

# Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 68

## Autumn 2018



*Featuring*

The National Memorial Arboretum – p.5

# The Somerset Gardens Trust



## *From the Editors*

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Magazine. We have just passed the Equinox – when day and night are equal – in the heat of the day it is difficult to believe that Winter is coming, but the early morning chill warns us that frosts are on the way. There is still time to enjoy the garden's roses and salvias; and also for planting bulbs for next Spring.

This edition both looks back to the Summer and forward to next Spring. There are articles on the enjoyable Herefordshire Tour, on Linda Denman's interesting garden, news from the Committees; jointly researched articles with Devon Gardens Trust on the moving National Memorial Arboretum to commemorate the Armistice, and on historic icehouses; the Members Forum on box blight; and – looking forward – on snowdrops and hellebores. A wonderful and eclectic selection. Read it and enjoy! (And, of course, please volunteer your ideas and articles for the Spring edition).

Christopher and Lindsay Bond  
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## *From the Chairman*

Dear Members,

The Summer has passed so quickly, my May message was full of Spring hopes for the growing season, now Autumn thoughts crowd my mind while I try to gather apples and blackberries, and make chutney while the wind blows hard outside, it is the Autumn Equinox.

I hope all our members were able to enjoy the Summer and not just suffer from watering exhaustion. My valley here is



fairly moist so I think I got off lightly! There are no casualties and I have loved every minute of the sun and heat.

We had an excellent Annual General Meeting at Stoberry Park, Wells thanks to the generosity and hospitality of Frances and Tim Meeres. After the meeting we

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were able to enjoy a glass of wine and delicious eats in their large garden. I hope next year that we will be able to hold our AGM west of Taunton.

The Gardens Trust, our national body, has started to offer trips to various parts of the Country. I went to Northern Ireland with them, and thoroughly enjoyed myself. The details of the workshops I passed to Ian Clark for the Research Committee, the others I asked Mary ter Braak to pass on to

members. If anyone not in Ian's group would like details, they only have to ask.

Lastly, I believe we all enjoyed our visit to Herefordshire, the heat moderated, the gardens were still lovely. I want to thank John Townson again for his valuable help both in the recce and for steadying any nerves I might have had! Sadly he is not able to help in Northern Ireland.

Camilla Carter

## **Somerset Gardens Trust visit to gardens in Northern Ireland 2019**

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There are many fine gardens surrounded by lochs and with views to the Mountains of Mourne that have the mild climate that allows them to grow plants from the Southern hemisphere. Mount Stewart, Rowallane, Clondeboye, Castlewellan, Hillsborough, Ballyedmond and Antrim Castle are a few. Many have ericaceous soil so May should be the perfect time for a visit.

Members will be free to make their own travel arrangements either by booking a seat on the designated flight from Bristol to Belfast International or by extending their holiday and taking a ferry or hiring a car at the Airport. We plan to stay at The Dunadry Hotel, near Antrim; they are happy to fit in with members travel plans.

We plan to fly on Sunday, May 19th returning Thursday, May 23rd. An itinerary will be sent to members together with flight details when they are published.

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## The National Memorial Arboretum

*Anthony Pugh-Thomas finds a remarkable memorial to the dead*

In 1988 Commander David Childs CBE, a retired naval Commander, proposed that a national 'Centre' for Remembrance should be created and, following a meeting with Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC, an appeal was launched in 1994 by the Prime Minister, John Major. Lafarge Aggregates, gave the new charity the 150 acre site on reclaimed gravel workings bordered by the rivers Trent and Tame at Alrewas, near Lichfield, Staffordshire. The site includes a reed bed and wetland and now hosts a huge variety of wild plants and wildlife, including brown hares, skylarks, otters, green woodpeckers, lapwings and many others.

Visitors enter through the Remembrance Centre, part of which is the Millennium

Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness, where an act of remembrance takes place each day at 11am accompanied by the Last Post and Reveille. Although there are many military

*“Horse Chestnuts as the first police batons were made from that very durable wood”*

memorials throughout the Arboretum, visitors will also find many commemorating those who have died while on civil duty: close to the Centre there are gardens for Fire Rescue and Ambulance Services, the General Post Office and the Royal Artillery. A wide pathway, flanked with Victoria Cross commemorative paving stones, leads to The Armed Forces Memorial that commemorates over 16,000 personnel who have lost their lives in a conflict, or as a result of terrorism, since the end of the Second World War. Throughout the grounds there are memorials dedicated to the main branches of the British and Allied Armed Forces (such as the Poles and the Royal Norwegian Navy), but also to individual regiments recording their battle honours, and to many other organizations such as The Association of Jewish ex-service men and women; the Boys' Brigade; the workers on the infamous Burma Railway and



*Royal Welsh memorial*

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the Royal National Lifeboat Institute. One of the most moving is to those shot for desertion or cowardice in the First World War, often boys of 19 or 20, but who, it is now accepted, were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and who were granted a posthumous pardon in 2006. One of the most dramatic is to the Polar Bear Association, a tribute to the 49th Infantry West Riding Division who in the Second World War were stationed in Iceland, and because they were snowed in under 20 feet of snow, were called by their commanding officer “his Polar Bears”. And one of the most unusual to the Showmen’s Guild who have raised thousands for charitable causes and many of whose members died during the national conflicts.

