



## Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

### Chairman's Message

Spring has sprung

By Stephen Parker

The year has got off to a wonderful start with the news that Dyffryn House, is to be given a new lease of life, thanks to a £600,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The money awarded to the Vale of Glamorgan Council will fund the restoration of the main rooms. The work will return the interiors to their former glory and open them up for visitors to enjoy for the first time since the

house closed to the public in 1996. The grant will also be used to fund the employment of an Interpretation and Learning Officer and provide a programme of training opportunities for local volunteers.

I know you will share my delight that the HLF grant will reopen the house and reunite it once more with the gardens as it was originally designed, creating one fantastic space for visitors to

enjoy. Furthermore, the Friends have a vital role to play within this. There is currently a regular 25-strong group of committed garden volunteers, and over 330 members of the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society. The council wants to build on this to help visitors make the most of their experience. The Friends have therefore been asked for volunteers of all ages to get involved in a variety of roles such as

Summer 2011



(Left) The view from the upstairs main main bedroom

(Below) One of the magnificent painted Victorian ceilings

researchers, period flower arrangers and tour guides in full Edwardian costume, to really bring the history of the house to life.

The work is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2012 and a series of events, activities, exhibitions and school visits are planned to take place.

We thought it about time to update the layout of the Friends regular newsletter in keeping with the e-newsletter that is regularly sent out to those friends that have supplied their email address. I hope you will agree with me, that this is a great design and is far easier to read. This newsletter will be sent out three times a year, with supplementary issues being emailed each



month to keep you informed about events, trips and coffee mornings both for Friends of Dyffryn and at Dyffryn Gardens.

I am thrilled so many of you have thought to renew your membership again this year. It is another exciting year in prospect, and I hope you can all spread the word and be 'ambassador's' for the Friends and encourage other new

members to join . As one of the oldest established Friends Societies in the country, it is exciting to see us still going strong in 2011, and being able to support Dyffryn Gardens and the house.

Finally, I look forward to seeing many of you at the Friends AGM on 18th May at The Cory Education Centre, at Dyffryn Gardens at 7pm.



Thirty Friends visited 19 Westfield Road, Pontypridd on 20th February 2011

**Snowdrops Galore**  
**By Val Caple**

As I drove up a hill out of Pontypridd, through a housing estate and over sleeping policeman, I was sure I had lost my way. Surely this was not the route to the magical garden I had been told about. However, this was Westfield Road and there were some other Friends walking towards a small bungalow at the end of a cul-de-sac – I was there.

We were welcomed to the living room by Brian Dockerill where his wife, Sue, introduced us to the world of the Galaphile. We were lost in admiration as she described the small details which distinguished the species and cultivars. All the members of the



genus have 6 petals – 3 large outer ones and 3 small inner ones forming a cup, which is most often marked with green. However the length and shape of the outer petals can vary, as can the markings. There are also varieties where the outer or the inner petals are doubled, and some even have yellow markings. The common species is *Galanthus nivalis*, but cultivars have been introduced using *G. elwesii* or *G. plicatus*, which has pleated leaves, as parents.

We were then allowed to see the garden which is indeed, amazing. The small plot by the house has been extended to make a woodland garden with moss-covered stone paths leading by the side of a small stream through an area of small trees alive with birdsong. The masses of snowdrops were dramatic. Some of the snowdrops are in raised beds, making it easier for the less agile to admire the delicate flowers.

However there was

of clean terracotta pots, waiting for their next residents. Despite the dull light, the garden shone.

After we had seen our fill we were invited inside

to enjoy tea and homemade cakes – I wish I had a photo of those too! We then reluctantly left Sue and Brian, each clutching the plants we had

purchased. I look forward to seeing 'Nerissa' and 'Magnet' flowering in my garden next spring'.

## Tadpoles in the Wild

By Abigail, aged 11

The tadpoles first develop in the egg, then they eat the egg case. After this they often seem to disappear - this is because they are so small you don't see them in your big pond. But after a while you will see them swimming around; often you will see them in the warm areas around the edge. They at first eat algae, then they progress on to other plants and then sometimes on to meat - such as worms and daphnia. They will even eat each other!

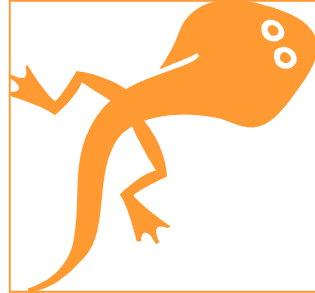
You will start off with lots of tadpoles in the pond, but many will be eaten before they become frogs. Over time the tadpoles will grow first their back legs, then their front legs and then they will lose their tail. After a while they will not be tadpoles anymore,

but froglets. It is important at this stage that they can get out of the pond, so be sure you have gently sloping sides to your pond, or a plank or something for them to climb up.

### Tadpoles

#### Food

Put some pond weed in the container, it helps oxygenate the water as well as provide food. But tadpoles also like lettuce apparently - boil the lettuce for 10 to 15 minutes and then drain and chop. You can then freeze it. Give the tadpoles a pinch of lettuce every few days. Don't give too much. You can get tadpole and frog food at pet stores. If tadpoles aren't fed enough - they can start eating each other. After a while some tadpoles can turn carnivorous



anyway (they may not) - in which case we feed them dried ants eggs from the pet shop.

#### Letting tadpoles go

When the tadpoles start to turn into froglets, put a rock in for them to climb, otherwise they can drown. Then when they want to leave the water let them go where you found them.

The best advice is of course to make your own wildlife pond instead of taking the creatures out of ponds. Natural ponds are being destroyed all the time and we need to help wildlife by making new ponds.



## Thomas Mawson and the Restoration at Dyffryn Kitchen Garden

By Ceridwen Davies

Thomas Mawson recognised the importance of the walled kitchen garden as both a provider of food and as an area of the garden to be visited and enjoyed by the garden owners and their visitors. In his book 'The Art and Craft of Garden Making' he devoted a chapter to his thoughts on the site, size, layout, structures, paths and walks and embellishments of the walled kitchen garden and another to vineries and glasshouses.

Aesthetic value, Mawson wrote, could be brought to the kitchen garden without reducing its productivity by including herbaceous borders growing fresh cut flowers for the house, espalier fruit trees lining the paths and fruit walls to give vistas and enclosure. Normally utilitarian potting sheds and tool sheds could be made attractive, and along with fruit rooms and glasshouses, when correctly placed help make the productive garden pleasing to the eye.

Mawson did not expect the walled kitchen garden to meet all the fruit and vegetable needs of the house. He thought one and a half acres to be sufficient for most households. This would not allow for main crop potatoes or for orchard trees. He recommended gardens had a separate reserve garden where fruit and vegetables could be grown in a less showy manner. An orchard away from the main kitchen garden would provide a 'romantic' peaceful,



*To the 'soul attuned to sympathy' no pleasure exceeds that of being able to wander round a prim walled in garden, enjoying the fragrance of the blossom in Spring, and watching the setting of the fruit and in its various developments through the successive seasons until the gathering in.*  
- Thomas Mawson 'The Art and Craft of Garden Making'

secluded place, with rambler roses climbing up the fruit trees and spring bulbs and meadow flowers growing through the long grass.

The walled kitchen garden at Dyffryn precedes Mawson's 1906 design. It is marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1821 but is thought to be much older, perhaps dating back to the seventeenth century. The arrangement of a large garden with a display house, then a smaller one with the sheds and bothies are found in eighteenth and nineteenth century walled gardens. Mawson's plan for the garden shows



the upper and lower gardens as they are now, plus a reserve garden that no longer exists, in the now west garden. However Mawson's influence can be seen in the detailing. Above the archway between the two gardens is a decorative urn similar to some shown in his book. The photo, left, of Dyffryn's walled kitchen garden in 1915, shows such urns over the arch between the two gardens and at the gate to the west garden. (From Glamorgan Records Office)

Mawson's ideas of fruit walls and espaliers lining the paths are being incorporated into the restoration of the lower garden. The use of wooden posts with a finial knob and wooden



top rail combined with wires below for training the trees along the central paths follow his recommendations as does wiring the west and east walls to grow apricots, plums and pears. In the upper walled garden a cut flower border has been planted with perennial plants along the central axis running from the garden's main entrance on the double herbaceous border to the glasshouse.

*The new Greenhouse currently being constructed in the Walled Garden has been designed using original*



*images of the greenhouse which was replaced in the 1960's . For ease of maintenance the new design includes modern materials.*

## Notes from the Head Gardener By Alex Andrews

The recent sunny weather has certainly encouraged the plants to start moving and our first magnolias are out in the West Garden and the camellias in the Arboretum have put on a fabulous display which should be out for another couple of weeks although they have a tendency to spoil if we get heavy rain, so you need to catch them now.

We are still keeping a watching brief on many other plants to see what has survived the cold and the plants mentioned last time are not really looking any better so we shall just have to hope that they pull through.

The staff are continuing their efforts to get the Gardens ready for spring and the grass has had its first cut this last fortnight, seeds have been sown and bulbs potted up ready for the summer display. The spring bedding is beginning to mature and the tulips will be out soon – fabulous how they open and close so dramatically with the weather.

Talking about tulips there is a small clump of specie tulips in the grass area below the rockery which are of particular note along with the pasque flower on the rockery itself, both worth looking at. But for sheer exuberance the display of daffodils on the Archery Lawn takes some beating – I was behind a couple of regular visitors and they had come specially to see this display and just went wow!

Catriona and Scott have created a new addition to the gardens with a grass maze in the lawn area below the Vine Walk which looks really good – we are hoping that this will be a draw for visitors to the southern end of the grounds an area which is often overlooked although the long view back to the house is stunning – but I could be a little bit biased here.

Finally a note for you all to look at our events list and get booking for the various walks and talks and in particular for me to push the Botanical Art Workshops. I attended the my first ever course on Botanical Art last year not having



an artistic bone in my body and was quite proud of what I achieved – not a master piece but very pleasing even my family were impressed.

Debbie is a great teacher and you will come away inspired and with your very own art piece to frame – check out her website [www.debbiedeauden.co.uk](http://www.debbiedeauden.co.uk) to see her work.

And don't forget Tony Kirkham on 7 June – Kew's Tree Man talking about following in the footsteps of Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson's plant expedition and Roy Lancaster on 13 Sept. talking about his life as a plantsman. We are still looking to engage Monty Don to talk and will make a decision shortly and let you know but if you are interested then drop me a line on [aandrews@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:aandrews@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

## Global Warming

### By Barbara Hodges

In March 2010 I visited my daughter who lives near Figueres in Northern Spain. On the morning that I was due to return home - Monday 8th - I woke up to find that it was snowing heavily and that the snow was sticking, I hadn't seen such large snowflakes falling so thickly for many years. A snow blizzard is not the usual weather to expect in North East Spain at any time but certainly not during the second week of March, I thought that it would probably last for about an hour then turn to rain, so carried on preparing to leave.

Although normally the journey from Ordis village to Gerona airport takes about 35 -40 minutes, we decided to leave early in case it took a little longer due to the snowy conditions, when we got onto the N.2 our fears were confirmed, the snow was already a few inches deep and the lorries and cars were having severe difficulties.

After a short while the traffic came to a halt and we realized that we would not go anywhere fast if we stayed on that road, Helen decided that we had to travel on the autopista AP-7 in spite of the notices telling us to keep off. She prepared to turn the car round so that we could go back to join it, the wheels started to spin and we were firmly stuck across the carriageway. In a flash several young men leapt from their lorry cabs and helped us back onto the opposite lane so that we could continue our journey, they handled the car as if it was a toy.

On the autopista AP-7 the road conditions were just as bad but there



Helen's garden taken in the sunshine on 9th March 2010

was less traffic as the lorries had been diverted from it to the N2. Visibility was about a metre and at times it seemed as if we were on another planet. My daughter lived in West Yorkshire for 20 years before moving to Spain and often had to drive in conditions similar to the ones we were now experiencing although she had never considered that she would need that experience in Spain.

After about 3½ hours we arrived at Gerona airport with five minutes to spare before my flight was due to leave but to my relief there was a two hour delay. For the next three hours we waited to see if the flight would leave but as all the other flights were being cancelled one by one and the snow was still falling, we didn't hold out much hope. At 6.30 p.m we were told that the flight to Bournemouth had been cancelled and invited to re-book (free of charge) on the one computer terminal (the second one was out of order) or to go to one of the check-in desks. Over three hours later we had managed to re-book the flight for Wednesday 10th - the first available flight with Ryanair.

We decided to have a meal at the nearest airport hotel just a short 'slide' away then to try to drive back to Ordis, hoping to arrive home in time for breakfast. After a very



welcome meal we headed off towards the N2 at mid-night.

It was a very long but interesting journey along a road packed with abandoned cars, parked lorries and from time to time, tractors pulling a vehicle onto the side of the road in order to let us through, as well as the odd snow plough clearing parts of the carriageway. We spent a long time parked beside large articulated lorries, I have never before had the time or the opportunity to make a detailed study of the sides, undercarriage and very large wheels of lorries; those wheels are huge. There were many periods when we just sat and waited whilst the road was cleared but eventually at about three thirty in the morning we arrived in the village near to our destination.

To our amazement the village roads were clear and so was the gravel road that leads to my daughter's home, that is until we were within about 600 metres of her house. That part of the road leads through a small wood and the weight of the snow and effect of the high winds that had been blowing all day had brought down several trees. We then knew that we could either sit in the car until morning or get out and walk, we got out and walked. It was like picking your way through a stream which had a covering of soft, slushy, ice cold snow. Our feet sunk into this mixture of slushy snow and icy water with every step, that is when we didn't slide sideways. The fact that the road was covered in tree trunks and adjoining branches didn't help our efforts but we eventually arrived at the house only to find that the electricity,



..and 2 days later

water supply and telephones were all inactive. When the electricity fails at my daughter's home, the water ceases to flow as it depends on an electric pump to pump it from the well. At least I knew where to find candles and matches and we were soon able to see what we were doing so that we could make a welcome cup of tea on the calor gas cooker.

After a short night's sleep we woke up to brilliant sunshine. The garden looked wonderful, it was covered in snow and the effect of the sun made it shine as if it had been sprinkled with minute diamonds. We spent the day making log fires, collecting snow to melt so that we could have a have a wash as well as cleaning the used crockery, cutlery etc. It reminded me of when I was a child in the 1940's except that I do not remember the drinking water tap being dry. It was a very pleasant day, the sun was shining and we were alive and well, what more could one ask for?

After I returned home I thought that getting stuck in the snow in Spain was not an ideal way to end a holiday but as I am writing this just after the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan, I am thinking it was just an interesting event in life's varied tapestry and nothing to get too concerned about. - we all survived it and we are still here to tell the tale.

## Garden Cuttings From the Committee

### Newsletter Editor

Hywel Jenkins has resigned as editor and I would like to thank him for all his work over the past few years.

I have volunteered to act in this capacity until someone else volunteers

If you are interested in helping, please let me know  
Val Caple

### All Members.

This is your newsletter and we would like to receive articles, photographs etc., from you - The Members.

If you have visited an interesting garden or venue with horticultural links - anywhere in the world - if you have taken photographs of interesting plants, gardens, parks, farms perhaps you paint nature scenes, animals, flowers, vegetables, wildflowers etc., anything that you think a fellow member might be interested in and would like to share, we shall be pleased to receive your contributions. They will get our full attention.

For the latest information about the Friends events, membership etc. please visit our website at; [www.dyffryngardens.org.uk](http://www.dyffryngardens.org.uk)

Please send articles and photographs to the Acting Editor, Dr. Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge. CF71 7RQ, [val.t.caple@care4free.net](mailto:val.t.caple@care4free.net) or Chairman, Mr Stephen Parker, 22 Altolusso, Bute Terrace, Cardiff, CF10 2FE, [fodyffryngardens.chairman@virginmedia.com](mailto: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 [fodyffryngardens.chairman@virginmedia.com](mailto:fodyffryngardens.chairman@virginmedia.com)

### Kathy Seddon

Kathy Seddon was very pleased to take on the role of FOD membership secretary this year. She has been a Friend of Dyffryn Gardens for several years, and has particularly enjoyed the many wonderful visits arranged by Mary.

Kathy has a background in education and is involved in several environmental

groups including British Butterfly Conservation and the Linnean Society

### Renewals

Please remember, if you have not renewed your membership for the year April 2011 to 2012, you will not be allowed free entry to the gardens or to the Cory Education Centre.

### Committee Members.

Some members of the committee have had to resign this year due to personal circumstances.

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

### Are you looking for your Gloves?

A pair of black leather gloves were left at the premises of Sue and Brian Dockerill on Sunday 20th February - please contact Barbara Hodges.

THANK YOU.