

TRAFODION

Occasional Writings for The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

Issue 1 – NOVEMBER 2011



Ymddiriedolaeth Gerddi Hanesyddol Cymru
The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

Contents

From The Chairman - Gwyneth Hayward	3
James Pulham & Son in Wales - Claude Hitching	4
Edward Milner in Wales - Bettina Harden	11
The Walled Gardens of Norchard - Heulwen Davies	16
The Heritage Horticultural Skills Scheme - Andrew Dixey	19
New Shoots at Aberglasney	19
Changes for Welsh Gardens - Bettina Harden	20
Happy New Year 2012	23
Seedlings:	
Bodnant Garden	24
Capability Brown in Wales	24
The Mystery of Trees	24
A Puzzle at Hafod	25
Philip Tilden	25
Pets' Graveyards	25
Books for Your Library:	
<i>Gardens of Earthly Delight: The History of Deer Parks</i> - John Fletcher	26
<i>The Making of The English Gardener: Plants, Books and Inspiration 1560-1660</i> - Margaret Willes	28
<i>The Omnipotent Magician: Lancelot 'Capability' Brown 1716-1783</i> - Jane Brown	29
<i>Edwardian Country Life: The Story of H. Avray Tipping</i> - Helena Gerrish	31
Contributors	32

From the Chairman

After a rather disappointing summer it is good to start the winter with the news of a new venture for the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust in the form of the publication of *Trafodion* [Transactions]: Occasional Writings for the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust under the Editorship of Bettina Harden. *Trafodion* will appear annually and will seek to provide an opportunity for contributors to present more in-depth articles than is possible in the confined space available in the *Bulletin*; it will in effect be a Big Bulletin. Members will also receive the *Bulletin*, under the Editorship of Glynis Shaw, three times a year.

Both editors, who have given their time and extensive expertise so generously, are well known in the Trust. Bettina Harden is a founding member of the Trust and a member of the Trust's Council; a past Chairman; a member of the National Trust Advisory Board for Wales and memorably the founder of The Gateway Gardens Trust which did so much to provide access to the historic gardens of Wales for the disadvantaged. Glynis Shaw is the Chairman of the Trust's Clwyd Branch where she has for many years produced an excellent newsletter. Glynis is an energetic campaigner in the cause of safeguarding the Welsh historic landscape as her recent activities at Wynnstay will attest.

The changes to our publication regime are the sad result of economic necessity. I am sure you are all too aware of the diminution of public funding available to charitable bodies and this has made it impossible to finance the publication of our biennial journal, *Gerddi* at present. The Gwynedd branch has made a generous donation towards our publishing costs, but without the extremely generous support of NFU Mutual producing our publications would be very challenging and we are very grateful for the support and advice of Susan Barley and her team. However, every cloud has a silver lining and in this instance we are provided with an opportunity to make innovative changes which provide exciting opportunities.



At this juncture, I would also like to thank Matthew Dennison who has so imaginatively edited the *Bulletin* over the last two years. His busy literary and journalistic commitments have made it impossible for him to continue as Bulletin Editor and I am sure that you would all join me in wishing him great success in his future career.

The Trust continues to fulfil its role of maintaining a watchful eye over possible threats to the historic landscape in Wales. Events on the other side of Offa's Dyke suggest that we may well have to be extra vigilant in future, and I urge all branches and individual members to inform the Trust of any concerns they may have about particular gardens.

I am sure you will all enjoy *Trafodion*, and look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our events in 2012. Thank you for supporting the work of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust.

Very early Christmas greetings to you all,
Nadolig Llawen

Gwyneth Hayward

James Pulham in Wales

James Pulham and Son are best remembered these days for the picturesque rock gardens, ferneries, follies and grottoes they constructed during the Victorian years. This was the time when tourists returning home from their 'Grand Tours' of Europe sought to create natural habitats in their gardens for the ferns and Alpine plants they had collected during their travels. Hence the fashion for rock gardens, and, if natural rocks were not economically available, the Pulham craftsmen would 'make their own' by building up heaps of rubble and old bricks, and coating them with their own proprietary brand of cement that soon became known as Pulhamite. The craftsmanship of the 'rock builders' lay in their ability to sculpt the surfaces to simulate the colour and texture of natural rock.

As garden fashions gradually evolved through the Edwardian years, the Pulhams extended their portfolio to include grand, formal balustraded terraces, and Italian and Japanese-styled gardens that were becoming so popular with the 'travelling gentry'. The full story of the lives and work of this fascinating firm is told in *Pulham's Rock Gardens*¹ - my book to be published by The Antique Collectors Club in early 2012, beautifully illustrated by many pictures taken by Jenny Lilly, the professional gardens photographer – and all the latest updates can be found on my website at www.pulham.org.uk. All visitors are welcome!

Suffice to say here that there were four generations of Pulhams, and all of those most directly involved in the family business were named James, so, in order to avoid confusion, I find it easier to refer to them individually as James 1, 2, 3 and 4. The firm became established as James Pulham and Son when James 2 took his son, James 3, into the business in 1865.

Most of the firm's work was carried out in England, but they also had clients in Scotland, Wales, and even Denmark. This article is concerned with their known gardens in Wales, discussed here in chronological sequence.

1866-67 - Bryn-y-Neuadd, Llanfairfechan, Conwy

Bryn-y-Neuadd was the home of John Platt, for whom James Pulham and Son constructed '*Waterfalls, fernery and ponds*' in 1866-67, although nothing but a small part of the fernery now remains. I have no personal knowledge of Pulhams' work on this site, but John Platt's story is told by Bettina Harden elsewhere in her article about Edward Milner.

1869 – Gorrddinog, Abergwyngregyn, Conwy

The Pulham database records that James Pulham and Son constructed '*Waterfalls, Rock Bridge, as if natural, Lake and Streams*' for Captain Henry Platt, eldest son of John Platt, in 1869, and is also discussed in the article by Bettina Harden.

1872-76 – St Fagans Castle, St Fagans, Cardiff

St Fagans Castle was the home of the Lewis family for more than 250 years before Elizabeth, daughter of the last male descendant, married Other Windsor, 3rd Earl of Plymouth in 1730.² The eventual heiress of this branch of the Windsor family married into the family of Clive of India, and in due course they became known as Windsor-Clive. Robert George Windsor-Clive was created Earl of Plymouth (the third creation of the title in 1905), and his grandson, the 3rd Earl of Plymouth, gave St Fagans Castle and its surrounding estate to the nation for a Museum for Wales, now called St Fagans: National History Museum, in 1947. The museum stands in the grounds of the castle, which, with its gardens have been restored to something of their former glory as at the end of 19th century reflecting the lives of the family in residence. In the grounds many buildings have been transferred from all over Wales to show what rural life was like in days gone by.

Lady Mary Windsor-Clive engaged James 2 to construct a rock garden at St Fagans in 1872, but negotiations were long and protracted, with the result that the garden was not completed until 1876. The full story is told in the

¹ This is a working title, and may change. The full currently proposed title will be *Pulham's Rock Gardens, Ferneries, Follies, Grottoes, Fountains and Terracotta Garden Ornaments – The Pulham Legacy*. This is very long, but the idea is to cover the wide range of features constructed by this remarkable firm, and also to catch as many keywords as possible on internet search engines and bookshop computer systems &.

² Historical notes provided by Christine Stevens, Curator at St Fagans: National History Museum

book, but the eventual result was that the present rock gardens only represent part of James 2's original plans. It cannot be regarded as a large rock garden by Pulham's normal standards, but, situated as it is in a small north-to-south valley, overlooked by the Castle to the southeast and set into grounds of some 105 acres; it is nevertheless extremely pleasant and peaceful.

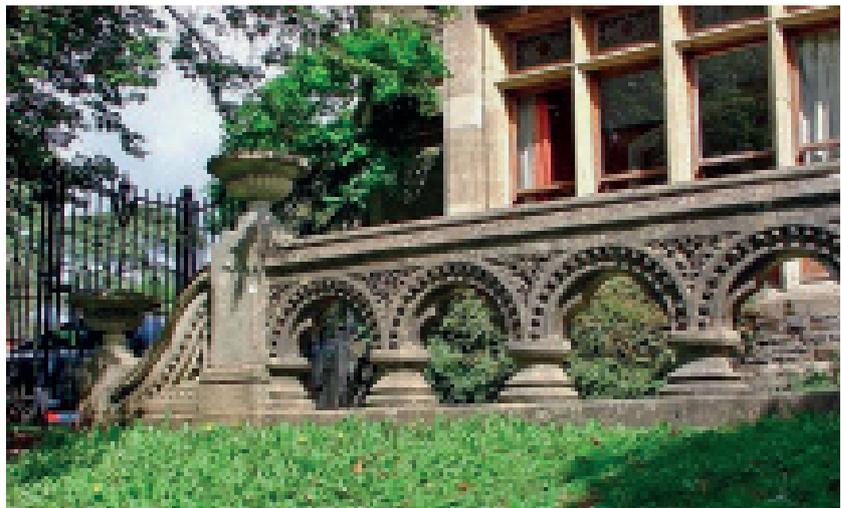


*Fig. 1 - Below the rustic bridge and waterfall at St Fagans in 2004
(Photograph © Juliet Hodgkiss)*

The stream meanders gently down the valley from north to south, and its banks and island were 'rockified' using mostly natural stones – occasionally 'locked' together with Pulhamite - quarried from the estate during the initial preparatory stage in 1872. There was a major project to restore and clean the water gardens at St Fagans in 2003, and Fig. 1 shows the charming Pulham bridge, waterfall and lower stream in 2004.

1878-98 – Insole Court, Llandaff, Cardiff

James Harvey Insole - a young colliery proprietor – built a small country house for himself in Llandaff - a leafy suburb of Cardiff - during the late 1850s. It later became known as Insole Court, and had a terrace along the side with a beautiful stone balustrade and a pair of sleeping lion figures, all carved by the local sculptors, church furnishers and restoration specialists William Clarke and Son (a section of the arched balustrade is shown in Fig. 2). Clarke is also thought to have built the Summerhouse and a set of rock-bordered steps below a section of the balustrade at that time.³



*Fig. 2 - Balustrading along the side of Insole Court
(Photograph © Alun Salisbury)*

During the late 1870s, Insole embarked upon an extensive expansion and refurbishment of the house, and also engaged James 2 to cast his spell by making further improvements to the gardens. This took place between 1878 and 1898, although the exact dates are not known. James 2 published a promotional booklet entitled *Picturesque Ferneries and Rock Garden Scenery* in 1877, in which a list of all his 'satisfied clients' up to that date were listed, but all the firm's records were destroyed when they eventually went out of business c1939, and the assignment of dates to some projects on which they are known to have worked after 1877 is not always easy.

³ *The Story of a Victorian Manor* by Matthew Williams, (The Friends of Insole Court, 1998, printed by Keith Brown & Sons Ltd, Cowbridge, 01446 774 490)

In fact, there is no known documentary evidence to prove that the Pulhams worked at Insole Court at all, although the circumstantial evidence is very strong. The date of 1878 fits very well with the fact that it is only a couple of miles or so from St Fagans Castle, so it is quite probable that James Insole knew Lady Mary Windsor-Clive, and liked her new rock garden sufficiently well to invite James 2 to do some work for him. The *Gardeners' Chronicle* also published an article about the gardens at Insole Court some time in 1882, in which it reported that:



Fig. 3 - Side garden to Insole Court c1900, with Pulham ornaments
(Photograph provided by Alun Salisbury)

'The mansion is a handsome Gothic building, with a tower and observatory 85 feet high. On the west, or entrance front, is a spacious lawn, with fountain etc, and bounded by banks planted with Rhododendrons, hardy Ericas and Azaleas, amongst which the growths are rapidly appearing of a varied collection of bulbs. Beyond this rises a very effective piece of rockwork, which has been planned to hide a blank wall leading to the stables, and has been carried, partly by mounding and partly by large masses of natural rock brought from some distance, to a height of 30 feet. . .

'A terrace of gravel and grass commands a view of the lower garden on the east front; the beds being furnished with shrubs and bedding plants for spring effect which are not particularly interesting in January. To the left of the flower garden a winding path is entered, with shrubbery borders and rockwork which has been skilfully blended with its surroundings and hidden from the lawn . . . and . . . a recent addition to its extent, taken from the park in front, and just converted into a rock garden, with a small streamlet gradually widening to a pool at the lower end, where it is terminated by a rocky grotto some 30 yards long.'

Figs 3 and 4 are pictures of the gardens dating back to c1900, with Fig. 3 showing the formal gardens near the house – a typical Pulham layout, complete with vases from their manufactory - and Fig. 4 showing the rockery by The Leat (or ditch). There can be absolutely no doubt about its provenance! Fig. 5 shows the grotto following its 'rediscovery' in 2010, and shows that it was built from a combination of natural stone and Pulhamite.



Fig. 4 - Rockery by The Leat at Insole Court c1900
(Photograph provided by Alun Salisbury)

The flight of steps shown in Fig. 6 is also interesting. This arched pattern of the balustrade is not illustrated in Pulhams' *Garden Ornament Catalogue*, but was probably James 2's

attempt to create something that was as sympathetic as he could get to William Clarke's original balustrade. The pattern of the 'dimpled' section of the pillar is one that was used in some Pulham gardens elsewhere.



Fig. 5 - The grotto at Insole Court. Some rocks are natural – probably from the nearby Radyr quarry – and others are artificial. (Photograph © Alun Salisbury)

1893 – Belle Vue Park, Newport, Monmouthshire

Belle Vue Park, in Newport, was the first public park designed by the eminent landscape architect, Thomas Mawson. Here again, the full story is told in the book, but it is my belief that James Pulham and Son were involved in the complete project. They are known to have worked with Mawson on a number of occasions, and Fig. 7 demonstrates that the rock and water feature that runs down through the centre of this steeply sloping park is quite definitely their work – in fact, Mawson acknowledges the fact in his autobiography.⁴



Fig. 6 - Balustraded Steps to what used to be the Bowling Green (Photograph © Alun Salisbury)

⁴ *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect*, Thomas Mawson (Percy Brothers, 1927)

There was originally a Pulham fountain in the park, although that has long since gone, and, right at the top, there is a small Pavilion, with glass conservatories on either side. It has a commanding view, overlooking a grand, balustraded terrace - complete with bandstand - and thence over the park itself. The balustrading is definitely Pulham's, and, although the buildings and terrace are built to Mawson's designs, they all seem to convey the message that 'Pulham was here' - even to the terracotta Newport coat of arms that is mounted above the door of the Pavilion. The park was the subject of a massive Heritage Lottery Fund grant in 2004, and the restoration work extended through to 2007, so that visitors can now savour the pleasures experienced by their forebears more than 100 years ago.



Fig. 7 - The cascade in Belle Vue Park
(Photograph © David Morris)

1893 – ‘The Hendre’, Monmouth, Monmouthshire

‘The Hendre’ is a rambling, picturesque brick mansion that was begun c1830 by John Rolls (1776–1837) with a second stage carried out for John Etherington Welch Rolls (1807-70). The final stage of the work began in 1872 for John Allan Rolls, 1st Baron Llangattock (1837-1912), whose third son, Charles, became the co-founder of Rolls Royce, the car manufacturer of world renown. The original house on the site was a small house that was used by the Rolls family as a shooting lodge during the 18th century. John Allan Rolls extended the parkland to about 1,000 acres, and enclosed it in 1892. He engaged H. E. Milner – the celebrated landscape architect with whose family the Pulhams worked on a number of occasions – to landscape the 3-mile long drive that winds through the park, and ends up curving through the arboretum to the west of the house. The CADW Register of Landscapes explains that:⁵

It was carefully planned to take maximum advantage of the rolling ground, and was landscaped all the way, with tree and shrub planting. Views cut through the woods, stone bridges and rockwork (some artificial, or Pulhamite). The drive passed an existing small lake, made 1837-50, which was ornamented with a rockwork cascade.’

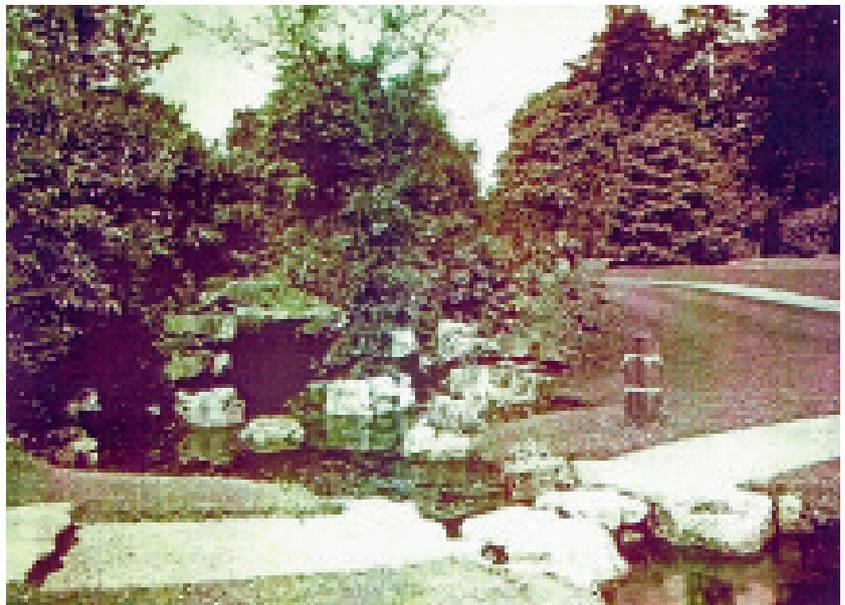


Fig. 8 - The lake and rockwork at ‘The Hendre’ c1900
(Picture provided by Tony Hoggett, Capita Property Consultancy Ltd)

⁵ Cadw / ICOMOS *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. Part I: Parks and Gardens*. Gwent volume (1994), pp. 44-46



*Fig. 9 - Remains of the Pulhamite cave at 'The Hendre' in 2002
(Photograph © John Harris)*

Fig. 8 is a picture of a portion of this rockwork by the lake c1900, with what would normally be regarded as a boat cave, although it is difficult to see how it could be used as such with the stepping-stones across the stream that leads to the lake.

'The Hendre' is the one site to which I was not allowed access during my travels. It is now used as a golf club, and my request for admission to search for whatever might remain of the Pulhams' work was refused on the grounds that the club was 'not insured against the possibility of a non-member being hit on the back of the head with a golf ball'. However, one of my spies was able to take some pictures for me during a round of golf, when he eventually found the remains of a 'waterfall on the edge of quite a large pond' alongside one of the fairways. One of his pictures is reproduced here as Fig. 9, and it is quite clear that most of the main lake has now been filled in, and that this structure is all that now remains of the old 'boat cave'.

1895-1912 – Dewstow House, Caerwent, Monmouthshire

Whatever Wales may lack in the number of sites that James Pulham and Son constructed in their lovely country, it can certainly claim to make up for it in quality. The gardens at Dewstow, near Caerwent, Monmouthshire, are a sparkling jewel in the Pulham crown, and should be explored by everyone interested in our garden heritage. They include beautiful surface gardens in many styles, with artificial pools, cascades and rock-lined streams; a Pulhamite tunnel, and a collection of extraordinary underground fernery grottoes that are totally breathtaking.

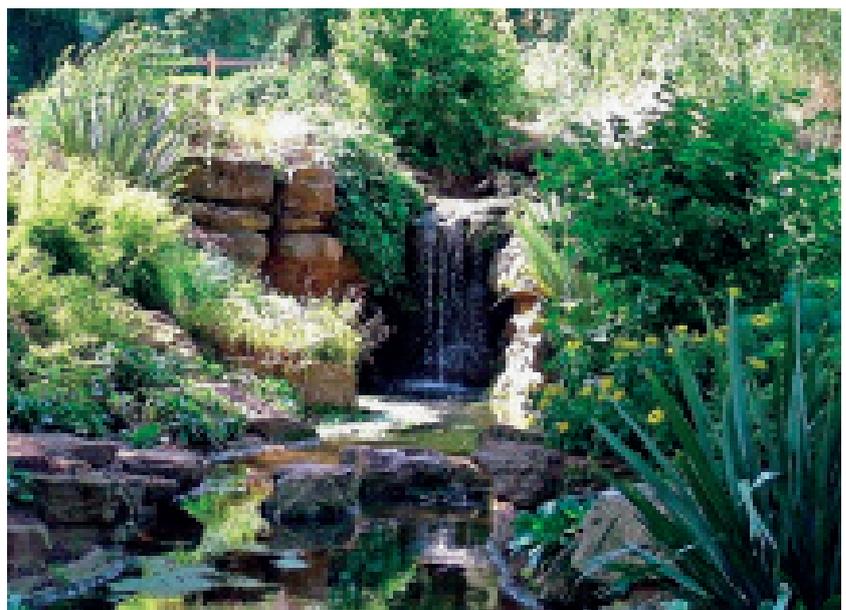


Fig. 10 - Cascade in the stream of the South Gardens at Dewstow

Dewstow was the home of Henry Oakley, a Director of the Great Western Railway who worked in Newport, so he must have seen the Pulhams at work in Belle Vue Park, and it is believed that he was so impressed with them that he invited James 2 to beautify the gardens around his own house. As far as can be ascertained, this was done in two stages – the first c1895, when the lawns to the South of the house were laid out, and the second c1912, when they created the Alpine Garden and the stunning grottoes in the North Garden. As one might expect, this story is told in full in the book, but the extraordinary thing about it is that the gardens were totally buried in topsoil during the Second World War, and only came to light again when they were ‘rediscovered’ by the present owners in 2000.



Fig. 11 - The Lion Grotto at Dewstow

Luckily for us, the Harris family have invested a tremendous amount of time, money and dedication in bringing them back to life in their full glory, and opening them up to the public. Any opportunity to view them must not be missed. Figs 10 and 11 show just two examples of the many features to be enjoyed – Fig. 10 shows the cascade in the rocky stream that flows through the South Gardens, and Fig. 11 is a picture taken in the Lion Grotto. Now where have you ever seen anything quite like that before?

c1910s – Bodnant, Tal-y-Cafn, Conwy

Bodnant Garden, in Conwy, is a National Trust property, and is a spectacular site to which, according to the English Heritage database, Pulhams are noted as having made some contribution. Sadly, I have not yet had an opportunity to visit these gardens, but extensive research has failed to establish what they are reputed to have done, or when they are supposed to have done it.

There will almost certainly be someone out there who knows the answer to these questions - if so, I would be most interested to hear from them at claudio@hitching.com. Alternatively, if this article has whetted your appetite for more knowledge or information about this remarkable firm, don't forget to look out for *Pulham Rock Gardens*, which should be available from April 2012, or check out www.pulham.org.uk for further details.

© Claude Hitching 2011

Editor's Note The late Patricia Moore, the WHGT's first Archivist, was a great fan of Pulham's work in Wales and contributed several relevant articles to *The Bulletin*. Her first was in the Spring issue of 1993 announcing the discovery of an ink and watercolour plan for **St Fagans** in the Glamorgan Record Office, together with an account for the work from James Pulham & Son and a delightful poem addressed to Lady Mary Windsor-Clive (featured in Claude Hitching's forthcoming book). Patricia's article on **Insole Court** appeared in Spring 2001, following Hilary Thomas's article on the 'Work Diaries of Joseph Martin Farley, Foreman Gardener at Insole Court' in Summer 2000. Patricia's first article asked "Did Pulham carry out work in other Welsh gardens?" She would have been thrilled to read Claude Hitching's fascinating piece nearly twenty years later.

Edward Milner in Wales

In May 2010 the WHGT was approached by Dr J.P. Craddock seeking information about gardens designed in Wales by Edward Milner. Dr Craddock supplied a list collated from the order books of Milner White & Partners. In seeking to help him I gathered some of the information that follows below and made some discoveries. While I have done some more research in preparing this piece, readers will realise that a lot of work remains to be done in describing the designs and gardens and one day I hope to present you with the results. Anyone knowing more about the following sites who would care to assist me would be welcomed with open arms.

Edward Milner (1819-1884) was born in Derbyshire where his father worked in the gardens at Chatsworth. Aged 18 Edward Milner was apprenticed to Joseph Paxton, then Head Gardener at Chatsworth. After a period in 1841 spent studying in Paris at the Jardin des Plantes, France's principal Botanic Garden, he returned to become Paxton's assistant. Paxton's Crystal Palace, "the greatest conservatory of them all"⁶, originally erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851, was re-erected at Sydenham (1852-54). Milner was appointed to superintend the work of laying out the gardens and park to Paxton's designs. He became superintendent of the Prince's Park in Liverpool and, in 1881, he became principal of the Crystal Palace School of Gardening, established by the Crystal Palace Company, a position he held until his death in 1884. The site is now the Crystal Palace Park (the Crystal Palace itself was burnt to the ground in 1936). He lived close at hand at 1 Fountain Drive, Dulwich. He also worked as a garden and landscape designer throughout the United Kingdom and as far afield as Denmark. His firm, as Milner White & Partners, survived until 1995, by which time it was the oldest garden design and landscaping practice in Britain.

To get an impression of Milner's style you need to imagine extraordinary, often huge houses in Victorian Gothic or 'Jacobethan' style surrounded by large formal terraces usually featuring a parterre, dropping away to views over perhaps a lake and parkland, enclosed by a shelter belt of trees.⁷ These gardens, pleasure grounds and parks would be backed up by extensive kitchen gardens and glasshouses manned by anything upwards of 11 gardeners. Milner wasn't Paxton's pupil for nothing – "There was nothing subtle about mid-Victorian flower beds: even the fine new mock seventeenth-century parterres at great houses, like those at Chatsworth where Joseph Paxton was head gardener, were a riot of colour."⁸ Raising all those bedding plants and exotics took acres of glass. One of Milner's projects at Rangemore Hall in Staffordshire involved "40 glasshouses with three-and-a-half miles of pipes..."⁹

As will be seen from Claude Hitching's article about the work done by James Pulham and Son in Wales, the firm worked on a number of projects with Edward Milner, his son, Henry Ernest Milner, and Henry's son-in-law, Edward White. Given that the Pulham works were in Hertfordshire and road haulage was initially entirely horse-drawn and canals were slow, it is clear that the advent of the railways played a huge part in the success of Pulhamite in gardens, carrying it across the country to Dorset and Halifax, the North Welsh coast and Monmouthshire.

Bryn-y-Neuadd, Llanfairfechan, Conwy LL3 0HH [Grade II]

The original 17th-century house and land was part of the Williams-Bulkeley Baron Hill estate. The partly-derelict mansion and 150 acres were purchased by John Platt of Oldham in 1857. Born in Dobscott, Saddleworth, Lancashire John Platt (1817–1872) had a vast fortune generated by his family company, Platt Brothers. By the time he bought Bryn-y-Neuadd the company was known as the world's largest textile machinery manufacturer. Platt was also a distinguished Liberal politician, being Mayor of Oldham three times and representing Oldham as its Member of Parliament from 1865 until his death. When not in Wales and performing his duties as Mayor and M.P., John Platt and his very large family lived at Werneth Hall in Oldham. He died in Paris aged 55.

Having taken possession of his new property John Platt set about transforming it. In those far off days before planners he even managed to persuade the Turnpike Trust to move the high road to accommodate his new home and its surroundings. It was, incidentally, very close to the Chester & Holyhead railway line. The demesne was increased in

⁶ Christopher Thacker, *The Genius of Gardening*, (Wiedenfeld & Nicholson, 1994), p. 263

⁷ Alison Hodges, 'A Victorian Gardener: Edward Milner (1819-1884)', *Garden History*, Vol. V No. 3 (Winter 1972), pp. 67-77

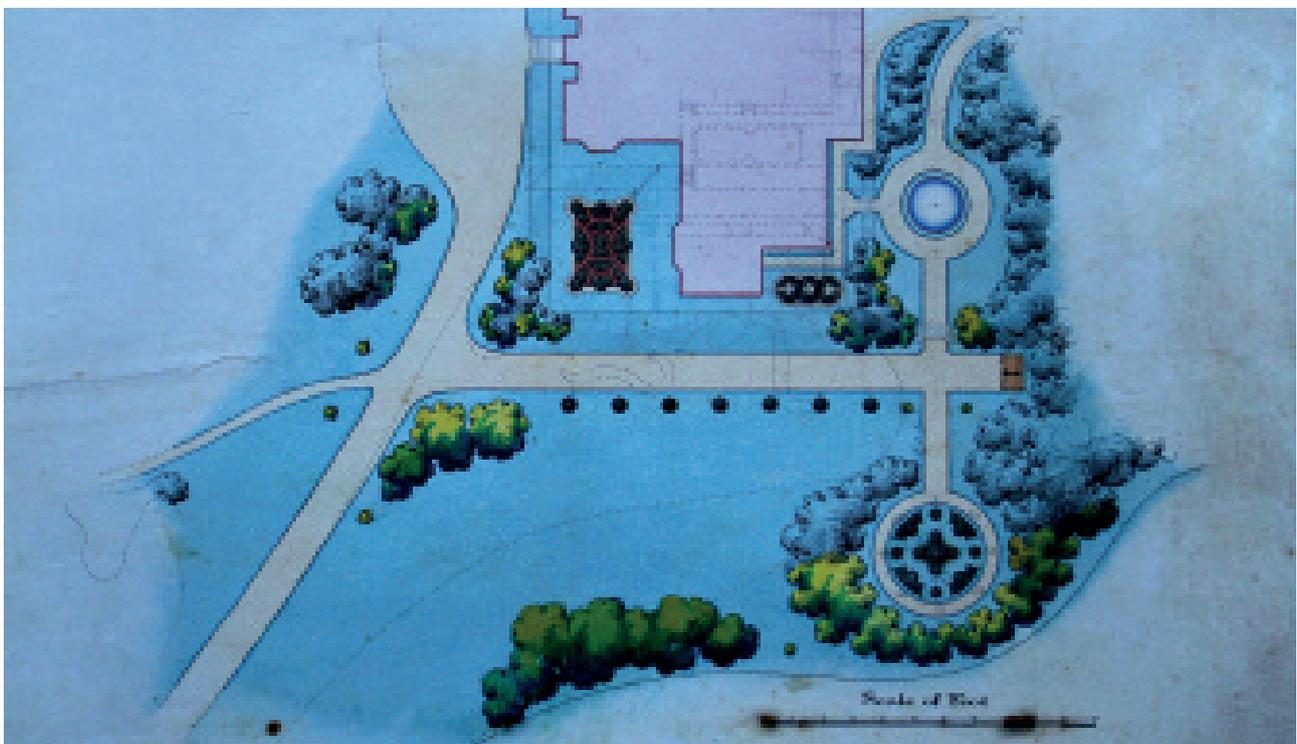
⁸ Jenny Uglow, *A Little History of British Gardening* (Pimlico, 2005), p. 182

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241

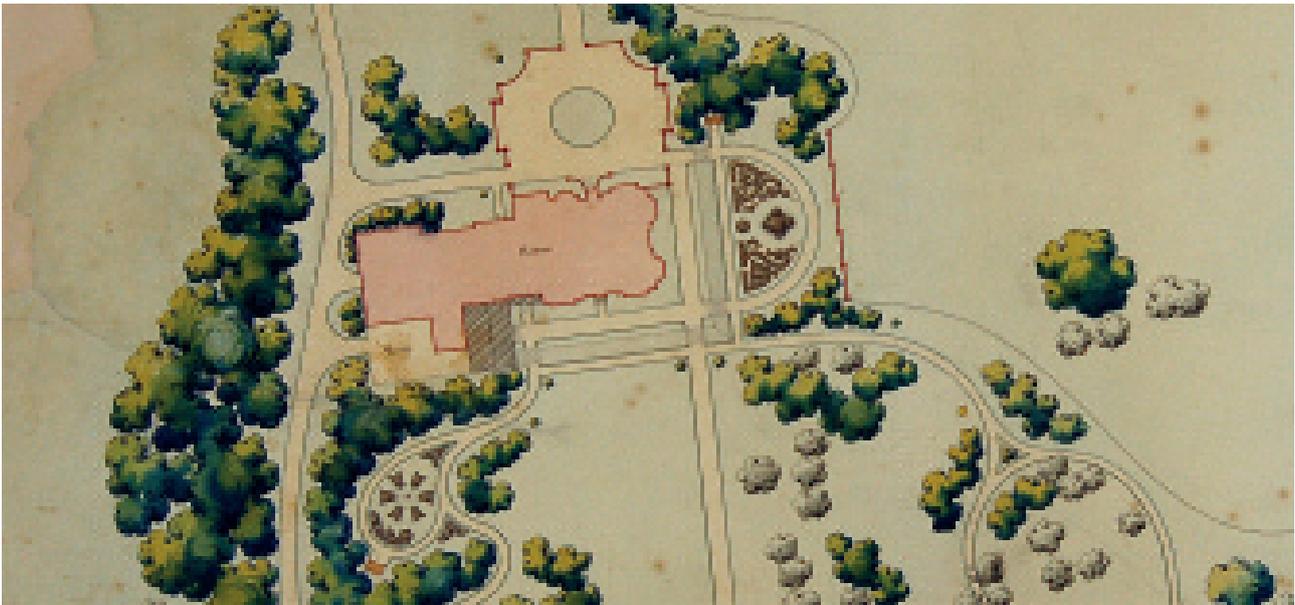
acreage to include a Home Farm and the park and gardens at Bryn-y-Neuadd were laid out by Edward Milner in 1866-67. There was a formal Italianate garden and an extensive kitchen garden, as well as a delightful small Pulhamite Grotto. Pulham & Son also built some artificial pools and rockwork features in a stream beside what was then the Grand Lodge at the entrance to the estate (this was demolished in the 1960s). Sadly very little of what was a huge Victorian mansion, four times the size of the original, and its pleasure grounds exists today. After John Platt's death Bryn-y-Neuadd became the home of his youngest son, Sydney Platt, in 1884 but according to local accounts Mrs Platt never really settled in North Wales and they left after 13 years. Some two years later it was sold and for the first half of the 20th century the site was owned by St Andrew's Hospital, Northampton. The house was demolished in 1967 and Bryn-y-Neuadd became a purpose-built hospital for people with learning difficulties with villa-style accommodation in the grounds. There are still fine specimen trees to be seen and the little Grotto still exists (although it is well hidden). The garden that surrounds the ornate French fountain, made by Barbezat & Cie and brought by John Platt from Paris in the 1850s, is still kept up but is a shadow of its former glory. To give some idea of its splendours, John Gould, writing in the *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* in 1864, observes in that year 25,000 bedding plants were planted in the gardens. There are Platt papers in the Conwy Archives.

Gorddinog, Abergwyngregyn, Conwy

This is just a stone's throw from Bryn-y-Neuadd. John Platt had purchased not only the estate of Bryn-y-Neuadd but also the old mansion and estate of Gorddinog just across the parish boundary in Abergwyngregyn. The present house was built as a wedding present for Captain Henry Platt, the eldest of his seven sons, in 1868-69. His father was clearly well pleased with the designs Milner had done for him and so perhaps suggested that he carry out the same for the grounds of Gorddinog. The house, smaller and more convenient than its neighbour at Bryn-y-Neuadd, belonged to the Platts until after World War II and in 1957 it was purchased by the family to whom it still belongs. As a result, having always been well-kept, it is in very good order. There is extensive use of Pulhamite around the small lake and river course that runs through the property, including a charming bridge and elaborate ice house. There is also an extraordinary grotto – more extensive and larger than that at Bryn-y-Neuadd. I have made detailed plans of this grotto and some research at the RHS Lindley Library and talking to Brent Elliott leads me to believe it was planned as an ornate Fernery. An original Milner drawing for the gardens is in Conwy Archives, but there is little accompanying other paperwork. However, comparing the drawing with what is still on the ground you can see that, other than the maturity of the trees, it is still remarkably true to its original design. The gardens are not open to the public.



A section from Edward Milner's plan for alterations to the gardens at Gorddinog showing the terrace and parterres designed for the west side of the house. The little river and lake embellished with Pulhamite lie to the east and north-east of the house. (Reproduced with permission of the Conwy Archives Service)



*Part of Milner's design for Treborth Hall, with its typical terracing, closely-designed parterre beds and screening belts of trees.
(Reproduced with permission of the Gwynedd Archives Service)*

Treborth Hall, Bangor

In 1852 twenty-five acres of pleasure grounds were laid out as Britannia Park on a site between the two bridges across the Menai Strait. They were designed by Sir Joseph Paxton for the Chester & Holyhead Railway Company as a pleasure complex. A garden was laid out with a cascade, lime tree avenue and other features were planned to include a Grand Hotel, conservatories and a railway station. Although a start was made the whole project was finally abandoned and largely reverted to fields and woods. However, features of the design, such as the lime avenue, can still be seen today and part was developed as Treborth Botanic Garden in the 1960s. The 90-acre site of the Botanic Garden formed part of the Treborth Isaf estate until 1846 when it was purchased for £18,000 by the Chester and Holyhead Railway whose Chief Engineer was Robert Stevenson, son of George Stevenson. I was not aware of Treborth Hall and Milner's plans for its owner, Richard Davies, until Dr Craddock alerted me to the existence of Treborth Isaf. Checking with the Pevsner *Gwynedd* told me that the Treborth Isaf estate lay to the west of Britannia Park and was purchased by Richard Davies in 1867. He later purchased Britannia Park and built the stepped bridge across the railway and the Lodge at the entrance. He built himself a large house, Treborth Hall, and the gardens were laid out by Edward Milner in 1875 after the house was completed earlier in the 1870s. The splendid plan, to be seen in Caernarfon Archives, covers the home demesne and features a terrace with a delightful half-moon parterre. Sweeping paths lead to clumps of trees, a pool, a delicious tear-drop parterre and seat, with the stable yard well away from the house with another range of buildings. I have yet to see this site so have no idea if anything of the Milner plan survives.

The connection between Milner and Paxton is a fascinating one and I hope to discover whether Joseph Paxton told his protégé about the opportunity at Treborth or whether Milner assisted Paxton in the creation of Britannia Park and perhaps met Richard Davies in the course of his work. Richard Davies (1818-1896), a leading Welsh radical non-conformist, was Liberal Member of Parliament for Anglesey (1868-86), as well as a prosperous trader and ship-owner. He made his mark as Anglesey's first non-conformist J.P. and Lord Lieutenant (1884). On his death he willed the mansion and estate to his wife for life and then to his eldest son John R. Davies. The estate was sold in 1925.¹⁰ I have yet to see this site so have no idea if anything of the Milner plan survives.

Bodnant, Tal-y-Cafn, Conwy [Grade I]

Linked forever with the Aberconway family, Bodnant was in fact bought by Henry Davis Pochin (1824-1895), a renowned industrial chemist. Pochin invented a means of clarifying rosin to produce coloured soap as well as developing processes for the production of china clay from Cornwall. Member of Parliament for Stafford (1868-

¹⁰ Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon – draft Will for Richard Davies 1884 and Sale Catalogue of the Treborth Hall Estate, 1925 ref. XD2/14596.

69), he first settled in North Wales in Llandudno. In 1875 he purchased the Bodnant estate at Tal-y-Cafn and began the great work of creating the famous gardens that overlook the Conwy valley. Already a keen gardener, Pochin employed Edward Milner to plant the Dell with great American and Oriental conifers. Milner also created a design for the garden described as ‘uncomplicated, with terraces on the south and west sides of the house, from which a rather steep grass bank descended to the lawns, inconveniently without steps. There were formal beds and informal shrubberies on the sloping lawn to the west. The pierced wall which runs off to the south from just east of the conservatory was probably part of the design; this follows the line of the west wall of the old kitchen garden, which was moved probably in the early 1880s. In an engraving of 1883, a round garden is shown beyond the end of this, up a few steps, which must be on or very near the site of the present Round Garden.’”

Pochin’s daughter Laura married Charles McLaren, later the first Baron Aberconway [1911] and she and their family continued the great tradition that has produced the gardens we know today. In 2009 the National Trust re-created a tiny portion of Edward Milner’s designs just in front of the house. It is a small fraction of parterre with box hedging, paths and planted with tulips. Since the 1870s much has been overlaid, re-designed and re-worked and only comparison with the original Milner drawing and what is on the ground today will tell you what, if anything, remains other than the tiny piece referred to above. There is a framed plan of Milner’s ideas for the site at Bodnant together with some old photographs on which the re-created section of parterre was based. Early searches at Bodnant have yet to reveal any other Milner plans or papers.

Bodnant Gardens are open in 2012 from 25 February – 31 October, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; 1 – 18 November 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Kinmel Hall, Abergele [Grade II*]

According to Dr Craddock, the Milner White records suggest that Edward Milner was involved here in 1883. This VAST chateau-style house, sometimes called the Welsh Versailles, was designed by William Eden Nesfield and built from 1871-76. It had 18 acres of walled gardens including Venetian Gardens designed by W.E. Nesfield’s father, William Andrews Nesfield, as well as 3,500 acres of farm and parkland (the parkland today is in separate hands). The Kinmel estate was bought in 1786 with the immense wealth generated for the Hughes family in the 18th century through their half-ownership of the great copper mine, Parys Mountain on Anglesey. Sir Nicholas Bayly (ancestor of the Marquess of Anglesey) owned the other half. Nesfield’s house was the third house on the site, replacing one built in 1842-3 in Palladian style by Thomas Hopper for William Lewis Hughes (d. 1852), created Baron Dinorben of Kinmel. With the early death of William Lewis Hughes, the 2nd Lord Dinorben, almost immediately afterwards, the estate passed to a Hughes nephew, Hugh Robert Hughes (d. 1911). Always known as HRH for his princely taste and style, he would have been the person who might have engaged Edward Milner to do further work on the gardens at Kinmel in 1883. The Hughes family continued to live at Kinmel until 1929. After that the house had a chequered career as a health spa, a hospital during World War II and as a school from 1945 until a fire forced the closure of the school in 1975. Restored in the 1980s, Kinmel Hall has been sold several times. Current photographs show the gardens to be in a sad state of decline. Bangor University and the Denbigh Records Office hold Kinmel MSS and it may be that they have details concerning the building/design of the Nesfield house and gardens and Edward Milner’s possible involvement here.

Dingestow Court, Dingestow, Monmouth

The Dingestow Court estate originally belonged to the Jones family and the core of the house dates from the 1620s. Richard Jones, the last member of the family to own Dingestow, sold the estate to George Catchmayd, who in turn sold it to James Duberly. In 1801 the trustees of James Duberly sold Dingestow to Samuel Bosanquet. The Bosanquets were originally a Huguenot family and Samuel Bosanquet (1744-1806) was Governor of the Bank of England. Samuel’s son, Samuel (1768-1843), made Dingestow his chief seat and became High Sheriff of Monmouthshire in 1841. Samuel was succeeded by Samuel Richard Bosanquet (1800-1882) and his successor was Samuel Courthorpe Bosanquet (1832-1925), High Sheriff of Monmouthshire (1898).¹¹ He employed Edward Milner to undertake a new design for the gardens in 1883, the year after inheriting Dingestow; he was clearly keen to make his mark on the estate.

¹¹ Information from National Archives record accessed 7/09/11

Dingestow Court's parkland and pleasure grounds extend over 1,000 acres. The gardens and park as laid out by Edward Milner in 1883 incorporated earlier features such as 'Happy Dick's Mount'. Constructed before 1789, it was named after Richard, the last Jones to live at Dingestow. The mid-19th century lake in the park replaced earlier fishponds drained in the 17th century. Milner's plan for his proposals is to be found at Dingestow and it would seem that most of his ideas were carried out. There are 19th-century photographs showing the parterres before they were grassed over and replaced by a tennis court.

The gardens and parkland are beautifully maintained by Anthony Bosanquet and his wife Helen. They are open for one day each year in aid of the Gwent Wildlife Trust or by appointment: Telephone 01600 740 238.

The Hendre, Llangattock-Viban-Avel, Monmouthshire [Grade II*]

The Hendre was originally built as a shooting box in the 18th century. The family, who had owned the estate from the 1640s, was very successful in the 19th century and built an enormous Victorian Gothic mansion, developing the whole house and its grounds in several stages throughout the century. John Allan Rolls (1837-1912), High Sheriff in 1875 and MP for Monmouthshire, 1880-1885, was created Baron Llangattock of the Hendre in 1892. He was succeeded by his son John Maclean Rolls (1870-1916), 2nd Baron Llangattock, High Sheriff in 1900. Charles Stewart Rolls (1877-1910), a younger son of John Allan Rolls, was one of the founding partners of Rolls-Royce.¹² The 2nd Lord Llangattock was killed in World War I at the Somme and the direct Rolls line ceased. However, descendants of the family continued to live at The Hendre until 1987.¹³

Created between 1830 and 1900, the bones of the Victorian garden survive here but the park is now a golf course. Aspects of the garden were designed and constructed for the 1st Lord Llangattock by Henry Ernest Milner (c1845-1906), Edward Milner's son, also a landscape designer and his father's principal assistant in later life.¹⁴ *The Gardeners' Magazine* of 1903 described the park "*The Hendre stands in a finely wooded park of a thousand acres' extent, and is reached from the county road by a long drive of about two miles. This drive was made by Mr H.E. Milner (son of landscape gardener Edward Milner), from his Lordship's own designs [Lord Llangattock]. It passes through plantations of the finest conifers, winding upward by easy gradients through oak wood and copse, revealing here and there broad stretches of open park bedded with bracken and peopled with herds of deer.*"¹⁵ There are records for Pulhamite stone on this drive as well as round the landscaped lake with its artificial cascade. Sadly, there is little access to the site and, indeed, from Claude Hitching's experience, is discouraged.¹⁶

What emerges from this necessarily superficial trawl through the mass of information to be explored is that Edward Milner attracted men of energy and vision to employ his talents. His work can be belittled because he worked in a milieu summed up as 'New Money, No Taste', an attitude that smacks of snobbery and is rather patronising. Every generation is fascinated by new ways of working and if new money can afford the latest garden innovations from glasshouses to the introduction of trees and plants, what is wrong with that? Where would the great plant hunters have been without the money invested in their expeditions across the world? These entrepreneurs wanted to make their mark and invest in new ideas and devoted as much energy to their new houses and estates as they had to the enterprises that had made their money in the first place.

The fact that most of Milner's Welsh clientele were captains of industry, Members of Parliament and extremely rich, generates all sorts of lines of enquiry to follow. How well did they know one another? Milner was a protégé of Sir Joseph Paxton. Did this link lead to an introduction to Richard Davies during the planning of Britannia Park? Both Richard Davies and John Platt were Liberal MPs in the 1860s; Henry Pochin was an MP at the same time. John Allan Rolls, later the 1st Lord Llangattock, was MP for Monmouth (1880-85) and sat in the House of Lords at the same time as Lord Aberconway. Mr Rolls and Samuel Courthorpe Bosanquet, as High Sheriffs of Monmouthshire would have known one another as men of influence in the county as well as socially, both men living close to Monmouth. The possibilities for further research are endless and fascinating.

Bettina Harden

¹² Information from National Archives record accessed 7/09/11

¹³ http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/anw/get_collection accessed 23/09/11

¹⁴ H.E. Milner's daughter married Edward White (c 1873-1952) and by 1903 the company was known as Milner, Son & White.

¹⁵ The whole article and an appreciation of The Hendre by Elisabeth Whittle can be found in the Autumn 2003 issue of *The Bulletin*.

¹⁶ There is an excellent article on The Hendre and its history at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hendre

The Walled Gardens of Norchard

Our move to Norchard some 15 years ago presented a wonderful opportunity to indulge in two great passions; architectural history and gardening. Medieval Norchard, built after the arrival of the Normans, derived its name from the Middle English 'Atten Orchearde' and gradually evolved into its current form.

Adjoining the south-facing façade of the farmhouse was a small walled garden, or courtyard, with an imposing crenellated entrance. There were a couple of flower borders, a lilac and some hydrangeas framing a lawn bisected by a narrow path leading to the front door. There was also what we believe to be *Rosa Alba Maxima* and an unusual small-flowered white jasmine. Immediately adjacent, to the west, was another walled garden which extended to some 1/3 of an acre that had become a very useful enclosure for livestock. The remains of a retaining wall, which created a split in the levels, were still clearly visible.

Insignificant they may be in comparison to their grander cousins, such as the vast walled gardens at Stackpole, but the relatively small size of the walled gardens at Norchard, being altogether more manageable, was a huge attraction. There was an undisputed aura of antiquity evoked by these walls but they revealed little else and the mystery of the design of the courtyard intrigued me.

I commenced my research and discovered that the walled gardens were built during the Elizabethan era, probably around 1600. Having resided at Norchard for centuries, the Saint Marychurch family had embarked on a major re-modelling and aggrandizement of the property during this period. As was befitting of their social status, the family's pedigree and coat of arms was recorded by Lewys Dwnn in his *Heraldic Visitations*, Vol. I in 1591.

It is thought that the centre section of the house, comprising an open hall which probably sat above two vaulted undercrofts, was replaced with a more contemporary layout with a series of rooms and a central staircase. Furthermore, a false projection was built at the west end of the house to match the existing projection at the east which, although not identical, gave the illusion of symmetry that was much favoured across Europe at the time. The walled gardens completed the re-vamp and their immediate proximity to the house, the relatively low height of the walls and their small size were absolutely typical of this period.



*The early stages of the re-discovery of the design and layout for the Norchard walled garden.
(Photographs © Heulwen Davies)*

The long and largely peaceful reign of Elizabeth I which followed the stability brought about by the Acts of Union (1536 and 1543) that united Wales politically with England, combining them into a single state, gave an opportunity for channelling resources into more frivolous activities such as the construction of pleasure gardens. Of course, the walled garden provided many very practical functions, not least an element of security for the resident household but also, importantly, a sanctuary from some of the unpleasant realities of life including recurring bouts of the Black Death. A world in its own right, it was an area where nature could be controlled – a world apart from the surrounding disorder and chaos.



Gradually, it became apparent that despite the seemingly insignificant size of Norchard's walled gardens, they were, in fact, historically very important since they represent an early example; being so intact and original making them all the more remarkable. Although the external boundaries provided a clear structure, there were few clues as to the original design within. Numerous attempts to discover the layout of the garden proved fruitless. A search for early paintings, looking at plans and maps and waiting for a drought yielded nothing. With increasing frustration, I kept recalling Monty Don's words during a garden restoration programme nearly two decades ago. Since they had no plans of the Tudor garden they had called on the help of a diviner (or dowser); a throwaway sentence which echoed in my mind.



*The completed work in 2011
(Photographs © Heulwen Davies)*

A visit by the Hardy Plant Society proved fortuitous. I enquired whether they had heard of the use of divining to find old garden layouts. A lucky conversation indeed since, although they did not know about using divining in this way, they were able to show me how to divine for water. To my utter astonishment, I discovered that not only did it work but I was able to do it!

One warm afternoon after school some dozen years ago, my young son and I decided we would try divining the courtyard. We worked in a grid-like fashion – me on the rods and he putting down markers each time I had a response. We went upstairs to look down on the garden and what emerged felt miraculous. Through this seemingly improbable route, these ancient walls finally divulged their secret to reveal a classic Elizabethan parterre.

The design incorporated a 9' wide path that led straight to the front door from an arched entrance topped with five crenellations – each said to represent one of five sons of the Marychurch family¹⁷. Intersecting this was another 9' wide path with a turning circle for carriages superimposed in the middle of the garden. 3' wide paths near the base of the walls completed the design which produced four quadrants in a scheme epitomising the Renaissance movement which emanated from Florence – rigidly formal, axial and symmetrical.

¹⁷ Information from Mr Leach, former Curator of Tenby Museum

It transpired that where the rods crossed over, there were paths – possibly as a result of impeded drainage; everywhere else they remained open. We did a small test dig on the edge of the turning circle and this confirmed what the rods had found. Surprisingly, the original layout of the garden was only some four inches below the surface with the turning circle constructed of random rubble limestone laid in lime mortar. One further surprise was the discovery of two turning circles – one with a diameter of 34' and the other, presumably later, circle of 42'. One assumes this later modification was made to accommodate larger carriages.

Restoration commenced in February of 2009. The limestone seemed an impractical surface from a maintenance point of view. Therefore, it was decided that only a thin layer of earth would be removed from the paths and turning circle before laying geotextile membrane which would be topped with shingle indigenous to this coast line. Happily, this left the original surface intact.



*Summer in the ornamental kitchen garden in 2011.
(Photograph © Heulwen Davies)*

The planting was selected to capture the spirit of the period through the use of roses, honeysuckles, lavenders, columbines, box hedges and yew. Great emphasis was placed on choosing plants with scent which, to some extent, is trapped by the surrounding walls. We have not, however, remained faithful to varieties available during that period which would have been rather limited both in terms of choice and length of flowering period.

A soft palette of colours was chosen, ranging from the whites, through the pinks and lilacs to the deepest purples. They are generally organised so that the whites are planted at the foot of the north-facing wall in order to stand out against this darker, more shaded background. This also serves the purpose of giving the false impression of greater distance from the front of the house. Conversely, the darker flowers tend to be planted in front of the house in order that the intensity of colour can be viewed to greatest effect.

And what of the other walled garden? Yet more divining revealed an ornamental kitchen garden with borders running along the base of the walls. Within this we found 24 borders on the top level organised into four blocks of six beds; this pattern was repeated on the bottom level. Each bed measured 6' wide and approximately 15' long. In between were 3' paths with the exception of the central axis which had a path of 4' wide leading to a niche in the wall at the very top end. Ambitious though it is, we have commenced work on this area though the design has been modified in an effort to make it manageable.

I feel immensely privileged to have been a passenger on this surprising and rewarding journey. Through an unlikely series of events, some of the mystery of the garden has been uncovered and I am very grateful to those who, through coincidence or otherwise, have helped to make this happen. I hope very much that our efforts will give pleasure to future generations and that we will have succeeded in giving something back to this noble old lady called Norchard. I also hope that our story will inspire others to try divining and, maybe, other gardens will be saved from oblivion.

Heulwen Davies.

Norchard Gardens are open to the public through the National Garden Scheme between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday 29th April and Sunday 17th June, 2012.

HHSS – What’s That Then?



Unfortunately many traditional gardening skills are being lost and without them the character of our wonderful heritage gardens will be lost too. The Heritage Horticulture Skills Scheme (Cynllun Sgiliau Garddwriaeth Dreftadol) is an exciting development funded by the HLF under the new ‘Skills for the Future’ programme and focuses on the practical side of horticulture for heritage gardens. It aims to increase the number of gardeners with high quality practical skills and a passion for a career of practical working in heritage gardens as well as developing a new route to accreditation for existing gardeners. The first seven recruits started their traineeships at the end of September, only two months after the launch of the scheme at the Royal Welsh Show. With the benefit of bursaries funded by the HLF grant, over the next 18 months they will study at some of Wales’s premier heritage gardens, to train them to use traditional gardening tools and techniques and also to apply modern techniques to achieve similar results. As well as the trainees, existing staff will be helped to pass on their own skills, by becoming trainers in their own right. The photograph shows some of these on a ‘Training the Trainer’ course at Dyffryn Gardens (note the splendid new glasshouse!). The other gardens running the scheme are Aberglasney, Bodnant Garden, Cardiff City Council at Bute Park, the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Newport City Council at Belle Vue Park and here at St Fagans. We will be telling the stories of how these new trainees progress on our website [www.hhss.co.uk] as well as letting the WHGT in on how they’re getting on. The next intake of students will be in September 2012.

*Andrew Dixey
Estate Manager, St Fagans: National History Museum*

New Shoots at Aberglasney

As WHGT members will know, the Trust has had a long association with Aberglasney. There are two new faces to be seen there this year, the new Chief Executive of the Aberglasney Restoration Trust, Roger Evans, and the new Head Gardener, Joseph Atkin. Roger Evans was born in the Tywi Valley so has had links with Aberglasney all his life, “Having attended Llangathen Primary School near Aberglasney, I had first-hand experience of seeing Aberglasney fall into ruin. Happily, that experience has also included the magnificent restoration of the gardens ...” He has had a distinguished career in Welsh agriculture and is a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society and is currently a Non-Executive Director of the Community Foods Group Ltd.

Joining the team is Joseph Atkin who has returned to Aberglasney via the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Pershore. He writes “Now that the first season is coming to an end the chance to plan for next year has arrived. The emphasis this year has been on developing heritage horticulture [Aberglasney is part of the Heritage Horticultural Skills Scheme mentioned elsewhere in *Trafodion*] and sustainability within the gardens. The kitchen garden has successfully provided food and flowers for the shop and Café, offering something new for visitors. This autumn Aberglasney-

grown plants are being sold as bare root plants in the shop to allow customers to buy plants in the old fashioned way with a zero carbon footprint.

Next year the gardens will offer a series of plant-based events throughout the year so that there is something different happening every month. The season starts with new winter interest and bulb displays running through to Hydrangeas in late summer and the cut flower borders. This, combined with a new improved event list, will create added interest for the visitors and season ticket holders.

Aberglasney has successfully put itself on the map as historic garden with excellent horticulture. The task for the future is ensuring it blossoms into a garden that changes with the times but retains its history and character.”

Changes for Welsh Gardens

At the time of writing four gardens in Wales of major importance are undergoing change to their ownership and/or management: **Tredegar House & Dyffryn Gardens** near Cardiff will shortly come under the aegis of the National Trust in partnership with the Councils of Newport and Vale of Glamorgan; **Dewstow** has been recently put up for sale by the Harrises; **Ffynone** is now on the market following the death of Earl Lloyd George last year. All four gardens have been rescued and improved in the past 20 years and it seemed important to honour all that hard work and creativity and to encourage new owners or management to do so too.

Tredegar House, Newport was the ancestral home of the Morgan family for over 500 years until the house was given up by Lord Tredegar in 1951. The house became a school for many years until it was purchased by Newport Borough Council in 1976. The earliest part of the house dates from the 16th century and there is evidence of Tudor gardens established here. Today Tredegar House (Grade I), built for Sir William Morgan between 1664 and 1672, is seen as one of the finest Charles II mansions in the United Kingdom. Surrounded by a 90-acre park with its great Oak Avenue (sadly truncated by motorway development), there are three brick-walled gardens of which only two are currently open to the public – the Cedar Garden and the Orangery Garden.

This last enclosed space was the subject of much work and research assisted by the Monmouthshire branch of the WHGT in the early 1990s. The Orangery is one of the earliest in Wales and its setting and garden layout was hidden under a layer of spoil spread over it when the lake was created in c1790. Some 200 years later excavation revealed “a remarkably intricate formal layout of paths, beds, a small mount, and a pair of inorganic parterres in front of the orangery. The main central path was composed of coal dust bordered with crushed sea shells, and the patterns of the parterres were formed using different coloured materials such as crushed lime mortar, sea shells, brick and coal dust. The multi-coloured effect of this garden is now hard to imagine.”¹⁸

This autumn it was announced that the National Trust will take forward a 50-year lease from Newport Council. As the National Trust’s first stately home in south Wales it is hoped that this move will create a higher profile for both Tredegar House and the Trust. The move to transfer the management of the house, gardens and parkland to the Trust has potential to bring the charity into the local community, and it is hoped an additional 50,000 visitors a year to the property will be created as a result of this presence, boosting the local economy by an estimated £1.47 million. Under the agreement with National Trust, Newport residents and visitors will continue to have free access to the park, children’s play area and the council-run library. Once contract details, which are at an advanced stage, are finalised, it is expected that the National Trust will open the property by spring 2012.

Dyffryn Gardens, St Nicholas, near Cardiff [Grade I] The gardens at Dyffryn were begun for John Cory, a wealthy coal-owner and coal exporter, by Thomas Mawson c1903/04. However, the gardens are principally associated with John’s son, Reginald Cory, who took over the 2,000 acre estate and continued his father’s work with Mawson when John died in 1910. Reginald Cory and Mawson made a great team and even went off to on holiday to Italy together

¹⁸ Elisabeth Whittle, *The Historic Gardens of Wales* (Cadw, 1992), p. 32.



*Dyffryn Gardens with Mawson's trademark gold and yellow topiary yews.
The effect was achieved by grafting two different types of yew together.
(Photograph © National Trust)*

to gather inspiration for the gardens. The resulting layout incorporated a delicious series of garden rooms that include a wealth of ideas from a Moorish Court, through a Dutch Garden to a Pompeian Garden and a special site devoted to Reginald Cory's passion for dahlias.¹⁹ All of this was set in a wider landscape with terraces, a canal, sweeping lawns and an arboretum.

After Cory's death in 1934 Dyffryn was inherited by his sister Florence. When she died in 1937 the whole estate was bought by Sir Cennydd Traherne and in 1939 Sir Cennydd leased the house and gardens to Glamorgan County Council as a botanical garden for 999 years. In 1997, as the Vale of Glamorgan, they purchased the freehold. Since then the gardens have been the subject of a long, careful and very creative restoration project to bring the gardens back to Thomas Mawson's original design. The success of this meant that in 2000 Dyffryn gardens were listed as Grade I. The Grade I citation reads "The gardens at Dyffryn are the grandest and most outstanding Edwardian gardens in Wales. They are comparable to some of the most extravagant gardens of the period in Britain." The work has been supported with generous grants from HLF so that the gardens celebrated their centenary in 2006 in some style. HLF has recently granted a further £600,000 towards partial restoration of the house. The National Trust has taken a 50-year lease of the house and gardens and it is expected that they will take over the running of the gardens early in 2012.



(Photograph © National Trust)

¹⁹ see *Gerddi III* for a long article devoted to this.

Commenting to me on the Tredegar and Dyffryn partnerships, Justin Albert, the National Trust's new Director for Wales, said "We are thrilled to have been presented with the opportunity to get involved with both properties. Our desire is to make these two unique places even more special, locally and farther afield. To this end we will complete the restoration of the garden rooms, arboretum and parts of the house to make Dyffryn a 'must visit' destination for everyone with a love of gardening and the outdoors. We will focus on creating new opportunities for social enterprise and recreation whilst promoting the gardens as a place where everyone can enjoy. With Tredegar we will concentrate on the visitors and their experiences there, bringing the place to life for everyone who sees it."

Dewstow, Caerwent The astonishing discovery of some of the most extensive and elaborate grottoes, ferneries and rockeries in Wales was one of the wonders of this new century. As Claude Hitching says in his article here, they are 'totally breathtaking' and have featured in all the recent books on gardens in Wales such as *Discovering Welsh Gardens* (Stephen Anderton, Graffeg, 2009) and *The Gardens of Wales* (Helena Attlee, Frances Lincoln, 2009). The gardens were buried under thousands of tons of soil and from 2000 on the Harris family began the Herculean task of bringing them back to the light. These gardens, the like of which are not known to exist anywhere else, have, above ground, rock gardens, ponds, water features, ornamental areas, glasshouses and a vast variety of plants, shrubs and trees from around the world. In addition there is another subterranean world of caverns and tunnels to be explored, all carried out in Pulhamite stone. To quote Helena Attlee in *The Gardens of Wales* "Thank goodness for the Harrises, who have had the courage and imagination to undertake such an ambitious restoration project." It is to be hoped that any purchaser of Dewstow house and gardens is blessed with the same vision.

Ffynone, Boncath, Pembrokeshire [Grade I] This lovely house, rescued and restored by Earl and Countess Lloyd George from 1988, is now 'a gleaming solitaire in the heart of the Pembrokeshire countryside...'²⁰ Ffynone was built for Colonel John Colby between 1790 and 1800 to designs by John Nash and remained in the family until the 1920s. The last Colby heir was killed in World War I and the house sold in 1927.

Having been given rash permission by her husband, John Vaughan Colby, to improve the house 'in any way she wished', Mrs Colby engaged Francis Inigo Thomas to remodel and extend the house. Between 1902 and 1904 a huge programme of work began culminating in the design of the terraced gardens contained by classical stone walling and balustrades, with a croquet lawn and clipped yews (the walled garden, woodland walks and fountain garden were already in place). During their time at Ffynone Lord and Lady Lloyd George created glorious woodland gardens planted with rhododendrons and azaleas and carpeted with bluebells. All of this beauty could be seen as part of the National Garden Scheme.

Francis Inigo Thomas (1865-1950) was a landscape designer, architect, and writer. With his fellow architect Reginald Blomfield he published *The Formal Garden in England* (1892). They did the research together; Blomfield wrote the words and Inigo Thomas provided the drawings. After its publication he received a number of large commissions, sometimes working with his co-author. Given the theme of the book, it is not surprising that many of Inigo Thomas's commissions were from owners of Tudor houses who wished to restore and enlarge the buildings, and complement them with suitably formal gardens in Renaissance or Baroque style.

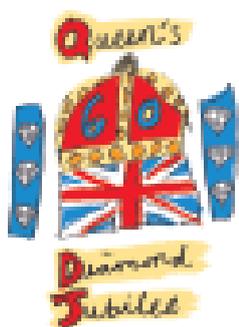
All four properties are of great importance to the history of garden and landscape design in Wales. Let us hope that once they are established in new hands the motto will be 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose' and that these beautiful places remain loved and looked after to a high standard.

Bettina Harden

²⁰ Penny Churchill, 'Simply splendid isolation', *Country Life*, June 29, 2011

Happy New Year 2012

Being of an optimistic turn of mind, I always look forward to a new year and 2012 has a lot to offer. All gardens, historic or otherwise, like to plan ahead for new ideas and features and 2012 can offer all sorts of ideas for a themed planting, an event to celebrate, an anniversary to mark with a garden opening and much more. For example, 2012 sees the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens. If you live in Kent, Portsmouth or London, there is rich material to draw on to focus on an event. Sadly, Dickens did not feature Wales in any of his novels. However, as a reporter he covered the aftermath of the tragic loss of the steam clipper *Royal Charter*, homeward bound from Australia, which sank off Moelfre on Anglesey in October 1859 during a colossal storm. More than 400 men, women and children lost their lives. 'The Shipwreck' was first published in Dickens's magazine *All the Year Round*, and later collected in his book *The Uncommercial Traveller*. Maybe a garden owner on Anglesey could mark Dickens' anniversary with a reading of his graphic account of the disaster and its aftermath out-of-doors, although perhaps this should be done on the 9th June, the date of his death rather than 12th February, his actual birthday – just a thought.



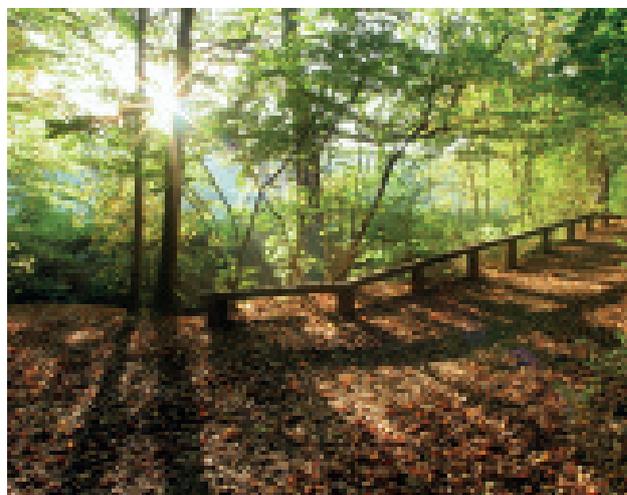
More importantly 2012 is **The Queen's Diamond Jubilee** and there is a major scheme afoot for 60 'Diamond' Woods to be created throughout the UK – the historic landscape of the future; in addition thousands of packs of tree saplings will be made available, each to include a 'Royal Oak' from Windsor for schools and community groups to plant. "The Woodland Trust's Jubilee Woods Project is offering people the gem of a chance to be at the heart of the Queen's 2012 Diamond Jubilee celebrations, by planting trees to celebrate the Queen's 60 years on the throne. The project, which has the Queen's support and the Princess Royal as patron, aims to plant six million trees across the UK and involve millions of people" [jubileewoods@woodlandtrust.org.uk]. Do you know a school or community who would like to join in? Lincolnshire Gardens Trust is marking the occasion with a

'Diamond Grove' in Grantham's Queen Elizabeth Park featuring 60 silver birch trees around an oak, underplanted with snowdrops. County branches in Wales could plan or plant something similar.

The Diamond Jubilee can inspire garden owners all over Wales to do something to celebrate, perhaps over the Diamond Jubilee weekend of 2 – 5 June. While there will be the Big Jubilee Lunch on Sunday 3rd June [www.thebiglunch.com] and over 2,000 beacons to be lit on Monday 4th June [www.diamondjubileebeacons.co.uk], garden owners could consider a garden party for people in their 60s or for 60 visitors who suffer from sort of disadvantage. What about planting 60 plants and/or trees with royal titles? A quick dash through some of my gardening books and catalogues reveals a host of appropriately named plants: Buddleia 'Royal Red'; Cotinus 'Royal Purple'; Osmunda regalis, the 'Royal' fern; rosa 'Scarlet Queen Elizabeth'; Rhododendron Loderi 'King George' for her Father or Rh. 'Princess Anne'; Clematis 'Prince Charles'; Magnolia 'Royal Crown' or 'Elizabeth'; Hosta rectifolia 'Royal Standard' and many more. A little creative thinking and in twenty years' time visitors could be talking about the Diamond Jubilee planting created by you.



(Photograph © Woodland Trust, Nick Spurling)



(Photograph © Woodland Trust, Steven Highfield)

Seedlings

This section is to highlight new ideas, sprigs that might grow into something more. They can be short notes about anything at all connected to historic parks and gardens: identifying a garden from an old photograph; announcing a research project that readers might know something about; heralding the start of a project; a puzzle about a garden or related topic to solve. DO send or email me anything relevant.

Bodnant Garden is launching a “Friends of Bodnant Garden” group. The idea is to keep interested people up-to-date and aware of the latest developments at the gardens, announcing flowering times, evening and day events, special offers &c. If you are interested in joining the group please send your email address to bodnantgarden@nationaltrust.org.uk

Capability Brown in Wales is a real seedling to be nourished and thought over. 2016 is the Tercentenary of the birth of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown (1716-1783). He was responsible for over 170 gardens surrounding some of the finest country houses and estates in Britain and there are already plans afoot to mark the anniversary in a big way through his parks and landscapes in England. Brown’s work in Wales was rather more limited – there are only three known sites in Wales – but at least we aren’t in the position of Ireland of which he remarked he hadn’t worked there as ‘he hadn’t yet finished England’.

The principal places in Wales where Brown is known to have worked or had associations with are Dinefwr (as Newton House) in 1775 for George Rice (Grade I), Cardiff Castle in 1776 for John, Lord Mountstuart (Grade I) and Wynnstay for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn from 1777-1783 (Grade I). He visited Llewenny Hall near Denbigh in September 1781²¹ which had been sold by Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton to Thomas Fitzmaurice, brother of the 1st Marquess of Lansdowne for whom Brown worked at Bowood, in 1748. A bill for £100, Brown’s standard fee for drawing up a plan, was settled with Brown’s executors after his death²². There is a thought that he might have been involved at Wenvoe Castle (Grade II) on the outskirts of Cardiff. Happily these sites are scattered from North to South Wales so perhaps members in Clwyd, the Vale of Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire could put on their thinking caps and see if Wales can’t come up with some good ideas for 2016. This may seem a long time away but such plans might need funding and that takes time to put in place.

The Mystery of Trees Here at Court Henry we have a 50-year old oak tree grown from an acorn from the oak tree planted by the great French man of letters, Victor Hugo (1802-1885) on Guernsey. The acorn was brought back to Wales by my father. It would be fascinating to gather together folk stories and legends connected to particular trees, or records of how certain trees came to be where they are. *Thomas Lloyd*

Editor’s Note To start the ball rolling, I have a newspaper cutting from the 1900s stating that a Eucalyptus planted in the garden here at Nanhoron was the tallest specimen in Britain at the time. Additionally, there is a huge myrtle traditionally planted as a slip from her wedding bouquet by Maye, the last Miss Lloyd-Edwards, on her marriage to Colonel Alan Gough in August 1895. Sacred to Aphrodite in ancient times, the myrtle is a symbol of love and constancy. Queen Victoria may have inspired Maye, as she too planted a sprig of myrtle from her wedding bouquet.

Any readers who have such traditional tales, legends and stories attached to trees they know, or who may have champion trees in their gardens, are invited to send a note to the Editor. Do include photographs or mention a print we might source as illustration. In due course I hope to prepare an article or even a small booklet gathering all this lovely arboreal knowledge together.

²¹ Christopher Thacker, *The Genius of Gardening*, (Wiedenfeld & Nicholson, 1994), p. 217

²² Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* (Faber, 1975), pp. 198, 232

A Puzzle at Hafod Some twenty years ago I was researching Hafod under the ownership of the Waddinghams (1872-1940). Dr Roberts of Crugiau, Rhydyfelin invited me to come and see him. His memories of Hafod did not add much to what I already knew. He did, however, have one fascinating anecdote which has puzzled me ever since. As a boy he was taken down to the docks at Aberystwyth by his father. Barrels were being unloaded from a ship from South America. He asked his father what they contained. He was told that they contained a special oil which Mr James Waddingham of Hafod imported to treat his Wellingtonia trees (*Sequoia giganteum*). No-one has been able to enlighten me as to what the oil might be or how it was used. Does any reader hold the answer to this mystery?
John R.E. Borron

Philip Tilden (1887-1956) was an interesting architect even if his achievement was relatively small. He worked for a select group of wealthy and influential men, often converting and modernising old country houses to a high standard. His principal clients between the wars were Sir Philip Sassoon for whom he designed the gardens at Port Lympne, Gordon Selfridge, Lord Conway and Winston Churchill (Chartwell). As a garden designer he worked at Garsington Manor for the Morrells, at Kingston Russell in Dorset and Allington Castle in Kent. He appears to have had only two jobs in Wales. In 1930 he carried out alterations at Caer Beris near Builth Wells for Lord Swansea. At the same time he was responsible for some minor work including the new Dining Room at Llwyn Madoc for Commander Evans-Thomas. He laid out the terrace at Caer Beris and I suspect that the yew hedges there were also planted to his design. Exactly what he did and why he was employed at these two Welsh houses is unknown. He might have had Welsh connections as he designed Lloyd George's Surrey home at Churt, Bron-y-De (destroyed by fire in the 1960s). Perhaps one of our members can elucidate. *John R.E. Borron*

Pets' Graveyards The charming tradition of burying one's pets with honour has been carried on for centuries at houses round the country. For thousands of years beloved animals have been revered and remembered by their owners. The 19th century saw the establishment of proper cemeteries devoted to animals such as the Cimitière des Chiens in Paris (1899) and Queen Victoria established a vast graveyard for all her animals, from horses to her beloved little spaniel Dash, at Windsor. Given how much we and our forebears loved our pets, it is a sad fact that many of these resting grounds for Man's best friend and other chums have been neglected and lost. We would like to start gathering together a list of sites, together with photographs of gravestones and their epitaphs and any other information relating to these graveyards in Wales. As ever, notes, ideas and any photographs can be sent to the Editor.

'CANOPIED WITH BOWERS'

Pergolas, Arbours and Arches

Study Day

Saturday 28 April 2012

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

as the

The Inaugural Event of the Bodnant Welsh Food Centre

Tal-y-Cafn LL28 5RP

Speakers:

Linda Farrar – *Pergolas of Ancient Rome*

Jan Woudstra – *Bowers, 'Berceaux' and Cradle Walks*

Troy Smith – *Bodnant Pergolas*

The day will be completed by a conducted tour of Bodnant Gardens

This is an advance notice. Further details will follow in due course.

Waiting list applications to

joyneal@btinternet.com or write to:

Mrs Joy Neal, Llwyncelyn, Glandyfi, Machynlleth, SY20 8SS

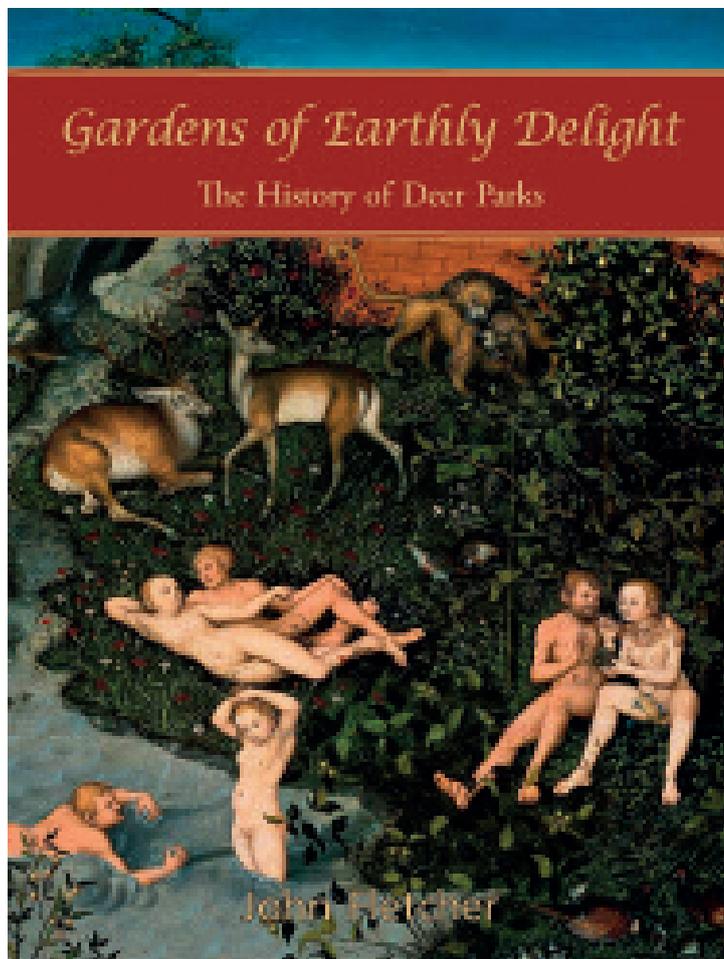
Books for Your Library

Gardens of Earthly Delight: The History of Deer Parks

John Fletcher (Windgather Press, paperback, £25)

John Fletcher is a specialist deer vet who took a PhD from Cambridge on the breeding behaviour of deer. His approach to this book is that of passionate interest in deer and how attitudes have changed to them over the centuries. The title is a little misleading as the emphasis is directed to the hunting and slaughter of deer rather than the development of deer parks and the landscape.

Fletcher starts in prehistoric times and continues through the Assyrian empire until the Roman era. He goes on to explore the differing attitudes of the Greeks and Romans to hunting and of the varying approaches to deer hunting taken by differing Chinese Imperial dynasties. This is very interesting, but it is when Fletcher comes to modern history that he commands the attention of the landscape historian. It is a pity that he does not go into more detail on medieval deer parks. He mentions the fact that many were located away from the main estate house but gives no convincing reason for this. However, he is excellent on the establishment of boundary fences and the management of deer herds and the methods used to kill/cull them.



There is little in the book about parks themselves. There are a few pages, far too few, on deer shelters and refuges in parks. Indeed the whole enlargement and creation of landscape parks is dealt with in rather a cursory fashion. Fletcher raises some interesting questions concerning deer and the landscape (although not always backed up by primary research). For example, was England originally covered with forest as many historians still believe or was it open parkland as Fletcher suggests? Is it the case that villages were moved to accommodate deer parks? To create or enlarge parks is probable but for deer parks is more questionable.

There is a vast amount of information in this book about deer, but there is rather less for those interested in landscapes.

John R. E. Borron

DEER PARKS IN WALES

Editor's Note A quick race through the Cadw County Registers of historic parks shows that Wales had its fair share of deer parks. The following is a short list from across the country to demonstrate how widespread they were. In medieval times a deer park was an enclosed area bounded by a ditch and bank with wooden paling on top of the bank. The ditch was typically on the inside allowing deer to enter the park but preventing them from leaving. If any readers know of more or has information to share do let me know and we can work towards an article for another issue of *Trafodion* in due course.

Abergavenny Priory has a well-preserved medieval deer park laid out on the south east flank of Sugar Loaf Mountain. The deer park was associated with the Benedictine priory of Abergavenny, founded soon after the Norman Conquest.

Bodorgan, Anglesey The deer park here, still in use today, was originally part of an estate of the bishops of Bangor and in the 16th century became the land of the Meyrick family who still live there. In the late-18th century a Tudor house and probable 17th-century formal gardens were destroyed to make way for the present house with its formal terraces and walled kitchen garden.

Chepstow Park, Monmouthshire Here the park wall has six medieval entrance points. A platform in the park has been interpreted as evidence for a deer course probably established in the 1630s. The site is now given over to commercial forestry.

Chirk Castle, Wrexham The castle was mainly built by Roger Mortimer at the end of the 13th century. In 1595 it was purchased by Thomas Myddleton, whose descendants have lived there ever since. The park includes what was the small timber-fenced 14th-century deer park. In 1675 Sir Thomas Myddleton extended the park to the south and east to hold 500 deer.

Coldbrook House, Abergavenny This is a multi-layered site created from medieval times to the early 20th century. The house no longer exists. The medieval deer park was landscaped in the mid-18th century.

Gwysaney, Soughton, Mold, Flintshire Part of the landscape park at Gwysaney was a 17th-century deer park, and has some contemporary walling and trees, including magnificent sweet chestnuts. The park is now permanent pasture with isolated trees.

Kilgetty, Pembrokeshire Kilgetty has the remains of the structure of a pleasure garden and small deer park that probably dates from the first half of the 17th century.

Powis Castle, Welshpool Surrounding the famous red castle and gardens is the medieval deer park, still home to fallow deer. The park belongs to the Earls of Powis and is not managed by the National Trust. The public (but no dogs) are allowed to walk along the main drive through the deer park.

Raglan Castle, Monmouthshire Now surrounded by fields, Raglan was a great fortress that had not one but two deer parks, the Home Park and the Red Deer Park, both known from the 14th century and marked on John Steed's map of 1610. Before the Civil War the gardens were some of the finest of the period.

The Making of the English Gardener

Margaret Willes (Yale University Press, £25)

The subtitle of this book is 'Plants, Books and Inspiration 1560-1660' but since the gardens that contained the plants and the people who created the gardens are to a great extent lost to us, it is through the books that both plants and inspiration emerge most clearly. Margaret Willes is a book person, a former Publisher for the National Trust, and in exploring the transition of these islands - for, despite the title, Scotland, Wales and Ireland are not ignored - from a horticultural backwater to a place at the forefront of European gardening, she uses books of all sorts to chart the journey.

Nailing her colours firmly to the mast, the author places one book, Pena and L'Obel's *Stirpium Adversaria*, published in London in 1570, at the start of her voyage and another, John Evelyn's *Sylva* 1664), at the end. The former, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I and by no means a commercial success at the time, was the work of two refugees from religious persecution in Europe, written wholly in Latin and with a medical, rather than horticultural bias. The second book, dedicated to King Charles II and produced for the infant Royal Society, was a runaway bestseller, written, but for its title, in English but rapidly becoming known all over Europe, and included, besides 'a discourse of forest trees and the propagation of timber', an appendix on orchards and cider-making and, most importantly for the purposes of this book, a Gardener's Almanac, detailing the tasks for every month of the year.

For Pena and L'Obel, physicians as well as botanists, a register of plants was a scientific work dedicated to the correct identification of known species and describing the many new introductions which travellers and explorers were bringing home with them. It had very little to do with gardening for pleasure, or even profit. The reign of Elizabeth I abounded in the creation of gardens to go with the new country houses which were springing up in a newly stable national environment. Courtiers like Robert Dudley at Kenilworth, William Cecil at Theobalds and Christopher Hatton at Holdenby, vied with one another to make magnificent gardens, fit to entertain a Queen, who did not always honour them with her presence or, if she did, not infrequently occasioned ruinous expenditure on the part of her hosts. Few of these gardens survive, although English Heritage has recently had a splendid go at recreating Kenilworth.

Margaret Willes brings all this vividly to life, quoting the impressions of visitors and dwelling to good effect on the literary background which influenced the designs: poetry and classical works but also architectural authorities such as Vitruvius, Alberti, Serlio and Palladio, made newly fashionable by travellers to Italy. We tend nowadays to identify these as 18th century influences so it is interesting to discover that Christopher Hatton's library at Holdenby contained a copy of Palladio.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, it is the period before the Civil War, and notably the 1630s, which emerges as something of a golden age. James I was no gardener - his only known horticultural intervention was to ban the cultivation of tobacco, somewhat to the dismay of the medical profession - but he gave houses to his queen, Anne of Denmark, where she created spectacular and extremely expensive gardens. At Somerset House the privy garden was raised and levelled and a huge octagonal basin created, containing Mount Parnassus complete with British Rivers, grottoes, the Nine Muses, probably with Apollo, the whole surmounted by a golden Pegasus. This edifice was the work of Salomon de Caus, a French Huguenot much influenced by his travels in Italy, and it was the forerunner of a host of impressive garden monuments. When Lord Arundel returned from his travels to start on the garden at Arundel House, on the north bank of the Thames, he went in for statuary in a big way. By the 1630s, he had 32 statues, 128 busts and 250 assorted inscriptions, sarcophagi and altars, including a giant head of Jove. No wonder that Francis Bacon, who strongly disapproved of this kind of thing, exclaimed at sight of it: 'The Resurrection!'

The Civil War and Commonwealth brought an end to such extravagances, though at least one Roundhead General, Sir John Lambert, was a notable gardener, but the gardens of ordinary men and women - Willes pays particular attention to the women, as far as they can be known - flourished. And it is at this time that the practical gardening books come into their own. Thomas Hill's *Gardeners Labyrinth* and *Profitable Art of Gardening* were to be found on

many shelves along with John Parkinson's phenomenally successful *Earthly Paradise* with its punning title: *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris*. Sir Thomas Hanmer, returning from a short continental exile, documented the life of his north Wales garden and corresponded widely with other garden owners and botanists. It was a small world and those involved in it exchanged letters, plants and seeds with amazing frequency, even across the Channel. Books were translated and London no longer lagged behind Paris or Amsterdam. Plant introductions from the New World multiplied and new crops began to be planted.

This was the England to which John Evelyn returned after time spent abroad for political reasons. He was a practical gardener and, full of all that he had seen in Europe, set about resurrecting the neglected gardens of his wife's family property, Sayes Court, by the Thames at Deptford. By the time that *Sylva* was published, the Commonwealth was over and a new king on the throne who, along with half his court, had spent many of his own formative years footloose in Europe. Practical expertise on the one hand and fresh ideas from abroad on the other were about to combine to set Britain on the way to becoming the leading nation of gardeners.

It is impossible, in a brief review, to do justice to a book so packed with information, but the author's enthusiasm for her subject, the people from all walks of life whom she so vividly evokes, the books and gardens she describes, make this as enjoyable to read as it is invaluable for reference.

Anne Carter

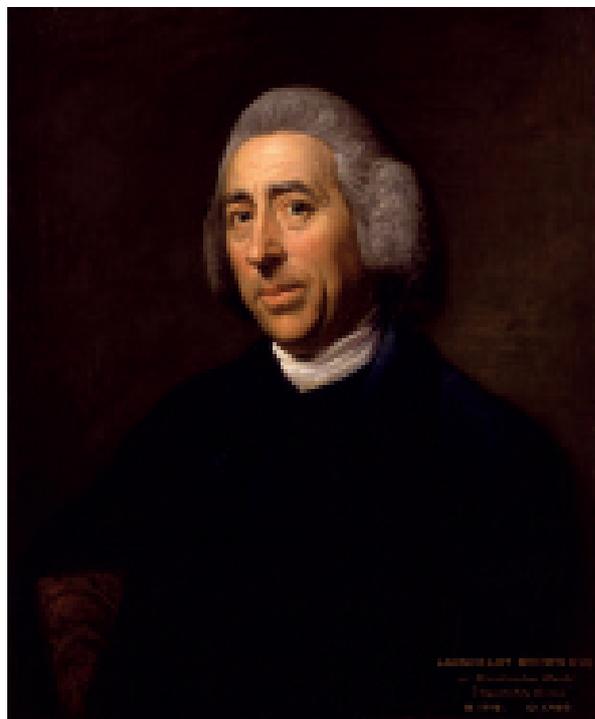
The Omnipotent Magician: Lancelot 'Capability' Brown 1716-1783

Jane Brown (Chatto & Windus, £20)

Having recently seen the excellent exhibition 'Capability' Brown & The Landscapes of Middle England' at Compton Verney and planted the seedling elsewhere about Brown's Tercentenary, the arrival of this book to review was very serendipitous. While no relation to Lancelot, Jane Brown, a well-known writer on garden subjects, presents her hero in a warm and sympathetic light. She very firmly calls him Lancelot as apparently the nickname 'Capability' was never used of him in his lifetime.

Starting with his childhood and upbringing in Northumberland, we follow Lancelot Brown's career across England and, indeed, up and down the country too for his range of work covered the land from Dorset to Alnwick in his home country of Northumberland, from Wales to Suffolk. These involved tremendous arduous journeys undertaken by Brown on horseback in all weathers and every season. The excellent Notes to this book reveal the fact that Jane Brown traced every journey by car, often accompanied by her Norfolk Terrier, Bertie. It is this attention to detail and the way she summons up Brown's life, loves and achievements, describing the domestic setting of his homes and their surroundings as well as the splendid sweep of his grand landscapes that make the book an energising and fascinating read. One wants to set out at once and follow in both Browns' tracks with maps and plans to hand.

Lancelot Brown clearly had the gift for making friends and influencing people and his career is peopled with a glittering array of the great and the good in 18th-century



Lancelot Brown by Nathaniel Dance painted c1769. "At Burghley House outside Stamford, where Lancelot had worked happily for more than twenty-five years, Lord Exeter had Brown's portrait ...placed in the Pagoda Room. It hangs there still."
(© National Portrait Gallery, London)

society. His patrons, who often became friends, included the four men who launched him on his career: Richard Temple, Viscount Cobham who employed him so happily at Stowe; William Pitt, Earl of Chatham who, while governing the country “found time to sanction a petition for Lancelot to have a royal appointment and a pension”; George Lucy of Charlecote who gave him one of his first major commissions; George William, 6th Earl of Coventry who used Brown as the ‘architect’ of the transformation of Croome Park in Worcestershire. He had been dining with Lord Coventry on the night he died, and it was Lord Coventry who placed a Coade-stone casket beside the lake at Croome that featured this memorial inscription:

To the Memory of
Lancelot Brown
Who by the powers of
His inimitable
And creative genius
Formed this garden scene
Out of a morass.

Although Lancelot Brown knew everyone who mattered as the King’s Master Gardener at Hampton Court, and who counted so many duchesses among his acquaintance that he could have a favourite – Elizabeth, Duchess of Northumberland - we also meet his close friends and family, the men who worked with him and the nurserymen who supplied his trees and plants. None of his remarkable achievements, with land drainage, in creating pools and lakes, sculpting contours where there had been none and smoothing away others, planting clumps of trees and sweeps of woodland, establishing kitchen gardens and siting eye-catchers in the park, would have been possible without an army of men and women. “The reality of his everydays was to give employment to men and women – often of the lowliest labouring kind – for whom his schemes were a means of survival.”

Jane Brown’s ‘Afterpiece’, tracing Lancelot Brown’s influence on the landscape gardeners and architects who have followed him, right up to the work of Dame Sylvia Crowe and her successors – and discussing those who took against his work – is particularly interesting to me. A delightful quote from Dr William Mavor’s *New Description of Blenheim* (1772) sums it up:

“[Brown] viewed nature with the enthusiasm of a lover; and though it cannot be denied that he sometimes tricked her out in meretricious ornaments, and patched her with too refined an art, he never lost sight of her prominent charms; and his worst errors can only be considered as minute pimples on a beautiful face.”

If I have a tiny quibble about this excellent book it is that the quality of the paper has swallowed up the detail of the black and white illustrations, some of which are also rather too small for fading eyesight. That said, it is a relief to be able to read a full and fascinating book while still being able to hold it without needing a lectern, as is so often the case with biographies these days. The temptation to go on writing this review, savouring the vignettes of Lancelot Brown’s life and work, is considerable. Like the author I have found it hard to give him up or let him die.

Bettina Harden

Edwardian Country Life: The Story of H. Avray Tipping

Helena Gerrish (Frances Lincoln, £35)

Avray Tipping (1855-1933) by his writings in *Country Life* over three decades did more than anyone to create the vision of the English country house which still resonates today. In this fascinating and beautifully presented book Helena Gerrish does full justice to Tipping's writings and his houses and gardens in Monmouthshire. This is the more remarkable due to the lack of evidence. Tipping in Gerrish's words "left everything to a thirty-one year old gardener who then burnt his papers, sold the estates and quickly let his benefactor's name sink into oblivion."

Gerrish describes admirably the main facets of Tipping's life – his writings, his architecture and his garden design. His architectural writing, culminating in the nine volumes of *English Homes: Architecture from Medieval times to the early part of the 19th Century* is described "as being an unparalleled pictorial survey of the domestic architecture of England". Tipping also wrote knowledgeably on furniture and in particular the work of Grinling Gibbons. The wonderful photographs taken by Charles Latham for *In English Homes* (3 volumes, 1908-09) are unlikely ever to be equalled.

Tipping never settled in a house for long. He sold Brasted Place, the lovely Adam house in Kent that was his childhood home and which he inherited when his brother died in 1911. Mathern Palace in Monmouthshire he restored admirably but sold after his mother's death, also in 1911. He then built Mounton House which he subsequently gave to his brother's godson, Hubert Holden, before finally building High Glanau. It is not clear how much of the architecture of these houses is due to Tipping or how much to his young collaborator, the Chepstow architect E.C. Francis. Gerrish considers Mounton is Tipping's best house. However, the restoration of Mathern Palace and the building of High Glanau are of superb quality.



High Glanau Manor, Avray Tipping's last Monmouthshire home. It is an important Arts & Crafts house set in the 12 acres of gardens he designed.

(Photograph © Val Corbett/Country Life)

It is however as a garden designer that Tipping is today most clearly remembered. In a series of evocative descriptions Gerrish deals with the most notable of these. The wonderful gardens at Chequers are his finest example but run very close by the delightful house and garden at High Glanau which Helena and Hilary Gerrish have so splendidly restored.

If Tipping remains a private and rather enigmatic man, this superb book does his achievements full justice. All who are interested in gardens will find it a delight to read and study.

John R.E. Borron

A Stocking Filler: *Digging for Victory: Wartime Gardening with Mr Middleton* (Aurum Press, £9.99) A charming reproduction of a book, originally issued in 1942, to encourage anyone with an interest in growing their own food in these straitened times.

The Contributors:

Gwyneth Hayward, Chairman of the WHGT, serves the gardens and landscape of Wales in several roles. She is a member of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority as well as a Trustee for the Aberglasney Restoration Trust.

Claude Hitching, a retired Management Accountant, started to research his family tree in 1999. He always knew that his grandfather, Fred Hitching, worked for James Pulham & Son as a 'Rock Builder', and discovered that no fewer than five of his ancestors, including his grandfather and great-grandfather, all worked for the firm in the same capacity. He is now the leading authority on all things to do with Pulhamite and his forthcoming book *Pulham's Rock Gardens* will be published by The Antique Collectors' Club in 2012.

Bettina Harden is Editor of *Trafodion* and a founder member of the WHGT in Gwynedd. She was branch Chairman (1990-1997); Vice Chairman of the Trust (1994); Chairman (1997-2003). She is now a member of the Council. With the WHGT she set up the HLF-funded Millennium Gateway Project – to take 2,000 people out into the historic parks & gardens of Wales in 2000. From 2003-09 she was Chairman of Trustees for The Gateway Gardens Trust.

Heulwen Davies is a new member of the Pembrokeshire branch of the WHGT. She has spent many years lovingly restoring the beautiful gardens at Norchard.

Andrew Dixey is the Estate Manager for St Fagans: National History Museum. He has a long-time connection with the WHGT since we set up the campaign to help provide the roses for the restoration of the Rosery at St Fagans Castle in 1997. He has been instrumental in setting up the Heritage Horticulture Skills Scheme in Wales as part of HLF's 'Skills For the Future' programme - www.hhss.co.uk

John Borron is known to all WHGT members as its current Treasurer. He was Chairman of the Publications Committee for many years. A tireless supporter of the heritage in all its forms from archaeology to historic buildings and gardens, he has been Chairman of the Cumbria Gardens Trust (1996-2006), and has served on the Councils of both the Garden History Society and the Cambrian Archaeological Society.

Anne Carter, Vice Chairman of WHGT and Chairman of the Brecon & Radnor branch, is a long-standing member of the Trust and has served its Committee in various roles, including Editor of *The Bulletin* (1993-97) and, more recently as Chairman of the Publications Committee, to both of which she brought the experience of many years in publishing. Members from across Wales will know her from the Trust's stand at the Royal Welsh Show.