

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of the Association of Garden Trusts

Summer 2015

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25  
YEARS

*Featuring*

*25 years ago - Who made the Somerset Gardens Trust and why*



## From the Editors

What a pleasure it is to introduce the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the SGT Magazine. To help us celebrate this we have some wonderful contributions from members. The Feature article looks at why the Trust exists –and who made it happen. There is then a series on highlights of activities in survey, education, events, tours and the Magazine itself, over recent years. Other articles look at grand gardens such as Halswell and Tyntesfield and how smaller ones can equally become special places. Not to forget nurseries which keep our plant heritage alive – two of them describe their life from the inside.

So read – enjoy – and be content.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond  
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## From the Chairman

Dear Members,

There has been a lot of interest with the Somerset Gardens Trust stand at the Bath and West Show this year. Leaflets and the spring magazine went flying off our table both with eagerness and the wind. Our marquee entrance position was a protection against the rain for poor Margaret and Mervyn on Friday

morning but not against stiff breezes for our other volunteers who had to be well wrapped up.

Many of the Show visitors commented that the Horticultural Display marquee was small compared with previous years, but it was a start after last year's closure. On Thursday evening, a Reception was held in the marquee, organised by our Lord Lieutenant, Annie Maw, to promote horticultural interests and launch "Grow your Own Future", the High Sheriff's proposal to start bursaries for horticultural students at Cannington College. These bursaries are specially to help students achieve a level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship or a Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Horticultural Studies. Our Vice-President Penelope Hobhouse was there, together with Charles Dowding, Jeremy Kerswell and Nigel Cox from Cannington College and Caroline Donald from the Sunday Times. Lady Fellowes, the Show President's wife also looked in.



The holiday season is upon us and it's time for some light reading. While staying with a friend in Pembrokeshire I was lent Sam Llewellyn's "*Digging with the Duchess*" and laughed my way through it. Sam is a writer living in Herefordshire and is Martin and Arthur Llewellyn's brother. This book is privately published and is available from him - google Sam Llewellyn.

Camilla Carter



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## How the Trust was founded

*Sylvia Ray and the Editors explore what happened in 1990*

### 1990

Three people sit in a historic room at Fairfield and discuss a vision for a county gardens trust. Around Somerset, other counties have established them to record and preserve historic gardens and landscapes – but are there enough people in the County willing to commit their time and energy to make it a reality? They decide to arrange a meeting at Hestercombe House and invite all the people they know to be keen gardeners in the County to come to it to test their interest.

### 2015 – 25 years later

The Somerset Gardens Trust Council meets to discuss an agenda that covers healthy finances (thanks to Stuart Senior), a full events programme (thanks to the Events Committee led by David Freemantle), surveys of four important gardens (thanks to Helen Senior and the Survey and



Elizabeth Gass and Patricia Davies-Gilbert among the freesias at Fairfield courtesy of Bristol Evening News.

Planning Group), grants to primary schools (thanks to Sheila Rabson and the Education Group), support for garden apprenticeships and a website update. It has been a long journey.

How did all this happen? This article looks at some of the key landmarks.

### Starting the Trust

To create a new organization requires not only the vision but also a risk appetite, drive, persistence and the ability to inspire enthusiasm among others, particularly volunteers. This the group of three did. So who were they?

*“Somerset is the only County in the South West without a gardens trust and this seemed particularly anomalous in view of the number of large and small gardens of quality in the County”*

First, Lady (Elizabeth) Gass, who was then a County Councillor with a well known interest in history and archaeology as well as gardens and gardening: she is now the fourth President of the Trust; secondly, Steven Pugsley, who had a close involvement in and experience from working with the young Devon Gardens Trust; and thirdly, Ken Brown, who was a County Council Planning Officer at that time who not only showed the support the Council gave the Trust but beyond his duties also contributed his countryside and planning knowledge to the cause. We owe much to the three of them.

Elizabeth Gass first gathered together, at Hestercombe House, many Somerset people who owned historic gardens and landscapes, as well as professional experts in various relevant fields who either owned or were known to have an expertise in the area of historic gardens. At an early stage the meeting agreed that a Trust should be formed.

It was from this meeting in July 1990 that a steering group was set up, chaired by the late David Tudway Quilter, owner of the well-known garden at Milton Lodge, Wells, which led to the formation of a launch committee and the start of the Trust. The legal documents gave rise to mild controversy



– “There is rather too much of the leave it to us, we know best in this” and “It is important that the people who are prepared to help are all Indians

*“Change is the only constant. Past history of the Trust, and the coming forward of younger members...”*

*and not Chiefs”* – perhaps an allusion to the feeling some had that not enough Indians were selected for roles. Others had more basic concerns “*However I had understood that the Somerset CC was not prepared to allocate any money to such a project, and without funds, any ideas of a garden trust must fail*”. But the group of three (with the early enthusiasm of such early members of the steering group as Lady Sarah Wright and Lady (Hermione) Luttrell) was resolute - and so the Trust was born. By December 1991 the Trust had quickly established a membership of 144.

There was always a lighter side to this formal process. One highlight was an evening with Gilly



Hestercombe House

Drummond organised by Lady Gass at Fairfield in the early days of recruiting members. Mrs Drummond was the Chairman of Hampshire Gardens Trust (one of the very first Trusts to be set up) and doyenne of the Gardens Trust movement. She was a powerful and charismatic speaker.

## How it all developed

The Hestercombe Meeting, and launch of the Steering Group, were the first and critical steps. Some other landmarks were –

- The AGM at Cannington in 1991 where the Council members were elected (with Sylvia Ray as Secretary) and the Survey Group (led for many years by Primrose Mallet-Harris) and the Events Committee, were set up.
- The start of the Newsletter at the same time edited by Stephen Pugsley (who did the distinctive line drawings in his kitchen), the predecessor of this edition.
- The establishment of the Education Committee to encourage colleges to promote horticulture as a career and schools to give a life-long enthusiasm to children for gardens, including giving grants – now ably led by Sheila Rabson.
- The start of the very successful annual Plant Shows organized by Michael and Eve Stancomb at Barford Park.
- The expansion of the role of the Survey Group to include Planning Applications in 1998 (now led by Jenny Kent) in part caused by the furore over inappropriate developments at Orchard Leigh.
- The first in a series of very successful international tours, organized by James and Primrose Mallet-Harris, to Ireland in 2000 (and more recently the one led by Camilla Carter and John Townson in 2014 of the Lake District).

These, and other landmarks described in the series of articles in this issue, well describe the current activities of the Trust.

## The Future

And so on to the next 25 years. Should the anniversary spur us to consider what our vision is for the next 5 or even 25 years? Change is the only constant. Past history of the Trust, and the coming forward of younger members, gives us the confidence that we will take advantage of the opportunities and meet the challenges that lie ahead.



## A Member's experience

*Judy Yeates looks back at the SGT*

As an old member – in every sense of the word – I have had nineteen years of enjoyment as a member.

I was introduced to the Trust by the excellent Chairman at that time, Shirley Hewitt, who I met at a party. Not only was she persuasive, but she sent me a membership form! My first memories? Primrose and James' warm welcome and the friendliness of members, plus admiration for their knowledge - instant recognition of unusual plants and their ability to reel off long Latin names. My first visit was, I think, to Iford Manor on a warm sunny evening followed by an amazing supper produced by Patricia Davies-Gilbert and her team. We sat under the trees with, of course, our bottles of wine to enjoy it.



Iford Manor

At that time the Trust was relatively small and there were not many outings. Now we have hard working, newer young members. The newsletter was simple but this has developed under various editors: Mervyn expanded it and added colour photographs. When Christopher Bond took it over, he developed it into a proper magazine and pressganged people like me to write! This has led to a greater understanding of the hard work of the Sub-Committees. I particularly admire the Survey

*“My first visit was, I think, to Iford Manor on a warm sunny evening followed by an amazing supper”*

Group as I know I wouldn't enjoy it except for reading the results. The Entertainment Committee excels itself, and we now have a packed programme with waiting lists. Whilst I scorned coach trips when I was young, I now welcome them: no hassle and no being last self-driving. The last four years I have been a member of the Education Committee which, as Sheila has written, is both interesting and stimulating. If only the efforts weren't often wasted by lack of watering during the holidays.

As you will gather I am greatly drawn to garden visits particularly James and Primrose's overseas trips. Their preparation is enormous and James' knowledge of many important people on the Continent, plus his language skills, have made them exceptionally enjoyable. The only drawback - dare I say - is James' enthusiasm which often returns us to our Hotel ten minutes before dinner!

I have been fortunate to visit Italy, Germany and France twice. These visits have been written about in previous articles but one or two memories - apart from the beauty everywhere - is of dead oak trees in June in Germany, the leaves still on the trees but completely brown. I hope this disease doesn't come to the UK. A visit to Potsdam was memorable. The remains of the Berlin Wall went through the gardens. At the same time we saw the



Conference Centre: each country had a suite of rooms it had furnished with its national furniture; each member entered the Hall by a different door. Not much friendship there! My last trip was to the Ile de France in May 2013 to coincide with the flower show at Courson just outside Paris. We explored the stands spread over several acres with nurseries from all over France and other countries including, in the past, James and Primrose's. The Fair is a laid back version of Chelsea – a good thing that the coach had a large boot as we were able to purchase plants on the site.



Now that I have joined the walking stick brigade, the younger members are patient and helpful. I hope that my nineteen years continue.

Is there a downside? not really, perhaps the fickleness of English weather when we paddle around the gardens in boots and macs – but that is gardening!

*‘Presumably this would have been a crossing purely for carriages, creating a dramatic splash as the horses crossed’*

## Restoration at Halswell Park - Mill Wood

by Edward Strachan

In the 1950s, Mill Wood, the pleasure gardens of Halswell Park, was sold off in a series of auctions, as the Halswell estate was broken up. As I wrote in the February issue, we have now re-united the House with its pleasure gardens after 65 years of separation, and have embarked on Mill Wood's restoration.

Last November we planted 150 trees in a symbolic ceremony to celebrate the reunion. Over the next six months, we plan to plant in excess of a further 3500 saplings following the original planting scheme of the 1750s, under the direction of our landscape consultant and historian Simon Bonvoisin of Nicholas Pearson Partnership, who has been closely involved with Halswell since drawing up a Landscape Management Plan in 1995.

Now we are concentrating on the restoration of the lakes, their structures and cascades. For those who do not know, there are six different lakes or large ponds, either cascading, gushing, or flowing into a lower, until finally culminating in a final cascade visible from the Goathurst Road, and continuing in a stream towards Bridgwater.

Before we can do anything, the archaeology has to be completed. And our appointed specialist, James Brigers, has already uncovered various areas of interest.

Between the middle lakes, at the waterfall which flows from what is known as Neptune's Arch, archaeology has revealed the full footprint of the Arch, and together with the existing ruins, we can be confident of being able to rebuild the Arch as it stood.

