

No. 38
Spring 2005

Two public inquiries concerning historic parks and gardens in Wales

by Liz Whittle

Cardiff Castle:

application by Cardiff County Council for visitor facilities
(June/July 2003)

Two modern buildings were proposed within the Castle Green; a visitor centre and a café/shop. Cardiff Castle is a grade I Listed Building, a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a grade I registered park and garden. It also lies within a Conservation Area. Objections were made in respect of the archaeological impact, the setting of the Listed Buildings, the impact on the historic park and the impact on the Conservation Area.

The Inspector recommended refusal of the applications for planning permission and scheduled monument consent and this was upheld by the National Assembly's Planning Decision Committee. He concluded that: 'the present proposals would cause material harm to the historic environment ...' (para. 144).

The Inspector's decision was based principally on the impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings and the visual impact on the historic park. The landscaping of Cardiff Castle has a long and complicated history but the main phase at issue here was the late eighteenth-century landscaping of the Green by Capability Brown. In respect of the latter, he remarked (paras. 132 and 133):

'Whilst non-statutory, this fact (that the park is grade I registered) is clearly a material consideration in the present case ... the open, parkland aspect of the Castle Green was established for the first time by Brown's work in the late eighteenth century, and I consider that the essential character that he established then can still be discerned beneath later changes.'

He then went on to agree with Cadw that the visitor centre building was insensitive in size and form (rounded) to the character of the Green, which is rectilinear in form and open within. He concluded that: 'Its curved form, and the relatively large northward intrusion into the Castle Green, would fail to reflect this historic character, and would lessen the intrinsic interest of the registered park.' The building would also entail the re-routing of Brown's circuit path. The Inspector also found the introduction of the café/shop an unacceptable, insensitive visual intrusion.

Margam Park:

appeal by Community Power Ltd against the decision of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to refuse permission for the erection of wind turbines on land at Ton Mawr Farm near Margam and Castell Farm near Llangynwyd
(July 2003)

The application was for the erection of 11 3-bladed wind turbines, each with a hub height of 49 m and a blade length of 26 m; a new access track to turbine 10; a viewing platform on turbine 10; and associated cable routes. The turbines were to be in two groups and it is only the southern one (nos 1-5) which would have affected Margam Park, a registered, grade I historic park. The arguments for refusal of permission for the northern group, concerning impact on a registered historic landscape and on the setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, will not be rehearsed here.

The Inspector recommended that the appeal be dismissed and this was upheld by the National Assembly's Planning Decision Committee. He decided that: '... the proposed structures, because of their scale, character and position must rationally be concluded as having a highly significant impact on the Park' (para. 11.5.12).

The great interest of this inquiry, in respect of historic parks and gardens, rests in the main issues at stake: setting and views. Turbines 1-5 would have been sited to the east of the park, just beyond the outer limit of the park's 'Essential Setting'.

The Inspector argued, as did Cadw, that the effect of a proposal on the setting of a registered park was a material planning consideration. Cadw explained, and the Inspector agreed, that the concept of setting was a layered one (para. 4.6.10), moving out from the setting to the house, at the core and ending with the wider setting beyond the 'Essential Setting'. The Essential Setting was explained (para. 11.5.11) as an area beyond the registered area of particular sensitivity. The Inspector argued (same para) that 'this does not mean, in my opinion, that all areas outside the Essential Setting, so defined, therefore do not comprise part of the Park's overall setting in planning terms. Nor does it mean that all development outside the Essential Setting, of whatever nature, must therefore be regarded as not affecting either the Park or its setting'. The Inspector concluded that the turbines

would have a major impact on the park's setting.

The appellant attempted to restrict the argument to the Essential Setting only and to limited and, in their view, less sensitive parts of the park. The core of the park would not, in their view, be affected; only in the outer parts of the park would the turbines be highly visible. However, both Cadw and the Inspector argued that the park should be treated as a whole and not subdivided into areas of greater and lesser importance (para. 11.5.14).

There was much analysis of views in this inquiry. The appellants attempted to argue that only the 'Significant Views', as delineated in the Register Entry, should be taken into account and none of these were in the direction of the proposed wind turbines.

However, both Cadw and the Inspector argued that, while these flagged up the most significant historic views, they were 'by no means the only views that users of the Park experience and appreciate' (para. 11.5.13). The Inspector concluded that the turbines would have 'dominant or significant visual effects on large parts of the upper and lower deer parks, the important hilltop of Mynydd y Castell, and the landscaped parkland area comprising the central part of the Park and the setting to Margam Castle' (para 11.5.15).

Elisabeth Whittle
Inspector of Historic Parks and Gardens

Fire Risk Assessment is needed

The disastrous fire at Hafodunos further erodes the probability that the once-fine garden (Listed grade II in the register) accompanying this Gilbert Scott house will be saved. The fact of arson rather than accident has been established in the courts but notwithstanding this, the damage could have been reduced had the fire brigade been better prepared.

Armed only with an ordnance survey map the fire engines spent some hours attempting to find an adequate water supply to tackle the blaze. Lakes and ponds marked on the map in the vicinity proved to have silted up and be useless to the fire tenders, and the only hydrant was on an antiquated pipe which lacked sufficient pressure. To raise it would have ruptured the supply in many places. As a result the fire raged unchecked and the building was gutted while fire crews sought water in a wet country.

For any building of importance it is essential that a fire-risk assessment by the local fire brigade should be in place in anticipation of a similar disaster. Conscientious owners will have undoubtedly thought of this and sought appropriate advice. But there is scope for concerned amenity groups such as



Hafodunos in 1954

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ours to contact our local fire brigades with such a request where we are aware that an important historic building stands empty and unloved.

Caroline Palmer

Enabling Development

It is now less frequent that the words 'development' and 'degradation' become synonymous when linked to the word 'enabling' than it was thirty or forty years ago. But occasionally one does come across a scheme where the words are synonymous one with another. This is where initial anger gives way to the search for a blame victim and perhaps that person is found in the shaving mirror.

Trevalyn Manor at Rossett, Clwyd is a case in point: a really good nine-bay house with a two bay kitchen extension, with delightful stables nearby and a registered grade II* listed garden of immense charm. Situated just on the Cheshire border this is one of those houses that could so easily have reverted to domestic use in single occupancy (it had been used as a hospital for many years). Instead the new owners have been granted planning permission to build a new terrace of homes of sixteen

bays in the listed garden, alongside and a few feet away from this fine Georgian house, and to convert the stable to domestic use in multiple occupancy.

It is the worst piece of 'enabling development' I have seen, and was permitted despite letters of objection from both the WHGT and the Georgian Group. Clearly in this instance our best efforts were simply not good enough so we have to ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to spread the word amongst planning officers and planning committee members.

The Joint Committee of the Amenity Societies have produced a useful publication on enabling development entitled *Rescued or Ruined*. Copies may be obtained from the Georgian Group at 6 Fitzroy Square, London W18 6DX. The WHGT is planning to arrange a conference aimed at councillors and planning officers in Wales.

Michael Tree

Unsightly Sheds

While ordinary householders need no planning permission for a garden shed, 'Permitted Development Rights' do not apply to all buildings. A garden shed of larger than 10cu metres capacity within the curtilage of a listed building does require planning permission. Two such applications have come the way of the Clwyd branch recently.

At Bettisfield Hall near Whitchurch the terraces and walls of a Tudor/Jacobean garden of some importance lie under the grass. The house belonged to the Hammers and it is thought that Sir Thomas Hanmer may have spent his childhood there. Listed Grade II*, it was recommended for a grant by the Historic Buildings Council in 1991 although it is only a part of the original very grand house which survives. For many years the terraces have been grazed by sheep, providing a simple setting which sets off the tall building to advantage. Planning permission was sought for a large tractor shed to house garden machinery.

This building would have damaged the archaeological remains of the early gardens and would have been very obvious in the foreground to the Hall. Its impact would have affected the dramatic setting to the ancient three-storey building and its terraces in a major way. The Local Authority consulted Cadw, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the Clwyd WHGT on the application. All registered objections and the application was withdrawn.

At Pentrecelyn Hall near Ruthin planning permission was also sought for a 'shed for the storage and maintenance of garden

machinery'. The three-and-a-half-acre garden is not on the Register but it provides the mature setting to a grade II listed building 'a very well preserved early Victorian villa of exceptional character, illustrating the nineteenth century planning for segregation of family and staff'. The mature trees to the back and side of the house continue as a woodland ribbon down the side of the long drive. On the other side of the house is a large parkland field now in separate ownership. Some time ago the original walled garden and buildings were developed for housing, but their loss in no way detracts from the setting to the Hall which still has superb open views over the parkland to the Vale of Clwyd.

Closer inspection of the plans revealed that the shed was to be a building of 50 feet by 36 feet with a ridge height of 20 feet and that the application was for 'a shed for the storage/maintenance of a helicopter'. The Clwyd branch of WHGT put in a letter of objection. Although the application was recommended for acceptance by the Planning officers, the Planning Committee paid a site visit and the application was refused.

While no historic service buildings are likely to be suitable to accommodate a helicopter, it is a matter of frequent concern that the conversion of attractive estate buildings for residential use is often followed by the need for new buildings to replace storage capacity which has been lost.

Sarah Furse

Monitoring planning in Ceredigion

As branch conservation officer I have built up a working relationship with planning officers in the county. One of the most helpful features of this is that they send me, by E-mail, the full list of applications which are coming before the planning committee. Scanning this list may draw my attention to applications relating to sites which it would be unreasonable to expect the planning department to have a full knowledge of. Frequently also, they now send me full photocopies of applications relating to Register sites on which they would expect to receive an opinion from WHGT. Once again this saves on time-consuming visits to the county planning office twenty miles away. If measured and reasoned, I believe our input is often valued by the Planning Department. It is some years since budget cuts deprived Ceredigion County Council of a Conservation officer, so it is understandable that they may lack input on historic matters.

When opposing an insensitive application, I find the council's own document the Unitary Development Plan an invaluable tool. This contains many policy statements which are sensitive to conservation objectives. Policies undertake the protection of sites which are on the Cadw ICOMOS register, and the setting of listed buildings. In my letters of objection I take care to quote (with paragraph number) each policy which the proposal may contravene. This document also is accessible via www.ceredigion.gov.uk/english/council/udp/contents.htm so the relevant policies can be effortlessly transcribed in the letter.

In the same way, for those gardens which appear in the

Cadw/ICOMOS register, I take care to present the precise objections in terms of the published description and draw special attention to plans which impact on the essential setting and designated principal views. Rather than expecting Planning to have read the Register themselves, (though they will undoubtedly have it) I provide a digest of the salient points. Since letters of objection are frequently read out to the committee in their entirety I try to keep them short and to the point.

It is also important to attend any site meetings to discuss the application, preferably armed with historic maps and photographs. I also send copies of these to the planners for information. I try to be constructive wherever possible, for example, by suggesting possible alternatives with less impact if appropriate and recommending mitigating landscape conditions to be imposed if planning approval is given.

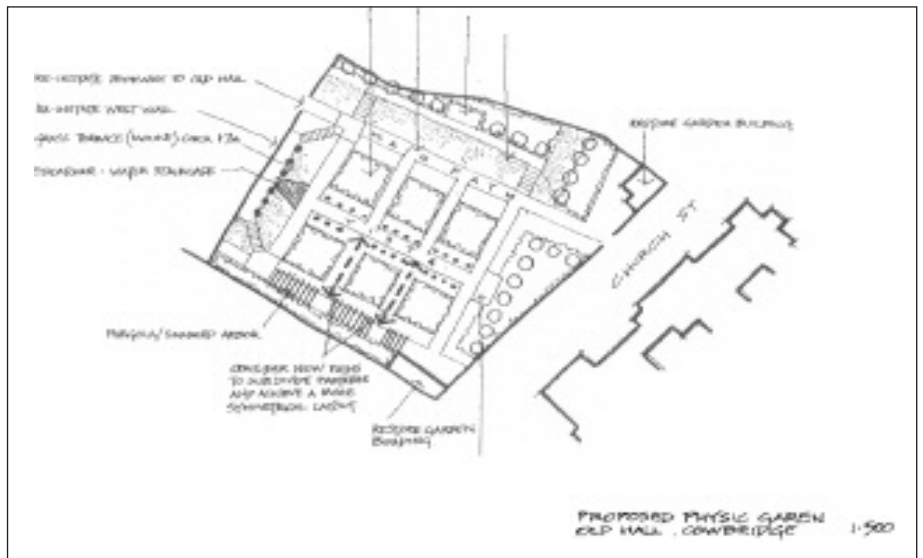
In some cases, the implications of an application may also be of substantial importance to local residents who, understandably wish to prevent a new development in their immediate vicinity. I feel it is important that the WHGT objection should be based wholly on the historic garden issues and address only these. Residents with other concerns for their own amenity or privacy should as far as possible be encouraged to write individual letters of objection. The sheer number of objections received may weigh significantly with local councillors. Petitions are also valuable, but probably not as influential as a bulging file of individual responses.

Ros Laidlaw

Progress at the Cowbridge Physic Garden

At the time of writing, it is satisfying to report that work on clearing the site began on 31 January 2005 with the felling of the trees. This will be followed in the next few weeks by the removal of tree stumps and roots, activities which will be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief. The site will then be cleared of all remaining debris. Once clearance is completed a full assessment of the stone walls which enclose the site on three sides can be made, a topographical survey undertaken and detailed plans for the hard landscaping of the site finalised and submitted for planning approval.

Since the Physic Garden project was launched on St David's Day 2004 there has been an increasing groundswell of public support within Cowbridge and the wider Vale of Glamorgan, support which those involved in the project have worked hard to maintain while efforts to attract funding have been made. A substantial grant (over two years) has now been obtained from



Initial design by Anthony Jellard, landscape architect

Creative Rural Communities, an organisation which, as part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, administers Article 33 funding received from the Welsh Development Agency, and match funding for the first year has been secured by way of donations from a variety of sources. We are hopeful that sources of match funding for the second year of the project will become available once the Cowbridge Physic Garden Trust gains formal status as a registered charity, an event anticipated shortly as trustees have been appointed, a constitution adopted and the necessary paperwork submitted to the Charity Commissioners.

Meanwhile, there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work being undertaken by committee members in producing information literature, devising fund-raising schemes and generally keeping the public aware of progress on the garden. The word seems to be spreading fast and we are receiving an increasing number of requests for talks on the project from various organisations and societies.

In the next issue of *The Bulletin* we hope to be able to report real progress in the creation of the Cowbridge Physic Garden.

Hilary M. Thomas



Tree felling in progress, February 2005

and at Penllergare

The restoration and regeneration of Penllergare Valley Woods, the Grade II romantic, late picturesque park and gardens on the northern outskirts of Swansea, has come another step nearer with the agreement on common objectives for a partnership between the City and County of Swansea, the Forestry Commission Wales and the Penllergare Trust.

The second edition of Richard Morris's *Penllergare - A Victorian Paradise* has now sold out but the Trust's website www.penllergare.org has useful background information on the place and its people. The latest newsletter is available by email via contact@penllergare.org or by telephoning 01558 650416.

Michael Norman



John Dillwyn Llewelyn's fishpond, currently awaiting restoration.

In this issue I have been unable to lead with a descriptive article about a Park or Garden because none were forthcoming. Instead I have gathered together contributions reflecting what must be one of the WHGT's key preoccupations: the protection of parks and gardens from insensitive development. Many of the accounts here represent successes, whether at the level of a planning application, a site visit or the full majesty of the Public Enquiries which Liz Whittle has reported on.

They should be of close interest to members for the examples and precedents which they set. While the Register identifies the concept of essential setting and key views, it is a valuable and widely applicable lesson that at Margam the Inspector rejected the claim that the wider setting outside the area stippled as 'Essential Setting' was not worthy of protection. This has implications for many other sites where a view rather than a structure is the subject of the debate.

The accounts of local planning issues also reflect the importance of local WHGT Conservation Officers monitoring their local area and responding swiftly and articulately to inappropriate proposals. Planners may not always be swayed, but the planning Committees can be deflected from their original recommendations by public response (see Clwyd), and in other cases they may already have a gut leaning towards rejecting a proposal, but badly need the ammunition provided by organisations such as WHGT in order to justify their recommendations.

Of course not every planning conflict has a satisfactory outcome for conservation, as Michael Tree so eloquently laments. But the example of the sterling work done by individuals and branches should be recognised and they may draw encouragement from each other's examples.

Caroline Palmer

Don't forget! Two major WHGT national events.

AGM

Saturday 4 June 2005

Details to be circulated with AGM papers.

WHGT and the Hafod Conservation Partnership

Study day and buffet lunch at Hafod

Saturday 25 June 2005

(see enclosed flyer for details and booking form)

Letter to the Editor

The Clock House
Far Sawrey, Ambleside, Cumbria

Dear Madam,

The Fowl House, Leighton

I have recently read your article (WHGT Bulletin Winter 2003/4) about the above-mentioned property of the Landmark Trust. John Naylor (1813-1889) who built the fowl house in 1861 was my great-grandfather. It is believed in the family that he gave the building to Georgina, his and his wife's (Georgiana née Edwards) fourth daughter (1854-1950). It might interest some who know the place to learn a little about Georgina.

It is known that Georgina ("Aunt Gina") was at the Slade School of Fine Art presumably in the late 1870's (although their records neither confirm nor deny this). She certainly developed a considerable interest in poultry. She moved from Leighton some time after her father's death and for many years lived in the outskirts of nearby Welshpool. She never married. John Naylor had amassed a considerable collection of pictures and Gina copied many of them, including Turners. Some of the copies are in the Town Hall at Welshpool although the originals, sadly, left the family many years ago.

When her nephew, John Murray Taylor, sold the Leighton Estate in 1931, Gina bought Leighton Hall and turned the house into several flats, mainly for relations or 'honorary relations' and

one which she occupied for the rest of her life. My father used to take me to see Aunt Gina in the 1930s and I also stayed there by myself. I remember that she learned to drive after she was 75, and in particular I recall sitting in the dicky seat of her two-seater Hillman and feeling lucky to avoid either a broken back or total ejection as she drove at undiminished speed over one of the Shropshire Union Canal hump-back bridges.

Later, Aunt Gina tackled learning ancient Greek in order to verify translations of the Bible about which she entertained some doubts. During the 1939-45 War she would go down hourly to the Great Hall at Leighton in order to listen to the news on the wireless: happily my uncle and my father heard about this and bought a portable radio for Gina to use in her first-floor flat.

I have always been proud of Aunt Gina whose zest for life continued into her nineties. She was of a generation of large families and her ability to answer questions about the family posed by later generations was legendary.

Yours etc. *T. Peter Naylor*

John Borron notes:

This letter corrects the account of the history of Leighton given in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register for Powys. The house was not sold in 1931 to Senator Rupert Davies, nor did it subsequently become a boys' school. It was sold after Miss Naylor's death to Senator Davies.

The Hafod Landscape: an illustrated history and guide

By Jennifer Macve (*Ymddiriedolaeth yr Hafod / The Hafod Trust, 2004*). 52 pp.; 55 illus., mostly in colour; 4 maps / plans, £4.50

Hafod Uchdryd lies in a remote corner of wild Wales, but it is an iconic site in the history of the Picturesque Movement. Situated in a natural amphitheatre on the banks of the Ystwyth among the foothills of Plynlimon, it has been represented by artists and writers as a paradise on earth. Its fame spreads principally from the many-sided activities of a squire, Thomas Johnes, who took up residence there in the late eighteenth century. The splendour of the house and its contents, as well as the beauty of the grounds, made Hafod a magnet for discerning tourists at the time. However, by the mid twentieth century successive changes in ownership and fortune had left the house a melancholy ruin and the grounds a desolate wilderness. In 1950 Hafod was bought by the Forestry Commission in order to grow cash crops of softwood. The ruins of the house were finally demolished for reasons of safety, leaving only a huge pile of rubble. Insensitive planting in succeeding years obliterated the former character of the landscape and damaged historic features of note.

Happily, after a generation of oblivion, the importance of Hafod was recognised, first by local enthusiasts, then in 1989 by the newly formed Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. The latter was instrumental in setting up the Hafod Trust, dedicated to the conservation and restoration of the historic landscape, and this book describes what has been achieved.

Any book on Hafod demands first-class illustrations, and here we find a wealth of recent photographs, carefully taken in ideal conditions of light and weather to highlight particular features. Of equal importance are the early landscapes, superbly reproduced in colour. The aquatints of J.C. Stadler, based on watercolours by John 'Warwick' Smith, are well represented, and examples are juxtaposed with present-day photographs. There are sketches by the eighteenth-century artist Thomas Jones of Pencerrig and views of Hafod on porcelain from the Derby Hafod Service. Nearer our own time belong two watercolours of 1939 by John Piper. All this graphic material is so important that it deserves a detailed list of its own. When an enlarged second edition is produced (!), a general index would also be justified.

There is a useful glossary of local Welsh place-names and their English meanings, as well as a bibliography of sources. If further references are required, the reader is referred to a fuller list, *A Documentary History of Hafod*, compiled by the Hafod Trust in 1998. Even so, a more expansive bibliography would have been appropriate here. A point may be noted on page 24, where

'William Wyndham' must mean 'Henry Penruddocke Wyndham'.

Central to the subject - and the book - is a plan of the estate with each walk boldly traced; features are numbered and explained in a key, and parking places marked. Map readers may be perplexed - until they realise that the North point is at the *bottom* of the plan. There is also a plan of the house in 1870 and a reproduction of William Blake's map of Hafod in 1796. Unfortunately for readers unfamiliar with Welsh geography, there is no general location map.

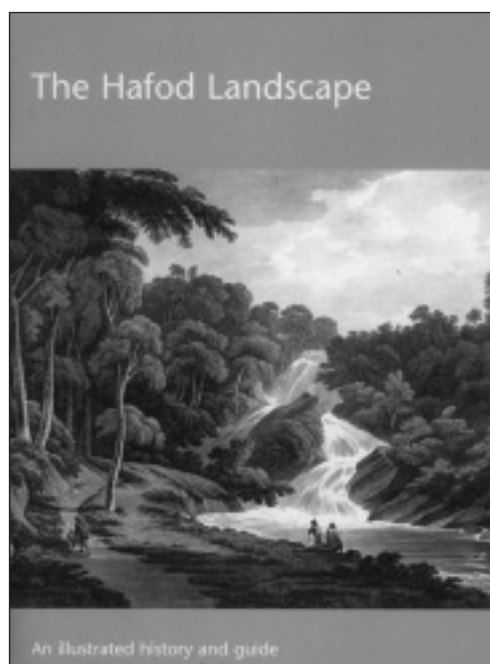
The text is a masterpiece of compression, beginning with the key personality, Thomas Johnes, his family history and connections. He arrived at Hafod ambitious to create arcadia among the gloomy hills. The story of the house, marked by success, disaster and tragedy, is retold. The local topography is described in relation to its geology and natural history. The author, Jennifer Macve, at present Administrator of the Hafod Trust, has been researching the story of Hafod for many years, and has been much involved in moves to save the landscape.

Johnes created a series of walks radiating from the house, the best known being the Lady's Walk and the Gentleman's Walk. He encouraged his guests to sample the walks, which he regarded as more important than the books and treasures which he kept in the house. Each walk was thoughtfully devised to contain a variety of experiences based on concealment and surprise in the best Picturesque tradition.

These walks were the first focus of the present restoration project, now carried forward by a Partnership between the Hafod Trust and the landowner, the Forestry Commission. The Trust has raised huge sums of money from private benefactors, charitable trusts and public authorities, and many of its successes are patent for all to see. Much of its activity, however, is not obvious - the investigation and research that preceded action on the ground. The trustees and their helpers have needed all the patience and perseverance they could muster to realise their vision, and the Forestry Commission must be congratulated on its collaboration. Conservation has had to take account of developments initiated by owners who followed Johnes, and compromise has occasionally been necessary. For example, the Alpine Bridge had to be reconstructed at a higher level than Johnes's bridge. On the other hand, natural erosion has sometimes been responsible for the disappearance of the original path, and alternative links have had to be devised.

All are welcome to roam at Hafod (there is no admission charge). Paths are waymarked and car parks provided. This is not a 'drive through' experience, but a 'walk around'. Much has happened at Hafod in the last decade - to the immense benefit of the place itself and of those who visit it. This book provides a timely introduction to the 'new Hafod', with much practical guidance for the explorer. It is a 'must' for lovers of the Picturesque and devotees of Hafod.

Donald Moore



Brecon and Radnorshire

Saturday April 16th, 2 pm – Visit to Ruperra

Following Pat Mosely's lecture at the AGM, we are making a visit to see the work of the Ruperra Trust. The house at Ruperra is privately owned, and is not available. There are no facilities for visitors, and it is suggested that you bring a picnic. There is no charge, but individuals are invited to make a donation to the Trust.

Sunday July 10th, 2 pm – Summer Garden Party

By kind permission of Lt. Col. Garnons-Williams the party this year is being held at Treberfydd. As well as seeing the garden, we hope to be providing all visitors with a strawberry tea.

The charge will be £6 per head for Members and their guests.

Saturday September 17th – Study Day

The last one a couple of years ago having proved so popular, this year we are holding another Study Day - on 'Botanic Gardens, Past and Future.' It seemed appropriate that it should be held at the Welsh National Botanic Garden, Llanarthne, Carmarthen. Places will be limited by the size of room available to us, so booking will be essential. The cost for the day, including admission to the Garden, and coffee, is to be £20.

Thursday 20th October 7 pm – Autumn Lecture

Helena Attlee has agreed to talk to us about Italian Gardens. The meeting will be in Llandrindod Wells, and the cost will £7 per head.

NOTE: Members may like to know that Helena Attlee is to give a lecture 'Water Music' at the Assembly Rooms, Presteigne, at 3 pm on Sunday February 13th, to consider the many uses of water in Italian renaissance gardens. Admission is £3 at the door. This lecture is a Mid Border Arts event.

Carmarthenshire

John Hegarty and Simon Wardle are trying to revive interest in this branch but require support from at least one or two existing members indicating they would like to participate.

Contact no. 01550 720273

Ceredigion

Sat., 30th April – AGM at Aberarth Village Hall at 2.30pm.

The AGM will be followed by a talk by Ken Murphy, Principal archaeologist - Field Studies, Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust on **Aspects of the Picturesque in South Wales.**

Saturday 16 July 2.00pm

Visit to Llwynwormwood, Myddfai, near Llandovery.

By invitation of Mr and Mrs John Hegarty.

We will be shown the late 18th century landscape park (Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens Grade II) associated with the former home of the Revd Sir Erasmus Griffies-Williams, Chancellor of St David's.

Own or shared transport.

Sunday 11 September 2.00pm

Dr Thomas Pinhorn has kindly invited us to visit his restored Georgian-style town house and garden, (completed in 1823). The classic town house is in the Struet (meaning the stroll) in Brecon and has been restored with its garden.

Dr Pinhorn is an expert in architectural restoration particularly ironwork, plasterwork and period paints and pigments. Current projects include a UNESCO project for the restoration of Dutch port buildings in Batavia, (now Jakarta).

Sunday 13 November 11.00am

Dr John Savidge will lead an exploration of recently 'improved' and 'ornamented' walks in some of the historic woodlands of lower the Ystwyth Valley.

Clwyd

Saturday 23 April Nerquis Hall – Coffee morning and show of auriculas in the historic gardens of the Hall.

Saturday 21 May – Visit to **Otley beside the Ellesmere** by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Mainwaring.

Sunday 12 June – A special chance to visit **Nantlys, Tremerchion**. The garden design is contemporaneous with the house. Documents relating to the garden history will be on display and tea will be available.

Saturday 22 October – **Study Day** at the Edith Bankes Memorial Hall, Northop. **The Planted Landscape** Speakers: Sheila Roberts, David Toyne, Elizabeth Whittle.

Gwynedd

Friday 18 March – 7.30pm. The Len Beer Memorial Lecture: Jim Jermyn of Edrom Nursesies, Scotland, on **Plants of the Austrian and Italian Alps.**

Saturday 30 April – **Annual Plant Fair** at Crug Farm, Griffiths Crossing.

By kind permission of Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones.

Wednesday 11 May – Garden visits to **Aber Atro Hall**, Llanbedr followed by tea at Las Ynys, Harlech.

Friday 24 June 6.30-8-30pm – **Garden Party** at Crug Farm.

Saturday 25 June – **WHGT National Study Day** at Hafod.

Thursday 7 July – Garden Visits to **Llanerchaeron and Tŷ Glyn**, Ceredigion.

16-18 September Harrogate Flower Show – Two night excursion, visit to Harlow Carr RHS garden on return journey.

Thursday 29 September Hotel Maes y Neuadd – Michaelmas Luncheon.

Saturday 8 October – **Study day on Walled Gardens** at Penrhyn Castle.

Pembrokeshire

Tuesday 22nd March at The Rising Sun Inn, Pelcom Cross, Haverfordwest 7.30pm

Tom Lloyd: **The settings of Historic Gardens in Pembrokeshire.**

Monday 18th April – **Annual General Meeting** at The Rising Sun Inn, Pelcom Cross, Haverfordwest 7.30pm.

7th May – **Stall at Narberth Plant Sale**, Narberth CP School, 10 am to 4 pm, plants for sale to reach us by 9.30 am in the playground.

21st May – Visit to restyled walled garden and grounds at **Treffgarne Hall** at 2.30 pm.

Saturday 25th June – **WHGT National Study Day** at Hafod

Saturday 23rd July – To be arranged.

Monday 21st November – **Annual Public Lecture** at the County Library, Haverfordwest at 7.30 pm. **Richard Ellis, National Trust**

Head Warden for Pembrokeshire will survey NT activity in the Pembrokeshire landscape with particular reference to the ongoing restoration work at Stackpole.

Rose Garden open at Coed-y-Ffynnon NGS Open Days Sunday 26th June and Saturday 3rd July - Open by telephone appointment other days mid-June to mid-July (01834 831 396).

South and Mid Glamorgan

Sunday 26th June

The Clock House, Cathedral Close, Llandaff.

Professor and Mrs Bryan Hubbard will open their garden on **19th June 2005** as part of the National Garden Scheme. However they have kindly invited the Branch to a private visit. We hope for donations to Branch funds.

Sunday 17th July – **Branch AGM**. Venue and speaker to be announced.

West Glamorgan

Programme yet to be finalised.

Contact: Mrs Ann Gardner.

Gerddi-WWW.

With the summer ahead of us, here are some sites to help you to plan your garden visits

<http://www.hudsonsguide.co.uk/home.html>

Hudson's Historic Houses & Gardens provides a **definitive guide** to the best **historic houses and gardens, castles and heritage sites** that Britain has to offer.

<http://www.rareplantsfair.com/>

A visit to a Rare Plants Fair provides a unique opportunity for any plant hunter or garden enthusiast to source rare and unusual plants. These fairs often take place in Historic Gardens giving you a chance to view and support them.

<http://www.ngs.org.uk>

The full listing of gardens open for charity in 2005 is now available.

Please send me photos of gardens or information on local events, news etc and new information for 2005 for the WHGT website at <http://gardensofwales.org.uk>

Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge, CF71 7RQ
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Book Review

Castles in the Air

by **Judy Corbett**, Published Ebury Press, hardback (2004) £12-99, paperback (2005) £7-99.

Judy Corbett has woven a readable tale around her and her husband Peter Welford's experiences buying and restoring Gwydir Castle, Llanwrst. Luck, fate, and even ghostly intervention buffet this plucky and apparently penniless couple in their single-minded quest to achieve their goal. One gawps amazed at the impression received that the costs of restoring a building of this magnitude could have been derived from the bed and breakfast trade in one wing and the proceeds of antiquarian book binding. If it has a fault it is that in concentrating on the romance of the tale it barely mentions the substantial sums of public money which, quite rightly, came their way as a result of the importance of the building and the support of Cadw and the Historic Buildings Council. This is a pity, because it might serve to reassure others who think of investing their entire resources in an important but crumbling building, that at least some help should be at hand.

The picture of discomfort and hardship is, I am sure not overdrawn. Indeed the couple are such purists that they have eschewed the modern comforts of electricity and central heating in favour of candles and open fires. Although all of us have ancestors who lived like this, it is a credit to the Welfords that they have carried the tradition into the 21st century.

The highlight of the book is the reclamation and re-installation of the 17th century panelled dining room, which had been purchased at auction by Randolph Hearst, crated up and shipped to America in 1921. Equally satisfying is the account of the efforts by which they re-instated the lead which feeds the header tank and how eventually water gushed again from the blocked lead pipes of Sir John Wynn's gravity-fed fountain on the Gwydir lawn. The machinations of the ghostly Margaret Wynn, I take with a pinch of salt.

There is also an unintended treat in the form of a misprint which must surely be down to the editor rather than the author. On page 78, reflecting upon the building materials of restoration, Corbett writes "This, then was to be our initiation into the sacred mysteries of **tantalised** (sic) timber, slaked lime and Code 7 lead." I find I now seldom pass a builder's merchant without a smile.

Caroline Palmer

Some Other Events

Fonmon Castle, Nr Cardiff, Contact 01446 710206

Sunday 26th June, **Rare Plants Fair**, 11am - 4pm, £ 4.00

Bute Park, Cardiff Contact 02076491885 or see <http://www.rhs.org.uk>
22nd - 24th April. **RHS Spring Flower Show.**

Dyffryn Gardens Contact 02920593328 or see www.dyffryngardens.org.uk
7th & 8th May, **Horticultural Weekend.** Explore the Arboretum with our historical plant hunters to discover the history and origin of our trees.

18th & 19th June **Opera & Music Weekend.** The Garden Opera company's outstanding production of Cenerentola (Cinderella) by Rossini and the RAF St Athan Band in concert.

Aberglasney Contact 01558 668998 or see www.aberglasney.org

28 May **Treasures of a woodland garden.** RHS special event.

25 June, 10 July, 14 July: **Musical evening, Opera in the garden, Jazz in the garden.**

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