

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

On 9th April, we were once again blessed with a dry and reasonably sunny day, and the trip westwards to Llanarthne in Carmarthenshire only took one hour.

On arrival most of us took a buggy ride up to the Great Glass House where we were met by our guide, a very pleasant and enthusiastic Australian lady who welcomed us with an introductory talk before dividing us into two parties before she led us around. The paths between the displays were too narrow for a large gathering to hear her

and to look at the plants she was discussing. She explained how from time to time various areas had to be replanted because even with the facilities available within the Great Glasshouse it was impossible to recreate the complete Mediterranean type environment necessary for natural and continuous growth. For instance some plants needed to be consumed by fire to start seed regeneration; also our hours of daylight differed to that of the more southerly Mediterranean – type areas. Some

plants however did adapt to the environment supplied and we really enjoyed our tour and plied her with many questions and I think kept her with us beyond our allocated time.

Our group then set off for a lunch break at one of the cafe/ restaurants nearby and then refreshed by the good food provided, set off to explore. I had my first walk around the perimeter of the gardens, enjoying the spring flowers and the sight of the leaves on the trees just beginning to open in various



Echium



Climber

shades of green and gold.

The cactus house was looking very healthy and the slate beds near the lake were being replanted and redesigned. Back at the Great Glasshouse, the dark entrance to the Fungus Hall attracted us inside and the information on both sides of the tunnel walk was amazing.

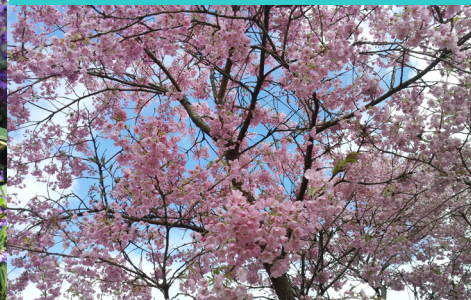
A welcome stop for a cup of tea



The Lake



Tree root



Maderense

was then taken before strolling back to buy a few plants and returning to our coach. There is plenty of walking here, but also the availability to sit in the sheltered areas and just enjoy the sights and smells of such a lovely environment.

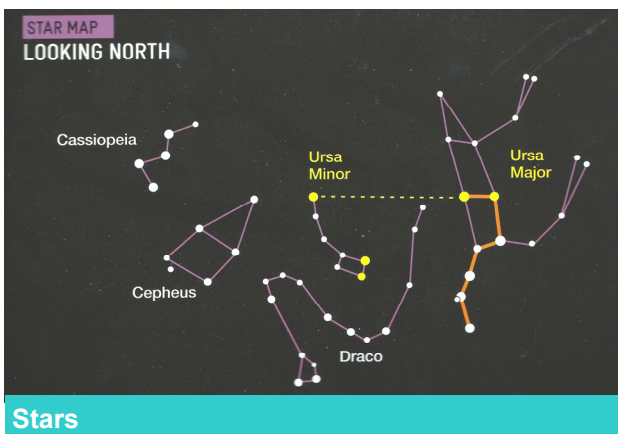
Star Gazing

By David Powell MBE

Some time ago I was invited to give a talk to the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens about astronomy. It was then suggested that I write a short article on how I first became interested in the subject.

So cast your minds back to the early 1960s. In fact, 1963 was the year my secondary modern school decided they could do no more for me and I was told to go out and find a job. In those days this was not a problem. I soon found work in the offices of James Howells and was paid just enough money to give my mother something towards the housekeeping which was a shock for her I can assure you

One year earlier I had received another big shock when my grandfather William Henry Powell died aged 80. Granddad was a great influence on me even as a small boy in short trousers. I can remember him teaching me to read and write, explaining the meaning of words, and telling me



all sorts of stories from around the world. Dad suggested I go and choose a book as a keepsake. What me? I mean who reads books? I managed to find enough excuses until he advised me granddad's library was being split up, with some books going to Aberystwyth University amongst other places. Apparently granddad was a poet and writer. In fact some readers may remember his pen name - Malfew Seklew

So to keep the peace over I went to the house and looked at all the books. I was looking for a specific book. It had to be small, have as few pages as possible and not smell musty. After about an hour I found what I was looking for

and I told dad I had a book but did not tell him which one as it was now as far under my bed as I could throw it.

Fast forward a year. The doctor told me I had a sore throat and should stay home for a week. So I did, but after two days I realised I was bored, remember - no day time TV then. In desperation I remembered the book. Wiping off the dust, fluff, and crumbs that had accumulated I opened it up and began to read. It was a book on astronomy which I read in one day. My father came home from work and I proudly announced "Tomorrow I'm going to join the local library!"

The next day I informed the startled lady Librarian that I

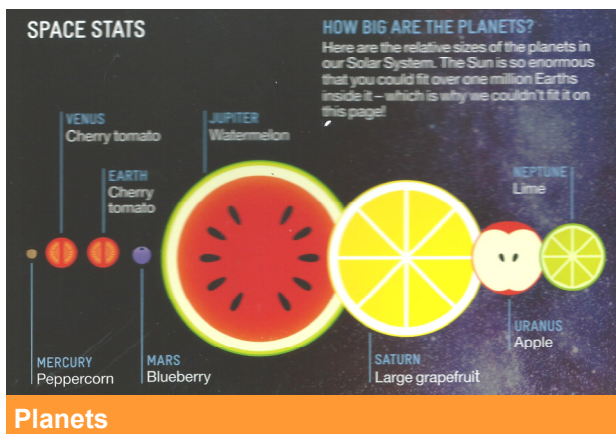
wanted everything she had on astronomy. She showed me to the one shelf groaning under the weight of 6 books, all by some chap called Patrick Moore - I had never heard of him!

Within two months I had exhausted our local library and I took the advice of Patrick and began to teach myself by joining the British Astronomical Association. Someone also told me about an Astronomical Observatory in Penylan and I enrolled in a night school course.

My father was working for The National Museum of Wales and he told me that his friend Dr Bob Owens, Keeper of Geology, was also a keen astronomer.

The BAA "Out of London Weekend Meeting" for 1975 was held in Dyffryn Gardens, and Bob was also attending, and that's where we met.

Most of the 30/40 delegates were from Bristol and Swansea and they talked constantly about their astronomical societies and observatories. This annoyed me so much that on the way home I



asked Bob how one went about starting a society. "Don't know", came the reply, "you could advertise in the local paper". "Right I will" I said. "But where will we meet?" "Penylan observatory would be a good place" replied Bob. "I will write a letter and organise it" I said.

I wrote the letter and about 30 members of the public turned up. These unsuspecting people elected some of us to form a committee; Bob as Editor, me as Secretary. Our first meeting proper would be at the Penylan Observatory and I placed an advert in the South Wales Echo. About 30/40 people attended but in the main they were an entirely different group to the ones who elected us.

So the current society was born at Dyffryn Gardens but there is more to this story.

The Penylan Observatory had a large Victorian telescope. This massive instrument was donated by Franklen G Evans Esq. J.P., F.R.A.S., F. R. Met. Soc.. Originally it belonged to the Rev. W Conybeare Bruce and was used by him at St Nicholas where he was the rector. Hence Dyffryn Gardens and the village of St Nicholas is connected a lot more with the stars than you may have thought.

Now for the sad part. The book - "What was it called"? I hear you cry. Unfortunately I can't remember. I lent it to a friend who promptly moved house and I never saw it again.

Barnsley Village Garden Festival

By Members

On May 17th a coach load of members visited the 26th Garden Festival at Barnsley Village, near Cirencester. Everyone was left with very positive impressions of the 12 Gardens which were open, the other village events and the people who were taking part.

Here are a few of them

Barnsley House Hotel Garden Tour was very interesting: lovely gardens, plenty of flowers to see

The Town Criers were very colourful and very helpful – quite characters’

‘Glorious gardens through the village. Particularly loved the Little House. Very friendly people and plenty to see and do. Excellent tea and cake in the Village Hall!’

‘Wonderful potager in Barnsley House Hotel, best we’ve ever seen.

Terrific variety of plants and herbs – very well kept, probably used in hotel. Lovely brick paths.’

‘The standout thing about today’s trip was the warm welcome we found and the obvious pride people took in their community

The garden in Little House was a wonderful sequence of considered planting but the sculpture in wire at Stone’s Throw made it delightful’

‘What a wonderful village to see and explore. Interesting gardens full of spring splendour and surprises. The local folk chatted and were helpful in every way. A magical experience with Morris dancers, entertainers outside a beautiful church. Truly an example of British village life at its best. Once again many thanks to Mary’

‘The garden it Little House was my favourite. The colour schemes of the borders and the area where they had the silver bird were lovely. The white border at Oxwold House was full of interesting combinations. The people in the village were very friendly and helpful’



Barnsley House



Rosemary Verey memorial



Barnsley Park Water Butt



Oxwold House

'Two little stone hippopotami

Stone Bretton – the stepped canal/water feature

Wire mesh sculptures in Stones Throw.

Barnsley Park

Gardens – the renovated Orangery

Little House – curvy hedges.- uuuu - and plenty of pleasant places to sit with interesting site lines

Had seen and read so much about Barnsley House that it was hardly a surprise

P.S. Lovely pot of tea and biscuits at Barnsley House Hotel'

'All gardens visited fantastic.

Amazing flower arrangements in the church using simple hedgerow flora.

Excellent coffee in Village Pub. Brilliant lunch at Barnsley House Hotel.

Little House garden offered everything in a simple style, it was charming and of course another Rosemary Verey garden'

'Lovely day – a delightful village with so much hard work put into a very ambitious event. A great welcome and plenty to see.'

'Variety of gardens – Little House was colourful and well laid out. Loved the white border in Oxwold House. My favourite garden was Stone's Throw – a small garden with lots of interesting areas.'

'A very pleasant day ending with scones, strawberries and cream at Barnsley House Hotel. Tiring but worth it and lovely to see Easyway was waiting to take us home

Thanks Mary for once again organizing our day'

'First impression is of a pretty Cotswold stone village with houses lining the busy road through to Cirencester. However walking around any of the gardens open to the public on this festival day reveals the very "genteel living" of many of the residents – gardens in immaculate condition and impressively large.

A touch of humour is brought to mind on discovering that The Dower House was situated in Cow Lane; and also the pleasure of sitting in the church and watching and listening to the bell ringers practicing on the church's six bells remains in the memory. The discovery of an



Stone's Throw



Barnsley House



**Barnsley House
Potager**

ancient "pinch belly" stone stile on the approach to the church made sure that I squeezed through it!

Rosemary Verey's house and garden remain as the outstanding memory on this glorious day of summer weather.'

'I loved the lead water butt from Barnsley Park. Also the frog fountain from Barnsley House and the lion fountain from Little House garden. The day could not have been better with blue skies and warm sunshine.'

'We received an extremely warm welcome from the flamboyant Town Crier when we arrived and this warm welcome was evident throughout the day from the local community.

There were several gardens open, Morris dancers, guided tours of Barnsley House Gardens, stalls with a variety of goods to buy as well as a BBQ at the village pub and a free shuttle bus to gardens on the outskirts of the village.

The Little House garden was the one that caught my imagination, there were Pleached Hornbeams to add shape and shade, large lawns, an abundance of flowers, shrubs and trees and interesting climbers on the walls of the house. The Clematis arches in the vegetable garden were one mass of white blossom and beyond all this I found cows, sheep and lambs peacefully grazing in the adjoining fields.'

'We arrived at the delightful little Church just as the bell-ringers were about to fill the village with pealing music and after listening to it we purchased ice creams and sat on the



Barnsley Village



Little House

seat in the Churchyard watching the horses in the next field.

The Head Gardener who led the Barnsley House tour gave us a potted history of the house, garden and original owner - Rosemary Verey - as well as some useful tips on arranging and planting a garden. Afterwards we wandered to the Herb garden up the lane and found herbs of all shapes and sizes as well as a range of cosmetics made from them - I now have a little pot of rose scented face cream on my dressing table - the contents of which will apparently will give me cheer in times of grief and

heartache as well as renovating my face - here's hoping!

'Thank you Mary for another delightful outing - we really enjoyed it.'

From: Yvonne Bennetts
Chairman Barnsley
Village Festival

'Thank you for such a lovely email and yes we do value your comments as we are always looking to improve in any

way. We have a final meeting to review and agree Charity donations, which is most of the amount raised, in 2 weeks time so we will discuss it then and share all the lovely reflections of your party.

It was good to welcome your party on such a beautiful day, what a wonderful effect you all had on the weather!! We are glad you all enjoyed the

gardens and your day with us. Thank you for all the lovely comments about the festival and so glad you enjoyed our garden. We love it and have great pleasure in sharing it with others.

So from the committee thank you for coming and we look forward to welcoming you all again in the future.

Best wishes.
Yvonne'

Membership

By Joan Andrews

The good news is that subsequent to Mary Evans having to resign as Membership Secretary; Clare Williamson has volunteered to take over the role.

Subscriptions for the year 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 can

now be sent to Clare. The form to enclose with your cheque is enclosed with this newsletter.

Please give us your current email address. The Newsletter and notification of Friends events goes to all members by post but updates regarding events to be held at Dyffryn are sent by the cheapest route - email.

We will acknowledge receipt of subscription by email but if you do not have an email address and would like a receipt please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

We hope to be able to claim Gift Aid Relief on your subscription so please complete that section if you are eligible.

Images of Dyffryn

By Members



AGM

By Barbara Hodges

Twenty three members attended the AGM at The Cory Education Centre, Dyffryn Garden on 19th May 2014.

Vice Chairman's Report

John Kirk welcomed everyone present and said that Dyffryn will grow in quality and interest which will ensure its place as a jewel in the eye of Welsh Tourism as well as the National Trust.

He thanked Mary Mulcock for taking the subscriptions from members present and welcomed our new Membership Secretary - Clare Williamson - following the resignation of Mary Evans. Mary will continue to serve on the committee. She was unable to be present at the AGM but has been thanked for all her hard work in the past.

The 'Friends' have now signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Trust which sets out the aims of the 'Friends' within our joint partnership. It aims to promote public access

to and understanding of, the Garden and to work together co-operatively.

In particular we will discuss:-

- 1) What we have both been doing.
- 2) Any planned events that may be of interest to each other.
- 3) Opportunities to work together.
- 4) Volunteering opportunities and Catering.

John said that he was sure that our close relationship with the National Trust would be in both our interests and can only lead to benefits for the Garden. He then reminded us that his position of Vice Chair was an interim one and that another Chair and Vice Chairperson is needed so if anyone would like to take over the reins or know of anyone, please contact a member of the committee

Treasurer's Report

Joan Andrews informed us that over £6,000 would be carried over into 2014/15. £3,500 of this was pledged to the purchase of a buggy for use in the gardens.

Now that we are a separate Charity with all

the subscriptions coming to the Society we are again in discussion with the Tax Authorities and hope that we may become eligible for Gift Aid in the future.

Joan thanked Mary Ponting for balancing the books with regard to visits but said that inevitably at times there may be losses as coach hire has to be paid regardless of uptake.

Joan also thanked the Auditor - John Wightman A.R.I.B. for certifying the receipts and payments account.

Honorary Secretary's Report

Barbara Hodges gave an overview of events during the past year. She invited any member who would like to join the committee to come forward.

At present we are looking for a Chair & Vice Chairperson but we also need more general members. She concluded by thanking all members who help out at events and said that the committee can plan and organise but without help from members it would be extremely hard work.

General Manager's Report

Geraldine Donovan was unable to attend the meeting but Alex. Luker - Head Gardener read her report. Gerry thanked the 'Friends' for their continuing support and said that it had been an exciting year. Since the last AGM 68,500 visitors have passed through the gates with 40,000 of those visiting the house.

She invited members to have a look at the recently refurbished St. Michael's Cottage with its new turret and original paint colours from the Cory period.

There is a new composting system in the southern area of the garden which will greatly assist with processing our own organic matter and improving our environmental standards.

The target for this year is for 83,000 visitors and Gerry asked for our help in spreading the word that Dyffryn House and Garden is the place to visit.

The new Dyffryn Daffodil was launched at the RHS Cardiff show this April and will be on sale this autumn,

there is a limited amount so keep an eye on the website, twitter and Facebook for updates.

Head Gardener's Report

Alex. Luker informed us that since the last AGM she has changed her surname to Luker. She said it had been an interesting year adapting to new procedures. A new seasonal gardener was recruited and is taking a pride in his work. Visitor foot fall has increased and there have been positive and negative comments.

Two trees were removed due to ill health and the cacti border planted last year has received favourable comments, plants over-wintered will be reused this summer.

There will be displays of dahlias in various parts of the garden this summer.

Staff attended the RHS show in Cardiff April 2014.

Friends of Dyffryn Committee members were elected for 2014/15. Their names are on page 11 of this Newsletter

Garden Cuttings From the Committee

Vice Chairman's Resignation

John Kirk agreed to take on the job of Vice Chairman until the AGM but we are now urgently for volunteers to take on the roles of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Plea for new Committee members

The Committee has reached a difficult time with the resignation of 3 experienced officers.

We need new blood to take over these rôles of the Committee in the future. If there is anyone who would be willing to put themselves forward as a Committee member please contact me as soon as possible.

Many Thanks

to all members who help with refreshments at the events which take place in Dyffryn - we would be lost without you.

Barbara Hodges,
Hon. Secretary

Programme of Events in 2014.

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 in Dyffryn Gardens,



Thursday 31st July	Coach trip to Powis Castle and Gardens See Application Form for Details
Friday 11th July 2014	Tour of Dyffryn Gardens at 11 am with Glyn Jones, Meet at Visitor Centre
Wednesday 13th August 2014	The Vale Show We hope to be helping on the Dyffryn stand
Wednesday 27th August 2014	Coach Trip to Wyndcliffe Court Sculpture Garden and Veddww House Garden See Application Form for Details
Sunday 28th September 2014	Proposed Coach Trip to Malvern Autumn Show Details will be available later

For more Information, 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

NT Events at Dyffryn

A list of events are available in a pamphlet or on the website:

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens