

# Windsor Gardens, Penarth

by Barry A. Thomas

Penarth was one of the South Wales boom-time new towns that grew throughout the latter part of the last century and the early part of this one. One hundred and forty years ago it was a cluster of whitewashed cottages and farmhouses with a population of only 105. Access from Cardiff was difficult, being over seven miles of rough road or a rope-ferry over the River Ely. Rowing boats and sailing boats did, however, bring a constant stream of people to walk on the unspoilt beach. This outwardly idyllic rural scene was soon changed when Penarth Dock was built at the mouth of the Ely River and opened in 1865. Penarth quickly became a successful and busy port and in 1884 the dock was enlarged for the steady increase in shipping. The town and its population grew with the docks so, although there were only 1,406 people noted in the 1861 census, the population doubled every ten years until the end of the century.

It was not simply the development of the docks and the extension of the railway into the town that brought refinement and prosperity to the town. It was also the vision of the Windsors (later the Earls of Plymouth) of St Fagans who had owned much of the local land since 1730. It was their wish to make Penarth into a beautiful town to live in as well as a centre of commerce and trade, that determined so much of the present day layout of the town. Of course it must be remembered that the family was a major stockholder of the Docks and the Taff Vale Railway and owned much of the land upon which the town was being built, so they were able to make a substantial return upon their investments.

It was during the early development and expansion of Penarth that a number of lovely parks were developed around its growing beach-side attractions. They became part of the overall scheme of attracting people to what the local press started to call *The most beautiful little town in South Wales*. Lord Windsor started work on the first of the parks as part of his scheme to attract ship owners and well-to-do businessmen who could now commute to Cardiff easily by train. Penarth quickly became one of the most fashionable towns in South Wales and at the turn of the century over ten millionaires lived there. Lord Windsor



*The bandstand at the turn of the century.*

opened the first, more northerly, section of his garden in 1880 that stretched along the cliff-top giving superb views over the Bristol Channel towards the Flat Holm, Steep Holm and the Somerset coast. The garden was entered from the seaward, bottom end of Bridgeman Road and could be easily reached by horse-drawn cab from the station. The entry fee of one penny kept the gardens relatively exclusive and the money was collected by the garden superintendent who lived in the brick-built house just inside the entrance. This house later became the Piermaster's house and is now a private home. The residents of the mansions in Bridgeman Road and Marine Parade, whose gardens abutted the new garden, were permitted to have their own private entry gates on the payment of half a guinea and some of these gates are still in place. Many of these houses had their own rather splendid gardens that were laid out by Charles Jones, a local landscape gardener.

The garden was designed by Lord Windsor's agent, Robert Forrest, and his architect, Henry Snell. Lawns and flower beds were laid out and shrubbery and trees planted. At first the garden extended to the little valley leading down to Penarth Yacht Club at the southern end of the Promenade. The visitors, if they wished, could leave the garden at the dingle by a one-way 'puzzle gate' and stroll back along the beach.

At the same time as this garden was being laid out, the Windsor Estate was undertaking other developments that would establish the future design of the sea front. Cliff Hill Road was cut out of the cliff in 1880 providing a southerly extension to the 36 foot-wide esplanade that was then built in 1883. It gave access to the beach from the more southerly developments of the town and opened up a circular route for the horse-drawn cabs. In 1885 a new garden was laid out from the valley to the top of the newly constructed Cliff Hill Road making the total area 4.5 acres and a second brick-built lodge built at the new southern end. The intervening valley was spanned by an impressive bridge, but unfortunately it was taken down in 1937 because it was thought to be in danger of collapsing. Now only the southern supports remain to show us where it once stood. Some sections of the original protecting iron railings that were put on the cliff-edge of the gardens do, however, still remain showing them to have been made by the firm of D. Evans of Llandaff in 1885.

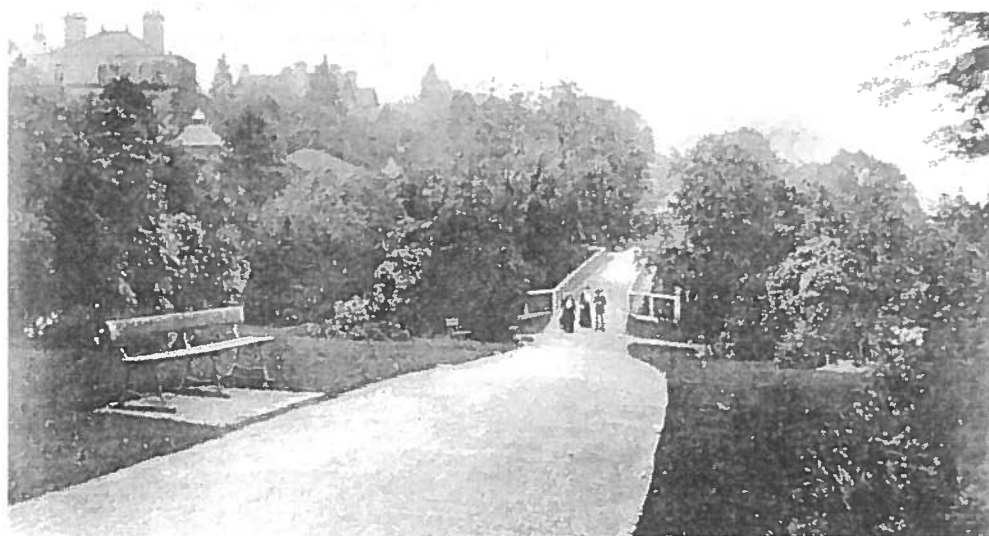
The gardens soon became a popular place to stroll, and be seen. Pleasant surroundings, views, sea air and select company were there for the people that could pay. The garden, together with the new promenade, attracted increasing numbers of better off visitors to the town. A bandstand was installed to enhance the use of the gardens and concerts were regularly held there during the summer months. Other varied, but rather grand and select events also took place in the gardens. However, with time, the number of visitors decreased even with the added attractions that were staged in the gardens. This was no doubt partly because of the proximity of the free Alexandra Park, which the Penarth Council had opened in 1901 on land donated by the Windsors themselves. It should be noted, however, that the gardens were still very popular for some, because in 1929 the local Penarth Times carried some rather adverse comments about the romancing taking place there. Eventually, in 1928, the Earl of Plymouth offered to give Windsor Gardens to the town in a package that included the sale of the beach foreshore and two pieces of land at the top of Beach Road for £1,735. The

lodges were also offered free on the understanding that an old employee of the Estate, Mr Carey, could live in the southern lodge rent and rate free. Although the arrangement seemed simple, the actual hand over of the garden took rather a long time, because of a hitch relating to the fencing and this long delay led to widespread public criticism. The Council also had to agree to keep the trees and shrubs trimmed so as not to obstruct the sea view of those houses fronting the garden, permit the continued use of the private gates, and keep the yacht club slipway in repair for use by the club.

Eventually in 1932 all was settled and Lord Windsor, who was by then the Earl of Plymouth, first removed the turnstiles to give free access into the gardens and then gave them to the town. On Saturday 30th April the Earl came to the gardens to open them to the public and thousands of people came to watch even though it poured with rain. The town now had a lovely park overlooking the sea that was stocked with a variety of shrubs and flowering trees, that was rather optimistically described at the time as second to none in the County of Glamorgan. But perhaps the most bizarre fact in the whole proceedings was that the Council provided no signs to indicate that it was a public park, so many summer visitors, thinking that it was still private did not enter.

Some early planted, if not original, trees remain and are now large and very beautiful. Most noticeable of these are the foreign oaks and the willow-leaved pear near the bandstand and the remaining one of a pair of magnificent Monterey Cypress trees above Cliff Hill Road.

The steps up from the beach shelter on the esplanade were opened in June 1977 by the Lord Lieutenant for Glamorgan, Sir Cennydd Traherne, to replace the ones built in 1933 that fell in a state of disrepair after the war. These new steps, costing £4,000, were a project of the Penarth Civic Society for European Architectural Heritage Year, with half the money coming from the Wales Committee for European Architectural Heritage Year, £500 from the Vale Council and the rest from donation and efforts of local people.

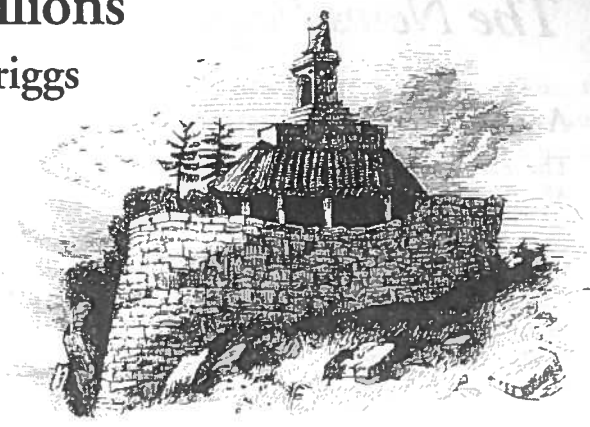


*The view northwards across the bridge in about 1910. Penarth Head is visible in the distance. Plymouth House, built in 1861 is the first building on the left, then come the mansions in Marine Parade and Bridgeman Road.*

[The author will be publishing his book, *Penarth – the Garden by the Sea*, this summer. Ed.]

# Circular Pavilions

by Stephen Briggs



THE PAVILION.

St Elmo's Summer House, which at one time occupied an eminence on the Golden Grove estate, Llanasa, Flintshire, was the subject of a stylised sketch by William Latham, printed in the Spring 1997 issue of this *Bulletin*.

By curious coincidence, the front elevation of a similar summer-house appeared on the front cover of the *Journal of the Picturesque Society* (no. 17, Winter 1996-7). And whereas there are many minor differences of detail between the two illustrations, this one, entitled 'A circular building proposed to be erected on an eminence' nevertheless shares much with the design of St Elmo's by Latham.

The Picturesque Society's cover illustration introduces an article about Charles Middleton by Ted Wade, which reproduces a near facsimile reprint of Middleton's first book, *Picturesque and Architectural Views for Cottages, Farm Homes, and Country Villas*, of 1793 (a second edition of which appeared in 1795). Apparently (p. 15) 'there is no record of any building which can be solely attributed to Middleton'.

Middleton's accompanying text to the design (above left), one of eleven *cottages ornés* described in his pattern book, runs:

Number X is a circular building, proposed to be erected on an eminence, the upper part of which may form an observatory, as the gallery, encircling the roof, affords an opportunity of gaining an extensive view of the surrounding country. The ground plan consists of a dining room parlour, and kitchen; the principal room, which is 14 feet high, may serve as a rural banqueting room; the sides are intended to be stuccoed with base and surbase mouldings, small architraves in the windows, folding wainscot sashes, with best crown glass; plain statuary marble chimney-piece; common straight-joint yellow deal floor; jib door to the closet, and six pannel door to entrance from the parlour. On the angles of the recess in which the center window is placed are columns which will form an alcove, and give an agreeable finish to that part of the room. The parlour, kitchen, and rooms above, may be finished in the style already mentioned for rooms of this description; the front stuccoed, the roof to be thatched; and the ends of the rafters supported by rude columns; the gallery round the roof may be made to have a pleasing effect, and is intended to be above the sleeping-room

floor, and formed of lattice work, supported by canterlevers under the floor of the gallery, and framed to the rafters.

Interestingly, St Elmo's was not the only hilltop to be capped by a structure of this type. In 1794 a similar, apparently circular 'pavilion' (above right) was erected on Kymin Hill, high above Monmouth and the Wye. Predecessor to the present well-known building and memorial on this spot, this one was later described as 'clumsy and little worthy of the proud position it occupies' (Hall and Mall 1861, 75-6). Significantly, its circumferential ambulatory roof was propped up by wooden pillars similar to those described and illustrated by Middleton.

Since Middleton was by no means the only architect publishing plans of this type, it is likely that more exact examples may eventually be recognised for comparison from amongst similar compendia of patterns.

The two buildings noted here belonged to a now largely lost population of habitable whimsical structures which originally occupied hilltops or were tucked away to offer picturesque parkland prospects or more dramatic views. Only further recognition among early graphic records or definition through archaeological excavation will now enable more useful comparison between these two examples and those published by Middleton.

## Acknowledgements

The writer thanks Mr E.A. Wade for his assistance in providing a copy of Middleton's plan from the Gregg reprint.

## Sources

C.S. Briggs, 'William Latham in North Wales', *The Bulletin* Spring 1997, 2-3.

S.C. and A.M. Hall, *The book of South Wales the Wye and the Coast*, Hall, Virtue and Co., 1861. E.P. Reprint 1977.

E.A. Wade, 'Charles Middleton', *The Picturesque (being the Journal of the Picturesque Society)*, Winter 1996-7, no. 17, 15-22.

*The WHGT extends thanks to Manchester City Council Department of Libraries and Theatres for kindly granting permission to publish the sketches by William Latham (MS 741 L25) in the Spring issue and for waiving the normal reproduction fee. Anyone interested in viewing this collection of Latham's topographical drawings, housed in Manchester Central Library, should contact:*

*Manchester Local Studies: Archives, Central Library, St. Peter's Square, Manchester M2 5PD (0161 234 1980).*

# The News Pages

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Nanteos, near Aberystwyth on Saturday, 10th May 1997. Attendance was excellent, especially considering the extremely variable weather conditions, and those who were not half drowned on the journey were able to explore the remarkably beautiful garden site in comparative comfort, led by Caroline Palmer and Ros Laidlaw whose researches into the history of the house and garden added greatly to the pleasure of the occasion.

Sadly, Professor Tom Pritchard has retired from the position of Chairman, although he remains a member of Council and so is not entirely lost to us. His time as Chairman has been marked by a resurgence of the Trust in various directions and he leaves us invigorated and more confident for his years of leadership.

Our new Chairman, Bettina Harden, is a familiar figure to many in the Trust, an active committee member for many years and an inspiring Chairman of the Gwynedd Branch. Her energy and enthusiasm will surely carry WHGT through to the millennium with ever greater success.

This year, the Trust also has a change of Secretary, although Col. Richard Gilbertson, who has carried an exceptionally heavy burden nobly for the past four years is not so much lost as going before us, carrying the flag as Membership Secretary and the first line of contact for Trust members.

We welcome our new Secretary, Ros Laidlaw, with the resolve to make her life as easy as possible while continuing to make outrageous and unremitting demands upon her time and goodwill.

The speaker, after lunch, was David Jacques, whose talk on 'The Georgian Garden', accompanied by a succession of delightful slides ranging from Versailles to the Devil's Bridge, was very well received.

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## The Royal Welsh Show

As usual the Trust will have a presence at the Royal Welsh Show, sponsored this year by British Gas. The work of all branches will be represented and there will be a welcome for all Trust Members on the stand which will be in the Horticultural Tent as before. You will find us this year among the professional exhibitors, on the left hand side going down. Needless to say, any member who feels able or willing to take a stint at the desk will be prized above rubies. This is your Trust, your exhibit: *don't miss it.*

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## Victorian Glasshouses.

Mr Gerry Hudson is researching Victorian Glass-houses and would be grateful for any information on the subject. He is particularly interested in heating systems but anything to do with construction, equipment and planting would be helpful. His address is: Cleveland, Begelly, Pembrokeshire, SA68 OYH. Telephone: 01834 814317.

## Study Day

Monaughty, nr Knighton, Radnorshire  
Thursday 11 September 1997, 10.00 am – 4.40 pm  
*by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Douglas Blain*

### Historic Gardens: Their Restoration and Maintenance

This Study Day is primarily for owners of historic gardens, on any scale, from Tudor to the Twenties, with or without experience. You may inherit, purchase or otherwise acquire an historic garden and not know where to begin; you may already be dealing with a large park or garden and need advice on research, obtaining grant aid, or opening to the public. By spending the day at Monaughty, itself a triumphant example of recreating a Renaissance garden to set off a fine Tudor house, we hope you will find information and advice to assist you.

### PROGRAMME

*Bettina Harden*, Chairman, Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. Her experience includes running and maintaining the gardens at Nanhoron, Gwynedd, a Regency house set in an older, eighteenth-century park with two walled gardens. She will discuss researching the history of a garden, undertaking gardening on a scale she had never before attempted, opening it occasionally to the public, and generally learning the ropes of running an historic garden.

*Elizabeth Banks* and her husband Lawrence, are well known as distinguished figures in the horticultural world, as consultants and advisers, but also for the famous garden of Hergest Croft, Herefordshire, holding the National Collections of birches and maples. This magnificent 50-acre site, laid out and planned over 100 years, is open from Easter until the end of October and receives some 14,000 visitors a year. Elizabeth Banks is well qualified to discuss the heights to which we all aspire.

*Thomas Lloyd*, Chairman, Historic Buildings Council for Wales. The author of the seminal book, *Lost Houses of Wales*, Tom Lloyd's knowledge of the historic houses of Wales and their settings is encyclopaedic. His work gives him invaluable experience to advise owners on how to set about obtaining grant aid for restoring historic gardens.

*Sophie Andreae*, formerly of SAVE Britain's Heritage and English Heritage, now a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, will speak on the restoration and creation of the gardens at Monaughty.

In addition to listening to the speakers and talking to them afterwards, there will be the opportunity to see the magical garden at Monaughty, to meet nurserymen and talk over planting and plants suitable for historic sites; and, of course, to meet other owners and gardeners.

The price of the Study Day, to include Coffee and Lunch is £35.00. For more information write to: Bettina Harden, Nanhoron, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, N. Wales LL53 8DL Telephone: 01758 730610 Fax: 01758 730452

## Editorial

This is my last issue as Editor of *The Bulletin*. I have occupied the editorial ducking stool since 1993 and that is probably more than long enough. I have enjoyed it immensely and you, the members, for all my anguished squeaks from time to time, have provided the magazine with some splendid material.

Now the Editor's job will be taken over by Caroline Palmer, from Aberystwyth. She is an experienced journalist – her book of *Cuttings*, culled from her columns in *The Cambrian News*, is

reviewed on p. 6 – and under her *The Bulletin* will continue to keep you, as I hope it has up to now, informed, enlivened and amused. Contributions, letters and ideas may be sent to her at: The Old Laundry, Rhyd-y-Felin, Aberystwyth. Telephone 01970 615403.

That's it, then. Best wishes, Caroline. Thank you all for having me.

Goodbye.

Anne Carter

## Branch News

### BRECON AND RADNOR BRANCH

The Brecon and Radnor Branch is now progressing strongly and has had two highly successful summer garden visits. The first was to the Nesfield garden at Treberfydd, by kind invitation of Col. and Mrs Garnons-Williams. Robin Whalley gave a talk on Nesfield and we were able to look at the designer's own original plan for the garden. On 6 July we went to Vaynor Park, Berriew, where Mr and Mrs Corbett-Winder welcomed us to the garden at the height of its summer glory. This was followed by a visit to the nearby studio of the landscape artist, Jonathan Myles-Lea, whose portrayal of the house and garden at Plas Teg is reproduced right.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Boughrood Rectory in early December. Further information nearer the time.

### PEMBROKESHIRE BRANCH

**Brownslade House – Sunday August 4th**

The abandoned gardens of Brownslade House are on the tank ranges at Castlemartin. The Commandant, Lt. Col. Portman, has very kindly arranged for us to visit them, and to attend Evensong at the old Flimston Chapel, also on the ranges, afterwards.

Rendezvous at the Guardroom, Merrion Camp, GR OS 158/939969, at 2.30 pm, for a safety briefing by the Commandant and an escorted drive to Brownslade. Bring a thermos for tea if desired.

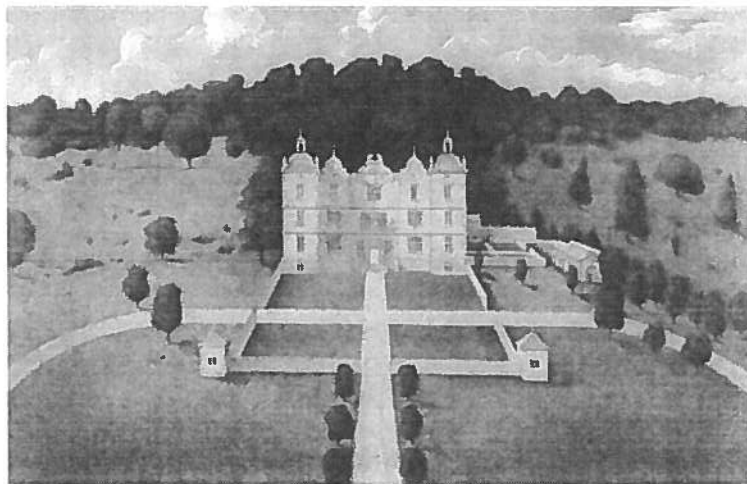
Please contact Sylvia Thomas-Ferrand (Tel 0834 813331) if you are interested in coming as numbers are limited.

**Saturday Sept. 20th – Middleton, Welsh Botanical Gardens**  
Visit to Middleton, Welsh Botanical Gardens, with tour by Ivor Stokes. We should see some progress by this date. This visit is a must for those interested in an exciting new project taking place on our doorstep.

**Monday October 20th – Cottesmore**

Jane Stokes will be visiting Cottesmore to give us the latest information on Pembrokeshire CADW gardens.

For further information, please contact the Secretary.



Jonathan Myles-Lea. 'Plas Teg' 1992. Oil on Panel.

Meetings at Cottesmore are on the *third* Monday of the month in question at 19.00 hours and are with the kind permission of Charlotte Kelway.

### GWYNEDD BRANCH

**Saturday, 27th September, Michaelmas Lunch**

Details of this outing have yet to be finalised, but will include a tour and talk at the National Trust's property at Crafflwyn.

**Saturday, 4th October**

Medieval House, Penarth Fawr, Pwllheli. 2.30 p.m.

Lecture: 'Medieval Gardens' by Elisabeth Whittle, author of *The Historic Gardens of Wales*, including her own work in designing the re-created garden at Tretower, Monmouthshire.

**Thursday, 6th November**

Oriel Ynys Mon, Llangefni. 6.00 p.m.

Annual General Meeting, followed by a talk on 'Anglesey' by Ian Skidmore, the well-known broadcaster.

For further details and information please contact:

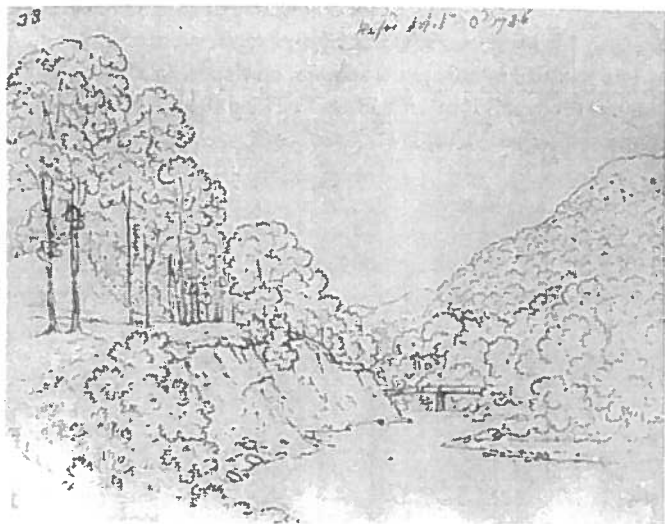
Margaret Mason, Penhyddgan, Boduan, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 8YH Tel: 01758 721577

## Book Reviews

# Cumberland's Hafod

by John Borron

*An Attempt to Describe Hafod* by George Cumberland. A bicentenary edition edited and introduced by Jennie McVe and Andrew Slater. The Hafod Trust, £9.95.



*The Ystwyth Valley from Thomas Jones's sketch book. By courtesy of the Hafod Trust.*

The Hafod Trust deserves the gratitude of all serious students of Hafod for its decision to republish Cumberland's essay on Hafod. The original edition published in 1796 has long been extremely rare and this new and attractive edition will help to make Johnes' aims available to a wider audience than has previously been possible. The new edition is much enhanced by useful introductory essays and the inclusion of drawings from a sketchbook of Thomas Jones of Pencerrig.

Although Wales has had many travellers who wrote vivid descriptions of their journeys there have been very few monographs on individual properties. Cumberland's Hafod gives a fascinating insight into the outlook of Thomas Johnes and his aims at Hafod. It is possible to recapture with Cumberland the mental and physical imagery that Johnes intended his visitors to enjoy as they walked the paths that he had created.

Although Thomas Johnes only lived at Hafod from 1783 to 1816 the glamour of his period of ownership has totally overshadowed the long history of Hafod as an estate. In recent years some accounts of Hafod after Thomas Johnes have been written but the previous history remains unknown. This is unfortunate as there is still no clear picture of Hafod as Johnes first saw it when he rode up the Ystwyth valley. It may well be that Johnes found more and did less than has so far been suggested. It is very much to be hoped that the Hafod Trust having made so excellent a start with the reprint of Cumberland will publish further books on the history of the estate.

# A Pleasure Shared

by Phyllis Guskin

*Cuttings. A Gardener's pot pourri from Wales*: Caroline Palmer. Gomer Press, £8.95.

*Cuttings* is a selection from the columns on gardens and gardening which Caroline Palmer wrote for *The Cambrian News* from 1989 to 1995. The essays are organized by month, with each month introduced by an atmospheric woodcut by Jenny Fell. Given its journalistic origin and its strong ties to the specific locale and conditions of coastal mid-Wales, centring on Aberystwyth, one might think that this book would be somewhat limited in its appeal. However, Caroline Palmer has an original and well-informed mind. Her training in biological anthropology has given her insights not only into the world of plants but into the animal creation, and her empathy extends to the snail as well as to the gardener. She is as appreciative of the enthusiastic efforts of the amateur dahlia grower (although she does prefer the flowers to be pale pink), as she is entranced by the wildness of Hafod. Her descriptions of the many gardens she has visited on open days in the area some thirty miles around Aberystwyth are generously responsive to the special conditions of the site and the proclivities of the individual gardener. Her eye for detail is constantly a joy, and her style is fresh, clear and evocative of scents, sounds and feelings.

Palmer's keen interest in the interaction of the human and the natural environment makes her ideas always challenging. She responds to the surprising – the charming rose-covered nineteenth-century cottage built within the enceinte of Manorbier Castle; and to the heroic – the devotion of Buddug Evans who rose before dawn one frosty spring to save her husband's beloved dahlias, in his absence, from the frost.

Gardens are significant in our emotional lives often from their associations with the past. Palmer communicates the intellectual pleasures of the rediscovery of the neglected grand house and gardens and the historic implications, as at Llanerchaeron or Nanteos; she is also keenly aware of the more intimate networks of friendship often built on the sharing of plants and flowers. Reading her pages one feels almost drawn into a similar relationship with her. I am happy to note that she is an enthusiast for the hellebores and euphorbias, and that she too gets tremendous pleasure from her garden pond.

Palmer's essays are filled with gems of information. One may have known that the dahlia came from Mexico but did you know its Aztec name? Her observations on the 'love darts' of the snail are a revelation – I will still toss them over the garden fence, as she does, however. Her experience as organizer of a local horticultural show informs many of her comments, and will surely make the casual visitor more respectful of the immense effort involved in producing such splendid vegetables, or in feeding the judges!

*Cuttings* is a pleasure to read, and to reread, and will surely become a favourite bedside book for those who garden in Wales, or anyone who is interested in the attitudes that lie behind human delight in the natural world.

# Who Cares for Calceolarias?

by Anne Carter

*The Penguin Book of Garden Writing*. Edited by David Wheeler. Viking £20.00

Another thing also much too commonly seen is an aberration of the human mind, which otherwise I should have been ashamed to warn you of. It is technically called carpet-gardening. Need I explain it further? I had rather not, for when I think of it even when I am quite alone I blush with shame at the thought.

Thus William Morris on the pride of late Victorian, labour-intensive gardens. His strictures on scarlet geraniums and yellow calceolarias are even more trenchant: 'not uncommonly grown together profusely, in order, I suppose, to show that even flowers can be thoroughly ugly'.

For a peaceful occupation, recommended to soothe the troubled mind and lower the blood pressure, gardening has roused some pretty strong feelings over the centuries and one of the charms of an anthology such as the present is to see one generation's high fashion excoriated by another. Francis Bacon thought '*Fountains... a great Beauty and Refreshment*' but '*Pooles marre all, and make the Garden unwholesome, and full of Flies, and Frogs.*' A.A. Milne dreamed fondly of 'a water garden, with a few perennial goldfish flashing swiftly across it, and ourselves walking idly by the margin...' while 'The Garsington pond proved to be, from the first, the magnetic point of the garden: tragic, comic and beautiful beyond Ottoline [Morell]'s imaginings.' People drowned in it, the black boar fell into it, Dora Carrington, after swimming in it, called it a 'cess-pool of slime' but was not above posing nude beside it, along with Ottoline herself, but the beauty of it, framed by yew hedges, statuary and reflected foliage, by day or night, was undeniable.

David Wheeler, himself no mean gardener, whose own garden writing would surely have deserved a place here under any other editor, has grouped his entries under five headings: thoughts, people, works, plants and gardens as a whole. His authors, most of them writing originally in English, range from the sixteenth century to the present day and from household names to the private and unsung. The thing they have in common is the one, deeply ingrained passion: what Charles Dudley Warner, writing in 1876, called 'the love of digging in the ground (or of looking on while he pays another to dig)... To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds and watch their renewal of life – this is...the most satisfactory thing a man can do.'

Not only a man. There are women enough in this book who have planned and planted and dug their gardens, and written about them in terms as passionate and elegant and learned and perceptive as any. Frances Trollope on the wild roses of Maryland and Virginia, Margery Fish on pulmonarias, speculating as to the identity of the eponymous 'Mrs Moon', Mrs Earle on crown imperials and Mrs Boyle, her contemporary, on arum lilies: it is astonishing how good these women are on individual



*Auriculas in the Greenhouse*, by Simon Dorell.

plants. They combine scientific objectivity with an artist's sense of form and colour, and their intent is to impart a shared delight.

The men, by contrast seem to write more about the grand design, the philosophy of the garden and the people and activities involved in it. Dean Hole, remembering his childhood, asserts that 'magpies were manly...and guinea pigs were quite genteel; but we might not even speak of flowers. They were considered to be beneath the dignity of gentlemen who would be nine years of age next birthday.'

But then one comes across Ruskin's luminous description of a small Italian poppy and all these theories are blown away. The love of gardens is not simply the purest of human pleasures, as Bacon calls it, it is also the most individual. Where one gardener is for neatness and order, another considers that tasteful meddling 'takes the bloom off nature'. The joy of one lies in propagation, of another in grand sweeps and prospects, while a third is happy with a small, enclosed space out of doors to sit in. Some have help, others do all themselves. 'If only', cried Vita Sackville West, 'one were as good a gardener in practice as in theory, what a garden one would create!'

This is a lovely book to have by when darkness or weather or some other cause keeps us out of the garden. It fills the inward eye with more than daffodils and sets the mind to work on glorious projects while, now and then, reminding us in a salutary way that we are not quite monarchs in our territory and our taste not always impeccable. But who cares, the garden is our garden and we see it through our own eyes, not those of other people.

It is fashionable nowadays to affect a horror of bedding plants... The simple life is becoming an affectation – in dinners and gardens...so we despise Scarlet Geraniums...make a face at Calceolarias and shudder at the mention of Blue Lobelia. Well, they have been sadly misused, I know, but they are fine plants, for all that, when in their right places. (E.A. Bowles. 1914)

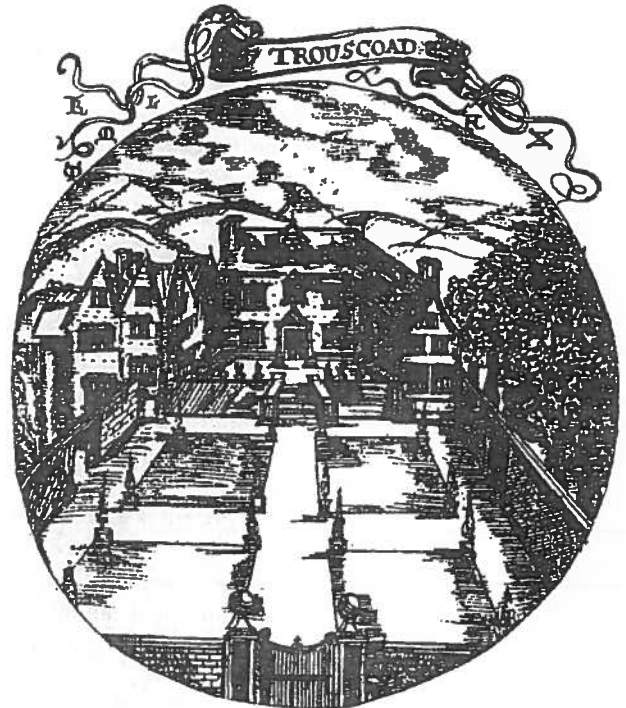
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Rhyd y Felin, Aberystwith (01970 615403)

HOUSES AND GARDENS  
IN WELSH POETRY

Saturday 23 August 1997, 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

Trawsgoed, Ceredigion



CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU  
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

**Architectural Association  
Post Graduate Diploma in  
the Conservation of Historic Gardens,  
Parks and Landscapes**

This course has now been running for ten years and has a growing body of work to show for it.

Career opportunities continue to expand and qualifications are necessary in this highly professional area.

The next academic year starts in October 1997 and the AA is enrolling now.

For further information and application forms please apply to Karren Whitehand, Conservation Co-ordinator, The Architectural Association, 34-36 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3ES.

A Day School to be held by The Friends of The National Library of Wales in collaboration with the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, The Cambrian Archaeological Association and the Ceredigion Antiquarian Society.

PROGRAMME

*Arwel Jones.* Y Mynegai Cyfrifiadur i Farddoniaeth y Llawysgrifau ac adnoddau eraill y Llyfrgell Genedlaethol (The Computer Index to Poetry in Manuscripts and other resources of the National Library).

*Dr Enid Pierce Roberts.* Tai a gerddi ym marddoniaeth yr uchelwyr (Houses and gardens in the poetry of the uchelwyr).

*Richard Suggett.* The concreteness of imagery: dendrochronology dendroculture, and the craft of the poet.

*Dr Nesta Lloyd and Dr Stephen Briggs.* Breconshire: literary, documentary, and archaeological evidence.

*Douglas Blain.* Monaughty, Radnorshire: restoring the house and gardens.

Simultaneous translation will be provided. Details from: Mark Mainwaring, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, Aberystwith, Ceredigion SY23 3BU.