

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Dyffryn Gardens Wins Special Places 2015!

By Kate Simons, (Visitor Experience Manager), **and Val Caple**

This was a fantastic achievement and we'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who voted and supported the Special Places campaign. We should all feel very proud of the accolade and the media coverage has had a phenomenal impact on our visitor numbers. Since the announcement on in July we have exceeded our visitor numbers targets – we had 4,077 more visitors in August then projected.

Apart from all the glory helping build our reputation as a destination garden, we have been awarded some prize money. We have purchased a professional grade camera for the site to help take beautiful photographs and of course some plants!

Eventually a plaque will go in pride of place on the Visitor Centre.

Hundreds of castles, beaches, mountains and landmarks were on the list and each had support from local fans and ambassadors, celebrities and AMs to guarantee their spot among the top five category winners. The categories reflected Wales' diverse landscape of: coastlines, historic buildings, parks, gardens, wild open spaces and quirky hidden gems.

These five winners went forward to the second stage of the battle.

The final top five were:

- 1) Dyffryn Gardens
- 2) Dolaucothi Goldmines
- 3) Rhossili
- 4) Gladstone's Library
- 5) Snowdonia

Last year's winner was Penarth Pier and Pavilion, also in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Garden Rooms Project

By Val Caple

Photos Rita White

Members of the Friends Committee were invited to the informal opening of the 3 newly restored garden rooms



Visit to Wellfield Barn and Wells

By Val Caple

On a drizzly morning in June we set out from Dyffryn with hopes of finer weather later in the day. Because of challenges with access to Wellfield Barn we were in a smaller coach to the one we usually use so we felt privileged to be among those members who had been able to book a seat

When we arrived at Wellfield Barn the weather was still damp. However the welcome was warm as we were offered a hot drink and a delicious choice of cakes. David Naysmyth then told us how he and his wife Virginia had found the barn and fell in love with the view of the tower of Wells cathedral. After they had bought it 17 years ago they realised they had a real challenge removing the concrete farmyard before they could start work. The result is



Wellfield Barn



spectacular. The view is maintained by the use of a ha-ha to protect the garden from marauding sheep. The sheltered garden between the stone

barns is a blaze of colour. The couple specialises in growing hardy geraniums, and we were given copies of the 38 plant names so that we could identify them ourselves. There is also an interesting pond

Around the house is an area with mown grass walks and interesting young and semi-mature trees as well as a sunken pond. The size may only be just over 1 acres but it is packed with interest

After wishing farewells we set off on the short drive to Wells. We were very sad to hear that David had died soon after our visit. Our thoughts are with Virginia, who is opening the gardens for the NGS scheme again in 2016 (see the yellow book or <http://www.ngs.org.uk>)

Arriving at the entrance to the Wells cathedral and the Bishop's Palace the weather was still dull, so we walked around the market and then found a local café to build up our strength.

By the time we met the volunteer who was to show us round the weather was brighter. There is evidence that the stunning medieval Bishops Palace Garden existed even before Bishop Jocelin began work on the Palace c.1206. Over the years the gardens have changed as successive bishops have added their legacy. We started our tour of part of the 14 acres

of gardens through the doorway of the ruined Great Hall into the South lawn, with its herbaceous borders and Sculpture display entitled 'A light Shining in Darkness'. The garden is enclosed by walls round the moat and by the walls of the Palace. We crossed the moat, using the beautiful wooden bridge, to the garden surrounding the well pools which give the city its name. The Well House is topped with a stone Talbot dog, Bishop Bekynton's favourite. We also looked over the Community Garden and the City Council Allotments which are being developed within the walls.

After the tour we were free to explore on our own. A stroll through the arboretum, a walk along the moat walls to see the famous mute swans or an exploration of the Palace where, among other exhibits, was a display of modern paintings by William Balthazar Rose, the artist-in-residence.

Another great day out. Thanks Mary – and congratulations on sorting the weather too!



Bishops Palace



Visit to Yeo Valley Organic Garden By Rita White

Our journey to Blagdon took us through the beautiful Somerset countryside: pretty villages, gentle, lush scenery, hill and valleys. We arrived in time for coffee, served in the dining room. The face of the large clock on the wall was composed of Scrabble pieces spelling out 'whattimeisit'!

This was the first hint of the imaginative mind behind this project. The painted watering cans; the unusual lampshades made from old buckets with an open pattern on their sides. (any suggestions as to their original use?) further evidence.

This is a garden like no other! This is a garden to feed the soul. This is nature harnessed with a gentle, loving hand that enhances rather than controls. I saw not one blousy flower head, just a paradise of bee loving, soothing vistas of lovingly collated colour and texture.

Yes, there is the down to earth compost area but even that was well planned and organised so that nature was merely given a hand

to do the work with as little interference as possible. Digging has virtually been eradicated as the compost is spread regularly, whenever the plant growth permits access to the ground, allowing the natural absorption to aerate the soil.

Yes, there are some orderly patches of ground, with fruit and vegetables used in the kitchen or rows of cut flower plants to decorate the tables in the dining room but these manage to look as though they are all part of the general landscape, natural and unforced, in spite of their prolific growth.

The green house is a series of rooms which can be isolated if an infection should occur. Solar panels supply electricity; this is a working garden that aims to be self-sufficient.

We were guided around the garden before lunch by a charming young lady gardener who transmitted her passion for this type of ecological gardening and of her admiration for her employers who were



Scrabble Clock



transforming a working farm into a haven of peace and tranquillity as naturally as possible

After lunch we then roamed freely, finding new areas or revisiting others. We discovered many sculptures hidden around the garden, all



hand made, the largest was probably a huge gate composed of garden implements

As we wandered around we discovered for ourselves the natural pond area with swathes of flowers, and gravel paths leading to and from woods, rockeries and reed beds, ornamental ponds with colour coded borders reminiscent of a Monet painting.

We discovered young woods with a flourishing undergrowth, little streams disappearing behind hosta leaves. A brand new project that is beginning to take shape will overlook the huge reservoir. There were



A bee paradise

beautiful views in whichever direction you looked. The garden blends in perfectly with its surroundings.

This was certainly a day to remember; a garden to remember. An inspiration. Time seemed to stand still, I

Natural pond area



Apple tree chair



Just follow the path



left completely relaxed yet invigorated, wondering how I could use some of the ideas, on a reduced scale obviously, in my own garden.

Thank you Mary for introducing this most entrancing of gardens.

Wenvoe orchard Walk

By Ray & Mary Ponting

It rained the day before, it rained the day after, but Wednesday 26th August was a beautiful day. The sun was shining as 12 of us set off from Wenvoe Village hall, led by Bruce McDonald, to see 3 new orchards and a community nature reserve.

We started towards Grange Park and en route Bruce pointed out a beautiful Purple Beech (not a Copper Beech) This and other trees around Wenvoe are listed in the "Wenvoe Tree Trail" (<http://wenvoewildlifegroup.weebly.com/wenvoe-tree-trail.html>).

The newly planted wild flower bed was looking lovely. It was sown with an international seed mix called Honey (used for some of the planting around the Olympic Village in London). It includes Cosmos, Zinnia and Coneflower and has flowered much longer than the native mix we saw later. International mixes may be just as good, if not better, for wildlife.

We headed to the footbridge over Port Road, stopping to admire some Hedge woundwort. One of our group said the green parts of the plant, and its relative, Betony, were often applied as a poultice to wounds. Another quoted an old Italian proverb advising anyone who is unwell to "Sell you coat and buy Betony".

The first orchard was Station Road Community Orchard. Wenvoe Wildlife Group is responsible for planting and managing the Orchards and their priority is wildlife biodiversity, not intensive fruit production. However the Orchards should eventually yield abundant fruit for the community. A mix of trees has been planted here,



Bee Hotel

including traditional varieties of apples (e.g. Bardsley Grenadier, Ribston Pippin, and also crab apples), pears and plums (e.g. Mirabelle plums and greengage), along with medlar, quince, mulberry and hazel.

There wildlife habitats included a pond, stream, mature trees (e.g. oak, willow, field maple, ash and horse chestnut), and old and newly planted hedgerows. Bruce explained that the method for estimating the age of a hedge involves counting the number of tree and shrub species within it. - the more species the older the hedge. Using this method their new hedge has a head start of 100s of years!

