

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

August 2026 Newsletter

Chesham Bois fete plant sale.

Oh what a relief after all that rain to have a fine day for the fete. I was quite worried as I did not have many plants and what I did have had taken a battering in the previous 3 weeks. In the last 48 hours I had a few more donations which were very welcome.

As my balance is very poor on uneven ground and carrying something makes life doubly difficult, I decided to take the plants over the Friday evening, so I could take my time going to and fro. Much to my surprise when I arrived on Saturday morning they had all multiplied! Many thanks to Liz and Brian, Jill and Graham, and Debbie. During the day more plants arrived but I didn't see the donors. If it was you, many thanks. In the end we had quite an impressive display.

My thanks must also go to Laura and Alex, Val, and Maggie for volunteering their help. Margaret who stayed all day and kept buying plants! And Jean who could now tell you every detail about every plant. Then there was Ken who got a job opening the poly bags. We had got a new purchase of bags which seemed determined not to open, well done for your persistence Ken.



In the end we cleared most of the plants and took close on £300 which was very good as the prices couldn't have been lower. Some people got some real bargains.

I couldn't have done any of this without my quiet helper Colin. You barely notice him, but transporting stuff, putting up and taking down and clearing away. All done very efficiently. So a big thank you to Colin.

Advance warning, in two years it will have to be someone else – my deafness is getting too bad; I can't hear the customers.

Susan Jeffery

Ed writes: Was it worth it?

On balance, probably yes – we did after all take almost £300, but it was a gruelling day for those of us who stayed throughout, and as we were leaving, one person was heard to say "I would cheerfully give a large donation to avoid having to do it again".

However, towards the end, when we were clearing up, a young girl came up and said "I've only got 12p left". I told her that she could have anything on stall for 10p. She was delighted, and I hope she will become a future gardener.



Forthcoming meetings in the Drake Hall

We do not meet in August

It has been decided no longer to hold a raffle at the monthly meetings, to allow more time for members to talk to each other over tea and coffee. There will still be a "big" raffle at the Christmas party on December 18th.

Irene Glyn-Jones writes: It was unanimously decided at the AGA Committee meeting on July 8th to cancel the monthly raffle. The reason for starting the raffle was to encourage people to mix and chat. It is now not particularly well supported, despite more worthwhile

prizes, and sometimes makes just a small amount for the Association. As our numbers have grown, the chairs are placed further back in the room and we need to have room for the queue for coffee and the raffle is getting in the way. As you all know, from the accounts produced at the AGM, we are not short of funds so that contributed to the decision.

Thanks to all who have contributed to the running of the raffle over the years.

September 24th Lily Blyth: [Horatio's Garden](#)



Horatio's Garden is named after Horatio Chapple, a schoolboy who wanted to be a doctor. Tragically, his life was cut short in 2011 at just 17, when his camp was attacked by a polar bear while on an expedition to Svalbard. There followed an outpouring of love and goodwill, with donations flooding in for his garden to be created.

People with spinal injuries need gardens like these. At Horatio's Garden we know that people with spinal injuries need natural beauty to support their recovery. This is why we build and look after extraordinary gardens in the heart of NHS spinal injury centres.

We know how critical it is to have an incredible garden right outside your hospital ward. We build and look after extraordinary, hardworking gardens with garden rooms to support this time. The gardens offer a vital place for reflection and adjustment, privacy and solace, joy and companionship. Our head gardeners offer gardening workshops to grow and cultivate plants and we organise a programme of events. Our evidence shows the

gardens support better sleep, vitamin D levels, improved relationships, mental health, distraction from pain and reduce stress.

We have now opened gardens in eight of the 11 NHS spinal injury centres in the UK. Our vision is for everyone with a spinal injury to have a Horatio's Garden as part of their rehabilitation care.

October 22nd Rob Potterton: 40 years of [Potterton Nurseries](#)

We are a traditional family run specialist nursery which grows and supplies an extensive selection by mail order and at the many shows we attend throughout the UK or directly from our nursery. The nursery has been awarded 7 Chelsea Flower show Gold medals and is open to visitors on Monday to Friday 10am to 3pm, March to October, at other times of the year by prior appointment. Our extensive sales area is restocked weekly, offering a huge range of plants. We have a lovely selection of display areas featuring many of the plants we offer, in raised beds, troughs, crevice and woodland beds.

The nursery was opened in 1971 and since then we have conducted our mail order business through our printed catalogue in paper format, although the relatively recent boom in internet use has resulted in an increasing proportion of orders been taken through the web site.

Here we look at the history of the founding of the nursery back in 1971 when it was originally named Potterton and Martin, detailing how the nursery has developed over the last 40 years including the building of our beautiful gardens. Other topics discussed include nursery propagation methods, cultivation, preparation for flower shows, mail order techniques and so much more.

November 26th Francesca Murray: The Rothschilds' orchids – heroes and heroines of the 19th century

Dr Murray is an author, speaker and researcher on garden history and the horticultural trades, with a special interest in nineteenth century gardeners and nursery owners.

After working in the design industry for ten years, Francesca studied horticulture and garden design at Berkshire Agriculture College before running her own garden design business. She has an MA in Garden History and a PhD from Queen Mary's University of

London, researching nineteenth-century gardeners, nurserymen, and the associations that came to their aid. She is a life member of Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust and London Parks and Gardens Trust as well as Archivist and guest speaker for Perennial (formerly known as the Gardeners Royal Benevolent Institution). She leads walks around London on the 19th century horticultural press and is a regular speaker on garden history.

Friday December 18th – Christmas party

Note that this is not our usual 4th Thursday. More details will be circulated nearer the time.

AGA Holiday 2027 -- departure date Sunday 6th June 2027 – Return date Wednesday 9th June 2027

This year we will be going to Yorkshire, staying in Harrogate.

We are planning visits to gardens in the area.

As soon as plans are finalised we will be advertising the holiday for bookings in the Newsletter.

Please keep the dates free.

Did you really expect this to work? or perhaps “You cannot be serious!”

The *Lifestyle* section of *The Guardian* has intermittent articles called “Houseplant Hacks”, in which the journalist tests an idea that has been suggested, often on social media, on how to care for your houseplants. Three of these are:

Add oats and Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) to potting compost. The idea is that the oats will break down and enrich the compost, and the magnesium from the Epsom salts will encourage chlorophyll formation. Two pots were set up, one with and one without oats and Epsom salts. After two weeks, the pot with oats developed a fuzzy white film on the surface, smelled “off”, and was attracting fungus gnats. It grew no better than the one without the oats and Epsom salts, but then there was no evidence that the compost was magnesium deficient in the first place, and adding just Epsom salts is no substitute for a balanced fertilizer.

Dip the end of cuttings in melted candle wax to seal it, then place the cutting in a glass of water. The idea is that the wax will prevent the bacterial invasion and force root development from nodes above. The plain cutting rooted well, while that treated with wax “sulked” before, eventually producing roots. Ed notes that it is hardly surprising that the cutting sealed with wax sulked – after all, it was deprived of water!

Use water that banana peel has been steeped in as a fertilizer. Steep the banana peel in water for a day, then strain and dilute to water your plants. Banana peel is supposed to be a source of potassium, which does indeed enhance flowering as part of a balanced fertilizer (think about tomato fertilizer for example). The treated plant looked no better than the control (treated with just water), and developed a slimy layer and a cloud of small flies – not what you want in your houseplants. Why not just put the peels on the compost heap?



Outing To Morton Hall Gardens, May 20th

Our first stop for refreshments was Hillers Farm Shop, which is well worth a visit if you are nearby. They have a small display garden and some good quality plants for sale in their plant centre. There is also a butcher, a fishmonger and a general shop selling savouries and vegetables/fruit. And a gift shop. All very tempting.

After lunch we followed instructions to the end of a lane where we were met by a man on a tractor who we followed to the gates of the privately owned Morton Hall Estate. The estate is owned by Anne and Rene Olivieri who always say that sixteen years ago they bought a meadow that came with a house, as they were so impressed with the fritillary display. Rene strongly believes that nature and wildlife should be shared and he became Chair of the National Trust in 2022. He is a keen equestrian as evidenced by the four impressive horses in the stables.



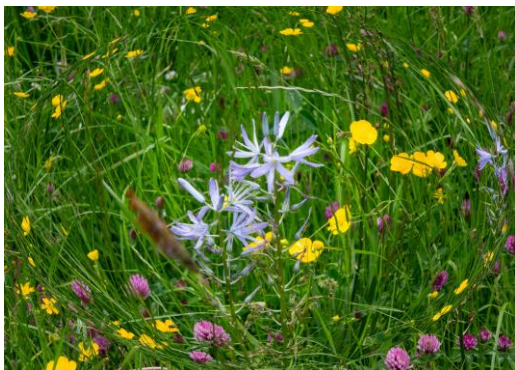
While seated on the terrace we were welcomed with a lively introductory talk by the Head Gardener. He has been there for 4 years, lives in a house on the estate and turned out to know the Amersham area well. Thereafter with map in hand we followed his route around the different sections of the garden. Thousands of new fritillaries are planted in the meadow each year although there are already thousands there. Also thousands of tulips are planted each year in the borders for their annual tulip festival. Sadly both were over. I would previously have described the architectural structure in the meadow as a folly. I learnt that it is a monopteros, as it is based on an ancient Greek and Roman circular row of columns supporting a roof but no enclosing walls.



Originally designed by Charles Chesshire between 2008 and 2011 the gardens surround the house and we viewed the immaculate herbaceous borders with perennial geraniums, thalictrums and various shrubs. They had two splendid examples of *Syringa microphylla*. There were a number of climbing roses on display and several more in bud in the borders. There was no black spot in sight, nor lily beetle on the lilies! The woodland rockery sported candelabra primula beside the pond and other shade tolerant plants. The kitchen garden was also immaculate with no weed insight.

All in all it was a relaxing stroll around the estate culminating in a muffin with a cup of tea on the terrace.

Anne Webb



More photo at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/127260098@N04/albums/72177720334519586>

The AGA garden holiday to Shrewsbury, June 2026

Day 1 Morning

Our first stop was at Pettifer's garden near Banbury. It has been created gradually since 1984 by Gina Price and her husband, James. It is a wonderful 1½ acre site sloping gently downhill with a series of beautiful terraces and a wonderful view. Sadly Gina died in 2023 but head gardener, Polly, works hard to maintain her vision and inspirational planting. Polly gave us an introductory talk before we were free to wander. The garden was packed with unusual perennials, colourful alliums, and unusual coloured peonies and roses. We were treated to coffee and homemade biscuits served by Gina's husband, James.

Val Cannon



Day 1 afternoon

In the afternoon we visited John Massey's garden at Ashwood nursery. We arrived early enough to have a good look round the nursery which was full of interesting well kept plants. Then we gathered for an introductory talk by Nigel Hopes, the head gardener. John's wonderful garden runs round a curve of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal and is made up of a plantsman's garden of many contrasting beds and borders, carefully thought out to be of interest all the year. The garden is immaculately maintained and clever pruning gives each plant space and allows us to look through to views of the canal and beyond. Unfortunately, shortly after we went into the garden, it started to rain heavily, so we couldn't linger there for as long as we would have liked and we had to retreat to the tea room.

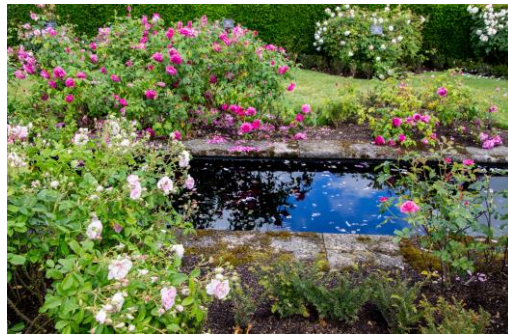
Frances Billington



Day 2 Morning

This was a visit to David Austin's rose gardens. We were blessed with a sunny day for our outing which was matched by the warm welcome from the staff at David Austin's. The gardens there are set out in rooms, some with water and another with a pergola. In each section were planted roses of every kind which were in full flower. The scent from the roses was wonderful; almost overpowering. We enjoyed the coffee shop, the restaurant and the excellent nursery selling many different plants, not just roses. Many of us were tempted to buy. The plants that we had bought were delivered to our coach on 3 trolleys! Our driver, Russell, excelled in fitting everything into the hold.

Liz Moulton



Day 2 afternoon

This was a visit to Wightwick Manor. We arrived in the sunshine, wondering if we would avoid the promised rain. The gardens were full of glorious roses, especially on the main parterre in front of the house. The house is built in mock Tudor style to display best the many items from the Arts and Crafts movement, although it is an amazing example of the Aesthetic Movement. It is an Aladdin's cave of gems from that period, with paintings from Rossetti and Byrne Jones, William Morris wallpaper and fabrics, stained glass from Charles Kemp and hand painted tiles by William de Morgan. Despite all of this, it was built to the height of modernity, having electricity and central heating. The visit seemed to be enjoyed by most and went almost to plan, with us being just two minutes late returning to the coach and getting caught in the rain.

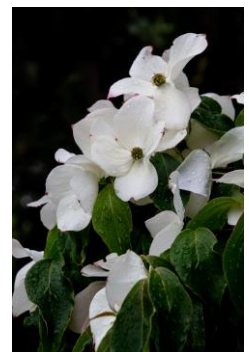
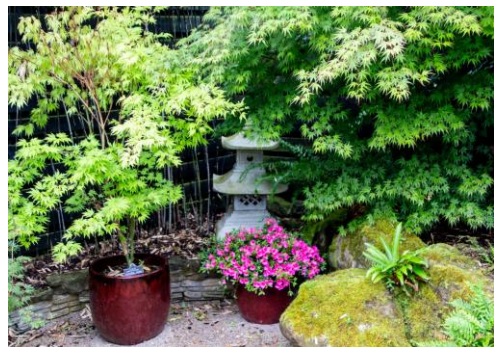
Diane Bellass



Day 3 morning

Visit to Bridgemere show gardens and garden centre. The morning of our visit was damp and blustery. After a longer walk than expected, through the most enormous garden centre that I have ever seen, we reached the six acres of show gardens. There were 16 gardens and unlike when they had been exhibited at Chelsea or other garden shows, we could walk and through them. It was like walking into one large garden which was laid out in rooms. The majority of them were full of plants and flowers in bloom, most of which were grown at Bridgemere. One or two were being renovated. My favourites were the Japanese and the Octavia Hill gardens. A highlight was that David Domoney was filming his monthly video podcast that he does for Blue Diamond, which now own Bridgemere Garden Centre and many garden centres in our area. He was friendly and after filming spoke to a number of our members and even had his photograph taken with some of them. AGA hope to have him visit us and give a talk in the future.

Althea Godfrey



Day 3 afternoon

A visit to Upper Ruston Farm. The garden surrounds a 17th century grade 2 listed farmhouse of interesting construction, including a chimney stack dated to 1675. We very much enjoyed this private garden and were warmly welcomed by the owners, Peter and Paul Turpin-Ottley. They have created the garden from scratch and each section was packed with interest. Their attention to detail was amazing and the variety of flowers and vegetables in a limited space was inspirational. In addition there were plants for sale.

Felicity Vickery



Day 4 morning, on our way back to Amersham.

We spent the morning at Middleton Hall and gardens. This was a fascinating visit as there was so much history attached to the hall; it goes back 400 years. It remained in a dreadful state until a group of ramblers came across it and decided to get it restored. Years and many volunteer hours work later, the house and other buildings have been beautifully brought back to their original state. There was also a very interesting walled garden.

Joan Clark



The last stop of the holiday was a bit of a contrast to the other gardens.

We had seen the superb mass commercialism of the headquarters of Blue Diamond at Bridgemere and the meticulous personal projects of Peter and Paul at Upper Rushton Farm, as well as other pristine gardens, so we stopped at a trio of family run businesses on an old quarry site hedged in by a motorway, an airport and massive allotments.

Sprawling about were three nurseries. Here was Chester's, a bonsai specialist with interesting Japanese water irises, a gnarled wisteria, bonsai tree grown from a scrap found in a salvage skip and lots of intriguing little trees in tiny Japanese pots wired into interesting shapes as well as miniature manicure sets of tiny tools to shape the trees. There were dishes and pans to suit every décor.



Avondale was a small nursery with a very impressive reputation and website. In the past it has exhibited at Chelsea. It was stuffed with the most interesting plants, the sort that are only seen in glossy gardening magazines, many new to the trade. The grass I bought, black arrow grass, was only released to the trade a few years ago. Three national collections are held here: michaelmas daisies, specifically the New England aster, *Symphotrichum novae-angliae*, sanguisorba and wood anemones, *Anemoides memorosa*. It is certainly worth exploring their website.

Russells was a family run garden centre with welcome tea and cake, and sunny seats for the weary travellers.

Jane Jenkins

More photos from the holiday at

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/127260098@N04/albums/72177720334524070>

Issie went shopping

OK, as a headline, this on a par with “heavy traffic on the M25” or “minor delays on the Metropolitan line”.

However, on the visit to Bridgemere on day 3 of the AGA holiday, Issie was eying up this splendid palm. I suggested that no way could it fit in the coach – we had already been told that, as ever, we had filled most of the “boot” space with plants, and our cases were still in the hotel.

Nothing daunted, Issie persuaded one of the sales staff of the garden centre to bring it out to see if our driver Russell could fit it in somewhere.



Perhaps fortunately for Issie, Russell could not squeeze it into the coach – quite apart from the enormous price, no way could she have lifted it to get it home, or dug a large enough hole to plant it..

The Bridgemere garden centre is not only home to a series of former Chelsea gardens (the reason for our visit, see page 7), it also has a large general shopping area in addition to the expected plant, garden ornament and ephemera sales areas.

One of these was a large Lakeland store, and when we had time to spare after lunch we wandered in, looking for a specific type of plastic gripper mats for opening jars and bottles. The staff knew what we were looking for, but said that they no longer stocked them (perhaps unsurprising; ours are, after all, some 30 years old).



This family of geese with goslings paraded outside our bedroom window each morning.

What impressed me, wandering round this shop, was just how many things there are that I didn't know I didn't want.

It was pity that this visit was not on the last day, when I could have bought some very interesting meats, vegetables, etc, in the large farm shop.

Red Kites

On 30th June, 30 of us visited "Red Kites", in Bledlow Ridge, owned by Mag and Les Terry.

The first thing that struck us was the incredible view. It was amazing! The garden of 1½ acres was certainly a hillside garden as we gingerly walked down past beds with shrubs, climbers and herbaceous perennials. We then passed a small vegetable garden and greenhouse before descending again into a large woodland area with many different paths leading us into the hidden garden at the bottom of the hill, where Les was on hand to tell us about the planting and how the garden had been expanded and developed.

We then walked up through the orchard and wildflower meadow into another area (originally a swimming pool) where we found a delightful pond with golden carp and sitting areas to admire the stunning view.



We carried on, past more herbaceous borders to the terrace where we gathered to enjoy tea and delicious homemade cakes.

Our hosts have been opening their garden for the NGS for 16 years and all the money they receive goes to the Charity. The garden is beautifully maintained by the owners with no outside help, except for one very high hedge near the house.

The garden is planted for year-round interest and is well worth a visit.

Irene Glyn-Jones

Editor notes: This really is not a garden for the faint-hearted, and Les has to be commended for mowing the lawns that slope steeply away from the house in a series of terraces, not to mention all the other work in planting and maintaining such a steeply sloping "patch". The Koi carp were very large – perhaps too large for the pond, although the received wisdom is that they grow to fit the size of the pond, and they seemed happy and healthy, and indeed perhaps (hopefully) too large for a passing heron to eat.

More photos from Red Kites at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/127260098@N04/albums/72177720334503856>



Visit to Broughton Grange Gardens and Upton House, 14th July 2026

It had to be a Tuesday, the only day coach tours are allowed into the beautiful private gardens of Broughton Grange! It proved to be a bad clash with various other local organisations. Also, Upton House had just been visited by groups from Chess Valley u3a and Amersham National Trust so our numbers were down. The relentless hot weather deterred a few too, but, incredibly, we had a blissfully cool morning and set off from the Rugby Club at 9am with 33 very enthusiastic, knowledgeable and supportive gardeners. We were trying a different coach company, Barnetts of Hemel. Driver Dave was most helpful, punctual and cheerful but sadly could not make the microphone work. Communication on the coach was therefore tricky so any idea of a quick talk en route had to be abandoned. I had been sent lots of brochures of the Broughton Grange gardens in advance so we were still able to plan our visit.



Andrew Woodall, Head Gardener was there to greet us and serve us coffee and biscuits. Several paths to the loos from the tea area had been cut through the paddock, which was planted with a fantastic wafting sea of tall white wild flowers, campion, mallow, wild carrot dotted with poppies. Huge terracotta pots were dotted around, extravagantly planted with exciting colour combinations. So, from the start, we knew we were about to explore somewhere very special!

The Grange has been there for hundreds of years set in 500 acres of beautiful Oxfordshire parkland. Work to develop some parts of the garden closer to the house was only begun in the 1990s. There is now a stumpy, woodland garden, fountain garden and a beautiful double herbaceous border plus many others. The house overlooks the beautiful rose parterre, originally planted with low box hedges which were abandoned in favour of euonymus Jean Hughes. Each central area is filled with tall pink nicotiana whisper mix. The surrounding hedge of roses were all white and pink. I counted at least 18 pyramidal obelisks but there could have been more.



In 2001 Tom Stuart Smith was commissioned. He turned a six acre field into a wonderful two sided walled garden with a rill running through. Full of herbaceous planting over three terraces, the south facing beds attract huge numbers of winged visitors, so many bees, butterflies, hawkmoths and dragonflies! Broughton Grange is now recognised as one of the most significant private gardens in the land.



Lunch was either a picnic on the coach or a visit to the Pavilion Cafe at Upton House. The afternoon was very relaxed having been allowed to choose our own entry times to the house. The temperature had shot up so the house was especially tempting. The history of the house is long and extremely complicated. In most of the guide books it only gets interesting in 1927 when Walter Samuel, 2nd Viscount Bearsted, bought it as a country retreat. Walter was heir to the vast fortune, estimated at £4 million at that time, amassed by his father Marcus and grown out of shipping silk and rice from the Far East as well as oil. In 1897 Marcus had established the Shell Transport and Trading Co. Walter modernised and extended the house. Internally many new spaces were created to house his ever growing art collection and old ones like the squash courts and billiard rooms were redesignated as art galleries. William was also Chairman of the Trustees at the National Gallery, a Trustee of Whitechapel Gallery and of the Tate Gallery.



We were treated to a music recital in the long gallery as we passed through and a feast of notable art including an amazing collection of Sevres pottery and paintings by Stubbs, Canaletto, Peter Breughel the Elder, Hogarth, Bosch and on and on. Knowledgeable guides and excellent books describing the house contents were available for reference in every room.

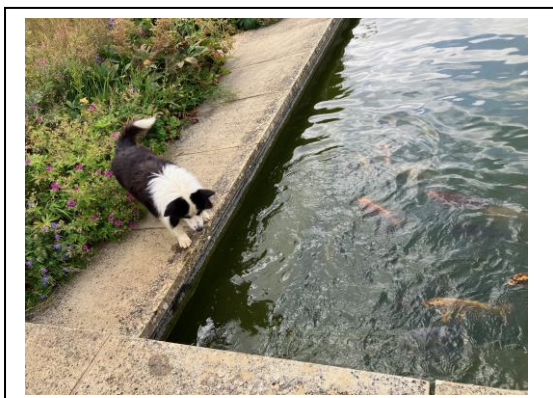
In the 1930s English garden designer Kitty Lloyd Jones worked with Lady Dorothea Bearsted to remodel the gardens introducing the 60 metre long double herbaceous borders and the mirror pond at the bottom of the very steeply terraced gardens.

I felt it was a good day out! I had lots of excellent feedback, about Broughton Grange in particular. The contrast between the two properties worked well. No one was ill and we brought everyone safely home on time but there is still the mystery of that hat! The driver swore he checked the coach before we set off in the morning and there was no hat then. No one has claimed it. So, unless I hear very soon, it will be heading off to the charity shop!

Val Cannon



Photos by Jill Harris, Liz Moulton and Val Cannon



Waltham Place

On 13th August, a searing hot day, a party of 24 intrepid heat-deniers visited Waltham Place organic and biodynamic gardens and farm near Maidenhead. This is a 220 acre estate owned by the Oppenheimer family since 1910.

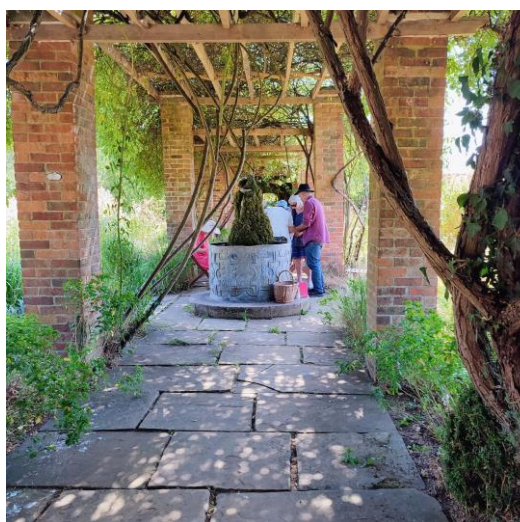
We started off with delicious refreshments in a beautifully restored ancient barn. Three knowledgeable and charming guides then showed small groups round the extensive walled gardens, dating from the 17th century, and the long borders that were redesigned in 2002 by noted Dutch plantsman Henk Gerritsen.

High temperatures had taken their toll but we were still able to appreciate a series of naturalistic gardens and learn about the importance of sustainability and biodiversity. Staggering back to the barn, we were given a delicious and reviving lunch of soup, salad and more baked goods. All ingredients were from the farm and gardens.

We were much impressed by the knowledge and consideration of all involved in the Waltham Place Team.

Susan Russell

Photos by Susan Russell and Liz Moulton



Some requests for help

We always need people to meet and greet members and visitors at our meetings.

If you can help, please contact Felicity Vickery Tel: 01494 726284, email felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk

We need people to help with the tea and coffee at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting. If you can help, please contact Liz Moulton Tel: 01494 784913, email libbym6740@gmail.com

As ever, it will be much appreciated if some members could arrive about 7 pm to help put out chairs and tables; they do not put themselves out! Carol Barratt has a rota, so again you do not have to do it every month.

Publicity. If you know where you could put a publicity poster please contact david.bender@btinternet.com

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham; Blue Diamond (formerly Van Hage) garden centre; Little Chalfont Library; Amersham Library; Chesham Library; Coleshill Village Hall, Tesco Amersham, Amersham Old Town

Committee and Contact Details

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Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at

<http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

Photos from outings

You can see links to lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>

Click the button on the top right of the screen for a slide show; you can scroll through the pictures using the > and < arrows on the right and left of the screen

Half price entry to RHS gardens

We are affiliated to the RHS, and one of the benefits is a card allowing two AGA members at a time to visit one of the RHS gardens at half price. If you want to borrow the card, please contact Jean Bowling (secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk)

We are not psychic

If you change your email address (or indeed your postal address) please email membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk and / or newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk, so that we can keep the records up to date and make sure you receive the newsletter and booking forms for outings.

[Click here](#) for a list of all the NGS gardens in Buckinghamshire