

WELSH HISTORIC GARDENS TRUST.

YMDDIRIEDOLAETH GERDDI HANESYDDOL CYMRU.

BULLETIN. MARCH 1990.

Dear Members,

We are anxious to keep you informed of our progress, and in the meantime we are sending out this Bulletin which includes an important note about grants for storm damage. You will all by now be aware of the conference taking place in a few days time at St David's University College, Lampeter, "Welsh Gardens Under Threat". We will be reporting on the outcome of the conference in our first newsletter. We are enclosing a copy of the minutes of the A.G.M. held in February to accompany the Chairman's report, in which you will find the names of all the members duly elected at the meeting to serve on the committee.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE A.G.M. FEBRUARY 1990.

You may think that we are off to a somewhat eccentric start, holding our first A.G.M. a mere 5 months after our Inaugural General Meeting. We were advised however to hold an A.G.M. in order to appoint a committee to hold office in accordance with the terms of the constitution and to establish a pattern of answerability.

As you can imagine, I should like to come before you at our first A.G.M. with a multitude of solid achievements, but given the fact that we have only been in existence 5 months I do think that what we have achieved is considerable.

Your Formation Committee, as you will be aware, had been meeting since June of last year and with the exception of one snow cancelled meeting it has met every month since then. A great deal of our work has been concerned with the very setting up of the Trust and the Inaugural General Meeting, from this we moved to the structure of the Trust and its constitution. We have now agreed a constitution, modelled on the best existing patterns, and have submitted it for approval by the Charity Commissioners. Copies of the constitution are available from the Membership Secretary.

At this meeting you will be invited to elect the officers of the Trust and an executive committee. They will take over responsibility from the Formation Committee, some of whose members offer themselves for election, others have chosen to hand the torch on. Once the Trust has an elected committee we feel that we can proceed with the appointment to other posts such as Council, Trustees and President.

From the establishment of the Formation Committee in June last year a great deal of effort went into the recruitment of new members. The number of subscriptions received by February 24th was 187, including 9 local authority and institutional members, 36 life members and 18

founding members. Taking account of family membership this means we probably have a total of over 250 members, which, after 5 months we believe to be very satisfactory. We understand that it compares very favourably with the achievements of the English county trusts.

As you know from my remarks at our inaugural meeting we intend to set up branches at county level. We are currently forming the first of these branches in South and Mid Glamorgan, under the Chairmanship of Michael Littlewood. We are also discussing the formation of branches in Gwent and Clwyd and would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in assisting us.

I hope that by now you do not need me to tell you much about the conference 'Welsh Gardens Under Threat', which takes place at St Davids U.C. Lampeter from April 2/4th. The Formation Committee have worked hard to set this up and the conference organiser is Mr. Rookingham Gill. I believe that this will be a major conference by any standards, drawing participants and expertise from all over the U.K. and the United States. We anticipate a great deal of valuable publicity for the quality and cause of Welsh gardens and parks and invaluable contact with the skills needed to safeguard them.

Other sources of publicity in the past 5 months have been a most valuable article by Richard Haslam, Country Life Jan. 11th, two articles in the Western Mail, an article in the magazine of the Garden History Society, an article in the forthcoming edition of Hortus, two radio interviews, mentions in the Times and pieces in several local newspapers.

It gives me particular satisfaction to report that work will re-commence on the Register of Sites of Historic Landscape Interior in April. It had been one of our prime objectives from the outset to see this crucial work re-start and we are profoundly grateful to our colleagues in the Countryside Commission and Cadw who have gathered the money and the manpower to bring this about so rapidly, and we propose to make a financial contribution to this undertaking.

We have also been fortunate to secure the assistance of the Chairman of the Welsh County Archives Group, Mrs Patricia Moore, who will advise on, and co-ordinate, archival work on Welsh gardens.

As you know the Trust has, from the outset, been deeply concerned about the future of two very important and beautiful gardens in Dyfed, Middleton and Aberglasney. It is still too early for me to give you any definite news about either of them. However it may interest you to know that probably not a fortnight has gone by since last year that there has not been a meeting about one or both of them. As I mentioned at our Inaugural Meeting, I see our task as requiring imagination, co-operation and patience, the patience of Job.

A small, but I think significant straw in the wind, is the prospect of a meeting, at their invitation, with the Welsh Health Authority to discuss the landscape significance and potential of their estates.

Now I want to turn to some of the tasks ahead of us. If we successfully establish county branches we will be particularly concerned that they establish a close relationship with the local authorities in their area. We do not yet know whether there may be a role for our members in the compilation of the Register of Historic Landscape but once the brief is clear we will be able to see what follow up work may be required.

This may take the form of further research, either historical, or on present ownership, or of photography. We must also anticipate making lists which establish priorities for the Trust in each region. I believe that we may soon have cause to circulate our members with a form to see on what fields they might be willing to volunteer their assistance.

Finally I want to turn again to the organisation of the Trust. The workload of developing membership strength, of increasing liason with other bodies, invitations to speak and inspect, not to speak of the ongoing negotiations on Middleton and Aberglasney is very considerable. It gives me great pleasure to report that we have acquired the assistance of Susan Lloyd-Fern who is going to work part time for us as Membership Secretary undertaking a wide range of duties including the production of a newsletter. We have applied for a grant to assist in her employment and to provide improved office facilities. Mrs Susan Muir, who has done an outstanding job will be able to hand over her task as Membership Secretary, while our Minutes Secretary, Gerard Dent has very kindly agreed to stand as Honorary Secretary to the Trust.

We hope that with this additional assistance and the enlarged committee we may be able to organise one or two benefits for members such as visits to gardens and discounts at one or two nurseries.

We are sad to loose five members of the Formation Committee, but everyone joined it on the clear understanding that it was a short commitment if they so wished. I would particularly like to single out Merfyn Bourne who has put a great deal of work into developing and steering through our constitution. We are all most grateful to him.

William Powell Wilkins. Chairman.

STORM DAMAGE TO HISTORIC PARKS & GARDENS IN WALES.

The Countryside Commission has announced special funding for tree surgery and replanting following the severe gales which destroyed many trees at the beginning of the year. Wales is to receive a proportion of the £60,000 initially allocated to the Commission and further funding for a 5 year period to 1994/5. It is understood that consideration is being given to the special case of Welsh historic parks and gardens. The WHGT is in discussion with the Commission with the aim of securing assistance in the short and longer terms. As the clearance of fallen trees may be an eligible item, owners are advised to postpone this work if possible since grant payments only cover expenditure incurred after a firm offer of grant aid has been received. In certain exceptional cases, where urgent clearance has taken place, parties may still be eligible, but they must carefully keep all receipts and / or time sheets. In due course, information about application procedure and rates of grant may be obtained from your Local County Council (Planning Dept), or in case of difficulty further guidance may be obtained from WHGT.

Much useful historical and scientific information was obtained in England following the great storm of 1987, which furthered the understanding of the development of historical sites.

The WHGT will shortly be communicating with the owners of historic parks and gardens on this matter, however we would be most grateful if members could complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the Membership Secretary as soon as possible. If any member feels that they may be eligible for the above, proposed grants they should contact the Membership Secretary for inclusion on the circulation list.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Members might like to note the following events taking place across the country.

"THE COUNTRY HOUSE LANDSCAPE, PARKS AND GARDENS".

West Dean College in association with the Garden History Society will be holding a 5 day residential course at West Dean College, from 24th-29th June 1990, entitled "The Country House Landscape, Parks and Gardens".

Further information and programme details can be obtained from West Dean College, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex PO13 0QZ. Phone Singleton (024363)301.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WALLED GARDENS.

Ms. Angela Mc Cann is currently working on a thesis for the Architectural Association's Conservation course on Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens, and would be most grateful for any help that any of our members can offer her.

She would be most interested in details of any Walled Gardens that you know of in your area. Anyone with information can contact her at Greenhill, Hatfield Broad Oak, Bishops Stortford, Herts.

The WHGT has been fortunate to secure the assistance of the Chairman of the Welsh County Archivists Group. She would like to hear from anyone who has any information or photographs particularly relating to Welsh historic gardens. Anyone who has relevant information should send details to; Mrs Patricia Moore BA., FSA. County Archivist, Glamorgan