



## Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

### **Sharing the Past@Dyffryn.**

**By John Oliver, House Guide and Research Volunteer**

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2017 the Dyffryn Volunteer Research Group will be four years old and I have been reflecting on why the Group was created and how it forms a part of the volunteering programme.

### **In the beginning**

In Spring 2013, when the National Trust had taken over stewardship of the House and Gardens, I began my volunteering as a Visitor Guide in the House.

Following induction and some training, I started to engage with visitors. My guide colleagues and I were provided with some historical details about the rooms

that we were working in and about the Corys, the last family to own and live in the House.

Fact sheets were supplied by the NT Interpretation and Learning Officer, Rhiannon, who trained and inspired. To begin with, these sheets armed us with knowledge and gave us confidence to chat with visitors and give short House tours. But as time went on, questions came up that we did not have answers for. Curiosity made me start searching independently, for answers and more detail about the history.

### **Working together**

Four House volunteers started to discuss what they had individually been doing to find out

more. Jackie, Pat, Chris and myself then began to share our findings and our skills and resources. As a result, we all discovered a great deal more about the Corys.

Soon it became apparent that that there existed many layers of history prior to the Cory family, stretching back to Elizabethan times and even further. We discussed our findings with Rhiannon, who was looking for new material to produce displays and exhibitions for visitors. She encouraged us and we were delighted that she wanted to use our material and involve us.

### **Early Work**

We were also invited to work alongside a historical research professional, Judith Teasdale (a professional landscape architect) who had been commissioned to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for Dyffryn. Working with

Judith was a delightful experience. We gained a great deal of knowledge and learned much, much more about research techniques.

When the exhibition featuring the Cory family and their business was created we contributed research findings and helped with the preparation of displays. We then became aware that other volunteers were interested in researching other topics.

As a result we formed a research group, to bring people together to share their work by giving talks about their research. We approached Rhiannon who said that we should give it a try and offered facilities to do so.

### **Dyffryn Research Meetings**

Our first research had three speakers, Jackie covering Sir Thomas Button, Pat talking about Reginald Cory and myself giving a history of Cory Bros



**Admiral Sir Thomas Button, an Elizabethan privateer and previous resident at Dyffryn**

& Co Ltd. The event was well attended and feedback showed that volunteers would welcome these sessions on a regular basis. We agreed to hold 3 sessions per year at Dyffryn.

### **The Dyffryn Archive**

We also work closely with the Dyffryn Archivists, a dedicated group of volunteers who have created and maintain the Dyffryn Archive. This is a very well ordered and run collection of historical data and information, which is available to researchers and is a place to store copies of their findings. It is an extremely valuable research resource,

particularly the on-line database which allows access to much of the collection from home.

**Now and the Future**

Currently we offer support to Christina Hanley, Conservationist for the NT at Dyffryn and House Steward, who also has responsibilities for interpretation as part of the Visitor Experience.

Our programme of speakers for 2018 is being considered now and details will be

available, with dates for the meetings before the end of this year. We offer a welcome to Friends of Dyffryn

To maintain a pipeline of new material, we would like to hear from anyone who is already researching any Dyffryn related topics and those who might be interested in getting involved in research at Dyffryn in some way.

If you are interested please contact John Oliver via



**Reginald Cory, industrialist, horticulturalist and plant hunter, who, with Thomas Mawson, created the Gardens**

[jj@jcloliver.plus.com](mailto:jj@jcloliver.plus.com)

**A Plantsman's Response to World War**  
**From [www.nationaltrust.org.uk//dyffryn-gardens](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk//dyffryn-gardens)**

2017 marks 100 years since the gardens were turned over for fruit and vegetable production in World War I. The borders and beds were filled with produce and a gourd tunnel created in our Australasian garden to mirror the 1917 war effort.

Food was in short supply during the First World War and by

1917 Britain was running out of produce. Growing vegetables was actively encouraged; even the flowerbeds at Buckingham Palace were given over to food production.

**Dig for victory**

At Dyffryn, the Cory family sent their gardeners out to share their horticultural knowledge with village

communities around the estate. They also began growing on a vast scale. Every inch of available ground, including the garden's annual flower and dahlia beds, was used to raise 100,000 young vegetable plants from seed, all dispatched in early May and June to villagers to grow on in their own gardens.

The walled garden supervisor, Ceridwen Davies, has delved into the archives to create a display in our

pot store which tells the story of the 'vegetable plants for villagers' scheme. From details of the crops grown to the two women gardeners who worked alongside the 6 remaining men of the original 40 strong workforce, most had signed up at the outbreak of war.

Re-creation of the First World War planting scheme  
 Reginald and Florence Cory, working with their Head Gardener, Arthur Cobb, continued to maintain the gardens to a high standard and used the land, where there was an opportunity, to support the war effort.



" Did you know... 6 acres of potatoes were planted at Dyffryn to help the war effort"

Re-creation of the First World War

Most of the special planting is in the carefully designed beds in front of the house and in the Australasian area.

**AGM evening stroll with Chris Flynn**  
**Margaret Perring**

It had been a windy and showery day but about 20 Friends turned up despite the weather, to hear from Chris, the Head Gardener, about the proposed future developments.

We started at Kennel Bank, with large areas of bare ground caused by removal of the heather beds. Some members were sorry to see them disappear, but Chris pointed out they were alien in a southern, lowland garden. Plans are in place to plant thousands of bulbs, including up the slope (where trees had been felled last autumn).

Chris had more dissent when he

explained the next plan! We stood at the house entrance and looked N across at north meadow, noting the trees in the distance which will be removed allowing a view of the House from the road. (I thought it was a brilliant idea as I had just come back from visiting Boughton House in Northants and Audley End in Essex, both of which offer tantalising views of what is in store).

Some argued that we were losing too many trees and how important they are for removing the CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, and mentioning some of the new, local housing developments). Water management will also be undertaken in this area to

alleviate any further flooding.

We walked round to the front of the House, Chris reiterating the aim now at Dyffryn of achieving THE SENSE OF PLACE. The 2014 future plan include the paragraph -

*An essential thread running through all aspects of plant collection, cultivation and planting design in the gardens of Dyffryn must be to keep alive the spirit of Reginald Cory's enthusiasm for and collection of a wide range of plant types from many parts of the world, including the Americas, China and South Africa.*

No grumbles now as we ooh-d and aah-d about the wonderful summer bedding scheme using vegetables, (both the familiar and tropical ones) plus a variety of herbs. Including: Tree Spinach:, *Chenopodium giganteum*, var. magenta spreen: Pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans* (Mexico), a bright large yellow leaf: A "Morning glory", *Ipomoea lobata* (Mexico), a jazzy yellow and red climber:

Oca NZ Yam, *Oxalis tuberose*, this has edible tubers like the *Ipomoea*. PLUS the following: beetroot, kholrabi, celeriac, red lettuce, onions, Florence fennel, Jerusalem and globe artichoke, Tumbling Tom tomatoes in urns, herbs including sage, thyme parsley and chives.

At this point he mentioned that the yew trees in the panel garden would be replaced

On to the Australasian garden where a newly constructed tunnel,

was covered in gourds, all shapes and sizes, with room for further development! This was surrounded by a large and prolific bed of 40 varieties of marrow and pumpkin. (At this point Chris told us of a wonderful book about Waddesdon's vegetable garden by Mary Keen, *Paradise and Plenty*).

We moved on to the garden rooms, one, bounded by yew hedges with 'windows' all rather raggy and neglected, needing cutting. Chris mentioned again, a sense of place must be kept and perfection in the execution as we looked down on mop headed trees also in need of a trim (*Ligustrum*, i.e. privet ).

We moved on to the Rose garden, bounded by hedges. It is now past its peak. Chris said that scent is important so there will be a concentration on flowers in the centre beds, with more diversity of form (especially hips).

He mentioned water features,- controlling blanket weed and the necessity to protect the habitat of the Great crested newts, these are



This year's 'Summer Bedding'



Exotic planting



Paved Court



Gourds



Window in the Yew

a European protected species.

Next we went into the Mediterranean garden with its old crazy paving - to be taken up and replaced by areas of gravel to accommodate plants from the 3 great Mediterranean zones, Western Australia South Africa and

the western USA.

The aim here also, is to have an area of large leaved trees emulating the tropics. It is hoped by 2023 to mark the centenary of the garden. Well, the majority of folk present are unlikely to be here to celebrate!

## Dyffryn News

### By Dyffryn Gardens Staff

#### Fountain Pool Fundraising

So far £35,000 has been raised for restoring the Fountain Pool. Of the £16,000 was from the sale of second hand books. The target is £75,00 do please continue to donate books—and buy them.

#### Days of Christmas Trail

From 18th November to 7th January

Take a 12 Days of Christmas trail sheet and sing your way around the gardens as you marvel at the new family fun display.

Other future events are on [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens)

## Lydney Park and Clearwell

### By Rev. Margaret Stark

Some 30 Friends set off by coach (our driver was the lovely Keith again) for Lydney Park on a thoroughly wet May morning. As we drove into the Park we spotted fallow deer and pheasants. On arrival at the house we were warmly greeted by Sally, a longstanding employee and friend of Viscount Bledisloe's family.

Tea, coffee and cake were served in the dining room, before we set off down the hill to view the Woodland Garden which had been developed by the second Viscount from 1950 onwards. This garden is notable for its colourful azaleas and rhododendrons and its wide range of deciduous trees and conifers. There are, for example, fine tulip and handkerchief trees. Through the woodland runs a stream that expands occasionally to form a pool or lake.

To the left as we passed through the gate into the garden was a small pool studded with stepping stones and surrounded by bright pink and red Japanese azaleas with the occasional white azalea or rhododendron and dwarf maple. The stream continues under a wooden bridge with peduncles of wisteria forming an arch over it. A little away from the stream is an Italian Folly that was brought back from Venice by the second Viscount in 1961. Overarching it is a huge Pine tree.



A slate table inside is inscribed, *'To the memory of Benjamin Ludlow Bathurst who made and loved this garden'*. Climbing up through the woodland we came

upon some rhododendrons with larger leaves; the seldom seen Himalayan rhododendron. Some of us walked up the steep path to the Roman remains.

We were served hearty soup or sandwiches for lunch and we made the acquaintance of the Bledisloes' dog, Rascal. The museum was visited and, after thanking Sally and the catering ladies for looking after us so well, we set off for Clearwell and South Lodge.

At South Lodge we were welcomed warmly by Jane and Andrew. Their garden which is opened for the NGS as well as for private groups like us, is very different from the extensive woodland of Lydney Park. It is more open to the sun with less shading from trees and there are magnificent herbaceous borders. In these we enjoyed, amongst other plants, colourful delphiniums, geraniums, lupins, poppies and roses. On the slope, an area where there was originally

extensive rubble, we saw some fun items - pigs and a rooster and flowers, all created from iron, and a little fairy house made of wood.

There is a fine pergola with pink and crimson climbing roses and clematis. The far corner of the garden has an arbour intermeshed with willow and the ground is gravelled with plants in pots. High stone walls around the garden are climbed by wisteria, clematis and roses. Jane and Andrew are keen to encourage wildlife and so have a wildlife pond and, nearby, a fernery. The orchard has a variety of fruit trees and there is a wild flower area which was bright with poppies and ox-eye daisies.

When we had our fill of the garden we trotted along the road into the village of Clearwell to the village hall where Jean and Di served us tea and scrumptious cake. Climbing back into our coach we were very happy with our day and grateful as always to Mary for arranging it.

## **AGM Wednesday. 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

The AGM was attended by 19 members

Barbara thanked Mr John Kirk for acting as Chairman at the committee meetings during the past year and invited members to apply for the post of Chair and Vice Chair. She was pleased to be able to tell the members that

three new committee members had joined since the last AGM: Dr. Paul Knoyle, and Mrs Jane and Mr Martin Haworth.

Derrick Kingham has resigned from the committee due to ill health and personal commitments. Irena Waselewska has also resigned. They were both thanked for there contributions.

See page 11 for latest Committee news



## Sandleford Place and Hillier Gardens

By Val Caple

A select group of members set off from Dyffryn anticipating an interesting day visiting the renowned Hillier Gardens. However, we were very glad of a garden break on the long journey.

Sandleford Place, Newtown, near Newbury is a private, 4 acre, garden owned by Mel Gatward and opened specially for us in support of the NGS charities.

We were distracted from our first view of the house by the beautiful modern fountain, specially commissioned for the site, before squeezing through the plants between the River Enborne and the house. There coffee and cakes awaited us, with plenty of seating indoors and out allowing us to enjoy views of the garden.

Mel entertained us with a description of her trials as she got to grips with the 4-acre site over the past 30 years. Her dedication

paid off and we could enjoy her idiosyncratic ideas and personal planting schemes.

The river meanders through areas of mixed borders, a wild flower meadow and fine trees. A door leads into the walled garden planted with vegetables plus more borders and trees. Spectacular. We left our enthusiastic hostess with reluctance for the next part of our journey.

Hillier Gardens is a much bigger site with a famous nursery. Entering the visitors centre we were met by the head of Arboriculture who, gave a brief introduction to the work of Sir Harold Hillier, whose idea it was to plant a collection of trees from around the world. Since then a variety of 'garden rooms' have been planted to extend the interest for visitors throughout the year.

The Winter Garden



Sandleford Place



is particularly famous and even out of season holds a lot of interest, especially enlivened by a series of colourful modern sculptures which are made from various mediums including glass, ceramic, marble, copper and recycled materials

Next we admired the vista through the tree collection. This is being enhanced by planting trees for autumn colour. It should be magnificent in a few years time  
Next we walked past

some newly planted wisteria which are being trained up posts, and will be carefully managed so they keep their shape.

The Centenary Border is a spectacular mix of herbaceous plants at their summer best, with interesting side paths to explore. The unusual square trees at the end are particularly eye-catching.

Our next destination was Jermyn's House, the original home of Sir Harold Hillier.

Opposite were more flower beds, trees and sculptures, including a lifelike head of the founder.

We wended our way to the viewpoint above the Bog Garden before dropping down to meander by the lakes planted with the appropriate plants.

We were led back, through more established trees, to our starting point so we could enjoy some lunch before exploring on our own.

I decide to take a similar route – but with



Hillier gardens



diversions. The gate to the vegetable patch was a delight, and, after this, I found myself sculpture spotting. In the woodland areas many were made by willow weaving – and yes, I found Mary indulging her passion next to the deer. It was Mary who advised me to follow the Pinetum Sculpture Trail past giant botanical cones between the magnificent collection of conifers.



Time now for

indulgences - tea and cake and a walk round the plant nursery before returning to the coach for the journey home after a memorable day.

Many thanks Mary for being adventurous and taking us to a part of England I rarely visit would love to return to when the Winter garden is at it's most impressive.

## Programme of Events 2017/2018.

**Talks are open to members only, unless otherwise stated.**

**Where numbers are limited pre-booking is required using the application forms included with this issue.**

**Right: Friends at the 2017 Friends of Dyffryn AGM in Dyffryn Gardens**



Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2017	Afternoon Tea from 2.00 to 4.00 pm in the Cory Education Centre Talk by Marion Davies on 'Landscape and Character in Jane Austen's Novels'
Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2017	Blue Anchor, Aberthaw for our Christmas lunch - 12.30 for 1 pm.  <b>See Application form for details.</b>
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2018	AGM. 2.00 pm Cory Education Centre

### **For more Information about above events, please contact**

Mrs Mary Ponting, 4 Church Terrace, St Mary Church, Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan, C71 7LU, maryponting@talk21.com  
or Mrs Barbara Hodges, Greenfields, Eagleswell Road, Boverton, Llantwit Major, CF61 1UF. fodyffryn.sec@virgin.net

For the latest information about forthcoming Friends events, etc. please visit [www.dyffryngardens.org.uk](http://www.dyffryngardens.org.uk)

For information about Dyffryn Gardens events, volunteering etc. contact  
Dyffryn Gardens  
St Nicholas  
Vale of Glamorgan  
CF5 8SU  
029 20 593 328, <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens>