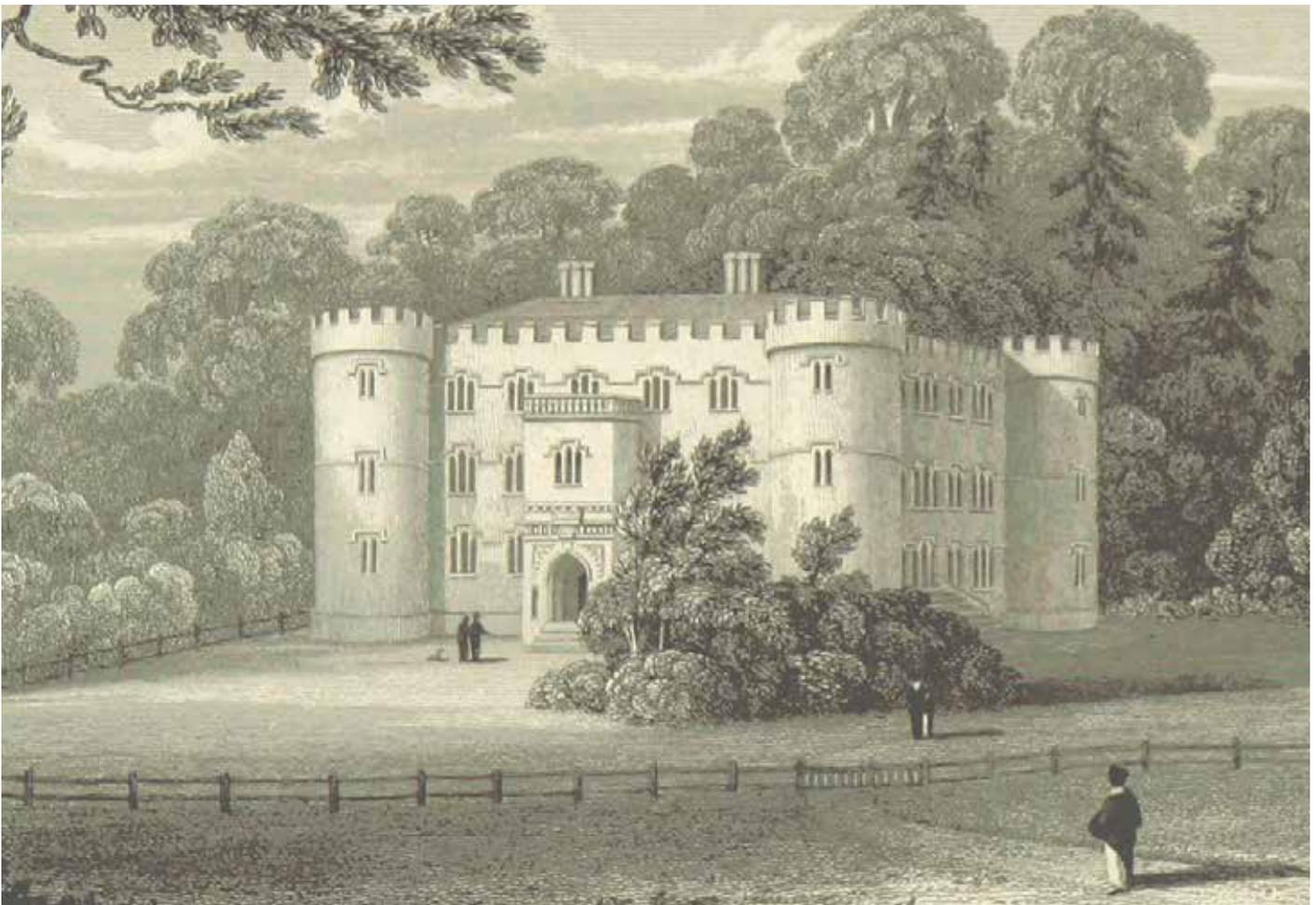




# WHGT BULLETIN

ISSUE 75 SPRING 2018



*Ruperra, Glamorganshire, 1821, page 300 of volume 5 of 'Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. L.P', by John Preston Neale. Original held and digitised by the British Library.*

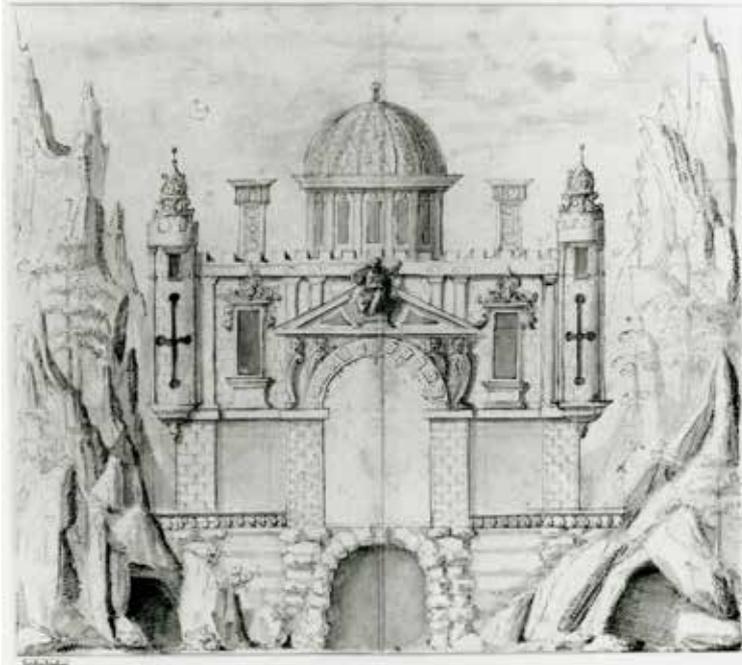
**Ruperra Castle: Vanished gardens, faded landscape.** John Thorneycroft LVO, FSA, RIBA

*Despite its current neglected condition, it is a precious example of a small group of surviving buildings that vividly illuminate a court culture of chivalric romanticism and architectural ingenuity. It sits in a fragile landscape of great beauty and acknowledged importance. (Professor Malcolm Airs FSA FRHS 2009: evidence of the significance of Ruperra.)*

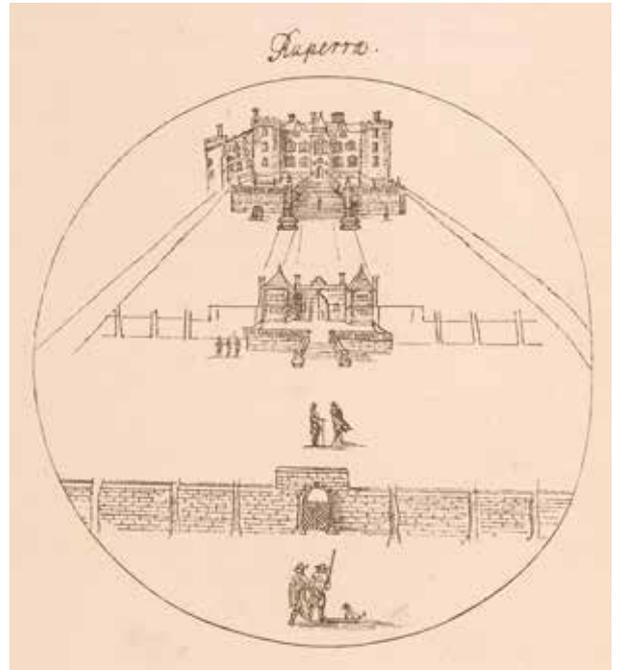
Ruperra Castle, near Caerphilly, is a scheduled ancient monument and Grade II\* listed building within a Conservation Area. Its Grade II setting is listed in the *Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales* for its deer park, the architectural remains of its seventeenth century layout and later Edwardian formal gardens and landscaping. I have known this magical place almost all my life, ever since my first visit on a fine summer's day in 1948 for a picnic in the mysterious ruined gardens arranged for the children of the Tredegar Estate by eccentric Evan Tredegar's equally eccentric agent who suddenly materialised in the midst of the happy event dressed as Charles I.

Appropriate, as the King did visit the castle briefly in 1645 but we should look for its origin earlier in that century when Sir Thomas Morgan, newly knighted by James 1 in 1623, returned to Wales after service as the Earl of Pembroke's steward at Wilton.

Infused with the taste and sophistication of the Tudor court, Morgan was eager to build in the very latest chivalric manner with Lulworth Castle, Dorset, completed after 1608, as his template. Ruperra was completed by 1626, replacing an earlier house, and in its Welsh context, must have looked astonishingly avant-garde and strange; a fantasy castle inspired by the set designs of Inigo Jones for court masques and the courtly ethos of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.



Inigo Jones, Sketch for 'Oberon, the Faery Prince'. A Masque of Prince Henry's by Ben Jonson 1611. Devonshire Collection, Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees. Photograph: © Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. Private collection.



Ruperra, 1684. Dineley's sketch of the formal south approach to Ruperra Castle © NLW

While the castle itself has undergone only one major alteration following a serious fire in 1785, its surrounding courtyards, gardens and landscape have seen several major changes, which can be identified from evidence, at five widely separated dates.

Evidence of its early setting appears in the rather artless sketches in *An Account of the Progress of his Grace Henry the first Duke of Beaufort through Wales, 1684*, by Thomas Dineley, one of the extensive entourage of the Duke of Beaufort, to record their banquet at Ruperra. At the time of this splendid event, the Morgans had already built their lavish palace at Tredegar and the castle had passed through marriage to the Kemeys family. Linking palace and castle, an avenue of chestnuts called The Great Walk had been planted across the Deer Park.

Dineley's efforts show the south approach to Ruperra Castle with a simple arrangement of courts on three ascending levels, the lower two separated by a retaining wall with an elaborate gatehouse or barbican, and the South Porch entrance on a high terrace at the summit, reached via an improbably long flight of very grand steps. The only hint of planting are lines of distressingly pollarded trees, perhaps an artist's short cut to help complete the sketch in a hurry.

A survey of the Tredegar Estate, in *A Map of the Demesne of Ruperra belonging to the Hon. Thomas Morgan Esq. 1764* (NLW), reveals that over the intervening 80 years, a far more elaborate system of courtyards gardens and landscaping had developed. The sequence of enclosed courts sketched by Dineley had been elaborated and realigned, and most interestingly, a terraced paradise garden had been laid out, overlooked from rides referred to as 'lights' cut into the wooded hillside of Coed Craig Ruperra.

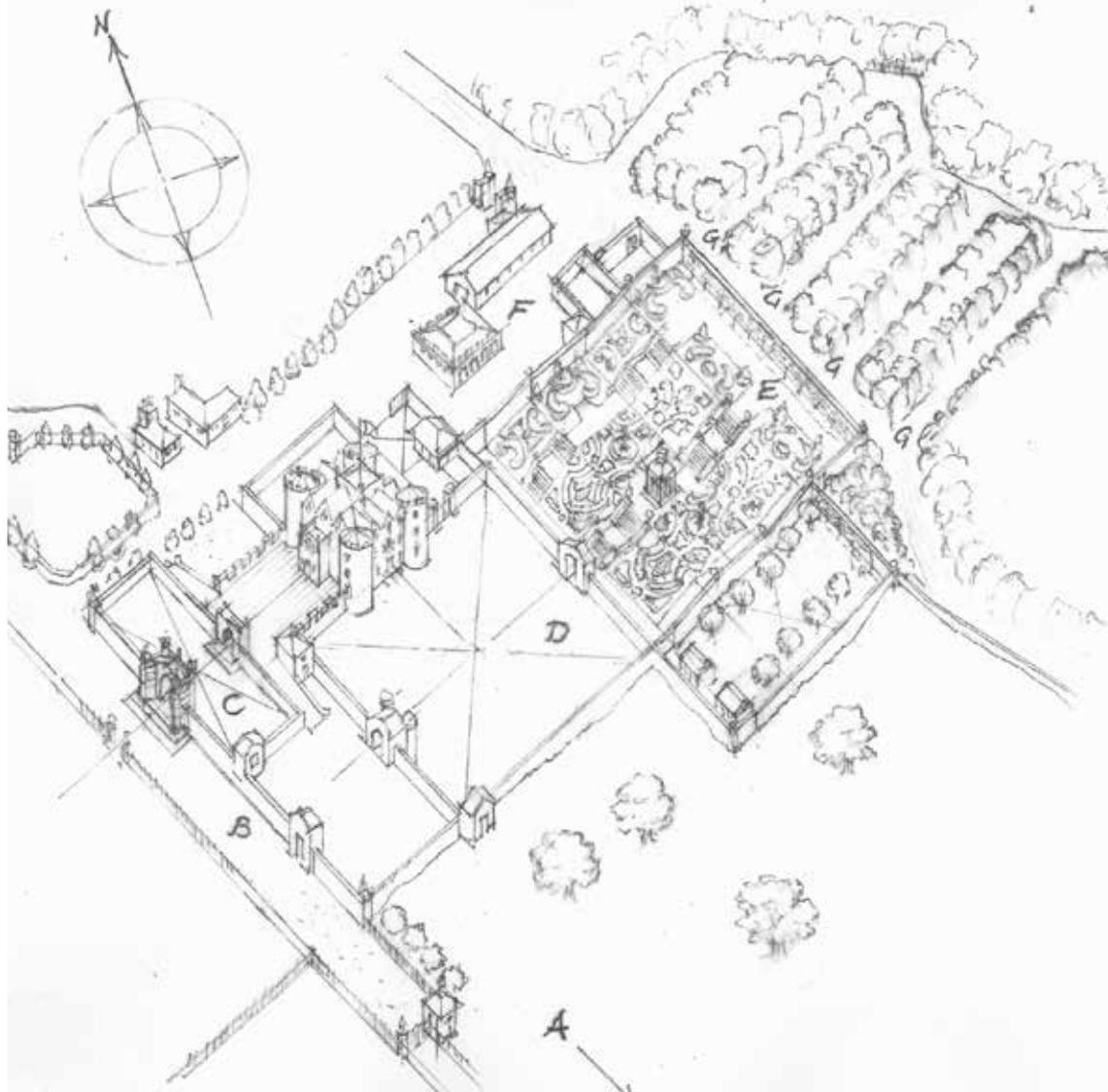
At the top of these openings a walk was carefully threaded through the woodland, as at Piercefield Park, Monmouthshire, first to a belvedere complete with its own 'light' giving a distant view of the Channel, and then spiralling up an ancient motte, in the manner of a Troy Town, to arrive at a stone summerhouse.

In his article *On the ruins of Ruperra in Country Life*, 23.10.1986, Giles Worsley observes; *this is a carefully thought out sequence of some importance for early gardens in Wales are little recorded. It would be fascinating to know more about its origin.*

Anecdotally, parterres were assumed to exist at Ruperra either from the outset, or after the royal visit in 1645, when Isaac de Caux who had provided designs at Wilton in 1633, was said to have done the same for Thomas Morgan on the King's order. This is unsubstantiated and, given the unsettled times, a little too temptingly like a good story to be relied upon.

A letter written in 1699 by the gentleman soldier-architect and garden designer Captain William Winde, one of 80 addressed to his cousin Lady Mary Bridgeman concerning the re-modelling of Castle Bromwich, Warwickshire, records transplanting trees at Ruperra, *of considerable bigeness withe good suckcess* for Sir Charles Kemeys.

Winde is known for providing parterre designs for eminent clients including William Herbert, 1st Marquess of Powis Castle, and his surviving layout for the Bridgeman family at Castle Bromwich could well relate to the vanished formal terraces at Ruperra. Indeed it is unlikely that this fashionable garden designer would be invited to Ruperra just to move a few trees and far more plausible that this was just one element of an extensive commission. Accordingly, it seems reasonable



Key  
(based on an abstract to the Key to the 1764 map).

A Gated Avenue from the Caerphilly Road.

B Driveway to the principle (South) entrance access to the Deer Park, Great Walk and Fishpond field.

C Entrance forecourt with inner gateway to raised South front terrace and the south porch. Within, left: buttery, and offices, right: the Great hall.

D The Square court, called the 'Deer court'.

E The gardens with adjacent orchards and barns.

F Stables and a great barn.

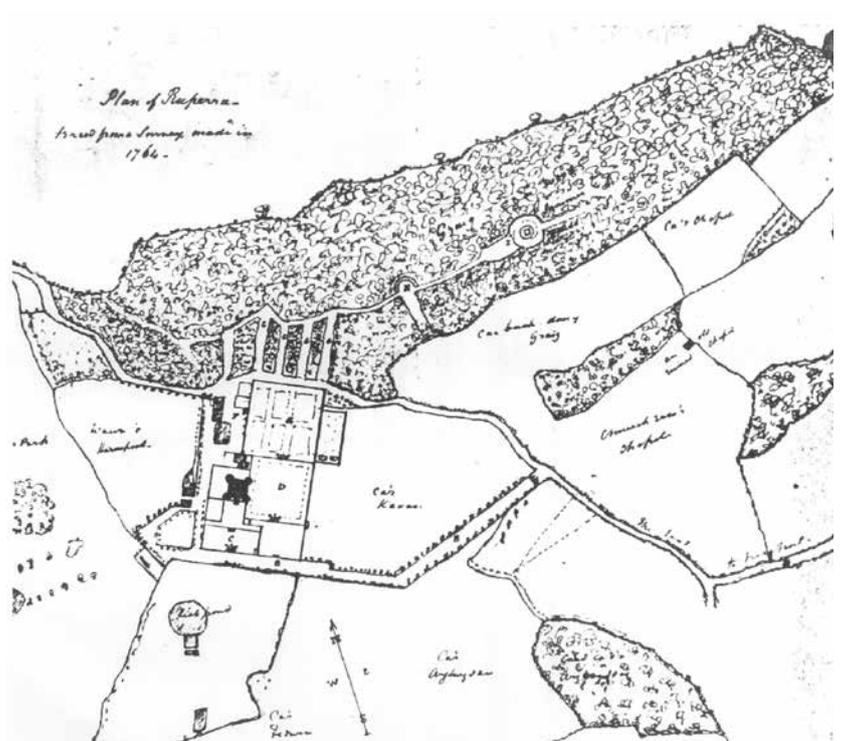
G 'Lights' cut through the wood from the woodland walk.

Ruperra Castle: A conjectural 42 degree isometric projection © John Thorneycroft. Extrapolated from A Map of the Demesne of Ruperra belonging to the Hon. Thomas Morgan Esq. 1764 (NLW).

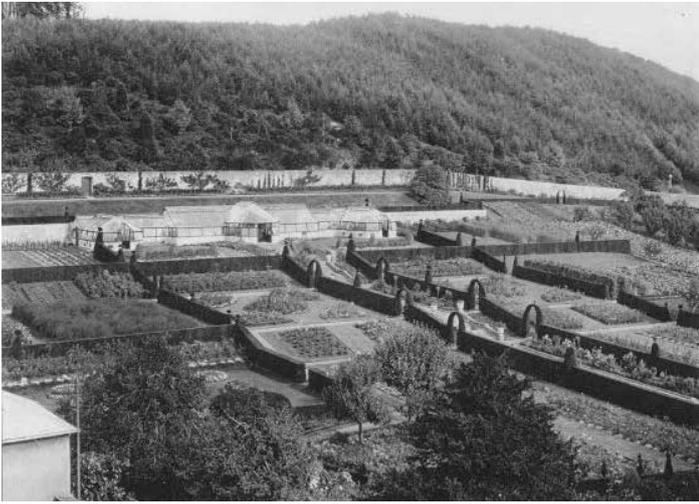
to suggest that it was Winde's sophisticated scheme, including both the parterres and the woodland landscaping, that appears on the 1764 survey.

After the serious fire in 1786 major alterations to the appearance of the castle were carried out by the architect Thomas Hardwick, as seen in the Neale view, and from about that time the formal courtyards, still shown in a Kemeys' archive dated 1785, were abolished and the ground levels altered to integrate the castle into a fashionable newly landscaped home park. The old formal approach to the South Porch was abandoned and a new driveway laid out to the East front and Hardwick's modest new front door.

Reduced from a castle to a castellated country house, Ruperra in its Deer Park saw only occasional use as a hunting box and over most of the nineteenth century it fell into gradual decline. The 1870 OS map shows an orchard covering the site of the lost parterres. The 'lights' too are gone, though the woodland



Detail of 1764 map showing the 'lights' through the woodland (NLW).



Edwardian gardens at Ruperra 1935 (*Country Life*)



East front and gardens © Crown copyright: RCAHMW: Aerofilms Collection, 1930



Ruperra Castle 2009, Draethen, Caerphilly © Paul White



The South East tower collapsed 1982

path still leads to the summerhouse on the mound, now a scheduled ancient monument. By this time two more summerhouses linked by a gentler woodland walk have appeared.

In 1909 Freddie Morgan died leaving his son Courtney a legacy of neglect, including the burnt out shell of the old stable block abandoned since a fire in 1890.

An ambitious campaign of improvement ensued, beginning with the rebuilding and an extension of the stables. Later a muscular Edwardian porch was added to increase the importance of Hardwick's entrance and a low curving crenellated wall built enclosing the perimeter of the existing lawns on the East front.

But by far the greatest achievement was the creation of major new flower gardens in 1912, laid partly over the contours of the seventeenth century parterres but far greater in extent. The uppermost terrace was crowned by a splendid teak framed conservatory flanked by twin carnation houses by Mackenzie & Moncur of Glasgow, the Rolls-Royce of glasshouse builders.

The pre war aerial view of Ruperra with 1912 garden layout shows the remains of the seventeenth century

Great Walk to Tredegar House visible in the top left hand corner.

Only 22 years later the family finally abandoned the castle and its magnificent gardens. Lying empty and useless it was given over to the war department by the Tredegar Estate and shortly afterward was gutted by fire, a disaster waiting to happen. In 1962 the successor to the Tredegar estate sold what remained of Ruperra. A succession of unsuitable owners lived in Hardwick's Bothy, one installing a large concrete pool destroying more of the seventeenth century garden archaeology. The South East tower of the castle collapsed in 1982.

In 2002, following many more years of uncaring ownership and neglect Ruperra was threatened by a highly contentious enabling development which was eventually defeated at a public inquiry in 2009 thanks mainly to the heroic efforts of the Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust. While this gave no comfort for the Scheduled Ancient Monument, its fragile surrounding landscape was saved from obliteration. The state of dereliction at Ruperra at this time is shown in Paul White's image above.



*Ruperra Mackenzie & Moncur glasshouses May 8, 2018 © John Thorneycroft.*

For just over 300 years the courtyards, parterres, landscaping and Deer Park were enjoyed, embellished and adapted by succeeding generations of the Morgan and Kemey's families.

Beginning as a prodigy design with courtly and briefly royal connections the castle devolved into a hunting box for the new house at Tredegar and again after a period of neglect, to the well-appointed Edwardian home complete with modern stabling and an extensive formal flower garden with one of the grandest glasshouses in Wales. Sad that after such centuries of splendour it should have spent the last 77 years as a gutted ruin surrounded by wilderness and decay. Elisabeth Whittle writing in the

Bulletin in 1999 suggests that *sympathetic treatment of the former gardens would not only reveal the historic character of the site but also provide the castle with an attractive and appropriate setting.*

There is now a real chance that with a sympathetic new owner, and a scheme for emergency work to the castle funded through SAVE about to begin, something of these aspirations may soon be achieved.

Already the battered but virtually intact façade of the glasshouses has emerged from the scrub clearance. Its teak and cast iron structure have survived 88 odd years of neglect, proving its exceptional quality of construction.

## Editorial Glynis Shaw

Attending the annual conference 'Digital Past' held at Aberystwyth University meant seeing the grubbed up shrubberies. It is great that the Ceredigion branch has mounted a campaign to save this twentieth century listed landscape from further destruction (see pg 9).

Digital Past is organised by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, to showcase and share innovative digital technologies and techniques for data capture, interpretation and dissemination of the heritage of Wales, the UK and beyond.

New digital technologies need to be utilised to meet the expectations of generation Z (the demographic cohort after the Millennials) who have grown up in a digital age. In some cases a new skillset will be needed, particularly in the management and interpretation of vastly increased data now available. Developing technologies for new information capture such as drone imaging will enhance our understanding and knowledge of the historic landscape.

Greater use of social media to disseminate information or as a tool for campaigning to save sites at risk can lead to tremendous success at speed and with almost no cost. However, social media has its pitfalls, with a potential for confusion, and instant critique. Some platforms provide

limited space for communication leading to a dumbing down of information. There is also an expectation and an over reliance on instant information. A further challenge is in maintaining the accuracy of content with the speed of new communications.

It is the entertainment industry that largely leads on digital developments. This means that there is a growing interest in the ways virtual and augmented reality can help share the knowledge, experience and interest in the past. More data can be visualised with sophisticated 3D modelling systems and this can make information seem more real and entertaining.

Satellite data will improve detailed mapping and problems of canopy penetration are being addressed. The future will see more interactive experiences. Technology is also increasingly helping those with disabilities to share and enjoy heritage experiences.

Whilst the world becomes ever more digital, I sense that for some, a visit to a park or garden is a retreat from a world of technology. Digital wizardry can't replace a real experience, with plants and nature, when stepping into a sunlit beautiful old garden moments after it has just stopped raining.



Palé Hall, Llandderfel, four gardeners tending the grounds c 1875 (NLW); Right Thomas Ruddy age 27, courtesy of W. Carey.

## Thomas Ruddy, Palé Hall's first Head Gardener Wendy Carey

On Tuesday 19th January 1869 a young man arrived at Palé Hall near Bala, Merionethshire, to take up a post as Head Gardener for the railway engineer Henry Robertson and his family. His name was Thomas Ruddy and fortunately he kept a journal that was preserved amongst family papers for two further generations. The day went well; Thomas set about making his mark on the design of the garden, and a warm relationship commenced between Ruddy and the Robertsons which continued through 37 years in his position as Head Gardener and thence until 1912 when Thomas died. Thomas records the significant day in his journal: *Mr. Robertson was waiting at the station where I arrived at 11 am. On delivering my letter of introduction, he told me to go up to Bryntirion first where he had engaged apartments for me and then get to Palé. Mr. Smith the architect and Mr. Bull the clerk of works arrived at the same time.*

*Mrs. Robertson and family came from Crogan in the afternoon, so that we spent the day in talking and planning. A new house was to be built with the dining room windows looking west, the boudoir and drawing room windows looking NW & W the flower garden was to be (according to the architect's wish) in the small piece in front of the dining room, but I got Mr. & Mrs. Robertson to have it where it now is with terraces instead of a bank. Mrs. Robertson then wished me to plan the glass houses. I was quite pleased with the affable and modest manners of Mrs. Robertson and family...Mr. Robertson's manner was more like that of a business man, quick at comprehending me, and quick at deciding. I felt quite at home with my new employer and his amiable family. I slept at Bryntirion, with the determination to make Palé a fine place. I set to work next morning, got some men to work and formed many plans in my mind.*

Unfortunately for garden historians, Thomas's journal contains hardly any direct reference to the develop-

ment of Palé gardens, his day-to-day work or details of his workforce. However, the eight handwritten hardback notebooks record almost the whole of his life, which was remarkable in a number of ways, charting both Thomas' education as a gardener, and the delicately nuanced relationship between Thomas and his family and Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, and then their son Sir Henry Beyer Robertson who took over the Palé estate following his father's death in 1888.

Thomas did not have an easy start in life; it must have been his own innate talent and diligence that brought him to Palé aged 27, to his third situation as Head Gardener, and the most extensive of his estates. Thomas did not even begin life as 'Thomas'. He was born in January 1842 in the village of Murrisk, County Mayo, Ireland and baptised Patrick. Thus he was born in the centre of the area afflicted by the Irish potato famine in the mid 1840's. Nothing of this appears in the journal, which begins with his boyhood in Jedburgh, Scotland. Despite spending almost all of his working life outside Scotland, first in England and then in Wales, he obviously retained his Scots accent, for Queen Victoria herself, during her visit to Palé in 1889, asked him which part of Scotland he came from. In the census records of 1871, 1881 and 1891 he records himself as born in Scotland, but the Scottish census of 1861, taken while Thomas was a garden boy in his first situation at Minto, near Jedburgh states that he was born in Ireland. His journey towards the position at Palé begins with ambition: *The time came at last that I must take some occupation – various occupations were thought of, but I did not fancy them because they were to be in shops – these did not suit my fancy for I loved the open air, I loved natural objects I loved to see nature. My father had a friend named Robert Daniel..... This man gave my father glowing accounts of gardeners, and how he knew of many and that he was nearly being one*

himself in his day but that he foolishly let a companion of his go in his place – how that companion went to the garden, served his time, pushed up and in a few years after came to see him with ‘the air and address of a gentleman’. He ended by strongly advising me to be a gardener.

Thomas began his apprenticeship at Minto House, Roxburghshire in 1858, under the supervision of Mr. Williamson the Head Gardener: *November came and I went to the garden on the 11th of the month to live in a ‘bothy’ with other four companions; luckily these were sober and intelligent. During the long winter evenings, all of us instructed ourselves in geometry, mensuration, and in languages. My companions were Oliver Taylor, who used to read aloud to us when resting from study; he was a well instructed man and a distinct reader. Andrew Stormont was studying French, James Stables was studying Latin, and Wm. Nichols was like myself, studying botany and geometry. I took also to French and Italian. Our ‘bothy’ was during the winter evenings more like a school than anything else.*

Thomas’ apprenticeship ended in November 1861, and he spent a year at Gilmerton House, East Lothian. After this we begin to see that being a competent gardener at a time of great expansion of estates and gardens gave talented gardeners, and particularly foremen and head gardeners, an advantage in what was a seller’s market. From this time Thomas was able to pick and choose his positions, according to their geographical and climatic conditions, and the amiability of the employer. Rossdhu house in Dumbartonshire did not bring satisfaction, and he stayed only a month in late 1862.

Thomas then followed a developing trend in the careers of gardeners of the time, and went to work at Pink Hill Nursery in Edinburgh. The most prestigious Nurseries seem to have acted as ‘head hunters’ for the profession. Just over a month after arriving at Pink Hill Thomas writes: *I had the offer of two situations the same day, one was to go to be journeymen at Lambeth Palace London, which I declined; the other to go to the Isle of Man in a place where I was to get the foreman’s place when he left, this I accepted.* The decision seems to have been in favour of career over glamour!

After two years in the Isle of Man, Thomas made connection with Dickson’s Nursery in Chester, a move that four years later was to lead him to Palé, and to make in George Dickson a friend with whom he shared a mutual passion for geology. Thomas was 23, and becoming a ‘hot property’: *On the following day I took a letter of introduction to Mr. James Dickson, Newton Nursery. I was kindly received, and when he found that I could do geometrical drawing, he said that I was the very man he wanted, because there was a gentleman in Herefordshire who wanted a man to landscape some work. .... The gardeners in the nursery were envious, because I, a newcomer, was picked out and sent out as a landscape gardener. Mr. Dickson said that I looked young, but I was to put on my top hat as he called it and go up to the*



Above: Palé Walled garden c.1875 (NLW)  
Below: Palé glasshouses-demolished 1961

*gentleman like a man. ....*

*I soon found that I would not be comfortable at The Barns so that I resolved to leave, I liked Mr. Pemberton very much, he was affable, chatty and pleasant, but his gardener was a morose disagreeable man; he was the only disagreeable gardener I ever had to do with. I felt inclined to go to London instead of Chester, although I had a very nice letter from Mr. Dickson pressing me to return. I resolved to go to Mr. Laing at Stanstead Park, Forest Hill, London.*

Two months later, Thomas made an interesting decision - to study horticulture at a nursery in Angers, France. Little has been written about English gardeners studying in France at this period but there was an international feel about his fellow students: *there were several other strangers there with whom I got acquainted when I was able to speak. Our common language was French. My companions came to be my two English friends, a Swede named Nicholas Peter Jensen, an Italian named André Rovelli,....; Hesterman, a native of Potsdam in Prussia.*

Thomas remained in France for eight months, on his return taking up his first Head Gardener post at Newtonairds House where he *had hothouses to erect and furnish.* Winter damp, summer flies and argumentative father and son employers drove him thence to Derby-



Left: Thomas Ruddy aged about 64, courtesy of W. Carey. Right: Palé Hall, Llandderfel South face and terracing (NLW)

shire for two years, where he met and married his first wife Mary. Then it was that he arrived at Palé.

Two things rooted the previously peripatetic Thomas to Palé and its surroundings. One was his warm relationship with the Robertson family, sensed from their first meeting, and unchanged through the rest of Thomas' life; the other was his passion for geology.

I theorise that Thomas Ruddy's relationship with his employer at Palé, the railway engineer and mining magnate Henry Robertson, was one of mutual respect between two men who had risen in the world through their own talents and determination. So far as Robertson knew, it was also a relationship between two Scotsmen - I doubt that Robertson knew of Ruddy's Irish origins. I imagine that Robertson demanded prompt, high quality and well-managed work, and that Ruddy met these expectations. Certainly Robertson was empathetic to his gardener's needs, arranging a holiday for Thomas, his wife and baby son at the end of his first year of work, when Thomas had almost worn himself out and compromised his health with his endeavours in laying out the new gardens at Palé.

In his excellent book on Head Gardeners (1) Toby Musgrave points out: *indeed what could make a nouveau riche garden-owner feel more smug than to invite his aristocratic neighbour to view his most recent, most expensive and thoroughly fashionable horticultural purchases and successes.* Certainly there were many visitors to Robertson's garden, some from overseas, such as the Dutch Barones van Heeckeren van Waliën. Thomas was also loaned out to Robertson's acquaintances to assess and advise on their gardens. He was soon in demand as a judge at local produce shows and eisteddfods.

Throughout his adult life Thomas became passionately interested in geology, and increasingly skilled in the practical and theoretical aspects of this new science. He had read Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1861, only two years after its publication, whilst his elder brother James, witnessing his father's death certificate with a cross,

appears not to have learned to read. Through his friendship with Chester nurseryman George Dickson, Ruddy associated himself with the Chester Society of Natural Science, soon becoming a guide to many of the Society's members in geology, botany and walking expeditions. His employer seemed happy to allow Thomas opportunity for these excursions and his own fossil hunting expeditions, and to have been proud of his employee's talents.

In 1878 the adult Robertson children, Elizabeth, Henry Beyer, and Annie, now Mrs. Sherriff, with Annie's sisters in law, went on two geological expeditions with Thomas:

*May 3rd Miss Robertson brought Miss Sherriff, and Miss Alice Sherriff to see my fossils and general collection; they were very much pleased. After seeing them we went together in the wagonette to Garnedd to see the Bala beds and to collect fossils. Mr. H.B. Robertson went with us. We got several nice fossils and walked back together.*

*May 18th I went with the Misses Sherriff & Mrs. Sherriff to Gelli Grin, to geologise. The first two worked uncommonly hard at stone-breaking - I never saw more enthusiastic ladies fossil hunting. Mrs. Sherriff was painting a sketch. They all enjoyed themselves very much and were very courteous.*

In 1887 Thomas hosted a large party from the Staffordshire Field Club at Palé where they were met and entertained to tea and a tour of the gardens by the whole Robertson family. Thanking Thomas, the Staffordshire Secretary remarked *he could see by the way the Robertsons spoke of me and treated me that I was practically one of the Palé family.* [2]

We are fortunate that the journals preserve a memory of a remarkable man and that the gardens at Palé still bear the stamp of his creativity and diligence.

1. Musgrave, T. *The Head Gardeners*; Aurum Press 2007

2. Thomas Ruddy in a letter to his wife, June 1887

For further information on Thomas Ruddy please see:

<http://thomasruddy.co.uk/>

## A Cadw Listed garden in Crisis Caroline Palmer

In 2002 the grounds of Aberystwyth University were awarded Grade II\* listing in the Cadw Register, one of a very small number of twentieth century gardens to receive this accolade.

The earliest buildings on the campus had been designed by architect Sir Percy Thomas, and later buildings were by others in his Partnership. The exposed and sloping site so close to the coast created special challenges, and the design concept was that the brutalist long low flat-roofed buildings should be framed by shrub plantings which would reach through the site like long fingers extending from a periphery of trees. These shrubs would provide a dark underlining when seen from a distance, and help to reinforce the horizontality of expression, appearing dark green in summer and green, brown and black in winter through the selection of swathes of deciduous and evergreen plants. Parts of the garden between the earlier buildings, Pantycelyn Hall and the Cledwyn building, were laid out according to designs by the acclaimed landscape architect Brenda Colvin.

Adjoining Plas Penglais, the Principal's residence, a botanic garden had been established in 1947, headed up by Head Gardener Harry Hart recruited from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. He was followed by Basil Fox, Curator of the Botany Garden and College Grounds, and during this time an extensive programme of trialling, propagating and hybridising suitable shrub species was closely supervised by successive professors of botany. The result was swathes of dense groundcover, heavy on cotoneasters, hebes, heathers, olearias, hydrangeas, but including specialities like crinodendrons, embotrium, camellias and rhododendrons in sheltered corners.

Over the years staff cuts have reduced maintenance, and the botany gardens, with their beds representing each taxonomic order of plants have long been abandoned. However, the character of the main campus

remained, with a rich ecosystem of wildlife benefitting from the permanent plantings.

It was a shock in 2017 to find that the newly appointed estates manager had set about solving the problem of encroaching brambles by sweeping away entire borders to replace them with bark and turf. Worse still, the contractors had no expertise to identify the gems among the plantings. The few trees spared by the mechanical digger were wild seedlings grown out of the planned borders: willow, ash and sycamore, which will be quite unsuitable, and grow far too big in coming years.

When we contacted the University it became clear that the "new brooms" had failed even to acquaint themselves with the Cadw listed status of campus, or indeed with a major landscape survey commissioned by the University in 2010 which had designated this very border as planting of the highest historical significance. Ros Laidlaw and I have since been recruited onto an Advisory Group which meets occasionally, and the University is now going to commission a Conservation Management Plan, whose author will consult with Lisa Fiddes of Cadw, and hopefully study the documentation of development plan and survey in the University's own archive.

In the meantime, more devastation has occurred in the name of Health and Safety, executed by people with no horticultural training whatever.

There are some good documents out there, like Cadw's Managing Change to Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, but sadly the Register does not confer statutory protection, and the priorities of the Estates Department do not appear to extend beyond making things 'tidy'.

Students, staff, and residents of Aberystwyth have protested, there have been howls of dismay in the press and social media. None of this will necessarily be enough to save this listed garden.

*Grubbed up shrubbery below the Hugh Owen building, Penglais campus Aberystwyth University © Caroline Palmer.*





about the Garden, considered the soil excellent and the garden well sheltered and drained and believed vegetables would grow well. Much encouraged, he sowed a *good lot of seeds*, even before signing the tenancy agreement in May 1858. Ty Cerrig's garden, during the Pamplins' tenure, may have been about an acre in extent, probably incorporating part of a field. (The property was later re-named Priordy and by 1871 was occupied by the then late Rector's daughters, Matilda and Sophia Jones). Country living gave Pamplin the opportunity to indulge his passion for natural history – on arriving at Ty Cerrig he and his wife turned out their *two Green*

*Jersey Lizards in the most sunny part of the Garden*. Among many birds observed over the years he recorded swifts, wheatears, greenfinches, spotted flycatchers and in May 1866 he recorded a corncrake in their garden, *standing on top of the manure heap with outstretched neck...puzzled by the very strong echo which sounds from that point*. By the mid-1860s, Pamplin had added beekeeping to his activities. The creation of a kitchen garden was a priority and much needed help was obtained from a local labourer, John Roberts, who remained Pamplin's gardener well into the 1880s. The development of Pamplin's two gardens in Llandderfel was captured in his *Diary and Botanical Record...and Mem. for my garden at Ty Cerrig and at Pen y Llan* (NLW MS 7508C). Varieties of pease, potatoes, carrots, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, artichokes and *Orange Jelly* turnip were sown and grown: as for any gardener, the challenges came from winter weather, constant rain, rabbits and in Ty Cerrig's garden, marauding hares. Caught in a steel trap, one *fine huge & heavy* hare wended its way *in a basket with some carrots herbs & plants* to Pamplin's sisters at Lavender Hill.

Plants were offered from the rectory garden, and an apple tree from John Jones, parish clerk and choirmaster; other vegetable seeds and plants being contributed by Alexander Irvine, Pamplin's old friend John Lloyd and from Kennedy (possibly the Vineyard Nursery, Hammersmith) and also from his uncle at Walthamstow and sisters at Lavender Hill. By September 1858, William and James had planned and marked out the garden into quarters, separating the kitchen and flower garden with *broken & curved lines* of laurels and lilacs. The Rector provided new boundary rails; an orchard was established with many dwarf varieties, hedges planted and new paths created. Regrettably, hares and sheep decimated much of the early planting by the time the Pamplins returned in January 1859. Undaunted, William set to *digging & forking* and at James Pamplin's instigation and plan, he began creating botanic borders (the plants laid out in family order, such as Aster or Campanula), *from the entrance gate all*



William and Caroline Pamplin, Pen y Llan, c.1870, courtesy of W. Carey.

*round the Ch(urch) y(ar)d wall* within the garden. The *intelligence, care, and neatness* he observed in small gardens attached to farms and cottages seen on his travels, encouraged him to advocate improvements to the quality of horticulture and floriculture through hands on education.

A strong family friendship with William Anderson, Curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden (1814-1846), and later Sir William Jackson Hooker's patronage while at Kew, of Pamplin's botanical agency and bookselling / publishing business, indubitably gave him a sound grounding and familiarity with the layout of botanic gardens.

As a herbarium agent dealing with botanical explorers and plant introductions from the Americas, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, William Pamplin was accustomed to the challenging business of selling on seeds and dried plants to clients. However, the guiding principle at his own North Wales Central Botanic Garden was to offer *gratuitous distribution of seeds and plants; mutual exchange* of seeds and plants; and to offer *practical advice and assistance in planning and managing the gardens of small farms and cottages*. Always open to visitors, he held Exhibition Days and made small packets of seeds or spare plants available. In October 1863, Pamplin fitted out a *New Room* as a shop to cope with demand, which included vegetable seeds or plants from his garden. Visiting Ty Cerrig at every opportunity over the next four years, the Pamplins were shocked when given notice to quit in 1862.

Nevertheless, when he retired from his Soho business in September 1863, he and Caroline planned to make Llandderfel their permanent residence. Clearly negotiating a reprieve lease from the Rector, they resolved their housing problem by buying the property next-door. Pen y Llan, or Top y Llan as it was known colloquially, was described by Pamplin as *An old thatched house, tavern or rather two buildings, one, of a more modern date with stable, brew-house and wash-house*, which they demolished and completely rebuilt in 1864. The old thatch was carefully preserved and became the basis for new hot beds at Pen y Llan.



Dickson's Advertising Leaflet; interleaved in Pamplin's Account Book, July 1872-93 (Ruddy-Pamplin Papers).

Over the following year, Pamplin recreated his garden, transferring most of the trees and plants (with the Rector's blessing) from Ty Cerrig next door until they finally moved into their new house in September 1865. Much the same size as Ty Cerrig's garden, and again, probably incorporating part of a field, Pen y Llan was laid out on similar lines: quartered, with a strict division between kitchen and flower gardens, lawns, an orchard and new hedges, paths and again, his botanic borders. Pamplin's generosity towards his neighbours occasionally had its drawbacks. After erecting a new pump for the well in Pen y Llan's garden, Pamplin was obliged to affix a padlock and chain, after it was discovered that the rectory's maid was happily availing herself of a convenient water supply.

Throughout his life, Pamplin maintained a strong correspondence with his business clients, a number of whom became friends, particularly those with sound botanical or gardening interests. This led to seed and plant introductions from notable gardens at Ty Cerrig and latterly Pen y Llan which Pamplin reciprocated. In February 1871, he sent off *the Basket of Plants a really capital lot of very nice things for Mr Gerard Smith's Garden at Ockbrook near Derby*: this was the Rev Gerard Edwards Smith (1804-1881), a

client of Pamplin's since the early 1850s. In November 1864, Thomas Moore, curator at Chelsea sent a mixed parcel of hardy bulbs including Narcissus, Fritillaria, Scilla and Muscari and the following month, *A basket of live plants* was contributed by Pamplin's friend John Smith, curator at Kew and planted out in *long bed No. 3* close to the house. Amongst these were Fritillaria Imperialis, Liliun tigrinum and L. martagon, two varieties of Ophiopogon (Lilyturf), and Five-fingered Aralia (Eleutherococcus seiboldianus, 'varigata') and Anemone japonica. In 1857 Smith published under the auspices of the publishing arm of Pamplin's botanical business, *Cultivated Ferns: Or A Catalogue Of Exotic And Indigenous Ferns Cultivated In British Gardens*. Pamplin continued to receive Kew plants or seeds for his botanic garden over the following two decades. Friends and family regularly sent seeds, bulbs and plants – John Lloyd, who specialized in succulents, sent Aloes and Sempervirens. James Pamplin contributed white lily bulbs from his Walthamstow nursery, the Rectory offered tulips, crocuses, hyacinths and narcissus and *my good customer & friend Mr Geo. Wood of Rochford* sent several varieties of cyclamen and polyanthus seeds which Pamplin assiduously potted up before winter set in. Sarah and Harriett Pamplin sent their brother a variety of dwarf fruit trees in November 1864, for planting in Pen y Llan's new orchard. In 1870 William became acquainted with Thomas Ruddy, the Head Gardener at Palé, and in 1871 was pleased to receive *a few nice Cabbage Plants in the end of March* also *some famous Cauliflowers on April 25*; the following year, Ruddy contributed Brompton Stock seeds, the Crocus sulphureus and potatoes Myatts Early Kidney.

Over time, Pamplin favoured hardy bulbs or hardy or half-hardy herbaceous perennials in his botanic border planting, many from the Asteraceae family. By the early 1870s, he began producing catalogues of hardy bulbs from his garden: earlier listings of plants in his garden were detailed in indexes to his personal copies of Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*; unfortunately, none of these records appear to have survived. Benefitting from the family background in horticulture, Pamplin bought plants and seeds, largely vegetable, from many reputable contemporary nurserymen: these included Joseph Bray (1813-1890), nurseryman and florist of Lambeth; *Mr Mackay* of Walthamstow; *Dickson's of Chester*, a large nursery business at Upton House, Newton, Chester and Robert Mackenzie Stark (1815-1873), a botanist and nurseryman of Edinburgh, a specialist in alpines.

Three of Pamplin's plant exchanging client-friends are of particular interest: William Wilson Saunders FRS, FLS (1809-1879), a well-known naturalist and a vice-president of the RHS, who established a renowned botanical collection in 1857 including Fern House and Orchid House at Hillfield, Reigate, Surrey. In September 1862, Pamplin prepared ground to receive 70-80 bulbs *so kindly given me by Mr. Wilson Saunders – from his splendid Garden*, but having been short of time during

*William and Margaret Pamplin, Pen y Llan, c.1895. John Thomas Collection 1502B; by permission of NLW.*

his visit to Hillfield, failed to write down the bulb names and could only await identification once they had grown. A number proved to be Narcissus and Alliums. Saunders later sent 3 *large Umbells* (possibly Giant Hogweed) for the garden's herbaceous borders, which Pamplin potted up along with Giant Brompton and other Stocks.

The Rev Henry Harpur-Crewe (1828-1883), distinguished for his study of crocuses, also plant exchanged with Pamplin. In December 1872, plants from the rectory garden at Drayton Beauchamp, Buckinghamshire included *Crocus aureus* (flavus) and *C. minimus*, which Pamplin noted were originally wild roots from Barton Hall, Bury St. Edmunds. In September 1873, Harpur-Crewe sent Pamplin four varieties of crocus bulbs for the Botanic Garden.

Perhaps the most intriguing of his gardening correspondents was the Rev Canon Henry Nicholson Ellacombe (1822-1916), of Bitton, near Bristol, author of *In a Gloucestershire Garden* (1895). Born at Bitton vicarage, the Canon succeeded his father in 1850 and continued to develop his plantsman father's garden, adding many rare and beautiful plants. Ellacombe benefitted, as did Pamplin, from a good relationship with Kew that involved plant exchange and a generous sharing of plants and seeds with fellow gardening enthusiasts. A business relationship with Pamplin in the 1860s seems to have moved fairly quickly to plant sharing. In February 1868, Pamplin received *from my good friend Mr. Ellacombe of Bitton a very nice Hamper of good Plants (51 in all) and 4 seed packets – 21...were Bulbs most acceptable many of the bulbs were...small and he added, not uncritically, and some I think not quite correctly named.* He was particularly concerned that the plant sent as *Pyramidal Star of Bethlehem*, was actually Portuguese Squill. Pamplin sowed *Sorghum saccharatum* seeds from Bitton in 1869 and in 1872, eleven plants from Ellacombe were grown in the botanic borders: these included *Cistus hirsutus* (inflatus), a rock-rose; Herb Paris; a Helleborine; *Primula marginata* (silver-edged primrose); and *Linum campanulatum*. Ellacombe delighted in sharing his garden and plants with friends as did Pamplin and both were well aware of the difficulties in correct plant naming. *I try to be as accurate as I can, Ellacombe wrote to Sir Joseph Hooker in 1871, but perfect accuracy in plant naming is not granted to man.*

By the mid-1870s, the botanic borders at Pen y Llan were becoming more specialised while the yearly success or failure of the kitchen garden was reflected in

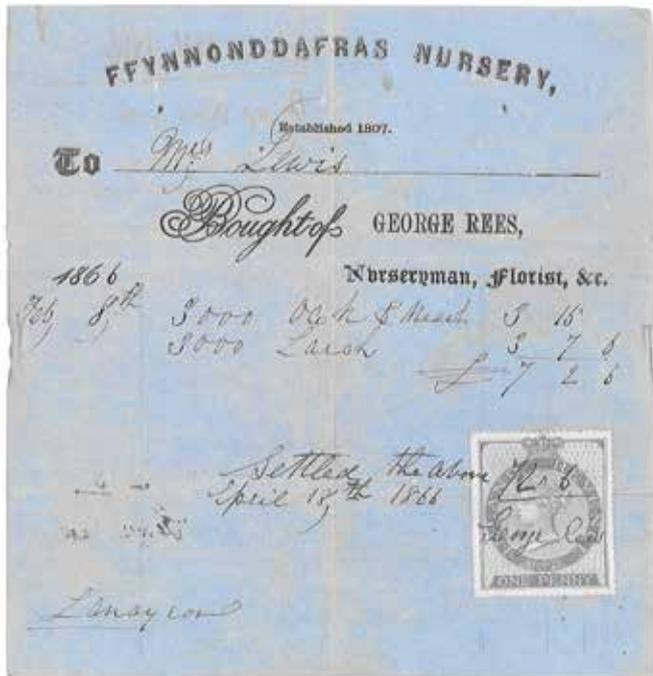


Pamplin's constant observations on the weather. In the autumn of 1873, space previously occupied by *large coarse growing sorts of herbaceous Plants*, was reduced in order to expand the range of his hardy bulb collection. An additional 70 species *received from various of my kind friends* were augmented by an extensive range of Liliiums and also Narcissus which he purchased from Barr and Sugden, the Covent Garden bulb and seed merchants. Owned by a well-known Scottish nurseryman, Peter Barr (1826-1909), his speciality was the identification and reintroduction of daffodils to the late nineteenth century garden. Thus influenced by contemporary fashionable planting, Pamplin's order beds also included a range of alpines, a number being supplied by Thomas Ruddy.

By the 1880s, much of Pamplin's gardening concentrated on kitchen garden produce and he became dependent on his jobbing gardeners, John Roberts, and later in the 1880s to early 90s, Evan Roberts. Caroline Pamplin died in 1876: remarrying in 1879, Pamplin's financial circumstances became increasingly strained, although he maintained a private bookselling business after retiring to augment his modest income. When he died in 1899, his second wife, Margaret Parry (1838-1916), sold Pen y Llan. The North Wales Central Botanic Garden, like many other specialist gardens, barely survived its creator. Wilson Saunders' botanical collection was dispersed upon his bankruptcy in 1873; echoes of Ellacombe's vicarage garden are only to be found in a few surviving trees and shrubs. Yet in Pamplin's gardening journal, as in Ellacombe's writings, the charm of his love of plants survives. Benefitting from exciting plant introductions throughout the nineteenth century, Pamplin belongs alongside other contemporary innovative gardeners noted for their creations.

*Acknowledgement: The writer is indebted to Wendy Carey for access to the Ruddy-Pamplin Papers.*





Left: The Ffynnonddafras Nursery in Llanwenog had family connections with Fronwen. George Rees, here supplying Mrs Lewis of 'Lanayron', eventually ran a nursery in Lampeter. (Archifdy Ceredigion)



Right: Nurseryman George Rees (1836-1903) in his early 20's during his apprenticeship with Garraway & Mayes in Bristol. (Rees private collection)

most are readily deciphered – despite variant spellings of personal names, places and plants.

Fronwen (and neighbouring nursery at Ffynnonddafras) lie just west of the ancient house of Llanvaughan or Llanfechan. Fronwen variously supplied Cardiganshire estates including Abermâd, Bwlchbychan, Derry Ormond, Falcondale, Glandenis, Highmead, Llanerchaeron, Llidiardau and Waunifor, as well as Waddingham at Hafod. In Carmarthenshire it supplied Maesyrcrugiau, Campbell-Davys of Neuadd Fawr, Llandovery, C. Chivers of Myrtle Hill and R.R. Carver of Wenallt and St Clears, among others. There were numerous private customers whose properties are often still identifiable, and periodically the firm must have visited or done some kind of promotion at Newquay and at Aberaeron, since pages of the ledger show concentrated orders from those towns. Fronwen also supplied nurseryman George Rees, who had a family connection.

Ceredigion Archives contain references to other nurseries along the Teifi including Blaengwyddon Nursery near Newcastle Emlyn (fl. 1868–69) and Maesllyn, Llangynllo. As with the Hindes and Williamson records from the Felindre nursery, the numbers of trees supplied was prodigious, often numbering in the thousands.

This raises the question of where all the stock plants came from. A clue is perhaps provided by D.J. Williams in *Hen Dy Ffarm* (1953; translated as *The Old Farmhouse* 1961), where in the Duar catchment south-east of Llanybydder growing larch from seed was a kind of rural industry in north Carmarthenshire. The author remembers in his youth women tending nurseries on 'small men's land, the freeholders':

*It was a pleasure to see [the seedling larch], with a few old women in Welsh dress and petticoat opening the drills with small spades, or squatting down weeding*

*industriously. The rows ran as straight as linen threads, and thousands of fine green spears pierced the air like an army from Lilliput.*

Similar cottage industries must have existed on an unofficial scale all over the countryside, but when records of the nursery businesses themselves are so scanty, what hope of identifying their grass-roots suppliers? So far the hundreds of 'small men' – and women – who must have cultivated some of the thousands of seedlings as a sideline, remain under the radar. Will documentary evidence of their anonymous efforts ever come to light?

### Please keep in touch!

The new Data Protection law comes into force on 25 May 2018 and organisations need to be ready for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Some branches have requested members consent and those received will be forwarded to Jennie Macve, the WHGT membership secretary.

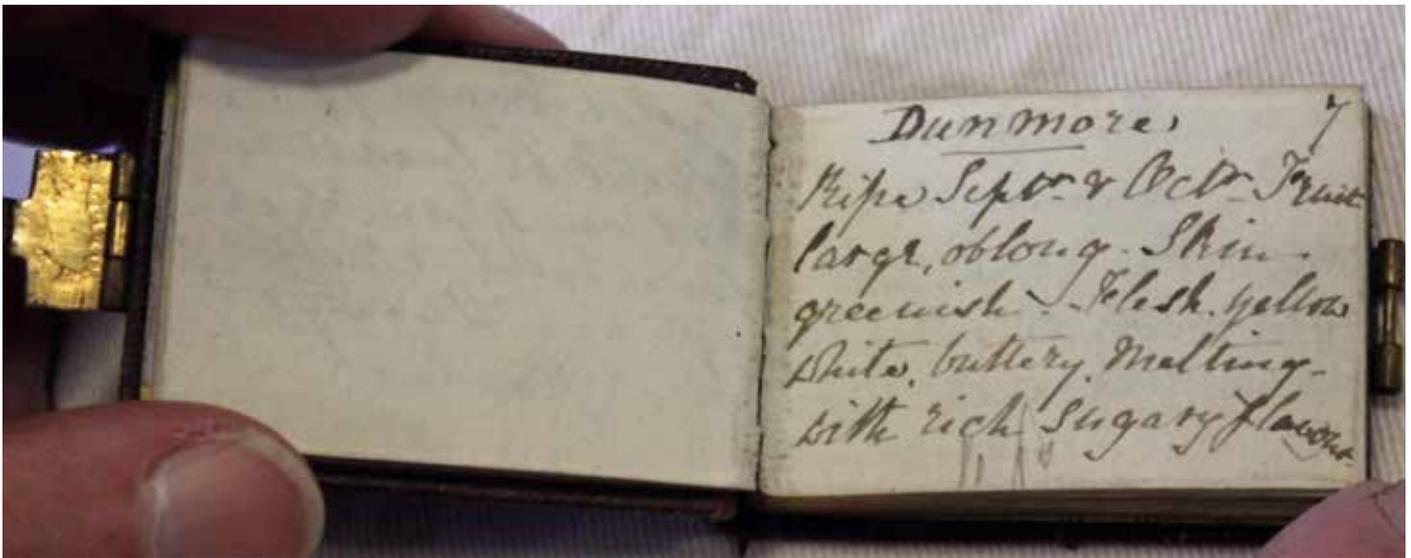
Please complete the form enclosed if you have not already given consent, for WHGT to continue to hold your membership payment history and contact details and confirm that you wish to continue to receive WHGT mail and email communications.

Members can notify WHGT if they wish to withdraw this consent at any time. WHGT will keep your details only as long as your membership is maintained.

Please also note that none of your information is ever forwarded on to any third parties.

However if for any reason you would no longer like to receive mails or emails please let us know.

Contact [admin@whgt.org.uk](mailto:admin@whgt.org.uk)



A tiny leather bound volume (2 inches x 1½ inches) with gold tooling on spine, gold edged pages and decorative metal clasp; Glamorgan Archives, ref. DNCA/27



Catillac



Forelle

## Dimlands Pears Hilary Thomas

*Plant pears for your heirs* says the old English proverb, but when John Whitlock Nicholl Carne compiled a list of pears growing in his gardens at Dimlands, near Llantwit Major on the coast of the Vale of Glamorgan, he may have been anticipating the fruits of his own labours.

His father the Rev. Robert Nicholl Carne (d.1849) built the first house at Dimlands at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The layout of the house and garden is shown on a contemporary map. Robert's notebooks and accounts contain numerous entries recording purchases of seeds and plants. Whilst there are references to apple trees in blossom, not a single entry referring to pear trees, or their fruit, has been found, so it seems likely that it was his son John Whitlock Nicholl Carne (Dr. Carne) who was responsible for planting pears at Dimlands as he upgraded the property in the early 1850s.

In 1860 John Whitlock Nicholl Carne recorded and described twenty-seven different varieties (cultivars) of pears at Dimlands in his tiny notebook (see above).

Some were probably grown as freestanding trees, but many would have been grown as espaliers, cordons, or

fan trained within the shelter of the walled gardens to the north and east of the house and along the boundary wall to the north-west. Neither the number of trees of each variety planted, nor the fruit yields were recorded, so it is impossible to determine the scale of this 'experiment' in pear cultivation.

Most of the pears listed are dessert pears, but two are hard culinary pears (known as 'wardens'). One is Catillac or Pound Pear, one of the earliest cultivars, first recorded in 1665, and described by Carne as *the best stewing pear from December to April*. There is also Uvedale's St Germain, another early cultivar that was listed in William Airton's *Hortus Kewensis, or, a catalogue of the plants cultivated in the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew* (1789) and described by Carne as *an excellent stewing pear, ripe January to April. Flesh white and juicy*.

The majority of the Dimlands pears would have come from specialist nurserymen such as Thomas Rivers of Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire. In 1840 Rivers published *A Descriptive Catalogue of Fruits cultivated in his nursery*. Over 150 different pears are listed, giving their size and quality, productiveness and fruiting season. The trees are priced with advice on planting and cultivation. All but one of the Dimlands pears, the venerable Catillac, are included in Rivers' catalogue, but it is not

known where the Carnes obtained their trees.

John Carne's list provides not only the names of the pears grown at Dimlands but also their fruiting season, texture, quality and flavour. Such details were (and still are) given in nurserymen's catalogues, and he may have copied them directly. The cramped, handwritten entries put the pear orchards at Dimlands into a precise context of a local landscape and climate (neither of which seem ideal for pear cultivation), and reveal the enthusiasm of the man who planted the trees and enjoyed the harvests.

Some of the pears at Dimlands were self-sterile (as are many pears) and needed a suitable pollinator to produce fruit, and here again the knowledge of a specialist nurseryman would be invaluable. Most of the trees seem to have matured and fruited well, with only the occasional problem, as with the delicious summer pear *Citron de Carnes* which, according to Carne, *was very apt to crack*.

The pears planted at Dimlands were selected to provide a succession of early, mid and late season fruit. Carne's notes are a personal record of his observations:

*Aston Town: Ripe October and November. Good bearer. Medium size fruits. Flesh yellowish white, buttery, high flavour and perfumed.*

*Bishop's Thumb: An old pear, ripe October. Fruit large. Flesh greenish yellow, melting & juicy, rich sugary & vinous flavour.'*

*Chaumontel: High merits. Ripe from November to March. Fruit large, oblong. Flesh yellow white. Melting, rich and highly perfumed.*

*Citron de Carnes: A delicious summer pear, ripe July and August. Very apt to crack.*

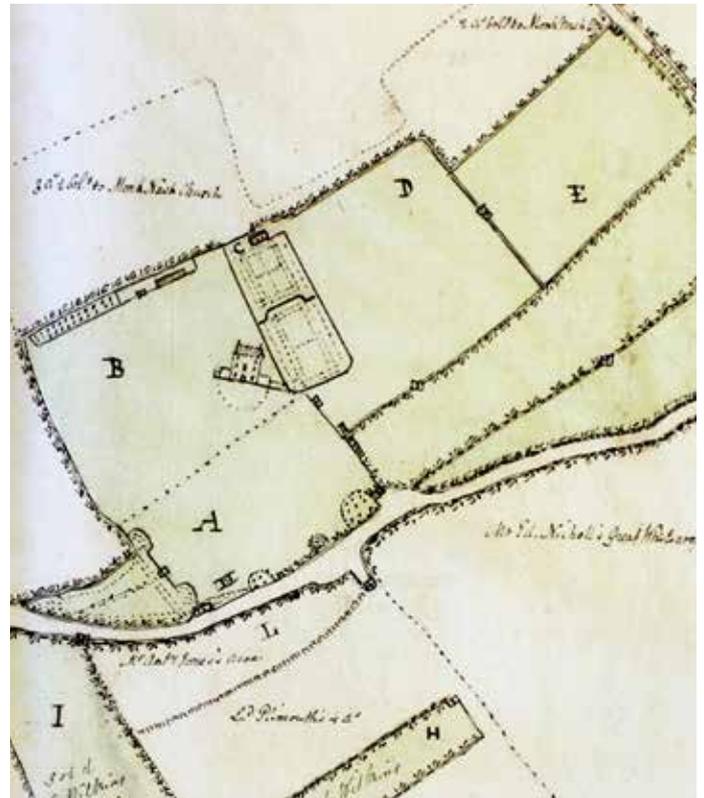
*Glou Morceau: Ripe December and January. Skin smooth, pale green yellow. Flesh white, tender, smooth. Rich sugary flavour.* This pear is described in Rivers' catalogue as succeeding well on quince stock in his nursery but seldom succeeding well on pear stock.

*Knight's Monarch: Ripe December and January. Fruits round. Flesh yellow, melting and very juicy with rich, piquant and perfumed flavour.* This pear was propagated by Thomas Andrew Knight (d.1838), the botanist and horticulturist of Downton Castle, Herefordshire. Knight, an important figure in the cultivation of pears and a fellow of the London Horticultural Society, was the author of *A Treatise on Culture of the Apple and Pear* (1797).

*Williams' Bon Chrétien: Ripe in August and September. To be gathered before it is yellow. Skin smooth. Flesh white, fine grained, melting. Rich flavour. Musky aroma.* This pear was raised in the garden of a Berkshire schoolmaster named Wheeler in the late eighteenth century. Subsequently it was raised from grafted stock by nurseryman Richard Williams of Turnham Green and named after him.

Many of the Dimlands pears originated from Belgium, where the first deliberate hybridisation of pears, led by the community of monks at Mons, took place. Other early cultivars were raised in Germany and France:

*Beurré Rance:* A green skinned pear, one of the best late



Detail from map of Dimlands, early 19th century, Glamorgan Archives, ref. DNCA/27Map

pears was discovered growing at Rance, in Hainault, Belgium in 1762 and was raised by Abbé Hardenpont a pioneer of pear cultivation at Mons. Was this the only failure at Dimlands? Carne has left that page blank apart from the heading.

*Forelle:* This is a pear, which probably originated in North Saxony (*forelle* the German word for trout). Carne records it as *Forelle or Trout*, and commends it as *an excellent pear with vinous white flesh*, and notes that it is *covered with crimson spots like a trout*.

*Glou Morceau:* This is another old Belgian pear raised in the mid-eighteenth century in Mons, by Abbé Hardenpont. It was introduced into Britain in 1820.

*Louise Bonne of Jersey:* A pear raised c.1780 by M.Longueval in Normandy before it reached England via Jersey in the Channel Islands. Carne describes this October ripening pear as *a good bearer, medium size' with 'white buttery & melting flesh and a rich, sugary & brisk flavour*, which suggests a personal preference for this particular fruit.

*Beurré Diel* was discovered c.1800 at the Chateau de Perck, near Vilvoorde in Belgium by Pierre Meuris, Head Gardener to the Belgian pomologist and plant breeder Jean Baptiste Van Mons. It was named after the German physician and promoter of fruit cultivation Dr. August Diel.

A number of the new Flemish introductions including *Passe Colmar*, *Napoléon* and *Marie Louise* are also included on Carne's list. His comments suggest that they all flourished at Dimlands and yielded excellent fruit:



Dimlands Castle c. 1850

*Passe Colmar*: Ripe November and December. Medium sized. Skin smooth, deep lemon colour. Flesh yellow white, melting, juicy. Rich sugary aromatic flavour. This pear was raised by Abbé Hardenpont at Mons in 1758. Thomas Andrew Knight described it as *by far the most valuable pear I have ever seen*, but while noting its sweet, aromatic flavour, Carne did not single it out for special favour.

*Napoléon*: Ripe November and December. Good and large fruit. Skin smooth. Flesh white, tender, very juicy, rich and refreshing flavour.

*Marie Louise*: Ripe October and November. Good bearer. Tender bloom. Large fruits, very juicy, rich and vinous. Flesh white, melting. Skin smooth. This pear was named after the second wife of Napoleon Bonaparte. Both Napoleon and Marie Louise were raised in Belgium early in the nineteenth century and were brought into this country in 1816.

*Thompson's*: Best of pears. Ripe November. Medium size, Skin pale yellow. Flesh white, melting, very juicy & rich with fine aroma'. This pear originated in Belgium and is thought to have been raised by Dr. Van Mons who sent it, unnamed, to England c.1820. It was named after Robert Thompson, fruit foreman at the Horticultural Society garden at Chiswick.

Carne's descriptions of the individual cultivars and their merits suggest that he kept a careful and knowledgeable eye on his pear trees at Dimlands and was something of a connoisseur of the fruits. Perhaps his tiny notebook was tucked into a waistcoat pocket for quick reference when he examined his trees to see how well they were fruiting. In the context of Glamorgan he may well be considered a pioneer of pear cultivation, for there is little evidence to suggest that his neighbours' orchards were similarly stocked. Dimlands House and gardens stand on a slightly elevated site just two fields away from the Bristol Channel, not the most obvious location for pear cultivation, but a southerly aspect and the walled gardens seem to have provided sufficient warmth and shelter from the prevailing winds for a 'pear friendly' environment, enabling the Nicholl Carne family to enjoy pears for many months of the year.

John Whitlock Nicholl Carne's enjoyment of his orchards was short lived. In 1869 he moved to St. Donats and Dimlands was leased to a succession of tenants who would have enjoyed the fruits of his labours.

J.W. N. Carne's List of Pear trees in the Dimlands garden, made 1860:

*Aston Town; Marie Louise; Chaumontel; Napoléon; Citron de Carmes; Louise Bonne of Jersey; Dunmore; Bishop's Thumb; Brown Beurre; Beurré Diel; Thompson's Glou Morceau; Passe Colmar; Easter Beurré; Beurré Rance; Williams' Bon Chrétien'; Winter Crassane; Knight's Monarch; Hacon's Incomparable; Ne Plus Meuris; Forelle or Trout; Suffolk Thorn; Winter Nelis; Uvedale's St Germain; Cadillac or Pound Pear; Duchesse d'Angoulême; and the Colmar d'Aremberg.*

Notes:

Carne's tiny book is probably the smallest known book on pears. A printed label advertising 'HENRY PENNY'S Patent Metallic Books' is attached to the inside front cover. At the back of the booklet is a list of the fifteen varieties of strawberries grown at Dimlands, among them Adair, La Reine, Sir Harry, Nimrod, British Queen, Prince of Wales and Penllyn Castle ('a preserving strawberry').

Bibliography:

Hilary M. Thomas, *'Dimlands, Llantwit Major: a small-scale gentry house in Glamorgan'*, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Vol 153 (2004)

*'Dimlands', Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan* (2007):

For a useful and beautifully illustrated introduction to the history of pear cultivation see: *Jim Arbury & Sally Pinhey, Pears, (Wells & Winter, 1997)*



*Bodfach hall, watercolour Moses Griffith 1781 NLW*

## Bodfach Hall, Llanfyllin Montgomeryshire Simon Baynes

The AGM in 2018 will be held at Bodfach Hall, hosted by our Chairman Simon Baynes and his wife Maggie.

Bodfach has a long history. Records go back to 1160 when the estate was passed to Einion Efell from his father Madoc ap Meredydd, Prince of Powys. A house was probably built at Bodfach in 1256 after the destruction of the motte and bailey castle, which stood on the hill above named Domen yr Allt.

The heraldic bard Siôn Cain (c1575-1650) sang the praises of Bodfach when it was owned by William Kyffin, a descendant of Madoc ap Meredydd. Siôn Kyffin, his son, succeeded in 1655. The Welsh inscription of 1661 by the farmer-poet Edward Morris above the old front door praised his improvements: *A Hall fit for generous Lud in this a palace of pure beauty, a jewel of a house.*

When Siôn Kyffin died in 1694 Bodfach passed to his granddaughter Mary Kyffin, who in the same year at the age of 15 married Adam Pryce, a scion of the Pryce family of Newtown Hall. Adam, a staunch High Church man and Tory, incited the local mob in the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 to burn down the Dissenters meeting house in Llanfyllin.

In 1758 Bodfach passed to its most innovative squire Bell Lloyd on his marriage to Anne the granddaughter of Adam Pryce. A second inscription above the old front door dates Lloyd's building works to 1767 and a painting by Moses Griffith in 1776 shows the Georgian Hall and coach house with a cupola. The coach house had a dovecote and also a spinning room, hence the inscription above the Gothic entrance: *Where sits a dame disguis'd in look profound, and eyes her fairy throng and turns her wheel around.* Bell Lloyd drained the great turbarry near the town, built a new road to Llanrhaeadr and planted over 170,000 trees. All this took its toll on his finances and he died in the King's Bench debtor's prison in London in 1793.

Lloyd's eldest son Edward Pryce Lloyd married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Roger Mostyn Bt. by whom he inherited the Mostyn estates in North Wales and became the first

Lord Mostyn. He sold Bodfach in the 1840s to Lt. Gen. Sir John Wilson and in 1854 the Lancashire cotton manufacturer John Lomax bought the estate for £52,000.

His son, Thomas Lomax, succeeded in 1863 and carried out major building works in the 1860s. He married Anne, daughter of the Rev. R. Pughe, Rector of Llanfihangel. They enlarged the Hall, changing the Georgian brick exterior to its present day white stucco, in the Victorian Italianate style as described by Pevsner, and laid out the Victorian terraces, gardens and small lake and planted the rhododendrons and azaleas, which now form one of the finest collections in Wales.

Two of Thomas Lomax's children, Sir John and Anne, remained unmarried and lived on at Bodfach for the rest of their lives. After Sir John's death in 1936, Anne became a recluse with a large number of dogs. By the time that she died in 1944 the Hall had become very run-down. As her brother Charles did not want the property it was put up for auction in July 1945.

The estate of 1,261 acres was mainly sold to its tenant farmers; Mr & Mrs Winter Tunstill bought the Hall and 33 acres giving Bodfach a new lease of life as a hotel. In 1972 Ian and Ann Gray bought Bodfach and continued to run it as a hotel with Ian becoming High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire, following in the footsteps of his predecessors.

David and Mary Clegg bought Bodfach in 1999 from whom Simon and Maggie purchased it in 2007. Both families reunited land and buildings so the property now consists of the Hall and surrounding buildings and 100 acres of gardens, woods, parkland, fields and the small Bodfach caravan park. The Llanfyllin Show continues to be held on the parkland of which 8 acres have been let to the Llanfyllin Town Council as a community field called Cae Bodfach which provides a much-used local amenity.

*Further information can be found at: [www.bodfachtrust.org.uk](http://www.bodfachtrust.org.uk)  
The Bodfach Trust is based at the house and supports charities in Wales and on the Welsh borders.*



Left: Bodysgallen viewed from the garden. Right: View from the tower, with a distant prospect of Conwy and the river's estuary.

## Bodysgallen Hall: an ornament to Conwy John Edmondson

Situated on a south-facing hill overlooking the River Conwy estuary and with views of the town, castle and bridges, together with a more westerly prospect that includes the profile of Deganwy Castle's 'twin peaks', Bodysgallen Hall and grounds are rightly listed Grade I on account of their outstanding quality. Although now in the ownership of the National Trust, it was once the seat of branches of the Wynn and Mostyn families, and dates (in its current form) from the early 17th century. However it is believed that the gardens pre-date the Hall by some years, as there is convincing evidence that they were first laid out around 1600. With connections to the much earlier buildings at Aberconwy Abbey, some of the stone from which was re-used at Bodysgallen, it is likely that the house's tower originally served as a lookout point to help guard the estuary from seaborne invaders.

The Renaissance gardens, so described by Richard Haslam and his co-authors in Pevsner's Gwynedd volume, are a significant survival by any measure, but oddly little mentioned by visitors whose eyes were taken by the picturesque scenery. These views have become of much greater significance, in recent months, due to the proposal to build a housing estate on farmland overlooked by the Hall's tower and terrace. This development is being vigorously opposed by local people and amenity groups, not least the WHGT, and is the subject of a postponed Public Inquiry.

Thomas Pennant described his visit to the Hall in glowing terms: *It is a fine situation, environed with woods. From a neglected terrace is a most beautiful view, over the tops of trees, of Conwy, part of the river, and the vast mountains which form the back ground of the prospect.* One only has to see the view of Conwy framed by the woodland on either side to appreciate that this is an important aspect of this world heritage site, and this prospect is much too precious to be sacrificed to the needs of high-density modern housing.

Another visitor to the gardens, John Williams of Llanrwst, mentioned the Hall in his *Faunula Grustensis* (1830), an account of the natural history of the Parish of Llanrwst, which then extended northwards on the east side of the river as

far as Llanrhos. He wrote: *Bodysgallen, the residence of the Miss Mostyns, is the finest place about this part. It appears to be more ancient than the date fixed to the wall, above the drawing-room window, which is R. W. K. 1620. Its mode of building closely resembles that of Gwydir, and [was] probably built about the same time. ... The tower is very high, and commands a fine prospect. The eastern wing of the house was built by Robert Wynne, Esq. of Bodysgallen, A. D. 1738. There is a good garden belonging to the house, and one of the best greenhouses in Wales. The farm is extensive, upon which Mr. Wynne, above mentioned grew his own hops. The *Scrophularia vernale* grows abundantly in the woods. This place, as well as all Creuddyn, is celebrated for its excellent wheat.*

The writer, a physician whose father owned a water-powered corn mill at Pentrefelyn, was well able to judge the quality of the local produce. He was also a trained gardener who had previously worked at Chelsea Physic Garden and Kew, so was able to appreciate the noteworthy attributes of the gardens at Bodysgallen. Indeed it is likely that this garden was one of those surveyed by Williams for his list of locally cultivated garden plants that was published in the *Faunula*.

The original greenhouses have vanished, to be replaced by one of nineteenth century vintage that was relocated from Gorddinog near Llanfairfechan, but the gardens are maintained in fine condition thanks to Head Gardener Robert Owen who has been at Bodysgallen for over 35 years. The gardens have been sensitively restored include a hortus conclusus with Gothick cottage and a sunken terraced garden, Italianate in inspiration, with parterres of Victorian vintage. The walled section furthest from the Hall was perhaps intended as an orchard. There is certainly scope for more research into the special features of these gardens, and the hotel manager has enthusiastically embraced the idea of carrying out a tree survey across the property. If there any members wishing to take on a share of such a project, I would be happy to hear from them

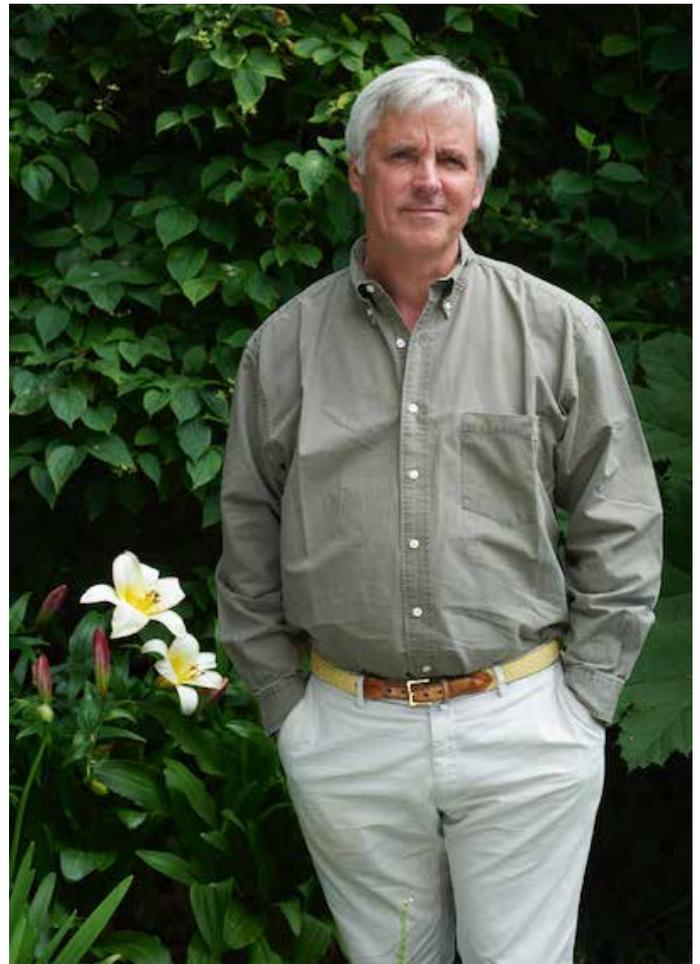
Please contact [John Edmondson <a.books@mac.com>](mailto:a.books@mac.com)

## New President: Stephen Lacey

It is very good news that at the AGM in June we will welcome Stephen Lacey, the well-known journalist and writer, as the new President for WHGT. Stephen will be known to many for his column in The Daily Telegraph:

I am very honoured to have been invited to become President of the WHGT, and shall greatly enjoy becoming better acquainted with its work, and the gardens and landscapes it helps to rescue, protect and conserve. I was brought up in Anglesey and Wrexham, and have had a home, and a garden, in Wales all my life. My love of plants was kindled in childhood, and my love of gardens at university, and after a brief spell in the commercial world, I decided to make gardening my career. This has taken me into journalism (principally for the Daily Telegraph), broadcasting (for a while I was a roving presenter on BBC Gardeners' World), publishing, and lecturing, and I have tried to seize every opportunity to see the most wonderful gardens, and meet the most talented gardeners and designers, both in the UK and abroad. My education in garden history began in earnest with a commission to write Gardens of the National Trust in 1996, and I have revised this book several times since. I am much looking forward to continuing my education in the company of WHGT members.

Stephen Lacey



## Community Garden Llangollen saved

In January we were delighted to hear that the community Garden in Llangollen was saved.

Last autumn, without consultation, members of Denbighshire council had agreed in principal to gift the site of the community garden to a developer for building four or five detached houses in return for garden wall repairs and other unspecified work at Plas Newydd, the historic house once home of the Ladies of Llangollen, owned by the council.

This was extraordinary as this site had been bought by the council, with public money, for public benefit. The purchase of the site was recommended in a report by Nicholas Pearson & Partners in 1998, to protect Plas Newydd, a Grade II listed property within the AONB, from unsympathetic development on its boundaries and its essential setting. It was considered important to protect the views from within the listed landscape. It was also not considered feasible to provide access to the site without damaging the heritage asset which includes old walls of a walled garden, the Weavers Cottage and the mill race and leet which borders the site.

By 2012 the site had remained neglected for years and was derelict. It was wonderful when a local community group wanted to reinstate the garden in 2012, and with the agreement of the LA the Llangollen Community Garden was begun. After more than five years of hard work by a committed group of volunteers, organic crops

of fruit and vegetables flourish. The group also provides many opportunities for the local community with events held throughout the year.

It was, therefore, a huge shock to learn that the council was putting the garden at risk of development. Furthermore the 20 year old report by Nicholas Pearson & Partners had apparently been misfiled. Fortunately the WHGT found a draft in their archives!

Following a vigorous and successful campaign, the developer has now withdrawn this inappropriate development proposal and the garden has been saved. The community group will now aim to secure a long term future.

## Roath Brook Flood scheme

Waterloo Gardens and Roath Brook Defence are a group residents set up to raise awareness of the flood defence work along Roath Brook Cardiff.

The work involves the felling of 33 mature and established trees, new walls along the river bank and the creation of a pagoda and viewing platform which will inhibit access to the river.

The group consider the work an unnecessary and insensitive change which will destroy the character of the nineteenth century landscape. Through crowdfunding the group have raised funds to consult an independent hydrologist to challenge the tree felling.

NRW have paused the work for four months while the project is being reassessed.



Above: Fountain uncovered.

Left: Glynllifon terrace.



If you have any stories, tales, myths or facts concerning Glynllifon we welcome them – please get in touch.

[contact@landandheritage.com](mailto:contact@landandheritage.com)

[www.landandheritage.com](http://www.landandheritage.com)

## Landscape Restoration begins at Plas Glynllifon Matt Jackson MCIHort

Many know Plas Glynllifon, well and have strong connections for a wealth of reasons. Glynllifon, near the village of Landwrog, lies south of Caernarfon. Like so many estates it carries the hearts of a wide community and a level of 'rightful possession' that transcends any owner. Having passed through turbulent times from gentry, to timber merchant, to agricultural college, council and then to private owners it has seen much change and serious decline.

As a Special Area for Conservation (SAC), a SSSI, and a Grade I mansion and landscape, all within a Conservation Area, it has perhaps been hamstrung by the multiple designations and protections, and we now see the nationally significant landscape seriously at risk. Land & Heritage is undertaking the complex task of researching and producing restoration plans for the landscape.

Welsh to the core, legend has it that Cilmyrn Troed Ddu (Cilmyrn Black Foot) settled at Glynllifon, and that it's subsequent noblemen supported Llywelyn, Prince of Gwynedd and then Llywelyn, Prince of Wales. Thomas Glyn's fine garden was recorded in 1639, and in 1751 Thomas Wynn built a new, grand brick mansion, setting out some of the landscape we know today.

The principal time for Glynllifon however was from 1840 to 1930 when following a fire the new mansion seen today was built and the landscape laid out along with it. Most of the pleasure grounds have been attributed to the

1848 completion of the house by the 3rd Lord Newborough, however close inspection of the mapping and construction materials places much of it from 1888 to 1914 under the eye of Frederick Wynn, the 3rd Lord Newborough's youngest son. We are delving into this further until we have certain proof, but it's possible that assumptions have lead the way until now.

An exciting future is now at hand, with the ownership of Paul and Rowena Williams who hold the mansion and its immediate grounds. With the house more than half restored, work has commenced on the pleasure grounds, the exposure of the 'grand terrace' and many other features. The banks have been cleared of dense rhododendron, replacement urns tracked down, a missing fountain excavated and restored along with additional owner embellishments. This is part of the project to fully restore the house and grounds by 2020 when it will open as a hotel.

The owners of Plas Glynllifon are also in positive discussions with Gwynedd County Council about the joint management and full restoration of the pleasure grounds and south park. Under such a scheme the entire pleasure grounds will remain open to the public but in a fully restored state, with the addition of functioning kitchen gardens. Exciting times lay ahead, for what is one of the finest landscapes in Wales, and a match for any internationally.

## John Evelyn: a Life of Domesticity by John Dixon Hunt

(London: Reaktion Books, 2018), 328 pp., illus. in black-and-white, £14.95 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-78023-836-4.

The subject of this biography is well-known not only as a diarist and author but also as a friend and contemporary of Samuel Pepys, though perhaps less widely acknowledged as an advocate of continental garden styles in mid- to late-seventeenth century England. An early Fellow of the Royal Society, serving on its "committee for the improvement of our English tongue", he was noted for his enthusiasm for tree-planting. His public service included a stint on the commission that cared for sick and wounded seamen and prisoners of war. Most of all, as this book emphasises, he was a family man who retreated to rural domesticity in his later life. Following a period at Balliol College, Oxford, leaving without a degree in 1640, Evelyn travelled widely in Europe in his twenties and brought back many ideas and impressions that were later incorporated into his published works and shared with his friends. A principal theme of this biography is his achievement in making European garden arts accessible to a British audience and in influencing estate design and management. Shortly after his marriage in 1652, after first occupying his wife's family home, he settled at Sayes Court in Deptford, close to the dockyard and on unpromising Thames-side gravel. Here he created what we might now call a plantsman's garden, which went through various stages as he gradually adapted it to cope better with the local conditions. His scientific experiments with different styles of management helped refine the design, and the outcomes were recorded in his greatest work, *Elysium Britannicum*, which remained unpublished until 2000 following the acquisition of his manuscripts by the British Library in 1995. One chapter of this work appeared in

his lifetime as *Acetaria: A Discourse of Sallets* (1699; reissued in the year of his death, 1706).

As an author Evelyn is best known for his *Sylva: or a Discourse on Forest Trees* (etc.) whose first edition appeared in 1664; in subsequent editions the main title changed to *Silva*. As Geoffrey Keynes had published *John Evelyn: a Study in Bibliography* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1968) Hunt only includes "publications available outside rare-book collections" in the section on Further Reading, which is a pity, though the major works are listed in a Chronology on pages 286-7.

Evelyn's diaries and correspondence provide a rich source of material, and these have been expertly distilled to provide insights into the seventeenth century life of a landowner and scholar. His later years were spent at his Tudor house at Wotton in Surrey, appropriately a contraction of Wood-tun, which he inherited from his elder brother. Unlike Sayes Court this estate still exists in a form that he would recognise; the much-modified house is now an hotel. Anyone interested in the development of garden design, particularly in the latter half of the seventeenth century, will find this book a rich source of ideas; it is very well-referenced, with 25 pages of end-notes. Despite the existence of several earlier biographies it stands as a definitive account of domesticity in both senses: on the one hand, home life; and on the other, the process of assimilating new ideas into the national consciousness.

John Edmondson, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK

## Nannau: A Rich Tapestry of Welsh History by Phillip Nanney Williams

Published by Llwyn Estates, Manafon, Welshpool, Powys, 2016; 393pp., copiously illustrated. ISBN: 9780995533707

Nannau, a Georgian house begun c.1788, is found three miles north of Dolgellau. The site has been the home of two of the most powerful and influential families in the county, the Nanneys and the Vaughans, for a thousand years.

Phillip Nanney Williams has achieved something special in this book; it is a large, richly illustrated volume encompassing a huge multi-branched family history.

This book comes at a time when the study of Welsh estates has become much more focussed, due partly to the inception of ISWE, the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates at Bangor University and the encouragement of access to extensive archives. The book adds greatly to this 21st century legacy.

For those researching historic gardens in the area, the

book is a great resource, with wonderful photographs both of estate and garden features and also of the social life within the gardens of the various country houses associated with the extended Nanney and Vaughan families.

There is a fine bibliography but, as the book covers such a wide span, the garden details have to be sought out, and the lack of an index can make this difficult.

Of the houses discussed perhaps the most important to our organisation are Nannau itself and Cors y Gedol, but the text brings in many associated houses such as Dolmelynlyn and Dol'rhyd which will be of interest to other readers.

Joanna Davidson



## Repton 2018

Celebrated by Brecon & Radnorshire.

May 23, Stanage Park, nr. Knighton, Powys, LD7 1NA,  
kindly hosted by Mr and Mrs Coltman-Rogers.

### Landscape Gardener and Artist

Speaker Gareth Williams, Curator at Weston Park.

The landscape gardener Humphry Repton (1752-1818) enjoyed a fascinating career, having made the decision to turn to landscape gardening following an earlier business failure. Equipped with a silver tongue and with deft use of an artist's brush, he established himself as the go-to man for park and garden improvement. His presentation of designs to patrons - in Morocco leather bound 'Red Books' that were ornamented with before and after watercolours to show his proposals - were a brilliant masterstroke of marketing as well as an invaluable record of what his works succeeded. Discover how this flatterer of properties and patrons came to be immortalized in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park and learn about his improvements on some of Britain's great estates with specific references to Repton's Welsh commissions at Stanage, Plas Newydd and Rhug in this beautifully illustrated talk.

There will be a walk around the Repton landscape.

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## WHGT AGM 2018

Saturday June 16

Hosted by Montgomeryshire Branch  
at  
Bodfach Hall, Llanfyllin

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