

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Chairman's Message

New partnership brings 'kudos' to Dyffryn Gardens

By Stephen Parker

After the press release from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, members of the Committee of the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens met informally and are agreed:

The Friends, as one of the oldest Friends Societies in the country, has always been committed to the development and promotion of Dyffryn Gardens and House. We see the transfer to the National Trust as a

positive development. It provides Dyffryn with the major kudos such a partner can bring, both in terms of attracting a far wider number of visitors and in opening new possibilities for The Friends and their members.

The Friends are looking to function very much as before, as a committed supporter of the gardens and house. We will continue to provide regular outings, seasonal lunches,

newsletters and talks.

The committee want to assure members of the Friends that we have already opened discussion with the National Trust.

Details of how we will manage subscriptions to the Friends will need to be looked at in detail, as will other aspects of the business of our Society such as insurance, RHS affiliation and our Constitution and relationship with the Charity Commission.

Once we have some proposals regarding necessary changes we would hope to bring these to an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society.

We understand that detailed negotiations between The Vale of Glamorgan Council, which has agreed to lease Dyffryn House and Gardens to the National

Autumn

Trust for 50 years, are still underway.

The Friends will continue to monitor the situation closely and will welcome comment from all members.

Pembrokeshire Gardens

By Heather March

Visits to two very different gardens made an interesting contrast for the Friends on 6th May.

A fairly full bus set off from Dyffryn and first we visited Tony Ridler's garden on the outskirts of Swansea. Those of us who had heard his preliminary talk had some idea of what to expect, but it was a shock to find so much planting contained in a fairly small area. The concept of 'garden rooms' was the theme, and we made our way through a maze of box and yew hedges and intricate topiary. This area led on to a meticulous kitchen area with fruit, raised beds and a splendid display of early vegetables including some unusual and interesting ones. Do they all get eaten?



'a maze of box and yew hedges and intricate topiary' in Tony Ridler's garden

Mr. Ridler gave us coffee and delicious cake and we greatly admired his enormously hard work and enthusiasm. Low maintenance this was not!

Our coach then took us to Pembrokeshire and down a very hazardous lane to Colby (luckily our clever driver found a better route to return to the A477)

This estate lies in a tranquil valley and was beautifully peaceful. We had an excellent lunch in the Bothy Tearoom and

enjoyed a guided tour of the walled garden with its Gothic gazebo and delightful planting and water feature. Then followed a tour of the woodland, and our timing was right for a view of the carpet of bluebells dappled by the afternoon sunshine. We returned across meadowland bordered by some magnificent trees.

Once more, many thanks to Mary for arranging an excellent day.



Dairmuid Gavin's Irish Sky Garden

Green Chelsea

By Val Caple

I last visited the Chelsea Flower show in 2008 and, when I wrote for the Newsletter at the time, my final comment was that everything was GREEN, meaning monochromatic.

This year I was with the 40 Friends who visited Chelsea in May. The weather was perfect – the 2 days before were windy and the following day very wet. The coach was comfortable and we all appreciated the leisurely lunch before our journey to Chelsea Royal Hospital – all due to Mary's planning.

The first Show garden which came into view – literally – was Dairmuid Gavin's amazing Irish Sky Garden. However the crane which held the 'Hanging Eden' rather overpowered the garden and those around. Seeing the garden on TV the ground planting was an interesting design of green plants and circular pools, but this was not obvious from where I stood.

Of more interest to me was the neighbouring B&Q garden. It included the tallest structure in the show and carefully laid out beds all



The B&Q Insect Hotel



The M&Q potager

planted with edible plants to demonstrate self-sufficiency. Other features demonstrated 'insect hotels' which were designed by children, water harvesting and renewable energy.

Another decorative potager was the M&G garden designed by Bunny Guinness. The eye-catching features here were the raised beds built from Willow and topped with Cedar coping. This garden included pleached trees and fruit trees in terracotta pots.

Many of the other 'British' gardens also contained herbs and traditional plants, including trees, climbers and other perennial plants which I grow in my own garden and require minimum maintenance.

I may not have a water feature like the water mill in the garden by Leeds City Council, the red structures in the British Heart Foundation Garden designed by Ann-Marie Powell or the 'Grecian' pillars of the Daily Telegraph Garden by Cleve West, but again I felt at home with the planting.

Other gardens with beneficial plants and features were: the Times Eureka garden in association with Kew showing the significance of plants in science: the Cancer Research Garden on the theme of surviving and the RBC New Wild garden.

Two of the Artisan gardens had a Welsh theme. A Child's garden in Wales was designed by the Ysgol Bryn

Castell and Heronsbridge School Horticultural students with Anthea Guthrie and reflected the make do and mend needs of the Welsh in 1947 which again meant home grown food mixed with flowers which were usually passed on from neighbours. The Postcard from Wales by Kati Crome and Maggie Hugues recreated a dilapidated boathouse by a silted inlet in Laugharne. Again the planting was homely blending to wild by the inlet

I was less inspired by the Urban Gardens. The reclaimed industrial cooling fans and structures in the Winds of Change by Jamie Dunstan are good for the environment but too

artificial for me. The RNIB and Doncaster Deaf Trust Gardens included good ideas for designing to help disabled people but again were too artificial for my taste.

And so to the Grand Marquee. Gosh! How do they get Narcissi, Sweet Peas and Roses to all be at their best at the same time and after such a challenging spring?

My impressions of this years show? Again GREEN, but this time meaning self-sufficient and sustainable. This was achieved with the use of colourful, often edible, hardy British plants, water conservation techniques, insect attractants and energy saving devices. I came away feeling I was part-way there in my garden – though I do like a few exotics to satisfy the plantswoman in me.



A Child's garden in Wales



Daffodils by Avon



The Friends Trip to Herefordshire

By Michael Blaney

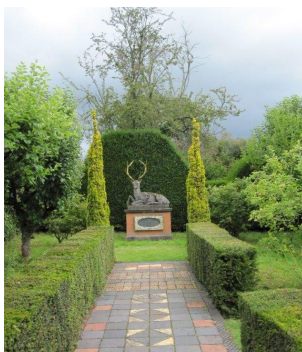
On a grey day in July, the friends visited the Laskett, the garden created by Sir Roy Strong and his late wife Julia Trevelyan Oman, near Hereford.

The garden had drawn inspiration from Hidcote, with help particularly from Rosemary Verey, the latter particularly regarding the use of topiary.

The result is rather like Hidcote on “speed” and most engaging. The incredibly well-furnished garden rooms were full of plants and garden structures. These latter frequently made reference to Sir Roy’s remarkable career and that of his theatrical designer wife. The couple had been sufficiently well connected to be able to

include stonework discarded from the Houses of Parliament and All Souls College, Oxford. Also a sundial from Cecil Beaton’s garden and much specially commissioned work.

Quite remarkably, the great man both welcomed us and made sure to come down the entrance to the gardens to make his farewells. In his rather moving greeting he spoke about the garden’s inception and development and the fact that much of it related visually to the Strong’s’ shared life. This included memorials to two cats and many references to events which had provided inspiration and indeed, finance for the various garden developments. Sir Roy’s most



The Laskett

searching comment was that the test of a garden resided in how it looked on a January day; one felt that The Laskett would pass with flying colours.

As though this was not enough, we then went on to Hereford Cathedral. The building is reason enough to visit, with considerable refurbishment and the new building for the chained library and Mappa Mundi proved a great improvement on the past arrangements.

Some listened to the lunchtime organ recital and then we were split into two groups for a tour of the little-known gardens of the cathedral. Our (voluntary) guide called himself amateur, but was a respectable plantsman, taking us instructively around the

rather good collections. Sadly he was unable to explain how the hollyhocks remained rust-free. In one of the rooms in the cloister was a plaque with a motto that man may do the gardening but that God

provides the rain for watering. With mostly leaden skies, we had been fortunate that the celestial watering can was kept horizontal on a most enjoyable day.

The Voase Cacti Collection

By Geraldine Donovan

The majority of the cacti collection on display in the new Greenhouse has come from the Voase family of Stokesley, North Yorkshire. Mr John 'Jack' Voase collected and nurtured these fine Specimens for over 35 years. Sadly, due to the onset of Alzheimer's, Jack can no longer care for the collection and a new home has been found for some of it at Dyffryn.

Jack started his career as a blacksmith but then moved into the nursery business and his cacti passion grew. Initially based at Hull he moved to combine his collection with his daughter Helen Bainbridge, at Stokesley. As a private collection only those in the cacti society or visitors to their garden opening special days for the National Garden scheme could enjoy the varied and unusual plants.

Helen, son-in-law Mark Bainbridge and Eric Atkinson carefully packed and delivered the cacti to Dyffryn on 23 June 2011 – 3 hours packing for a journey of 5 hours. This was followed by days of work by the garden staff unpacking and positioning them in the new greenhouse.

Now at Dyffryn these form part of the central display. Our accession records and labels identify the plants



Inside the glasshouse

with the initials 'JV' so that visitors for years to come will know they are Jacks plants.



The Dyffryn Gardens stand at the Vale Show



Campsis radicans

Notes from the Head Gardener **By Alex Andrews**

Well what good news – for the second year running we won large Gold at the Vale Show with our mock-up of the new glasshouse. We received many positive comments and hopefully visits to see the real thing will be the end result. I would like to thank all the staff who contributed as it is always done on a 'bit of a wing and prayer' but we get there in the end, well done to all.

The new glasshouse has been very well received with plenty of



South front and central walk

positive feedback from our visitors and if you haven't been to see it then come down soon. There is an article about the cacti collection from Gerry in this newsletter which should whet your appetite.

I managed to get out and about in the garden this week (8th August) and if you are coming

down would advise that you look at the trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*) on the south front of the house, red trumpet shaped flowers in profusion not necessarily hardy but as it is in a sheltered position it appears to have weathered the last couple of winters very well.

In the West Garden in one of the island beds (leave by the path opposite the great lawns and bear left) is a Eucryphia, a small flowering tree with an abundance of white flowers. This is an under rated tree and once settled will provide invaluable colour at this time of year with good autumn foliage colour to follow. I wasn't aware that it was there until recently as I thought most of our collection was in the arboretum – just shows what you can miss.

The annual displays on the south front and centre walk are becoming a little battered but they at least look bright and cheerful with annual sunflowers giving an orange glow contrasting with the dark red leaves of the atriplex and ricinus and the huge leaves of the banana standing out in the centre of the beds. I first noticed atriplex at Great Dixter and then Sissinghurst last year and wanted to put some in the display beds here which have worked well but on Saturday as part of the Professional

Gardeners Guild outing I was warned, 'allow it to seed at your peril as it is very prolific, once here its here for good, you will be weeding it out for years to come' – we shall see.

Another success this year but it has passed its best now, was the annual flower beds in the old Australasian garden where we had corn cockle, corn flowers, poppies etc creating a brilliant colour palette for our bees, insects and moths. We took part in the National Butterfly Count but recorded very few numbers and those were mainly cabbage white's but we have sent the details off to add to the list. Catrina has collected the best colours from the poppy seed and she will sow it next year along with what has fallen on the ground so we should get a good display.

The physic garden also looks very colourful with plants of a medicinal background with some huge plants of burdock taking my eye. This garden room is slowly taking shape and continues to be



The walled garden and greenhouse

filled with bee loving plants.

Another area which is looking good is the herbaceous border with plenty of colour and again the huge plant with silvery leaves which is a cardoon taking my eye. We have had some casualties with the shrubs in this border but the plants which we thought were dead have had all the dead wood removed and are now re-sprouting from the base which includes

both our Crindodendrons or have been pruned back to good wood. We will continue to monitor the situation and hope for a milder winter this year.

The walled garden is looking bright and colourful and for those of you with a passion for vegetable growing take a peek. The brassicas are netted to stop cabbage white butterflies and I suspect pigeons from eating the crop and the peas have been excellent. Produce is available to purchase in the end pink bothy room. Ceridwen is usually on site and will let you know what's available.

The general maintenance tasks are on going, the weeds need pulling, the grass needs cutting and the

flowers dead heading to prolong their display. It has been funny old season so far going in peaks and troughs and today (11th August) sitting in the office it sounds like winter with a howling wind although sitting in a polo shirt, the temperature indicates that its not. But even the cooler weather and high winds affect the gardens increasing water loss from the plants, rocking the roots and generally drying out the land.

Last but not least for those of you who haven't bought a ticket to **Roy Lancaster's talk on 13th September** please do. Without support from you we will not be able to hold any further lectures as we must cover our costs.

Strawberry tea on 12th July

By Val Caple

The annual flower beds in the old Australasian garden. Many thanks to Alex for her enjoyable and informative tour of the gardens and all those who helped organise the Strawberry tea—delicious!



Mr. Alaric Louis Jeffrey Raum.

Mr. Jeffrey Raum died in hospital on 8th July 2011. Jeffrey was a valued committee member of the 'Friends' for many years and will be sadly missed.

His wife Joan, who is also a

committee member, would like to thank everyone who attended his funeral on 20th July at the Natural Burial Ground, and afterwards the buffet luncheon in the Cory Education Centre, Dyffryn Gardens. Donations in lieu of flowers were given to the Dogs' Trust.

The Friends of Dyffryn Christmas cards

Packs of the card will be on sale at the coffee mornings or direct from the Hon. Secretary Barbara Hodges.

Garden Cuttings From the Committee

All Members.

Thank you for the contributions we have received, including more photos than could be used in this issue. However we hope to use them in future issues or on the website.

This is your Newsletter and we welcome all articles, photographs etc., from you - The Members.

If you have visited an interesting garden or venue with horticultural links or have something which you would like to share with fellow members, please send articles and photographs to the Acting Editor, Dr. Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge. CF71 7RQ, val.t.caple@care4free.net or Chairman, Mr Stephen Parker fodyffryngardens.chairman@virginmedia.com

E-Newsletter

If you would like to receive the monthly E-Newsletter, please send your e-mail address to Chairman, Mr Stephen Parker

For the latest information about the Friends events, membership etc. please visit our website at; www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

AGM 2011

Mrs Katrin Aberg and Miss Cynthia Merrett were elected onto the Executive Committee at the AGM on 18th May.

Geraldine Donovan reported that they plan to open the house in November 2012 and that there will be a series of open day events to meet the Master Craft people. There were 55,000 visitors to the garden during the year

Alex Andrews was happy to report the appointment of new members to the staff including Deputy Head Gardener Neil Sleddon who came to us from Kew Gardens having passed their Diploma with distinction and Clare Harte from the National Botanical Gardens of Wales who will be responsible for the new greenhouse and plant propagation.

Alex thanked the trusty band of volunteers who regularly turn up every Tuesday to help out - they have been a boon and have made a difference.

Geraldine drew attention to the buggy parked outside and asked the members if they knew of anyone who would like to help buy one as it would be very useful to get disabled people around the 55 acres of garden. The committee have already organised a raffle and book sale to raise money for this project.

It was suggested that an afternoon meeting for the AGM could be popular and it was agreed that we would try it in 2012.

Committee Members.

We are always looking for people with new ideas. If you would like to contribute to committee work, please contact the secretary - Mrs Barbara Hodges. You will be made very welcome,

If you are interested in helping edit the Newsletter, please let Val Caple know.

THANK YOU

Barbara Hodges