

# Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue XXX

Autumn 2004

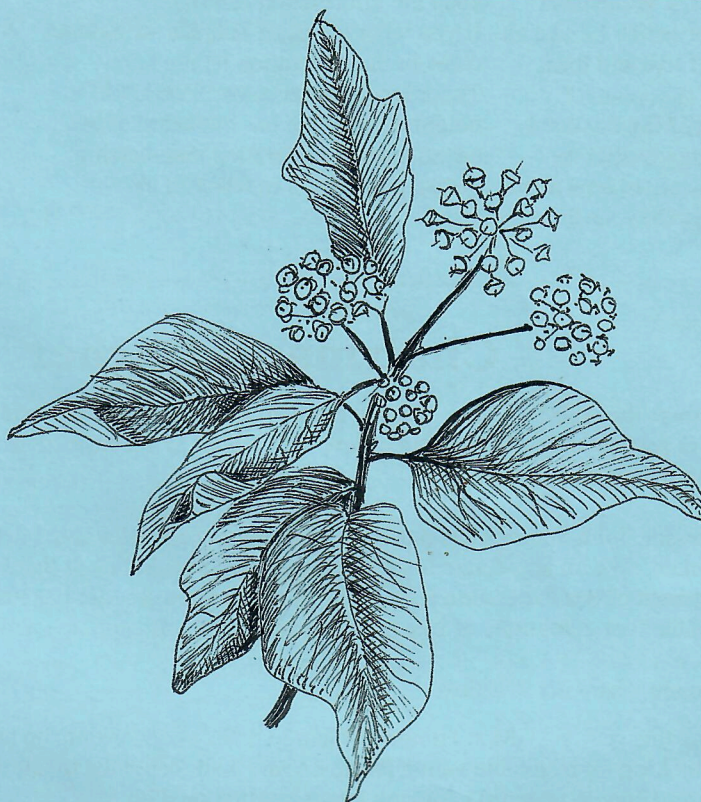


## Points of interest

- Plea from Hon. Sec.
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- France next year?

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*Now winter nights enlarge  
The number of their hours,  
And clouds their storms discharge  
Upon airy towers.  
Let now the chimneys blaze  
And cups o'erflow with wine;  
Let well-tuned words amaze  
With harmony divine.*

*Thomas Campion  
1567-1619*

## Introduction

It is doubtful whether Campion would be impressed by these ill-tuned words falling short of amazement with harmony, divine or not, but..... welcome to the thirtieth edition of the Newsletter.

Please read, or recycle. There are exhortations to Hon: Secs: and the first words from our new Chairman, Lyn Spencer-Mills in the Chairman's Corner.

There might be, you feel, a Wellensian flavour to this edition for which I make no apology. This is where I live and local copy is available.

So what about next time? May this hard-pressed editor timidly suggest that we have a West Somerset Issue, or how about the Devonians sending in copy, or from

anywhere else in our increasingly vast region. We have Clubs from Warminster to Torquay, from Portishead to Axminster. There **must** be gardening news, snippets about your club, a garden visit, a garden joke or tip to publish.

I am very grateful for all those who send in information of one sort or another from programmes to newsletters. Please keep the information coming.

If you wish to be put in touch with other clubs in the Federation let me know.

There are 233 of us now. Perhaps a neighbouring club has not heard of the advantages of Federation membership; please put them in touch with us.

P.H.



## Chairman's Corner

During the months since the AGM we have all been busy in our gardens and the load of your committee has been light. Your new chairman in particular, has been lying fallow with regard to the business of the SFGC! Our first committee meeting of the season was held in October.

Although my predecessor, John Starmes has retired as Chairman, we are delighted that he still comes to our meetings in his new role of President. We all appreciate his wise counsel and should like to thank him again for his long-time contribution to the development of our Federation from its birth to full maturity. He has made many contributions since he was a founder member of the first committee of like minded garden club officers who perceived a need and dedicated themselves to fulfilling it.

Thank you John -you are a hard act to follow.

Meanwhile, following this year's AGM at Hinton St George, I have been eyeing up any village hall where I happened to be invited to speak, looking for a suitable venue for next year. I am delighted to tell you that I have found one with a lovely gardening club willing to undertake hosting the Federation on 27th May 2005. We are to be the guests of Norton Fitzwarren, whose chairman I only had to coax quite gently! We hope to have at least one garden and possibly a garden centre to visit before the meeting which would be followed by the now traditional buffet supper.

Many of you have been asking "When will there be a new Speakers List?" I am about to take this task over from our overworked Secretary and he tells me that it will take about a year to complete. So the answer to the question is "Early 2006" Whilst talking to Chard Gardening Club last week they mentioned that it would be helpful if an 's' symbol could be inserted after any talk which includes a slide presentation to make it easier to select talks suitable for bright summer nights where the hall curtains are not light-proof. Simple and easy to do.

Please let me know if there are any other useful additions we can make to ease the life of Programme Secretaries.

Lyn Spencer-Mills

## A Plea from Hon. Sec.

If you have a change of officer especially that of the main contact between your club and the Federation please let the Hon. Sec. SFGC know. A number of communications have gone astray since the person receiving the mail no longer serves on the Committee.

P.H.

## Revision of 'Gardens Open Booklet'

Due to the cumulative effect of my indolence and inertia plus 'engine room complications' it is unlikely that the new edition of the above will be produced before the Spring of 2005. I hope the wait will prove worthwhile.

Ray Box

## A Vexed Question

On the matter of speaker's expenses which are not necessarily evident from the Register, programme secretaries are well advised to negotiate all costs prior to or at the time of booking the visitor.

Treasurers have often received a nasty surprise at the end of the meeting! "Ninety pounds please" "But?!...."

The Federation has no control over what speakers reckon as being an appropriate fee. We can only give a rough idea. So the details of the package must be agreed beforehand. Petrol prices are increasing and some speakers, I regret to say, seem to take the opportunity to charge excessively. This needs to be thrashed out at the booking time.



## Some thoughts for next Spring

### *Plant three rows of peas:*

Peace of mind  
Peace of heart  
Peace of soul

### *Plant four rows of lettuce:*

Lettuce be faithful  
Lettuce be kind  
Lettuce be happy  
Lettuce really love one another.

### *Plant four rows of squash:*

Squash gossip  
Squash indifference  
Squash grumbling  
Squash selfishness.

### *No garden should be without turnips:*

Turnip for service when needed  
Turnip to help one another  
Turnip the music and dance

To conclude our garden

***We must have thyme:***

Thyme for fun  
Thyme for rest  
Thyme for ourselves



## The Register

Would all those receiving communications from Hon. Sec. **please** ensure that the relevant documents go to the appropriate person? This applies especially to details of new speakers and judges. I have listened many times to bewildered programme secretaries who have never seen the latest amendments.

Apart from the enclosed newsletter the person organising the programme for the year should be in possession of

1. The Red Register
2. The yellow list of amendments
3. The enclosed list

Any queries about this please contact Hon. Sec. SFGC

The task of revising the Register of Speakers will be undertaken next year with a view to publication in 2006.

If anyone knows of a good speaker or judge who is not already on the SFGC Register would they please send me, Hon. Sec. SFGC a name and address in order that an invitation to join may be sent. This is particularly important in those parts of the county or areas not especially well served. I am anxious that new clubs, for example, in West Somerset, Wiltshire and Devon provide information which other clubs can share. The success of the Federation depends entirely upon pooling resources and passing on information. So if you know someone whom you can definitely recommend please let me know.

I prefer a name and address rather than a telephone number as I can then make a more formal approach. The list needs

to be increased as the Federation expands.

There are a number of gaps and shortages of speakers on certain topics. If you know of a lecturer who covers any of the following subjects, please let me know.

- All aspects of garden history
- Plant hunting and plant hunters
- Vegetables
- Practical basic gardening techniques and tips
- Plus all other aspects of gardening!

### **Important postscript**

If you are ever in difficulty with a speaker, please let me know immediately. This applies to emergencies and last minute and other disappointments. Pip Harwood 01749 679182

## Allotment Self management

Six Councillors and five allotment site representatives met on the evening of October 6th 2004, for our normal council meeting of Allotments, held every six weeks. When the matter of self management came up, it was the same old report from the councillors. It has taken 60 years since Self management was first thought of so I proposed that further discussion should take place after the councillors had

visited the each site. This was agreed. Inspection of the sites will take place on October 21st.

### Children's Plot

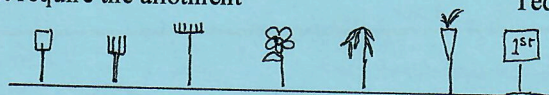
Teachers who were taking gardening classes in the adjacent school have moved to another school. Sadly no other teacher will carry on the work so the school does not require the allotment anymore.

### Weston-super-Mare Flower Show

The diamond jubilee of the local show was a great success with an increase in classes, exhibitors and the paying public. Our first show was held in 1944 and was in aid of the Merchant Navy Benevolent Fund.

That's all the news this end folks

Ted, W-S-M Secretary



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## **T'was ever thus**

When my wife and I were exploring the western end of Exmoor I spotted this notice which appears in Combe Martin Museum

**THE ILFRACOMBE, BERRYNARBOR, COMBMARTIN,  
TRENTISHOE, KENTISBURY, WESTDOWN  
AND MORTHOE  
COTTAGE GARDEN SOCIETY  
est. 1837**

**"The Cottagers best Friends are those that help themselves"**

**CAUTION**

**Whereas  
It has been discovered that some of the**

**COTTAGERS and**

**OTHERS**

**Have obtained PRIZES by exhibiting Articles,  
NOT THE PRODUCE OF THEIR OWN GARDENS,**

**in violation of the Ninth Rule of the Society;**

**The Committee have unanimously determined to publish and**

**EXPOSE**

**All such Offenders, and forever after to**

**EXCLUDE THEM**

**From the Benefit of the Society**

**Committee Room October 7th 1865**

# 101 Ways of dealing with Gastropods

- No 39 The SLUG & SNAIL GIZMO Advertised at £15.45. This is the answer to gardeners' prayers, (allegedly)
- No 40 Place opaque sheet of plastic on the garden path and enjoy an early morning's skewering with a pointed instrument.
- No 41 Human hair is reputed to deter badgers. It also has an effect on slugs and snails (apparently)
- No 42 Ammonia, This is readily available and abhorrent to our enemies -and our friends as well if the truth were known. Let's move swiftly on....
- No 43 Heavy Metal Rock Music; can be pernicious to the human ear drum. Blasted out at a megawattage it should deter enemy advances on your lettuce.
- No 44 The Longstock Water Garden Method. All borders containing perennials are razed to the ground in autumn and all the debris cleared away. Dead leaves are collected up and tidied away as well as any material which might provide shelter for slugs, snails beetles, bugs, toads, insects etc,etc.  
Alles in Ordnung. (See below)

## France next year?

Does anyone know of an organised visit to the floral show at Courson near Paris next year. If you know of such an excursion could you please let Hon. Sec. SFGC know as there are a few members in other parts who would like to go without the hassle entailed in individual visits.

P.H. 01749 679182

## Calendar of Events

Please complete the enclosed form and return to Barbara Rahn before mid-February if you wish your details to be included in the annual events calendar which goes out in the spring. Spring events are difficult to publicize since these dates rarely occur after publication.

## Are you a Dainty Person?

In some long-forgotten magazine devoted to household management there appeared an article which, faced with a week's accumulated clutter, my wife is fond of recalling. Entitled 'Are you a Dainty Person?' It urged the virtues of neatness and good order in the home. A place for everything and everything in its place. An acquaintance of ours once remarked with aggressive pride, 'I like to keep my home like a battleship'

Some folk are the same with their gardens 'Alles in Ordnung' as the Germans say. Are you a Dainty Gardener? I confess straightaway that I am not. The implication here is of a delicate and tasteful beauty, a scrupulous adherence to neatness of appearance to the point of fastidiousness. Do you wince at a weed? Do you shudder at a pile of forgotten prunings in the corner? Do you choke at the sight of a creeping buttercup?

One of our club's visits this year was to Longstock Water Gardens near Stockbridge, a beautiful series of ponds filled with water lilies -Monet would have loved it - neat wooden bridges and grassy paths connecting ponds to islands and each other, knife edged lawns (always mown on Thursday), borders of wonderful astilbes, loosestrife, hostas, and perennial buck-eye. The whole totally agreeable and soothing to the soul; good order throughout.

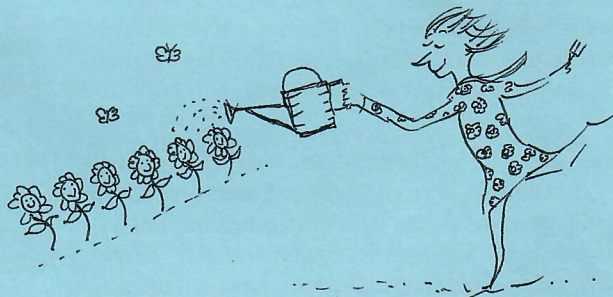
I spent a little time chatting with the gardener and at one point he leapt off at a tangent, plunged into the border and grabbed a decadent leaf from a shrub to thrust it away into a pocket without a break in the conversation. *If thine hand offend thee cut it off!*

Nature here was very definitely under control, much to the displeasure of one of our elderly members who grumbled and

chuntered about there being no wildlife, no dragonflies, no butterflies, 'no spirit to the place' -her words. Apparently frogs were notably absent as were slugs and snails. Present were fourteen inch carp and a method for dealing with the latter. (See elsewhere in the newsletter).

As winter looms here in Wells, my own garden collapses into decay and a lack of tidiness. My excuse is that the birds and beetles revel in it. Frogs leap out of scruffy niches, blackbirds plunder the overhanging berries and woodmice filch the peanuts from under the startled beaks of our increasing family of spadgies. Alles definitely not in Ordnung!

P.H.



## Another Vexed Question

### Insurance and Gardens Open

A number of clubs have asked whether the Federation Public Liability Insurance Scheme covers members who visit gardens where it is organised by the club. The answer is 'Yes'.

Cover is provided in cases where the Club is found to be negligent in a Court of Law. Garden owners are not covered by the Club even if they are Club members. General household insurance usually protects owners in the case of an accident on their property as a result of a slippery path or broken step etc. The Club organising the visit is not liable in this instance. So it is up to Garden owners to ensure that they have cover and are insured. After all, the postman could trip over a dodgy step.

If the Gardening Club has organised a visit then their members are covered by the P.L. scheme. If some other organisation in the town or village arranges it then the SFGC cannot provide cover.

Importantly the scheme covers for the **negligence** of the club and its members. Even if the Club organises a Garden Open Day the individual garden owners must ensure that they are insured. The Club's insurance covers the members visiting. Moreover the scheme protects Committee members from liability

It is a difficult area for lay people. Lawyers are as at home here as vine weevils in peat compost. Perhaps a few further examples might help to clarify things. The following is taken from the SFGC's own document on the subject.

People can have accidents anywhere, even on official outings, so by joining the insurance scheme Clubs and members will be covered if accidents occur due to their negligence but **not** from accidents due to the negligence of another party. There is **no** cover for accidents where the Club and its members are **not** liable.

A few examples:

1. **Covered** A Club member falls over another member's umbrella which has been left carelessly sticking out from under a chair. The injured member sues the Club. If the Club or member is found negligent in a Court of Law, the insurance would pay.
2. **Covered** A Club member pulls down a branch of a shrub for close inspection on an official visit to a garden. It springs back when released and injures someone else in the eye. The injured party sues the Gardening Club. Negligence may well be proved against the Club in a Court of Law, in which case the Club is covered by the policy.
3. **Not covered** A Club member falls through the stage of the village hall and the accident was due to dry rot. The Gardening Club is not liable or negligent in such a case, so if the Club was sued the case would be thrown out of court. But, in the unlikely event the Club was proved negligent for some reason, the Insurance would pay.

4. **Not covered** A Club member falls down some steps on an official visit to a garden and the accident was due to some broken stones. The Gardening Club has not shown any negligence and is therefore not covered. The injured person should sue the garden owner for damages or prove negligence by the Club in a Court of Law.

Cover is **not** provided unless the accident occurs at an official Club event or function. An accident which takes place on an official Club outing will be covered if negligence is proved against the Club in a Court of Law.

Cover is **not** provided if an accident occurs when a group of members decide to visit a garden on their own. If it is not on the Club fixtures list or recognized as an outing by the Club, the Club is **not** involved and is therefore **not** liable or negligent.

So the criterion is:

Negligence must be proved in a Court of Law against the Club or its members.

Accidents due to negligence of someone else are not covered.

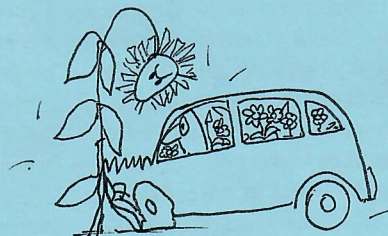
It is vitally important that all your members and Committees read this notice.

### And a post script courtesy of Tatworth Horticultural Society.

#### *By the way.....*

Always on the lookout for a good excuse, the *Old Muck-spreader* has come across some examples from motor insurance claims forms. Readers may find them useful:

- \* The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intention.
- \* I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way.
- \* A lorry backed through my windscreen into my wife's face.
- \* A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
- \* In an attempt to kill a fly I drove into a telegraph pole.
- \* I had been shopping for plants all day and was on my way home. As I reached a cross-roads a hedge sprang up obscuring my vision and I did not see the other car.



# The Bishop's Palace Work in Progress

Many of you will recall a summer evening in 2003 when the Somerset Federation held its AGM at the Bishop's Palace, Wells. Since then a new Head Gardener has been appointed. James Cross had been working under Troy Scott-Smith at the Courts Garden, Holt, a N.T. property near Bradford-on-Avon. Work on developing the Gardens has already started as James explains in the following article.

**James Cross, Head Gardener,  
Bishop's Palace, Wells**

It is nearly a year since I started working at the Bishop's Palace Wells and I have enjoyed every minute of it. There is so much happening both inside and out. My job is to improve the gardens at the Palace making them more exciting and diverse. When I arrived I realised the gardens were a blank canvas waiting to be designed and planted. Most of the gardens are laid to lawn but that was not always the case. In Victorian times there was a knot garden behind the Under-croft, grassed over for a few decades and then planted as a red and white rose garden in the 1970s and subsequently grassed over again on the departure of

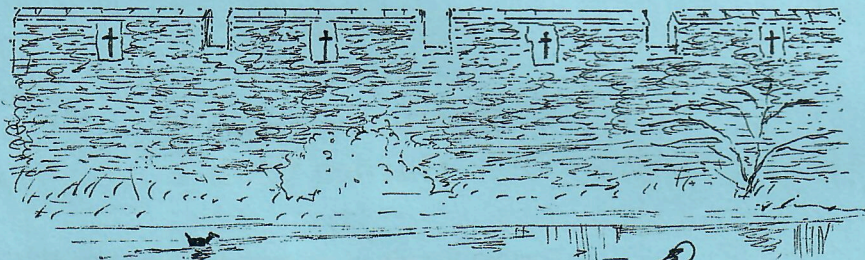
Bishop Bickersteth in 1987. Rob, my assistant garden, and I have now just finished double digging the area and preparing it as a rose garden and herbaceous perennial garden. Separated into four squares by two paths and surrounded by box hedging. The area will be planted up in the spring. The only item of real interest that we found was a silver three pence from 1901 in perfect condition. The first item I found looked old and exciting but turned out to be an American quarter from 1967.

In the past the garden suffered or thrived depending upon the Bishop of the time. Now, however, with tourism bringing us close to 40,00 visitors between April and October and Evening/Daytime tours, conferences, Dinners and Wedding Receptions all the year round, it has been realised that the gardens must always be well kept and developing. I am very pleased that Bishop Peter is a keen gardener and realises the importance and potential of the gardens. When he has time he spends it gardening. Future developments in the garden include a Hot border; reinstating the borders at the front of the Palace; the creation of

flower borders as you cross the bridge into the outer gardens; the full development of the old kitchen gardens not currently open to the public to include sculptures; and in general improving and replanting the existing flowerbeds. Rob and I manage our time carefully because so much time is spent mowing, particularly, in a wet summer. We could not get as much done without our volunteer, Ian, who has been here many years, and James who started volunteering this year. We welcome anybody who can give a morning or afternoon, or day to help the garden. You get fresh air, exercise, and a hearty lunch for #£1.60 in the restaurant.

The Bishop's Palace garden is undergoing a major transformation and there will be a lot of changes from year to year, some of which will hopefully inspire people in their own gardens. We look forward to welcoming you to the Bishop's Palace.

James Cross  
Head gardener,  
The Bishop's Palace, Wells  
For more information telephone  
01749 678691



## Bees and the Gardener



In talking to gardeners, I am constantly reminded of the close links between gardening and beekeeping. Where would the bees be without the gardens, and where would the gardens be without the bees? When giving talks to Gardening Clubs, it is hardly surprising therefore, that I find there is more than a passing interest in the craft of beekeeping. Indeed, many gardeners see beekeeping as an extension of their hobby.

In July of this year, I gave a talk to a gardening club in Dorset, and at the end of

this presentation, I was approached by two members, who expressed a further interest. Within a very short space of time, they both became beekeepers.

This experience suggests that there might be benefits to be gained from a closer liaison between the Somerset Beekeepers' Association, and the Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs. Clearly, both organisations have members with similar interests, as most beekeepers are also keen gardeners. Having spoken to Mrs Lynn Spencer-Mills, we both feel that the

best way forward in the first instance would be to make speakers from the Somerset Beekeepers' Association available to make presentations at Federation Clubs. If you also feel that this would be worth pursuing at your local club, please contact me, and I will make the necessary arrangements.

Gerald Fisher  
Promotion Officer,  
Somerset Beekeepers Association.  
Tel. 01458 250700

Email [gerald@thefishers.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:gerald@thefishers.eclipse.co.uk).

## Final Cuttings

Since the last Newsletter we have welcomed Exton Garden Club, Burlescombe and Westleigh Horticultural Society, Monksilver and District, Ashcott Garden Club, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Gardening Club, Denbury Flower and Produce Show Society, Urchfont Garden Club and Henleaze Garden Club. This brings our total membership to 233.

To these new clubs we extend our good wishes.

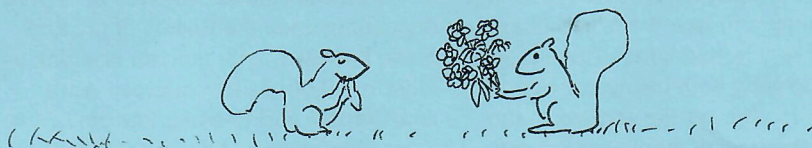
My grateful thanks once more to Pam Kellett who has transformed scribbles into legible literature for your benefit. As the nights enlarge their hours we review the highlights and low lights of our gardening efforts. One short highlight in my garden this year was not a horticultural event nor was it the result of my husbandry. Flitting briefly but stunningly one morning through the last blooms of 'Sanders White Rambler'

was a Bee-Hawk Moth. This rarity in suburban Wells. I am not expert enough to distinguish whether it was Narrow-bordered or Broad-bordered. Like my gardening I leave those tidy details to others but what excitement! It is surprising what goes on in our gardens when we are not looking, especially as we tend to view things pessimistically in terms of pests and diseases. But then what are our gardens for? Just us??

If a rare insect shares my pleasure in the older roses then I can face the winter with quiet satisfaction and ignore as ever, the predations of squirrels, aphids and Black Spot.

The Season's Greetings to you all and even greater success in the New Year.

Pip Harwood



### Somerset Federation Committee

#### President

Mr John Starnes 01935 881308  
Stoneleigh, Duckpool Lane, West Chinnock, Crewkerne TA18 7QD

#### Chairman

Mrs Lyn Spencer-Mills 01460 76389  
Hooper's Holding, Hinton St George TA17 8SE

#### Vice Chairman

Mr Nick Rigden 01278 671376  
Cridlands West, High Street, Spaxton, Bridgwater

#### Secretary

Mr Philip Harwood 01749 679182  
Fernville, Bath Road, Wells BA5 3HR

#### Treasurer

Mr Bill Thomas 01934 822627  
Littleton, 3, Littlefields Avenue, Banwell, N. Somerset BS29 6BE

#### Committee Members

Mr John Addison (ex officio) 01278 655000  
Cannington College, Cannington TA5 2LS  
Mr Ray Box 01761 434415  
Tramore, 25, New Bath Road, Radstock BA3 3ED  
Mr Ted Gill 01934 628758  
30, Brighton Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 3QG  
Mrs Pamela Kellett 01432 760075  
Lakeside, 22, St Mary's Lane, Burghill, Hereford, HR4 7QL  
Mrs Barbara Rahn 01749 675753  
1, Dells Court, St Thomas Street, Wells BA5 2U  
Mrs Marie Wheatley 01935 881421  
Yeoman's Wake, Higher Street, West Chinnock,  
Crewkerne TA18 7QA

### Advance notice of the AGM 2005

**AGM 2005  
will be held on  
May 27th  
at**

**Norton Fitzwarren Village  
Hall  
hosted by  
Norton Fitzwarren  
Garden Club**

Further details in the next newsletter



**Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs**