

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Report of the Head Gardener

By Chris Flynn

This has been a tumultuous year and a very different season, plagued by uncertainty and very often strained, but it has prompted some interesting changes and some stunning chance arrivals. It has challenged us to think differently, not just for this season, but far off into the future. How can we add more value to what we do? What might we be a flagship for in the future? How do we future proof ourselves against further large-scale unforeseen events? Whilst it can sound daunting at first, it's often just a matter of juggling and re-ordering. All of our plans that will lead us to the ultimate vision for the property will still occur, just in a different order and an altered focus. Our experimental plantsmanship for which the garden will be known again perhaps no

longer just applies to how we collect, but to how we work in the garden and how the garden is connected to the wider environment. Embracing change is as much a part of horticulture as attempting to 'tame nature'. So whilst we work hard to alter soil types and create microclimates to suit an ever evolving collection of horticultural curiosities, we are also embracing the wider landscape and allowing it to sympathetically flow into the heavily designed features of the garden, softening the feel of the gardens and bringing a gentle balance to some of the more raucous areas (mostly the Paved Court!)

The real visual treats this year have come from the South Front bedding, the Exotics Garden, Mediterranean Garden, Sweet pea display and the Causeway Border. The South Front played host to



The Paved Court in September- riotous colour on a gloriously sunny day

probably the best spring display that we've ever put on. The succession of Crocus, Iris and Puschkinia meant that we had colour from really early on in the year.

These were then followed by a fantastic progression of white and yellow narcissus that ran in two bands through the beds. These were replaced in part by what I think is probably my personal favourite of our summer displays, which again was quite meadow like in its appearance, but the height and scent added by the sweet peas and the gentle palette of pink, blue and burgundy really helped to create the bold, but gentle style that we were after. We actually took the chance

to leave some of the spring bedding in to see what it will do next spring as the myosotis that dominated the beds are in fact short lived perennials rather than annuals and the bulbs featured will perenniate quite happily. This year has resulted in a little experimentation through necessity, but whatever happens, it will be interesting!

The Exotics and Mediterranean gardens just keep getting better and better as the planting fills out and matures. We've still got lots to come from these areas and they will always present opportunities for us to further diversify our plant collections and push the boundaries with what is considered hardy. So far those gambles have not proven entirely disastrous!

Now in its second year, the Causeway borders are really starting to fill out. The cool palette really helps to make the garden seem longer, but can't help but catch the eye. With four main flowering periods throughout the year it really is the border that keeps on giving and will still provide important structure throughout the winter. We've a few

tweaks to make for the next season, but overall it's coming along nicely. The Arboretum is now leading the charge for autumn colour and it looks like we're going to have another fantastic year for it. The hot dry conditions earlier in the year, combined with the really cold snap that we experienced a few weeks ago have set us up for a real riot of colour for the coming season.

Recently we've been working on our long grass areas. Each year the meadows are getting better and better, becoming more floristically diverse and increasingly alive with birds, mammals and insects. As we continue to cut and collect, the nutrient value in the soils reduces. In the past five years the areas that have been under a meadow management regime have gradually gotten shorter and shorter each year as rank weedy species have given way to our more delicate, native grasses, which in turn clears the way for an increase in our native wildflowers. It's a slow process, but we're now reaping the rewards of getting an early start on this particular aspect of the property's



Causeway in October

management.

The abundance of nature in the gardens this year has been incredible. One of the highlights has to have been the number of dragonflies around the garden. The increased hunting grounds provided by the varying heights of grass around the site and the change to how we managed our water bodies that we implemented a few years ago are making us a real hotspot for these majestic insects. But the dragonflies haven't had the waterways all to themselves. In the absence of visitors we've had a great increase in the number of visits that we've received from the local kingfishers, great crested and palmate newts, frogs, toads, diving beetles and a wealth of other aquatic

molluscs and invertebrates. We've also played host to colonies of several species of mining bees and seen a great increase in the diversity of our other bee and hoverflies.

The combination of these two factors as well as the need to increase visitor access to more of the property has enabled us to secure some funding from Natural Resources Wales to look at

increasing access to our outer fields, increasing the interpretation of our work in the wider landscape and to begin preliminary surveys that will form the basis for a much broader study of the nature value of the garden. The current funding will hopefully see the involvement of Cardiff University helping us to map habitat types within the property boundaries and explore our archaeology further, particularly within the East Field. We will also begin preliminary works to eventually link up the Dyffryn Parkland with the wider landscape via surrounding walking routes and take the opportunity to engage further with our visitors and other groups to help tell more of the stories that make Dyffryn so special

Covid-19 at Dyffryn

By Gerry Donovan

It was going to be a significant year for Dyffryn, celebrating the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the Trust, our 7th year operating within the Trust and of course just the numbers 2020 we're going to be memorable. Little did we know what would be thrown our way. We had just gone through a wet winter and flooding in February to suddenly be in

the midst of a global pandemic and full closure on March 23rd. Everyone was sent home with only a skeleton staff doing the essential compliance tasks. We didn't know for how long and in fact very much hoped that it would be a case of weeks or a couple of months at most. I must thank the whole team in work and on furlough for their tremendous commitment to Dyffryn and their resilience during difficult times.



Many thanks for the generous gifts from staff and the Friends Society. My smile should be much wider!



West Garden - October's fungal foray

We finally re-opened our doors on July 6th but not everywhere was open such as our cafes and retail and still our aim was to keep as many of the staff as possible on furlough to help the finance of the charity. We've gradually been able to introduce more and I'm delighted to report that our retail outlet and specifically the plant sales is performing as well as a 'normal' year- in fact slightly better. Perhaps as a consequence of so many people reconnecting with their gardens through lockdown. The Gallery café was also doing well until we had to shut because of roof and ceiling issues, but it is open again. We know we are a little rough around the edges in terms of presentation. We still have part of the team furloughed and are working on a programme of reengaging with our volunteers. It will be a steady process to prioritise works through the autumn and winter.

At the same time, you're aware that regrettably the charity has had to

respond to the pandemic with significant restructure which has resulted in redundancies across the Trust and indeed at Dyffryn. Every department has been impacted and we have a challenging few months ahead with selection processes, saying good bye to valued and cherished colleagues and rebuilding the team. The gardens will remain open but the house is paused and will remain closed while we review what is the best way forward in utilising the building for the benefit of Dyffryn and the Vale of Glamorgan as a whole. We will be working with staff, volunteers, your society and the local community to ensure we have the right business model and community support for it to flourish. I will be in contact shortly to arrange a listening session for your members. The society will play an important part in our recovery and I would take this opportunity to thank your members for their continuing support

Garden Buggy

The purchase of the Buggy using the financial donation by the Friends has

been delayed while the National Trust looks at options for a smaller buggy suitable for use with Covid-19 restrictions.

Introduction to Coade Stone - Part Two

By Philip Willis

In Part One we looked at the story behind Coade Stone. In Part Two, we shall look at some specific examples primarily at Croome House

It is interesting to note how prospective purchasers ordered items of Coade Stone to decorate their buildings and gardens. Eleanor Coade produced a catalogue of all the available designs which could be ordered either as individual pieces, or in the case of decorative friezes, which could be ordered by the foot. This catalogue 'A Descriptive Catalogue of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory' contains some 778 items so mail order is nothing new!

The most recognisable Coade sculpture is the Lion on the South side of Westminster Bridge, modelled by W.F. Woodington. Originally, the lion, being the largest of three, stood from 1837 on the parapet of The Lion Brewery in Lambeth. The brewery lay mostly derelict until

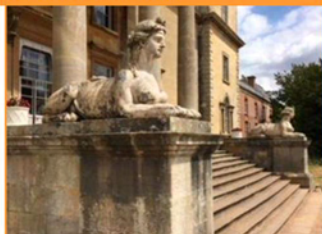


South Bank Lion & Twickenham Lion'



being demolished in 1949 to make way for the Royal Festival Hall. At this point the Lion was preserved at the wishes of King George VI. It was moved to the entrance of Waterloo Station in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and in 1966, it was moved to its current position on Westminster Bridge. It is now referred to as the South Bank Lion. The second, smaller lion, was given to the Rugby Football Union in 1971 and can now be seen at the entrance to Twickenham Rugby Ground where it is was covered in gold leaf to mark England hosting the Rugby World Cup in 1991. The whereabouts of the third lion is unknown, and has presumably been destroyed.

Coade Stone at Croome includes:



Grecian Sphinxes and a Druid Statue

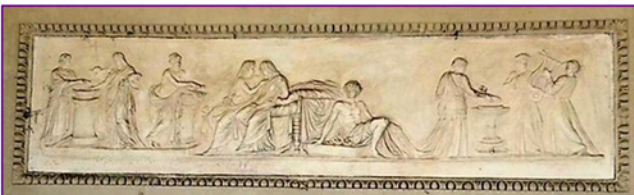
- Two large Grecian Sphinxes to the South Front Steps and a Druid Statue in the grounds (a bill to the Earl of Coventry dated 14.8.1795 shows a cost of 50gns and 25gns respectively).

- Three long rectangular Coade Stone reliefs within the Robert Adam designed Island Temple. One depicts the Aldobrandini Greek Wedding whilst the other two show Griffins and Ornaments. There are also two roundels depicting a Phrygian Shepherd and Shepherdess.

- A statue of Naiad, from Greek mythology, being a female spirit or nymph, presiding over fountains, wells, springs, streams, etc. This is stamped Coade Sealy, London and dated 1802. A Naiad of this description is shown as Item No.18 in the catalogue, dated 1784 and is priced at £31.10s.0d.

- A dry arch bridge containing rusticated Coade Stone blocks and a Coade keystone of a Bearded Figure (River God), the figure stamped Coade, London, 1797. In the Coade Catalogue there are three sizes for this piece (Item No's 437, 438 & 439) which range in price from £1.11s.6d to £5.5s.0d for the largest.

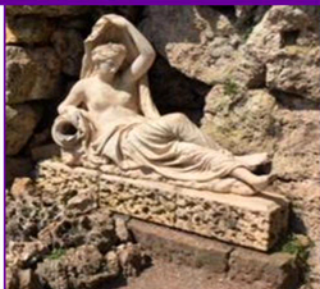
There are many Coade Stone items to be seen in various National Trust properties, at other locations throughout the



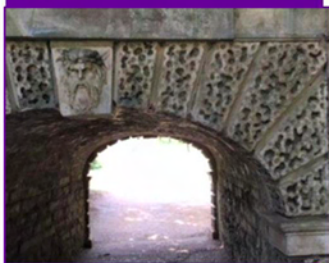
The Aldobrandini Greek Wedding

UK, and even some foreign parts including Canada, Brazil & the USA, but I'm sure there must be many more that have survived and which are still to be discovered.

It is also interesting to consider how these large pieces were transported securely around the UK. Records kept by Croggan, show that packing cases were constructed, which were themselves an expensive item, with customers having to pay up to £6 for them. There seems to be no records of any refunds for the returned crates. Pieces were taken to a holding depot, usually a local Inn, where they would be collected by a local carter (one who transports goods by cart or wagon) for its onward journey. For example, East Anglian orders waited at the Blue Boar Coaching Inn at Whitechapel. Some pieces were taken by Pickfords, whose earliest records date to 1646, and who had recently set



Naiad



Dry arch bridge with keystone of bearded figure

up a service of 'Flying Boats', which travelled the developing canal system.

Turning to my local National Trust property, Dyffryn House & Gardens, the NT website lists two items of Coade Stone, namely, Two Boys with a Dog (NT 1682835-listed as 'not on show') and a Plinth (NT1682823 - although it doesn't show any markings identifying it as a Coade piece). Alison Kelly in her Book 'Mrs Coade's Stone' does not list any Coade Stone being at Dyffryn, so I'm curious to find out

if there are any records to confirm these pieces as Coade, or indeed, if any other pieces found their way to Dyffryn House.

I have much to discover regarding Coade Stone but find it a fascinating subject. The very fact that a Georgian Businesswomen, itself a rarity, was running a successful business almost 100 years before The Married Women's Property Act of 1842 gave women the right to

own and control their own property is quite remarkable.

References: Mrs Coade's Stone by Alison Kelly, The Self Publishing Association, 1990.

Coade Stone by Hans van Lemmen, Shire Publications, 2006.

Photos: Philip Willis, December 2019
(contact details: pjw_willis@hotmail.com)

June Jenkins

By Val Caple

It is with sadness that I have to inform you that June Jenkins died recently after a long illness. June was a long time supporter of the Friends and many of you will remember visiting her garden at Bryn-y-Ddafad, Welsh St Donats in 2015

In memory of June her husband Glyn opened the garden for the NGS scheme in September and several Friends took the opportunity to see her beautiful compact garden again. The open weekend raised £750 for various charities.



Pembrokeshire Gardens

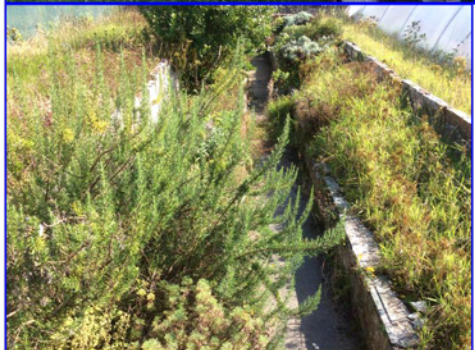
By Marion Davies

On a short break in Pembrokeshire in September I was very lucky to enjoy some warm weather and to be able to visit some gardens.

The walled garden at Stackpole (just south of Pembroke) has been producing food for the table for the past 250 years and that long tradition continues today. It is now managed by Trustees of Pembrokeshire Mencap Ltd. Very impressive work is undertaken by Pembrokeshire adults with learning disabilities – and a large range of plants, fruit and vegetables are sold in the Garden Room.

Also impressive is their Cawdor Tea Room and lawn where I enjoyed some lovely coffee and cakes.

A visit to Stackpole is a tantalising glimpse of the wealth at the disposal of the landowners from the beginning of the eighteenth century until death duties took their toll on the family, and the great house and estate vanished well before the end of the twentieth century. Bettina Harden's book 'The Most Glorious Prospect, Garden visiting in Wales 1639-1900' (Published by Graffeg Ltd in 2017) has a very informative chapter on Stackpole. Illustrations dating from 1758 to 1871 capture the magnificence of the 150 room Mansion and the Great Conservatory, and the surrounding land. Work undertaken by the family over a number of generations included the construction of the walled garden and hot house, a fashionable wilderness and Belvedere, the damming and flooding of water meadows to form the lakes and lily ponds, the New Deer Park,



Stackpole

pleasure grounds and a flower garden and an eight arch bridge.

On another afternoon I visited The Grove Hotel at Narberth and enjoyed a wonderful champagne afternoon tea on the Terrace. Strolling in their well maintained walled

garden afterwards I was very pleased to see the champagne empties being put to good use.



Grove

Spring to Autumn at Tredegar House

By Mary Evans

Access to local green spaces became a valued part of our lives during lockdown and is doing so again as new restrictions have been introduced. Newport reopened its parks on the 18 May this year when initially visitors were limited to a 5 mile radius. This included the 90 acres of parkland with its lake at Tredegar House where my husband and I have walked most days.

Tredegar House and its 90 acres of parkland were bought by Newport Council in 1974 from the Sisters of St Joseph, who purchased it in 1951 from the last Lord Tredegar to use as a Catholic girls' boarding and day school.

In 2012 Newport City Council transferred the management of the Tredegar House Estate

to the National Trust on a 50 year lease. Newport still owns the Mansion and formal gardens and the transferral to the National Trust stipulated that the 90 acre parkland remained open for free access to the public. Consequently the parkland was the only part of any Welsh National Trust property to give access to the public when lockdown in Wales was eased on the 18 May. Last month the Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW) in a youtube video hailed Tredegar House as a Welsh masterpiece.

Newport is only a handful of towns and cities to have two Gorsedd circles. One was erected in Belle Vue Park (the only public park in Wales designed by Thomas Mawson) in 1896 for the Eisteddfod which took place for the

first time in Newport in 1897. The other pictured here is in Tredegar House parkland where the Eisteddfod was held in 1988 and 2004.

My pictures reflect the changes we saw in the parkland as we moved



from spring into autumn. The two resident swans with their 6 tiny cygnets greeted us on day one of reopening in May. One was lost quite early on but the five thrived observing social distancing until last week when three had flown the lake and only these two remained. Two families of coots were raised on the lake and there is a resident heron which watches from the reeds.

Yellow iris were in bloom at the lakeside in May and we were walking nearby when a giant oak tree, uprooted, come crashing to the ground.

A rustic scene greeted us in early September with the parkland full of hay bales against a backdrop of the House in the far distance. All the grass had been cut by a local farmer who takes the bales in return for maintaining the drainage ditches and hedgerows on the estate of Tredegar House. A beneficially mutual local agreement to be applauded.

The formal gardens have been open again since the 2nd August for booked visits and on the 16 September the House reopened with access to the ground floor state rooms only. Autumn has



Gorsedd circle



Formal garden, Orangerie and Restored House

arrived and we had a last visit today, the 27 September, in glorious sunshine as sadly the House and the formal gardens will be closing again.

I have written an article for the website blog of the Friends of Newport Museum and Art Gallery where you can

read about Mawson's design for Belle Vue Park, the link with Dyffryn Gardens and why there is a statue of Lord Tredegar outside Cardiff City Hall. It was posted 10 August and is entitled **'A Legacy from Newport's Victorian Era.'**



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For the latest information about membership, forthcoming events, etc. please visit www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

For information about Dyffryn Gardens events etc. visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens

Garden Cuttings

From the Committee

AGM 2020

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions we were unable to invite members to the AGM which took place on October 16th via Zoom and was attended by Committee members only.

Members should have received notification and the documents will be available on the Friends website.

Committee Members

We are always looking for new ideas and would welcome you if you are interested to join us on the committee.

Meetings are usually held four times a year at Dyffryn. Please contact a member of the committee if you are interested.

Membership

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions which have meant that we have been unable to hold events membership fees have been waived for 2020—2021.

RENEWAL FORMS for 2021—2022 WILL BE SENT OUT WHEN THE COVID-19 SITUATION BECOMES CLEARER.

Website and Newsletter

Val Caple would be delighted to receive your contributions for the Newsletter at any time. This is YOUR Newsletter and, because of the cancellation of events, Val has been particularly grateful to contributions from members for the issue. Please send photos or articles on your garden or one you have visited

Please also let her know how the website can be improved.

Programme of Events 2021.

Talks are open to members only, unless otherwise stated.

Where numbers are limited pre-booking is required using the application forms provided.
Right: One of our last get-togethers in 2019



Winter Talks

Unfortunately the series of talks planned for the winter of 2020—2021 have had to be put on hold.

If you have any ideas for speakers for the autumn and winter of 2021-2022 please could you discuss with Barbara Hodges

2021	Visit by coach to the National Botanic Garden See Application Form for Details
2021	Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society AGM. 2.30 pm meeting at the Cory Education Centre Please support your Community by attending.
2021	Visit by coach to the House Farm and High Glanau See Application Form for Details

For more Information about above events, please contact

Mrs Barbara Hodges (fodyffryn.sec@virgin.net) or visit
www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

To book entry to Dyffryn Gardens during the Covid-19 restrictions visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens