

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 63

Spring 2017



Featuring

Members welcome the Spring Awakening – p. 5

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From the Editors

Spring has finally arrived. A strange Winter – daffodils in December and snowdrops in January. But now we have the Spring succession – starting with the yellows and finishing with the blues. This edition shows some remarkable Somerset gardens - how lucky we are with generous garden owners – but we have much to learn about other styles of garden. The research made by the Survey Group, the visits to private gardens organized by the Events Committee and the article on Swiss gardens show this clearly.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond
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From the Chairman

Dear Members,

There is a new movement in Somerset called the “Garden Day Initiative” where it is hoped that we, anyone with a garden that they enjoy, will take time off, on Sunday May 14th to enjoy our gardens, give ourselves pats on the back and share our gardens with friends for tea or a drink. I do hope our notorious weather will take this on board and be at least pleasant.

Diana and her team have planned some lovely outings for us this Summer; tickets are being sent out as I write this. I have plans to visit Mount Stewart and Rowallane in Northern Ireland in May, with a view to taking a party of Gardens Trust members in early Summer next year. We had thought of going to Hertfordshire

that year but with Brexit and the fact that we will probably cross the border to



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County Wicklow to see Jimi Blake's garden and his sister's garden nearby, it was considered prudent to bring the date forward and go to Herefordshire in 2019.

The work of the Trust carries on with Mary ter Braak nobly doing the office work, the membership list and keeping members informed with the occasional e-mail. Christopher and Lindsay Bond producing the Magazine, endlessly thinking up articles and they and I are very grateful to our members for their contributions. Jenny Kent keeps up with the planning, there is a surprising amount. At the moment plans to upgrade the A303 will adversely affect the listed park at Hazelgrove House, Sparkford. They

together with Council members do sterling work and I want to thank them all.

Recently, when I met Heidi Howcroft, she gave the Batcombe Spring lecture last year, I mentioned visiting gardens in Southern Germany on which she is very knowledgeable. James and Primrose took us on a wonderful visit some years ago. The visit would be for 12 or 14 people, we would use a travel company to book so the cost would be greater than our normal away visit. Could those who are interested in a visit in 2020 e-mail me at cchoneywick@hotmail.co.uk and we will prepare some costings and an itinerary.

Camilla Carter 2017

The Trust welcomes the following New Members

Mrs Ann Cook, Wells

Mr D Curtis & Ms B Peppin, Castle Cary

Mrs M Drysdale, Pitcombe (Life)

Mrs Maili Felton, Sturminster Newton

Mrs Diana Hoare, Castle Cary

Major & Mrs Mitford-Slade, Norton Fitzwarren

Mrs Frances Neal, North Cheriton

Mr & Mrs Alistair Roach

Mrs Venetia Venning, Marston Magna.

Mrs Judith Weston, Middle Winterslow

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CONTENTS

Members' gardens Spring Awakening - 5
Enjoyable contributions from four members

Sherborne Garden, Litton - 7
Reasons to celebrate

Garden Disasters - 8
Lindsay Bond

The wonder of Acers - 9
James Harris describes a passion

What so special about Kew Gardens? - 10
A visitors' eye view

Burton Pynsent - 11
The Survey Group reports on its research

The 2017 Events Programme - 14
Diana Hebditch describes an exciting programme

My Garden - 17
Annabelle Chisholm describes a much loved space

Little Garth, Dawlish - 18
A wonderful smaller garden

Swiss Magic - 19
Charles de Salis on a garden with a view to die for

The Hardy Plant Society - 21
Stuart Senior describes an active group

Capability Brown - 22
Steffie Shields book reviewed by Anthony Pugh-Thomas

The Somerset Gardens Trust



The Spring Awakening

Leo Clarke

Early morning sunrise. Early birds. Much longer days. Snowdrops of course, but smaller it seems. Primroses hidden under hedges, daffodils in the orchard and the tips of *Camassias*, tulip *sprengeri* and *Alliums* showing at last. As I walk the dog the first crocus are showing on the bank by the front gates, and belatedly the iris have flowered in the corner. Apple trees begin to wake up. New hedges wait to be planted to replace diseased box, final decisions need to be made before it's too late. Hurry hurry, so much to do.... Summer will be here and still no sweet peas or broad beans sprouting! Or tomatoes come to that. And where was I going to plant all those roses I ordered at Chelsea Flower Show..... Oh what did we do so busily on those cold frosty days in the Winter?

Patricia Davies-Gilbert

The *Iris unquicularis* (once called *stylosa*) has been flowering for some months ready to pull and put in a vase. The Winter flowering *Jasmine nudiflorum* makes for an easy arrangement.

It is lovely to see the *Helleborus* flowering in the borders, the Snowdrops just beginning to flower the two commonest varieties both double and singles. It is the way they arrive and cover the ground with the lovely sight en masse.

Under a young Weeping Ash Tree there should be coming a carpet of crocus but I

fear the carpet is a little bare as the mice I suspect have enjoyed the corms, but the *Anemone blanda* are succeeding better and give something to look forward to, by then the *Camellia* Donation will be flowering next to a patch of *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*.

The daffodils are beginning to show their leaves now (it's January still). Actually there is still plenty of pruning and tidying up to do.

If you do wish to see a sea of Spring bulbs at their best do please visit Fairfield, Nr Stogursey on **Sunday April 2nd**.

Problems, what problems? Last year it was slugs this year so far it is moles. The lawn is a mess, the fields are endless hills, then there has been a deer stripping bark from trees and the ever-present squirrels don't help.

“New hedges wait to be planted to replace diseased box, final decisions need to be made before it's too late”

Mervyn Wilson

The garden is beginning to stir. At Candlemas snowdrops hang their heads concealing their beauties in humility as did the Virgin Mary. Small specie crocus, cream and white and golden brownish striped; narcissi poking up their heads;

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wintersweet, *Lonicera fragrans*, magic scented; Lent lilies, *Helleborus orientalis guttatus* and *atrorubens*, from wine red with their inner crown of creamy white stamens to hanging bells of white, together with variant pinks and greens, make a great show in the Wilderness, complementing the primroses, seeding everywhere, even in the hellebore's heart, but hard to eradicate. Primroses - magic in Spring - but greedy.

“Last year badgers, or was it squirrels, ate the bulbs when the plants were in full flower.”

Perhaps Winter is best likened to night, mostly asleep, but here and there some are up and about. Dawn will not come until buds are fattening, when early blossom breaks. Bees fly in March when the early plum flowers nectar will replace diminished Winter stores. A time for germination: broad beans and peas up, but most wait until after the Equinox when the soil begins to warm.

Then the grand procession begins, keeping the gardener on his toes.

Cicely Taylor

Cyril Connolly said that *“Spring is a call to action,*

hence to disillusion”. I so agree with him. Encouraged by warmth and sunshine I tried to start the mowing machine. It didn't, and now, of course, there is a long queue for servicing.

The stream is, at last, running through the garden, but it is moving slowly, blocked by weeds and grass that should have been pulled out during the Winter. And as for the laurel hedge that we meant to cut back...

On a brighter note, the little wild daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) are showing signs of life. They have spread from the neighbouring fields, and though not quite Wordsworth's 'host', are getting on that way. Primroses which have been flowering since Christmas, are a thick yellow mat and the tulips in pots beside the House are shooting up. Fingers crossed. Last year badgers, or was it squirrels, ate the bulbs when the plants were in full flower.



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Sherborne Garden, Litton

Pamela Southwell describes how to take the opportunities from disasters

We came to Sherborne, a lost hamlet of Somerset, close to Litton, in 1962. Called Pear Tree Farm, the fields had been sold, leaving the farmyard, a quarter acre derelict garden, and small cider orchard. All the stone walls had collapsed. The dairy, cart house, tractor house and pigsty had been demolished. We restored the stable and added a studio, re-built the pigsty as a fuel store, later a fruit store. We built a garage and found the well. We borrowed a horse to eat down all the grass and had a pond dug out in a wet area. Our small boys had a sandpit in the farmyard and with builders we restored the farmhouse.

Later we bought a 2/3 acre strip to fence off and keep out cows, and continued to rebuild walls. In 1966 we designed and stated to plant the Pinetum with interesting conifers, had a large pond dug, and planted 25 eating apples in an orchard. This is now replaced by a gravel garden, trees and hollies. We planted our first large tree, a French walnut.

Later we bought

more land where we grew hay, kept hens and had a vegetable garden. We had a sweet cherry orchard which all died as it was too wet. So we replaced with pears, nuts and spring bulbs and surrounded with a purple nut hedge.