Meanwhile, archaeology here has shown us that the passage between the lakes, currently grassed over as it passes over the water, was formerly a brick-lined ford, which would have had a constant flow of water crossing it. Presumably this would have been a crossing purely for carriages, creating a dramatic splash as the horses crossed. This ford may have failed at some point, perhaps leaking through its surface, or it may have been covered and grassed over in order to allow large modern



agricultural machinery to cross at this point. A new concrete weir was installed in the 1970s to allow the flow of water between the lakes. Before taking any decision whether to reinstate the ford, archaeological investigation over a larger area will be required followed by a full condition survey/analysis of the remaining structure. [see photo above]

Interestingly, the archaeology has also found a pebble-lined leat, flanked originally by a brick wall, which ran parallel to the middle lake, picturesquely providing the sound of water as a visitor ambled along the path. With only three trenches sunk, we cannot be sure of its purpose, or indeed its source, although we can be sure of its final destination at the deepest point of Mill Wood. Perhaps it was to feed a small mill, or a small fountain - or just an overflow. [see photo below]



We have been reassured to find the foundations of the historic Druids Hut. This important structure in garden history, about which I hope to write more once it has been rebuilt, sat hidden in the trees in Mill Wood and is familiar within living memory. It was left standing open to the elements following the clear felling in the 1950s, was burnt down in the 1960's. Its footprint had long disappeared, until the archaeologist got to work. Eerily, his findings have shown evidence of paleolithic life in this isolated site, and as yet, nowhere else in Mill Wood, although analysis of Google Earth images reveal the outline of a C shaped settlement just to the West of the Druids Hut, in the field to the West of Mill Wood. [see photo above right]

Perhaps as we expected, our first months at Mill Wood have thrown up too many questions than can be addressed speedily or answered with certainty. The archaeology has been, and continues to be fascinating, and we will follow its direction, but will also be happy to heed any advice or thoughts. We look forward to welcoming members of the SGT on 19<sup>th</sup> September, and sharing our experiences to date.



## How to prepare for Chelsea

*Chris Smith and Mike Mulligan of Pennard Plants explain how it can dominate your life - arranged by Anthony Pugh-Thomas*

### How we started

We established Pennard Plants Nursery in 2001 in the walled garden of Pennard House in the village of East Pennard. Initially we began by growing grasses and herbaceous perennials, but the focus has changed over the years, and we now specialise in the 'Kitchen Garden' supplying a range of around 600 varieties of heritage vegetable and flower seeds, and growing herbs, fruit trees and

*“...we now specialise in the 'Kitchen Garden' supplying a range of around 600 varieties of heritage vegetable and flower seeds...”*



increasingly a large range of unusual edible plants from around the World.

It is all very well growing these plants but in order to make a living, we have to sell them too. The Nursery is off the beaten track so it is no good relying on passing trade; we do not have a cafe or tearooms to encourage visitors, so rather we have to go to them; hence we decided very early on that we would be looking to the flower shows to sell our production. Initially we went to the smaller shows; our first was at the Bath & West at a time when foot and mouth had prevented the main show from taking place. We believed we needed to find a way into the larger shows and began to apply to the Royal Horticultural Society for such shows as Gardeners' World and Tatton Park.

## **The Road to Chelsea**

Our first RHS show was at Wisley Gardens, leading on to an appearance at Tatton Park the following year, but back in 2001 there were plenty of exhibitors to fill the stands and it was a very hit and miss affair as to the availability of space and who was allowed in. In 2003 we had applied for Chelsea never dreaming a small nursery, very much in its infancy, would be allocated a space. Initially we were turned down, but in the March of that year a cancellation occurred and we were offered a tiny space, just 10ft x 10ft, to mount a display. We did, and achieved a Silver Medal, the first of many Medals for Chelsea and the other RHS Shows. We are now a regular exhibitor at Chelsea, Hampton

Court, Tatton Park and all the other RHS shows.

These large Shows take much of our time, both in preparation and in actual presence on the showground. If we consider Chelsea, applications are made in August, allocation of space by October. Meanwhile we will have briefed the designer, an initial plan will have been drawn up to which the plants will be added, in mid-September (before knowing we actually have space at the Show), we will have potted a lot of the plants and ordered much of the 'hardware', the paving, edging and all the other ancillaries one

needs. At Chelsea you cannot excavate in the Great Pavilion, therefore everything has to be above ground and this usually means raised beds. By the New Year we will have many of the plants well underway but then have to consider sowings of annual plants and vegetables. The weather plays a huge part in the growing of these and we usually have to sow far more than we need. Whilst all this is going on, we still have to keep the business

*“At Chelsea you cannot excavate in the Great Pavilion, therefore everything has to be above ground and this usually means raised beds”*

running - mail order through the website is tremendously important - as are the many Potato Events we run in January, February and March. In April it will be the Cardiff Flower Show, so are planning for that with the thought of Chelsea forever in our minds; accommodation will have been booked; our landscape crew briefed about any hard landscaping on the project; and press releases will have been prepared and sent to the BBC and



various members of the Horticultural Press in the hope of getting coverage.

May arrives - we no longer take part in the Malvern Show to allow more time to prepare for Chelsea. On the weekend of the week before, we begin to load trucks to take an entire garden from Somerset to London, and this will be the first of possibly 6 trips up and down the A303 to the Show. Deliveries will also have been slotted into the schedule for heavy materials such as compost and paving which will come straight to site.

The Build usually starts on the Monday, the Great Pavilion is relatively empty then and access is easy. As the week progresses it will get much more difficult. We aim to finish on the Saturday, the Sunday is taken up with final tweaks, clearing the rubbish and tidying. The Monday is Press Day - and the dreaded Judging, the Royal Visit and the Gala Night!

On the Tuesday we find out if it has all been worth it, the Medals are out! It took us just eight years to win our first Chelsea Gold in 2013! In 2014 we slipped back to a Silver-Gilt and the pressure is on for 2015 to get back to Gold!

One week later, on the Sunday after the Show all the work is dismantled, the end of another Chelsea!

*Editors' Note: They did it – another Gold Medal at Chelsea!*

## Highlights of the many garden visits organized by the Events Committee

*Susie Thorne relives some great garden visits*

The first event I attended was the trip to Rousham in Oxfordshire, organised, I think, by Mervyn Wilson. As well as the beauty of the House and Kent's landscape and the charm of the 'watery walk', I well remember the welcome by the Trust members and the surprise of the shared picnic we enjoyed in the formal gardens. Another trip where there was a particularly memorable picnic was the

visit to Camerton, where lots of luscious home produce was donated. The tour of the garden there was a revelation, with wonderful formal areas following one after another. We were all amazed at the owner's energy in creating and maintaining it to such a high level.

*"The tour of the garden there was a revelation, with wonderful formal areas following one after another"*



Gresgarth

Any list of highlights is sure to be personal. As someone interested in garden design, the dreamy Upton Wold has to be mentioned. The garden there made the absolute best of a less-than-perfect site and every area has its own appeal. Tree lovers were also catered for with the national collection of walnuts. It was an absolutely beautiful day; we had been to Sezincote in the morning and had a fascinating tour of the House. We picnicked beside the stream and it was difficult to get people to rejoin the coach, but I was confident they would love Upton Wold once they got there.

I wasn't lucky enough to go on James and Primrose Mallet-Harris' extremely successful trips in Germany, Florence and Ireland, but Camilla Carter



The Chairman and Council of the  
**Somerset Gardens Trust**

Invite you to join their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

at

**Halswell House, Goathurst, Bridgwater, TA5 2DH**

by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Edward Strachan

on

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 3.30 p.m.**

***RSVP by 1<sup>st</sup> August***

*David Freemantle*

*Email [hartwoodhouse@hotmail.com](mailto:hartwoodhouse@hotmail.com)*

*Tel 01984 667202*

***preceded by***

*AGM @ 2.30 p.m.*

*3 p.m. Halswell talk*

*by Mr Edward Strachan*

**A VERY IMPORTANT DATE FOR YOUR DIARY**

**The Cornwall Visit in 2016**

The Somerset Gardens Trust will leave for Cornwall on Thursday, April 7th, returning on Sunday 10 April 2016. We have booked rooms at The Falmouth Hotel, a comfortable family run hotel which prides itself on its food. It will make an ideal base for garden exploration.

We shall visit many spectacular well known and private gardens - Heligan, Trewithen, Trewidden, Tremeneer, Godolphin, Trebah, Glendurgan and Pencarrow (more mouth watering information on each of these on the internet). We will also spend one afternoon in Falmouth to enable members to visit either The Maritime Museum or Pendennis Castle.

Bookings will be taken in the Autumn when costs and a full day-by-day itinerary are available.

Camilla Carter, John Townson



and John Townson's trip to the Lake District was hugely enjoyable. An afternoon at Arabella Lennox-Boyd's superb garden at Gresgarth was followed by time at the great gardens of Holker and Levens as well as the historic ruins at Lowther Castle. Those of us on the trip were so impressed with the perfect timings allowed for each visit.



Durslade Farm

Other gardens that spring to mind are the intriguingly hedged Plaz Metaxu near Tiverton and our evening visits to Middle Lambrook and Corton Denham.

I remember drifts of blue mertensia at Longstock Park, blue agapanthus in box-edged beds at Pulham and the blue border at Corscombe, as well as fabulous furniture at John Makepeace's house in Beaminster!

We have all enjoyed the supper lectures and had entertaining evenings at Mallet Court, Hartwood House, Crowcombe and Batcombe. Members' cooking skills have been called upon and delicious suppers have been provided over and over again. Top of the lectures for me was Jake Hobson's talk on topiary with slides of clipped plants from all over the world. Following this up with a trip to his mother's lovely garden, Harvard Farm, where we could see that some of his work in reality, worked very well. That day, we then went on to the perfect,

colour-themed garden at Corscombe House. Somehow, en route, our whole convoy of cars misread the directions and toured the lesser-known lanes of the district, passing and re-passing each other several times.

We have had two very enjoyable evening drinks parties, one at each end of the County and enlisted many new members as a result.

Not to be forgotten, of course, are the plant sales, kindly hosted in recent years by Anthony and Rosemary. Pugh-Thomas. These have been very successful financially and have involved lots of work for all members; catering, plant producing, and not least, pricing, as well as running it all on the day. I have been checking for buds on my *Primula* 'Snowdrift' one of the treasures purchased last year from Camilla's stand.

At the heart of the Events Committee, of course, are David and Rosemary Freemantle, who have generously put so much time, energy and goodwill into the events, made them so much fun and given us all happy memories.

## An eventful day at Melbury and Minterne

*By Deidre Gascoigne*

Melbury Gardens and Deer Park are owned by The Honorable Mrs. Charlotte Townshend DL, whose ancestors have lived at Melbury since 1500. The Gardens and Deer Park lie within a wider designed landscape which extends to over 1500 acres.

*"The relatively uncultivated environment has resulted in the survival of a very rich lichen and bryophyte flora..."*

Despite a brisk cold wind twenty-four members of the Trust enjoyed a really wonderful morning. In the absence of Mrs. Townshend who unfortunately had to attend an important funeral, we were taken round by the very knowledgeable Estate Manager,



Andy Poore, who is also the Archivist for Melbury. He has looked after the Estate, along with several others, since 1988. Despite some delays caused by a road accident, our tour started on the top of a hill in the Deer Park. Andy has been responsible for re-landscaping part of the Deer Park which was created in 1547 and where a number of medieval oaks still survive. The changes included the introduction of a number of small enclosures and avenue features, dominated by oak, but also with beech and sweet chestnut as well as individual planting of exotic species. The relatively uncultivated environment has resulted in the survival of a very rich lichen and bryophyte flora and rare species associated with primary forest conditions.

We were pleased to move into the comparative warmth of the “Garden”, which is very much part of the Deer Park as the owners think of the whole area as their garden! We walked through swathes of natural wild bluebells and white wood anemones sloping down to the Lake. There are many stunning and unusual trees but most impressively the *Platanus orientalis* (by the Lake) and the *Sequoia sempervirens* which is one of the tallest and stoutest in England. The tour allowed wonderful views of the House across the Lake, which was built in the 1540’s adjacent to a previous medieval mansion

house. It was altered and added to in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>C.

*“Picnic lunch was unfortunately marred by a hailstorm so we were delighted to be welcomed into Minterne House”*

Picnic lunch was unfortunately marred by a hailstorm so we were delighted to be welcomed into Minterne House, the home of the Churchill and Digby families since 1620, where we were given an entertaining and informative talk by Lord Digby supported by his son, The Hon. Henry Digby, who filled us in with marvellous family stories during a tour of the ground floor. There were many wonderful pictures and tapestries on the walls including one very special painting of a child on a pony with two little dogs painted by Queen Victoria’s animal painter, C. Burton Barber. We were then given tea with tasty sandwiches and delicious apple cake, after which we were led by Henry around the delightful gardens through an abundance of Rhododendrons and Azaleas, first brought back from the Himalayas by E.H Wilson in the 19<sup>th</sup>C, many of which have now grown to full maturity producing a Himalayan-like shrubbery. The garden led along a lively stream which cascaded down the valley, with fascinating collections of *Primulas* and *Hostas*. Specimen trees, including a *Prunus*, were beautifully reflected below a pretty arched bridge.

The whole day was rated by many of the tired members as one of the best they had enjoyed and we are very grateful to James Harris for arranging it.



Minterne House



## Beyond the Palace Walls

*Maria Constantinidou finds a watery garden in Wells*

I associate the Bishop's Palace gardens with sleepy summer days suffused with the sound of water: the gently moving water around the moat, the still contemplation pool in the heart of the gardens and the cascade. Water is the life-giving well that springs in the middle of the garden and to which the City of Wells owes its existence.

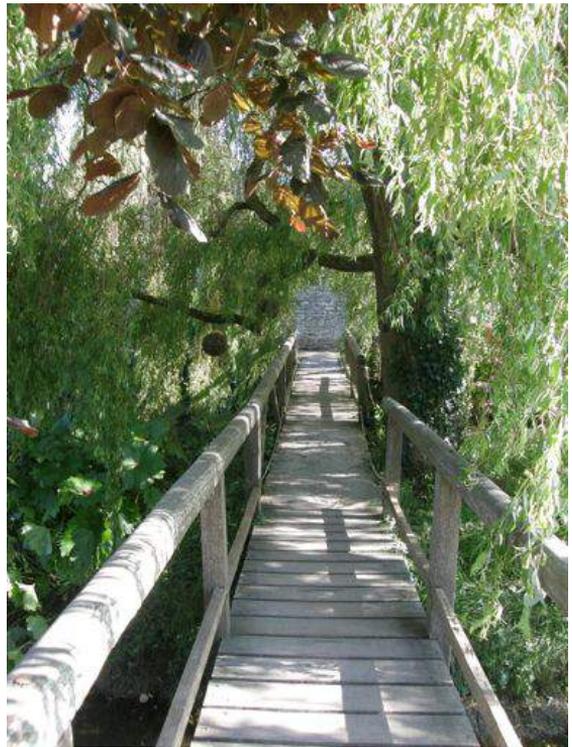
Yet over the gentle landscape of the garden there is a weight of eight centuries of history. I set out to find how the past relates to the present use of the garden with the help of James Cross, the Head Gardener.

*“the community garden breaks down the high walls which surround the Palace and which were constructed originally to protect the Bishop from the people of Wells”*

James has been the Head Gardener for the last eleven years. He works with a team of dedicated gardeners - Rob, for instance, has been working there since 1955! James knows very well the history of the gardens and the influence and styles of past bishops to the present landscaping. Bishop Laws (1825-1845) and his successor, Bishop Bagot, were the prime movers in turning the south lawn into a romantic picturesque/gardenesque Victorian garden. Bishop Laws had some of the ruins of the Great Hall demolished and altered and he planted the great trees that still survive, the black walnut, the *Ginkgo biloba* and the *Catalpa*; also he surrounded the ruined turrets with a bed of exotic plants. This part of the garden has retained the original style.

However, the garden is not fossilised in the 19C. Lots of new work is going on all the time, work that takes its inspiration from the historic features of the Palace and of the Chapel. In the North-East

corner of the formal garden, the gardeners have taken their inspiration from the stone carvings of the Oriel window. A stone portcullis has been turned into a grid of *Euonymus* hedging with each square planted with different *Dahlias* bearing Bishops' names, a great success with the public. The hedging was kindly paid for by the Somerset Gardens Trust.



Another stone carving on the same window is that of St Andrew's Cross. Work is in progress to create another hedged-in garden in the shape of the Cross and fill it with plants that bear the colours of the arms of the Bishops of Wells, purple, yellow and blue. The real challenge will be to recreate - probably in hedging - the stone rose on the same window. It is extraordinary, bringing history into the present, by turning the cold carved stone into living, breathing, ever-changing plants.

In the informal part of the garden, there is the contemplation garden commissioned by the previous Bishop of Wells, Peter Price, before his retirement in 2013. It is an oblong enclosed by



young yew hedges. It is divided into irregular beds by raised, precisely cut, Purbeck stone. It is a representation of a small part of the stained glass window showing the Tree of Jesse, the stone edge to the beds representing the lead framing of the stained glass. James had filled the different beds each with a different bright flowered annual, to represent the vibrant colours of the stained glass. In the middle of the summer it looks magnificent.

History has its place in the garden. But, also, so does the modern commercial world. In part of the old kitchen garden, enormous in the old days, there is bustle and life supervised by Amanda and her group of volunteers. There is a neatly laid out community garden which provides vegetables for the restaurant, already, in mid-April, showing lots of herbs and vegetables; an extensive nursery garden that provides plants for sale to visitors and for planting in the ornamental garden; and there is a large expanse of allotments - present since 1945. Some of them are exquisite in their neatness, artistic layout and abundance.

I think that the reason that I like this garden so much is because it provides a contrast between the old and the new. The old history brought literally to life through turning old stone symbols and brittle glass into living plants; the community garden breaks down the high walls which surround the Palace and which were constructed originally to protect the Bishop from the people of Wells, and turns the people into the gardeners and stakeholders.

## Why Art in the Garden ?

*Two sculptors (Fiona Campbell and Melanie Deegan) talk to the Editors*

Looking out into the Paradise Garden at East Burford House with its stone troughs, lions and pavilion, it seemed the right time to ask the difficult question as to whether plants and art mix. Melanie was clear that they add to each other.

They provide colour all year round – in all lights and weathers and provide focal points. Fiona liked the way that art can sometimes catch the essence of the plants, adds intrigue and lifts a garden to a different level.

If art has all these advantages, why do so many gardens have none? The Editors suggested that maybe people wanted grass or vegetables more.

*“... others like art to have a function - a pergola to support climbers or an ornate fountain head in a garden pond, large or small”*

Fiona shook her head sadly – “it’s because they have no interest in art”. There was a short silence. And then Melanie explained that artists can see how a piece of art will look in its place – but some of us do not have this gift.

So it’s a leap of imagination. Once that barrier is crossed, there is a wide choice. We discussed the materials that are weather proof – way beyond



Melanie Deegan



stone – such as wood, copper, stainless steel, recycled materials, glass (Melanie works in moulded wire, resin and recycled materials producing figurative animals which she creates in her studio and while travelling in a motorhome abroad); Fiona works mainly in steel, copper and wire producing anything from wire spiders' webs – ideal for catching metal flies in a pergola – to more abstract forms which are full of surprises): and style – classical or contemporary: size, figurative or abstract – a recycled driftwood horse in a large garden to a wire nest with glass eggs in a small one.

The conversation moved onto where to put art in the garden. Melanie explained that there are no rules – it is where you think it looks best. Some like art as a focal point in a courtyard, or reflected in a pond, or enlivening a woodland clearing as at Hestercombe, or providing structure in a formal garden, or a statue at the end of a vista. Fiona pointed out that others like art to have a function - a pergola to support climbers or an ornate fountain head in a garden pond, large or small.

So is there a good time to start looking at art ?

Melanie liked the idea of a new garden when it can be incorporated into the design or of willow structures before the plants bulk up. Indeed, sometimes it drives the garden design with the art an integral part of it - think of the canal and pavilion at Tintinhull. Fiona said it is not too late for an established garden – it may give it a new point of interest, even excitement.

So where do you find a selection to choose from? Melanie said that you cannot go to an art supermarket to view all the possibilities but there are lots of channels to choose from



Fiona Campbell

## SAW/NGS Weekend 9-11<sup>th</sup> October

*As part of the Somerset Art weeks Festival 2015 (3rd-18<sup>th</sup> October)  
the Somerset NGS Gardens Open for Charity will be joining with Somerset Art Works  
to open five gardens over this weekend:*

Aller Farmhouse nr Williton T4 4LY  
Copse Hall Brent Knoll TA9 4DF  
Honeyhurst Fm Nr Cheddar BS27 3UJ  
Little Yarford Fmhse nr Taunton TA2 8AN  
Midney Gdns Somerton TA11 7HR



– art or sculpture galleries, gardens or exhibitions, reclamations. Both artists exhibit in Somerset Art Week where you can visit studios, see how the art is made and, if you wish, commission a bespoke piece – not as daunting as it sounds – artists are approachable and keen to understand your idea and your budget - which can be as low as £50. Melanie is happy to receive visitors to her studio on the Quay at Watchet. Fiona enjoys meeting people at Shows (and how satisfying it is to know the person who made it – Somerset is happily full of artists (Somerset Art Weeks is from 3 to 18 October. Come and indulge your senses – the artists are wrong – art fires all our imaginations - *Editors*).

And their final messages? Fiona “*artists are very happy to help, discuss and understand your concerns..*” Melanie – “*Tell us what you want and we’ll make it*”.

## Education Group highlights

*Sheila Rabson visits some exciting schools*

Having worked in the field of education as my career, it was a natural progression to combine this role with my love of horticulture and nature. Volunteering to help with the Education Group of the Trust has given me some very interesting insights and highlights and I would like to share five areas with you.

Firstly, most Schools have taken up some aspect of gardening to enhance the National Curriculum. In some cases a teacher has had gardening thrust upon them and they have laboured to find things to do to engage the children. In other Schools they have the joy of a properly trained horticulturalist and there is a real plan in place to which the children can relate and contribute. Enthusiasm from teachers, parents, or even an outside source, can really engage the children and get

them hooked on gardening for life. We recently visited Highbridge Church School, a new building in older grounds, and found some well-used raised beds growing a range of vegetables and a wonderful, large pond that is used for pond dipping.

*“All children can participate in this and learn to build dens, climb trees, light fires, experience the outdoors in all weathers...”*

Secondly, we have seen much interest in our grants. We will visit Schools to see how they will put their plan into place and often we will be shown around by members of the garden club or the eco-warriors. The pupils are very involved with composting and other green issues. It is a shame that at Montacute the badgers want to join in distributing the compost before it has had time to





break down! Willow workshops have provided pupils with an interesting and constructive day and the School is left with a shady reading room, walkway or other feature made from living willow. Other Schools have visited gardens such as Hestercombe and taken back ideas for artwork, garden design projects etc.

Forest schools have started to come to the fore in this area as the main driving force came from Bridgwater College. All children can participate in this and learn to build dens, climb trees, light fires, experience the outdoors in all weathers etc. Children with particular problems can be helped as there is no pressure to be still or achieve academically. We recently visited a new Academy in Bridgwater and the Head is full of ideas for this area. He has already planted twenty-five different varieties of Somerset apples to create an orchard. He also has the most wonderful wild flower meadow covering approximately one acre.

Each year the Education groups of the South-West have a conference. Here we can meet and exchange ideas with other Trusts. It would appear that each Trust takes a very different approach to the idea of education. In some Counties, they pass things over to the County Naturalists' Trust, some support students at horticultural college and others are semi-moribund or hampered by a lack of volunteers. Finance is obviously an issue within some County Gardens Trusts whilst others have heavy support both from the County Council and private companies.

Lastly the best thing of all is the people who sit on the Education Group. We are a small but friendly bunch and enjoy interacting with the Schools we visit. We all love gardening and will enthuse over the one potato or carrot that has grown and inspired a child to try eating it, as over a grand landscape scheme. The advent of the "Bargain Basement" plant stall was due to the idea of one of our members, as she felt that no plant was too common to be sold. This gives us another way of talking to people and showing our love for plants and gardens.

## Derek Briggs 1932 - 2015

Derek has been a valued member of the Education Group since its inception ten years ago.

As a new venture the group needed to find people to form it and I, as first Chairperson, asked Derek to join. With many other voluntary commitments Derek simply didn't have time for more, but education and the environment were always integral to his life and so he agreed to lend his support.

His interest and commitment has lasted for the intervening ten years and the Education Group has benefited greatly from his knowledge and practicality. He was always quick to recognise the good work done by schools and the benefits that this brought their pupils.

Derek was a splendid man to know. As a group, we not only work well together but also make our meetings enjoyable; we will miss his valuable contribution to both. He was a rock of sense and stability and also the most agreeable of companions. It is telling that he was with us to visit two schools just a fortnight before he died. He will be missed.

## Glorious Geraniums and other delights

*Jenny Spiller of Elworthy Nursery tells an unlikely tale with a happy ending*

*"When I started selling plants, I would propagate everything I could, but because our garden is on a north slope at 600 ft above sea level, plants needed to be fairly tough"*

## How I came to run a Nursery

Shortly after I gave up teaching in the early 80s and after we had started a family, I visited a garden where there was a range of interesting plants that were new to me and saw rows of seedlings in pots



that the garden owner had grown from the Alpine Garden Society seed exchange. This inspired me to grow more and more plants from seed, to join specialist gardening societies and to share ideas with enthusiastic local plantsmen.

We had an extra  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre adjoining our garden and we moved our three goats there, so allowing us to create new island beds in the garden proper, which we soon filled with divided plants, those grown from cuttings given by friends and with seeds from the specialist societies.

*“The range is wide and the plants can be lobed and toothed; aromatic; interestingly coloured with flowers ranging from white, pink, to purple or blue...”*

Once I had filled our garden and swapped surplus plants with friends, I was still left with many that I could not bear to throw away, so I joined the local W.I. market at Williton and sold there on a weekly basis. Soon after this we went, as customers, to one of the first NCCPG (now Plant Heritage) Plant Sales at Knightshayes Court: it was rather like a frantic plant jumble sale with lots of treasures. Within a couple of years we went to the Sale as a Nursery and also sold plants at Dunster Country Fair, where I think we were the first exhibitor to sell plants. At this time I had just a small gravel area by the garage to stand the plants on, and each sale like these, stretched my stock to the limit. As stocks increased we took part of the goats' paddock for plants, erected a greenhouse and our first polytunnel. Much has changed - we now exhibit at the Savill Gardens in Windsor Great Park, Chenies Manor, Cothay and specialist Plant Fairs in the South of England.

## How I came to grow Geraniums

When I started selling plants, I would propagate everything I could, but because our garden is on a north slope at 600 ft above sea level, plants needed to be fairly tough. As I became more familiar with the huge range of perennial and alpine plants that were available and that suited our conditions, I became a bit more discerning about the plants I wanted to grow. I am particularly enamoured of hardy geraniums as they are long-lived, versatile and undemanding and we currently offer 85 varieties. The range is wide and the plants can be lobed and toothed; aromatic; interestingly coloured with flowers ranging from white, pink, to purple or blue; usually saucer-shaped with differing shapes - sometimes flat or star-shaped. They are ideal garden plants.

Hardy Geraniums can be found growing in the wild in many areas of the world such as Europe, China and North America. They have a variety of foliage forms with leaves in various shades from plain green through variegated to those with dark markings. Flower colours range from white to differing shades of pink, purple or blue and can be single or double with several different flower shapes. For sunny areas *Geranium sanguineum* or *cinereum* varieties are best; in shade *nodosum* or *phaeum* varieties (*nodosum* 'Blueberry Ice' is especially good for difficult dark corners) and for those gardeners looking for colourful ground-cover, there are the *Geranium macrorrhizum* varieties.





At one time I used to buy in a few plugs etc. from wholesalers to obtain the latest varieties but quickly found many of them were not as resilient as older varieties or were just short lived; and sometimes the plants were wrongly named. As significantly, since many new varieties had Plant Breeders Rights on them (making it illegal to propagate them without a licence that is too expensive for a small nursery to acquire), and as what really interested me was propagating plants, there was little point in my buying them just to sell them on.

**Note:** *Details of our opening hours and our current stock and our annual Galanthus list are on our website but we do not supply plants by mail order (except for Galanthus in January and February), relying for sales on visitors and plant fairs. - [www.elworthy-cottage.co.uk](http://www.elworthy-cottage.co.uk)*

## A little changed Capability Brown landscape at Croome Court

*"The first and best beloved child" - by W.B. Sullivan of the Staffordshire Gardens Trust (Somerset boasts only one design by him - the tower at Burton Pynsent)*

The present Croome Court, a Grade 1 listed building, dates from 1752 when the Earl of Coventry commissioned Brown to design a new house in the more fashionable Palladian style, to replace the Jacobean structure he had inherited (and of which only the chimneys survive). He next invited him to create a park on the surrounding land, which was virtually a bog (and according to its owner "as hapless a spot as any in the island"). Brown, who numbered water management among his talents, drained the land by laying miles of culverts which fed into a lake and a mile-and-a-half serpentine river, which took twelve years to dig out by hand.

Apart from being part of Brown's drainage system, the Lake's function was both aesthetic and recreational, adding to the scenic value of the parkland and providing family and guests with the opportunity for some gentle sailing.

This was the first of Brown's estimated 280 commissions and, when finished, presented not only his employer but also future generations down to this very day (thanks to the National Trust), with an archetypical Brownian 'natural' landscape, incorporating features such as his signature lake, softly undulating contours, belts of trees and vistas end-stopped by eye-catchers, and bringing the neighbouring parkland into closer contact with the House (It was not for nothing that William Cowper called Brown "the omnipotent magician").

Brown also replaced the mediaeval church (which occupied a site too close to the present house) -p22 with the present building, an early example of Gothic Revival architecture, siting it as an eye-catcher on higher ground, though the interior, described as "pure Georgian Gothic", is the work of Robert Adam. The mediaeval village which also stood close to the House was removed in order to create an open park with uninterrupted views of the distant Malvern Hills, and the formal garden which lay on the South side was also swept away.





Fifty members of the Trust visited the gardens at East Burford House in an isolated Mendip Valley near Wells on the first warm evening in June (SGT weather!) . The food and drink made by members of the Events Committee vanished easily on the Terrace



Brown also designed the Rotunda, a domed circular building close to the House which views across to Bredon Hill and the Malverns, as well as the lakeside grotto, constructed with tufa and limestone and covered with shells, corals and semi-precious stones which would have sparkled in the sunlight, but which are now long gone. Next to the entrance to the Grotto reclines the Coade-stone figure of Sabrina, the water-nymph believed to have inhabited the River Severn, on whose gentle curves Brown's river is said to have been modelled.

*“... drained the land by laying miles of culverts which fed into a lake and a mile-and-a-half serpentine river, which took twelve years to dig out by hand.”*

Pirton Tower, an eye-catcher perched on a rise to the North of the Court, and Dunstall Castle, now cut off from the Park by trees, were both built as ruins, following contemporary fashion, the first to a design by James Wyatt, and the second to a design by Robert Adam (Broadway Tower, built on a 'beacon' hill overlooking the village of Broadway, was also designed by James Wyatt, commissioned by Lady Coventry, who wanted to see whether it could be seen at Croome Court, twenty-two miles away!)

Such was the fame which Croome Court enjoyed in the sixth Earl's lifetime that in 1788, it was visited by George III, accompanied by a large royal party. It became the home of the Dutch Royal Family during World War II, as well as being chosen as a possible retreat for our own should they ever have agreed to leave London (which they never did!). During WW2, part of the Estate was used as an airfield, at which radar systems were tested, and the present Visitors' Centre occupies what was once the sick quarters.

The Coventry family left Croome Court in 1948, and it then passed through a number of owners, the first being the Archdiocese of Birmingham which used the House as a school. It later became the

headquarters of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, renamed as “Chaitanya College”, and later a conference centre, before it was purchased by the Croome Heritage Trust. In 2007 the National Trust acquired a ten year lease from the Trust, which could be extended to 999 years provided The National Trust can raise £4.8 million to secure the Court's long-term financial future and to carry out essential restoration work. In carrying out this work, the Trust faces difficult decisions. For example, during its occupation by the Hare Krishna owners, the unique eighteenth century stucco garlands on the walls of the Dining Room, which was used for special ceremonies, were painted in bright colours, and the Trust must decide whether they should be restored or left as a reminder of the Court's more recent history.

So far, the Trust has dredged the Lake and River, (and, in doing so, removing fifty thousand cubic metres of silt), restored ornamental statues and buildings and planted 45,000 trees and plants, drawing for historical accuracy on old estate maps and a guide book written in 1824 to which the head gardener, William Dean, was a contributor. The Trust has also benefitted from the sixth Earl's habit of maintaining and then retaining a detailed record of what types of plants he purchased, and where they were planted. Together these documents have enabled the Trust to plant the 45,000 trees and shrubs. Much has been done, but much remains. For example, the Chinese Bridge which once spanned the River, waits to be re-built, as does the boathouse, of which only the foundations now remain.

Parts of Croome Court and the Park itself are open to the public.

## The end of training comes into sight

*Simon Grundy of Cannington looks out of his campsite window*

We always tell students that once they return after the Christmas break, the rest of the academic year flies by, and before you know it, the last assignment is in and the Summer break is here. At the point of writing this article Students have four weeks left in College and then for some it's the big bad world of



work and for others it's a few weeks rest then back to College in September.

This term has been as busy a term as I have ever known in 15 years in education. Students have been cracking on with assignment work, many achieving excellent grades with some fantastic well-written pieces of work finding their way to my desk. Monty Garden in the heart of the Cannington Campus has been transformed with new turf laid, some serious pruning being completed, a polytunnel in full use and the plots that were being prepared in the Spring now in full production. Sat in my office in shirt and tie, I get a pang of jealousy as I see the Students out in their shorts enjoying the early Summer sunshine, looking like they are enjoying learning their trade and being able to practice it on campus. When I go and ask how they are doing and what their plans are for the Summer, the responses are always positive, many saying they are busy at work either on placements or in part-time jobs - the good weather helps the mood too.



A couple of weeks ago we had an excellent event where a range of industry representatives came and gave an insight to our Students on what it's like working in the horticulture and the countryside industries. With representatives attending from a variety of organisations including the Soil Association, National Trust, Yeo Valley Organic Garden and Cantelo Nurseries - Staff and

*“... It went so well and I really feel very proud. Such an achievement and a real confidence builder...”*

Students had a good view of what it's like to work at some great places and gained an insight into what employers expect in terms of skills required.

Our horticultural Students have been instrumental in our big show events this year at both the Devon County Show and the Bath and West Show. They have helped design the plot, source and grow on the plants for the horticultural displays, get it prepared and loaded for each Show, and it's all paid off with two 'Best in Show' trade stands (winning gold medals at both!). We can't take all

the credit as it's a big effort from the whole of the land-based provision at Cannington, but our contribution was a big one.

Yesterday we had an added and most welcome award as a couple of our level 3 horticulture Students, Sid and Jack, were awarded both the 'Judges' and 'Peoples' Choice' awards for the 2 - hour Garden Challenge at the Bath and West Show, a real credit to their hard work and passion for their chosen subject. Sid, one of our level 3 horticulture Students who has been with us for two years, when asked how was that experience for you said *“It went so well and I really feel very proud. Such an achievement and a real confidence builder. It's only the start of many great things to come. Honestly couldn't have done it without you,*



*Tom and Nigel, so thank you for your help. I have learnt a lot from you guys and have the upmost respect for you all”.*

Nigel Cox, programme manager for our horticulture and countryside management programmes, is enthusiastic about the future. *“Students have great resources here that enable them to develop a wide range of skill-sets, and our links with partner industry representatives helps us to ensure that the skills we deliver are those that industry needs”.* With new ‘Grow your Own Future’ bursaries helping horticulture Students financially, and other industry scholarships available, Students have all the opportunities they need for a successful future career.

It’s been another cracking year, it’s nearly over for the Students now, and the Staff will be off for a well-deserved break over the Summer, but soon September will be here and it all starts again.

## Survey and Planning Highlights

*The Editors look back at some recent highlights from a great selection of surveys and planning initiatives made by the Survey and Planning Group led by Primrose Mallet-Harris and Helen Senior. Here the editors give their reactions to some of them -*

- A graphic account of the documentary research that goes into finding out the history of the gardens surveyed and who made them – with many dead ends and pleasant surprises from unlikely sources such as Court dispute records – by Duncan Chalmers in the Winter 2014 edition. This showed as much about the harsh conditions (and primitive medicine) people lived in, as about their gardens.
- A lovely and encouraging piece about the why researching a historic garden at East Coker enabled Caroline Lee to see her own garden with new eyes. In the Spring 2015 edition.
- The complicated – and sometimes arcane – world of planning laws described by Helen Senior in the Winter 2014 edition. The concept of the ability of a place to tell the national story is powerful and understandable: the important

meaning of ‘significance’ had quite passed me by.

- The thought that follies had a function such as banqueting or as boundary markers, and were not even ‘follies’ at all (rather ‘eyecatchers’) saddened me – there should be space for pure individual useless fantasy, and Helen found some that are at Barwick Park (see the Spring 2015 edition and the picture of ‘Jack the Treacle Eater’).
- Why volunteers join the Survey Group – “To read a letter written by the owner of Hestercombe to the owner of Halswell in the eighteenth century opens a window onto a different world” in the Summer 2014 edition.

*“To read a letter written by the owner of Hestercombe to the owner of Halswell in the eighteenth century opens a window onto a different world”*

- A few highlights. Exciting discoveries were made at:
  1. Orchardleigh. The greenhouses were identified by Susan Campbell as modules designed by Paxton -the first DIY. The only other known one is at Heligan. Also Susan identified the walled garden as ‘Reptonian’.
  2. Jordans. A hydraulic pump found there dating from the 1800s was traced to a firm in the Midlands who were still in existence.
  3. Marsden. The formal gardens were designed by Schwitzer who is well known for his ornamental water gardens and work.

## Watcombe – A wonderful Edwardian garden

*By Dilly Bradley*

This enchanting garden with its Edwardian flavour actually dates from around 1940. It all began with the purchase, just before the Second War, of a



farmhouse, and cottage, with a field, and, further pieces of land were acquired, mainly to protect the property. The last plot was acquired in the 1970s. The boundary of the Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty runs along the line of a wall, which is now lawn. The new owners, Mr & Mrs Bill Silcocks, with their daughter Jacqueline, born in

provides focal points is a feature of the gardens. Passing round the end of the House, there is a high wall to the left from whence *Hellebores* nod down – an effective way to display them. Ahead stretches the lawn, with its *Cornus contraversa* Variegata (wedding cake tree), to a wall and deep herbaceous borders. Beyond this, there is a pleached hornbeam



Orchardleigh

1937, moved in and set about the step-by-step creation of the current footprint and planting of trees. It became the total life of Jacqueline who tragically died in 2001.

*“... there is a pleached hornbeam walk interrupted by a circular pool with its fountain, down to the summer house.”*

The present owners acquired Watcombe in 2001, together with a number of statues and other garden artefacts as were left behind with the property. They were non-plussed by the request to make an offer for the entire collection! To the front of the property, which stands end-on to the road, a paved patio extends from the house to a rockery rising to a lawn with a very handsome tulip tree, and a strikingly clipped yew. The way the topiary

walk interrupted by a circular pool with its fountain, down to the summer house. This really is something of a misnomer since it comprises a semi-circular arbour with classical columns and roof. The Mediterranean allusion is supported by terracotta pots and other sculpture. To the right there is shaded area below a fine copper beech, a lime walk running parallel

with the roadside property boundary, and a secluded garden. To the left is a fruit orchard edged by cordon-trained fruit trees, and handsome borders.

Back through the gate in the wall to the lawn and House, a Pergola, dripping with Wisteria, (at their best in late May and early June), leads down to a square pond surrounded by paving beneath a venerable ash tree. Then, bearing right, one reaches the greenhouse area and the boundary. This is visually permeable in that the trees along it have had their crowns raised so that the further view comes into the garden. To the left of the Pergola is a small rectangular area, which served as a chicken run during the War, until transformed into a charming secret garden.

The garden is structured and contained by its stone walls and dark clipped yew and box hedges and characterised by its “walks”. Each of these leads to view or a focal point of urn or statue. There is considerable imagination and variety of design



within this apparently formal framework. All is enhanced by the most felicitous planting to create a magical memorial to a daughter whose life was lived out in her own secret garden.

*Watcombe is open for the National Garden Scheme in the Spring- see the Yellow Book.*

## Grow your own Future - A Paper in support of Somerset Horticultural Bursaries

*Camilla Carter discusses an interesting initiative*

This is a proposal by Lucy Nelson, the present High Sheriff of Somerset. We met on a mid-April afternoon to discuss her idea of raising funds in support of Horticultural Bursaries at Cannington College. She started off by saying that she already had the support of The Lord Lieutenant Annie Maw, Michael le Poer Trench at Stavordale, Alan E Down (Cleeve Nursery), Yeo Valley Farms, Iwan Wirth at Durslade Farm, Dan Pearson, Charles Dowding and Merryn Preece (RHS Community Outreach Officer for the South-West). Many of these supporters are frustrated by the lack of interested, enthusiastic young trainees.

*“One of the problems for the young is the lack of good local transport. Lucy told me about the Youth Local Transport Scheme which gives help and advice with transport issues to those aged 16-25”*

One of the problems for the young is the lack of good local transport. Lucy told me about the Youth Local Transport Scheme which gives help and advice with transport issues to those aged 16-25. Tel 01278 722100 or at [admin@sryp.ag.uk](mailto:admin@sryp.ag.uk). Yarlinton Housing run a “lend a moped scheme” to support their young residents. Jeremy Kerswell (Director of Land-based studies at Cannington College) has confirmed that the money raised by

this initiative will go towards training and travel bursaries for a level 3 advanced Apprenticeship or those embarking on a Higher National Certificate/ Diploma in Horticulture. This will hopefully attract more independent and academic candidates.

Yeovil Careers Office is to include details of this bursary when they run their Careers Seminar.

Finances have already been raised and so far a cheque for £3000 has been sent to Bridgwater College of which Cannington is part. The launch of ‘Grow Your Own Future’ took place at the Bath and West Showground on May 28th 2015.

Two members of our own Gardens Trust have responded to an informing e-mail interested in giving Students a training place, as has Charles Dowding at his organic vegetable garden. Lucy Nelson will be interviewing, herself, those Students eligible for a bursary. She hopes to support 6 students and will continue to fund raise. It is now up to Cannington to respond to this need for bright, enthusiastic Students with a love for plants and the outdoor life.

The Trust’s Council received this report and were enthusiastic about it. They will consider a grant when there is more information available about the take-up of the Scheme.

## My Life in Horticulture

*Alan Ketley looks back at an exciting and satisfying career*

I was not interested in horticulture until I was about 12 when I discovered that you could earn pocket money by gardening. I left School at 16 and became an apprentice gardener at Hazel Grove and Bramall UDC, which took on 2 or 3 Apprentices every year. A proper 3-year training scheme was in place and this, combined with day release at College, gave me City and Guilds qualifications.

Kew Gardens took on 20-22 people annually from Parks Departments and overseas and I obtained a 3-year Scholarship to be a student gardener. Work rotated every six months and some 20 subjects had to be studied e.g. mycology, entomology and landscape. Edinburgh Botanic Garden also operated



a similar scheme. I was awarded the Kew Diploma in 1969.



Most people went into local authority employment but I responded to an advert in 'The Gardener's Chronicle' and landed the job of Horticulturalist on St John, US Virgin Islands working for Laurence Rockefeller. Here I ran the grounds of his Hotel, did tide and weather measurements, pest control and had 24 people working for me. Every Saturday I gave talks to many distinguished hotel guests. Everything was provided on the Island by the Hotel including housing, food, electricity and transport. I remained there for five years.

I returned to England with a young family and went to lecture at Wythenshawe FE College for the next nine years. Whilst here I did an OU degree, but as there were no promotion prospects, I moved to Cornwall College. I was soon appointed a Senior Lecturer and then Vice-Principal. The College moved to Rosewarne and set up its Horticulture Department, which I ran until retirement.

*"... landed the job of Horticulturalist on St John, US Virgin Islands working for Laurence Rockefeller."*

I have been responsible for setting up Garden Clubs and have also judged at various Garden Shows as

well as at the Taunton Flower Show. From my early interest in gardening, my career has given me the opportunity to live in exotic places; everywhere I go I can see plants and recognise them.

Horticulture makes an excellent career and I can recommend it.

## Editing the Magazine 2006-13

*Mervyn and Margaret Wilson look at the highlights*

Sometime in 2006 Anthony Pugh-Thomas, then Chairman of Trust, asked me, after discussion with other members of the Council, if I would take over as Editor of the Newsletter and expand it into something more of a Magazine, with a wider range of articles and pictures. I talked it over with Margaret; essential, because in all our married life she had actually produced the Parish Mag and much else. My role had been oversight of material, and to write some of it.

So we set to, and the first number appeared in Spring 2007, but two weeks late, due to a misunderstanding over sending the material to the printers. This was nearly a disaster, as it had been timed to announce the March lecture, and it was too late. Failure ended in success, when the Council was mobilised to ring round the membership. The consequence: the best attended lecture yet. So disaster was turned to triumph, thanks to the co-operation of many.

*"Failure ended in success, when the Council was mobilised to ring round the membership. The consequence: the best attended lecture yet."*

Reading through what back numbers we have, 14 out of 18, I think we achieved a representative variety: programme news, reports of visits, lectures, the Education Group, of the Survey Committee, book reviews, articles of wider interest,



on people, favourite plants, on vegetables and recipes. One disappointment: I had hoped to find and write up some interesting parsonage or ex-parsonage gardens in Somerset, but the nearest we got to it was the Old Deanery in Wells, where the Dean, in the 1600s, had written a herbal. He was being remembered in the Garden there to which we made a grant.

A few articles struck me: Barford and Michael Stancomb and his generosity to the Trust; the years of plant sales that gave us funds; the story of a house and garden rescued; Joan Lorraine and her Garden at Greencombe at Porlock. She holds the National Collection of *Eurythroniums* and wrote a really comprehensive and practical article on them. Only Rosemary Fremantle could compete for thoroughness with her article on Dandelions – the sublime to the humble. One omission was that if there are too many, introduced geese who will eat the golden flowers to extinction.

**History:** Tradescant, Gertrude Jekyll, William Kent, Harold Peto, the Victorian kitchen garden.

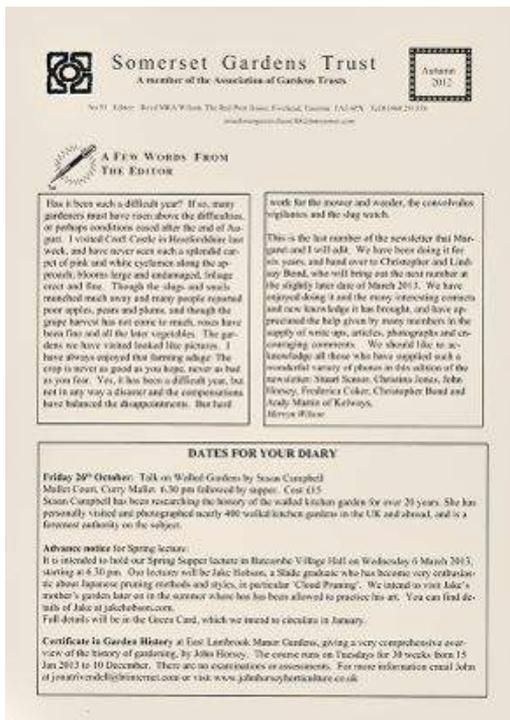
**Tools;** remedies and poisons before the present age of chemicals. **Plant explorers;** Anthony Pugh-Thomas on the Wardian Case. **Apples;** were not missed out, particularly old varieties and a recipe for a wassail cup. **Visits;** Plaz Metaxu, the place in between, impressive, odd and not easily explicable with carved quotations in Greek, Gaelic and Buddhist allusions. Hestercombe and Halswell seem straightforward and predictable. **Book reviews;** on Enville, Hagley and the Leasowes helped our understanding. **Gardens;** Camerton Court, the creation of Ken Biggs, builder and restorer, thus able to put his hands on many unwanted items in stone and lead, and had also commissioned new works in Bath stone, humorous and quaint.

Work by the Survey Committee is recorded. Finding a glasshouse from Brympton D'Evercy, now elsewhere. Write-ups of Dillington, Ven and Orchard Wyndham.

Even a recipe for that enemy of the gardener, squirrel pie, which we enjoyed with friends one evening.

All this and much more. Articles written by many hands. It is the function of the Editor to ask, and no one said no. Many Trust members write well. Others offer articles, saving the Editor a headache. We usually ended up with too much, so the next question was how to arrange and fit everything in, with some cutting; but generally it was a pleasure to produce and try to pass on the specific and the multifarious activities of the Trust and the particular enthusiasms and knowledge of members.

During this time we made progress with the arrangement of photos, at first in black and white, later in colour as Margaret's grasp of technology improved, and also thanks to the patience of many contributors.



## My Garden

*Susie Thorne describes how to convert a farmyard into a beautiful garden*

Gardens and gardening have always been important to me. I grew up in the large garden created by my parents around the house they had built in 1949 on the south side of Taunton. The garden (always



'THE GARDEN' in our minds) is now unfortunately the site of five 'executive homes'. The apple trees and the stream were constant sources of entertainment and my mother, a keen gardener, was used to seeing the heads of her flowers whisked off by cricket balls, tennis balls, and later, golf balls. I am proud of the fact that the toy rabbit I lost and cried over for weeks as a very small child had been named, by me, 'Buddleia'. I had my own garden beside the stream at the age of 14 and the following year created a herb garden with over thirty varieties. Scotts Nurseries' handbook was one of my favourite books as a teenager.



*"We spent our first winter sorting out huge piles of rubble to save all the natural stone we could, but I did manage to plant a border along the front of the house"*

Whisking forward in time, in 1985 my husband Stuart and I moved to our house, which we had converted from a barn on his family farm. It was still surrounded by concrete yards - not such a great start! We spent our first winter sorting out huge piles of rubble to save all the natural stone we could, but I did manage to plant a border along the front of the house and it still remains much the same.

Over the next few years, I think we had JCBs in four times to remove concrete and level areas and much of the gardening was done with a pickaxe. Naturally, our soil is a sandy loam with a pH of 6.5 and very red. Having been brought up on brown soil, I have always mulched heavily (so that it looks more like the real thing) and of course this has improved it greatly, but we have areas where the

shellet (morte slate) is just under the surface and some of the soil we bought in to replace the concrete was heavy clay to start with. Luckily, we have four large oak trees in front of the house, so we have leaf mould and as we had ponies for some years, horse manure was plentiful.

I have noticed in the past that people's ideas of their gardens are often very different to those of the outsider. I would say that mine at its best looks bountiful, but others may feel it is teetering out of control! It all depends on whether the grass has been cut and the edges trimmed (rarely), so that there is a contrast between the supposedly manicured lawns and the supposed froth of the borders. I garden in fits and starts - my keenness waxing and waning. I always have more schemes than I can achieve, but I am not sure that 'finishing the garden' is actually part of the plan.

## Thoughts on the Bath and West Show Stand

*The volunteers' viewpoint*

The gale blew, the canvas strained at its moorings - only the metal tent poles stayed anchored. This was no voyage out at sea but the SGT Stand in the Horticultural Marquee. Only the strong knots of



Camilla and her team tying the display boards to the metal poles saved us, and the excellent school photos, from being blown to the Tor.

*“Only the strong knots of Camilla and her team tying the display boards to the metal poles saved us, and the excellent school photos, from being blown to the Tor.”*

The visitors saw the tent as a safe haven (they had not heard the story of the Hampton Court Marquee that dramatically ripped along the whole of one

long side leaving the Exhibitors' careful displays to roll across the crowds like skittles). Many wisely kept their heads down as they passed our stand at the entrance to the tent, but enough stopped at the stand to make it worthwhile. Teachers who had school gardens – one was delighted to have had a SGT grant; regular garden visitors from all over the UK (sadly few from Somerset); NGS garden holders who were curious about the SGT; SGT members who were delighted to see the Stand; young people with children who dreamt of gardens but knew they needed a football pitch and couples who just wanted a garden designed for them; and yes – there were some people who enquired about membership and picked up Membership Forms.

So what were the lessons learned? That you need a lot of SGT leaflets and sample Magazines to hand out over 4 days, that the display pictures were good, but too much weighted towards Education, that message needs to be in a simple and clear and dramatic form that demands to be read in passing, that the NGS is better known than us, and we need to distinguish our stand from it. As interesting was what our volunteers found about visitors interested in gardening living in Somerset.



## News from the Council

*By Susie Thorne*

Council met on the evening of 1st July, again taking advantage of Primrose and James Mallet-Harris' kind hospitality, at Mallet Court. This time members admired the blood-red flowers of a rare *Lonicera* as we arrived.

It was a full agenda. Camilla Carter, our Chairman, reported that our presence at the Bath and West Show was appreciated and she had received a kind letter from the Lord Lieutenant. Various members had volunteered to man the stand. It was decided to repeat this next year and Camilla would update the display board.



*Allium cernuum* or *carinatum* subsp. *paulchellum*?



Council members had received copies of the Report and Accounts, which have again been examined by A.C. Mole and Sons. They were approved by the Council and signed by the Chairman who thanked Stuart Senior for all the work involved.

David Freemantle, Events Committee Chairman, was not at the meeting, but had submitted a report – there were still tickets available for the trip to Hilliers and the supper lecture. The events so far had been successful and Stuart Senior reported that the trip to Fairfield and the lecture on Durslade Farm at Batcombe had been particularly successful at raising funds. Unfortunately, both David and Rosemary Freemantle will be retiring from the Committee at the end of this year.

Helen Senior reported on the Survey Sub-Committee's activities. Two surveys had been completed and others were underway. They were hoping to do some new work at Simonsbath. Unfortunately, the Committee had lost several surveyors, although they had gained one new volunteer, so more new surveyors are needed. On the planning front, Jenny Kent and her team continue with their work and have two new volunteers with planning expertise to help. Sadly, Helen Senior is retiring as Chairman of the Survey Committee and Council thanked her for all her work. Luckily, she will continue to do surveys and remain on Council.

Helen Senior also reported that there had been no applications received for grants and bursaries. Camilla Carter had submitted a paper in support of a scheme to raise money for horticultural bursaries being set up by Lucy Nelson, the current High Sheriff, in conjunction with Cannington College. Council were keen to support this and would await further proposals.

Sheila Rabson reported from the Education Group who had visited some wonderful schools; a new Bridgwater School has a wildflower meadow and an orchard of 50 Somerset apple trees and a school at Highbridge has a large pond and lessons are taken using the pond every week.

The major item was the proposed merger between the Association of Gardens Trusts (AGT) and the Garden History Society. Council members had received copies of the Post-Merger Business Plan

and also a Questions and Answers document. There were discussions on these and the consensus was that the business case for the merger had not been made. Council voted unanimously against the

*“There were discussions on these and the consensus was that the business case for the merger had not been made.”*

merger and Camilla Carter will be our representative at the AGT AGM where the proposal will be put to the vote. The Chairman thanked Stuart Senior for all the work he had put in attending AGT meetings and investigating this complicated issue.

Mary ter Braak who is both Membership Secretary and Website Manager had reported that the SGT website needed updating technically, to enable it to be used via mobile devices. Council felt that the content also needed to be updated and would investigate. The next meeting will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

## What Plant Shows did for the Trust

*The Editors look at a bold and successful initiative*

More recent members of the Trust may not know the strong tradition of Annual Plant Shows that have for many years defined the Trust in the eyes of the public and its members.

Michael and Eve Stancomb started these at their home at Barford Park where they had created a

*“So visitors not only found an increasing variety of interesting plants to buy but also enjoyed the gardens in a friendly and very welcoming environment”*



beautiful garden – Michael digging some ponds himself. So visitors not only found an increasing variety of interesting plants to buy but also enjoyed the gardens in a friendly and very welcoming environment. Michael and Eve grew many of the plants available for sale themselves – it was a great opportunity for members to exchange plants. The Shows grew in size and popularity over the many years that they organized them. They were well publicized and visitors came from far and wide to enjoy. From taking plants home to pleasure jaunts in a pony and trap!

Michael organized and hosted these but the contribution of many willing hands in providing plants, selling them, and making teas and cakes, was also essential – hard but enjoyable teamwork.

What started as an event where members met and raised some much-needed funds for the new Trust, developed into a substantial source of income upon which the secure finances of the Trust are still based, with the thousands raised through them each year, enabling other activities such as survey and education to do their good work.. We have much to thank Michael and Eve Stancomb for.



After Michael's death, in his nineties, the Show moved first to Cannington College (which provided many enormous *Primula denticulata*) and then to Anthony and Rosemary Pugh-Thomas at Glebe

Court (who also shared their fine garden with the visitors). Members will have good memories of these happy occasions.

All we need now is a volunteer to carry on the tradition.

## The Trust's Financial Affairs 2014/15

*Stuart Senior, the Treasurer, reviews a satisfactory year*

From a financial perspective the year ending 31 March 2015 was again very satisfactory. The surplus of £15,000 is somewhat inflated by the writing back of the proposed grant of £7,000 to the Halswell Park Trust to part-fund the acquisition of the land for the car park at the Temple of Harmony because of the change of ownership. (Mill Wood has been acquired by Mr Edward Strachan, the owner of Halswell House).

However, the Trust was pleased to provide a grant of £2,000 towards the garden conservation work at Croydon Hall and the Education Group provided grants to the following schools:

- Birchfield School, Yeovil (£350);
- All Saints School, Montacute (£350);
- Lympsham School (£300);
- Bowlish School (£350);
- Spaxton School (£350).

The Events Committee oversaw a very successful fund-raising year. A surplus of £7,786 was generated, the bulk of this amount coming from The Plant Sale at Glebe Court (£3,188), made possible by the hard work and generosity of Rosemary and Anthony Pugh-Thomas, and the tour of the Lake District (£2,200), so expertly arranged and led by Camilla Carter and John Townson. John generously waived his reconnaissance expenses which are treated as a donation (with appropriate Gift Aid refund) in the Accounts.

And, like last year, the continuing bullish nature of the financial markets meant that the value of our



investment continued to increase and the income of just over £1,000, which it generated in the year,



represented a yield of 5% on the nominal value of the £20,000 investment which was valued at just over £24,000 at year-end.

During the year our CAF bank account was closed

*“So we ended the year with a net worth of £57,253, up from £42,221 in 2013/14. The outlook for the current year is less spectacular with no Plant Sale and no major tour”*

because it ceased to bear interest. A Business Direct 30 Deposit Account was opened with Bath Building Society which currently offers a modest interest rate of 1.05%.

So we ended the year with a net worth of £57,253, up from £42,221 in 2013/14. The outlook for the current year is less spectacular with no Plant Sale and no major tour (the projected Cornwall tour in 2016 will fall into the 2016/17 financial year).

The Report and Accounts have been independently examined by Steve Golby, managing partner of A C Mole & Son. Steve does this on a pro bono basis

for which the Trust is extremely grateful. The Accounts were formally signed at the Council meeting in July and will be tabled at the AGM in September.

## The Parks & Gardens Blog

*Anthony Pugh-Thomas opens the door to a new world*

Do you blog? I can't say I did so until, as a trustee of Parks & Gardens UK ([www.parksandgardens.org](http://www.parksandgardens.org)), we developed our own blog – and it's rather fun.

Go to the website. Click on the button that looks like this  at the bottom of the front page – and

*“The wheelbarrow as a weapon of war;  
Mechanical Elephants in a Public Park in Hull”*

there you are—wide ranging information with entertainment. The wheelbarrow as a weapon of war; Mechanical Elephants in a Public Park in Hull (and that would surprise anyone researching public parks!); Roof Gardens (with the wonderfully clipped BBC commentary of the time): nostalgic for anyone who was taken to the Derry & Toms roof gardens as a child; influential gardeners such as John Claudius Loudon and his influence on Cemetery and on Greenhouse design; Humphrey Repton and his Red Books and Percy Thrower, the first TV pundit; Stumperies at Biddulph and Highgrove (and do you agree with the Duke of Edinburgh when he asked his son when he was going “to set fire to this lot”?); plants - did you know that the Paulownia was named after Princess Anna Pavlona, daughter of Tsar Paul I, who later became Queen of the Netherlands and is such an important tree that it has been labelled as “*The Tree that can save the World*”? – and much more..

A “Must” for anyone interested in garden design.

If you enjoy it you can, right at the end, sign-up to receive future blogs from Parks & Gardens automatically by inserting your email address.



## Preparing for the visit to Durslade Farm, Bruton

*Ann Wood is full of expectations from the Spring Lecture*

Piet Oudolf had been chosen by Hausert and Wirth as the garden designer for their new Gallery at Durslade Farm. Urquhart, Hunt, and Petherick, the international Landscape Consultancy in Bruton, were thrilled when their tender was accepted to do the hard landscaping as well as create the garden. They had had all their computers stolen days before the final presentation so it had not been a very auspicious start, but a hand drawn plan got them the project.

Lulu Urquhart and Adam Hunt told us about the sourcing of materials for the rebuild of the old buildings, some new build, car parks etc. A great emphasis was placed on using local materials and the fact that all the team involved were local people.

Drainage pipes had to be installed in the meadow and extra soil brought in to prepare for the planting of thousands of plants in the Oudolf design. The wettest winter for many, many years (2013/14) flooded the site and stopped work.

The grass, *Sporobolus hefferlopiis*, has been used in large numbers among other plants such as *Monarda*s, *Asters*, *Echinaceas*, and *Dianthus*.

After the talk I asked Adam about the choice of Oudolf as designer when his signature style of grasses and perennials are not suited to wet clay soil. Adam brought in a lot of impoverished shale soil. He said *“We must think of the garden as an installation as much as the Installation in the Gallery”*.

The evening was completed by the most delicious supper. Huge

thanks and congratulations to Camilla Carter for the main course (recipe in another part of this magazine) and also to her team for some wonderful, mouthwatering puddings. A feast indeed!

## Highlights from SGT Tours

*James and Primrose Mallet-Harris talk to the Editors*

The Paeony avenue was at its height when I visited Mallet Court to find out more about the idea and work behind the successful SGT tours they had organized. To start with they explained the idea to arrange overseas tours of SGT members. For some years they had enjoyed overseas visits to gardens and landscapes in many countries as members of the International Dendrology Society. James explained - *“I wanted to share the different styles of gardening I had found with SGT members. I hope the tours have influenced members in their garden design and plant selection. The rationale for the tours was to introduce Surveyors to different styles of gardens.”*

The very first tour was to Eastern Holland in 2000. Unlike its public image, this is a surprisingly unspoilt countryside – a long way from the fields of tulips.



France, 2013



After the success of this first trip, members encouraged them to organize tours every other year. *“We have visited Ireland & France twice each, Italy, and Germany. All have very different gardening styles”*. James and Primrose have a great fund of knowledge about plants unusual in the UK which has answered many questions – the most difficult ones requiring late night research!

I was fascinated to know what lay behind the smooth functioning of the tour arrangements. James and Primrose explained there was a lot more to it. Knowing gardeners from other countries helped a lot in designing the tours. After that there is the endless list of practical arrangements to make – the hotels, the travel arrangements, the meals and much more. Sometimes a local travel agent was knowledgeable and helpful, but often it was down to James and Primrose to do this. And then there were the reconnaissance trips – *“you need to try a hotel before recommending it to others”*.

In looking back, they remembered the cheerfulness, and willingness of members to put themselves in our hands – making the best of what insights and adventures the day brought. And the mild surprise that some came who simply enjoyed gardens or the tour – without having a large garden at home.. Memories that stand out include being shown around Sanssouci by the Head of the Parks Department in Potsdam, the Allees giving amazing perspectives at the Chateau de Limpiville in Normandy and the English Garden at the Parco Villa Reale in Tuscany where the owner was too ill to show us round so we explored the landscape ourselves.

There were also moments of surprise. The shell grotto loo and the bath in the middle of a bedroom in a house in Great North Street in Dublin, and being invited by the Princessa Corsini to an excellent dinner with the full complement of uniformed servers at the Palazzio Corsini in its five acre gardens in the centre of Florence. And the disasters – the bus driver at Woerlitz refusing to believe that the bus could not drive off the ferry across the River Elbe and the occasional broken bone or sprained muscle.

So we finished by looking at the future of SGT tours. James and Primrose were delighted that Camilla Carter and John Townson have continued

the tradition with organizing tours – of the Lake District last year, and of Cornish gardens next year. *“They are a wonderful way of binding members of the Trust together”*.

*Note: James and Primrose’s role in starting and leading so many SGT tours and sharing their knowledge of plants has brought pleasure and delight to so many members. We owe them both (and their successors!) a huge debt.*

## The History of a garden through its Plant Labels

*By Paul Evans, Head Gardener at Tyntesfield*

When Tyntesfield was acquired by the National Trust in 2002 much of the publicity focused around the Grade 1 listed house and its remarkable collection. The garden was less attention grabbing and was thought by some as not of any note. When I began working at Tyntesfield in 2004 as Assistant Head Gardener, little had changed in the grounds since Lord Wraxall’s death in 2001. The garden is actually remarkably complete and unaltered since its late Victorian heyday, which makes it a special place to me. The range of garden areas is varied – a boating lake, arboretum, dell, formal topiary lined walks, rose garden, rock garden, parterre, cut flower garden, orangery, vegetable garden, and glasshouses – and a large collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century plant labels.

I remember at Heligan being told that they found their old plant labels by using a metal detector, at Tyntesfield we found them in a wide array of places – in boxes in tool stores, in the main house, in situ next to the original plants, and some buried in holes where the original specimen had long since vanished.

There are about 40 ceramic labels produced by the Bourne pottery, made to order - dating from the 1850’s and 1860’s. (see photo) These are relatively rare in Great Britain, only the Garden Museum in London has some examples. Then there are about 350 of the more common cast alloy oval and rectangular labels with a long spike for insertion into the ground – dating from the 1880’s to about 1900. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is represented mainly by oval fruit labels and hand-written metal and plastic



labels dating from the last Lord Wraxall's ownership.



What does this Collection mean to gardeners and garden historians? It tells us that the Family wanted their plants to be labelled, unusual in a relatively small garden such as Tynesfield. It shows that the 19th century labelled plant collection consisted mainly of trees and shrubs, and that only about 30% of plants represented in the label collection exist as living specimens today. Some labels represent the family's religious beliefs and the importance of biblical plants to them such as "*Cedar of Lebanon raised from seed brought from Lebanon by JL Gibbs in 1858*". Provenance like this is valuable, as some of these 1858 specimens are still living and have recently been propagated to retain the wild collected gene pool. It has helped identify trees too – a tree catalogued as a Lawson Cypress turned out to be a dwarf when we found its original label buried at the base of its trunk.

The Collection raises many questions too. Why did they label their plants? Is this the largest collection of labels in a 'private' garden in Great Britain? Were the Family influenced on their plant choices by their well-known horticulturalist relation – Vicary Gibbs of Aldenham? What event was commemorated by planting in 1892? (about 25 labels bear this date). Plants are constantly being re-classified, some Victorian names are proving difficult to translate. Were they sourcing plants directly from Veitch?

The Collection (over 550 in total) helps inform future plantings, and has helped raise the profile of the garden and plant collection. It provides an

insight into the plant collecting interests of 4 generations of the Gibbs Family, in the heart of their secluded Somerset estate.

## That special Batcombe Supper Recipe

*Camilla Carter tells how to make it*

At the Batcombe Spring lecture some members were kind to say that they enjoyed the food and would like to have the recipe. The recipe is from Ottolenghi's first book called 'The Cookbook'.

**Roast Chicken with saffron,  
hazelnuts and honey**  
serves 4

**1 large organic or free-range chicken, divided into quarters: breast and wing, leg and thigh**

**2 onions, roughly chopped**

**4 tablespoons olive oil**

**1 tsp ground ginger, 1 tsp ground cinnamon, a generous pinch of saffron strands**

**Juice of 1 lemon, 4 tbsp cold water**

**2 tsp coarse sea salt, 1 tsp black pepper**

**100g unskinned hazelnuts, 70g honey, 2 tbsp rosewater**

**2 spring onions roughly chopped**

In a large bowl, mix the chicken pieces with the onions, olive oil, ginger, cinnamon, saffron, lemon juice, water, salt and pepper. Leave to marinate for at least an hour, or overnight in the fridge.

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5. Spread the hazelnuts out on an oven tray and roast for 10 minutes, until lightly browned. Chop roughly and set aside.

Transfer the chicken and marinade to a roasting tray large enough to accommodate everything comfortably. Arrange the chicken pieces skin-side up and put the tray in the oven for about 35 minutes.

While the chicken is roasting, mix the honey, rosewater and nuts together to make a rough paste. Remove the chicken from the oven, spoon over a generous amount of nut paste to each piece and spread it to cover. Return to the oven for 5-10



minutes, until the chicken is cooked through and the nuts are golden brown.

Transfer the chicken to a serving dish and garnish with the chopped spring onions.

## ‘Somerset Mist’ – the local version of Pimms

by David Freemantle

A welcome alternative to Pimms introduced to me by Christopher Staniland of Quantock Abbey Wine as served during the SGT evening at East Burford



**1 Bottle Kingston Blacka  
Somerset aperitif produced by The  
Somerset Cider Brandy  
Company  
44cl can dry cider  
50cl lemonade or ginger beer (I use  
lemonade)  
50cl Good Apple Juice  
Ice and chopped mint**

As you can see there is very little alcohol in this drink, nevertheless it is refreshing, tasty and very Somerset Summer

If you want to pep it up add some Somerset Cider brandy, or if you have just come back from France, some cooking calvados.

## “Rambling On: Reflections in a Garden” - Robin J Ray, published Lazybones 2014

Reviewed by Mervyn Wilson

I found this delightful and enjoyed the photograph on the cover of a view from the garden into the country, framed by the rose ‘Rambling Rector’. Robin is a recently retired clergyman. His book is set out in twelve monthly chapters, beginning in April 2013. He sits in the garden, watches the birds and the plants, and tells the reader about them – showing expert and sometimes recondite knowledge. For instance, writing of *Itea salicifolia*, he likens its catkins to a drooping moustache reminding him of its collector in China, Augustine Henry, who retired with the rank of Mandarin. He records many little known and interesting facts. He also intersperses the text with poetry, including Thomas Hood’s “November” and his own “No to gloom and despondency”.

True to his calling, there are many passages such as this: “...marking the Epiphany, wise men bring gifts, among them incense, which the powerful spicy perfume of the ‘Chimonanthus praecox’ replicates so beautifully”.



The one inattention I noticed in his Ramblings was any focus on insects, good or bad, bee or aphid! His writing is full of a delicious idiosyncrasy and a sort of self-deprecating modesty, unfashionable in this



age of unsubtle trumpet blowing. Quaint too. “*The Wife*” is there in the background, having views and doing her things.

*There are a few copies available from Robin, [robinray@btinternet.com](mailto:robinray@btinternet.com), in return for a donation to be sent to him for Perennial – ‘The Gardeners Charity’.*

## “Silence”

*Christopher Bond*

What a noise!  
A car accelerates,  
A plane flies low and loud,  
A car radio blares,  
that bike has no silencer.  
But would I have it otherwise?

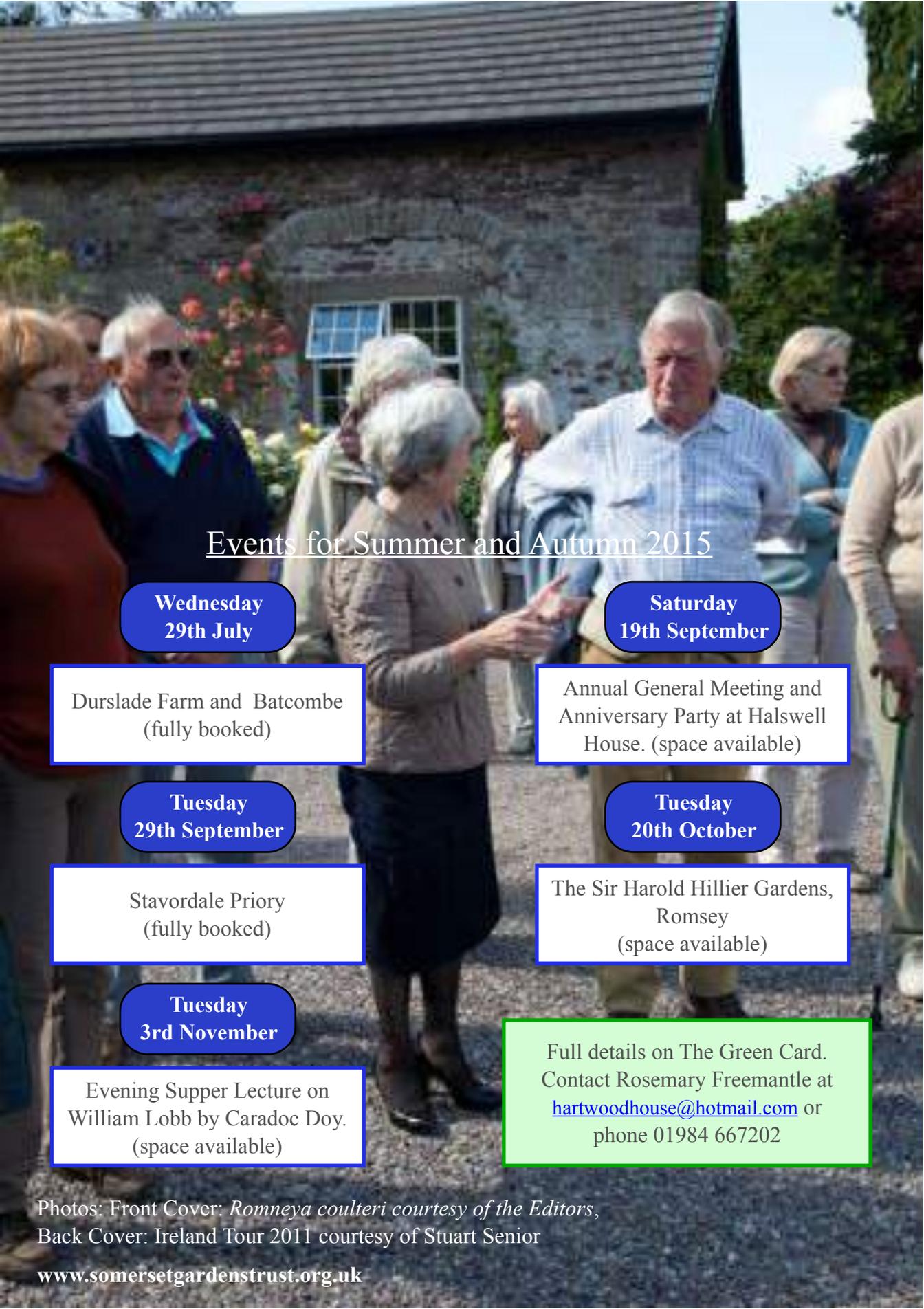
A silent world.  
electric cars glide by,  
planes fly nightly no longer,  
residents sleep all through,  
music is Apple with headphones,  
that bike is now outlawed.  
Only in the countryside  
do diesels throb and tractors roar.  
A paradise – perhaps.

Remember the warmth of crowds,  
the hum of expectation before the concert starts –  
and the clapping afterwards,  
the murmur of chatter in the streets,  
the suitcase’s wheels,  
bouncing between each broken slab  
(bringing me travel envy),  
of the rain beating on corrugated roofs,  
bus doors sighing open,  
street musicians busking in station arches,  
Big Issue sellers chanting,  
A bike bell’s sudden ring,  
other peoples’ mobiles’ crazy tunes, and  
of train station Christmas Choirs?

In the countryside where the planes now fly,  
and machines do grab and grind,  
remember the ringing at the edge of silence,  
the skylarks interminable trilling,  
the enervating drowse of bees, and  
the ever-changing music of the river.

It is this buzz of noise,  
in town and country,  
that keeps us all alive.





## Events for Summer and Autumn 2015

**Wednesday  
29th July**

Durslade Farm and Batcombe  
(fully booked)

**Tuesday  
29th September**

Stavordale Priory  
(fully booked)

**Tuesday  
3rd November**

Evening Supper Lecture on  
William Lobb by Caradoc Doy.  
(space available)

**Saturday  
19th September**

Annual General Meeting and  
Anniversary Party at Halswell  
House. (space available)

**Tuesday  
20th October**

The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens,  
Romsey  
(space available)

Full details on The Green Card.  
Contact Rosemary Freemantle at  
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phone 01984 667202

Photos: Front Cover: *Romneya coulteri* courtesy of the Editors,  
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