

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 77

SPRING 2021

Featuring

Slope Garden Opportunities – p.4



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From the Editors

Welcome to the Spring edition of the SGT Magazine

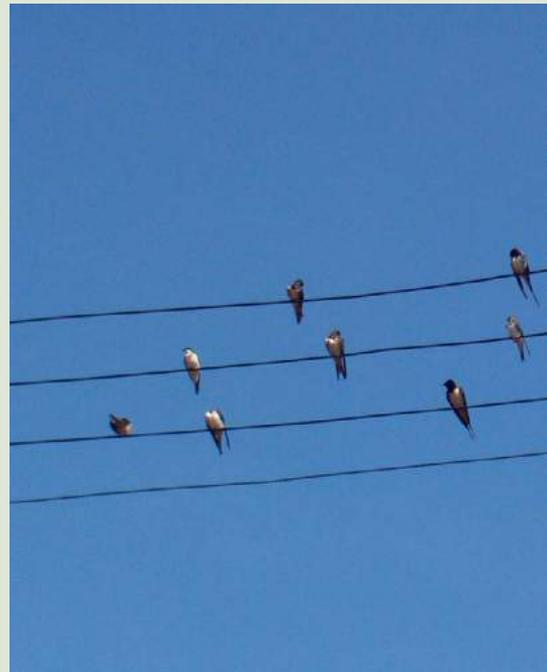
What a difference a shaft of Spring sunshine makes to the garden – and to encouraging us to go out into it. The short grey days of grim February are past and soon vaccinations will free us from lockdown – we will meet people again.

This edition looks at gardening and landscapes from many viewpoints: owners describing their beautiful gardens, how we protect them from development, the artists' gardening eye, key individual plants, famous gardeners and a new book of outstanding Somerset gardens. Thank you very much.

We have been delighted that so many members have taken the initiative to send us articles and photos for this issue.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond

bondchristopher@btconnect.com



From the Chairman

Dear Members,

When I sat down to start to write this piece, it was cold and news on most fronts was bleak. I came across this picture of birds looking like musical notes sitting on the telephone line outside our kitchen in a summer blue sky. The return of martins and swallows from their Winter in the South is the harbinger of Summer days filled with plenty, and always lifts my spirits. I was hoping that when they returned this Summer we would be out and about meeting folk and visiting gardens. Now, the weather is warmer and Spring flowers are

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all around and the news is so much more positive. With vaccinations and lifting of restrictions in the coming months and with nothing unforeseen, we shall be able to meet up once again.

We have continued to plan events for the Summer and will launch the visits programme in May. As a taster we have two events planned for mid-summer which are described on page 7 in the Magazine. Feedback, ideas and volunteers always welcome.

Stay safe and keep gardening.
Diana Hebditch

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Slopes need not be a challenge!

Nigel Cox explains the considerable opportunities

My garden looks out across Godney Moor and the distant view of Glastonbury Tor. This is a glorious backdrop to my garden which is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre in size. And yes, it is on a slope!

The beauty of the garden is that it is south-facing and in the Summer is baked by the high sun. At the bottom of the slope is my vegetable garden which, unlike the remainder of the garden, is reasonably moist as the water drains to the bottom of the slope.

When I was looking for a new home the agent called me up and told me he had found me a garden and it had a house with it! He certainly understood my priorities – garden first!

The previous owners had thought a lot about how to design on a slope, and the garden is terraced with low stone dry walls (all of which now rebuilt by me) with stepped pathways giving access to the lower parts.

The terraces are full of sun-loving plants from alpines to large Chusan Palms (*Trachycarpus 'Fortunei'*) which gives a rather exotic feel to the garden. An olive tree thrives in this situation as do the grape



vines that now clothe the fences providing a good supply of grapes in the Summer, well ripened by the summer sun.

One of the great benefits of a sloping garden is that you are able to look up at it from lower down the garden which gives one a very different perspective on plants. My particular favourites are my *Helleborus orientalis* which have promiscuously seeded all around the borders. Their nodding heads in all shades of white, cream and purples point

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“ One of the great benefits of a sloping garden is that you are able to look up at it from lower down the garden which gives one a very different perspective on plants ”

downwards but having them in these terraced borders allows me to look upwards at them and enjoy the special beauty of these flowers.

People think that a sloping garden is a challenge and in some ways that is true. For those with mobility issues, slopes can be difficult to climb; handrails along a stepped path can help with this.

The other issue is that the upper areas can dry out very rapidly. Incorporating organic matter and applying a surface mulch will help retain moisture, but for me I make a virtue out of necessity by filling the borders with dry-loving plants and bulbs in plenty.

One of my favourite bulbs which thrives in the garden (although supposedly better in a shady spot) is *Sternbergia lutea*. Beautiful yellow crocus flowers in the Autumn which brighten up the darkest days and if left alone will multiply year on year. In the Summer I can sit in the upper garden and relax and enjoy the sunlit views of the beautiful Somerset landscape, and feel content that I chose a garden on a slope.

A glimpse of Marianne North: Intrepid Victorian traveller and Painter.

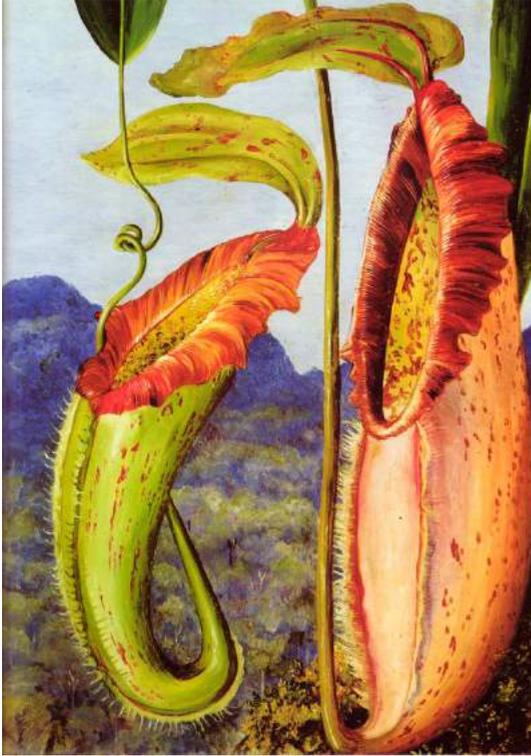
Jan Stanton finds a fascinating character

You know when you come across someone whose life, talents, achievements and legacy make you feel hopelessly inadequate? Marianne North was one such.

She was born in Hastings in 1830, into a well-connected and wealthy family, travelling between Winters in Hastings, London from Easter to August for the Season, and Norfolk to the family seat of Rougham, (the journey being “a long week’s work”). A trip to Scotland, she writes, “was firstly by coach, and



Marianne North



Nepenthes Northiana

then... there were only bits of railway in those days, and we drove a long way to reach them, and then sat in our own carriage, which was tied on a truck, surrounded by all our luggage."

From 1847-1850 the family travelled extensively in Europe. Her hated school education had lasted about three months, but she was thereafter tutored in music, singing and painting

by some of the most impressive teachers available. Remaining an accomplished pianist and singer, in Jamaica she noted *"a bird whistled... a diminished seventh in the key of F, an E natural and B flat alternately, and in perfect tune."* However, painting in oils from nature became her abiding passion.

In 1856 she was given a sprig of *Amherstia*, which fuelled her desire to paint the flora of the tropics. Thus started her intrepid lifestyle, with her Father, with friends or alone, travelling the World and painting all the interesting plants she found. Some of these were hitherto unknown to science, and were named in her honour – notably the pitcher plant *Nepenthes* 'Northiana' from Sarawak, the giant *Kniphofia* 'Northiana' from South Africa, and *Northia* 'Seychelliana'. Marianne often supplied seeds and live specimens to Sir Joseph Hooker (he of the sprig) at Kew.

After her Father's death in 1869, although grieving, she continued her work, visiting Canada, the USA, Jamaica, Brazil, Japan, Tenerife, Singapore, Borneo, Java and Sri Lanka in five years. Charles Darwin sent her off to Australia

“Thus started her intrepid lifestyle, with her Father, with friends or alone, travelling the World and painting all the interesting plants she found”

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and New Zealand, via India, travelling and painting for a year; then to South Africa, the Seychelles and Jamaica. During this time, she commissioned a gallery to house her gift to the nation of 848 paintings. The magnificent Marianne North Gallery in Kew Gardens opened to the public in 1882, was an immediate hit, and remains so today, (well, in principle anyway!)

Taking a last trip to Chile in 1884, her health deserted her, and she retired to the Cotswolds, where she died in 1890, aged 59. Her entertaining book “*Recollections of a Happy Life*” is available online via Wikipedia, and is well worth reading, beautifully interspersed with amusing vignettes. I wonder what would she have thought of that?

2021 SGT Events

Diana Hebditch encourages us to look forward

We will launch the visits programme in May when we will have some more gardens to visit and will be sending out the usual booking form. Here are the first two events planned for mid-summer.

Firstly, Iford Manor Wednesday PM 9 June 2021

Troy Scott Smith, Head Gardener, who came from Sissinghurst two years ago, will give us a tour of the private walled garden

and glasshouses and discuss the many projects planned for that area. We will also be able to enjoy the puzzle garden and shell house.

William Cartwright-Hignett grew up at Iford, leads its restoration work and design, in close collaboration with Troy. We will see the newly restored Cloisters and William will take us on a tour of the main garden. “*The structural design seen today was largely*

North Wales and Cheshire

The visit to gardens in North Wales and Cheshire is to be postponed until May next year; most of the gardens we are likely to visit are on acid soil where the gardens are at their best in Spring. When I was discussing the proposed outing with a friend, she said “I’ve been to Bodnant, it’s really quite dull in September”. Also I have had no contact with the hotel this year, they just don’t answer e-mails, or letters; we were in touch early last year. I do hope that those who have contacted me are not too disappointed.

Camilla Carter

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created by Harold Peto, who lived at Iford from 1899-1933. A man of exquisite taste, with a talent for placing objects sympathetically to their surroundings, he designed gardens for royalty and aristocracy around the World."

"During the past 55 years, today's owners, the Cartwright-Hignett family, have lovingly restored the garden (once thought 'lost' after WW2) and continued to develop it, saving the buildings therein, finishing the Oriental Garden area designed by John Hignett and redesigning areas of the garden as they age, 100 years after Peto's original plantings."

As those of you who have visited will know, there is a lovely spot to park and picnic by the entrance.

Secondly, Crowe Hall Widcombe Hill Bath
Thursday PM **8 July**

Listed terraced gardens surrounding a Georgian House, 1 mile from the centre of Bath. Views, meadows, water features, a tufa and limestone grotto and a rockery designed by William Carmichael. Carmichael was trained at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens and worked in the 1860's for the Prince of Wales at

Sandringham before coming to Crowe in the 1870's to work for Henry Tugwell, the garden was remodelled then.

“ We will see the newly restored Cloisters and William will take us on a tour of the main garden ”

If you are interested in attending, you may let Sue Hatherell know Tel 01460 52834.

Email: suehatherell@btinternet.com

In the meantime, there are lectures online from The Gardens Trust at <http://thegardenstrust.org/events> which we, as Somerset members, can access. We have not yet struck out and produced any ourselves. If you would like to offer to do so, we would be pleased for you to have a go.



Crowe Hall, Widcombe, Bath

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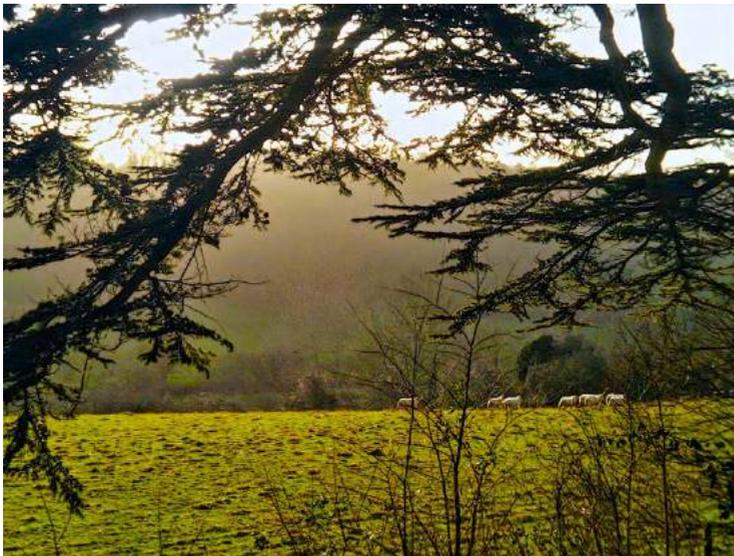
Iford Manor Garden

Head Gardener Troy Scott Smith takes a long strategic view

As gardeners we have a most enviable, yet difficult job, one of balancing science and art, whilst working with the dimension of time, (and not just the time of day or season), but the passing years when nature's growth expands and matures, lending the garden a different identity, almost beyond our control. By their very nature, gardens are constantly evolving, their fabric dictates that they are never static or finished, nor are they ever perfect. Iford is no exception, it has an individual personality borne from its history and, whether you are managing a large country estate like Iford or tending a small plot, the long-term conservation of all gardens relies on so much more than

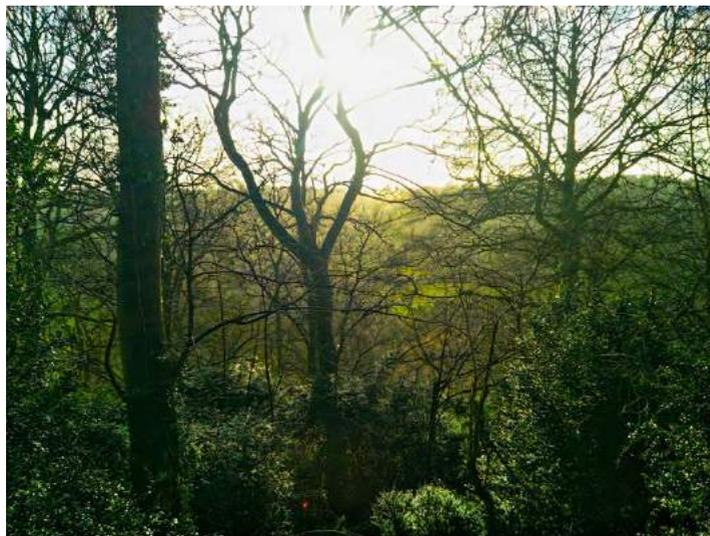
proficiency in horticulture.

Most of us garden without a long-term plan, although the results can occasionally be pleasing, all too often we end up with a garden resembling a fruit salad. We install ideas, features and plants on a whim, with each repeated action not only having a day-to-day effect but also a cumulative effect and a long-term impact. Vulnerable to these knee jerk alterations, as well as accident, economics, etc., the outcome of this change can be difficult to predict and therefore suggests the need to be more considered in our approach to garden management, particularly when dealing with historic gardens such as Iford.



For over thirty years I have had the good fortune to work at and manage beautiful and significant gardens and I have adopted the same knowledge based, research led approach at all of them. At the outset aiming to understand as much as possible about the garden, not only in a practical sense (i.e., the soil, frost pockets,

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rainfall etc.), but also something about its creators, the layering of different owners and different periods, how the garden has changed and how it is used today. From this rather intellectual beginning one becomes free to garden in an instinctive way, reflecting and adapting to the needs of the day, whilst keeping any changes appropriate.

Remember it is not change itself that matters, but the nature of the change which is important.

To create a pastiche or an ossified facsimile of Peto's Iford would be missing the point. In time we hope to bring about a celebration of everything that is good about Iford, retaining the best of what we do now, but be open-minded about

the reimagining of authenticity.

As we lead up to the centenary of Peto's death, Iford offers a fascinating essay into the complexities and challenges that we face - balancing conservation with access, historical integrity with modern appeal and uniformity of opening requirements with property distinctiveness.

At our best we have a terrific opportunity

to grow, develop and enhance the garden at Iford, whilst ensuring the embedded *sense of place* remains and is strengthened. The revival will be deliberately slow, with the garden dictating the pace and momentum. I hope through the occasional column in these pages I can bring some of our work to you and take you with us on Iford's journey into its next chapter.

“ Most of us garden without a long-term plan, although the results can occasionally be pleasing, all too often we end up with a garden resembling a fruit salad ”



Blues beating Blooms

What a joy it is to see blooms in the dreary month of January. Our favourite must be Cyclamen Coum (see above), as opposed to the autumn blooming Cyclamen Hederifolium. They provide a carpet of white and various shades of pink in the first two months of the new year. We particularly like the dark pink variety. These are not always easily available, but Avon Bulbs lists them in their autumn catalogue. They do seem to be particularly happy around the base of beech trees where ours are spreading exponentially. The seeds, we are told, are carried about by ants who are attracted to the sweet seed coating.

This year, following YouTube instruction, I hope to propagate Coum from gathered seed.

I might even have plants available one day at an SGT plant sale!

Neale Hatherell

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Life in the Undergrowth

Artist Fiona Campbell looks at art in the garden

Since last Spring lockdown, life has become introspective and hermetic for me. In isolation, as with many people, I've experienced various forms of grief and joy. I began taking life at a slower pace, sowing veggie seeds, and mending things. Appreciating, observing and attending to nature seemed vital.

My garden, until then somewhat neglected, became my World and route to wellbeing, providing a sense of peace and purpose. My lockdown project 'Life in the Undergrowth'

was inspired by small hidden worlds in the garden that often get overlooked. It became a circular process - garden feeding art and art feeding garden.

A fascination with the entanglement of roots, worms and shoots in upturned turf led to experimental responses using to-hand materials and found objects. I drew knotted clumps; dried pondweed, sun-bleached, became paper; handmade tools from natural debris generated drawings, and sculptural works evolved.

While digging the

earth to make space for a studio bay, I found a glut of old rusty nails to use in my work.

I sold my soil locally - creating a circular economy. Communing with small creatures, witnessing transformation, life and death, it was emotional at times. Themes and stories emerged, some wonderful, others very sad. Encounters between myself, garden as site and nature helped me form a stronger bond with all that comes and goes. The deep seclusion allowed time and space to process,



Entangled VI; recycled and found wood, pondweed, paste, copper, steel

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surrender to the moment, and create awkward objects through a gentle tacit dialogue.

Realising that film-making and sharing online was going to be critical to engage people, I broadened my practice and embraced technology. I filmed the incidents in my garden, and my work, as it unfolded. The outcome was a short film [Life in the Undergrowth](#), which documents my isolation project and represents my first serious experiments with film-making.

During this time I published free online creative demos and launched a new online 5 week sculpture course. The hard work creating the course has been well worth it. Due to the success of the first, I am currently running my second course during this third lockdown. Participants have embraced the opportunity to safely learn new skills, experiment with recycled materials, and created sculptures inspired by nature.

I've surprised myself with what can be achieved under difficult



Time Capsules (detail); found objects: giant molars, glass bottles, ceramics, old rusty nails

“ Encounters between myself, garden as site and nature helped me form a stronger bond with all that comes and goes ”

circumstances. I've managed to create and find alternative work solutions, which I put down to creative resilience. I think 2020 was a huge jolt to us, and despite the sad and tragic happenings, I'm hopeful that we have come out of it stronger and better.

www.fionacampbellart.co.uk

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My Garden

Sir John Lushington

In 1999 we moved from Essex to Barrington – from a Georgian vicarage garden – all evergreens – which we restored and planted thousands of bulbs and over 100 clematis varieties and an equal number of roses of all description.

But we had to leave it all behind after a disastrous flood to make a planned move to the West Country. We found Kent House (it was Kentucky Farm House, but our boys refused to let us keep the name so we removed the “ucky”). This left Kent, the County from which my family are descended. The house was sound, but awful inside! The “garden” non-existent, overgrown and generally decrepit with a Nissan hut falling in on itself.

In Essex there was no room for any more trees – but in Somerset I had three acres to plant! So off to Thornhayes Nursery, and in 2000 I selected my Millennium Tree Planting List. I had decided to plant for the future and thus chose some woodland and ornamental varieties of some of our common species. We involved the local primary school children in the planting, hoping they would remember the event.

At the time I did not expect to see the trees into their maturity, but I did not anticipate the magnificent soil and climate. Now, 20 years later, we have a fine stand of superb trees which gives huge pleasure throughout the Seasons.

“ We involved the local primary school children in the planting, hoping they would remember the event ”

The best specimens include *Quercus: coccinea splendens, lucombeana* ‘William Lucombe’ (Devon Oak); *Fraxinus: americana* ‘Rosehill’,



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excelsior 'Jaspidea' and *pendula*, *pennsylvannica* 'Summit'; *Fagus sylvatica* 'Riversii', 'Dawyck'; *Aesculus*: *indica*; *Populus*: *tremula erecta*; *Acer*: *campestre* 'William Caldwell', 'Crimson King', *rufinerve*, *conspicuum* 'Phoenix', *griseum*; *Alnus*: *incana aurea*; *Liquidamber styraciflua* 'Worplesdon'; *Nyssa sinensis*; *Tilia*: 'Henryana'. *Liriodendron tulipifera*. *Juglans regia*; *Castanea sativa*. Several varieties of *Prunus* and *Crateagus* supplement an orchard of apples, pears, plums and cherries. Newer plantings in 2014 have included *Acer* 'Scanlon'; *Quercus* 'Green Pillar' and *Pyrus*

'Calleryana chanticleer'; *Alnus campestre* and *Sorbus* 'Hilling Spire'. More recently we have planted a *Fagus sylvatica* and *Quercus robur*. We are now into our ninth decade. When we planted the first batch of trees we never thought we would see the results of today's display. For the younger members of the Somerset Gardens Trust I would just encourage you to plant for the future – you will be surprised how soon the young trees mature. In 100 years' time subsequent generations will be able to enjoy the fruits of your labours.



A friend, long dead,
gave me a few of these
bulbs, saying they were
very precious and I must
guard against theft.

They took a long time to
establish themselves but,
with a little help from
me, have now spread
enthusiastically.

Can anyone identify
them for me?

Cicely Taylor

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What our Planning Application Group does

Ian Clark, Chairman of the Research and Conservation Committee, on an essential activity of the Trust

One of the key activities of the Group is to comment on planning applications that could potentially affect important historic parks and gardens. We do this by working very closely with The Gardens Trust who are the statutory consultees and are notified

“ One of the key activities of the Group is to comment on planning applications that could potentially affect important historic parks and gardens ”

of any applications affecting properties on the Register of Parks and Gardens (RPG). A lot of the planning applications are fairly minor but occasionally there are significant applications that could potentially detrimentally affect the RPGs.

Unfortunately, some of these are poorly supported with the appropriate heritage impact assessments or landscape and visual impact assessments; however, some provide very useful information, invaluable to the Committee and its work.

A recent example is the A303 improvements planning application which directly affects part of the Hazelgrove parkland. Anyone who has driven along the A303 will know the roundabout which provides a feeder road to the house and parkland and the

speed at which traffic negotiates it, so the improvements to the road are generally welcome; however, the proposed works will directly or visually affect the parkland and its setting. Highways England,

who are responsible for the application, has produced a Heritage Report to assess the impacts of the highway works and in doing so have brought together a significant amount of historic evidence into one report.



Hazelgrove Parkland

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The report includes information on the families that have owned the land, maps showing establishment of the parkland and its evolution, as well as up to date information on the condition of the parkland as it is today. This is invaluable for the work of the Committee in adding to the historic

evidence already held by the Trust. In this instance Highways England are also proposing to undertake some enhancement of the parkland which includes new tree planting, new estate railings and improvements to the rights of way that cross the site.

Why Peonies are glorious

Caroline Stone inspires us to grow more

Herbaceous peonies are such an integral part of the English garden that, although *Paeonia officinalis* has been grown since medieval times and used for medicinal purposes, it is something of a surprise that *Paeonia lactiflora* only started to be grown in Europe in the early 1800s. Initially breeding was largely carried out by French breeders before the great Somerset Nursery of Kelways at Langport began to offer its own peonies in the 1880s. There is nothing more redolent of the great herbaceous borders of the Edwardian era perhaps than peonies. The wonderful Kelways catalogues, *Manuals of Horticulture* as they were called, contained

long lists of peonies amongst the Nursery's many other offerings. Peony Valley containing several acres of peonies became famous and the Nursery attended Shows all over the Country and abroad, displaying the blooms. They even produced a scent and a talcum powder with the fragrance of Peony Valley! Hybridisation has produced May-flowering varieties like 'Avant Guard' and 'Mai Fleuri' – both crosses from *P. wittmanniana* introduced in 1907 by Lemoine – and with more recent breeding, particularly in the US, the colour range has expanded giving 'Corals' such as 'Coral Sunset' of an orangey pink and the yellows bred by Dr Saunders.

The range is enormous but it is historic varieties that have captured my heart. I decided to plant pre-World War One peonies thinking to narrow my choice. I now grow about 125 pre-WW1 varieties in my garden; initially

“(That led me to try and track them down with the intention of creating a National Collection to conserve this important part of our horticultural heritage for the future)”

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Kelway's Glorious

intending to have two beds, temptation overtook me. As I bought the peonies it became obvious that the Kelways varieties had almost all dropped out of commerce. That led me to try and track them down with the intention of creating a National Collection to conserve this important part of our horticultural heritage for the future. Many varieties that I know were available relatively recently have proved elusive, however. Can you help? **Do you have peonies from Kelways in your garden?** Some of those I am still searching for include 'Colonel Heneage', a red Imperial, 'Kelway's White Lady', 'Duchess of Bedford' a lovely single pink,

'Admiral Harwood', a very distinctive peony. Varieties that were certainly still for sale fifteen years ago have yet to be found so don't assume your peony isn't of interest!

Not only are they easy to grow but the plants are very long lived making them a good investment for any garden. Planting depth is key. No more than about an inch deep is a good rule of thumb. Peonies come originally from Northern China and appreciate cold in the Winter. Also, it is important to remember to allow good circulation of air to avoid botrytis. Never mulch over the plant.

They are perfect for herbaceous borders as well as an informal cottage garden look and make good cut flowers. And bees love them!



Red Queen



Readers Forum

My Greenhouse, My Haven

Paul Cumbleton

Some gardeners rarely venture into their plot in Winter. Not me! My greenhouse is largely filled with winter-growing bulbs from South Africa. From September right through to May there is always something to provide colour and interest, inviting me

“ My greenhouse is largely filled with winter-growing bulbs from South Africa. From September right through to May there is always something to provide colour and interest ”

to venture out every day to see what blooms have opened. This is my Winter haven. I grow about half in pots and half planted out in raised plunge beds. It is noticeable how much larger some of them get when planted out with a free root run. February has just passed and despite the cold at times I have been cheered, especially this past month, by the extraordinary flowers of *Daubinya aurea*, whose brilliant lipstick-red, yellow or orange blooms can pierce any Winter gloom. This plant comes from high on the Roggeveld Plateau in the Northern Cape Province of

South Africa where they are sadly threatened with extinction. At least they are well established in horticulture. At a time of year when there is often little else to delight in the garden, this plant can certainly bring a ray of sunshine and lift the spirit. Well worth a trip to my Winter haven!

Brian Jaques

My greenhouse is the sixth iteration of a structure that is a place of magic, mystery, success, - and disappointment (naturally).

It was in my first greenhouse that I was at last able to enjoy the innocent pleasure of growing live things from seed; after the frustration of discovering ‘gardening’ following a childhood in a smoky industrial town that didn’t seem to know what sunlight was. What a release, what fantastic consequences of putting dry bits and bobs into dirt and deriving beautiful, intriguing, useful plants.

“ It was in my first greenhouse that I was at last able to enjoy the innocent pleasure of growing live things from seed ”

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Imagine my sorrow to learn that in every residence that I moved on from the new owners actually destroyed the greenhouses that I left. Philistines! My present greenhouse provides me with sub-tropical plants that spend non-winter time outside thus giving me and passers-by, if they have the soul, continuing pleasure at the majesty of plants. Thank you, Mother Nature.



Camilla Carter

My first greenhouse was built by a very loving husband to compensate me for the loss of my first son to prep school. I kept wailing “*all I want is a walk-in cloche*” – what I got was a large carpenter-built house with a wonderful even temperature and excellent growing atmosphere; built in proportion to the size of house. I was smitten! A term of weekly evening classes at Cannington on propagation followed and then later, the purchase of a mist propagator, and plants came streaming off the production line.

My present greenhouse was designed in outline by Julian Bannerman, two 10 x 8 ft houses joined under a glazed 30 ft roof, with a space in the middle, open to the garden. I opted for something simple, and double glazed. I don't regret taking up his suggestion of treating the wood with an

opaque stain, not paint, in a RAL colour with powder coated metal roof struts. It has only been retreated once in 17 years.

One house is kept above 6°C for tender geraniums, rooted cuttings and a propagator, growing tomatoes there in Summer. The other is kept only just above freezing and houses hardier items; my dahlias, kept in wood shavings in wooden wine cases, tender *Salvias* potted up, waiting to have cuttings taken in early Spring and a lovely white rose ‘Soulange’ trained to cover the back wall,

“(A term of weekly evening classes at Cannington on propagation followed and then later, the purchase of a mist propagator, and plants came streaming off the production line)”

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it flowers early April. The centre portion, open at the front can freeze, but my sweet peas overwinter there, this space is also excellent for hardening off seedlings. We can sit there from March until the end of October for chat, coffee and meals; recently I have hung a heater so that I can safely have a Covid lunch with friends but only when allowed to do so.

