



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Royal visitors at Dyffryn Gardens

By Joan Andrews

Photos by Dimitris Legakis for the NT

TRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall devote a short period each year staying in the Principality while visiting various organisations and places of local interest. Such visits are not announced until the last minute so we were unable to inform members of the Friends.

On 1st July of this year they first visited Llantwit Major and then made a call at Dyffryn. They were met by Justin Albert (Director, National Trust in Wales), Gerry Donovan (Site Curator)

and representing the Queen – The Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan - Dr Peter Beck.

On the day Dyffryn looked its best. The sun was shining on immaculate borders, our new buggy was on show, police presence was large but not too obtrusive as sniffer dogs viewed the garden from a whole new olfactory perspective.

The Astronomy Society had set up their telescopes on the lawn and were much enjoyed

by off duty police. The croquet club in immaculate whites were demonstrating their sport and the apiarists had a stand by the panel garden.

The visitors were first shown round the house and met many of the volunteers. Some local school children demonstrated the facilities for younger



visitors. The royal guests then strolled along the long walk and on behalf of the Friends I had the honour of being introduced.

The gardeners and volunteers showed the visitors round the garden rooms before they ended their visit by attending a reception by the Welsh Historic Garden Trust in the Cory Education Centre.



The New Buggy

By Val Caple

The Friends Committee agreed to offer matched funding for the NT to purchase a buggy which will be driven by volunteers to transport visitors around the garden. In recent years Dyffryn Gardens have hired buggies when events were taking place but this buggy will be waiting at the entrance gate most days



Glyn Jones' Guided Tour

By John Wallace

On a glorious July morning the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens met Glyn Jones for a guided tour of the gardens.

Glyn is the Garden and Countryside Manager at Hidcote Manor. In this position, he is responsible for steering a major restoration project, researching the essence of Hidcote from its early 20th century heyday, and returning the property to its former glory.

Glyn was born and raised in Rochdale but his father was from Anglesey, hence his name and his love for Wales. His interest in gardening dates from his childhood

and he remembers lifting paving slabs in his back garden and sowing seeds or planting in the space provided.

He left school early and started as an apprentice on municipal gardens in the North of England. After graduating from the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh in 1986, Glyn worked as an intern in the Forestry Reserve of Illinois at the Brookfield Zoo. He returned to the UK in 1987 and worked alongside Penelope Hobhouse at the Tintinhull House Garden in Somerset for five years. He was then promoted to Head Gardener/Property Manager at the Peckover House in East Anglia before accepting his current position at Hidcote. He has worked in

horticulture for over 40 years, including 14 years at Hidcote.

He is presently seconded to Dyffryn Gardens for a year as a consultant where he hopes to bring some of the experience gained at Hidcote to continue the excellent restoration work already underway here.

In general, his objective is to produce a documented strategic plan that outlines how to recreate the spirit of Reginald Cory's garden progressively and in a dynamic way in order to attract increasing numbers of visitors year by year. Parts of Cory's gardens are about 100 years old so much work will have to be carried out. However, this must happen gradually in order to maintain and increase visitor interest.

Glyn took us on a tour of the garden in order to illustrate some of the issues he faces using some of Edith Adie's paintings as references. On our way to the Panel Garden, Glyn pointed out the multicoloured Yews to the side of the house (not Cory's but later Local Authority

plantings) which were intended to imitate mushrooms with a narrow base and flattish tops. At some stage it might be desirable to do some replanting to recreate this effect. At the Panel Garden we looked at other Yew trees and noticed how they had grown out of shape and become so large that the views toward the house were masked. Replanting should perhaps be considered with smaller examples to preserve the formality without impairing the view.

We were then joined by two American DNA researchers who were looking at the DNA of the Acer Griseum in particular the Champion Tree and intend to compare this with samples from trees in China and the USA. They had to hurry away on their way to Westonbirt Arboretum but commented that they thought our Champion Paperbark Maple was probably the largest of its type in cultivation in the world.

We then went to look at our specimen Acer Griseum in the Arboretum. It was



Glyn and members



evident that this significant tree was not presented in a manner befitting its importance. Much too close by was an ancient Oak Tree. Each tree detracted from the other particularly in an environment where the undergrowth appeared wild. This demonstrated two issues for consideration. Should the Oak be sacrificed for the benefit of its illustrious neighbour or is it providing invaluable

protection from the weather. Or would judicious pruning of the Oak be more appropriate. Also cost effective and environmentally friendly ways of managing the undergrowth might be considered to help improve the presentation of the trees.

We then continued across the lawn to the far end of the canal and looked at the view along the canal back to the House and again noted the way the Yews were obscuring the view of the House that Cory wanted. The two Yews Trees with the golden tops by the croquet lawn were originally intended to represent candles but they are now hopelessly overgrown and misshapen. This emphasised the need to consider how best to manage all these trees for the future. Even now the House looked magnificent and provided a glorious punctuation mark to the view. However, looking the other way toward the south and over the empty pond it was very disappointing. Glyn thought Thomas Mawson wanted a similar punctuation mark in this direction, either with a building, or planting, or a grand water feature. But we are up against the newts yet again!

The Paved Court Garden was our next destination where Glyn showed us a prototype planter to replicate those illustrated in Edith Adie's painting. He described how the painting was being used to scale the planter sizes and future plantings in this area. We noted the exceptional quality of the prototype planter even though only softwood had been used in this example. Hardwood will be used in the final versions and the scale adjusted slightly.



Glyn explains his plans



Finally we visited the Reflecting Pool where Glyn showed us how various small Maples have been planted in recycled pots from elsewhere around the site. The problem here of course was the water quality which totally destroyed the reflecting qualities of the pool. Once again the newts reared their heads and because of them the thick blanketweed cannot be removed. Glyn was puzzled why the authorities in England and Wales should adopt such different approaches to the same conservation problem. At Hidcote they have been able to legally clear their ponds of blanket weed without threatening the newts who survive quite happily. Glyn was thanked by everybody for such an interesting and illuminating tour. We now look forward to his documented plan and to future developments in the gardens.

Powys Castle and Gardens

By Rita White. Photos by Heather March

It was an early morning start from Dyffryn to Powys Castle and Gardens. The weather forecast was a bit iffy but everyone had a mac. or umbrella so no worries! As it turned out, they were not needed!

We stopped for a welcome coffee break at the delightful little Erwood Craft Station, situated in an old railway station not far from Builth Wells. Some of us managed to investigate the path that led down to the river, certainly a place to remember for another visit when we might have more time.

The road from here zigzagged and wove its way around the contours of the mountains until we had our first glimpse of this imposing medieval, Welsh (as opposed to English) castle standing aloft with a commanding view in all directions.

At first sight it looked as if it was built of red brick and it was not until later that I could see that it was in fact a wonderful red STONE.

We descended en

bloc upon the restaurant, where we all enjoyed a good lunch before meeting our gardener who gave us a guided tour of the gardens.

We began on the layered terraces, yes, three of them, hewn into the rock, giving a fantastic view of the grounds, their balustrades topped with huge sculptures. They were stocked with herbaceous borders, climbing roses, clematis, wisteria etc., and specimen trees, with a view of the formal gardens below and, as far as the eye could see, the wonderful mid-Wales countryside with the skyline broken by mountains.

The Formal Garden is typically Edwardian, flat, rectangular areas of colour bounded by hedges and fruit trees. Beyond, and out of sight of the house we discovered the nursery and green houses, the heart of the garden you could say.

The gardeners are very eco-friendly and the first thing that I noticed



Powys Castle



Hot coloured beds



Cool coloured beds



View from Terrace

was the display of solar panels! Then the rotational heaps!

We left our guide here and made our own way back to the castle, choosing to avoid all of those steps by taking the flatter route through the recreation area, where children were running around the flat, mown paths of a maze. Then to the lake, which I am sure, is a haven for wildlife. From here it was only a stones throw to the Museum, which was another surprise.

In what looked like an old keep, but had been in fact part of the residential area of the building, we discovered the benefit of the earl's generous act of handing over the Castle to the National Trust lock stock and barrel, with furniture and artefacts going back



Members enjoying the view



Barbara and Friend?



Potting for next year

several hundred years. This was a fascinating and eclectic exhibition.

All in all we had a full and enjoyable day, with perfect weather in spite of the warnings! I need

hardly to add that the coach was very quiet on the journey home and our driver 'did not spare the horses' to get us back by 8.00pm.

Membership

By Joan Andrews and Clare Williamson

If you have not paid your subscription for the year April 2014 to March 2015 – we hope you will do so.

We have included a new form for those who have NOT joined us yet.

Please join today. You will be helping us to continue to support Dyffryn Gardens and House during this exciting period of change as the NT makes plans for its future.

Remember that if you are not a member you cannot attend events in

Dyffryn, including the winter talks and the 2015 AGM, and you will have to pay extra to join us on our outside visits and events.

If eligible please do complete the section on Gift Aid – which will make a useful addition to our finances. Thank you

Bowood House By Rita White

A recent visit to Bowood House and Gardens was a great success. The guided walk and talk through the private gardens followed by a delicious dinner prepared by the Marchioness of Lansdowne herself was appreciated by everyone.

Opposite is my photo of the beautiful organ as it has rather an interesting history. The organ at Bowood House

Chapel marked the completion of a study project into the work of the Trost organ building family who were active contemporaries of J. S. Bach in his native area of Thuringia. Built within an earlier chapel organ case, an organ was built based on documentary evidence dating from the period with Christopher Kent as consultant.



The Organ



The Lake



The Upper Terrace



Walled Garden



Herbaceous Border



Lakeside Cottage



Tunnel in the Pinetum



Wyndcliffe Court and Veddw House Gardens

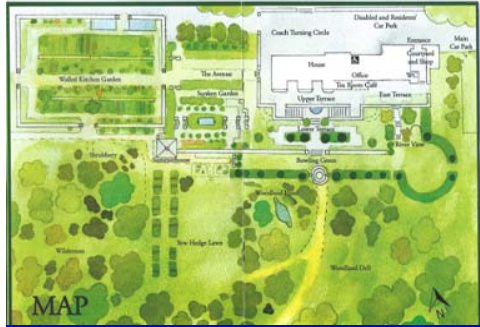
By Val Caple

These two gardens have much in common, despite being designed nearly 70 years apart. Both have areas with a formal design with trimmed box and yew hedges or walls and areas of natural woodland landscape. Both have individual 'garden rooms' and are built on sloping sites and include terracing and magnificent views of the surrounding countryside. Both included beds of colourful plants on the bright autumn day when we visited them

However the Clays commissioned Henry Avray Tipping, who designed many famous gardens including that at his own house at High Glanau Manor nearby, to design Wyndcliffe in 1922 while Veddw House garden was created by the owners Anne Wareham and Charles Hawes in the 1990s.

The Clays owned Piercefield House near Chepstow and had made their money in banking and brewing. Wyndcliffe Court Garden enhances the large Arts and Craft style house designed by Eric Francis before WW1. The Clays were a social couple who were well known in the local community and we had the chance to admire the oak-panelled ballroom where we were served home-made cakes and sandwiches.

In contrast Veddw House Garden surrounds a small cottage probably built by a labourer who worked in the nearby wireworks or woodland. The building encroached on wasteland owned by the Duke of Beaufort who gave land to build a church and school at nearby Devauden in the 1840s to



Wyndcliffe



Veddw



Veddw—Reflecting Pool



Wyndcliffe—dipping pool + otters

‘rescue the rude, boisterous mountain children from their ungodliness.’

A tour around the garden at Wyndcliffe Court starts in front of the house with a series of stone walled terraces leading down to formal gardens, summer house and a pool. You then wander across the smooth bowling green or through a clipped yew lined path down to the informal woodland area and views of the Bristol Channel. To the west is the walled kitchen garden and old greenhouse. This area is planted with vegetables and more colourful plants.

At Veddw the car park is at the top of the site, so you first look down on a large parterre of grasses in a pattern of box hedges based on the local Tithe Map of 1842. Lower down the local rolling hills are reflected in the curvy hedges that lead to the reflecting pool. On the slope opposite is formal terracing leading up to an informal woodland area. As you walk down the steep path to the house you move into an area of colourful



Wyndcliffe—statue and pool



Veddw—hedges and grasses

planting. Behind the house is the vegetable garden and orchard.

The designers of Veddw admit to be influenced by the Arts and Crafts tradition, but have added a quirky style of their own which we either loved or hated. Similarly challenging were the modern sculptures on display in the Wyndcliffe garden. I personally loved the mix of old and new in both

gardens and am thinking where I could put one of the plants or sculptures which I admired.

Another successful trip – thank you Mary for discovering these gems



National Trust Events to be held in Dyffryn Gardens

From Gwenno Griffith & Jen Park, Visitor Experience

Lecture lunches

Join us for a series of lectures on poetry, gardening and history followed by a delicious lunch prepared by us.

11.30am to 1.30pm

14 Oct-Phil Carradice- 'Dylan Thomas-Do Not Go Gentle'

11 Nov-Glyn Jones- 'Plant hunting and plant hunters of Dyffryn and Hidcote'

9 Dec- Bill Jones- 'In search of Uncle Sam: Welsh immigration to the USA in the nineteenth century'

13 Jan-Elaine Davey-'Sir William Goscombe John. Sculptor and patron 1860-1952'

£15 per person, booking essential on 02920 590813

Garden Cuttings From the Committee

Vice Chairman's Resignation

John Kirk agreed to take on the job of Vice Chairman until the last AGM but we are now urgently in need of 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.

Botanical art course

4 October, 1, 22 November. 10am to 4pm

Debbie Devauden is a botanical artist who joins us for a one-day course to help you learn how to draw a botanical subject from our gardens. Advance booking only: 02920 59 0814, tickets £30.

Welly week

25 October to 2 November

Join us for a wet and wild welly-themed half term. Hunt for hidden wellies all over the gardens and find the mysterious golden welly.

Hallowe'en family party

31 October 5.30 to 7.30pm

Join us after dark for a fun filled Hallowe'en disco in the house. Wear your spookiest outfit. £5 per ticket. Under 5s go free.

For more information on events please contact the National Trust 02920 593328 nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens

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

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Friends News

By Val Caple

E-Newsletter

We are still looking for someone to edit the e-newsletter and update the Twitter account.

Please contact me if you feel you could help.

Website

The website is updated regularly and has been designed to keep members up-to-date and to attract new members.

Please send me any comments about the content. Also please

For the latest information about membership, events, etc. please visit www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

send me photographs—old or new—which you have of the gardens or House so that I can continue to tell the story of Dyffryn as it develops under the NT.

Newsletter

This is YOUR Newsletter, and I am always happy to receive items from you for the next issue.

Please send me articles, photographs

etc. at any time, especially those on events and trips which we have organised.

I am also happy to include articles about Dyffryn or about other gardens or horticultural interests which you would like to share with fellow members.

Please post items to me or email them using addresses above.

Programme of Events 2014—2015.

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 6th November 2014	Coffee Morning. Talk by Dr Jean Reader entitled 'Stark Mad with Gardens – the contribution made by women to gardens in Wales between 1750 and 1850'. 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre.
Wednesday 19th November 2014	Talk by Glyn Jones, Garden and Countryside Manager at Hidcote Manor. 2-4 pm in the Cory Education Centre. Joint meeting with the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust
Thursday 27th November 2014	Coffee morning. Talk by Colin Evans (no pictures or slides) on 'Childhood memories of Dyffryn'. 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Tuesday 9th December 2014	Christmas Lunch, St Athan Golf Club Application Form included
Thursday 12th February 2015	Coffee Morning. Talk by Ceridwen Davies, Dyffryn Walled Garden Supervisor, entitled 'The Restoration of Dyffryn's Walled Kitchen Garden'. 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Wednesday 13th May 2015	Annual General Meeting. 2.00 pm in the Cory Education Centre.

For more Information, please contact

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