

Spring 2015

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Living at Dyffryn House during the Second World War

By Colin Evans

In 1937 Inspector Emlyn Evans of the Glamorgan Police Force was appointed officer in charge of Civil Defence and ARP training for newly recruited civilian wardens. In 1941 there was a particularly bad German air raid on Cardiff when amongst other damage the Cathedral and the Arms Park were both hit. As a result local officials decided that all important documents in the City and County, should be stored away from major risk of damage. The then Colonel Traherne, who had recently bought Dyffryn from Miss Cory, offered the use of the House. In 1941 Inspector Evans was made officer in charge and was expected to live on site. He, his wife Lilian and two sons

moved from Canton into Dyffryn and lived there for over two years.

The story of these years is told by Colin Evans, then aged 7 years, as seen through his eyes and that of his 10 year old brother. Colin later went on to a very successful career in education and after his retirement wrote his story for his grandchildren. He talked to The Friends of Dyffryn about his memories of this time. Unfortunately the few photographs taken at the time have gone missing.

A car was provided to take the family to see their new home and Emlyn can still see his mother's dismay and her ultimatum that she would only move if the authorities converted part of the building to an apartment for the family. This was duly done utilising the end of the first floor nearest the current walled gardens. Colin remembers large rooms, a lounge overlooking the

garden and stairs leading down to the main kitchen.

In Miss Cory time 32 gardeners looked after the extensive grounds but by 1941 only two were left. The head gardener lived in a building near the entrance to the paved court while his deputy Mr Oakley lived with his family in West Lodge.

The house was used not only to store documents, probably in the locked rooms on the first floor, but for training both the police and ARP wardens. At the beginning of the war 'Policing' was a reserved occupation but later the young police were called in to the services to be replaced with older reservists and it was these who lived at Dyffryn during their training. Colin remembers his mother being an unpaid counsellor and confidante to these trainees. Looking back Colin remains surprised that they never went to church but their attendance resumed after leaving Dyffryn.

Colin and his brother played cricket on the lawns and were at ongoing war with the gardeners. The swimming pool was used by the police and the boys (who learnt to swim in it) despite lack of cleanliness. The billiard room was a great attraction and gave Colin a basis for many years of pleasure. For friends the boys had the gardeners' children and another family living nearby. It was not only the gardeners who had to mete out punishment as one day the children found the culvert entrance that goes up towards the village and climbed right through - later they were punished by Inspector Evans for the risk they had run.

Food must have been rationed but Colin has no memory of his mother ever going shopping. It is possible that the food for the family was brought in with that for the trainees and staff. There was no gas to the estate so cooking must have been done with electric or oil or a wood or coal range. The cooks and the clerks were bussed in each day from Barry. Colin also remembers an ex-Welsh Guards Drill Sergeant who advised his mother to close her windows against his probable profanity. Diet was possibly supplemented by the rabbits shot by Colin's father .

Both boys attended the Church in Wales school in St Nicholas- the building still stands. There were three classes for children from 4 to 11, the oldest group taken by the headmaster. The walk to school was along a lane with 2 narrow paved strips but it was macadamed before the family left on the occasion of a visit by the Canadian Ambassador.

The head teacher, Mr Jenkins, was of the old school and all children had daily spelling and mental arithmetic and poor results led to the cane. However his results did lead to a number of the children passing the 11+ scholarship for Cowbridge Grammar school

The Evans family left Dyffryn for Whitchurch in 1943. Dyffryn remained a police training centre to about 1946.

This article is based on the talk Colin gave to Friends of Dyffryn and is included in this newsletter with his approval

Malvern Autumn Show

By FOD members

Wonderful weather, short and easy journey, early arrival good, 5 o'clock return shattered. A great sight of Mary at 4.45pm steaming up to the bus with all her 'buys'. Well done Mary once again for a wonderful day P.S. Special note of the Young farmers' Association flower displays on the theme of 'the anniversary of the First World War – they were fantastic and a great credit to the young farmers, one of whom we spoke to. He came from the north of England and mentioned that they had been working on the project for 2 years

A lovely day, beautiful weather and something to interest everyone. This show has a real end of term atmosphere and is a celebration of our countryside

We had a lovely day. Thank you Mary for arranging it. It was a real plus point to be so near the entrance. Something for everyone but for us it was pants, plants and more plants helped along by Cornish pasties, Ralph's cider and numerous cups of tea!

We loved the picturesque setting of the show ground. There was so much to enjoy, particularly the giant curly chrysanthemums and the monster vegetables. The gun dog race trials were fun and the tea and cake in the vintage teashop. The flying display was spectacular It was good and the weather was superb – more like a very good day in July,



Giant carrots and leeks



We all enjoyed the whole experience – lovely weather, good food, plenty to see and lots to buy & sample.

Poultry show was superb – many varieties of birds – most interesting. Sheep dog trials excellent, the owners can run as fast as the dogs in some cases – amusing at times and interesting.

Roast lunches good and reasonably priced.

Bamboo pillow – very comfortable – I bought one and hope to it will relieve my aching neck.

Flower arrangements exquisite – such patience needed – some people have an extravagant flair for the exotic.

Wonderful day – splendidly organised, no need to drive, fabulous flowers, amazing veg. went home tired and happy.

This was my second day out with the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens and it proved as good as the first.

The arrangements were first class and everything went like clockwork. We were at the show almost as soon as the gates were opened, only a short walk from coach park to entrance.

The weather was wonderfully dry which added to our enjoyment. The show itself was full of interest but do not think I saw half of it, what we saw was good and we were well satisfied. Another wonderful day out.

A hot summer day at the end of Sept. wonderful.

We had a good day, sun shone for us and I bought yet another pillow for my aching neck.

I had a great day out, weather was pleasant – quite hot and sunny. Fantastic flower displays, lots of plants to buy, Interesting vintage caravan and car display.

The shepherds' huts for sale were interesting, if I had £12,000 to spare, I would put on in my garden for a summer house, maybe a summer house would be less expensive.

Many hand made crafts, jewellery, bags, clothes pottery etc., for sale – some things quite pricey but well made and attractive.

Vintage clothes and furniture on sale, some of it didn't seem too vintage to me as I grew up with those designs, I must be older than I like to think.

Enjoyed the free samples of cheeses, sweet potato crisps, wines etc.

Bought some garlic from the Isle of Wight – will try to grow some for the first time.



Aerobatics

Bought some tulip bulbs which promise to look like cones of ice cream when in bloom.

Market hall fantastic, have never seen such long carrots and parsnips, some were over a meter long from top to tip. Cabbages bigger than footballs, sticks of celery bigger than my legs.

I saw one lady leave the show with one dahlia bloom in her hand, the flower was as big as her head. So many plants, bulbs etc., for sale, I could have filled a lorry but didn't have one there so contented myself with a few bulbs.

All the traders very helpful. Monty Don and Joe Swift had a huge audience – we were a bit too late to be able to see him except through the foliage from the side.

Learned how to cook rabbit for a quick lunch.

Would have loved to buy some of the beautiful grasses on show but couldn't carry them home.

Thank you Mary for another splendid outing – you are a past master at organisation.

Powys Castle and Gardens

By Eileen Body

On Thursday 31st July 2014 we boarded a coach and left Dyffryn Gardens, looking forward to visiting Powis Castle. The Friends were kind enough to invite the garden staff, and 5 of us were pleased to accept.

By mid-morning we were ready for a tea break and stopped at an old railway station that had been closed in about 1962. Erwood Station is based on an old GWR Railway and has been re-invented as Erwood Station Craft Centre, Gallery and Tea Rooms, complete with a display of milk churns and an old railway engine.

Arriving at the castle the party was greeted by Neil, a member of Powis Castle garden staff, who first gave Dyffryn garden staff a tour of the nursery area. The castle is on top of the hill and – of course, the nursery and glasshouse area is at the bottom. We had little time to admire the views from the top terraces as we descended flight after flight of steps to the

service area and nursery.

These areas are run with the same care, thought and knowledge as the areas open to visitors. The nursery area consists of cold frames and standing out areas situated in and around the Edwardian glasshouses and brick sheds. They were built on the orders of Lady Violet, (1865–1929), who had them moved from what is now croquet lawn after trees which hid them from the castle blew down. The nursery has been adapted to 21st century needs being used for overwintering and growing an impressive range of plants for the garden and for plant sales. The area has space for water extraction and energy generation and the composting area includes a reed bed for catching and purifying any run off. In a process that takes two years, green waste from the garden is kept in three compost heaps consisting of fresh, semi broken down and ready



Erwood Station



Powis castle



Glasshouse



Borders

to use. The heaps are turned once a month and watered when dry. The range of glasshouses and poly tunnels heated sustainably. Investment,

sponsored by N power has allowed a ground source heating system to be installed. A system of cables buried about a metre under the ground in an adjoining field feeds the overhead heating ducts.. A system of conventional electric glasshouse heaters copes with sudden falls in temperature. Powered by electricity generated from photovoltaic cells in another field, the surplus electricity generated is sold back to the energy company. The area has been put to grass , saving on gardener time and machinery costs. Water comes from an onsite bore hole. Standing out areas are on sand beds where water is fed through rather than from overhead watering to reduce the amount of water needed.

A recent new project, done by Laura, their career-ship trainee, is the cutting garden. This interested Ceridwen as one of her aims in the walled kitchen garden at Dyffryn is to grow flowers for the house. Though Laura is aiming to grow flowers to invoke the feeling of the

seventeenth century Dutch flower paintings, Ceridwen found much in common with growing for Edwardian interiors. Shrub roses, Dahlias, sweet peas and Ammi majus with its lacy white flowers are favourites of both gardens.

After bidding farewell to our hosts, lunch was calling so we headed back up to the top taking time to admire the borders and clipped yew hedges. We liked the under planting round the trees bordering the paths.

The tearoom is named after Henrietta Herbert who married Edward Clive (son of Clive of India) in 1784 and provided a sound financial future for Powis, which enabled the garden to return to “the most complete and perfect state of repair”.

We had time to overview the formal garden which Lady Violet had created in the Edwardian period, and the terraced borders.. The giant yew topiary on the top terrace was of particular interest. It was first planted in the 1680's and began life as trimmed cone or obelisk shapes. As fashions



Castle



Borders



changed, it evolved to the shape it is today - a ‘Cloud Hedge’ leading the eye to the panoramic view to the hills beyond. Located midway along the central terrace, the old Orangery is tucked under the terrace above. The potted *Citrus* trees were outside sunning themselves for the summer, but inside in

the cool shade was an impressive array of large ferns, notably the Royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*, one we have recently acquired for Dyffryn. Leaving the formal terraces behind, we made our way along a gentle path down the hill through the contrasting “woodland wilderness”, transporting us to a different place but still within the gardens. We stopped to admire the Stable Pond,

dramatically reflecting the images of the trees and sky on the still water. Continuing on through the densely planted areas of trees shrubs and groundcover, we spotted a square stone tank set in an alcove. Said to be where Clive of India regularly took a cold bath. Eventually reaching the bottom of the garden we looked up to a fine view of the red sandstone castle and

the grass maze laid out in front of us.

Thank you Friends for another enjoyable and informative day with you. And oh yes, we won the quiz on the way back, of course the tin of chocs was passed round the coach, and the remaining chocs were enjoyed by the rest of the garden staff the next day.

Alex Luker, Head Gardener
By Gerry Donovan

As you know, Alex has been unwell recently, and has now decided that she will not return to Dyffryn. In her 5 years

at Dyffryn Alex has brought the garden team through a number of changes, not least the move to The National Trust. We all wish her well for the

future and thank her for everything she has done for the garden in that time.

We will be recruiting for a replacement in the near future.

Subscriptions & Gift Aid

By Joan Andrews (Honorary Treasurer)

All members will be pleased to hear that as we no longer pay part of our subscription as entry to the Gardens we are now eligible for GIFT AID repayment on your subscription. We have added over £200 to our income in this first year.

We hope that this sum could be doubled in

the coming year if all members who are eligible taxpayers complete the Gift Aid declaration on the membership renewal form. Remember that many will be paying tax even if no longer having to complete an annual return. Those who do still have to complete

such a form can of course claim Gift Aid rebate against there own tax bill. Please help in this way if you can.

A few members have yet to renew their subscription – we look forward to hearing from you – a renewal form is on the website –or I would be happy to send you one. My details are on page 11.

Wyndcliffe Court & Veddw House Gardens

By Mary Evans

In late August on a rather misty autumnal day, which happily remained mostly dry, a coach full of members visited two gardens which were in sharp contrast to each other.

Wyndcliffe

This is a Grade II listed romantic old garden and house which sits on a hill above Chepstow Racecourse with glimpsed views of the Severn Bridge and the Bristol Channel.

On arrival we were greeted with tea and coffee in the oak panelled ballroom dating back to the early 20th century with its original features of oak panels, wooden floors and intricate rose sculpted ceiling. There was a sumptuous array of homemade cakes and I can highly recommend the unusual courgette and lime which was the result of a glut of courgettes from the walled kitchen garden.

We were free to wander the peaceful gardens and discovered

many unusual and attractive sculptures in the attractive setting of several garden rooms with the backdrop of the Arts & Craft red sandstone house. My sculptural acquisitions were modest: two metal apples which now hang from my apple tree and can be safely 'chimed' by my 3 year old grandson.

The garden, designed by Henry Avray Tipping and undergoing extensive restoration, have much to delight and interest any gardener or sculptor. It is a fine example of Arts & Crafts style with its terraces and paths of local stone, yew topiary, long borders, sunken garden, small pools of water and woodland dell. The focus of the whole garden is an attractive two storey gazebo.

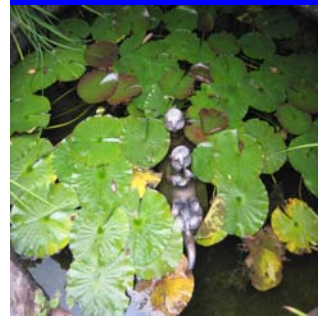
Many of the plants were in late summer mode and the trees were already starting to turn, a reminder that it would soon be autumn. Little did we know that a record gloriously warm, dry and sunny September would follow. The Lily basin, with 2 reclining otters is reminiscent of Hestercombe



Wyndcliffe



Ballroom



Otters

Lunch was an enjoyable meal followed by an unscheduled talk on the House, which is probably named after the curve in the River Wye. It was commissioned in 1910 for the Clay Family. The house was designed



Gazebo



Terraces

by Eric Francis who was also the architect of Tipping's other houses in Monmouthshire, including High Glanau. For over 50 years it was occupied by Patrick and Betty Clay and is now held in trust. Christine Baxter and Alex Brown took over the running of Wyndcliffe in 2013 since when they have organised seasonal exhibitions of sculptures. It is this couple we have to thank for starting to restore the neglected gardens which deserve every success.

Veddw House

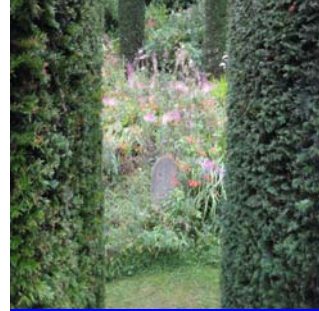
It is described as a contemporary romantic garden by its owners, photographer Charles Hawes and journalist and self-styled "bad-tempered gardener, Ann Wareham. Ann greeted us and explained how the garden is tied to the landscape with its interlocking grid of yew hedges clipped to reflect the undulating Monmouthshire hills. These make a series of enclosed garden rooms in the valley climbing up behind the house to a ruined cottage and The Population Gate, a memorial to the people who worked the land in the past.

Ann hoped the garden would provoke discussion and it certainly did! Comments were heard later from some of our members that *'it wasn't their idea of a garden'*. I liked it more than on my first visit as it has softened in appearance and featured more colour and history than I remembered.

The most dramatic surprise of the garden is the reflecting pool with its black dyed water and pink, wave-form bench reached by a zigzag



Pool and hedges



Border

descent through the wave hedges. Some members found sitting here a grim experience, others found it calming. Certainly it provided a location to reflect on a garden which is probably one of the most controversial and fascinating in Wales.

Thanks to Mary Ponting for organising a successful visit to two contrasting Welsh gardens in this part of Wales which last year was described in the Daily Telegraph as "the new Sussex for Gardeners" (Tim Richardson).

Spring 2015

Members Christmas Party From Val Caple

50 members enjoyed the party at St Athan Golf Club. Great food, great atmosphere and great music, supplied by the U3A choral group



Many thanks Mary—you have done it again

National Trust Events to be held in Dyffryn Gardens

From Rhiannon Gamble,
Interpretation and Learning Officer

Volunteer open day

March 12th at 11am

If anyone is interested in finding out about volunteering opportunities at Dyffryn please come along.

E-mail Dyffryn@nationaltrust.org.uk or contact Dyffryn Gardens to say you are coming

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,

Botanical Art

21 March, 18 April, 16 May
13 June, 18 July, 15 August

Vale of Glamorgan Artist Exhibition

Mid April to Mid-May

Dawn Chorus

3 May—Guided walk

For information on all events please contact Dyffryn gardens or visit their website at www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryngardens

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.

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 at the Christmas Party



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 4th March 2015	Coffee Morning. Talk by Joan Andrews on the Gardens of the Veneto 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
	See Application Form for details
Wednesday 6th May 2015	Packwood House and The Museum of Carpet, Kidderminster See Application Form for details
Wednesday 13th May 2015	Annual General Meeting. 2.00 pm in the Cory Education Centre. PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR COMMITTEE
Wednesday 17th June 2015	June Wellfield Barn and The Bishops Palace, Wells See Application Form for details
Wednesday 5th August	Yeo Valley Organic garden See Application Form for details
Thursday 22nd October 2015	Coffee Morning. Talk by a volunteer from the Cowbridge Physic Garden 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre

For more information, please contact

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or Mrs Barbara Hodges, Greenfields, Eagleswell Road, Boverton, Llantwit Major, CF61 1UF. fodyffryn.sec@virgin.net