

Summer 2012

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Chairman's Message

The Friends move forward into Autumn

By Stephen Parker

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the AGM on the 10th May, and I am particularly pleased that moving the AGM to the afternoon has been so well received, we do try our best!

I know you are all awaiting news of the handover to the National Trust, but once again, as of date of printing of this newsletter, we still have no firm news about dates. However, as soon as we hear we will of course let you know.

The work of the Friends continues, and next on the agenda is the Vale of Glamorgan Show at Fonmon Castle, on the 22nd August. As usual we will be manning our stand, promoting the Friends and the gardens at Dyffryn,

and if any of you would like to volunteer please get in touch, as this is a very popular show, and one I know I thoroughly enjoy. I look forward to seeing you all there.

I would particularly like to draw your attention to a trip we are running on the 13th September to Waterperry Garden Nr. Oxford. This is a magnificent garden, famous for it being where, in 1932 the redoubtable Miss Beatrix Havergal opened her School of Horticulture for Ladies. Application forms for this, and information on further trips are included with this newsletter.

Another event of particular interest to you all is the exciting news that

work in the house is progressing well and as such the Friends have been offered exclusive access to view this work and the interiors as they are being developed. The house still has restricted access so there will limited numbers allowed, with visits arranged in groups of 25 and allocated on a first-come-first-served-basis. This will be on the Saturday 8th September, and only four groups will be able to visit on that date. I have had a

preview and I must say it is very exciting to see the fantastic work and indeed the plans for the house, so I hope as many of you as possible can attend.

Finally, and yes I know it seems early, but we are planning another Christmas lunch for Friends, the details will be announced in our next newsletter, and I look forward to seeing you all there once again.

Friends Membership Subscriptions

By Joan Andrews, Treasurer

The situation remains extremely frustrating – not least for the staff of the gardens.

We are advised that the transfer to the National Trust is likely to happen shortly but still have no definite date.

In the interim – until we get a date for transfer to the National Trust – the Gardens (Vale of Glamorgan Council) will continue to allow admittance to

the garden on last years card – up until the end of September 2012.

Many of you who have read our previous bulletins will have paid their subscription to the Friends covering the period from 1st April to 31st July –if not see below:-.

Please continue your support for the Friends and for the gardens through these rather difficult few weeks – the gardens are looking great and can only improve in the future.

With thanks

If you have not paid your subscription for the three months from 1st April – 31st July 2012 please help us by re-joining.

<i>Individual</i>	<i>£7.40</i>
<i>Concession</i>	<i>£6.40</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>£17.40</i>
<i>Joint adult</i>	<i>£13.40</i>

Title/s.....
Full names
Full address

Postcode
Telephone.....
Email

Payment – Please make cheques payable to ‘The Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society

Category of membership
Amount paid.....

If as a current taxpayer you pay more than the subscription and you wish your subscription treated as a GIFT AID donation - please sign and date below:

Signed.....
Date

*Please RETURN to Membership Secretary
 19 Edward VII Avenue, Newport, Gwent,
 NP20 4NG*

Abbey Cwm Hir House & the Red Kite Centre, Gigrin Farm

Cynthia Merrett

An early start of 7.30 a.m. on 3rd April for this trip, caused me to activate two alarms – an old wind-up clock plus my radio-clock. Just as well, as I discovered I had set the radio-clock to 5.35 p.m., so only the old faithful awoke me on time! As you can tell from the early rise, I needed to have some breakfast before setting out! All participants were on time and in our very comfortable coach with Kevin our driver, we experienced minimum traffic delays on our way to the A470 and the journey into mid-Wales, north of Llandrindod Wells, to Abbey Cwm Hir.

After the beautiful sunny days at the end of March, it was April “coming in as a lion” and the skies were grey and the wind was strong and cold. However it stayed dry and now and again the sun peeped through, while we either racked our brains looking at the quiz handed out by Mary, or enjoyed the beautiful countryside of Breconshire and the signs of Spring . Greenery emerging on the trees and bushes and new lambs with their dotting mothers .

We arrived at Abbey Cwm Hir (“the Abbey in the long valley”) on time and were welcomed by the owner who guided us into the Garden Room where we were obliged to change our shoes and wear a variety of bedroom slippers to protect the house floors. Commencing with hot drinks we were then divided into two parties to start the exploration of the 52 rooms, all refurbished by the



Abbey Cwm Hir House –part of the collection



View of the house from the walled garden

owners and local residents, even painting and decorating the walls and sewing the very large curtains – mostly by hand. The history of the

house and its previous owners was recounted and the reasons why the present owner and his wife felt the need to live there and restore both the house and its 6-acre garden to its original standard. Where possible they bought in furniture and fittings of the past to match the house, but also added more modern artefacts where it took their fancy and this gave us all an overwhelming view of a house much loved and lived-in by three generations of a family.

We eventually emerged, to walk down to the village hall, armed with small bottles of

wine or soft drinks (purchased in the garden room) to enjoy a sumptuous hot lunch before leaving for Rhayader and the Red Kite Centre at Gigrin Farm – a short journey of half-an-hour.

Fortunately we had reserved a hide here, because the wind was now very strong and cold, but we had a superb view of the birds being fed at the daily time of 3 p.m. They were accompanied by members of the Crow family, mainly rooks, but the Red Kite is a very agile predator and kept the rooks at bay while they swooped on the



Red Kites

tasty offerings of beef. They are only fed once a day to make sure they still hunt for their own prey.

After visiting the centre display and shop we left for home and arrived at Cardiff to join the homeward-bound queues of traffic on the M4 roundabout. Not for long however and we arrived back safely at 6.30 p.m. A very good day indeed

Winter Talks 2012

By Val Caple & Barbara Hodges

Spinning and Weaving

As a keen knitter I thought I knew all about wool production and use, but Cynthia is a real expert. She fascinated us as she took us through the types of wool, and the carding and spinning processes used to produce a yarn suitable for weaving, knitting and crocheting.

Her demonstration of spinning and the display of her colourful and inventive work were real eye opening.

In future I will be seeing the fleece of sheep with new eyes, and, come the dark nights of winter, I will be getting my needles out again.

Slide show of South African Flowers.

On a misty cold morning in March 23 members

were entertained with a colourful slide show of South African Flowers in the Cory Education Centre by Mr Lannon. Coffee/tea and biscuits was enjoyed by all and several of the members gathered in the restaurant afterwards for lunch.

We will be continuing with our winter coffee mornings—why don't you join us?

Croquet & Afternoon Tea

By Barbara Hodges & Joan Andrews

The weather was wet, cold and windy but it did not deter the twenty 'Friends' who gathered by the croquet lawn at Dyffryn Garden on the afternoon of Sunday 22nd April.

Sue and Paul gave us a quick explanation and demonstration on Golf Croquet and the play began.

From the laughter and squeals of delight I could hear as I was playing I came to the conclusion that everyone was enjoying the experience. The sun played hide and seek all afternoon but when it did make an appearance it felt good to be playing where generations of people had played before me. I imagined all the ladies who had played in their long flowing gowns during the early part of the Garden's history.

We completed the afternoon with an enjoyable afternoon tea in the Cory Education Centre.



Anyone for Croquet?

If you would like information about joining the Croquet Club at Dyffryn Gardens - please contact:-
 Sue Mackay chair:-
sue@sausalito.demon.co.uk or
 Paul Pristavec Sec.
emailpristavec@yahoo.co.uk

Horticultural Heritage Skills Scheme

By Val Caple

In May the local branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust invited Harry Green, Deborah Decole and Gareth Jones, the three HHSS students who are based in the Vale of Glamorgan, on our members visit to the Bristol Botanic and other historic gardens in the area.

The students have been selected from applicants to the scheme, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund,

to gain experience in the practical side of horticulture. The HHSS is run by a group of associated garden sites in Wales: Aberglasney, Bodnant, Cardiff City Council, Dyffryn Gardens, Newport City Council and St Fagans.

I was impressed by the student's enthusiasm and knowledge and am sure they will all enjoy a successful career helping to maintain some of the important gardens in the UK.

A further £500,000 funding has now been awarded to the scheme and more students will be selected to start in the autumn.

RHS Garden Rosemoor By Val Caple

Another early start - my dog is getting used to walking around the village where I live while the dew, or overnight rain, is still on the grass and the sheep are all dozy.

Thanks to all members who consistently arrive ahead of time we left Dyffryn Gardens on the stroke of 7.30 a.m. The journey to Rosemoor was very enjoyable as we passed through the scenic parts of Wales and South West England, the roads getting narrower once we had left the M4 and headed to north Devon.

We were a little late arriving and our 2 guides were waiting for us. I had visited Rosemoor about 6 years ago, but I am sure I had not visited some of the areas which we were shown by the enthusiastic volunteer.

The gardens consist of many garden rooms and open areas showing a variety of types of garden from formal to woodland. I particularly enjoyed comparing my plot with the fruit and vegetable garden at Rosemoor and picked up some new planting ideas—but I think a potager is beyond my capabilities.

We were too early for the roses, but the rhododendrons and Wisteria were still on show and the borders were already showing how magnificent they would be later.

One amusing feature was the Green Boat inspired by the drawings of Quenton Blake. We were later able to visit an exhibition of his work, which gave us all a good laugh.

Following the tour we were really

appreciated the local food on offer in the restaurant before we explored more of the gardens on our own.

The journey back was uneventful and I was home before my dog had noticed that her dinner was late!



Rhododendron, Parsley and Wisteria.



The Potager.



The Green Boat

Afternoon Tea at Hen y Felin By Barbara Hodges

If you have ever thought that the age of afternoon teas has passed - I think you could be mistaken.

On Sunday 8th July 56 'Friends' gathered at Hen y Felin for a very detailed talk and garden tour with the owner- Rozanne Lord. The original plan was for the adjoining field to be used as a car park but due to the recent heavy rain producing boggy conditions, it was decided that as many cars as possible would be parked at Dyffryn Gardens and three committee members would ferry members to and from Hen y Felin. In the main this proved very successful - thank you Friends for your patience and co-operation.

Rozanne has a beautiful cottage type garden with colourful wildflower borders, a lovingly tended vegetable garden, an orchard, laying chickens, lambs and an adorable Labrador bitch with her two mischievous and bouncy Labradoodle puppies.

We were shown the Art studio with it's adjoining secret garden, the pig sty - no pigs as yet but we were informed there will be soon, the riverside seating areas, the dovecote (no doves due to a hungry sparrow hawk) and many other interesting features such as the riverside table made from the trunk of a tree that had to be felled. Rozanne has tended this garden for sixteen years and regards it as a labour of love, it is certainly a credit to her and shows just how many hours she must spend working in it.



The Friends listening to Rozanne



The wild flower meadow



The Courtyard

We then crossed the bridge over the river Weycock and walked into the garden of Swallow Barns. This is another interesting garden with colourful herbaceous borders but completely different to Hen y Felin.

Part of this garden runs along side the river and due to the recent heavy rains was in places, very boggy. The owner treats this area as a wildlife garden and has planted many willow trees which help to use the available water.

On our return to Hen y Felin we were invited by two charming children - one dressed as a flower fairy, to go to the Art Studio for our tea. Here we were

served a variety of delicious sandwiches, slices of freshly baked ham which was still warm, welsh cheeses, a variety of home-made breads including wholemeal with walnuts followed by various mouth watering cakes and scones. I heard one or two comments such as "I shouldn't eat this, but it looks too good to leave." "I mustn't eat this but I am going to, it looks delicious." Those

cakes were delicious made with Rozanne's home produced eggs - some filled with whipped cream and home grown strawberries and raspberries. The chocolate brownies, scones and lemon drizzle cakes were equally tasty.

If the age of afternoon teas has passed it is my belief that it should be resurrected.

Maureen Abbott By Geraldine Donovan

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform the Friends Society members of the loss of one of Dyffryn's staff.

The late Maureen Abbott, passed away on Friday on 3rd August. Mo, pictured here at last Christmas's staff get together, was a stalwart member of the team. She had first been engaged by the catering franchise operating at Dyffryn in 1996 and then transferred to the Vale Catering unit operating our old tearooms, affectionately referred to

as 'sputnik'. She saw many a sight through the years including the arrival of a Bollywood production which from a proposed 'just a few actors' turned up in two coach loads and commandeered the tearooms for make up and costume.

After years at the tearooms, Mo moved to work in the visitor centre. At that time this was a timber shed and although the best was made of what we had, Mo would often ask me 'Will it be this year?' and finally in 2007 it was and I had the biggest smile from her I had ever seen. Mo's sense of



humour and love of Dyffryn ensured she coped with whatever happened here from crowds in the sunshine to the gardens submerged in floods. Until her illness was diagnosed in February this year, she was a familiar sight to visitors and got to know many of the regulars. I am sure she will be greatly missed by all at Dyffryn.

Notes from the Friends Committee Meetings

Progress report of the Dyffryn Estate.

Work in the house is progressing well in spite of a few problems due to pipes and asbestos. There have been successful visits from specialist groups.

It is the 1st anniversary of the opening of the Glasshouses. The plants are looking well established especially the orchids.

There have been more donations of cacti and succulents - Clare has a lot in the poly tunnel. Gerry suggested that after the meeting we should go to look at the Cornus

Cousa which is looking splendid and probably the best for many years.

There is £500,000 funding for the HHSS - traditional skills. 16th July was the closing date for applications for this scheme.

The Frontage of Dyffryn Gardens will eventually reflect the traditional colours. The National Trust has a palette of colours which will have to comply - a deep pink red has been chosen for contrast. The house will have a different colour palette. Lessons have been learned from Tredegar House and Garden.

Entry to Kew Gardens is free with the 'Friends' membership card until the National Trust takes over, but members must ask the Membership Secretary for an 2012-2013 card.

AGM Thursday 10th May 2012 By Barbara Hodges

Steven Parker welcomed the 42 members who were present at the AGM and drew our attention to the photographs of the interior of the house taken during renovation and said that he was taken on a tour of the house just one week ago and was very pleased to see how the renovation is progressing.

Dr. Andrews explained that the bank balance is £6,044.64 this year as against £8,476.60 at the same time last year as it does not include the membership subscriptions as yet. It is hoped that we may become eligible in future for Gift Aid.

Mary Ponting was thanked for her hard work in organising the visit. She has again succeeded in balancing the

books which enabled us to make a small profit.

Special thanks was given to members who have given donations towards the buggy fund. The Committee has committed £1,000 towards plants recommended by Roy Lancaster as being especially suitable for the Gardens.

All Officers and members of the Executive Committee agreed to remain for 2012-2013. A warm welcome was made to Mr. John Kirk who will be joining the Committee.

It is very expensive to provide and post AGM minutes to all members before the meeting and Members present agreed that next year the minutes will be distributed at the AGM meeting and also be posted on the website www.dyffryngardens.org.uk.

Garden Cuttings From the Committee

New Membership Secretary

The Committee is very happy to welcome Mary Evans as a member. She has also agreed to be the Membership Secretary

Mary writes:
‘My husband and I have been members of the Society for several years and have had a great deal of enjoyment from our visits to the Gardens in all seasons. As I approached my retirement last year from a Senior Lecturer role at the University of Wales, Newport, I joined for the first time the excellent garden visits organised by Mary Ponting for the Friends.

These visits gave me a foretaste of the more leisured life I would pursue. However I was 'encouraged' by the other Mary to consider the opportunity retirement presented to take on the office of Membership Secretary. Further encouragement came from our Treasurer, Dr Joan Andrews, who has given me much welcome support in my

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

apprenticeship during this eventful year for the Society.

As a resident of Newport and newly recruited NT volunteer at Tredegar House I have seen the considerable advantages The National Trust has brought with its stewardship. I look forward to a successful completion of the transition of Dyffryn Gardens to the National Trust and a more settled period of my new office with The Friends’.

Newsletter

Please continue to send contributions, especially your impressions of the Friends events and visits, other gardens or any garden related topics. This is your Newsletter and we welcome all articles, photographs etc., from you - The Members.

If you have visited an interesting garden or venue with horticultural links or have something which you would like to share with fellow members, please send

articles and photographs to the Acting Editor, Dr. Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge. CF71 7RQ, val.t.caple@care4free.net or Chairman, Mr Stephen Parker fodyffryngardens.chairman@virginmedia.com

E-Newsletter

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

Website

Please continue to send comments on the new Friends website, which will be finalised after the transfer to the NT who will launch their own Dyffryn website.

Committee Members.

We are always looking for people with new ideas and for help at events. If you would like to contribute please contact the secretary -
THANK YOU

Barbara Hodges
Hon. Secretary