

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 69

Spring 2019

Special 2019 Events Edition

The Somerset Gardens Trust



From your Guest Editor

For this edition, I have taken over the editing reins from Christopher and Lindsay Bond. Christopher's parting shot was to enjoy the experience. Putting together the programme of fundraising events is always the hardest part of the year and we are always very grateful for keen gardeners and plants people to open their gardens to us. We aim to have a varied programme which is accessible to our members across the county. Please do remember that members are expected to take reasonable care during visits.

When I took over as Chairman of the Events Committee from David and Rosemary Freemantle, I knew they would be a hard act to follow. Their combined energies and hard work had made a success of events for many years. To achieve as much as they had I knew we had to have a good team and we certainly have.

I was very aware that I could not have taken on the Events mantle when I was working. With the demands of modern day work, it is a growing challenge for societies like ours to attract both members and volunteer workers.

We hope you enjoy this one-off edition of the magazine. As ever, feedback would be very welcome – as will be the return of Christopher to the editorial chair.

Diana Hebditch, Events Committee
Chairman dianahebditch@myfwi.co.uk

From the Chairman

Dear Members,

Once we've turned the year and snowdrops start to open, I feel there is everything to live for. This country has such wonderful long springs, treacherous they may be, but one has to admit that from now until the end of April there is a never ending display of spring flowers. As I write, I have a large array of snowdrops, many named, aconites, quantities of hellebores, as well as Daphnes, Sarcococca and Hamamelis. There is scent and colour, sheer heaven.

We had hoped to have our plant sale at Barford Park on 18 May, but having booked the day, a family commitment came up for the owners. They offered us 25 May but many of us are only just back from Northern Ireland and we didn't think we could manage such a large event. Instead members and their friends are invited to visit the garden. I think we could have a trestle table of a few saleable plants, but please not masses and those plants that don't sell must be taken home afterwards.

There are a few places left on the Northern Ireland visit. The dates are from Sunday 18 May until Thursday 23 May. A single place costs £585 and a double place cost £535 per person. I am opening up to Dorset and Devon Garden Trusts and from now on it will be dependent on whether the hotel has rooms free. My contact details are below.

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Some members have enquired about Hadspen House. It is expected to open in June and the head gardener from Heligan has been appointed as Director of Horticulture. I cheekily wrote to ask for a preview but haven't heard, probably because they are all just too busy getting ready. The other news is that Troy Scott-Smith is moving from Sissinghurst to be head gardener at Iford.

And a date for your diary: Chelsea Gold Medal Designer, Charlotte Rowe, will give the Ian Flower Memorial Talk at St Martin's Church, Zeals on Thursday, 14 March at 7pm. Tickets are available from Lyndi d'Ambrumenil tel 01747 840594, e-mail lyndi_dambrumenil@hotmail.com.

Camilla Carter
cchoneywick@hotmail.co.uk

Somerset Gardens Trust is a charity founded "to promote the education of the public on matters connected with the arts and sciences of garden landscapes and to preserve, enhance and recreate for the education and enjoyment of the public whatever garden landscapes may exist or have existed in or around the county of Somerset."

What does our Somerset Gardens Trust charity do?

- awards grants to schools for establishing gardens as an educational resource;
- awards bursaries to horticultural students to develop practical skills in the protection, conservation and re-creation of garden landscapes;
- offers advice and awards grants to garden owners for the restoration of designed landscapes in Somerset which are of historical importance

This edition outlines our events for 2019. Detailed times and directions will be shown on the tickets. All but the Newbury day are self-drive. If you are willing to take a fellow SGT member, please do mention it when you book. A booking form for the events to and including July

is enclosed with this magazine. The booking form for the September events will be sent out in the summer.

We would love to hear your feedback and, of course, help with events is always welcome.

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THE SOMERSET GARDENS TRUST

President

Lady Elizabeth Gass

Chairman

Camilla Carter
Honeywick House
Honeywick
Nr Castle Cary
Somerset BA7 7LP
Tel: 01963 351106
cchoneywick@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer and Trust Secretary

Stuart Senior
Bull Street
Creech St Michael
Taunton, TA3 5PW
01823 442344
stuart_senior@msn.com

Minutes Secretary

Susan Thorne
Barton House
Kingston St Mary
Taunton, TA2 8HH
01823 451693
STBartonHouse@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Mary ter Braak
Harcombes
Trendle Lane
Bicknoller, TA4 4EG
01984 656633
info@somersetgardenstrust.org.uk

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Wednesday 10 April at 2:30pm

Exmoor Lost Gardens: John Knight Spring Lecture given by Rob Wilson-North
Monks Yard, Horton Cross, Ilminster, TA19 9PY

We begin our programme on the Devon/Somerset border, with a talk about the lost garden of the Knight family at Simonsbath. The garden was laid out in the 1820s but was never completed. Its creator was the cousin of Richard Payne Knight and a leading proponent of the “picturesque” movement. The Exmoor

garden seems to have followed the same principles. Knight’s activities had a significant impact on the Exmoor landscape. On an estate once comprising some 20,000 acres, he built farms, an estate wall 29 miles long, roads and canals, as well as developing gardens at Ashcombe (which is in Somerset). We will hear that there are plans to recreate this garden and that volunteers will be welcome.

Rob Wilson-North is a landscape archaeologist who specialised in the study of abandoned gardens before settling on Exmoor. He is the Head of Conservation & Access for the Exmoor National Park Authority.



Lost garden of the Knight family at Simonsbath

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Wednesday 22 May at 2:00pm

***Lower Shalford Farm Charlton
Musgrove, BA9 8HE***

*By kind permission of David and Suki
Posnett*

David and Suki Posnett will welcome us to Lower Shalford Farm. When David bought it some 30 years ago, it was a working farm. Now it is a fairly large open garden with extensive lawns and

wooded surrounds (nearly all the trees have been planted by David). Nearer the house is a hedged herbaceous garden, a walled rose/parterre garden and several ornamental ponds. There is a small winterbourne stream running through the garden with three stone bridges. Suki Posnett has been part of the team for the last 12 years and is a keen cut flower grower and florist. She describes the gardens as “work in constant progress”.



Lower Shalford Farm

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Saturday 25 May at 2:00pm

Garden Visit and Plant Exchange

Barford Park, Spaxton, Bridgwater, TA5 1AG

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Donald Rice

We have an invitation to visit this beautiful garden from Mr and Mrs Donald Rice.

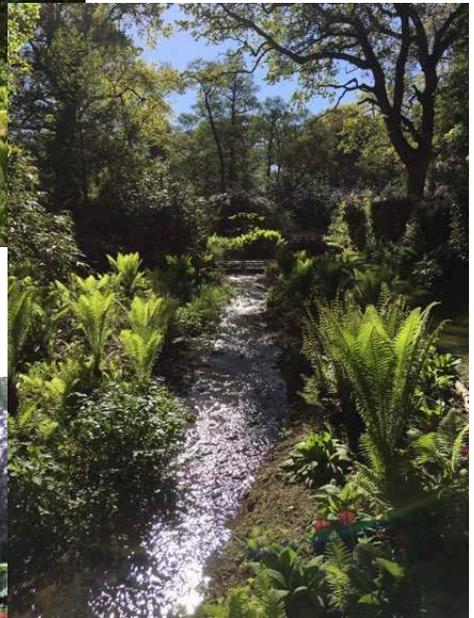
In previous years, this was well-known to SGT members who enjoyed the well-laid out borders and the cool and shady waterside walk. You may have been to one of our highly successful plant sales there. We thought we might revive it in a small way and have a plant swap. You are invited to bring plants to exchange or sell. As ever, we will enjoy a cream tea, hopefully in spring sunshine.