After the 1976 drought we had a long pond dug out and made a pretty pebble covered

“These were completely washed away in a flood with all their labels”

bed for a large collection of ornamental grasses. These were completely washed away in a flood with all their labels, so instead we created a large gravel area with grasses, *Miscanthus* and *Cortaderia*. We had a wooden bridge constructed over the pond and extended the long border of shrubs.



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In 1988 we bought Bide Hill (2¾ acres) which is now a car park, a W.I. golf-croquet patch, a wood barn and Arboretum. Two years later we planted a wood of native trees with a 50% grant from Somerset County Council.

In 1985 we had to build over the Margery Fish Garden of shade loving plants (bought from her at 1s 3d each) and change the wall garden. The Granny Annex was completed in 1986 just after Granny died. Now we use it for storage and as a small tea room for our visitors. It leads out to a terrace and overlooks the cottage garden and formal beech walk. The two-seater privy was built up in 1996.

We celebrated the millennium by

constructing a Wadi from the waterfall to the long pond and another rill.

“The Granny Annex was completed in 1986 just after Granny died”

We have always enjoyed collecting species – birches, acers, hollies, oaks, roses, hostas, hemerocallis – they come and they go.

We hope we have achieved some balance between horticultural enthusiasms and design (*Ed – indeed they have*).

Garden Disasters

Lindsay Bond

Some of you who have visited our garden near Pilton will remember that at the back we have steps leading down from the terrace into the walled garden. In the centre there is a long, rectangular stretch of water, our canal.

This was not always so! My mother-in-law, proud of all her new grandchildren, decided to plant a row of standard rose trees, one for each of the them as they were born. However the ground was obviously not of good rose growing material, and one by one they all decided to die. To begin with she replaced them, but the death rate was too high!

Thus, when we moved in we decided to

take them all out, and put in the long rectangular canal that we now have. The rain keeps the water level constant, small fish thrive and the grandchildren are still all alive!

If you are willing to share your garden disasters with us, please contact the Editors



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Growing Acers

James Harris interviewed by Christopher Bond

It was a cold winter evening enlivened by tea and cake when we talked about the glories of the *Acer* (maple) family in which James' Nursery has specialized for many years.

Why *Acers*? Plants should be grown properly or not at all. So James bought an orchard and planted the land with many plants – including an ever expanding collection of *Acers* acquired from correspondents worldwide; growing them from seed was his passion but since they do not come true from seed, vegetative reproduction increased his stock to the point that his land and friends could no longer absorb the quantity. Starting a specialist nursery, and writing the authoritative book on *Acers*, became inevitable. 'Acer' Harris was born.

Seeing *Acers* in their natural habitat and collecting seed from the wild remains his passion, and has led him not only to travel widely – in the US, Korea and Russia – but also to his introduction into cultivation of new varieties. A privilege few have.

So what are the his moments of marvel? Seeing an 80 foot *Acer Macrophyllum Campestris* on Mount Morrison in Sierra Nevada; a twelve year search for the

source of the fabled *Acer Pictum* ssp *Okomotoanum* – ending in a remote island in the Eastern Sea off Korea – last described by the pioneering plant hunter E.H.Wilson in the nineteenth century.

How can you distinguish one *Acer* from another given the large number of cultivars available, and their characteristics? *Acers* hybridize naturally let alone man-made



Acer griseum

cultivars. Many identical or near identical plants have different names. James' book untangles these and guides gardeners on what plants suit their conditions*.

Acers come and go in garden fashion so propagating *Acer* species and varieties and predicting demand years before their sale is difficult. Growing oaks may meet steadier demand.....!

**The Gardeners Guide to growing maples*

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A Visitor's View of Kew Gardens

Ruth Martin finds the magic for City Dwellers all year round

It is February, just, and snowdrops are in abundance in the Rock Garden at Kew Gardens; simple, native, unadorned in anyway. Kew can be so unpretentious and yet so majestic, a place of contrasts.

In early January I went to one of my most loved places, the Redwood Grove and the Pinetum. Kew in Winter has the most amazing conifers including cedars, and my two year old grandson collected some cones

and found just the places where the squirrels would want to eat them, where we could tell they had already been eating the pine nuts and discarding the husks. It was wet, windy and it was sleeting and he was miserable when we first arrived, but collecting and running amongst these magnificent trees soon worked wonders as we hid in the trees, took shelter from the

rain and watched the birds foraging round us as we stood perfectly still. We did not see another family until we ventured towards the main paths.

