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WELSH HISTORIC GARDENS TRUST

Number 46



South and Mid Glamorgan Branch Newsletter

Best Wishes for 2013 to you all.

We have had another eventful year with several very successful events and visits. I hope we will see some of you at other planned events.

South and Mid Glamorgan Branch AGM 2012

Sunday 1 April at Beulah Chapel, Rhiwbina

The AGM was well attended with 9 members of the Committee and 12 other members present.

Chairman's Report

Jean announced that she will be resigning as Branch Chairman as she is standing for election as National Chairman at the AGM in Brynkinalt, Clwyd on 16 June.

Committee: Jean began by thanking the committee members for their particular contributions throughout the year: Hilary Thomas for supplying text on local gardens, visits etc., Derrick and Rebecca for managing the money, Judith and Elaine for their experience as conservation experts, Gerry, Paul and Jacky for their practical gardening expertise and Val for organising the paperwork.

Visits and events: Jean reported that the Branch has had a successful year with most of the events being very well attended. The **National AGM** was held at **Fonmon Castle** and the reception at the **Cowbridge Physic Garden** on the evening before was very well attended and the weather was beautiful.

Grants: **Cyfartha Castle, Merthyr Tydfil**, has received a £1.96 million grant to restore the garden and greenhouses. **The Horticultural Heritage Scheme** is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund where gardeners being trained in conservation techniques are based in one or more of a group of local historic gardens, including Dyffryn Gardens.

National Trust. The management of **Tredegar House** will be transferred from Newport Council to the National Trust from



April 2012. The National Trust will take over the management of **Dyffryn Gardens and Arboretum** as soon as negotiations with the Vale of Glamorgan Councils are completed. WHGT members are asked to join the National Trust at a local garden as part of their subscription will be given to each garden. Money will also be given to the garden after every recorded visit by a NT member

Election of Officers

As Jean has resigned, Gerry Donovan was elected as Chairman. Hilary Thomas (Deputy Chairman), Rebecca Exley (Treasurer) and Val Caple (Minute Secretary) were unanimously re-elected. Bronwen Thomas and Ian Nicholas were elected to the Committee and Derrick Kingham, Paul Underwood, Judith Martin-Jones, Jacky Thorne and Elaine Davey were unanimously re-elected.

The AGM was followed by a very interesting illustrated talk by Helena Gerrish (Chairman, Gwent Branch) on: *Henry Avray Tipping and Health and Happiness in Rhiwbina Garden Village*. A very influential garden designer in his time H. Avray Tipping lived in, and designed gardens for, 3 properties in Monmouthshire: Mathon Palace, Mounton House and High Glanau. Although most of his private papers have been destroyed Helena has made a study of his work since she started restoring the garden at her own house, High Glanau. H. Avray Tipping was also involved in the design of some of the properties in Rhiwbina for the Rhiwbina Housing Reform Company which was planned as a healthy environment for people working in Cardiff to live in.

This was followed by a book signing, tea and a walk around Rhiwbina Garden Village



Helena signing her book



Rhiwbina Garden Village

Hafod Estate, near Aberystwyth Saturday 14 July 2012

I have heard about the work of the Hafod Trust since its inception but this was my first visit—and was it worth it. We were very lucky with the weather, which was dry and bright, but rain during the previous week had swelled the water course so that the falls were spectacular. We were lucky to have as our guides Ken Murphy of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and Jennifer Macve of the Hafod Trust to lead nine members of the WHGT and friends—plus a dog—round this beautiful picturesque landscape.

We started at the Hafod Estate Office, the original stables of Hafod House, which was knocked down in the 1970's. We meandered around the site following part of the Gentlemen's and part of the Ladies walk. The latter was supposed to be more gentle, but both had been affected by new tracks which had been built by the Forestry Commission. so neither walk was now as originally planned. However enough features and viewpoints remain to give a feel for how it looked in it's heyday. We are very fortunate that, in the early 1990s, the WHGT was able to set up the Hafod Heritage Partnership Trust, with the help of a private benefactor and local support so that this truly magnificent landscape was saved and the Hafod Trust is continuing to manage the estate so well.



Hafod picturesque landscape



Trip to North Wales

Because of lack of support we were unable to justify the cost of the coach trip the study day to the Canopied with Bowers, Pergolas, Arbours and Arches on Saturday, 28 April 2012. However several members did attend and enjoyed the talks and the conducted walk around Bodnant Gardens.

Bristol Botanic Gardens and Goldney Gardens

Thursday 17 May 2012

Twenty-nine members and friends set out on Thursday 17 May by coach for Bristol. After an interesting trip around parts of Bristol some had never seen we arrived at Goldney Garden, Clifton. One of several historic gardens in the ownership of the University of Bristol and now somewhat reduced from its original 16 acre size it forms the setting of Goldney House and orangery, now a popular venue for weddings and other events, and the award-winning student accommodation added in 1960s. Knowledgeable guides took two parties around the highlights of the garden, notably the restored Grade I shell and mineral grotto, regarded



Goldney Gardens



Emmaus House

as the best example in Britain. The original garden, established over 35 years by Thomas Goldney III, a wealthy Quaker merchant from 1731 onwards combined in a relatively small space many of the fashionable features of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The high level grassed walk along the military-style bastion with its vast statue of Hercules would have given a commanding view of the Avon where Goldney's vessels came and went. The walk terminated in a Rotunda used as a summerhouse. The 1758 Dutch style canal still contains splendid fish and leads to a mount with a tower which houses the apparatus for raising water for the grotto cascade.

From Goldney we made our way to Emmaus House, a former RC school and now conference and retreat centre, where we sat down to a delicious lunch. The new but confident gardener there charged with the awesome responsibility of restoration gave us a swift conducted tour of the complex terraced gardens there. Some of the elements of the Victorian paths were evident but the site



which has achieved prizes in the Bristol in Bloom commercial category in recent years has been overlaid with many modern additions.

The coach then took us to Bristol Botanic Gardens on their third site at Stoke Park Road just off Clifton Downs. Starting with an almost virgin site, the setting for The Holmes Arts and Crafts styled Hall of Residence, the design team were charged with creating a design to accommodate all the plants from the former site and our guides described the process of cataloguing and transporting many thousands of species and relocating them safely. The



Bristol Botanic Gardens



design of the gardens was attractive, accessible and highly informative. The plant displays show part of the Botanic Gardens' four core collections: plants that illustrate evolution, plants from the world's Mediterranean climatic regions, useful plants and threatened native plants from the Bristol and southwest area. In the two hours allocated for our tour we saw a huge variety of exciting plants, finishing at the hothouses with the giant *Victoria Amazonica* waterlily and scared lotus plants, and taking in a lovely pool of waterlilies, the giant a western herb garden and an area devoted to Chinese medicinal plants. Many expressed delight with this lovely place and were encouraged to become 'Friends' thus enabling free entry at any time. Our day was completed by the gift to each of us, from the 'External Estates' team responsible for these gardens, of a copy of a book on 'The University of Bristol Historic Gardens' by Marion Mako, an MA student there.

Judith Martin-Jones



Hensol Castle Walled garden



The Grade 1 Listed Hensol Castle in the Vale of Glamorgan (half a mile south of J34 of the M4) is undergoing a transformation from dilapidated psychiatric hospital to luxury hotel and spa. The present 'castle' is mainly an eighteenth century early neo-gothic mansion, added to in the nineteenth century, and built around a double courtyard. The extensive parkland with lakes and woodlands was laid out in the eighteenth century, and the large walled garden dates from that period.

The estate was sold to the National Health Board in the late 1920s and became a psychiatric hospital. Most of the hospital buildings, including residential ward blocks, were developed in the parkland to the south of the Castle, leaving the lake and gardens around the Castle as recreational areas for the patients and staff. A few years' ago the Castle and its grounds was bought by Leekes Ltd., the Department Store retailer and landowner of the adjacent golf courses and Vale Hotel complex.

The walled garden is located a few hundred yards north of the Castle, in a gentle declivity, straddling the stream that flows out of the large upper lake. During the last century hospital patients worked there, producing fruit and vegetables, but since the 1990s it has been derelict. When asked by Leekes to come up with plans for the restoration of the walled garden, I carried out a site survey and did a bit of delving in archives to find out what of significance remains, and how appropriate it is to conserve, restore or re-invent the former garden for future use.

The map that accompanied the sale details of 1824 shows the garden much in its current form, with a track around the west and north sides and maybe around the south and east.

The first edition 25" OS map of 1877 gives more detail, showing glasshouses against the north wall, a small building against the south wall, and a simple layout of straight paths with bridges across the stream towards the west and east ends. The map indicates that there may have been an outer wall to south and east but this is not apparent

on the ground today.

The 6" OS map accompanying the sales catalogue of 1923 shows no obvious changes, but the description of the walled garden, quoted below, and photograph show that it was productive and up-to-date.

“THE KITCHEN GARDEN through which a Stream passes, spanned by rustic bridges, is walled on all sides and contains FRUIT TREES of all descriptions, with a big VINERY containing the famous single Vine which is reputed to be six months younger than the famous Hampton Court Vine (1760s). **Peach House, Melon House, Orchid House** and **Hothouse**, all heated from the Stoke Hole. Range of brick frames, **Potting Shed, Pot Store**, etc.; **Engine House** containing Hornsby Ackroyd Oil Engine and Dynamo, by Drake and Cotham, of 200 volts, with a full and complete of Cells, Switch Board, etc.”

Most of this remains today, but in a ruinous state, as shown in these photographs taken in October 2012.

1. North-east corner of the walled garden, showing a blocked-up gateway. The inner face of this east wall is brick, with an outer face of stone. All the other walls are stone throughout.



2. The central canalised stream enters and exits via arches through the wall. The stream is used by otters, and a kingfisher flashed past when I was surveying. Adjacent to the entrance is a blocked arch but it is not clear what function it performed. Stone abutments to carry a bridge are just visible.



3. The central rustic bridge is still intact. The white timber Oriental style handrails shown on the photograph of 1923 have disappeared but will make an attractive feature to restore. One of the two weirs can be seen beyond the bridge, and at the far end, a more recent vehicle bridge, on older stone abutments.



Lady Egremont Visits Dunraven

Over seventy years ago, Pamela Wyndham-Quin and her sisters, travelled from their home at Adare in Ireland by boat, train and car to Southerndown to spend summers at Dunraven Castle with their grandfather Windham Henry Wyndham-Quin, the 5th Earl of Dunraven.

On a cold, misty and decidedly wet day in July 2012, Pamela, now Dowager Lady Egremont, came to Dunraven to revisit a place of which she retains very happy childhood memories. Heavy mist shrouded the landscape obscuring the views, and sodden, muddy ground had to be negotiated with care. Undaunted, Lady Egremont explored her childhood haunts with determination and evident enjoyment and provided those of us accompanying her with fascinating reminiscences about life at the Castle before the Second World War.

Lady Egremont and her old friend John Borron (former treasurer of WHGT) were met at Dunraven by Val and Hilary and by the principal ranger for the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Paul Dunn, the latter thoughtfully providing a 4-wheel drive vehicle to cope with the muddy conditions under foot and wheel. And it was Paul's strong arm and sure footing which enabled Lady Egremont to indulge her wish to venture down the steep cliff path to Temple Bay, a place of particularly happy memories for her. After walking to the site of the old mansion (demolished in the early 1960s) on the headland, we went into the Walled Garden where, as pre-arranged, we were joined by Robin Herbert (president of WHGT). Here, Lady Egremont shared with us more memories of the Castle and the Garden, memories of the last heydays of Dunraven Castle and of the final years of the Dunraven family's residence there.

We are assured that lady Egremont thoroughly enjoyed what must, for her, have been a very nostalgic visit. We all had an extremely interesting and informative morning in her company and dare to hope that some of her memories a 'vanished era' will be recorded.

Hilary Thomas



Glamorgan Vineyards

Viticulture is not a new phenomenon in Glamorgan, and members intending to come to the wine-tasting at Glyndwr Vineyard on 29 September may be interested in the following 'historical snippets'.

In the 1860s the Marquis of Bute planted some vines on the walls of Cardiff Castle, but it was at Castell Coch, that exuberant recreation of a medieval castle north of Cardiff, that the Marquis planted his first vineyard in 1875. Here, on a south-facing slope, he made his first serious attempt to produce good wine in Glamorgan. A year earlier he had sent his head gardener, Andrew Pettigrew, to northern France to acquire a thorough knowledge of vine growing and wine production from some of the foremost vineyards in the area, and the Castell Coch vineyard was planted in accordance with Continental practice.



Some fifteen years later a second, larger vineyard was planted at Swanbridge (near Sully), and a third, small one at St Quentins Castle, near Cowbridge. The latter was short-lived, the site proving too exposed, but the Swanbridge vineyard flourished and proved a more successful long-term venture than that at Castell Coch where mildew was a recurrent problem. The vineyards were stocked with *Gamay Noir*, a small black grape grown successfully in the cooler regions of France

Viticulture on the Marquis of Bute's Glamorgan estates confounded the prediction of a sceptic in *Punch* who, in 1875, wrote that it would take four men to drink wine produced in Glamorgan – two to hold the victim down and one to pour the wine down his throat!!! In 1877 the first Castell Coch vintage produced 240 bottles of a white wine that won favourable comments. In 'Jubilee' year 1887 the grapes at Swanbridge ripened to perfection and produced 'a luscious golden wine'. The two Bute vineyards survived until 1920.

Present-day wine producers in Glamorgan are widely respected for the quality of their wines. We were in for a treat at Glyndwr Vineyard

Hilary Thomas

Glyndwr Vineyard, near Cowbridge, Saturday 29th September

This afternoon visit to the Glyndwr Vineyard was enjoyed by 21 members and friends. The weather was perfect for September and we all enjoyed a glass of sparkling wine on the veranda with views over the Vale and the garden. However the weather has been disastrous for the vineyard this year with the cold spring and sunless summer contributing to the almost complete lack of grapes on the vines giving no possibility of a 2012 vintage.

Our host talked about the setting up and planting of the vineyard before taking us to see it. First we had to negotiate a passage through the field with the resident llamas who would have liked to sample the few grapes on the vines.

We then returned to the dining room to sample the wines and a variety of cheeses while being told about the techniques of growing and maintaining the vines.

Everyone expressed their thanks for a very enjoyable and educational visit, but I doubt if any of us plan too open our own vineyard soon!

Val Caple

Searching for gardeners. We need your help!

You will remember that in 2007 your Branch published *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan* which explored the diverse garden history of the Vale and offered unique perspectives on the gardens in question. But of the hands-on gardeners, those men (and women) essential to the creation and maintenance of a garden, very little was discovered and they remain shadowy, elusive figures.

Now your committee is appealing for your help in tracking down some of these gardeners. Are there any



Members enjoying the wine and llamas



gardeners among your ancestors? Do you have any notebooks or journals, letters, photographs, newscuttings or other items relating to their gardening activities? We are particularly interested in those who worked in private gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan before the First World War, but will also spread our net to the wider geographic area of Glamorgan. Some gardeners will be closely identified through family and place of birth to Glamorgan. Some will have moved here from England or further afield to work in a garden, put down roots (no pun intended!!) or moved on after a few years. Our search will encompass them all.

The hands-on gardeners deserve to be recognised and rescued from obscurity. So, if you have any information that will help to identify some of them please get in touch. Hilary Thomas who will look forward to hearing from you.

You can contact her at Brookside Farm, Llandough, Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan CF71 7LR. email: hilarymthomas@talktalk.net

Illustrated talk on Ham House Garden, Surrey

Our first talk, hosted by Dyffryn gardens was a great success. Sandra Durant's presentation on the restoration of this little known 17th century NT property was fascinating and beautifully illustrated. If you have ideas for future talks please contact a Committee member.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South and Mid Glamorgan Branch AGM 2013

Bute Park Education Centre, Sunday 28th April, 2.30-4.30pm.

After the business meeting Dr Julia Sas will give a talk on the project to restore Bute Park and will lead a conducted tour of the park.

There will be a small charge for refreshments and the talk and walk.

Hidcote Gardens, Gloucestershire

Thursday 9th May 2013

The visit to this NT property will include a 'behind the scenes' tour with Graham Pearson, biographer of Lawrence Johnson. Details have not been finalised but, if there is sufficient interest, a coach will be organised.



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