



WHGT BULLETIN

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Margam House Paintings: National Museum Wales (NMW)



The paintings are attributed to Thomas Smith (active 1680s-1719) an English artist who worked in the topographical Dutch style. Thomas Smith painted similar views for the 1st Duke of Beaufort.

NMW bought the paintings for £218,500 with a grant of £142,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and £75,000 from the Art Fund.

The paintings will be exhibited at the museum alongside a double portrait of Sir Thomas Mansel with his wife Jane c. 1620s.

*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North. Oil on canvas c. 1700
Image courtesy of NMW*

The Margam House Paintings were bought by National Museum Wales in October 2012. They are the first early estate paintings collected by the museum.

The two paintings capture early 18th century aerial views of the great Tudor house which belonged to the wealthy Mansel family from Oxwich Castle on the Gower. Margam was developed from a Cistercian Abbey bought from the Crown in 1540 after Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. The paintings show the property set in a deer park surrounded by extensive formal and productive gardens and orchards.

Above you can see the main axis looking north and the main approach of the 16th and 17th century mansion via a series of gates. A great tree avenue leads to a baroque water garden in front of the house where the medieval

gate house has been retained. Margam House began as a conversion of the former monks' residence in the 1550s but the house was enlarged and improved with the tower added c.1600 and the wing on the left with the classical portico added c.1670. The first evidence of the garden is in the accounts of 1661 which record that John Thomas, a gardener, was responsible for building walls and gardens.

The tower like structure (top right) above a terraced orchard and beside a bowling green is a summer banqueting house added c.1670. Its detailed stone facade and frontispiece and the elaborate parapet reflect an interest in a new classical style of architecture. This seventeenth century facade has been attributed to Inigo Jones. The three hills in the background (above) have

been modified to frame the house.

The view of Margam looking South (right) shows the tree avenue reaching well into the landscape creating a long vista towards the Kenfig sand dunes and the Bristol Channel. This view has long been lost to the industrial landscape of the Port Talbot steelworks and the M4.

The small thatched cottages (lower right) are the old Margam village which was demolished in the 1840s in order to enlarge the kitchen gardens. The former almshouses were saved and converted into a gardener's bothy. The villagers were moved to Groes, a model new village. Groes was later demolished to make way for the M4.

In 1750 the Mansel family line died out and the Talbots of Lacock, Wiltshire, took over the estate. The heir, Thomas Mansel Talbot, went on a Grand Tour between 1768-1772 and on his return had no interest in the dilapidated old Margam House. Instead he began to build a new neoclassical villa at Penrice which he considered the most romantic spot in all the country.

Thomas turned Margam into a Pleasure Park centred on a new 327 ft. long orangery. This Grade I listed building was designed in 1787 by Anthony Keck (architect of Penrice) to house the citrus collection inherited with Margam House and estate. In 1727 the gardener Joseph Kirkman had made a catalogue of the greenhouse plants providing the earliest known listing of the orange trees. The Margam orangery is considered one of the finest classical building in Wales. Inspired by the buildings of Rome, the orangery was built from local Pyle sandstone and Sutton stone from the former mansion at a cost of £16,000. Margam House, as seen in the paintings, was demolished as the orangery was built, thus enhancing its setting by bringing the abbey church and the ruins of the chapterhouse and infirmary into view.

Aligned east-west it was the longest orangery in Britain with pavilions at each end. The west pavilion was a richly decorated library. The east pavilion housed a collection of marble statues from the Grand Tour of which only one now remains, an over-life-size Roman emperor Lucius Verus. At just 30 ft wide, the orangery is a narrow building allowing the sun to light the whole interior from the 27 tall, round headed, south facing windows. It is heated by coal fires with chimneys set into the back wall. The plants were taken out into the garden between May and October through a high rear entrance.



View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South. Oil on canvas c.1700
Image courtesy of NMW

In 1793 Thomas Mansel Talbot wrote to his friend Michael Hicks Beach: *'My Dear Sir.... I am very buisy now in finishing my green houses at Margam by an inclosure of that with a high stone wall from the materials of the old mansion. The remainder of its walls are now levelling and covering with earth & trees, no more to be seen – when I have the pleasure of seeing you here next summer there will only be the old paintings of it to look at, what a mass of buildings it was... Yours very sincerely, T. Mansel Talbot'* (From Joanna Martin, *Henry and the Fairy Palace* (1993), pp. 126-7).

When visiting the orangery and gardens in 1793 the family lodged at Margam Cottage on the outskirts of the park. The gardens were securely fenced in 1794 to keep out the deer and an entrance of piers and rustic gates were erected.

The present Margam Castle was built for Christoper (Kit) Rice Mansel, Thomas Mansel's only son. In 1829 the road from Llangynwyd to Taibach was diverted so that travellers would not need to cross the park and in 1830 Thomas Hopper was employed to design the new Margam Castle with its terraces, stables and lodges, built between 1830-1840. Thomas also remodelled Margam Park. The marshy area of Cwm Philip, north of the gardens, was excavated and dammed, making the 4 acre fishpond lake which was used to supply the fountains added to the orangery terrace between 1851-53.

Thomas was a cousin of the pioneer photographer

Henry Fox Talbot and a friend of the photographer Calvert Richard Jones. A number of their early photographs taken of the estate have survived, like the one shown (right) of the orangery. The 19th century saw the introduction of new plants into Europe for hot-house and garden cultivation. Margam Park became famous for its rare specimens and new glasshouses were constructed. The 150 foot citrus house was built in 1801 for wall trained citrus, but by the late 19th century it was used as a winter garden. This and the propagation house have recently been restored.

The estate remained with the Talbot family until 1942 when it was sold to Sir David Evans Bevan. Margam was eventually acquired by the Local Authority in 1973 and developed as a country park. West Glamorgan Council restored the orangery in the 1970s.

The herd of 300 Fallow deer dates from Norman times, and can be seen in the paintings. 64 Red deer and more recently the Pere David deer, a non native endangered species from Whipsnade, have been introduced to the 500 acres of parkland.

On December 17th, 2012, the Grade I listed Margam Park was awarded £1.6 million from the HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) Parks for People programme. This grant will enable the restoration and conservation of the formal pleasure gardens, the focal point of the park. Improvements will be carried out to the broadwalk, the castle and orangery terraces, the Japanese garden, the ha-ha and the water features. The Temple of Four Seasons will also be restored. This was constructed in the nineteenth



*The Orangery, Margam, c.1845 Rev. Calvert Richard Jones(1802-1877)
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London, www.vam.ac.uk*

century incorporating the dismantled facade of the seventeenth century summer banqueting house and fronts Ivy Cottage the gardener's house.

Future plans include improved facilities and the employment of a volunteer co-ordinator to further the existing strong community involvement with this landscape.

Neath Port Talbot Council have just recently announced plans for a new competition standard mountain bike trail in the woodland area of the park.

Glynis Shaw

Welsh Pineapples

There is some debate since the last issue of the Bulletin as to whether the Crawshays at Cyfarthfa did indeed grow the first Welsh pineapple.

Possibly Cyfarthfa produced the first pineapples grown from their own stock rather than buying in mature plants. The 1675 painting by Hendrick Danckert of Charles II being presented with a pineapple by John Rose, gardener to the Duchess of Cleveland, depicts the fruit of an imported mature plant. The first British pineapples were grown for Mathew Decker at Richmond by his Dutch gardener Henry Telende between 1714-1716. By the 1770s large estates such as Chatsworth were building bespoke pineries.

The Crawshays enticed a gardener from Castle Drumlanrig and introduced a hot steam system for the pinery - possibly a first in Wales. The Cyfarthfa gardeners also met with much early success in winning prizes at the RHS - perhaps also a first in Wales.

Jonathan Williams has found accounts as early as 1788 of pineapple plants being purchased by Philip Williams at Penpont, Brecon, from Pontypool, presumably from the Hanbury estate at Pontypool Park (in public ownership since 1920). Wynnstay, Tredgar and other wealthy estates would also have been attempting to cultivate pineapples at around the same time.

Perhaps the first Welsh pineapple remains unrecorded. From the first hothouses Richard Crawshay had built at Llwyncelyn in 1796 by gardener and artist William Pamplin, the Cyfarthfa pinery became a highly productive enterprise. By 1875 a stock of '3,000 plants was maintained throughout the year in the estate's four pine stoves and 9 succession houses. One hundred ripe pineapples were regularly cut for the Crawshay family Christmas' (The Pineapple King of Fruits, by Fran Beauman 2005 p.170)

Are there any other early Welsh pineapple records?

A Welsh gentleman's link with the Chelsea Physic Garden

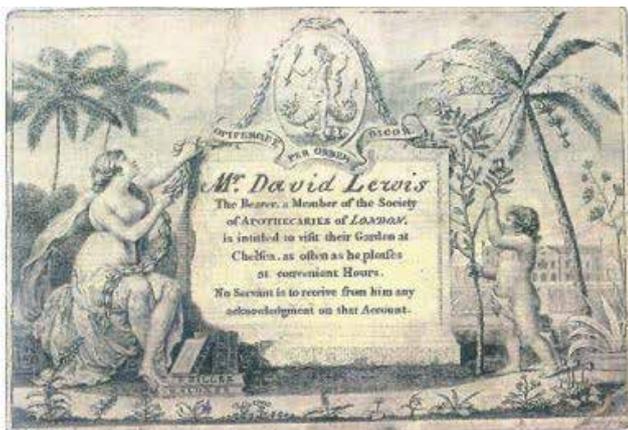
When I visited the Chelsea Physic Garden a couple of years ago I received a charming little ticket inscribed in the blank middle 'Admit One'. The 18th century engraved decoration of the card showed exotic palms, banana trees, agaves, a well-built and scantily clad lady (The Goddess Flora I presume?) and a sturdy and equally flimsily veiled cherub, or more accurately, a putto. Flora rests her bare foot upon the works of Philip Miller, gardener of the Physic Garden and author of eight editions of the Gardener's Dictionary 1732-1768 and of Hans Sloane, the garden's benefactor.



Day entry ticket for Chelsea Physic Garden

I had seen this design before. Amongst the ephemera of one of Ceredigion's great houses I came across an original, (see below) in which, instead of the terse "Admit One" the central panel reads:

Mr David Lewis The Bearer, a Member of the Society of Apothecaries of London, is intitled to visit their Garden at Chelsea, as often as he pleases, at convenient Hours. No servant is to receive from him any acknowledgement on that Account.



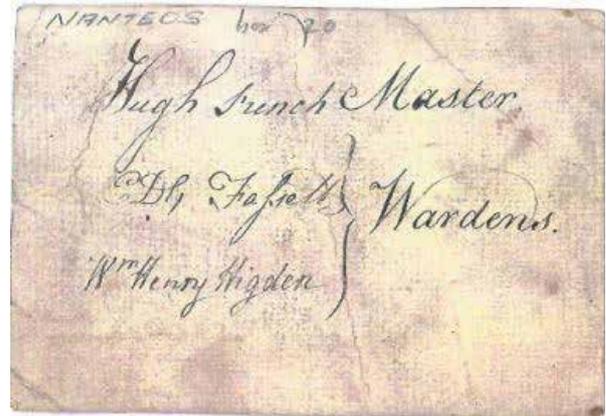
Membership pass: Mr David Lewis, a member of the Society of Apothecaries of London

Green Monuments

The Tree Council's **Green Monuments Campaign** is a UK wide campaign to gain protected status for trees of great historical, cultural or ecological significance. The value of heritage trees is already formally recognised in many countries. Sadly this is not the case in the UK.

The Welsh Assembly's legislative programme scheduled up until 2016 includes the Heritage Bill to be presented in the next two years. This may provide Wales

with an opportunity to pioneer legislation which will protect some of the nation's most celebrated trees. Many heritage trees have no Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and could be felled or destroyed tomorrow. Archie Miles has published 'Heritage Trees Wales' in support of this campaign and will be giving an illustrated talk at the Ceredigion AGM on March 9.



Reverse side of Mr David Lewis's ticket

On the reverse were written three names: Hugh French, Master, E.D.G. Fafield, and Wm. Henry Higden, Wardens.

The Archivist at the Chelsea Physic Garden was able to tell me that the Society of Apothecaries appointed a new Master annually, so Mr David Lewis's card was issued in 1807-1808.

Lewis is not a rare name in Wales, but this David Lewis was almost certainly a local gentleman, the owner of a 199 acre estate, Cefn yr Yn, which was located about 12 miles inland from Aberaeron in the fertile Aeron Valley. His estate was surveyed in 1787 and showed it divided into four tenanted farms, two of which had very extensive gardens which may have produced herbs. His membership pass to the Apothecaries Garden ended up in the archives of Nanteos amongst unsorted papers dating from the life of William Edward Powell. W.E. Powell inherited Nanteos, one of the four great estates of Ceredigion, in 1809 at age 21 and promptly set about an extensive programme of house and garden improvements, egged on by the influence of Welsh architect John Nash and his circle. Very possibly he borrowed David Lewis' membership card in order to familiarise himself with the most fashionable trees and plants in London. Certainly a Tulip tree, a gigantic Ginkgo and an Oriental Plane are among the prestigious trees which mark out Nanteos as a historic garden of distinction.

Caroline Palmer

First published in www.letterfromaberystwyth.co.uk

Award winning Bute Park Restoration Project in Cardiff

Bute Park is recognised as one of the best UK heritage projects benefiting from Lottery funding. The Bute Park restoration project received the runner-up trophy in the National Lottery 2012 awards on December 8th broadcast live on BBC1. Over 3,400 public votes secured this place from among the 10 semifinalists shortlisted for the awards.

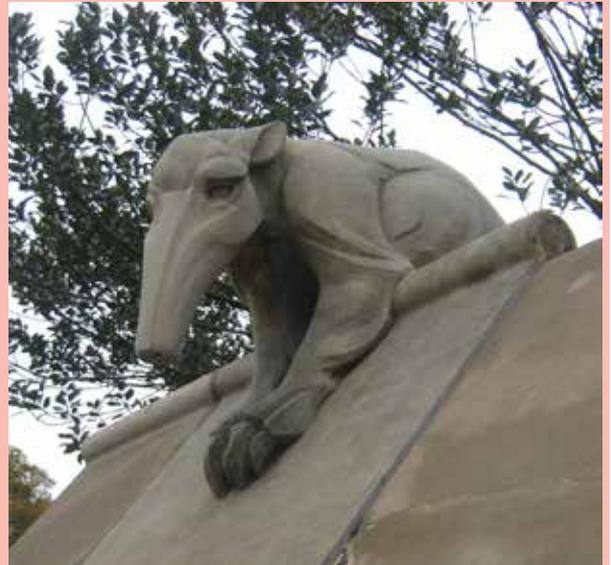
The Annual Lottery Awards are a search for the public's favourite lottery funded projects. More information about the awards can be found on the **Lottery Good Causes website**.

Bute Park is a £5.8 million project with £3.1 million from HLF for restoration and conservation of the Grade I listed historic landscape in the centre of Cardiff. The Lottery funding has ensured the restoration of the iconic Animal Wall, giving the Anteater a new nose. The Animal wall designed by William Burgess for the Marquess of Bute in 1866, was built in 1890. There are 15 different sculptured animals, nine of which are original (1890s) by Thomas Nicholls, and six sculptured by Alexander Carrick in 1931. The wall was re-sited from the front of Cardiff Castle to facilitate road widening in 1922. Five new large wooden chainsaw sculptures by Tom Harvey have recently been added to the Park.

The old park keepers lodge is now converted into a tea

room and gift shop and throughout the park pathways and benches have been improved. New facilities have also been developed including an education centre. Bute Park now provides in-house training of horticultural staff and apprentices, educational visits and guided tours.

Many cultural events are organised in the park including the Cardiff RHS show.



Restored Anteater, Animal Wall, Bute Park © David Edgar

Paxton Cascade revealed at Treborth Botanic Garden, Bangor



A cascade designed by Joseph Paxton has been exposed at Treborth Botanic Garden. Treborth is on the site of Britannia Park landscaped by Paxton in the 1850s for the Chester & Holyhead Railway Company. A 25 acre Victorian Pleasure Garden with a cascade, a lime avenue and other features, was completed by 1852 and the foundations for the Grand Hotel were also laid. By 1867 the Britannia Park scheme was abandoned for lack of funds and the site reverted back to pasture and woodland.

Dyffryn Gardens in the National Trust

The Grade I Dyffryn Gardens and Arboretum re-opened in January under the guardianship of the National Trust. John Cory purchased the estate in the 19th century with a fortune made from coal and shipping and commissioned Thomas Mawson to design over 55 acres of spectacular gardens. The garden was developed in collaboration with John's son Reginald, a horticulturist and leading figure in the Royal Horticultural Society.

Dyffryn is celebrated for its rare specimens and themed garden rooms, an Edwardian feature typical of the Arts and Crafts movement. Dyffryn is featured in the fifth edition (1927) of Mawson's *'The Art and Craft of Garden Making'*.

Reginald Cory travelled widely as a passionate plant collector and sponsored several plant hunting expedi-

tions. By 1912 Reginald had the largest bonsai collection in Britain. The Theatre garden with its raised stage was used to display the bonsai. The Pompeian gardens were inspired by his trips to Italy and his passion for dahlias led to him becoming President of the Dahlia Society.

The Vale of Glamorgan CC acquired Dyffryn in 1996 and has worked hard to restore the gardens to the Thomas Mawson master plan of 1906. The restored glass house was opened in July 2011.

Dyffryn restorations have cost £8 million with £6.15 million from HLF and should be completed this year. Restored rooms in the mansion will open at Easter to enable visitors to enjoy the gardens from the different perspectives within the house just as it was originally designed for the pleasure of the Cory family.

Gregynog: New National Nature Reserve



Image courtesy of Gregynog

The 750 acre Gregynog estate near Newtown, was designated a National Nature Reserve in September 2012 in recognition of the importance of this special Grade I listed landscape. Gregynog has existed for over 800 years. The already designated SSSI Great Wood site was extended in 2011 because the ancient parkland and pasture woodland supports nationally rare lichens and insects. The Warren is also an SSSI.

Continuing restoration (dredging the Lily Lake, clearing the almost forgotten Valley Walk after many decades and the partial reinstatement of the historic orchard in the old walled garden) has contributed to the rich biodiversity of the site. This is in addition to the Dell, where a bee apiary has recently been established, the Dingle and the rhododendron walks.

The earliest recorded design for Gregynog is a 1774 plan for Arthur Blayney by the landscape designer William Emes who worked in the manner of Capability Brown. In the late 1760s and 1770s Emes worked at Powis, Chirk and Erddig (home of Philip Yorke, Blayney's friend and biographer) which Arthur Blayney would have known. The Gregynog design, with vast informal planting and the series of pools and lakes created in what is now the sunken garden in front of the house, is typical of Emes. The Lily Lake is probably a surviving feature of the Emes design.

In the late 18th century Arthur Blayney inherited the large Morville estate near Bridgenorth, Shropshire, where he undertook the restoration of the house and gardens. This may have inspired him to make a new garden at Gregynog. (One of the gardens at Morville Dower House designed by Katherine Swift is dedicated to the memory of Arthur Blayney.)

Woodland has always been an important element of the Gregynog estate and grounds. Some of the oaks in the Great Wood to the north of the hall are three hundred years old, and some of the trees in the Wern (the valley floor to the west of the hall) can be recognised in Emes's 1774 plan.

The Sudeley family in the nineteenth century planted the great stand of mixed conifers and broadleaf trees seen

on the far side of the sunken lawn in the 1880s, with magnificent Wellingtonias and a Douglas fir said to be one of the largest in the British Isles. The rhododendrons and azaleas that set Gregynog ablaze with colour in late spring and the famous golden yew hedge were also introduced in the late nineteenth century.

The Sudeleys were also responsible for the unique concrete bridges and fountains, important elements of Gregynog's Grade I listed status. Despite the unpromising material, these concrete features are now attractively softened with age. The fountains are gravity fed from the estate reservoir Llyn Gwgia, but now played only on special occasions as they cut the water pressure to some of the neighbouring farms.

Gregynog had a splendid walled garden described in the 1913 sale catalogue: *Fruit Trees, cold beds with brick footings, glass houses for tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, peaches, vines and carnations, a bothy for the staff.*

Gwendoline and Margaret Davies bought Gregynog in 1920. Over the next 20 years they added their own romantic stamp on the gardens. In the early days, unusually, the Head Gardener was Miss Clark and her assistant Miss Durant. Miss Durant stayed on in 1930 when Mr George C. Austin was appointed Head Gardener. He remained at Gregynog until his retirement in 1969.

The Dell, the Dingle, the many borders and woodland walks were created in the 1920s-1930s. The garden staff increased from 16 in 1930 to 23 in 1939. Mr Arthur Hughes of Newtown headed a small team which seems to have been especially responsible for the Dell, still one of the most delightful parts of the garden in all seasons. Today the garden is the responsibility of a small and dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

Gregynog was given to the University of Wales in 1960. Soon after, the celebrated landscape designer Sylvia Crowe was asked for recommendations to simplify the management of the gardens, most of which were adopted - except her advice to remove the golden yew hedge. In 1972, Crowe also recommended replacing vast areas of old rhododendrons - a project which is now underway.

Francis Hewlett's mysterious sculpture 'The Hand' has added a surprise element to a walk across the concrete bridge since the 1980s.

Future projects include the reinstatement of lost architectural features and historic flower beds such as the rose garden planted in the fingers of the yew hedge in the 1890s, additional parkland planting with Welsh oak, the creation of an arboretum and, eventually, the restoration of the walled kitchen garden. Our ambition exceeds our assets, but so does our passion and that of our many supporters - a passion we are determined to mobilize to ensure Gregynog's survival and success.

Mary Oldham

New look Parks & Gardens UK and a New website www.parksandgardens.org

2012 proved an exciting year with a generous grant from The Bulldog Trust which enabled a programme of improvements including a design refresh and the move to our own server with the new .org address. This 'new look' heralds a new phase in the development of Parks & Gardens UK. This is a faster, more interactive and informative website for all those interested in visiting, researching and conserving historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes throughout the UK.

Thanks to weekly contributions from garden owners, individual researchers, members of the public and volunteers in gardens trusts, new site records have been added and existing records expanded and/or updated, resulting in a 3% growth of the database records over the last year.

The database now has over 6,600 site records and more than 2,100 person records. Additionally, our digital archive of images has jumped to nearly 4,000!

One of the highlights in our digital archive is the Welsh postcard collection. We are extremely pleased to make this collection available to the public and acknowledge Peter Davis for making the contribution from his personal collection; the hard work and long hours behind the scanner by Caroline Palmer; and a grant from RCAHMW for making it possible.

You can find the scanned postcards as part of the Welsh records on the website. The value of this collection of postcards as a part of the database is enormous. The images provide insights into places, especially lesser known, smaller gardens and parks and those no longer extant, that otherwise would not be accessible to the public.

An example is Glyn Aur, now lost, which was a cottage garden with spectacular topiary. (If you type Glyn Aur into the Search on the website, you can view the post-card images.)

By now, many members of gardens trusts will be aware of the Working in Partnership (WiP) initiative between the Association of Gardens Trusts, The Garden History Society, The Garden Museum and Parks & Gardens UK. The last few months have seen progress as the organisations discuss the best way to coordinate efforts and work more closely together on shared initiatives. The partners have agreed to collaborate on one themed event each year, starting in 2013 with Twentieth-Century Landscapes. Parks & Gardens UK will participate by providing articles and educational activities as well as adding database records to support this.

We would also be happy to highlight the work of groups within the WHGT by featuring news and events on our website. We receive on average over 500 visitors per day, so it is a good place for further publicity. Submissions can be emailed to: info@parksandgardens.org

If individuals or groups are interested in receiving data entry training or a refresher for anyone previously trained, please contact us. For those Trusts whose volunteers have research they would like to upload to the database but cannot do this themselves, our team can do this for a small contribution towards costs. Again, do please contact us to discuss this. We hope that research groups will take advantage of this opportunity and help to expand the database even further.

Rachael Stamper, Project Manager

June 8th WHGT AGM 2013 at Llanover, near Abergavenny. A Cornucopia Weekend - £25

Friday 7th June: Evening Wine Reception at High Glanau Manor, Lydart, nr Monmouth.

Helena Gerrish and the Monmouthshire and Gwent committee members will welcome you with a glass of wine to the beautifully restored, listed Arts and Crafts garden laid out by H. Avray Tipping in 1922.

Saturday 8th June: The AGM at Llanover House is kindly hosted by Elizabeth Murray. Llanover is a 15 acre listed garden and arboretum. There is a circular walled garden with herbaceous borders, streams, cascades and ponds.

Guest speaker, Sir Roy Strong, 'The Regeneration of the Garden at The Laskett'

Lunch will be followed by a visit to **Bedwellty House and Park**, Tredegar. Bedwellty was established in the early 1800s by Samuel Homfray, one of the Ironmasters

of Tredegar. The recently restored regency villa and 26 acres of parkland and gardens were reopened in 2011 after a £5.9 million restoration project generously funded by the HLF, Cadw, European Contingency Funding and Blaenau Gwent CBC. Liz Whittle, expert on Welsh historic parks and gardens, will give a guided tour of the garden.

Sunday 9th June: The Nelson Garden will be open for members to see this oasis in the heart of Monmouth, a memorial to Lord Nelson's visit to Monmouth in 1802. On Sunday afternoon **The Neuadd**, Llanbedr, nr. Crickowell, Powys, is open under the NGS scheme (£3.50). This is the beautifully restored garden of Robin Herbert CBE VMH, President of the WHGT. Teas will be served.

Members will receive AGM papers in due course.

Chairman's Letter

I'd like to take this opportunity of wishing you a happy and healthy 2013.

In order to harness our resources and make increased use of technology we have made administrative changes for WHGT in recent months. We no longer employ staff. Instead we have an agreement with Aberglasney Gardens which provides administrative assistance and a Monday - Friday telephone answering service. With the rise in postage costs we are trying to make greater use of e-mails and the website. If your e-mail address has changed or if you think we don't have it, please let us know, email: admin@whgt.org.uk We are re-introducing membership cards which will be sent out gradually over the coming months. In the past it was possible to get concessions at some gardens and stores with these cards - something we would like to re-introduce. If any member is interested in trying to develop this project please contact me.

I am often complimented on the quality of WHGT publications. The Bulletin has been a regular for many years; Gerddi has appeared five times, last in 2009. (If you have joined WHGT since then and would like to see a copy please let me know.)

There have been editions of Trafodion in 2011 and 2012. Printing and postage costs are escalating and it is important to know your views on these publications so

we are asking for your opinions. You will find a survey enclosed; it is also on the website so you can submit it that way and save postage. Please let us have your response by Friday 15 March 2013.

Championing historic gardens and landscapes is an important task and person-power is becoming increasingly stretched so we are on the look-out for volunteers. For example, help is needed to organize branch and national events and with keeping the website up to date. We need a new Membership Secretary and would especially like to hear from Welsh-speakers who can help us make greater use of the language. Please come forward and offer your skills, whatever they might be.

We were sorry to say goodbye in December to our Membership Secretary, Ann Sayer, who has worked hard over the last few years transforming our records. I would like to thank her for all she has done for WHGT and, although she now lives in Bath, I hope that we shall see her frequently at our events.

Finally, I hope you will be able to get out very soon to visit a garden near you. All the gardens of Wales need as much support as they can get. If WHGT members don't visit, who will?

Jean Reader

Wepre Park, Connah's Quay, Deeside

The Old Hall Gardens at Wepre Park were awarded an HLF grant of £583,400 in December 2012 for their restoration. Wepre is the backdrop to Ewloe Castle, a scheduled ancient monument dating from the 11th century, built by the Welsh Princes during the borderland struggles with Edward I. The oldest record, the Doomsday Census in 1086, records a hall at Wepre owned by St. Werburgh's Abbey (now Chester cathedral) held by a man called William. There may well have been an even earlier Saxon dwelling on the site.

By 1430 Wepre Hall was owned by Gwladys, heiress of Bishop Owen of St. Asaph. The Fitzherbert family acquired the estate through the marriage in 1695. During the Civil War a Royalist by the name of Captain Edward Morgan stayed at Wepre. Edward Jones, a lead mine owner from Holywell, built the Georgian Wepre Hall in 1788 and bought more land. However, Edward died in debt and his son Major Trevor Owen sold part of the estate in 1825 and the hall was rented out. Further land was sold in 1865 when Wepre Hall was sold to John Rowden Freme, a Liverpool merchant. Wepre became famed for parties and dances until 1920 when Wepre was sold once again. In 1943 Connah's Quay Urban District Council bought what remained of the site.

The Old Hall was initially converted into flats but was demolished in 1960 as the building had become derelict.

The 2nd edition OS map of Flintshire 1899 reveals Wepre

park as an 18th and nineteenth century landscape with a carriage drive, a semi-natural woodland with vista paths and steps forming a picturesque landscape featuring the medieval ruins of Ewloe Castle. Pont Aber, a small stone arched bridge, was built in 1800 to cross Wepre Brook. The dam and waterfall constructed in the nineteenth century powered a turbine which provided electricity for the hall. Most of these features survive but the pets cemetery is no longer in its original position.

The formal gardens were landscaped c.1880. A round sunken lily pond, steps, yew hedging, stone edged paths and the surviving gateposts will be restored. Some giant redwoods and monkey puzzle trees remain alongside a few surviving shrubs. A community garden is planned for the old 18th century walled garden. This was repaired in the nineteenth century but is now in a ruinous state. The grant will also fund a Heritage Project Officer to develop a programme of activities for school visits and support the Friends of Wepre Park with training opportunities in conservation and horticultural skills.

Improved footpaths and interpretation will also help local people and visitors explore the story of Wepre, the Old Hall Gardens and Ewloe Castle. There are several Wepre ghost stories about Norah the nun and big black dogs!

We now look forward to future developments at Wepre Park which is at the heart of Connah's Quay.

Farewell to Gwyneth Hayward



WHGT President Robin Herbert (centre) hosted a farewell lunch for Gwyneth Haywood (left) for her work for the Trust as WHGT Chairman 2009- 2012. Jean Reader (right) is the current WHGT Chairman.
© Anthea Prest

Brynmill Park Revisited

Brynmill was awarded a £1.1 million HLF grant in 2006 and a renovation scheme of £1.6m to Swansea's first park began the following year. Recently we decided to see how the Brynmill Park was faring 6 years on. The London consultant's grandiose suggestions had included additional horticultural interest. Few additions are to be seen except for a new bog garden where a stream enters the park. Natural streams are the key to the park's existence as Swansea's first reservoir was created here in 1828. Soon after, the area became a place for walks and picnics and an urban park was created in 1872. However, these same streams caused the park's Lazy Lawn to become water-logged, preventing its use and enjoyment.

The Lottery grant has enabled extensive drainage to be carried out and the removal of ugly concrete buildings; the so called OAP Shelter and the vandalised public toilets which were closed in 1999. The centrepiece of the restoration is a new lakeside **Discovery Centre** made from quality materials sympathetic to its setting. Its large well equipped room is used by schools and the public for environmental education. A large one-way glass window allows birds and wildlife coming to feed to be observed undisturbed. From Thursday afternoon to Sunday the Discovery Centre is open to the public. A refreshment kiosk, new toilets and the much enlarged outdoor play area make Brynmill Park a real asset in this densely residential area. Some over-mature planting has been removed, opening up the views and giving a greater sense of security for the many extra visitors who now enjoy the park.

Ann Gardner

A Sainly Gardener

Did you know there was a patron saint for gardeners? I discovered this fact on a recent visit to Jardins de Sardy, near St.Emilion in the Dordogne area of France, where I found his statue. The garden itself is delightful and restored in the 1950s from the original features of an 18th century property. I can recommend a visit if you are ever in the area.

Saint Fiacre is much better known in France because it was here that he spent most of his life. He was born in the 7th century in Ireland in County Kilkenny, and raised in a monastery, where he developed his skill with herbs and the joy of planting and harvesting crops. Drawn to the religious life and the desire to serve God in solitude, Fiacre decided to establish a hermitage. He chose a wooden area by the River Nore, but soon people were flocking to him for prayers, food and healing. He fed the hungry and healed the sick with herbs from his garden. Longing for solitude for his worship, Fiacre travelled to France where the Bishop of Meaux granted him a wooded area near the Marne river. The miracle, which led to his sainthood, occurred when he asked the Bishop for additional ground for his garden. The Bishop told Fiacre

he could have as much land as he could entrench in one day. According to legend, the next morning Fiacre merely dragged his spade across the ground, causing trees to topple and bushes to be uprooted. A suspicious woman reported the incident to the Bishop as witchcraft, but he recognised it as the work of God.

Word of this miracle spread and people flocked to him for food, healing and spiritual guidance. This established St.Fiacre's famous monastery surrounded by a culinary garden that fed the poor, a physic garden that cured the sick, and a flower and herb garden.

He is a saint whose aid may be sought in clearing weeds and rubbish from the garden -and if he doesn't help with the digging he can at least grant patience and persistence in a job that is never finished.

It is possible to buy a statue of Saint Fiacre in the USA and he is featured on several gardening websites, but I have been unable to locate him for sale anywhere in the UK. St. Fiacre is depicted in art and statuary as an elderly man carrying a spade. Does anyone know of his presence in a garden in Wales?

Olive Horsfall

March Public Inquiry on Super Dairy at Lower Leighton Farm, Welshpool.

The internationally acclaimed Grade I listed gardens of Powis Castle are famed for the baroque terraces overlooking the Severn Valley. On a clear day the views are sublime and are enjoyed by up to 110,000 people each year. In November 2011 Powys Council was minded to approve a controversial and re-submitted planning application for a super dairy, subject to a report on outstanding issues. This was against the advice of the planning officers. This planning application puts at risk the outstanding views of one of the most important NT properties in Wales.

Originally proposed in 2010, the massive expansion of a dairy at Lower Leighton Farm near Welshpool is designed to accommodate up to 1,000 cows. A watercolour artist's impression in the revised proposal was discounted by the planning officer as 'worthless' as it did not convey the true visual impact and scale of the development.

Many consider that this development will significantly harm the character and visual amenity of the landscape setting of both Powis Castle and Offa's Dyke and the heritage of Leighton including its conservation area and setting to 70 listed buildings. The cultural heritage value of this landscape is huge.

Strong local opposition from most of the residents in the Leighton area led to the *Campaign Against Leighton Farm expansion (CALFe)*. CALFe, amongst others, requested that this planning application be called in, concerned by the vast scale of the dairy close to the school and the village.

The National Trust objected to the scheme since the development threatens the aesthetic experience and enjoyment of the many visitors to Powis Castle. The terrace views provide the special 'sense of place' which is unique. The applicants' proposed tree screening is considered inadequate to protect the glorious views from this elevated castle site.

A senior planning officer concluded that the development would have an

'overbearingly significant detrimental impact upon the character and visual amenity of landscape setting'

That it would have an adverse impact on the setting of Leighton Estate when viewed from outside the site, and would affect the views from Powis Castle.

That it would hinder access to a nearby bird rearing unit and would significantly, and detrimentally, affect the free flow of traffic along the county highway to the detriment of highway safety.'

Statutory bodies opposing this planning application



View from Powis terrace © Glynis Shaw

include the Countryside Council for Wales, Cadw, Powys Teaching Health Board, Welshpool Town Council and Buttington Community Council. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) believes that Planning Policy Wales should protect open countryside from development which is likely to create significant harm to its character. Compassion in World Farming has also condemned the plans for the super dairy.

The importance of the historic environment in Planning Policy Wales is recognised in the adopted Powys Unitary Development Plan. Recent constitutional changes concerning planning in Powys meant this application had to be reconsidered in October 2012 and was then rejected by Powys Councillors 11 to 5. This decision will inform the Welsh Assembly at a Public Inquiry at which Ros Laidlaw, Conservation Officer for WHGT will be making a representation on our behalf. The fate of this planning application will now be determined at the Public Inquiry in March 2013.

Glynis Shaw

Welsh Garden Festival Llandudno

The Mostyn Estate wish to launch a Welsh Garden Festival in Llandudno, in May 2014. Anyone wishing to be involved should contact Edward Hiller, managing director of the Mostyn Estates:
edward@mostynestates.co.uk

Congratulations!

David Toyne was awarded a Fellowship with the Institute of Horticulture at the AGM and Conference at Capel Manor College.

Bleddyn Wynn-Jones of Crûg Farm Plants received an Honorary Fellowship from Bangor University for his services to horticulture and plantsmanship.

Could YOU be a Trustee?

The national Committee of the Trust is made up of four Officers; no fewer than 6 and not more than 12 members of the Trust elected at the AGM; and representatives of the Trust's active branches.

As with any management body, the Committee functions best with a mix of experience of WHGT procedures and new ideas and perspectives. We would therefore encourage you to apply if you feel you could contribute to the work and decision-making of the Trust. Formal meetings are held four times a year, though there are plenty of opportunities to get involved with sub-committees and supporting work between meetings.

The Trust has a vital role in recording and protecting Welsh designed landscapes. We would welcome nominees who can bring commitment and perhaps specialist skills or knowledge to this process. We should particularly like to hear from potential trustees in Clwyd and Gwynedd, two of our largest and most active branches.

Applicants must be WHGT members and be nominated and seconded by two WHGT members. If you would like your name to go forward, please ensure that your nomination, supported by a brief CV (not more than 300 words), reaches the Secretary by 20th April 2013.

Jennie Macve, WHGT Company Secretary,
Aberglasney Gardens, Llangathen, Carmar SA32 8QH
jennie.macve@btinternet.com

Editor Glynis Shaw

It has been great to include some of the recent HLF grant aided Welsh parks and gardens in this issue. To date the HLF Parks for People programme has supported 33 public parks in Wales awarding a total of £31,374,671.

Heritage landscapes may also benefit from *The Historic Environment Strategy* launched in November 2012 to promote understanding and enjoyment of the heritage environment. In December, Housing, Regeneration and Heritage Minister Huw Lewis launched the All-Wales Heritage Interpretation plan at the Dehongli Cymru / Interpret Wales conference at Cyfarthfa Castle. Stories connected with Welsh heritage are to be presented in various ways to promote visitor interest in the historic environment across the country.

In 2015 a Festival of Welsh History is proposed for heritage organisations to engage residents and visitors in Welsh history at numerous locations. These initiatives will help people become more aware of the importance of heritage including historic parks and gardens and further the appreciation of the value of these special landscapes to our civilization.

The next Bulletin will be in August. Articles concerning Welsh historic gardens and landscapes are always welcome. Please send to: Bulletin@whgt.org.uk or by post to Castell House, Bodfari, Denbigh, LL16 4HT. You can also call me on 01745 710261 / 07867 970086.

Branch events

Brecon and Radnor

Thursday 21 March Branch AGM 3pm at Gliffaes Fach near Crickhowell. Talk by Hon Mrs Shân Legge-Bourke on 'Glanusk Estate, Past, Present and Future', followed by afternoon tea.

Wednesday 22 May visit to Bryngwyn Hall near Llanfyllin. A tour of the gardens and the house by Lady Linlithgow, followed by afternoon tea. We will visit Bryan's Ground near Presteigne on the way and have tea/coffee there.

Sunday 23 June Garden Party and visit to The Pant, Fforest Coal Pit, Abergavenny. A talk and tour of the garden by Doctor Swift and a strawberry and cream tea.

Week 21-27 October Visit to Westonbirt Gardens and the National Arboretum. Date to be confirmed.

The Branch will also be running the WHGT stands at both the Smallholder and Garden Festival at Builth Wells Showground **18-19 May** and the Royal Welsh Show from **22-25 July**.

Contact Jonathan Reeves for further details

reeves@aberedw.wanadoo.co.uk 01982 560205

Carmarthenshire

Saturday 16th March 2pm Talks and cream tea.

'Historic houses of Carmarthenshire from the air' by Toby Driver Aerial photographer for the Royal Commission and 'Picturesque Landscapes' by Ken Murphy Director of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust. At The Vestry, Capel Newydd, Crescent Road, Llandeilo (next door to the Civic Hall and opposite the entrance to the main town car park).

£5 Admission to all but please book in advance

Contact Judith Holland for further details

j.holland@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk 01558 823121

Ceredigion

Saturday 9 March AGM 2.00 followed at 2.30 by a lecture on Heritage Trees Wales by photographer Archie Miles at Waun Fawr Community Hall, Aberystwyth, SY23 3PN.

Wednesday 8 May Visit to Lodge Park, the deer park formerly part of the Gogerddan Estate, led by Ros Laidlaw. Tea at the Wildfowler, Tre'r Ddol.

Wednesday 5 June Visit to Llysdinam gardens, Newbridge on Wye, conducted by the gardener Becky Keeble-Payne.

Wednesday 11 September Visit to private gardens in the lower Teifi Valley, led by Penny David.

Contact Penny David for further details

lady.fern@virgin.net 01570 422041

Bodnant new Winter Garden

Bodnant opened a new winter garden on Dec 27th 2012. 10,000 plants of 350 varieties have been planted in just over half an acre. A new winter walk around the remaining 80 acres has been developed for visitors to enjoy mature plantings of winter interest including the Paperbark Maple, Rhododendron nobleanum, Witch Hazels and Daphnes.

For news and events visit us at: www.whgt.org.uk

Clwyd

Thursday Feb 21st 2.00pm Bodnant Garden. A tour of new winter garden with Troy Smith, Head Gardener.

End of Feb/March Crocus display at Dolhyfryd yn Lawnt, Denbigh. LL16 4SU

Saturday March 9th 10.30 AGM, Gladstone library, St Deiniol's Hawarden, 11.00 'Greenhouse, Hothouse and Stove: the Evolution of the Glasshouse' talk by Fiona Grant.

March 23rd 11.00am Visit to Whitehurst (re-programmed due to icy conditions in January) £6 Bookings by 18th March

Thursday April 18th 2.00pm Guided walk at Wepre Park to see Old Hall gardens. David Toyne to lead a Wild flower walk through the park to Ewloe Castle.

Thursday April 25th Recording Historic Gardens seminar (joint event with Gwynedd branch), The Royal Hotel Llandudno. £10 includes coffee and lunch. Verena McCaig will share her experience of recording gardens in Kent.

Saturday June 15th Corwen Garden visits with sculpture and a taste of the orient. (£6 includes elevens and tea)

Wednesday July 17th 2.00pm Bodrhyddan Hall garden visit and cream tea. £10

(Clwyd members should have received a full programme)

Contact Glynis Shaw for further details

glynis@castell-photography.co.uk

01745 710261

Gwynedd

Thursday March 21st AGM –Coffee 10.30 for 11 am. Talk by Mark Baker 'The Brynkir Archaeological Site', Telford Centre, Menai Bridge.

Thursday April 25th Identifying and Recording Historic Gardens. Joint Workshop with Clwyd Branch. The Royal Hotel Llandudno.

Saturday May 4th Plant Fair Crûg Farm Nursery, Griffiths Crossing, Caernarfon specialist Nurseries, Walled Garden and Grounds open 10 am – 4 pm Home made refreshments. Admission £3.00 Free Parking, Children Free.

May Coach visit to Wightwick Manor near Wolverhampton, a Thomas Mawson garden surrounding a superb Arts and Crafts Manor House and the Dower House, Morville Hall to see Katherine Swift's sequence of gardens, giving the history of British gardening. Date and details to be confirmed.

Friday June 14th Garden Party Plas Cadnant 6.30 - 8.00 pm, home of Anthony Tavenor. A fund raising evening with canapés and wine.

Tuesday July 9th -11th Visit to Wrest Park, Bedfordshire & Gardens of Northamptonshire. Tours of Deene Park, Corby and Castle Ashby Gardens. £199 includes two nights half board, garden entry, tours and lunch on first day. Single supplement £36

Thursday July 25th Afternoon visit to Plas Brondanw, Llanfrothen, home of Sir Clough Williams Ellis. Guided Tour and afternoon tea.

Contact Olive Horsfall for further details

oandmhorsfall@btinternet.com

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The WHGT Bulletin
Sponsored by NFU Mutual

Monmouthshire and Gwent

Monday March 11th at 7 pm. AGM, followed by 'Stark Mad with Gardens' - the untold story of women gardeners in Wales, 1750-1850 by Jean Reader, Chairman of WHGT, at High Glanau Manor, Lydart, Monmouth NP25 4AD. £10.

Friday June 7- 9th National AGM at Llanover, guest speaker Sir Roy Strong. £25

Saturday September 28th 10.15. 'The Pulham Gardens of Dewstow' by Claude Hitching and Val Christman, afternoon tour of Dewstow. £20 includes lunch and admission.

Contact Merilyn Anderson for further details

m.anderson666@btinternet.com

01600 780389

South and Mid Glamorgan

Sunday 28th April 2.30-4.30pm. AGM, Bute Park Education Centre. After the business meeting Dr Julia Sas will give a talk on the recent project to restore Bute Park and will lead a conducted tour of the park. There will be a small charge for refreshments and the walk and talk.

Thursday 9th May visit to Hidcote Manor Garden, Gloucestershire, with a 'behind the scenes' tour with Graham Pearson, biographer of Lawrence Johnson. We hope to fill a coach.

Contact Val Caple for further details

val.t.caple@care4free.net

West Glamorgan

Thursday March 7th AGM followed by Helena Gerrish on 'Restoring High Glanau'.

May Visit to Golden Grove, Carmarthenshire - date to be confirmed.

Monday June 17th Coach Trip to Caerleon and The Veddw – details to be confirmed.

July 17th Coach Trip to Sezincote via Lacock - details to be confirmed.

August Strawberry Tea - details to be confirmed.

Thursday September 26th Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy by Claude Hitching.

Thursday November 7th Sally Pollock on 100 Years of Chelsea Flower Show.

Talks take place at St Paul's Parish Centre, De La Beche Road, Sketty, Swansea SA2 9AR on Thursdays at 2pm (doors open 1.30) £3 includes light refreshments.

Contact Ann Gardner for further details

hughgardner@virginmedia.com

01792 290014

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Vice Chairman: Joy Neal	01654 781203
Treasurer: Hugh Gardner	01792 290014
Company Secretary: Jennie Macve	01970 626180
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