

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

Commemorative Tree Planting for Sir Cennydd Traherne

**By Gerry Donovan, General
Manager, Dyffryn Gardens**

It seems such a long time ago and yet also just yesterday that I met with the Friends of Dyffryn chairman, Paul Knoyle and Rhodri Traherne, Sir Cennydd's nephew, to plant a rather lovely specimen tree to mark 25 years since his passing. Sir Cennydd leased the estate to the Glamorgan County Council in 1937 and eventually gave it to them for use as a centre for education in horticulture.

We chose a significant day in Dyffryn's calendar – Saturday 28th November 2020, National Tree Charter day. We have been a part of the Tree Charter since it was launched in 2017 and each year celebrate by planting an important

specimen and sometimes a few.

For this occasion, Chris had chosen an *Ostrya carpinifolia* for a lovely spot in the southern section of the arboretum near the Log Stack play area. The *Ostrya*, although not particularly botanically unusual, is often overlooked for planting in gardens presumably because of its eventual size. Whilst it looks similar to a hornbeam the big differentiation is the fruits, which give the plant its common name of Hop-Hornbeam. The fruiting is prolific, and the young clusters look like pale green flowers at a distance during the summer, turning brown in the autumn where they can persist after the leaves have fallen. It's an excellent specimen tree that will also provide a good backdrop for smaller flowering trees and shrubs. The seasonal shade pattern that it casts will also make it a useful plant for sheltering spring flowering,

woodland bulb species. The tree has a lifespan of 200 years and will adorn the arboretum for visitors to enjoy long into the future.

I think Sir Cennydd would have approved and we look forward to adding more choice specimens in 2021, hopefully under more relaxed conditions so that more of us can gather together to celebrate in future.

Chris Flynn, Dyffryn's Head Gardener, explaining the tree pit preparation and planting method we have adopted at Dyffryn to give each tree the very best establishment. It is definitely worth all the effort.



Dyffryn Gardens Update

By Gerry Donovan

Portfolio Reorganisation

A proposal has been put forward for Dyffryn Gardens and Tredegar House to merge into one South East Wales portfolio. This would mean the removal of the current General Manager posts and the creation of a single, higher grade General Manager for the new South East Wales portfolio.

Sadly I will be leaving Dyffryn after 24 years. The proposed merger is proceeding and therefore my position is made redundant. Thank you so much for all your support through the years – Dyffryn has had so many ups and downs but always come through stronger.

Gardens

The gardens team have been making strides in recovering areas which had to be left during the lockdown and furlough periods but it is an uphill battle. Certain areas such as the east

section of the arboretum have to remain closed as tree works are prohibited during the bird nesting season. Certain issues have also arisen in the kitchen garden and for this week and next week the area will be closed during the weekdays, open on weekends, to enable the team to concentrate on targeted recovery.

To support the summer recovery, 3 seasonal gardens are being recruited to join the team until the end of October. Which will be a great help in increasing the pace of operations. We have also changed our entry signage and will be doing more within the gardens to explain we are a restoration garden and a work in progress. We are aiming to bring visitors along with us in terms of recovering significant features such as the herbaceous border which will take a couple of years.

House

The ongoing engagement of previous house volunteers and different

stakeholders such as the Friends has been paused while the proposed restructure is considered.

Meanwhile the test use of selected rooms accessed from the south terrace has continued. The Co worker use of the morning room had only a small take up but very positive

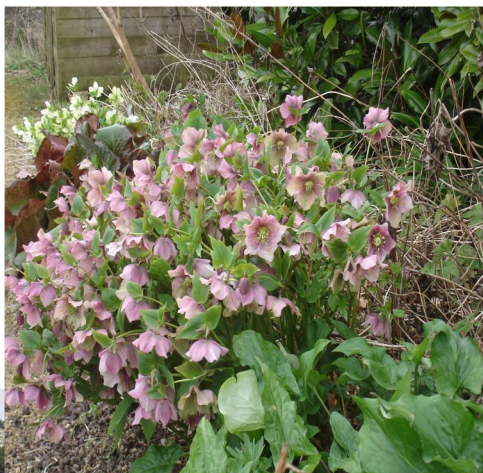
feedback from users and the property. Currently part of the International Garden Photographer of the Year Exhibition is in the Morning room, the other part is in the west garden, and will be with us to 11th August. Absolutely stunning images, highly recommended.

