



South and Mid Glamorgan Branch Newsletter

HRH The Prince of Wales, WHGT Patron

The Prince has been our Patron for many years and in this, the year of the 25th anniversary of the Trust, we were especially delighted that he was able to spend time with us at Dyffryn Gardens.

During the meeting he showed great interest in the Trust's work, in particular the new WHGT Small Grants Scheme which was launched that day. His Royal Highness is, of course, very familiar with the challenges of preserving historic parks and gardens and understood exactly what we are aiming to achieve. More information on the scheme is available at www.whgt.org.uk

His Royal Highness cut and partook of our celebratory cake which had been made by Becky Woszczycki and was presented with a copy of *Edwardian Country Life* by Helena Gerrish. Quite coincidentally a photograph of High Glannau, Helena's house was on the front cover of *Country Life* and from the animated conversation it was clear that the Prince is both an enthusiastic and hands-on gardener who is deeply concerned over the future of the historic gardens of Wales.

Jean Reader



South and Mid Glamorgan Branch AGM 2015

19 members attended the AGM held in The Kymin, Penarth, on Sunday 12th April 2015.

Extracts from the Chairman's Report from Gerry Donovan

I start by thanking Judith, who is retiring from the Committee, for her sterling work, especially for her expertise and commitment to planning matters.

The South and Mid Glamorgan Branch continues to run a variety of events and provide responses to planning issues arising in our area.

Having heard a fascinating talk from our President, Liz Whittle, on the 25 years of WHGT, we also reflected on the branch 25 years at our April AGM held in Cowbridge and commemorated one of our most ambitious instigated projects- the Cowbridge Physic Garden, by erecting a plaque at the garden in recognition of the efforts of the then Chair, Dan Clayton Jones.

Plans for our summer visit to Dyrham Park and Tredegar House were revised when the Royal visit to Dyffryn Gardens was announced for the same day.

The Branch joined with members of the Friends of Dyffryn to hear Glyn Jones, Head Gardener at Hidcote, who was seconded to Dyffryn until March of this year, talking on his love of plants at both properties. Lawrence Johnston and Reginald Cory went plant hunting together to South Africa in 1927. Free places at this and other events continue to be offered by the branch to the Heritage Horticultural Skills Scheme Trainees at St Fagans, Newport and Cardiff Councils and Dyffryn Gardens.

Fund raising was very successful this year through the Waitrose Community Matters scheme and this was further topped up by the branch and given to the Small Grants Scheme fund and projects in our area were awarded assistance.

It is with regret that due to personal circumstances I am standing down from the Chair a year earlier than planned. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and am confident I am leaving it in my successor's very safe hands.

Hilary thanked Gerry for her work during her years as Chairman and expressed the Committees appreciation to her for agreeing to continue on the Committee.



Treasurer's Report

The Branch had £3434.49 in its General Fund on 31st December 2014. The decrease from £.3737.96 on 31st December 2013 was partly due to the donation of £500 to the WHGT small grants scheme. Fewer books were sold than in 2013, but very few still remain in stock.

Election of Officers

As Gerry Donovan was retiring as Chairman she proposed that Elaine Davey be elected to the position and that the other Officers be elected en block. Elaine Davey (Chairman), Hilary Thomas (Deputy Chairman), Rebecca Exley (Treasurer) and Val Caple (Minute Secretary) were unanimously elected.

Six of the Committee members were willing to stand for re-election to the Committee and Derrick Kingham, Paul Underwood, Jacky Thorne, Gerry Donovan and Bronwen Thomas were unanimously elected to the Committee.

Gerry presented Judith with a bowl of daffodils

'Stark Mad with Gardens - the contribution made by women to gardens in Wales between 1750 and 1850'

The meeting continued with a talk by Dr Jean Reader, National Chairman of the WHGT. This was a very enjoyable and enlightening talk on the contribution made by women of all classes to the development of some of the famous historic gardens of Wales, including the Ladies of Llangollen and Emma Llewellyn of Penllergare, the daughter of Mary Talbot of Margam and Penrice. Gerry thanked Jean and presented her with a bouquet of flowers

Gerry presenting Jean with flowers



For more information on all the branches' events and news updates visit www.whgt.org.uk

Branch 'Social' at Miskin Manor

Sunday 21st September 2014 was a glorious late summer day. Bathed in warm sunshine the gardens at Miskin Manor were looking splendid with just a touch of autumn colour appearing on some of the trees. The Garden Room in which we met looked out directly over the lawns and provided a pleasant venue in which to enjoy 'light refreshments' after our exploration of the gardens: all the elements of a perfect, leisurely Sunday afternoon except for the absence of our members. Where were you all? There were just ten of us, yes **only ten** including two guests!!



The response of members to recent visits and events planned and organised by your committee is proving dispiritingly poor and puts future plans in jeopardy ... so be warned.

Here ends the gloom and doom part of this contribution to the Newsletter!!

It was a real delight to wander at will around the gardens at Miskin Manor which were in excellent order. The terraces, topiaried yew hedges and lawned enclosures are among the dominant features created by the wealthy coal-owner David Williams and his son Judge Gwilym Williams in the mid C19th and early C20th and, as we strolled around, the Tudor-style Kings Beasts on their octagonal pillars in alcoves in the yew hedges kept an heraldic eye on our progress. A similar set of Kings Beasts can be seen at St Donats Castle, installed there in the early C20th by the owner Morgan Stuart Williams, a cousin of the Williamses of



Miskin. Herbaceous borders edging the lawns were full of vibrant colour, and at the western edge of the gardens the old ha-ha, thought to be a survivor from the C18th, has been incorporated into an herbaceous bank.



There are a number of fine specimen trees in the wider grounds at Miskin, so the more informed arboreal experts in our little group were regularly being asked 'what is that?' We did notice with concern that a number of the Horse Chestnut trees appeared to be under attack from one of the prevalent tree diseases. The Water Garden to the north of the house which incorporates a stream, ponds and dams, and an informal grassed area, was largely the creation of Eleanor Williams (widow of the Judge) and her daughter in the early C20th. and retains many of the original plants.

Gravel paths and steps close to the stream and grass walkways among the trees and shrubs enabled us to explore this area in a suitably leisurely fashion.

So, a very enjoyable afternoon. Just a shame we were so few.

Hilary M. Thomas

Tour of Dyffryn House

In March, members from our branch and Gwent and Monmouth had a behind the scenes tour of Dyffryn House.

I have been lucky in being able to watch progress as the neglected rooms have changed, thanks to a grant from the heritage Lottery Fund and continued support from the NT. Gradually rooms on the lower floor have had their wall coverings and ceilings restored and/or replaced so that their former glory shines through. Since my last visit the woodwork billiard room has been carefully cleaned and brought



back to life. On the first floor work is still in progress as and visitors can enjoy seeing the restorers at work and envisage what the rooms will look like. However, on this special visit we were allowed to poke our noses into room where work has not yet started and, in some cases, the floors are still unsafe.

Gerry hopes eventually to bring some furniture into the rooms and perhaps have copies of the original wall hangings in the entrance hall. At the moment some of the

rooms are being used to display the history of the house and the role of Reginald Cory as a supporter of plant hunters. One room is full of donated books waiting to be sold to raise funds for the restoration. In the empty rooms, it is easy to see the beautiful painted ceilings—by lying on the cushions on the floor— without any clutter.

Some of the other rooms are being used for ever changing art and interpretation projects. The restoration is also designed to support provide stunning views of the original Mawson design and the planting by Reginald Cory, Vale of Glamorgan Council and the National Trust.

If you have not had the chance to see the work, do visit the house—it is open from 12.00 to 16.00. For details see <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens/Val-Caple>



RHS Cardiff Spring Show

Several members of the South and Mid Glamorgan branch helped 'man' the WHGT stand for the duration of the RHS Show in Bute Park in April.

From the attached photograph you can see that we displayed an OS map of south Wales. On it we placed coloured and numbered spots to indicate the location of interesting historic gardens (we only had room for the south, but we hope to complete the rest of Wales later). The numbers related to information on each garden in a ring binder on the table.



This exercise created a lot of interest, study, discussion and correlation. It also alerted the writer to add quite a few gardens to the list. This is a work in progress towards producing a motorists map/app. that will highlight the location of our beautiful historic gardens so that visitors can be drawn into Wales and along the main roads, once they can see that there are hundreds of gardens to visit and that they are really accessible and worth the journey.

If you would be willing to help with this project, please contact me
Elaine Davey

You are Invited to be Involved in a Branch Project

Hundreds of photographs and 35mm. colour transparencies of historic gardens in Glamorgan are held by members of your Branch Committee. Many of these images were produced when our Branch's publication *Historic Gardens of the Vale of Glamorgan* was being compiled, and it is these that we want, initially, to put on to disc or memory stick. Originals and digitised images will then be put into the Glamorgan Archives, as part of our Branch

Archive, where they will be securely & permanently stored and made available for consultation by researchers.

The project will then extend to include members' photos of historic gardens in the former geographic county of Glamorgan (not just the Vale of Glamorgan) and of gardens photographed by members during Branch visits.

This is an innovative project for our Branch in which members with computer access (and a little technical knowledge) are asked to participate. The necessary equipment can be provided. We don't expect one person to 'do it all', and the work, which will be done at home, can be shared out. But the participation of Branch members is essential if this project is to be successful. Those involved will be making a significant contribution to the preservation of the pictorial record of our historic garden heritage.

SOUNDS INTERESTING? If you would like to be involved (no commitment at this stage), please register your interest with Val at val.t.caple@care4free.net or 01446 774795. Depending on the response we will organise a 'get together' and plan a programme

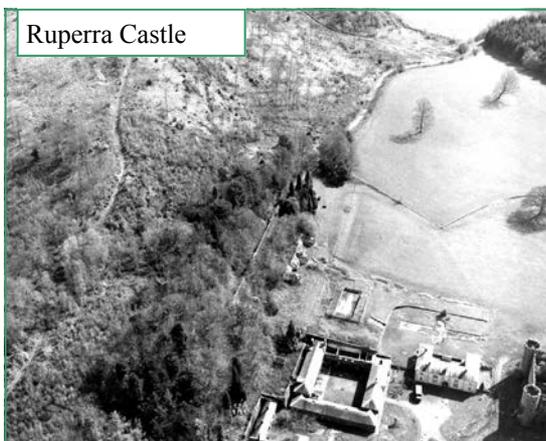
Hilary M Thomas

Ruperra Castle

The Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust are continuing discussions with the new owner who has bought the main part of the 13 acre site. Mr Barakat still owns and lives in the right hand side of the Bothy and also owns the two fields to the east of the ha-ha.

There is no reply to a request as to whether Ruperra is included on the CCBC 'Buildings at Risk' register.

Pat Jones-Jenkins




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*Drawings
from
Culpepper's
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Herbal 1826*