On the reverse of a notice board giving additional information is a large 4 star "bee hotel". The choice of accommodation includes bamboo sticks and various bricks. The bees clearly preferred the logs cut in cross-sections with holes drilled in them, as seen by the number of entrances sealed with mud. The bee deposits its egg(s) in the hole, adds a dead insect as food for the grub(s) and blocks the hole. When the young bees are ready they gnaw through the earth.

Wildflowers are gradually becoming established on the grassy areas. They are trying to introduce yellow rattle to

reduce the vigour of the grass and hence the need for mowing. Shrubs are also being planted such as Guelder Rose, Mahonia, Flowering Cherry and Escallonia. Attached to one of the mature trees was an enormous bird box to attract Barn Owls - there is a pair in the area.

We made our way under Port Rd. via the "Cattle Creep", and paused to admire the Church, one of Wenvoe's 2 listed buildings, the other being the bright red telephone box by the village green. The area is jam packed with interesting trees including a Ginkgo, one of the most ancient trees dating back 252 to 66 million years - the Age of Reptiles. This is a male. Females are seldom planted because the fruit smell pretty awful.

We made our way to the Garden Centre and up the track, to Burdons Farm where we were joined by Jean and Robert Reader, the owners. The Elizabethan Orchard is located beyond the farm buildings and was part-funded through the Glastir programme, whereby farmers get paid to increase biodiversity on their land. The Readers and Cardiff University were involved in a project comparing the bird life on their farm with that of a large arable farm in the SE England. Not too surprisingly their mixed farm with all its hedges and mature trees wins hands down, but even the Readers have been surprised by the number, and variety, of birds they have. Robert says there are as many birds now as he remembers from his childhood, apart from the lapwings.

The trees in the orchard include apple, cherry, pear, medlar, quince and walnut. The varieties were chosen with the help of the National Trust who have records of trees

planted in the 16th to 17th century at Lyveden New Bield. They include Dr Hervey and Jargonelle Pear. Old varieties of Gooseberry have been planted and seem to be doing well.

We continued to St Lythans and the third orchard, the Wild Orchard. Here, a selection of fruit-bearing trees found in our native hedgerows, have been planted. Some may have introduced themselves into Britain after the last Ice Age, or they may have been planted later. Amongst them were Crab Apples (the third most common tree in Anglo-Saxon hedgerows), Wild Pears and Wild and Bird Cherries. The fruit is not palatable raw but has been used in cooking and preserves for centuries. Here we found a very nice bench – lunchtime!!

We walked along the road from Dyffryn to Twyn-yr-odyn with amazing views of Flat Holm and Steep Holm. A path lead us to the Upper Orchid Field, the entrance guarded by two wood carvings: Gog and Magog. It took several years of annual cutting by the Council and many man-hours by the Wildlife Group to remove the Ash trees and restore the 5 acre field to a meadow. Now it is a Community Nature reserve, with Green Flag status,. It is home to over 400 species of flowers, grasses, insects and birds. From late Spring to early Autumn there are 7 species of Orchid and in June the field is covered in several thousand Common Spotted Orchids.

On the way round we visited Molluscopolis, an area where snails and slugs are encouraged and Snail Racing takes place on open days!

From the bottom corner of the field we were back in Wenvoe. Thank you very much Bruce for a highly enjoyable day, we'll be back.

Tour of Dyffryn Walled Garden

By Barbara Hodges

Photos by Rita White and Val Caple

Approximately 25 members enjoyed a tour of the walled garden led by Ceridwen Davies (Walled garden supervisor). We learned about the importance of matching plants to the correct soil conditions and how one area of the garden would support a plant perfectly but the same plant in a different area would just exist or fail altogether.

She explained how she had developed the walled garden - with the help of volunteers - from a grassed area to how it is now and shared her thoughts about its future. The vegetables and fruit are used in the café and any surplus is sold in the visitor centre.

We saw beautiful apples and pears almost ready for picking and learned about the tasty cherries that had already been picked and consumed. There was a profusion of companion flowers such as nasturtiums and marigolds, their bright colours helped to replace the sun that was behind the clouds that afternoon.

The various coloured



brassicas looked splendid under their protective covering of nets to keep them safe from predatory butterflies. Ceridwen said that once the nets are removed people visit the garden specifically to capture the 'brassica show' on film.

Finally we toured the Bothy and Head



Gardener's office full of interesting ancient artefacts relevant to a large historic garden.

I recommend a visit to this part of Dyffryn Garden at any time of the year, it is always interesting.

Thank you Ceridwen for a splendid afternoon.

Visit to Bryn- y-Ddafad By Hope Hall and Joan Andrews Photos by Val Caple

On September 9th, on an unpromising afternoon, the Friends of Dyffryn visited Bryn- y-Ddafad, Welsh St Donats, near Cowbridge, the home of Mr and Mrs Jenkins.

Despite the clouds the weather was kind, the hosts were welcoming and informative, and we spent a happy afternoon revelling in the beautiful gardens and relaxing over refreshments in the warm conservatory.

When Glyn and June Jenkins bought the very old Glamorganshire cottage it was in need of massive repair and reconstruction. That done, they set to work to create around it a terraced garden which features a pond and natural stream, a pergola supporting climbers and really excellent raised herbaceous borders made with imported new soil. At the side of the house is a small walled courtyard garden with raised beds, sundial and water feature.

Everywhere there are strong colour combinations and uncommon plants and when we had finished looking we settled to a good old gossip in the conservatory over tea and refreshments.

A lovely afternoon out!

Thanks, June and Glyn.

If you have not seen the garden – look out for opening days under the NGS. Perhaps combine with a visit to Bordervale Plants - a nursery with most unusual plants run by Claire Jenkins (RHS Silver medal winner).

See: www.bydd.co.uk
www.bordervale.co.uk



Dyffryn Update

By Kate Simons, (Visitor Experience Manager)

The orders have all gone in for the spring bedding and there will be some amazing specimens. The South Front will have cool-shades of 4 varieties of double-tulips. The hot theme in the Paved Court will continue and be carried through with lily-form tulips and around Dyffryn you will see a succession of potting displays including amaryllis in the glasshouse, hyacinths and tender paper-white narcissus. We'll also be managing our long grass to show off our rich and diverse existing bulb flora.

Hedge cutting has been completed in the south end of the garden and Heart Garden and we're working on the Lavender Court and garden rooms.

We've started to clear out the river corridors so that survey work can be carried out on the bridges and we can also begin the first stages of flood management further upstream.

Our new website will go live on 9th November, and will be much less white space and more interactive. We are collating as many hi-res images as we can using the new top-notch camera and we'll be able to better capture the sometimes fleeting garden wows throughout the seasons.

We've successfully appointed a new HHSS trainee, Sophie Hirst who will be with us for 14 months. Unfortunately this is the last year the traineeship is running, but we are seeking to pursue match-funding to carry on the grand tradition of training at Dyffryn, through the historic and botanic gardens bursary scheme.

Subscriptions & Gift Aid

From Clare Williamson (Membership Secretary) **and Joan Andrews** (Honorary Treasurer)

We have included a new form for those who have NOT joined us yet for the year April 2015 to March 2016 – we hope you will do so.

. When you join you will be helping us to continue to support Dyffryn 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 2016 AGM, and you will have to pay extra to join us on our outside visits and events.

If you have not already signed a please complete the section on Gift Aid – which helps our finances.

Friends News

From Val Caple

Website and Newsletter

These are YOUR Website and 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.

I am always looking for photos of Dyffryn gardens, especially old ones

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

Programme of Events 2015—2016.

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 Kitchen garden



Wednesday 11th November 2015	Coffee morning. Talk by Rita White on the Lesser known areas of Paris. 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Tuesday 8th December 2015	Members Christmas Lunch at the Blue Anchor, Aberthaw. See Application form for details. Members only
Wednesday 17th February 2016	Coffee morning. Presentation by Stephanie Power., composer, poet, critic and essayist 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre. Info about her on http://www.composersofwales.org/member.php?ID=137
Thursday 25th February 2016	Chris Flynn, the Head gardener, will give a talk entitled 'Cliveden to Dyffryn - A Head Gardener's Journey'. 2 pm in the Cory Education Centre. This is a joint meeting with the Welsh Historic Garden Trust
Wednesday 27th April 2016	Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Society AGM. 2.00 pm in the Cory Education Centre

For more Information, please contact

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