

January 2010

Number 42



South and Mid Glamorgan Branch Newsletter

Branch AGM 2009

The Annual General Meeting was held at Bryngarw on Sunday 6 July. The weather was not enticing but we were again disappointed in the turnout, just 21, and all but two or three of those were members of your Committee and their partners. **We desperately need your support.**

At the AGM Paul Underwood stepped down as Chairman because of career commitments and a health problem, but will remain on the Committee.

Paul said that it had been a privilege to work with such a dedicated Committee who were willing to give so much of their time at cost to themselves.

Jean Reader was proposed as Chairman. This was seconded and Jean was unanimously elected. The remaining Branch officers (having signified their willingness to continue in office) were all unanimously re-elected.

In his Chairman's address, Paul thanked all the officers and committee members for their work and support during the year. Over 600 copies of *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan* have now been sold and the cost of production has almost been covered. He reported that the loan from the WHGT had been repaid and only £1000 of a private loan remained to be paid off by the Branch.

Hilary, on behalf of the Branch, thanked Paul for his hard work, starting with his contribution to planning the book launch in 2007. She passed on the very best wishes of all the members for the work he is undertaking at Friar Park and presented him with a small gift.

The Treasurer's report showed a small credit balance in the Branch account (excluding receipts and disbursements for the book) and was formally accepted.

After the business meeting Gerry Donovan, the Project Manager at Dyffryn Gardens who has worked in Japan, gave an interesting and very informative illustrated talk on the influence of Japanese gardens in British garden design, as exemplified at Bryngarw, Coedarhydyglyn and Dyffryn Gardens and Arboretum, as well as recent RHS Chelsea Flower Shows. This was followed by a walk around the gardens at Bryngarw.

You missed a treat if you were not at Bryngarw to hear Gerry's talk
Val Caple



In the Japanese garden, Bryngarw

Study day on Planning Issues in Relation to Historic Landscapes,

Unfortunately the study day had to be cancelled because of lack of support.

The new WHGT Conservation Committee includes 2 Branch Committee members, Judith Martin-Jones and Elaine Davey. A decision will be made on further training of interested parties when it becomes clearer what the role of the Conservation Committee will be in responding to planning applications affecting gardens throughout Wales.



Branch Visit to Llanover on 2 October 2009

For this visit, our Branch invited WHGT members from Gwent to join us and the joint event proved very successful. We met at Llanover House in the early afternoon and were welcomed by our hosts Elizabeth and Ross Murray. Before we set off on the tour of the grounds, Elizabeth gave us a short talk on the history of the house and wider landscape outlining the activities of her predecessors/ancestors at Llanover since the arrival of Benjamin Waddington in 1792. After Waddington's death his estate passed to his youngest daughter Augusta who married Benjamin Hall of Hensol (Lord Llanover), and their daughter married into the Herbert family in whose possession Llanover remains to the present day.



Members enjoying the grounds of Llanover Hall

There followed a most interesting and enjoyable tour of the gardens and parkland (Grade II*), with Elizabeth and Ross willingly sharing their vastly impressive knowledge of the history, layout and content of the estate, its main phases of development dating from the late C18th (Waddington) and the mid C19th (Hall). Close to the house we saw the circular and walled garden (in process of a 'make-over' by Elizabeth) and dovecote, and then our tour took us into the wider parkland with its superb collection of trees and shrubs from many parts of the world, and with its canalised stream, weir and ponds. On this leisurely and informally conducted tour, there were numerous halts for our hosts to point-out significant features and to answer our questions.

Although the full vibrancy of autumn had not yet arrived, tints of colour were beginning to appear on some of the trees, and our attention was drawn to the Acers, Hickories and other trees planted by Elizabeth's father to introduce the vibrant colours he had seen on the east coast of the USA. The continuity of planting at Llanover by successive generations of owners has given and continues to give Llanover its very special character, apparent in the wonderful diversity of the trees in the parkland. Towards the end of the tour we went into the walled garden, an area of some two acres retained within high brick walls.

At the end of the afternoon we were invited into the house for tea. Here we were able to thank Elisabeth and Ross most warmly for a thoroughly memorable afternoon and to present Elizabeth with a copy of *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan*.

Hilary M Thomas

A Visit to Insole Court

On 5 August 20 Branch members made a visit to Insole Court, where members of the Friends of Insole gave an interesting talk about the history of the house and family. Jacky Thorne provided a leaflet containing pictures from the Insole Court family photo album showing the house and grounds in their heyday. The gardens are still a fine example of the grand Victorian and Edwardian period with some garden features still identifiable.

Insole Court formerly known as 'Ely Court' was built in 1855 for the family of James Harvey Insole whose fortune had been made from the mining industry. A local nursery, Treseders, was paid to lay out the gardens. The family enjoyed a gentry lifestyle for some years with extensions to the house, grand garden features and an impressive kitchen garden. During the early twentieth century family deaths and economic decline meant the remaining family could no longer afford to stay at Insole Court and sold the property to the local council in 1932.

Jacky Thorne



Members at Insole Court



High Glanau Manor and Wyndcliffe Court, Monmouthshire,

The visit on 6 Saturday June 2009 was very poorly supported. However the few who did attend greatly enjoyed the talk and tour by Helena Gerrish at High Glanau and the lunch she provided before going on to Wyndcliffe Court

My Time at Cowbridge Physic Garden

My time at the Physic Garden has been a wonderful experience. I have especially enjoyed working closely with volunteers. I started in June 2006, employed on a part time basis to establish and set up the garden which had been a derelict tree nursery, the main objective being that the volunteers would be able to maintain the garden in the future. Although most of the hard landscaping had been completed there were still many weeks of hard digging to be done and the volunteers and I dug out enormous piles of rubble from the garden, probably the equivalent of four skips worth. Then came the delivery of the plants, hundreds of box bushes, herbs, shrubs and fruit trees. Planting started in earnest on 26 September 2006, within a year the garden already looked well established.

Jacky Thorne

Visit of Gwyneth Hayward to Dyffryn Gardens

I was delighted to welcome Gwyneth Hayward (recently elected national Chairman of WHGT) and members of the local branch to Dyffryn on 23 September. After lunch in the tearooms and before discussions in East Lodge meeting room, we took the opportunity for a brief stroll in the gardens.

Gwyneth Hayward (centre) with Gerry Donovan and Jean Reader



The late summer temperature meant the bedding displays to the south front of the house looked splendid and indeed they did last all through October.

Our main destination was the walled garden currently under restoration. Many of the group were very well versed in what a kitchen garden should look like so I did pre-empt their expectations by explaining that progress in terms of the planting was slow as we awaited appointment of the HLF funded post. Indeed, even our displays of heirloom sweet peas though lush with growth hadn't displayed colour. Gwyneth and others were generous in their comments and I am happy to give an update that the Walled Garden Supervisor has been appointed and will be starting with us in the New Year.

Meanwhile, our Tuesday volunteer sessions are growing with many of the participants particularly interested in horticultural activities in the walled garden. I look forward to Gwyneth returning and seeing a lush and productive kitchen garden either in June 2011, when we are hoping Dyffryn will host the National WHGT AGM, or sooner.

The lower walled kitchen garden is now open to the public.

Geraldine Donovan, Restoration Project Manager & Site Curator at Dyffryn Gardens and Arboretum

Ruperra Castle

The Branch Committee were delighted to hear that the Welsh Assembly Government have dismissed the appeal against their earlier decision to uphold the refusal by Caerphilly County Borough Council to grant planning permission for the development of the castle and grounds

Judith Martin-Jones and Elaine Davey, members of the Branch Committee, represented the WHGT at the Public Inquiry which started on 21 April 2009. More details of the enquiry have been published in *The Bulletin*. We will continue to support the Ruperra Trust in their plans.

Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan edited by Hilary M Thomas

Sales of the book have been steady during 2009, mostly through our outlets in bookshops in Cowbridge, Llantwit Major, St Fagans and Penarth and the cost of production has now been covered. However we still hope to sell the remaining copies to boost the Branch funds ready for our next project.

The book can be ordered by members from Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge, CF71 7RQ for £25 to include postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to WHGT.



Vale of Glamorgan Council welcomes funding for Dyffryn House

Alun Ffred Jones, Minister for Heritage, paid a special visit to Dyffryn House and Gardens to announce that more than £900,000 is to be shared amongst 22 of Wales' most important historic buildings. As one of the recipients, Dyffryn House, which is owned by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, has been offered a Cadw grant of £50,000 towards a scheme of works to repair and refurbish the house's principal rooms.

Alun Ffred Jones said afterwards: "I was delighted to be at Dyffryn House and Gardens to offer these grants for historic building repairs. The grant offers, which are for a wide range of historic buildings across Wales, including many of the fine churches of Wales, will ensure that some of our most important buildings are restored and maintained for the enjoyment of future generations."

"Dyffryn House makes a wonderful backdrop to the Gardens which are enjoyed by 50,000 visitors each year. I hope that the grant offered will help with the long term aspiration of opening Dyffryn House for visitors to enjoy the splendour of the Dyffryn House."

To mark the occasion of his visit, the Minister for Heritage was presented with a copy of Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan, which he received with great interest.

*For more information about Dyffryn please visit their website www.dyffryngardens.com
Geraldine Donovan*

Councillor Anthony Ernest presenting the book to Alun Ffred Jones on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council



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Events 2010

AGM at the Capricorn Centre at the National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon on Sunday 25 April from 2 – 4pm.

After the AGM there will be a talk by Mr Mark Lewis, award-winning Curatorial Officer at the National Roman Legion Museum, and a tour of the new Roman Garden. The garden displays how a Roman garden in Britain might have looked, with box hedges, bay trees and vines climbing the triclinium - an open-air dining area, just as we have patios, garden furniture and gazebos
More information is available at <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/roman/>

The Laskett Gardens Tuesday 18 May from 2-4pm.

Sir Roy Strong, a former director of both the National Portrait Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum has invited the Branch to visit his garden and, health permitting, he will show us around.

This is a rare opportunity to visit the garden and the numbers are strictly limited so please be sure to send your cheques and details as soon as possible to secure a place on this visit! If you want to read up about the creation of the garden you might like to look out for a book by Sir Roy called *The Laskett*. It is available in both hardback and paperback.

Hen Felin and Swallow Barns Sunday 27 June at 3—5pm.

These two gardens have been created in the hamlet of Dyffryn in the Vale of Glamorgan within the last fifteen years so this is an opportunity to enjoy gardens that have very short histories! Their owners will give WHGT members a guided tour which will be followed by a cream tea that will be served under cover if the weather isn't perfect. The garden also opens for the National Gardens Scheme

For more information see <http://www.ngs.org.uk/gardens/gardenfinder>

Craig-y-Parc Wednesday 18 August at 4 pm.

This Grade II* listed Arts and Crafts house and garden stands on a ridge south-west of the village of Pentyrch, a few miles north-west of Cardiff, and looks out across the Vale of Glamorgan. The house is a SCOPE residential home and is not normally open to the public. A cup of tea will be served during the visit and a donation will be made to SCOPE.

*For more information see *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan* ed. Hilary M Thomas*

*Drawings from
Culpepper's
Complete Herbal
1826*