

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

40th year for the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society

A welcome from our chair, Gerry Donovan

Welcome to a momentous year for our society and our second newsletter of 2023. I'd like to thank the continued loyalty of members to the society, many of whom have been supporters for decades. I'd also like to take the

opportunity to welcome new members.

It has been a very busy time, and I must thank the committee for all their contributions. I hope you enjoy reading the accounts of our activities and possibly spotting yourself and friends in the photos.

Do hope you can join us for the Christmas Lunch to round off the 40th year.

40th Anniversary Celebration Speech [June 29th]

By Rhodri Traherne

Firstly, can I say that I am very sorry indeed not to with you in person today to say a few words about this very special celebration.

You may not be aware that my Uncle and Aunt, Sir Cennydd and Lady Traherne, were at the inaugural

meeting of the Friends on the 30th of March 1983. They loved Dyffryn and were very clear that the best way to safeguard its future was to form the Friends. My Uncle felt that without such an organisation there was no way to hold the management of the gardens, at that time South Glamorgan County Council, to account. He felt that it was vital that the very special gardens here at

Dyffryn were properly cared for and that the public should be able to enjoy the gardens not only in the summer months but throughout the year. As such my Uncle and Aunt were always enthusiastic supporters of Dyffryn House and Gardens and everything that took place here. I know that they also took great pleasure in coming to Dyffryn and very much enjoyed walking through the gardens, either with each other or with the many guests that they had to stay with them at their home, Coedarhydyglyn, some 15 minutes away.

It must be said that it has not always been 'plain sailing' here at Dyffryn. Yet another reorganisation of Local Government in 1996 saw the demise of the South Glamorgan County Council and the new management here at Dyffryn was to be the newly formed Vale of Glamorgan County Council. Almost immediately, the new Administration was keen to form a partnership with a Hotel Group at Dyffryn, but this proved to be a complete disaster which ultimately perhaps cost the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive their jobs. It was notable at the time that the Friends were active in opposing the project and conducted some fierce and most successful lobbying. I think I can say that Local Government does not always 'get things right'.

It was therefore somewhat ironic that in 2008 I became a County Councillor and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration for the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Dyffryn Gardens was part of my portfolio and I remember very well attending my first meeting of the Dyffryn Advisory Group. At that time Gerry, your Chair, was



Bust of Sir Cennydd Traherne K.G. T.D. Inside Dyffryn House - Unveiled in 1986 on the occasion of the naming of The Traherne Suite. Photo by Elliott Brown

running the gardens and the Friends were represented by a very wise and very fierce lady, or so she appeared to me at my first meeting, called Joan Andrews. As the meeting progressed it was clear that several different departments of the Council were involved in one way or another at Dyffryn, but no one appeared to be in charge. As an example, the lawns were mowed by people from the Visible Services Department, but they reported to the Director of Visible Services based in the Alps Depot. Gerry was supposed to be in charge but in fact she had no power over most of the people who worked at Dyffryn. Joan was quite clear that the present situation was completely unworkable and should be changed immediately with everyone at Dyffryn reporting to and working for Gerry as The Curator. Joan was of course right. I met with the senior management of the Vale Council and after a certain amount of huffing and puffing it was agreed and the necessary changes took place.

To be fair to the Vale Council a

great deal of money over a significant period had been bid for and was well utilised at Dyffryn to enhance the Gardens and to begin the detailed work required to start the renovation of the House. Visitors were arriving in ever increasing numbers and the management at that time produced exciting events for all ages and interests. However, it was clear to me and to others that to complete the necessary work to turn the House and Gardens into a major and successful visitor

attraction was perhaps a task that seemed to be out of reach of a relatively small unitary authority.

It was at this time and after about 4 years as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Dyffryn that I was informed that the National Trust was interested in taking over the management of the House and Gardens. I was clear that this was the right thing to do in view of the strong brand that is the National Trust. However, it was made very clear to me that the

Friends must be involved as part of the package, and this was arranged.

And I guess this brings us right up to date. The Friends are still here after 40 years and Dyffryn House and Gardens is a major 'National Visitor Attraction'. I feel sure that once the pandemic legacy is well behind us, Dyffryn will go from strength to strength with the help and advice of the Friends.

I do hope that you will all continue to support the Friends. Who knows

40th Anniversary Celebration

By Wendy Lowe

I would like to thank the committee of the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens for the enjoyable 40th Anniversary celebration of their existence. It brought back memories of my attendance at the inaugural meeting in the hall of Dyffryn House all those years ago.

The generosity of Sir Cennydd Traherne has brought much pleasure to many people. It has been a joy to see the improved maintenance of the Gardens during that time and to witness the

hard work of the gardeners and volunteers to maintain and return it to the design envisaged by Thomas Mawson and Reginald Cory. I hope that the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens will continue to raise funds to support the upkeep of these beautiful gardens.

I was interested to read on the display boards information about the choice of logo for the Friends of an Acer griseum for which Dyffryn is noted going back many decades. There is a 'champion' specimen in the grounds and I am fortunate to have one in

my garden, one of six that were available for sale to the public from cuttings from the champion tree and sold as saplings about 20 years ago. It is a fine specimen and brings much pleasure to visitors.



40th Anniversary Celebration

By Gerry Donovan

Thank everyone who made this celebration so special. Although unable to attend herself Mary went to great lengths to ensure all dietary needs were met with the delicious food she organised. We had enough food with lots of people going home with snacks for the following day. Also thank you to Paul, who organised the information boards which demonstrated our achievements.

Finally thank you to all the members who attended or who have

supported us in other ways over the years

I do hope the Friends of Dyffryn continues to grow to support this amazing place for another 40 years.



Presentation of cheque for first bench by Gerry Donovan to Lizzie Smith Jones

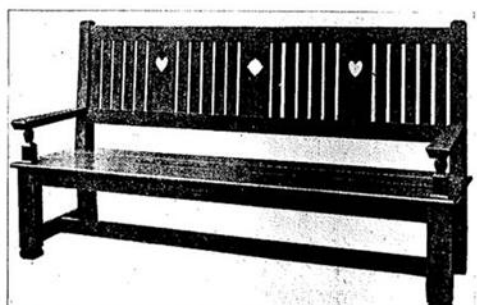


Fund Raising Success contributing to Dyffryn's Mawson distinctiveness!

By Gerry Donovan

As you know our focus for our 40th year celebration has been to support Dyffryn with their request to sponsor two garden benches. Not just any bench, but a style inspired by Thomas Mawson, the original designer of Dyffryn Gardens with Reginald Cory.

Over the years, with insights from the Glamorgan Archive Neame Roff images, Dyffryn has been incorporating these echoes of the past by different bench commissions in the Pompeian Garden, Paved Court, Reflecting Pool and South Front. This year, the 1905 *Mawson Brothers Catalogue of Garden*



The Ambleside Seat



Seat 1

Furniture's Ambleside seat has been the starting point for a pair of beautiful benches on the glasshouse terrace.

At our June celebration we presented Dyffryn with the first £2,600 in sponsorship and in September the Committee gathered around the very smart seat.

To enable the crafts people to ensure a beautifully matching pair, Dyffryn ordered the two and we have secured the further £2,600, through the society trips and your generous donations.

Following Judy Keenor's talk on 'Why Dyffryn didn't become the Kew Garden of Wales', (report in the

next issue), members were invited to gather at the second bench.

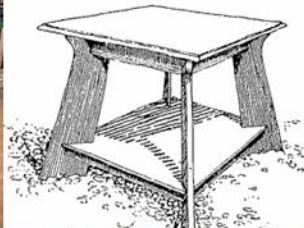
It's not the first time the catalogue has been an inspiration. A few years before the pandemic there were plans for a café makeover in the exhibition hall. Mawson's garden table Heathcote and Downs designs were studied, and a prototype produced. Plans changed and the direction of decoration

for the café had a different focus. However, eagle eyed members may well spot the rather elegant table now used in the

The Heathcote Table.



The Downs Table.



A Visit to Longhouse Farm and High Glanau Manor.

By Sue Knoyle

Although there was little sun on our visit to Longhouse Farm near Raglan and High Glanau Manor near Monmouth we all had a wonderful day.

On our first visit to Longhouse Farm we were greeted by our host Marilyn Anderson and shown to a very inviting barn where we had coffee and home made cakes. We then explored the two acre garden with a pond, millrace wall and a stream with ducks. An avenue of malus trees and colourful borders provided colour throughout including an attractive corpus kousa tree with pink bracts.

There was also a productive vegetable garden. A special feature in the garden were metal sculptures of a hare and crocodile created by Jo Paxton. There was a slight delay to the start of our next visit to High Glanau Manor caused by a flat battery which was put right with jump leads provided by our host.

High Glanau Manor is an Arts and Craft Manor House with a garden originally laid out by H Avray Tipping in 1922 who worked closely with Gertrude Jekyll in the 1920's. We were warmly welcomed by the owner Helena Gerrish who had prepared a delicious lunch including wine. The garden is set in 12 acres with commanding views of a 100 foot long double colourful herbaceous borders which replaced a swimming pool when the owners first moved in. There were formal stone terraces and an octagonal pool abundant with several species of newts including the greater crested newt. The original one hundred year old Edwardian wooden greenhouse was undergoing restoration to retain its



Longhouse Farm



High Glanau Manor



Grade 1 status. We enjoyed the spectacular views overlooking extensive woodland to the Brecon Beacons from the patio by the house.

It was late afternoon when we made our return journey to Dyffryn and our thanks must go to Mary for arranging a most enjoyable day out to two remote but captivating NGS gardens.



Tredegar House Gardens.

By Val Caple

Because of health issues only a select few members were able to enjoy the tour of the gardens lead by Steven Morgan, Garden and Outdoor Manager at Tredegar House.

Steven was a mine of knowledge about the history of the gardens which formed part of the original 16th century estate of the Morgan family, first substantially redeveloped by William Morgan in the 17th century and owned for generations by the Lords Tredegar. In 2012, Newport City Council leased the property to the National Trust.

The Grade I building, Tredegar House, and the Grade I listed stables, are also situated within the Grade II* park, comprising around 90 acres.

The formal garden includes the Orangery garden with intricate, undulating design of the ornamental parterre display features a variety of different-coloured minerals including seashells, crushed lime mortar, brick dust, coal dust, white and orange sands and grass. The design was discovered during an archaeological excavation. There are plans to restore the old glass house.

Afterwards some of us visited the house but I walked around the lake.



Orangery Garden



The old glass house



The Lake

Visit to Oakham Treasures and Tyntesfield

By John Kirk

It was a beautiful sunny day when we set off and exactly an hour later we arrived at our first destination.

Oakham Treasures.

What treasures they were, we entered one of the largest privately owned museums of retail and farming history in the UK. There was so much to see, including the reconstruction of the Old Post Office in Bletchley Park where British boffins broke German codes during World War 2, also a fantastic working model railway of Oakham station. In the Exhibition Hall the many displays included an AA Man standing by his motorbike and sidecar. I can remember the time that, if you were a member, you would receive a salute as you passed (those were the days). Then there was the Tractor Shed with old and new, large and small, tractors lovingly maintained. Close by were the elegant cars of yesteryear, all magnificently polished. Next the Emporium included a bank of red postboxes, a pharmacy, a pub, a sweetshop and a remarkable selection of toys and games. The tobacconist shop also deserves a mention with displays of tobacco products from the last 100 years. Not to be outdone there was a fabulous haberdashery, hats and a hardware section which included shops and displays including ironmongery, toiletries and early televisions. The grocery shop was a complete 1950s shop, transported and recreated with all its fixtures and stock – and 90% of the items still have their contents unused. Apart from the above, there was still a large amount



of interesting items to see and explore. One of my favourites was "Peppy" the large Fox's Glacier Mints bear which was created in 1922 by Eric Fox, and was shown in the Harrods window display in 1939.

There were war time mementos including a ration book and wartime notices, including one which warned us "Hitler will send no warning, so always carry your gas mask".

After thoroughly enjoying our visit we had a coffee in the shop and had the pleasure of meeting the owner, Mr Keith Sherrell who is now 83 and spoke at length about the early days of the museum. Many of the original exhibits belonged to him, but they were extended by purchases at auctions plus gifts from friends and the public. He has no plans to expand any further as he is bursting at the seams for space. However it was pleasing to hear that his 3 daughters are all involved in the business so this little jewel of our past will be maintained in the future.

We arrived at Tyntesfield, just in time to sample the lunch menu. Suitably refreshed we set off to explore the house and its extensive grounds.

The spectacular rebuilding of Tyntesfield was completed in 1865 by William Gibbs when he was well into his seventies. It was a proud affectionate tribute to his forebears who were merchant traders whose business went bankrupt. His father, Antony Gibbs, blamed no one but himself and he submitted himself to a life of unremitting industry. Soon after Antony moved to Spain and set up as a merchant. The family moved to Madrid where William was born in 1790. When Antony died in 1815 his eldest son Henry was running the business in London and William was successfully running the business in Cadiz. Their life and conduct had fulfilled the family's motto "Tenex propositi" (tenacious of purpose) and in 1818 set up a special "D. S. account" (sacred debts) in order to pay off their father's creditors of the original business. There was no legal obligation, but they were finally paid off in 1840, just over 50

years after the bankruptcy

In 1842 Henry died and William was solely in charge. As the Spanish business was declining William returned to London and the South American side of the business started to take off as they took out Government contracts for the shipment of guano (solidified bird droppings) from the barren islands off Peru. Their virtual monopoly of this potent agricultural fertilizer and the Chinese labourers who mined it turned William from a successful merchant into a man of immense wealth.

We took full advantage of the mobility buggy to whisk us to the main house which was magnificent. A gothic mansion lived in by four generations of the Gibbs family with their amazing collection of art and objects. First we were in the chapel with superb stained glass windows and pews. Surprisingly the chapel was not consecrated. Our guide suggested it was due to church politics at the time with the Bishop feeling that the Gibbs fortune was "New money" as opposed to traditional upper class wealth.

Outside the house



were formal gardens of quite outstanding.

We used the mobility buggy to see the extensive kitchen gardens and as it was a walled garden, the temperature was noticeably higher no doubt the reason the kitchen produce was doing so well.

We returned to the entrance and shop just in time for the return journey. It was a most enjoyable day and we were conscious there was much more to explore on another day.

AGM 2023

By Gerry Donovan

The AGM was attended by 27 members. Reports given by the Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Membership Secretary were all well received.

Proposed membership subscriptions	2024/25	2025/26
Single Membership	£10	£14
Joint membership	£15	£20
Student	£5	£5

The proposed subscription increase is shown in the table

The majority vote from the floor was that the membership fees should be increased in 2 steps as suggested above and the new category of student introduced.

The Executive committee and auditor were appointed.

Unfortunately, no representative from NT was available to attend. A written report from the Portfolio General Manager was read out. Highlights are given below.

The date for 2024 AGM has been confirmed as May 1st, 2 pm, at Dyffryn Gardens.

Report on the Dyffryn Estate

By Lizzie Smith Jones, General Manager South East Wales

The last year has been full of exciting moments, a major highlight was seeing the scaffolding going up around the house. This was installed for two pieces of work firstly to enable the repairs to ensure the main house could be made watertight and secondly as part of the Stoneworks Project, as you can see it's now cleaned and looking wonderful. We are still carrying out Stonework repairs and this will continue into the late summer. The roofs had been leaking for several years so having them repaired was a huge relief.

Another real success story from the last year was getting the house fire beam replaced. This was a complex job as we couldn't use scaffolding due to the Minstrels Gallery protruding out too far, so we had to bring in a cherry picker. This wasn't ideal with a

basement below, but we found a clear route for it to take.

In the Gallery Café, we undertook work to fireproof the Gallery Kitchen. This was finished at the start of 2023. It was a major piece of work which has helped our F&B team to enhance their catering offer.

The lower bothies reopened to the public for the first time in three years, with a redisplay inside to highlight the story of the gardens and the work we are doing in the walled gardens today.

We successfully reopened the Gardens Café in November. It had not been a café since 2019, so there was plenty of work to do. With the help of the facilities team, we refreshed the kitchen and painted the café in the portfolio green. We also reintroduced crockery and cutlery. We've come a long way since reopening, and developed our menu so that we can maximise sales without putting too much pressure on the team. We're very lucky to have a fantastic team

who aren't afraid to get stuck into all the changes and challenges which come their way.

Our offer for visitors across site has been extremely varied with a popular experience for visitors within our summer programming being the Dyffryn Olympics. It proved to be something that brought visitors back to do it again and again. It was also a fundraising win; the Dyffryn Champions medals we sold as part of the event brought in a superb amount of additional income.

Another success story for us was our Autumn Colours programming.

Dyffryn had the largest take up in Wales for the Autumn Gold Pass, bringing in people who wouldn't otherwise visit.

Our seasonal walks were another way to share the highlights of the gardens every season and provide a consistent additional reason to visit.

In the Gardens, we made sure we kept up our usual level of quality, while making improvements as well. This year we also saw the launch of our biodiversity survey, ever-increasing bulb displays, and some great new floral displays.

Early Autumn Images

By Val Caple



The Centenary of Edith Adie's Watercolours of Dyffryn

By Professor Ray Crozier, Sandra Crozier, and Dr John Devonshire

The AGM on 17th May was followed by a presentation on the Edith Adie watercolour paintings of Dyffryn Gardens given by Ray and John, almost 100 years to the day when they had been painted in the spring and summer of 1923. The set of 18 paintings was included in a set of 25 of her works included in Reginald Cory's bequest to the RHS Lindley Library, which arrived in 1936 following his death in 1934. However, the paintings 'disappeared' until the 1980s when they were discovered in a storeroom in the Lindley Library.

In the first part of our talk, PowerPoint slides of reproductions of all 18 beautiful paintings of the gardens were shown. The originals are small and unmounted, and on a visit to the library Ray and Sandra were able to copy notes that Adie had written in pencil on the back of several of the works. The set of original paintings is not normally on display but, at the time of our visit was kept in a shirt box in the library!

The remainder of our talk was devoted to the life of Edith Helena Adie. She was born on 27th December 1864 in Balham, Surrey. Her father Scott Adie (1823-1883) was from a humble background in Staffordshire but eventually set up Scott Adie Ltd., also known as the Royal Scotch Warehouse, of Regent Street in London; her mother, Elizabeth Hannah, *nee* Everall (1836-1917), was daughter of the owner of Gordon's



Reproduced by kind permission of RHS Lindley Collections / Edith Adie

Hotel in Piccadilly, London. Edith was the third of seven children.

By 1891, aged 26 years, she was painting in Italy – watercolours from this time came up for auction a few years ago and four are included in the Lindley Library bequest. She studied at the Slade School of Fine Art between 1893 and 1895, where she was a near contemporary of Augustus and Gwen John. Thereafter, she exhibited and sold watercolours, and taught painting in England and at Bordighera and Fiesole in Italy; her exhibitions included solo exhibitions at the Fine Art Society in London in 1907 and 1910. She travelled in Australia and Canada between 1915 and 1918, visiting family, painting, and exhibiting her work; one painting hangs in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. She was 58 when she was at Dyffryn in 1923, an experienced and successful watercolourist of gardens.

We have learnt much about Edith and her family life from a memoir written by her niece Eleanor Sanderson. She remembers 'Nellie' with affection, quoting that 'she was loved by all branches of the family'. Eleanor continues by saying that

'Nellie' created a sense of joy with her kindness and gentleness. And although she never married, Edith was deeply interested in the lives of her cousins, nephews, and nieces.

Edith Adie is little remembered today outside her family. Nevertheless,

her paintings of Dyffryn provide unique evidence about the gardens in Richard Cory's time, particularly depictions of colour, and make a valuable resource for the National Trust in maintaining and developing the estate.

Stoneworks Project

See www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens

Celebrating the newly completed Stoneworks project to restore the exterior of Dyffryn House, we are opening the Morning Room as an exhibition space.

Discover more about the different lives and fortunes of Dyffryn House

since it was built in the 1890s. Find out about the conservation and restoration work we are carrying out to stabilise the building so that it stands proudly at the heart of the gardens for another 125 years.

The exhibition will be open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturday, 11am to 3pm. The exhibition is free, normal admission applies.

This commenced from Thursday October 26th

Summary of Report on the Dyffryn Estate 12th September

By Lizzie Smith-Jones

- House of Discovery is the theme for telling the story of the house and garden, and will include telling the story of the conservation work and an open archivist room. The Edith Adie paintings are being used a colour palette for branding and signage.
- Future investment plans for the house and garden are under consideration, every space to have a purpose and future – opportunities for external funding to be pursued as well as NT funding.
- Letters of support from the Friends of Dyffryn would be welcomed for all grant applications. Current applications include flood defence and the arboretum.
- Work is underway with community groups – Somali group, Welsh language group.
- The summer events had been very successful, Autumn events include walks and Head Gardener tours.
- It was noted that the archivist from Llandaff Cathedral had recently visited and had referred to material dating back to the 6th century when the Church had been land-owners of Dyffryn.

A New Committee Member

By Linda Gibbs



My earliest recollection of Dyffryn House and Gardens was in the late eighties when Edgar (my husband) and I attended a weekend residential course on Audio Visual production. It was led by Richard Tucker, a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society. Audio Visual, abbreviated to AV or digital storytelling, as we now call it, has become a large part of our leisure activities. Little did we know that nearly 40 years later Dyffryn would also continue to play a part in our lives. We have made a digital story about Dyffryn House and Gardens and we have won several awards at national and international AV competitions for this digital story.

We have been members of the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society (FoD) for a number of years and showed our AV about Dyffryn called 'A Place in History' to the Friends in November 2018. It was part of a presentation called "The Digital Magic Lantern Show", a miscellany of digital stories, images and sound.

Before I took early retirement, I had worked had worked for the NHS for over 34 years. I started in the administration department of Powys Health Authority, and subsequently moved to Cardiff, so that Edgar and I could get married, over forty four years ago. I subsequently held a number of senior management roles in the NHS, which included managing several hospitals in the Cardiff area. My final

role was at director level on the Trust Board, working closely with the Chair and Chief Executive.

At the AGM of the FoD in May 2023, I volunteered to help with the administration of the FoD's Facebook page. I have since been co-opted on to the FoD Committee and have agreed a target date of November 2023 to launch a new Facebook page for the Society.

I submitted a report to the FoD Committee in July about setting up a new Facebook page for the Society. The report described the aims and objectives of the proposal, plus next steps, and rules of the Facebook page.

The proposed objectives of the new Facebook page are as follows: To post notices of the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society events and areas of interest in line with the aim of the page;

Encourage an exchange of relevant views/information e.g. gardening tips; and

Highlight the fund raising aspect of the FoD, in respect of additional amenities for Dyffryn Gardens.

My report, was accepted by the Committee. There is more work to be done over the coming weeks before the new Facebook page can be launched, especially as the Charity Commission has recently issued revised guidance on the importance of having a social media policy. This is now being looked at by the Committee Chair.

I will keep Members informed of progress via the usual email communication and look forward to receiving any thoughts or comments you have once the Facebook page is up and running.

Friends of Dyffryn Committee

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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

Membership

We would love to have new members to the Society. If you would like a membership form for your friends, please contact Marion Davies, or look on the website.

Visits in 2024

We are already planning trips for next year, and would love to hear from you if you have any ideas on gardens which you think other Friends would enjoy. Please contact me with details.

Website and Newsletter

Val Caple would be delighted to receive your contributions for the Newsletter at any time. This is YOUR Newsletter.

She is always looking for articles or photos from Dyffryn events which you may have attended or photos of the garden at all times of the year,

Perhaps you have descriptions or photos of your garden—as they do in Gardeners' World - or somewhere you have visited recently and which other members would be interested in.

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

Programme of Events 2023/2024

Talks are open to members only, unless otherwise stated.

Where numbers are limited pre-booking is required using the application forms provided.

Right: Friends at the 40th Anniversary celebrations



Thursday 14th December 2023	Xmas Lunch at the Victoria linn, Sigginstone. 12.30 pm Please contact Barbara Hodges
Wednesday 1st May 2024	AGM in the Cory Centre at 2.00 pm
To be confirmed	A talk on Jane Austin
To be confirmed	Spring walk at Dyffryn
To be confirmed	Summer Trip
To be confirmed	Autumn Talk

For more information about above events, please contact
Mrs Barbara Hodges or visit www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

Visiting Dyffryn Gardens

- The garden, shop and tearoom are open 7 days a week.