

Chair Report - David Bingley

Once again the committee, supported by a number of family members and helpers, staged our 2026 Autumn Show following the UK's driest summer on record. Well done growers and exhibitors for your tenacity with your watering over the long summer months. Our show was enjoyed by our society members, visitors and Abingdon's Mayor Cllr Andrew Skinner, who expressed his admiration for everyone's hard work.

Show Secretary Report - Barbara Bingley - Autumn Show

2026 was the first year in the many since I took on the role of show secretary that I was worried there would not be enough entries to make a good Autumn Show. However, members must have kept watering their allotments, gardens and pots to keep precious vegetables and flowering plants alive during the weeks of drought.

34 members brought their 320 entries to the Northcourt Centre on a perfect day, weatherwise. The most popular classes this year were the single rose, the pot plant in flower, squash, tomatoes and all the photography subjects. We held a colourful show with quality exhibits.

In the afternoon visitors enjoyed viewing the show and were able to have a cup of tea and purchase plants, cakes and produce from our sales tables. Once again the raffle was very successful with members contributing many prizes.

For the first time in many years, a reporter from The Abingdon Herald visited and took photos. It will be interesting to see the write up.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the show a success.

Congratulations to all our prize winners who received their awards from the Mayor Cllr Andrew Skinner.

David Hastings – the Banksian medal for most points in sections A and B – flowers fruit and vegetables

Ron Hamblin – the Macklow Centenary trophy for most points in section B, flowers and pot plants

Ian Middleton – the Dahlia cup, the Watt Shield for Allotment holders and the National Vegetable Society medal for an amazing bunch of carrots

Janet Moreton – Ledger Rose Bowl

John Elflett – Spokes Cup for most points in section B, fruit & vegetables

Barbara Bingley – President's cup for Homecraft – preserves and baking

Barbara and David Bingley share the Harry and May Nye cup for photography

April McLeod – Cecilia Smith Challenge Cup for Junior classes

Annie McLeod – Molly Fisher Salver for floral arrangements, Frank Haynes cup for Homecraft – beverages, and the Muriel Welch Memorial Cup for most points from 4 or more different sections in both the 2026 shows.

Treasurer & Members Secretary - Karen Fisher

Following a very successful Autumn show I can report the funds raised for this event. Thank you to everyone who entered, came along and took part.

We raised a total of £285.90. Here is the breakdown:-

Raffle	£61.85
Cakes sales	£21.35
Teas	£30.20
Plants sales	£89.00
Visitors	£65.50

We also had 3 people who took out membership of the Society.

Carolyn King - New Committee Member report

I thought the recent autumn show was amazingly good, considering the tropical weather we have all been having. Some of the exhibits, both flowers and produce, were stunning.

During the proceedings I was preoccupied with my allocated task – doing the prize cards for the photography section. Under Barry's patient instruction, I eventually got the hang of this. We were greatly helped by the long time photography judge, Lynda Crowley, who was well acquainted with the system. This ensured that anyone who had two entries in the same class only won one prize.

I look forward to the next show when maybe I shall have something worth showing myself.

Dates for your diary

We have made a reservation for our Christmas Lunch for Thursday, December 10th at Cosener's House - 12-30 for a welcome drink before a 1-0 o'clock lunch. Menu choices will follow shortly.

Our next talk will be on the 20th October when Derry Watkins will present her talk on 'Summer flowers from seed, wonderful Annuals and Biennials'.

Day Trips 2026 - Robin Carter

Our second outing was to Kiftsgate Court Gardens on the 26th August. We had 30 members who attended, despite a lot of interest being shown earlier.

The day was sunny and warm despite the weather forecast of showers.

We left later (10.30 am) as the gardens didn't open until 12 noon. They were very interesting and on two main levels the lower level was quite a challenge but most members did make it to the bottom, then puffed on the way back! Pleased to say every one did make it.

AHS 2026 Holiday to Kent Castles & Gardens - Suzanne Hamblin

On Thursday, 30th July at 9 am we began the pick ups with our driver Steve Bunce from Pearce Coaches, and with all 32 holidaymakers safely onboard we then travelled to Chartwell (National Trust), the former family home of Sir Winston Churchill, the first visit of our holiday. The cafes at Chartwell had a good choice of food and drinks available. We spent a lovely couple of hours exploring the house, garden and grounds that inspired Churchill and got to see the largest collection of his paintings. Some of our party made use of the complimentary white London taxi that was running between the car park and the house. We departed from Chartwell at 4 pm to make our way to the Bridgewood Manor Hotel & Spa where we stayed for 5 nights.

On arrival at the Hotel we were welcomed by the reception staff and anyone who needed assistance with their cases were helped, some people took advantage of the swimming pool. With everyone freshened up we all then met at 6 pm for our 3 course dinner which was very good and all left the tables feeling full.

Friday, 31st July 10.15 am departure for Lullingstone Castle & The World Garden which was a warm and sunny day. We were met and received a very warm welcome from Tom Hart Dyke who was very enthusiastic and kept us engaged and entertained by the stories of his grandmother and the silk moths, and his capture in the Darien Gap, where he and a friend were held hostage for nine months by gun-toting guerrillas and threatened with execution.

There was a lovely cafe set up in a marquee and we all took advantage of refreshments on arrival. Tom then took us on a tour of the World Garden which was most interesting and finished at the Plant Nursery. Some of us then went back to the cafe for lunch. Tom was delighted that we all stayed for a good length of time, and a few plants made their way back onto the coach. I also asked if Tom did evening talks at groups and he said he did, and passed me his contact information. We departed at 3.30 pm to make our way back to the Hotel, to get ready for dinner at 6.30 pm.

Saturday, 1st August 9 am departure for Sissinghurst Castle Garden (National Trust), where some of us ventured up The Tower where Vita Sackville-West had her writing room and gave us a bird's eye view over the gardens and surrounding countryside. We also were able to explore the Big Room (the Library), the various different gardens and the allotments but due to the drought all the lawns were closed off to prevent further damage to them due to the heat and sun. Another lovely cafe and delicious ice creams. We departed at 3.30 pm to make our way back to the Hotel, to get ready for dinner at 6.30 pm.

Sunday, 2nd August 9.30 am departure for Hever Castle & Gardens, a 14th Century moated castle, famous as the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife. Some of us toured the Castle with audio guides which gave us a great deal of information. It features a 150-acre estate with award-winning gardens, including an Italian Garden, Tudor herb garden, three mazes and a 38-acre lake offering a blend of Tudor history and Edwardian splendour. Lovely refreshments and ice creams were available. There was also a Super Car Event taking place with lots of different cars on display in aid of the Air Ambulance. A most enjoyable day and very pleased to see the buggy to help transport people up to the entrance at the end of our day. We departed at 3.30 pm to return to the hotel and dinner was at 6.30 pm.

Monday, 3rd August 10 am departure for Leeds Castle, Grade I listed fortress and royal palace. Lovely grounds surround the castle which is uniquely situated on two islands in a lake formed by the River Len. We had audio guides which we could use inside the Castle which gave us a good insight to the Castle's history and owners. Lovely cafes and ice cream available. There was a train and minibus running between the castle and entrance which was very welcome at the end of the day. We departed at 3 pm to return to the hotel to start our packing ahead of dinner at 6.30 pm. After dinner a birthday cake with candles arrived for one of our party who was to celebrate their Birthday, which was very well received.

Tips and thank you cards from our party were handed to Steve, our coach driver, and Grace at Reception for the Hotel staff and they were all very well received.

Tuesday, 4th August our suitcases were all loaded onto the coach by 8.30 am. 9.30 am departure from the Hotel to travel to Hughenden Manor (National Trust) renowned as the 19th Century country home of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and his wife, Mary Anne. We then independently had time to explore the house and gardens. We had a very interesting talk at 1.30 pm about the history of the house and its occupants. A few more items and plants were purchased from the Gift & Plant Centre to make their journey home to Abingdon.

At 2.30 pm we then boarded the coach for our return journey back to Abingdon, with Steve keeping a careful eye on the traffic taking the best route.

Overall, the holiday was a great success with sunshine every day. I was very pleased that everyone looked out for each other, circulating & making new acquaintances, we were very fortunate with the hotel and staff, the choice and food at meal times and with Steve our "driver" who was very calm, patient and a great driver which was a bonus when travelling, avoiding the low bridges and getting through some narrow gaps.

Thank you to everyone who came along and made it a lovely holiday and for the cards, flowers and messages received on my return, which are very much appreciated and thanks should also go to Carly Wheeler-Ellis at Just Go Group Holidays who helped with our arrangements. Time to start planning the next holiday for 2027 to the Isle of Wight.

Gill Draycott

Many of you will have known Gill Draycott through buying cheese from Wells Stores in Stert Street and later Peachcroft Farm. Since 2018 Gill, together with a friend, was our excellent Domestic section, (now Homecraft, preserves, baking and beverages) judge. She was very thorough and wrote very helpful comments to encourage an improved product.

After judging Gill would look round the show. In 2024 she was keen to learn which variety of runner bean won, as the ones she had grown she described as 'stringy'!

Very sadly, Gill died on the 10th of August 2026. We will represent the AHS at her memorial service in Charlbury.

David and Barbara Bingley

Gardening Tips

From David Bingley:

This year our autumn cultivations will be more important than ever. Over the hot dry summer weed control has been quite easy! That will soon change when the autumn rain will break the dormancy of the weed seeds that are in the soil. This coupled with our warm soils will give an autumn flush of weeds, when we will have an excellent opportunity to control them.

I am about to take cuttings of my geraniums, I would normally try to do them in August but I hope September isn't too late. I hope you have been looking out for some new spring flowering bulbs to plant this autumn - ready for the Spring Show!

From Carolyn King:

When we were at Kiftsgate I bought a shrubby salvia to plant near one of my roses. I already have Amethyst Lips near a white Iceberg which used to suffer from black spot – the salvia leaves give off a strong scent which seems to deter the black spot fungus so I'm hoping the new salvia will also do the trick. I can't remember where I first heard of this trick but it definitely seems to work.

The Dobies seed order Discount Code for AHS members is SUGD353A

This code will give 50% off seed orders and 20% off 'non seed live products' ie seed potatoes and onion sets etc.

The Dobies Catalogue can be found at www.dobies.co.uk

Requests

If any members have any useful garden tips, tasty menus they wish to share or any other items of interest they would like to have considered for the next newsletter then please forward these to Suzanne Hamblin, suzanneis@hotmail.co.uk for future newsletters.

Donations for the raffle and our Autumn Show would be greatly appreciated . Barry and Diana Wiggins, who organise the raffles, would like to thank all those who have already donated this year.

Anyone who has unwanted packets of seeds please bring them along to a talk to pass on to members who would like them.

Help Wanted

If you are interested in joining the committee please come forward, it does not take up much time and would help support the society.

Blue Sky Eco Cafe

Susan Hammersley, an AHS committee member, is one of the volunteers who open the Blue Sky Eco Cafe on the first Tuesday of every month (except January and August) from 12 noon – 2 pm at Long Furlong Community Centre OX14 1XP. Menus and more details are available at <https://blueskyecocafe.org.uk>

Sponsor

Charlton Park Garden Centre - Wantage sponsors our Society by supplying us with plants for raffles. Their Garden Centre has an extensive range of quality plants and garden requisites. They also bring a wide range of seasonal plants and bulbs to the Abingdon Market on a Monday. We hope you will continue to support them.

AHS Website: www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk