

# FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



## Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

### Update on Dyffryn Estate

By Chris Flynnne, Head Gardener.

The gardens are springing into life which is always lovely to see but in some cases a little concerning for this early in the season. Fingers crossed the rest of the winter will be mild and we will have a timely introduction to spring to bring things on nicely. So far snowdrops and cyclamen are beginning to appear all over the garden along with the heady scent of Chimnanthus, Sarcococca and Viburnum. This year's bedding scheme is just starting to poke through now. Sandra has put together another design to extend the season, beginning with snowdrops and crocus working towards a crescendo of tulips later in the year.

Around the gardens we are working hard to get many areas that are currently closed, ready enough to reopen for the 1<sup>st</sup> March. These will

include the herbaceous borders with the new scheme planted up in the eastern most end. The last areas to open will be the Pompeian and the Rock gardens plus the Fernery as we have some repair works and planting to complete before they are ready. We'll be seeing the return of the egg cup planters to the Pompeian Garden, so they will be planted up and looking splendid for the reopening. Also returning to the gardens shortly will be the statues of Romulus and Remus that have been undergoing some conservation work. These will be replaced on the ornate plinth that currently resides in the Cloisters once this has been moved to what we believe was its original position in the Exotics garden.

We're continuing with a number of tree removals at the moment to help open up more space in the Arboretum as well as preparing some areas for replanting in future years. We will be

planting more trees in early March with some container grown material that is currently in the nursery. We have also been lucky enough to secure some funding to help with removals work associated with Ash die back. Contractors will be focusing on dealing with a number of complicated road side trees, giving us more time to deal with trees further into the

gardens. This should enable us to begin opening up more of the Arboretum again for the coming season.

We are almost at the end of our hedge cutting and this winter has seen the last of the hedge renovations for phase 1. Phase 2 renovation works will begin in about two years time once other sections have grown back in. This is

momentous for us as it's the culmination of a targeted programme of works over the last six years to bring the hedges back into their original proportions returning the intended design to the garden, improving their aesthetic qualities and improving growing conditions for the surrounding planting.

## Recruitment for SE Wales Portfolio

By Gerry Donovan

The Interim General Manager Penelope

Chappell returned to her substantive rôle in the National Trust consultancy at the start of February. Many thanks to her for support

for Dyffryn and Tredegar. The post has been recently readvertised with a closing date of 20th February, with interviews soon after.

## The Iron Route, Andorra.

By Barbara Hodges

The Iron Route or Ruta del Ferro as it is known in Catalan, is an easy walking route for a family excursion approximately 4.24 kms. It combines nature, culture, social science and economy.

The walk begins in Llorts in the Parish of Ordino. The best time to walk the route is between June and October but if the weather is kind it can be possible as early as May. There are good examples of metal workshops and modern

metal sculptures as well as the church of Sant Marti de la Cortinada with its Romanesque architecture to be seen along the way. My main interest was the wild plants growing along this route.

The river water has a reddish tinge due to the high iron content that the soil carries. The Ordino valley is glacial giving it a U shape.

The plants that can be seen are:--

Alpen-or Snow-rose, *Rhododendron ferrugineum*. This is an alpine shrub that grows just above the tree line in



*Rhododendron ferrugineum*

the Alps, Pyrenees, Jura and Northern Apennines on acid soils. Its leaves are leathery and spear shaped, covered in rust brown spots on the reverse. The plant is often covered in snow which means it doesn't freeze. The flowers are pinkish in colour and bell shaped and are present throughout the summer

months. The fruit is an oblong capsule containing arecoline and rhodoxanthin which can cause vomiting and difficulties of the digestive, nervous, circulatory and respiratory systems. It can be used to fight gout and rheumatism.

Sundews can be found at certain times of the year, they are plants that trap prey in sticky hairs on their leaves, long tentacles protrude from the leaves each with a sticky gland at the tip, the droplets look like dew glistening in the sun - hence the name sundew. The common Sundew, *Drosera rotundifolia*, is the round leaved sundew, it is a carnivorous species of a flowering plant growing in bogs, marshes and fens on poor soil.

Butterwort, *Pinguicula*; this is a genus of carnivorous plants in the family Lentibulariaceae. They use sticky glandular leaves to lure, trap and digest insects in order to supplement the poor mineral nutrition they obtain from the environment.

Mosses: these are small non vascular flowerless plants and can be found adhering to

the northern face of rocks.

Black oats, *Avena strigosa*: also known as the lop sided oat, is a species of grass native to Europe, it can grow to a height of nearly two metres and its seeds can be eaten

Spanish gorse, *Genista purgens*: a spiny gorse like shrub with green stems and spines, in summer it has small yellow flowers with the scent of honey.

Black poplar, *Populus nigra*: this is a species of cottonwood poplar. It can grow to 20 metres and has oval shaped leaves and catkins.

Birch, *Betula*: this is known as the warty birch due to small warts occurring as it ages. It has greenish flowers which occur before the leaves.

Ferns, *Tracheophyta*: there are 20.000 species of plants. The common ones found in this area of Andorra are Pteridium, Aquilimium, Dryopteris, and Felix Mas.

Hazel, *Betulaceae*:: this blooms January to March with single sex flowers that appear before the leaves. The fruits known as hazelnuts are valued for their high lipid content, well suited to cold areas.



Genista purgens



Drosera rotundifolia



Purgens

They can be used as an astringent to treat diarrhoea and stop bleeding. In Celtic tradition, hazel represented knowledge. Hazel wood wands were used by Wizards and Warlords.

Scots pine - *Pinus Sylvestris*: this can also be found along this route.



## Camellias

By Val Caple

In 2015 I took a coach tour visiting gardens along 'The Camellia Route' in NW Spain where there are many gardens with fantastic displays of these glorious flowering shrubs and trees. I am aware of the impressive examples in Dyffryn Gardens so was interested in their history

Camellias have existed since the Cretaceous Era as fossils have been found in China. They belong to the family of Theaceae and the name *Camellia* comes from the Latin name of the Jesuit Georg Joseph Kamel (*Kamellus*), chosen by Linné in 1735 in recognition to his research of fauna and flora of the Philippines.

Many theories explain the arrival of the camellias to the West, but there is no lack of documentation. It is possible that they are from the travels of the Portuguese navigators to the East of Asia or the Spanish discovery of Philippines during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They probably were sold or gifted to the owners of Pazos, or ancestral palaces belonging to the

Galician nobility, with fertile and acid soil and sufficient rainfall.

Hybrids based on the *Camellia* species of *C. japonica* and *C. sasanqua* thrive without needing a greenhouse; sometimes surviving many years of neglect. This was how the camellias got to the Pazo Quinones de León from the nursery of Marques Loureiro in Portugal.

Pazo gardens we visited included Pazo de Santa Cruz de Ribadulla, the Pazo de Oca, popularly known as "the Galician Versailles", which has a 12 meter tall *C. reticulata*, Pazo de Rubiáns and Soutomaíor Castle. Camellias have been planted in these gardens from the C19<sup>th</sup>.

However the history of Camellias in Europe really began in the UK, even though the climate was not favorable. The first written, illustrated documents about Camellias are the notes of the English and Dutch navigators and the first Camellias arrived in England in the early C18<sup>th</sup>. They were cultivated in greenhouses, in the beginning. James Petiver, apothecary, described in 1702, a plant with a red flower



Pazo de Oca



Castillo de Soutomaíor



Pazo de Rubiáns



Pazo de Santa Cruz

named 'Thea Chinensis'.

The English were trying to find the tea plant but, if Cunningham, surgeon and botanist, brought back *C. sinensis* to propagate for 'tea' he did not give the desired result as the British had been given ornamental shrubs instead of tea



species. He had undoubtedly been given it was *C.japonica*. In 1739, the first *C.japonica* was cultivated but was generally considered as a foliage plant as it had very small red flowers and it was reserved to an elite, because of its rarity and cost.

The first plants in England, a single red and a single white, grown in greenhouses by Robert James, Lord Petre, in his garden at Thorndon Hall, Essex in 1739. His gardener James Gordon was the first to introduce camellias to commerce in the UK from the nurseries he established in 1743, at Mile End, Essex.

*C. saluenensis* was introduced by George Forrest about 1917. It grows in centre and west Yunnan and west Szechuan and is hardy in the milder UK gardens. Seed from Forrest's new discovery was sent back to Caerhays Castle in Cornwall as the owner, J.C. Williams, was a sponsor of the plant hunting expedition. In 1923 Williams crossed *C. japonica* with dark and pale forms of *C. saluenensis*. The resultant seedlings began to flower in 1926 were the first of the *C. x williamsii* which are hardy in the UK. Reginald Cory was also a sponsor for Forrest's expeditions in 1917 – 1920 and 1921 -1923 and would probably have introduced the new cultivars to Dyffryn at this time.

Today camellias are grown worldwide for their flowers; about 3,000 cultivars and hybrids have been selected. *C. japonica* is the most prominent species with over 2,000 named cultivars. Next are *C. reticulata* with over 400 named cultivars, and *C. sasanqua* with over 300 named cultivars. Popular hybrids include *C. x williamsii* and *C. x hiemalis* (*C. japonica* × *C. sasanqua*).

As at Dyffryn they are frequently planted in woodland settings, alongside other calcifuges such as rhododendrons.

There is great variety of flower forms: , singles, semi-doubles and doubles (anemone, peony or rose forms and formal doubles), streaked and striped and I am sure we saw examples of them all!



## Llandough Castle & Gardens

By Mary Ponting, history & map courtesy of Rhian Rees, the owner

Set within castle grounds and with a backdrop of an ancient monument, the 3½ acres of garden includes a potager with a hint of the Mediterranean, formal lawns and herbaceous beds, a wildlife pond with waterfall and a woodland garden with stumpery and sculpture. Over 60,000 spring bulbs have been planted including snowdrops, narcissi and tulips. The garden looks amazing in the spring when we visit.

### Potted History.

1100 The Lordship of Llandough and St. Mary Church was granted to the Walsche family by Robert Fitzhamon, the overlord based at Cardiff Castle.

1400 The Walsche family rebuild the castle in stone rather than wood after it was destroyed in battle.

1427 Robert Walsche dies. Heiress Elizabeth Walsche marries Payn de Van Marcross in 1429.

1444 The Manor and Lordship sold to Sir William Thomas. Ownership then passes to the Somersets.

1536 Sir Edward Carne buys the estate and the family remain for 150 years.

1677 Heiress Martha Carne marries Edward Mansel and the estate merges into Penrice and Margam Estate.

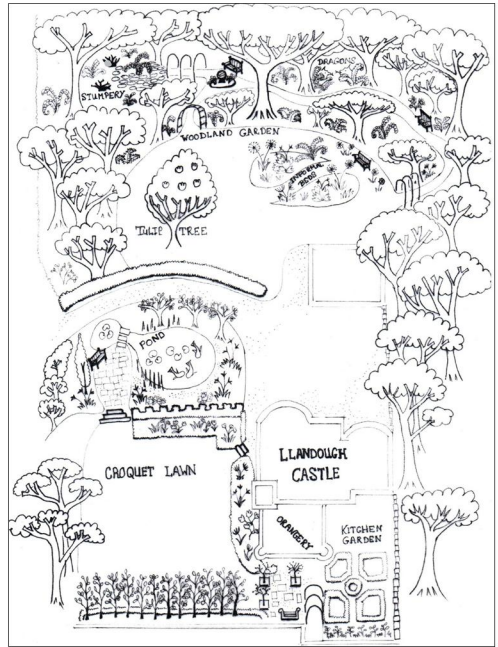
1685 For the following 230 years the castle is rented out by the Mansels.

1844 The Orangery is built.

1898 French composer Gabriel Faure writes his 7<sup>th</sup> Nocturne in the domed room of the castle.

1914 Sir Sydney Byass buys the property from the Mansel Talbots.

1934 Property leased to the Ministry of Labour who set up a juvenile instruction centre for young boys whose health had suffered after



working in the mines

1939 Fifty Jewish children rescued from Nazi persecution housed.

1940 Estate requisitioned by wartime government.

1946 Byass sells the property to Russell Shepherd.

1952 Castle bought by GP Arthur George Davies. At this point there was no staircase to reach the upper floor, just a ladder!

1957 Bought by Peter Warren Harvey.

1963 Arthur Capps, MD of Seccombes department store, buys the Castle.

1970 The Andersons buy the Castle.

2003 Simon Rees buys the Castle and builds an extension. The orangery is restored to the original.

2012 Work begins on creating the gardens. All hedges were planted, the swimming pool turned into a pond and the kitchen garden built.

2018 Work started on the woodland to reinstate a natural garden. The story of the gardens will continue .....



## Dr Jean Reader By Gerry Donovan

It is with great sadness to write about the passing of Jean who had been such an enthusiastic and determined researcher unravelling the Cory story of Dyffryn over many years. I first encountered her when she was bringing groups to see Dyffryn through the Gateway Trust which supported those who would not normally have been able to come to such gardens. It was an important connection for

Dyffryn to make as we grew our visitor support and demonstrated that everyone was welcome. Jean was the ultimate ambassador for promotion of historic Welsh gardens and went on to be the Trust's Chair in 2014. When I was joining some of the meetings around Wales, she would kindly offer lifts in what became known as the ideas car where we would brainstorm all sorts of things on promoting the gardens, Dyffryn and Cory's horticultural



eminence which was so little appreciated at that time. Her talks and publication since that time have done great service in changing that. Our thoughts are with her husband Robert and family.

## Percy Comes to Dyffryn

By Mary Ponting

Dyffryn's Percy the Park Keeper's winter wander trail ran from 4<sup>th</sup> December until 9th January in association with the best-selling author and illustrator Nick Butterworth. There's a lot to do over winter in the gardens at Dyffryn, and Percy needed a helping hand. Participating children were given a special pack with a Percy hat, a list of jobs, and a letter from Percy with clues to help find his equipment and complete activities along the way.

The main objective was to help Percy's animal friends prepare for the cold months ahead e.g. helping Mole to find a tasty snack or drink for them all. The animals were beautifully





## Dr. Paul Knoyles retirement.

By Barbara Hodges

Because of health issues Dr. Paul Knoyle has retired from position of Chair but will remain as a member of the committee.

Two books, Modern cottage design and Wild life Cottage Gardens, have been bought to thank Paul for his commitment and work

done on behalf of the Friends.

The following are his words taken from an email sent to me today. "I had a very pleasant surprise yesterday when Gerry came with two gardening books in recognition of my time as Chair of The Friends. It was a wonderful gesture and has given me enormous pleasure. The choice of books is excellent, one on a

modern uptake on cottage gardens, the other on wildlife gardening. Please thank the committee for their generosity although I hope to be at the next committee meeting at the end of April."

We are very grateful that Gerry, who was vice chairman and then acting chair, has accepted the rôle of Chairman.

## New Chairman Gerry Donovan

Hello from the new Chair

Amidst all the surprises of 2020 and 2021 I had not expected to be taking on the reigns from Paul as Chair of the Society. A huge thanks to Paul for his leadership. I'm honoured to step into the role. I am delighted to be joining the society's committee which has such a wealth and diversity of experience. After the hiatus of the pandemic, we are galvanizing our society activities and I have charged the committee to share with me their thoughts for what we could be doing over the next couple of years for

us to formulate a programme of engagement which I will outline at our AGM in May. It will be so lovely for members to be able to meet in person again.

I thought perhaps you might want to know a little of my background. I'm a Chartered Landscape Architect, born and bred in Cardiff, now living in the Vale. I did my BSc (Joint Hons) in Botany and Zoology at Aberystwyth University, then my Postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Design at Sheffield and then many, many years after a Postgraduate Diploma in Historic Landscape Studies at the University of Wales, Newport.



Most of you will know me as Dyffryn's previous General Manager. I'd been at Dyffryn for 24 years, initially as Project Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund restoration of the gardens and then as the years went on, I took on more and more operational responsibilities. Outside of work, during this period I also was appointed by the Minister of the Environment to the first Board of Directors

for the Design Commission for Wales, served on the Advisory Panel for the National Museum of Wales, was a Trustee for Penllergare Woods and Chaired the Landscape Institute for Wales, which I have recently rejoined as a committee member. I continue to be involved with the local branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Society.

### **New Membership Secretary Julie Walters**

I have been appointed as Treasurer for the Friends following Dr Joan Andrews' retirement last year. I started taking on the responsibilities last month and my thanks go to Barbara Hedges and Mary Pointing for covering the essential Treasurer functions in the interim and, along with Gerry Donovan, helping me through the handover period. Although I am new to the Society, I have been the Treasurer for Garth Gardeners club since 2018 and am looking forward to meeting and working with a new

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Dyffryn and, though very sad to leave due to the restructure, new opportunities arose, and I am now a full-time postgraduate student studying for a MSc in Sustainability with Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge and the Eden Project, Cornwall. I am hoping I can support some of the green initiatives that Dyffryn has

been operating over the past few years and help with identifying further opportunities. My work placement is with the RHS supporting their Sustainability Strategy roll out. I'm looking forward to a very exciting next few months before I get my head down to writing my dissertation.

group and expanding my skills to encompass the additional challenges in managing the finances for a registered charity. This was a bit of a baptism of fire for me having to submit and update information for the Charity Commission but managed within deadline and my next new task will be getting to grips with Gift Aid.

On a personal level, I am 66, married to Mark (ex Fire Fighter) and we have 2 grown up sons – both married – and one grandson. I spent most of my working life in the Civil Service on support areas such as finance, resources, business planning, projects etc, as well as managing



operations, and retired in 2014. I enjoy reading and walking and we were enjoying extended travelling to places like Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and America until covid came along! Adapting to the changes in lifestyle brought about by the varying restrictions, we have recently sold our house in Pentyrch and are temporarily living in Radyr while we look for our 11th, and hopefully, final home!

## New Committee Members

### Judy Keenor

I first visited Dyffryn in 1967 after joining Glamorgan County Council Health Department. We then regularly received in service training, (often residential) and, I stayed in the old bedroom block which was situated near the Cory Education Centre car park. At that time, the hot house on the north lawn was still functioning. I was later transferred to work in the Neath area so with the local Government re-organisation I moved to the Bridgend area. In 1978 I then worked in South Glamorgan in Whitchurch hospital until becoming Assistant Director of Mental Health. This meant working with voluntary groups and I became a voluntary board member with Hafod Housing Association and as Chair helped set up Hafod

Care. This was a registered housing charity, which provided care and supported homes throughout South Wales looking after 5,000 vulnerable people.

With the stressful work I was involved in, my hobbies helped to keep a sense of proportion in my life. These were gardening, a real family inheritance with Arthur Kilpin Bulley of Bees Seeds and Ness Botanic Gardens being a distant relative. I have been involved with Pentyrch Open Gardens and Garth Gardening Club since they were established

My late husband was a very keen yachtsman so I became very much involved with this when Cardiff Yacht Club was threatened with compulsory purchase under the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. Working with the Royal Yachting



Association we petitioned Parliament we were able to obtain considerable concessions which resulting in a new club house built at Windsor Esplanade in Cardiff Bay.

When the National Trust took over the management of Dyffryn I became a volunteer, working in the gardens until I had a problem with my knee. Since then I have worked in VR, a garden guide, a house volunteer and now a research volunteer. I hope to continue this as Dyffryn develops under the new arrangements.

### John Oliver

I have been a volunteer house guide at Dyffryn Gardens and House since 2013 and also head up the Dyffryn Research group.

I retired after a long career with the Post Office/British Telecom,

Telecoms Engineering, followed by IT development and management roles. My last 10 years of full time employment were spent as a lecturer at Cardiff University and finally at the Careers Service for Wales.





## Friends of Dyffryn Committee

### Chairman

Ms Geraldine Donovan

### Hon. Secretary

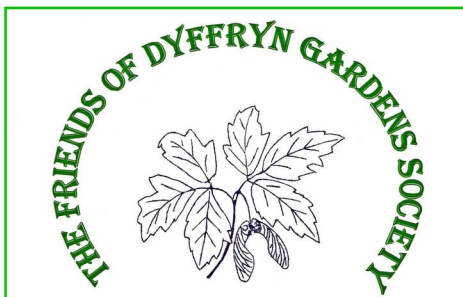
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For the latest information about membership, forthcoming events, etc.  
please visit [www.dyffryngardens.org.uk](http://www.dyffryngardens.org.uk)  
For information about Dyffryn Gardens events etc. visit  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens)

## Garden Cuttings From the Committee

### AGM 2022

Members should have received notification and the documents are available on the Friends website.

### Committee Members

We are always looking for new ideas and would welcome you if you are interested to join us on the committee.

Meetings are usually held four times a year at Dyffryn. Please contact a member of the committee if you are interested.

### Membership

Because Covid-19 restrictions have meant that we were unable to hold events membership fees were

have been waived for 2020—2022.

We already have a talk and 2 local visits planned for this spring and hope to be able to arrange coach trips later in the year.

We do hope you will continue to support us and will renew your membership. The forms for 2022—2023 will be sent out with this issue of the Newsletter.

### Website and Newsletter

Val Caple would be delighted to receive your contributions for the Newsletter at any time. This is YOUR Newsletter. Please send photos or articles on your garden or one 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 2022.

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

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

*Right: Friends of Dyffryn after the concert in 2019.*



Tuesday 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	Coffee Morning with a talk by Rita White entitled 'A trip to Paris' at 10.30 am
Thursday 21st April 2022	Llandough Castle, Cowbridge at 1.30 to 3.30. Tea/ coffee and cake. Members only, limited numbers. <b>See Application Form for Details</b>
Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	AGM 2022 at the Cory Education Centre 2.30 pm <b>Please support your Committee</b>
Wednesday 13th July 2022	Gileston Manor, St Athan at 2.00 to 4.00. Refreshments. Members only, limited numbers. <b>See Application Form for Details</b>

**For more Information about above events, please contact**  
Mrs Barbara Hodges or visit [www.dyffryngardens.org.uk](http://www.dyffryngardens.org.uk)

### Visiting Dyffryn Gardens

- The garden, shop and tearoom are open 7 days a week.
- Reception will soon be via the shop and the tearoom re-installed
- The house and some areas remains closed.
- They no longer operate a booking system in place for visits.