Dyffryn Re-opening

By Val Caple

I was delighted to return to Dyffryn after the re-opening on 26th March 2021. There is work to be done, but it has such good 'bones'.

It will be interesting to see how the wild flower meadows develop and how the new yew trees grow into their role of replacing the old ones on the front



Autumn 2020 at Dyffryn Gardens

By Mary Evans

I enjoyed, with my husband, booked weekly visits to the Gardens between September and November last year. Plenty of autumn colour to delight and what a welcome sight was the autumnal display in reception. On our first visit in September we experienced a blast from the past with a rare sound and sight. Was it a bird? No, a real aeroplane flying low over the gardens.

Our visits were supplemented with two interesting Zoom meetings. One in October was the first online Dyffryn research talk arranged by John Oliver entitled *Rosa: A Second Blooming*. The Story of Rosa Cory's life after Reginald's death. Presented by Ray Crozier, Sandra Crozier and John Devonshire.

The second in November was an Unforgettable Gardens talk on Dyffryn by Jean Reader who is a former Chair of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. Here are some of my autumn photos to remind you of the charm of Dyffryn Gardens and their contribution to the enrichment of our lives.



Christmas 2020 at Tredegar House Gardens

By Mary Evans

Like Dyffryn, Tredegar House Parkland provided an escape to nature for many months last year. The ground floor of the House and the Formal Gardens briefly opened for Christmas visits starting the 27 November only to close again after the second weekend. We were fortunate to have booked before it closed.

The staff had worked hard to decorate the House and gardens so it was some satisfaction for them that a large number of visitors were able to appreciate their efforts. The photos are from a walk through the gardens on a sunny December day starting in



the Cedar Garden, moving to The Orangery and its gardens and ending in Santa's room in the Stables.

Father Christmas wasn't visiting the House but the Stables were set up for his stop-off on Christmas Eve with his reindeer. As a

House volunteer it was heart warming to see the House full of decorations and visitors. Every room had a real tree lovingly decorated. My favourite was in the Gilt Room with fans, gloves, masks and slippers hand made by our Ladies volunteer sewing group.

It was also good to see that Tredegar House hosted filming last year with the S4C programme on NT Houses in Wales and the Landscape Painter of the Year for Sky this year. Now the success of the vaccine roll out gives us new hope for 2021.

Beekeepers and Honeybees

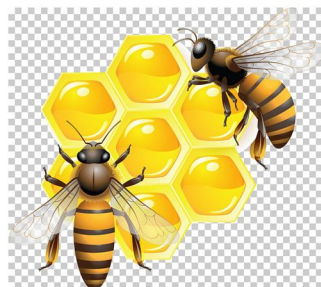
By Harold Williams.

Which came first the flowers or the Honeybee? Who knows! We beekeepers are well aware of the symbiotic link that exists here. The blossoms offer pollen and nectar and the bees along with many other insects provide the transfer of said pollen to bring to fruition a great variety of the foodstuffs we eat. This is a triumph of nature! Both parties are winners. Providing the beekeeper is in tune with this activity she/he can also become the recipient of honey.

Where does this honey come from? Well the nectar brought back to the hive by the foraging bees is handed on to those within the hive who have the task of converting it into honey.

First it is deposited in a cell and the water content has to be reduced to an acceptable level. This is a task for the in-house bees. Once this is complete, bees who have a particular gland within their head will add an enzyme to it and the honey that we love is the end result. The final step is for wax producing bees to seal it in and have it on tap to meet the demands of the colony.

The phrase as busy as a bee is very apt. Given fair weather the foragers of the colony will work non-stop to add to their in house stores. They never reach a stage when they say that will do us! If it is out there they will go and collect it. It is up to the beekeeper to provide the wherewithal by way of boxes for the bees to store their bounty. In



some years we struggle to keep up with the bees, however in some years when weather conditions are not suitable, we the beekeepers must feed our bees to enable them to survive.

Sadly our apiary at Dyffryn Gardens no longer exists. Covid 19 along with other restrictions imposed by Dyffryn management who did not seem to realise that honeybees do not work office hours plus failure to access our equipment store when we did visit made life for the beekeepers too difficult. The bees are now sited elsewhere.

The Antiques Roadshow in Dyffryn Gardens.

By Barbara Hodges

I attended the Antiques Roadshow in Dyffryn Gardens on Tuesday afternoon 8th June 2021.

On arrival I had to show my invitation and was told to park my car and walk into the gardens. Just after I left the entrance I had my temperature taken and was asked to wait until a manageress from the BBC could show me where to go. Several other people arrived and after five or ten minutes we were taken to the south side of the house and wished a pleasant afternoon.

There were several chairs and tables on the lawn with the red A R canopies. At the bottom of the lawn under a tree the Harper had just finished playing but as the Basic Better Best part of the show was being prepared I decided to wait to see that. I was amazed how long it took to prepare everything and when talking to one of the BBC staff afterwards she told me that there were around 70 BBC staff on duty. I saw someone sitting under a tree having her makeup repaired – it was Fiona Bruce.

Due to the wind and social distancing I was unable to hear the conversations between Fiona and the people she was speaking to but am waiting to see the television programme to find out.

After this, I sat at one of the tables on the lawn to have my picnic lunch and got talking to someone from Wiltshire who had travelled the world as a Ballet Dancing Examiner.

I wandered around the gardens and was amazed that it was so quiet and empty. I think I saw about three

gardeners but the visitors seem to have stayed on the lawn.

I eventually went into the arboretum and as I walked along the path to the entrance saw many wild orchids growing amongst the grass as well as the Dogwood tree which was full of blossom.

There will be two episodes created for Dyffryn by the BBC but we don't yet know when they will be shown. I am looking forward to seeing it.



Demonstration of the Mobility Scooter

By Val Caple

The Friends raised £3650 for the purchase of a buggy. However, following advice from Dyffryn, they purchased a mobility scooter for individual visitor use. This was thought to be more suitable especially in the current climate of Covid-19 restrictions. The donation has also paid to upgrade two wheelchairs.

A demonstration of the new scooter was held on Wednesday 28th July in the Gardens attended by several committee members. We were lucky with the rain passing just in time for the proceedings to get under way. Lynne Jakeway, from Snowdrop, was an excellent trainer and it was great to hear that she would promote that Dyffryn had these new facilities available for less able visitors through her Rotary connections.



Geraldine Donovan expressed her thanks for the continuing support from the Friends.

We're sure the scooter and wheelchairs will be much appreciated by our visitors and frequently used.

Pohutukawa. *Metrosideros excelsa*

By Paul Knoyle

This plant is very popular in New Zealand and adorns many gardens and public places. A member of the Myrtle family, it is grown as a bush or tree which can reach a height of 25 metres. Both forms have large spike ball flowers which comprise a mass of stamens and appear in the early summer.

They reach their peak at Christmas giving it the nickname of the Xmas

tree of New Zealand.

It is common along coastal areas as it can cope well in adverse weather conditions and flourishes in the most barren areas. It can live for a 1000 years. It produces large amounts of nectar attractive to birds, lizards and bats. Surprisingly native bees do not drink the nectar but honeybees make an excellent honey.

A true icon, but in



large cities it is an invasive weed.

This wonderful plant can be grown in the UK and the best examples are found in Tresco in the Scilly Isles.

Joan Andrews' Farewell Lunch

By Dr Paul Knoyle

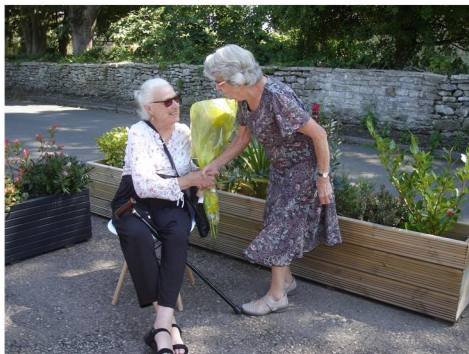
A very pleasant lunch in brilliant sunshine was arranged at the Bush St Hilary on 4 August to celebrate the retirement of Dr Joan Andrews, a much valued member of the Friends and Treasurer.

The occasion was limited by COVID-19 restrictions to committee members only but we were delighted to welcome Gerry Donovan General Manager of Dyffryn Gardens as a guest.

I recalled how I first met Joan, a gynaecologist, when I was a medical student at Cardiff Royal Infirmary in 1965 and pleasantly surprised when our paths had crossed many years later.

Joan joined the Friends in the early 1970's soon after its formation and under her guidance and others allowed the Friends to flourish in the 1980's. Darker years were to follow in the 1990's but Joan spearheaded campaigns to keep the Gardens open. A brighter future in the early 2000's was promised when Joan and the Friends supported Gerry in her successful bid for HLF funding allowing restoration of the Gardens and the House.

Joan took over as Treasurer in 2010 and introduced Gift Aid which increased income from membership subscriptions by 25%. A strong balance allowed a donation of £3650 to be made to purchase a mobility scooter for visitor use and was presented to Dyffryn on 28 July. Other items have been donated to the gardens over the years she has been Treasurer.



Joan is moving to her new home in Norfolk very soon and as a token of our thanks and gratitude for her enormous contribution to the Friends we will present her with a wisteria after she has moved.

We owe a very big thank you to Joan. Farewell we wish you well and we will miss you.

Joan Andrews' Farewell Presentation

By Gerry Donovan

I have always been able to count on Joan to call a spade a spade and to get to the root of the matter. Over the years, Dyffryn has had some up and downs and the Society, in particular Joan, have been a constant support for getting us through.

Leaving no leaf unturned, Joan has championed the fundraising for buggy, wheelchairs and mobility scooter provision at Dyffryn. All hugely appreciated by our visitors.

So we understand Joan is branching out to pastures new and all at Dyffryn wish her the best. We thought about what we could send you off with and had heard you'd been ruthlessly decluttering.

Hoping you can find a small corner for this memento from Dyffryn.

Our very best wishes.



The memento was a beautiful line drawing of Dyffryn House from the south front view by Katherine Jones.

Katherine is an artist and architect based in Cardiff.

'After 11 years of architectural training, working in various practices and bringing buildings to life, I realised I could help people connect with places in a new way'

katherinemjones.com



Marion Davies, the new Membership Secretary

By Val Caple

We would like to welcome Marion and wish her luck in her new, very important, role.

Marion has been a member of the Committee since 2019. She is also on the Committee of the local branch of

the Welsh Historic Garden Trust and a lover of everything connected to Jane Austen.

(Marion is 3rd from the left in the back row on the group photo on page 9)

Please contact Marion for any information on membership issues.

At the time of going to print we are still without a Treasurer.

Programme of Events 2021/2022.

Talks are open to members only, unless otherwise stated.

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

Right: Friends at Dyffryn in 2018 after the concert.



AGM 2021	Virtual meeting using Zoom Wednesday 29th September at 10.30. Please contact Barbara Hodges (fodyffryn.sec@virgin.net) if you wish to take part.
Winter Talks	Unfortunately the series of talks planned for the winter have had to be put on hold and the situation is still unclear for 2021-2022. If you have any ideas for speakers for future meetings please could you discuss with Barbara Hodges.
Garden Visits	Visits are also difficult to plan at the moment but we are looking at the possibility of meeting at local gardens, for example, Llandough Castle, Cowbridge. However all the venues appear to be booked up with postponed wedding parties at the moment! If you have any ideas please contact Mary Ponting

For more Information about above events, please contact
Mrs Barbara Hodges or visit www.dyffryngardens.org.uk

Visiting Dyffryn Gardens

- The garden, shop and tea-room are open 7 days a week.
- The house remains closed.
- They no longer operate a booking system in place for visits.
Please follow Welsh government guidelines when visiting.

Friends of Dyffryn Committee

Friends Representatives

Chairman

Dr. Paul Knoyle

Hon. Secretary

Mrs. Barbara Hodges

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Treasurer

VACANT

Membership Secretary

Ms. Marion Davies

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

For information about Dyffryn Gardens events etc. visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens

Garden Cuttings

From the Committee

AGM 2020

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions the AGM took place on October 16th via Zoom and was attended by Committee members only.

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 have been unable to hold events membership fees have been waived for 2020—2022.

Renewal Forms for 2022—2023 will be sent out when the Covid-19 situation becomes clearer.

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.