Kew Gardens marks so many of our family events, Mothers Day outings most recently with the exuberant Orchid exhibition in the Princess of Wales Conservatory, Spring birthdays with picnics near Queen Charlottes Cottage where the wild English



bluebells are, celebration of babies to come by the formal rose garden in June and of babies born giving quiet thanks in the moist warmth of the Palm House. Then a family outing where no one quite believed that water lilies really could be as green and perfectly patterned and amazingly huge.....and all those varieties of chili peppers!

What I love about Kew is the contrasts: the

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view from the Thames to the Pagoda up 'the ride'; the view from the azalea and magnolia gardens to the housing tower blocks of Brentford, reminding us of the present as well as the past; from the silent contemplation in the bamboo garden by the Minka house to the theme park style tree top walkway amongst the chestnut trees, marvellous in the October Autumn when you can almost reach those chestnut seeds.

Kew has had to move far away from its one-penny entrance fee, and its scientific focus is more appealing to me than the commercial exhibitions. However its balance of beauty with science, of romance with ecology and the local - global grasp of its future shows why this is a world-class place. As a gardener, the opportunity to go just to look and compare the different Ilex species (holly - and 56 species!), is a great privilege.

Summer is different in the Gardens. In 1921 Virginia Woolf wrote a short story about a hot July outing in Kew Gardens; *“the glass roofs of the palm house shone as if a whole market full of shiny green umbrellas had opened in the sun; and in the drone of the aeroplane the voice of the*

“As a gardener, the opportunity to go just to look and compare the different Ilex species (holly - and 56 species!), is a great privilege.”

Summer sky murmured its fierce soul.....but there was no silence, all the time the motor omnibuses were turning their wheels...the city murmured”.

But that is July. Next week, still in February, we will have another family birthday, looking for the first crocuses drifting across towards the Orangery Restaurant where we will have some lunch before peering up for tiny bananas in the Palm House. And if I am greedy for a drop of silence I might just try to steal away to my favourite tree in the woodland garden, complete with a bench that cannot be seen from without and a carpet of leaves that softens the sounds.....

The Survey Group reports on its latest research

Helen Senior and Caroline Lee report on the only ‘Capability’ Brown design in Somerset

Anyone driving along the A378 west of Curry Rivel cannot fail to notice the monument just outside the village. It

commemorates Sir William Pynsent, once the owner of the nearby House. In 1765, Sir William, who outlived his wife and children, and had fallen out with his nephew, died, leaving the House and estate to William Pitt, the former Prime Minister.

Pitt took up residence almost immediately, one of his first acts being to commission

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the memorial to his benefactor. Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown was responsible for the design, which is a pillar, 42m high, faced with Portland Stone. It was built by master mason John Ford of Bath and a local builder, Phillip Pear. The pillar was originally surmounted by a figure of ‘Gratitude’ replaced in the late eighteenth century by an urn. An inscription on the pedestal reads

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF SIR
WILLIAM PYNSENT

HOC SALTEM FUNGAR INAMI
MUNERE

The Latin, apparently from Virgil’s lament for Marcellus, translates as “*Let me pay at least this unavailing tribute*”.

“The bare slopes below the Column were planted with cedars and cypresses so that it appeared to be floating above a green sea of evergreens.”

Pitt also embarked on landscaping the grounds. The column was the focus of his design, and along the approach to it from the House (known as the Terrace) were a number of garden structures. These included a Cyclopean bridge, which

crossed a lane leading down to the farm at the foot of the hill, which Pitt sunk below ground level so as not to spoil the view. Also recorded were a number of other buildings – a Blackbird Haunt, French’s House, Sheep House, French’s Seat and Pan’s House. All these, now sadly gone, were placed to make the most of the spectacular views over Sedgemoor. The farm buildings at the foot of the escarpment, were ornamented with Tuscan columns.

In addition Pitt planted a large number of trees between the House and the column, including birch, ash, maple and black spruce sent from Nova Scotia. The bare slopes below the Column were planted with cedars and cypresses so that it appeared to be floating above a green sea of evergreens. An avenue led from the Terrace to the monument. There were more cedars close to the House.

After Pitt’s death in 1788 his widow Hester, continued to live in the House and to farm the land. On her death in 1803 the estate was sold. The sale particulars mention a walled flower garden, two hot houses and a greenhouse, though the location of these is not known. The garden buildings were all destroyed; the monument itself only saved by being bought by Pitt’s doctor, Dr. Woodford, who eventually gave it to the then owner of the estate, John Frederick Pinney, on condition that it be preserved.

