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Maesruddud House from Smith, E., The Sirhowy Valley Volume 1, Old Bakehouse Publications, Abertillery, 2003

large land holdings. In 1814, Mr Edmund Williams of Maesruddud is recorded as having let the rights to extract coal from part of his land to the Argoed and Newport Coal company, at a shilling a ton royalty. Perhaps this new income helped to elevate the family's social standing – Mr Williams is next heard of, in 1838, sitting as a Magistrate with Samuel Homfray, (one of the very wealthy Homfray dynasty of ironmasters from Merthyr and Tredegar) at the trial of some members of the 'Scotch Cattle' – early revolutionaries.

There are references to his interests in various small local collieries and once again the social standing of the family is confirmed in 1867, as he and his wife join the local elite in Breconshire to attend the funeral of Sir Thomas Phillips – the hero of the repulse of the Chartists' attack on the Westgate Hotel in Newport in 1839.

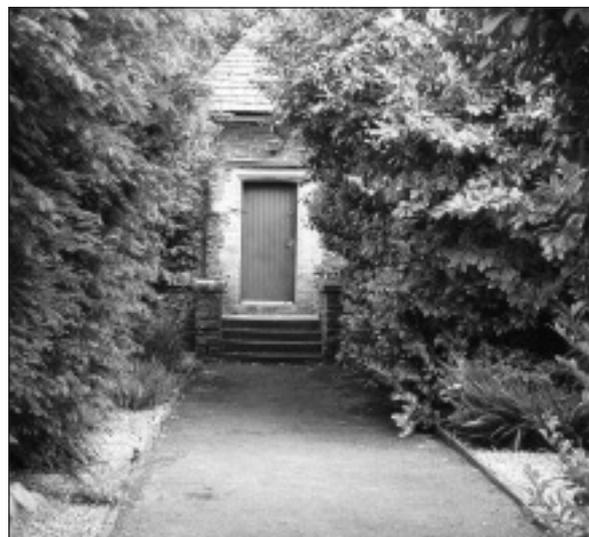
Edmund Williams had four children – William, Edmund Davies, Mary and Margaret, and it is his son Edmund Davies Williams who takes the story forward. On October 9th 1868, at a sale at the Westgate Hotel Newport, Edmund Davies Williams bought Hollybush Colliery, with all machinery, rolling stock, and the rights to 80 acres of coal-bearing land, under which lay the Pontygwaith and Marshall's veins – rich coal seams of 'house coal' (coal for domestic heating rather than steam coal or anthracite) that the colliery would exploit for the next 50 years. Edmund Davies Williams operated Hollybush in conjunction with other collieries nearby.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the primary landowners in the upper Sirhowy Valley were listed as John Hodder Moggridge, of Woodfieldside, Blackwood, Sir Charles Morgan, of Tredegar House, Newport and Edmund Davies Williams of Maesruddud. In 1887, at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Edmund Davies Williams is a JP, Deputy Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Monmouthshire.

A map of 1880 shows Maesruddud as a large

farmhouse, with some planting, later enhanced with slightly more formal gardens around the house. In 1890, the farmhouse was rebuilt, and this is where the story becomes increasingly interesting; for the architect was Edward Prioleau Warren, a member of the Art Workers' Guild, who practised extensively in Oxford in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, designing several small country houses, numerous educational establishments and an extension to St John's College, Oxford in 1901. Why, even before the appointment of Mawson, had the family engaged not a local architect, but a reasonably well-known and fashionable architect whose main practice was in Oxford? I have not been able to find records of Warren undertaking any other commissions in Wales.

The answer seems to lie in the marriage of Edmund Williams' daughter, Mary. In 1864, she had married Thomas Llewellyn Brewer, of Danygraig, Christchurch, Newport. The Brewers were a well established family of gentleman farmers who had gained ownership of Coalbrookvale Ironworks at Nant y glo, near Ebbw Vale, in an adjacent Monmouthshire Valley. And, if there was money to be made out of coalmines, there was even more profit in ironworks. We are all familiar with the famous ironworks families such as the Crawshays, the Homfrays and the Guests of Merthyr Tydfil who became fabulously wealthy in the nineteenth century (and were, themselves, responsible for developing some impressive gardens).



© Phil Jayne

The Terrace and Summerhouse today and as it appears in Mawson's book.

The Brewer family had originally lived at Coalbrookvale House, close to the ironworks but, in common with a number of ironmasters, had moved away from the heat, smoke and smells of the industry to more rural parts of Monmouthshire – in this case to Christchurch, a small village between Caerleon and Newport.

Mary and Thomas Llewellyn Brewer had a son, Edmund Williams Tom Llewellyn Brewer. Edmund Brewer had been educated at St Edward's School, Oxford and then at St John's College Oxford, where he gained his MA in 1893. He went on to become a barrister, a magistrate, High Sheriff and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire.

So, with E.P. Warren being active in Oxford in the 1890s, when young Edmund was in university, can we infer that his uncle, E.D. Williams, might have been influenced by this Oxford connection to appoint E.P. Warren to enlarge his house at Maesruddud, rendering it more fitting for a family that was consolidating and enhancing its position in society?

Probably, but E.D. Williams died in 1895 and cannot have been responsible for the Mawson commission. His estate was valued at £62, 622 18/2d (the equivalent, today of over £4.5 million). Letters of administration were granted to his sisters Margaret Williams (spinster) and Mary Brewer (widow).

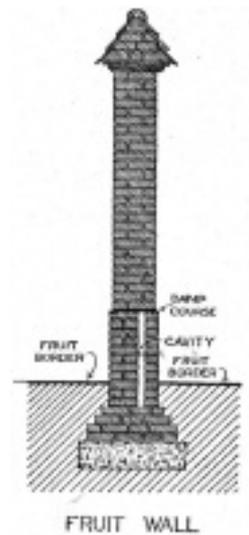
Edmund Williams Tom Llewellyn Brewer took the name of Williams by Royal Licence to become the heir to his uncle, becoming Edmund Williams Tom Llewellyn Brewer Williams, and in 1907 it was he who commissioned Thomas Mawson to design the gardens at the new house at Maesruddud. Mawson wrote "If 1906 was a lean year, 1907 was a very full one, and one which not only brought many new clients, but also many new friends and much interesting work". He lists eight commissions undertaken in that year. So what were the factors that influenced the family to appoint Mawson?

We know that Mawson had been involved with the design of Dyffryn Gardens for a year or so, and we know that his commission there was continuing. The Corys at Dyffryn had many interests in the coal industry, as well as in shipping. In the last decade of the nineteenth century Mawson also designed Belle Vue Park, in Newport, Monmouthshire, for the Council and it is thought that he had been involved with Beechwood Park, just over the hill in Newport from the Brewers' family residence at Christchurch. We can therefore assume Mr Brewer Williams would have been moving in circles that would have been very familiar with Mawson's work

Much of Mawson's work remains at Maesruddud, and many of the features so typical of his work are well illustrated by these remains. His plan was faithfully followed, and the overall structure of the garden is still clear today. Mawson's characteristic terraces were formed using the natural slope of the ground into the valley away from the house. These are grassy banks today, with small flights of steps. Ideal material for the stonework at Maesruddud was readily available nearby in the form of the local Pennant sandstone. This had been the main construction medium for many of the coalfield terraced houses and the collieries themselves, cleaving



© Phil Jayne



The kitchen garden wall at Maesruddud and the design as it appears in Mawson's book.

easily into regular blocks that could be laid neatly in courses, weathering well to blend into the surrounding landscape.

There is ornamental stonework – gate piers and balustrades - and wrought iron gates, all very typical of Mawson's work, together with the kitchen garden wall, with a brick inner skin, a stone outer skin and stone tile copings; all as recommended in Mawson's book. There is a terrace and summer house once again matching Mawson's recommendations.

Plans were apparently drawn up before the First World War for a new wing to the house, possibly to complete the symmetry shown in Mawson's original plans, but only a stable block was completed. As with many other country houses, we can assume that development stopped as a result of the changes after the war.

The family appears to have left Maesruddud in the 1930s. The house was used as a hospital, and a children's home, before becoming the Maes Manor Hotel. I assume that the Brewer Williamses cleared the house in 1931 as, in that year, they made a gift of a number of paintings to the National Museum of Wales. Ministry of Agriculture records in 1935 record Mr Brewer Williams living at Goldcliff, on the Severn estuary, near Newport.

The story of Maesruddud is the story of a family's rise to wealth and influence, and the expression of that wealth and influence by way of a garden in the heart of the industrial valleys, where we would perhaps least expect such an investment. As Mawson put it – "The very thought of collieries seems incompatible with gardens". However, the capital required for a number of important gardens in South Wales, and for many gardens in Britain, was partly - in some cases wholly - obtained from the profits of heavy industries such as coal mines and ironworks. Mawson's statement indicates that he fails to make that connection. In South Wales, the relationship between collieries as a source of wealth, and gardens, as an expression of that wealth, could not be more clear.

Although a hundred years have passed, it is still possible to 'read' the site as an example of everything that Thomas Mawson recommended as being good garden design in the early 20th century. The Sirhowy valley has changed significantly since the construction of the gardens at Maesruddud, returning to its rural past, and perhaps these changes have provided, at last, an appropriate setting for Mawson's jewel.

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1. Planning Casework

Probably the Trust's most important function after good basic housekeeping (i.e. collecting subscriptions, managing the accounts, and calling meetings, etc.) is monitoring planning applications, and responding to those where we think there is a need to do so, right across the length and breadth of Wales. Depending on circumstances this is done either by the local branch of the Trust, or more centrally from the Co-ordinator (Ros Laidlaw) or myself. This then is how we have managed to keep abreast of current planning challenges, although recently we have had to deal with an unusually large number of keynote cases all at the same time.

At Ruthin Castle, Clwyd we are expecting to dip all too deeply into our reserves to fund legal representation at a public inquiry to stop wooden chalets being erected in front of the castle in the middle of the prime view into and out of the parkland setting of the castle. In our view the resultant damage to this iconic heritage item (with its Glyndwr associations) would be severe. The March inquiry was cancelled for lack of an Environmental Impact Assessment by the applicant. However the issue will doubtless return and a fundamental rethink of long-term strategy by all concerned is much overdue, particularly as large sums of funding are needed to put the whole castle into a proper state of repair that would illustrate good cultural stewardship worthy of a civilised nation.

Another astonishing case concerns Troy House in Monmouthshire, which for almost thirty years has been mothballed pending the emergence of a new long-term use. This was, up to about a hundred years ago, the seat of the Dukes of Beaufort in South Wales. Sadly there is now before us a proposal to double the size of the house by building two new blocks of flats, one on either side of the existing house. We felt that this was not the right conservation approach that this important building and its setting deserve, so we lodged a strong objection.

We have featured Ruperra Castle in the Bulletin a number of times so it should be fairly familiar to you: it is hugely important despite having been burnt out many years ago, but could still be rescued by a sensitive redevelopment scheme. Sadly though, the current owner seeks so much enabling development in excess of that which the site could properly absorb, that we have thought it best to join with local amenity bodies to campaign against these proposals. The Public Inquiry begins on April 21st.

Lastly I would mention Reeves Hill in Herefordshire (just on the border) where we have assisted the Offa's Dyke Society by objecting to wind turbines being sited on the highest hill in the area. This would have a major visual impact on listed parks in Wales, especially the delightful Stanage Park where we are to meet for our AGM. Let us not forget that this area, which may now be visually blighted for at least a generation, was the cradle of the Picturesque movement as the home of Thomas Johnes, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price.....Blow, blow thou winter wind, thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude.

These are of course just a few illustrative cases with which we are currently dealing on your behalf, and in your name.

2. New Talent Sought

The search for a Chairman

I can hardly believe that seven years have gone by since I was asked to become vice Chairman of the Trust and then Chairman a year later. But this is so and we now have to search Wales for a replacement to take over this coming June. I would be very grateful if you could encourage anyone you feel may be suitable to apply via Andrea Dudley, the Administrator. This is a really vital matter, so that we get the best person available to drive the Trust on to the next phase of its development.

The search for a Bulletin Editor

Also coming to the end of its term is the post of Editor for the WHGT Bulletin. I would therefore thank Dr. Caroline Palmer for all she has done to keep the Bulletin coming out on time and maintaining the interest of members – not an easy thing to do in a specialist subject. We are therefore advertising the post widely in the hope that a new editor can be in place by the end of the year after some months to get up to speed with the job. If you can think of anyone who might be interested do please let Andrea Dudley, our Administrator know; she will send further details to all interested parties. In the meantime I know members would wish me to record publicly a vote of thanks to Caroline for her steadfastness in editing this publication.

The search for Volunteers

I am glad to say that we really do seem to have consolidated our presence at the Bothy, and generally it all works well, but actually only because Andrea and Catherine and others give very much 'beyond and above'.

Whilst this equates well with our charitable status, it is not really the way to work in the long run, where we all need to be perceived as being very professional, with little space for the 'wing and a prayer' scenario. Thus we much need to supplement our regular colleagues with volunteers at the Bothy for at least two days a week. This could be any reasonable permutation from four half days from four different volunteers to two people doing a day apiece. At the very least of it our office would then be open for five full days a week.

As to skills, we are glad to consider whatever specialist skills may be available, although of course a sunny disposition is perhaps a common denominator for us all! The Bothy is a happy office, the work is fun and the cause is good. So if any members reading this, or indeed if any members can persuade someone else to consider what is on offer, and feel that they can make a real contribution to the working of the Trust, would they please make contact with Andrea, our administrator. I know that she will be keen to hear from you.



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Hwyl, Michael Tree

Most branch events have already been advertised in Bulletin No. 54. They only appear here if new or altered in some way. If you wish to attend any branch events please contact the appropriate Branch Representative.

Brecon and Radnor

Saturday 20th June

Summer Garden Party at Evancoyd and the walled garden at Knill.

Ceredigion

Sunday 28th June 2 pm

A visit to Tŷ Glyn estate and walled garden, Ciliau Aeron.

Sunday 13th September at 2pm

The three walled gardens of Hafod. A visit to the three enclosed gardens in Thomas Johnes's Picturesque landscape: Mrs Johnes's flower garden, (recently felled of timber), Mariamne's precipice garden, and the walled kitchen garden which contains restored greenhouses and a native tree nursery.

Clwyd

Saturday 25th April

Walled Gardens Study Day at Erlas Conference & Training Centre Wrexham.

Programme

10.30 AGM

11.15 Karen Liebreich - Chiswick Walled Garden

12.15 Lunch

1.15 Maureen Thomas - William Goldring (1854 -1919)

Ann Morton - Erlas Garden Tour

2.15 Fiona Grant – The Walled Kitchen Gardens Network

Members £18, Non Members £21, Lunch included.

Booking Essential: Please Contact Elizabeth Bartlett 01352 758023

Sunday 7th June at 2.30

Garden Tea Party at Dedwyddfa, Bryn Goodman Ruthin, by kind invitation of Ann and Basil Thomas.

Sunday 21st June at 2.00

Private visit to Llangedwyn by kind invitation of Captain Timothy Bell. This is a 4 acre formal terraced garden retaining features from the late 17thC and early 18thC. Designed on three levels overlooking the Tanat valley; it features unusual herbaceous plants, a sunken rose garden, ponds, a kitchen garden and a woodland walk. The estate buildings include a stallion house, and an interesting octagonal barn.

Gwynedd

Friday 8th May – Sunday 10th May

Caelloi Coach Excursion to the Malvern Flower Show.

Friday 26th June 6-8pm

Garden Party at Goetre Isaf Farmhouse, Bangor, home of Alison and Fred Whowell.

Thursday 16th July

Bus trip to the Dorothy Clive Garden and Trentham Gardens, both near Stoke on Trent.

Pembrokeshire

Thursday 7th May 7pm

Picton Castle. Supper and lecture "Moonlighting in Gardens" by William Wilkins CBE.

South and Mid Glamorgan

Wednesday 5th August

Early evening visit to Insole Court, Cardiff, We will walk round the gardens in the company of members of the Friends of Insole Court, who are campaigning to retain the Court as an asset for the whole of Cardiff. See www.insolecourt.org.uk Insole Court was built by James Harvey Insole in 1855. The ornamental gardens, listed as Grade II*, were designed mainly in the 1860s, and the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The garden features extensive rockwork which was introduced as a habitat for Violet Insole's collection of alpiners and rock plants.

Friday 2nd October at 2pm

Llanover House. Elisabeth Murray, the present owner, will lead a tour of the garden and then serve a home-made tea. See www.llanovergarden.co.uk/history.htm. In 1792 Benjamin Waddington (1749 - 1828) laid out the garden and parkland in the style of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Later he followed the ideas of Humphrey Repton by building a circular walled garden with a dovecote, a terrace and a ha-ha. A formal system of paths and beds and a croquet lawn were added by Lord Treowen between 1912 and 1931. In 1931 the formal beds were grassed over and a new phase of tree planting began, notably two Acer griseums, now regarded as 'Champion Trees.'

In the 1960s Elisabeth Murray's father returned from the East Coast of America and started planting trees to achieve similar displays of colour: Magnolias, Acers and Nyssas, Hickories, Euonymus and Liquidambers.

AGM Saturday 6th June 2009

at **Stanage Park**, Knighton, Powys.

"The last and most complete of Humphry Repton's three recognised Welsh landscape commissions, ...landscape, castellated house and garden survive almost intact and are recorded in a "Red Book". (Cadw Register 1999)

There will be an address by William Graham, Conservative AM for South Wales East

And an introduction to the Picturesque Movement by Jenny Macve, Hafod scholar and Administrator of the Hafod Trust.

A blank canvas at the heart of Hafod

Lying at the heart of Hafod's historic demesne, Mrs Johnes's Flower Garden has been a source of embarrassment for the Forestry Commission and disappointment for visitors for many years. In the 1950s it was planted with a crop of Sitka spruce and suffered the indignity of having a road driven through it. By the 1980s, when a new awareness of the importance of Hafod emerged, no trace of original features survived other than a partly ruinous perimeter wall and an unhappy holm oak hemmed in by rapidly growing conifers.

Apart from some clearance and rebuilding of walls and gateways in the 1980s under a Manpower Services Commission scheme – when possibly valuable archaeological data went unrecorded – the garden has been passed by in the planning and execution of landscape restoration at Hafod.

In 2008, however, the Chairman of the Hafod

Advisory Panel, Mr Peter White, asked Forestry Commission Wales to look again at the possibility of removing the intrusive road. The road is essential for lorry access to the forests south of the Ystwyth, and large timber rigs demand a high specification for turning circles, but nevertheless it was found that an alternative route was feasible, between the garden and the river to the east.

At the time of writing this new road is under construction. Once it is complete, the old road will be removed and surfaces and levels made good, as far as possible, within the garden. Already some delicate work with a JCB has revealed that (a) the garden wall is still standing under the 1950s embankment, and (b) the circuit path shown on the OS 1:2500 map of 1888 survives as a simple band of shale chippings just below the present ground surface.

The opening up of the garden has transformed a previously gloomy and negative part of the landscape. It also presents the Hafod Partnership with the exciting challenge of a blank canvas. The site is just over one acre in size, and it can now be appreciated why the Johnes family chose this spot for their Flower Garden, there being very few places in Hafod where one can find a broad and roughly level acre of ground with a southerly aspect. From contemporary descriptions it is clear that key to the garden's impact was its position amidst natural woodland half a mile distant from the house, where its semi-formal layout and colourful planting afforded an experience of surprise and contrast – recurring themes in the Picturesque.

"Nothing can be more enveloped in solitude, nothing more beautiful or genial." wrote Benjamin H. Malkin, in 1804.



Mrs Johnes's Flower Garden, freshly cleared in March 2009.

© Caroline Palmer

The original design of the garden was strongly influenced by the writings of the Revd. William Mason, author of *The English Garden* (Collected Edn. 1783), who was responsible for laying out the flower garden at Nuneham Courtenay. Visitors to Hafod described "wreathing and fragrant plats" cut out of smooth lawns, statuary, a summerhouse or temple, a gravel walk around the perimeter. It was also a plant collector's garden, with specimens of plants recently introduced from North America, though it would be inaccurate to describe it as a true "American Garden" and the Johneses themselves never used that term. The garden seems to have been the particular province of Jane Johnes, who corresponded and swapped plant material with friends, but there is tantalizingly little hard data on exactly what plants it contained. It also, of course, altered over time, with later owners either neglecting it or encouraging it to become a garden of large shrubs and trees.

In outline, the proposal for the future of the garden is to create a space that evokes its past through the planting of trees and shrubs that would have been available in the late eighteenth century, but avoiding a heavy maintenance and revenue funding burden. Some of the newly opened 'views out' will be retained, while planting outside the walls will gradually restore its semi-concealment. And whereas much of Hafod can be explored only by those with a reasonable degree of physical fitness, the Flower Garden has the potential to provide all abilities with an experience of the Hafod landscape.

Jennie Macve
The Hafod Trust

Two coffee-table books:

The Gardens of Wales

by Helena Attlee, Frances Lincoln,
2009 £16-99. ISBN 978-0-7112-2882-5

and

Discovering Welsh Gardens

by Stephen Anderton Graffeg,
2009 £18-99. ISBN 978-1-905582-20-4

For years there has been no coffee table book about Welsh gardens, and then, what do you know, two come along at once! Both were launched in March, and vie for the same market – a lavishly illustrated gift book to send out to friends and relations. It is heart warming that these books reflect the growing realisation that there are, in fact, many good gardens in Wales.

The two books are **The Gardens of Wales** by Helena Attlee and **Discovering Welsh Gardens**, by Stephen Anderton. They are of similar squarish formats, the former slightly larger and hardback, the latter thicker, and softback, and they are only £2-00 different in price. Both are, of course, lavishly illustrated by distinguished garden photographers: Anderton, who lives at Abergavenny, is teamed with Charles Hawes, the owner with his wife Anne Wareham of a remarkable modern garden at Veddw House, Devauden. Attlee, of Presteigne, in Powys, is teamed with photographer Alex Ramsay.

Looking through both books reveals a close consensus between the two authors. Anderton's book described twenty gardens, of which fourteen also appear in Attlee's selection of twenty seven. Taking this as our guide, the torch for top garden must therefore be awarded to the common fourteen. These, alphabetically, are Aberglasney, Bodnant, Bodysgallen, Bodrhyddan, Cae Hir, Dewstow, Erddig, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Brondanw, Plas Newydd, Plas yn Rhiw, Powis Castle, Veddw, and Wyndcliffe Court. The make-weight gardens in Attlee's book, are in the main, other significant gardens of substantial historic houses, including Clytha, Ffynone, Llanover House, Llanfihangel Court, Picton Castle and pleasingly, the restored Shell House at Cilwendig. Anderton's six wild cards lean more towards the quirky cottage garden: places like Dyffryn Fernant, near Fishguard, Nant-yr-Eryd, Boncath or Lower House, Hay on Wye. His notable newcomer is Tony Ridler's sculptural topiary garden in suburban Swansea, but WHGT members will be pleased to see that Anglesey member Anthony Tavernor's restored garden at Plas Cadnant has made its way onto Anderton's list.

So which book to buy? Well, both, if you like pictures, and your favourite garden is among those featured. You can hardly have too many photographs of gardens, an evocative photo is more memorable than the most expressive prose. But if you, or your gift-recipient belongs to that rare group of people who actually sit down and read the prose in coffee table books, the

remainder of this review is for you.

Attlee's prose, is elegant, well turned and selectively describes aspects of history or people which are memorable and pleasing to the raconteur. At Bodysgallen she informs us of the eccentric Lord Mostyn's love of shoes, and his habit of dispersing local children playing football in the rose garden by firing his shotgun at six o'clock. At Brondanw we find a quote on how the young Clough Williams Ellis viewed each £10 cheque from his architectural practice as a yardage of yew hedge, or extra paving slabs for the terrace of his old family home. At Veddw House she plunges directly to the heart of the matter: what influences caused Anne

Wareham to create "the most controversial garden in Wales". Allowing the pictures and their captions to speak for themselves about the appearances of the gardens, she feeds us savoury snippets of garden and social history. There is a lot of white space in the design layout of this book, and gardens may be accompanied by as little as 600 words, but they are well chosen words, and one would not tire to read them out loud.

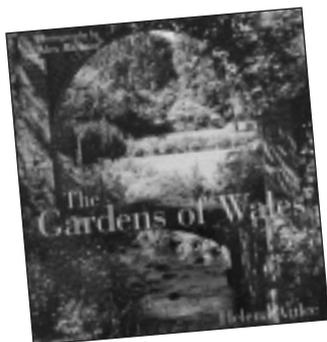
Anderton by contrast sets out to provide a critical ramble about each garden, describing what he sees, and his reactions to it. Though the text is lengthier, much floats past the consciousness until one is arrested by a personal interjection. His similes are unlikely to make it to the Dictionary of Quotations. Dewstow he sees as "a fat lady in a booth sort of place", Aberglasney "an old Quaker dress salvaged from a trunk", and many historic gardens open to the public are likened to "the old whore whose grandfather was an archbishop". "On the railway line to horticultural heaven, soothing is only a few stops short of boring" he warns us. There is a "whiff of nursing home" about Bodnant Hall, while Bodrhyddan brings on a staccato style: "You have to smile." .. "You expect confetti" .. "It's all great fun". When he gets to Plas Brondanw he decides to abbreviate Clough Williams Ellis "(let's call him CWE)". The seven subsequent pages are larded with this unexpected acronym.

Perhaps some of the responsibility lies with the publishing house and the editor. Anderton's publisher is Graffeg, of Cardiff, and over and above the individual authorial style they have let some howlers slip through. Aficionados of the misplaced apostrophe will reach for the red pen, and there are sentences in which word order, or the verb, have gone seriously astray. Perhaps most culpable are the errors of fact: William Emes the 18th century landscape gardener should not be spelt Eames; Nant-yr-Eryd, Boncath is not in Ceredigion.

Frances Lincoln, by contrast has a long track record in producing mouth-watering picture books with impeccable text. This book showcases a selection of Welsh gardens, presents pictures of extraordinary allure, and text panels which illuminate the humanity of the owners and gardeners. I think it will sit better on the discriminating coffee tables of the world.

Caroline Palmer

This review first appeared in the bimonthly colour magazine CAMBRIA, PO Box 22, Carmarthen, SA32 7YH, Wales.
Website: www.cambriamagazine.com



www.parksandgardens.ac.uk - Last call for training!

In January, members of the Clwyd and Gwynedd Branches had an enjoyable day in Rhyl with Project Manager Rachael Sturgeon, inputting their own records and photographs of gardens into the Parks and Gardens UK database. Individual members from various parts of Wales have also been trained and are uploading information.

There is still time to request a training session in your area in the next three months. Any group of three or more members willing to learn to input data should approach John Warden at info@parksandgardens.ac.uk to arrange a session as soon as possible. Meanwhile please explore the Welsh counties on the website – you will be pleasantly surprised!
Caroline Palmer

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NFU Mutual Announces its 2009 Customer Bonus



NFU Mutual, the large rural insurer, has today announced that for the tenth year running it will be paying a bonus to its loyal customers.

In 2009, as in previous years, NFU Mutual's general insurance customers will receive a bonus of up to 10% of their premiums when they renew their policies.

It is expected that the overall cost of the 2009 bonus payments will be around £85 million.

Lindsay Sinclair, NFU Mutual's Group CEO said: "We are delighted to be rewarding our loyal members. We have over three quarters of a million members who have general insurance policies with us, such as car and home, and year after year we see them coming back to us to renew their insurances.

"In fact, around 95% of customers renew their policies with us every year – reflecting just how much our customers appreciate the service we provide and the financial strength that lies behind it. Many of our customers are from families who have been with us for generations."

The level of Mutual Bonus that policyholders will receive depends on the length of time they have insured with the company. In 2009 every customer who renews will receive a discount of between 6% and 10%. This includes car, home and contents, business, horse and travel policies.

The Garden History Society GWENT WEEKEND

5th and 6th September 2009

Day 1: Clytha Park; Raglan Castle; High Glanau
Day 2: Dewstow; Wyndcliffe Court; Veddow House.

Gardens at Clytha, Wyndcliffe Court and High Glanau are the work of H. Avray Tipping (1855 - 1933). Raglan has a notable Tudor garden and Dewstow has an underground garden and grotto in Pulhamite. The Veddow garden is the modern creation of a member of the GHS.

The cost for the weekend is £84.50; which includes all entrances and meals.

Saturday 5th September only £50-50

Sunday 6th September only £34-00

For booking form and list of suggestions where to stay, please send an A5 size stamped, addressed envelope to:
Anne Richards, 5 The Knoll, Hereford, HRI IRU.