



Notice of the 2025 Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that an Annual General Meeting of Avon Gardens Trust will be held on Saturday 25th October 2024 commencing 2.00pm at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester. GL7 6JS

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chairs opening remarks
3. To receive the Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on Saturday 29th April 2025
4. Presentation of AGT accounts for 2024-2025
5. To dissolve the Avon Gardens Trust and integrate with the new Avon & Gloucestershire Gardens Trust

This AGM will be followed by the inaugural general meeting of the Avon and Gloucestershire Gardens Trust. An agenda will be sent by separate message for this event.

The meetings will be followed by refreshments and a lecture at 3.00PM from our President **Timothy Mowl** who will talk of '**A prettyish kind of a little wilderness**' – **Landscapes and gardens in the novels of Jane Austen**

Timothy Mowl's lavishly illustrated talk will consider designed landscapes and gardens in Jane Austen's novels, not only as representative of current horticultural fads, but as important elements in the plots, providing the background to moments of high emotional drama. Her life spans the demise of Capability Brown's minimalist landscaping (died 1783), the growth of Picturesque theory in the late 1780s and 1790s, which she satirises in *Northanger Abbey*, and the coming of Humphry Repton, who appears in *Mansfield Park*, with his promotion of Ornamental Gardening. At the heart of the novels and of this talk are the shrubberies, sweet-scented, shadowy places for exercise, contemplation and romantic assignations

The event is Free for Gardens Trust members and £10.00 for Guests.

REPORTS OF THE TRUSTEES 2024-2025

CHAIRS REPORT

I have very mixed feelings about writing this last Chair's report for Avon Gardens Trust: my last as Chair and the last for Avon Gardens Trust itself. One of the very first County Gardens Trusts, after 38 very successful years we are merging with Gloucestershire Gardens & Landscape Trust in October to form the Avon and Gloucestershire Gardens Trust – AGGT. For the last few months our merger committee have all been working hard to facilitate the smooth transition from two County Garden Trusts to a single bigger, better and bolder single Gardens Trust, encompassing Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset and historically re-uniting Bristol and South Gloucestershire with Gloucestershire. Part of our remit has been to produce a new Constitution, overseen by Barbara Hardy, our fellow Trustee and lawyer. It is now, we think, ready for the Charity Commission.

We have allocated roles to what will now be a larger and better equipped Committee, with more resources and a combined knowledge of historic gardens spanning the whole region. There will be seven Trustees as well as a number of other people on sub-committees. The appointments are, of course, subject to approval from our members at the AGM.

- Chair – Ali Jewell
- Vice Chair – Kay Ross
- Treasurer – Colin Johnston
- Secretary – Fiona Gunn
- Research – Gill Clarke
- Planning & Research – David Evans
- Journal Editor – Barbara Hardy

Margie Hoffnung, Chair of GGLT, will be stepping down to concentrate of her new horticultural business, and we wish her every success.

Our membership will, of course, effectively double and we hope that all members will continue to join us. Fiona will be responsible for membership and we are eternally grateful to Pete Hills for offering to maintain the new AGGT website for the present - www.aggt.org - and keeping us all up to speed. Other than specific emails for Events and Planning, we will have a central, single email – info@aggt.org - that will monitor and distribute emails to and from AGGT. The journal, ably prepared by Barbara and Tim, will be available for the AGM, and we will encourage members to come and take theirs – and for any for members they know – to avoid high postage costs.

We will now have a bigger team researching the garden histories across the region: combining our databases and adding new material as well as updating existing entries. Gill Clarke and Thoss Shearer will head up research and I now hope to be able to concentrate more on research. We in the South-West have been allocated a Research Study Day in February by the Gardens Trust and we are looking at a park site in Bristol. We hope that members will join us for the day and learn more about researching historic gardens and landscapes in Avon and Gloucestershire. More details to follow!

Colin and I will continue to look at grants for both schools and community gardens, but we do need volunteers from Gloucestershire.

The same is true of our planning remit, and again, whilst David Evans and Frances Russell will continue to deal with planning applications for Avon, we urgently need volunteer members to deal with planning in Gloucestershire. We will provide training for anyone who feels they would like to volunteer.

We are, of course, organising a programme of talks for the winter of 2025-6 followed by a series of spring garden visits. Tim Mowl has, as before, produced a series of speakers almost immediately. The talks will be evenly spread between BRLSI in Bath and Cirencester Royal Agricultural University, who have ample parking and a purpose built theatre. Tim will speak at the AGM on Saturday 25th October in Cirencester, then we have two talks in November and January at BRLSI, followed by a final one at Cirencester. From April there will be monthly



garden visits, in the process of being organised by myself, Margie, Ali and Fiona. Any suggestions will be gratefully received – we are always looking for new gardens to visit.

Our IT wizard James Cooper is combining the two websites for us, after Ali, Helene Gammack and myself looked at the content. Helene is now liaising with James, as she has with the design of our new logo by Kevin Smith, which we hope you like, based on a knot garden. Once up and running, we will address both a Facebook and Instagram site, as well as a regular newsletter.

There have been a number of interesting developments in Bath recently which AGT have been involved with. Helene, Gill and I have met with Council members to help facilitate talks on the restoration of the Georgian Garden behind 4 The Circus, which has been allowed to deteriorate over the last few years. David has had a meeting with Alex Sherman of BPT about a proposed garden behind 1 Royal Crescent and I have also taken part in a consultation with BPT about the future of Bath. There was a significant lack of any mention of gardens and landscape which I have hopefully rectified, and I have had a very positive response from BPT. It is possible that we might be working more closely with them now, which will help bring Bath's parks and gardens into sharper focus with the City.

I am sure you will all have many more questions for me, and I want to thank you all for your patience during the last few months and what has possibly looked a bit sparse on information from time to time. Amongst our volunteer members, I would like to thank Frances Russell, who has overseen so many planning applications and offered excellent observations and recommendations, Helene Gammack for providing advice and so much excellent help during the merger and Wendy Smale for her eagle-eyed proof reading of the journals and newsletters over the past few years.

It just leaves me to give a massive thank you to Anne and Pete Hills for their invaluable work for AGT over the years. Anne has addressed Avon's planning applications with knowledgeable and reasoned scrutiny, her excellent conservation and planning expertise enabling AGT to produce consistently sound arguments and recommendations. Pete, well, where do I begin? Administrator, website manager, membership secretary, minute taker and events organiser, responsible for setting up grant and booking forms, organising meetings, setting up the lecture rooms and always there to meet and greet members for both talks and garden visits ...the list goes on. On a personal note, I simply could not have done the job of Chair without their invaluable help and support. One thing is undoubtedly true, they will both be very much missed and we wish them all the very best in their new Surrey home.

So. Welcome to the new Avon & Gloucestershire Gardens Trust and I look forward to continuing this new phase of our journey with you.

Kay Ross, Chair of Avon Gardens Trust

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

The membership of Avon Gardens Trust fell dramatically this year at renewal this July. We as Trustees were aware that many members had indicated they were not to renew due to age, immobility or moving from the area. We now stand at 63 Members, 4 Honorary Members, 1 President. This is a significant drop from the 92 members of last year.

We move forward to the new Avon and Gloucestershire Gardens Trust (AGGT), all AGT members will automatically transfer to the new Trust.

Peter Hills, Membership Secretary

RESEARCH AND RECORDING REPORT

As reported last year the Avon on-line Directory now comprises all the information from the 1991 Gazetteer. In general, the registered sites are well-documented, although there is a need to ensure they are kept up to date, particularly as regards their current state and accuracy as more research data is revealed. Plans are underway to combine the Directory with site information held by Gloucestershire GLT. Additional information is added as



it becomes available, for example from planning applications, Historic England notes, or queries from interested parties.

Additions to the Directory – to the registered sites and the locally listed sites, continue and updates have been made to the entry on Hedgemoor Park, and on sites at Claverton, information on the Brunel Bridge in Sydney Gardens, and on the grotto at Royal Victoria Park, Brentford.

We also receive occasional enquiries, for example a recent one was Cote House, Westbury-on-Trym.

There is welcome news regarding No 4 the Circus, which was restored after archaeological excavation in the 1980's but has since been allowed to overgrow and the fine replica bench to decay. Discussions between the AGT, Bath Preservation Trust, the Council and the Trustees of the charity that manages the garden at No. 4 have recently taken place although we await a positive outcome on these efforts to restore this Georgian garden to its former glory.

Gilian Clarke

EVENTS REPORT

We have held 3 lectures and 4 gardens visits over the last 12 months.

Lectures at BRSLLI, arranged by our President Tim Mowl, were well attended and well received with some interesting topics revealed. Gardens visits arranged by Kay were also well attended with highlights at Caisson House for spring snowdrops and the visits to the Old Rectory and Dereham Park.

The series of lectures and garden visits will continue with the new AGGT, so we look forward to seeing you.

Peter Hills.

PLANNING REPORT

Since the last AGM, with the help of Frances Russell, I have monitored 67 planning applications, the vast majority of which needed no response, they do however take time to check against the Historic England's P&G register and the local Historic Environment Records. A couple of trends can be outlined in planning. First, not all the Avon LPAs submit applications related to local registered P&Gs. A second trend relates to Grade II P&Gs although the LPA, unlike the case with grade II listed buildings, these should be referred to, and be assessed by Historic England, this is not always the case. It should also be noted that the way the Gardens Trust deals with planning has changed, we now have a searchable database for applications which I can access without waiting to the GT to forward details.

As you will no doubt know the government is trying to remove the Gardens Trust (thereby local Trusts) as a statutory consultee for planning matters, which obviously remove an important function from local GTs. A trend which goes against current government policy for increased local democracy. Therefore, I have been working closely with the Gardens Trust in their campaign to reverse this ill-informed potential threat.

I must report at least one loss, the planning authority's decision to allow major development at Bath Rugby ground, which we see, although UNESCO do not agree, as a threat to Bath's double status as a World Heritage Site.

Although I shall not detail it, much of what I do is not directly associated with planning applications concerns the status and presentation of P&Gs. Most recently trying to discern what Bristol City Council intends for Castle Park. It is my view that the park should be considered as in effect a war memorial, unfortunately one which will be overlooked by tall buildings.

Not all is lost we are supporting Bath Preservation Trust's application for a 'pocket park' and supported in principle BCCs plan for a linear Park as part of the development at St Phillips.

David Evans



Avon Gardens Trust Annual Financial Report & Statement for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

Legal and Administrative Information

Status. The Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registered Charity No. 900377

Trustees. During the 12 months to 30 June 2025, the Trustees were: Kay Ross (Chairman), Gillian Clarke, Anne Hills, Peter Hills, David Evans, Selena Gray (Treasurer, to 12 October 2024), Colin Johnston (Treasurer, from 12 Oct 2024), Barbara Hardy (from 12 October 2024).

Registered Office: The CREATE Centre, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN

Bankers: There is a current account with Nat West Bank, 250 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4AA. We also had an account with CAF Bank Ltd., 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ which was closed in August 2024. Savings are held with NatWest Business Reserve, also Nationwide Building Society, Kings Park Road, Moulton Park, Northampton, NN3 6NW.

Report of the Trustees for the period 1 June 2024 to 30 June 2025

Objectives

The objectives of the Charity are for the public benefit:

1.Charitable Objectives

- to promote the education of the public on matters connected with the arts and sciences of parks, gardens and designed landscapes.
- to preserve, enhance and re-create for the education and enjoyment of the public whatever parks, gardens and designed landscapes that may exist or have existed in and around Avon.

2.Public Benefit

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in Section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Activities

Avon Gardens Trust has been actively involved in the protection and conservation of historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes in the Avon area. The Trust has made awards to community groups and schools. Research into all aspects of designed landscapes is encouraged by the Trust with findings being published in its Journal.

The Trustees have actively sought to promote collaboration with owners, local authorities, educational organisations and Friends' groups.

Information about the activities of the Trust is included in our publications (online and in print).

Future Strategy

The Trust intends to continue this range of activities, subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

Risk and Reserves Policy

The Trustees are satisfied that the Trust is not exposed to significant financial risks, and that its reserves provide an adequate basis for meeting expenditure that may arise.

These accounts comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and the Charity Commission's SORP 2014 applicable to accounts prepared in accordance with the FRS102 SORP.

Approved by the Trustees on 25th Oct 2025 and signed on their behalf by:

Name: *Colin A. Johnston*

Date: *25 Oct. 2025*

Income	2024/25	2023/24
Subs	1,315	1,035
Donations	0	0
Gift Aid	238	248
Events	4,421	3,346
Grants	0	0
Interest	0	2
Other	460	0
Transfer	0	2,500
Total Income	6,434	7,131
Expenditure		
Grants	3,270	1,250
Events	2,920	3,845
Donations	0	100
Expenses	0	49
AGM	139	139
Other	1,331	1,760
Journal	966	776
Refund of subs	180	0
Total Expenditure	8,806	7,919
Net movement in funds	-2,372	-788
Total funds at start of financial year	21,225	22,014
Balance	18,853	21,225

Interest for the year on our Savings Accounts amounted to £750 which provides us with **Total Cash Funds Carried Forward of £19,603.**

Total Funds of £19,603 consist of Nationwide Business Savings Account £17,710, Nat West Business Account £1,873, Nat West Business Reserve £20. The CAF Current Account was closed during the year and its funds transferred to our Nat West Accounts.

An increased number of grant applications was received this year and we were pleased to make more awards than in previous years, which is in line with our educational role contained in our Constitution.

Running costs (shown in Expenditure as **Other**) include website maintenance, software, ticketing systems, postage, and printing flyers.

These accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis within each accounting year and will include income and expenditure for events held outside the 12 month accounting period, 1 July to 30 June.

The Trustees received no remuneration from the Trust.

Signed on behalf of Trustees

Name: *C. A. Johnston*

Date: *25 Oct. 2025.*