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The view of the West front of Erddig from the park, by Moses Griffiths, showing the Emes parkland landscaping which remains largely unchanged. Image courtesy of the National Trust Erddig.

William Emes, the gardener who disappeared Prue Keely Davies

When Clive of India (1725–1774), the greatest nabob of his day, returned to his Shropshire roots in 1760, he bought an old manor house, Walcot Hall, near Ludlow. William Chambers, the most fashionable architect of the day, was commissioned to update it into an elegant rose-red brick Georgian mansion. Ten years later, Clive and his wife turned their attention to the park. To create the appropriate designed parkland around the mansion they called upon William Emes of Derby (1729–1803).

This name might surprise a modern garden tourist, for Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was still in his heyday and today Emes is hardly known outside academic circles. However, Clive was following the current landscaping fashion in his choice of designer: Emes was sought after among the wealthy, improving aristocracy and intelligentsia, particularly in the North West, Wales and the Midlands. In all, Emes designed, or was involved in the creation of, over ninety landscapes and gardens, with lakes and dingles or wild walks across England and Wales between 1760 and 1803.

Brown was, of course, the most fashionable and original of the landscapers to the mid eighteenth century families for whom *a Serpentine River and a Wood {were} the absolute Necessities of Life, without which a Gentleman of the smallest Fortune thinks he makes no Figure in his Country* (*The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1739), and his design diktats imposed themselves on a whole generation. Emes's landscapes are, indeed, based around the sweeping lawns, curving lakes, clumps of trees, perimeter planting and rides of the Brown formula. However Emes also made it his own, bringing a gentler, naturalistic, sometimes lyrical touch to his landscapes, incorporating both older and new touches.

There are debts to other, eclectic, English traditions in Emes's style. For example, the Kedleston accounts record that in 1758 Emes and his then employer, Sir Nathaniel Curzon, went to The Leasowes, Halesowen, the classically and poetically inspired garden that was the life work of the poet William Shenstone (1714–63) and a contemporary pilgrimage for anyone with pretensions



Walcot Hall, Shropshire

to designing their own park or garden. Another clue to his aesthetic comes from a poem, *Needwood Forest*, written by one of his patrons, Francis Noel Clarke Mundy:

*Emes, who yon desert wild explor'd,
Whose art is nature's law maintain'd,
Whose order negligence restrain'd,
Here, fir'd by native beauty, trac'd
The footsteps of the Goddess, Taste:*

Mundy added in a footnote: *Mr. Emes, who ornamented Beaudesert, the seat of Lord Paget, which is seen from the {Needwood} Forest, and who has obtained great reputation for his Taste in ornamental Gardening, has frequently assured the Author, that he took his best hints from the scenes of Needwood.* (Francis Noel Clarke Mundy, *Needwood Forest and The Fall of Needwood*, 1766, first published 1830 by Thomas Richardson.)

His lakes are varied, with islands and lateral banks built up as dams, their shapes ranging from balloons to elongated canal-like forms; there are kite-shapes, wishbones and amoebic finger shapes and he was an expert at solving hydraulic problems.

Emes created parklands which fitted well into their varied, sometimes awkward, topographical contexts, often skilfully exploiting or emphasizing borrowed views in the hilly landscapes where he frequently worked.

Later in his career, Emes's dingles and walks reflect the rise of the Picturesque in the last part of the century. By the 1770s and 80s he frequently provided his patrons with complex shrubbery walks and small pleasure gardens carefully placed near the house or by a lake, even, as the late Dr. Keith Goodway wrote, '*anticipating the gardenesque*' (Keith Goodway, 'William Emes and the flower garden at Sandon, Staffordshire', *Garden History*, 24 (1) 1996, p26).

The Harrowby diaries at Sandon show Emes giving detailed horticultural advice to his patrons about their garden under the drawing room windows. An interest in horticulture may be deduced from his association with Lady Mary Egerton at Oulton Park, where a Botanic Garden is included on Holland's plan of the landscape. We know from the Powis estate's plant order to Brunton's

of Birmingham in 1774 that he planted hundreds of flowering shrubs as well as trees. He seems to have delighted in designing huge, irregular shaped walled kitchen gardens, such as are seen on the plans for Broadlane Hall, Alderwasley and Erlestone, for example.

We know little of Emes's life. He was employed as head gardener at Kedleston in 1756 but there is no trace of him before then. He began the modernization of the grounds of Kedleston, including the creation of the first, upper lake but left, in 1760, soon after the arrival of a new Sir Nathaniel and his assertive young architect, Robert Adam. Emes set up as an independent surveyor, and

stayed near Derby until 1785 when his wife died and he moved south, perhaps to be near children who by then lived in London, renting a manor house in Hampshire from one of his richest clients.

For twenty-five years he lived and worked at the centre of the industrial revolution, finding his clients among the coal-owning aristocracy and gentry and his professional colleagues among the most successful architects and engineers of the day. His last appearance is as a consultant to Lord Mansfield at Kenwood in 1803 and he died the same year, at his daughter's house in Clerkenwell (she was the wife of the Rector of St Giles, Cripplegate). *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March 1803, p.292), reported his death: *At the Rev. Wm. Holme's vicarage-house at Cripplegate Wm. Emes, esq., late of Elvetham park, Hants, an eminent land surveyor, and father of Mr. E. engraver.*

Emes died a rich man and a renowned landscaper. However, his fame soon faded (as did Brown's) and the archive is fragmentary; only two scholarly articles have been published about him. Fortunately some thirty, usually extremely elegant and detailed, plans survive as well as a few contemporary images and written records together with over fifty sites, all of which help us to understand his legacy and contribution.

The best records of a commission are at Erddig, near Wrexham, where he was employed for over twenty years, from 1766. These are the only really complete known record of an Emes commission. They reveal something of his working methods and personal style. After initial visits, consultations and agreement on plans, Emes was not on site all the time. Between September and November 1766, William Emes visited Erddig on four occasions, charging 3 guineas in total. The following year, he was again in attendance, charging 8 1/2 guineas for his visits and for *a fair drawing of the Intended Improvements at Erthig*. (By comparison, a single visit from Lancelot Brown at the height of his fame was 10 guineas.)

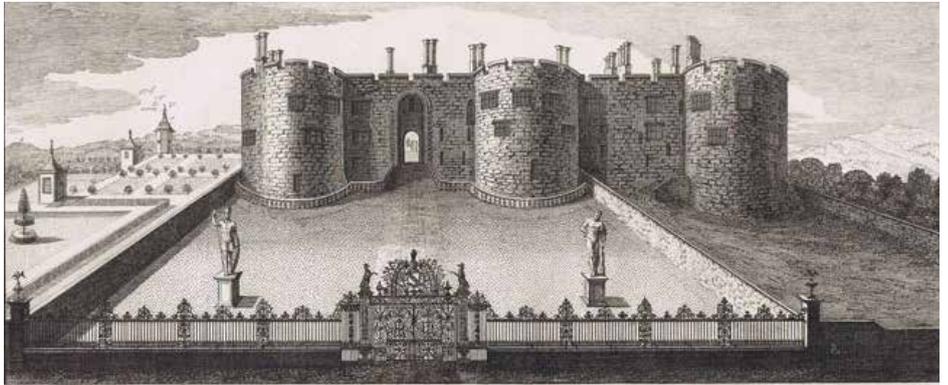
Emes paid regular visits to Erddig between 1771 and 1773, during major works to channel and control the two rivers which caused flooding on the estate, but the work



Above: *Emes Retreat Seat Chirk Castle* © NTPL / Mathew Antrobus

Above Right: *The North View of Chirk Castle*, engraving from drawing, Samuel Buck 1742

Below: *Chirk Castle Denbighshire* John Warwick Smith, watercolour late 1780s, courtesy of Lowell Libson Ltd.



was mainly overseen on the ground by one or other of his foremen. Over four years, Emes directly employed between seventeen and thirty men at the site, levelling land and channelling rivers in the French Mill Meadows, at a total cost of £1,200 in wages for the men and including £700 in fees for himself. A head gardener of the period was normally paid between £60 and £70 a year, about the same as a clergyman, so Emes was doing extremely well, earning more than twice as much at just one estate. (Charles Quest-Ritson, 'The English Garden, A Social History', *New York: Viking*, 2001, p.106). By 1789, Emes's possessions for auction from the house near Derby included the trappings of a very comfortably-off citizen: four-poster beds, feather mattresses, parlour furniture, an organ at fifty guineas, paintings, books and drawings, etc.

The Erddig records show that Emes was treated as an independent consultant, a man of consequence, who slept in the best spare bedroom when he visited. Philip Yorke, the owner of Erddig, like many of his estate-improving peers, was often away, and he seems to have put considerable trust in Emes. This way of working was conventional, but could lead to tension, as we glimpse in letters from Yorke to his agent, John Caesar: in 1774 he urges Caesar to 'keep a wary eye on Mr. Emes', but Emes was still employed in 1778 and seems habitually to have maintained good relations with his patrons over many years.

At Chirk Castle, the landscape tells the story. Emes was employed to update a magnificent earlier formal garden. Between 1764 and 1775 Emes banished the orchards, avenues, ornamental fencing, compartments and straight lines. He levelled, smoothed and lowered the land immediately around the castle and swept the shaven lawns up to the walls, leaving the Myddletons' fortress dominating a sea of grass.

On the North and East of the site, he thickened and

broke up existing woodlands, creating smaller irregular groups of trees. He created a curving terrace contained by a graceful ha-ha, backed by woodland, with a small classical building, dubbed the *Seat of Retreat*, set at an angle to enjoy the views and catch any passing Welsh sunshine.

In contrast to Chirk, at Heaton Hall near Manchester, and, a few years earlier, at Hulton Park, neighbouring homes to two of the richest coal-owning magnates in Lancashire, Emes made composite scenes of natural, pastoral and Brownian elements. He incorporated sweeping open grassland around the house and in the close park, made perimeter plantations, clumps and lakes but also retained much of the agricultural landscape. Given the wealth of these owners, this is likely to have been done deliberately to maintain the economic and sporting advantages of the estates – often a key element in eighteenth century parks.

As has been mentioned, Emes was particularly well-known for his skill with that essential element of the landscape park, water, even being called in on at least one occasion – at Hainton Hall, Lincolnshire – to correct an unsuccessful lake by Brown! Estate embellishment was often done for economic reasons, as at Erddig, where flooding of two rivers caused constant washing away of good soil, to the detriment of the income of Yorke's tenants – and his own rents.

Emes's legacy at Erddig includes a visually interesting *Cup and Saucer* cascade. This alleviated the problems of erosion by moving its flow to a different level, using a

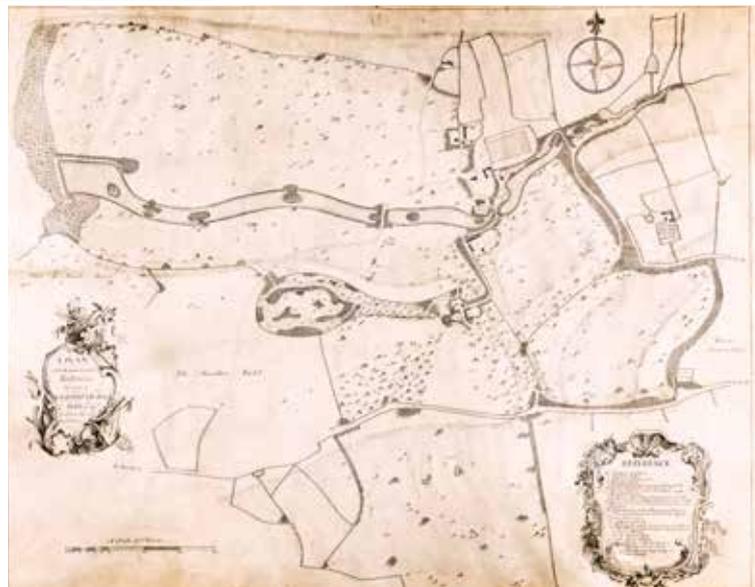


technique culled from the canal builders Emes mixed with in Derby. The river enters left, and is forced down by its own gravity through a tunnel and sluiced out at a lower level, thus preventing the catastrophic flooding down a natural slope.

As they often appear on his plans, Emes and his patrons seem to have liked his necklets of lakes, with streams dammed and manipulated to great effect, usually in sight of the house.

At Oakedge, in Staffordshire, there is a fine surviving example in the remains of his designed landscape. We have the plan, so it is easy to see how he worked. It is a

Left: Emes Cup and Saucer cascade, Erddig 1774 © GMS



Above: Left; Broad Lane Hall 1777 (Flintshire RO ref: D/HA/601). Right: Radbourne, nr Derby, Derbyshire
Below: Plan of Oakedge Park, 1771, (Staffordshire RO ref: D615/M/6/42) and Oakedge Hall, Nicholas Dall 1775, (NT Shrugbrough).



hilly landscape running up to Cannock Chase with the flattish River Trent valley below.

The plan looks haphazard, even splodgy, but this is Emes's naturalistic style and it enhances the uneven but undramatic terrain, carefully emphasizing the lines of undulations. The lakes are beautifully placed along the boundary woodland, in sight of the house and linked as they descend by cascades and elegant stonework dams.



Another surviving Emes landscape is Radbourne Hall, near Derby, almost next door to Emes's Derbyshire home. Dr. Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles Darwin) and his second wife, Catherine Pole, lived at Radbourne from 1775 to 1782. Dr. Darwin was a leading intellectual in the area, a member of the Lunar Society and friend of Josiah Wedgwood and other luminaries, so it is highly probable that Emes was associated with that famous coterie of the eighteenth century. After the Darwins left Radbourne to live in nearby Derby and the Pole heir

returned, Emes designed a delightful garden. The property with its park remains a private home in the same family.

The handsome red brick house sits on a very slight rise in a flat landscape. The plan shows an intimate parkland, with the view from the house towards the lakes, canal-shaped with small islands. A *Fishing House* is shown on one island and *Mrs. Pole's Seat* is also marked at the west of the shrubbery. To the side of the house, a planted walk leads through trees to a garden, with shaped beds, views out on to the countryside and a *Glass House*, or conservatory. There is interest and incident, to enliven a rather plain place. The plan itself is beautifully drawn in Indian ink, with an elegant scrolled Reference and a flourishing cartouche.

At Badger Hall, near Wolverhampton, Emes worked for another artistically minded coal mine owner. Isaac Hawkins Browne (1745 –1818), son of a poet, was an industrialist, politician, aesthete and collector. Between 1779 and 1783 James Wyatt extended and embellished the Hall and William Emes devised a Picturesque dingle landscape in the deep valley of the Worfe which flowed through the estate. It is one of several examples where Emes worked in collaboration with the Wyatt family of architects and where his pupil and later partner John Webb was also involved.

The river was dammed and diverted into artificial cascades, slow moving streams and a quiet lake, which lies below Wyatt's temple-shaped *Bird House*, from where visitors coming from the Hall a mile away could view the dingle. The valley walk had an ice house, a tunnel, man-made caves in the sandstone, another classical building, sudden vistas, mossy paths and patches of fern and flowers, rickety bridges and plantings of evergreens and flowering shrubs to create the required feeling of enclosure, surprise and secrecy.

Emes worked at around a dozen estates in Wales. At Penrice Castle on Gower, he had the opportunity to



Badger Hall Cascade and Temple above the lake © PKD

display many of his talents. Here he had the best raw materials for an ideal late eighteenth century park: an ancient ruined castle, a new house in need of a splendid setting, a remarkably beautiful view to the cliffs of Oxwich Bay and a rich patron who wanted to combine his taste for the Arts and for plants, with his love of field sports.

Below and beyond the castle and new house, perimeter plantings on the hills and landscaped slopes of grass frame the panorama; a lake, created out of the original stream provides an elegant central focus.

Moving away from the house a winding path leads around a wooded bluff, 'picturesquely' improved with imported rocks, a Roman sarcophagus and a cannon which could be fired to frighten unsuspecting visitors in true Sublime mood. The path goes on to a hidden garden complete with an orangery and then to the magnificent kitchen garden, contemporary with the parkland and probably designed by Emes.

Whilst planning to build at Penrice, William Mansel Talbot described the site as *the most romantic in the country*. It remains one of the finest legacies of Emes, the man he chose to embellish and perfect it in his typically restrained, appropriate and naturalistic style.

Below: Penrice Castle, Glamorganshire, Wales, Henry Gastineau, 1835, and a modern view of the Penrice landscape © PKD





Newly discovered Hornor painting with Paxton's Tower and two of the waterpark's bridges clearly visible

Middleton: Paradiseand a long-lost painting Regained

Congratulations to the National Botanic Garden of Wales on the recent announcement of £3.55 million Heritage Lottery Funding for the delivery phase of the *Middleton: Paradise Regained – Reclaiming A Regency Rarity* parkland restoration project.

As the final details of the engineering works and bridge designs are now being completed, the recent discovery of a previously lost early 19th century view of one of the main elements of the parkland, by Thomas Hornor, has been timely!

Hornor (1785–1844) was an English land surveyor, artist, and inventor. The re-discovered painting was included in an article by Sara Fox, 'Thomas Hornor and his paintings of the Middleton Hall Parkland, Llanarthne', *Carmarthenshire Antiquary* (Vol. 52, 2016).

Sara believes that this view (above) is from an album of pictures Hornor painted of the estate for Sir William Paxton in 1815. All fourteen of Hornor's studies from this album were stolen in the 1960s. Certain views from the album were recovered by the Grant family (Paxton's descendants) at auction in the 1980s. These were published in the WHGT Bulletin no. 67, April 2014.

The newly found painting undoubtedly shows a lake at Middleton with Paxton's Tower on the hilltop behind, recognisable from the panoramic view Hornor painted from the side of Paxton's mansion portico, station 3, in Hornor's album (image shown opposite).

Sara is confident that this is the view from Hornor's station 5. (See location on the bird's eye plan opposite). Sara believes that the accompanying narrative in the album relates to the newly discovered painting, overlooking Lower Lake:

Pursuing our walk to the left... we are led to the Lower Lake which is happily formed in a sequestered and well wooded little valley. The harbour in the centre of the picture forms the point of view which is the subject of a succeeding drawing. . . . The Dell which commences by the bridge to the right contains many characteristic beauties developed in the course of the walk: the path by the smaller bridge leads to. . . the Chalybeate Spring and Bath, the subjects of the next picture.

Others, however, believe that the new painting shows the view looking out across The Large Lake painted from Hornor's scrubbed out station 4 (see the plan opposite).

This interpretation, if correct, makes this a previously unknown painting. Comparing the vegetation painted around the banks of the lake with Hornor's bird's eye view supports the outlook as the one from across the Large Lake, but where is the full width of the lake on the right hand side of the picture?

Could the bushes, seen opposite the figures chatting on the lakeside, be growing on the island shown towards the east side of Lower Lake?

Whichever the case, the coming to light of this painting documenting the Middleton lakeside is invaluable in guiding the restoration work, and, in particular, the final designs of the re-instated bridges.

The ground works are due to commence this autumn. It is hoped that all work should be completed by the summer of 2020.

Louise Austin

Hornor images courtesy of the Grant family and Jeremy Rye.



Panoramic view from Hornor's station 3, with Paxton's tower depicted on the hill behind the portico.



A detail from Hornor's bird's eye view showing where station number 4 (ringed in red) has been scrubbed out on the edge of the Large Lake, now Llyn Mawr, and station number 5 (ringed in blue) is to the west of Lower Lake.

Troy House: A Tudor Estate Across Time by Ann Benson

(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), Hardback, 206pp, 111 illustrations, £29.99. ISBN: 978-1-78316-989-4.

In 1502 King Henry VII, accompanied by Elizabeth, his Queen Consort, held a meeting of his Council at Troy House, near Monmouth, the home of Sir William Herbert. Since the royal couple stayed at the property, it must have been a residence of considerable style and comfort. Today, Troy House and its estate has suffered the fate of many once glorious landscapes deserted by the family for centuries; often rented out, parts of it were sold, it became an educational establishment and, in recent years, prolonged planning disputes have plagued the site.

Dr Ann Benson discusses these issues and many more in this scholarly and thoroughly researched book where all sources are scrupulously recorded - one chapter contains 248 footnotes. There are chapters on the history of the house, the various gardens, the estate's fieldscape and its historical significance. The longest chapter is devoted to the history of the estate's ownership.

There is evidence that Ann's former scientific training was used in her fieldwork for the book. For example, she conducted resistivity surveys (methods used in archaeological geophysics where electrical resistance meters are used to detect and map subsurface archaeological features), which indicated the likely presence of paths in the walled garden of Troy House.

The author is unafraid to dispute and rigorously question the conclusions of earlier researchers. For instance a building originally described as a 'game larder' was in reality a conduit house, a building that would have held a tank that collected water, which passed through pipes to the house. In a section that includes a number of her own photographs she illustrates the possible route of underground metal water pipes for the conduit house. In an Appendix Ann examines the existing literature on Troy House and finds it wanting. Her words serve as a warning to present day researchers who have access to information sources so much more easily than in the past. They should not take as sacred truth things that have previously appeared in print and must question the veracity of every source to ensure they are not promulgating outdated knowledge.

This is an attractive book and the University of Wales Press deserve much credit for producing an exceptionally well-illustrated book with a mixture of aerial photographs, portraits, maps, sketches and many of the author's own photographs. It is likely to become a talking point amongst garden historians and researchers in Wales.

Jean Reader



Violet and pets at Insole Court, photo courtesy of Richard Perkins

Insole Irises

Ely Court, Llandaff, was built in 1855 by James Harvey Insole, a coal and shipping magnate. In 1874 James and his son transformed Ely Court into the grand Victorian mansion renamed Insole Court, now a Grade II* listed building. Insole Court was complemented by a prestigious Victorian/Edwardian town garden, Grade II* in the Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. The grounds include terraces and balustrading, lawns, rock-work, water garden, glasshouses including a vinery, kitchen garden and orchard, a croquet lawn, and a fine collection of specimen trees and shrubs.

In the Edwardian period, Insole Court achieved national horticultural recognition for its collections of alpines and irises, and it is here that the name of Violet Insole (1884-1932), granddaughter of James Harvey, becomes significant.

Violet began breeding irises c.1921 and filled two beds south of the house with mature plants and propagated the iris seedlings in the sunken lawn which had been the croquet lawn. Violet took personal care of her irises. The detailed daily journal kept by Joseph Martin Farley, foreman gardener at Insole between 1910 and 1912, has no reference to irises, nor any mention of alpines, another extensive collection acquired by Violet and planted in the rock-work.

Violet was among the first members of the British Iris Society founded in 1924. As a member of its executive committee she donated the *Insole Challenge Cup* for the exhibit displaying the decorative value of irises.

In 1929 Mrs Olive Murrell, co-owner with her husband Major P.B. Murrell, of the Orpington Nurseries in Kent, and a breeder of prize winning irises and a show judge visited Llandaff specifically to see Violet's irises. Olive enjoyed the hospitality of Violet and her widowed mother and was clearly captivated by the Insoles' well maintained gardens:

Miss Insole lives with her mother in an old stone built house standing in a small park on the outskirts of Llandaff. The gardens are large, and a staff of twelve gardeners is employed to keep them in order. Miss Insole looks after the Irises herself however, and also her fine rock garden. She is a keen lover of Alpines, and has a very fine collection of many rare and uncommon plants..

As Mrs Murrell strolled around the terraced lawns she admired some magnificent old trees including a very fine Cedar, and was greatly impressed by a Copper Beech near the rock garden. Close by were two irregularly shaped raised beds with narrow paths winding through them, where Violet planted her irises. *The effect of the Copper Beech and the bank of massed Irises of all colours was very lovely...enthused Violet's visitor, noting that Violet's collection of irises is up to date and includes such fine novelties as "Mrs. Valerie West", "Fra Angelico", "Cassiopee", "Anne Marie Cayeux", etc.*

Among the irises known to have been hybridised by Violet and grown at Insole Court were 'Eglantine', 'Jane Austin' and 'Queen of Sheba'.

Olive Murrell was aware that the raised beds in which Violet grew her iris seedlings had been dug out of part of the old croquet lawn and considered that Mrs Insole had *nobly surrendered* half the old lawn in the interests of iris propagation but thought that it would not be long before Violet took over the entire area!

Violet developed a number of new varieties of tall bearded irises, two of which won instant fame and propelled her into the first flight of amateur growers. One was 'Dog Rose', a beautiful pink bloom which secured a silver medal in 1929. Another, 'Golden Flare', was described as *a truly remarkable new break in the colour range of irises.*

Violet always set herself high standards, and some of her newly hybridised irises failed to meet her exacting standards. Violet was capable of trenchant criticism when discussions on irises took place, and self critical of her own blooms. 'Trigo' was a particular disappointment. The single spike which she took to London for the show in 1929 had a deep rich colour, but later spikes were reluctant to flower, petals of the large blooms were liable to split, and the colour, which Violet had never greatly cared for, became less and less pleasing to her eye.

She wrote with self deprecating humour: *If an artist used a dirty palette and tried hard to evolve a muddy and thick colouring he would produce the tints of Trigo. In fact, I think Trigo drinks! Nothing else would give him that complexion. It has a bloated effect as if excess of alcohol had left its mark. I have seen human faces like it and perhaps that type of face looks better indoors than out; certainly Trigo does.*

When Violet was asked *what had happened to Trigo?* she announced that he was in good health and living in seclusion at home where she would be pleased to show

him to anyone who called at Insole Court next season. With a further touch of whimsy she wrote that she would apologise to 'Trigo' if any visitors did not agree with her opinion. However, Violet adamantly maintained her own opinion and 'Trigo' was not registered with the Society! Five years after Olive Murrell's visit, Violet Insole died unexpectedly following an operation. Her untimely death undoubtedly robbed the horticultural world of more noteworthy irises from the Insole garden. Tributes paid to Violet after her death revealed her as a person of sound and shrewd judgement, with a nice sense of humour, a vivid personality, long remembered for her breezy conversation and the charm of her unconventional letters.

Poignantly, three irises were entered in the 1934 show by Violet's mother. A pink iris, 'Violet Insole', won a Bronze Medal. 'In Memoriam', a shot shade, and 'Windsor Lad', a yellow, each received a Certificate of Merit, and both 'Violet Insole' and 'Windsor Lad' were selected for inclusion in the Wisley Trials.

A few years later Insole Court was sold, the family departed, and the gardens were no longer maintained.



Left: 'Golden Flare', Insole 1931© LM.
Right: 'Dogrose', Violet Insole, 1930, © S. Scheel

Many of the plants, including most of Violet's irises, did not survive. Today with the restoration of Insole Court, there is hope that iris beds will once again become a feature of the gardens and a living memorial to Violet Insole.

Hilary M Thomas

Further information at : *Iris Chronicles of the Historical Iris Tobins of the American Iris Society No.XV1, Violet Insole compiled by Gerta Beach, 1966.*

www.insoleresearchgroup.co.uk/IRIS%20CHRONICLES.pdf

Bodnant Furnace Meadow and Woodland Garden



Artist's impression of the future Penjerrick Walk at Bodnant Garden by Clive McWilliam

In April 2017, the Furnace Meadow and Woodland Garden, a beautiful and historic 20 acres of Bodnant, opened to the public for the first time. Furnace Hill lies above the west bank of the River Hiraethlyn in The Dell and behind the Grade II Old Mill. The leat alongside the river, possibly of Tudor origin, once served a blast furnace nearby, giving its name to this area. Later the leat powered the Old Mill which served first as a flour mill and then became the estate sawmill.

The hillside, originally dotted with native trees was transformed from the mid 1870s by Henry Pochin and his daughter Laura McLaren, with the planting of Douglas fir, Scots and Corsican pine, larch and numerous Californian pines. In the early 1900s Laura's son Henry added the many Asian rhododendrons and magnolias.

This was a private area cherished by the McLaren donor family for decades for its tranquillity and panoramic views across the garden and the Conwy Valley.

In the 21st century this area fell victim to the disease *Phytophthora ramorum* (sudden oak death) which began to destroy many of the shrubs and trees. A five-year programme supervised by DEFRA removed *Rhododendron ponticum* and other host species such as larch. In 2015 Bodnant gained a clean bill of health. Whilst some old characters in the landscape were lost, the spaces left behind have given an opportunity to plant anew and to restore a lost avenue of rare rhododendrons, *The Penjerrick Walk*.

Troy Smith, former head gardener at Bodnant, was inspired to reinstate the Penjerrick Walk after discovering a speech by Henry McLaren, the 2nd Lord Aberconway: *If I could switch the clock to any season of the year to enjoy a two minute walk at Bodnant, my choice would be the Penjerrick Walk in the first week of May.*

The 100 metre avenue of creamy-white hybrid Rhododendron 'Penjerrick' (raised in the Penjerrick garden in Cornwall) was planted by Henry in the 1920s. Over the years the plants died out. With the help from the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group of the RHS, Bodnant Garden has been able to micro-propagate the last remaining plants at a specialist laboratory in Cornwall. Young plants were planted out in Furnace Wood in 2015. In future it will become a stunning spring floral display to rival the famous Laburnum Arch.

Fran Llewellyn



Left: Flooding at Gwydir during Storm Desmond 2015.

Below: Tree destruction of Storm Doris 2017. Images © Judy Corbett



Gwydir Castle, Llanwrst

The Grade I Gwydir Castle and gardens in the Conwy Valley is one of the most historic properties in Wales and the ancestral home of the Wynn family, prominent in the Tudor and Stuart period. The original fortified manor house of the Coetmore family was rebuilt by Meredudd ap Ieuan ap Robert, founder of the Wynns, c1490. The two square turrets were added c1540 using material from the nearby dissolved Maenan Abbey, with further additions in the 1550s and 1590s. Charles I visited in 1645 as guest of Sir Richard Wynn, Groom of the Royal Bedchamber.

After 400 years of inherited ownership Gwydir was sold in 1921 and suffered asset stripping. Panelling from the dining room bought at auction by William Randolph Hearst was bequeathed at his death to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It was still in the original packing cases when it was finally returned and restored to Gwydir in 1998. The search to recover the panelling, ceiling beams and the fireplace for the Oak Parlour, also acquired by Hearst, but now lost, continues.

The ten acre Grade I gardens date back to the formal Renaissance garden. Two fine 16th century garden arches and associated walls and terraces survive today. Later overlays and planting includes the work of Lewis Kennedy, the Regency landscape gardener, who collaborated with Sir Charles Barry (architect of the Westminster Houses of Parliament) in the 1820s and 30s garden restoration and laid out the knot garden.

Gwydir has around 80 trees protected by *Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)*, not only for their visual amenity value but also for their historic importance, including fourteen pre-1700 yews. The 'Giant Yew' is estimated to be between 600 and 1000 years old. Three Cedars of Lebanon

survive from an original twelve, planted in 1625 to commemorate the wedding of King Charles I to Princess Henrietta Maria.

The romantic and ancient garden is now threatened by changes in flood water management. In the past few years the ancient trees have suffered from frequent flooding. Several have now perished directly due to flooding and flood related trauma and disease.

Appropriate restocking can only be successful with reduced flooding.

The effect of Storm Desmond on Boxing Day 2015 was traumatic at Gwydir with 7 feet of water in the cellars and a torrent through the gardens damaging the yews and a sixteenth century garden wall.

The recent flooding has been exacerbated by forestry felling on the hills above Gwydir causing excessive runoff and the 2007 flood prevention scheme to protect properties in Llanwrst, on the other side of the river. This is currently under review by National Resources Wales and it is hoped that some long-lasting solution to the problem can be found.

Early this year Storm Doris contributed further damage to the Gwydir landscape, taking out some nineteenth century cypress trees.

Since 1994 Peter Welford and Judy Corbett have undertaken a sympathetic restoration of both the house and gardens.

WHGT are now supporting efforts to help provide the necessary flood protection to save the site from future damage.

Olive Horsfall

The Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates

The *Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates (ISWE)* is a national hub at Bangor University, for coordinating research into the history, culture and landscapes of Wales, based on the archives and the collections generated by landed families and their estates.

The estates, varying in size and character, formed a dominant framework in the life of Wales from the medieval period through to the early-twentieth century, affecting all layers of society and virtually all parts of the landscape, and exerting profound influences on subjects as diverse as politics, religion, warfare and industry through to architecture, literature, culture and farming. Analysis of this incredibly complex context is still very much in its infancy, leaving considerable scope for research from local, national and global perspectives.

ISWE is part of a vibrant and expanding international network of like-minded research centres, including the *Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates*, based at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth; the *Yorkshire and Thames Valley Country House* partnerships, with links to the Universities of York and Oxford; the *Centre for Scotland's Land Futures*; and the *Heritage Project* at Queen's University, Belfast. We are also members of the *European Network for Country House and Estate Research (ENCOUNTER)*.

The extraordinary range of subjects involving estates necessitates a truly interdisciplinary approach and we're pleased to be able to call upon the support and expertise of colleagues working in fields including English Literature, Forestry, Geography, History, Law and Welsh. At Bangor we're also particularly fortunate to have access to the vast corpus of estate collections, including the internationally-significant Baron Hill, Mostyn and Penrhyn papers, deposited in the University Archives.

Beyond Bangor, we're currently working with the National Library of Wales and the network of county record offices on initiatives to enhance the profile of Wales' estate collections, making these often complex, multifaceted and multi-period compilations of records easier to locate, explore and access for all users.

In May, we co-host a one-day symposium at the National Library focusing on the estate maps of Wales – an event which may be of interest to WHGT members.

In addition to archives, we're keen to unlock the research potential of Wales' landscapes, its built heritage and its visual and material culture – extending to historic houses, industrial sites, woodlands, portraiture, churches, library collections and, of course, parks and gardens.

A recent lecture by Bettina Harden as part of our 2016/17 Seminar Series fully opened our eyes to some of the possibilities associated with research into the history and development of designed landscapes in Wales.

We also want to ensure that our research can play an important role in heightening the cultural and heritage value of the historic houses and landscapes of Wales, thereby enhancing the nation's all-important tourism 'offer'. This

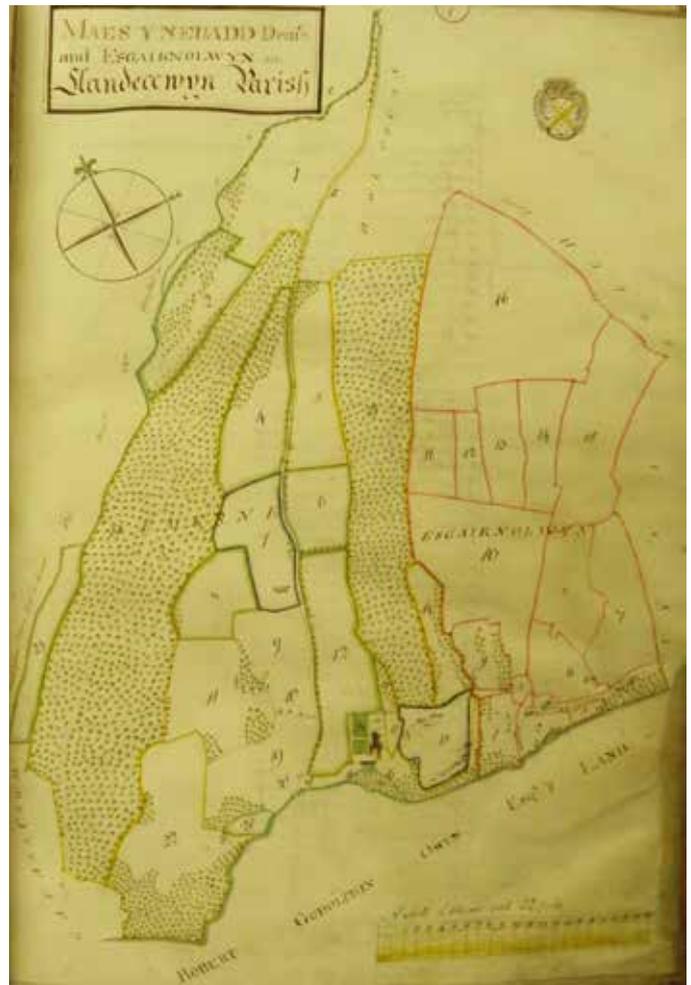
can only be achieved by working in partnership and collaboration with organisations such as the National Trust, Historic Houses Association and indeed the WHGT. We look forward to working with WHGT to identify projects and initiatives which contribute towards our shared aims and objectives

We anticipate that the research will play a significant role in transforming the understanding of Wales' past: interrogating established narratives and perceptions, discovering new evidence and interpretations and exploring broader themes and issues. We also envisage playing a significant part in determining how our heritage is presented and preserved for future generations.

To find out more, and how to support our work, please visit our website: <http://iswe.bangor.ac.uk> or join us for one of our forthcoming public events across Wales. Comments, feedback and suggestions from WHGT members would be gratefully received.

Email iswe@bangor.ac.uk or write to the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates, Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2DG.

Dr. Shaun Evans, Director



Page from Richard Owen's survey of the Maesyneuadd estate in the county of Merioneth, the property of William Nanney Esq., c. 1790, Maesyneuadd 394 Bangor University Archives and Special Collections.



Left: One of the Four Seasons sculptures
 Centre: The Serpentine pond and Icarus.
 Right: Statuary and fountain.
 Images c 1930 courtesy of John Markwick.

Edward Kemp at Leighton Hall

2017 is the bicentenary of Edward Kemp (1817-1891), the protégé of Joseph Paxton, who assisted Paxton in the layout of Birkenhead Park, the world's first publicly funded park, and became its Superintendent for over forty years. Birkenhead was a forerunner of the Parks Movement of the nineteenth century and an influence on the winning design for Central Park, New York, by Olmsted and Vaux in 1858.

Kemp's *How to lay out a Small Garden* (1850), and *The Parks and Gardens of London* (1850) were an important influence on the High-Victorian Mixed Style. Kemp also designed many parks, gardens and cemeteries.

At Leighton Hall, Kemp created a tour-de-force of landscaping and formal design in one of his earliest commissions.

In 1845 Christopher Bullin (Leyland), a Liverpool banker, purchased the Leighton estate comprising 2,813 acres, in Leighton, 2 miles from Welshpool, from Panton Corbett of Longnor Hall, Shropshire. In 1848 the estate was given to his nephew John Naylor, also a partner in the Liverpool bank, Leyland Bullins, following his marriage to Georgiana Edwards at Great Ness in Shropshire in 1846.

John Naylor also received a wedding present of £100,000.00 and reputedly spent more than twice this sum on constructing the church, stables, kennels and a new house, replacing the former Tudor building. The interiors were designed by Pugin (responsible for the decorations in the Houses of Parliament) and executed by J G Crace.

Kemp was commissioned to design the gardens and landscape in 1850. The formal gardens around the house are terraced on two levels with an octagonal pool and a flower garden (the Library Garden) enclosed by a high wall, in the style Kemp described as *architectural gardening* in his book *How to lay out a garden: intended as a general guide in choosing, forming, or improving an estate, (from a quarter of an acre to a hundred acres in extent) with reference to both design and execution.* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1858).

Kemp incorporated elements of an earlier, possibly

medieval, garden with ornamental pools and sculptures linked by raised walkways and bridges. In an informal area, a serpentine pond, with the statue of Icarus falling into it, was a focal point in the landscape. South of the Icarus pond a decorative cascade was fed from a series of lakes sequencing down the Moel y Mab.

There was a camellia house and the Park was laid out as a Pleasure Ground with summerhouses and evergreen shrubberies with winding walks through them.

Planting at Leighton coincided with the Victorian conifer craze. John Naylor bought redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) seedlings from California and planted a grove of 33 of them in 1857. Kemp's planting scheme included two North American conifers, the Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and the Nootka cypress (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*). In the wild these grow more than 400 miles apart. Planted in close proximity, in Leighton Park Wood, they cross-pollinated and resulted in 1888 in a chance seedling, the now notorious Leyland cypress (*x Cupressocyparis leylandii*). The new evergreen was admired by Victorian gardeners for its tolerance of the pollution that plagued the cities and its extremely fast growth as a hedge tree.

Kemp's work was completed by c1870, an expensive expression of the owner's wealth.

The estate was sold in 1931 when the Council purchased 500 acres and the Home Farm for smallholdings. John Naylor's daughter, Georgina, purchased the Hall, gardens, stables and kennels and maintained the gardens until her death in 1949.

Senator Rupert Davies (whose son Robertson Davies was the Canadian novelist and playwright) purchased the Hall, gardens and stables and continued to look after the grounds. He died in 1967 and the gardens have since declined. Today most of the statuary has gone and the grounds are now but a shadow of their original design. Icarus was recovered by the Planning Authority and now stands in the foyer of the Welshpool council offices waiting to be reunited with his pond.

Glynis Shaw and John Markwick

Congratulations to Nigel McCall at Abeglasney

Three images of Abeglasney Gardens, Carmarthenshire featured amongst the winning entries for the *International Garden Photographer of the Year* competition. All three images were taken by Nigel McCall and entered in the *Beautiful Gardens* category. *Autumn Evening at Abeglasney* was the category overall winner.

Nigel, managing director of his family's builders merchants, Towy Works Ltd., Carmarthen, spent the last two years documenting the seasons at Abeglasney.

The second of Nigel's images to impress the judges was *Upper Walled Garden, Sunrise*, which was a category finalist and 'Mist over the *Lower Walled Garden* was highly commended.

To celebrate, Nigel held an exhibition of his work in Abeglasney's Mansion House for a week in February.

The Abeglasney 2018 calendar features Nigel's photographs, now available at the Abeglasney Gardens shop and www.abeglasney.org. Proceeds from the calendar will help support the continued restoration of the Abeglasney Gardens.



Autumn Evening at Abeglasney © Nigel McCall

Good News for the Nelson Garden, Monmouth

WHGT members will be delighted to learn that the Nelson Garden Preservation Trust has won Heritage Lottery Fund support. An exciting new project *A New Life for the Nelson Garden in Monmouth* has received £84,600. Led by volunteers from the community, the project focuses on preserving and conserving the historic fabric of this important garden with its links to Lord Nelson and Emma, Lady Hamilton.

The repair of the rare 18th century hot wall and the restoration of the fine Grade II* listed pavilion with Nelson's seat will secure the main features of this landscape and enhance the visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the garden. There will also be training and educational

opportunities for local people to learn new skills with courses in historic restoration and practical gardening workshops. The garden will also provide increased access as a venue for community groups, schools and businesses.

The Nelson Garden was visited by Lord Nelson in 1802. Nelson breakfasted in the roundhouse on The Kymin, now owned by the National Trust, which can be seen from a vantage point within the garden.

While on the Kymin Nelson admired the picturesque views and the naval temple dedicated in honour of sixteen admirals. A copy of the Britannia statue and plaques of the sixteen admirals from the temple are now

mounted within the Nelson Garden.

The garden is an important link with the Nelson Museum in Monmouth which has a renowned collection of Nelson memorabilia.

The Monmouth & Gwent branch have contributed £1,000 match funding for the project.

Helena Gerrish



Nelson Garden: the hot wall left, the Pavilion centre and The Kymin beyond. © Helena Gerrish



Above: Scolton Manor. Below restored Pineapple house

Scolton Manor Walled Garden

The Higgon family lived in Scolton Manor, Spittal, in Pembrokeshire, five miles North of Haverfordwest, from the 16th century. The old house was destroyed by lightning in the mid-eighteenth century, which forced the family to move to Haverfordwest. Following the fire the derelict site at Scolton was abandoned for a hundred years until the family commissioned a plan to rebuild it in 1831. Work began first on the stables and the walled garden before the Victorian house was designed in 1840.

The Grade II* listed manor house is in a plain Neoclassical style, designed by the local architects William and James Owen, who also built the nearby Treffgarne Hall to a similar layout. Its most impressive feature is the cantilevered staircase, made of Bath stone. The Higgon family was prominent amongst Pembrokeshire society. The last resident, Lt. Col John Henry Victor Higgon (1902-1983), was captured and held as a prisoner of war in WWII. He survived to become the 3rd of his family to be High Sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1951.

The family lived at Scolton Manor for 130 years until Colonel Higgon decided that the running costs were too high, so he sold the house and grounds to Pembrokeshire County Council and the Welsh Church Fund in 1972. Scolton Manor then became a museum furnished with eleven period rooms and a collection of artefacts relating to Pembrokeshire country life.

The manor sits in 60 acres of country park and is Pembrokeshire's only Green-Flag awarded park, recognised for its rich natural habitat. The park was laid out 1840-

43, more or less contemporary with the house.

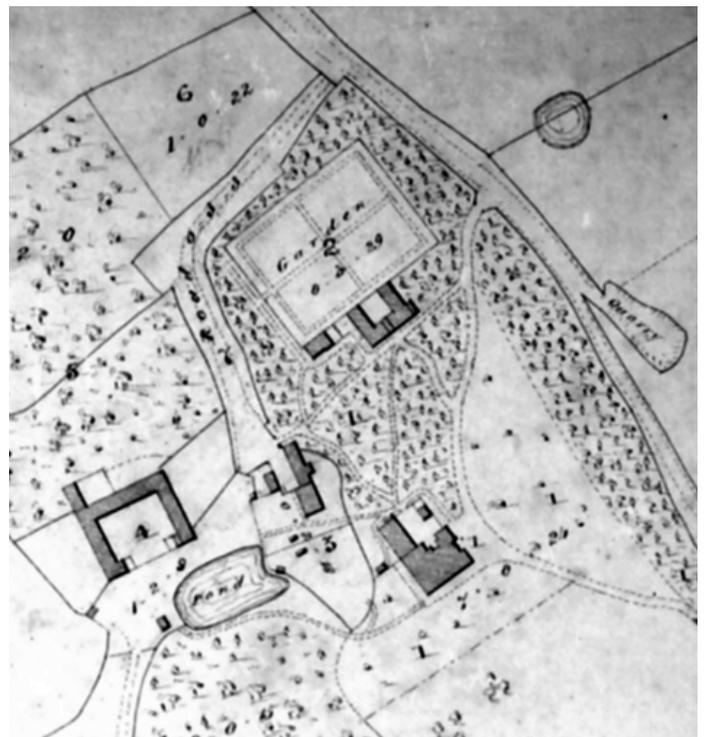
The one-acre Walled Garden project is based on the restoration of the previously dilapidated walls and re-establishing the nineteenth century kitchen garden shown on the 1853 map (below).

Mark Thomas, manager at Scolton, is passionate about being true to the Walled Garden's Victorian roots. Using only traditional tools and pure manpower, he hopes to research and recreate what will be an exact replica of a working Victorian walled garden. The oak used for the thick doors to seal the four entrances to the garden is from trees felled on the Scolton site.

Of particular interest is the reinstatement of the Pineapple house. In the Georgian period the pineapple was a potent status symbol and paraded at the dinner table. Producing a crop of tropical fruit in Wales before the advent of the hot water heating system was a remarkable achievement. The pineapple was testament to the gardeners' expertise as well as an emblem of the owner's wealth.

Pineapples need heat and moisture to thrive so pineries need to be heated. Gardeners had to judge the level of heat and humidity required. Rare, exotic and difficult to grow, pineapples were cultivated in a special glasshouse called a pinery. In the early 18th century pineapples were often grown in pine pits as at Middleton Hall. The pits were filled with tanners bark (crushed oak bark soaked in water) or horse dung, which through a process of fermentation releases a lot of heat. In the autumn the pineapples

Scolton 1853



would be transferred from the pit to a heated glasshouse. Eventually, a long low glasshouse with a heating system became a dedicated pinery.

Pineapple cultivation became much more affordable and more common in the nineteenth century with the invention of hot water heating in 1816 and sheet glass in 1833, and then the abolition of the glass tax in 1845.

Victorian gardeners grew pineapples of enormous sizes. Cultivation of the pineapple continued to be the measure of a gardener's skill and a pinery was mandatory for every estate kitchen garden, and remained so for almost another century.

Scolton Manor in Wales may join two other working pineapple projects which can be seen in Britain today: the 19th century pineapple pit at the Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornwall, and the pinery-vinery at Tatton Park, a restored structure dating from the mid 18th century.

Pineapples were also grown in South Wales at Stackpole Court in Pembrokeshire, Penpont in Powys, and Cyfarthfa Castle in Mid Glamorgan.

The garden project has been the catalyst for establishing the Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre. The adjoining hives help to pollinate the fruit in the garden.

Scolton, managed by Pembrokeshire County Council, is one of seven partners in the *One Historic Garden* scheme linking heritage, gardens and opportunities across South Wales.

This year Scolton has welcomed Simon Richards, a horticulturist, to the staff and plan to develop an apprentice scheme to sustain the walled garden.

Work is also taking place in the small arboretum adjacent to the house.

Mark Thomas



Hafod Urn, NLW and Inset detail © Mark Baker.

Repositioning the Hafod Robin Urn

It is thanks to Caroline Palmer and the Hafod Trust that the fine Neoclassical Hafod Urn has now been repositioned on the ground floor in the main exhibition space at the National Library of Wales.

The Carrara marble urn, one of the last works by Thomas Banks, was made for Mariamne's private small walled garden at Hafod in 1802. Mariamne (1784-1811), Thomas Johnes's only daughter, was encouraged in her interest in plants by the distinguished botanist Sir James E. Smith and Dr. James Anderson, a noted Scottish agriculturalist, who planted the garden, on a rocky promontory above the Ystwyth valley, with shrubs and alpinists in 1795-96. Sadly Mariamne died in 1811 aged 27.

The urn commemorates the death of a tame robin and stands on a plinth inscribed with *An Epitaph on a Robin Redbreast* by Samuel Rogers.

Major Herbert Lloyd Johnes of Dolaucothi, and relative of Jane Johnes, purchased the urn at auction. Entrusted to the care of the National Library, the urn ornamented the rockery garden on the slope adjoining the caretaker's cottage. In the 1980s the urn was brought inside for protection and positioned at the entrance to the Council Chamber. Some 15 years ago the urn was removed from public view and last year Caroline found it languishing in the basement near the disabled toilet and baby changing facilities, lacking any explanation or information.

Raising awareness of this sad fate has led to the urn being restored to public view.

The Hafod Trust hope that a replica can be restored to Mariamne's garden.

For further information on the urn and discussion of the Epitaph see: <http://www.letterfromaberystwyth.co.uk/mariamnes-urn->

Uncertain Prospects

At the end of November, the Gardens Trust launched a short report *Uncertain Prospects: Public parks in the age of austerity* by Katy Layton-Jones.

<http://thegardenstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/uncertain-prospects-2.pdf>

Whilst celebrating a renaissance in public parks which has been achieved since the campaigning efforts of the Garden History Society and the Victorian Society in the early 1990s, there is warning of the desperate future many now face as a result of local authority spending cuts. More parks will depend on groups of Friends and volunteers. The designed landscape of parks will need people who understand how the special historic sites should be preserved and maintained.

During 2014 and 2015 Nesta, The Heritage Lottery Fund and The Big Lottery Fund, supported a small number of pioneering innovations, with a focus on supporting and testing the new business models that will enable our parks to thrive for the next century. This can be seen at: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks#sthash.H8fc1zEC.dpuf>



Crowds at Plas Cadnant 1 April 2017 © Glynis Shaw

Plas Cadnant Celebrations:

On 1 April crowds came to a Celebration event held at Plas Cadnant gardens, hosted by Anthony Tavernor.

The gardens that were devastated by Storm Desmond on Boxing Day 2015 have since undergone a huge restoration. The wall behind the pool at the end of the 2.5 acre walled garden which was swept away, has been sympathetically rebuilt and all of the grounds in the valley woodland have been miraculously restored.

Earlier this year Storm Doris contributed further damage to the site, so the day was a credit to the team who have removed all trace of storm damage.

Everyone was delighted to see that the gardens continue to flourish and mature with exquisite planting and rare species.

Welcome to Jane Lee

Jane has joined WHGT as an administrative assistant and can be contacted at leejane@btopenworld.com

Advertisements

WHGT publications welcome the support of advertisers for the WHGT Bulletin and Annual Review.

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Aberglasney Gardens, Llangathen, Carmarthen SA32 8QH
admin@whgt.org.uk 01558 668 48

Please send Items for the Autumn Bulletin to:
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NGS - Gardens, Tea and Cake makes all the Difference!

National Garden Scheme (NGS) announced their support for two apprenticeships at the National Botanical Garden of Wales on 14 March. The new posts start in September in botanical horticulture funded by the NGS and Patrick Daniell who has supported apprenticeships at the garden since May 2015.

The NGS held a special event on March 14 to celebrate its 90th year. A record £3 million will be donated to their beneficiaries in 2017 as a result of funds raised in 2016.

The National Autistic Society (NAS) is a new beneficiary of the Gardens and Health grant this year to help with their garden related projects. *Gardens and Health* is a key theme for the NGS this year. George Plumtre, Chief Executive, announced their first ever *Gardens and Health* Week. The report commissioned by NGS on *Gardens and Health* from the King's Fund can be seen at: <https://www.ngs.org.uk/gardens-and-health/>

NGS 90th Anniversary weekend, May 27th – 29th, will see over 400 gardens opening for a weekend of horticultural delight.

Legacies

Where there's a will there's a way to help. It is a little known fact that gifts in wills are the cornerstone of UK charities, contributing more than £2.5 billion a year to causes we care about.

After you have taken care of loved ones, please consider including Welsh Historic Gardens Trust in your will. Your support in this way would be greatly appreciated by the Trust. Our Treasurer Maldwyn Rees would be very happy to discuss a legacy with you and help set one up in your will: reesm@pc-q.net 07974311320