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# Better woodlands - Or not?

by Caroline Palmer

Landowners of historic parks and gardens often find themselves in the possession of attractive mature woodlands, which have been neglected in the past half century or so. Many such woodlands suffer from dangerous or fallen veteran trees, rampant undergrowth, and extensive incursion by self seeded saplings, of ash, sycamore or perhaps sitka spruce from nearby plantations. How gratifying then, that they may turn to the Forestry Commission's Better Woodlands for Wales Scheme, which will draw up a management plan and grant aid the work over a period of years.

In the Ceredigion Branch of WHGT we were recently informally consulted by the management planner in respect of the management plan he was drawing up for Nanteos, a Grade II\* listed mansion with Cadw Icomos Grade II\* listed landscape. Here, almost the entire setting of the house: the drive, the woodland, the former shrubbery and dog's graveyard, and the ornamental lake were to be included in the scheme. Management objectives included the creation of paths through the woodland and around the lake, enabling disabled access from a new pull-off from the drive.

The devil, though can be in the detail, and we felt increasing concern to read that, under the terms of the FC funding, the objectives were to "return" the woodland to the status of semi-natural woodland (predominantly oak and ash) and that the specifications for paths were for tarmac black-top, certainly suitable to wheelchair users, but hardly sympathetic to the appearance of a grade II\* listed landscape.

Management Planner Rob Marsh was sympathetic to our concerns and anxious to do a good job. However, as he explained, in order to qualify for grant aid under the scheme, the area, all of which appears on the Provisional Inventory of Ancient Woodland, had to be treated either as native woodland (NW) or as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). By definition the long term objective for native woodland is a canopy composed of at least 70% site native trees, and for PAWS at least 51%. Although the plans do not call for the removal of existing non native trees, the massive beeches, silver firs, sequoiadendrons, and other stately aliens so typical of a gentry estate woodland, would gradually cease to be the dominant feature of the landscape, and be replaced by oak and ash.

Rhododendrons, cherry laurel, and Portuguese laurel planted along the drive and lake margin also count as alien and invasive species and qualify for grant aided removal. Yet these too, as marginal plantings, are historically consistent with the setting.

Even the long-established yellow Brandy Bottle waterlily, *Nuphar lutea*, (which certainly badly calls for a good dredging of the lake) found itself classified as non-native and invasive, though it is highly debatable how far this pretty pond flower is non native to Ceredigion.

The last 70 years of relative neglect at Nanteos have allowed self seeded ash saplings to spring up everywhere, and these, under the philosophy of native woodland, already have a head start and are destined to become the principal component of the canopy. In direct competition with the slower growing oak they are already well ahead. Beeches by contrast are deemed doomed, both because their historical planting in Wales does not qualify them as natives, and also because it is now believed that bark stripping by grey squirrels will prevent any young beeches growing sound and undistorted to forest size. As the old trees fail it is not planned to replace them.

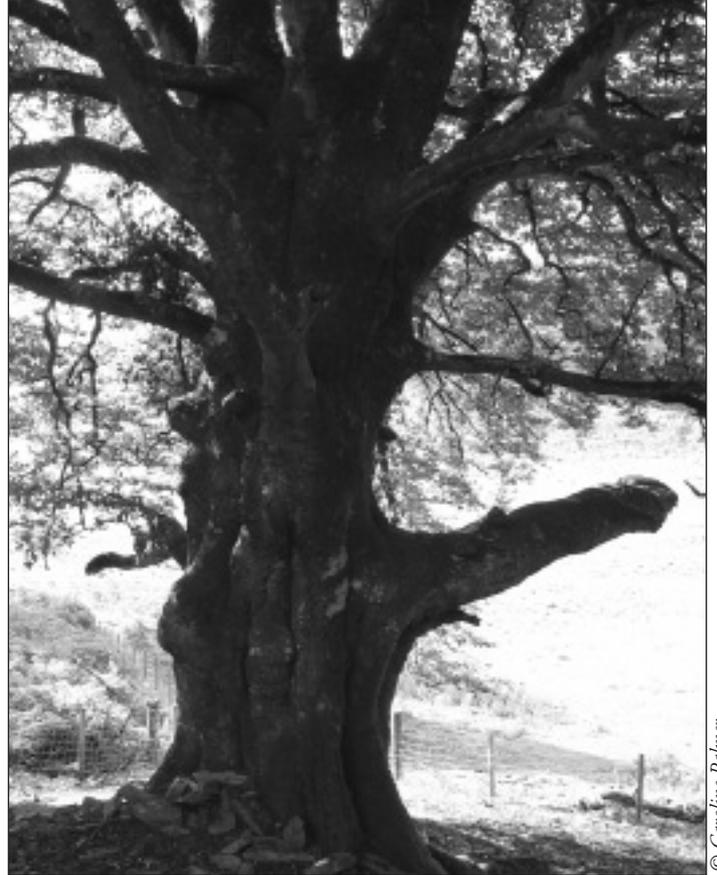


*Pure beech plantations like this one will become a thing of the past.*

© Caroline Palmer

Our concern is that the diverse ornamental woodland which forms the setting for a historic mansion was gradually to be changed to a vision of Wales which far pre-dates the creation of the park. Not in fact a cultural landscape at all. Similarly the public access components of the proposal do not allow the specification of path surfaces more aesthetically appropriate than tarmac. A determined landowner might personally insist upon and fund the upgrade to more sympathetic materials, but would not be obliged to do so.

A letter drafted in response to this issue has been sent by the Chairman of WHGT to Forestry Commission Wales, copied to Cadw, CCW and other conservation groups. Further consultation is under way, and Liz Whittle, Cadw Inspector of Parks and Gardens, paid a prompt visit to discuss the Nanteos proposals with Rob Marsh. There is no doubting the commitment of all the agencies involved, and the specifications for the grant will include proposals to plant up to 30% of non native trees amongst the ash and oak. However it remains a concern that in order to qualify for much-needed grant aid, a gentry woodland and long-overgrown shrubby garden must be shoehorned into the category of a native woodland, rather than managed and valued for its intrinsic qualities as a man-made landscape. Unless a separate grant-worthy category of woodland can be defined and funded, the distinct characteristics of estate woodland looks set to become diluted and lost with the passage of time.



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*It is being taken as inevitable that veteran, bunch planted beeches like this one will not be replaced.*

## Gardens Changing Hands

### Hafodunos, Sir Conwy

Not long ago (Bulletin 42 Spring 2006) we reported the shocking case of Hafodunos being burnt to the ground by arsonists. In our view this was a wholly avoidable event and has resulted in the loss of the interior of this fine gothic revival house by Sir George Gilbert Scott. But it is with the gardens that we are primarily concerned. They were, and to some extent still are, spectacular, having been planted and landscaped by then owner Henry Robertson Sandbach and his poet wife, Margaret whose friendship with J.D. Hooker gave access to one of the most important botanists of the nineteenth century and at the time, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Kew.

Thus, many examples of the exotic original planting survive in full maturity. Though currently totally overgrown, the grounds remain almost unchanged since they were laid out over 150 years ago. We feel, therefore, that every effort must continue to be taken to ensure that this deeply abused property is rescued as soon as possible.



Photo: Walker Singleton

That was the bad news, the really good news is that it has recently been put onto the market for sale by Walker Singleton of Halifax (contact there Mr. Howard Eastwood on 01422 430 000). We believe that this firm is acting for receivers and we have emphasised to them that the need for this property to be sold responsibly to somebody who really can turn it round rather than to a romantic dreamer, the likes of which we have seen all too often in the past in Wales. We have sent a draft 'planning brief' to the Local Authority, which we hope will be adopted, giving potential purchasers a realistic view of the extent to which change can be accommodated in such a sensitive site. Given the 'State of the Nation' at the present time, this property has the potential to be a real bargain for somebody who can afford its rescue.

*Michael Tree*



Photo: Walker Singleton

## Guest Chalets at Llangoed Hall Hotel

Now, I don't know about you, but I belong to and work for this Trust in order to protect our historic parks and gardens. The appreciation of the landscape and its manifest beauty is innate in all of us but the study of its history and the people who shaped it is intensely interesting and I have become passionately involved.

I used to believe that the mechanisms in place to protect historic places were fairly cast iron: that an English Heritage or Cadw listing would stand firm against all comers. Experience here in Powys has shown otherwise - the worries expressed at the 2007 AGM about the need for the WHGT to become Statutory Consultees for Wales have been clearly demonstrated and our own lack of vigilance of the new Unitary Development Plan and general trend locally to downgrade landscape considerations have resulted in Llangoed Hall Hotel (Listed Grade II\*) being given Planning Permission to build four chalets alongside their driveway.

We knew about this Application in October 2006 when it was first submitted (having missed an Application for a Helicopter Hangar in 2005, a real blot on the landscape). I personally visited the Council offices several times during 2007 asking when the application would be heard and being assured on each visit that we would be kept informed. The next thing we hear in January 2008 is an article in the Brecon & Radnorshire Express announcing that Planning Permission had been given. Dismay and consternation all round. How can this have happened on such an important site without us being consulted in some meaningful way?

The Planning documents associated with the Permission quote lengthily from submissions from Cadw, CPAT (Clwyd & Powys Archaeological Trust) and ourselves, Robin Whalley had written strongly objecting on behalf of B & R members of the WHGT. The Garden History Society made no comment, nor did it inform us of the Application or communicate with us in any way. I assume that they are still notified as Statutory Consultees but, as I understand it, are no longer in a financial position to comment - disastrous from our point of view. Likewise, Cadw made a powerful case against the proposals but never contacted us in any way to suggest how we should react or form a united front against the Application in spite of a plea to do so after the Hangar debacle.

I am currently engaged in a rearguard action. Embarrassed by my lack of credentials as an expert on planning matters and as a newcomer to Wales ignorant of most things Welsh, armed only by my passion for the countryside, I fear it is a case of 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread!' I have written to every person and organisation I can think of with a view on the subject, and all the amenity societies like ourselves concerned with the same issues. Unexpected help has come from our Welsh Assembly Member Kirsty Williams and our MP Roger Williams who have put me fully in the picture as to where we stand and on whose advice I have submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman on the grounds of mal-administration. I await a reply. A Judicial Review is beyond our means but it is possible that Cadw could call the matter in.

At our recent AGM we were reminded that last year's Minutes recorded a plea for our members to write in to the Council but sadly no individuals other than my husband and myself had done so. Roger Williams M.P. stressed the importance of individual letters to emphasise the public interest. He was not sure whether a letter from Robin Whalley as our Chairman counted as one or 150. He also said that it was important to keep up the objections now before any work on the project had been started.

I have also to confess a personal interest in that I live only a half mile away and walk my dog past Llangoed almost daily. This familiarity means that we enjoy the splendid fireworks after grand weddings at the Hotel and are fully aware when Sir Bernard is in residence with his helicopter - not very often! It is, however, a pleasure shared with many hundreds of walkers on the Wye Way and the beauty of this valley is supposedly protected as a Special Area of Conservation.

Finally may I challenge members to show me a development of chalet type buildings that enhance an historic or significant mansion? The setting and surroundings of Llangoed are essential to its status. The landscape of Wales is astonishingly beautiful, there should be a posse of Assembly Members willing and steadfast in protecting it. If there aren't we should go out and elect some immediately.

*Ginny Scott*

*Secretary, Brecon & Radnorshire Branch*

## And Cabins at Pant Glas

Until relatively recently, the core of the Pant Glas Estate, Llanfynydd was still one of the most notable properties in Carmarthenshire. The house and grounds had been laid out in the middle of the nineteenth century by the then owner of the Black Ox (Drovers) Bank. (Apparently it was then called Pen-y-Banc but the name was changed at the request of a young wife who found it objectionable, being married to an eminent banker but to live in a house called 'Penny Bank'!) No doubt she had great influence in the layout of the extensive gardens which are there to this day and could regain their marvellous views to the south towards Court Henry and Paxton's Tower. Central to the garden is the lake with its island containing one lone tree, and nearby classical bridge to the east. Elsewhere are fine specimens of fastigate yew, rare

Cupressus torulosa, and magnificent weeping beeches.

After many years use as an old people's home the house was burnt down in the 1960s and the fine stables were converted to hotel use. Quite inexplicably planning consent was granted some years ago for the erection of over a hundred and twenty log cabins in the grounds. About ten 'Swiss-style' timeshare chalets have now sprouted in the gardens and the prospect of yet more chalets is deeply depressing. Consent for these cabins was granted on appeal against the advice of the Local Authority. Admittedly this consent was given a number of years ago and may never be fully implemented but it does graphically illustrate the planning challenges the WHGT has to face.

*Michael Tree*

## The Chairman describes the presentation of a 'History of Llwynywormwood' to TRH The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall

Acquiring a new home, especially in a new area, is always hugely exciting. This is particularly so with historic properties where usually the initial decision is taken on the basis of visual appearance, amenity, and various other personal criteria. It is only when the property is in one's own hands does the real excitement come about when it is worthwhile researching the history of the property in order to understand it fully and hopefully to avoid making mistakes during the rescue process.

All this came flooding to mind some little time ago when I heard that our patron, HRH the Prince of Wales had acquired Llwynywormwood, a new though ruined home near Llandoverly. And so it came about that the committee of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust decided to commission a history of the property for presentation to his Royal Highness and the Duchess of Cornwall.

A very game Mark Baker (known to many for his work on Gwrych Castle) agreed to undertake the research and write the book at no cost to the Trust on the basis that he would retain the copyright.

Many months were spent researching the history of Llwynywormwood both locally and in Cornwall and in East Anglia. The results were far better than we dared hoped, in that we were able to commission a conceptual drawing of the house that existed on site up to the early 1960s but for which there were no known photographs. Also, a number of good portraits of the family were found in the ownership of the National Trust at the King's Head, Llandeilo, so bringing to life a family history that had disappeared from view for over one hundred years.

The result of all this endeavour found Mark Baker and myself heading towards the village of Myddfai on a particularly bleak and wet day in February of this year, dressed in full winter clothing complete with gum boots.

On arrival we were met with the most efficient but cordial security which seemed to process us in record time. What a pleasure, therefore, it was to meet up again with Dr. Manon Williams, our patron's assistant private secretary who over the years has shown us much kindness and been so helpful, ensuring that word of our endeavours got through. After initial greetings we were then shown to the great barn of the estate where the presentation was due to take place. As usual there was

the frisson of excitement and anticipation as His Royal Highness arrived. Needless to say, it was with great pleasure that I could on the Trust's behalf present the printed history which, by now, had been bound in the finest calf with appropriate gilding of the lettering. Naturally I took the opportunity to mention the keynote issues with which the Trust has been involved in the last eighteen months or so. And indeed I felt very proud to highlight amongst other issues the huge number of events the Trust lays on each year, most of which are of an educational nature. His Royal Highness congratulated Mark and me on the successes achieved so far with Gwrych Castle and Faenol respectively.

We then accompanied His Royal Highness on a tour of the building works currently being undertaken together with various officials from the Duchy of Cornwall, the Royal Household and Craig Hamilton the job architect, after which we proceeded to coffee and biscuits in a portakabin, still in our wellies, and so ended a really delightful morning with the hope that the Trust's efforts really will be of assistance in the rebirth of a lovely Carmarthenshire estate by the very best of patrons a Trust could have.

*Michael Tree*



*The National Library of Wales holds the only known view of Llwynywormwood, dated 1812, which shows the eastern facade and its picturesque setting. It seems likely that the drawing was in fact executed by one of the many children of Sir George Griffies-Williams and his wife, Anna Margaretta Evans who were responsible for laying out the park and gardens. Copies of the volume presented to the Prince will be deposited at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, British Library, National Library of Wales and Carmarthenshire Record Office. 'Llwynywormwood' by Mark Baker will be published later this year for general sale.*

*Mark Baker*

## The Welsh Historic Environment in Focus

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Civic Trust for Wales held this conference on Wednesday, 29th April, in partnership with Cadw. Five members of the WHGT attended: Michael Tree, Anne Carter, Col. Gilbertson, Ginny Scott and myself. As I entered the Millennium Centre in Cardiff, I wondered about Gwyneth Lewis's words, engraved monumentally on the façade: *In these stones horizons sing*. Would they be pertinent? Clearly the day would address the subject of stones, both in buildings and in the landscape, but would the speakers broaden our horizons? Would the stones sing?

The keynote speaker, Richard Keen, certainly aimed at inspiring us, by extolling the virtues of heritage and how it defines us: who we are, where we come from and where we aim for. This is not controversial, but I did wonder how much of the population of Grangetown I'd just travelled with on the No. 8 bus, would identify with these aspirations.

The Minister for Heritage, Rhodri Glyn Thomas, AM, then spoke, without notes and in Welsh. Again, he was enthusiastic but general. His insistence of the economic benefit of heritage did not, for example, address the numerous occasions when the interests of heritage and the local economy collide; he was elliptical when questioned about specific cases of planners encroaching upon historic sites (as in the burgage plots in Pembrokeshire, or Georgian houses bought and then allowed to collapse so that their land could be developed - as is happening, it is alleged, in Cowbridge).

Dr. Peter Wakelin, Secretary of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, then spoke about the Draft document of the Historic Environment Strategic Statement for Wales. This had been written by the Historic Environment Group, convened by Cadw, whose members include Dr Wakelin, Gwilym Hughes of Cadw, and representatives from the Dyfed Archeological Trust, the National Trust, Bridgend County Borough Council and Monmouth County Council. The document addresses the importance of the historic environment to our national identity, its economic value, both for tourism and business investment, but also its fragility. In particular, the document emphasises the importance of broadening physical and intellectual access 'to ensure that the people of Wales and visitors to our country are aware of and enjoy the wealth of our historic environment.' Comments were invited.

In the afternoon the conference divided into groups for discussion of the issues raised about the place of the voluntary organisations in the general picture and how they could be made most effective. Much good sense emerged and there was fairly general agreement on measures that would be helpful. It would be nice to think that some of it might bear fruit.

*Anne Evans*

Don't forget:

**AGM at Picton Castle, Saturday 7 June,**  
and a weekend of garden visiting.

## Carmarthenshire Drinks Evening



© Caroline Palmer

The launch of the WHGT Office at the Bothy was marked on 8 April with a drinks gathering in the newly restored rooms overlooking the Cloister Garden at Aberglasney. Part-time administrator Andrea Dudley displayed her many talents at organising on a shoestring: from the printed invitations to the imaginative petit fours it was all her own work.

After a period of chatting we all squeezed into the second room to hear a spirited talk about Wales' Cultural Landscape from Richard Keen, Chairman of the Historic Buildings Council. With a wide variety of illustration he reminded us that Cultural Landscape does not necessarily mean beautiful: but it does mean importance to people. And that may be because of the role it played in so many peoples' lives (the caravan parks of Porthcawl and the steelworks of Port Talbot come to mind) or the sheer ingenuity of its invention (yes, pylons and windfarms have their place too).

It is hoped that the long-suspended Carmarthenshire branch of WHGT will soon be reconstituted and active in the region. Simon Wardle has volunteered to act as Secretary and hopes soon to attract a full Committee.

*Caroline Palmer*

## Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan



© Mark Baker

*Mid Glamorgan Branch sign books and meet members of the public at Nash Manor Front (L to R) - Val Caple, Hilary Thomas (Editor)  
Back (L to R) - Derrick Kingham, Paul Underwood*

This book, published by the South and Mid Glamorgan Branch of WHGT, was launched at Dyffryn Gardens last November (2007) and has been warmly received. We have been invited by some 'Yellow Book' garden owners to take books to their National Gardens Scheme open day, and at our first appearance, at Nash Manor on a glorious sunny day in April, we rejoiced in publicity, book sales and enviable sun tans!

*Hilary Thomas*

# A Great Day for Wales: The Story of Ruperra Castle and the Caerphilly Councillors

The euphoria we all experienced on December 5th 2007 and then again on January 23 2008, although running through our veins for quite some time has now begun to dissipate.

Back in December as the Planning Committee meeting day for the Caerphilly County Borough Council drew near we had become increasingly apprehensive and despondent, even though we knew that our chairman, Councillor Phil Bevan had been working hard explaining to his fellow councillors about the importance of Ruperra. Indeed the Trust had supplied the councillors on the Planning Committee with so much information about the about the history, architecture and national importance of the site, they could have surely written a book about it themselves.

Yet we were not convinced that the councillors would not be persuaded that the housing proposals put forward by the owner of Ruperra were the only solution for the problem of Ruperra. After all, had not the planning officers themselves recommended that the application for enabling development should be accepted?

As the planning meeting progressed, we became aware that the councillors who spoke were truly convinced that they held the future of this precious piece of Welsh Heritage in their hands; that to allow housing in the grounds would destroy the setting of the building and turn a beautiful unspoilt area of countryside into an inappropriate suburban housing estate. The application was turned down. Newspaper reports spoke of the result as 'A Great Day for Wales'.

Local people had played a major part in this success. They signed petitions, put up placards stating 'NO HOUSING AT RUPERRA CASTLE' in their gardens and windows, and wrote letters to their local councillors.

Their letters to the Assembly went unheeded however, as did letters from renowned conservationists and architectural historians stressing that Ruperra was of national importance. The new Minister for Housing, the Environment and Sustainability, maintained to the end that the fate of Ruperra as a listed building was best left to the County Councillors to determine, its legal national status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument under the protection of the Assembly Government being easily cast on one side. How fortunate then that the Caerphilly Councillors understood and were willing to shoulder their great responsibility.

It is very reassuring that the new Minister for Heritage has been more sympathetic. He has told the Trust that he fully

appreciates the importance of Ruperra and will do all in his power to preserve it. His hands are tied however at present, as the site is in private ownership.

This is where the essential up-to-date ingredients of the saga come to the forefront. Now that the owner's plans have been rejected, he has stated that he intends to appeal against the decision. An applicant has six months from the receipt of the rejection letter from the County Council, in which to submit his request for a public enquiry. The owner of Ruperra has now reached the third month but has not yet lodged his appeal with the Planning Inspectorate.

The case officer for Ruperra at the Caerphilly Planning Division tells us that the owner has engaged planning consultants whose appeal material is nearly all gathered together and that it is considered that he has a good case. There are still those who doubt the wisdom of his spending a considerable amount of money appealing at all however. Questions are bound to be asked as to why the applicant was allowed so much time to provide further reports for a very inadequate application in 2002 and why even after four years of upgrading, his financial plan still included a 'grant' of £1million with no explanation as to its derivation. Furthermore, no other solution besides Enabling Development for the Castle had been considered by the owner, nor asked for by the Planning Division, even though most of his proposals were in contravention of the Caerphilly Unitary Development Plan.

The planning application was allowed to come before the Council in December 2007, as a straight planning application, just like one for any old building, with no Listed Building consent or Scheduled Ancient Monument consent applied for. How can this happen for a building of such architectural importance? Furthermore the archaeological report included in the December planning meeting had already been deemed inadequate by the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust. A subsequent one could not be carried out until the spring because the Great Crested Newts were hibernating. But the application was allowed to go ahead anyway and with the Chief Planning Officer's blessing for the enabling development.

If an appeal is lodged, the Trust is ready. And after that what will be the next step? The condition of the Castle is giving serious grounds for concern. There is no time to lose.

*Pat Moseley*

*Trustee : Ruperra Conservation Trust*

An invitation to a celebration – from the Ruperra Conservation Trust marking the last eight years' work:

## **The Restoration of Coed Craig Ruperra**

At 12 midday, on Saturday 28 June 2008 at Coed Craig Ruperra

To be opened by Professor Tom Pritchard

### Speakers

Mr Michael Tree, (Chairman WHGT, Trustee, the Georgian Group)

Mr Richard Turner, (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Cadw)

Mr Alan Underwood (Chairman Environment Wales Grants Panel, Council Member CCW)

Buffet, Exhibition, Bookstall, Woodland walks to the new features.

If you would like to attend please RSVP by 14 June to Mrs Dorothy Thomas, 2 St Benedict's Court, Caerphilly Road, Bassaleg, Newport, NP10 8LY

## Norah Lindsay: The Life and Art of a Garden Designer

By Allyson Hayward

Francis Lincoln. 2007 £35-00  
ISBN 978-0711225244



Regular visitors to country house gardens will have heard of the work of Norah Lindsay, one of the most prolific designers of the early twentieth century. One story often told is that she could trace out the design of a garden with the tip of an umbrella, and this is to some extent born out by the fact that in this book there are no garden plans or lists of plants.

Born into an Anglo-Irish family, Norah Bourke spent her early life amongst the gilded youth of the pre-First World War. After a disastrous marriage to Harry Lindsay, she had to find a way of earning her living, for she lived a life way beyond her means.

Her friends employed her to plant their gardens, and she

became a house guest who stayed for a month, kept going financially by whip-rounds from friends. As a regular visitor she was able to supervise some of her gardens over a long period. However, there was always a certain awkwardness as Mrs Lindsay had to reconcile her status as guest and tradesman.

The Book lists two gardens in Wales:

**Vaynol, Caernarvonshire.** (Sir Michael Duff) 1935-46.

Herbaceous garden plantings. (Vaynol Hall and its garden lies at the heart of the great park recently threatened by Gwynedd County Council's plans for a business park).

**Chirk Castle, Denbighshire.** (Lady Howard de Walden) 1924-1936.

Herbaceous borders, shrub gardens. Topiary proportions. (Chirk now belongs to the National Trust and is beautifully maintained).

Norah's basic design was of great formal herbaceous borders and beds of flowers and shrubs, perfectly contrasted in colour and texture. Lavishness was the order of the day, and where these borders still exist they can bowl the visitor over. Her designs were not revolutionary, and will only be a footnote in garden history, but they can still give pleasure and inspire gardeners of today.

*John Davies, Withington, Manchester*

## The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto

From the Archives of *Country Life*  
by Robin Whalley.

Aurum Press £40. 2007. ISBN 978-1845132354

Separated from us by two world wars and immense social change, the gardens of the Edwardian era are both strange and curiously familiar. They belong with great wealth, fixed orders of society and a sense of security. At the same time, their world was a modern one of telephones and telegraph. Travel, by boat, train and automobile was easy and luxurious, so that ideas moved rapidly from place to place and habits picked up abroad were carried on at home. Gardens had always been a setting for enjoyment – walking, reading, conversation and games like bowls or quoits – but the Edwardians took this much further. They carried their domestic rituals outside, building structures for every kind of activity, individual or social, into their external space with a degree of elaboration seldom envisaged before or since. Tea houses, tennis courts, rotundas, pergolas and outdoor sitting places abounded and the inspiration for all these came, not only from classical Europe but from every corner of the globe and, most notably, from Japan.

Harold Peto, whose work appeared regularly in *Country Life*, left few of these possibilities unexplored and Robin Whalley presents us with a sumptuous view of the great gardens he created and their development. He deals with them individually, describing their history, layout, construction and planting with great thoroughness and understanding but groups them in sections according to their salient characteristics, which are also roughly chronological. Thus, Easton Lodge, in Essex, (1902-3), a very grand garden with a massive pergola, Italian garden and Japanese tea house is followed by West Dean, in Sussex, (1911), a very different proposition but with a pergola which at 300 yards is the longest surviving one of the period. As garden follows garden, from "Rotundas and Pergolas" via "Canals, Pavilions and Bridges" and "Villas and Gardens of the Riviera" to end

with Peto's own long sought and much cherished garden at Iford Manor, where he died in 1933, recurring features and planting patterns provide a subtle insight into the influences and ideals which formed his vision. Whalley make clear that Italy was only one thread in the complex growth of his talents and that his early delight in flowers was as important to the final results as his architectural training.

Apart from Iford itself, the longest piece in the book is devoted to Inlacullin, the Irish island garden Peto designed for Annan and Violet Bryce before and after the First World War. The garden survives and may be visited, though the projected house was never built. There is a clock tower, an open pavilion framing a mountain view, an open temple on a rocky promontory, the little 'casita' overlooking a formal canal and a long flight of steps up to the old Martello tower, all bowered in trees like some enchanted Eden. And Eden, as Whalley reminds us, had no need of a house: "famous for bringing together two essential aspects of gardening, art and nature, [Inlacullin] would lose much of its fascination if it had not remained a houseless island".

But it is Iford that is the most personal of Peto's gardens, the one which encapsulated all that he had learned and believed about the art and purpose of gardening and, in the black and white pictures accompanying the text, (not all of them dating from Peto's lifetime), we see a truly magical place, pillars and statuary dripping with roses and other climbers, light shafting through great trees onto stone steps and the long terrace with huge jars and stone hunting dogs, like a scene from a fairytale. The garden survives and flourishes in its maturity. It is in good hands and forms a fitting monument to the man who built and loved it.

Peto's life was not a complicated one. His friendships were many but his life was mainly in his work. He was sixty at the outbreak of war in 1914 and in many ways his world had ended. The list of gardens he designed is immense. Some survive, though few are unchanged and the losses are great. Bridge House, in Surrey, which must surely have been one of the loveliest, has gone altogether, under housing development. In these pictures we can see them in their heyday, as Peto meant them to be seen, and know that they were indeed great gardens.

*Anne Carter*



The new WHGT Office is at:  
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## Meet the Administrator

Andrea Dudley has a HND in Business and Finance and BA (Hons) in Business Administration.

She worked for the Chief Executive of a property investment company based in Covent Garden for 5 years before relocating from London to Llandeilo in 2006. She has a young family.

Visit her at The Bothy, Aberglasney (usually Mondays to Wednesdays) or Email her at [welshhistoric@btconnect.com](mailto:welshhistoric@btconnect.com)



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## Come and visit us at the Royal Welsh Smallholder and Garden Festival

Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th May 2008  
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## and in the Horticulture Marquee at The 2008 Royal Welsh Show

21st to 24th July

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Caroline Palmer - How to research and rescue neglected historic  
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