Barford Park House



Barford Park



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Thursday 13 June at 10:30am

***Chettle House, Chettle,
Blandford Forum DT11 8DB***

*By kind permission of Tom and
Rosamond Sweet-Escott*

***and Crichel House, Moor
Crichel, Wimborne BH21 5DT***

at 2:00pm

*By kind permission of Mr and Mrs
Richard Chilton*

To start our day in Dorset, we will visit Chettle House garden. Rosamond Sweet-Escott writes “at the time of this magazine going to print Chettle House is just emerging from a two and a half year restoration of house, garden and landscape. The parkland is no longer a caravan park, hedges blocking the view have been cut down and the disintegrating remnants of the Victorian garden have been removed. Instead, under the supervision of Pip Morrison, landscape architect, the garden has been largely



Chettle House

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restored to reflect the original design layout of which there was still very clear evidence. The architect Thomas Archer built the house in around 1710 in the baroque style and it seems very likely that the garden and park were also laid out at that time. It, therefore, represents a brief period in garden design between the Dutch influenced formality that preceded it and the later landscape style of Capability Brown. The park and surrounding landscape have been subject to extensive planting of native trees, including new tree clumps reflecting the original design.” Please note there are a lot of steps and steep slopes in this garden.

Some 8 minutes away is Crichel House,

where we will be shown round the garden by the head gardener. Crichel House is set in an 18th-century landscape park with lake and woodland. The house was originally built by Sir William Napier in 1742 and has had additional works up until the Victorian era. In the 20th-century part of the estate was requisitioned by the Air Ministry while the house for some years was occupied by Cranborne Chase School. The Hon. Mrs Marten, who inherited Crichel from her father, Lord Alington, took up residence again in the 1960s. She embarked, along with her husband Toby, on a modernisation programme. The estate was sold to Mr and Mrs Chilton in 2013 and they are continuing to restore the house and gardens.



Crichel House gardens

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Wednesday 19 June

Allt-y-Bela Usk NP15 1EZ

By kind permission of Arne Maynard and William Collinson

and

High Glanau Manor, Monmouthshire NP25 4AD

By kind permission of Helena and Hilary Gerrish

We are able once again to visit renowned garden designer, Arne Maynard and William Collinson's romantic garden at Allt-y-Bela, Monmouthshire. Set in a secluded valley, it has a blend of informal flower meadows and formal clipped yew, hornbeam and beech. In the compact kitchen garden is a mixture of fruit, vegetables and flowers providing food for the bees in the neighbouring paddock. We will have a guided tour by head gardener, Rhys Griffiths. Places will be limited on what we expect to be a popular event. As parking is limited at the garden, we will meet in Usk and combine cars. The booking form will ask you to indicate if you are happy to ferry people as required. Exact timings to be confirmed.

Followed by an afternoon in a Grade 2 Listed Edwardian garden in the Arts and Crafts style. High Glanau was designed by Henry Avery Tipping in 1922. It has all the features you would expect of an Arts and Crafts garden such as pools, pergolas, herbaceous borders, roses and glasshouses. The current owners,



Allt-y-Bela

Helena and Hilary Gerrish, have restored the garden over the last decade or so to its former glory.



High Glanau Manor

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Wednesday 26 June at 2:00pm

Yews Farm, Martock, TA12 6NF

by kind permission of Louise and Fergus Dowding

There is a theatrical feel to the planting in the large walled garden at Yews Farm with outsized plants in a jungle garden. Sculptural planting has been chosen for height, shape, leaf and texture. There is a self-seeded gravel garden, a box and

bay ball border, espalier apples, eclectic cloud pruning and much block planting. Yews Farm also has a working organic kitchen garden, hens, pigs, an orchard and an active cider barn. Owners, Louise and Fergus Dowding, grow the Martock broad bean, the only known survivor of a medieval variety. For those members with an Instagram account, Yews Farm can be seen throughout the year (search for [dowdinglouise](#) or [#yewsfarm](#)).



Yews Farm

Monday 22 July

Malverleys, Newbury RG20 0AA

by kind permission of George and Emily von Opel and

Sandleford Place, Newbury RG20 9AY

by kind permission of Mel Gatward

By coach leaving from the Memorial Car Park, Wincanton at 9:00am

Malverleys is a dream of a garden. Begun in 2010, the 10-acre gardens have been designed by head gardener, Mat Reese, in conjunction with the owners. The influence of Great Dixter in Sussex and the writings of iconic gardeners, Christopher Lloyd, William Robinson and Vita Sackville-West is apparent. Mat trained at Kew, Wisley and Great Dixter.

Described as a “new English Flower Garden”, the garden includes abundantly planted terraces and long borders, a stumpery with ferns and unusual shade

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plants and a topiary meadow. Tall yew hedges form themed rooms, including a cool garden, a hot garden, a rose-clad cloister garden and a large pond garden. The walled garden contains areas for fruit, vegetables and cut flowers, alongside a white garden with four small fountains. The latest development is a striking yew and box parterre. The succession of hard-working garden plants alongside the unusual and rare, means there is always something of interest in the garden.

In the afternoon we will visit Sandleford Place. This is a four-acre plantswoman's garden by the River Enborne. It has developed over 33 years and surrounds a 16th century former mill and granary. There are different rooms of mixed and herbaceous borders with many unusual plants and a wonderful old walled garden. A wildflower meadow flanked by a long border runs down to the River Enborne. Sandleford Place has been gardened by the family for the past forty years.



Sandleford Place



*Malverleys garden - picture courtesy of Annaick Guitteny
Photography - for Malverleys*

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Tuesday 3 September at 2:30pm
**Westbrook House, West
Bradley, near Glastonbury, BA6
8LS**

*by kind permission of Keith Anderson
and David Mendel*

In the quiet village of West Bradley 5 miles from Glastonbury and seven miles from Castle Cary, garden designer Keith Anderson and painter David Mendel began laying out the garden in 2004. Set

within 4 acres, the garden has three distinct formal areas around the house with mixed borders of clipped box and yew, spring and summer shrubs, herbaceous perennials, cottage style plantings and trees. Beyond are mown paths leading through the meadow with spring bulbs, lilacs and both species and wild roses. Finally, there are two orchards planted with old-variety apples, medlar, quince, pear and plum trees interplanted with shrub roses and philadelphus.



Westbrook House

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Monday 30 September AGM at 4:00pm followed by

Autumn Lecture given by Lucy Wood

George Brookshaw C18th "Peintre-Ebéniste Par Extraordinaire": Cabinet-Maker and Botanical Artist

at Batcombe Village Hall, Back Lane, Batcombe, BA4 6HE

We return to Batcombe village hall for our last event of 2019. Together with

our AGM, SGT member Lucy Wood will talk on the cabinet-maker and botanical artist, George Brookshaw (1751-1823), whose career in these fields throws new light on the interconnections between late Georgian interior decoration, flower painting as a ladies' accomplishment, and botany as a rapidly evolving science. Brookshaw's own crowning achievement was the Pomona Britannica of 1812.

Lucy is a well-known furniture historian, formerly Curator at the Lady Lever Art Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum.



China Asters, 1817

George Brookshaw: Cabinet-Maker and Botanical Artist



Adam Demi-Lune Commode circa 1780

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Blackland House, Calne

Arne Maynard jewel of a garden at Blackland House, Quemerford, Calne, SN11 8UQ open for NGS 1 May

In the West Country we are lucky to have more than one Arne Maynard designed garden. Last year we were able to visit South Wood Farm just over the Devon border and we will be able to visit his own garden at Allt-y-Bela in June. Near Calne is an Arne Maynard garden, which Polly Nicholson has developed over the last ten years. She runs a small-scale flower growing and floristry business. The recently restored walled garden is set

against a Georgian dovecote and works as a microclimate. The garden is run along organic principles, with naturalised areas, a woodland planting overlooking the ox-bow lake and an old grotto.

We tried to arrange a visit but sadly she has decided not to have any other open days or groups. However, it will be open for the National Gardens Scheme on 1 May from 2-5pm. Fifteen thousand tulips have been planted, there must be some still in flower at the beginning of May. This picture reflects the use of espalier pruned trees often seen in an Arne Maynard and hopefully will be in blossom at the time the NGS opening.



Blackland House in May

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What does the Education Group do with schools in the winter?

Sheila Rabson, Education Committee Chairman writes

Although it is getting lighter and slightly warmer, it is still too cold for teachers to do much out of doors with their pupils. Plans can be drawn up, seeds can be bought, new designs made ready to get going when spring does arrive. And so, I thought therefore, that a couple of practical science suggestions for those work-

ing with schools might be welcome. Have you tried using red cabbage to make your own litmus paper? Simply chop up a red cabbage and cover with cold water. Bring this slowly to the boil and simmer for about 10 minutes. Strain off the water and dispose of the cabbage to the school compost heap. The liquid can then be divided into small dishes or clean yoghurt pots and used to test various things for acidity and alkalinity. Lemons, oranges and other fruits are easy ones to do, but do try vegetables like onions, leeks etc as well.

The view from a gardener

Biddy Chittenden writes about her time at National Trust property, Lytes Cary

My relationship with Lytes Cary started in November 1958 when I married Jeremy who had been a tenant there for 3 years. There was a full time gardener who maintained it all and the structure of the garden was almost the same as it is today.

When the National Trust Agent took us on our first tour of the garden I very naively asked him why only the Apostle Garden, near the front door, was open to the public. He replied that National Trust would be delighted to provide someone to design the big border and pay for the plants if I would be prepared to do the planting and look after it. I was pregnant with our first child and during the next 10 years was going to have 3 more children,

but being unaware of all this, I agreed with enthusiasm. The designer was Graham Thomas, who was quite a pioneer by wanting to have a "mixed border" with shrubs, roses and herbaceous plants but no annuals. And all very colour coordinated. It began with blues and yellows, then soft pinks, moving into brighter and darker reds. He put a yew hedge in at the bottom, below which the planting was white and silver on both sides of the path.

I have to confess now that I knew absolutely nothing about gardening. My mother always had a beautiful garden which I had admired but that was it. This was a major project for such a complete ignoramus. I diligently transferred Graham's plan onto graph paper, putting string across and along the border at yard intervals hoping I would get it right.

Then, with Graham's help, we rede-

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signed the orchard making diagonal avenues with quince, medlar and apple trees with a weeping ash in each corner and planting thousands of bulbs in the triangles. We lost a huge amount of elms in the 1970's but Jeremy donated 40 lime trees to line the drive to celebrate his 40th year as a tenant in 1995.

When we took over the garden the yew hedges had got into very bad shape and we were told that unless they were cut back they would die. We had to cut them back to the bone on one side and the top one year and then the other side in about 2 years when they were sprouting well after being fed with Jeremy's "jumping juice". It took about 10 years to complete this venture as there were so many hedges. Originally there was no gap in the hedge at the bottom of the main lawn and we felt it was a pity not to see the lily pond from the house so National Trust agreed that we could do this.

In 1994/5 the main border was looking very unhealthy due to old age and phytophthora in the soil. I made an accurate note of exactly what was in the border and was surprised to see how much it had evolved, imperceptibly, over the 30 years since Graham had designed it. On graph paper I redesigned the border combining a lot of Gra-

ham's original planting and certainly his colour scheme, but with some new ideas of my own which were agreed by the National Trust adviser at the time. This remained until I left in 2003 when the garden became open 7 days a week and they needed to make the border colourful for the whole season, thus planting a lot of tulips, annuals and sweet peas etc. It is now beautifully maintained by several gardeners and a lot of volunteers so it is much tidier than it was in my day with just one gardener and me.

Editor's note. Many of SGT members will have enjoyed the gardens at Lytes Cary and now know what an influence Biddy has made to the garden.





The Return of the Booking Form

These booking forms can be a bind
So gardening friends please do not mind
If I tell you about some stuff
That makes your secretary huff:

The bigger envelopes I fear
Cost more which makes them rather dear
So pay up please with the right stamp
Lest my brow should become damp
From paying excess postal dues
I really do not want the blues.

The other end, though, of this scale
Is equally beyond the pale.
If SAEs are far too small
They really are no use at all.
A good A5 gives me a thrill
But if no stamp I do feel ill.

E-mail addresses must be clear
To get to their intended lair.
And dodgy writing makes me moan
When trying to use the telephone.

Ballots are used for popular events
And make us all feel rather tense,
But names above the limit go
Onto lists which clearly show
Who should get the quickest shout
In the likely event of a pulling out.

So let's all have a jolly time
Gosh – some of this was hard to rhyme.

Anon



Front and Back Cover: courtesy of Diana Hebditch

www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk