

## Ruperra Castle: discoveries and possibilities

by Elisabeth Whittle

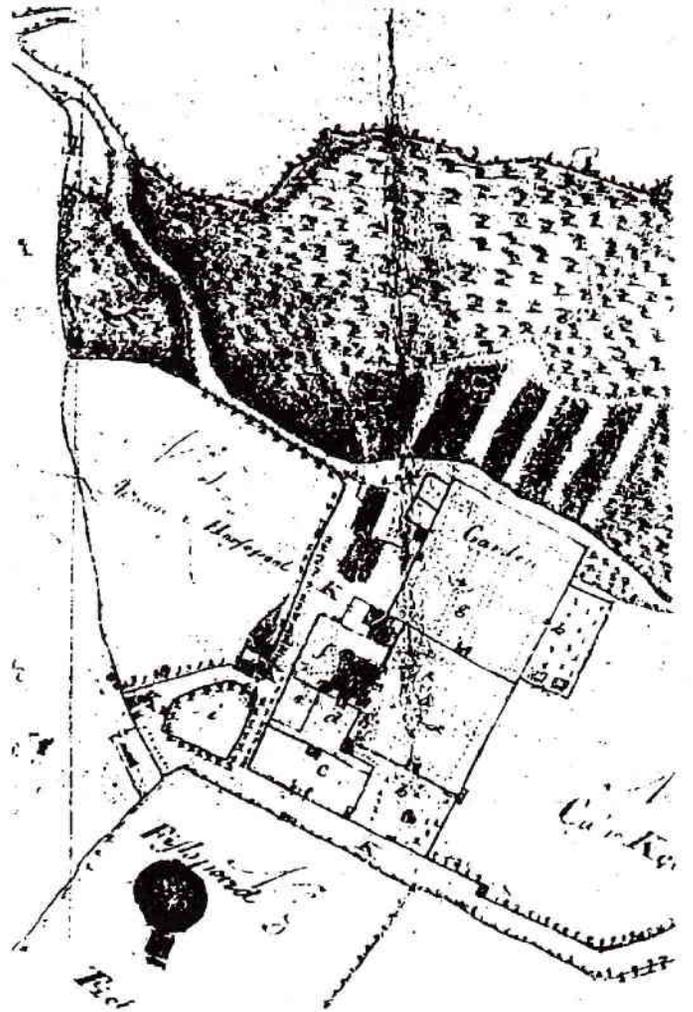
I have always associated Ruperra Castle with horses. They seem to be the presiding spirits of the place and never more so than now, with a string of thoroughbred polo ponies grazing beneath the walls. If the new owner's plans are fulfilled the Monmouthshire Polo Club will rise phoenix-like at Ruperra and horses will continue to hold sway there.

A change of ownership of a historic property, particularly one like Ruperra Castle that is in dire need of restoration, may bring the very welcome possibility of sympathetic restoration. Where, as here, the buildings are listed, the castle is a scheduled ancient monument, the park and garden are on the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales, graded II, and the whole is a Conservation Area, any restoration and development scheme must have regard to all the constraints that the historic character of the site imposes. Teamwork, with the participation of the owner, architects, Cadw, local authority planning officers and any other professionals involved, is of critical importance for a successful scheme. It is pleasing to report that this approach is being followed at Ruperra.

Ruperra Castle is a most unusual building of extraordinary historic importance. It is a sophisticated, Jacobean, mock castle, with corner towers and battlements (which were added later), built in 1626 by Sir Thomas Morgan, a member of the Morgan family of Machen and Tredegar House. It bears a striking resemblance to Lulworth Castle (Dorset), built in about 1608. A sketch of 1684 by Thomas Dineley shows that it was originally approached from the south through two axial courts and a gatehouse. It was damaged by fire and repaired in 1785-89, neglected during the nineteenth century and repaired again by Commander Courtenay Charles Evan Morgan, who inherited in 1909. He also transformed the gardens and rebuilt the stable block. Another and more disastrous fire gutted the house in 1942 and since then it has been abandoned.

The park and gardens have undergone several major alterations, leaving traces of each significant period today. Undoubtedly Sir Thomas Morgan created or altered the park to make a large deer park. This is shown on an important estate map of 1764 to have had formal and informal planted features: the 'Great Walk' avenue to the south-west has vanished, but the large clump on the mound remains, as does the sweet chestnut grove and the complex of buildings called 'Kennels' on the estate map. This shows the formal enclosures around the castle and 'The Garden' to its north-east, divided by straight paths. The formality of this layout suggests that it is seventeenth-century in date, probably contemporary with the building of the castle. It is known that William Winde, who also worked at Powis Castle, was involved

here in about 1699, when he moved trees 'of considerable bigeness with the good success' in Sir Charles Kemey's orchard. Despite later alterations to the garden there are remnants of this early phase, in particular three long terraces at the upper end and the backing wall behind them. Further remains may be buried beneath the turf, although Edwardian changes have probably obliterated them.



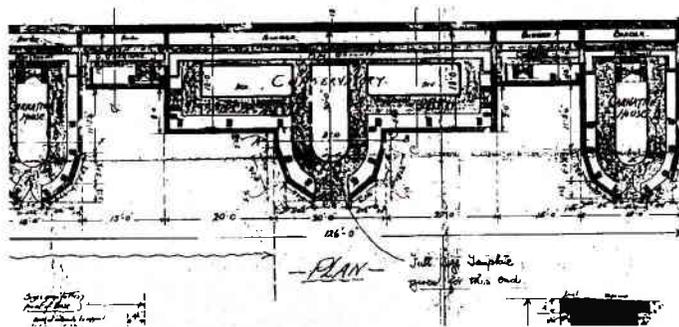
*A detail of the 1764 Estate Map  
(Reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Wales)*

Another interesting feature of this early layout, shown on the 1764 map, is the mound on top of the ridge behind the castle, with a walk to it, flanked by 'lights' cut into the woodland below, to provide views. The mound has a spiral walk up it and a

summerhouse on top. The mount and its spiral walk survive in good condition but the summerhouse has gone and only a low stone wall remains around the top.

At the end of the eighteenth century the park and surroundings of the castle were landscaped in the fashionable informal style. All the courts, gatehouse and enclosure walls were removed, the garden, now lawn, being enclosed by a curving fence. The present boundary of the garden dates to 1879-1901; on the south side it is on the line of the original boundary of the outer court and on the east it balloons out beyond the older boundary.

The last major phase to leave its trace is that of 1909-13, when the garden was transformed into a magnificent, formal Edwardian garden, with a huge glasshouse as its centrepiece. All that is left of this are a few paths and steps, a little planting, a small pavilion and the glasshouse itself. Despite, or perhaps because of, its infestation with brambles, it is in remarkably good condition,



*Design for a Glasshouse by Mackenzie & Moncur 1912  
(Reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Wales)*

retaining all its original fittings. It is a magnificent hothouse, built in 1913 of high-quality teak by one of the leading glasshouse makers in Britain, Mackenzie and Moncur, of Edinburgh. As far as I am aware, it is the only Mackenzie and Moncur glasshouse in Wales. The plan (November 1912) that the firm provided for it survives in the National Library of Wales and indicates that the large central pavilion was the conservatory and the smaller end ones were carnation houses.

So what are we left with and what is worth preserving? The immediate surroundings of the castle will require attention if the castle is once again to be occupied. The historic seventeenth-century terraces, the Edwardian glasshouse and pavilion and some fine specimen deciduous and coniferous trees survive in grass, the whole area now open, spacious and informally planted. The most sensitive garden area, corresponding to the seventeenth-century garden, is largely under rough grass, with some overgrown trees on the terraces. It is both historically and visually of great importance to the setting of the castle. This would be improved if the unlovely 1960s concrete pools and associated walls and steps were removed.

Sympathetic treatment of the former gardens would not only reveal and enhance the historic character of the site but provide the castle with an attractive and appropriate setting. Not enough is known about them to enable its original setting of formal courts and enclosures to be recreated; better to work with the existing landscape, which is the result of four centuries of development, preserving the most important historic elements and discarding the intrusive and unsympathetic ones. That way the horses should be happy.

# Steady Progress at Hafod

by Donald Moore

An important occasion took place at Hafod on 17 September 1999 - the publication of *A Strategic Vision for Hafod: a summary of the policy of the Hafod Conservation Partnership*. This 'vision' is the result of lengthy negotiations between between the Hafod Trust and Forest Enterprise, and it follows a complementary document *Hafod Management Guidelines*, also agreed between these same two bodies, thus making their relationship formal and explicit. Since the initiative of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust in 1991, much solid progress has been achieved on the ground - by the restoration of a large part of the Lady's Walk and the reinstatement of the Alpine Bridge. The Trust has sponsored considerable historical research, archaeological excavation and natural history investigation within the estate (far more than would otherwise have happened). In fact it has raised in the region of three-quarters of a million for all this work, money which could not have been found from the budget of Forest Enterprise.

However, it has become obvious to the Trustees that work was not proceeding as speedily or as effectively as they wished and that a much more formal and detailed arrangement was needed with the landowners, Forest Enterprise, an agency where personnel, organisation and methods are liable to constant change. They were also convinced that a designated officer, to be entirely responsible for Hafod, was a prime necessity. As a first step the Trust subsidised the temporary appointment of a Warden, and now has secured the appointment of a Hafod Estate Manager within the framework of Forest Enterprise. Its next step, now in train, is to secure its own position with permanent staff. As a centre of operation for both Estate Manager and Trust staff, it is planning the conversion of the old stable buildings, which fortunately still remain in good repair. It also proposes to rehabilitate an old cottage not far away as a base for an artist-in-residence. Various other imaginative initiatives are under consideration.

Present at the event of 17 September were members of Forest Enterprise staff, representatives of the Hafod Advisory Committee, the Hafod Advisory Committee, the Hafod Trust and other bodies and also various benefactors and well-wishers. The new Canolbarth District Forest Officer, Clive Thomas introduced Mr H. Fetherstonhaugh, who emphasised the commitment of Forest Enterprise to the partnership. On behalf of the Hafod Trust, its retiring Chairman, Donald Moore, gave an overview of the situation, and Michael Norman, the Project Manager, added further details. The party then moved off under the guidance of the Estate Manager, Richard Crompton, to view the Alpine Bridge. After a buffet lunch, a tour was made of other parts of the estate.



Following Donald Moore's Retirement from the Hafod Trust, the Trustees elected Richard Broyd as their Chairman. Donald Moore will act as Emeritus Trustee so his expertise will not be lost.

*Editor*

# Opening the flood-gates...my first two weeks on the Gateway Project

by Sharron Kerr

"We want to offer a hundred free garden visits to under-represented groups as part of the Millennium Festival, Wales," said the WHGT chairman at my interview. "Of course, there will be lots of planning involved. No one's ever thought of such a scheme before let alone done it. There will be a steep learning curve for us all."

Followed, with a wry smile, at our first lunch together a week in post, "Would you like to resign yet?" "Absolutely not," was my reply.



The Gateway Project. Daunting, yes. Daunted, no. And for those of you who may, or may not, know much about the project or why it could possibly be daunting, let me elaborate.

The project has funding to operate for 18 months to the beginning of 2001, setting up and organising garden visits by under-represented groups. Other objectives include enhancing and developing continuing interest in the garden heritage of Wales, enabling the community to appreciate their historic parks and gardens as never before. We want to encourage life-long learning about this aspect of Wales' heritage and develop an education programme for children and adults around the garden visits and their interpretation.

It really is a very special project for the Millennium to bring the beauties and enjoyment of the historic gardens of Wales to hundreds of people who might otherwise never have the chance to visit them. People such as those with disabilities, the elderly and infirm, families on low incomes, ethnic minorities and children with special needs, as well as schoolchildren all over the country. Each garden will be carefully chosen to offer maximum enjoyment for its target audience.

There will be an opportunity to see some of the most beautiful gardens in Wales all through the year 2000 - to enjoy snowdrop walks, bluebell woods, Spring colour with azaleas and rhododendrons, rose gardens, water gardens, wild gardens,

displays of Autumn colour, the clear outlines of garden in winter. Our partner charities are The Prince's Trust Cymru, the Black Environment Network, The Sensory Trust and Age Concern. Prince's Trust Volunteers will help pushing wheelchairs or whatever is required on the day. The Black Environment Network will put us in touch with ethnic communities and points out that there is a powerful emotional significance in seeing something from the faraway country of one's origin living and growing here in Wales. It provides a living link which stimulates the exploration of the meaning of ancestral culture.

The Sensory Trust also will put us in touch with our audience and advises that there are millions of people who do not have access to nature. The reasons are rarely singular. Disability, age, poverty, gender and background are all individually highlighted as potential causes of exclusion from green space, but the reasons often come from a range of commonly experienced problems. For example, lack of confidence, heightened sense of vulnerability to crime, reduced opportunity to use public transport, limited access to information and dependence on others are all factors that work to limit mobility. Food for thought, indeed.

My first two weeks involved meeting the aforementioned partner charities as well as contacting other charities myself. The response so far has been overwhelming from charities such as the Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative, the Stroke Association, Children in Wales, Scope, and the Encephalitis Support Group.

My problem is not how to target my audience but how to say no. My winter months are going to be busy. I'll be launching a press campaign (post Rugby World cup), meeting WHGT members, visiting and learning about "my" gardens, meeting other charities to advise on suitable gardens for them to visit and make plans. I'll be attending a City and County of Swansea training day for people involved in the management of millennium festival events, as well as networking at a North Wales exhibition to promote the Gateway and receive some feedback on how to add value to existing ideas. And that's just November. I'll be talking to bus companies, running training sessions for volunteers, considering health and safety implications, reporting back to the WHGT and the Gateway Steering Group and fund-raising like mad. Daunting, yes. Daunted, no!

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*Sharron grew up in Carmarthenshire and was educated at Llanelli Girls' Grammar School. She left Wales to study for a B.A. Hons. in French, Economics and Politics at Kingston University, and returned home briefly for a graduate course in Journalism at Cardiff, before taking up a career in London. She has worked on local papers, top womens' weekly magazines, and has co-authored books on health topics.*

*Three years ago, after 18 years in London, she returned to Wales, and lives in Gower, with her husband and two young children. She has worked for the Stroke Association in Swansea and written a lottery project for the charity Children in Wales.*

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# Fundraising for the Gateway

by Bettina Harden

We are delighted to have Sharron Kerr in post as our Access Officer. She rose to the top of some 150 applicants for the job, and was the unanimous choice of the interview panel. What we have to do now is to support her and ensure that the Gateway really does open up the garden heritage of Wales.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, together with our old friends who are sponsoring the Millennium edition of The Guide to the Historic Parks & Gardens of Wales, The Principality, The National Grid, Wales Tourist Board and The National Trust, have enabled us to get the project of the ground. However, we do need to raise some £30,000 of match funding. As you can imagine, applications are out with important charities and business enterprises to try and secure the bulk of that money. We also need to demonstrate that members of the WHGT are making a contribution to the whole. Enclosed with this edition of *The Bulletin* is a Sponsorship Form. Now is the time to go out and ask the friends and neighbours we have sponsored in the past to help us by sponsoring someone to make a garden visit with The Gateway. We estimate that it will cost £10 a head to make these visits possible. If we could raise £1,000 per branch, this would be £10,000. If you consider that that attracts £40,000 of match funding you can see what an enormous difference your efforts will make.

There are so many ways of raising money for the project. As well as encouraging as many sponsors as you can, what about holding a Potting Shed Sale? This is the gardener's equivalent of a jumble sale: all those pots and seed trays you never get around to filling, garden furniture bought in the flush of youth which you deeply regret now, the 20 tomato plants too many, the division of geranium, *Alchemilla mollis* and sweet woodruff which is ramping through your borders, bulb pots given by dear relations which you cannot bear the sight of..... A Potting Shed Sale can be as big or as little as you care to make it. Join with friends, other members and hold one at Coffee Morning level, or go for broke and make it a huge event. Whatever you do it will count. Do please write to me, e.mail or call, and I will make a feature of your efforts in future editions of *The Bulletin*. Multiply every tenner by 75% and see what a difference that makes.

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## The Royal Welsh Show

by Anne Carter

WHGT's presence at the Royal Welsh Show has now become a regular event and we hope will continue to be so because it certainly attracts a great deal of interest, as well as an opportunity to meet old friends and make new members. Most noticeable is the fact that, year by year, the level of knowledge and understanding among the public as a whole seems to increase. From the days when someone could look at a picture of the Gnoll and say: 'Oh, is that a garden?', we have moved on to sophisticated inquiries about every aspect of our national landscape heritage. This year, not unnaturally, given its immense TV coverage, most inquiries were about Aberglasney, which is, of course, one of the gardens featured in our *Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Wales*.

Our stand, with help from British Gas, looked more attractive than ever, with a banner proudly proclaiming our tenth birthday year. One section was given over to the Gateway Project and another to the St Fagans Sponsor-a-Rose-Scheme. Both drew a lot of attention. We had many inquiries about the Gateway from people involved with relevant groups and individuals and sponsorship forms for that and St Fagans simply melted off the stand. The *Guide*, too, was in great demand and it was good to see people take one as just another handout, then take a second look and become completely absorbed – so much that the landscape designer on the next stand started to complain that she was being ignored and asked if we couldn't hand them out only to visitors walking the other way!

A huge thank you is due to everyone who helped to man the stand. It is tremendous fun and very worthwhile but it can be tiring work and you do sometimes feel as if you are repeating the



*Deborah Evans, Anne Carter, Ros Laidlaw, Caroline Palmer, and Peter Elmes (obscured) meet the Prince of Wales*

same conversation endlessly. But the more helpers we have, the lighter the load, so be sure that any members who would like to offer themselves for next year will be gratefully received.

The highlight of the Trust's week at the Royal Welsh Show was our meeting with the our Patron H.R.H. Prince of Wales. This took place on Thursday and we trooped off to the President's pavilion in good order at the time appointed, only to find that the Prince was running late and we were to come back later. When we reappeared, the lawn was already crowded with small groups, a relaxing glass of wine was produced and we waited our turn. We were, in fact, the last and, so we were informed when the organisers briefly thought they had mislaid us, "the stars of the show". Certainly the Prince seemed glad to meet us at last, asked very pertinent questions and showed a real interest in the work of the Trust. His parting words were an invitation to visit Highgrove – an invitation followed almost immediately by a letter confirming a date to be arranged in spring 2000. Numbers will be limited but for lucky members it should be an outing to remember.

## The Prince's Invitation

At this early stage no dates in 2000 have been offered to us. Our party will have to be restricted in numbers so it has been decided that the fairest way forward would be to allocate three places to each county branch. When we have a definite date to offer members we will ask those of you who wish to be included to forward your name to the Trust Administrator and these names will be entered into a draw. Last year the Gwynnedd branch enjoyed a similar visit to Highgrove, so Mary Garner's account is particularly welcome as a appetizer for the forthcoming visit.

Editor

## A visit to Highgrove

by Mary Garner

A Prince with a passion for gardens, and a distinctly 'green' approach at that, has to be someone worth a closer look. So not surprisingly Gwynnedd members of the WHGT jumped at the chance of a visit to Highgrove, Prince Charles's estate in Gloucestershire. We held a ballot to determine democratically who would be the 32 lucky ones to go there on June 28, and despite the long journey - a total of 11 hours in the coach and on rest stops - the visit was voted the high point of the year's activities.

Highgrove is of course, the Prince's private home, and the gardens are not open to the general public, which made it a great privilege to be allowed to visit. Security, as might be supposed, is tight. Everyone's name goes on a list, for prior checking, and no last minute changes can be made. No cameras are allowed, and visitors must keep to the paths, staying with their guides. No problem here, and security cameras are so unobtrusive that no one was aware of them. In fact, only one minor slip up. We arrived a good half-hour to early, and were asked to turn the coach around and return at the appointed time. They explained that two other parties ahead of us were still doing the tour.

Volunteers act as garden guides, each taking groups of about 16 round the quite incredible maze of gardens forming part of the grounds. If you wonder about the drifts of *Alchemilla mollis* tumbling over some of the paths, or the invasive mass of yellow *senecio* in the beds near the house, then the likelihood is that HRH likes it this way. For it seems one thing he really dislikes is formality in a garden. One of his first actions on moving in was to attack the formal Thyme Walk from the house - he ordered his gardeners to cut the golden yew into 'more interesting shapes', so no two are now alike.

"This is very much the Prince's garden," our guide said. "Very little of the original garden remains."

Many noted garden designers - Roy Strong, Rosemary Verey, Lady Salisbury among them - have been guests at Highgrove so that the Prince could pick their brains and seek their advice. The result is a series of interlinked small gardens, each with their own charm. One of the latest ideas is to create a black and white garden, using light and dark shade, in the Sundial Garden. The sundial was given by the Beaufort Estate, but the original intention that it should sit in the centre of the rose garden was abandoned because the roses were not considered worth keeping and the beds have now been cleared. The outcome will surely be worth seeing in a year or two.

Because of the Prince's interest in all things natural, we were not totally surprised to see that some creatures have a field day. Aphids on the lupins and some splendid caterpillars provide testimony for his desire to keep everything organic. A small notice just outside the main entrance proclaims that the estate is "GM Free!" Visitors are taken around the perimeter of the famous wildflower field, not at its best for our visit but we got the general impression. Apparently attempts to plant drifts of daffodils, tulips and other spring bulbs among the daisies and corn cockle have not been a complete success, and some replanting is likely to be necessary.

Hazel and willow are used freely to create flower supports, and in particular deep sweet pea arches separating segments of luscious beans, peas, cabbages and many other vegetables in the Royal kitchen gardens. In co-operation with the Brogdale Trust, the Prince has a small collection of old species of apples, mainly eaters, grown in a part of the grounds we were not allowed to visit. We did walk through the woodland area, which has been culled and replanted, and this autumn masses of narcissus will be planted for naturalising. Many trees in the grounds have special associations, including one which is a seedling from the King Charles Boscastle Oak, and another dedicated by the Dalai Lama.

Hedges between the garden "rooms" are cut with niches at intervals to hold some of the many busts of well-known and not-so-well known people who have influenced Prince Charles. There are many other sculptures forming focal points, some gifts to the Prince, others specially commissioned. One, a group of four young girls, by Frederick Hart, always attracts attention. Called *Matyrs of Modernism*, it was carved from recycled stone from Hereford Cathedral.

Obviously some parts of the grounds are no-go areas kept exclusively for use by HRH, but during our hour-and-a-half tour we saw a great deal to admire and many good ideas we would like to copy. It is difficult to believe that the Prince employs only two gardeners, though probably some casual staff as well. We all liked the informality of the gardens, and felt a very strong sense of being welcome there. Afterwards we were given tea and some of the special Highgrove biscuits in the Orchard Rooms, a purpose-built reception centre, the roof of which is designed to feed rainwater into the fully automatic watering system. There we had a chance of thanking our garden guides, who were charming and extremely informative throughout the tour. The guide who led my group said, quite sincerely: "It's been a pleasure to meet you. You are one of the best groups I've had." Possibly that was a tribute to the garden knowledge which some of our members displayed.

Highgrove does have its own shop offering extremely high quality souvenirs, including champagne, wicker baskets and willow plant supports. All the profits go to the Prince's Charitable Foundation which supports local projects.

For me, the visit to Highgrove was not only an extremely interesting day out, but above all I felt through his garden I knew a little more about the man who will be king, and had an infinitely greater respect for him.

Mary Garner

Chairman, Gwynnedd Branch, WHGT, 1999

# The Edwardian Study Weekend - September 18th-19th 1999

by Ros Laidlaw and Bettina Harden

This was the second study session to be arranged with the kind co-operation of the Museum of Welsh Life. Wales has many wonderful gardens created in that golden age running up to the First World War, representing the work of some of the greatest garden designers of the age. Inevitably what we managed to cover in one weekend was only the tip of the iceberg, but it is to be hoped that we have started a trend to encourage more research and debate on this period of garden history. Certainly the talks and garden visits that formed the fabric of the weekend will supply rich material for the next edition of *Gerddi* and thus ensure that some of the splendid scholarship displayed as the days went on will be shared with all our members.

We were privileged to start the session with a lecture from Professor Michael Tooley on "*Miss Jekyll in Wales*". The author and editor of several books and articles on Gertrude Jekyll, he is Professor of Geography at the University of St Andrews. The gardens in Wales on which Miss Jekyll worked can be counted on the fingers of one hand – Llanfawr and Presaddfed on Anglesey, the Old Vicarage at Gresford, The Court, St Fagans and Hillside in South Wales. Professor Tooley was able to show us that Miss Jekyll had visited friends in Wales, carried out some delightful watercolours on those visits, and clearly found the country a visual inspiration. The lecture was not confined to her small body of work in Wales, but related it to her work on a wider scale, not least at her famous home at Munstead Wood where, in her Reserve Garden, she raised so many of the plants she supplied to her clients. One thing we all learnt in the course of the talk was *not* to call her flower borders 'herbaceous borders', rather 'hardy flower borders'. One fascinating aspect of Professor Tooley's studies was the work he has done in compiling a list of all those plants selected, bred or named after Miss Jekyll. Too many of these have vanished without trace and it made us all realise what treasures must have been lost with the wholesale destruction of her garden at The Court, St Fagans, just down the road from where we sat.

Miss Jekyll's work on this last garden, created for Lady Llewelyn, was revealed in wonderful detail by Patricia Moore, narrating her splendid archival research into The Court, St Fagans. Given that she has been battling with serious illness and its treatment, her courage in joining in the weekend and giving us the benefit of all her excellent work was breathtaking and heart warming. Thank you very much indeed, Patricia. How we all longed to roll back time and recapture those lost borders and walks now lost to executive housing. Many of us would also have liked to have met the redoubtable Lady Llewelyn who was clearly a force to be reckoned with.

All of us present at St Fagans had a good opportunity to talk to each other and the speakers and get a good look at the plans for the borders at The Court. We were honoured to have amongst our number two great nieces of Miss Jekyll herself as well as descendents of her great friend, Georgina Duff-Gordon. After an excellent lunch the party departed in a downpour for the Italianate gardens at Dyffryn, designed by Mawson in 1906 in collaboration with the owner Reginald Cory, a keen plantsman. We were shown round the site by Gerry Donovan the gardens project manager, miraculously avoiding being soaked by a thunder storm circling overhead, and heard about the current restoration work, funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, including the recently restored Pompeiian garden. At present the hard landscape looks rather stark, but is to be softened by appropriate planting, to replace the present corporation-style bedding schemes. Much of the work being carried out, however, was not apparent on the ground, and

involved the extensive restoration of the underground water and drainage systems and the installation of a comprehensive electricity supply network. An interesting strategy, that might pay dividends on other sites, was the involvement of specialist societies in the restoration of various features on the site. For example, the British Alpine Society is advising on the restoration of the extensive rock garden adjacent to the house. In all the restoration projects there were constant compromises to be made between historical accuracy and public access and safety requirements. Many changes, particularly the removal of inappropriate tree planting would be implemented gradually over the long term as and when trees died, thus cushioning the visiting public from radical sudden changes in the landscape of the gardens.

Sunday's proceedings started with an illuminating talk by Elisabeth Whittle on Edwardian gardens in Wales. The numerous different strands of Edwardian garden design were clarified. These design themes included naturalistic, Japanese, Arts and Crafts, Italianate, architectural, historicist and plantsman's gardens and were illustrated using examples of designers including Mawson, Mallows, and Avray Tipping together with those created by enthusiastic owners.

Following this lecture Deborah Evans the gardens adviser and project co-ordinator at St. Fagans gave a short talk on the Edwardian gardens at St. Fagans. There followed a thought-provoking tour of the gardens in the immediate environs of the castle highlighting current and future restoration plans and offering an interesting insight into on-going maintenance problems.



After lunch we were fortunate to be able to visit the garden at Craig y Parc, now a school for children with physical disabilities run by Scope. This garden, designed by the Arts-and-Crafts architect C.E. Mallows is a gem that still retains its original structure of terraces, garden buildings including a charming loggia (complete with fireplace) and paths. Much of the original planting has been lost having been replaced by low maintenance shrubs, but some period features remain such as a magnificent mulberry at the front entrance to the house. The architectural detailing is very pleasing and imaginative with sympathetic use of natural materials. However this garden is teetering on the edge - surviving largely by virtue of the high standard of its original design and workmanship. It is a gem that would benefit from advice and help with its management, that would also have to rise to the challenge of the needs of the current users. The magic of this garden was potent enough to turn a logistical hiccup, when the coach was delayed through becoming stuck in the lane close to the house, into an appropriate finale to the weekend: - sitting on the terrace soaking up the sun of a golden afternoon - all that was missing was the tea and cucumber sandwiches.

# Lucky Son of a Bastard!

## Book Review: Penllergare - A Victorian Paradise

by Richard Morris

publ. by the Friends of Penllergare 1999 Hardback, £17.50

Every significant estate in Wales need a written account of its history, and Penllergare, on the outskirts of Swansea, needs it particularly urgently. The house demolished in 1961 and later replaced by the Council Offices, the estate carved by the motorway, encroachment of modern housing and needless vandalism have all taken their toll, such that the site could soon be little more than a place-name associated with one of the pioneers of photography, John Dillwyn Llewellyn. A personal enthusiasm for this one of his wife's ancestors perhaps motivated Richard Morris to do the research, while the publication of this

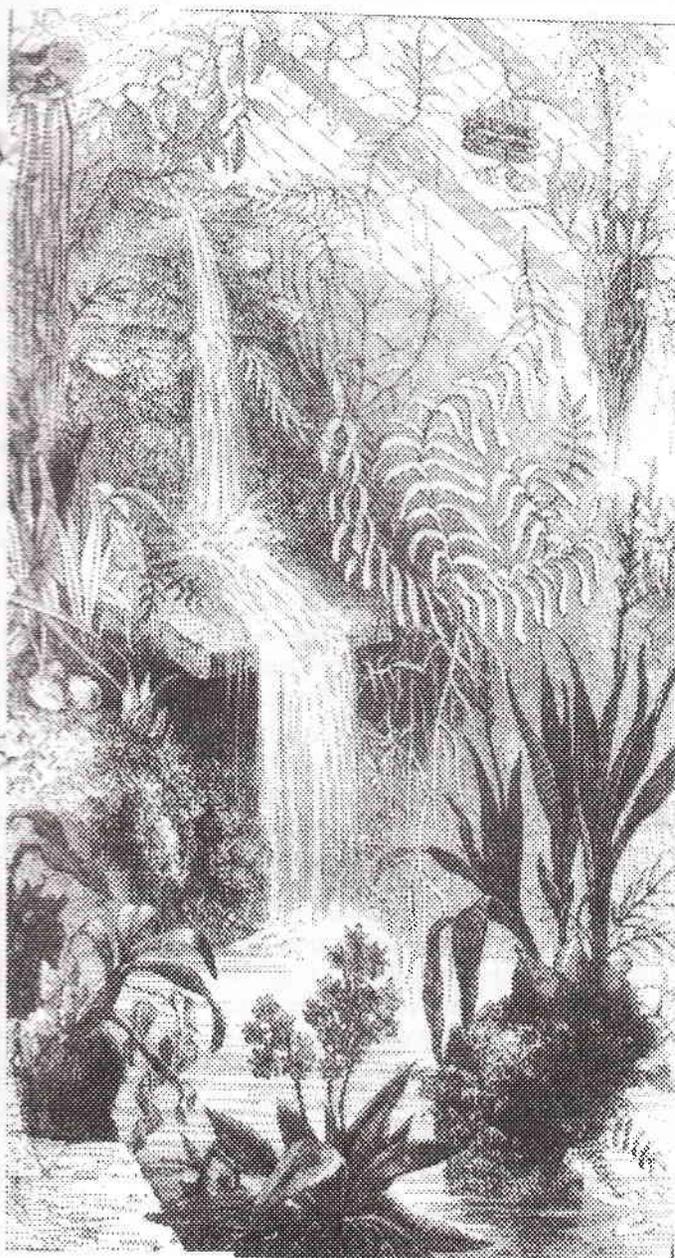
It is tempting to attribute John Dillwyn Llewellyn's considerable creative expression, in both landscape and photography, to the circumstances under which he was reared, destined, from the age of seven, to inherit a substantial fortune. Born plain John Dillwyn, son of Swansea industrialist Lewis Weston Dillwyn, (proprietor among other ventures, of the Swansea Pottery) and of the illegitimate daughter of Colonel John Llewellyn of Penllergare, he was the only grandchild of Llewellyn blood. The Colonel's will, which is reproduced in part, appointed the trustees during John Dillwyn's minority to include his childless wife Fanny, the illegitimate Mary, and her husband John. Whether this was a happy alliance can only be speculated!

The outcome though, was that young John, inheriting in 1831, promptly married Emma the youngest daughter of Thomas Mansel Talbot of Penrice and Margam, and embarked on a life of leisure, improvement and benevolence. He employed Edward Haycock to refurbish his crumbling mansion, remodelled the park in picturesque style, brought in the latest technology in stove houses and naturalistic orchid house in his walled garden, and competed enthusiastically in the Swansea and Neath Horticultural Society and in the emergent craft of photography. He performed his civil responsibilities conscientiously, fathered and participated in the lives of his seven children, and died an old man, in 1882.

As a book, this volume has two strengths, a well researched manuscript and a remarkable range of visual images, early photographs by John Dillwyn Llewellyn, and by his daughter Thereza, skilful watercolours by his daughter Emma Charlotte, and more naive paintings by himself. Its weakness is in the compilation of the book: there are no text references to the pictures, there is no index, and the contemporary reader would welcome a modern schematic map showing the principal features of the estate, what remains and how that land lies in relation to the ravages of motorway and housing estates.

For the student of garden history, the *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* of 1886 contains a splendidly detailed description by Andrew Pettigrew, and large tracts are reproduced in the text. Archive research has revealed correspondence with botanical friends Bentham, Hooker, Lady Mary Cole and Henry Talbot, and that plants and supplies were obtained from Loddige's, Miller's, Knight's and Veitch's nurseries, but if a particular landscape designer was involved, his identity has not come to light. Most tantalising of all is the description on page 45, of "a remarkable drawing of the estate at the period, (the 1830's) almost a bird's eye view, but shows very dramatically the complete layout, with the mansion dominating the horizon and looking down over the wooded landscape and the lakes". In the absence of clearer captioning it is impossible to know whether this is the picture illustrated on page 46. The description might almost hint at an unsigned work by Thomas Hornor.

Caroline Palmer



Interior of the Orchidaceous House at Penllergare.  
*Journal of the Horticultural Society 1846*

work is a significant step in bringing what remains of Penllergare, and the need for its protection, to a wider audience.

# The Register of Historic Parks and Gardens

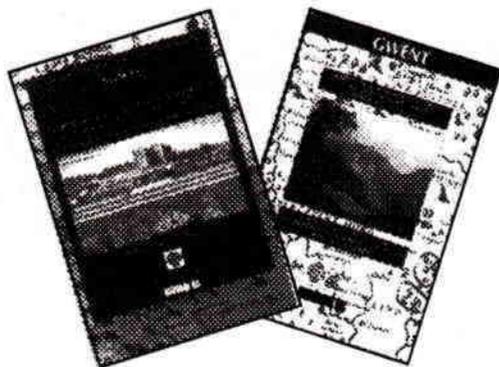
The Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales) has taken another step towards completion, with the publication of two new volumes. The first covers north-west Wales, in the unitary authorities of Conwy, Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey. The second is for the county of Powys.

In north-west Wales there are 62 sites on the Register, eight of which are Grade I. All periods are represented, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The Tudor gardens of Gwydir Castle, Bodysgallen and Vaynol, the baroque layout of Gloddaeth, Plas Newydd's spectacular landscape park, the Victorian masterpiece of Glynllifon, the Edwardian masterpiece of Bodnant and Clough Williams-Ellis's garden at Plas Brondanw are some of the highlights. The area is particularly noted for its mountain scenery and from the eighteenth century on this was incorporated into landscaping schemes, often to spectacular effect. One only has to think of the views across the Menai Strait to Snowdonia from Plas Newydd and Llanidan, the view at Peniarth across the park to Cader Idris or the alignment of the axes of Plas Brondanw on the surrounding mountain peaks. I am delighted to be able to include a different sort of historic garden on the Register in this area - the plantsman's, or plantwoman's, garden. Oak Bank/Bulkeley Mill and Plas-yn-Rhiw are fine examples of this kind. We have also found a good modernist garden, at Conover House, Llandudno. It would be exciting to find more.

In Powys there are 50 sites on the Register, five of which are Grade I. Again there is a wide range, both in date and style. The Tudor period is represented by Abercynrig and Old Gwernyfed; Powis Castle has perhaps the most spectacular baroque formal garden in Britain; there are some outstanding landscape parks, as at Stanage Park, which was landscaped by Humphry Repton, and Vaynor Park. The county has numerous nineteenth-century parks and gardens, at the pinnacle of which are those of Leighton Hall. Rock Park, in Llandrindod Wells, is the earliest publicly owned park in Wales. To demonstrate the scope of the Register, we have also included a historic churchyard, at Guilsfield, and a historic arboretum, at Silia (Presteigne).

Both the new volumes are available for purchase from Cadw, at £30 and £21 respectively. They can be obtained from Trefor Jones, Cadw, Crown Building, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NW (tel. 01222 500200). The earlier volumes for Gwent and Clwyd are also now available for sale, at £10 and £15 respectively.

*Elisabeth Whittle  
Inspector of Historic Parks and Gardens, Cadw*



*All these volumes are a delight and although copies have been generously donated to each Branch many individuals will be eager to purchase their own.*

*Editor*

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## A note from the Membership Secretary

I have recently taken over from Richard Gilbertson. All Richard's membership data has now been transferred to my computer and, after the inevitable initial teething troubles, I think everything is up and running. However after ten years, with changes in personnel and in methodology, from 'quill pen' (as Richard puts it) through various computer systems some errors have crept into the records. There are a number of subscriptions which appear overdue, and I will be writing shortly to ask those members to renew or, if our records are incorrect, to put me right.

After 10 years it has become necessary to raise our subscriptions. From 1 January 2000 these will be:

Individual members £12.50 Family membership £20.00

Corporate membership: Schools, Associations £35.00,  
Firms, local Authorities £75

Life membership £250 preferably by Gift Aid which enables us to reclaim the tax you have paid on the sum.

*Peter Williams*