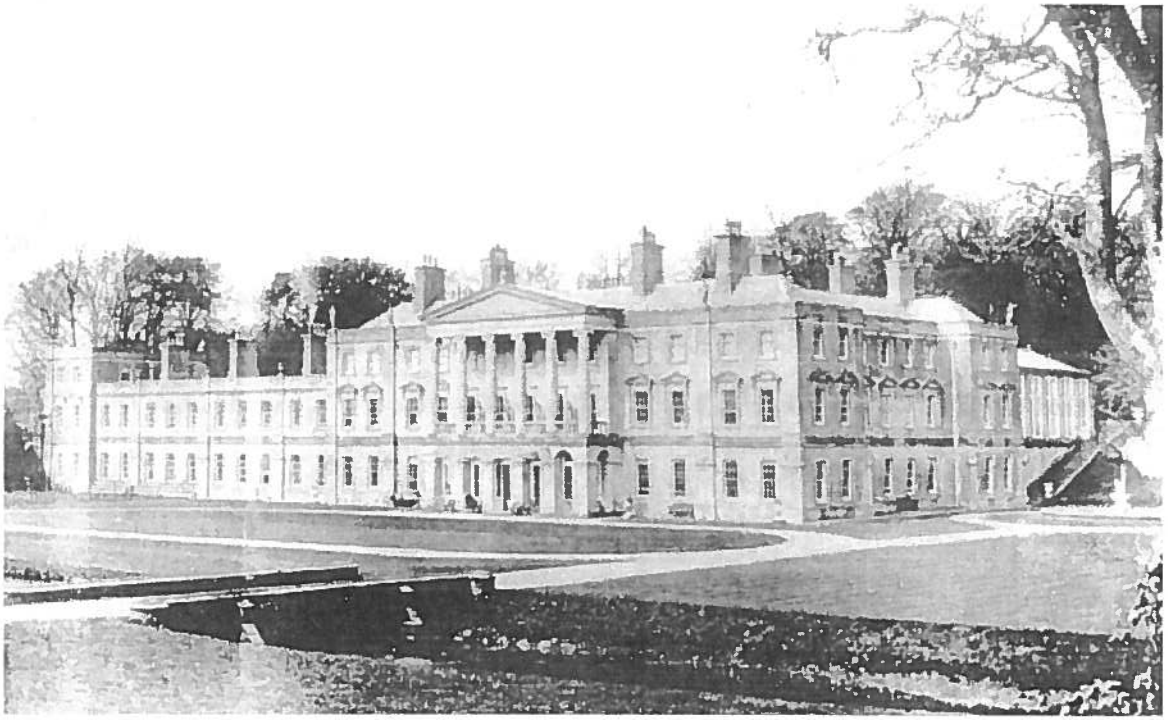
The Bulletin

SUMMER/AUTUMN ISSUE 1995



The Park and Gardens at Glynllifon

by Bettina Harden

Glynllifon, 'the valley of flowing water' is possessed of one of the finest parks and gardens in Wales. With the great mansion as its focus, its park and gardens were developed over two hundred years and contain a unique range of garden structures, follies and water displays. The home of the Glyns and later the Wynns (a Wynn married the last Glyn heiress in 1700), for centuries, it was the 18th century which saw the beginnings of what became a model estate in the 19th century. The first rebuilding of the house took place in 1600, which in turn was replaced in 1751 by 'a moderate-sized brick mansion having a colonnaded vestibule as its principal entrance.'

Sir Thomas Wynn (1736–1807), the 3rd Baronet, later the 1st Lord Newborough, was almost certainly responsible for laying out the park and developing the walled gardens. An enthusiastic amateur architect, he designed the distinctive gates to Glynllifon as well as Fort Williamsburg, begun in 1761, with additions in 1773–76. This remarkable 'toy fort' with its sister, Fort Belan, was the headquarters for *The Garrison of Fort Williamsburg* and which, together with *The Holy Order of Sisterhood connected and Regulated with the free firm and friendly Garrison of Fort Williamsburg* formed the centre of his social and military life while in Wales. While Fort Belan would certainly have seen off any French invaders advancing down the Menai Strait, it is to be doubted whether Fort Williamsburg had any real military purpose for all its 36 cannon. Sir Thomas' architectural talents were also used to design a seaside villa and garden at Kingsgate in Kent for Lord Holland. According to Horace Walpole this could be 'easily mistaken for a prospect in some half-civilised island discovered by Captain Cook.'

Created Baron Newborough in 1776 and having married Lady Catherine Perceval (sister of Spencer Perceval, Britain's only assassinated Prime Minister) all seemed on the up and up for the Wynns. But, following the death of his wife and a falling out with Lord North over the 'ruinous and disgraceful' war with

America, Lord Newborough was beset with troubles. Taking his young son with him, he left Wales with its local feuds and his money problems behind him, and went to Tuscany. Several years later he caused scandal and gossip on his marriage to the beautiful, but very young Maria Stella Petronilla Chiapini—she was thirteen years old compared to his fifty! Officially the daughter of a Public Constable, Lorenzo Chiapini, she always maintained she was the legitimate daughter of Louis Egalité, Duc d'Orleans, swapped at birth for a more desirable boy! The French Revolutionary Wars of the 1790s drove Lord Newborough and Maria Stella home to Wales, and it was long thought that this was when the gardens at Glynllifon were laid out. However, contemporary records and descriptions lead us to believe that this was not the case. Lord Newborough was still assailed by money problems, and although accounts reveal that he ordered a Vinery for the walled gardens in 1793, nothing else is recorded. This view is borne out by John Evans' description of Glynllifon in his *Beauties of England & Wales* (1812)—'The park is spacious, tho' exhibiting little variety ...or artificial decoration.

Fountains set in a lime avenue, focussed on a distant cascade.

The park and gardens we see today were undoubtedly the work of the 2nd Lord Newborough, Thomas John Wynn, and his brother, Spencer Bulkeley, who succeeded him as the 3rd Lord Newborough in 1832. The 2nd Lord Newborough was a minor until 1824, and by 1828 Cathrall was able to record '

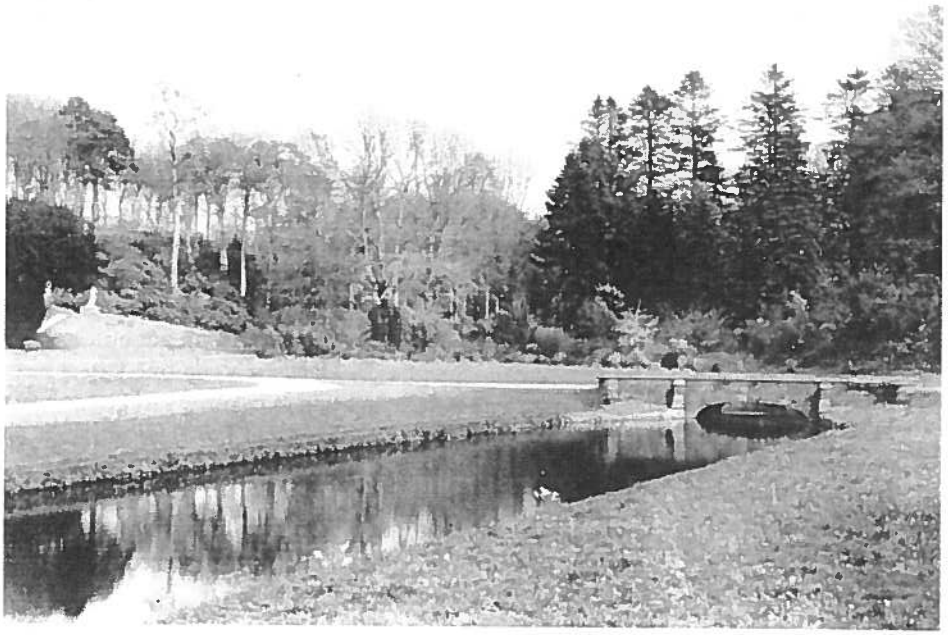
> The present Proprietor has repaired and improved the house, and has furnished it in a most costly and superb manner, having purchased and brought hither from Italy and other parts of the Continent, during his late tour, numerous rare paintings and various antiques of value. His lordship has also made many improvements about the house, principally by enlarging the park about which he is building a lofty wall: planting, draining, and building of farm-houses etc., with other improvements are also carried out upon different parts of the estate.'

It is worth noting here that the wall, still extant today, was nine miles long and cost £40,000, a huge sum in those days.

The scheme of follies, waterworks and grottoes is late in the history of landscape and looks to be in a style popular some fifty years earlier, and this may have given rise to the thought that they were laid out to please Maria Stella. Its Italianate feel probably has more to do with Thomas John's Grand Tour than his exotic Mama. From garden accounts in the Caernarfon Record Office we know that the 2nd Lord Newborough was responsible for the Hermitage. This charming Gothic building, reflected in the water below, forms one of the most Romantic and Picturesque features in the gardens. Originally a 'Hermit' was employed to sit in it, but following his dismissal for too-enthusiastic drinking, it was used as a 'chapel' for the Pet's Cemetery behind it. The Cromlech, an unusual neo-druidical folly, also dates from this period.

Following the death of his brother in 1832, the 3rd Lord Newborough was almost immediately faced with the task of rebuilding the mansion, following the disastrous fire of 1836. Employing Edward Haycock, considered the architect of Regency Wales, he built the largest neo-Classical house in Wales, and took the opportunity of ensuring that its surroundings reflected the palatial style of the house. The Afon Llifon had been canalised by his brother and he set about enhancing the water with a children's boathouse and the Children's Mill—both enchanting places for his five children to enjoy. He further enhanced the vista from the East front of the house with its series of three fountains, set in a lime avenue, focussed on a distant cascade. The whole water system was gravity-fed from pools set above the river valley. The terrace running from the house was decorated with a series of giant urns, and statues were placed at intervals along its length. While only one fountain survives and most of the statues and urns are no longer *in situ*, the vista from the house remains a beautiful one today. The magnificent grotto was dug out of the rocky bank of the valley. With a nymph pouring water into its pool, and the light filtered through blue glass, it must have been a wonderfully atmospheric place to bring visitors. There are other, smaller, caverns and grottoes within the park, some still to be rediscovered.

In 1888 Glynllifon passed to the Hon. Freddie Wynn (1853–1932) who had long managed the estate for his father. He had a passion for the place evidenced by the money he poured into Glynllifon to further enhance the house and its setting. There was elaborate topiary to be found, not least round the island in



The Afon Llifon was canalised by the 2nd Lord Newborough.

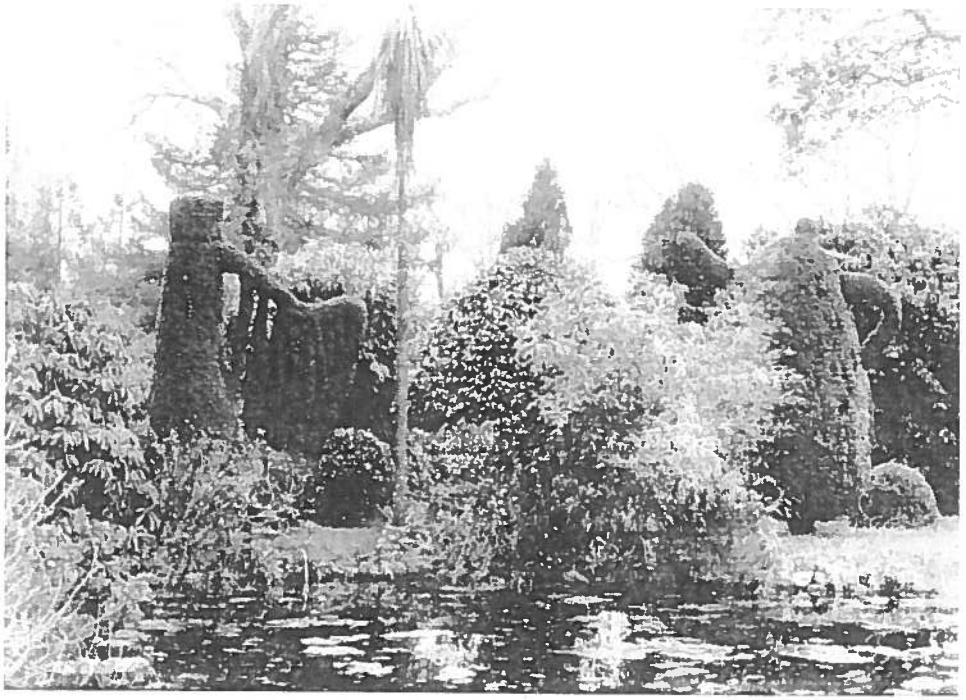
the Afon Llifon, which also acquired a pebble mosaic of the Wynn eagle, an heraldic symbol which obviously meant a great deal to Freddie Wynn—he kept eagles in a special house in the walled garden. The walled garden was another place where money was lavished—it contains a Peach House, Mushroom House and a Pit House where melons and pineapples were grown, with a Palm House added in 1897. He was seriously interested in the many new plants, trees and shrubs being imported by the great Victorian plant hunters, and the park today has many fine trees planted at that time. One of his great passions was ferns and there is a marvellous description of what he managed to achieve in a professional journal of the 1920s. The gardens were:

> garrisoned by countless thousands of ferns which here grow with a luxuriance the writer has never before seen equalled. The dingle has in places been converted into a series of dells, caves and grottoes. There are fountains, rushing streams and cascades, and most realistic effects have been produced by the introduction of grotesquely attired fairies, threatening snakes, huge snails, monstrous toads and gigantic fungi, which crop up unexpectedly from among the tall graceful ferns, and are wonderfully appropriate and quite in harmony with the general sylvan surroundings.

The tragedy is that none of these amazing creatures survive, but it is hoped that some information may yet be retrieved from archive photographs.

Freddie Wynn died in 1932 and Glynllifon passed in turn to the 5th and 6th Lords Newborough. The house and demesne were finally sold to a timber merchant in 1948. It is worth mentioning here that in the aftermath of the Second World War, with its rationing, shortages and general lack of funds, many people felt that the days of the great estates were over and would never come again. A great many estates were given up at this period. The estate was last sold in 1954 to the then Caernarvonshire County Council.

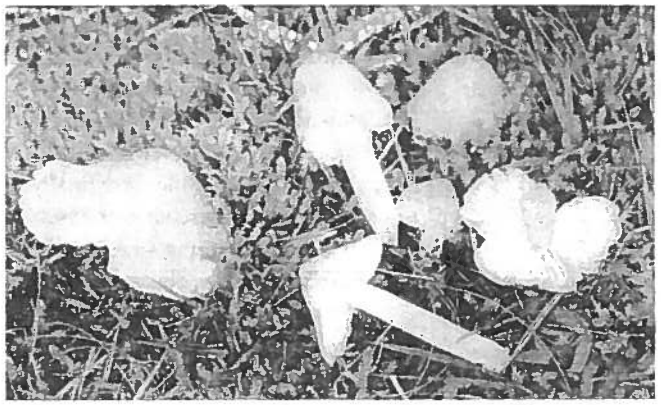
With the passage of time and the passing of Glynllifon into other hands, it is inevitable that the heyday of the gardens, with its army of gardeners, is over. However, the untiring work of those associated with Parc Glynllifon and Coleg Meiron-Dwyfor has meant that most of the important features survive in a state where they can be restored and enjoyed again. Plans are currently afoot to create a scheme which would see great improvements at Glynllifon under the auspices of the Millennium Fund. Our fingers are tightly crossed.



Elaborate topiary.

Wanted: Care-Worn Lawns

by Penny David



Hygrocybe persistens (= H. langei of the New Check List), which regularly fruits on the lawn at Llanerchaeron. (Photo: John Savidge, at Ynyslas).

Are you sitting comfortably? On an old-established lawn, say fifty years old at least, and looking somewhat distressed—not very green, rather too much moss? All the better. (Never mind the sun-baked biscuit effect after the driest summer for 200-odd years, think long-term: grass always perks up once it rains.) And once the rains come, watch out for mushrooms and toadstools. If you find some and it's a lawn in your care, whatever you do, please hold the 'improvement' treatments. On a really old lawn, a dose of weedkiller or fertilizer could be tantamount to taking a Brillo pad to a fine old piece of furniture. In a well-intentioned moment you could destroy a precious patina that has taken generations to form.

The Llanerchaeron estate near Aberaeron in Ceredigion was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1989. Casual surveys of its tiny old lawn began to show astonishing numbers of autumn-fruiting fungi. It proved especially rich in the colourful wax-caps (of the genus *Hygrocybe*) and also sported some intriguing fairy clubs. Further study revealed that many of these were endangered British and European Red Data List species. They grow among fine grass species, and the lawn is also springy with moss and stitched with wildflowers—including the odd orchid and the little ivy-leaved campanula (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*). 'Minimum maintenance' is the Trust's euphemistic phrase for the care Llanerchaeron has received during the last half-century or so. The lawn was not exactly neglected: it was mown, fallen leaves (and rhododendron blooms) were raked off, it was romped on by occasional children and more frequent rabbits; but above all, it was not fed and fertilized to coax it into a pattern of mower-stripes. Not-too-vigorous unimproved grass species didn't crowd out 'weeds', and their fine texture allowed mushrooms to fruit.

The Llanerchaeron lawn is now being nursed by the Trust while the powers that be are considering according it SSSI status. Technically it qualifies as 'ancient grassland'. Ecologists warn that this is becoming an endangered habitat all over western Europe as agricultural methods remorselessly 'improve' pasture by reseeding and fertilizing. Once a sward has had such treatment it takes decades of neglect for a mushroom population to regenerate. There are, lamentably, numerous records of rich habitats that have been wiped out overnight by a sprinkling of fertilizer, or the plough. Conversely, no one knows exactly the pattern by which fungi begin to colonize turf given the right conditions. You often find little beige *Panaeolus* with dark gills, but their presence is due to animal droppings. Quite early on there can be galerinas, honey-yellow umbrella-shaped fragile little mushrooms with widely spaced gills, and a few other 'little brown jobs' or 'bums' (brown, undistinguished mushrooms). Things get interesting when the wax-caps begin to appear in their jewel colours—ruby-red, jade-green, amber-yellow, ivory-white. They are often preceded in early summer by the elegant leptonias, slender and chic in a tone of navy-blue. European mycologists recognize these communities as indicator species of unimproved grassland. The flora of these habitats is also vulnerable to pollution on much of the Continent, so the clean air of rural Wales, plus our high rainfall, means we should be offering them a valuable refuge.

Some of the mushrooms that crop up on lawns are in symbiosis with nearby trees—chanterelles and boletes, for example. What we are most interested in are saprotrophs, grassland species like the wax-caps (and, indeed, the familiar field mushrooms). So please keep your eyes open around old houses, rectories, long-established colleges and other such institutions. And if you know of a venerable lawn or unimproved grassland rich in fungi, please contact Maurice Rotheroe or myself at Fern Cottage, Falcondale, Lampeter, SA48 7RX. Telephone (01570) 422041 or Fax 423437.

Fungus foray on the lawn at Llanerchaeron. (Photo: John Savidge)

The Annual General Meeting

The Trust Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday, 13 May at the Elephant and Castle Hotel, Newtown, was moderately well attended, although the excellence of the afternoon speaker deserved a much larger audience. Members were welcomed by the President, Lord Morris of Castlemorris, with some reflections on the past year. A year in which the President's telephone was not constantly ringing must surely be one in which the Trust's affairs were going well.

The Chairman looked back on a year in which the Trust had settled down into a new shape and looked forward to an active year ahead, in which the branches would carry increased responsibility. Wales was not good at centralisation: its geography was against it. A loose relationship between the centre and the branches offered a promising way forward. Now was a time to consolidate but to keep a high profile also in view. To this end, the Trust would be holding a major conference on planning and conservation for the 21st century, aimed particularly at members of the new Welsh unitary authorities and others concerned with the future of the Welsh landscape. [see p. 9 for details]. Sponsorship for the conference had already begun to appear, notably from AMCOR Packaging (UK), and with an encouraging response from CCW.

Membership had held up well during the year and was moving ahead. Brecon and Radnor branch would be launched in June and Montgomery soon after. We needed to make a special effort to recruit young people. All in all, this had been a good year, the Trust was in good heart and poised to accelerate.

The meeting then proceeded to the election of the Vice-Chairman, Mrs Bettina Harden (see profile on p. 6) and Treasurer, Mr Derek Kingham.

Mrs Gilly Drummond

After lunch, Mrs Gilly Drummond, President of the Association of Garden Trusts, spoke about the work of the Trusts. Her talk was an inspiring mixture of ideals and case histories which left her audience filled with fresh resolve to go and do likewise. Her enthusiasm was infectious and her expertise formidable.

Examining the need for vigilance in the preservation of parks and gardens, she stressed the influence of landscape and defined the way we look at, manage and embellish our landscapes as a thermometer of the well-being of a nation. It is important that we get it right, not least because parks and gardens are a key factor in tourism, which is vital to the future. She compared our present era to the 18th century, when access to the riches of the Graeco-Roman world through the Grand Tour produced an explosion of new ideas.

In practical terms, the work of restoration and repair called for commitment at a local level and, here, success breeds success. Then the word would spread to the corridors of power. The National Lottery and the Millenium Fund offered potential sources of funding. Registers were an important tool, the English one, she felt, unnecessarily restrictive. The Scots was very much wider and the Welsh might be wider still, taking in all aspects of the cultural landscape as defined in the word aesthetic: 'notions of beauty associated with feelings of pleasure'.

Mrs Drummond and members of Hampshire Garden Trust presenting an award certificate to the head teacher and pupils of Farnborough Grange Infants School, for garden work, including the pergola in the picture.

Moving on to particular examples of the work of the Hampshire Garden Trust, Mrs Drummond showed some illuminating slides of the work undertaken at Selborne, home of Gilbert White; in the garden of Anglesey Crescent, Alverstoke, a surviving remnant almost lost for ever as a car park and now a source of pleasure and recreation to its neighbourhood; and, perhaps most important of all, with primary schools, whose surroundings could, with enthusiasm and comparatively modest outlay, be made a source of visual inspiration: notions of beauty associated with feelings of pleasure in the minds of a new generation. How could we surround our children with cracked concrete and sterile grass and expect them to grow up with an aesthetic sense?

There followed a breathtaking assortment of pictures from gardens and landscapes of all kinds, threatened, restored and reused in every conceivable way. The one thing they had in common was the profound practicality and good sense with which their problems had been tackled. The important thing was to be realistic, to understand what could be done and use a change in one part to safeguard the spirit of the whole. The weapons were tact, persuasion and good research. The Hampshire Trust's biggest project to date had been the rebuilding of a greenhouse, on its original footings, at a cost of £1.4 million. Nothing was too small. With such a flood of good advice and example ringing in our heads, what wonder that we went away inspired.

A.C.

The News Pages

BRECON AND RADNOR

A very successful launch party was held on Saturday 3 June at Penpont, Brecon, by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Hogg, who also provided us with a sumptuous tea to round off the afternoon. Dr Stephen Briggs gave an illuminating talk on the role of the Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments in establishing a national database of parks and gardens in Wales for planning and research. Then the teeming rain ceased dramatically and was replaced by glorious sunshine in time for an exploration of the gardens: moss house, river and walled garden, led by Mr Gavin Hogg.

Any B & R member willing to take an active part in running the new branch please contact Anne Carter (01982 570279) or Robin Whalley (01874 665353).

Profile

Bettina Harden

As the new Vice-Chairman of the Trust, Bettina Harden sets out with the advantage of being known, probably, to at least as many Trust members outside her own branch as within it. She has been a member, and a member of the various Trust Committees, almost from the beginning and Chairman of the Gwynedd Branch for nearly as long. She was, among other things, the first Editor of this Bulletin. Married to a farmer (her husband is the current Chairman of the CLA in Wales) and with two growing children, she still finds time for innumerable outside activities, as well as running a large house and gardens which are themselves historic. Although herself brought up largely in Ireland, her commitment to Wales is absolute.

Meeting her, and experiencing the impact of her enthusiasm and friendliness, it could be easy to overlook the shrewdness, ability and determination which is the bedrock of her effervescent personality. Anyone who has worked with her will be aware how staunch an ally she can be. The Trust is lucky to have her.

CEREDIGION

Day School at Llanerchaeron

Several people remarked on the heat retained within the walled gardens on a cool May day when the Trust joined with Ceredigion Antiquarian Society to hold a second day-school at the new National Trust Property in Ceredigion. A similar day-school was held last year and was so over-subscribed that it was decided to rerun it. This year it was chaired by Daniel Huws, a member of the committees of the two bodies, and it included a lecture by Richard Suggett of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales who has done research on the architect responsible for the house at Llanerchaeron, John Nash. Nash is the subject of the main summer exhibition at the National Library of Wales arranged by Richard Suggett and of his forthcoming book. A National Trust Volunteer, Mair Lloyd Evans, talked about the former owners of the estate which is near Aberaeron in Ceredigion. Dr John Savidge talked about the estate and the gardens and led a tour of the gardens, explaining about the work done in identifying old fruit trees and the replanting carried out by the many enthusiastic volunteers.

Mary Burdett Jones

Garden Visits

The summer programme included three garden visits, to Hafod, Dinefwr and Stackpole. Unfortunately, on the first two occasions the weather was so uninviting that attendances were small, while on the third there was such continuous rain that the visit had to be called off.

Trust Annual Lecture

Saturday, 25 November, 2.00 pm
Council Chamber
National Library of Wales,
Aberystwyth

Dr Brynley Roberts
'Edward Lhuyd'

By courtesy of the National Library, the lecture will be followed by tea, and, we hope, accompanied by a small exhibition.

Edward Lhuyd was an 18th century polymath, described by Hans Sloane as 'the greatest naturalist in Europe'.

Lecture

In contrast to the garden visits, the lecture 'Contemporary Sculpture in the Welsh Garden', held in the University School of Art at Aberystwyth on 12 May, was well attended and proved highly successful from all points of view. The lecture was given by Tamara Krikorian, Director of Cywaith Cymru/ Artworks Wales (formerly known as the Welsh Sculpture Trust) and it was held jointly with the Department of Extra Mural Studies of the University, to which the Branch records its thanks. The lecture was followed by a lively discussion, which proved the importance of the theme.

Sunday afternoon, 17 September

Exploring the traces of historic landscape at Derry Ormond, Bettws Bledrys, near Lampeter. To be confirmed. Apply for details, after 7 September, to Penny David, Fern Cottage, Falcondale Drive, Lampeter. 01570 422041

Saturday, 25 November, 2.00 pm

Trust Annual Lecture by Dr Brynley Roberts, 'Edward Lhuyd', will be followed by tea and the branch Annual General Meeting. We look forward to a strong attendance.

CLWYD

Bodelwyddan

After a prolonged period of consultation, Rhuddlan Borough Council's Planning Committee turned down an application to change the greater part of the parkland at Bodelwyddan Castle near Abergele into an 18-hole golf course.

The parkland, lying to the north and east of the castle, slopes gently downhill towards the A55 and the flat land of the Vale of Clwyd near the sea. It is therefore very prominent in the landscape. Evidence for its defence, in its own right and as the essential setting to the castle, came from the Garden History Society, Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, Georgian Group and Victorian Society, as well as from many individuals.

The report, 'Impact on the Historic Parkland at Bodelwyddan Castle', prepared by the Centre for the Conservation of Historic Parks and Gardens (Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at York University), had concluded that the suggestion was totally unacceptable. Rhuddlan Borough Council had commissioned the report. The Garden History Society and Welsh Historic Gardens Trust had asked the Secretary of State for Wales to call in the application. This was refused and the matter referred back to the local authority.

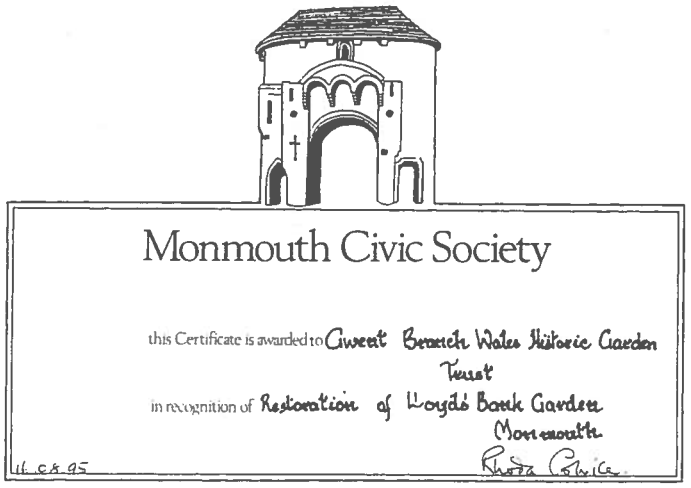
The Clwyd branch of the Trust is delighted with the planning decision. The castle houses the Welsh National Portrait Gallery and the much-altered gardens are run by the management of the new hotel, recently built to the side of the castle and using the back premises and outbuildings as the core of a modern design.

Sara Furse

The CADW/ICOMOS Register

The Register of Historic Parks and Gardens for Clwyd, a Joint CADW/ICOMOS venture, has now been published. It contains details of seventy-five gardens of which five are classified as Grade I. Chirk and Erddig belong to the National Trust but Hawarden, Leeswood and Wynnstay are still privately owned and provide the appropriate settings to the listed groups of buildings, domestic and service, which they surround. The grading of the gardens is, in some cases, higher than that of the houses themselves. The Clwyd Register includes a wide spectrum of gardens, many multi-layered as a result of changes of fashion. These range from gardens of the Tudor period to those of the 1920s and 30s.

The Branch arranged a formal launch for the Register, attended by representatives of four local planning authorities.



GWENT

Gwent Branch Award

The work of the Gwent Branch in the restoration and maintenance of the Nelson Summerhouse Garden in Monmouth has been recognised by the award of a certificate from Monmouth Civic Society. The presentation ceremony, with a photograph of the Branch Chairman and representatives of other award-winning organisations, was well reported in the *Monmouth Beacon*.

With the cooperation of the owners, Lloyds Bank, the branch has organised four Sunday openings of the Garden during the summer and arranged with three other organisations to steward the garden on these days, The Nelson Society, which acted in May, has been most helpful and the Branch made them a donation which they have used to provide much needed direction signs and illustrated handbills for Open Days. Monmouth Civic Society stewarded in July and Monmouth Field and Antiquarian Society in June.

We hope to be able to continue our connection but much depends on Mr Watkins, the indefatigable gardener, who is well into his seventies.

Branch Meeting 21 September, 7.00 pm
At Trewyn, near Abergavenny. There will be an illustrated talk by Mr Clay Jones, followed by a buffet supper. Tickets, price £6, can be obtained from the owner, Mrs Hanford. Telephone: 01873 890 457. All members very welcome.

Sheila Thorneycroft

MID & SOUTH GLAMORGAN

Llantrithyd and Llanmihangel
Fine and sunny April weather, the kind co-operation of owners, and expert guidance from Jenny Morris (who lived at Llantrithyd before moving to Pontardawe), ensured a most successful visit to Llantrithyd in the Vale of Glamorgan. The sites of the former gardens and ponds were explored, and the beeboles, stream and Ladies' Walk were examined. Sue Beer welcomed us back to Llanmihangel and showed us around the gardens and orchards, pointing out recent discoveries. A delicious tea rounded off the afternoon.

Cadoxton Court, Barry
On 15 May a group from the Branch was warmly welcomed to the Court by the owners, Dr Mary Lennox and her husband. Members were shown the 19th century garden and a well-preserved medieval dovecot.

Workshop at Warwick University
On 30 June Peter Elmes and Val Caple attended a Recording Workshop at Warwick University, arranged by the Gardens Trust.

Miskin Manor Hotel
The Branch was approached by the hotel manager at Miskin for advice on renewing the Edwardian gardens which once surrounded the manor house (now a hotel). Peter Elmes, Derrick Kingham and Patricia

A Daisy Chain for Plas-yn-Rhiw!

There may be bigger and grander gardens in Wales, but on the tip of the Lly[n Peninsula lies one of the most charming of the National Trust's properties, Plas-yn-Rhiw. A small manor which, together with its estate, was bequeathed to the Trust in the 1950s, its chief delight is its garden. Overlooking Porth Neigl or Hell's Mouth, a favourite spot for wreckers and smugglers in the old days, you find a wonderful site full of tender shrubs and plants, rambling roses and unusual trees, all enclosed in a maze of little box hedges. The Misses Keating, who owned the place, were great fiends of Clough Williams-Ellis who gave them a great deal of help and advice. To mark the Centenary of the National Trust, Madeleine Dick, who runs Plas-yn-Rhiw, has come up with a lovely idea—a daisy chain with which children can encircle the garden! Given a notional length for each daisy of 5 cm, you are being asked to donate £1.00 in the name of a child in the hopes that enough money will be raised to provide 5,600 daisies in a chain which will run all around the garden. The name of each child is being written in a beautiful leather-bound volume. The monies raised will go towards sponsoring a book on the life and work of the Misses Keating. I should say that Matty and Eddie Harden's names are the first in the book. If you would like to remember your children, grandchildren, godchildren, nephews and nieces in this way, do: please send your £s to:
Mrs Madeleine Dick, Plas-yn-Rhiw, Rhiw, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 8AB

MID & SOUTH GLAMORGAN (Cont.)

Moore visited the Manor to identify features marked on early OS maps. The M4 motorway now cuts across the site, and the various parts, including the walled garden and the lake, are in multiple ownership.

The terraces appear to be structurally sound, but many urns are missing or damaged; it is evident that the Edwardian planting was subsequently simplified. The Japanese bamboo and bog gardens could easily be reinstated once the feeder stream and the sluices have been cleaned and repaired. There are fine trees, which deserve identifying and labelling. Derrick Kingham has traced a former head gardener and will record his recollections. Has any member any old photographs of the house and gardens? Vital clues may be found in them.

Talygarn—Proposed Visit
It is intended to visit Talygarn on Sunday 1 October to compare the present grounds with views shown on recently-discovered old photographs. Contact Derrick Kingham. Tel. 01443 228889, if coming.

MONTGOMERY

The branch held a quietly successful launch on 12th July and a full programme of events for 1995/6, including lectures and garden visits, has now been arranged.

On October 26th, in conjunction with the local Fine Arts Society, Dr Keith Goodway of Keele University will speak on the History of Garden Design.

November, in conjunction with the Powys Land Club: a talk by Elizabeth Whittle on Gardens in Wales.

For further information, phone Christine Churchill: 01686 640283.

PEMBROKESHIRE

The Branch has had a full programme to start 1995. In January, Susan Lloyd-Fern told us about the work at Middleton Hall, where she was originally employed as an archaeologist; leading up to the genesis of the scheme for establishment of a National Botanic Garden for Wales. In February, we had a talk from Mrs Ruth Hayden on Mrs Delaney, and in March we had a 'double bill'—Michael Norman talked on the work of the Trust, with some interesting consideration of the philosophy of garden restoration, and we had a Gazetteer Study Day at Cottesmore, the residence of Miss Charlotte Kelway, our regular evening venue during the winter. The house was rebuilt in 1840 and the walled garden, at least, is at least as old. Miss Kelway is replanting, and her conservatory is being restored. It contains at least one very old rose, believed to date from the 1830s, a white noisette with a very faint tinge of blush, said to have come from a nurseryman, Marechal, but it has lost its name. It was flowering strongly in mid-May.

Our Gazetteer study party went on in April to look at Holyland House, near Pembroke, where a new tenant is hoping to restore the walled garden. Again, details were recorded for the Gazetteer. We are greatly indebted to Dr John Savidge for taking several days to show us the elements of gazetteer work, as we hope to make real progress with this task during the summer.

In May, we had our Annual General Meeting, at which Peter Holden took over the chairmanship of the branch again, after a year as Chairman of Acanthus, a group of conservation architects. Brian Rogers, of Manorowen, Fishguard, became Branch Secretary, as Eileen Wheeler has taken on the Rhododendron Group secretaryship. Sylvia ThomasFerrand becomes Vice-Chairman.

Saturday, 17 September, 2.30 pm
Coedcanlas and Landshipping. Tom Lloyd. A follow-up to his talk last September.

Wednesday, 25 October, 11.30 am
National Library of Wales: material relating to Pembrokeshire. Lunch is available in the cafeteria. Afternoon visit to the University of Wales Botanic Garden if time permits.

Monday, 20 November, 7.30 pm
Cottesmore, by kind permission of Miss Charlotte Kelway. Talk by Mr John Rees: 'History of a Garden'.

Trust Conference

TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM

The Conservation of Welsh Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes for the 21st Century

Thursday, 10th October, 1995

The Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth

The establishment of the new Unitary Authorities in May, 1996, will place this responsibility in the hands of 22 new Planning Committees and their Officers. With the encouragement of Cadw and The Countryside Council for Wales, the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust is mounting a Conference, mainly for elected Councillors and Planning Staffs of the new authorities. Many other organisations will he represented, and the Trust is particularly grateful that the Chairman of The Countryside Council for Wales, the President and the Conservation Officer of the Garden History Society, the Chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, and members of Cadw staff have agreed to share their knowledge with us.

The Speakers

Mavis Batey, MBE, was a pioneer of the movement for the conservation of historic parks and gardens, for many years Secretary of The Garden History Society, and now its President. Publications include *The Historic Gardens of Oxford and Cambridge* (1989), *Arcadian Thames* (1994), and *Regency Gardens* (1995).

David Lambert is currently the Conservation Officer of The Garden History Society. He is responsible for the preparation of formal advice for local planning authorities in England on all applications for planning permission affecting parks and gardens included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Publications include *Parks and Gardens of Avon* (1994).

Thomas Lloyd is Chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales. He is an expert on the buildings of Wales, and is author of *The Lost Houses of Wales* (1980) and of the forthcoming Dyfed volume of *The Buildings of Wales.*

The Trust will produce a Post-Conference Report to which all the principal speakers will contribute, with summaries of the Workshop results. It is hoped that this document will provide an easily accessible work of reference for planning staffs and others concerned with our heritage of parks, gardens and designed landscapes.

Other members of the Panels and Workshops

Elisabeth Whittle is Assistant Inspector of Historic Parks and Gardens with Cadw, author of *The Historic Gardens of Wales* (Cadw, 1992). She has been deeply involved in the preparation of the two published Welsh County Registers, Gwent and Clwyd.

Phillip Eyton-Jones was until recently Director of Planning, Architecture and Estates for Clwyd County Council, and is President of the N. Wales Society of Architects.

Keith Goodway is Chairman of the Garden History Society. He is particularly concerned with survey, management and aftercare of restored gardens.

Eira Hughes is Head of the Conservation Policy and Advice Group of the Countryside Council for Wales.

The Sponsors

AMCOR PACKAGING, manufacturers of corrugated packaging, trace their origins to the establishment of a papermaking factory at Melbourne, Australia, in 1868. They rank sixth or seventh in the world in the international paper board industry, and their new (1994) factory at Mold is at the leading edge of the technology of the industry, employing a work force of 145 people, mainly local residents, on a 25-acre site.

Programme

10.00	Coffee and Registration
10.30	Opening Address by the Chairman, Lord Elis Thomas, Chairman, The Welsh Language Board
10.45	*A General Overview—Why do we need to preserve Historic Gardens?* Mavis Batey, MBE
11.30	*Planning Law Present and Future, and the Registers* David Lambert
12.15	*The Role of Cadw and the Historic Buildings Council* Thomas Lloyd
12.45	*Address by the Chairman, The Countryside Council for Wales* Michael Griffith, CBE, DL
1.15	Luncheon
2.00	*Workshop Sessions* Introduced by Professor Tom Pritchard, Chairman, Welsh Historic Gardens Trust
3.15	Tea
3.30	Reports by Workshop Groups
4.15	Open Forum
4.45	Closing Address
5.00	Depart

Fees (incl. coffee, lunch and tea) £60
Voluntary organisations £20
Special rate for WHGT members.
For further information contact the Trust Secretary (01834 831 396)

Book Review

A Time for Synthesis

by Katherine Swift

THE GENIUS OF GARDENING: THE HISTORY OF GARDENS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND. By Christopher Thacker (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994) 352 pp; illus. £19.99.

This is a curiously old-fashioned book. None the worse for that, perhaps. Christopher Thacker takes us all the way from Druids, Romans and Anglo-Saxons in chapter 1 to Percy Cane and Ian Hamilton Finlay in chapter 18, by way of Francis Bacon, John Evelyn, William Shenstone, Mrs Delaney and a host of other characters, major and minor. The book is interestingly (though sparsely) illustrated, well documented with footnotes, bibliography and index, decently produced and, at less than £20 for 352 pages, good value for money.

But in the last two decades much has happened to our thinking about garden history which is not reflected here. In 1979 an earlier book by Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens*—still deservedly in print—covered much of the same ground. Although the new book devotes more space to the history of gardens in these islands—to which only five chapters could be given in the earlier, more widely ranging, book—the perspective is essentially the same. And from the founder and first editor of *Garden History* (the journal of the Garden History Society), and one of the chief architects of the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England,* this strikes me as not a little disappointing.

We now know far more about the survival of (and have better access to) the physical evidence for the history of gardens in these islands than ever before... The compass of garden history is now considered to include the relation of garden and landscape design to architecture, art, literature, philosophy and society, and the literary and iconographical aspects of gardens are now routinely explored by diploma and doctoral students. Nor, in this burgeoning history of gardens, has the history of gardening itself been neglected, with studies of working gardeners and nurserymen, plants and planting, botanical techniques and garden tools (for example, Christopher Thacker's own 1990 catalogue for the Museum of Garden History, *Historic Garden Tools).* The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens was set up in 1978 specifically to address the problem of dwindling stocks of historic plant material, and throughout the 1970s and 1980s the study of nurserymen's catalogues and other sources pioneered by John Harvey has revised our notions of the availability of plants at specific periods. The many garden conservation projects under way—such as those at Painshill, Castle Bromwich and Hampton Court—have prompted research into historical methods of planting, giving us much more precise notions of how the designs were achieved on the ground. The materials therefore now exist for a radical reassessment of the history of British gardens, and this Christopher Thacker has not given us. He begins his book with a quotation about English gardens from *The World* of Thursday, 12 April 1753:

> They are usually new-created once in twenty or thirty years, and no traces left of their former condition. Nor is this to be wondered at... Were any man of taste not to lay out his ground in the style which prevailed less than half a century ago, it would occasion as much astonishment and laughter, as if a modern beau should appear in the drawing-room in red stockings...

But *why* should this be? What do garden styles 'mean', and what is happening in society, and in the arts, when they change? This is the sort of question which Christopher Thacker largely eschews. He concentrates instead on names, dates, events, places, the eighteen chapters unfolding in one long narrative thread with little pause for reflection or interpretation, or indeed for assimilation of new research. However, the book is dense with information, and it may well be as a quick reference source that the book finds its niche. On the whole the crowded canvas of people, dates and facts is handled with ease and even elegance. But one has the impression that even the author flagged at times, and some of the information is digested rather wearily into lists: lists, for example, of gardens and parks where George London and/or Henry Wise were engaged; of Charles Bridgeman's main garden works; of important gardens and parks with designs by Capability Brown; of the principal works of Humphrey Repton; of botanic gardens founded in the nineteenth century; of nineteenth-century private gardens with special collections of exotic trees and shrubs; of public parks established in the nineteenth century; and so on. There is also a chronological list of nineteenth-century garden designers, and a rather odd list of 'garden designers and writers with an architectural bias active from the 1890s'. But nothing is given in these lists to indicate which sites still survive, and—a grievous fault—the contents of the lists are not included in the general index. The question of plant introductions, skated over in the text, is also treated in list fashion, but rather rudimentarily: the list of plant introductions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries runs to 50 entries; of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to 43 entries; and of the eighteenth century to a mere 28 entries.

The enumerative phase of garden history in these islands is now perhaps nearing completion (as exemplified by the *Register* of gardens and John Harvey's painstaking compilation of plant lists); the descriptive phase (as exemplified by the many excellent studies of individual gardens, based upon archival sources) is ongoing; the analytical phase, taking account of the *longue durée* (of which Douglas Chambers's *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden* of 1993 and the work of John Dixon Hunt are prime examples), is in full swing; what we need now is a synthesis. Sadly, *The Genius of Gardening* is not it.

Dr Katherine Swift is a rare book librarian. She lives in part of Morville Hall, Shropshire, where she is creating a series of period gardens. Visitors are welcome and details can be found in the Yellow Book.

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TRAWSGOED—

A HOUSE AND ESTATE IN TRANSITION

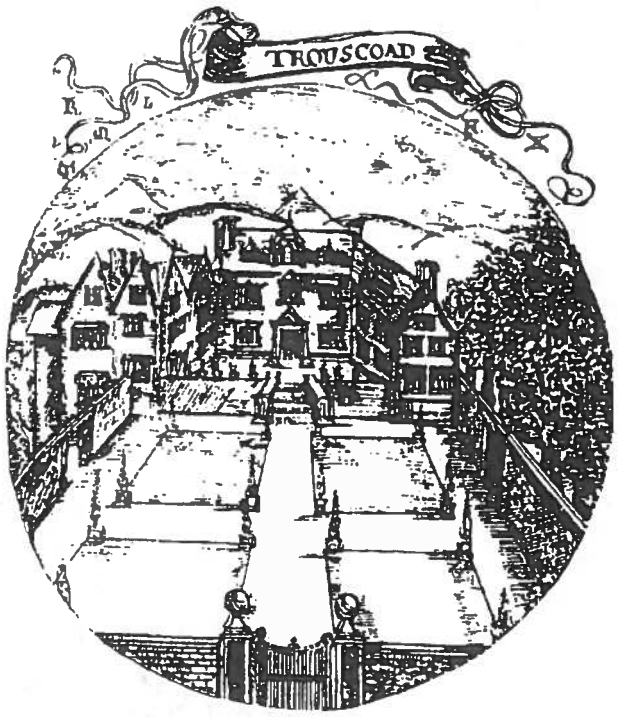
The following paper is being distributed by the Ceredigion Branch to selected authorities in the area. We are reprinting it here in full, both as an admirable summary of the importance and requirements of a particular site of general interest and as an example of active lobbying by a Branch of WHGT to draw attention to an imperilled landscape

This paper aims to draw the attention of the responsible authorities to the importance and interest of the built heritage and the created landscape and gardens of Trawsgoed (or Crosswood) in Ceredigion, at a critical time when ownership changes could imperil them,

1. In May 1995 the agricultural advisory service ADAS marked the end of 48 years association with Trawsgoed. Not long before, the Welsh Office Agricultural Department (WOAD) ceased operations there and sold its surplus furniture and garden equipment. Another agency, the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), still has a presence in the adjoining parkland. Discussions are now going on regarding possible repurchase by the former owners, the Vaughan family. Property Holdings has followed the Property Services Agency as managers, and is inviting proposals for development. The National Trust has been approached to discover if it is interested in acquiring the property.

2. Trawsgoed lies seven miles south-east of Aberystwyth and contains various elements:
(i) An historic mansion, with important architectural features, on a site occupied by the influential Vaughan family for over seven hundred years. There are likely to be remains of several earlier houses, on or near the present site,
(ii) Gardens—'pleasure grounds'—created in the 19th and early 20th centuries, containing many different elements, hitherto in a good state of maintenance. There are hidden remains of earlier gardens, in particular an 18th-century formal garden, known from maps, and a 17th-century formal layout, illustrated in a drawing of 1684.
(iii) Various outbuildings, converted to serve the needs of agricultural advisory work.
(iv) Planted trees and shrubs of outstanding quality and interest.
(v) Surrounding parkland, now part of a working farm,
(vi) Distant hilly landscapes of great visual quality, giving 'borrowed views'.
(vii) A kitchen garden, now scarcely recognisable owing to an infill of laboratory blocks.
(viii) A Roman fort site near the mansion, known from archaeological excavations.

3. These diverse elements make an outstanding combination of architectural, social, historical, botanical and garden interest, and they should all be taken into account in future plans. Naturally, any future owner will have to find a viable economic use for the property, but that should he consonant with the special character of the place.



The 1684 sketch of Trawsgoed by Thomas Dineley, from Christopher Thacker's book, reviewed opposite.

4. Certain matters, however, demand immediate attention:
(i) Whatever the eventual developments, the lawns should be mowed regularly now to stop them becoming meadows, the pond should be monitored for leakage and the carp fed.
(ii) Protection or safe storage is needed for portable objects outside, e.g. garden statues.
(iii) Statutory protection or 'listing' is needed to safeguard an ancient building. It is understood that part of the mansion is so protected. The Ceredigion Branch of WHGT has drawn the attention of Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments to the present situation.
(iv) The gardens and parkland also deserve protection. Trawsgoed appears on the Cadw provisional list of historic landscapes and gardens. The list records official opinion on the importance of the site, and the government hopes this will influence local authorities in their planning. The new Ceredigion Draft Plan notes the gardens as a feature to be retained, and a Woodland Preservation Order has recently been made by the Ceredigion District Council.
(v) A record of all important features, both ancient and recent, should be made as quickly as possible before fresh changes are made. The older parts of the mansion are already noted in the National Monuments Record at Aberystwyth, but updating may be needed. The gardens require recording. There are important documents, maps and plans in the National Library of Wales. There is good pictorial documentation in family photographs. Much work has been done on historical and botanical aspects by a working party of the Ceredigion Branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. The same working party has made a survey of trees on the estate, updating work by the Forestry Commission in 1969, and it can give further help.

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STONE AND LIME

A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

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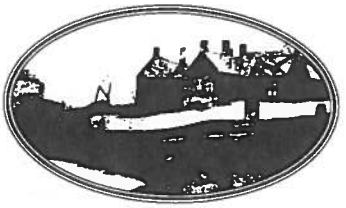

Organised by Carmarthenshire and Llanelli Historic Buildings Preservation Trust and supported by CADW, Llanelli Borough Council and Dinefwr Borough Council.

With sessions on Construction, Historic Mortars, Consolidation and Repair, the Use of Lime in Building and Practical Demonstrations, this should be a really informative day. For further information contact the Chairman, Ken Moore on 01588 668792. Quickly!