



WINTER 2000/2001

ABERGLASNEY: The Excavator's Interpretation of the Cloister Garden

by Kevin Blockley

INTRODUCTION

This note has been written to further the debate on the layout, phasing and date of the garden complex at Aberglasney, Llangathen, Carmarthenshire (SN 5815 2213). It follows a paper by Stephen Briggs published in the last volume of *Post-Medieval Archaeology*.¹

The author is archaeological consultant to the Aberglasney Restoration Trust and Director of the 1997-2000 excavations by Cambrian Archaeological Projects at Aberglasney. It is the author's view that Dr Briggs has ignored much of the evidence from recent excavations in favour of citing newspaper reports and popular publications in an attempt to give credence to some highly speculative interpretations.² Many interim reports have been prepared by Cambrian Archaeological Projects during the course of the excavations and much of this vital information appears not to have been considered by Dr Briggs in his work.³

This is not the place for the presentation of a detailed argument of the phasing and dating of the development of Aberglasney's gardens. A report is currently being prepared for publication as a *British Archaeological Report* monograph.⁴ Although excavations have been undertaken at several locations around the grounds of Aberglasney, and extensive recording of the fabric of the mansion undertaken, the excavations are ongoing in the gatehouse courtyard and much of the phasing in these locations remains interim. The most studied and phased area is the cloister garden, excavated in 1998-9 (Plate 1). Consequently the phasing presented below will concentrate on the development of the cloister garden.

THE CLOISTER GARDEN

The earliest features (Phase 1) located in the excavation of the cloister garden comprised three gullies containing early 16th century pottery. The Phase I features run at a marked angle (around 45 degrees) to the Phase 2 garden, and the gullies are sealed by the north range of the Phase 2 parapet structure. These features and three fragments of masonry walls found at other locations during watching briefs in the grounds, are indicative of occupation on site before the construction of the Phase 2 cloister garden and its contemporary parapet walks (see below). Recent finds of a silver Penny of Edward I (1282-9) and a silver Half Groat of Henry V (1413-22) attest to earlier occupation of the site.

In the second phase (Phase 2) the cloister garden was established, and has been divided into three sub-phases (Phases

2A-2C, Fig. 1). The western parapet and the north and south walls of the garden were constructed first, followed shortly afterwards with the addition of a substantial building in the south-east corner of the cloister garden, and later the addition of the north and south parapet walks. Dating of the earliest elements of the Phase 2 garden come from constructional features, pre-dating the layout of the central area of the cloister garden, such as a saw pit, which contained a fine late 16th-early 17th glass vessel and pottery confirming that the garden was laid out around 1600.

The layout of the cloister garden during the 17th century comprised the following elements: an upper terrace along the west side of the mansion, an ornate pitched stone walk along the east side of the cloister garden (terminating at the masonry building in the south-east corner of the garden), a rectangular parterre divided from the ornate walk by a timber fence, a lower terrace wall, and a lower terrace of random cobbles. Access to the north and south

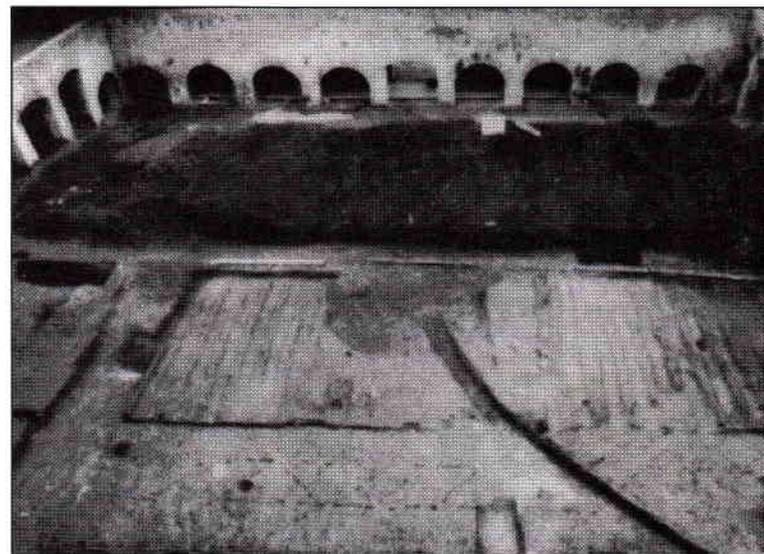


Plate 1. Cloister garden excavations, looking west. © CAP Ltd.

parapets was via steps towards the east end of the parapet ranges, later removed during a remodelling of the garden in the 19th century. Three flights of steps are interpreted in the lower terrace wall, whilst a single flight of steps was found on the upper terrace wall (Fig. 1). An interpretation plan of the cloister garden around the middle of the 17th century, based on the standing masonry and foundations uncovered during the archaeological excavations in 1998-99 is given in Fig. 1.

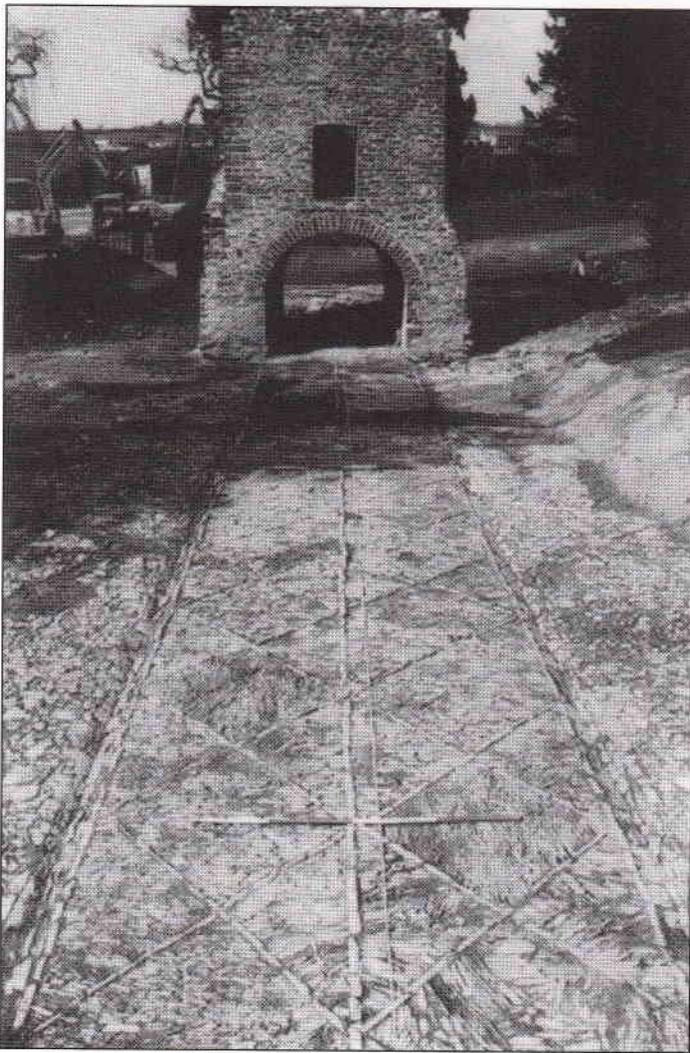


Plate 2. The gatehouse tower is considered of Phase 2 construction. The ornamental cobbling is continuous with that running along the east side of the cloister garden.
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Phases 2A and 2B are likely to have been built by Bishop Rudd in the early years of the 17th century, whilst Phase 2C may relate to work by his son (Sir Rice Rudd) after 1614.

The west range of the mansion (surviving as a cellar) is of a similar date to the Phase 2A-B features, as are timbers re-used in the south range. The latter have undergone dendrochronological dating and are indicative of a “building period towards the end of the 16th century or the early part of the 17th century” (Miles & Bridges, in Briggs 1999, 270). The end of Phase 2 is dated by alterations to the parapet structure in Phase 3 (below).

Phase 3 modifications to the parapet ranges were undertaken in the first half of the 18th century (around the 1720s). This phase is securely dated by a well-sealed group of pottery and glass which was found in a deposit post-dating the construction of the Phase 2

Chronological table of structural phasing from excavations			
Period	Feature	Builder	Date
0	Stream	Natural feature	
1	Drainage gullies	William Thomas?	16 th C
	Walls below north lawn	William Thomas?	16 th C
2A	House with cellar	Bishop Rudd	c. 1600
	Western parapet	Bishop Rudd	c. 1600
	Gatehouse	Bishop Rudd	c. 1600
2B	South-east building	Bishop Rudd	c. 1600+
2C	North and south parapets	Sir Rice Rudd	c. 1614
	Ornate walk added	Sir Rice Rudd	c. 1614
3	Changes to cloister garden	Robert Dyer	c. 1710
	Re-building of parts of house	Robert Dyer	c. 1712
4A	Part demolition of gatehouse	Thomas Philipps	c. 1830
4B	Farm buildings added	Thomas Philipps	1802-40
	Re-modelling of cloister	John Walters Philipps	c. 1840
4C	Fountain and aviaries built	Mrs Mayhew	c. 1880

parapets and sealed by a wall relating to the Phase 3 modifications. The changes comprised the creation of small rooms at either end of the west range, the insertion of doorways on some bays of the north and south ranges, and the re-flooring of some of these spaces, including the building in the south-east corner of the garden. The most likely date for this work is after 1710 when the Dyer family purchased the property, and this fits well with the dating evidence.

The north wing of the house appears to have been re-built in this phase. Dendrochronological dating has provided a date of 1712 for a spanning timber in the north range. The latter fits well with a rebuilding of the north wing by the Dyer family shortly after 1710.

In Phase 4 the cloister garden saw extensive re-modelling. The steps to the north and south parapets were removed and access ramps added, extending east towards the house. At the same time the upper and lower terrace walls and much of the cobbling was robbed and the garden landscaped to form a gentle slope from east to west. The work was undertaken by John Walters Philipps around 1840 and removed all traces of the 17th century garden (save the standing walls).

The house saw major changes in the 19th century, culminating in the addition of the north porticus around 1840 at the time of the addition of the carriage turning circle on the north lawn.

PARALLELS FOR THE CLOISTER GARDEN

The garden is interpreted as having been laid out in the early 17th century and to have been complete by the middle of the century. This is not the place to go into great detail in terms of the development of gardens, especially since the date of the cloister garden has been established archaeologically. However, to put the garden into context, the following information should be considered. Bramante’s ideas of landscaping and controlling terrain by terracing was used at the Vatican Palace in 1503.⁵ His ideas reached England about 100 years later and probably influenced the design of Moor Park, Hertfordshire, which is a close parallel for the cloister garden at Aberglasney. The plan of Moor Park, drawn from written descriptions, had a terrace with a summer-house at either end, and long walks the length of the garden with cloisters beneath.⁶ It was created by Lucy Harington between 1617 and 1627 and as such provides a good parallel for a formal design with Italian influences and covered walkways in the early 17th century.

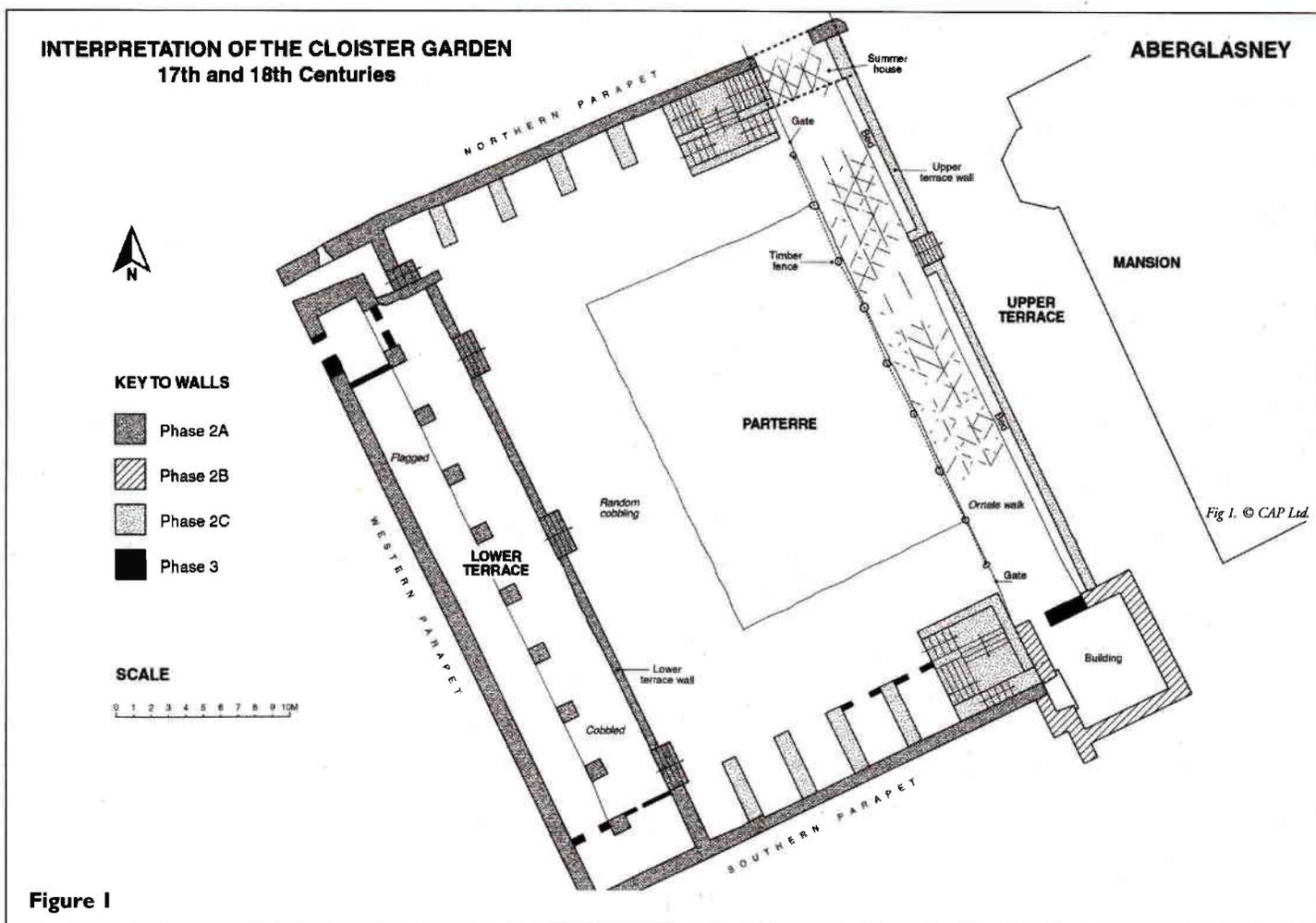
Many of the 16th and 17th century gardens in England were swept away by the landscaping of Capability Brown and his contemporaries, and Aberglasney can be seen as a rare survival.

In Wales a number of sites survive in various conditions, from the well preserved to the badly decayed and overgrown. The garden complex at St Donat’s Castle, South Glamorgan, is another rare survivor. Here the garden is terraced down from the castle, through five gardens towards the sea. The garden was built by Sir Edward Stradling and his son Sir Edward during the 16th century. The latter had travelled extensively and spent time in Italy. The gardens at St Donat’s clearly show a formal layout of terraces, retaining walls, steps and a summer-house in the 16th century.⁷

The gardens at Llannerch, Gwynedd, known from an illustration of around 1662, provides strong parallels for many features of layout at Aberglasney, even though this is a few decades later.⁸ The terracing and summer-houses echo Moor Park.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been established by archaeological excavation and the dating evidence (pottery and glass finds) that the cloister garden was built during the 17th century as a formal garden with terracing and parapet walkways overlooking the cloister garden, its adjacent gardens, and the natural landscape beyond. Historical sources



suggest that the Rudd family were the owners of the property between c. 1600 and 1710. The most likely time likely time for the construction of the garden is during the first half of the 17th century before the family leased the property.

The development of gardens and in particular parallels in England and Wales confirm that such a layout is consistent with the first half of the 17th century.

Dr Briggs' suggestion that the "arched 'cloister garden' feature" was used as a cow house has no credence.⁹

NOTES

- 1 C.S. Briggs Aberglasney: the theory, history and archaeology of a post-medieval landscape, *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 33, (1999), 242-284.
- 2 Briggs, *op. cit.* in note 1, 242-5.
- 3 K. Blockley, *Aberglasney Mansion and Gardens: Proposals for archaeological recording*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 39, (1998); K. Blockley, *Aberglasney Mansion and Gardens: Interpretation of the cloister garden layout*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 102, (1999); K. Blockley, & P. Evans, *Aberglasney Gardens and Mansion: Interim Report on an archaeological evaluation of the parapet structure*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 49, (1998); P. Evans, *Aberglasney Gardens and Mansion: Interim report on archaeological watching brief (car park area)*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 40, (1998); P. Evans, *Upper-walled Garden, Aberglasney Mansion, Carmarthenshire: Interim report on excavations*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 64, (1998); P. Evans, *Aberglasney Gardens and Mansion: Interim report on an archaeological evaluation of pond garden*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 71, (1998); P. Evans, *Aberglasney Gardens and mansion: Interim report on an archaeological evaluation of the upper walled garden water feature*,

- Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 72, (1998); P. Evans, *Aberglasney Gardens and Mansion: Interim report on an archaeological evaluation of pond island*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 74, (1998); P. Evans, *Aberglasney Mansion and Gardens: Interim report on an archaeological watching brief of gardener's cottage*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 75, (1999); P. Evans, *Aberglasney Mansion and Gardens: Interim report on archaeological watching briefs during 1999*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 79, (1999); I. Halfpenney, *Courtyard Garden, Aberglasney Mansion, Carmarthenshire: Interim report on excavations*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 51, (1998); I. Halfpenney, *Parapet walkway, North-east Corner, Aberglasney Mansion, Carmarthenshire: Interim report*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 56, (1998); I. Halfpenney, *Aberglasney Mansion and Gardens: Report on excavation work undertaken on the north side of the kitchen garden*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 97, (1999); I. Halfpenney, *The Gatehouse Courtyard, Aberglasney mansion, Carmarthenshire: Interim report on excavations*, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Report No 103, (1999). Several further interim reports have been produced since these.
- 4 K. Blockley, & I. Halfpenney, *Aberglasney Mansion and Gardens: Excavations and standing fabric recording, 1997-2000*, (BAR, forthcoming).
- 5 M. Mosser, & G. Teyssot, 1991, *The History of Garden Design: The Western Tradition from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London, 1991), 45, 50.
- 6 R. Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England*, (London, 1978), fig 89.
- 7 E. Whittle, *Historic Gardens of Wales*, (London, 1992), 20.
- 8 Whittle, *op. cit.* in note 7, 27.
- 9 Briggs, *op. cit.* in note 1, 258.

Church Flowers and Greenery

by Patricia Moore

Kilvert's diary is just one of the sources which describe decking the church at the major festivals of Easter and Christmas, as well as at Harvest Thanksgiving. Artists throughout the nineteenth century painted churchyard scenes of the dressing of graves with flowers, said to be particular to Wales. The Reverend George S. Tyack, in his *Lore and Legend of the English Church* (1899), quotes Gilbert White's *Antiquities of Selborne*, which comments on the 'maiden's garlands', made of paper, still hanging in some churches in the eighteenth century, although the custom by then had almost died out. The decoration of the church with flowers, however, is less well documented. Today's flower rota, pinned on the notice board inside the church porch is thrown away once the next is due, and any annual vote of thanks, even if it mentions the names of those who arrange the flowers, gives no details of the flowers used, nor their source. Churchwardens' accounts in the past do not appear to cover the provision of flowers, perhaps because they were gifts, yet the beautiful flower arrangements one sees today in churches great and small are part of a tradition which stretches back to the Middle Ages.

Entries in medieval gardeners' accounts from Norwich Cathedral Priory relate to flowers used to adorn the church and to the upkeep of particular gardens in which these flowers were grown. An article by Claire Noble explores and discusses the subject of medieval monastic precinct gardens in a recent issue of *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* (vol. 20, no. 3, autumn 2000). Whether, at that time, flowers would have adorned parish churches too we do not know. Flowers would not have been as readily available as in later times, when they could come from the glasshouses and gardens of the big house, or, later still, the florist's shop.

Some indication of the decoration of churches in the seventeenth century may be given by the Reverend Robert Herrick (1591–1674). His 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may' and 'Fair daffodils', poems on the transience of life (so seize the moment), feature in most anthologies. Less well known is his poem printed in *The Oxford Book of Carols* as a Candlemas Eve (1 February) carol. It itemises the greenery appropriate to different times of the year, as well as flowers (unspecified), which make their appearance at Whitsuntide:

Down with the rosemary and bays,
Down with the mistletoe;
Instead of holly, now upraise
The greener box for show.

The holly hitherto did sway:
Let box now domineer
Until the dancing Easter day,
Or Easter's eve appear.

The youthful box, which now hath grace
Your houses to renew,
Grown old, surrender must his place
Unto the crispèd yew.

When yew is out, then birch comes in
And many flowers beside,
Both of a fresh and fragrant kin,
To honour Whitsuntide.

Green rushes then, and sweetest bents,
With cooler oaken boughs,
Come in for comely ornaments,
To re-adorn the house.

Thus times do shift;
Each thing his turn does hold
New things succeed,
As former things grow old.

Herrick speaks of 'houses' but the practice may well have extended to churches. The greenery would have been readily available, and it, too, would have had its own scent, welcome in the time when burials within the church were still allowed.

Can any reader please add to the evidence, or offer comment?
My thanks to Derryan Paul for help in compiling this note.



Branch News and Outline Programme for 2001

Not all branches have found it possible to supply details by this print deadline. It is hoped that they will provide material by **1 April 2001** for inclusion in the Spring Bulletin.

Members planning to join an event organised by a branch outside their area should contact the appropriate branch organiser, for further programme details.

Ceredigion Branch

Saturday 7 April 10a.m.- 4p.m.

Visit to Strata Florida with Professor David Austin

Packed lunch & stout footwear. Cost: £5.00.

Numbers limited: to book please contact Penny David (tel. 01570 422041) by 1 April.

Saturday 14 or Sunday 15 July visit to Tŷ Glyn, Ciliau Aeron with Ros Laidlaw, Designer of the recreated garden, and to another garden in the Aeron Valley.

Later in the summer it is hoped to organize a visit to gardens in the Teifi valley.

Clwyd Branch

Saturday 17th February Lunch at Highfield 12.30 p.m.

Saturday 7 April AGM and Study Day on Knot Gardens & Parterres at Bodysgallen Hall 10.30 a.m.

Saturday 21 April Auricula Show at Nerquis Hall 10.30 a.m.

Saturday 19 May Visit to Old and New Foxhall, Henllan

Sunday 24 June Walk at Plas Heaton and Dolbelidr 2.30 p.m.

For further details please phone Elizabeth Bartlett on 01352-758023.

Gwynedd Branch

15th March, Gwynedd Branch AGM Ty'n Rhos Restaurant,

Pentire, Bangor Lunch 1 p.m. Time of meeting to be arranged.

21st April. Garden visits in Llyn and Eifionydd. 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (approx). Details to be finalised.

5th May, Plant Fair at Crug Farm, Griffiths Crossing. 10 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

26th May. Village Garden visits to Llandegai. Details to be finalised.

June. Visits to Anglesey Gardens. Dates and Gardens to be arranged.

July. Visit to Tatton Park. Approx. date 22 July. To be finalised.

September. Michaelmas Luncheon. Venue to be arranged.

Further details will be available, in due course, from Ms. Margaret Mason, Hyddgan, Boduan, Pwllheli. 01758 721577.

Pembrokeshire Branch

Monday 19 February Illustrated lecture on Aberglasney by Penny David

Monday 19 March The Powells of Nanteos in the late 18th and the 19th Century by Dr Caroline Palmer

Monday 16 April AGM and Election of Officers. Guest Speaker

Tuesday 15 May Visit to Picton Castle Gardens with head gardener Roddy Milne

Tuesday 19 June Visit to Dyffryn gardens

Tuesday 17 July Day visit to Aberglasney

South and Mid Glamorgan Branch

The Branch is still struggling because of the lack of active members willing to serve on the executive. However we have made some progress at Rookwood. The Hospital Trust has told us that the relevant part of the grounds may not still be in their ownership in five years time and therefore we are trying to set a plan to remove the Summerhouse/Icehouse to another site.

We are trying to expand our membership by contacting like-minded bodies in the area (Historical societies, civic trusts and other conservation groups).

We try to arrange lectures of interest to their members or to invite them to our own functions where our literature and enrolment forms are on display. We also keep supplying Guides and enrolment forms to Information centres, libraries, centres of further education etc. in the area.

Now that there is progress being made with the centralisation of the Trust Information Technology, under Val Caple's capable guidance we hope to start documenting those gardens which Elizabeth Whittle has not included in the CADW Register. There are plenty in this area. We hope that some practical involvement will lure more members (and others) to help us.

We have not worked out a program for this years lectures, outings etc but hope to have it ready for the next Bulletin.

West Glamorgan

Thursday 29 March AGM followed by a talk "The Gateway Project—the gateway to the gardens of Wales for everyone" by Sharron Kerr, branch secretary and access officer The Gateway Project (WHGT). 7pm at Memorial Baptist Church, Walter Road, Swansea. Entrance in Burman Street.

Thursday, 3 May

The Glasshouses of Clyne and Singleton by John Morgan, Assistant Principal Officer of Specialist Parks, City and County of Swansea. 7pm Singleton Botanical Garden.

Saturday, 23 June

West Glamorgan links up with Brecon and Radnor to visit the 'other Hampton Court': the Van Kampen Garden, Hampton Court, Herefordshire.

AND Don't overlook The WHGT Study Day:

**WELSH HISTORIC
GARDENS TRUST**
In association with The Museum of Welsh Life

**GLASSHOUSES
IN GARDEN HISTORY**
at
The Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans
Saturday 28th April, 2001

May Woods
Glasshouses from Orangeries to the Millenium Dome

Gerry Hudson
Welsh Researches into Glasshouse Manufacturers

Andrew Dixey
Tour of the St Fagans Glasshouses

Elizabeth Whittle
Glasshouses in the gardens South Wales

See enclosed Booking form with this mailing.

Review: Thomas Pennant's Vision of the Landscape

by Donald Moore

(first published in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 1997, reprinted November 2000, price £4.00).

I have for some time had a vague feeling of guilt about being so unacquainted with Thomas Pennant, having passed him over some years ago on account of his failure to describe Cardiganshire or indeed anywhere in the southern half of Wales. But now, happily, I have been provided with a short cut to a scholarly knowledge of Pennant's work, through Donald Moore's most readable and thoroughly researched article *Thomas Pennant's Vision of the Landscape*.

Pennant (1726-98) possessed the usual attributes of an enlightened eighteenth century squire: a well-managed estate, a compassionate attitude towards his tenants, a willingness to be of service by holding offices within the county administration, and the wealth and leisure to pursue his interests. In the last respect he surpassed the more dilettante efforts of many of his contemporaries. His endlessly enquiring mind and keen powers of observation, assisted by the large library he assembled, enabled him to become an authority on an impressive range of subjects. In particular he became renowned for his studies in zoology; he corresponded over many years with Carl Linnaeus and produced his own illustrated *British Zoology*. His accumulated knowledge and practical studies also extended to archaeology, history, botany, geology, place-name origins, and folklore. All these topics converged in Pennant's writings. He was, as Donald Moore states, 'a topographer in the fullest sense of the word'.

The main subject matter of the article is Pennant's landscape descriptions of Wales (though, where relevant, reference is made to his travels in other parts of Britain – he pioneered the tour of Scotland four years before Samuel Johnson – and the Continent). Pennant considered illustrations to be an essential complement to his written works and gave employment to many artists and engravers, among them his servant and travelling companion, Moses Griffith. Standard editions of *A Tour in Wales* contained engravings, but in a limited number of special copies other views were added, including watercolours hand-painted in the margins. Several of the latter are among the sixteen beautifully reproduced colour plates that illustrate this article. Those of gentry houses, such as Powis Castle and Erddig, are a valuable resource for the garden historian, as are the textual descriptions. There are also a dozen or so monochrome figures, including my own favourite, 'Pharos on Garreg', an engraving that could almost be a sampler for the Picturesque, containing as it does a ruin as a focal point, a crumbling rock outcrop, trailing ivy on a dead tree trunk, and a gnarled and stunted tree, all dominated by the foreground presence of a gloriously hairy goat.

Pennant was of course not only familiar with the visual conventions of the Picturesque (he even had a fake ruined abbey on his estate at Downing) but also with its language. At times his prose descriptions echo the style of William Gilpin, and his accounts of mountain ascents show a feel for the Sublime. But, where writers on the Picturesque generally concerned themselves with a critique of the visual components of a landscape (actual or painted) and how



'Pharos on Garreg' by Moses Griffith features a gloriously hairy goat

they should be disposed to best effect, Pennant made objective observations and took a scientific interest in every aspect of the landscape, from grass species to underlying geology. He also wanted to appreciate it in a fourth dimension, interpreting its antiquities, exploring written sources and recording oral traditions. He was especially proud of his Welsh ancestry and heritage, and took pains to explain its culture to his readers.

In this detailed examination of Pennant's work, his threefold approach to the landscape is revealed: his study of its physical features, large and small, natural and manmade; his understanding of it as property and part of a political and ecclesiastical system; and his interest in its historical elements and associations. Pennant was not given to philosophising, and his works are probably all the more useful for being objective records of observations made with no attempt to develop them into a grand theory of Nature or aesthetics.

Jenni Macve

Copies may be obtained £4.00 post free, from the author,
Donald Moore, 9 Ger-y-llan, Penrhyncoch, Aberystwyth
Ceredigion SY23 3HQ

Review: Welsh woods and forests: a history by William Linnard

(Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2000). v + 247 pp. 23 tables; 97 figs. £19.95.

Welsh woods are in a poor state, with few honourable exceptions. In metaphor and reality they cling to the steep hillsides and rough places. Their past is complex, their future perilous. There are few highly-trained foresters in Wales and they have little influence in woodland restoration. Commercial pressures, political indifference and insensitive owners determine matters. The broadleaved woodland is mainly coppice oak on ancient enfeebled stumps – no younger seedling trees, the ubiquitous sheep sees to that. The grazed woods are aesthetically pleasing to an untutored eye, but quite wretchedly poor to forester and knowledgeable naturalist. The statistical majority of the near 12 per cent of Wales nominally forested comprises the uplands planted with conifers during the post-war dash for timber reserves by a state frightened at the dearth of pitwood and timber, 90 per cent of which had been imports in 1914.

A thorough understanding of how Welsh woodland has come to its present state is an absolute pre-requisite to any sensible programme for its restoration. William Linnard received high praise in 1982 for the scholarly, readable version of his PhD thesis published by the National Museum of Wales as the first edition of this book. It was soon out of print. This new edition by Gomer brings the history up to date with chapters covering the period of Forestry Commission activity since 1919. It also benefits by new research on earlier periods and much improved illustrations.

The woodland history is told straight with little comment as to the consequences of the exploitative misuse of woods as they dwindled from 90 per cent land cover in prehistory to 4 per cent in 1914. History, however, is Linnard's purpose and he is a splendid tutor to the growing audience who wish to back their conservation impulses with a solid background of woodland history. He offers plenteous detail from primary documents whilst maintaining a clear sweep to the story.

Linnard charts the re-forestation of postglacial Wales from pollen evidence. Pine comes and goes. Oak starts its long struggle to survive degradation by people and stock. The Romans clear and use forest, the

Normans far more, breaking up the near universal lowland forest. The process of selecting fine trees is under way, impoverishing the genetic base for successor woods. The Cistercians assart* great areas for their flocks. Underwood and small wood is cut on increasingly short rotations to char for smelting and lime burning. Forest laws, the key to any structured long-term management of woodland, are largely ignored in Wales. There is a first wave of tree planting vigour a century after John Evelyn gave the wake-up call. Thomas Johnes around 1800 spearheaded the activity, planting vast numbers of larch and oak at Hafod.

In 1919, the infant Forestry Commission faced a situation where almost half the remnant woodland area was classified as 'devastated scrub'. The conifer-clad hill land which causes such widespread present day anguish was largely planted in two decades after 1945. These plantations comprise low quality trees and in their present roughly managed state are wind prone and near to stagnation until mechanically clear-felled, a far cry from the silviculture envisaged when they were optimistically planted. To convert these to mixed, productive and conservation-rich continuous forest cover will be a truly daunting task.

In a rare aside, Linnard chides today's foresters for rediscovering the 'multiple use' concept. In early times this was 'multiple exploitation' of an overwhelming forest cover by a tiny population. The new attempt at 'multiple use' must battle to create a modern ethos and technology of woodland management in the face of a large, heavy-handed population that seems to know little and care less. The hope is that this erudite, stylish history can urge those who do have a say in the fate of Welsh woodland to follow paths of enlightenment.

Howard Owens

*An assart is an area of cleared woodland.

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Members' Expertise Sought. What characterises your boundaries? by David Thomas

As reported by Patricia Moore in The Bulletin, Summer 2000, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has recently started on a project, jointly funded by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), to investigate boundaries and boundary types in Wales.

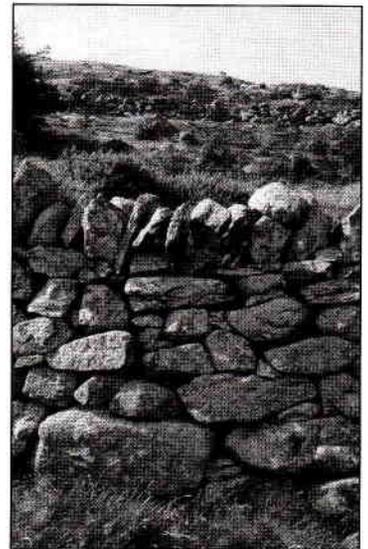
The principal outcome of the CCW-funded part of this project is to produce a preliminary inventory and regional atlas of traditional boundary types in Wales. This will be used to inform *LANDMAP* (Landscape Assessment and Decision Making Process) exercises currently being carried out by unitary authorities, and other countryside initiatives such as Tir Gofal (the all-Wales agri-environmental scheme). The aim is to ensure that the variety of traditional boundaries characteristic of different parts of the country is preserved, and that the appropriate techniques are employed when boundaries are repaired and rebuilt.

At this stage we are hoping to identify and map all types of traditional boundary that have a significant distribution and frequency in Wales. The principal types currently envisaged include dry-stone walls, hedges, earth banks, *cloddiau* (embanked stone walls), ditches and slate pillar fences. In addition, we know that some of these may have significant sub-types including, for example, hedges of a particular species (hawthorn, holly, beech, laburnum, privet, bird cherry etc.), dry-stone walls of a particular construction or period, or boundaries that require a particular management regime (for example the drainage rees on the Gwent levels).

We are keen to involve WHGT members and branches in compiling this inventory and atlas, as we know that their local knowledge represents a huge reservoir of information, and we would be grateful for any information readers can send us.

Ideally, the details we require are:– a brief description of the type(s), a rough idea of the location and distribution of the type (either a grid reference or the name of a nearby town or village), a photograph and any historical references that may exist which give details of date or construction. If possible we would also like to know of any particular threats or management problems associated with individual boundaries. If it would help, we can supply recording forms and maps for people to fill in. However, any information which can be supplied would be much appreciated, so don't worry about having to make a formal response. The first stage of the project is due to be completed by the end of March.

For further details please contact David Thompson or John Roberts at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Garth Road, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT tel. 01248 352535 or email dthompson@heneb.co.uk or john.roberts@heneb.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.



Gerddi-WWW.

Welcome to the second list of my favourite WWW sites. If you have suggestions for sites to include in further issues, or would like advice on using the WWW, please contact me:
Tel: 01446 775794.
e-mail: val.t.caple@newscientist.net

Garden visit and Travel Guide

<http://www.gardenvisit.com/>

Entries on many UK, Europe and America gardens. Includes the History of Garden Design, garden styles and some 300 biographies of garden designers.

Royal Horticulture Society

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/>

Includes both a garden and a plant finder as well as news on flower shows

Association of Garden Trusts

<http://www.gardenstrusts.co.uk/>

Please note the new address

Museum of Garden History.

<http://www.cix.co.uk/~museumgh/>

Describes the museum and garden, including activities and lectures. Provides links to other Internet sites and sources of interest

English Heritage

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>

Entries on 67 EH properties that have gardens including opening times, access etc.

Historic Scotland

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/>

Entries on 5 HS properties that have gardens including opening times, access etc

Val Caple

May Plant Fair at Crug Farm Nursery

Join this hugely popular annual fund-raiser organised by the
Gwynedd Branch

Saturday 5 May 10-4pm

In addition to the usual delights of this specialist nursery, run by plant collectors Bleddwyn and Sue Wynn Jones, the plant fair hosts around two dozen small specialist nurseries offering unusual plants.

Light lunches and refreshments will be available throughout the day.

Admission £1.50. Free parking. Signposted from the A487 Caernarvon-Bangor road.

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Ceredigion Branch

Saturday 7 April

Visit to Strata Florida with Professor David Austin

Following his enthralling lecture on 26 January at the Ceredigion Branch AGM, David Austin invites members to join him to explore this historic landscape and seek evidence of its past gardens.

The morning will be spent in the immediate vicinity of the Abbey and its surrounding buildings. After a picnic lunch more strenuous excursions are planned to outlying remains.

10a.m.- 4p.m. Meet in car park at SN746657. Bring packed lunch & stout footwear. Numbers limited: to book a place please contact Penny David (tel 01570 422041) by 1 April. Cost: £5.00 per person.



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