Annabelle Chisholm

Last week a local farm shop had some 'left over' small bulbs which they were selling for 20p a packet – some were just a weeny bit on the mouldy side, but hope springs eternal. So HOPE is what we are now growing in 13 shallow terracotta pts of different sizes, currently sitting snugly on the staging in an unheated greenhouse/haven!

Mary FAnson

The “fossil coloured” door slides open. Always expectation!
Inside, a different climate, another world, mood lightening,
A verdant, rampant range of productive vegetation,
The unmistakable aroma of tomatoes on the turn, (only in my memory).
A beautiful pale lilac aubergine, amazingly large contorted tomatoes,
Oh to share this abundance with friends and family very soon.
I tend my beloved greenhouse with love hope and kindness.



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John Scott (1807 - 1886)

Anne Kaile reviews the early life of a famous gardener

Many gardeners will be very familiar with the Nursery, Scott's of Merriott, Somerset.

John Scott, who became the owner of the Nursery in 1851, was born in 1807, in Perth, Scotland. His father was a gamekeeper.



Charles M'Intosh

Scott began work in horticulture when he was about twelve years old by gathering mosses and lichens from his native mountains in Perthshire. His earlier days were with one of Britain's most eminent horticulturists - Charles M'Intosh (1794-1864). M'Intosh was also born in Perthshire and went to England to begin his very distinguished career in gardening. In 1829 he became the gardener to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg at *Claremont Gardens*,

Esher. He travelled widely and became a well-known writer on gardening.

Scottish gardeners were much in demand in England due in part to the better education system in Scotland, to the Scots' capacity for hard work and habits of thrift. So, Scott's move to England and his work for M'Intosh - a man who it was reported to have been generous with his knowledge - would have been of a great benefit to his career.

It is reported in Scott's Obituary that he also spent some years working in the *Jardin des Plantes*, Paris, which is now the main botanical garden in France. These botanical gardens date back to the XVII century and were originally the *Royal Garden of the Medicinal Plants*.

Jardin des Plantes

The next official listing we have for Scott is in 1846 when he marries Elizabeth Winderbank at St. Luke's, Chelsea, his occupation is shown as gardener.



Jardin des Plantes

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Scott's Obituary says that "he held good places both in nurseries and gardens in England and the last of which was with Sir John Guest, of Canford, Dorset". The census of 1851 shows Scott living at Canford, Dorset, and he is shown as gardener and forester (a title incidentally that M'Intosh had used to describe himself). Canford was a high Victorian garden: features of the gardens included a 250 foot long, 25-foot-high, magnolia wall, vinery, peach house, melon house, fernery, terrace and a 250-acre arboretum - thus requiring a large team of experienced gardens and foresters - Scott being one. The gardens, and its gardeners, featured on many occasions in the gardening press during the Victorian period.

In 1874, long after Scott left Canford, he writes in *the Gardeners' Chronicle* about a good place to find *Ophioglossum* (the adder's tongue fern) being the meadows "extending from opposite Canford House to the railway station at Wimborne; there it can be gathered by tens of thousands all in low damp places by the side of the River Stour" - ferns being much

“Canford was a high Victorian garden: features of the gardens included a 250 foot long, 25-foot-high, magnolia wall, vinery, peach house, melon house, fernery, terrace and a 250-acre arboretum”

admired by the Victorians.

Today Canford Magna is a private school – the arboretum and some fine specimen trees including Champion trees still exist. Scott moved to Merriott in 1851 and took over the ownership of the Nursery.

Editors' Note: Readers may remember that Jenny Hawksley wrote about his successful ownership of the Nursery in the Spring 2020 edition of this Magazine.



Canford Magna circa 1905

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Secret Gardens of Somerset

The writers' tale

Secret Gardens of Somerset was published in September 2020. As a garden writer who has lived in Somerset for nearly 20 years but who has previously spent a lot of time writing about London gardens, I was itching to celebrate the superb gardens on my doorstep.

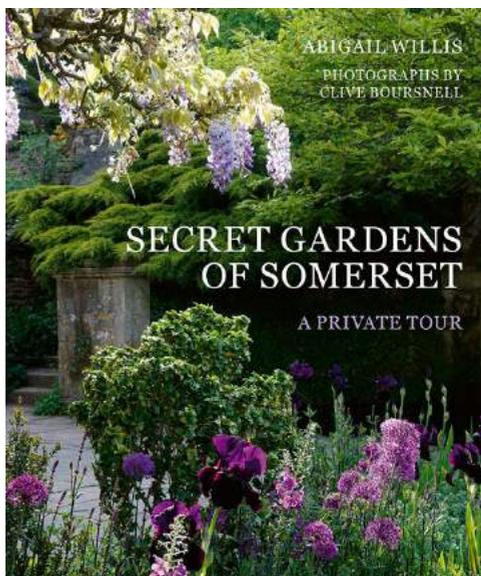
The advent of Oudolf Field at Hauser & Wirth, new gardens at the American Museum, and the transformation of Hadspen House into the 'Newt' confirmed that the time was ripe for such a project.

The Book was commissioned in Spring 2019, with Clive Bournnell assigned as photographer. Clive's images perfectly capture the characteristic softness of Somerset's gardens and he and I spent the next few months on the garden trail.

I relished my drives across the County as the Seasons unfolded in the hedgerows and fields. These became the scenic overtures to each garden visit, underscoring the significance of the garden's landscape setting.

Gardens are about so much more than plants and design. People are always part of

“ People are always part of the story, and interviewing owners and head gardeners was a hugely enjoyable element of research ”



the story, and interviewing owners and head gardeners was a hugely enjoyable element of research. New friendships were a wonderful by-product!

By September, most of the research (the fun part!) was complete, and I was at my desk, the February deadline keeping me awake. Narrowing the final edit down to 20 gardens was a painful necessity dictated by the book's format.

The selection aims to show a varied cross-section of Somerset's gardens, while also treating readers to a tour of this diverse County. Hopefully in due course the Book might also persuade visitors rushing along

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the A303 or M5 to peel off and discover our wonderful gardens.

Launching the Book during a pandemic was not ideal (no launch party sadly) but on the plus side I have had lovely feedback from readers who have whiled away lockdown reading about Somerset's gardens and planning itineraries for visiting them when

coronavirus rules allow.

Secret Gardens of Somerset by Abigail Willis is published by Frances Lincoln, £22.

ISBN 978-0-7112-5222-6

Signed copies from Bailey Hill Bookshop, Castle Cary. Tel: 01963 350917 / bhbsnews@gmail.com

What can you glean about garden plants from Prayer Books?

Sheila Rabson on a fascinating journey of discovery

No two "*Book of Hours*" are ever the same as they contain different combinations of prayers, psalms, calendars, illuminated miniatures and initials. The depiction of Saints would vary from one area to another with the patron determining the contents of these very expensive books. Saints would vary from area to area and were often seen as talismans against particular diseases, illnesses or general perils of life. The scribe, usually a monk, would produce the text and any illuminated lettering but the

rest of the decoration was often passed to another, more artistic, monk to complete. The illustration below comes from the *Soane Book of Hours* which was produced in either Ghent or Bruges c.1500. The pages



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come from a section containing the *Seven Penitential Psalms* and is accompanied by a litany of the Saints. The main illustration shows St Gregory – newly elected Pope in 590 – heading a procession of hooded flagellants, clerics and ordinary people crossing the Tiber to St Peter's to pray for

“The use of scattered flower heads to create a border is often seen in mediaeval manuscripts”



the cessation of the currently raging plague in Rome. Plague was again raging at the time of production of this book so St Gregory may have been seen as an inspiration for relief from this disease.

The use of scattered flower heads to create a border is often seen in mediaeval manuscripts. Several of the flowers are easily identified e.g. *Violas*, daisies, *Dianthus* and lilies and there are also strawberries in evidence. Clearly the illustrator had seen these plants growing, perhaps in the monastery herbarium or local countryside.

The picture below also comes from the *Soane Book of Hours*. The picture shows the Virgin Mary meeting her cousin Elizabeth shortly after the Annunciation. Elizabeth is expecting John the Baptist but it is Mary who is shown heavily

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pregnant. Behind the women is a scene of a Flemish rural landscape. The house is in the latest Gothic style with a stepped gable, gothic tracery in the windows, patterned roof tiles and an elaborate chimney.

The surrounding border is a little harder to interpret but is also clearly gothic in style. It is an unusual lattice design with twig-like divisions sprouting leafy crockets – similarly these can be seen in gothic architecture.

However, this design is really based in the mediaeval garden where trellises were used to support flowering plants with surrounding “flowery meads”. The diamond patterns depict individual flowers and fruits and are very similar to those in the previous illustration so presumably, the same artist. In the *Roman de la Rose*, Chaucer wrote “There sprang the violet all new, and fresh periwinkle, rich of hue, and flowers yellow, white and red; such plenty grew there never in mead.”

Loved and Lost

Susie Thorne looks out of the kitchen window

Contemplating the stick which is the replacement for my *Aralia elata* ‘Argenteovariegata’, led me to think about other loved and lost plants. The *Aralia* was beautiful in leaf and even more so when it flowered, but it died, out of the blue, one Summer, having reached 20 years of age. It joins a long list of ‘has-beens’ in my garden – I avoid looking at the book in which I list my purchases. It took me some time to realise which perennials were rabbit fodder. White flowers such as *Geranium sylvaticum* ‘Album’ and *G. Macrorrhizum* ‘Whiteness’ are obviously particularly delicious, as was the lovely white *Polemonium* ‘Halfway to Paradise’, which stood no chance. Squirrels have grown fat on my tulips. Other plants have been lost to disease, such as *Iris foetidissima* ‘Variegata’, much used years ago, until it all succumbed to rust. Who knows what happened to the *Rosa pomifera* ‘Duplex’?



Worst of all, we have now been here long enough for trees which we planted to die – a Whitebeam has recently fallen down in the wind and was very rotten at the base.

All I can do is to keep planting.



We didn't have snow here on Christmas Day, but Stephen and I saw this lovely lonely Snow Bunting on the Quantocks in Lockdown 2. Very best wishes for 2021

Sue Custance-Baker



Arrivals and Departures

New members since February 2020

Sir Benjamin & Lady Sarah Bathurst, Chilton Polden

Mrs L Beazer, Stoney Stratton

Michael Cansdale, Wells (re-joined)

Mrs Carol Findlay, Templecombe

Mrs Nickie Gething, South Brewham

Mrs P Judah, South Brewham

Mr & Mrs A Kirkness, Langport

Mrs Gillian Lane, Witham Friary

Mr & Mrs D J Lees, Bath (re-joined)

Mr & Mrs A W Lukes, Ruishton

Sir John Lushington Bt., Barrington, Ilminster

Mr & Mrs M J Stanton, South Petherton

Mr & Mrs Richard Wales, Bath

Members who have died since February 2020:

Richard Chandler, Aller Farm House, Williton – joined September 2006

Mrs P Ellis, Long Sutton, Langport – joined May 2019

Mr Patrick Pisani, Sutton Bingham – long-time member

Mrs Sylvia Ray – Life member and founder member

Mrs Elizabeth Tudway-Quilter, Wells – Honorary member,
widow of our first Chairman, David Tudway-Quiler

Mrs Anne Wood, Wells – joined March 2005

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The Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs - a brief history

Philip Harwood, President describes a vibrant organization,

In the early 1980's the late Bill Johns found himself facing a bit of a quandary, one which many of us have had to get to grips with. A retired engineer and keen gardener and exhibitor, he had volunteered to take on the role of Secretary and Treasurer of Castle Cary Gardening Club. Like so many who are willing to do something to make a difference in an area of personal interest, he discovered that all his previous experience had not prepared him for the challenge of organizing a programme of speakers, booking the halls, seeing to refreshments and supervising a flower show. All from scratch. Of course he managed, but there had to be a better way than this muddling through. Mulling it over with his friend Alan Eason who was gardening for Penelope Hobhouse at the time, the simple answer was to pool resources and ideas between other clubs and organizations. The result was the formation of the Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs.

“ he discovered that all his previous experience had not prepared him for the challenge of organizing a programme of speakers, booking the halls, seeing to refreshments and supervising a flower show ”

From the dozen or so clubs attending the first meeting, mostly in the south-east area of the County, the Federation has grown to around 220 members, some over the borders in Devon and Wiltshire, others as far as one or two in Nottinghamshire. Broadly speaking, the Federation offers a support service to hard-pressed secretaries and officers on whom the brunt of work so often falls. The two main provisions which assist the member clubs are a register of



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs



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speakers and judges, and very importantly, an attractive public liability insurance scheme which was organized by the late John Starnes of West Chinnock many years ago. The present Chairman, Erl Plomgren of Holford Gardening Club, has brought the Federation, which is probably the largest in the Country, up to date with the introduction of an efficient website: sfgc.org.uk.

Whether Club members meet together in a millennial village hall, or urban Scout hut, saloon bar or even, as happens, around the kitchen table in a remote area, they are

united by one determined factor, namely their keenness. A word of praise should be added for the intrepid speakers who follow vague instructions down darkened lanes to be met with a flickering torch on a rainy night. It is all part of the pleasure and enjoyment which encapsulates the social fellowship of like-minded people and makes the SFGC the success it is.

Editors' note: SGT is a member of the federation and we have advertised plant sales and lectures on their site.

John Evelyn 1620-1706

Anthony Pugh-Thomas assesses the big contribution to gardening by an extraordinary man

Who was John Evelyn whose 400th birth Anniversary was celebrated last year? Born into a wealthy family at Wotton, Surrey and educated at Balliol College, Oxford and the Middle Temple, Evelyn was a landed gentleman, a high Anglican of great piety, a polymath, lifelong bibliophile and the author of some 30 books mainly on the fine arts, forestry and religion - but including such matters as the growing air pollution problem in London! He started keeping a diary at the age of 11 with entries ranging from memoranda to descriptions of places and events and the characters of contemporaries; he recorded more than 50 years of English life. (He was helped by his life-long friend Samuel Pepys, the other great 17th century diarist). Evelyn left England in 1643, travelling in Europe to

avoid involvement in the Civil War but returned in 1651 and, following his marriage, settled in Deptford at Sayes Court. (In 1671 he there encountered master woodworker, Grinling Gibbons, and introduced him to Christopher Wren). After the Restoration Evelyn enjoyed Court favour and held useful, albeit minor, posts.

Evelyn was known for his knowledge of trees and in 1664 produced for the Commissioners of the Navy, '*Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-trees, and the Propagation of Timber*' describing various kinds of trees, their cultivation and uses. This influential book went through 10 editions and encouraged landowners to grow much-needed trees for the use of the Royal Navy and to beautify their properties. (Evelyn also designed landscapes: in 1671 at Euston Park, Suffolk,

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John Evelyn (right) and Pepys

for Lord Arlington, and in 1674 for Henry Howard, later Duke of Norfolk, at Albury Park, Surrey: both survive.)

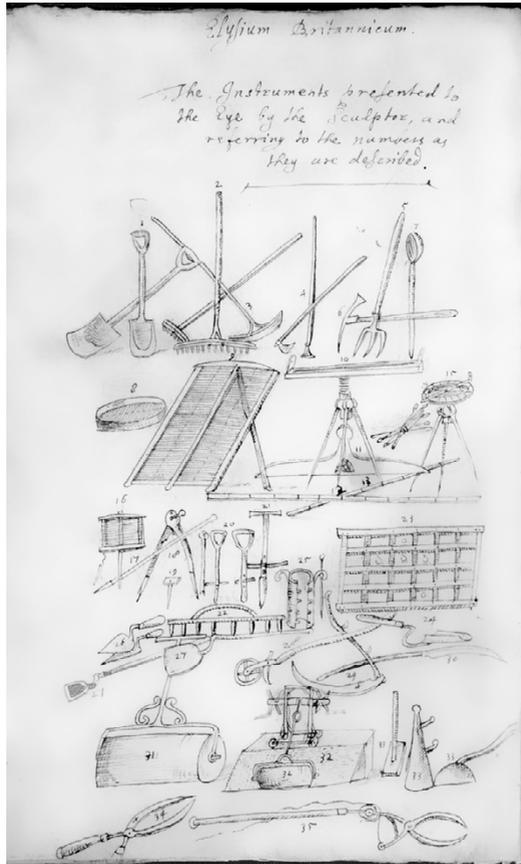
In about 1657 Evelyn started a never-to-be-completed gardening encyclopaedia, *'Elysium Britannicum'* of which parts, *'Kalendarium Hortense'*, *'Acetaria'*, about salads, and *'Pomona, or an appendix concerning fruit-trees, in relation to cider'*, were published at first as supplements to *Sylva* and later independently. He translated

foreign horticultural works including *'The French Gardener: Instructing How to Cultivate all sorts of Fruit-Trees, and Herbs for the Garden'* of 1658 by Nicolas de Bonnefons, into English "The Complete Gard'ner", and Jean Baptiste de La Quintinie's *'Instructions pour les jardins fruitiers et potagers'* of 1690.

At Sayes Court Evelyn displayed his skills

“(This influential book went through 10 editions and encouraged landowners to grow much-needed tress for the use of the Royal Navy and to beautify their properties)”

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as a practical gardener and recorded that “I should speake much of the Gardens, Fountaines and Groves that adorne it were they not as generally knowne to be amongst the most natural & most magnificent that England afforded”. (Pepys commented, waspishly, that Evelyn was “a most excellent person, and must be allowed a little for a little conceitedness... being a man so much above other”). After Evelyn

moved to Wotton, following his brother’s death without heirs, Sayes Court was let to the Tsar Peter the Great who trashed house and grounds. The house no longer exists but is marked by a public park. Wotton is now a hotel, and the Diaries, with Evelyn’s personal papers, are in the Victoria & Albert Museum.



Acca sellowiana - Pineapple Guava courtesy of Judith Jackson



Front and back cover courtesy of the editors

www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk