

TRAFODION

Occasional Writings for The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

Issue 2 – NOVEMBER 2012



Ymddiriedolaeth Gerddi Hanesyddol Cymru
The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

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The WHGT Logo

New members often ask the significance of our logo. Those present at the recent Brecon and Radnor study day were able to see for themselves the gates of Old Gwernyfed and it became immediately apparent why the image had been selected. R. R. Rockingham Gill has been kind enough to remind us how the choice was arrived at:

“What could be more suitable as a heraldic device than this haunting image of the Old Gwernyfed gate, standing alone, dilapidated and pointless, abandoned in a field and reminiscent of Shelley’s *Ozymandias*?:

“Nothing beside remains.
Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, reckless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

In 1989 we wanted an image for our letterheading and, in particular, the advertising material for the founding conference of the WHGT in Lampeter in April 1990, *Welsh Gardens under Threat*. We asked people for ideas but of the dozen or so photographs submitted only one, of the Old Gwernyfed gate, actually stirred the imagination. I don’t know for sure whose photograph it was, but I think Tom Lloyd.

A colour photograph could not be used to produce the half-tone needed for the primitive equipment on which the Trust was printing its publications, so I asked Colin Grimes to redraw the central portion and frame it in a bordering ellipse, which I took to be appropriately antique. Rob Ives, our printer, then suggested that the remains of the wall by the left-hand pier be allowed to bleed across the border between appearance and reality.

Within a short time there were mutterings from some members, ridiculing the backwardness of the image as the logo for what they thought of as a society of the thrusting, go-ahead, progressive, sort. Accordingly, at the next meeting, I produced the logos of all the garden/landscape/history organizations then in existence (perhaps twenty): our original was reaffirmed by acclamation.”

From The Chairman

I feel very privileged to have been elected Chairman of WHGT this year and it is a great pleasure for me to write this introduction to *Trafodion*. The first edition was well received and I am sure you will enjoy reading this edition as it contains a lively selection of items on issues relating to the historic gardens of Wales. I would like to thank Bettina Harden for all the work she has done and energy she has exerted in producing these first two editions. My thanks also go to all those who have supplied Bettina with articles and information for this edition.

I look forward to meeting as many WHGT members as possible as I go around Wales but please feel free to contact me if you have ideas or comments on what you think we should be doing and on the events and publications we produce. For example, for financial reasons *Gerddi* has not been published for the last few years. If you want to see it published again, please let me know. I would also like to hear your comments on *Trafodion* and *The Bulletin* (which we aim to publish three times a year). This is particularly important if you think things could be improved because, if we don’t get feed-back, we presume we are doing well and everybody is happy! However, it goes without saying that we also like compliments! Once again this year we have received generous support towards our publications from NFU Mutual and I would like to thank Susan Barley for this and for the generous raffle prize she presented at the AGM.

Looking to the future, there are a few dates for your diaries. First, the AGM will take place at Llanover Hall near Abergavenny on Saturday 8 June 2013 where our guest speaker will be Sir Roy Strong. Booking is likely to be heavy so, as soon as you get notice of the event, please let us know of your intention to attend.

Secondly, we shall be twenty-five years old in 2014. This seems a good opportunity for celebration of the work we have done in the last quarter-century and an assessment of the work we’ll need to do in the future. I hope that all the branches will be willing and able to think of events and activities that can take place locally. I am also looking for ideas for some celebrations that might take place nationally. Please let me or your branch Chairman know your thoughts about what we might do. I would also like to have offers from anyone who thinks they might be able to take an active role in organizing such events.

The other event on the horizon is the tercentenary of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown in 2016. As you will see elsewhere in *Trafodion*, many ideas are already coming in for the celebrations so please think of projects to celebrate Brown’s work and, even if he didn’t do extensive work in Wales, the ways in which he influenced gardens here.

Finally, thank you for supporting the work of the Trust.

Jean Reader

From The Editor

When, now nearly a year ago, I started posting off *Trafodion* to all the splendid and stalwart members of the WHGT, I had no idea how really splendid and stalwart you are. The response to the several articles and, importantly the 'Seedlings' that were planted, has been tremendous and I have been thrilled with the resulting new pieces that have grown on to include in this second issue of *Trafodion*. There have been fresh ideas, constructive criticism and new contributors to include. What has emerged is very much of your making and I am very grateful. The prospect of what you might be inspired to contribute towards a third issue of *Trafodion* next year is very exciting.

The Annual General Meeting at Brynkinallt in July triumphed over the inclement weather and was very much enjoyed by all those who managed to attend. We were treated to a fascinating lecture by Steven Desmond and, as those of us who got to Brynkinallt only represent a small percentage of the total membership, we thought we should share this with you.

Bettina Harden

Orderly and Rich: the Arts and Crafts Garden

The ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement, one of Britain's greatest cultural exports, were applied to many aspects of design in its golden age at the end of the 19th century. Houses, furniture, ornaments, fabrics, tiles and much else were obvious vehicles for the application of this historicising style rooted in the principles of honesty, the inseparability of form and function, and the dignity of labour. Can we identify an Arts and Crafts style for the garden, and if so, what would it look like? Perhaps the best way to find out would be to consider what the great theorists had to say on the subject, and to look at the gardens which surround Arts and Crafts houses.

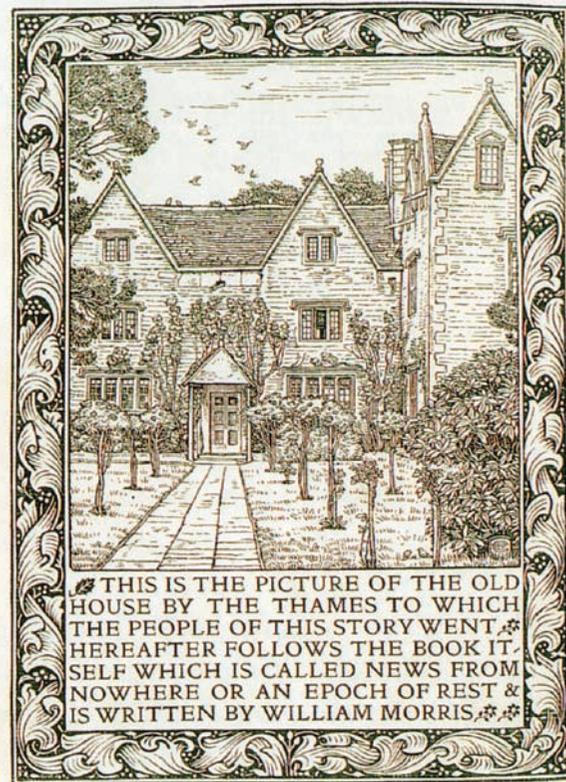
William Morris had little to say about gardens, though plenty on other subjects. It is reasonable to assume that gardens barely figured in his great schemes for the improvement of the human condition. Nonetheless he did come up with one broad set of principles which we might use as a basis:

'Large or small, it should look both orderly and rich. It should be well fenced from the outside world. It should by no means imitate the wilfulness or the wildness of nature, but should look like a thing never to be seen except near a house. It should in fact look like a part of the house.'¹

This seems to tie in well enough with the familiar illustration of the house and garden at Kelmscott, Morris's country house, in which an avenue of standard roses leads straight across a neat lawn to the front door. The plan of the garden has extended from that of the house, the very principle laid down by influential designers such as John Brookes to this day. But wait: the wall of the house has some sort of climbing vegetation trained across it, like the curtains of wild flowers which drape the romantic ruins of decaying abbeys. And then there is that anecdote of garden apples falling in at the open windows of Red House, while Morris and his circle busied themselves at their vital work within.

So there appear to be two conflicting styles in play here: firstly the straightforward rigour of layout and maintenance which distinguish the artificial garden from the wider natural setting, and secondly the yearning for the Picturesque, that British version of Romanticism which takes pleasure in the power of nature to drape the architect's hard corners in mossy beauty.

All this came to a head in a clash of garden cultures during the 1890s. The architect John Dando Sedding, who had a foot in both camps, published a book entitled *Garden Craft Old and New* in 1891. It is an engaging but endlessly



William Morris's house and garden at Kelmscott, Gloucestershire. An illustration from News from Nowhere, 1891.

vague set of ideals for garden design, in which he appears broadly to argue for terraced gardens on a geometric plan of enclosures, featuring lots of topiary. In short, a revivalist style loosely based on 17th-century examples. Sedding died soon after publication, and so was spared the sight and sound of the great row which broke out in its wake.

Sedding was keen to insist that the architect's influence should extend from the house into the garden. 'The house is his child', he writes, 'and he knows what is good for it. Unlike the imported gardener, who comes upon the scene as a foreign agent, the architect works from the house outwards ... the other works from the outside inwards, if he thinks of the 'inwards' at all.'

On the face of it, this seems to echo Morris's earlier statement, though overlaid with a new insistence on the dominance of the architect, with the ignorant gardener pushed to the margins of influence on design. Nonetheless, Sedding's ideas, politely expressed, might have faded quietly away, had they not lit the blue touchpaper of two of the great men of the day.

The first big beast on the scene was Sir Reginald Blomfield, a successful architect in a Baroque revival style, and best remembered today as the designer of the Menin Gate in Flanders. He published a book entitled *The Formal Garden in England* in 1892, an historical review of geometric layouts over the centuries, beautifully illustrated by Inigo Thomas with garden views in an antique manner. Blomfield's view was quite clear: "The formal treatment of gardens ought ... to be called the architectural treatment of gardens, for it consists in the extension of the principles of design which govern the house to the grounds which surround it'. If Blomfield had maintained this straightforward tone throughout, he might have been met with polite nods all round, but he was a pugnacious man who took the opportunity to rubbish the work of everyone involved in a more naturalistic style, including Kent and Brown, whom he saw as the men who had betrayed a noble tradition and replaced it with superficial gimmicks. He informs us, for instance, that 'the vaunted ha-ha is little more than a silly practical joke'.

Blomfield and Thomas's book was enthusiastically received, and rapidly ran through three editions. But not everyone was so keen. A heavyweight soon appeared from among the ranks of the gardeners in the form of William Robinson, an influential writer whose book, *The English Flower Garden*, a composite work first published in 1883, remained a bestseller for the next fifty years. The third edition of 1893 began with the following sentence: 'One aim of this book is to uproot the idea that a flower garden is necessarily of set pattern - usually geometrical - placed on one side of the house.'

These two big guns continued to blast away at each other, generating much heat but little light, each speaking up for vested interest and contemptuous of the other man's point of view, for a decade. In the early twentieth century both Blomfield and Thomas produced interesting garden designs, including Blomfield's monumental layout at Mellerstain in the Scottish Borders and Thomas's fetching exercise in Tudor Revival at Athelhampton in Dorset. Meanwhile Robinson continued to declaim the interests of plantsmanship and a naturalistic use of plants in certain places, e.g. on the walls of the house and on outlying approach drives. These self-proclaimed polar opposites were, in fact, promoting different aspects of William Morris's ideal garden. Had they been less self-important, each could have acknowledged a degree of merit in the other's case, and so advanced to a mutual victory.

In the meantime another young architect was making his way, and developing a distinctive style rooted in tradition but full of original ideas, beautifully executed. This was Edwin Lutyens, a curious character, independent-minded, who had left his pupillage with Ernest George, Harold Peto and Herbert Baker early, saying that he had nothing more to learn there. He established a country house practice by 1890, and went in search of a well-placed kindred spirit who could provide him with the desired network of contacts for social advancement. He was recommended to Gertrude Jekyll. The rest is much-repeated history.

Through these two and their dynamic partnership, the debate was quietly resolved. It should, of course, be a partnership between architect and gardener. Lutyens produced his endlessly ingenious houses with gardens subdivided into geometric spaces aligned with the plan of the house, and Jekyll provided planting schemes which soft-furnished these spaces with a careful combination of rhythmic patterns and comfortable drapery, taking Morris's formula to its ideal conclusion. She even ticked off the warring parties, with whom she was well acquainted, like a benevolent headmistress: 'Both are right, and both are wrong ... All who love gardens must value Messrs Blomfield and Thomas's excellent and beautiful book ... but those whose views are wider cannot accept their somewhat narrow gospel.'²

Each garden by Lutyens and Jekyll has its own character, but there is a recognisable formula common to all. A key example, essentially unaltered, and the only one of their joint projects to remain in the ownership of the family who commissioned it, is the Bois des Moutiers, near Dieppe. The house, a curious mixture of domestic friendliness, cool severity and puzzling originality, looms over the garden on one side and a park leading down to the sea on the other, and is clearly intended as a grandstand for viewing both. The garden compartments are formal, and separated neatly from one another by walls, hedges and a pergola. At every turn there is traditional craftsmanship of the highest order: lime roughcast on the house wall, wrought ironwork in the gates, the meticulous patterns of the path surfaces. And thoroughly

Orderly and Rich

interwoven with all this is the planting, with neat box-edged rose beds here, billowing herbaceous planting there, climbers sprawling over the walls. There is a considerable level of control, but the growth of vegetation forestalls any sign of severity by introducing the notion of cushions and carpets and wall-hangings in varied greenery.

This fully-developed style - it seems unreasonable to call it a compromise, but that is just what it was - was tremendously successful, and widely emulated throughout Britain, Europe and the USA. One of its descendants appeared as late as the mid-1920s in the Wye Valley at St Arvans, where the Clay family, rich Newport ironmasters and owners of Chepstow racecourse, built a house and made a garden with magnificent views over the

Severn estuary. The architect, Eric Francis, produced a house for weekend entertaining which looked outwardly 17th century and traditionally built, though it was hung over an iron frame, which would not have pleased Mr Morris. Its one big room, with its beautiful plaster ceiling, was used for country dancing, and after each set the guests would spill out onto the upper terrace to admire the view or walk in the garden.

The terraces themselves evoke an ancient space, and descend through abstract topiary to a bowling alley, as if doublet and hose were the code for the day. Nearby is a sunken garden, de rigueur in the twenties, in which a slightly risqué female statue descends into a rectangular pool framed in *Bergenia*, in an uneasy meeting of Miss Jekyll and Art Déco. It is extraordinary to think of this house and garden, self-consciously olde-worlde, being formed at the same time as Le Corbusier was publishing his manifesto of Modernism in which a house was a machine for living in.

The sturdy, pyramid-roofed garden house, another Jekyllsque feature, surveys garden, house and estuary from an ideal vantage point, and also looks into the kitchen garden, one of the last such spaces made in this country. Its elegant stone walls frame a sloping pattern of walks and beds, with the ornamental iron gate aligned squarely on the oriel window of the house, the walk between the two flanked by herbaceous borders. The message is clear: the kitchen garden is an integral part of the design. Skilled work is of equal standing with clever decoration.

The Jekyllisms found throughout the garden can be explained partly through fashion, and partly through the influence of Henry Avray Tipping, a Chepstow man who remodelled several houses and gardens locally and made his living as architectural editor of *Country Life*, the very magazine which had effectively launched Lutyens and Jekyll on their brilliant careers, and backed them to the hilt once safely launched. Tipping was here, advising, suggesting, adding a little wild garden behind a hedge in a nod to William Robinson. The whole place is a charming set-piece tribute to the ideas outlined by Morris, fought over by Blomfield and Robinson, and brilliantly resolved by Lutyens and Jekyll and their admirers. It is unmistakably both orderly and rich.

Steven Desmond

NOTES: ¹ William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, 1882

² Gertrude Jekyll: *Gardens and Garden-Craft* in *The Edinburgh Review*, 1896



*A garden compartment at Le Bois des Moutiers, Varengeville, Dieppe.
(Photograph: Steven Desmond 2012)*



*The house and garden at Wyndcliff Court, St Arvans, Chepstow from the garden house.
(Photograph: Steven Desmond 2002)*

Penllergare – A Paradise Almost Lost

“The real glory of Penllergare consists of its truly magnificent grounds, and its rare and beautiful plants which add a superabundance of attractions to a spot already marked by nature for special favours...For beauty and scenery there is nothing in the whole land of Morganwg to excel the valley of Penllergare”.

West Glamorgan Beauty Spot, *South Wales Daily News, August 1910*

“Years of wonder and delight are the memories of my childhood at Penllergare. It was a magical place”. “Penllergare was my playground of delight, discovery and learning for ten years.” *Penllergare – Echoes from Valley Woods*, Penllergare Trust, 2006.

“We protest in the strongest possible terms at the apparent freedom with which the developer is being permitted to destroy the historic fabric of Penllergare.”

Penllergare Trust to Director of Development, Swansea Council, September 2002

This is the story of how a combination of indifference, bureaucracy, and commercial muscle nearly did for one of the most important picturesque, romantic landscapes in South Wales, with a planning system vainly trying to exercise compliance. It also tells of how the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust had the audacity, energy and wit to call a halt and to prepare the way for the restoration and regeneration of this very special place by the Penllergare Trust.

Penllergare's Heyday

On the north-west fringe of Swansea, in a valley gouged out by melt-water from the last ice age, nestles the private paradise of Penllergare. Its creator was John Dillwyn Llewelyn (1810-1882), a prominent figure in Victorian society, and pioneer of science, horticulture and photography. Perhaps influenced by his contemporary Wordsworth who held that, “*The landscape gardener should work in the spirit of Nature with an invisible hand of art*”, JDL's genius was to realise the dramatic and functional potential of what was already a very pleasing place in a relatively small compass. The craggy confinement of the Upper Valley was re-modeled in the romantic picturesque style, with waterfalls, cascades and exotic plantings, in heightened contrast with the wooded pastures of the former Nydfwch estate to the south. Both contained perfectly contrived lakes on the energetic little River Llan and the whole was unified by the bold sweeps of his new drive with artfully placed views of the newly-created features and the hills beyond. The equatorial observatory and pioneering orchidaceous house were notable initiatives. The outcome combined innovation, domesticity and wilderness, made all the more dramatic given the noisome copper manufactories just a few miles away.



Penllergare House – a 19th-century drawing, artist unknown.

The estate was a model of enlightened stewardship, philanthropy and the promotion of education. Emma Thomasina was herself a devoted plantswoman (her letters often left family news to an after-thought) and she helped JDL with his photography, perhaps unsurprisingly since Henry Fox Talbot was a cousin. She also took a leading role in the laying out at Knapplwyd of the first park (now Parc Llewelyn) specifically for people in the then newly industrialised Swansea valley below. As David Painting has observed, this was “... *a fruitful partnership between gifted husband and wife which tends to modify the stereotype of the passive Victorian lady of leisure*”.

Commercial Exploitation Looms

As the last unexploited part of the South Wales coalfield was being mined in and around Penllergare Sir John agreed in 1899 to the sinking of a pit on the demesne, provided that none of the buildings were to be visible from the house. By now ties with Swansea had begun to loosen in favour of Llysdinam and Penllergare was effectively abandoned with Sir John's death in 1927, although parts of the estate were subsequently bought back. WWII armies left their mark and eventually the derelict observatory remained as the one up-standing marker of what had been. Then the M4 motorway top-sliced the valley and another dual carriage-way shaved off the left flank, isolating the estate from its village. All the while the landscape became blurred, enveloped and eventually near-impassable by the luxuriant, exotic vegetation. So this focus of intellectual and practical polymathy and centre of local life began to sink out of sight and mind.

But even as the landscape deteriorated a few people retained a proprietorial concern for their remembered Woods. Others, younger and more adventurous, adopted this beautiful, neglected wildscape. Their nicknames were – and still

Penllergare

are - used for special places; 'Kiddies' is the river pool in which children had to stay until their peers were satisfied that they were capable of swimming in the lake. The observatory was 'The Lighthouse' and the waterfall was 'The Hidden'. Others saw the valley as a target for vandalism and destruction.

There was also a darker, commercial agenda. The now-absent landowners saw Valley Woods as a potential commercial investment. The local planners agreed that the valley was suitable for substantial, unobtrusive, mainly recreational usage. However this would not pay its way without housing development and a theme park, but part of the valley (including the waterfall) must be a country park with free walker access and the inherent natural beauty must be retained. A pedestrian link under the M4 would re-establish access to what were now Forestry Commission plantations to the north. There followed a succession of some 30 schemes ranging through wildlife, country and theme parks to a championship golf course and hotel, a leisure complex and housing: all still-born. What was billed as Swansea Bay's answer to Disneyland featured a theme park based on the lake. Upwards of a million visitors per annum were forecast. Planned to open in 1983, this scheme foundered too.

Undeterred, plans for a Royal Fern golf course were launched in 1987, complemented by the now-requisite theme park, country park, a working farm and housing plots. The next scheme was even more ambitious with executive training, fishing, boating, windsurfing, white water canoeing, riding, 'rough' cycling and beginner climbing, all linked by a rubber-wheeled train system. The forecast 300,000 visitors per annum (the National Botanic Garden of Wales hoped for a similar figure but eventually settled for half that) were to have parking for 2,000 vehicles at the so-called woodland centre, a visitor attraction in its own right with a retail arcade, a motel and restaurant. On the western side of the valley, there were to be 400+ housing plots and a hospital cum medical centre on the site of the forgotten walled garden, then classified simply as agricultural land.

Despite the prevailing economic boom there were warnings that this ambitious project faced substantial losses initially. There was another problem: the area was now designated as a Green Wedge and LVBC was minded to refuse the application. At this point the developer mounted a charm offensive, ending with the threat that if the scheme did not go ahead, "... *Protection at all costs will ensure that the area continues its decline into an overgrown, unmanaged wasteland, beset by periodic vandalism and fires and denied to public access*", a statement that came back to haunt both developer and everybody else who loved Penllergare. Planning permission was eventually given in 1991, reinforced by a Section 106 legal agreement that tied residential and commercial development to the provision of the country park for 125 years. Work began briskly enough and the developer's brochure soon invited a visit to 'Swansea's Best Kept Secret', where you could, '*Walk the soil, tread the paths, that only Victorians have walked before*'.

Enter the WHGT

A year earlier, in April 1990, at the conference, '*Welsh Gardens Under Threat*', Hal Moggridge – an eminent landscape architect – had proposed that a garden under threat should be identified and that money should be raised to restore it. The nascent Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (WHGT) soon became the rallying point for the handful of people who remembered the pre-eminence of Penllergare, had familial connections with the place, or were interested in what had been achieved there, notably in photography. The WHGT's Conservation Management Committee moved swiftly and in February 1991 commissioned a preliminary strategy to conserve Penllergare's historic landscape. In so doing the Chairman commented "*it is more likely than any other project except Hafod to gain (the Trust) the maximum of favourable notice*". Landskip & Prospect's report concluded that the Penllergare landscape:

"... contains evidence of a design that was essentially simple, yet highly sophisticated." "It is worthy of conservation/restoration as a single unified design ..."; and, "Through the sensitive use of peripheral land at Penllergare, it may be possible to prove that commercial development and high quality historic landscape may coexist to mutual advantage."

On cue the West Glamorgan Branch was launched that November and took control of the project. The now-confirmed walled kitchen garden was surveyed, the path layout being identified by dowsing. With all the confidence of youth the WHGT then wrote to the Chief Executive of LVBC saying, "... *we are content that (the developer) is capable of carrying out the revitalisation phase. What we now seriously doubt is either its ability or commitment to fund the maintenance, security and interpretation of this fragile artefact. Indeed we question whether a development company is the appropriate custodian for a site of national, historical importance ...*" and the letter concluded with a recommendation for a strategy to, '*... to ensure the conservation of this threatened element of our national heritage for the benefit and quiet enjoyment of visitors and local people alike ...*'

By now boom had turned to bust and there was no sign of the paying facilities that were essential if the books were to balance. The WHGT sensed an opportunity and persuaded the developer to join West Glamorgan County Council, LVBC, Wales Tourist Board, Welsh Development Agency and the Countryside Council in a full appraisal of the historic landscape, the impact of the development and to recommend on future management, with WHGT as project manager.

The ensuing report, *'Penllergare Heritage Landscape'* by John Brown & Company and Landskip & Prospect in February 1993 was unequivocal. In laying blame on both developer and planning authorities for a flawed scheme the consultants redrafted the agenda. Confirming that, *Penllergare is a juxtaposition of opposites – magnificence & rarity – peace & drama – nature & technology*. *It is a secret and magical place (and) visibly in need of adoption.*, they opined:

- *"There should be no development in the walled gardens that should be reinstated as a 'Secret Garden', with the upper valley as the 'Romantic Landscape Garden' and the 'Outer Park', this last managed as a wilderness with access on foot as complementary objective."*
- *"The present conditions of consent are not compatible with the responsible preservation and restoration of an historically important garden and landscape. They also place constraints on the opportunities for commercial developments ..."*
- *"If the emerging country park, as provided by [the developer], falls some way short of what the (Local Planning Authorities) have been expecting they must blame this [on their failure] to set a clear, unequivocal and detailed specification as part of the conditions of the consent ..."* *"Running loss-making country parks is not in the [the developer's] normal line of business"*
- Noting that the planners had not protected the historic landscape elements adequately, *"We are all coming in at the last minute to save part of Wales's garden heritage. We are not too late but the cost will be higher than if it had been properly safeguarded in the first place ..."*
- *"We do not foresee any possibility that the historic gardens and landscape could be restored as a visitor attraction on a commercial basis. It will have to be done as a non-profit project, created and run either by a public authority, or by a charitable body of some kind, with annual subsidy."*

This was a pivotal moment. Faced with an escalating rent and the costs of upkeep with no foreseeable income the developer retrenched. There then followed a period of what the Trust described as 'tea cup diplomacy', *"... though there have been many occasions when we would have smashed the teacups over certain heads and got on with the bottle!"*

Then the developer acted: on the face of it, re-branding one of his companies as a subsidiary of a national house-builder did not seem untoward. But this relatively simple formality detached the 125-year burden of the country park from the profitable housing development, effectively and irrevocably. Unaccountably this manoeuvre was confirmed through a new Section 106 legal agreement and successive planning permissions.

Now on the back foot and also struggling financially the WHGT Committee invited the Branch to set up a separate charitable trust, because, *"... this was a very important project which must not be allowed to die"*. In fact the developer was already offering to transfer the park to the Council, a suggestion endorsed by David Lambert of the Garden History Society whose first visit to Penllergare was punctuated by exploding cars, who commented that. *"... the landscape is simply not functioning ..."*. *"For Swansea Council a huge opportunity is being missed"*. In September 1997 the Branch reported back with more than a hint of bitterness, demonstrating the catalytic function of the WHGT and its limitations.

'Over the past seven years the Trust has played the roles at Penllergare that it is best at: adviser, enabler and catalyst. In that respect the withdrawal of management time and resources from the central body of the Trust, leaving the Branch to struggle on as best it can without any outside assistance, has been a major set-back, reducing the Trust's influence on this complex, delicate and long-term project to purely voluntary effort.'

Fresh Initiatives

Meanwhile a proposal by this writer and others to commission Richard Morris to write up and publish his research on JDL was seen as too big a financial risk for the Branch. The restoration of the walled gardens was also regarded as overly ambitious and unsustainable, though there was agreement on the conservation and management of the picturesque landscape as a public park. An amicable re-alignment became inevitable and the Friends of Penllergare was set up as an informal and independent society in March 1999. Its objects were:

- To protect, conserve, restore and interpret the historic landscape of Penllergare designed by John Dillwyn Llewelyn
- To protect and enhance the diversity of wildlife species and habitats, and
- To promote public knowledge and appreciation of the landscape, its history and biodiversity, as well as free public access on foot.

Richard's book, *Penllergare: A Victorian Paradise*, was launched at Swansea Museum in October 1999 and almost immediately sold out.

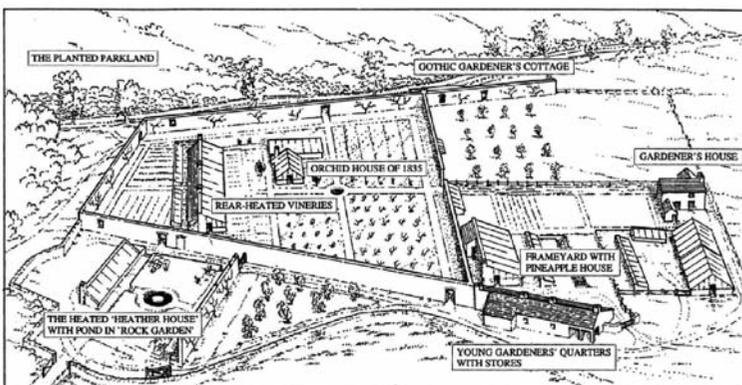
By now the new housing was threatening to encroach on the walled gardens, despite these having been excluded from development by the Branch and Friends campaigning together. Even so the Friends commented, *"There is mounting disquiet that the Council is seemingly intent on ignoring the historical importance of the Walled Gardens and the Valley Woods as a whole, and therefore permitting them – by default – to deteriorate yet further."* This fell on seemingly deaf ears so the

Penllergare

Friends sought independent and authoritative advice and who better than the Royal Commission. The ‘*Preliminary Notes to Accompany a Survey of the Kitchen Garden at Penllergare Swansea*’, (Briggs & Ward, RCAHMW, NPRN 265643, 2000) duly noted that:

“Penllergare is one of the most extensive and distinguished parkland and garden sites in Wales, dating from the earlier nineteenth century” “Even in its present derelict state, Penllergare’s kitchen complex is one of the most extensive surviving in Wales outside a major stately home. Its original range of forcing houses must still rate amongst the most comprehensive ever built in Britain. Of particular interest to the history of botany is the orchid house, a building at the leading edge of orchid cultivation from c1835 ...”

However there was an ominously blank space on the survey where part of the frameyard had been encroached upon and smashed. This unwarranted destruction and the realisation that none of the responsible parties wished to or were capable of halting the abuse of this one-time paradise led to the Friends reinventing themselves with potentially more clout as an independent charitable company. With Hal Moggridge as its founder Chairman the Penllergare Trust was incorporated in 2000, with just £4,600 in the bank, the profits from the book. Swansea Council immediately asked the Trust for a plan for the future management of Valley Woods. This was received warmly but not acted upon.



Walled garden plan (Illustration: Penllergare Trust)

The Planning Impasse

All the while the developer asserted that he had fulfilled his obligations in the country park apart from an annual tidy-up and that the Council should take over. The Council disagreed on both counts but did nothing about it, commenting that it had sufficient parks and gardens in its care already and could only think of taking over the park for a commuted sum of about £2.3 million. The developer offered a fraction of this sum and that proposal failed.

In 2003-04 the Trust suggested that Valley Woods could be taken over by Forestry Commission Wales and managed together with its plantations north of the M4. The Trust would be responsible for the walled gardens, observatory, fund-raising and volunteers, while the Council would represent the people of Swansea and act as facilitator. However this ambitious proposal also came to naught because FCW and the Council both foresaw unacceptable risks because, notwithstanding the terms requiring free public access on foot, the land was privately owned.

For its part the Council was attempting to re-establish the link between commercial benefit (housing) and public benefit (country park) under a thoroughly dysfunctional and ineffective Section 106 legal agreement. Echoing the 1993 report the Trust agreed. *“[The park] fails to comply with the Trust’s understanding of the minimum legal requirement for the management and control of land to which the public is permitted access, let alone a country park of the calibre envisaged initially, but never defined subsequently. In consequence only the intrepid (or miscreants) ever venture into Penllergare and few do so alone”*. Unfortunately a trio of planning enquiry inspectors agreed with the developers. In November 2002, *“While there is little sign of permanent progress on the country park ... and I understand the frustration of those interested and committed parties ...”* the inspector found against the Council. The following month another said that Valley Woods *“does not yet function as a country park”* and turned down an application for a token woodland centre, now reduced to a log cabin with just six parking spaces.

Back at the walled gardens there seemed to be more hope. In September 1999 and again in May 2003 the Council resolved urgently to take a repairing lease and to secure funds for restoration so that the Trust could take over responsibility, but both initiatives petered out and there the matter has rested. The Trust’s offer to take over the observatory, first made in 2001 also remained in the long grass for another decade.

Engage the Community, then Work on the Ground

Despite all these frustrating set-backs the Penllergare Trustees recognised they had to make a start by rekindling local people’s latent love of the place (some 129,400 people live within the immediate catchment area of Valley Woods) and to attract new ones. What evolved into Community Engagement & Education (C2E) under Jennie Eyers entailed highlighting the importance and plight of Penllergare, as well involving primary school children in understanding and appreciating this unique place on their doorsteps.

But on the ground the reality was often dangerous mayhem, as Jennie reported to the developer:

“Last Saturday I led a walk of over 40 people who wanted to see the Penllergare estate and learn about its history. I was appalled at the dereliction and palpable danger, not only to my group but also to other people who were walking, blackberrying and innocently enjoying what should be a safe and beautiful place. I counted 15 wrecked vehicles. A recently abandoned car near the waterfall was torched in front of me by some young children, youths with air rifles were shooting at targets on a public bridge, and joy-riders on motor-cycles and in cars were roaring up and down the drives. Today it has been reported that another two cars have joined the wreck by the waterfall. The situation is fast going out of control. Someone very soon, whether perpetrator or bystander, is going to get seriously hurt”.



Wreck in the river (Photograph: Chris Cray)

In the face of this violent anarchy and impatient with the planning impasse the Trustees commissioned an independent report on the state of the park. In February 2005, from the perspective of the first-time visitor - strangers with an informed eye - Anthony Jellard Associates concluded that:

- *“Penllergare’s appearance is one of continued slow decline, exacerbated by the failure to carry out basic (management). Its relevance to the nearby communities is very limited and its appeal is greatly reduced by the effects of anti-social behaviour, theft and criminal damage and an unsafe atmosphere”* And agreeing with the inspector, *“This is a country park in name only”*,
- *“It is difficult to imagine a site which is supposed to function as a place which actively encourages public access that could be so discouraging” ... “The perception is negative and that nobody is actually looking after this place. To proceed onward into the Park ... might present a perceived risk to personal safety”*

This was the signal for action. Without the funds to rent – let alone buy – Valley Woods, the Trustees got informal permission from the developer to work on the ground. Their objective was straightforward: together with the C2E programme, to halt the decline of Valley Woods and make them a safer and more enjoyable place to visit.

A thorough understanding of the place was essential and more archival research, ecological, geophysical and topographical surveys as well as visitor surveys followed. About 14 km of footpaths were re-opened and three new bridges built over the Llan, including one for vehicles by the local Territorial Army sappers. Robust security measures and ‘boots on the ground’ wardening led to a big drop in vandalism, illegal bikers and cars. So where less than a decade ago Valley Woods was shunned as un-welcoming, more and more people – some returning after decades – were enjoying the quiet beauty of Valley Woods and its wildlife. Many were introduced or re-introduced by children who had taken part in the school programme. A growing mass of historic and contemporary letters and oral statements resulted in the Trust’s second publication, *‘Echoes from Valley Woods’*.

The Big Lottery’s ‘People and Places’ programme provided a huge boost to C2E enabling the expansion of ‘Wild for Woods’ for primary schools, social recreation, the reactivated Friends’ group, walking for health, challenging team activities, accredited training in conservation skills and more opportunities for volunteering. A temporary woodland centre (a portakabin, not a retail arcade) became the base for many of these activities. By the end of 2010 upwards of 10,000 people and 106 organisations had been involved in C2E. The tradition of high-quality management of woodlands at Penllergare was also being revived, thanks to a grant from the Forestry Commission through its *Better Woodlands for Wales* scheme.

Within 23 months the first objective had been achieved. Despite more damage by unsympathetic development, a safer and more enjoyable Valley Woods has become a reality with upwards of 65,000 visitors in 2011, and rising. In most respects Valley Woods had become the specified country park, with the added dimension of a thriving community and education programme. Volunteers are involved in conservation, wardening, education and fund-raising. A forum of users, volunteers and local organisations advise and comment on current operations and proposed plans.

VIPs were beginning to take an interest. The then First Minister, Rhodri Morgan walked and talked the length of Valley Woods to much joshing that if JDL, in his capacity as magistrate, had sentenced the Morgan family to deportation for its part in the Rebecca Riots, history would have had to be rewritten! The Trust’s first decade of achievement was recognised in 2009 in The Lord Mayor of Swansea’s Community Regeneration Awards - for Best Community Environment Scheme and Best Community Information.

The HLF's Vote of Confidence

With its solid basis of research, work on the ground and success with C2E the Trust engaged Nicholas Pearson Associates as consultants and was awarded the first of three grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Parks for People' programme. In marked contrast to the earlier commercial proposals, the Trust's concepts for Valley Woods now echo those of the WHGT's a decade ago. What is new is that Swansea Council and the Trust will cooperate through a memorandum of understanding, based on achieving common objectives.

But none of this could happen without legal tenure. Fortunately the landowner and developer were appreciating that, in contrast to all that had gone before, the Penllergare Trust really was capable of managing and sustaining Valley Woods. Negotiations began in earnest in December 2009, a decade after first mooted and the assignment to the Trust of the leases for the country park was signed on 25 April 2012, albeit with a not-inconsiderable annual rent.

With the award of an HLF grant of £2.3 million the Trust is now embarking on a programme that will see Valley Woods having its own car-park, refreshment kiosk and an interpretative tour on restored historic pathways with a greater variety of circuits. The long-heralded walkway under the M4 motorway will link with the FCW forest, doubling the size of Valley Woods, as well as providing a 'green' route to Swansea's hinterland.

Informed by his photographs the upper lake will be de-silted to reinstate JDL's design, with its fringing specimen trees and ornamental shrubberies, while preserving historic views. Steps, terraces, the stone-arched Llewelyn Bridge (again JDL's own photographs were almost all the architects had to go on), waterfalls and cascades will be repaired and restored. The equatorial observatory will be repaired and brought back into use. Trustees believe that JDL would approve of a hydro-electric generating plant being embedded in his waterfall to provide sustainable power for the project.

Community involvement will be stepped up and volunteers will manage practically all aspects of the project. There will be mostly charged-for events and other activities, with more emphasis on attracting visitors from further away. With the Friends concentrating on sociable fund-raising there will be a renewed drive to develop sustained revenue, including legacies. It is hoped that this first phase will be followed – finally and at long last - by the acquisition and restoration of the walled gardens, including the orchidaceous house, for horticultural training and as a visitor attraction, with more opportunities for volunteers.

A Paradise Regained?

Over the last half-century Penllergare, despite its special qualities of seclusion, drama and charm, has suffered neglect, damage and a procession of inappropriate developments, all but one still-born. Legal agreements failed to protect the public interest; enforcement proved futile. The Council and potential partners backed away for lack of cash and potential liabilities. Not for the first time charities have stepped in where others have failed to deliver promised public benefit. And it all started with the people who flagged up the plight and importance of Penllergare and the WHGT that highlighted the all-but forgotten significance of Penllergare to the heritage of Wales and why it should be cherished and restored.

In his essay for *Indignation*, in 2000 David Lambert caught the then-prevailing mood in that, *"Anyone who has been involved in campaigning knows that it is the personal sense of indignation at a threat to what is cherished which is the fuel that burns within all resistance to what is perceived as harmful change."* And, *"Conservation is thus often far from a minority academic interest in preserving data about the past, but is on the contrary a deep-rooted, inherently radical, instinct with a strong populist strain"*.

So a new era has begun and lessons learned. In what may well be an unprecedented period of financial pressures on the public sector, will the Penllergare Trust achieve its aspiration to be a third sector model of how a recreational green space of this size, complexity and heritage importance can be saved and maintained? And how to meet the cost of upkeep without having to resort to commercial razzmatazz? The next half-century will tell.

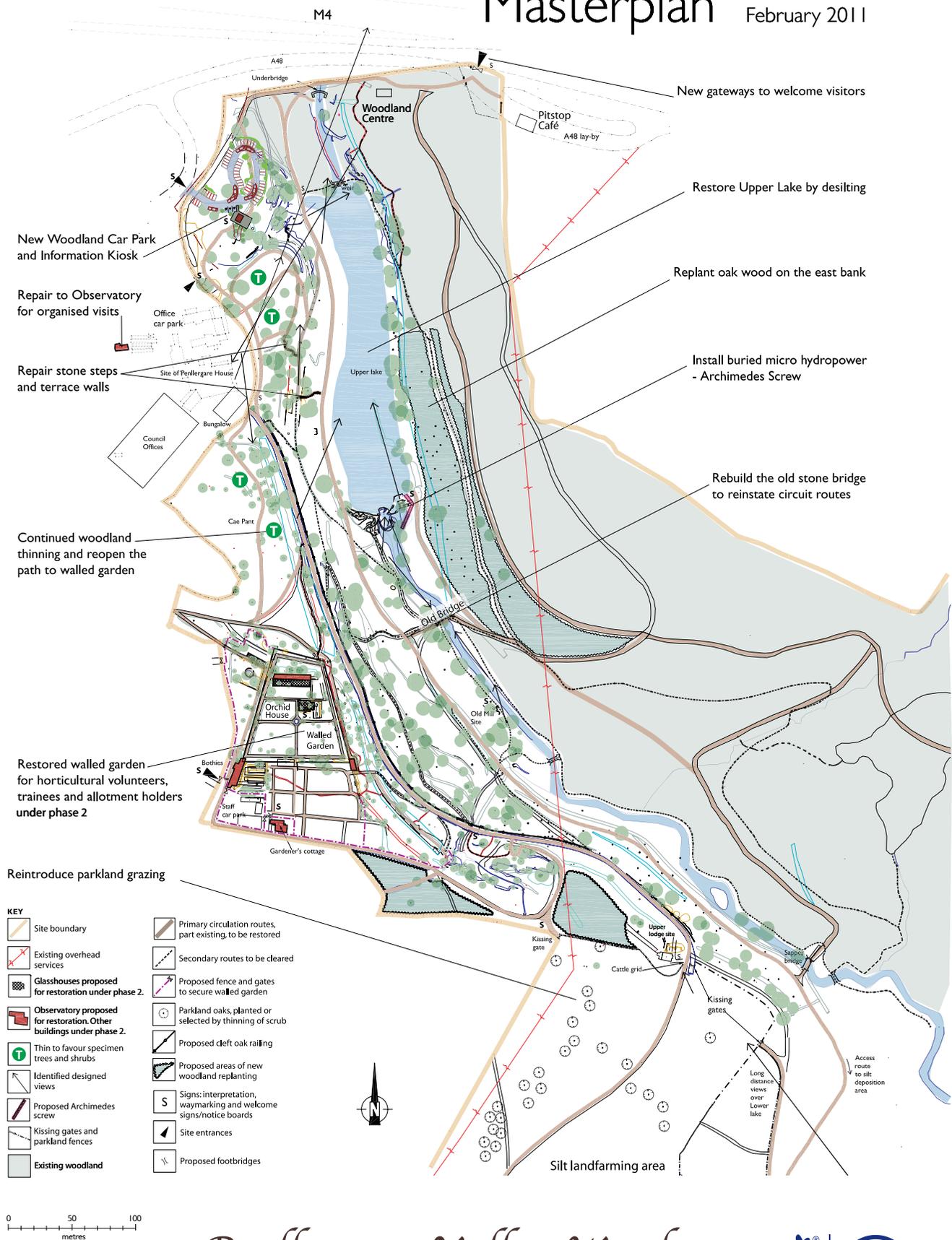
Maybe this volunteer holds the key. *"If you value and enjoy Valley Woods, then you must help look after them"*.
Michael Norman

For more information about the Valley Woods project and how you could help contact Michael Norman:
michael.norman@penllergare.org, Coed Glantawe, Esgairdawe, Llandeilo SA19 7RT



*The Upper Lake as photographed by John Dillwyn Llewelyn.
(Penllergare Trust)*

Masterplan February 2011



Penllergare Valley Woods

Ymddiriedolaeth Penllergare • The Penllergare Trust



In praise of Frank Cabot

Let us now praise gardening men and their wives who supported them. So might begin a eulogy to Frank Cabot who died in November 2011 after a long illness. He was a serial creator of gardens, a tireless admirer of the gardens of others and a generous benefactor of garden causes.

My acquaintance with him began in November 1993 after a lecture I had given on the historic gardens of Wales in New York. Afterwards the committee took me out to dinner and placed me between a 'rhododendron man' and 'a great gardener'. I don't recall names being used. However, my scant knowledge of rhododendrons was not required at all as 'the great gardener' on my right totally dominated the conversation and directed it exclusively to the discussion of Aberglasney, one of, I suppose, some twenty-four gardens which I had shown. At the end of dinner he presented me with his card and said that he would like to come over and see it.

The appointed date was in January 1994 after one of those autumns when it had rained every day since mid-October and was to do so until the end of March. I was in despair. How could the mangled, collapsing, overgrown wreck that was Aberglasney interest 'the great gardener' in a rain-laden south-westerly gale? But luck was with us, for the two days of his visit the sun shone brilliantly, light glittered from the oxbows of the Towy and the greens belonged to a Pre-Raphaelite heaven.

Frank thought it was one of the most beautiful settings he had ever seen and fell in love with the mystery and potential of the garden and its structures. He offered me 'seed corn' towards setting up a trust and acquiring the property. Years later, when asked why he had become involved with Wales, having no existing connection to the country, he was overheard to say: 'Oh William went fishing and the old trout rose to the surface.' This was typical of his wry humour, together with what I think of as one of his favourite catch phrases, 'no good deed goes unpunished', of which more later.

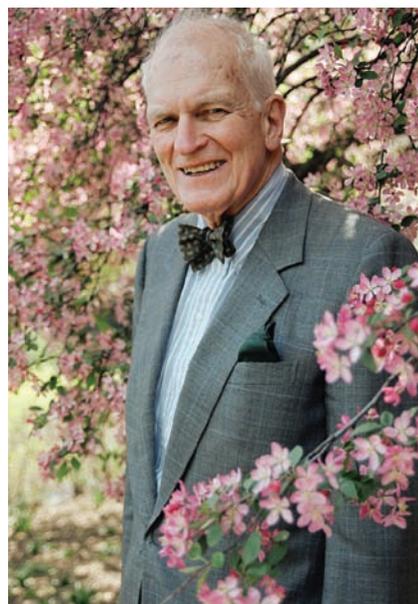
Frank and Anne's support, as is well known, became more extended and more substantial, going far beyond the original seed corn. He still wanted to see their money used as a lever with which to get grants from other sources, but by the time the garden opened in 1999 not only had innumerable specific parts of the garden been restored with their aid, but an endowment was being put in place to ensure the sustainability of the venture. But we had also worked hard to lever other funding, so much so that at one point we had something like twenty different funding programmes coming from twelve or thirteen different sources. All these grants came with different terms and conditions and Frank, being unused to anyone imposing terms and conditions, on occasion gave vent to his frustration and irritation ending, often, with 'no good deed goes unpunished.'

Originally Frank was anxious to remain strictly anonymous but as time went on and they set up the Quatre Vents Foundation in order to channel support to Aberglasney, he became happier to emerge from the shadows. He had always felt most at home discussing the design and planting of the various opportunities which the garden presented. He loved 'garden rooms' and they seem to have played a major part both in his love of Aberglasney and in his garden designs at Stonecrop, Cold Spring and Quatre Vents in Quebec. I doubt whether he was ever happier than when discussing the planting plans with, successively, Hal Moggridge, Penny Hobhouse and Graham Rankin. The 'Ninfarium' was his conception, wonderfully executed by the architect Craig Hamilton and plantsman Graham Rankin and while it is the Quatre Vents Foundation that is acknowledged in the cloister, by the time the Ninfarium was opened the plaque acknowledges Frank and Anne themselves.

Frank's interest in gardens was boundless. He wanted to create them. When I last heard, he was going to do something in Arizona as well as New Zealand, and he wanted to conserve them, for which purpose he set up the burgeoning Garden Conservancy organisation in the United States, an American National Trust of Gardens.

I have no idea of the scale of his generosity and support for other gardens such as Wave Hill and the Brooklyn and New York botanical gardens, but I am sure it was considerable. We are just fortunate that his love of plants and gardens knew no geographical or political boundaries. Without Frank, Aberglasney would be several large piles of stone, with perhaps half a dozen bungalows scattered among them. We owe him a great debt for saving such a significant historic garden and for giving so many people so much pleasure.

William Wilkins



*Frank Cabot in 2006.
(Photograph Marina Schinz)*

Brynkir, Dolbenmaen, Gwynedd

A lost house and garden in Wales, Mark Baker is conducting the first serious archaeological dig at Brynkir. A fascinating and many-layered site, Mark came to this because of his interest in historic Welsh houses and their gardens, having recognised at Brynkir a unique opportunity to understand an untouched designed landscape.

Mark Baker has funding for three years (the first year just completed) for University of Cardiff students to carry out the 'dig' at Brynkir. However, most of this funding is focused on recording and excavating the houses. The archaeologists hope to start exploring and mapping the gardens during the summer of 2013. The Gwynedd Branch is giving the project their full support and is excited at the prospect of discoveries in a previously unexplored historic garden in the county.

As described in Tom Lloyd's *The Lost Houses of Wales*, the old house of the Wynns (later Brynkers/Brynkirs) was constructed c1500 with a late 16th-century cross-wing. This became a secondary house to the new Brynkir.¹ Edmund Hyde Hall, travelling through Caernarvonshire in 1809-11, mentions 'The mansion ... stands at a good elevation above the left bank of the stream which is poured down from the upper end of the parish.'² In 1809 part of the Brynkir estate was purchased by Captain Joseph Huddart who had come to the area while surveying coastal towns that might be suitable for running the mail packet to Ireland – Porthmadog was being considered as part of a scheme with its terminal at Porth Dinllaen, but as we know Holyhead took the prize. Joseph Huddart added to his holdings in the area in 1811 and 1815. 'Huddart had great schemes for converting the Brynkir demesne into a paradise in the wilderness – a gentleman's country seat worthy of the name.'³ Colin Gresham's splendid book, *Eifionydd* sets out the whole establishment of the Brynkir estate by Huddart and gives a description of the house and its setting with 'a stately approach to the site on which a new mansion could now rise, made possible by a rich inheritance (his father had died in 1816).' *"The lower part of the valley was designed as a park; the wild slopes were tamed and converted into open grassland, smooth and green, planted here and there with clumps of trees in the traditional manner. Trim lodges were set up by each gate, for a second approach road was made to the south. ... As time went on the more distant slopes were cleared, and every rock and boulder was blasted out of the way and built into trim straight walls, so that where there had been but rough grazings and a few untidy cultivation plots there were now large rectangular fields of rich pasture."*⁴

Looking at the Ordnance Survey maps of 1889, 1900 and 1915, one can see that the Regency mansion was surrounded by both park and farmland, with at least two serpentine walks through pleasure grounds, a small lake (now silted-up), a large walled garden beside what was then the Home Farm, and an ornamental walk up to the banqueting tower. This was built to celebrate the coronation of King George IV in 1821 (begun in 1819 and now restored and converted as a romantic holiday cottage) using labour in a scheme set up to provide work for ex-soldiers following the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

On the Open Day held by the archaeologists in August members of the public were taken to see where the circular carriage sweep had once been in front of the main entrance to the house (all overgrown now but you can see where the trees were planted in a circle). They were also shown the ornamental terraces that drop down from the site of the two houses towards the position of the lake and the river and the road leading to Cwm Pennant. Originally the mansion must have sat beautifully in its park and meadowland facing the river and forming a pretty view in itself. Scrubby woodland now obscures the view from the house – the Drawing Room with its fine bay window would have afforded a lovely vista. You can see that the little river at the bottom of the terraces has been engineered and faced with picturesque rocks to form small cascades and there may have been a water garden here. From the date of the original 'Old' Brynkir (a hall house with a Snowdonia farmhouse added later) it is thought that the terraces might be very old and relate to the terracing at Parc below Croesor, not that far away. There are remains of fine trees and shrubs planted in the 19th century, e.g. a Monkey Puzzle; rhododendrons that have largely reverted to the *ponticum* stock that nearly all old rhododendrons were grafted on (it is anticipated that a visit in the Spring with an expert will determine whether any still produce their original flowers in hope of identification); bamboo (the Bamboo Society are very good at spotting interesting old forms of bamboo and we may be able to invite them to come and take a look). As the excavation progresses more interesting trees and shrubs may emerge from the undergrowth, as well as other garden features.

The Huddart family played a major role in the Industrial Revolution in this part of Wales, and invested in the Ffestiniog Railway and numerous quarrying and mining ventures, including largely unsuccessful ones in and near Cwm Pennant. Captain Huddart and his son Sir Joseph were both friends of William Maddocks who lived at Tan-yr-Allt which he had bought in 1798. Captain Huddart had first met with Maddocks when he was reclaiming the land at Traeth Mawr from the sea with the building of the Cob and dreaming of the link to Ireland. Sir Joseph Huddart became High Sheriff for Caernarvonshire in 1821, and was knighted in the same year whilst the Prince of Wales was visiting the region.

Brynkir

Sir Joseph married Elizabeth Durham in 1808 and they had three sons and seven daughters. On his death in 1841 the estate passed to his eldest surviving son George Augustus Huddart. The family also had a house in Bath as was fashionable at the time, yet Brynkir remained the family home.⁵ As the 19th century drew to a close the estate fell on hard times and the Huddart family abruptly left Wales, leaving everything in the hands of a Criccieth-based estate agent 'and the grounds were returning to even more of a wilderness than they had been in the eighteenth century.'⁶ Local legend supposed that a family will had bequeathed money that could only be used on improving and adding to the mansion and consequently it was one of the largest in north-west Wales.

George Augustus Ward Huddart, Captain Huddart's great-grandson, sold the estate to Richard Methuen Greaves in 1903. Huddart and other family members had tried to return to Brynkir in the early 1890s, going as far as completely refurbishing the interior of the house, erecting a new porch and Billiard Room with a separate entrance, lit from above by a lantern. R. M. Greaves was the owner of the Llechwedd Slate Quarries at Blaenau Ffestiniog and already owned the Wern Estate. Over the next forty years the house and its grounds was frequently used for shooting parties and events by the Greaves family. The whole estate was sold off and split up c1944, after the death of R.M. Greaves, when it was asset stripped, and has lain forlorn ever since.

There is a local belief that the mansion brings ill fortune to those who live there which might account for the fact that it was abandoned so long ago to sink and decline into the melancholy and romantic place it is today. That said, the light that has shone on the site through the excavation led by Mark Baker, with what has been discovered so far and what may lie ahead has cheered everyone who has visited the site and who has connections with it.

Mark Baker & Bettina Harden

NOTES: ¹ Thomas Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales: A Survey of Country Houses in Wales demolished since c. 1900* (Second Edition, SAVE Britain's Heritage, 1989), p. 19.

² Edmund Hyde Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire (1809-1811)* (Caernarvonshire Historical Society, 1952), p. 234.

³ Colin A. Gresham, *Eifionydd: A Study in Landownership from the Medieval Period to the Present Day*, (University of Wales Press, 1973), pp. 52-53.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Information from census records and the wills of Capt. Joseph, Sir Joseph and Lady Huddart, www.festipedia.org.uk accessed 21/08/2012

⁶ Colin A. Gresham, *Eifionydd: A Study in Landownership from the Medieval Period to the Present Day*, University of Wales Press, 1973), p. 55.



Brynkir still standing in its landscape in the 1930s.



The Ruins of Brynkir in 1962.

Anyone who has knowledge of the site, its history, decline, old photographs or memories – indeed anything relevant - should contact Mark at gcpt@btinternet.com.

SHOOTS:

A memory of yesterday's pleasures: Bryn-y-Neuadd in the 1950s

When I read the first edition of *Trafodion* the name Bryn-y-Neuadd leapt out at me and I was reminded of what an idyllic place it had been when I was growing up there in the 1950s. The article described the initiatives taken by the Platt family to develop the estate and their decision to employ Edward Milner as their garden designer in the 1860s. I do not recall hearing Milner's name when I was a child but the article on his work in Wales fascinated me, especially as I could remember very clearly a number of the features mentioned. I left Llanfairfechan in 1961 and had never visited Bryn-y-Neuadd in the intervening years so, inspired by the article, I decided to look into the history of the estate and make a visit there in 2012.

In 1898 the Platt family decided to sell the estate, the sale particulars describing it as commanding 'magnificent views of the surrounding range of mountains ... the Menai Straits, the Irish Sea, the Coast of Anglesey, Penmon Light House, Puffin Island, the Great Orme's Head and Llandudno ... only a few minutes' walk from the charming Seaside Resort of Llanfairfechan, with a private entrance to the Railway station'. All of this remains and, despite the best efforts of Dr Beeching, Llanfairfechan still boasts a working railway station. The sale catalogue suggested that it might make 'a high class cricketing hotel or a hydro-pathic establishment with all the amenities of a country residence'. In the event, the estate was bought by St Andrew's Hospital in Northampton and used for about seventy years as a place of respite for patients offering, in the words of the sale catalogue, 'an acknowledged healthy, genial and invigorating locality'.

In 2012 the main approach to Bryn-y-Neuadd was much as I remembered but, although I knew that the mansion had been demolished in the 1960s, its absence still came as a shock. Only the stable block remains. Even fifty years ago this was a misnomer for it provided space for a garage, the electricity generator and the Occupational Therapy room. Of the high Victorian Gothic house there is no trace. I remember the outside of it vividly but was rarely allowed inside so can only recall two things of its interior: a splendid Billiard Room and the smell of cooked cabbage that permeated the corridors.

It was the grounds that I knew best for there I could run free, ride my bike up and down the paths and use the bathing huts on the beach. The only place I wasn't allowed was the formal garden at the front of the house because my presence might have detracted from the enjoyment of the residents. On high days or holidays I was permitted to visit the 'Italian' garden and I remember being fascinated by the fountain with its cherubs and dolphins and trying to count the hundreds (probably thousands) of what I'd now describe as bedding plants. Not far from the formal garden was the 'cave', where I used to take book, torch and sandwich and imagine that I was a character in an Enid Blyton story. It is still there but, like so many things remembered from childhood, much smaller and, now that I know it is a man-made grotto, not as enticing.

My route to and from school used to take me near the walled garden and I used to pass a fierce sign saying 'Tradesman's Entrance'. Unfortunately neither entrance nor walled garden was accessible to me this year, something I greatly regret. In my mind I can see very clearly the walled garden, ruled over by Mr Stubbley, the Head Gardener. By the 1950s two world wars must have resulted in many changes but, looking through the 1898 sale catalogue brought things sharply into focus for me as I read of Paxton glasshouses, peach houses, vineries, cold and forcing pits, mushroom and seed houses. How many of those were functioning in the 1950s I cannot tell but I certainly remember seeing melons and peaches in the glasshouses and I think the mushroom house must have been there too because I'm sure it was in Bryn-y-Neuadd that I first saw mushrooms being cultivated. I feel sure that every bit of the walled garden was in use because I recall serried ranks of plants and I know that it produced most of the flowers, vegetables and fruit for the house. Every week Mr Stubbley delivered to our home a skip made from slithers of white wood with a very shiny silver handle which was full of vegetables in season. The potatoes were always loose in the bottom whilst the more prosaic vegetables (swedes, parsnips, onions or turnips) would be separately wrapped in newspaper. I especially liked new potatoes and I remember asking Mr Stubbley once why we couldn't have them every week. It was from him that I had my first lesson on seasonality. Whatever the time of year, there always seemed to be something pretty at the top of the basket: a bunch of carrots, a handful of herbs, plums or apples. Sadly, I can never remember finding either melons or peaches.

I learned to ride my bike on the paths and roads that ran through the parkland. My favourite route was a long one, from Grand Lodge in the south-west corner of the estate, past the rear of the house and then down to the drive that led to the station. It was flat and not greatly used so I could get up quite a speed. Despite its name, it was not the main entrance to the estate when I was a child. I remember asking my mother, since it was so grand, why it wasn't the main entrance. She explained that when the mansion had been built in the 1850s the really important guests arriving from England or Ireland would have approached Llanfairfechan from the west. I found this hard to understand because when

Bryn-y-Neuadd in the 1950s

we travelled from England we came along the A55 from Conwy. It was only when she asked me to think of how narrow and close to the cliff the road was near Penmaenmawr that I realized she was probably right. Years later in the British Library I found a 1750 view of the road near Penmaenmawr showing people on the edge of the precipice trying to right an upturned coach so I expect her hypothesis was correct. Sadly, Grand Lodge has disappeared (probably during the construction of the A55) but I am fortunate that an old school friend whose great-grandfather was the gardener in Bryn-y-Neuadd has allowed me access to the painting illustrated here.



The Grand Lodge at Bryn-y-Neuadd where the stream and bridge was embellished with Pulhamite now demolished. (Private Collection)

Exercise was important to the residents of Bryn-y-Neuadd and I

remember many croquet, cricket and tennis matches. The cricket pitch, described in 1898 as 'the magnificent and renowned cricket ground which has been thoroughly well laid without consideration of cost, and which is generally acknowledged to be second to none in the kingdom' was to the left of the main drive and in frequent use in the 1950s when I remember many matches, though I have to confess that my interest was always greater in the tea that followed than in the number of runs scored. Nowadays the cricket pitch has become a remarkably flat field. I much preferred tennis but sadly, I do not remember the court as a place where I achieved many famous victories. I do remember imagining myself as the next Christine Truman although I, of course, would have beaten Althea Gibson in that Wimbledon final. The red clay court required lots of brushing, rolling and watering. It also transformed tennis whites into tennis reds which were a nightmare to wash. The court was surrounded by high netting and conifers which gave off a distinctive smell. When I asked after it in 2012 nobody could remember it so I went in search of it. There is a dense little forest of conifers, too thick for me to penetrate but that is all that remains of the tennis court. A bit like my Wimbledon dreams!

The feature of Bryn-y-Neuadd that I loved most was its proximity to the sea for it was in the Menai Strait that I learned to swim. The 1898 sale catalogue mentioned 'a private road leading to the sea shore and foreshore and a private bathing hut' and what must have been a rather larger version of this was there in the 1950s. There were at least ten small changing rooms and I thought these wonderfully luxurious because it was possible to retain one's modesty whilst changing rather than struggling with a towel behind a groyne on the seashore. I'd heard that the bathing huts were no more so, the evening before my visit this summer, I walked along The Cobb to inspect the foreshore and see if I could find any evidence of them. I'm certain that I found the location but nothing remains to indicate what had been there. My approach to the bathing huts used to be a fast pedal from the rear of the house down a track, under the railway line and through woodland where red squirrels were still to be seen. Now it is impossible to get to the foreshore from Bryn-y-Neuadd because what was once an orderly plantation has become totally overgrown. I was told that the last person who attempted to get through, unsuccessfully, was a BT engineer in search of some cabling.

The formal garden is nothing like it was in the 1950s when there were gardeners to manicure it and Mr Dingley, the engineer, to ensure that the fountain worked to perfection. This was made in the 1850s by the most important French firm producing cast-iron garden products of the day, Barbezat & Cie, and gives an indication of how much thought and money the Platt family put into the planning of their garden. It is ripe for restoration, so if any reader is looking for a new project, please come forward. Otherwise another Welsh garden feature might be lost forever.

I would like to express my thanks to the officers at Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital who permitted me to visit the estate in 2102. Further information on Bryn-y-Neuadd is to be found in the Cadw, *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales*, Part 1: Parks & Gardens: Conwy, Gwynedd & the Isle of Anglesey (Cardiff: Welsh Historic Monuments, 1998). The 1898 sale catalogue is to be found at the Conwy Archives office in Llandudno.

Jean Reader

The Hendre

It was a pleasant surprise to receive the first issue of *Trafodion* last year. John Borron's Hafod puzzle (p. 25) immediately caught my eye as I live in the old vicarage of Eglwys Newydd, effectively the estate church of the Hafod estate, and a house sponsored by the Waddinghams. I haven't solved the puzzle yet but am working on it - which illustrates the value of this kind of publication, I would say.

The Editor also appealed for further information on Welsh deer parks. One such was a property alluded to elsewhere in this first issue of *Trafodion*, namely the Hendre at Llangattock Vibon Avel outside Monmouth. A photograph of the remains of its Pulhamite cave accompanies Claude Hitching's article on this commercially successful firm of Victorian garden designers. (As it happens, a precursor of Pulhamite, Coade stone, can be found on the Hafod estate with a few examples having found their way into my own garden...a hare we might pursue on another occasion).

My great grandfather worked as a gardener at the Hendre in the last decade of the 19th century under the much-respected head gardener, Thomas Coomber. The walled kitchen garden still survives with the remnants of the property's celebrated pineapple house. There was an ice house close by, beside a group of yews. Amongst other duties, my great grandfather was responsible for the welfare of the ducks on the lake that had been decorated with Pulhamite rockery. My grandfather also recalled, far from fondly, long hours spent with his stepfather, the blacksmith Noah Vaughan, tarring the deer fence on the property in his summer holidays and being paid for his labour at the rate of two pence per linear yard. He recalled this fence as being some nine feet in height and fitted with wire mesh to half its height. The fence was made at the local forge at Box Bush, now - of all things! - the studio of the Queen's calligrapher, Donald Jackson. According to my grandfather, there were over a thousand deer in the Hendre deer park.

In the 1930s, my mother went into service for Major Alfred Hickman at Wyastone Leys, just over the Wye in England but very close to Monmouth town. It is now home to the Nimbus Foundation with a splendid concert hall and also a fine herd of deer.

David Barnes, Cwmystwyth

The National Garden Scheme:

Caer Beris Manor - a Pioneer Garden for the Scheme in 1927

When we bought Caer Beris Manor in January 1987, we not only bought a property but also inherited 27 acres of parkland, surrounded by the river Irfon. This unique setting had unfortunately been neglected since the mid- 1960s.

Built on the bailey of a 12th-century motte, Caer Beris overlooks a loop of the river Irfon.¹ In 1896, Captain Charles Gam Harcourt-Wood of the 15th Hussars turned Caer Beris into a sporting estate. He had married Lina Styleman and this was to be their family home. An extension, housing a library and billiard room with master bedrooms above was built using adze-cut elm. In 1918 he sold Caer Beris to Thomas P. Rose Richards². He then sold it on to the Right Honourable Odo Richard Vivian, the third Lord Swansea.³ He bought the house in 1923 and developed the grounds and gardens. As John Borron pointed out in the last issue of



Caer Beris c1920s photographed by P.B. Abery. (National Library of Wales)

*Trafodion*⁴, Lord Swansea employed the Arts & Crafts architect, Philip Tilden to carry out alterations at Caer Beris in 1932. "He laid out the terrace at Caer Beris and I suspect that the yew hedges there were also planted to his design." He was described by Roger Bowdler as combining 'an Arts & Crafts sensibility with an eye for garden design'⁵

Caer Beris Manor

In its heyday, in the 1920s and 1930s, it was immaculately kept by a team of gardeners. The gem of a photograph by P. B. Abery [see article below], who recorded the state of the gardens in the 1920s. You can see from this photograph the overall garden design, with paths as well as tree and shrub plantings. Many of the rhododendrons and azaleas had been brought from Clyne Castle, the Vivian family home, near Swansea, known for its collection of rare and beautiful rhododendrons. The Caer Beris estate was broken up in the 1970s with the cottages and stables being sold off separately.

Caer Beris was one of the Pioneer gardens to open for the National Garden Scheme in 1927. The Scheme was founded to raise money for the nurses of the Queen's Nursing Institute (essentially the Health Visitors of today) by opening gardens of quality and interest to the public and in the first year 609 gardens raised over £8,000. Caer Beris opened on the 25th June and raised the magnificent total of £7 and 6 shillings. The entry price was set at a shilling so you can easily calculate how many people attended - 146! The event was covered by the local paper, the *Brecon and Radnor Express*. Their report lists some of those who attended. It opened again in 1928.

However, the gardens were completely abandoned for about 16 years during and after the last war, from c1939 to 1955. They then opened again for the National Garden Scheme in 1959 and also in 1960, 1964 and 1965. We assume that after that date the grounds started to decline and eventually grew into the neglected state that we found in 1987.

As Caer Beris Manor today does not have the luxury of a team of gardeners to care for the grounds, but instead limited staff (albeit with a range of time-saving equipment) we decided to merge nature and nurture. For example, the grassland, which at one time was well manicured, has been allowed to become a wild flower meadow in springtime. It blossoms with cowslips, buttercups, and violets. The creation of a pond has encouraged all kinds of water life. Interestingly, many of our guests seem to appreciate the beauty of unspoilt nature! At the same time the sheer size of the specimen trees in the parkland, planted almost 100 years ago, evoke their own special sense of history.

The woodland has been cleared of wild rhododendrons and this has allowed us to create woodland walks - we have undertaken a planting of more than 400 deciduous trees in the grounds. With a range of habitats including a river, a rocky cliff, meadows and broadleaved woodland, the grounds have become a haven for wildlife. These include a host of bird species, moths, bats, and even otters. Regarding the rose trestle walk – despite being thwarted by hungry rabbits and severe winters, we are still hopeful to restore it and grow a variety of David Austin roses over this unique walkway. The grounds will always be a work in progress!

As one of the four founding 'Pioneer' gardens still open for the National Garden Scheme in Wales in 2012 we wish the National Garden Scheme all the best for a continuing, prosperous future.

Peter and Katharine Smith

www.caerberis.com; Telephone: 01982 552 601; email: info@caerberis.com

NOTES: ¹ Richard Haslam, *Powis: The Buildings of Wales* (Penguin Books, 1979), p.

² Powis County Archives, Draft Conveyance 23 December, 1918

³ Powis County Archives, Draft agreement for sale and purchase of Caer Beris mansion, grounds, farms & lands, between T.P. Rose Richards and Lord Swansea, 21 May 1920 accessed online 08/06/2012. Other documents indicate the sale was completed in March 1923.

⁴ John Borron, 'Philip Tilden (1887-1956)', *Trafodion*, Issue 1 – November 2011

⁵ Roger Bowdler, 'Babylonian Beauty', *Country Life*, January 11, 2012

Editor's Note I am most grateful to Katherine Smith for submitting this article about Caer Beris and its place within the National Garden Scheme as it has been the source of inspiration for the two articles that follow it.

Percy Benzie Abery (1877-1948)

P. B. Abery, the son of a grocer and one of 13 children, came from Folkestone. He arrived in Builth Wells in 1898 and bought a small photography business. During the summer he made his living taking photographs of visitors to the Wells. These would be displayed outside his shop the next morning and crowds of people would gather there to look for pictures of themselves.

In the blurb that accompanies the book of his photographs, *Photographs of Radnorshire*, there is a charming description of his arrival in Builth: "At the age of 21 P. B. Abery came to Builth Wells and asked a man on Builth Bridge for directions. The young man he asked was George Ethelbert Sayce, who became the editor of the *Brecon and Radnor Express*, while Abery bought a photographic business. The two men became life-long friends and the newspaper provided an outlet for Abery's photographs. They were often sought by the national press and prints would be rushed to the station to catch the train for London. Abery captured a way of life, recording events and activities throughout Mid-Wales and the Border Counties during the first half of the twentieth century."

There is an extensive collection of Abery's photographs in the National Library of Wales and my thanks are due to Camwy MacDonald for his help and assistance in checking through the P.B. Abery holdings in the Library and assisting me with this article. I hoped that we would find other photographs of historic gardens in Radnorshire as well as Caer Beris, showing how they looked over 50 years ago, and we did. We reproduce them below with a note on each property and its history for readers who are unfamiliar with the area.

NOTE: *Photographs of Radnorshire by P.B. Abery (P/b, 72 pages, 60 b&w photographs ISBN 978 1 904396 91 8)

Clyro Court [Baskerville Hall], Hay-on-Wye, Powys

Clyro Court was built by Thomas Mynors Baskerville (c1806-1864) in 1839. He inherited the Clyro estate from his third cousin Colonel Thomas Baskerville (d.1818). His eldest son, Walter Thomas Mynors Baskerville (c1849-1905) inherited the estate and in 1905 Walter's son, Ralph Hopton Baskerville (d. 1917) took it over*. At the time Abery's photograph was taken the estate was in the hands of Dorothy Nesta Baskerville who had inherited Clyro from her brother, killed in WWI. Clyro remained the family seat until 1945 when it was sold to the local council with 38 acres and turned into a school. There is a thought that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose first wife Louise had connections with Clyro, may have based *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901) on the local legend of a huge hound that haunted the Hergest Ridge and that brought bad luck if it was seen. Clyro Court has been the Baskerville Hall Hotel since 1984.



Clyro Court photographed by P.B. Abery. (National Library of Wales)

NOTE:*Powys County Archives Office, Radnor County Council: Clyro Court Deeds and Papers

Cefndwylys gardens, Builth Wells, Powys

We could not find a house with this name as titled at the National Library. However, Anne Carter thinks that this photograph is almost certainly the gardens of Cefn Derys set above what is now the Royal Welsh Showground at Builth Wells looking towards the Wye. She visited the site with a copy of the photograph to hand and it does seem to match up, although much of the detailed planting is lost. If anyone knows more about this garden do, please, let us know.



Cefn Derys photographed by P.B. Abery. (National Library of Wales)

Percy Benzie Aberly



Gregynog Hall photographed by P.B. Aberly. (National Library of Wales)

Gregynog Hall, Tregynon, near Newtown, Powys SY16 3PW

With its Grade I grounds and gardens, Gregynog has existed for 800 years. Today the mansion is set in 750 acres of formal gardens and countryside. At the end of the 18th century Charles Hanbury married the last Tracy heiress to Gregynog adding her name to his as Charles Hanbury-Tracy, in due course becoming the first Lord Sudeley in 1837. In 1840 he designed and built the present Gregynog Hall, unusually one of the earliest concrete-clad buildings still standing. With the remains of an 18th-century landscape designed by William Emes (1774), the 19th century saw the creation of formal gardens around the house – the name of Nesfield is mentioned by the Sudeley family today but, sadly, there are no records and nothing survives. Aerial photographs of the gardens show that there were two ornate parterres on the west and north-west lawns.*

In 1893 the Sudeleys lost a vast sum of money in the Newtown flannel industry and, following bankruptcy, sold the estate to the 1st Lord Joicey (1846-1936) in 1894. He was a hugely successful colliery owner with estates in Northumberland. A late-Victorian garden began to develop with the planting of many specimen trees and shrubs including the now-famous golden yew hedges. Lord Joicey maintained the estate until 1914 when, having previously disposed of a lot of the tenanted farms and holdings (1913), he sold it to the 1st Lord Davies, grandson of David Davies of Llandinam (1818-1890).

David Davies was one of the most successful entrepreneurs of the 19th century. He built much of the railway system in mid-Wales and was a pioneer of the coal industry in south Wales creating Barry Docks. His massive fortune was inherited by his grandchildren and his granddaughters used their inheritance to assemble one of the finest collections of paintings in the country. In 1920 Gwendoline and Margaret Davies bought Gregynog Hall from their brother. They set out to establish it as the headquarters of their enterprise to bring music and the arts to the people of Wales inspired by what they had seen in WWI when they had run a Red Cross canteen for soldiers in war-torn France.

Gwendoline especially was a great gardener and together the sisters began to enhance and add to the gardens of Gregynog. They employed two lady gardeners, very unusual for the time (1920s) but perhaps because so many men with such skills had perished in WWI. They began creating new spaces within the gardens such as the Dingle and the Dell. Their friend and neighbour H. Avray Tipping helped with the design of the Dell and the water garden (recently restored in 2010). With their experience of WWI one can imagine why they opened the gardens for the Queen's Institute of Nursing in 1927. The 1930s saw the garden staff increase from 16 to 23, but WWII and the years after saw the gentle decline of the gardens until the death of these two remarkable ladies. Gwendoline Davies died in 1951 and, in 1960 Margaret gave the house and grounds to the University of Wales. It opened its doors to students in 1963, the year in which she died.

The Gregynog Estate is open daily between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Admission to the gardens: £3 + £2.50 per car for the estate walks. Annual membership is £15; £25 for a family.

www.wales.ac.uk/gregynog; Telephone: 01686 650 224; email: gregynog@wales.ac.uk

NOTE: *Powys, Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales (Cadw, 1999), p. 109



Norton Manor photographed by P.B. Aberly. (National Library of Wales)

Norton Manor, Knighton, Radnorshire

This Victorian mansion, set at the end of a mile-long drive, was built in 1858 on the site of an older house.* It became the home of Sir Richard Green Price, Bt (1803-87) and his large family (with two wives he fathered some 13 children). He inherited the house and estate from his maternal uncle Richard Price (1773-1861) adding the name of Price to his own at that time. He had been Tory MP for New Radnor Boroughs. Later he represented the Radnor Boroughs, but as a Liberal (1863-69) and was created Baronet in 1874. He was largely responsible for bringing the railway to Radnorshire. His fine obelisk memorial above Offa's Dyke states his "... services to the county of Radnor will long outlive his name. Through his untiring energy the railway to Knighton and Llandrindod was constructed as well as to Presteigne, and New Radnor. He ever laboured for the welfare of his native county.' The house has been a hotel for some years (currently closed).

Bettina Harden

NOTE: *Richard Haslam, *Powis: The Buildings of Wales* (Penguin Books, 1979), p.262



Norton Manor photographed by P.B. Aberly. (National Library of Wales)

The National Garden Scheme in Wales

Following on from Katherine Smith's article on Caer Beris, the NGS very kindly supplied me with their list of the 24 Welsh gardens that opened to the public in 1927. I have annotated the list with a note of the owners in 1927 and indicated whether they still open for the NGS or are otherwise open to the public. Two on the list have proved untraceable so far. Both in Flintshire, they are listed as Groganey (no owner given) and Brygwyn Hall opened by a Miss Vernon. They could be typing errors or written by someone unfamiliar with Welsh place names but if inspiration strikes any reader do, please let me know.

DENBIGHSHIRE

Brynbellia, Tremerchion, near St Asaph, LL17 OUE

1927 – The Misses Glynn & Dr Glynn This delightful Georgian 'villa' was built for the famous Welsh-born Mrs Piozzi (previously Hester Thrale), the great friend and companion of Dr Johnson, in 1792-95 by Charles Mead. Sitting at the foot of the Clwydian Hills, the house with its small park and gardens (Grade II) looks out over the Vale of Clwyd. The gardens here have been overlaid and altered many times in the hands of several owners but have retained their charm throughout. In 1920 Brynbellia was purchased by Dr Glynn who lived there until 1944.

2012 – Mr & Mrs P. Neumark, who kindly hosted a visit for the WHGT AGM in 2007, have carried out extensive work in the gardens which now include a woodland garden, walled garden, three water gardens, and a gravel garden. The gardens are open by appointment and for members and Friends of the HHA: Telephone: 01745 710 669

Coed Coch, Betws-yn-Rhos, Colwyn Bay

1927 – The Hon. Mrs A.G. Brodrick The house was built in the late 18th/early 19th century, possibly by Henry Hakewill, but this estate near Abergele belonged to the Wynne family from the 16th century. WWI saw the untimely death of the heir, Edward Wynne who was only 23 when he was killed in 1916. His mother, Anne Gwendoline survived him. Her first husband, Major-General E.W. Wynne had died in 1893 within a year of their marriage (Edward was born posthumously) and she married, secondly, Laurence Alan Brodrick, the second son of the 8th Viscount Middleton, in 1896. Laurence Brodrick died in 1915, so it was as a widow once again that Anne Gwendoline opened her gardens for the NGS. Their daughter Margaret Brodrick inherited Coed Coch and began a well-known Welsh pony stud there which continued until her death in 1961. The house and estate



*An 1885 photograph by John Thomas showing Coed Coch and its splendid artificial lake.
(National Library of Wales)*

then reverted to the Wynne family via the family connection with the Williams-Wynnnes and was let on a long lease, first as a school and then as a Christian centre. Happily it has returned, via inheritance, to a connection of the family and is now the home of the Featherstonehaughs.

The park and gardens at Coed Coch are listed on the grounds that the small landscape park with its splendid artificial lake survives in its entirety. There is a series of excellent 1885 photographs of Coed Coch including the large kitchen garden with 3 extensive glasshouses under cultivation.

2012 – Mr & Mrs H. Featherstonehaugh. Since returning to Coed Coch they have carried out much restoration work and improvements and it flourishes as a family home once again.

Erddig Hall, near Wrexham, LL13 OYT

1927 – **Simon Yorke Esq** had inherited Erddig from his father, Philip Yorke in 1922 when he was only 19. Perhaps his known reclusive tendencies had not developed to the stage where he shunned company when he opened the Erddig gardens in 1927. Neither he nor his younger brother, another Philip, married. Philip Yorke inherited Erddig on Simon's death in 1966. By this time lack of money from a dwindling estate and subsidence caused by mining at the local Bersham colliery, aggravated by the nationalisation of the Coal Board in 1947, meant that the house and gardens were sadly neglected but pretty much intact. The gardens are heritage treasures in Wales as unlike many formal gardens swept away in the 18th century these were spared by William Emes, who was commissioned by Philip Yorke to landscape the parkland from 1768-89.

2012 – **The National Trust** took over Erddig from Philip Yorke (he died in 1978) in 1976. They began a programme of restoration and rebuilding that has led Erddig to be declared one of the finest stately homes in the country. The gardens were opened for the NGS this year and in 2013 the NGS days are Sunday 5th May and Saturday 15th June, 11 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

Plas Heaton, Trefnant, Denbigh LL16 5AE

1927 – **Mrs Florence Heaton** was the widow of Lieut-Col. Wilfred Heaton, J.P., D.L. (1854 – 1921). Purchased in 1805, Plas Heaton was clearly a place of some grandeur with early 19th-century parkland and woodland gardens which offer views out to the Clwydian Hills and the Irish Sea. In addition the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments lists a ha-ha, kitchen garden, a walled garden, a cave, ponds, orchard, greenhouses and an ice house.* The park and gardens are listed by Cadw as Grade II*. The house and its grounds have passed down the family line until today.

2012 – **Mr & Mrs Richard Heaton.** The gardens are occasionally open for the NGS but there are no plans to do so in 2013.

NOTE: * C.H. Nicholas, RCAHMW, 15th August 2006

Darland Hall, Rossett, Denbighshire

1927 – **Mrs Moseley.** After much hunting I discovered that she was the wife or widow of Roger Bright Moseley, a Lieutenant in the Royal Dragoons, born in 1900. He was the son of James Fairclough Moseley Esq., J.P., of Chester (1863-1926) and his seat is listed as Darland Hall.

2012 – Further research indicates that Darland Hall was demolished, although a cottage remains, and the parkland is now a golf course. If anyone knows more about the place or the family I would love to know.

FLINTSHIRE**Gwysaney, Mold**

1927 – **Major Philip Tatton Davies-Cooke** was the head of a family that had lived on this site for over 400 years. The parkland (Grade II*) is particularly fine with the remains of a 17th-century deer park within it. To the north there is a good 19th-century Pinetum and arboretum created by Philip Davies-Cooke after he inherited the estate in 1821. The gardens were restored in the 1950s by Philip Ralph Davies-Cooke and his wife.

2012 – Today Gwysaney is still owned by a member of the Davies-Cooke family but it has been on the market for a couple of years.

Mostyn Hall, Mostyn

1927 – **Llewelyn Nevill Vaughan Lloyd-Mostyn, 3rd Baron Mostyn** (1856-1929). This is a centuries-old site originally a mediaeval great house celebrated by Welsh bards as 'the hostel of the whole of Wales'.* The park and gardens that surround the vast 'Jacobethan' mansion (remodelled 1846-7 by Ambrose Poynter) have seen many incarnations from mediaeval orchards to formal gardens and a deer park, all swept away in the 19th century. There remains a fine lime avenue and the serpentine Marine Walk has lovely views over the Dee Estuary. The park and gardens as seen in 1927 featured shrubberies and lawns (Grade II*) and today there is a Japanese garden and roses.

2012 – **The 7th Baron Mostyn.** The house and its grounds are not open to the public.

NOTE: Elisabeth Whittle, *Historic Gardens of Wales* (Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, 1992), p. 12.

Rhual, Mold

1927 - **Mrs H.A.S. Philips** This attractive small-scale Jacobean house has a forecourt described as a 'delightful survivor of this period' [late 17th-century]. It has two corner alcoves with benches inside, their roofs are topped with wrought-iron tulips.* There is a 17th-century bowling green and the house is surrounded by a small landscape park. Stephen

The National Garden Scheme in Wales

Switzer, the famous early 18th-century garden designer mentions a kitchen garden here in 1739 when he was writing to Sir George Wynne at Leeswood. In the 19th century Rhual was bought by Colonel Frederick Philips. His grandson Basil Edwin Philips was another victim of WWI, killed in action in 1915. His widow Helena Adelaide Sara Philips opened the gardens in 1927. Their daughter Gwenllian married Lt-Commander Hugh Heaton RN and they inherited Rhual in due course.

2012 – Mrs Julia Marlow-Thomas, the Philips's great-granddaughter, has recently taken over Rhual and for the moment the gardens are not open to the public.

NOTE: *Elisabeth Whittle, *The Historic Gardens of Wales* (Cadw:Welsh Historic Monuments, 1992), p. 37.

GLAMORGANSHIRE

Llandough Castle, Cowbridge

1927 – Sir Sidney Byass, Bt. (1862-1929). Sir Sidney was a sheet steel magnate at Port Talbot with the firm of R.B. Byass & Co. and the Margam and Mansel Tinplate Works. He was created 1st Baronet in 1926. He was a force to be reckoned with in South Wales, throwing himself into public and political work, serving as Mayor of Aberavon in 1918, 1919 and 1920. When the new borough of Port Talbot was created Sir Sidney was the first Mayor. He purchased Llandough Castle in 1914 acquiring some beautiful gardens. To quote Hilary M. Thomas: "In the words of one correspondent he [Head Gardener, William Harkness] "established the lovely gardens of flowers, fruits, vegetables, hot houses, pineries, vineries etc." and laid out woodland walks and miles of "waterfalls in babbling brooks" in Castle Woods'. The gardens must have looked wonderful in 1927 when they were opened for the NGS. Sir Sidney died in 1929 and Lady Byass left Llandough. 'During the 1930s the house was used as an instruction centre for boys with poor health as a result of working in the mines. During this period, the gardens continued to be well-maintained by Jack Evans, and a wide variety of fruit, vegetables and flowers were produced'. As with so many large houses the castle and its gardens fell into decline after WWII. With part of the house demolished, much of the gardens were left to return to nature and other areas were sold off.



*Lady Byass in the gardens at Llandough Castle c1930.
(Reproduced with kind permission of Glamorgan Country Archives)*

2012 – The gardens of Llandough Castle can be described now as lost. A few woodland walks, water features in the woods, mature trees and stone walls still survive.

Duffryn (Dyffryn), St Nicholas, Cardiff

1927 – Miss Florence Cory was the sister of Reginald Cory who, with Thomas Mawson, had created the superb gardens at Dyffryn. Reginald Cory married in 1930 and moved to Dorset. He died suddenly four years later and Florence inherited Dyffryn. She died there in 1936. Her obituary in *The Colliery Guardian* (4th December 1936) states that 'she took little interest in public life. Her chief interest was the Glamorgan County Nursing Association.' This might well suggest why she opened the gardens for the National Garden Scheme. The piece on Dyffryn in *Trafodion I* (p. 20) gives the outline of the development of the gardens at St Nicholas.

2012 – Dyffryn, owned by the Vale of Glamorgan, will be opening under the aegis of the National Trust in 2013.

St Fagan's Castle, St Fagans, Cardiff

1927 – The Rt Hon. Ivor Miles Windsor-Clive, 2nd Earl of Plymouth (1889–1943) and his family lived at St Fagans Castle mostly in the summer in the 1920s. The formal gardens surrounding the house have been the subject of careful and sensitive restoration over the past decade. The WHGT was closely involved in the project to restore the Rose Garden laid out and planted by the Plymouth's well-known Head Gardener, Andrew Pettigrew in 1899. We ran a scheme whereby people could buy roses from the original Pettigrew planting list to commemorate an anniversary, the death of a loved one and so on. These purchases and their dedications were carefully logged in a Book of Remembrance which can be seen inside the Castle.

The grand terraces look out to the wider landscape (Grade I) and the possibly mediaeval fishponds, now a water feature in the gardens embellished by James Pulham in the 1870s. The Italian Garden was restored in 2002 and all the formal gardens close to the house are now in very good heart. It has been suggested that the 'crazy paving' beside the house was traced out by Lady Plymouth using her parasol!

2012 – Following the gift of St Fagans to the nation by the 3rd Earl of Plymouth in 1947 the Castle and gardens are now part of **St Fagans: National Museum of Wales** and are open daily throughout the year.

MONMOUTHSHIRE**Castleford House, Chepstow, Monmouthshire**

1927 – William Royce Lysaght C.B.E. (1858-1945) was Chairman of John Lysaght, steelmakers. Originally based in Wolverhampton, the company and the Lysaghts moved lock, stock and barrel to the Orb Steelworks, Newport and south-east Wales. Originally built as a hunting lodge in 1875, Castleford was substantially extended for the Lysaghts in the early 1900s. William Lysaght was a magistrate for Monmouthshire and became High Sheriff in 1915. Apart from Castleford, his home, he also owned Chepstow Castle in 1915 as well as Chepstow Racecourse. His son, Desmond, followed in his father's footsteps as High Sheriff in 1942 but it would seem that most of the Lysaght holdings in the county were sold off following his father's death in 1945. I have not been able to find any precise details of the house and garden and would welcome information.

2012 – Castleford House is now a care home for the elderly.

Dewstow, Caerwent, Caldicot NP26 5AH

1927 – Henry Oakley Esq acquired Dewstow House in 1893. Known locally as Squire Oakley, he was a rich London barrister who was also a Director of the Great Western Railway. He set about transforming the gardens to indulge his passion for growing ferns and exotic plants. The wonderful subterranean gardens, grottoes and glasshouses were commissioned from James Pulham in 1895 [*Trafodion* 1, pp. 9-10] Before WWI there were 15 gardeners employed at Dewstow and the gardens were open to the public about four times a year. They were clearly still in reasonable condition for viewing in 1927 but, after Henry Oakley's death in the 1940s, they fell into disrepair and vanished under tons of earth in the 1960s until re-discovered and rescued by John Harris and his family in 2000.

2012 – Dewstow still belongs to the Harris family and opened for the NGS this year. In 2013 the NGS dates are Sunday 14th April and Sunday 15th September, 10 a.m. – 2.30 p.m. www.dewstow.co.uk

High Glanau Manor, Lydart, Monmouth NP25 4AD

1927 – H. Avray Tipping (1855-1933) Elisabeth Whittle describes H. Avray Tipping's gardens in Monmouthshire as 'four of the best Welsh gardens of this period' [Mathern Palace, Mounton House, Wyndcliffe Court and High Glanau]. High Glanau, his last house and garden, is possibly his finest, carrying out his own advice to the RHS given in 1928: 'Let there be some formalism about the house to carry on the geometric lines and enclosed feeling of architecture, but let us step shortly from that into wood and wild garden.'*

Tipping was in at the birth of the National Garden Scheme serving on its Committee and opening High Glanau in September 1927. Following his death in 1933 the property passed through several hands with the gardens gradually declining and losing their planting and detail. In 2002 Hilary and Helena Gerrish purchased it and have spent the past decade rescuing and restoring this beautiful romantic garden.

2012 – Mr & Mrs Hilary Gerrish opened High Glanau in 2012 as one of the four Welsh 'Pioneer' gardens still opening for the NGS after 85 years. In 2013

they plan to open again for the scheme on Sunday 12th May. The Rare Plants Fair will also take place there on Sunday 2nd June 2013. The garden is also open by appointment. Contact: helenagerrish@gmail.com



High Glanau Manor. (Photograph Val Corbett)

NOTE: *Helena Gerrish, *Edwardian Country Life: The Story of H. Avray Tipping* (Frances Lincoln Limited, 2011), pp. 177 & 181. Readers should go to this excellent book for detailed descriptions of both High Glanau and Mounton (see page 28).

Mounton House, Chepstow

1927 – Major H. C. L. Holden After Mathern Palace, Mounton was the second house and garden in Monmouthshire developed by H. Avray Tipping. Known as the distinguished architectural writer for *Country Life*, Tipping also created superb Arts & Craft gardens, not just in Wales, but across England, from Surrey to Devon. Mounton was the first house he was responsible for building - 'the last full-blown country house built in the county' - beginning in 1914 and working in collaboration with the architect Eric Francis. He began the gardens five years before he built the house, starting in 1907 when he bought some land at the foot of the Mounton gorge and constructed a water garden around a stream. Surrounded by a woodland garden, Mounton had all the classic elements of an Edwardian Arts & Crafts garden with its elegant approach, formal gardens near the house with a long terrace overlooking the bowling green contrasting with the natural garden below.

Hubert Capel Lofft Holden was the godson of Tipping's brother, who had died in 1911. Tipping handed Mounton over to him in 1922, moving on to High Glanau. As Major H. C. L. Holden he served in the Royal Artillery from 1910 to 1922 when he moved to Mounton. The Holdens left Mounton in 1935.

2012 – Mounton House has now been split up into 30 flats and apartments.

Tredegar House, Newport, NP10 8YW

1927 – Courtenay Morgan, 1st Viscount Tredegar OBE, VD (1867–1934). The Morgan family seat for 500 years, Tredegar House, with its 90 acres of gardens and park, was inherited by Courtenay Morgan from his uncle Godfrey Morgan, 1st Viscount Tredegar, as third Baron Tredegar in 1913. He served with the Royal Monmouthshire Engineers, fighting in the Boer War, 1900-1901 and he and his only son, Evan Morgan, the 2nd Viscount Tredegar, both served in WWI. Known for his extravagance, a trait shared with his father who, among other things, was credited with owning the largest yacht in the world before WWI, Evan Morgan was also renowned for his eccentricity, poor poetry and the possibility that he was gay (although he was married twice). He hosted lavish garden parties at Tredegar in the 1930s. After his death in 1949 the house was sold, in 1951, to the Catholic Church as a school. In 1974 the house was bought by the then Newport Corporation Council, when it became known as "*the grandest council house in Britain*".

In the late 1980s, under the guidance of David Freeman as Curator, Tredegar had a renaissance as he reinterpreted the house interior, acquiring furnishings and pictures and re-arranging the contents – his great friend and Chairman of the Monmouthshire branch of the WHGT, Sheila Thorneycroft, used to arrange splendid displays of flowers in the house. Outside he encouraged the excavation and rediscovery of the Orangery Garden (described in *Trafodion I*, p. 20). He facilitated the setting up of Growing Space, the award-winning mental health charity, within one of the walled gardens, now in a slip garden and the orchard at Tredegar. It encourages its clients to tend allotments, growing fresh fruit and vegetables in the 'growing space' at Tredegar.

2012 – Tredegar House is now run by the National Trust, managing it on a 50-year lease for Newport Council. The gardens are open 11.30 a.m. – 4 p.m., from Easter to October, free to National Trust members. Last admission to the house and gardens is at 4 p.m. The parkland at Tredegar is open to the public, free of charge, daily from dawn to dusk.

POWYS**Buckland Hall, Bwlch, Powys, LD3 7JJ**

1927 – Lady Buckland. Facing west across the river Usk, the principal development of Buckland House or Hall took place in the 18th century when the property belonged to the Gwynne family. The estate passed to the last Miss Gwynne who married Major James Price Holford in 1830. Adopting the name of Gwynne-Holford they enhanced the gardens creating a fine arboretum. At that time the gardens and parkland became famous for the trees planted outlining the battle formation of Waterloo. Major Holford, who served in the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, had taken part in the famous battle. Little of this still remains – the story is that the French lines were mown down by the Forestry Commission rather than the British Army. The house was rebuilt in Elizabethan style by S.W. Williams following a fire in 1895. In the 1920s the new owners, the Berrys, asked their friend, H. Avray Tipping to give advice on the gardens and he came up with the design of an iris and lily garden (c1923).

The Berrys had bought the Buckland estate in 1922 and Henry Berry took its name as his title when he was created 1st Baron Buckland in 1926. Sadly, Lord Buckland was killed in a riding accident the same year so it was Lady Buckland as a widow who opened her gardens for the National Garden Scheme. In 1935 Buckland was sold to Sir David Llewellyn (1879-1940), who also lived at The Court, St Fagans. The 1935 Sale Catalogue lists 'an Italian garden, a rose garden, an American garden, a blue garden, the maze and a rhododendron bank'.*

The Llewellyns used Buckland as their second home until WWII when the house became a military hospital. The

house and gardens were so badly treated that, in 1941, the Llewellyns passed Buckland to the War Office. After the war, the house was passed to the British Legion as a centre for ex-servicemen who needed long-term care and was renamed Crosfield House. It passed through several hands thereafter until it was rescued by the Buckland Project in 1996. By then the gardens had 'gone where they wanted to', but the trees remain magnificent and the hybrid rhododendrons put on a splendid show in the spring. As the Cadw Register for Powys says 'in many ways it is pleasing that so much has survived.'

2012 – Buckland Hall is run by The Buckland Project Ltd as a venue for hire for different occasions. The gardens are not open to the public but a group visit can be arranged.

Telephone: 01874 730 330 Email: info@bucklandhall.co.uk www.bucklandhall.co.uk

NOTE: *Powys, *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales* (Cadw, 1999), p. 39.

Caer Beris Manor, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3NP

1927 – **The 3rd Lord Swansea**. Please see the article on Caer Beris on p.19 for information about the house and gardens.

2012 – **Mr & Mrs Peter Smith**. Caer Beris Manor will open for the National Garden Scheme in 2013 on Sunday May 26th (with the added attraction of the Builth Wells Ladies Voice Choir) and Sunday June 7th. [Sunday Lunches and Afternoon Teas available]

Clyro Court, Clyro, Hay-on-Wye, Powys

1927 – **Mrs D.N. Baskerville** She married Commander Pratt-Barlow but resumed her maiden name of Baskerville on succeeding her brother in 1918. Both her husband and her brother were killed in action in WWI. From the details supplied by the NGS Archives it would seem that perhaps Mrs Baskerville had let Clyro Court in 1927 as the person named as opening the gardens was a Miss Marojani. See the preceding article [p. 21] for details of the history of Clyro Court.

2012 – Clyro Court is now known as Baskerville Hall Hotel.

Maesllwch Castle, Glasbury,

1927 – **Walter De Winton Esq** (1868-1935). This Walter de Winton was the fifth generation to live at Maesllwch. Maesllwch was purchased by his great-great-grandfather, the first Walter Wilkins to live there, in the 18th century, and the immense castle, the third house on the site, was commissioned by the second Walter Wilkins from the architect Robert Lugar in 1829. The whole scene at Glasbury was well described by Samuel Lewis in 1833 "*The parish is intersected by the river Wye, the banks of which here exhibit some of the most picturesque and luxuriant scenery in South Wales, or in the kingdom : its stream glides smoothly along through rich meadows, or occasionally ripples over its pebbly bed... , while the entire scene is enlivened and embellished with numerous elegant villas and genteel houses, among which rises conspicuously Maeswlch Castle, the princely residence of Walter Wilkins Esq.*" [the third Walter Wilkins adopted the ancient name of de Winton in 1839] "*From the terrace in front a beautiful lawn declines to the water's edge, commanding much of the richly varied scenery which here adorns the banks of the river; and at the back rises an eminence, wooded to its very summit.*"¹ Parts of the house were demolished in the 1950s and the mid-20th-century additions include terraced gardens whose layout reflects the lost parts of the building. The wonderful setting remains and is the reason the park and gardens are listed as Grade II*.

2012 – Maesllwch is still owned by the De Winton family and is not open to the public.

Notes: ¹ Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales in two volumes*, (S. Lewis & Co., London 1833), Volume 1. According to the compiler of the Cadw *Register of Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest: Powys*, the idea that the lawns ran all the way down to the Wye is artistic license.

² The splendid website, the Powys Digital History Project, gives details about the family who lived at Maesllwch down the years (www.history.powys.org.uk/history/hay/maes3.html).

Pwll-y-Faedda, Erwood, Builth Wells LD2 3YS

1927 – **Joseph Henry Russell Bailey, 2nd Baron Glanusk CB, CBE, DSO** (1864 –1928)

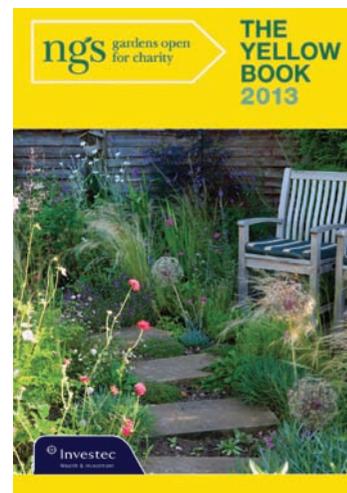
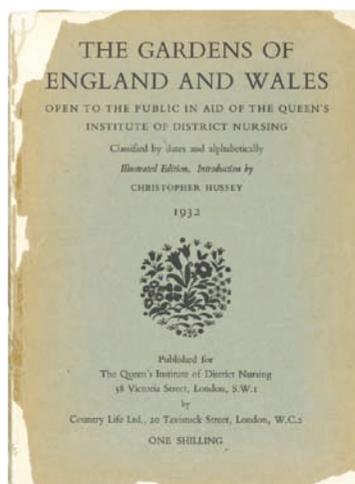
In the 1920s Pwll-y-Faedda was a fishing lodge built on the river Wye by the second Lord Glanusk forming part of the great estate created by the famous ironmaster Bailey family in the area, including Glanusk Park, from 1826. Following Lord Glanusk's death in 1928, a year after opening for the NGS, Pwll-y-Faedda was sold to meet death duties.

2012 – Pwll-y-Faedda was a fishing hotel until recently. It was sold last year but we currently have no details as to the new owner and their plans for the site.

The National Garden Scheme in Wales

The progress in Wales that has been made in the now-nearly 86 years since the National Gardens Scheme first began is wonderful. From 24 gardens, essentially great and grand spaces, to something over 213 gardens in 2012, the range of size, style, and geographical spread (there were no gardens included from Gwynedd and Anglesey in 1927 for example, where now some 47 open their gates for the scheme) is terrific. There are famous gardens; allotments; whole streets full of gardens in Usk, Barry and Bridgend; commercial enterprises such as Welsh Lavender; secret gardens in Welshpool; cottage and castle gardens; and more besides. Queen Alexandra, in whose memory the scheme was launched to aid her Queen's Institute for District Nursing and who was known for her love of roses, would be proud.

Bettina Harden



The cover of the 1932 National Gardens Scheme that eventually became the famous 'Yellow' Book (2013's cover on the right), and the vade mecum for garden lovers.

Pets' Graveyards

I am extremely grateful to the members who have taken the trouble to send in photographs, pointed me towards graves or graveyards they knew of or who have written the following paragraphs themselves. There are at least five more in the pipeline - keep them coming, please.

Buckland Hall, Bwlch, Powys, LD3 7JJ

As described by Martin Fleming of the Buckland Project, 'One interesting feature here is the set of gravestones on the lawn near the main entrance of the house. These are of a horse and dog, probably belonging to Major Gwynne-Holford. The inscriptions read:

'Beneath lie the remains of Pen-Gwyn-Flandda
who departed this life January 3rd 1841 aged 31 years.
Fleetest of the Mountain Race; my gallant, docile, hawk-eyed grey.'

'Also those of the noble grateful Guard
deceased December 5th 1843 aged 15 years.
May he who readeth this equal him in faithfulness and truth.
Man can learn virtue from a dog.'

Dan y Parc, Llangattock, Crickhowell

Across the River Usk and a little downstream from Crickhowell once stood the mansion of Dan y Parc, described in 1798 by Henry Skrine as 'standing in a spacious lawn beneath a thick range of spreading woods'.¹ Dan y Parc was home to several grand families over the years. Skrine himself married the Harcourt heiress, Laetitia, and, after his death in 1803, she sold the estate to the ironmaster Edward Kendall. It was subsequently owned by another iron family, the Crawshays and in 1884 Jessy Crawshay married her cousin Robert Sandeman. Jessy was clearly an animal lover and most of the pet burials date from the 1880s. The memorial stonework would not be out of place in a 19th-century churchyard and the animals, from horses and donkeys to cats, dogs and farm animals were given touching verses. For example, one stone is inscribed to 'My poor little Kitty' from her 'sorrowing husband Jimmy'; there is another to 'My poor Madame, Jimmy's first love' and 'Sweet lady, Jimmy's first wife; went to sleep 13 June 1884'. Jimmy seems to have been a family pony. Scamp, the old pet sheep who died in 1887 aged 11 years is buried in the cemetery and there was also humour, with "Two Sarah squashed and two she didn't. These are they. The others isn't. March 29 1883". Perhaps Sarah was a pet pig?

The family love of animals is highlighted by the memorial to Robert Sandeman, who died in 1932, in Llanelly churchyard, on the hill above Gilwern. The story goes that the Colonel's dog followed the funeral procession and would not leave the graveside. He remained there until he died and in time a statue of this faithful friend was added to the memorial. This description can be found online: 'on a visit a few years ago, I found the grave and statue of the dog. Speaking to a nearby resident...he mentioned that Colonel's Sandeman's widow was annoyed that the statue was of the dog's wrong colour'.²

The estate passed to the Sandeman's son, also Robert and was split up and sold by his widow Cornelia in 1958. The last pet burial appears to have been Towzer in 1971 and the inscription - 'he asked no questions and told no lies. When addressed he looked straight in my eyes. Content with a little he never despaired but in all my troubles he willingly shared' - suggests a dog.

Some of the Dan y Parc parkland is still recognisable from Skrine's description, with the remains of a lake and ice house and about 20 stones are still legible and remain in place in the pet cemetery. There is however no public access.

Elizabeth Siberry

NOTES: ¹Henry Skrine, *Two Successive Tours throughout the whole of Wales*, (London, 1798), South Wales, p. 36.

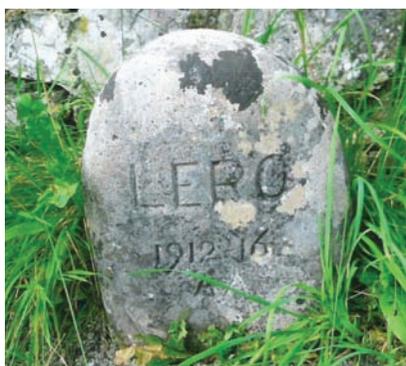
²Esme Heal from www.cymtillery.com/newsletter accessed 20/08/2012

Dunraven, Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre, Southerndown, CF32 0RP

Dunraven Castle, the grand castellated mansion built for Thomas Wyndham MP at the beginning of the 19th century, dominated the headland overlooking Dunraven Bay and was the Glamorgan seat of the Wyndhams' successors, the Earls of Dunraven. The house was demolished in 1962 and today only a few footings survive to bear witness to this once imposing property. Similarly, in the wider context of the surrounding estate, there is little visible evidence of past glories, but one feature, the walled garden, does survive to provide a glimpse of life at the castle in its Victorian and Edwardian heyday. Within the walled enclosure, sheltered from the prevailing winds which lashed the castle, fruit and flowers, trees and shrubs were grown in profusion and each compartment of the garden provided a place of quiet enjoyment for the Dunraven family and their guests. In the easternmost compartment the former croquet lawn and the red-tiled Edwardian summerhouse recall a lost era, and on the terrace path below the summerhouse are three memorials to four-legged friends who once accompanied their owners in the garden. They are set in a line against the retaining wall of the terrace below the summerhouse and above the former croquet lawn.



BINA
MY FAITHFUL FRIEND FOR 16 YEARS,
1875-1911
AA



LERO
1912-16
AA



TOOLEY CAIRN
1928
ED

I am informed by staff at the Heritage Coast Centre that they remain *in situ* as found when the gardens were handed over by the Dunraven family. I am not (yet!!) absolutely certain to whom the letters **AA** and **ED** refer. **AA** may represent Aileen, 3rd daughter of the 4th Earl of Dunraven, using the Adare title. **ED** is possibly Lady Eva, wife of the 5th Earl of Dunraven. BINA's stone is, as you will see, is a conventional 'tombstone' shape fashioned from local stone. The other two are large pebbles incised with the inscriptions. Interestingly, pebbles are widely used throughout the gardens as path edgings. The dogs' names intrigue me.

Hilary M. Thomas

For more details about Dunraven Castle see *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan* (Ed. Hilary M. Thomas, South & Mid Glamorgan Branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, £25 plus £5 p&cp, ISBN: 978-0-9558021-0-2). Dunraven is now home to the Heritage Coast Centre and the walled garden can be visited all year round free of charge (there is a car parking charge).

Pets' Graveyards

Glynllifon, Llanwnda, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL54 5DY

Among the series of follies and eye-catchers in the grounds of Glynllifon (Grade I) stands the delightful Hermitage, a charming small-scale Picturesque set piece. Initially it even housed a hermit (legend tells us he drank his wages and frightened the ladies of the house on their walks and so was dismissed). By the end of the 19th century, having been suitably embellished by the noted local Bangor architect, Henry Kennedy (who specialised in churches), with traceried windows, the Hermitage became a chapel for the Pets' Cemetery created in a yew tree circle next to it. This area is badly overgrown and largely lost and in the 1980s the headstones were removed and preserved in the Walled Garden.

The 18 surviving stones range across the years, starting with one of the earliest I have come across: 'Alas poor CANARLLY 1775' to 'KEEN, Retriever, Drowned 19 June 1913, aged 7 years'. There are Labradors and a Newfoundland (Nana in *Peter Pan*), 'FUSS, Born 1864, Died 1878. The little pet of F.M.W.', mostly with short, easily called names – Snap, Dot, Polly, Nelly, Jock, Bruin. The longest epitaph is to Bondo, who died on a Sunday in 1805 aged 11. "From Labrador he came, And Bondo was his name...Companion for 11 years, F.G.W."

Bettina Harden

The park and gardens at Glynllifon are open daily between 09:00 and 17:00 throughout the year. Admission: £4; Children £1.50; Pensioners £2; Free parking.

Nanhoron, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 8DL

The plot known as The Dog's Graveyard, deep in the woodland walk, Coed Nant-yr-Ala, was the place where my late Mother-in-law always said she would like to be buried herself. Here she would have shared the space with her beloved dachshund Ricky and Gwennie 'the Dustbin Dog', a little mongrel rescued from a litter bin on the Denbigh Moors. The oldest stone states 'This stone marks the spot where a favourite black horse called Wexford is buried. He died August 17th 1871 and must have been at least 27 years old.' Another recalls 'Dear Olga' (she was a Pug) who died in 1905. In carrying on the family tradition we have erected slate headstones inscribed with the dog's name, breed, age and a mention of any outstanding characteristic that calls them back to fond memory. Finally we add the initials of the member of the family to whom the dog belonged – or in some cases, all our initials - D B M and E. The gardens at Nanhoron are open by appointment: 01758 730 610.

Bettina Harden



(Photograph Aisling MacWilliam)

Following On:

Capability Brown 1716-2016: Celebrating 300 Years

In England things have been moving apace to create a suitable celebration of this anniversary. A heritage partnership has been created involving every organisation and relevant grouping in England that has an interest in Brown's work. The partnership has been created to promote Brown's legacy to a wider audience. It would be a great pity if Wales, albeit with its few Brownian sites, missed this rather fine boat. Set out below are the aims and ambitions of the steering group behind the project so that WHGT members can get a feel for what is planned and perhaps see a way in which they can link in with what promises to be a great event.

The Aims:

- Celebrate Capability Brown, a great British artist, loved and admired, and globally influential
- Encourage more people to get out and enjoy Brown's landscapes throughout the country but above all to connect people with their local designed landscapes
- Establish a new way of looking at and enjoying these special places and to inspire people to get involved in looking after our landscapes
- Increase understanding and raise awareness of designed landscapes and to raise the standing of landscape design.

The Objectives:

Open in 2106 as many of those landscapes and houses with designs that are attributed to Brown in order to showcase Brown's contribution and to encourage people to discover these places, to visit, to explore, enjoy, utilise and learn about them to promote the understanding of Brown and his influence through exhibitions of his work at Tate Britain and the Garden Museum

- Promote understanding of Brown and his influence through exhibitions of his work in London and elsewhere
- Celebrate and promote wider understanding of his work by supporting and encouraging: programmes on the media; websites and social media; involvement of volunteers and historic and natural heritage organisations; publications of books and articles about Brown; a programme of post-graduate research; assistance for gardeners to participate in the Historic and Botanic Gardens Bursary scheme; a series of events and activities related to Brown and his work.
- Fundraise and encourage fundraising in the pursuit of the above

Come on Wales! Not only have we got some Brownian sites in Wales but we have sites where designers who were influenced by Brown produced wonderful landscapes [e.g. William Emes]. All of these are important and serve as an illustration of how his ideas permeated the landscapes of the nation.

WHGT members and others with an interest in Brown's sites in Wales should contact Jean Reader in the first instance. Watch this space – a new Capability Brown Tercentenary website is soon to be launched. For information and a progress report on the plans nationwide contact Adam Clarke at adam@creativeandculturallearning.co.uk Telephone: 07834 537 569 195 Wigston Lane, Aylestone, Leicester, LE2 8DJ

Changes for Gardens in Wales

This time last year Ffynone, Pembrokeshire and Dewstow, Monmouthshire were up for sale. **Ffynone** remains in the hands of the Lloyd George family through the late Earl Lloyd-George's youngest son, the Hon. Robert Lloyd George. In the interim the upkeep of the gardens have suffered somewhat but we hope that the family passion for the lovely garden here, with its collection of over 600 rhododendrons and azaleas, continues.

Dewstow Gardens and Grottoes have been taken off the market so they remain in the excellent care of the Harris family. They have revamped their very good website – www.dewstow.co.uk and have begun a series of events to attract people to the gardens.

Tredegar House opened its gates for the National Trust on 4th April. The new Property Manager, Joanna Cartwright, tells us that they are taking time to consider the future development of the gardens. The NT Gardens Panel has recommended that, as a first step, a programme of research is undertaken to understand as much as possible about the history and significance of the gardens. Once in place, this research will help to guide any decisions about the future design or restoration of the three walled gardens which comprise the 'formal gardens'. In the meantime, the gardening team is working on a Garden Management Plan so that any short-term planting and maintenance plans deliver as much impact and interest as possible while the research phase is in progress. The gardens will re-open on 9th February 2013. The ambition is that the gardens may remain open all year round. The parkland is open every day, free of charge, from dawn till dusk. **Dyffryn** will follow in Tredegar's footsteps next year when, in January, control passes to the Trust from the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Heritage Horticultural Skills Scheme

Last year I introduced this Scheme, an HLF-funded project that focuses on developing high quality practical skills for trainees. Well, we've now been running a year, and a lot has happened! We have seen a slight loss during germination, with six of the original seven trainees now entering the last six months of their training. We have a new intake of seven, and another will be advertised at the end of the year, to start in late March 2013. The existing trainees have now commenced their assessments in the RHS level 2 Practical Skills modules, so it will be a busy time for them over the next few months. Just in the process of completing its accreditation is a new level 3 qualification that we have developed in cooperation with Lantra. This is particularly exciting, as the development and now the piloting is happening in Wales,

The Heritage Horticultural Skills Scheme

before it will be rolled out across the UK. For once, Wales leads the way!

Many of you will have seen the wonderful news that the HLF has agreed to grant aid the re-development of the Museum here at St Fagans. £11.5million is a lot of money, but we still need to raise the total to £25.5million!! With the Archaeological displays transferring from the Cathays Park site, St Fagans will allow visitors to follow the stories of the peoples of Wales from the very first inhabitants to the present day and beyond. For *Trafodion* readers, I should point out that almost none of this is taking place in or around the Castle and its Gardens. The work on the western side of the site will include a new building near where the Celtic Village has been for many years and two new experimental archaeology sites; a recreation of Anglesey's *Llys Rhosyr*, a palace for the age of the Welsh Princes on the previous site of the timber circle, and *Bryn Eryr*, an Iron Age farm in the previously unvisited south-westernmost part of the Museum. All three of these will be using elements of the Plymouth/Pettigrew plan of 1906 which created the fenced woodland where the Museum is now sited. Many of the original paths and nodes will be used and the original plan made much clearer by clearance of those rides which have become overgrown. Work starts in 2013.

Andrew Dixey

Books for Your Library:

'If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.'

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Passion, Plants and Patronage: 300 years of the Bute Family Landscapes

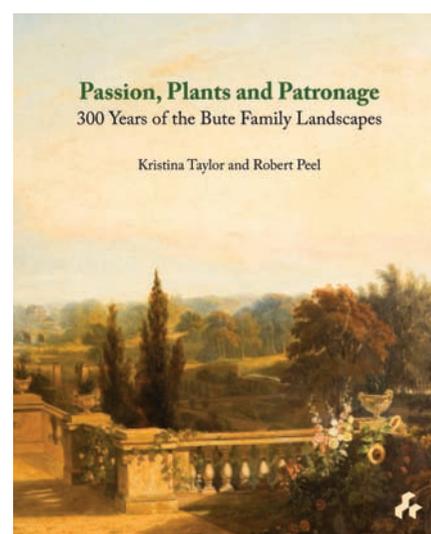
Kristina Taylor and Robert Peel (Black Dog Publishing, 2012, p/b, £19.95)

This book has been brought to our attention sadly too late to review. However, we thought you should read this as it clearly a book of some importance relating to gardens in Wales. The authors are stalwarts of the Garden History Society: Kristina Taylor is the new Vice-Chairman of GHS Scotland and Robert Peel, who has kindly supplied the following description of their book, is Vice-Chairman of the GHS.

The name Bute is strongly linked with Cardiff Castle, Castell Coch and the lower Taff valley. Other landscapes associated with the Bute family, however, range from the south coast of England, through Kew and Regents Park in London, to Luton and, of course, embrace several in Scotland from where the family originates and where the family seat, Mount Stuart, is on the Isle of Bute. The two towering individuals who played the major role in commissioning landscapes and in the patronage of artists, craftsmen and designers, were the 3rd Earl and the 3rd Marquess, the former during the late 18th century, the latter in the late 19th century. Although the landscapes may no longer be complete, with parts of one under the waves and another in divided ownership, it is remarkable how nearly all of them are accessible to the public today and are the object of active conservation and good maintenance.

Each major landscape is given its own chapter. The book is generously illustrated with maps, images of family members by distinguished portraitists, landscape paintings which capture how the buildings in their settings looked and photographs from various decades, which trace the changes and show the significant components of the landscapes then and now.

Robert Peel



Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy

Rock Gardens, Grottoes, Ferneries, Follies, Fountains and Garden Ornaments

Claude Hitching, with photography by Jenny Lilly

Garden Art Press, 2012, £35, (£28 if ordered online from www.anticquecollectorsclub.com/uk), 320pp,

ISBN 978-1-870673-76-1

Claude Hitching's article 'James Pulham in Wales' which appeared in the first issue of *Trafodion*, anticipated the publication of this 'big book', large in format and lavishly illustrated. The author's interest in the Pulhams sprang from his researches into his own family history and the discovery that his grandfather, Frederick Hitching, had worked for the Pulham family firm for over half a century. The present publication is the culmination of decades of intensive, patient and evidently enjoyable research by Claude Hitching and is both an impressive 'business history' and an appropriate tribute to his grandfather.

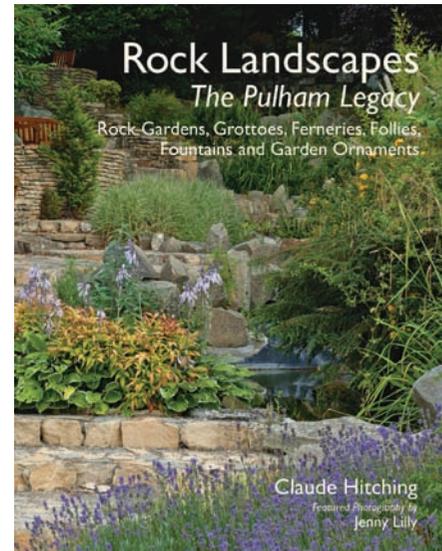
The history of the establishment and growth of the Pulham business is the archetypal rags to riches story as represented by four generations of Pulhams. It is the name James Pulham which dominates the story (four generations bore that name, each clearly identified by Claude Hitching), but less well known is Obadiah, another talented member of the family, who is now given due recognition.

The book falls into three main sections – A background history of the firm of James Pulham and Son and the development of 'Pulhamite'; detailed accounts of over 40 of the Pulhams' most prestigious projects; and a comprehensive Gazetteer listing some 380 commissions, the names of the patrons, the nature of the work undertaken and the English Heritage Parks & Gardens registration (unfortunately EH and not Cadw is cited for the Welsh entries).

Tempting as it will be for the reader to plunge into the central section of the book to explore a particular garden, essential preliminary reading is the first section: 'How it all Began', 'The Second Generation' and 'The Broxbourne Manufactory' for these chapters put the Pulham family in a genealogical and social context, describe the manufacture of 'Pulhamite' (which involved pouring cement onto rubble and colouring the resultant rock to replicate natural stone), the different types of artificial stone and cement in the Pulham repertoire, and give an outline of the firm's multifarious activities. Then, chapter by chapter, in chronological order, the author investigates some of the Pulhams' major projects, beginning with Highnam Court (1847-62) in Gloucestershire and ending with Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens (1934-36) in Buckinghamshire, with a final chapter on the decline and ultimate closure of the business.

The long title of the book gives some indication of the diverse output of the Pulhams. Claude Hitching reveals that it was in stone modelling and plasterwork that the first James Pulham's talents were initially demonstrated (would you recognise a Pulham face adorning the wall of a church, private residence or public building?), then came church restoration and building, the development of 'Pulhamite', the production of garden ornaments and the creation of picturesque rock gardens. What emerges with great clarity is that the Pulhams were shrewd businessmen and that the fashion for Grottoes, Ferneries and Alpine Gardens provided them with unrivalled opportunities to demonstrate their skills. They were craftsmen expert in the art of deception, their artificial rock all but indistinguishable from the natural local stone it was imitating. When their skills were applied to garden ornaments they proved themselves equally expert in producing formal embellishments such as urns and balustrading, vases and fountains which firmly identified their makers, and the output of their factory at Broxbourne in Hertfordshire was prodigious.

Even among the wealthiest, titled landowners there were few who could afford to emulate the 5th Duke of Devonshire who despatched his head gardener Joseph Paxton into the Derbyshire Peak District to extract huge boulders of local stone to create the rock garden at Chatsworth, and for the less affluent, the emergent *nouveaux riches* and the developers of public parks and gardens 'Pulhamite' brought Rock Gardens, Grottoes, Ferneries etc. within their grasp. Such garden landscapes were sure indicators of wealth, social status (assured or aspirational) and 'taste'. In the case of parks there was the added social dimension of providing open spaces for the population of the new industrial towns. For the Pulhams and their Broxbourne manufactory the opportunities were boundless and they grasped them with shrewd business acumen.



Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy

Members of WHGT will, inevitably, seek out the Welsh gardens where 'Pulhamite' is (or was) such a notable feature, gardens included in the *Trafodion* article but here described in much fuller detail or included in the Gazetteer at the end of the book. For example, the chapter on St Fagans records the reluctance of Lady Mary Windsor Clive to finance the entire original design, and includes a copy of the detailed plan submitted by James Pulham (the second of that name) together with two poems in praise of 'Pulhamite', one penned by James Pulham to accompany his plan, the other by George Hitching (another of the author's forebears) in praise of Ferns and Rockwork.

The Pulhams established themselves among the foremost 'landscape artists' of the Victorian and Edwardian period, their use of a combination of natural and artificial 'Pulhamite' stone creating some stunning rock and water landscapes. Edward Milner and his son Henry Ernest, and Thomas Mawson were among the eminent landscape architects who incorporated Pulham rockwork and garden ornaments into their schemes, and each 'rock landscape' described in the present publication has its individual tale to tell. The roll call of commissions and clients is impressive. It includes Royal Sandringham (1868-1905) and Buckingham Palace (1903-04) which earned the Pulhams a Royal Warrant, Waddesdon Manor (1881-92) for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, Friar Park (1898-1912) with its 'mini Matterhorn' constructed for the alpine plant expert Sir Frank Crisp, Ross Hall Park, Glasgow (1890-91), the rock garden at RHS Wisley (1903), Regents Park Zoo (1905-13), and Selfridges Roof Garden (1914), to name but a few.

This book invites the reader to explore the Pulham legacy. Not all the sites identified are open to the public, not all the features originally incorporated into the landscapes have survived unscathed. Some have deteriorated beyond repair; some have been rescued in the nick of time thanks to the endeavours of Claude Hitching. But there is much to see, and the reader is challenged to turn detective for, as Mavis Batey says in her Foreword, there is probably more Pulhamite to be discovered (she herself discovered examples at Bletchley Park). Claude Hitching, who has a well-established website (www.pulham.org.uk), would certainly be delighted to learn of it.

Hilary M. Thomas

Gardens in History: A Political Perspective

Louise Wickham

Windgather Press (an imprint of Oxbow Press), 2012, paperback, £29.95
280pp, ISBN: 978-1-905119-43-1

This is a fascinating book looking at garden history from a most unusual angle. The influence of politics on garden layout for individual gardens has been explored in several recent articles on gardens such as Chiswick and Wentworth Castle. This is, I think, the first attempt to consider all gardens for the last 500 years through a political 'lens'.

Louise Wickham is good at emphasising the importance of water to gardens especially in the Middle East. Water was scarce and its provision required major engineering works which could only be provided by a powerful ruler. The Assyrian kings from the 9th century B.C. onwards built enormous waterworks to create the gardens and parks in which they delighted. Wickham argues convincingly that these were symbols of their power and hence political statements. Their destruction by enemies was a symptom of loss of power. This symbolism was also reflected in the Rome of the Emperors with their great aqueducts. The great gardens of Islam also expressed the link between water and political power.

One of the most interesting features of the book is the individual case studies ending each section. The first of these on Hadrian's villa at Tivoli should be required reading before anyone visits that wonderful site. The study of the Taj Mahal with photographs showing its planting before Lord Curzon had them cleared away is a revelation.

The studies of Italian Renaissance gardens and the French formal garden are full of points of interest. It is easier to accept the political attitudes behind them than it is to accept the Landscape Garden as a political tool for Whig England or the Picturesque debate as a political metaphor. Some landscape gardens in the 18th century were clearly political statements, e.g. Stowe. There were factors other than political in the sweeping away of the formal gardens of Stuart England and fashion surely played a part. So far as Picturesque gardens are concerned their lack of conformity may have made them attractive to Whig politicians. While Thomas Johnes was on this side in politics it is hard to believe that this influenced his landscape at Hafod.

One of the most absorbing chapters is Wickham's linking the movement for public parks in the 19th century to the politics of Reform. This is utterly convincing and is an important contribution to that great reforming century.

There is much else of interest in this book including a chapter on Japanese gardens which was a revelation to this reader. Louise Wickham has written an important book on garden history which everyone interested in it should read.

John R. Borron

Hedge Britannia

A Curious History of a British Obsession

Hugh Barker

Bloomsbury, 2012, £16.99 (£15.99 if ordered online from www.bloomsbury.com)

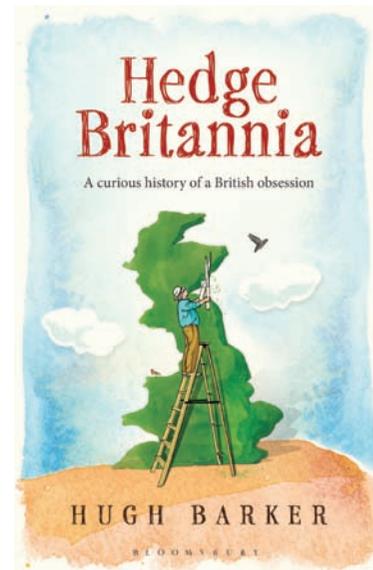
336pp, ISBN: 978-1-4088 01-86-4

The homely hedge is probably one of our most taken for granted landscape features. In field or garden, hawthorn, privet or leylandii, the eye slides over it; a familiar, comforting frame for the livestock, buildings or ornamental plants that we cherish. And yet, as Hugh Barker points out in this fascinating little book, where would we be without it? In practical terms a well laid hedge is stockproof, burglar proof, proof even, on occasion, against invading armies. With proper maintenance it will outlast many fences, providing, in its time, firewood and food for people as well as homes, sustenance and thoroughfares for the unnumbered wild creatures existing in the shadow of human activities.

The origins of hedges are as old as farming itself. Before metal tools, the construction of protective barriers, whether to keep stock in or predators out, must have taken immense labour and ingenuity. In an island like Britain, where land for cultivation had, more often than not, to be carved out of the prevailing woodland, it would have been a daunting task even for men with iron axes and the only boundary was likely to have consisted of a thin, residual line of wildwood, traces of which can be found in our oldest hedgerows to this day. But with the discovery of coppicing and the later art of hedge-laying, the way was open for hedges of much greater length and more varied use. There is a rule of thumb based on the number of woody species in a 100m line of hedge which indicates a surprising antiquity for many of our more wayward rural hedgerows but when we look at the regular chequerboard pattern of much open countryside, we are going back no further than the 18th and 19th centuries, when the fastest growth of enclosures took place. Barker traces the history of this development from its beginnings in the wake of the Norman Conquest through to the ubiquitous garden hedges of today. His sympathies are, on the whole, more with the hedged against than hedging: he sees, like the Diggers in the 17th century, that the creation of more and more private land left the common people - common because they got their living from common land - dispossessed. But he also sees that the process was unstoppable because population growth, improved farming methods and the appetite for manpower produced by the industrial revolution all contributed to the changes in the rural economy.

The increase in the number of country houses in the 16th and 17th centuries, encouraged by a greater sense of stability which developed under the Tudors, produced another effect. Gardens, which had hitherto been the prerogative of royal palaces or walled in as small herbers in grim castle precincts or monasteries, came suddenly into fashion. And with ornamental gardens, came the ornamental hedge. Small, practical gardens had long used hedges for protection. A hedge, besides longevity, makes a much better windbreak than a fence. But as travellers began to bring back new ideas from France and Italy and even further afield, hedges, which do so well in our moist soil, became the framework and background for the grandest formal gardens. Yew and box were the native plants that came most readily to hand, but also hornbeam, beech and many later introductions. Hedges acquired unprecedented height and breadth; they developed arches, doorways and windows, towers, balls, crenellations and pinnacles. They might even, if Francis Bacon is to be believed, be embellished with cages of singing birds and discs of gilded glass to catch the sun. Hugh Barker describes them all with gusto and they soon lead him, inevitably, into the weird and wonderful world of topiary.

He has pursued his passion the length and breadth of the British Isles. The amazing Elephant Hedge at Rockingham Castle is 450 years old and survived the Civil War. The tapestry hedge at Hidcote dates from the first half of the 20th century. Then there are mazes, old and new; at Chatsworth, Blenheim, Hatfield and, possibly the oldest of them all, at Hampton Court, which dates from 1685 but may well have been on the site of an even earlier one. Pleached limes at Knebworth recall an Elizabethan fashion now showing signs of revival. Topiary is everywhere, at Cliveden, where the shapes are most extraordinary, at the home of the writer, Lucy Boston at Hemingford Grey, where the ghosts of her characters flit in and out, and, most notably, at Levens Hall in Cumbria, where it was started in the 17th century and survived subsequent changes of garden fashion to reach its present astonishing state.



Hedge Britannia

These are grand gardens but Barker's love affair is also with the individuality that emerges from small garden hedges: the castellated, extravagantly curved or angled, cats, birds and serpents. It made me remember a row of elegant swans, alas no longer with us, that I watched being brought into existence on a road I used to drive. The saddest tale, though, is that of the Brixton whale, complete with a spray of white flowers emerging from its blowhole, which was rudely terminated by a humourless local council. Barker reserves his only criticism for the 'hedge-like objects' which he sees proliferating in so many public places such as roundabouts, supermarket car parks and service stations. And yet, while disliking, he is intrigued by them, seeing in their clipped uniformity both a human urge to control nature and the need of people trapped in a concrete environment for some touch of nature.

The book is a labour of love, a comprehensive history, embracing places beyond the British Isles, but also a manual, full of tips on how to do it and what not to do. Most of all he wants us to value our hedges and to halt the decline in hedgerow management which accelerated to an alarming degree in the aftermath of the Second World War and now threatens to change our landscape irretrievably for the worse.

But in spite of the hedge-grubbing that went on with such ferocity, and still continues, in spite of neglect and flails and the mechanical autumn trimming which deprives the bushes of their new growth and the birds and insects of their winter feed, Barker does perceive some signs of hope. Hedge-laying enthusiasts in many places are striving to pass on their skills, many farmers, landowner and conservationists are doing their best in difficult circumstances and there are even some small government initiatives. But if these hopes are to be fulfilled, each one of us who walks or drives through the countryside, or is responsible for his own garden hedge must sit up and take notice. We have Neighbourhood Watch. What we need now is Hedge Watch.

Anne Carter

Heritage Trees Wales

Archie Miles

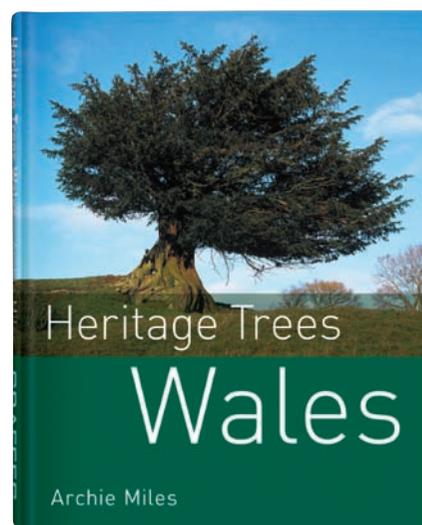
Graffeg, 2012, £ 20, 260pp, ISBN: 978-1-905582-49-5

Since every one of you as a member of the WHGT is certain to love trees, it will take little persuading here to encourage you to appreciate this expertly written, beautifully illustrated and handsomely produced book. Even the price is attractive. Indeed my only regret is that the author must have had to leave plenty of material on the cutting room floor when it came to the final edit, and I would love the chance to see that too. Memo to all county secretaries therefore: book Mr Miles for a lecture. He lives only just across the border in Herefordshire.

Archie Miles is a professional photographer whose specialism is landscape and trees. He already has an impressive list of previous publications and does fine work for The Tree Council and The Woodland Trust. This book has been backed by the (now merging) Countryside Council for Wales and Forestry Commission Wales, and rightly so for a volume that is not only a showcase of some of our finest trees but an important call for care and respect for one of Wales's most precious natural assets. Many entries include specific advice for the management of the more veteran trees described and let us hope that this is acted on.

I recently saw Mr Miles's photography in a similar work of 2006: *The Heritage Trees of Scotland* and read there how the Forestry Commission Scotland had sponsored a Heritage Trees promotion competition on the internet with a panel of experts selecting the hundred finest trees chosen by the public. As these do not have to be forest monarchs but can equally be something quirky in your garden, perhaps the WHGT could take this up here on a national or county basis? There are still unrecognised treasures to be recorded (rare old apples for example), even though the author has looked far and wide. I had no reason to suspect that he would know the ancient oak in the hedge of a narrow road leading up to remote Rhandirmwyn in north east Carmarthenshire, but here it is, beautifully captured, and indeed I read that a song has even been recently recorded inside its hollow trunk.

Many of you may have the small green paperback book published by the National Museum of Wales in 1931: *Welsh Timber Trees, Native and Introduced* by H.A. Hyde, which includes a number of small black and white photographs of famous specimens, including one of the great Caeryder Oak in Monmouthshire, then reaching the end of its celebrated



life (it still stands today, as just a pillar of old trunk, but much loved). Indeed, one of the pleasures of the book is that it looks back to famous trees in Welsh history: the first chapter is called “Long Lost Heritage Trees” and here you will find watercolours, prints and Edwardian postcards of vanished notables and eccentricities, with short chapters following on particular favourites – the huge Golynos Oak, the haunted Nannau Oak and the ridiculous Merlin’s Oak in Carmarthen.

Our forebears were no less fascinated by great trees. Thomas Pennant in 1781 noted several on his north Wales travels – for example ‘The Three Sisters’, huge old sweet chestnuts in the grounds of Bachymbyd House near Denbigh, while Richard Fenton was amazed by the “fantastick” growth of the Llandeinioien churchyard yews in 1810. (Again both are covered here). Lord Dynevor published a little book on the trees in his magnificent park in 1934 (which included the strange Derwen Grop, with an amazing naturally grown face on it, which some can still remember). Old newspapers mention local giants, especially when surveyors calculated their size: one of the giant oaks at Chirk Castle was reckoned to measure 1472 cubic feet in 1801. And artists of course loved to paint these heroic sights.

To record and index all the accounts and legends of trees from our native literature and memories would be a fascinating if daunting task, but well worth trying. I used to play as a child in Carmarthenshire in a vast, dome-like chestnut tree, whose lower branches had all touched the ground, re-rooted and shot up again. It had sprung generations earlier from the muck heap of a long demolished stable block, but one day – nearly fifty years ago, I realise with horror - it was hit by a vicious summer storm when in full leaf, snapped in the middle and collapsed in all directions. Tears before bed time there.

Much however is already being done. The Woodland Trust has this year launched a public petition to encourage the Welsh Assembly Government to beef up protection for trees, as part of its thinking into the new bills it is drafting for the built and natural heritage. The Trust points out that Tree Preservation Orders keep trees safe but do nothing for their management (in the way that Cadw can grant aid the repair of buildings). Readers should add their support (see their website – www.woodlandtrust.org.uk). Then there are the increasing fears for health and safety to be reckoned with. A distressing Pembrokeshire case is going through the law courts now. Owners of publicly accessible trees must rightly bear a strict burden of care, but a climate of fear can only do damage.

These varied lines of thought are all prompted by the beautiful images and descriptions of individual trees that Mr Miles presents. But he does an added service by covering also groups of trees particular to certain areas: ‘The Weird Birches of Ty Uchaf’; ‘The Laburnum Hedges of Ceredigion’; ‘Llanthony Whitebeams’; ‘Tan y Pistyll Wild Cherries’; ‘Monmouthshire Orchards’ and so on. Most of these will probably be unknown to you but their importance is immediately obvious and appealing. There are suddenly many little corners in Wales I need to visit.

74 short chapters are squeezed into the 260 pages of this book. Being on high quality paper to do justice to the illustrations, it would do damage to a Christmas stocking, so my advice is to give it to yourself as a present without delay to keep your spirits up as the long, wet winter evenings come upon us. Britain as a whole is recognised as having perhaps the very finest stocks of veteran trees in Europe and I feel some pride in seeing how many of these wonderful creatures live in Wales.

Thomas Lloyd

Focus on Listed Buildings from NFU Mutual

Understanding the Real Value of History

From Elizabethan mansions to Victorian back-to-backs, wartime air raid shelters to converted lighthouses, the range of historic properties within Wales which people increasingly call 'home' is as diverse as the nation's history itself. As well as providing a stunning and often proudly cherished backdrop to normal daily life for thousands of families, ownership of a property with Listed Status can also bring great responsibilities, both financial and as a custodian to the nation, to those who live there.

While most homeowners will invest significant amounts of time and money preserving these homes on a day-to-day basis, an alarming number may unwittingly be putting their home's long term future at risk by not adequately protecting themselves against the costs of rebuilding their historic property should major damage or accidents occur. The risk of major incident can be especially pronounced in listed houses as, by their very nature, many may feature plumbing, electrics or construction techniques which can be centuries old and not necessarily suited to modern-day wear and tear. Faced with such considerations it is critically important that homeowners have sought professional support in gaining and insuring against a realistic estimation of the rebuild cost.

As the UK's leading rural insurer NFU Mutual is concerned that, across the industry, some owners of listed buildings are unwittingly failing to insure their properties against the real cost of rebuild or repair. Much of the reason for such shortfalls is based upon the fact that owners of listed properties are required by Cadw to make 'like-for-like' repairs, using not only traditional materials but often traditional and scarcely specialised building techniques. Professional fees, access costs, salvage and restoration charges and the cost of sourcing period fixture and fittings are all other factors which may contribute to pushing the true cost of rebuilding a listed property beyond expectations if not properly accounted for from the outset. Following a recent Government ruling on VAT eligibility, owners who are VAT eligible or unsure about their status, also need to consider adding up to 20% to their insured total in order to cover any VAT liabilities arising from rebuild or repair works.

With such a range of issues to take into account it is crucial that owners of listed buildings work with insurance companies like NFU Mutual, who both understand their needs and also actively engage with them to ensure they have cover which is suitably comprehensive enough to meet their needs and potential liabilities. To help customers NFU Mutual works with specialist valuation experts Cunningham Lindsey to establish and then insure for the 'true' rebuild cost. Combining Cunningham Lindsey's globally acquired expertise with the intimate local knowledge and understanding of NFU Mutual agents, enables NFU Mutual to offer owners of listed buildings insurance which is both comprehensive and also designed around their specific needs. Owners can then rest assured that their most valuable of assets, and those of the nation's heritage, are covered by an insurer that has received a 5-Star rating for excellent levels of cover from Defaqto, one of the UK's leading independent financial services research companies.

The properties listed by Cadw in Wales fall into three levels of classification;

Grade I: Buildings of exceptional interest, considered to be of national importance.

Grade II*: Particularly important and more than special interest, of regional importance

Grade II: Buildings of special interest, considered to be of local importance.



NFU Mutual