

Glansevern Hall - A Garden Reclaimed

by Neville Thomas

The conception that was realised in the building of Glansevern starts with a letter from architect, Joseph Bromfield, to Sir Arthur Davies Owen, prospective employer. It is dated 30 August, 1801, and says: "I have a plan for your house drawn." That plan is no longer identifiable. The Glansevern Papers deposited at the National Library of Wales contain a number of plans, all undated, and it may be that changes were made after August 1801, to result in the building as it now stands.

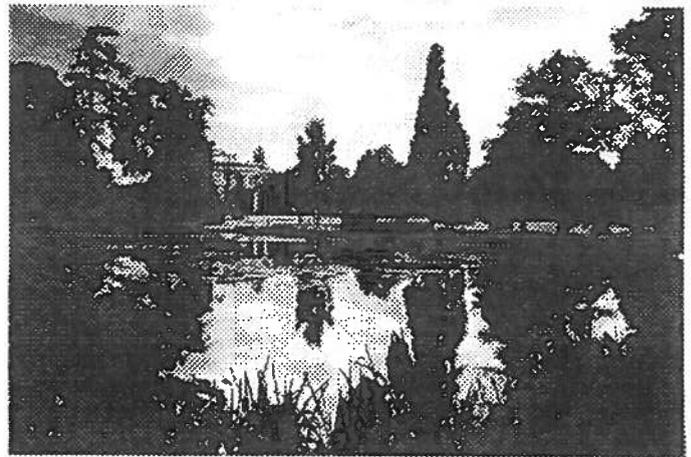
The site chosen by Owen, on part of the extensive lands in his ownership, was near Berriew and on slightly raised ground some 500 yards from the banks of the Severn. It commands a fine prospect towards Comdon and its outlying hills across the river. The house was raised from scratch: John Evans' map of the survey of North Wales with the Llwyd y Groes imprint of 1795 shows no sign of a dwelling in the vicinity.

The work of Joseph Bromfield can be seen elsewhere. He contributed to Nannau and Rŷg in North Wales and Oakley Park, Walcot Park and Attingham park in Shropshire. His involvement at these locations, however, was largely confined to plasterwork for which he was best known (he had been admitted to the Shrewsbury Carpenters and Bricklayers company in 1777 as an "overmantle plasterer"). It is likely, however that at Glansevern the house was wholly conceived and erected by Bromfield. * Born about 1743, Bromfield was a young man at the beginning of the neo-classical movement which took impetus at Versailles in the 1760s. It is not surprising, therefore, that the product of his endeavours at Glansevern was described by Pevsner as "an austere Greek Revival house". Nor that John Hilling ("The Historic Architecture of Wales", 1975) compares the main facade, finished in Cefn stone, with the Petit Trianon at Versailles. The rear extensions to the main block together with the coach house and more distant stabling, are of brick construction. Contrary to the impression sometimes created, they are all of a period with the principal edifice and not of later date.

Sir Arthur Davies Owen traced his ancestry back to the marriage, in 1165, of Cadifor ap Dinawal, Lord of Castell Hywel in Cardiganshire and Catrin, one of the countless natural offspring of Lord Rhys. A memorial to Arthur's brother, William, at Berriew church is engraved with the arms of Cadifor ap Dinawal. The Owen family prospered over the centuries and, by 1800, held large estates at Berriew and around Llanguirig. The 19th and

* FOOTNOTE: *Bromfield is also believed to be the architect of several private residences in North Wales, notably Nanhoron (home of Bettina Harden) Broomhall, Caerynwch, and Plas Bodegroes.* (Ed.)

early 20th centuries saw them active in radical politics, both local and national, with a particular interest in Welsh education.



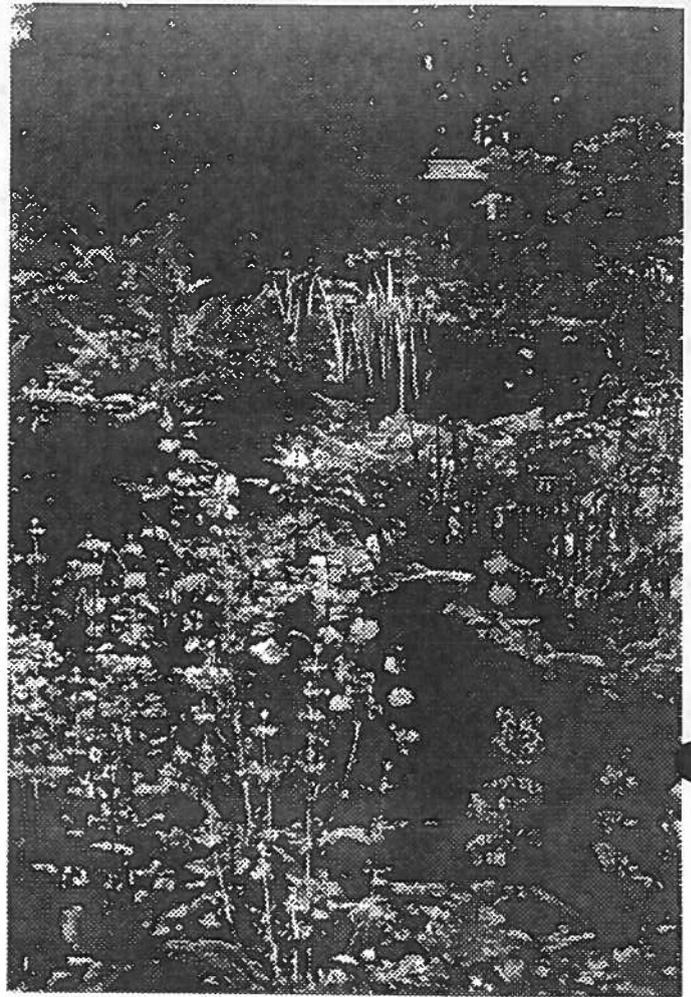
Glansevern Hall

In 1960 the family became extinct in the male line with the death of Stephen Owen while the connection with Glansevern had already been severed by the sale of the property in 1951. During the Owens' tenure of Glansevern the gardens were, reputedly, magnificent. On different accounts either 9 or 14 gardeners were in full-time employment up to 1939. Between the sale in 1951 and the year 1982, however, ownership changed four times. The first buyer, as so often the case with well-wooded properties after the Second War, was a timber merchant who reaped the expected harvest from his purchase. He was succeeded by three short-term residents so that house, garden and park-land were in danger of becoming a traded commodity. It is, therefore, not surprising that a decline which had already set in during the last years of Owen ownership accelerated sharply after 1951.

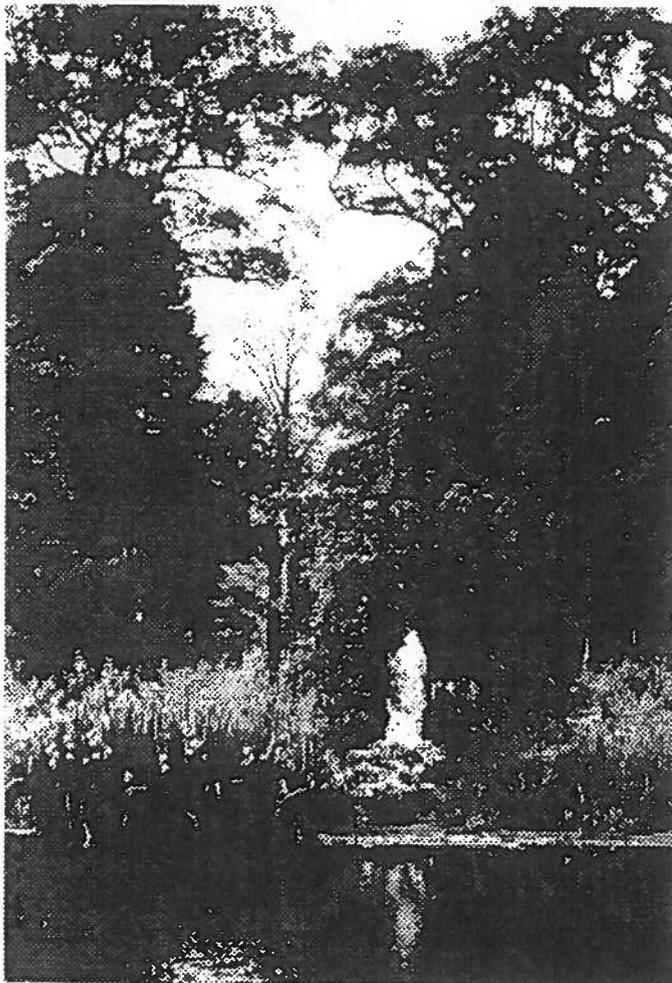
Little seems to be on record concerning the original layout of the gardens. A plan for the walled kitchen garden was agreed in 1805 and construction proceeded according to the plan. It is still there. Beyond that the trail runs cold when seeking design materials contemporaneous with the building of the house. There exists, however, a plan dated November, 1880, which shows the gardens as a whole and a small sketch of 18 December in the same year listing plant names. Both documents are signed by Edward Milner, a collaborator of the better-known Sir Joseph Paxton. It is plain that they represent proposals for the future and are not a record of what was then in place. [A small parenthesis on Milner. His son, who worked closely with his father, described him, with filial piety, as having "designed and

completed many of the finest works of the kind that have ever been produced, not only in this country but in various notable places on the continent of Europe". (Henry Ernest Milner, "The Art and Practice of Gardening", 1890)]. Milner's 1880 plan is of limited assistance because it is not clear whether, or to what extent, his proposals were implemented. A collection of photographs taken at the turn of this century, bought at a local auction, disappointingly contained not a single over-view or panorama. Their focus was on individual flowers and fruits (a lot of peaches). Gastineau's print of 1820, widely available, is also uninformative - it shows no more than swans on the lake with the house as background.

The picture presented in 1982 was all too familiar. Whatever the product of Milner, or some earlier designer, there was little to show for it. The area of once-formal garden near the house had been reduced to postage-stamp size, the remainder having been surrendered to sheep. Cattle had been allowed to graze around the once gardened lakeside and the walled garden of 1805 had provided conveniently sheltered quarters for general livestock. Pigs had stripped bark from trees, bringing sickness or death, and had disported themselves vigorously among the ruins of large, almost Kew-sized greenhouses. Shrubberies spared from devastation by livestock had, of course, become impenetrable thickets. Trunks of fallen trees combined with random deposits of earth, rubble (where from?) and disused farm machinery denied access to much of the ungrazed land. The starting point for any serious reclamation is never a gardener with a spade but a Hymac (to dredge the badly silted lake), a



A part of the restored water garden, a recently erected summerhouse in the background.



Nearly 1000 tons of soil and rock were moved to recreate the island in the lake. The pergola & statue have been in place for six years.

bulldozer, a chain-saw gang, a fencer, a stonemason, a bricklayer and a ruthless cast of mind.

Yet, through all the dereliction, the essential elements of a wonderful garden could be glimpsed. Clues lie in the immediate topography and undulations of the land, the positioning of a fountain, the disposition of ornamental trees. More positive signals are afforded by linear plantings of rhododendron and other long-lived shrubs which betray the existence of a planned walk. Two particular discoveries have been hugely rewarding.

First, a pattern of small streams emptying in the lake suggested the perfect site for a water garden, and so it turned out to be. With restored pathways and fresh planting this has become the most riotously colourful area of the entire garden from May onwards. Secondly, a pile of huge boulders had its true purpose camouflaged by self-seeded forest trees growing on, and out of, it. On proper inspection it turned out to be a rock garden of formidable size, now thought to date from about 1840. Passing under and through the rock is a grotto, delight of small children. Oaks, seeded between the stones, were up to 4 feet in girth, threatening the stability of the structure and indicating that a very long time had passed since this was recognisably a garden. Another 4 or 5 years of expanding trunks would have brought assured disintegration of the whole edifice. Just in time! The abandoned areas of formal garden yielded very few clues to past history. The sheep is a supreme eliminator of evidence.

Today's herbaceous beds, therefore, lay no claim to imitate

earlier designs, save where a new pergola has been erected to run from the house to a large stone fountain/cascade on the East lawn and where plantings have been restored on either side of the orangery.

The gardens now cover 18 acres (including the lake of 4 acres). Notwithstanding the activities of the timber merchant and other vicissitudes a good number of unusual tree species (tribute to the owners) have survived to maturity. They include fine specimens of *Magnolia acuminata*, *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, *Parrotia persica*, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Platanus orientalis* and *Ginkgo biloba*. This inheritance has inspired the choice of new tree plantings where the emphasis has been on the mildly exotic in woodland surrounding the lake. The same theme has been followed for the specimen trees planted in the central parkland whereas, around the perimeter, several thousand native

species have been grown to replace the originals. A project currently under way is the re-opening and re-planting of the Victorian "Smokers' Walk" which formerly led from the house towards the River Severn. If age, patience and finance remain tolerant, the next stage may be to take back into garden a thick wedge of ground which runs South from the main frontage of the house towards the stream exiting from the lake. Yew hedges once forming the sides of the wedge have, sadly, been the victims of rampant agricultural enterprise but the outlines remain, having successfully resisted the best efforts of sheep, cow and bullock. As ever, it is irresistibly tempting to take a garden back to its old frontiers.

Glansevern Hall Gardens are open to the public from May to September, Fridays, Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays, 12.00 noon to 6.00 pm.

The Gateway Project

by Bettina Harden

As most of you will be aware, last year we put together an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project to form part of The Millennium Festival, Wales. Pulling it all together, getting other charities on board and, indeed, filling in the horribly complex forms, was quite an achievement. We then had to hold our breath and hope that we would be successful. I am delighted to say that we heard at the end of February that The Gateway Project would feature in The Millennium Festival. The form filling is far from over and we have a lot to do before we can draw on the funds allocated to us. It is intended that the Project will start work in July of this year and I would like to say how grateful we are to the branches who have helped start to put together the list of gardens suitable for the project.

I thought it would be useful to set out the aims and objectives of The Gateway Project, so that you all know exactly what we are trying to do:

Aim:

To enable access to the historic parks and gardens of Wales for as wide an audience as possible as part of The Millennium Festival, Wales.

Objectives:

To make the beauties and enjoyment of the garden heritage of Wales available to all the people of Wales with the publication of a Millennium Edition of *The Guide to the Historic Parks & Gardens of Wales*. This will also be available on the Internet, courtesy of the National Botanic Garden of Wales - www.gardenofwales.org.uk.

To promote and facilitate free visits to historic parks and gardens in Wales, by under-represented groups in Wales, for their enjoyment.

To enhance and develop continuing interest in the garden heritage of Wales, enabling the community to appreciate their historic parks and gardens as never before.

The Gateway Project has funding to operate for 18 months to the end of 2000, setting up and organising visits by under-represented groups - people with disabilities, the elderly and infirm, families on low incomes, ethnic minorities, schoolchildren, children with special needs &c. - to the historic parks and gardens of Wales. From July we will have an Access Officer in place to co-ordinate and organise the garden visits, working with specialist charities so that each garden experience will be tailored to the needs of every individual group. There will be an opportunity to see some of the most beautiful gardens in Wales all through the year 2000 - snowdrop walks, bluebell woods, Spring gardens with azaleas and rhododendrons, rose gardens, water gardens, wild gardens, Autumn colour. We hope to encourage adults to life-long learning, and, through the children who visit the gardens, inspire the future stewards of our parks and gardens.

The Gateway Project will be run by the WHGT, the lead partner in a consortium of other relevant charities. These include The Prince's Trust Volunteers, Age Concern Cymru, The Sensory Trust and the Black Environment Network. It is hoped that, having established and run the project to the end of 2000, we will be able to continue to run it, albeit on a smaller scale, for the foreseeable future. Fund-raising is on-going to provide the matched funding we need for 2000, but also for at least another three years.

We are going to need the help of every member of the WHGT - to tell groups in your area about the project, to act as volunteers on some of the days out, to come up with good ideas for fund-raising..... One idea we have had is to set up a scheme whereby people can sponsor someone to join in the scheme - say a £10.00 a head - to give a child a wonderful day out, complete with transport to and from home, tea and buns, and a good information pack to take home. Write me a letter, telephone me, send me an e-mail - david.harden@farmline.com - any and all suggestions gratefully received.

W.H.G.T. News

W.H.G.T. TENTH ANNIVERSARY

We have been working in the background to find an opportunity to offer all our members the chance to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the Trust this year. This is advance notice of one of the occasions when we will be able to do this. The National Library of Wales in collaboration with the Royal Cambrian Academy are mounting a very special exhibition - **Gardens of Wales** - which will run from the 1st - 30th May at the Royal Cambrian Academy, Conwy, and from the 19th June until the 21st August at the National Library. Curated by Paul Joyner, it will feature paintings, watercolours and engravings of some of the great gardens of Wales - Hafod, Portmeirion, Bodnant &c. as well as contemporary works of art focussed on Welsh gardens painted by members of the Royal Cambrian Academy. The whole breadth of gardening in Wales will be covered from the great landscapes and formal topiary gardens to displays in cottage gardens and tiny back yards.

We have organised two special Private Views of this exhibition exclusively for our members. The first of these will take place on Thursday 13th May at 6.30 p.m. at the Royal Cambrian Academy. Tickets are £6.00 each to include admission to the exhibition, a copy of the catalogue and refreshments. Well aware that the North coast of Wales is not accessible to all our members, we have organised a second Private View which will take place at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth on Saturday 26th June at 1.00pm. On both occasions, viewing the exhibition will be preceded by a Reception offering a glass of wine and refreshments. We do hope that as many of you as possible will join us either in Conwy or Aberystwyth - and, do, please bring a friend. In the meantime, if you want any further information do contact either the Chairman, Bettina Harden - 01758 730 610 - or Ros Laidlaw - 01970 832 268.

GARDENS OF WALES

Royal Cambrian Academy, Conwy

1st - 30th May

Open 11.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. daily except Monday

Sundays 1.00 p.m. - 4.30 p.m.

National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

19th June - 21st August (Closed Saturdays)

EDWARDIAN GARDENS STUDY WEEKEND

THE MUSEUM OF WELSH LIFE, ST FAGANS, CARDIFF SATURDAY 4th JULY & SUNDAY 5th JULY

We are organising a weekend in South Wales to study in detail some of the wonderful Edwardian gardens to be found in Wales. The weekend will offer the chance to listen to lectures on Edwardian gardens as a whole, on the gardens at St Fagans - their development, the Italian garden and the Rosery there' on Duffryn. Miss Jekyll's garden at St Fagans Court, as well as other garden sites in Wales. Most of these will take place on the Saturday and on the Sunday we will go out to look at some of the gardens discussed. Those of you who wish to join us might like to know that on Friday 3rd July there will be a Reception in the evening for everyone who has sponsored roses for The Rosery at St Fagans. As soon as all the details are finalised we will be sending you a leaflet on the weekend. Meanwhile, please make a note of the date in your diary.

OBITUARY

Sylvia Thomas-Ferrand

It was with great regret and sorrow that we learned of the sudden death of Sylvia Thomas-Ferrand on the 30th March. A member of an ancient and distinguished Pembrokeshire family, Sylvia's contribution to the setting up of the Pembrokeshire Branch of the WHGT was invaluable and she represented that county with distinction on the Trust Committee for over seven years. I know that I will not be alone in missing her elegant, charming presence at our meetings and we will feel her absence when we have knotty problems to resolve. She cared for and nursed her beloved David until his death earlier this year and we all hoped that she would find the strength and energy to overcome her own serious health problems as the Spring progressed. Alas, this was not to be. We offer our sincere condolences to their children, Cherry, John and Rosamund.

AGM AT POWIS CASTLE

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 5 June in the ballroom at Powis Castle, promptly at 10.30am. Coffee and tea will be available from 10.00am in the tea room, and the meeting will be followed by the opportunity to lunch in the tea room at 12.00 noon. Members are asked to park in the usual National Trust car park below the house.

A bonus of the day is that it coincides with the weekend event **Potting On** hosted in the gardens by the National Trust. Six of Britain's leading potters will be displaying their work and demonstrating their craft in the gardens. Work will be displayed in and around the Orangery, and from 12.00pm to 4.00pm there will be demonstrations of potting by Mark Griffiths, whose huge terracotta pots are thrown by hand in the traditional way, and by David Frith who makes glazed stoneware conservatory pots and water fountains. Also featured are Jonathan Garratt, Karin Hessenberg, Gordon Cooke and Simon Hulbert. Garden furniture by Graham Perks and Sean Hope will be on display.

Remember to bring your National Trust membership card to visit this exhibition and, of course the gardens, which should be looking wonderful with this summer's container plantings freshly placed around the garden. Non-members of the National Trust pay the usual garden entry fee.

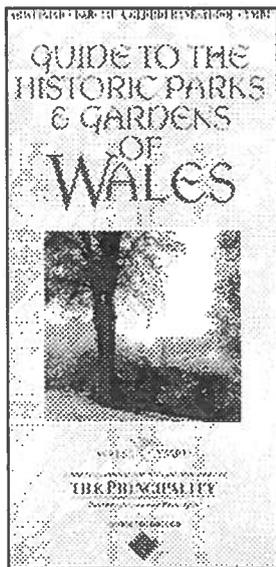
COPY DEADLINE FOR SUMMER ISSUE

MATERIAL FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF THE BULLETIN MUST REACH THE EDITOR BY 30th JUNE. IT WILL BE ESPECIALLY WELCOME ON FLOPPY DISC IN WORD OR WORKS FORMAT. ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR MAJOR ARTICLES, AND APPROPRIATE AUTHORS WOULD BE ESPECIALLY WELCOME.

Caroline Palmer

Leaflet, launched at Middleton, joins the Internet.

On 5 April 1999 the **Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Wales** was launched, for its second successful year, with minor alterations and a new cover picture. Trust Committee and Publications Committee members joined with owners of participating gardens in the area in applauding the coalition of partners. Wales Tourist Board, The Principality Building Society, Country Side Council for Wales, The National Grid and The National Trust which has supported this successful venture. The party enjoyed a tour of the recently erected glasshouse led by Dr Ivor Stokes, and a buffet lunch generously provided by our hosts the National Botanic Garden of Wales.



The leaflet has been posted to all members and more copies will be available through your local branch, through participating gardens, Principality Building Society Offices and Tourist Information Offices. It may also be viewed on the World Wide Web by visiting the site www.gardensofwales.org.uk/historic. This website, professionally created by Simon Jones & Associates of Llandeilo, allows internet visitors to view the entire brochure, including every picture, at the touch of the keyboard.

News from the Branches

BRECON AND RADNOR

Saturday 19 June 2.30pm Pen-y-Maes, Glasbury. Garden visit and bring-and-buy plant sale.

July 19- July 22 Members of the Branch will be manning the WHGT Stand in the Flower tent at the Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells.

Saturday 4 September 2.30pm Craig-y Nos Castle Visit to Castle and Gardens. There will be a talk about Mme Patti and her private theatre at the Castle.

CEREDIGION

The Branch AGM was held on 30 January. Members enjoyed an enthralling talk by Chris Musson on Welsh Historic Gardens viewed from the air. In March, surefooted members enjoyed two exceptional picturesque walks: Rediscovering Thomas Jones' Fourth Walk, organised by the Hafod Trust and led by Jenni Macve, and exploring Richard Payne Knight's Picturesque landscape at Downton Gorge, Herefordshire (now a National Nature Reserve), led by Tom Wall, of English Nature.

Saturday 15 May Recognising Trees. Field seminar on the University Campus, led by Dr John Savidge.

Details Phone Dr Savidge 01974-261352

Sunday 16 May 2-5pm A rare chance to visit the gardens of Glandyfi Castle. £2.50 to charity.

Saturday 19 June An Information day will be held at Hafod. Contact Michael Norman 01558 650735

Saturday 10 July National Trust Fete at Llanerchaeron. The Branch will man a stand.

Saturday 11 September Gardens of the Lower Teifi Valley. Visit led by Tom Lloyd. (Details Penny David 01570-422041)

CLWYD

Sunday 23 May Walk around Llanrhaeadr Church and Almshouses.

Saturday 12 June 2.00pm Visit to Mostyn Hall Gardens.

October (date to be arranged) Autumn Walk in the Erbistock Area, and Lunch.

GWYNEDD

Mary Garner writes: Well in hand is the Branch's involvement with the Ellis Wynne Trust in the garden restoration at the Bard's home, Las Ynys, Talsarnau, Merionedd. Ellis Wynne have appointed a Development Officer, and the next priority is an application for grant money. Gwynedd Branch will be contributing towards matched funding, and lending their expertise. A full programme has been arranged for the 10th Anniversary year.

Saturday 22 May 11.30am. Visit to two contrasting Anglesey Gardens. Penrhos, near Holyhead, a neglected park round a ruined house, and Carregllwyd, near Llanfaethlu, an oasis hiding in a windswept wood.

Thursday 17 June Visit to Highgrove. Members ballot to allocate places.

Saturday 10 July Nursery Crawl. One ticket, all inclusive of tea, entitles members to visit any of 15 nurseries in Gwynedd, all of which will offer discounts of at least 10 percent.

Friday 10 September Garden visit and tea at Bryn y Bont, Nantmor, home of Committee member Jean Entwistle.

Sunday 10 October 2.00pm Autumn Plant Sale at Pandy Treban, Bryngwran, Anglesey, home of Committee member Joanna Davidson.

MID AND SOUTH GLAMORGAN

Peter Elmes writes: DUFFRYN: Some of us have been watching the work that has been going on using the lottery money. The work seems of variable quality and it is not clear which features of the garden are to be restored and which are not. We have been worried about the lack of clear horticultural direction and advice. While not wishing to denigrate the keen efforts of the existing staff and their volunteer helpers we have been seeking methods of improving the situation. To this end we are developing a closer liaison with the Friends of Duffryn. From now on one of their members will sit in on our executive meetings and vice versa.

RUPERRA: At present the WHGT can only hold a watching brief until the present owners of the castle and gardens put forward an official application to the planners and Cadw for the redevelopment of the site. Meanwhile the Ruperra Conservation Trust and the Friends of Ruperra are negotiating to buy the area of woodland above the castle which includes the iron age fort etc.

Friday 21 May Spring Party, (by Ticket only) at Dan Clayton Jones' home, Mwndy, Llantrisant.

Summer Programme, contact Peter Elmes 01222 512102

PEMBROKESHIRE

Sunday 20 June 2.30pm. Double garden visit to members gardens: Cleveland, Begelly, Kilgetty, home of Dr and Mrs Gerry Hudson, and Coed y Ffynnon, Lampeter Velfrey, home of Richard Gilbertson.

Thursday 22 July 2.00pm. Visit to National Botanic Garden of Wales, Middleton Hall.

Saturday 25 September 11.00am. Tour of Aberglasney, followed by lunch and visit to Gelli Aur.

Feedback: The Cefn Mabli Oak

Gerry Hudson's discovery of a handbill, (Bulletin, Winter 1998/9) has prompted some further comments:-

- A note by Dr William Linnard

The first known description of the famous Cefn Mabli oak is from 1684, when Thomas Dineley, accompanying the Duke of Beaufort on his official progress through Wales, wrote: 'It is in

It is a single piece of oak 42 ft. 6 inches long, 32½ inches wide, and 5 inches thick.

Another famous old tree, the Golynos oak, grew only a few miles away from Cefn Mabli. It was bought for the navy in 1810 for a hundred guineas. The main trunk was 9½ ft in diameter, and when standing its crown 'overspread 442 square yards of ground'. Five men were engaged for twenty days stripping and cutting it down. It produced 2426 cubic feet of timber, and the heavy body bark was three inches thick.

Several other fine old veteran oak trees, over thirty feet in girth, are still growing in Gwent and Glamorgan, not far from the sites of the Cefn Mabli and Golynos giants.

Dr Linnard is author of 'Welsh Woods and Forests: History and Utilization' 1982.

THE ACCOUNT
OF THE OFFICIAL
PROGRESS OF HIS GRACE
HENRY
THE FIRST DUKE OF BEAUFORT
(Lord President of the Council in Wales, and Lord Warden of the Marches)
THROUGH WALES IN
1684.

*By Photo-lithography
From the Original MS. of Thomas Dineley
in the possession of His Grace,
THE EIGHTH DUKE OF BEAUFORT.*

WITH PREFACE BY
RICHARD W. BANKS, Esq.

LONDON:
BLADES, EAST & BLADES,
13, ARCHURCH LANE, E.C.

MDCCLXXXIV

height seventy foot, having no bow in ye way to obstruct its being laudable timber: at above sixty foot whereof it carrieth about 3 foot diameter, rather more than less, and is in Circumference about the butt neer seven yards'.

Iolo Morganwg, a young man when the tree finally fell in 1779, also described the Cefn Mabli oak in one of his manuscripts (NLW Ms 13089E, p. 357) giving all the facts and figures later reproduced in the printed handbill of 1886. Iolo probably acquired his information originally from an earlier printed account of the tree, produced soon after it fell in 1779.

The decapitated lead-capped trunk must have stood for half a century before the mansion at Cefn Mabli like a giant phallic symbol, and would have been a noted local landmark.

Cefn Mabli was also famous for its great table or shovel-board (i.e. shove ha'penny board) also described by Dineley in 1684, and which had been made from another giant oak. The table was '42 foot in length ... of one intire plank of an Oak, whereof 20 foot was also cutt off before'. Fortunately, this table top has survived, and can now be admired at Tredegar House, Newport.

- Patricia Moore writes:

The Glamorgan Record Office holds a large collection of estate records relating to Cefn Mabli, part of a greater Kemeys-Tynte archive which was dispersed in the late 1930's, much by sale, and is now divided between the Glamorgan, Gwent and Somerset Record Offices. The Glamorgan collection contains no copy of the Cefn Mabli Oak handbill.

Perhaps they were all given away and none retained by Sir Charles. Possibly one day a further copy will be found among a recipient's archives, but the example unearthed by Mr Gerry Hudson appears at present to be a unique survival. We are grateful to him for making its existence known.

The house at Cefn Mabli, now given up by the hospital authority, is being badly vandalised, and there are plans for executive-style houses in the parkland.

Editors Note: Erratum

The final line of Gerry Hudson's article should have read "In around 1792 Nash worked in Tenby designing Sion House, later called Woolferton Grange, for William Routh". The latter name was adopted by the boarding school which occupied the house in the twentieth century until it was destroyed by fire in 1938.

Book Review:

Knot Gardens and Parterres :

A History of The Knot Garden and How To Make One Today

Robin Whalley and Anne Jennings

Barn Elms in association with the Museum of Garden History
160pp £25.00

It was with great pleasure that I received a copy of this handsome book to review for *The Bulletin*. In one way I should probably declare an interest as Robin Whalley is a long-time member of the WHGT, serving for many years on the Trust's Committee and Anne Jennings' work at the Museum of Garden History in Lambeth, where she is Garden Director, is a delight to see. A collaboration between these two authors promised much - and, indeed, delivers that promise.



As The Marchioness of Salisbury says in her Introduction, "The great charm of the formal garden lay not only in its harmonious relationship with the house it surrounded, but in its contrast with the world beyond..."

In Part I Robin Whalley sets out the history of knot gardens from their first mention to the present day. Chapters cover the development of the knot as a motif in design, the emergence of the knot in early Tudor England, the "imbroadery for the earth" to be found in late Tudor and Stuart gardens, the relaxation of the stiff geometric knot into the arabesques and sweeps of the seventeenth-century parterre, and the revival and restoration of formal gardens after 1800. As he says "As virtually all knots and parterres disappeared under the relentless groundswell of

of changing opinion that personified 'Nature' as the ideal maker of the eighteenth-century landscape garden, there are now no surviving examples." However, the excellent illustrations of sources - paintings, drawings and engravings - together with photographs of modern-day recreations and restorations, give the reader a good impression of what a properly-made knot garden was like.

Part II deals with 'How to Make Your Own Knot Garden'. I only wish that I had had it to hand when I laid out my tiny, very simple herb garden. The section 'From Page to Ground' would have saved me hours of time and trouble. Anne Jennings discusses the elements of design involved in creating a knot garden, the plants from which to choose, the practicalities involved in designing your knot and creating a planting plan, preparing the ground and future care and maintenance. Finally, there is a list of gardens to visit (including quite a few Welsh examples), an excellent bibliography for further reading and a proper index - all the ingredients you would hope to find in a well-set-out book on garden history and design. Whether you want to enquire further about the history of the knot garden, have grand and sweeping plans or simpler ideas of your own, this book should serve to set you on the right lines.

Bettina Harden

Designer Dossier

Gertrude Jekyll at Penarth

While re-reading 'Gardens of a Golden Afternoon' by Jane Brown, I noticed in the list of Gertrude Jekyll's works, a reference to 'Hillside' at Penarth. I contacted Professor Barry Thomas, expert on the gardens of Penarth, but he had no knowledge of Hillside.

An application to the Godalming Museum brought the information that a page in Miss Jekyll's notebooks covers the planting at Hillside in 1924, and that the name of the client looks like G. Croisdale Kirk.

Mrs Elizabeth Whittle of Cadw was able to tell me that Hillside is in Beech Road, Penarth and that little trace of the original garden remains. The garden is on a very steep slope, down which is a winding path flanked by borders. Presumably it was these borders for which Gertrude Jekyll provided a planting plan.

I would like to thank Professor Thomas for going to look for the garden in the pouring rain.

John Davies

Garden History

Summer School 4-9 July 1999



BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE

Course Director: Robin Whalley
Co-author of *Knot Gardens and Parterres*

- Illustrated Lectures
- Guest Speakers
- Visits to gardens of the West of England including Prior Park, Dyrham, Rodmarton, Iford, Hestercombe, Barnsley and Hadspen
- Residential at Newton Park

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New Organisation: the Friends of Penllergare

An informal society entitled FRIENDS OF PENLLEGARE, has been formed to further the following objectives, for public benefit:

1. To protect, conserve, restore and interpret the historic landscape of Penllergare designed by J. D. Llewelyn;
2. To protect and enhance the diversity of wildlife species and habitats there, and;
3. to promote public knowledge and appreciation of the landscape, its history and biodiversity, as well as free public access on foot.

The Friends first project will be the publication of Penllergare: a Victorian Paradise, by Richard Morris. Details of a pre-publication offer will be available later this year. Meanwhile if you would like more information about the Friends, please telephone Michael Norman on 01558 650735



CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

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Omission:

The Editor gratefully acknowledges the Permission of the National Library of Wales for allowing the reproduction of the watercolour by Williams Sandys, of Arch Isaf, Hafod (N.L.W. Cwrt Mawr MS 393C) which appeared in Jenni Macve's article, Bulletin Winter 1998/9.