

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 70

Summer 2019

Featuring

Members confront the dilemma of reducing their garden or staying on – p.5

The Somerset Gardens Trust



From the Editors

What a wonderful Spring and early Summer it has been. Plenty of sunshine – some ground is already cracking – but the plants and trees seem to remember the hot sun of last year – the *Photinias* have flowered extravagantly. These hot Summers are prompting gardeners to look at drought tolerant plants, and wonder about trying tender ones in sheltered places. The gentle micro climate seen on Camilla’s Northern Irish Tour encourages such thoughts.

This edition has some excellent articles – from those describing fascinating private gardens, through the brilliance of peonies and growing them, to a remarkable garden in the US; not forgetting the practical and enjoyable members’ forum articles on garden downsizing and on the Northern Ireland Tour, on the progress of the research & conservation group and on the succession of delectable events this summer served up by the Events Committee. Read and enjoy.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond
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From the Chairman

Dear Members,

I want to say how much we appreciate our members, there are those who are active and we welcome them but also there are those who we do not meet and the Trust appreciates them just as much and the generous support they give, through their subscriptions, for the work that Somerset Gardens Trust does. Our committees are all running well, Ian Clark is invaluable over planning applications and his team are



busy digitising the records at Hestercombe and doing research on walled gardens in Somerset. Sheila Rabson has a new recruit for her schools team and there have been many new applications this year from schools for grants and Diana Hebditch and her group have organised an excellent summer of events to interest us.

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Those of us who loved and admired the gardens at Hadsen House in the days of Penelope Hobhouse and Nori and Sandra Pope will be interested to hear that they have reopened under the name of The Newt in Somerset. Don't go expecting to see something similar to years gone by, it is quite different. For a start the levels in the parabola garden have been terraced and now make the most of the view. Heritage apples, traditional to many of our British counties are grown, trained in all the classic shapes and possibly some others. There is plenty to study; vegetables, great banks of yew, fountains, water, a huge impressive glasshouse and an herbaceous garden divided by beautiful willow woven walls. There are a couple of cafes and a bar for drinks and cider, I enjoyed a delicious lunch, largely based on vegetables with salt

marsh lamb but finished with a slice of the most yummy chocolate and prune cake with a great dollop of clotted cream! I think it will be a popular location. The hotel will open at the end of August/September

Some of our members have already attended a Gardens Trust lecture in Bath, the speaker was Dr Marion Harney from Bath University, and she spoke on the Pleasure Gardens of Bath (see Review later). There will be other events organised by the Gardens Trust and I will ask Mary ter Braak to advise members of the local events. It is worth checking on their website, there is much going on around the Country.

Camilla Carter

ADVANCE NOTICE

The SGT will launch a Gardens Competition in Somerset for schools and individual garden owners in 2020 for both members and non-members. More details in the Autumn issue of the Magazine.

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MEMBERS FORUM

*To simplify your garden or downsize?
Members give their views*

Leonora Clarke - I don't know how old one has to be to realize that the weeds growing in my garden would look better at the edge of a field even if the ground elder flowers look like cow parsley – but for me the time has come. So this winter we cut the herbaceous borders down to half their original depth, and re-laid the lawn. The new vegetable garden is now near the house, with smaller raised beds so I only grow half the amount as before. At the moment I can't honestly say it has been a great success but it is early days - the good thing is that it takes half the time to 'do' than before. I still spend a lot of time in the garden, and it means enjoyment can be had without too much exhaustion due to one's approaching old age!

Jean Hunter - I downsized from a retirement garden we had made on the edge of Exmoor of two acres, to a town garden of about 20 x 10 yards ten years ago. The first time I saw it I turned it down, too small, but luckily I had the chance to see it again and accepted it, and very pleased I am now.

There are four trees, an *Amelanchia*, a *Prunus*, a crab apple and an *Acer*, virtually a walled garden, a long border down one side and a narrow border. The garden faces South and is at the back of the house. My pleasure is small treasures. A group of *Hepatica*, *Tulipa imifolia* under the small *Acer*, a few roses including *Rosa mutabilis* climbing up the crab apple, and one or two

favourite herbaceous plants; also lots of pots.

Enough to give me plenty of interest.

David and Michael Meiklejohn - We made garden changes last year. We reduced the planting area as per the accompanying photos.

Before



After

Much as I like the 'before' picture....the gardening is now that bit easier!

Hazel Ricketts - Downsizing has meant a reduced selection of the plants that bring colour and pleasure and those which produce vegetables and fruit. Grass cutting is minimal.

James Harris – As you enter your golden age – the eighties – do not simplify your garden or downsize, do projects instead.

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The Historic Landscape Project – supporting volunteers

Tamsin McMillan, Historic Landscape Project Officer, The Gardens Trust

It's been great to welcome so many members of County Gardens Trusts to the HLP's events, but we'd really love to meet more of you!

Volunteers from the CGTs have a vital role to play in the research, recording, history and conservation of our heritage.

Increasingly, CGTs are an important and respected voice offering authoritative advice on historic designed landscapes in the modern world. And of course, they also provide a vibrant social group for people interested in parks and gardens, with a busy schedule of events and garden visits.

For those of you who haven't yet come across us, the HLP is an initiative from the Gardens Trust, part-funded by Historic

England, which offers support to CGTs in all their endeavours and helps their volunteers to play a greater role in the conservation of our historic designed landscapes.

To this end, we run a varied programme of training opportunities for CGT volunteers, on topics including:

- responding to planning applications (currently running in Yorkshire, with a repeat in the south-east in 2020)
- research and recording
- understanding significance
- the public parks funding crisis . . . and more.

We also hold regular networking days: regional Members' Meet-Ups (this season in Essex, Cheshire, Bristol and the West Midlands); and our national, annual, Historic Landscapes Assembly, where all those interested in conservation and historic designed landscapes can come

together to discuss key issues on our horizons. All our events are friendly and informal and suitable for those with no prior knowledge. Most are free to attend.

We can provide one-to-one support with planning work, ways to take your CGT forward into the future, and help to build links with other



All revved up to save our parks, at our Public Parks Crisis training day in Abington Park, Northamptonshire, 2018

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CGTs or relevant organisations.

Please do get in touch to find out more. We welcome *all* CGT volunteers to our events, whatever your experience or area of interest.

Please may I urge you to join our emailing group, to receive occasional updates and news of upcoming events. Simply email me at tamsinmcmillan@thegardenstrust.org to sign up.

Visit <http://thegardenstrust.org/conservation/historic-landscapes-project/> to read more about the HLP, and to access our Research Hub of downloadable support. Our events are also listed on the GT website at <http://thegardenstrust.org/events-archive/> and you can join the online discussion forum for CGTs at: <http://thegardenstrust.org/learning/forum/>

Thank you, and I hope to meet you soon!

Tamsin

Amazing Peonies

Tracy Robinson of Kelways Plants describes the choice and what they like

If you can practice patience and are prepared to wait then peonies, in herbaceous, tree or the fairly new hybrid of the two intersectional types, will reward you with truly show-stopping blooms of varied colour, form and fragrance.

It is difficult not to form a bond with each herbaceous peony in the garden as each February or March they poke their crimson spears above the ground expectantly. Unassumingly, tiny buds develop on top of slender stems, pausing for what seems an endless wait until, almost overnight, swelling into solid, glossy, golf balls on small bushes



P. Claire de Lune

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“One magical morning, there is a hint of colour to be glimpsed within the tight, globular bud”

of pinnate foliage. One magical morning there is a hint of colour to be glimpsed within the tight, globular bud. By the third day, the flower has fully revealed its glory and proved that a peony's blossom is definitely worth the wait. There is merit in even the smallest garden growing these often-dismissed plants. They are resilient through climate extremes and neglect. Many have been known to survive for fifty years or more with no care whatsoever.

The most important tip when planting is not to plant too deeply. The top of the crown should be no more than 5cm (2.5in) below soil surface. Planting too deeply is a common reason for a peony failing to

flower. Allowing space around plants will encourage bigger, floriferous peonies.

P.Claire de Lune is perhaps one of the first to bloom, in early May; a remarkable plant that is the result of crossing *P.lactiflora* and *P.mlokosewitchii*, producing single pale lemon blooms with bright golden centres. At the latter end of the flowering season is *P.Sarah Bernhardt*; a taller variety, benefiting from staking - the intense scent of rose-like, apple-blossom pink blooms make it worthy of growing.

It is also worth noting *P.Kelways Glorious* for its gleaming, double white flowers and creamy centre glow. With a strong scent of roses, this is arguably the finest herbaceous peony of them all!

P.Yachiyo-tsubaki is the perfect cultivar tree peony. It has beautiful purple foliage with red stems and stunning pink blooms. It is very free-flowering and possibly the easiest to grow. One of the first to open, in mid-April, is *P.Cardinal Vaughan*. A trustworthy tree peony, with large saucer-shaped, episcopal purple blooms.

The Old Rectory garden at Lydeard St Lawrence

Robert and Georgina Reoch

In October 1999, we found the home where we wanted our family to grow. A house that needed updating and nurturing, and a well-established garden with a large collection of acidic loving plants, including some unusual trees spanning three quarters of the garden. Our challenge didn't seem too big, despite our limited experience to

that point being a few window boxes! As time passed, we discovered we had landed more of a jewel than we initially realised, in a glorious micro-climate our love for this garden began to grow, our eyes widened and we saw the need for work.

We soon realized our garden attracted a lot of wildlife when we saw a large stag and his doe sleeping in the early morning sun above the house! We have encouraged wild areas to grow naturally, attracting animals,

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insects, wild-flowers and an abundance of different varieties of fungus.

The entire garden was on a slope so we flattened the ground outside the front of the house and pushed one foot into the hill making the house look more stable in its position! This has also enabled the Walled Garden to become our blank canvas, as what we inherited around the house seems to belong more to the landscape. Recently

“in a glorious micro-climate our love for this garden began to grow, our eyes widened and we saw the need for work”

space which has worked well. We have fought slugs, pigeons, dogs walking over young seedlings, survived winter storm damage to the Camellias, learnt what foods we enjoy growing and so much about how we want to grow – all this having tried Luna planting, rotation and companion planting.

As time has passed, we have found the plants changing their patterns of flowering. In particular we had an abundance of rich shocking blue *Hydrangeas*; however,

we have seen less of these since the dryer weather and hotter summers, and have lost some of our Rhododendrons too. The garden here is always changing and with the losses of some plants we discover new ones - so the life of the Old Rectory gardens continues.

Editors' Note: The Old Rectory opens for St Margaret's Hospice.



we added an evening terrace to catch the last of the day's sun, where we hope to build a proper fire pit for year-round enjoyment. Above this is the large contemporary slate terrace leading from the house, which we use as a living space during the warmer weather. This looks across at a pool separated by a sunken chess board to contrast the two main materials of slate and grass. We have used different levels to keep the interest in the

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Diana Hebditch, Events Committee Chairman, writes

We started our 2019 programme with a talk by Rob Wilson-North on Knight's lost garden at Ashcombe, Simonsbath. He was enthusiastic about the project despite the large amount of restoration work to be undertaken. At the Council meeting in April it was decided to make a donation towards the work and Rob reports that *"the funding will be put towards buying ferns in order to plant up an old quarry that lies within the heart of the garden. We plan to do the planting at the beginning of the autumn. I'd be delighted to show the quarry to SGT members when they visit later this year."* As this visit very much depends on good weather, we will organise it at short notice.

In addition to the events outlined in the Spring edition of the Magazine we have a visit to Barrow Court and the nearby Home Farm.



Picture of Barrow Court courtesy of Iann Baron

Tuesday 10 September

Barrow Court Barrow Gurney BS48 3RP
By kind permission of Iann Barron
At 10:30am

and

Home Farm, Barrow Court Lane, Barrow
Gurney BS48 3RP
By kind permission of Antony and Ginny
Gibbs
At 2:30pm

We have been invited to see the house and gardens at Barrow Court. Barrow Court was originally Barrow Gurney Nunnery and was rebuilt in the 16th and 19th centuries. Formal gardens surround the house and in the parkland there is a medieval deer park. In 1890 Inigo Thomas carried out extensive work building gazebos, a balustraded garden wall and walled courts. In 1890 he added a set of gates and a wall with twelve pillars known as the *"twelve months of the year"*.

They support sculptures by Alfred Drury representing the *"daughters of the year"*, with January being a young girl at the Northern end to an elderly matriarch representing December at the Southern end, each with flowers suitable to the particular month. The lily pond, with its accompanying pedestals and urns, dates from the same time along with other ornamental steps, walls, vases, a sundial, and a mock temple.

Please note this visit entails a lot of steps and some difficult terrain.

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Please bring a picnic lunch which we may eat at Home Farm.

At Home Farm, Antony and Ginny Gibbs will welcome us to see their large collection of trees which they started to establish here some 35 years ago. The International Dendrologist Society visited in 2014 and we hope to have some of our tree specialists with us on this visit. There are also fruit and vegetable gardens which are always popular with SGT visitors. Tea and cakes to follow.

A Day on Italian Gardens

When our garden visiting season is over, The Arts Society Taunton have invited us to join them at a study day on “*The Grand Tour and the Influence of Italy on English Gardens*” with James Bolton. It will be held on Thursday 21 November at

Cheddon Fitzpaine Village Hall TA2 8JY. There will be three talks on:

- Gardens in Italy from the Emperor Hadrian to the Emperor Napoleon;
- The Grand Tour: The Perils and Pleasures of the Eighteenth Century Traveller’s Journey to Italy; and finally
- The Influence of Italy on 18th Century English Gardens.

Full details and booking form is available at Arts Society Taunton website under Special Interests:

artsocietytaunton.org.uk. The cost is £25 for members of the Arts Society and £32 for non-members.

The Newt, near Castle Cary

Susie Thorne visited it before its recent opening

Something very exciting is happening in the east of Somerset. Hadspen House was bought by South African Koos Bekker a few years ago and an enormous amount of work has been going on to create a hotel (‘The Newt’) and an amazing new garden set in this lovely landscape. Camilla and a few others went to have a look. Apples are celebrated in the walled garden with apple tunnels and espaliered trees around the walls arranged in their counties of origin. A cider press on site will use these. Fruit training and pruning will be one of the subjects of the courses they are intending to hold, as well as the methods they use in the large vegetable garden which will be used to supply the café and restaurants. Great sweeping banks of wild flowers were showing pink catchfly and in summer will be full of ox eye daisies, amongst others. A cottage garden, a series of small colour gardens and a large area, which later will be full of tall *Miscanthus* and *Veronicastrums*, were full of Spring flowers. The whole place buzzed with the enthusiasm of the charming young staff and it is going to be fascinating to see it develop in the years to come. For more about it see thenewtinsomerset.com.

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The Huntington Library and Gardens, California

Sue Custance-Baker was impressed

The Huntington Library with its world-class collection of rare books and manuscripts (including a copy of the Gutenberg Bible), the Art Collections (including Thomas Gainsborough's Blue Boy and J M W Turner's The Grand Canal), and the Research

Centres are all housed in buildings of architectural merit.

These are surrounded with over 12 different types of garden spread over 120 acres, well-designed with quality plants which are carefully labelled. The Japanese



Garden appears on the cover of many books of gardens of the World and The Garden of Flowing Fragrance is the largest Chinese garden outside of China.

Everything is beautifully maintained and is

managed to cope with the drought conditions and scorching heat in San Marino. It is a unique and outstanding cultural experience. Perhaps next time I visit I can study the Desert Garden and write up an article on that.

A Little Book of Latin for Gardeners by Peter Parker – Little Brown £12.99. ISBN 978 1 4087 0616 9

Anthony Pugh-Thomas has fun

*Latin is a language
As dead as dead can be;
First it killed the Romans,
And now it's killing me*

But Latin remains the universal language of the international gardening community and Peter Parker, in this informative and amusing book, explains why. Botanical Latin owes little to the Romans but a great deal to Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist who refined and standardised its use in the 18th century and plant names now refer to the physical characteristics of the plant, its colour, smell, geographical origin and sometimes its discoverer.

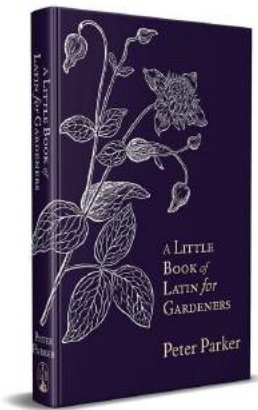
The book is not, in its author's words, "*a work of scholarship, but is intended to*

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inform and entertain.” Each chapter deals with one of a plant’s characteristics and concludes with a useful Word List (Latin/English).

They are interspersed with anecdotes and quotations from plant hunters and eminent gardeners. The epithet *cardinalis*, for example, was attached to *Lobelia* when it



was introduced from the Americas into Europe in the 1620s during the papacy of Urban VIII in 1627, the extravagant patron for the arts, who in 1627 had himself painted wearing a scarlet cope and sitting on a scarlet throne.

The Latin definitions provide general guidance on what to expect although gardeners may not all agree with how colours, smell or other attributes are described; as Reginald Farrer observed: “...No three people see ice or snow or wax or pearl or rose (white) with the same eyes...” and as for aroma, Graham

Thomas, the long-serving Garden Adviser to the National Trust who had an acute sense of smell, likened *Salvia turkestanica* to “a barmaid’s armpits”! (One wonders how he knew). What is true for English is also true for Latin.

“Botanical Latin owes little to the Romans but a great deal to Carl Linnaeus”

The chapter on Anatomy is particularly enjoyable. Following a short description of the old Doctrine of Signatures (that an individual part of the body could be healed by plants that had features resembling it), Parker gives examples: *Pulmonaria*, for instance, takes its name from its spotted leaves said to resemble a diseased lung – *pulmo*. And he lists some plants that take their names from the old Bestiaries – *Lilium pardalinum* from the Greek word for leopard – *pardos*.

The chapter on Eponyms (a person, place, or thing after whom or after which something is named) touches briefly on some of the renowned plant hunters such as ‘Chinese’ Williams, Father Delavay, Forrest, Farrer and Henry who all feature in plant names as do the Greek Gods such as *Hyacinthus*, beloved of Apollo. The practice continues today with *Lancasteri* for Roy Lancaster. Sometimes the name is applied as a tribute – The Rev. Adam Buddle did not discover *Buddleja* and Mr.

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Dahl played no part in the discovery of the *Dahlia*, but their names live on. A final chapter covers the appropriate Latin descriptions of season, shape, size, leaf form, foliage, stalks, shoots and roots.

If you interrupt your weeding to find out why Foxglove is *Digitalis* you will

probably find turning the pages much more attractive than returning to your fork and will learn, effortlessly, about the herbalists, garden designers, plant hunters, missionaries, monks, emperors, Greek heroes and many others who have contributed so much to our gardens.

Some activities of the Research & Conservation Group

Somerset's Nurseries – Jenny Hawksley and Anne Kaile

Research into Somerset's nurseries has started to show results. Questionnaires were sent out at the end of last year to nurseries asking for access to their historic records. Ones that hadn't responded and additional nurseries were re-contacted.

From enquiries so far about a quarter have replied which the Committee thought was a good response. One of the most interesting was from Blackmore and Langdon who used to be in Bath and had

supplied plants to Claude Monet in Giverny.

We have had an excellent response from East Lambrook, both from Mike Werkmeister and Maureen Whitty, who

“We would welcome any contributions from members of the Somerset Gardens Trust who have nurseries or have had one in the past. No nursery is too small to be included”

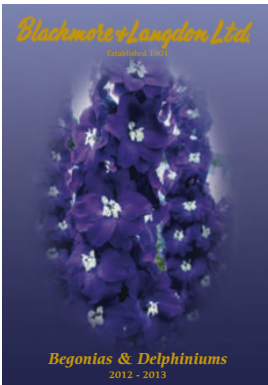
worked with Mrs Fish and still continues to work at East Lambrook. We have also been given old catalogues for Scotts and other nurseries.

If anyone has any old catalogues they could donate we would be very grateful.

The Devon Gardens Trust has also helped with information and documents. We now have copied references to Somerset nurseries from their RHS Journals.

The next stage is to visit nurseries we have not heard from and contact staff at the larger nurseries to arrange interviews.

We would welcome any contributions from members of the Somerset Gardens Trust who have nurseries or have had one in the past. *No nursery is too small to be included.*



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This will be a valuable resource for future generations.

Digitising of Historic Records – Ian Clark

A small group of volunteers, headed up by Sue Custance-Baker, has been working with the Parks and Gardens UK based at Hestercombe to input historic records onto the new database. The work has been valuable both for the SGT and P&G UK as it is helping to test the new database. There have been some ‘teething’ problems

but it now feels like real progress is being made thanks to Chris White at Hestercombe and the website developers, Yello.

It would be great to get feedback from any members on researches they are undertaking using the database of Somerset records of any inconsistencies or issues they may have in using the website. If you haven’t done so already it’s definitely worth a look – www.parksandgardens.org.

Northern Ireland Tour Highlights

This article was compiled from participants’ comments

- The friendship and congenial company of fellow members willing to share their enthusiasm and knowledge of gardening.
- The welcome we received from the owners and head gardeners of the



gardens we visited who shared their passion and knowledge with us.

- The soft Mediterranean climate enabling successful and abundant growth topped by a brilliant 4 sunny days (except for Ballyedmond’s new woodland garden and stumpery in the pouring rain).
- The constant presence of the sea adding an extra dimension to many of these gardens.
- The comfort of the hotel and its welcoming staff: the only stress in the hotel was getting up in time for breakfast (I now need to diet).
- The look on the faces of the group when they saw the tea table at Ballyedmond: waitresses in black and

“The look on the faces of the group when they saw the tea table at Ballyedmond”

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white aprons, lovely Limoges porcelain, scones galore.

- Rosemount – the view from the drawing room, it's a place I could settle; Clandeboye – the *Davidia involucrata*; Ballyedmond – the echiums, masses and tall, in the purest blue possible (but controversial taste); Rowallane – the magnificent rhododendrons and the very different peaceful walled garden; Mount Stewart – the

Italian garden created a lush and memorable picture; it amply confirmed its place in the “top 10” (pity about the traffic noise).

- Everywhere we visited produced a new delight.

Camilla you gave us a treat
even if we were walked off our feet.
Rare plants did abound
when we looked on the ground,
and the trees and the views and the houses we saw
were memories we'll treasure evermore

(Anon)

Council Meeting 12th April 2019

Susie Thorne explains what happened

Council met at Camilla's house near Castle Cary. Camilla had been to a national meeting of The Gardens Trust and reported on its future activities. Some discussion took place about the talk by Lucy Wood on George Brookshaw, which is to take place at the AGM on 30th September and it was decided to ask the Art Fund if they would like to join us for the Talk. Stuart Senior, Treasurer, outlined the Trust's performance during the previous financial year and presented an outline budget for 2019/20. Mary ter Braak had reported that our membership numbers are down. Diana Hebditch from the Events Committee gave a report on our many visits; the lecture by Rob Wilson-North on the lost garden at Simonsbath had been very enjoyable and a great success. It was agreed that a grant of £200

be made to the restoration project. Numbers for the Barford visit were disappointing and the ticket price had been reduced to encourage more members [*See separate report on this event*]. More help at Barford with the plant sale was needed. Ian Clark and the Research and

“the lecture by Rob Wilson-North on the lost garden at Simonsbath had been very enjoyable and a great success”

Conservation Committee sent in a report on digitalization of records, walled gardens and Somerset Nurseries [*see*

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separate article]. Also busy were the Education group who have had lots of



applications for grants. Christopher Bond and Julian Gibbs have worked hard on exciting proposals for a county-wide Garden Competition. It was decided to restrict this to school gardens and start in 2019 to fit in with the school year with the competition in 2020 [*subsequently the more detailed execution plan was*

approved including a category for individually owned gardens].

The website needs updating. Camilla and

Mary ter Braak would meet to discuss this, ***but it would be useful if there was a member with digital skills to help.***

Camilla would be standing down as Chairman at the AGM - everyone agreed how very successful her Chairmanship had been. The next Council meeting will be on 8th November.

No Swinging on Sundays: The Story of Bath's lost Pleasure Gardens by Kirsten Elliott Akeman Press - £19.99 ISBN 978-0-9933988-2-7

Mervyn Wilson finds a lost social history

This book is a treasure chest for those that like to hear the authentic voice of the past, and see the sights then seeable, and reimagine a little bit of what then moved men and women, excited them and entertained them. I wondered when reading it if the author had left anything out of her fruits of research of 35 years. The result is a detailed account based on for the 18th century in particular on the Bath Chronicles, as will be seen from the notes on sources.

She puts the gardens in perspective, writing of Ranelagh and Tunbridge Wells and others. The major part is of Bath, the first enterprises near the Abbey in the 17th century, with the Orange Grove extension, then across the river to Spring Garden, Bathwick Villa and Grosvenor, to mention the more significant. A large section is given to Sydney Gardens, the last and only one to survive in recognisable form.

In their day they were great places of recreation and entertainment. The spa attracted many with leisure to fill and money to spend. Harrison's Assembly Rooms opened into walks with espalier trees and a grotto where two lovers are reported to have left notes for each other before eloping to France. Spring Gardens had a building, outside fish ponds and fruit trees. A map of 1775 shows a more elaborate layout with a canal. Tea, coffee

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“grotto where two lovers are reported to have left notes for each other before eloping to France”

and chocolate with hot rolls were advertised. There was a pond, gravel and grass walks, trees, vegetables and a fine breakfast room. There were entertainments, on Friday nights music and dancing; also fireworks, salutes of

cannons, rockets, wheels of fire and more. Then there were swings, in particular a feature of Sydney Gardens. They were daring. Men pushed girls and their skirts blew in the wind. The gardens had qualities we would recognise today, but primarily they were places of entertainment.

Elliott writes of the entrepreneurs. These were all commercial enterprises; their ups and downs and the steady expansion of the city. By the time the canal and railway came, the great days were over.

The book is lavishly illustrated on good quality paper, which makes it heavy for its

size, but ensures really good reproduction. It is more of an encyclopaedia on the subject than a quick read, and one which brings back to life ages now long past.

The SGT reader can find considerable detail on how these Gardens were planted and laid out. The book is fully indexed.



Sydney Gardens by John Claude Nattes

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SGT Visit and Plant Fair at Barford Park

Cicely Taylor enjoyed a sunny afternoon

Barford is a mellow red-brick house sitting comfortably in its surrounding park, and for many years the setting for our hugely popular annual plant sale organised by the SGT and open to the public.

After the previous owner and SGT member, Michael Stancomb, died and the house was sold, we had our sale elsewhere, but this year we were invited by Mr and Mrs Donald Rice for a private visit for our members.



“the glorious walled garden and magnificent woodland walks”

Those of us who remember the glorious walled garden and magnificent woodland walks were delighted that the garden is well maintained and developing further

with its new owner’s love of trees while his family’s small children make the place feel lively, with the cricket net on the lawn and little girls running with their dogs through the glades in the wood.

We sat in the sunshine enjoying the delicious cream tea prepared by the team led by Patricia Davies-Gilbert, under the awning cleverly assembled by Stuart

Senior and his helpers, while admiring the garden with its striking yellow irises, and clumps of lupins which Donald had sown from a packet that had fallen out of a magazine.

Huge thanks to him and his family, and for their invaluable help and enthusiasm in setting up the tea stall and packing it up afterwards.



Front Cover: Mount Stewart - courtesy of the editors

Back Cover: Home Farm courtesy of Ginny Gibbs

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