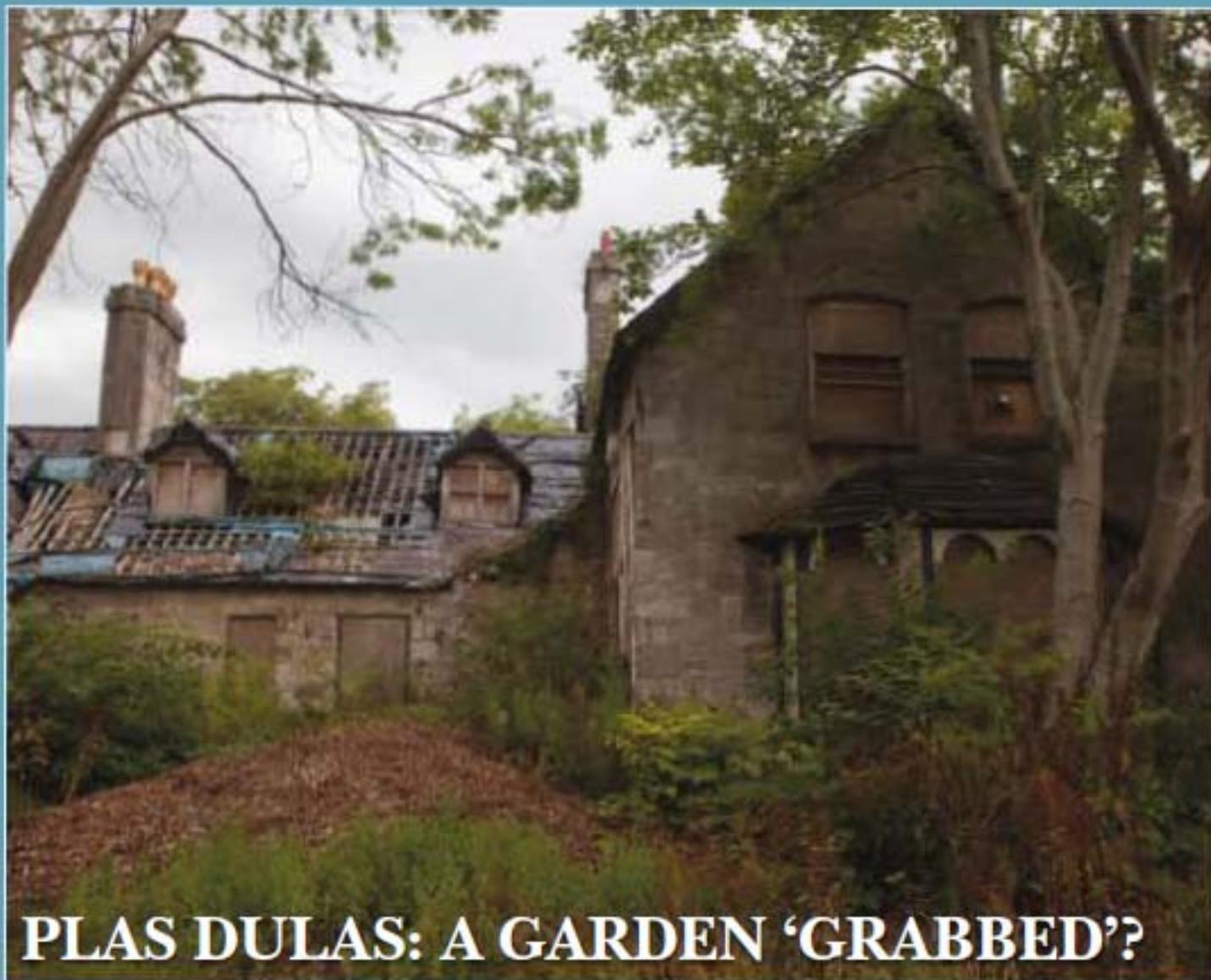


the BULLETIN

WELSH HISTORIC GARDENS TRUST YMDDIRIEDOLAETH GERDDI HANESYDDOL CYMRU No. LVIX Summer 2010



PLAS DULAS: A GARDEN ‘GRABBED’?

Home of the largest sorbus in Wales, specimen trees imported a century ago from Greece and Cappadocia, besides a colony of lesser horseshoe bats, the two-acre garden surrounding this early-Victorian villa is safeguarded by Tree Preservation Orders. Tree felling and crown clearing have already begun. So has destruction of surviving garden terraces. In the absence of CADW listing, what chance is there of resisting an ongoing proposal for intensive housing infill development?

A NEW BEGINNING?

Latest developments at Gwrych Castle

I DON'T LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE

Dylan Thomas and Rhossili Bay

THE PEOPLE'S PARK

Fresh air, social cohesion and Joseph Paxton at Birkenhead Park

plus This year's AGM and Penllergare study day

from THE EDITOR

It was not the plots of the ITV mystery series *Rosemary & Thyme* which surprised so much as the gardening experts-cum-sleuths' predilection for bedding plants. Regardless of the historical context, Felicity Kendal and Pam Ferris's characters delighted in half-moon-shaped beds chock full of brightly coloured annuals. As readers will know, few historic gardens benefit from an avalanche of cineraria and double begonias.

This high-handedness about garden history is not unique to makers of Sunday night drama. Repeatedly owners of historic houses lavish care and attention on restoration schemes which – sensitive to the tiniest internal paint scrape – play fast and loose with the house's immediate man-made setting. This is why organizations like the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, with its body of expertise and remit for vigilance, are so important.

Two summers ago, on a day of metallic heat in central Rome, I witnessed an inspiring example of the potential longevity of historic garden evidence. The Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, part of the National Museum of Rome, stands cheek by jowl with Rome's mighty Termini station. It is not a region of stillness. Yet briefly all was silent.

I felt an extraordinary cold thrill entering a room which kindly had been cleared for me. It lies at the top of the white-painted museum, but within all is colour, the jewel-bright, aqueous colours of an eternal summer garden. The room is lined with mural paintings removed from a villa several kilometres outside Rome which once belonged to the Empress Livia, subject of my most recent biography. The paintings are thought to be the work of the most famous muralist of his day, a man called Studius, acclaimed by Pliny. They depict an idyllic garden of fruit trees and flowers in which, as if by magic, buds, blossom and berries co-exist simultaneously. The painting shows a high level of botanical accuracy and most of the specimens have been identified. As far as we know, the scheme, created for Livia's summer triclinium, is unique among Studius's output. There are thus strong reasons for assuming that the painter worked from specimens in Livia's own garden, close beyond the confines of what was once a partly subterranean room. Archaeological excavation has revealed something of the plan of that garden; Studius's murals enable us to restock the plan with trees and flowers – and even to imagine the kinds of birds Livia would have seen.

In few instances of garden restoration are researchers so fortunate, but this is no reason not to strive for accuracy, appropriateness and beauty. The ability to help maintain such rigorous standards is not least among the Trust's justifications.

May I thank all those of you who took the trouble to contact me in the aftermath of the last Bulletin, and reiterate the urgent cry of that issue: the Trust desperately needs new members and increased funds. We must all be evangelical in increasing membership and awareness in order to perpetuate our valuable work.

MATTHEW DENNISON

from THE CHAIRMAN

The sun shone brightly on our well-attended AGM at Powis Castle on 6 June, and set the tone for a thoroughly stimulating day. Peter Lord's informative and beautifully illustrated talk on changes in historic attitudes to the Welsh landscape through art and literature provided a thought-provoking framework for the gardens visited that afternoon – Vaynor Park and Glansevern. My thanks to Peter Lord, Mr and Mrs Corbett-Winder and Mr and Mrs Neville Thomas for their generosity, and to Joy Neal who arranged the AGM so efficiently.

The programme of visits, lectures and study days organised by the branches this year has been, as always, exceptionally good. It was a great temptation to attend them all. I could not resist the visits to Sir Roy Strong's Laskett Garden (South & Mid Glamorgan), The Penllergare Garden Study Day (West Glamorgan), the garden party at Trawscoed (Ceredigion) and the evening at the National Botanic Garden (Gwynedd and Clwyd). All were hugely enjoyable and an illustration of the continuing vigour of the Trust and the enthusiasm of its members.

However, the Trust still faces many challenges, in particular, those arising from the austere national economic climate. It seems unlikely that we will secure any further public funding in the near future. Constant vigilance will be required to ensure that any threats to our important historic garden heritage receive a swift and determined response. Mark Baker's article on Gwrych Castle provides a good example of the potential threats posed by economic adversity.

The new database of members is now complete and a Membership Secretary has been appointed. I am enormously grateful to Ann Sayer for taking on this important role which will assist us greatly in the smooth running of the Trust.

Finally, may I wish you all a glorious end of summer in our beautiful countryside, with a profound hope that the weather may continue to be as good as it was at Powis.

GWYNETH HAYWARD

Top Tips from NFU Mutual

As autumn approaches, now's the time to tidy up the outside of your house. Removing unwanted debris from your drains and gutters is best done at the beginning of winter.

This will clear away all the leaves that have fallen during the autumn. If leaves, seeds and debris build up it can lead to overflowing gutters which drench walls and can cause damage. It also puts unnecessary strain on guttering which can lead to blockages and more serious problems.

Also make sure your drains are clear from leaves and debris to allow water to flow away freely. For more information on home insurance, call us on **0800 197 1185** or visit www.nfumutual.co.uk/whgt



NFU Mutual

HELLENIC CAMBRIA?

Following depredations over a lengthy period, little remains of the historic gardens at Plas Dulas. Is CADW right not to list either house or garden? The site deserves better, argues MARK BAKER

In the late 1840s, Elizabeth Easthope moved to the newly fashionable coast of North Wales with her married sister and family. Elizabeth was the daughter of Sir John Easthope, M.P., owner of the influential *Morning Chronicle* and one of the wealthiest men in Britain. The farm she acquired was of late-eighteenth-century origins. Located to the southwest of the historic core of Llanddulas, it occupied the steep slopes of Pen-y-Gopa, lands historically owned by two great estates, Wynnstay and Garthewin. The views must have been breathtaking, taking in a similar aspect to that of nearby Gwrych Castle. Work began almost immediately on erecting a large early-Victorian villa at the north end of the farm, nearly doubling it in size. The experience was clearly a positive one: Elizabeth went on to extend two further large houses in Llanddulas.

garden for displaying archaeological antiquities. His activities can be seen as part of a fashion for recreating fragments of excavated classical sites back at home. Arthur Evans, for example, after unearthing the Minoan palace of Knossos, built an archaeologically influenced garden at Boars Hill in Oxfordshire. Allusions to the gardens at Plas Dulas being a theoretical attempt to recreate a classical Greek garden in North Wales are provided by Dawkins himself in extensive letters that survive in Oxford archives. In addition, stylistic comparisons can be made with the gardens at the British School at Athens, of which Dawkins was director.

Although firm evidence is lacking, it has been suggested that Evelyn Waugh, a contemporary of Dawkins who was briefly



PLAS DULAS PHOTOGRAPHS: GLYNIS SHAW

Elizabeth and her descendents continued to develop Plas Dulas, and there can be seen at least three distinct phases of garden activity. First, Elizabeth appears to have laid out the essence of the garden, planting trees, excavating terraces and enclosing the kitchen garden with a high, crenellated park wall, identical to the estate walling at Gwrych. (This wall was added to by her brother-in-law, Andrew Doyle, and his son, John Andrew Doyle, up to the mid-1870s.) Then the eighteenth-century barn at Plas Dulas was converted for use as stabling and a series of greenhouses erected on a terrace south of the house. heralding a later stage of activity, in 1907, the estate (and a substantial legacy) passed to a first cousin, Professor Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, internationally famous archaeologist and author, who, through his extensive travels and excavations in the Mediterranean, experimented with plant importation at Plas Dulas. Dawkins excavated widely, at Palaikastro, the Kamares Cave, and the Lasithi plateau in Crete, as well as at Artemis Orthia near Sparta.

Dawkins, a man of uncertain character, sought refuge from his academic activities at Plas Dulas, where he used the

employed as a schoolmaster at Arnold House School, close to Plas Dulas, may have written part of *Decline and Fall* here.

Much research has been undertaken by WHGT's Clwyd Branch, particularly Glynis Shaw and David Toyne, to record this garden at risk. The rare plant collection has been decimated and, despite Tree Preservation Orders, a huge number of trees – collected over a 100-year period – lost. A planning application to demolish the entire site to make way for a housing estate was turned down by the local authority in late November 2009. Unsuccessful pleas were made to Cadw to list both the house and garden, and in February 2010, bulldozers took down the eighteenth-century barn and chapel, as well as the orchid house and park wall. Fortunately, the presence of the lesser horseshoe bat saved the main house. A conservation trust has been established for Llanddulas with a view to saving what remains of the site, but the future of both house and garden remains uncertain.

For further information, call Cllr Pamela Jenkins on 01492-518550 or visit www.plasdulas.co.uk

STUDY DAY REPORT: PENLLERGARE

Penllergare is a former gentleman's estate on the northwest outskirts of Swansea. In its heyday in the early twentieth century, a visitor wrote, 'For beauty and scenery there is nothing in the whole of Morgannwg to excel Penllergare,' and it is uniquely important in the cultural history of southwest Wales. At one time it was the home of John Dillwyn-Llewelyn, horticulturalist, philanthropist and pioneer photographer. It was his vision and landscape design in the picturesque tradition that made Penllergare one of the great gardens of Wales.

On 15 May, a study day devoted to its history and future was held at the Civic Centre, Swansea, jointly organised by the West Glamorgan branch WHGT and the Penllergare Trust. It was held this year to coincide with a series of events celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dillwyn-Llewelyn. The conference covered the origins of the park, its magical splendour, gradual decline in the twentieth century and the ambitious plans for its restoration.

Ann Gardner, chairman West Glamorgan branch, presided in the morning. Local historian Bernard Morris described the emergence of Swansea at the end of the eighteenth century as a prosperous industrial town, its fortunes built on local coal, copper smelting and pottery. These activities and a substantial estate funded Dillwyn-Llewelyn's ambitious project.

Jennie Eyres, Head of Community Engagement and Education, Penllergare Trust, described Dillwyn-Llewelyn's creation of a Victorian paradise. In 1833, he inherited the Penllergare estate and soon set out to restore the mansion and lay out an extensive park with a one-and-a-half-mile-long drive along the steep-sided Llan valley and a four-acre

walled garden containing the first orchidaceous house in the world – a cascade of heated water created the necessary warm, steamy environment. Two other major projects were the lake and waterfall.

Dillwyn-Llewelyn determined to make Penllergare a wonderful home for his new bride Emma, who was a first cousin of pioneer photographer, Henry Fox-Talbot. Both he and his daughter Emma Charlotte in turn also became early exponents of photography, and the magnificent park and garden is extensively documented in a comprehensive archive of contemporary photographs. In the 1890s, Dillwyn-Llewelyn's heir died in tragic circumstances. From that time, the estate declined and deteriorated. In 1961, the house was blown up during military training.

Hal Moggridge, landscape architect, chairman of the Penllergare Trust and a relative of Dillwyn-Llewelyn, chaired the afternoon session. William Wilkins, champion of conservation causes and a key founder of the WHGT, left delegates in no doubt about the importance of Penllergare. Aberglasney and the National Botanic Garden have established a blueprint for the way forward and he quickly convinced delegates that Penllergare must be the third.

Co-founder of the Penllergare Trust, Michael Norman, outlined ambitious plans to restore the park and walled garden in the final paper. Currently a detailed £2 million bid is being prepared for the Heritage Lottery Fund, with matched funding for a further £1 million. A fitting climax was the site visit, during which delegates could see many features of Penllergare's glorious past. Surely these gardens must be restored for future generations to enjoy.

DON WILLIAMS

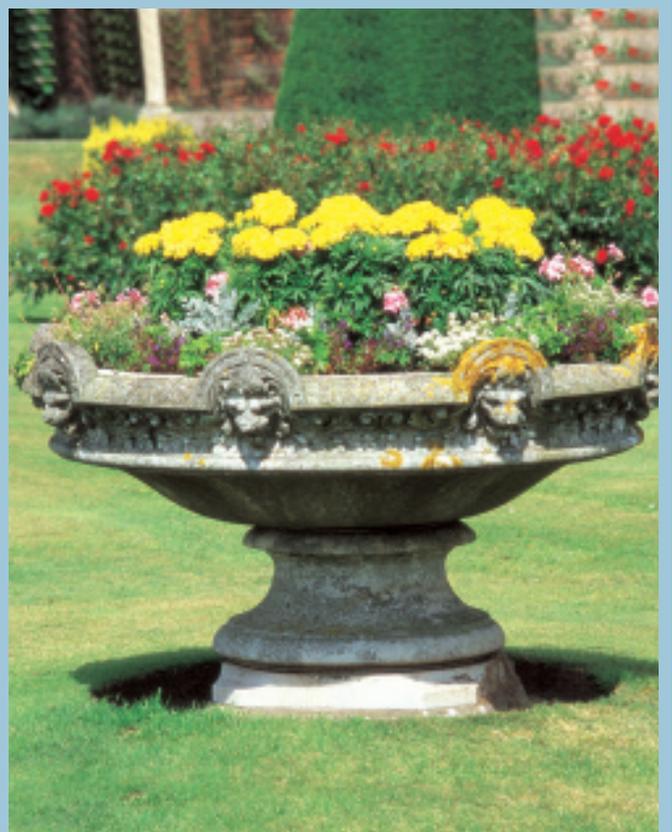
IN SEARCH OF GARDENERS: A NEW WHGT PROJECT?

In the wake of our publication *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan*, South and Mid Glamorgan Branch has embarked on a search to identify those 'hidden heroes' of the gardening world, the hands-on gardeners without whose labour and skills gardens great or small would not have existed. Often historic gardens and their owners are well documented, but the day-to-day activities of the gardeners themselves are rarely recorded and this vital workforce remains elusive.

This paucity of source material makes the search for gardeners a difficult one. It soon became apparent to our Branch that if more than a handful of gardeners were to be identified and their daily work revealed, research needed to be conducted over as wide an area and as diverse a range of gardens as possible. Only then might a significant contribution to garden history be made.

So this is the challenge your Branch is invited to take up. We envisage a long-term collaborative project with the potential to add a new dimension to 'Garden History'. We have initially set a cut-off date of 1920.

HILARY M THOMAS



THE PEOPLE'S PARK

Ahead of a Clwyd branch visit on October 16th, ELIZABETH SMART looks at the history of Birkenhead Park



Birkenhead Park has a particular position in the nineteenth-century development of the British public park. By the turn of the century public parks had become a matter of social concern. The 1833 Select Committee on Public Works had reported that parks and open spaces for recreation were urgently needed both on health grounds and for social stability.

In this period there were a number of parliamentary acts relating to park development, including both private bills like the 1842 Birkenhead Improvement Commission and more general legislation such as the 3rd Improvement Act of 1843, the Burial Act of 1853 and the Recreation Ground Act of 1859.

Few early parks were fully public in the sense of being freely open to all members of the public – many required a subscription or entry fee and/or imposed a strict dress code. Many had been created on land given by donors, who imposed conditions of entry, or by subscribers who established a subscription fee as a condition of use by members of the public. Birkenhead Park was radically different: a park created and maintained by the municipality for the people, it became the first truly public park.

Before 1820 Birkenhead had a population of only several hundreds, but with the introduction of the 1820 steam ferry service to Liverpool, the population rose to some 8,000 in twenty years. The rapid growth inspired, in 1833, the creation of a Commission to develop an infrastructure, to include drainage, sewerage and a public park. A group of prominent businessmen purchased 185 acres of land for a park development. Part of the land – sixty acres around the perimeter – was to be sold at a profit for housing to help defray some of the cost of creating the park.

The land purchased was flat – fields, marsh and bog – and the earth mainly clay. This presented a challenge to Paxton who, in 1843, became the chosen designer. In November his design was accepted and his architectural assistant, John Robertson, was requested to produce designs for seven lodges. Thomas Bayley, a Chatsworth gardener, and Edward Kemp were also recruited. Kemp was the assistant

in laying out the park and afterwards was park superintendent for forty years. Paxton also presented plans for thirty-two building plots to provide 212 houses, the sale of which would create income for the development. The first auction in July 1845 sold fewer than half the plots, and there was a similar result at a second auction in September 1846, after which some plots were sold through agents and advertisements, with the remainder being absorbed into the park. The official opening took place on 5 April 1847, attended by at least 10,000 people.

The Birkenhead design incorporated open areas, intimate spaces and a separation of pedestrian traffic from routes for carriages and horse riders. Paxton's design built on ideas he had tested in his Prince's Park development in Liverpool. He cleverly created two lakes which drained the marshy ground, using the spoil to form mounds for tree planting. He used mature trees, evergreens for winter interest, plus exotic specimen trees and shrubberies. There were rock gardens and formal beds with summer bedding to provide additional colour. Bridges crossed the lakes.

Variety in design and planting, with areas for sports, were intended to make the park attractive to all social classes. The introduction in 1849 of a refreshment saloon was a novelty in its day.

So successful was the design that when an American traveller, F.L. Olmsted, visited in 1850, he wrote that whilst his initial impression of the Grand Entrance did not prepare him for the scene beyond, he 'was ready to admit that in democratic America there was nothing to be thought comparable with this People's Garden'. Olmsted eulogised on the beauties he saw and Birkenhead Park is recognised as being a formative influence on his future career as the foremost American landscape architect of his day and the designer of Central Park, New York.

Recent years have seen considerable restoration in the park, notably the Swiss Bridge and boathouse, and the reinstatement of formal bedding (in front of the visitor centre) designed to be in keeping with Paxton's original scheme.

The Clwyd branch visit to Birkenhead Park takes place on October 16th 2010.



BESIDE THE SEASIDE

WILLIAM RICHMOND revisits Dylan Thomas's vision of Rhossili Bay, this summer voted Britain's best beach



PHOTOGRAPH USED WITH KIND PERMISSION OF GOWER HOLIDAYS,
WWW.THE-GOWER.COM, A LOCAL TOURISM WEBSITE

Anyone who has visited Rhossili Bay, on the western tip of the Gower Peninsula in south Wales, can't help but be puzzled by Dylan Thomas's assessment that it was 'the wildest, bleakest and barrenest I know – four or five miles of yellow coldness going away into the distance of the sea.' Perhaps the poet's memories were of winter, for that 'yellow coldness' is the sand that, on a summer evening, can glow golden against the surprising sapphire blue of the sea; and 'wildest' it may be, but only because this part of Wales's coast was then – as it remains today – delightfully un-developed.

Thomas didn't always speak of the bay in such language. His short story *Extraordinary Little Cough* is set at Rhossili Bay during a 'bright and glorious August,' he says, 'some years before I knew I was happy'. In the story he describes the 'sweeping five-mile beach' with the 'shimmering' sea that 'rolled out into the world', where he and two friends go on a fortnight's camping trip, to 'bathe and throw ball on the sands and stone a bottle on a rock and perhaps meet three girls' – paradise for three young boys. Here at Rhossili, far from the bleak, barren cold, we're in the realms of such Thomas rhapsodic classics as *Fern Hill*.

His aesthetic seems to depend entirely on the circumstances. When the boys do eventually hook up with some girls, they find them 'admiring the sunset with little attention'; feigning an aesthetic appreciation to make themselves attractive to the boys. The girl he sets his sights on, Jean ('this is love, I thought, as she nodded her head and swung her curls and said: "It's nicer than Porthcawl"'), of course has a good deal of control over how he feels about

the place. And she makes one fatal stab into the heart of a young boy. There are other boys camping at Rhossili – who laugh and cuff and bite and wrestle – and Jean takes a fancy to the particularly brutish one instead, asking after the 'handsome... tall one with the dirty trousers', just as our narrator is beginning to wax lyrical about the eagles. The poor chap defensively responds, 'He's not handsome... He never washes or combs his hair or anything. He's a bully and he cheats.' Predictably, Jean and the bully end up in a tent together – leaving our poor narrator by the campfire with his mates, feeling 'old and alone, sitting beyond desire in the middle of the night'.

It's all very well to go into rapturous poetry about the beauty of the natural world, but we are reminded that this is what poets do in order to show us what talented wordsmiths they are – not to give us a good idea of the relative merits of beaches in a beauty contest. More than that, poets tend to be irremediably bound to the old Romantic pathetic fallacy that the natural world somehow responds to our feelings. In short, if you're in a bad mood, even the most beautiful sunset won't lift your spirits. Or, more specifically, if you're on an idyllic camping trip and the girl of your dreams shackles up with another boy, is it any wonder that the most beautiful beach in Britain will seem wild, bleak and barren? Today's visitors, alternatively preoccupied, evidently find it otherwise.

WILLIAM RICHMOND is a director of publications at the *Royal Opera House*.

THE CASTLE RECAPTURED?

MARK BAKER reports on recent developments at Gwrych Castle

One could not find a more romantic and picturesque setting than at Gwrych Castle, Abergele. A handsome setting, however, is poor safeguard. Situated high above the shores of the Irish Sea, Gwrych has languished through the last twenty-five years – once a family home of otherworldly grandeur, afterwards a major tourist attraction, now a derelict shell.

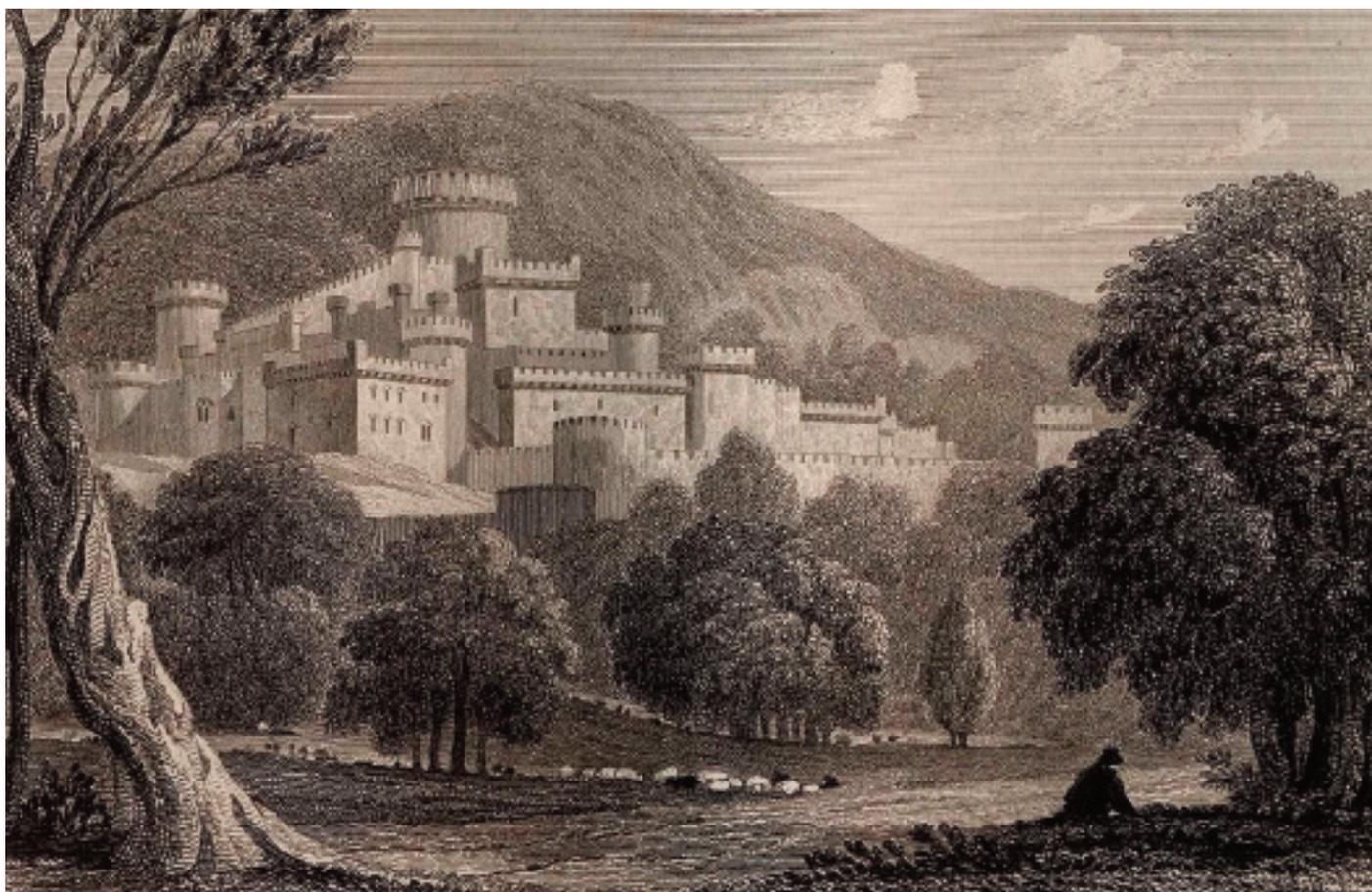
Built during the Napoleonic Wars by Lloyd Hesketh Bamford-Hesketh as a memorial to his mother's family, the Lloyds of Gwrych, it was designed as a showpiece of medieval architectural interpretation and the embodiment of picturesque theory and ideology. The gardens were said to have taken the visitor several days to view, and ranged from lofty, cathedral-like caverns, precipices and steep-sided falls – intimations of the sublime – to the more romantic forest walks and shaded, sun-dappled terraced walks. At the centre of this historic designed landscape was a formal garden, surprisingly laid out as a French parterre, featuring an elaborate Gothick 1830s conservatory and ornamental fountains. Yet all of these features were no more than diversions, for wherever one walked at Gwrych, the eye was always drawn back to the dramatic views of the North Wales coast and the asymmetry of the romantic castle itself. Such French formality did, however, offer a rather daring contrast to the wildness of the Welsh countryside. Cultivation of hanging ivy and superabundant greenery further added a sense of magic and mystery, a perfect setting surely for Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Family ownership of Gwrych ended in 1946, when the 13th

Earl of Dundonald sold the castle; the gardens were never again to be recognised as an asset of special merit. The Gothick conservatory was derelict by the 1960s and, together with the French parterre, was levelled to make way for a 'tiltyard' – a jousting platform for tourists to witness medieval re-enactments during the 1970s. Many of the walks through the woods and park became impassable, and features such as an ornamental bridge and ornate garden temple unrecognisable.

Clayton Hotels purchased the castle in 2006 and invested hundreds of thousands of pounds in clearing excess ivy and overgrowth, and in consolidating the rather delicate structure. However, the company sadly went into receivership during the height of the recession in 2009 and were forced to sell the property. Now, a year later, an exciting chapter in the history of Gwrych is beginning with new owners, who are continuing the essence of Clayton's scheme for the castle to be converted into a five-star hotel and for the gardens to be reopened as an attraction in themselves. Conservation architects Donald Insall Associates have been appointed and more detailed plans will be released in the near future. Let us all hope that Gwrych's status as one of Wales's most pressing items of heritage at risk will soon be at an end.

Latest news on developments at Gwrych can be found at www.gwrychtrust.co.uk. The author is interested in hearing from readers with photographs or memories of the castle (gcpt@btopenworld.com)



AGM 2010

Those who attended the AGM this year were treated not only to the glories of Powis Castle but also to a cornucopia of other pleasures and our thanks go to Peter Lord, William and Kate Corbett-Winder and Neville and Jenny Thomas for all they did to make the day such a delight.

Peter Lord's masterly presentation, 'Landscape in Welsh Art', left us breathless with pride on the quality and quantity of works of art which illustrate not only how artists saw Wales over several centuries but also the developments which have resulted in the countryside we see today. Peter's aim was to concentrate on three crucial periods in the development of the Welsh landscape. First, the eighteenth century, when travellers discovered that Wales had remarkable sights to offer tourists and the concept of the Picturesque became the fashion of the moment. Next were works from the second half of the nineteenth century – a time when a new, often non-conformist, intelligentsia was beginning to influence Welsh art. Finally there were reflections on how artists had interpreted the landscape in the late twentieth century, after David R. Brower's ideas on environmentalism had begun to take hold.

Since the garden of William and Kate Corbett-Winder at Vaynor Park is rarely accessible to the public, it was a particular privilege for WHGT members to be offered an opportunity to visit. There has been a house on the site from the fifteenth century and we were given a detailed history of the estate by Jeremy Rye, who had collected together a large selection of archival documents for our

perusal. A walk along the terrace offered wonderful views over mature parkland and a chance to admire an immaculately maintained parterre which we had already seen in a mid-nineteenth-century plan. A tour of the area surrounding the house included the walled garden and climbing roses, but for many the highlight was the subtlety of colour in the borders. Kate Corbett-Winder is a painter and her artistic and horticultural skills have been combined to produce the most wonderful mix of purples and creams in the planting schemes.

Our final treat of the day, just down the road from Vaynor on the banks of the Severn, was the twenty-five-acre garden of Glansevern Hall. Originally laid out in 1801, the grounds surrounding the Greek Revival house were in less than pristine condition when Neville and Jenny Thomas bought the estate in 1982. Since then, careful and thoughtful restoration and conservation have been combined with the addition of a vast collection of new tree and herbaceous perennial species to produce a remarkable garden. The site is constantly being reviewed and improved, as illustrated by the complete remodelling of the walled garden a few years ago. During our visit, the large rock garden and grotto were greatly admired but, at the end of a long day, it was a particular pleasure to wander at will in the late-afternoon sunshine in level parkland around the streams and water garden.

Jean Reader, Chairman, South & Mid Glamorgan Branch

A PRE-VICTORIAN VISION?

Lampeter's later gentry houses encapsulate twin themes of eighteenth-century villainy and Victorian philanthropy. The beleaguered Peterwell Estate passed to the Harford family of Blaise Castle around 1820. In 1859 John Battersby Harford rebuilt a house in the Italianate style (today the 3-star Best Western Falcondale Mansion Hotel) and set about landscaping the surroundings as well as improving the lot of the people of Lampeter and the residences of his own tenants.

Ceredigion Branch last visited here in October 1994 (see 'Falcondale: a Victorian Vision' in WHGT Bulletin, winter issue 1994). Since then little has changed in the orderly pleasure grounds (though sadly most of the walled garden structures, along with the derelict backsheds, have been razed 'for safety reasons'). The ice house survives. Recent discoveries about the estate's history include a nineteenth-century map showing plans to remodel buildings into lodges and estate dwellings.

We hope to visit the site of Peterwell, Falcondale's predecessor – an extraordinary late-eighteenth-century house ('diagonally set towers capped with domes') of which only remnants of walls can now be seen, with a splendid lime avenue signalling the approach. But these are stones with many a story, resonant with the deeds of its infamous owner, Sir Herbert Lloyd...

The Ceredigion branch visits Falcondale and Peterwell on September 16. For details, contact Penny David, Fern Cottage, Falcondale, Lampeter SA48 7RX (tel: 01570-422041; email: lady.fern@virgin.net)



The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

The Bothy, Aberglasney, Llangathen SA32 8QH

Tel/Fax: 01558 668485

Email: admin@whgt.org.uk

Web: www.whgt.org.uk