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The changing fortunes of Rhyl Botanical Gardens

by Glynis Shaw

Rhyl in the early 19th century was a small fishing village with a population of some 300 people. The arrival of the railway enabled Rhyl to become a fashionable seaside resort and Rhyl developed a considerable garden history of Promenade Gardens, Pavilion Gardens, Winter Gardens, Summer Gardens, Queen's Gardens, Marine Gardens, Pier Gardens and a Royal Floral Hall. Although none of these survive today, the Botanical Gardens has undergone a remarkable renaissance.

The origin of the Rhyl Botanical Garden has yet to be discovered. It is likely that the gardens were once part of the Ty'n Rhyl estate, reputedly the oldest house in Rhyl (1672 is the date over the door). Until 1800 Ty'n Rhyl on Vale Road was the only house of any note in Rhyl. Enlarged at a later date, it was occupied by the historian Miss Angharad Llwyd between 1841 and 1866. At this time the house was described as having several acres of land and spacious walled gardens.

The earliest known reference to the Rhyl Botanical Gardens is in 1878 when it was sold by R.D. Roberts at public auction on September 2 at the Royal Hotel in Rhyl as lot 4, a leasehold lot held for a term of 21 years from 1st February 1872 at the yearly rent of £42. The sales pitch at this time describes the valuable leasehold property as:

'The Botanical Gardens,'

'Containing about 9 acres of Land, beautifully and artistically laid out, acknowledged to be the Eden of Rhyl, with well-shaded Walks, Lily Ponds etc, situate within few minutes' walk of town.

The proposed new Carriage Drive that will probably be completed by next season, passes close to these favourite gardens.'

The plan shows that there were conservatories, a pond and a number of shaded walks. These gardens are already well established. Joseph Evans, who owned the surrounding land, eventually developed Grange Road, formerly a muddy lane, and built the Gladstone Bridge over the railway, linking the Botanical Gardens to

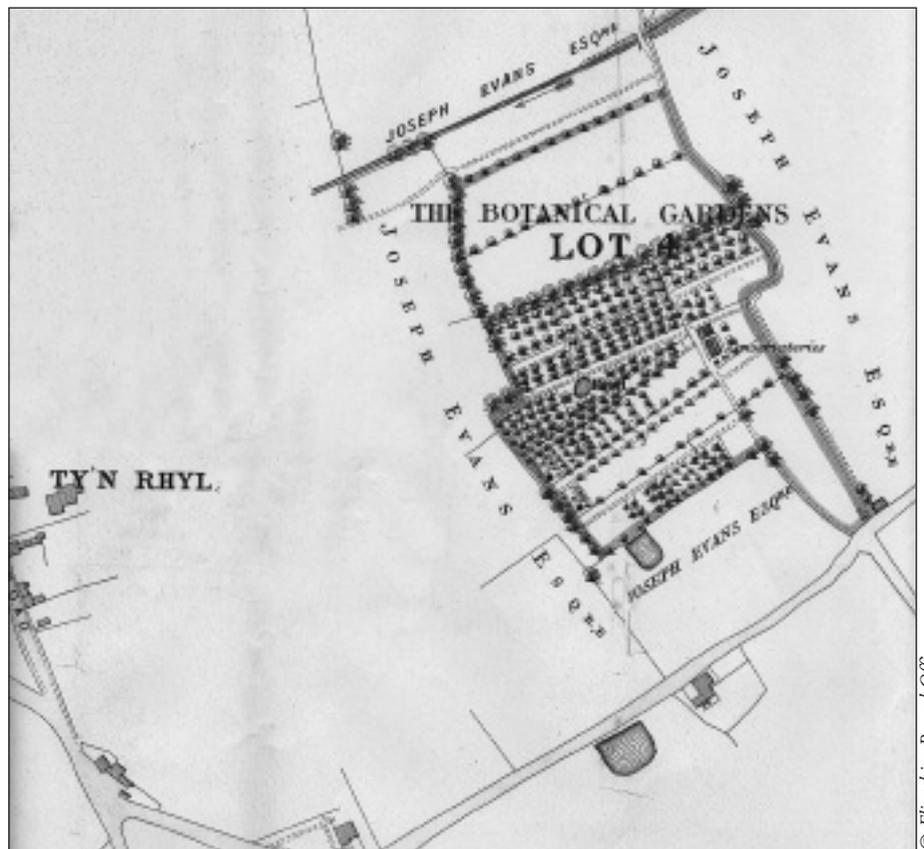
the promenade.

In 1900 the football club moved to Belle Vue gardens then part of the of the Botanical Gardens estate. The land was sold on the basis that the purchaser and his successors entered into a covenant to use the land for the purposes of sport and recreation only.

Mate's Illustrated Guide to Rhyl and its Environs in 1902 particularly praises the sports provision:

'Tennis-players will also find several first class lawns at Rhyl, the best probably being those at the Belle Vue Gardens, a prettily laid out enclosure on the Grange Road. This affords an agreeable walk, and the gardens have been charmingly laid out with shrubs and plants, amidst which are nice paths with seats and summer-houses.'

On a 1913 map the gardens are labelled the Belle Vue Gardens.



Plan accompanying the auction particulars of 1878.

© Flintshire Record Office

The gardens were for a time owned by a syndicate composed of many of the people who owned the Winter Gardens including the Duke of Westminster and Major Cornwallis West. At this time the gardens were opened to the public, who had to pay an entrance fee, and were described as a favourite 'courting ground' for couples.

In 1919 the Belle Vue gardens, now known as the Botanical Gardens, were sold to the council by Sarah Ann Oakey wife of Percy William Oakey. This included an area which had been cultivated by Richard David Roberts as a nursery and market garden. The gardens were then neglected for some years until the council finally reorganized and once more opened the Botanical Gardens to the public. The Rhyl Record advertised that the Botanical Gardens were to be opened to the public on Whit Monday 1928, by the Manager, J.W Jones, with tennis courts and a miniature golf course for hire throughout the season. According to the 'Rhyl Round About' John Jones was a seed merchant with a shop in Kimmel Street, who did much to develop the Botanical Gardens.

In the 'Illustrated Guide to Rhyl, Abergele, St Asaph and Prestatyn' c.1928, John Heywood lists the Botanical Gardens as one of the principle places of amusement. He describes the gardens adjacent to the recreation ground recently laid out with a covered stand:

'the Botanical Gardens recently acquired by Rhyl Council are renowned for their wealth of sylvan and floral beauty. Greens have been prepared for bowling, there are many tennis courts, a miniature golf course has been constructed and the needs of the kiddies has been remembered, for the council has produced swings and other games for the young generation. Admission to these gardens is free and a frequent service of motor buses conveys visitors to and from the promenade.'

In the early 1930s the RUDC (Rhyl Urban District Council) acquired a further 10 acres of the former Ty'n Llyn estate between Vale Road and Grange Road from a Mr G.M.Hargreaves. Originally this land was intended for workmen's housing but Hargreaves' development schemes had failed to mature and the land was compulsorily purchased by the Council. Architect P. Stevens and Surveyor Mollington determined that some of this land cut off by development should only be used as a garden.

Past descriptions of these botanical gardens bear little resemblance to what can be seen today. These gardens have been long-famed for their rose gardens and a rose pergola. In 1933 it was described as having roses of all sizes and descriptions. There is also an image of a floral sun dial and a café and sports pavilion constructed in so-called Italian architecture which is featured in 'Holidays to Sunny Rhyl' 1933 and in the 'North Wales Suntrap 1938'. During the 1930s RUDC invited offers for the tenancy of the café for 1 or 3 years. In 1934 we find that the cafe required roof repairs. As well as the tennis and miniature golf there is also, in 1933, the first mention of a Crown Bowling Green.

In 1936 the Rhyl Journal and the Rhyl Leader advertised for a Working Caretaker at the Botanical Garden for £2/10/- a week, applicants not over 40 years of age!

In October 1936 Rear Admiral R. Rowley Conwy, C.M.G., Lord Lieutenant of the County requested that a fund be established for a National Memorial to the late King George V.



A Valentine's postcard (1936) The Rose Garden, Botanical Gardens, Rhyl.

© Peter Davis Collection

There was a public meeting to decide how to celebrate the new coronation. It was decided that Coronation Gardens should be laid out on Vale Road. Laying out these gardens and providing public lavatories was estimated at £5,000. A Coronation Gardens Depot was established in the High Street at Burton's Gents Outfitters, providing the public with information on trees, equipment for the playground and seats. These were to be supplied from Messrs. Bees, Chester Landscape Gardeners. A further two-acre Memorial Garden with a bandstand was to be made by Madryn Avenue. The public was asked to donate seats, with the donors' names inscribed on a plaque. It was also agreed that a Memorial Playing Field accessed from Madryn Avenue should be developed over the 10.5 acres adjoining the Botanical Gardens. All this is recorded in the newspapers of the day.

The Rhyl Leader 31 Oct 1936 described the plans drawn up by the town's surveyor Walter Lomax. As this land was previously used for agriculture, 180 yards of hedging needed to be removed, ditches filled and a number of trees felled. The Daily Dispatch in September 1937 reported that £40,000, largely raised through public subscription, was to be spent during the winter on the playing fields to commemorate the memory of King George V. This was among the earliest of the King George's Fields established under the original grants policy. Pitches were laid out for football cricket and hockey, a new physical training pavilion equipped with hot and cold baths, changing rooms for both sexes as well as all the necessary apparatus for modern physical training.

In April 1937 860 yards of wrought iron fencing 5'6" high was ordered for the Botanical Gardens' extension. A rate increase in 1939 of 10d included 1d towards the Parks and Gardens committee to concrete borders on the West Parade Gardens and to maintain the new addition to the Botanical Gardens.

The abdication of Edward VIII following his romance with Mrs Wallis Simpson meant that the Coronation Gardens were never completed, so the 19 seats which had been provided by the citizens and businesses of Rhyl were placed in the Botanical Gardens. Some remain to this day. Coronation events for King George VI took place on the promenade.

The Art Deco-style double gates at the Vale Road entrance inscribed 'Coronation Gardens 1937 RUDC' (locally referred to as the 'Corras') cost £100 and were donated by Councillor H.A. Tilby OBE. The playing field entrance is on Madryn Avenue where the gates have recently been refurbished. Indulgence in ornate and very expensive gates was discouraged by the King

George Fields Foundation. The stone heraldic tablets inscribed to George V were issued free of charge to all approved schemes. The entrance to the Botanical Gardens is on Grange Road. Pedestrians originally entered through an arch between the red brick houses on Grange Road which has since been bricked up.

On 25 March 1937 The Coronation Gardens were celebrated by having an avenue of trees planted on Arbor Day. Eleven Rhyl schools collected money for the trees and two children were nominated from each school to plant them. These trees still line the Vale Road entrance to the playing fields.

At one time the Botanical Gardens had an area of tropical plants with monkey puzzle trees, yucca palms, pampas grass and what was described as the finest hedge in Wales. One man has also described an aquarium attraction in which the tank was made of concrete 8' high and 25' long. In 1945 Mr. T. Summers of 50, Ty Newydd Rd, planted an acorn on the day that Germany surrendered. The resulting oak was presented to the Parks and Gardens Dept in 1948 to mark the birth of Prince Charles. This oak tree was planted by Summers' granddaughters Muriel and Angela to the right of the bowling green. The Rose Walk through the pergola c.1946/47 illustrated in 'The Rhyl Suntrap' is in glorious bloom. In the 1940's the lily pond is shown with a heavy rock surround.

The gardens continued to be developed into the 1950s. Photos at this time show another large bone shaped pond with a scalloped edging and planted terraces. Borders were filled with carpet bedding. The Gorsedd Ceremony during the National Eisteddfod in 1953 was held in the Rhyl Coronation Gardens, attended by Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. On this occasion Dilys Cadwaladr was the first woman to win the Crown for her pryddest 'Y Len' and the Penyffordd born playwright and Hollywood film star Emyln Williams was initiated into the Bardic circle.

A children's cycle track made alongside the football ground was for a time enormously popular in the 1960s. Posters on the sea front advertised the botanical gardens and an open air bus called the toast rack took people there from the promenade. Promotional literature also refers to peacocks in the garden at this time.

It is difficult to determine when these Botanical Gardens once again fell into decline, but Rhyl suffered a general crisis of visitor demand from the 1970s. The gardens were still being advertised for their exotic and subtropical plants in the 'Rhyl and Prestatyn: Lively Resorts 1980'. The Council planted an oak on the occasion of the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1981 and a new children's playground was opened in 1985 by the Rhyl-born actress Nerys Hughes, star of the Liver Birds. At some point, the children's cycle track was requisitioned by the council for a depot facility. In the 1990s the gardens were increasingly neglected and by 2003 in a very sorry state. The café was derelict and boarded up and there was only the barest of maintenance in the garden. At this point the council proposed chopping down the trees and developing a two storey registry office and car park.

Fortunately members of the community realized the value of this public space and the Rhyl South West Central Residents Association mounted a spirited campaign to save the gardens. 4,000 signatories petitioned against the loss of this amenity and since 2004 have worked untiringly to reinstate all the facilities that were available in the 1930's.



A postcard by J. Valentine (1930) Pergolas, Botanical Gardens, Rhyl.

© Peter Davis Collection

After gaining community grants and lottery funding, the premises has been made secure with railings, CCTV, lighting and shutters for the café. The once-disused café has been reinstated and is now open 7 days a week, run by volunteers. This not only provides the Botanical Gardens with an income, but also a local community centre. A Parent and Toddlers group, Alzheimer's Club and an Over 55 group are amongst the organizations who regularly meet there. The committee recently donated £1,000 to the St Kentigern's Hospice from the café profits. The Committee has now secured a 25 year lease on the former bowling and tennis club house which were recently condemned buildings. These are now being restored - Pilkington's boardroom furniture, purchased for £250, now furnishes the new community room.

Much work has also been done in the gardens. The lily pond had 10 years of silt dug out, a new pump, and the fountain restored. The pergola has been replaced and pear trees planted. Many trees were lost to storm damage in 2007 and have been felled and cleared. Most recently a rockery has been established. The Coronation Gardens were re-launched in March 2008 and to mark its refurbishment a new 1000m circuit and Trim Trail and Wales's first iPlay (Intelligent Play System), a solar powered activity centre were installed in the playground.

Once more the Botanical Gardens are providing for well-being, recreation, sport and leisure. Last summer the Residents' Association proudly invited the Earl and Countess of Wessex to visit the Rhyl Botanical Gardens on their Welsh tour. Enjoying a fine sunny day their Highnesses planted a monkey puzzle tree and met with the local residents and children, to the accompaniment of the Rhyl Silver Band.

Most deservedly, the Rhyl South West Central Residents Association received the 2008 Queens Award for Voluntary Service for the reinstatement of these gardens. The Clwyd Branch also wishes to acknowledge the tremendous success of the dedicated committee of the Residents Association in saving and securing these Botanical Gardens. We hope to plant a Wild Service Tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) later this autumn.

Acknowledgements: Many thanks for information and assistance to Mr. Eric Black, Secretary and Treasurer of the Rhyl South West Central Residents Association; Archivists at the Flintshire Record Office and Shirley Quinn at Rhyl library.

Glynis Shaw is a freelance photographer and an active member of the Clwyd branch of WHGT.

Monitoring the Local Development Plans

by Ros Laidlaw, Planning Co-ordinator

Introduction

Decisions made by County Councils on land use planning in Wales are plan-led i.e. based on policies set out in development plans which should contain the policy of the Welsh Assembly Government. It is therefore vital for the safeguarding of historic parks and gardens from unsuitable development that there are strong policies within these plans offering them protection. Effective responses to planning applications rely upon the strength of these policies. Currently many local authorities are still operating under the policies of Unitary Development Plans (UDP) or its predecessor the Local Plan, however each county council is now required under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to produce a Local Development Plan (LDP). Currently there is a period of transition with some local authorities still working on the preparation of a UDP with others already started on the preparation of an LDP.

WHGT Branch committee members have in the past participated most effectively in the consultation process and have been involved in the preparation of Local Plans and UDPs. As a result, policies protecting historic parks and gardens are in place in many development plans. Land use designations have also been contested, the most recent example being the successful fight to remove a business park designation in the core of the Faenol estate from Gwynedd County Council's UDP. It is vital that Branch committees, with their invaluable local knowledge, now participate actively in the consultation process involved in the preparation of the Local Development Plans.

Influencing your Local Development Plan

The first stage of the Preparation of an LDP by Local Planning Authorities is the drafting of a Delivery Agreement which basically consists of a timetable for producing the LDP and a Community Involvement Scheme in which the public, developers and interested groups can contribute to the plan preparation. Ideally this is the stage at which Branches will make sure that they are on the Local Planning Authority's mailing list so that they become part of the process and are automatically consulted at each stage.

Once the Delivery Agreement has been accepted by the Welsh Assembly there follows a period of gathering of information and setting objectives. The first consultation phase of this process is the publishing of a draft Sustainability/Strategic Assessment Scoping Report which sets out key sustainability issues and objectives and will be used to assess the extent that LDP policies will contribute towards sustainable development. In Ceredigion's Report, for example, under the topic heading of 'Landscape and Historic Environment' the main objectives were:

To value, conserve and enhance the Ceredigion landscape and to understand, value protect and celebrate Ceredigion's historic environment, diversity, local distinctive and cultural and historic heritage.

Sub-objectives of significance to the protection of historic parks and gardens included:

Development in sensitive locations should be avoided and high quality design should be promoted.

To understand and value historic and cultural assets and local distinctiveness, protect them from negative effects of spatial planning and support their enhancement.

When this draft document was put out to consultation in Ceredigion it was a welcome opportunity for the Ceredigion Branch to expand, amend and introduce new issues, objectives and potential indicators relevant to those historic parks and gardens on the Cadw/ICOMOS Register, and also to other parks and gardens of registerable quality or of regional and local significance.

Nominating Candidate Sites

The next stage of public participation, and part of evidence-gathering for the preparation of the LDP is when Local Authorities invite interested parties such as developers, service providers, landowners and others with an interest in land to submit sites they wish to be considered for future development or protection through the LDP. The sites identified are referred to as Candidate Sites. This process not only offers a window of opportunity for the Trust to ascertain where future development is likely to occur, and thus identify sites at particular risk, but also to flag up for inclusion in the LDP historically significant parks and gardens that are not currently protected by other designations.

It is possible to nominate Candidate Sites to be protected as an historic landscape and not be designated for development. Ownership is not a pre-requirement for submission of Candidate Sites. A strong case must be made to justify the site as one of significant historic interest. As a general rule Candidate Sites that already have designated protection would not normally be considered by Planning Authorities as sites for development for inclusion in the LDP. Candidate Sites worth nominating by the Branches could therefore be those that are not offered the protection of being listed in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register, are not part of the setting of a listed building or are outside a Conservation Area. Locally-important historic urban parks and public open spaces spring to mind as Candidate Sites. Certain domestic gardens, at present designated as brown space for development, could also be submitted, but it would be necessary to show that they were felt to make a significant contribution to the historic landscape character of an area.

Recording and researching of historic parks and gardens carried out by the Branches will be vital to inform this selection process and to justify the inclusion of a Candidate Site in the LDP. Submitting carefully selected Candidate Sites is therefore an effective way that the Branches can flag up significant historic sites that currently are not afforded protection within the planning process and may help prevent unsympathetic development.

Late nominations of sites

Some local authorities have already completed the first phase of the LDP, but late applications, although they do not have to be

considered, will apparently usually be looked at. Planning authorities are not obliged to publish a register of Candidate Sites, but are advised to by WAG as good practice. Ceredigion County Council intends to publish their register by the end of 2009, which represents a processing time of about 18 months, and intend to circulate it to libraries, public offices and probably put it on-line as a .pdf document. Responses and objections could be sent for consideration at this stage, but the main period of consultation is likely to be at the pre-deposit stage of the LDP.

The community consultation phase

Once the above procedures have been completed there follows a period of community consultation events. I have attended two in Ceredigion and perhaps it would be helpful to outline my experiences. Both events were very well attended with what seemed to be a wide cross-section of the community including business interests, government bodies and local representatives of charities and amenity groups. The first event started with a series of talks aimed to give an overview of the LDP. We were then split into groups of around ten to discuss a vision statement for the Ceredigion 2020 Community Strategy and the LDP and what we thought the county should be like in 15 years' time. After lunch we were given feedback on the morning session and asked to consider two objectives in more detail that could be part of achieving the vision.

The second event was more focussed and consisted of two workshops which discussed strategies for different levels and distribution of growth in Ceredigion and started to look at policy options on how best to achieve the objectives. Although at first sight these events seem to have little direct relevance to the work of the Trust they were an invaluable opportunity for community groups to meet and acquire insight into each others' aims and objectives and to gain insight into the county and national planning systems. Delegates in my group, different for both events, included representatives from the Welsh Assembly Spatial Planning Group, Aberystwyth Town Council, Local Safeguarding Children Board, Communities First Upland Villages of Tregaron, Tourism Partnership Mid Wales, Federation of Small Businesses, Transport Wales, the Humanist Society of Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales. There were opportunities to raise issues of relevance to WHGT such as the potential conflict between growth of tourism and protection of the heritage asset of Wales as was highlighted by Ginny Scott's article in Bulletin No 50. It was also a great opportunity to get to know and be known by county planners. I learnt that in Ceredigion it is possible to track and comment on the progress of work on the evidence base of the LDP by either downloading the information from the county council website or by contacting the planning department direct.

Two further consultation steps

Once the information-gathering is complete the Local Planning Authority and the stakeholders will publish the Pre-deposit LDP document which will outline the authority's overall objectives for the plan and preferred strategy for growth or change, including preferred options for major development sites. There will then be a six-week consultation period when the documents can be viewed and written comments made to the Local Planning Authority. This consultation period is perhaps the most important one of the whole consultation process. A Deposit Plan will then be published accompanied by a Consultation Report outlining how the previous consultations have influenced the

plan and a revised Sustainability Appraisal Report. Following another six week consultation period the Local Planning Authority will consider any representations and produce a final Consultation Report.

Welsh Assembly approval

The Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Welsh Assembly, will then examine the report, all of the deposit representations, the Deposit LDP with its background evidence and the Sustainability Appraisal Report. After an Examination, the Inspector will review all the relevant information and consider what changes the Local Planning Authority should make to the LDP. An Inspector's report will then be published outlining the changes to be made and giving reasons for them. Whereas in the UDP preparation process the Inspector's views were only advisory, in this process they are binding and the local planning authority must make any changes recommended. The LDP is then adopted and the Local Planning Authority must subsequently send in an Annual Monitoring Report. There will then be regular opportunities for consultation as the LDP must be reviewed at least every four years when the plan preparation procedure will be repeated.

Investing in the future

Clearly the WHGT with its locally-based branches is in a strong position to make informed contributions to the LDPs throughout Wales, and these will have a vital influence upon the future protection of historic parks and gardens in Wales. To check on the progress of your county's LDP I would suggest contacting your County Planning Department or visiting your County Council website where you will find information on the Local Development Plan under 'Planning Policy'.

Seeking Welsh Fountains

The **Fountain Society** is a charity devoted to the restoration and development of fountains and other water features for public and private enjoyment.

The Society is currently assembling a list of fountains in the UK, which including over 70 (so far) in Wales – mostly those listed by CADW. Information on any Welsh fountains that may not be in this list would be greatly welcomed by Lord Aberdare via aberdare@probusbnw.com

Next year (2009) the Society will present an award, sponsored by the Marsh Christian Trust, for the best new UK fountain created during the past five years. Another goal is to build a fountain at Marble Arch in London celebrating all the British Olympic Gold Medal winners since 1896, if possible in time for the 2012 London Olympics.

The Fountain Society welcomes new members: more information is available at www.fountainsoc.org.uk, or from the Hon. Secretary, Ian Hay-Campbell, at High House, Bucknell, Shropshire SY7 0AA.

Bute Park at risk once more

'The history of Bute Park is a microcosm of the history of Cardiff as a settlement' (Bute Park Restoration and Development Plan) but the park as we know it dates from the latter half of the 19th Century when it was developed as a pleasure ground for the Castle from land reclaimed from the Taff river bed and other land gathered into the ownership of the Bute Estate after the death of the 2nd Marquis. It is an internationally important urban park listed Grade I by Cadw.

By 1855 the Trustees had secured the land and enclosed it to form a private park, prohibiting access to the general public and establishing a deer park. The Trustees to the 3rd Marquis transferred the head gardener, Andrew Pettigrew from Dumfries House to Cardiff in 1873, to develop an informal Victorian, horticultural, picturesque landscape with a specimen plant collection. It was at this time that the Swiss bridge designed by Burges was built. A walled garden was added in the early 20th century to provide the family with fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers. In 1947 the 5th Marquis presented the Castle and some areas of the Park to the City. The Council purchased further land to form the 130 acres of Bute Park that we see today.

It was after this acquisition that the Council initiated the Aboretum which has led to Bute Park being described by Dr. Owen Johnson, as 'the richest urban park for trees, quite probably in the world' following a survey compiled for the R.H.S. Tree Register.

There are many other interesting features in the Park, not least the remains of the Dominican (Blackfriars') Friary founded by Richard de Clare, son of Henry I in the 13th Century and the Mill Leat which follows the line of the 12th century mill stream. Both of these features are to be restored as part of the restoration partly funded by the H.L.F.

The Park has a linear layout running north alongside the river affording a most impressive and memorable vista looking south-east to the 'forest' of towers on the west range of the Castle, - a backdrop to the park that conjures up images of Camelot.

There was a proposal by the Cardiff Corporation in 1924 to construct a road through the Castle grounds linking Corbett Road with west of the river. This was described as 'an act of vandalism' by the Bute's representative at the Public Inquiry that ensued, who added 'it is not like crossing a meadow. It is crossing a miniature



A pre-1914 postcard shows the towers of Cardiff Castle soaring over Bute Park.

© Peter Davis Collection

Hampton Court'.

Sadly, history often repeats itself, for at Bute Park, we are now objecting to the scale of the proposed access road and bridge from Corbett Rd. over the dock feeder to the nurseries. It is claimed necessary to provide easier access for articulated lorries servicing events, carrying deliveries to the nurseries etc. and to relieve the current conflict of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic at the north gate. However there is a ground swell of opinion that the presumption of a very expensive 'improvement' scheme to facilitate greater commercialisation in this important Park is deeply flawed.

After much local opposition, the application, number 07/02649/C, was withdrawn for modifications in March and is the subject of determination once again. The current application shows a decrease in the width of the 9 metre access bridge for part of its length and a reduction in its visual impact plus a revised form of construction for the 4 metre wide roads in the park and greater protection for the individual trees near the roads. We still object to the principle of greater commercialisation of the Park requiring such an expensive and intrusive solution.

Elaine Davey for Glamorgan W.H.G.T.

Research

Abuses before the days of Planning

The creation of landscape gardens in eighteenth century England caused many villages to be destroyed, while at Milton Abbas in Dorset, a whole town disappeared. Usually, every building was destroyed, but sometimes the local bishop was stubborn and the parish church remained on its own in the grounds as at Croome and Kedleston. At first, the villagers were simply cast out, left to fend for themselves, but as humanitarian protest increased and the ideas of the Picturesque movement took hold, model villages were created, discreetly out of sight of the main house.

Goldsmith's poem 'The Deserted Village', attacking the removal of ancient sites, probably refers to Nuneham Courteney

in Oxfordshire,

*"Thus fares the land by luxury betrayed
The country blooms - a garden and a grave".*

I have so far found references to two such villages in Wales: **Llansannor**, Glamorganshire. (The Lost Villages of Britain. Richard Muir. 1986.) and **Bodllytn**, Ruabon, Denbighshire, a hamlet which was incorporated into Wynnstay Park. (Remembering Ruabon. T.W. Pritchard. 2000) Perhaps members could provide further information on other examples.

*John Davies, 15 Kingslea Road, Withington,
Manchester, M20 4 UB*

A Public Inquiry for Ruperra Castle

The owner of Ruperra Castle had six months from the Local Authority's ratification of refusal of planning permission on January 23rd, in which to appeal against the decision. He did this on Monday June 25, the beginning of the week when Ruperra Conservation Trust celebrated the end of the HLF and Cydcoed funded management work begun soon after the woodland Coed Craig Ruperra was purchased.

As the landowner of an environmentally important site neighbouring the Castle grounds, Ruperra Conservation Trust has a special interest in preventing building development there. However the progress of the planning application had become so complicated and time-consuming that it was deemed necessary to set up a separate trust to deal with Castle affairs. This was announced at the Celebration event and all matters concerning the planning appeal are now being sent to the Planning Inspectorate by Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust which is a client of Caroe and Partners, Conservation Architects. At present all the trustees of the new Castle Preservation Trust are also trustees of the Conservation Trust and hope to remain so.

At first, the appeal against the Caerphilly Councillors' decision to refuse the development had been set up as an informal hearing (Bulletin 51). We do not know at whose request this was, but many people were horrified that the fate of a site as important as Ruperra in heritage terms could be decided at an informal hearing lasting just one day. Several national organisations, the new Ruperra Trust and many individuals, wrote in to the Planning Inspectorate requesting a Public Inquiry. This was soon set up.

A Public Inquiry is a costly business for both the appellant and the opposition, but Public Inquiries are set up for matters of much less national concern than Ruperra. The letter from the Inspectorate stated that the appeal was upgraded because Ruperra is of 'more than local importance.' (Previously, successive Welsh Assembly Government planning ministers had considered it of only local importance.) We have now

heard that the jurisdiction of the case has been 'recovered' by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Inspector's report and decision after the Inquiry will be submitted to the Assembly for consideration and a final decision by the Minister for Planning.

The trustees of Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust have been opposed to the development from October 2002 when the first planning application was submitted. They have already formulated their representations, endorsed by many worthy people in the historic heritage field and have been offered Rule 6 Status to appear at the Inquiry. The National Amenity Societies will also have this status. Their opinions had not been sought at the time of the planning application because neither Listed Building nor Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent had been applied for.

The Public Inquiry will take place on April 21 2009. This gives plenty of time to prepare evidence and raise money to pay professional fees. But it also means that the castle will have to withstand another winter of rough stormy weather. The Welsh Assembly Government's 'recovery' of the Inspector's report may also cause a further delay of as much as four months after the end of the Inquiry.

All the correspondence submitted previously for the application and the informal hearing as well as the Inquiry itself will be made available on the Planning Inspectorate Planning Portal. Submissions can still be sent in if you so wish but only up until Wednesday October 22. Email is acceptable to wales@pins.gsi.gov.uk

Please check with the weblog for up to date information.

www.ruperracastle.blogspot.com

Pat Jones-Jenkins (formerly Moseley)



WHGT Job Vacancy

An opportunity has arisen for a paid part time **administrative assistant** based at our office in Aberglasney Gardens, Carmarthenshire. Initially the vacancy is for 6 hours per week.

Contact Andrea Dudley on 01558 668 485 or John Moyse on 01792 202 196 for an informal chat or send a CV with covering letter to:
WHGT, The Bothy, Aberglasney Gardens, Llangathen,
Carmarthenshire SA32 8QH

Christmas Bargain!

HISTORIC GARDENS OF
THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN,
edited by Hilary M. Thomas with contributions from
Brian James, Murray McLaggan, Derrick Kingham,
Jeff Alden and the editor.
256 pages; hardback; lavishly illustrated in full colour;
published by the South & Mid Glamorgan Branch
of WHGT.

An ideal gift for all garden lovers. Browse among these pages and explore the history of gardens great and small in the Vale of Glamorgan. Reviewed in issue 49 of the Bulletin, this book is offered direct from the address below at a special pre-Christmas price of £25 to include postage and packing. Cheques to be made payable to WHGT and sent with order to: WHGT, c/o Mwyndy House, Mwyndy, Llantrisant CF72 8PN.

Study Day: The Edwardian Garden in Wales

20th September 2008 at Gregynog

A rare, gloriously golden autumn day was fitting weather to celebrate the 'Long Edwardian Summer' of Edwardian Gardens in Wales, at a one-day seminar organised by the Brecon and Radnor Branch of the Trust.

The opening talk, on the gardens at Gregynog, raised a topic that was to become the theme for the whole day: the industrial basis for these Edwardian gardens. The Jacobean house had been bought at the end of the 19th century by a northern businessman, William Joyce, who restored the gardens in the period leading up to the First World War. Drawing on documents, especially details of the sale in 1913, Anne Carter described the combination of features characteristic of that period – plantings of newly fashionable plants such as sweet-briar hedges and Pink Pearl rhododendrons, combined with state-of-the-art infrastructure: for example, an electric plant house, cottages for the estate electrician and a bothy with an indoor lavatory! In 1924, the house became the home of the Davies sisters, Gwendoline and Margaret, granddaughters of 'Top-sawyer' David Davies of Llandinam. The sisters developed Gregynog as a centre for artists, musicians and fine printing. In 1963, it was bequeathed to the University of Wales, a typical gesture of artistic philanthropy financed by industry.

Geraldine Donovan then spoke about Dyffryn, where she is Restoration Project Manager. The gardens were designed just before the First World War by Mawson, for the owner, John Cory, the Cardiff shipowner. Geraldine Donovan's talk focused on the restoration of the eleven garden rooms, with their high yew hedging. These afforded vistas and cross views and, in the case of the Cloister Garden, windows, which looked towards the Theatre Garden, where, in Cory's day, the largest U.K. bonsai collection was displayed on its stage. The influence of Italy upon Mawson is seen in the statuary and balustrading of the Pompeian Garden. Much of what is now known of Dyffryn in its heyday is due to the very fortunate discovery of watercolours by Edith Helena Adie, held by the RHS in London, at the Lindley Library. These delicate but highly accurate pictures evoked that atmosphere of lushness and plenty so typical of the period.

In the afternoon, Helena Gerrish, an M.A. student in Garden History at the University of Bristol, gave us a hands-on account of her own restoration of Avray Tipping's garden at High Glanau in Monmouthshire. Between 1894 and 1922, Tipping had bought and restored a number of gardens in the county, often using water, and arranging formal gardens leading from the house. High Glanau has the characteristic features of a long formal terrace, octagonal pools and herbaceous borders.

It was a real culture shock to move from the urbane world of Tipping, the principal writer for *Country Life*, and his elegant mansions in rural Monmouthshire, to the coal-mining landscape of the Sirhowy Valley near Blackwood, the setting for Maesrudded, the subject of Phil Jayne's talk. The garden by Mawson was designed for the local coal-owner, who actually wanted to see the mines from his newly-built house, as a reminder of the origins of his wealth. It displays Mawson's trademark grand entrances, flights of steps, and summer houses at the ends of terraces. Nevertheless, Mawson's distaste for the location is reflected in his observation of Maesrudded as 'a jewel set in a lump of lead.' Phil Jayne highlighted the disturbing elements of history: tables of the take-home pay of the miners, and the statistics of their frequent accidents and short life expectancies.

The final talk was by John Woods, Park Development Manager for Newport Council, on the restoration of Mawson's Belle Vue Park, on land given by Lord Tredegar. In the park, Mawson included features for ordinary working people to enjoy: a rustic tea house, a bowling green, tennis courts, a bandstand, pavilions, conservatories and a fountain. We were given copies of the issue of the *South Wales Argus* for

8th September 1894, which commemorated, with great civic pride, the opening of Belle Vue Park.

'The past is another country. They do things differently there.' Robin Whalley introduced the afternoon session with this quotation from the beginning of L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, a book so redolent of the Edwardian period. After such a full programme, we were left with much food for reflection: the way industrial wealth had been used, often for public good, as well as for private pleasure.

Anne Evans

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