

No. 39
Summer 2005

Piercefield, Monmouthshire: the results of a new survey

Ken Murphy and Liz Whittle

Piercefield is one of the most outstanding picturesque and sublime landscapes of the eighteenth century in Britain, ranking in importance with Downton in England and Hafod in Wales. Following a recent survey by one of the authors (Ken Murphy), of Cambria Archaeology, for Cadw and the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a much more complex picture of the landscaping than was previously known has emerged. This is an extremely exciting development that will have wide repercussions both for the interpretation of Piercefield itself and for the wider picturesque movement.

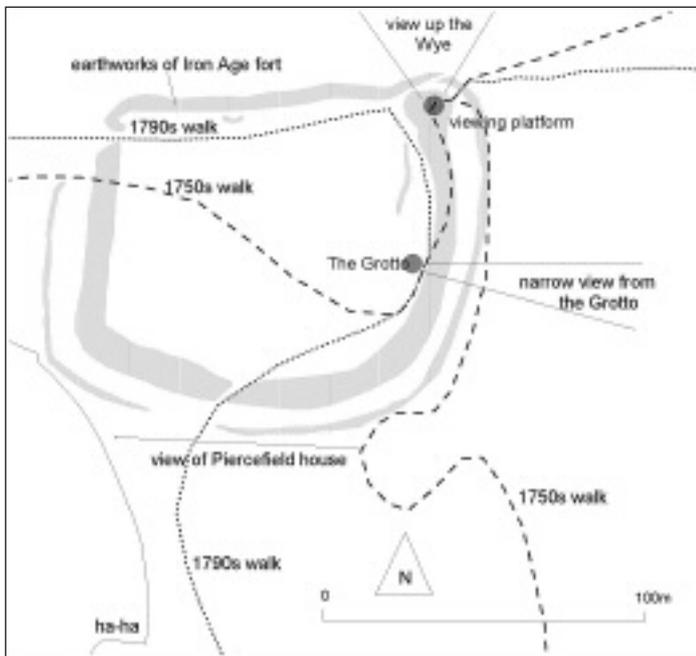
The Piercefield Walks were laid out for the pleasure of the owners, their friends and visitors. They became popular with the increasing number of tourists who visited the lower Wye valley in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They lie along the western banks of the River Wye between

Chepstow and a point three miles south of Tintern. The walks and associated viewpoints, summerhouses and other features were first laid out by Valentine Morris soon after 1752 and seem to have been largely completed by 1760 when Edward Knight visited the estate. The walks were neglected by the 1780s, but a new owner in 1794, George Smith, re-opened them and made alterations that reflected a slightly different appreciation of the landscape and a change in the way the walks were undertaken. The walks closed to the public in the 1850s.

There are two aspects to the increase in complexity which have been uncovered by the survey. First, it is clear that there was a whole network of paths, viewpoints and picturesque incidents, not just a single, linear path (although this remains the chief element of the landscaping). This is the spatial aspect. Secondly, there is the temporal aspect. It is now clear



Modern photograph of the Giant's Cave



Map of the Grotto and environs

that there was not just one, but two major phases of landscaping at Piercefield. The first was by Valentine Morris in the mid eighteenth century. The second was by George Smith in the 1790s.

Valentine Morris designed his walks to be tackled north to south. Tourists would normally first visit the high cliff-top viewpoint at the Wyndcliff, to the north of Piercefield, and admire the magnificent panorama across the Wye and Severn with Gloucestershire, Somerset and Devon stretching away into the distance. On entering the main Piercefield walk visitors would be presented with a series of constructed viewpoints - the Temple or Octagonal Seat, the Lovers' Leap, the Chinese Seat, the Giant's cave, the Halfway Seat, the Double View, the Grotto, the Platform, and the Alcove, plus a host of intermediate seats and resting places - at which they would be invited to rest and admire the landscape. A narrow, sinuous and lightly engineered path, designed to be walked single file, linked the viewpoints. Some viewpoints lay on short spur paths, providing a sense of surprise, arrival and achievement. In addition, there were subsidiary paths. Some led to further viewpoints, some down to the river, where there was a landing stage for boats and a riverside walk, one to a



Drawing by George Cumberland from his 'Tour in north Wales 1784': no 6, the Giant's Cave

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Cold Bath, which survives as a ruin. On one subsidiary walk the survey work discovered a probable pair of ponds, the walk running along the top of their substantial dam, complete with a narrow rocky chasm below it that may have been a cascade.

The complex nature of the original walk design is best demonstrated at the Grotto, which lies within the earthwork remains of an Iron Age fort. Here the visitor would have approached from the west, having first passed close by Piercefield House but not actually observing it, and then swung round to the north to reach the Grotto, a small subterranean structure. After admiring a carefully contrived narrow view to the east from a seat within the Grotto the visitor continued northwards to a platform called 'Above Pierce Wood' or 'Mount Pleasant' which commanded extensive views up the Wye to the north. The walk now continued southwards along a terrace passing below the Grotto before curving round to the west. For a very short distance of 10m or so a fleeting and distant glimpse of the front of the house would have been obtained - the only location of the whole of the walk from which the house was visible. The walker then continued on his way.

The changes of the 1790s significantly altered the routes and construction of parts of the walks. The emphasis was now on the visiting public, in larger numbers. Rather than be dropped by boat or taken by coach to the north end to start their walk they would mostly begin at the southern, Chepstow end. Some of the more sinuous sections of the main walk were straightened. Viewpoints on spur paths were brought into the main walk circuit, and more heavy engineering allowed for the visitors to walk side by side. It would seem that these changes were designed to allow the landscape to be viewed as series of ever-changing scenes, although many of the managed viewpoints were retained.

At the Grotto, changes to the walk were dramatic, and elements of concealment and surprise originally designed for visitors approaching from the north were lost in the redesign. The visitor now approached from the south along a new access path, with distant views of Piercefield House. The walk then passed through the main entrance of the Iron Age fort and on to the Grotto. The viewing platform and the terrace walk were abandoned, and the visitor followed a straightforward course to the west.

Many of the constructed viewpoints survive in various degrees of dilapidation. Remains of the Alcove contain a shabby modern bench but views down to Chepstow and beyond are still open and as dramatic as they would have been in the eighteenth century. The massive masonry structure at the Platform survives virtually intact but the views are completely closed by trees. Similarly, nothing is visible from the collapsing Grotto. The Giant's Cave and the Lovers' Leap have fared better and, although the statue of the eponymous giant has long gone, constructed elements and views survive at both locations.

Despite the ravages of 250 years the design and intentions of both Valentine Morris and George Smith survive and a visit to the Wyndcliff (where the Eagle's Nest, the present dramatic viewpoint, is a later addition) followed by an amble along the main Piercefield Walk is warmly recommended to anyone, whether or not they share an interest in the picturesque.

A.G.M. at Clytha Park, Saturday 4 June 2005

By kind invitation of Sir Richard Hanbury-Tenison, the A.G.M. took place at Clytha House, near Abergavenny, Monmouthshire. Set in quiet untouched countryside amongst rolling hills, the ancient park straddles the old main road, its arrival heralded by mature trees in open pasture and a delicate ogee arched and pinnacled entrance screen by John Nash. Although one of the finest and most whimsical 18th century Gothic structures in Wales it is but a prelude to what must be one of Britain's best sham Gothic castles built as a giant eye-catcher and folly on a hill to the south west. Built for William Jones to relieve him of 'the loss of a most excellent wife', it was designed by John Davenport (died 1795) from Wem in Shropshire. (Relatively unknown Davenport was also responsible for work or designs at Daylesford (where details in the Orangery match those on Clytha Castle), Mawley Hall, Shropshire and elsewhere in Wales, at Bettisfield Park, Nanteos and perhaps Bodhilen). Clytha Castle, now owned and admirably restored by the Landmark Trust was built as the principal eye-catcher to be viewed from the early 18th century main house of the Berkeley family which was set lower down from the present site. In the late 18th century this had been intriguingly decked out with Coade stone figures on the centrepiece of the main façade and filled with neo-gothic furniture. But around 1825 it was swept away by the great-nephew of the folly-builder, another William Jones (later Herbert), and replaced by Edward Haycock of Shrewsbury, (1790-1870) with the finest surviving Greek revival house in Wales. (Haycock, although Shropshire-based had an extensive country house practice in Wales stretching from Glynliffon near Caernarfon to Coedarhydyglyn near Cardiff).

Approached diagonally across a gently rising sweep of parkland the house is built on a slight mound, its two ashlar stone principal show fronts enlivened alternatively with a bow and a giant Ionic portico. It was under the latter and through its fine and rare cast iron porch that we entered for this year's AGM. With seventy members together with officials there was hardly breathing space, even in Sir Richard's large dining room. Proceedings were briskly dealt with though by the now well-established Chairman, Michael Tree who highlighted the main battles ahead, while the Treasurer once again cautioning about needless expenditure in spite of healthy looking balances. The business of the day was rounded off with gratefully received words of advice from the President, Professor Tom Pritchard. This left plenty of time for the main event of the day, a lecture given by Wim Oers, a friend of the Chairman, about the Belgian royal palace at Schonenberg. Not only was this a marathon event but it was also illustrated with superb slides and included information about one of garden history's most fascinating new discoveries. With proof from original archival material in Vienna we learnt that there were surviving designs by Capability Brown not only for this palace but also for other parks in Europe. The lecture was also interspersed with totally unexpected musical interludes beautifully played on the violin by Ann von Coillie who had accompanied Wim Oers from Belgium especially for our AGM. One of the compositions played: 'The Clytha Park Impressions', was especially written for this particular event. Accompanied by the taped sounds of water and birds it was a rare treat that will make the day memorable for all.

A first class lunch was laid on by the wife of the ex-agent of the Clytha estate, Sarah Lee. Its leisurely pace allowed time to not only chat with friends but also to take in the fine furnishings and stacked rows of family portraits beneath the sumptuous plasterwork. The afternoon involved an informal ramble between scattered showers of light drizzle around the extensive and immaculately kept grounds of



The folly, Clytha Castle

©C.D.P.

the house, and a walk to the more cultivated gardens set some distance away. These were accessed past the site of the now-demolished kitchen wing and were originally laid out around 1700. Greatly altered in the late 18th century by John Davenport, in accordance with then current picturesque principles, the earlier canal was converted into the present lake which now forms the centrepiece of the garden and is encircled with a winding path and surrounded by notable trees and shrubs. Prominent are a very large tulip tree and a magnificent cut-leaf beech and also a row of Irish yews put in at the suggestion of Avray Tipping in the 1920s. Also by Davenport is the D-shaped brick walled garden, alas now lacking much of its original internal layout, but still containing one or two interesting details from the late 18th century, including some gothic blind arcading over one of the entrance doors, sinuous paths and wrought-iron railings to support the espaliered fruit trees. These latter are now rare, most having been removed as scrap during the World Wars of the 20th century; the example at Clytha is one of only a handful still surviving in Wales.

Sadly, a casualty of the elaborate lecture and musical entertainments was a talk by Sir Richard Hanbury-Tenison about the house, garden and contents. However, he was there to talk to during the informal part of the day and those who took the opportunity would have realised how well informed and knowledgeable he was about them all. In particular he knew much about the wonderful contents of Clytha, which came from his old family home, another great Welsh house, Pontypool Park a few miles away, and from where the family decamped just before the First World War.

Our thanks go to Ros and Michael for arranging a tremendous day and we look forward with great anticipation to next year's A.G.M., which will take us to Radnorshire's finest Elizabethan mansion, Monaghty, near Knighton and its beautifully recreated 16th century gardens.

Jeremy Rye

Clytha Reflections from the Chairman



The approach to the Clytha Park

©C.D.P.

For those of you who were not able to attend I am glad to say that we had an excellent day, and all went well. But firstly it gives me great pleasure to thank Sir Richard Hanbury-Tenison for his seemingly boundless hospitality - we actually did take over his fine house even to the extent that the dining room had to be dismantled, with nothing more than smiles and encouragement from our host. Both he and Wim Oers, our speaker, 'played a blinder' so to speak with the result that we had a memorable day. We are very grateful to them.

It is also with much pleasure that I include in this, mention of our President, who was able to chair the event, and particularly to help us look forward by raising four items of particular prominence in our affairs for special consideration in our forthcoming business plan. These were:

- a) The vital importance to be attached to our advisory activities for Government, and the consequential need to foster our intellectual resources, to ensure that the quality of our advice is uniformly of the highest.
- b) The need to be constant and effective networkers to ensure that client bodies know that we exist, and what we can do for them.
- c) The fundamental need to be eager to include young people in our membership, and to ensure that there are adequate training facilities for them and others.
- d) The need for the Trust to play a central role in education within our own disciplines in terms of outreach to Councillors and paid officials.

I have already thanked our President for the trouble he took chairing the event, but also and particularly for giving us of his 'thinking time'—this is much appreciated and will be prominently included in our business plan which will be available later this year.

But there is one issue that is bound to come up, as it has as an issue almost annually since we started: membership! If only each one of us could introduce just one other person, whether a son, daughter, nephew, niece or whatever we could transform our effectiveness.

Surely, all of us could manage just one! Do try!

Finally, I would not like to let this opportunity slip without recording a personal expression of thanks to Carrie Dalby, Donald Moore, and Sue Wynn Jones all of whom will sadly be doing less for the Trust in future through what others may call retirement. I live in hopes that they will have some involvement with us from time to time, as and when opportunity permits! They have all given so generously of their time and talents—both of which have been prodigious.

*We wish them well, and every blessing.
Ever yours, Michael Tree.*

Study Day at the National Botanic Garden of Wales

Middleton, the site of the National Botanic Garden of Wales, being an historic garden in its own right, is of special interest to members of WHGT, so that the Autumn Study Day to be held there on 17th September promises to be an exceptionally rewarding occasion.

The theme of **Botanic Gardens, Past, Present and Future** will be considered with particular reference to the National Botanic in Wales and there will be opportunities to explore the garden in relation to the matters under discussion. The principal speaker will be Ivor Stokes, whose close association with this and other botanic gardens has given him an unrivalled insight into the needs and demands on such gardens in the 21st Century.

The Study Day is organised by the Brecon and Radnor Branch and all inquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, Ginny Scott, at the address on the enclosed leaflet. The cost of £20 for the day includes tea, coffee and, of course, entry to the garden. Lunch may be had in the restaurant or people can bring their own picnics.

Anne Carter

The Gateway opens wider

It is some time since members of the WHGT have had an update on the progress of their baby, The Gateway Gardens Trust. I do hope that everyone knows what a huge commitment the Trust made, way back in 1998, to set the Gateway Project up and start it on its way. It is amazing to realise that this year is our fifth year of operation and we will celebrate our birthday in September.

We have come a long way since those early days and I think it can be fairly said we have achieved a great deal. By the end of 2004 The Gateway had taken over 10,000 people to more than 33 historic parks and gardens in Wales and with summer on its way we are in full swing with our 2005 visits. In February we finally completed our three-year initiative for Heritage Lottery Fund – ‘Education & Garden Heritage’. This was the first time that the historic environment had been linked to work undertaken in the classroom and involved 253 visits for 137 different organisations throughout Wales – primary schools, secondary schools, comprehensives, schools and colleges for those with special needs, Lifelong Learner groups including serious art students at the North East Wales Institute in Wrexham and members of the University of the 3rd Age from Cardiff.

As well as extending access to garden heritage for hundreds of people, this initiative has also opened the eyes of many garden owners and managers to what can be achieved with the facilities they have to offer – “*Gateway visits have extended our audience and some schoolchildren have returned to visit with their parents. One Group we remember particularly was the African Friendship Society, but all Gateway groups have been terrific.*” (Dinefwr Park) – this was the visit when one young visitor asked the staff if Dinefwr was heaven! Our report on the whole undertaking can be downloaded from our website – www.gatewaygardenstrust.org.

Our wonderful Learning & Access Officer, Jean Reader has taken honourable retirement and while we miss her very much, we have a splendid new Education Officer, Philippa Owen, who is going to run our new schools project ‘Education & Environment’. This is funded with grants from HSBC, HLF and CCW. The latter have been a tremendous support from the very early days, but we can now celebrate a brand-new funding partnership with them – ‘Environment For All’. We have just appointed our first Environment For All Officer, Jeanette Hill, who takes up her post in June. This project will be concentrating on community groups, charities and schools based in Communities First areas – the most socially deprived wards in Wales – and runs for three years. While the core of this funding comes from CCW, we are delighted to report that it is match funded by a range of other organisations including Lloyds TSB Foundations supporting visits for families on low incomes and Barclays PLC supporting special needs and those suffering from multiple deprivation.

As many of you know, not content with raising the profile of historic parks and gardens in Wales, we decided to lead an invasion the other way across Offa’s Dyke into England. For the past eighteen months, supported by HLF (West Midlands) and English Heritage, we have been conducting an Audience Development Plan to discover whether or not we



A young visitor to Dinefwr Castle and Park

would find a welcome in the West Midlands. With a lot of hard work and research and with tremendous support from organisations such as the National Trust and the Historic Houses Association, we have identified 102 historic parks and gardens from Staffordshire in the North, through Shropshire, Birmingham & Wolverhampton, Herefordshire, to Worcestershire and Warwickshire in the South, that will welcome a Gateway visit. Hundreds of community groups, charities, voluntary organisations, schools and Lifelong Learner groups have registered with us for a Gateway visit, even though they all know we don’t yet have the funding in place. We are now in the process of setting up a major bid to HLF and other grant-giving bodies to fund a mirror-image of our Welsh selves in the heart of England. Watch this space!

Lastly, a date for your diaries: we will be holding our second Gateway Gardens Trust Autumn Fair at Glansevern Hall, near Welshpool, on Friday 30th September and Saturday 1st October. With some 30 stalls offering a wonderful range of good things for sale – for the gardener, the gourmet, the lovers of fashion or faience, there will be something for everyone. Do try and come and know that you will be supporting a really good cause – historic gardens in Wales.

*Bettina Harden, Chairman, and
Sharron Kerr, Development Director
The Gateway Gardens Trust
May 2005*

The Tudor gardens at Plas-y-Betws by Felicity Michaelides

Mid and South Glamorgan members may recall that I wrote in the Branch Newsletter, Number 31, January 2003, about the discovery of these gardens by Elisabeth Whittle, Cadw Inspector for Historic Parks and Gardens in Wales, when she made her first visit to Plas-y-Betws. This site meets the criteria for scheduling as a monument of national importance, and is at present being processed by Cadw.

The ruin of the manor house lies east of the village of Bettws (Grid reference SS905 866), near Bridgend. It is located on a hillside overlooking the river Garw and the hamlet of Cwm-y-Pandy. In its heyday, Cwm-y-Pandy was a community of small industries which served those at Plas-y-Betws, it had a tannery, a corn mill, two spinster's cottages, and the fulling mill, together with the cottage which housed the master fuller and his family.

Plas-y-Betws is thought to have been built on the site of Glyngraw Grange, a monastic priory of the Carmelite monks of Margam. It is included in a list of granges in the Bull of Pope Alexander IV (1261), where it is named 'Glyngraw.' The 'myll of Garrowe', also appears as a possession of Margam Abbey in 1536¹.

The Thomas family who built Plas-y-Betws were descendants of Lleisan of Baglan. They came into possession of the property through marriage to the heiress of Morgan Griffith of Tir Iarll. Lewis Thomas was Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1612, and again in 1624. He was a wealthy sheep-breeder, keeping large flocks of sheep over an extensive area of land stretching as far as the Brecon border. As the woollen industry was central to his business, Lewis Thomas employed a fuller and dyer named Bradford to run the fulling mill on his estate.

John Kyrle Fletcher, an antique dealer from Newport, (who married Jenny James, a descendant of the Bradford family), recorded the details of the families of Bradford and James. In it he wrote an account of Lewis Thomas gathering an army of yeomen to fight for the royalist cause, and being defeated at the battle of Higham in 1642. He and Bradford were taken prisoner. Their names are recorded in a list of those captured in an account in Phillips 'Civil War in Wales', where their names appear as 'Capitan Lewis Thomas and Cornet Bradford.'^{2,3} Plas-y-Betws was a royalist stronghold, and it is recorded that it was 'besieged by Sir Philip Jones of Fonmon, aided it is said, by Cromwell's gunners firing from a mound across the river'.⁴



Tŷ yn y Betws and the nearby community of Cwm y Pandy. Estate map 1783

©By kind permission of the National Library of Wales



A reconstruction of Plas-y-Betws House (RCAHMW 1981)

©Crown Copyright RCAHMW

Lewis Thomas's nephew, Edward, also a leading royalist, inherited Plas-y-Betws, along with Llanmihangel Place in the Vale of Glamorgan. He in turn became high Sheriff in 1633, when he was described as 'of Llanmihangel'. By 1681 his son Robert had sold both Llanmihangel and Plas-y-Betws to Humphrey Edwin, a London merchant. The properties subsequently devolved to the Dunraven estate when Edwin's grandson's sister married Thomas Wyndham.⁵

In her report⁶, Elisabeth Whittle notes that the plan of the house and some of its features suggest that it was built in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. It appears that the house was rebuilt at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as there is a datestone of 1732 which was reused in a stable block of 1883. It is believed, though, that the gardens were created in the Tudor period. Although the property later became little more than a farmhouse, and was abandoned in the mid-nineteenth century, the layout and structure of the gardens remained intact, with the outer parts incorporated into fields. An estate map dated 1783,⁷ shows an enclosure to the south of the house, two platforms with buildings on them, and a large square walled enclosure to the west of the house which is labelled 'Green'. It also shows a terraced area to the south-east of the house, which is labelled 'Garden'.

Elisabeth Whittle states that '...The monument is of national importance as a rare survival of the structure of a garden of the Tudor period. It has the potential to enhance our knowledge of the layout and structure of Tudor gardens associated with manor houses in Wales.....the gardens contain interesting built features, and further garden layout and structures remain buried.'

Plas-y-Betws itself is now a ruin, but the 16th Century dwelling adjoining the manor house has been restored as family home. Another structure of particular interest in the scheduled area is a corbelled, domed pigcote, (pigsty) which has a paved floor.

The merging of the peoples of the mining communities of the Ogmere and the Garw with the small farming community of Bettws in the 1950s brought about an inevitable loss of identity. However, now a process of rediscovery is taking place through a series of heritage initiatives. The creation of the Bettws Heritage Group has addressed the ways in which local people can research the history and heritage of their community. The Bridgend Library Service, Cadw, The Glamorgan Record Office, and The Royal Commission on Ancient Historical Monuments in Wales, have all given invaluable advice and assistance with regard to Plas-y-Betws. One of a number of projects of the Bettws Heritage Group has been the setting up of a community website www.betwscommunity.org.uk which will contain archival material, including information about the manor house. Bettws Primary School has also recently participated in the Welsh Heritage

Schools Initiative, a Heritage Lottery Fund competition to encourage young people to learn about the heritage of their community. As part of their project work the children learnt about Plas-y-Betws and Cwm-y-Pandy, and the link with Margam Abbey.

With the recent discovery of the Tudor gardens, the owners of Plas-y-Betws, Mr and Mrs John Tudor, are interested in the educational benefits such a site might offer to young people who wish to carry out research. This would need to be organised in supervised and structured programmes of activities, such as mapping and geophysical survey. It is hoped that experts involved in archaeological community outreach, in collaboration with local schools, might assist young people in uncovering some of the mysteries of this fascinating site. Another possible community

project might be a reconstruction of the site at a different location, to demonstrate what the gardens may have looked like.

¹ RCAHMW (1982) An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan: Volume III: Medieval Secular Monuments, Part II: Non-defensive, p.290

² Fletcher, J.K. Unpublished MS, Courtesy of Glamorgan Record Office

³ Phillips, J.R., (1874) Civil War in Wales: Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales, and the Marches 1642-1649

⁴ Garw Valley Official Guide, (1992), p.58

⁵ RCAHMW (1981): An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan: Volume IV : Domestic Architecture from the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution, Part I, The Greater Houses, (p.208 and p.210)

⁶ Cadw Scheduled Ancient Monument Record

⁷ The National Library of Wales

Ruperra Castle for Sale Once Again

Ruperra Castle with its outbuildings and seventeen acres of ground, was bought by its present owner, Ashraf Barakat in 1998 when Ruperra Conservation Trust had already had a feasibility study carried out and were in negotiations with the Phoenix Trust to progress matters. As soon as the offer to buy had been made however, both Building Preservation Trusts had had to withdraw. Charitable bodies which depend on public funding cannot compete with private owners. It was at this stage that Ruperra Conservation Trust bought the 150 acre woodland, Coed Craig Ruperra as a consolation prize.

In 2002 Ruperra trustees attended a meeting convened by the Rt Hon. Ron Davies, then our local MP, with Pat Mears, the Chief Planning Officer of Caerphilly County Borough Council to discuss the way to stop further deterioration of the castle, since there seemed to be no prospect of any work being done to preserve the building. The importance of Ruperra in Welsh architectural and landscape heritage was stressed.

The promise of the Chief Planning Officer to look at a Compulsory Purchase Order as a solution did not materialize and soon a planning application was submitted proposing nine flats in the Castle, the conversion of the outbuildings, partial demolition of the listed Mackenzie and Moncur Edwardian glasshouse and the erection of 15 urban-style houses by way of enabling development. From then on, the planning application prevented any further progress in securing remedial help for the castle.

The application was inadequate in that there was no supporting business plan for the enabling development, no nature conservation report, no archaeological report and no conservation design details. The intrusive layout and unsuitable architectural design indicated that the advice given to the owner by Cadw had been ignored. The Planning Division now asked for the information needed for a listed building planning application.

In 2003 greater and lesser horseshoe bats were found to be roosting on the site. This would necessitate some future reshuffling of the enabling development with the resulting upset in financial calculations. Also there seemed to be a possibility of CCW designating the site as a Site of Special Scientific Interest which might further restrict development.

Throughout this time Ruperra Conservation Trust were in communication with the Spitalfields Trust, another Building Preservation Trust with a tally of rescuing twenty-six buildings at risk in the twenty three years of their existence. The aim of the two trusts was to try to get the planning application thrown out



Ruperra Castle 2004.

Photo by Commissionair

so as to move the situation forward. In 2005 the application approached its third birthday.

The castle now appears to be for sale, at a price of £1.2m with an extra £800,000 when planning permission is given. The sale brochure implies that permission is a foregone conclusion. The Chief Planning Officer has been asked to give potential buyers a true picture of the kind of planning application needed for a building such as Ruperra so as to prevent a recurrence of the recent situation.

Meetings have been held between ourselves and some advisers to the Spitalfields Trust who recently paid a visit to the castle and to the Chief Planning Officer. The Phoenix Trust has sent a representative to visit the castle and to become acquainted with the current situation. We have met with our local AM, Jeff Cuthbert who has offered to investigate the situation and provide legal opinion on the vexed question regarding the dual status of the Castle as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Grade II* Listed Building.

I am sure I do not need to remind readers of the very special position that Ruperra Castle holds in the history of architecture. In Wales it has an unique significance, and I never cease to be heartened by the number of people I meet outside Wales who are so positive about its importance. Meanwhile the ambience of the place never fails to capture the emotions of those who visit.

By this time those in positions of power are fully aware of the need for action. It would be a tragedy if the moment was not seized.

Pat Moseley June 2005

Gerddi-WWW.

As usual when the holiday season approaches I think of places to visit.

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/whatson/gardens/opening2005.asp>

To celebrate the Bicentenary of the RHS, garden owners around the country are opening their gardens. The site has a list of all these gardens, with directions and a brief description.

<http://www.bgci.org.uk/>

Botanic Gardens Conservation International - The Gateway to the World's Botanic Gardens.

<http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/>

Click on **Events programme 2005** for information, including some garden events.

The **Guide to Historic Parks and Gardens in Wales** may be viewed on the WHGT website at <http://gardensofwales.org.uk>. Please also send me photos of these gardens or information on local events, for inclusion on the site.

Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge, CF71 7RQ
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Please write for the Bulletin!

A main article describing a garden.

I would like 1000 - 1500 words and up to three pictures, perhaps including an estate map or other historic image, and a recent photo reflecting what is there on the ground now.

This article need not be the last word in scholarly introspection but I would recommend that it addresses the following questions.

Where is it?

What was it like in its heyday - who lived there?

Who, if known were the main influences on the garden? (designers or owners).

What is the site like now? Not just the building, describe the garden - even if it is derelict tell readers what can still be seen.

What has brought it to your attention - could be simply a quest for knowledge on the part of an enthusiastic owner, or a proposal leading to development or threat. Mention involvement of landowner, Cadw, schools, council or any other interested parties.

Prospect for the future.

References (usually not more than 6).

An author may draw heavily on a printed source such as the Register of Parks and Gardens for historic facts. This is fine, but should be acknowledged as a reference. What you are adding is your own voice and personal impression of the garden.

A short half-page note

450-500 words or 250-300 words plus one picture

This is ideal to describe a branch event or a particular issue such as a planning victory, or an identified threat. Or simply to express an opinion.

A letter to the Editor

Any length, responding to or adding to a story which has appeared in The Bulletin. Or for short 50-100 word notes and comments.

A Book Review

400-500 words for a single column or 950 words for a full page.

Please suggest titles to be reviewed, and indicate whether you would be willing to write it yourself. It is usually possible for me to get a free copy from the publisher which the reviewer may keep.

The authorship of the Bulletin should reflect the membership and interests of WHGT members - please ensure that you co-opt several members in your branch who are willing to write.

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