In 1909 the estate was acquired by Mrs Crossley, a sister of Harold Peto, and he improved the gardens and made some

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alterations to the House.

During the past two years the present owners have been restoring the neglected garden. They kept the architectural features of Peto's garden but added their own designs, and as the garden matures it will be lovely, with spectacular views to Capability Brown's monument. There is a local tradition that he also designed the Park but in our researches we found no evidence of this.

Sources:

Micheal Symes, 'William Pitt the Elder, the Gran Mago of Landscape Gardening', Garden History Society Journal, Vol 24, No 1, pp126-36

Nick Owen; Burton Pynsent, Somerset Brown's Column and the Landscape of William and Hester Pitt,

The Follies Journal, No 7, Winter 2007 pp41-54





2017 Events

Your Events Committee has been working hard to give you an interesting and varied programme for 2017. Here are the dates as an aide memoire. We do hope there is something you will enjoy, be thought provoking and as these events are our main way of raising income to support the aims of the Trust, profitable.

Wednesday 26 April - The Gardens at Montacute

Following Jennie Langford's informative talk about the Elizabethan gardens at Montacute House in November, we will be able to see the fruits of her research.

Thursday 18 May - Allt-y-Bela and Veddw House Monmouthshire

We are lucky to be able to visit Arne Maynard and William Collinson's romantic garden at Allt-y-Bela. We will then visit the fascinating garden at Veddw House created by Anne Wareham.

Tuesday 6 June - Munstead Wood, Godalming and Loseley Park, Guildford Surrey

The iconic garden of Gertrude Jekyll has been newly refurbished and opened for garden visits this year. We will also visit the area where Gertrude Jekyll had her original test beds (now part of the next door property). Loseley Park has fine parkland and a lovely 2.5 acre walled garden in a series of rooms and food and facilities not available at Munstead. This is our only coach trip.

This year as well as payment by cheque, you may pay by bank transfer. Please do ensure that you put your surname as a reference to help Stuart identify the entries on the account.



Munstead Wood



2017 Events

Tuesday 20 June - Rockwells, Batcombe

Rockwells has long had a lovely garden and is now under the custodianship of Oliver and Hattie Lane Fox who have carried out an extensive replanting scheme and some structural works. The garden unfolds in front of the main house and stretches down to the river.

Tuesday 27 June - Mells Manor, Mells

The recently restored C16th gardens at Mells Manor are Grade 1 listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens with additions by Lutyens in the early 1900's of a loggia and single storey orangery or summerhouse.

Tuesday 4 July - Hazleby House and Earlstone Manor Burghclere, Nr Newbury

Two wonderful but contrasting gardens. Hazelbury House was once owned and designed by Martin Lane Fox, but in the past 16 years Patrick Hungerford has developed the gardens. There are sweeping borders, roses, vegetables, lakes, streams, terraces, and structures. Earlstone Manor is topiary heaven. Bruce Ginsberg has created formal parterres and knots with fountains and pools, an Italianate theatre garden, silver garden and a more informal area with water. As we are advised that access by coach is not possible, this is a self-drive event where we hope you will be able to share cars.

Wednesday, 19 July - Cadhay and South Wood Farm, Ottery St Mary, Devon

A guided tour of both the magnificent Elizabethan house and lovely garden at Cadhay in the morning. In the afternoon a guided tour of South Wood Farm from gardener Will Smithson. Featured in *Country Life* recently, this enchanting garden has been created by Dr Stephen Potter.

Please do enclose one large stamped and clearly addressed envelope (at least A5) which is the size of the tickets! An additional envelope, please, if tickets for more than 4 gardens requested.



Found in Rabat, Morocco - What is it?



gately doing the same and the wonderful *Salvias* ‘Amistad’ and ‘Phyllis’s Fancy’ almost at their best – so the russet colours of Autumn had been avoided for a little longer.

Ours is an enclosed village garden – a bit over half an acre and some surprisingly 550 feet above sea-level – neighbouring the little sixteenth century church of which the house is a (much altered) contemporary. When we came twenty-five years ago the garden was rather neglected and we had some fun overcoming the sloping ground behind the South-facing house by removing many lorry loads of soil and slightly terracing the remainder. This gave us differing levels – a great asset in a small garden.

We expected to have hardiness problems but on the whole the winters have not been exceptionally cold and *Cistus* and *Arbutus* (*andrachnoides* as well as *unedo*), *Drimys* and many *Pittisporums* seem to

My Garden

Annabelle Chisholm looks out of her windows...

Being asked by the Editor to write a short piece about your garden makes you instantly run anxiously outside to see if there is actually anything to write about. As this was in mid-November I was quite pleasantly surprised to find some of the single dahlias still flowering away, *Hydrangea paniculata* and *Abelia* still

“we had some fun overcoming the sloping ground behind the South-facing house by removing many lorry loads of soil and slightly terracing the remainder.”

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flourish. There is no acid soil so we are limited by that, and it is also incredibly quick-drying – rain for a week and dry in a day. We are always a late garden, and envious of those early clouds of snowdrops and narcissi in others. We do have lots of tulips mainly in similar shades to the later single Dahlias – magenta, crimson, purple, deep pink etc, and manage the transition period with

these, *Aquilegias*, perennial stocks, different honestys and the scented shrubs such as *Daphnes*, *Lonicera* and *Osmanthus delavayi*. Roses are a real struggle with just a few such as the fabulously scented ‘Wild Eric’ winning out. The lawns are nothing to write home about but, in its modest old-fashioned way, the whole is as pleasing as we could have hoped.

Little Garth – A plantsman’s dream

Marion Pollard describes how her garden gives lots of year round interest

Little Garth achieves this through using a mixture of herbaceous perennials, bulbs, and foliage plants with trees and shrubs for structure. Some borders have colour themes to bring a little order. The plants are not arranged in large groups of one variety but intermingle, and some grasses are grown, aiming at a lighter more natural appearance. The soil is neutral to acid so most things grow, including rhododendrons. There is a very well-drained soil for semi-tender plants and a shady corner for woodlanders such as *Trilliums* and *Erythroniums*.

When we moved here in 1995, the half-acre garden was just growing with a few old cider apple trees and surrounded by large shrubs including a row of huge *Leylandii cupressus*. One of the first jobs was to get rid of them! As the garden surrounds the Bungalow, it falls naturally into different sections. I wanted each to

have its own character.

The Bungalow faces South and reminds me of a ship floating in a sea of grass, so my husband and I made a terrace along the front with a flower border to anchor it to the horseshoe-shaped lawn. Around the perimeter I made a Gertrude Jekyll style border covering the colour spectrum.

The West side of the Bungalow has the septic tank in the middle of the lawn so I had to make a feature of that! I incorporated it into a central bed and placed a birdbath on it, with a curving path running past it down to the end of the garden. Then I made two large kidney-shaped beds either side of the central bed so there was no lawn but curving grassy paths.

The North side sloped down slightly and I wanted to give the impression of terracing with paths. There were four beds, each with its own colour scheme, that is white, blue and silver; crimson and purple; orange, yellow and scarlet; and white and cream. Initially there was a wide grass path running along one side but we paved

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it over, so there is no grass at all in this area. My only regret is that we did not make all the terrace paths wider.

The East side has only one colour theme border that is blue and yellow. The rest is mixed herbaceous plants and bulbs with three apple trees. One border seems particularly suited to *Dieramas* as they have seeded well; even though mostly shades of pink, all have originated surprisingly from a white one!

Wildlife is very important and we have



nine birdbaths – all well used; no spraying of pesticides allowed though I am tempted to spray the lilies.

Editors' Note: Now you know how to pack in the plants!

The Garden at Palazzo Salis in Bondo

Charles de Salis describes his Swiss Garden

Palazzo Salis was built by Peter de Salis in 1765, in theory for his father Jerome but in fact for himself. Jerome was born in the Republic of the Grisons but became English in 1730 and was made Envoy from England to the Grisons. His son, Peter, was born and educated in England but returned to the Grisons where he held a variety of official posts finally becoming Governor of the Valtelline, a part of what is now Italy which the Grisons then ruled.

The House faces West, with mountains on either side and fine views across the frontier towards Italy. It gets no sun for three months during the Winter and was always intended as a Summer residence.

From the House a terrace leads down to the formal garden with box edged squares and a fountain in the middle. At the end there is a wrought iron gate with fields beyond. The garden is enclosed by a wall with fruit trees growing on all the insides of the walls. In the centre of each square there is a box circle with peonies inside. At each corner, round the fountain, there are roses.

The garden was a trifle neglected until my

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“asked Lyn Constable-Maxwell to make a bust of the Goddess of the Chase, influenced by drawings of our four daughters”

Grandfather began to use the house more often. In 1990 I asked a cousin, Jane Bihr, who is a garden expert, to help restore the garden to its former state. She found letters and bills which showed the plants that my ancestor had used and with help from the Canton, for our Republic joined the Swiss Confederation in 1800, the garden was brought back to near perfection. We were also helped by a fine screen which was made for the House and which shows the garden and the fruit trees espaliered on the inside of the walls.

In 1900 my Grandfather had been given permission to change the road which led to fields from the village and thus incorporated an older house which

he joined to the Palazzo with a bridge. The garden of the older house now became part of the main garden and you could look through from the fountain to a more rustic garden with a stone column.

At the beginning of the Century we won a sum of money from the Schultess Prize and I asked Lyn Constable-Maxwell to make a bust of the Goddess of the Chase, influenced by drawings of our four daughters, to sit on the column.

The chief attraction of the garden is to look over the parterres and the fountain, through the ornate gates, and see the mountains in the distance, with the terrace and the pots and urns behind you.

The garden is open to groups by appointment with our agent in the Summer and for individuals when we or our daughters are about.



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The Hardy Plant Society

Stuart Senior, a Society Trustee, describes a vibrant society to which some SGT members also belong

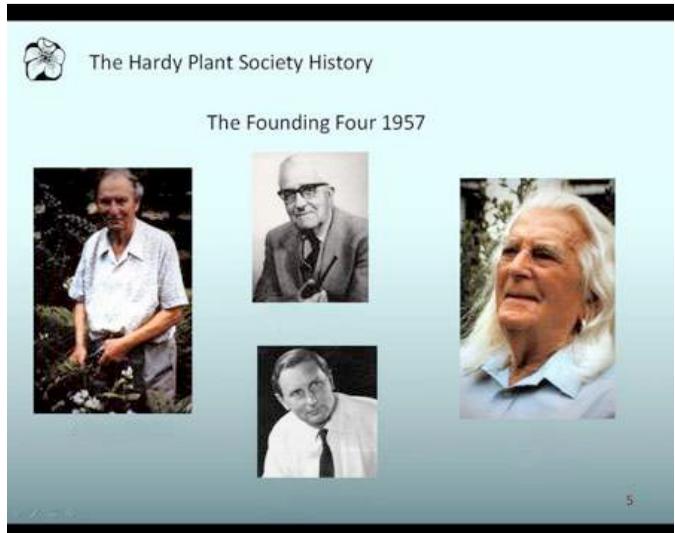
This year the Hardy Plant Society (HPS), founded in 1957 by Alan Bloom, will be celebrating its diamond anniversary. Most members of the HPS are in the UK but some garden outside it. Some are experts, like the President, Roy Lancaster the renowned plant explorer; some are beginners and most are somewhere in-between.

The Society was established to:

- advance the culture, study and improvement of hardy herbaceous plants;
- preserve the older, rarer and lesser known hardy plants, cultivars and varieties from being forgotten and lost to cultivation; and
- advance the knowledge of and foster public interest in hardy plants by the publication of information, by exhibitions or displays, by stimulating research and experiment and by awarding bursaries open to public competition.

Conservation

Large commercial interests, sometimes on an industrial scale, increasingly control what is available. Virtues can be overlooked such as reliability, how well a plant does over a long time, scent, resistance to pests and diseases and long flowering time. Some older cultivars are becoming harder to find. They may well have a role in future breeding. The HPS has a national Conservation Scheme which aims to preserve some of these plants. Volunteer members grow them in a variety of places across the Country. They also propagate and pass them round so it is a good way of getting your hands on a rare plant!



Clockwise from left: Arthur Hellyer, Will Ingwersen, Alan Bloom and John Sambrook

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Seed Distribution

Every year the HPS Seed List offers over 2,000 tempting varieties of rare, unusual and familiar seeds. All members can join in the annual distribution, by donating and/or obtaining seed.

“For several years the Somerset Group has hosted a very popular Early Spring Plant Fair at East Lambrook Manor on the last Saturday of March.”

Publications

There is a journal, *The Hardy Plant*, published twice a year, with authoritative articles on hardy perennials by leading UK and international enthusiasts; members also contribute their own experiences; and a newsletter with information on all HPS activities. Finally there are inexpensive booklets on special plant families such as hardy *Geraniums*, *Pulmonarias*, *Hostas*, *Euphorbias*, *Phlox*, *Campanulas* and *Peonies*.

Local Groups

For most members their principal contact with the Society is with its local group. The Somerset Group, with over 160 members, is very representative. It offers talks by experts at West Monkton Village

Hall, visits to local gardens and nurseries plus coach or car sharing trips to those further afield, and various social events. Plant sales are an important fund raising aspect. For several years the Somerset Group has hosted a very popular Early Spring Plant Fair at East Lambrook Manor on the last Saturday of March.

So if you would care to sample the HPS why not come along to a Somerset Group lecture? Visitors are charged the modest sum of £2. For more information about the local Group go to its website, <https://somersethps.com/> and for the National Society <http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk>.

“Moving Heaven and Earth” by Steffie Shields.

Published by Unicorn Publishing Company at £30.

Reviewed by Anthony Pugh-Thomas

Steffie Shields, who has been researching Brown’s works for over thirty years, offers a new perspective on ‘Capability’ Brown’s landscapes by dealing in depth with many of the practical problems that he faced when implementing his grand designs. The text is enhanced by the author’s excellent photographs. She describes many of the completed landscapes, ranging from the very grand at Croome and Blenheim, to the very small such as Garrick’s riverside garden at Twickenham, and she deals in some detail with Brown’s relationship with his clients where, for example, a formal business contract often

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led to a long-lasting friendship, the best example being between Brown and the Earl of Coventry at Croome.

“he cajoled idle soldiers of the North Staffordshire Regiment to help with ‘muck-moving’”

Brown travelled widely drafting new plans and supervising existing schemes and the archives at Burton Constable, Petworth and Tottenham, show how he was committed to his plans for many years. He achieved so much because he carefully selected, trained and supported a team of assistants. He would call in local county surveyors and would use others’ surveys as a basis for his own plans and he was also pragmatic: once when navvies were in short supply, he cajoled idle soldiers of the North Staffordshire Regiment to help with “muck-moving” on the King’s land at Richmond. Every aspect of new plans attracted his attention – for example, at Tottenham, he provided for the supply of tree landscapes – 14,000 beech and 21,000 oaks.

Water – drainage and lake-making – were nearly always significant aspects of Brown’s plans and there are separate chapters on “Lake-Making”, “Cascades” and “Problems and Pumps” that describe various seemingly mundane but important ways of dealing with problems.

A chapter on “The Kitchen Garden” deals with an aspect of his work that will be new to many visitors. Lord Warwick, writing to

the Earl of Guildford commented that:- *“As to the kitchen gardens, he can scarce want practice in them for in about ten years he has made upwards of 30 and sees them well stocked and not only that, but recommended proper gardeners to take care of them and also seen that they did so”*.

Brown’s architectural work, often in conjunction with the Hollands father and son (the latter being a son-in-law), is described in some detail. It had the merit of providing comfort and convenience as well as display: at Croome he designed house and garden, and dismantled and re-sited the church.

Brown had his detractors. When alive one of the best known being Sir William Chambers, possibly jealous of Brown’s position at Hampton Court, as the King’s Gardener, who wrote that *“It cannot be expected than men uneducated, and doomed by their condition to waste the vigor of life in hard labour, should ever go as far in so refined, so difficult a pursuit as architecture.”* When dead he fell foul of Uvedale Price who concluded that *“he chose to make landscapes, of which he was worse than ignorant, for of them he had the falsest conceptions”*. In the 20th century, designer David Hicks complained that he *“destroyed so many fine avenues and marvellous English gardens”*.

But such criticisms do not detract from the continuing admiration of Capability Brown’s achievements as shown by the restorations at Stowe, Croome, Prior Park, Trentham and elsewhere and their enjoyment will be enhanced by reading this book.

Events for Spring and Summer 2017

Wednesday
26th April

The Gardens at Montacute

Tuesday
27th June

Mells Manor, Mells

Thursday
18th May

Allt-y-Bela and Veddw
House, Monmouthshire

Tuesday
4th July

Hazleby House and
Earlstone Manor,
Burghclere, Nr Newbury

Tuesday
6th June

Munstead Wood, Godalming
and Loseley Park, Guildford

Wednesday
19th July

Cadhay and South Wood
Farm, Ottery St Mary.

Tuesday
20th June

Rockwells, Batcombe

Front and Back Cover: Courtesy of the Editors

www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk