

CLWYD BRANCH NEWS



Editor: Glynis Shaw

September 2011



Enjoying harvesting the Mostyn salad and vegetables



Production at Mostyn

The large kitchen garden at Mostyn was developed about 1830. Along the north east wall is a range of potting sheds, boiler rooms and bothies including a gardener's cottage. The garden is entered from this range via the Messenger glasshouses which once included vineries and a peach house.

When members of the branch last visited this garden, the restoration of the walls had just been completed. The 1.2 hectare or 2.97 acre site was then a blank canvas and bleak with not a plant in sight. In 1965 Mostyn had 12 gardeners and the produce was sold from the gates. Today with only 2 gardeners the development of the walled garden presented a challenge.

Edward Hillier, Managing Director of Mostyn Estates has now brought the garden back into production with a *Groundwork North Wales* project. This has enabled 14 young men otherwise unemployed to cultivate the kitchen garden on an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) programme. The scheme funds the participants for 42 weeks of horticultural training and work experience.

The participants on this programme have done an immense amount of hard work. Spoils from the estate's lead mine were once used on the footpaths to keep down the weeds. The leaching of this material had contaminated the soil. Before any vegetable planting could begin this had to be removed and new soil brought in.

Since April the trainees have been introduced to a wide variety of gardening skills including conservation, landscaping, site maintenance, food production, organic principles, harvesting and crop rotation. The green houses are also once again fully productive and to maintain horticultural interest a wide variety of vegetables and salads have been grown.

Caffi Florence at Loggerheads Country Park is now benefitting from this locally grown organic food. Mostyn Groundwork ILM co-ordinator and project manager Philip Handley and all the participants should be congratulated on their success.

A new find at Mostyn

Head gardener Kevin Woods has also been able to engage the participants in the wider Mostyn landscape. Whilst tidying up part of the early 20th century Japanese garden they discovered a long lost feature, **Karetaki, or a dry cascade**. This has now been excavated and is thought to compliment a nearby planting of a snowdrop waterfall.

The upper section of the Kyoto Saiho-ji temple gardens contains the oldest known example of a dry waterfall of the Muromachi era (1336-1573). This was not a landscape to walk through but one to be viewed. It is designed in accordance with Zen principles to facilitate meditation. The rocks are stacked to suggest a fast flowing mountain stream rushing over stones to a pool below. Gazing at such dramatic scenery was considered beneficial to the human spirit.



Karetaki / Dry cascade discovered at Mostyn



Lime Avenue at Soughton Hall c.1732

Soughton Hall

The Soughton estate was owned by the Conway family of Bodrhyddan at the beginning of the 17th century. The current house is believed to date from 1714 and was sold to John Wynne, Bishop of St Asaph in 1732, he later become Bishop of Bath and Wells. Neither of Bishop Wynne's two sons married so the estate passed to his daughter Margaret, wife of Henry Bankes of Corfe Castle/Kingston Lacy, Dorset.

The house was substantially remodelled c.1820 by William John Bankes, friend of Byron, and one of the greatest travellers and collectors of the early 19th century. William met Sir Charles Barry in Egypt at the temple of Ramses in Abu Simbel and employed Barry at Kingston Lacy and also at Soughton where he added the pavilions to the outer bays and the steep pitched roof with a central cupola to the arcaded top floor. Barry also added the corner stone turrets to the entrance courtyard matched by a pair at the back of the property.

In 1867 the Cheshire architect John Douglas added the red brick facing to Soughton Hall for John Scott Bankes and the Romanesque arches on the south front giving the form of the property you see today.

Douglas also designed the octagonal game house to the west of the hall in 1872.

In 1986 Soughton was sold to the Roddenhurst family who restored the property and opened Soughton as a hotel in 1995.

The garden and landscape park at Soughton Hall dates from the 18th century although some evidence of earlier planting has survived.

The semi circular area behind the 18th century stables and coach house was originally a drying green for the coachman planted with yews and holm oaks.

Four medieval statues representing civic virtues were found here, collected by William Bankes from the London Guildhall in the early 19th century. They are now in the Museum of London.

The wonderful quarter mile long lime avenue on the main approach to the south front of the house was planted by John Wynne c.1732. It may originally have been a double lime avenue planted as a decorative feature when the main approach was from the west. Part of the western avenue has now been replanted.

The main garden is now on the west side of the house in the area once used as the forecourt prior to 1805. This has been divided into quarters with a pool in the centre and yew trees around the outside with a small formal garden developed on the site of former greenhouses.

On a branch visit on September 23rd we will meet the gardener Chris and learn more about this landscape. Members will be able to look around the hotel interior also. Those wishing to meet for lunch in the Stables Bar Restaurant from 12.30 or who wish to stay for tea (you can do both) please let me know when you book. (See pg 4)

National WHGT AGM 2012

June 16th

Brynkinalt Hall, Chirk

Kindly hosted by branch members Kate and Ian Hill-Trevor.



Above: Veteran oak at Wynnstay may be over 500 years old
 Left: Wynnstay's Golden Oak 'Quercus robur 'Concordia'

Protecting Trees

The Forestry Commission defines heritage trees as “old trees, wide trees, rare trees and trees with historical and cultural significance.” Britain has the highest proportion of ancient trees in Europe. Wales has many amazing trees but many are unprotected.

On heritage landscapes, trees are an enormously important element and often the oldest surviving component of the designed landscape. Trees in listed landscapes include ornamental as well as native varieties. However rare or ancient, the trees on a Grade I listed landscape in the *cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales* have no statutory protection.

Up until now tree survival has largely depended upon responsible owners. However, recent pressure for housing development, intensive farming and the rising costs of arborist services means that the survival of the nation's most incredible ancient living monuments is increasingly threatened.

At Wynnstay, Grade I listed landscape at Ruabon the remarkable tree heritage depends upon the management and goodwill of a number of parties due to the fragmented ownership of the site.

Since the Spring the Clwyd branch has endeavoured to ensure the protection of the Wynnstay trees with an *Emergency Area Tree Preservation Order* This should be followed by individual TPO's of the rare and beautiful trees in the Capability Brown Pleasure Ground and the many ancient trees of the parkland and avenues.

Lack of adequate protection for veteran trees and those of heritage status and historic significance has been a concern of the Woodland Trust, Coed Cadw. This autumn the Ancient Tree Forum are launching a campaign for trees such as the

Llangernyw Yew or the Pontfadog Oak to have a listed historic designation like buildings.

WHGT members met in August at Wynnstay with tree hunter Rob McBride and AM Ken Skates who are heading the campaign for better tree legislation. This should (a) provide trees with a listed status. (b) remove an exemption allowing trees defined as 'dead' or 'dying' to be felled even if they have a TPO and pose no risk to the public; (c) enable the public to contact a tree officer to request emergency out of hours TPO to be applied to prevent weekend felling; (d) ensure that the maximum fine for felling a tree with a TPO will be £20,000 as set by parliament rather than £2,500 for carrying out work without consent.

Some trees naturally come to grief due to adverse weather conditions, storm damage or disease. Others need professional tree surgery and skilled maintenance. Over zealous lopping and root exposure can traumatise ancient trees which then die.

The *Golden Oak 'Quercus robur 'Concordia'* stands in the Pleasure Grounds at Wynnstay. This is certainly one of the oldest of its kind and one of the rarest trees in Europe.

According to Johnnie Amos, garden expert on the BBC Green Welly show there are only three mature Golden Oaks in Europe. The Golden Oak is an extremely slow growing tree and was first raised in 1842 in Van Geert's Nursery in Antwerp. The Wynnstay Golden Oak is as beautiful as it is rare and currently has no tree protection.

Wrexham Tree Officer Moray Simpson is now in the process of applying the relevant TPOs to protect the Wynnstay tree heritage.

Many thanks to everyone who has generously hosted branch events this summer and for all the help and support of the committee members.

The Teddy Bears picnic was a delightful event with a bear hunt in the beech wood at Dolhyfryd. Special thanks to the White Rabbit and also Michael and Virginia Cunningham who provided all the children with a trailer ride with the miniature tractor and a pony ride in the lovely buttercup meadow. Dave Hopkins and Ian Stopes (with their bears) played the tunes of the *Teddy Bears' Picnic song*, and 'The Bare Necessities' to over 50 small people and their teddies who all had a wonderful afternoon.

The Strawberry tea at Wigfair Isa was also a very successful event. £900 was raised for Cancer Research and £432 for WHGT. Many thanks to Ron and Sinah Harrison-Jones, Mary and Clive and also Auntie Glad!

Apologies that due to unforeseen circumstances the Eaton Hall garden tour did not take place as advertised. However several members enjoyed meeting with the Head Gardener Les Armstrong.

The Music Night in August was a great success with the musicians playing in the ballroom. Many thanks to Bill and Sally Glazebrook for encouraging the show to go on despite the terrible weather. Thanks also to Morris and Alan who saved the tent from blowing away, as was the fate of the Gwynedd gazebo at the Anglesey Show on the same day! Over £500 was raised thanks to everyone who supported the event regardless of the gales and rain.

Planning Seminar

Gregynog Newtown October 12th

This seminar is for anyone interested in the development and management of historic landscapes and is being jointly promoted by WHGT and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Cymru.

WHGT wish to ensure that heritage landscapes are given proper weight in the planning process. Speakers will cover the various aspects to be considered when development is proposed within historic gardens, parks and designed landscapes.

Fee £60, WHGT members £40

Please book by Friday 23rd Sept.

For a full programme and booking information see: www.whgt.org.uk or tel Glynis 01745 710261

2012 dates for your diary

January 21st at 12.00pm

New Year Lunch for branch members at Watkin House, Wynnstay, Ruabon, LL14 6LQ

Kindly hosted by Anna Dempsey followed by a guided walk around the grounds.

£15 Lunch including a glass of wine

10th March Branch AGM

Gladstone's Library St Deiniol's, Hawarden

Autumn Branch Events

Visit to Soughton Hall, Northop, Flint, CH7 6AB
Friday 23 September Meet 2.00pm in the Foyer
Gardener Chris will lead a tour of the garden. You can meet for lunch at the Stables Bar Restaurant or stay afterwards for afternoon tea. The house will also be open. Members £3 Non members £5

Japanese Garden at Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 6QN Friday 14th October
Meet 11.00 Garden entrance.



Japanese Garden at Tatton Park in the Autumn

This is a special opportunity to enjoy the centenary of the Japanese garden at Tatton Park with a tour given by Head Gardener Sam Youd. Sam is a renowned expert on Japanese gardens and will be retiring next year after 30 years at Tatton!

Meet with Sam at the garden entrance at 11.00.
Garden Tour: Members £10 Non members £15
For non RHS and NT members there is also a £5 admission charge for the garden or £8.00 for the mansion and garden.

There are only 25 places available for this tour.

Advanced booking is essential.

Contact Glynis Shaw (details below)

*Any items for the next issue please contact Glynis:
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