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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



I cannot believe we are already half way through the year, but what a year it has been. Free from Covid (well almost) and lockdown, Avon Gardens Trust has been thriving. As well as some fascinating talks, we have organised a series of very successful garden visits—with more to come.

Several members of The Somerset, Bristol & South

Gloucestershire branch of the NGS kindly offered to let us have a stall during their Open Garden days to help raise awareness of AGT. Through this we met

with a great amount of interest from garden lovers, both for what the Trust does and for our forthcoming garden visits, and hopefully encouraged some to become members. Our thanks to all the lovely garden owners who made us so welcome.



Our June Garden visit to the wonderful High Glanau Manor near Monmouth (right), and Wyndcliffe Court, another Tipping garden, were hugely successful. (pages 9-10). On Monday 24 July we will visit the mouth-watering gardens at Caisson House in Combe Hay near Bath – not to be missed in high summer. On 20 September, our final garden visit for 2023 will be a ‘Behind the Ropes’ tour of Tyntesfield’s gardens by Head Gardener Paul Evans, who will show us parts of the garden and artefacts which the public don’t normally get to see (details of both page 15). We hope to see you at future garden visits and events and, as ever, if you have any suggestions for a garden to visit or a speaker, please do get in touch with events@avongardenstrust.org.uk.

We have been busy commenting on planning applications for all four local authorities—no mean feat., including controversial plans for the Bristol Zoo site at Clifton and the former Beckford's Ride at Lansdown in Bath (page 12). We are thrilled to have been able to award several grants for £200-£250 for school and community gardens, totalling £2,050 so far. If you know of a local primary school, special school or community group who could be helped with a grant, please do put them in touch with us.

Change to our Bank

We are changing our bank from CAF to Nat West. This will not affect those of you paying by Standing Orders for the next few weeks but we will be sending out details for changing across to the new bank. The move has been prompted by the increasing difficulty in cashing cheques or cash and, more concerning, by new members joining online who have made us aware that most banks do not 'recognise' CAF as one of their approved banks, although it is a bona fide bank for charities.



June AGT visit to High Glanau Manor with Helena Gerrish

Some of the Avon Gardens which have opened their doors this summer

Acton Court

The dramatic Acton Court in Iron Acton, South Gloucestershire, opened to the public during June. Much of the grounds are now wildflower meadow, dissected by mown pathways. The wildflowers were still very much in evidence during my visit at the end of June, even filling the remaining



sections of moat. The magnificent house today comprises mainly the east wing, added by the owner Nicholas Poyntz for Henry VIII's visit with his second wife, Anne Boleyn, during his Summer Progress around the West Country in 1535.



Views from the first-floor windows of the King's suite would have taken in parterres, bowers and avenues. Though any trace of these has long since disappeared, the sense of long views radiating out across the open countryside remain. Today, the only formal planting is the beautiful

lavender around the central pool of the walled kitchen garden, surrounded by raised beds teeming with fruit and vegetables. The garden forms a pleasant, sunny retreat, along with some colourful companion planting and old roses tumbling from the brick walls. The visit was enhanced by the wonderfully vibrant flower arrangements provided by nearby Organic Blooms for National Flower Week, as well as their excellent plant stall. <https://organicblooms.co.uk>



The Old Rectory, Doynton, South Gloucestershire

Whilst we were not involved with this garden, the June fête in Doynton village offered a rare treat to visit the gardens of the Grade II listed Old Rectory. The owners, Edwina Dunn and Clive Humby, have created a beautiful garden within the 15-acre estate, with a formal canal, garden 'rooms' and a large kitchen garden, designed by landscape architect Iain McDonald.



ferred a rare treat to visit the gardens of the Grade II listed Old Rectory. The owners, Edwina Dunn and Clive Humby, have created a beautiful garden within the 15-acre estate, with a formal canal, garden 'rooms' and a large kitchen garden, designed by landscape architect Iain McDonald.

The gardens are dotted with statues, many of them viewed through openings or along avenues lined by trees or high hedging. Most recently the box planting, which added a layer of formality to the garden, has been lost to the caterpillar and uprooted. This has created a softer look, augmented by climbing roses and burgeoning flower beds.



There will be a more in-depth article on this garden in a

later edition, but the story of the garden's creation is told in a beautifully illustrated book by Edwina Dunn *The Old Rectory Garden at Doynton*. <https://doyntongardens.tumblr.com/>



Doynton House, Doynton, South Gloucestershire

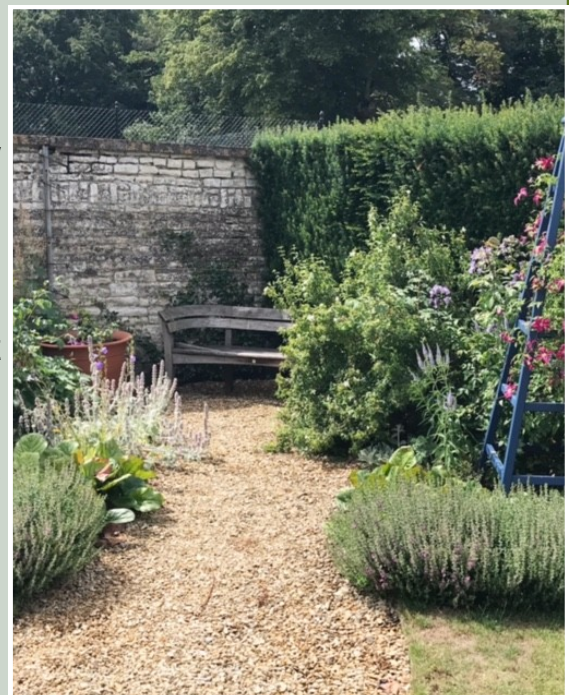
Doynton House was open on 7-8th July for the NGS. Frances & Matthew Lindsey-Clark have created a spectacular garden with a series of garden spaces. The rill garden is spectacular: the long rill fed by a circular pool, surrounded by vibrant clematis cascading from obelisks and herbaceous borders spilling onto the small lawns. These are interspersed with semi-hidden nooks where one can just sit and soak in the garden.



The walled vegetable garden has paths and apple lined paths radiating from a central pool. The peach house, with soft fruits growing in profusion up the stone wall, overlooks two small garden areas, one formal, the other a perfect place to spend a sunlit afternoon beneath an apple tree, lined with bee friendly plants and pale pink roses. A stone archway opens into an enclosed pool garden, surrounded by high stone walls.

The main pool is darkened, stone steps leading down into it, whilst to either side are shallow pools planted with water loving plants attracting dragonflies and butterflies. Each garden presents surprises in the landscaping, carefully crafted but ultimately to be immersed in.

I promised to mention the 'Front of House' who extended such a warm welcome to everyone visiting this beautiful garden.



AGT teams up with the Somerset, Bristol & South Gloucestershire branch of the NGS

Hanham Court, Hanham, South Gloucestershire

What a treat. Hanham Court was opened over the weekend of the 24 – 25 June as part of the NGS Open Gardens in aid of the restoration of their beautiful mediaeval barn, recently re-roofed by architects Philip Hughes. Meandering through the box-lined alleyways, the Bannerman legacy is still in evidence in the archways and follies, but the current owners' planting softens and enchants,



with the old white climbing roses tumbling down the many pillars and arches. The planting is primarily of shades of blue and purple, pinks and white with eryngiums, delphiniums, iris, lavender, alliums, foxgloves and sweet peas. The bowling green is lined with towering yew topiary, like giant chessmen.



There was plenty of seating in nooks and crannies to just sit and soak in both the garden and the wider views across the orchard and pasture, with its colourful gypsy caravan. The stunning lower herbaceous border leads to the classical archway, where the garden immediately changes to woodland, the pathway winding down past the two ponds and round up to the kitchen garden and beautiful new greenhouse. At the opposite end is a rustic archway, framing the towering Court house itself and the Arts & Crafts loggia. Stepping through it, you

arrive on the grassed plateau of a wonderful newly created knoll, planted with grasses, salvias, nepeta and tall veronicas. The path down leads to tea and some delicious cakes, a perfect end to a very special garden visit. Our thanks to Julian and Richard Boissevain for generously allowing Avon Gardens Trust to have a stall for the day, and to all the visitors who came over to chat and find out more about us. <http://www.hanhamcourtgardens.co.uk/>

The Hayes in Newton Saint Loe, Bath & North East Somerset



In May we visited The Hayes in Newton Saint Loe, on the outskirts of Bath, with our stand. Jane Giddins took ownership 30 years ago when the gardens were derelict and they are now a delightful masterpiece set in 1.5 acres on the southern slope of the Avon Valley. Very large and private, it is enclosed by high walls, next to the

13th-century parish church tower.

The house, covered in blue wisteria, is Georgian with early 19th-century alterations. The central lawn is surrounded by classic borders sculptured to give interesting form to the grassed areas and a couple of attractive, mature native trees.

The flowering perennials, were at their best at this time of year, with no noticeable



damage from the recent drought. This was a popular venue for garden visitors, who also enjoyed the delicious homemade cakes that Jane provided. Peter Shannon

Tregunter, Lansdown, Bath

We also took our AGT stall to Tregunter, on Lansdown in Bath. The one acre garden is sited on the side of a long valley looking out over Solsbury Hill and what makes this site special is that it is not overlooked. Jane and Peter Mawle took ownership about 20 years ago, and have tried to reflect the various shades of green in the landscape with their garden planting. The hard landscaping has been done enthusiastically and with vigour. The steep slope means that small drop terraces would not work, so the solution was to put in 1 metre drops, connected by well-manufactured steps with handrails. In amongst this are several water features and with light, dense planting and careful use of height, it makes for an attractive expanse. Peter Shannon

AGT visit to High Glanau Manor & Wyndcliffe Court, Monmouth

In late June we visited the enchanting High Glanau Manor overlooking the breathtaking Brecon Beacons, the view surely what brought Henry Avray Tipping to this part of the world. Many decades later, it beguiled the present owners,

Helena and Hilary Gerrish. Helena initially contacted *Country Life* picture library to see



whether they had any photographs of the house or garden and received twenty-four photographs taken from glass plates in their archives, all of which are displayed in the hallway.

Helena began the task of restoring the overgrown garden to its Edwardian origins, removing the swimming pool to restore the fabulous herbaceous borders that Tipping called his 'ribbon parterre'. I think we all just fell in love with this part of the

garden on the spot. The planting, primarily in blues and yellows, was just a feast for the eyes: campanula, salvias, alliums, pale yellow scabious, nepeta, delphiniums and much more. Tipping's Messenger greenhouse is still very much in use, with its original iron mechanical structure intact. Old pathways and steps uncovered by Helena wound through the woodland garden, and the upper terrace where we eventually reconvened for lunch was covered with swathes of colour, roses climbing up the walls of the house, not least the perfect 'Shropshire Lad' (right).



Helena and Hilary's hospitality was superb: we were welcomed with coffee and homemade biscuits before Helena took us on a tour of the garden, after which she gave us the most delicious two course lunch with glasses of wine, from which it was very, very hard to drag ourselves away, not least from the views.

Wyndcliffe Court, Monmouth

We drove the few miles back towards Chepstow to Wyndcliffe Court and our host Sarah Clay, whose husband Anthony's ancestor Charles Leigh Clay built Wyndcliffe Court in 1922. Eric Francis was the architect and Tipping collaborated on the gardens.



Pevsner described it as 'Cotswold Jacobean, relaxed and sophisticated'. The garden was extraordinary, comprising several different levels on a relatively steep slope. There is architectural topiary and old stone steps and terraces with pools in



the 'Italianate' Arts & Crafts Style, almost entirely unaltered. On the lower terrace is a small stone pool with a dolphin fountain and a two-storey summerhouse whose roof and outline echoes that at Hidcote in the Cotswolds.

The Rose Garden, designed by Sarah Price in 2018, is full of old species, many tumbling off the walls of the house. Sarah took us to her walled Kitchen Garden, one half orchard, with a serpentine lavender tribute to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Sarah's design featured three lavenders – pink, blue and white – winding down towards ornate double gates at the end of the path. Planted against the upper south-facing wall were several different varieties of figs. Back on the upper terrace, the oak benches have been remade to the original 1920s design, with carved out ends to rest your weary head and feet.

We ended the afternoon in the long drawing room which overlooked the garden, with a truly fabulous plasterwork ceiling in the Jacobean style of plants interweaving with each other. The tea and delicious cakes were the cherry on the icing for what was undoubtedly a wonderful day out for all of us. A huge thanks to Helena, Hilary and Sarah for making the day so very special.





The County Gardens Trust Meet Up at Hestercombe 16th May 2023

The Gardens Trust hosted a meeting of local County Garden Trusts at the beautifully restored Arts & Crafts garden at Hestercombe House. Peter and Anne Hills and Selena Gray represented AGT. It was fascinating to hear about the different activities and scale of membership of the different Trusts in the South West. The Gardens Trust presented on work that they had done on how to recruit and retain trustees and

volunteers. It was apparent that whilst AGT might be relatively small on membership numbers compared to some other trusts, the work we do on reviewing and commenting on planning applications is recognised and highly valued at national level by the Gardens Trust.

Hestercombe's CEO, Philip White, gave an update on the history of the restoration, not just of the famous Lutyens and Jekyll formal gardens, but also of the wider 18th-century landscape and, more recently, of a newly discovered 16th-century water garden, long mistaken for a duck decoy! We had a useful update from Fiona Baker, the Data Manager for Parks and Gardens UK, about the database and how CGTs can contribute to their research.



We had the opportunity to visit the gardens, radically restored from my first visit almost 30 years ago when they were under the care of Somerset Fire Brigade.

The gardens have been managed by the Hestercombe Garden Trust since 2003 and in 2018 they acquired a further 320 acres of land, enabling them to restore other elements of the Grade I listed garden. The characteristic stone pergolas, rills and ponds and sunken gardens designed by Jekyll and Lutyens were looking magnificent. It is truly inspirational to see the transformation and restoration of the garden over this time.

Avon Gardens Trust Planning Report

Two planning applications for the same site in Bath were made earlier this year. The site formed part of the original Beckford's Ride, in the Lansdown area of the city. The first application sought permission to knock down part of a stone gateway (below) and listed wall, in order to gain access from Upper Lansdown Mews to the rest of the site.

The second application concerned building a house on the strip of land

north of Dixon Gardens. The strip, outlined in red (right) indicates the site covered by both applications. The entire site from Beckford's Tower and Lansdown Cemetery is on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, therefore Avon Gardens Trust has a statutory right to object to planning applications which would harm a registered site.



Once the first application **23/00258/LBA** was **REFUSED**, the accompanying application was withdrawn. It is worth reading the withdrawn application (23/00257/FUL), as it contains valuable and interesting historic facts from the various objectors to the

proposed scheme, describing how Beckford, after breakfast, would leave his house in Lansdown Crescent, walk up through the gateway to meet his groom then ride up Beckford's Ride to Beckford's Tower. Here he could read books in his library, entertain guests and enjoy the view over Bath from the top of the tower.

Anne Hills.

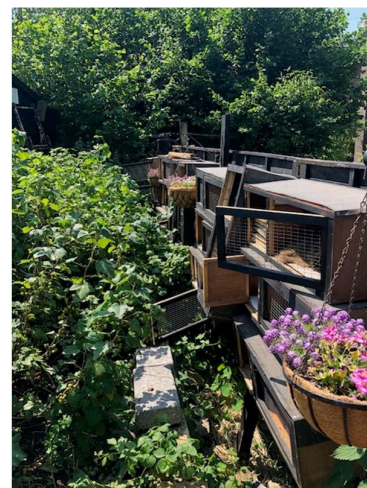


Figure 2.1: Aerial photograph showing the location of the Site with the approximate red line boundary (source: Google)

Grants for Schools and Community Gardens

We have been thrilled to see the number of applications for grants for school gardens and some community gardens rising throughout the year. Grants have been for amounts between £200 and £250, mainly for creating raised beds and for tools. One very interesting change from pre-pandemic applications is the need for planting in order to encourage pollinators, and establishing gardens which do not need a lot of watering. Sensory gardens, fruit trees and raised beds are some of the items we have been asked to fund, including a grant to the Hedgehog Rescue in Chipping Sodbury for their garden. See all the news about the grants awarded to our applicants on our website

<https://www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/education-communities/> or contact Peter Hills



Kay Ross with Yvonne Cox of Hedgehog Rescue

Urgent Appeal for new Committee Members

We are sad to be saying goodbye to Wendy Pollard, who has compiled both our Newsletters and Journals, as well as sitting on the Grants Committee and much, much more for many years. She has recently stepped down both from the Committee and as a Trustee. We wish her well and will certainly miss her.

We now comprise just 6 Trustees/ Committee members and urgently need to fill the roles of Secretary and of Marketing & Social Media. It is an exciting time for all CGT's, when we can spread the word about what AGT does, our Events and news of our Parks and Gardens. If you feel this is something you could help us with, we would very much love to hear from you. Email chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk.

Friends Groups Looking after Avon's Gardens

There are a huge number of Friends groups in Avon looking after historic gardens and landscapes. AGT want to spread the word about the fantastic job these volunteers do to keep them thriving and open for the community. We are starting our project by looking at a Friends group looking after one of Bath's oldest Pleasure Gardens.

The Friends of Sydney Gardens

Last month I met 3 members of the Friends of Sydney Gardens: Wendy Powney, Gill Gazzard and Alizon Messant. The four of us had a fascinating conversation about the Regency gardens' earliest existence as a pleasure garden behind what was then



quite a rarity, a purpose-built hotel, now the Holburne Museum. The Friends were formed in 2013 to preserve and improve Sydney Gardens and to provide the community face of the Heritage Lottery Project.

In February 2019, they were successful in their bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund with a grant of £2.7m, adding to a total funding to improve the gardens of £3.4m. The restoration project has so far succeeded in transforming one half of the garden including play areas, tennis courts and refurbished Edwardian public toilets. The Friends successfully raised over £3000 to plant a traditional Georgian Garden in the park, designed by Audrey Timm, with plants commonly used throughout that period.

One fascinating component of the project is the restoration of the surviving supper box from the pleasure gardens. More about this exciting project can be seen on our website shortly—we are constructing a new page - 'Friends of Avon's Parks & Gardens' - for news of all our many Friends groups in Avon, which will be up and running shortly. Look out for it.



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Upcoming AGT Events—Summer 2023

**Visit to the garden of Caisson House, Combe Hay, Bath,
BA2 7EF**

Monday, 24 July 2023 - 2 - 4 pm

This is a wonderfully eclectic garden set in the most beautiful English countryside around a gorgeous Georgian house built in 1815.

It is a mix of herbaceous borders, topiaries, ponds and rills, a walled garden with fruit trees, greenhouses, flower and vegetable beds.

There are wildflower meadows surrounding the garden and the disused Somersetshire coal canal running through.

<https://www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/events/a-visit-to-the-garden-at-caisson-house/>

Visit to Tyntesfield

Wednesday, 20 September 2023 - 11am - 1pm

Head Gardener Paul Evans will show us some garden artefacts of the Gibbs era and take us to areas of the estate normally closed to the public. Following the time with Paul, a guided tour of the wider gardens on the estate will be available with an Estate Guide. Full details to follow.

<https://www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/events/a-visit-to-tyntesfield/>

Annual General Meeting and Lecture

Saturday, 28 October 2023 - 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

This will be followed by a lecture from Trish Gibson – ‘Brenda Colvin – A Career in Landscape’