



# CLWYD BRANCH NEWS

Editor Glynis Shaw

September 2010

## Pool Park

'Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren' by John Michael Wright depicts the earliest image of Pool Park. Sir Walter Bagot's mother-in-law, the wealthy widow Elizabeth, is seated with his children Elizabeth and Edward. Mrs Salesbury moved from Bachymbyd, Rhewl, to Pool Park which became the Bagot seat in Wales.

The artist depicts a walled and terraced garden landscape with woodland and the Clwydian hills beyond. This was the most expensive of the six family portraits Walter Bagot commissioned in 1676/7, begun at the ancestral family seat at Blithfield in Staffordshire and completed in London. The accuracy of the landscape in the painting is questionable as there is no evidence that Wright ever visited Pool Park. However, this landscape was important to Bagot and the painting is believed to celebrate the end of a dynastic dispute.

The origin of Pool Park is not known but it was one of the five deer parks once associated with Ruthin Castle. Surrounded by ancient woodlands, part of the southern boundary of the original deer park may still be identified today. The medieval name Glympolva or Poll Park, after an ancient pool, indicates that the estate is considerably older than the house.

Pool Park was a component of the Bachymbyd and Rhug estate acquired in the early 16th century by John Salesbury, fourth son of Thomas Salusbury of Lleweni. (*'Salesbury' is the C16th and C17th spelling used by this branch of the family*). The estate was divided into two by William Salesbury 'Hen Hosanau Gleision' 'Old Blue Stockings' an ardent royalist who valiantly defended Denbigh castle during the civil war. William partially disinherited his eldest son Owen who not only fought on the wrong side but also married without consent. Owen inherited Rhug but the larger Bachymbyd estate including Pool Park went to his younger son Charles, Knight of the Royal Oak. In 1670 Pool Park passed to the Bagots' of Blithfield when Sir Charles's only surviving daughter Jane married Sir Walter Bagot.

According to family tradition Walter Bagot fell in love with Jane at first sight when his spaniel strayed onto her land. After a year of negotiation (Jane was a



*Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren by John Michael Wright 1676 (Tate Britain)*

much sought after heiress) Jane and Walter married in 1670 in secrecy as Jane's cousin William (Owen's son) threatened to kidnap the bridegroom on the way to the ceremony. William then spent the rest of his life contesting Jane's inheritance in the court of Chancery in a futile attempt to reunite the estate.

The 21 acre site of Pool Park appears to be an 18th century design. It has an informal landscaping with clumps of trees and a fine kitchen garden. Sir William Bagot wrote a pastoral poem on Poussin's *'Shepherds of Arcadia'* in 1772, the painting which inspired the Shepherd's Monument at Shrugborough Hall. Sir William Bagot wrote the poem in anticipation of a party at Shrugborough. Paintings by Poussin and Claude Lorrain were instrumental in changing the taste in the design of English landscapes.

The most significant landscape feature of Pool Park is the large terraced mound or mound in front of the house. A sundial originally from Bachymbyd, with Charles Salesbury's initials and 1661 (date when he became High Sheriff of Denbigh) carved in the stone column, is placed on the mound. Today it is a



Terraced mount left; steps to woodland walks right

sad record of time - the dial is lost and the column propped up with metal rods.

A standing stone from Bedd Emlyn (Emlyn's Grave), from a tumulus on the summit of Bryn-y-Beddu in Clocaenog was also placed on the mount. The stone, recorded in 1693 by Edward Lhuyd, was removed from its site by Bagot in 1813. This is a bilingual ogham stone with engraved Roman letters 'Aemilini Tavisaci' and ogham grooves on the side (read from bottom left along the top and down the right). The original stone is now in the NMW (Cardiff) and a replica is now in situ.

A third feature placed on the terraced mount was a stone chair (See page 4) which is now lost.

A single yew tree was also planted on top of the mount - yew trees were considered sacred to the Celts - the druids are said to have inscribed its wood with powerful words in the ogham script. The origins of this mount are not known - perhaps it was a Bagot creation or an ancient burial mound turned into a 'Prospect Mount'. Such mounts were not uncommon in the 18th century.

After 1813 the main drive was re-routed, approaching the house from the Ruthin entrance winding through the parkland past a possibly ancient carp pond and most importantly towards the mount (terraced on the north, facing the drive and on the west, facing the house). This remarkable garden feature illustrates the family motto "*Antiquum Obtinens*" ('Possessing Antiquity') and reflects the 18th century preoccupation with druid stones and the search for an indigenous ancient culture.

In 1826-9 Pool Park was rebuilt for William 2nd Lord Bagot in a half timbered mock Tudor design. The architect John Buckler (thought to have re-modelled Blithfield) and the Wrexham surveyor Benjamin

Gummow designed the Home Farmhouse south of the forecourt in the same manner. When rebuilding the house the neoclassical arched entrance, incorporated a pair of fine flanking columns from what Bagot described as an Inigo Jones portico. The columns and elements of the balustrade either side of the entrance are from the Bachymbyd old house. However, the fine oak staircase with famous carved panelling came from an old house in Clocaenog, said to be a former Bishop's residence, located where the playing fields are found today.

Pool Park's four lodges are early C19th. The main drive

led from the half timbered Ruthin Pine Lodge. The parkland included three woodlands. To the east is the stream Efail y rhidyll (the Sieve Smithy) - perhaps once there was a smithy here - passing through Coed Efail-y rhidyll now managed by the Forestry Commission. To the north west is Coed Ty'n-y celyn approached from Bingley Lodge, the original main entrance to the old house. Coed Ffrith-wern-Dafydd to the south was accessed from Pen y Maes lodge later associated with Pool Park Home Farm and became the game keeper's cottage. The Farm is now a separate property; the current farmhouse has been developed from some of the nineteenth century farm buildings. The original high arch entrance into the farm yard still remains, though the farm is now reached by a new drive. Today Pool Park is approached from the eastern Clocaenog Lodge, the former tradesman's entrance.

A tennis court described in the 1928 Sales particulars as '*under the shadow of a fine copper beech tree*' was on the bank above the lawns. The terraced lawns have far reaching views towards the Clwydians (perhaps the view in the painting) and had a bowling green. The 1928 Sales Particulars also mention a lily pond surrounded by herbaceous borders which has since disappeared. A steep flight of steps from the lawn leads up a riveted bank behind the house to paths through the woodlands above the house. Now much overgrown, it was once covered with wild daffodils and bluebells.

The picturesque Dingle and steep shrubbery walk down to the stream is reached from the forecourt through rhododendrons following a path from the drive around the base of the mount. 1828 accounts refer to the Dingle paths being maintained. A large lake called Pysgodlyn south west of the house



above the Dingle was drained when Pool Park went on mains water, forming Maes Tyddyn, a 32 acre field. Originally the stream was canalised above the Dingle and tunnelled under the drive from the Clocaenog entrance providing a small cascade.

Pool Park has an unusual large sloping 3 acre horseshoe-shaped kitchen garden, sited upwind some way south of the house. The slate edged paths did not cross in the centre of the walled garden. Instead the four large growing beds had an unusual offset arrangement. Protected by belts of woodland from the north and east winds the garden is orientated south-east as advocated by Switzer in his *'Practical Fruit Gardener'* 1724. The sloping garden is well designed for drainage and air flow. Its walls are of varying height, similar to those at Clumber, to ensure that cold air could exit the garden. The brickwork and copings are all in remarkably good condition but recently the walls have been stripped of the old fruit trees. The flued wall appears to be mid to late C18th. Water was originally piped from a reservoir on the hill above the garden to the old wooden greenhouses since removed. A newer greenhouse with its pipe work more or less intact is all that now remains with a vine still struggling for survival.

The old gardener's cottage with a vegetable cellar at the south east corner of the garden is now in urgent need of repair and the attached potting shed is completely derelict. The gate by the cottage would have been where manure and material from the farm was brought in and the former hot beds are near by.

During the C19th Pool Park was tenanted by industrialists looking for a rural retreat. George Richards Elkington, pioneer of electroplating solutions, spent his last few years at Pool Park where he died in 1865. Robert Blezard a brewer from Liverpool lived at Pool Park for 20 years breeding a pedigree herd of shorthorns among the ancient trees; his son died at Pool Park in 1907.

Visitors also stayed at the Georgian Firgrove (formerly Plas Minffordd) restored by Bagot c1800 as a guest house beside the nursery fields for the forestry plantations. The Bagots stayed at Firgrove for a period whilst the building work was underway at Pool Park. The monument at Pincyn Llys was erected in 1832 by the second Lord Bagot commemorating the replanting of Clocaenog forest which had been heavily felled during the First World War.

J C Loudon described Pool Park as *'finely wooded with old chestnut trees'*. Veteran trees still survive



*Mount today with abandoned container and rubbish at its base*

in the parkland including some magnificent sweet chestnuts north of the Dingle. Perhaps these were planted by Charles Salusbury who planted the 'Three Sisters' of Bachymbyd (marked on the OS map) as a token of affection that his three daughters had for each other.

Ornamental landscaping extended into the estate. Lady Bagot's Drive was laid out as a carriageway during the Edwardian period linking Bachymbyd with Pool Park through the beautiful Clywedog valley, running eastwards from Rhyd-y Cilgwyn near Rhewl. This was her favourite Sunday drive after a service in Llanfwrog church before returning home for lunch. The drive follows an uncompleted rail track for extracting Clocaenog timber which began by the old saw mill at Bontuchel. Funding for this track ran out at Cefn Iwrch Bach.

In 1928 Pool Park was lost to the Bagot's on a bet at the races. The 17,500 acre estate was divided into lots. The tenant farmers mainly bought their farms and a Llanwrst timber merchant who felled the trees including most of the avenues bought much of the parkland. The house remained unsold and was leased to Sir Henry Tate as a retreat from his Liverpool sugar enterprises. The semi-detached Maesgwyn cottages were built for Tate's gardener and chauffeur, among the fifty staff he employed at Pool Park.

## Pool Park Hospital

Pool Park's garden history did not end in 1934 when the District Health Authority bought Pool Park as a convalescent home.

Pool Park opened for 80 male patients in 1937 and accommodated up to 120 patients during the war. A POW camp was also established in the grounds of Pool Park alongside the Ruthin Clawdnewydd road.



Pool Park in the 1940's. From the Collections of the National Monuments Record of Wales:  
© Ronald Thompson.

The prisoners worked on the surrounding farms. After 1949 Pool Park became a mental health hospital and accepted women. The gardens continued to be maintained by the patients and a gardener. The walled kitchen garden provided occupational therapy and was hugely productive supplying the Denbigh, Ruthin and sometimes also Glan Clwyd hospitals. The old gardener's cottage was used as a day room for the patients working in the garden.

For many years a single lawn mower was used for the croquet lawn and the bowling green which was then kept in better condition than the one in Ruthin. Patients used scythes to cut the grass elsewhere. Patients also prepared the produce, shelling peas, etc in the stable block where other occupational therapies were later organized. The deep well in the stables maintained a good water supply at Pool Park during the drought in 1975.

When the authorities stopped the patients working in the gardens for fear of exploitation, sheep grazed the lawns. The walled garden continued to be productive under the gardener Bryn Lewis until 1988.

A chapel was built for the patients from a row of wooden stables with support from the Ruthin Rotary Club. Scattered hymn books and bibles are still left behind. During the NHS ownership the old farmhouse was demolished as it had become unsafe. The patients enjoyed the gardens and parkland at Pool Park and there were many seats for their enjoyment of the views beyond the farm on the terrace besides the main hospital entrance as well as from the terraced lawns.

The hospital entrance was from the east but used a

drive which led around the mount to the forecourt -the old gateposts still remain- now crudely blocked off with rubble The hospital sewage treatment was sited below the mount by the stream.

The patients left Pool Park in 1989. It was sold in 1992 and has since remained empty. Purchased by a developer, Pool Park has been land banked for nearly 20 years and left to fall to ruin. The landscape is overgrown and abandoned and the public right of way has not been maintained. Pool Park is a listed II\* building in a Grade II listed landscape and now in urgent need of rescue.

*Many thanks to Robert Price and Peter Lund for their kind assistance; Thanks also to Anna Meadway of Firgrove for the print of Pool Park. Special thanks to Caradoc Jones who worked for years on the estate, Bryn Lewis the last gardener at Pool Park and Rhian Jones from Pen-y-Maes Lodge who was born at Pool Park farm, for all their assistance, time and interest in providing material on Pool Park and its landscape.*

## Where is the Pool Park Chair?

The 1928 sale details describe Bagot's stone chair as the 'Cadair y Frenhines' (Queens Chair) from Lys-y -Frenhines. It was said to be similar to the ancient Coronation or Inauguration Chair of the Clanna-boye (anglicised Claneboye), the O'Neills of Castlereagh, which is roughly hewn from a boulder of white sandstone.

The O'Neill's relic survived being cast down from the clan's stronghold, the Grey Castle, on the hill of Castlereagh outside Belfast -nothing remains there today. Discovered in 1750 it became a seat in the wall of the butter market. Thomas Fitzmaurice saved the O'Neill chair in 1829 when the butter market was demolished; he moved it to his garden in Lancaster Place. Roger C Walker a barrister and collector of antiquities bought the chair for his residence in Co Sligo where it remained until 1897 when it was moved to the Ulster Museum of Belfast. Wherever possible the English broke up the Inauguration stones of Celtic kings and chiefs making them very rare. No one now seems to know what happened to Bagot's chair.



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## Over Three hundred Years in the Sun (Thoughts of an old sundial) by Irene Brightmer

I have enjoyed a varied life, in and out of the lime-light but always in the sun on my own terrace in a North Wales garden.

Made by John Marke in London I carry his signature "Johannes Marke Londini fecit." I was brought here during the 1670s, and was probably the first double horizontal dial in the area. I was shown off to one and all to much admiration and amazement.

They needed me to regulate their clocks and watches. I have long outlived most of these, including the original gatehouse clock which kept good time thanks to prompts from me. Nowadays the one which looks down on me is a replacement by Joyce of Whitchurch, installed a hundred years ago; their man still turns up regularly to service it.

Now they can all live without me and have forgotten that I exist. Even the gardener hadn't noticed me, never mind walked up to check my time.

I once had a useful life until about a hundred years ago when they moved me a few metres along the terrace, just because they wanted symmetry when the terrace below was replanted with a fashionable rose garden.

I have never been the same since. You see, they didn't make a good job of it and I am not quite horizontal. I suppose they didn't bother too much because with better clocks and more technology they didn't need my precision any more.

However, I would look much finer if my pillar were upright and I could do my job properly again. The times and other fine details on my dial plate can still be read, but the engraved text under John Marke's signature is faint; only I know what it says, although one of those clever members of the British Sundial Society may decipher it before long!

They have started noticing me once again and realise how special I am. I am enjoying being back in the limelight but now a new threat hangs over me; to protect me from further effects of aging they want to hide me away from the weather. They mean well but the sun would no longer light up my dial. I shall be safe, but will I be forgotten all over again? I hope not. There aren't many double horizontal sundials left and very few of us are in our original gardens. Perhaps I have been lucky to have enjoyed a quiet life in my North Wales garden until now."

*NOTES:1. A version of this article first appeared in the Bulletin of the British Sundial Society Vol 20 (iii) Sept 2008 2. A double horizontal dial has a distinctively-shaped gnomon which shows the time and date and many other astronomical parameters. Some also function as moon dials. They were first introduced in the early 17th century in London. Most are now kept in museums.*

*Sundial information can be found at: [www.sundialsoc.org.uk](http://www.sundialsoc.org.uk)*

## Glenna's Garden by David Toyne

Mwrog Street in Ruthin was once a grand thoroughfare, tree lined, with a tributary of the River Clwyd running down its centre and a mixture of sedate Victorian houses and smaller cottages along both sides.

The trees and river have gone but the houses, with few exceptions, are much the same. The rear gardens, long, very narrow plots have changed little – the width of the 'two-up-two-down' cottages or, in many cases, the width of three cottages, divided crosswise to give three square plots, approximately 30' x 30' extending away from the houses.

In the 1970s, Glenna's house, 'arrived'. Numbers 44 - 46 built in 1851, were knocked-into-one and acquired what appears to be three garden plots, knocked-into-one, giving a garden of approximately 130 feet by 30 feet. Then four years ago, a kind neighbour, seeing the wonders Glenna was working in her patch, suggested Glenna have her third of the next three houses' plot. In 2008 - hedge removed, lawn laid, beds planted - this became the 'formal' part of the garden, which is now a broad 'T' shape, some 120 feet long and 60 feet at its widest point.

Prior to 1851 the back gardens were once market gardens so the soil is very dark and deeply cultivated. As the soil is mostly of shale origin it is not naturally very fertile and needs constant applications of compost and leaf-mould.

When Glenna arrived in 2000, there were just four trees - a fairly big beech and a double-stemmed birch near the house, and a weeping willow and laurel at the far end and a small assortment of sickly shrubs, choisya, camellia and berberis – the rest was grass.

This has now been imaginatively transformed into a cottage garden with a formal area, woodland shade garden, shrub border, small meadow area, wildlife areas, veg garden and numerous sitting places.

Although the garden has had to contend with the construction of a large extension to the house last year, so many of the plantings are new and currently the Veg Garden is being revamped with new 'sleeper' beds the garden is lovely with a rich and varied planting.

There are plans for a large new shed and potting area as the garden continues to develop.

It was a pity that the branch visit clashed with the Wimbledon final and it rained. However, it is highly recommended for next year.

## Birkenhead: *The People's Garden* *'That which is good should be preserved'*



Crowds entering the Park through the Grand entrance on the opening day. An engraving in the *Illustrated London News*, 10th April 1847

Opened in 1847, Birkenhead is Britain's only Grade I listed park. As the inspiration for Central Park in New York and the first urban park built at public expense, Birkenhead is a milestone in the history of parks.

The American, Frederick Olmstead, visited the Derby Arboretum (designed by John Claudius Loudon) and Birkenhead Park in 1850 during a European tour. In 1858 Olmstead entered the competition to design Central Park in New York with the British architect Calvert Vaux. Their winning '*Greensward Plan*' incorporated many features from the designs of Loudon and Paxton. Olmstead went on to become America's most important park designer and founder of American landscape architecture.

Olmstead and Vaux revisited Birkenhead in 1858 to develop their plans with the Park Superintendent, Paxton's able pupil, Edward Kemp. Central Park was completed in 1873. Last July a tree planting ceremony both sides of the Atlantic celebrated the link between the two parks; an evergreen oak was planted at Birkenhead near the new visitor centre.

Since the branch's visit in 2002 Birkenhead has benefited from an £11.5 million renovation by the Heritage Lottery Fund and partners.

Paths have been improved, rock work renovated, the lakes cleaned and restocked, new bridges and railings have been installed and much of the original planting restored. The Swiss Bridge, the Roman Boathouse (Paxton's idea for a bandstand)

are restored and the Grand Entrance has had roof leading replaced and masonry repairs. A new £1 million pavilion has been built to accommodate a visitor centre, café and exhibitions; its glassy design reflects the aesthetics of Paxton's famous Crystal Palace.

**'The Friends of Birkenhead Park'**, founded in 1976 by Lord Griff Evans of Claughton (of Welsh descent) to protect the park, have been instrumental in this restoration. The Friends ensured that the park was properly recognized, first as a Conservation Area in 1977 and gained its listed status in 1995. Since then the Friends have worked tirelessly to secure its protection and conservation.

The park was the vision of Sir William Jackson who commissioned Joseph Paxton to design it. Despite Paxton's initial reluctance to be involved with

a development on a poor site of cheap marshland, Birkenhead is recognized today as his most outstanding park achievement.

Constructed 1843-47 the park was based on the ideals of the 1833 Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Walks that '*the working-classes .. be able to walk out in decent comfort with their families.*'

Paxton reclaimed the marsh by designing drainage to create the artificial lakes. The excavated material was used to landscape the hillocks and rockeries which are all man made. The 180 acre site was modelled on the Parisian parks with serpentine paths and undulating ground. Paxton wanted visitors to enjoy an idealised landscape and encounter unexpected views and hidden features, following the winding paths through open meadows and naturalistic woodland bordered by intermittent clumps of exotic trees.

The curve is the principle line of design to create this natural and informal landscape with a variety of views. The 8 acres of lake are the most important element in this landscape. From any particular view point it is difficult to see where the lakes begin or end. The banked edges keep them hidden from a distance whilst their sinuous narrow arms and sequence of bridges provide idyllic vistas of a river landscape. Olmstead wrote in his book '*Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*'

*"I cannot undertake to describe the effect of so much taste and skill as had evidently been employed; I will only tell you, that we passed by winding paths, over acres and acres, with a constant varying surface, where on all sides*





Restored Roman Boathouse - Paxton's idea for a Bandstand

*were growing every variety of shrubs and flowers, with more than natural grace, all set in borders of greenest, closest turf, and all kept with consummate neatness".*

The varied styles of the five lodges including Norman, Gothic, Castellated and Italian are integral to Paxton's design of novelty views, as is the restored Swiss bridge which links to an island on Lower Lake. In the 1850s a gondola was bought for the Roman Boathouse. The varied and exotic architecture creates a sense of journey to a utopia far from the everyday city experience of overcrowding, noise and pollution.

John Robertson, Paxton's architectural assistant who had previously worked for Loudon provided the detailed drawings for the park and the lodges. Lewis Hornblower, a young Liverpool architect, designed the Grand Entrance based on the temple on the Ilissus in Athens. This classical Ionic entrance has a large central archway for carriages to access the drives and smaller side archways for pedestrians. It also accommodates the North and South lodges. Although Paxton had the Grand Entrance scaled down, Olmstead found it *'heavy and awkward'*.

Today 26 listed buildings (including some of the surrounding park villas) are associated with the park. They were designed by Paxton's team and mostly built in the local Storeton sandstone.

From its inception the park catered for sport as health and exercise were important elements of the Park movement. The cricket club, which began playing here in 1846 before the park officially

opened, is one of the oldest in the country. Fishing, football and rugby are all long established activities within the park. Bowls, curling and archery were also popular in the C19th. Today there are two cricket clubs, two tennis clubs and a football club which offers multi-sports including squash and racket ball. Angling, bowls and running are also popular and a weekly programme of health walks and cycle rides caters for all abilities.

Kemp was the park's first Superintendent for 46 years. It is Kemp who should be credited for the imaginative planting schemes. He lived in the Italian Lodge with the campanile from which to view the parkland. Colour and experimentation are shown in the range of plant species he established on an annual budget of £1,000. Although the elm trees were ravaged by Dutch

elm disease in the 1970s, variegated holly, purple leafed beech, pale green swamp cypress, weeping willow and silver pear were all documented in the survey of 1999 by the Parklands Consortium.

A recent survey of the planting has found over 4,000 trees of 60 different species including all the native trees as well as exotics such as the cucumber tree.

Clearings of the self seeded sycamores around the upper lake are now being replanted with 'living fossils' - the species which survived from the dinosaur age such as Monkey Puzzle and Gingko. This is inspired by Paxton's design at Crystal Palace where a group of life size dinosaur sculptures are placed along the lakeside.

Restoration of the lakes involved dredging 10,000 tonnes of 160-year-old silt which was recycled to provide soil for a new community woodland on Bidston Moss, a former waste site.

Over the years Birkenhead park has been used for music, celebration and protest. In 1917 the Welsh National Eisteddfod was the first held outside Wales. It was attended by Lloyd George and marked by the *'Black Chair of Birkenhead'*. The Chair was draped as the winning poet Hedd Wyn, the bardic name of Ellis Humphrey Evans from Trawsfynydd had fallen in the battle of Pilkem Ridge, Ypres a few days after submitting his poem. His story was commemorated in an Oscar nominated film. Hedd Wyn's poem *'Yr Arwr'* (The Hero) describes the realities of war.

A palm house of 1921 and a later conservatory have long since been demolished. In the 1940's the

park's railings and iron work including a bandstand were lost to the war effort and the Upper Park was used for allotments.

However today Paxton's original design is largely intact and the park remains much loved and well used. Despite its unfavourable site Paxton created an environment as important for Birkenhead today as when it was first designed. Following the massive restoration Birkenhead Park reopened in 2008. In 2009 Birkenhead Park gained the prestigious Green flag Award.

Clwyd branch have a guided visit to Birkenhead Park on 16 Oct to see the restorations. You will also see the new sculpture, 'High Hopes', a 12 ft woman raising a child designed by the Wirral artist Paul Bearman sited near the new pavilion.

The Friends of Birkenhead Park have had huge success and fully lived up to their motto: '*That which is good should be preserved*'. Birkenhead is a great example of what can be achieved through a Friends group.

*Please complete the enclosed booking form if you would like to join this visit.*

## Parks need Friends

Cae Ddol in Ruthin has a newly formed Friends group. Cae Ddol is possibly one of Denbighshire's oldest parks. On the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey it is referred to as Castle Park and was the old deer park. The earliest known references to a park in Ruthin date from 1533-8 detailing foresters' fees to a master forester carrying out work at *Town Parke or Ruthin Parke*. The original park would have also included Coed Merchon in the hunting grounds of the estate.

The public park is believed to have been established by the Myddleton-Wests in 1850 when the Corwen road was re-routed to allow a more impressive drive to the castle via the castellated lodge (1848-53).

Today there is considerable concern at the state of the castle walls in the park. Anyone interested in Cae Ddol should join the Friends.

The Friends of Ffrith Beach are a community group who have been working to improve the Ffrith festival gardens. This group has been successful in developing a children's playground on the adjoining common ground.

## Branch News

A warm welcome to all new members. We hope to see you on our visits and study day.

Best wishes to Ann Sayer, Chairman of the Pembrokeshire Branch, who has valiantly volunteered to be the much needed WHGT membership secretary.

Welcome to Elspeth Brelsford who joined the Clwyd branch earlier this year and has agreed to become our much needed treasurer.

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## Summer Concert at Leeswood

Thanks to everyone who helped make the summer concert party at Leeswood a great success. Special thanks to Elizabeth and Pierre Bartlett for hosting this event. The evening was very enjoyable and raised over £800 for the WHGT.

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Congratulations to branch members Glenna and David Toyne and Fiona Bell on their success in gaining a silver gilt at the RHS Tatton Park Show with the Cottage Garden Society.

Wedding Congratulations to David and Glenna and all our best wishes!

Many thanks to everyone who has provided content and information for the branch newsletter. If you have items or ideas for the next issue contact Glynis: [glynis@castell-photography.co.uk](mailto:glynis@castell-photography.co.uk) (01745710261)

**Gwynedd Branch:** have a study day Oct 16 on 'Traditional Orchards' 10.30 - 3.00 at Maes-y Porth near Brynsiencyn, Anglesey. £18 including coffee lunch and tea. *Details on the website: [www.whgt.org.uk](http://www.whgt.org.uk) or contact Olive Horsfall 01766 780187*

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