Many of these memorials when they relate to particular war zones are grouped together in separate garden settings – for

example the Mediterranean garden for those involved in the defence of Malta, the storming of Monte Cassino and the Cyprus Emergency are commemorated.

Areas of the Arboretum have been planted with native species such as Black Poplar, and the Service tree, together with groups of trees from temperate regions such as North American Oaks, and there are stands of Douglas firs and Giant Redwoods. Although the trees are still young they already define certain areas; for example a long avenue funded by all the Police forces of the United Kingdom, is planted with Horse Chestnuts as the first police batons were made from that very durable wood.

Visitors to the Arboretum can join a guided walk, a buggy tour, a Land Train ride or a free talk, many often conducted by one of a team of over 260 volunteers. It is likely to be a moving experience.

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## Buzz, Flutter, Crawl

*Shiela Rabson, Chair of the Education Committee, finds a great initiative*

Recently we had an application for an Education Group grant from Curry Mallet C of E Primary School. The project was extremely well thought out and managed and I felt we should share it with all members of SGT.

The whole school took part in this project. It was primarily based on bees and how valuable, if not essential, they are to the World. The children were set the challenge of designing a garden suitable for bees to be built from scratch on an underused

piece of land. Several designs were then selected by the School Governors who amalgamated elements from the best designs.

Class work ensured that the children learned what a bee does for plant pollination as well as learning about honey production. They heard about about several types of bee, not just the bumble and honey bees, and, how something so small was essential for our food production. Class work involved working on hexagonal shapes and creating an indoor hive from cardboard boxes, tubes and old filing cabinet pockets full of facts about bees. Art work focussed on making flowers

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*“creating an indoor hive from cardboard boxes, tubes and old filing cabinet pockets”*

out of tissue paper and pipe cleaners. The school also visited a honey farm and every child came away with a jar of honey!

Parents, governors, teachers, pupils and the school gardening club all helped to create the garden. They were involved in turf cutting which took place over a weekend and was extremely hard work. Everybody then helped to dig over the plot and the soil was fertilized with well-rotted manure. The application said this was supplied by a parent but I suspect there was a horse involved somewhere along the line! The children helped barrow this from a field gate to the plot as there is no car access to the area. One of the parents owns a garden centre and he costed and sourced the plants for the school. The PTFA raised some of the money through cake sales and the school gardening club sold plants and made jam and chutneys to sell using fruit and vegetables grown at the school.

The Education Group were subsequently invited to the opening ceremony and we were pleased to be given a guided tour of the school and its delightful grounds by some of the garden club before being

shown into the various classrooms where we could see all the work the pupils had done on bees. Our guides were very knowledgeable and confident about their task and could answer all our questions. Some of the guides were about to leave for senior school and had been in the gardening club for over five years. Several children spoke at the Ceremony about the element that they had particularly asked to be in the garden. The plants were already attracting bees, hoverflies and butterflies and will continue to grow and seed to ensure the continuity of the area.



This was an extremely worthy scheme to support and we were more than glad to assist, even in such a minor financial way. Praise must go to the teachers who had worked co-operatively on this venture and to the Head for allowing such an imaginative and well thought-out project to over-ride a set curriculum to enhance the pupils' learning.

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## Humphry Repton and his designs for Ston Easton and Endsleigh Cottage

*Hilary Little finds two fascinating landscapes*

Of the hundreds of gardens designed by Humphry Repton, Ston Easton Park is the only one remaining in Somerset. In 1792 Henry Hippisley-Coxe commissioned Repton to produce a plan for the gardens of his house.

The house, built about 1750, sits above a small valley which divides the grounds into two 'plains' - north and south. In this valley, rather than creating a lake, an outmoded Capability Brown idea, Repton proposed constructing a stream with a cascade and a series of weirs. There was the same height of riser and interval between each weir to provide movement and sound. Another new idea of his was the creation of a terrace around the house.

Instead of unifying the landscape he enhanced its separation by obscuring the north plain with trees. In contrast, to the East, he removed the mound which hid the sinuous curves of the Wellow Brook. Repton also tried to create a sense of aerial perspective with trees, planting dark cedars

and copper beeches near the house and lighter-foliaged specimens further away.

Repton always considered the line of approach to a house to be of paramount importance and, as at Blaise Castle (*see the Summer edition*), the approach at Ston Easton winds its way from the South,



*Ston Easton Park, view from the house looking East before the mound was removed*

avoiding the village. However, at Endsleigh Cottage in Devon, Repton's proposals for a scenic drive were ignored, the Duke of Bedford preferring a short, direct carriage drive to his hunting and

*“Another new idea of his was the creation of a terrace around the house”*

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fishing lodge built in the ‘*cottage orné*’ style.

In contrast to Blaise Castle and Ston Easton, Repton’s design for Endsleigh was undertaken towards the end of his life. It encapsulates many of his recurring themes with a terrace around the South side of the house, a nearby garden, and flowing water to provide sound.

The terrace incorporated a children’s garden with a rill on which to sail toy-boats and a conservatory with raised beds beneath to “*solace the infirmities of age*”, a feature perhaps inspired by his own need to be carried around the estate in a sedan chair. Rather than enclosing gardens in “*lofty Scarlet walls*”, he preferred them “*to be disposed in terraces*” which admirably suits the situation of the house and garden above the Tamar Valley, as seen in views of the long herbaceous border today. In the dairy dell and elsewhere he suggested creating cascades to tumble down the hillsides.

He argued against building a “*magnificent and costly bridge*” over the Tamar which he felt would destroy the solitude “*which is the characteristic of Endsleigh*” and instead proposed crossing the river immediately opposite the house “*by a Wier*” (sic) - this to provide a “*safe Ford for Carriages’ together with a cast-iron or timber bridge for Horses and foot Passengers above the Common Summers flood*”.

He suggested the view from the house would be enlivened by the smoke from a cottage on the opposite side of the river and if this were to be a mill, then the occasional traffic “*of persons crossing the Tamar would add to the picturesque effect*”.

Both Ston Easton and Endsleigh are currently run as hotels and are well worth visiting as the owners have done much to restore the gardens.

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## Schwetzingen

*Frederica Coker finds an impressive historic landscape*

The core of the present Palace of Schwetzingen (near the City of Mannheim, Germany) is a moated castle built in the fourteenth century. The building was damaged in several wars and subsequently reconstructed. A new era began for Schwetzingen with Prince Elector Carl Theodor (1724 – 1799). He added two

curving extensions at the side of the Palace, which then formed a semicircle, but left the designing of the baroque garden to Johann Ludwig Petri (1714 – 1794). Petri was inspired by the curving extensions to plan a circular parterre enclosed on the west side by two curving pergolas of trellis work. Around 1756, when work came to a standstill, Petri asked to be released from his post. Nicolas de Pigage (1723 – 1796), an architect from Lorraine, was placed in charge of the

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development of the garden. He kept the basic structure of Petri's draft plan but made the *bosquet* zones (areas of small woods) longer by extending them westwards. The *bosquets* were divided into cabinets (small rooms) and decorated with numerous statues.

Nowadays, visitors enter through the arched gateway of the Palace, admiring as they walk the central Parterre, which is planted with avenues of trees and colourful bedding and traced with box. The central Fountain has a



*“...which is planted with avenues of trees and colourful bedding and traced with box”*

statue of Arion being rescued by dolphins. This leads on to the Stag Fountain with statues of stags and hounds. To the right side is the Temple of Apollo, and beneath the Bath House, a place where the Prince could relax with friends. Following fashion, Carl Theodor engaged Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell in 1776 to redesign the outer areas of the garden in the English

landscape style. Fortunately, Sckell preserved the formal parterres near the Palace. The rectangular pool at the end became the irregular lake with two statues at the water's edge, River Rhine and River Danube, with spectacular views back to the Palace. In 1777, Carl Theodor succeeded to the throne of Bavaria and Sckell went to work on the Englische Garten in Munich and at Nymphenburg. Nicolas de Pigage stayed at Schwetzingen and designed the Temple of Mercury and Carl Theodor's last folly, the Turkish Mosque. This is flanked by two minarets and stands in a lake.

There is much more to see at Schwetzingen but its importance in garden history lies in illustrating the contrast between the formal gardens and the landscaping alterations made thirty years later.

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## From the Events Committee

Writing something for the Magazine at this time of year is not easy. We have updated you on events as they have happened during the year. As I write our November lecture is the remaining event of the year.

### Thursday 15 November

Tony Kirkham, Head of  
Arboretum, the Royal Botanic  
Gardens, Kew

*“Following in the Footsteps of  
Wilson in China”*

At the Williams Hall, Dark  
Lane, Stoke St Gregory,  
Taunton TA3 6EH

6pm £15 for members and for guests.  
Followed by tea/coffee and biscuits

We have met to begin to plan the 2019 programme. Nothing is totally confirmed as yet, but we hope to have some afternoon

visits with tea and cakes in and around Somerset, some self-drives further afield and two lectures.

A big thank you to Sally Leaney who distributed leaflets on SGT on our behalf at the Taunton Flower Show, to attract new members. Sally is a well-known local garden designer whose garden at the Show is always well attended - and prize winning. This year her garden had a First World War theme remembering the young men from the farm where she lives who lost their lives on the Western front.

Thank you for your feedback on events and for suggestions for future visits. If you wish to start your garden visiting early in 2019 and see swathes of early spring bulbs, particularly the beautiful crocus flowers on the main lawn in front of it.

Forde Abbey near Chard is open daily.  
([www.fordeabbey.co.uk](http://www.fordeabbey.co.uk))

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## Sue Custance-Baker enjoyed the SGT visit to Herefordshire in July

*Sue Custance-Baker enjoyed the SGT visit*

This was my first experience of an SGT organised holiday and I have to say what an enjoyable one it was. Camilla and John had put together an excellent itinerary and the coach driver managed to get us down all the very narrow country lanes.

I had been to our first stop, Kentchurch Court, a few years ago, to see the ancient trees. This time, I delighted in the magnificent Grinling Gibbons wood

carvings in the house, enjoyed meeting everyone at lunch in the dining room and loved the romantic walled garden with its loose growing herbaceous plants. The bright pink patio rose *Rosa* ‘Lovely Fairy’ planted en masse in a circle around a clematis-covered pergola, was very striking at The Old Rectory, Thrupton, and we all had pleasure watching the dragonflies on the naturalised lily pond in the orchard and arboretum.

On day two, we explored the grounds at Newport House with the head gardener. No expense had been spared in restoring the productive two-acre walled vegetable

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garden. At Hergest Croft I was inspired by the variety of pelargoniums in the conservatory and enjoyed a walk across the parkland “with its magnificent collection of specimen trees”.

Cary Goode showed us Rhodds Farm including her dovecote and the gravel garden, which she had designed and built this year. Climbing plants clothed the walls of the buildings and the wide herbaceous borders were full of hot colours.

*“Camilla and John had put together an excellent itinerary and the coach driver managed to get us down all the very narrow country lanes”*

chestnut trees planted in the early seventeenth century. Some of us explored the historical city of Hereford in the afternoon.

After endless days of glorious sunshine, there was torrential rain for our visit to

Brockhampton Cottage, where Peter Clay and Tom Stuart-Smith have created a wonderful modern romantic garden, but my memory of it will be of hundreds of tiny frogs jumping about our feet in the long wet grass by the lake. Our holiday came to an end after a delicious lunch at Grendon Court, which has a cleverly redesigned garden with many flowering grasses.



The next day we visited Glan Arrow in the half-timbered village of Eardisland. Here the large lily pond across the lawn from the house was most memorable. The highlight of the trip for me was the ancient tree walk at Croft Castle which was lined with sweet

Hereford is a delightful county of rolling hills and all the gardens we visited had made the most of their glorious situations and far-reaching views.



## Members Forum

### Can Box Blight be cured?

#### *Carolyn de Salis*

I think most of us have heard enough about the Box virus, *Cylindrocladium buxicola*. What I have been using is a Fungicide called 'Top Buxus Health Mix' which certainly works, but unless you do it regularly or so it comes back. With a great many plants, the virus is almost impossible to contain.



Much more serious, is the Box Moth *Cydalima perspectalis*. It has spread across Europe, travelled through Kent, reached Gloucestershire, and is on its way here! It is a green caterpillar which appears to produce thousands of friends in just a few days. They will then munch through any green leaves, leaving a lacey finish. 'Dipel' is an Organic spray which works, but pointless spraying until you have the caterpillar. The next stage is the Flying insects, emanating from cocoons. You put up traps around the garden, the moths are attracted to them, and then they die. But, if one escapes... then you are in trouble again.

See the attached picture of the caterpillar, and the damage done in three days to a box hedge near us in Switzerland. One friend just collects the caterpillars, and squishes them. Whoops!

#### *Jo Schoenfeld*

I have encountered two types of so called box blight, one a fungal box blight and the other an infestation.

My knot garden is *Buxus Sempervirens*, which suddenly showed signs of what looked like box burn after Spring cutting 2 years ago but progressively worsened. Within months box leaves had turned brown and dropped to reveal a completely twiggly silhouette. We treated it with 'Topbuxus', an organic tonic folia plant feed with copper as the antifungal property, spraying at intervals of 3 times every two weeks, once in Autumn and again in Spring, and also watering the roots throughout with seaweed mixture. By Spring the box had begun to green up, and after a further year of treatment the box has substantially recovered; also needs a strict adherence to sterile tools. 100 Tablets makes 100 litres and costs about £80.

I have been alerted to Box Tree Moth which is in Richmond and travelling South West! This is manifested by browning leaves which are covered by tiny green caterpillars. The successful treatment is by spraying a solution of 'Xen tari raupenfrei Agrinova' powder twice with an interval of a week, and a 'Buxatrap' Box Tree Moth trap (all on line). The suspended Box Trap quickly collected male moths brought in by the pheromones contained in the trap. The hedging made a quick recovery in 2017

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only to get a further infestation in Spring 2018 which was swiftly dealt with. Constant vigilance!

## **Anne Wood**

A friend pointed out the sick looking box balls when I returned after a few days away in July 2013. It had appeared on some of the balls that lined a very short path from the garden gate to the back door. I had grown them from cuttings.

I fed them with blood, fish and bone and watered them regularly; however they continued to lose leaves. In November I



could not stand them any more and dug them all out. I replaced them with ivy which I had seen growing as a low hedge in the Dower House garden in Morville Hall in Shropshire, the home of Catherine Swift. The variety Fibrex Nursery recommended was *Hedera helix* 'Lovelace'. Since then the ivy has knitted

together very well and made a good edging about 15 inches high. I still prefer my old box balls!

## **Mary Stirling**

My only experience of box blight was some years ago in the wonderful William and Mary gardens of Het Loo Palace near the Hague, where the gardeners were becoming frantic because box blight was decimating the extensive formal plantings of box, some of which formed shady alleys well over head height. Their only cure was to dig out the sick plants and thus ruin the historic symmetry for many years to come. It was very prevalent at the time, and Hampton Court was also badly affected, with similar dire consequences. Of course the Dutch blamed the English for starting it, and vice versa.

*“the damage done in three days to a box hedge near us in Switzerland”*

Fortunately I have neither box nor blight in my garden!

*Editors note:* Other potential box substitutes include *Pittostorum tobira* 'Nanum', *Japonicus* 'Green Rocket', *Rosmarinus*, Chilean myrtle, *Podocarpus nivalis*, *Rhododendron* 'Bloombox', *Berberis darwinii* 'Compacta', *Taxus* 'Repandens'.

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## Lenten Roses and their delights

*Juliet Davis of Kapunda Nurseries explains their origin and variety*

Most gardeners are stirred by the lovely sight of the brave snowdrop pushing its way through the Winter soil, but it has a companion which follows soon after encouraged by the increasing warmth of the Sun. The Heavenly Hellebore and for me in particular the Lenten Rose inspires a great passion due to its exquisite blooms of clear white, yellows, peaches, pinks through to the rich colours of rouge, plum and black forms in single, double and anemone-centred flowers. Spots, stripes and blotches add character and excitement to these new crosses.

The original Lenten species came from the northern parts of Greece and Turkey, growing in inaccessible mountain regions, in the woodland or shaded habitats among

the scrub. These plants were dull in colour compared to today's plants when, more than half a century ago, Helen Ballard and Elizabeth Strangman collected seed and

*“Spots, stripes and blotches add character and excitement to these new crosses”*

began to hybridise from their stock. Today's current crop of spectacular Hellebore flowers is the result of onward breeding by dedicated nurserymen and women cross-pollinating their most beautiful plants, sowing the seed and carefully selecting the best of the progeny.

It is important to buy your Hellebores in the Spring as flowering plants for the wide

range of colours and styles, whether they be single, double flowers or have an anemone centre, make them very individual, and when planted out, they soon settle into their new home. These plants will be at least three years old, having been grown from fertilised seed. Dig a hole which is bigger than the plant and mix in some



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compost and fertiliser and water the plant well. Hellebores are hungry feeders and it pays to feed them well as it gives the plants the energy to produce an abundance of flowers. Hellebores do like some shade during the day, particularly during the Summer months and they mix in well with a range of semi-shady plants. I cut off the flowering stems in May, before they spread their seed to stop hundreds of babies popping up in the beds the following year. If you spray your roses, give the Hellebores a dose of aphicide and fungicide to knock out any greenfly and black spot at the same time. Remove and dispose of the old leathery foliage during the Winter to minimise disease and give a clear view of the new Spring flowers.

Almost all Hellebores are hardy in most of Britain. The lovely Christmas rose (*H. niger*) is best grown in a humus rich soil which does not dry out completely. *H. foetidus*, together with *H. viridis* are our own two native species, and do well in poor conditions except waterlogged soils. *H. argutifolius*, the pale green Corsican Hellebore is tall and statuesque. Together with the hybrids which have been developed by breeders, there is much to choose from.

BUT I would not be without my Lenten Roses and enjoy welcoming visitors during March at the two Open Days. Garden Societies and Clubs welcome by Appointment.

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## My Big Move

*Linda Denman remembers a great adventure*

We arrived in Stratton House in the Autumn of 1986 to a three-acre walled garden with virtually nothing in it, offering us the huge fun of creating, with professional help. This was a great success and was occasionally opened to the public. After 25 years it was time to downsize and we bought Parsonage House located just 120 yards down the road. The previous owner had been a very keen gardener with an accomplished wash bag which had magically returned filled with cuttings from Australia after his frequent trips to visit family.

Our first challenge was privacy, as the property was surrounded by a shoulder-high wall which allowed folk walking by



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to see into the garden and house on two full sides. We created a natural wall extension by using our bamboo from Stratton to create a hornbeam pleached hedge with wattle fencing which did the trick – now 7 years on the hornbeam nearly replaces the fence and we have plenty of kindling!

Our village of Stoney Stratton is not so called without reason. Weeding still involves two bags – one for stones and one for weeds. Weeds end up in the brown bins for rubbish collection leaving the compost more or less weed-free and the farmer fills his gateways with our stones!

We have a garage now covered in virginia creeper but it had no gutters so on the West side we put in a gutter and rainwater butt. When I planted an apricot I unknowingly created a sort of shelter above it which has led to really good crops of apricots except for this year when the blossom-laden tree was totally frosted!

I had a piece of garden between the road and the garage cut off with a rusty metal 6-foot ornamental fence and planted a russet and an orange pippin apple either

*“Weeding still involves two bags – one for stones and one for weeds”*

side which seem to really enjoy the sun from 11:00 till dusk. This area is now filled with raised beds for veg. and it has its own gate which gives the garden a much better shape.

I am very fond of *Euphorbias* and have a *mellifera* which we wheeled over in the barrow from the old garden. From Pan Global I bought a *E. ‘Phrampton Phatty’* which is now a pronounced feature being 6 foot high and around 7 foot wide with *Ipheions* at the base and an *E.stygiانا* nearly equally its size (close to an inherited stone seat which perfectly captures the evening sun).

Though not the showpiece that our old garden was, this new downsized one still brings me great pleasure and is always a work in progress.

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## Icehouses of the South-West

*Dr Clare Greener of Devon Gardens Trust finds a surprising number of interesting survivals*

Before refrigeration ice was important in the storage and preservation of food, for cooling drinks and for the creation of luxury iced sweets such as sorbet and ice cream. From the seventeenth century there

were purpose-built icehouses in Britain for commercial use, and by the eighteenth century, estate owners built icehouses on their land. These were a statement of wealth as there was a substantial investment in building materials as most were sited underground with thick walls and drainage at the bottom of a deep pit.

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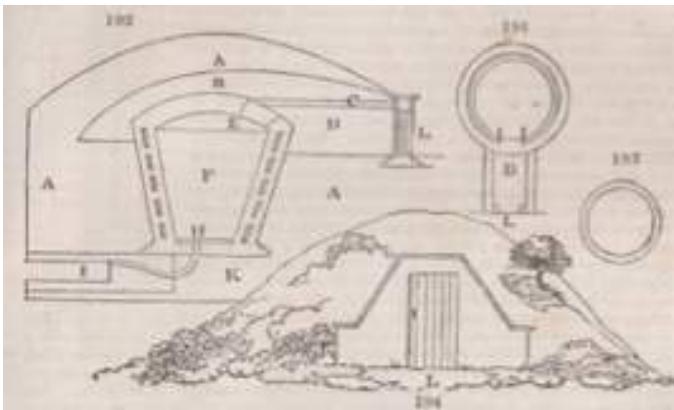
John Claudius Loudon, in his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* of 1822, suggested that for even a small icehouse it was necessary for it to be at least six feet in diameter and up to ten feet deep. Usually a mound was built above the pit to provide insulation, covered further with earth, and an entrance with a double door system to help keep the ice cold. Not all icehouses were built to this design and some were incorporated into other buildings such as under the Dairy at Endsleigh, Milton Abbot, or under the octagonal Game Larder at Coryton Park, Kilmington, both in Devon. At Halswell Park, the icehouse is in the mound

*“At Halswell Park, the icehouse is in the mound surmounted by the rotunda built in the mid-eighteenth century”*

surmounted by the rotunda built in the mid-eighteenth century.

Ice was obtained from nearby shallow ponds, often specially constructed and kept clear of plants and wildlife. It was one of the annual Winter tasks of the gardeners and estate labourers to fill the

ice house, especially as Winter was generally a quiet period. At Killerton, in 1809, it took thirty men more than five days to fill the new ice house which was built the previous year under the guidance of John Veitch. Ice was broken and dragged to the side of the pond with long hooks. The aim was to carry up to one ton of ice per day over a period of three to four days, which was heavy and cold work, however the men were rewarded by additional wages and cider or beer. Ice



“ (Fig. 191. Ground-plan. Fig. 192. Section in the direction of the entrance passage. Fig. 193. Ground-plan of the well. Fig. 194. Elevation. A. Upper covering of earth. B and K. Strata of clay. C. Wall of the arched roof of passage. D. (Figs. 191, and 192.) Entrance passage. E. Entrance aperture of the well. F. Well. In its side-walls may be seen the cavities for the retention of the warm air, which would otherwise make its way to the well. H. Pipe for carrying off the water or moisture. I. Drain of it. L. (Figs. 191, 192, and 194.) Door of passage.”

From: J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), p.

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was shovelled down into the icehouse and packed down tightly or left to settle under its own weight. The more tightly packed the ice, the longer it took to thaw. A thick layer of straw or sawdust was then placed over the ice as insulation. A well-stocked ice house could keep the ice frozen for two to three years, so a mild Winter did not mean an estate would run out of ice.

From the end of the nineteenth century icehouses were more frequently filled with ice from refrigerated ships transporting ice from North America or Norway, rather than from an estate source. It was only when refrigerators became more popular that the icehouse declined in use. Some were re-used for other purposes such as cold storage for game or for a rubbish tip, others were dismantled or were simply left to decay. The former icehouse at Avishays,

Chaffcombe, Somerset, of unusual cruciform plan internally whilst octagonal externally, seems to have become a summerhouse.

As most icehouses were underground, they have been easily lost or forgotten. Sometimes the only sign that an icehouse still exists is a mound, frequently covered with scrub and trees; although once cleared it is obvious that the mound concealed an ice house.

Provisional lists have been compiled for known icehouses in the region. However, there is little information available even about the icehouses that we know still exist. Research into these garden features could be the basis of a regional project in the future.

## ICEHOUSES IN SOMERSET

Babington, Kilmersdon: to south-west of house, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Grade II listed.

Chaffcombe: Possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century

Crowcombe Court: remains of by stream, 150 metres north of house, late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Dillington House, Ilminster

Halswell Park: icehouse under mid-18<sup>th</sup> century rotunda, Grade II listed.

Hatch Court, Hatch Beauchamp

Lydeard House

Marston House, Selwood: built c1740

Montacute House, Montacute: in north-west corner of the garden.

Nynehead Court, Nr. Wellington

*Old Hall, Somerton*

Orchard Wyndham

Shapwick House: with domed roof, late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Grade II listed.

Standerwick Court: North side of house, mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

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## A Passion for Snowdrops

*Paul Cumbleton interviews Galanthophile, Broadcaster and Author, Naomi Slade*

Enchanted from an early age by the thousands of flowers carpeting her family's orchard, Naomi Slade has always known that snowdrops vary. She even called her pet rabbit 'Snowdrop'. Little did she know that named cultivars would reach over 2500 and her childhood enchantment lead her to authoring a well-received book about them and even having a snowdrop named after her.

If you are new to growing snowdrops, it would be easy to be overwhelmed at the vast range now offered. Naomi has a few favourites – 'Trym', 'Godfrey Owen', 'E.A. Bowles', 'Cowhouse Green' and 'Green Tear' for example – but advises a slow, mindful approach to acquisition. Don't buy many different ones at once, buy a few and get to know them and how to grow them. Once you progress to wanting more select forms, if you had say £40 to spend, don't buy one expensive one at £40; rather get one at £20 and two at £10 each. It is easy to be enticed by the new and novel, but will these be good garden plants? Naomi advises going for some of the older, established varieties that are not only cheaper but known to be good doers in the garden. Her recommendations include 'Magnet', 'S. Arnott', 'Ophelia', 'Merlin', 'Dionysus' and 'Richard Ayres' (not so old but still good).

While snowdrops can be grown in pots, Naomi reckons they don't do well in the long term when pot-grown. They run out of nutrients and can easily get too hot or cold. But if you must pot-grow, her suggested compost mix is: 2 parts perlite, 1 part John Innes No. 2, 1 part multipurpose compost and then to this mix add a third of leafmould. Feed with a high potash fertiliser and re-pot regularly. In the garden, they are happiest in a moist but well-drained soil and are relatively unfussy about pH. They need a decent amount of light while in growth or they won't flower well.



*Galanthus plicatus 'E. A. Bowles'*

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*“While snowdrops can be grown in pots, Naomi reckons they don’t do well in the long term when pot-grown”*

Snowdrop enthusiasts (“Galanthophiles”) often covet the so-called ‘coloured’ snowdrops. Yellows such as ‘Wendy’s Gold’ are well-known, but pink and orange tones are being developed, though as yet

you often need more imagination than eyesight to see the subtle shades on offer. For others, Snowdrops any colour other than white seem wrong somehow. But for sheer spectacle, Naomi says the massed plantings at places such as Welford Park never fail to delight. But unless you have a particularly large garden, she advises against trying to replicate this – rather, plant groups of the various species and cultivars to achieve flowering over a longer period. For further advice, I highly recommend Naomi’s book *“The Plant Lover’s Guide to Snowdrops”*.

## James Allen – the Snowdrop King

James Allen (1830-1906) and his two brothers were born near Shepton Mallet. After the death of their mother the brothers moved into the town. James’s second house move took him into Highfield House, where, although an amateur horticulturist, he hybridized new varieties of snowdrop – the first person to do so. It is thought he bred over one hundred varieties. Botrytis and the narcissus fly attacked his collection and probably only two varieties, ‘Merlin’ and ‘Magnet,’ have survived.

## Shepton Mallet celebrates the humble snowdrop

*Frederica Coker enjoys the Winter Festival*

On a chilly February morning, Michael Eavis, founder of the Glastonbury Festival (dressed as usual in short trousers in spite of the cold), opened the second ‘Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival’ by the market cross in Shepton Mallet. Friends and notices had referred me to the Festival, an initiative of the Shepton Mallet Horticultural Society. In the town centre visitors could buy an impressive variety of

snowdrops, and have their own identified. Then they followed the Snowdrop Festival





*“a cheerful brass band,  
left from Highfield  
House, where James  
had done his  
hybridising, for Shepton  
Mallet Cemetery”*

Trail through this historic town, guided by the beautifully stencilled white and green snowdrops on the pavements and accompanied by countless colourful planters. One trail led to the two houses where snowdrop breeder pioneer James Allen had lived. ‘Magnet’ and ‘Merlin’, two hybrids bred by him, grow there.

In the beautiful church of St Peter and St Paul there were many stalls, and residents of Evercreech, a nearby village, were showing their attractive flower arrangements. Children and adults Poetry Competition and Photographic

Competition entries on the theme of snowdrops were on display to be read and enjoyed, awaiting the Award Ceremonies on Saturday.

After the Children’s Fancy Dress Parade, a Celebratory Procession, accompanied by a cheerful brass band, left from Highfield House, where James had done his hybridising, for Shepton Mallet Cemetery. There snowdrops were planted at the Allen family memorial. After that, most of the Festival goers went back to the Church for the poetry readings and the prize-giving for the Poetry and Photographic Competitions.

Sunday began with an interesting illustrated presentation by Naomi Slade, broadcaster, garden writer and author who gave a fascinating talk on how to grow snowdrops – opportunities and challenges. The day ended with a guided snowdrop walk through Winter woodland near Pylle.

*Editors Note:* The next Snowdrop Festival will take place on **16th and 17th February 2019.**

## **The Trust welcomes the following New Members**

Mr Duncan Chalmers, Ilminster  
Viscountess Dilhorne, Rimpton, Yeovil  
Miss Elle Gilpin, Stoke-sub-Hamdon  
Mr Alan Gloak, MBE, Bove Town, Glastonbury  
Ms Sherrie-Jane Jackson, Langport  
Dr Hilary Little, Westbury-sub-Mendip  
Mrs Susan Meehan, North Curry  
Mr & Mrs P Simper, Hemington, Radstock  
Mr & Mrs P Walker, Gillingham, Dorset

# *The Somerset Gardens Trust*

## *The Great Marrow*

Silently the marrow grew  
its speed invisible to human eye,  
Its straw filled cot -  
wrapped all around from birds and pests,  
dining daily on magic potions -  
until it crowded out all others.  
It lies alone in green lit majesty.

The Village Show awaits in awe,  
the heaviest marrow by far -  
two strong men must lift it;  
other gardeners fear the worst  
out-marrowed for another year.

But what is this ?  
A brown stain against the lustrous green -  
no cleaning can remove it;  
and worse – the flesh rots from within,  
every day a widening circle -  
to cut it out would leave a hole,  
no leaf or patch could fill it.  
Now it's fit only for the compost heap.  
Despair – when triumph was so close;  
other gardeners grin with pleasure.

What slug or bug could wreak such havoc ?  
Was it the mythical pink marrow worm ?  
What competitor would stoop so low ?  
How could they break through all those defences,  
the hourly inspections and the love ?  
Only the small boy with the airgun knows.



*Christopher Bond*

The garden at Hainbury Mill Farm had been beautifully transformed by Anthony and Teresa Myers. A video and introductory talk showed us what a challenge it had been. They had planted a large number of roses largely bought from Kordes of Germany including 'Tradition 95', a stunning red climber. There were also several interesting acers. A delicious tea followed.



*Front Cover: The Herefordshire Tour - courtesy of Ann Cook*

*Back Cover: "Hainbury Mill Farm - courtesy of Ann Cook*

[www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk)