



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

American Museum in Britain - at Claverton Manor, Bath

By Joan Andrews

It was a rather grey day when Friends of Dyffryn reached Claverton Manor - but cookies and coffee appeared, we divided in to three groups each with an informative guide with lively presentation.

The main exhibition is of rooms decorated and furnished in the style of the day - from that of the earliest settlers through to recent times.

We all had our highlights:-

- a 'quilted' grandfather clock -wey- all I'll be dahnged!;
- a dress that danced with George Washington;
- samplers from all ages;
- the earliest ever seed packets - invented and produced by the Shaker community;
- the huge collection of old maps

housed next to wedding dresses through the ages;

- and the history and exhibition of fabulous quilts.

A few of us braved the now wet garden - part laid out as a copy of the garden of George Washington all set out on a ridge with fabulous views of the surrounding Bath countryside.

Kapunda Plants

A short ride through some narrow lanes brought us to the home of Juliet Davis. The house itself was unusual with curved walls and a turreted roof. While raising a young family she had become involved with propagating hardy perennials and in recent years has specialised in Hellebores - especially Helleborus Orientalis hybrids - the Lenten rose. Some of us had seen the garden on Gardeners World and now we wondered and admired her passion

and dedication.

The garden is set against the background of the interesting old house with its formal statuary and pond leading across lawns to beds full of incredible hellebores - a feast for hellebore fanatics.

She took us through the four year cycle from planned cross pollination, pricking out the tiny seedlings, growing on and at last - the excitement of the first flowers. We enjoyed them all, colours ranging through dark red to yellows and an apricot, doubles, anemone shaped and picotee edged. The sale bench was a bit sparse as

the prior week had been cleared by a large group of visiting enthusiasts.

Husband plied us with tea and biscuits while some of us got hints on cultivation - feed generously twice a year with blood fish and bone or compost, after flowering cut old flower heads off unless you want seedlings, cut all old leaves back in autumn and can spray as for black spot on roses. A useful bit of advice was to grow on a bank if possible - they seem to grow particularly well.

For more information see - www.americanmuseum.org and www.kapundaplants.co.uk

Visit to Kapunda Plants

By Diana Mead

After a fascinating and informative visit to The American Museum on the outskirts of Bath, The Friends of Dyffryn Gardens travelled a short distance to Kapunda Plants, a small nursery specialising in hellebores. The nursery is situated on a windy ridge but is well-protected by conifers and thick natural hedges. We walked up the drive to the house through shrubby, open borders full of Spring flowers and blossoming trees

Here we were welcomed by owner Juliet Davis who provided us all with tea and biscuits. Much more exciting than the refreshments (although these were very welcome) was a glass bowl of water with hellebore flower heads of all varieties and colours floating on the surface. For a hellebore addict like me this was breathtaking.

There was a disappointingly small



number of plants for sale but we hellebore fanatics quickly headed for the sale table to secure a specimen. My choice was taller than most with small delicate flowers on longer stems, completely different from my existing plants. I am waiting impatiently for it to open its first flowers which I think will be pink.

Juliet apologised for the small number of plants for sale but explained

that, following her recent appearance on BBC Gardener's World showing off her beautiful garden and plants, she had over 900 visitors, most wanting a plant to take home!

The garden is compact and Julia has designed it to complement the house, which has an unusual double-bay front elevation design. At the front of the house is a short grassed avenue bordered by small, clipped lonicera hedges, leading to a circular pool and fountain. The remainder of the garden is devoted to large beds of hellebores of every variety and colour imaginable. The hellebores appear in mixed beds and borders in the garden too.

At the rear of the garden is the powerhouse of the nursery, a greenhouse filled with Julia's breeding hellebores where she hand-pollinates various plants to create new hellebores and improve existing colours and forms. Julia demonstrated how to pollinate a plant and also showed us some of her small pots of tiny seedlings.

It was an interesting visit to an inspiring small nursery, illustrating the debt we gardeners all owe to dedicated plants-people who create the beautiful plants we all enjoy so much.



Kapunda Plants



Dyffryn Who? Putting our famously lost gardens back on the map

By Chris Flynn, Head Gardener, and Jennifer Park, Visitor Experience Assistant

This article was written for the NT's 'Seasonal Times' Summer Edition 2015. The Friends of Dyffryn might be interested in seeing how we are raising the awareness of Dyffryn within the NT.

Often unknowingly seen on our screens as one of the many sets used in the filming of *Doctor Who*, this little-known Welsh treasure offers a lot more than just a backdrop to the diabolical deeds of the cyber men!

Set in a quiet valley outside Cardiff, the gardens are outstanding for their diverse horticulture from global plant-hunting trips as well as trials and the propagation of new species. They include themed garden rooms, two productive walled gardens, arboretum, fern garden, rock garden, parterre and what has now been identified as one of the most important woody plant collections in the NT.

The gardens contain

155 County Champion trees and shrubs, including 17 Britain and Ireland Champion trees, (a further two Champion trees are recorded on Dyffryn Lane) and 113 Wales Champions. One of the Champion trees, *Acer griseum*, has enormous scientific and botanical significance; it was grown from seed collected by the plant hunter Ernest Wilson in 1901 and planted at Dyffryn in 1911.

The Edwardian design and planting are the legacy of a unique and close collaboration between Dyffryn's owner plantsman Reginald Cory and landscape architect Thomas Mawson in the early twentieth century. Before the NT took over the gardens a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund was given to Vale of Glamorgan council to reinstate large parts of the gardens at Dyffryn including replacing the enormous and dilapidated glasshouse. This year we shall be



Wisteria at the front of Dyffryn House. Photo by Rita White

continuing the work by restoring three of the garden rooms back to their 1920's splendour. Working from watercolours painted by Edith Adie in 1923 and a handful of black-and-white photographs commissioned by Cory, the Pompeian Garden, Paved Court and Reflecting Pool are being transformed over the spring and summer. We are returning as many original plants to these garden rooms as we can identify from the watercolours and photographs; unfortunately no other records of the planting

remain. The restoration will include repairs to stonework and paving, new planting schemes and reinstating benches, statues and urns to the gardens.

This project marks the beginning of a future plan of restoration and rejuvenation that will see Dyffryn Gardens

returned to the grandeur and celebration it enjoyed in its heyday. It will not become a period piece for we shall continue to develop the plant collection with the same pioneering spirit that Cory himself instilled into the garden.

Whether you're searching for film sets,

seeking out potential plant swaps (Trust gardeners will be frisked for plant material on their way out!) or just want to see what we're up to and discover somewhere new, Dyffryn is the perfect place to relax and immerse yourself in the creation of Cory and Mawson.

Friends of Dyffryn AGM 2015

By Val Caple

Many thanks to all the friends who supported the Committee by attending the AGM.

The business was dealt with quickly as there were no changes in the Committee or other issues requiring discussions. The Honorary Treasurer reported that the balance stood at £2682.28 on 1st April 2015 compared with £5888.92 on 1st April 2014. This was mainly due to the donation of £3500 to Dyffryn for the new buggy.

John Kirk, the Acting Chairman, and Barbara Hodges, the Honorary Secretary, spoke of the many successful events held in 2014/2015 and thanked all those who

contributed or attended the visits and talks.

Absent members missed the chance to hear and talk to some of the garden staff.

Geraldine Donovan was very pleased with the visitor numbers last year, and so far this year. The highlight was the visit by TRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. To celebrate the occasion a tree was planted in their honour. 2014 was the year which celebrated Reginald Cory's passion for Dahlias, with splendid display for many months. These tubers have been carefully lifted and stored, and will be on view again later this year.

Dyffryn had a stand at the RHS show in Cardiff and were surprised how many visitors were not aware of Dyffryn gardens. Gerry asked members to continue to promote the gardens

She also spoke of the staff who had left and the new ones who were already making their mark.

Stephanie Evans, the Conservation expert for S and W Wales, spoke of the Conservation management Plan (available at www.friendsofdwyffryn.org.uk) and the first project to spend £150,000 on the Garden Rooms Project restoring the Pompeian Garden, the Reflecting Pool and the Paved Court. Most of the money is going on and repairing, reinstating or replacing the fountain,

stonework, statuary and seating using old photos and paintings as guides.

Sandra Duran (acting head gardener) spoke of the sterling work being done by the volunteers in the House and the Garden and the

planting plans for 2015.

Finally we were introduced to the Chris Flynn, the new head gardener who joined on June 5th. He is currently the Assistant Head Garden at Clivedon.

Garden Room Project

By Jen Park, Visitor Experience Assistant

Dyffryn Gardens is a hive of activity this week as gardeners; conservationists and builders help return these lacklustre gardens back to their former glory.

So far statues have been removed to be restored, urns are in the hands of conservationists and plants are being grown off-site for the big reveal in the summer, and that's just for starters!

This week marks the first week of the restoration work being started in earnest. Workmen will be on-site continuously from now to July repointing paving, plastering and fixing crumbling steps.

The expert team from Clivedon conservation have taken the statue of Pomona to their workshop to replace her missing hand and foot and are recasting a mould for Flora for the Pompeian Garden. They will also be refitting the fountain so that once again visitors can hear the trickle of water drifting through the gardens.

Geraldine Donovan comments "It's wonderful to see so much care and attention go into this project from so many experts. Parts of these gardens were restored in 1998 but more was needed and the level of detail this project will achieve will make these



Experts at work

rooms extra special places to visit. Watching the gardens changing a little bit each day is really exciting. The process is just as exciting as the prospect of the end result."

The rooms will be finished and open to the public this summer. The work will be going on throughout the spring and summer which may mean occasional disruption to the areas, however the house and gardens will remain open as normal. Stop by over the spring and summer to see the gardens transform.

Packwood House By Barbara Hodges

A house to dream of, a garden to dream in.

These words were quoted by a guest at Packwood House in the 1930's - it was one of the many quotations made by visitors to Graham Baron Ash's home during their visits.

Baron Ash, as he liked to be known, was an unmarried man of wealth and discrimination who extensively remodelled the small and intimate Tudor House with a view for glamour, quality and conservation. His wealth came from a galvanised steel business in Birmingham as well as his investments in stocks and shares. He was a collector and conservationist - importing and using articles from other houses that were facing destruction. He added rooms and converted a barn into a Great Hall during 1927 where his visitors enjoyed dancing on the sprung floor.

Baron Ash was an orderly and fastidious man and made it clear in his memorandum of wishes how the rooms should be set out and that fresh flowers should decorate them for visitors to enjoy.

During 1927 Queen Mary stayed in one of the bedrooms to relax after her journey - Baron Ash was so proud of this that he had a plaque put up to mark the occasion.

As well as the beautifully presented house there are extensive gardens including a magnificent kitchen garden, walks and trails. Unfortunately I did not take advantage of these as it was pouring with rain and by the time the sun appeared it

was time to board the coach for the journey home. I have decided that I must go back.

In 1941 Packwood house was donated to the National Trust and Baron Ash switched his attention to a moated castle in Suffolk.



Packwood House and gardens

Museum of Carpet in Kidderminster

Photos by Anthea Major

Before the visit to Packwood House members were given a tour of the with a guided tour of the museum with the chance to see live demonstrations of their Victorian handlooms and working power looms



Discovering an Arts and Crafts Gem

By Mary Evans

This contribution is not about a recent FOD visit but a discovery on a recent visit which I think will interest our members.

Based at the delightful medieval market town of Ludlow my husband and I spent an interesting week exploring southern Shropshire, a

county about which we knew little. It reminded us very much of our county of Monmouthshire with its rolling hills and castles. Between the 15th and 17th centuries Ludlow was the Welsh Capital with the Council of Wales and the Marches based at the town. Today it has a great deal to offer in terms of architecture, eating places and several National Trust properties within close proximity. One of these is Croft Castle and Parkland which last

year recruited as its Manager the acting House Manager at Tredegar House where I am a room guide.

But our surprising discovery was a little further afield near Wolverhampton. Wightwick Manor is a late Victorian house built in 2 stages in 1887 and 1893, commissioned by the industrialist Theodore Mander, a paint manufacturer.

The Mander family had a great interest in William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites and in 1937 presented the Manor to the National Trust. It is one of the best surviving examples of a house built and furnished under the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement and only one of a few houses where the work of William Morris can still be seen used as he intended. The house is lavishly furnished with Morris wallpapers, textiles and carpets, William de Morgan tiles, and paintings by Ford Maddox, Burne-Jones, Millais and Ruskin.

And the bonus for FOD members is the Edwardian gardens with their skilful layout taken from the designs of 1904 and 1910 by Thomas Mawson. His plans were not fully implemented but since the mid 1980s a programme of restoration and improvement has reinstated some of the lost Mawson features. We also learned that like our own Belle Vue Park in Newport designed by Thomas Mawson. Wolverhampton's East Park was the result of a competition launched by the council. Mawson's design was successful and he was present at its opening in 1896.

Our visit to Wightwick Manor took place in late autumn last year



Wightwick Manor



Belle View Park



Band stand at Belle Vue Park with views over the Bristol Channel

and we would be very happy to revisit the Manor. A possible venue for Mary Ponting to consider?

Subscriptions & Gift Aid

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

Everyone who was a member last year should already have received a request for Subscriptions due for 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

For those members who have not yet responded a form is included.

Please remember that if you are not a member you cannot attend events held in Dyffryn, and that you will be asked to pay extra for outside events and visits.

We would be grateful if you could sign the Gift Aid declaration - if appropriate - and also give us an email address if you have one.

We look forward to hearing from you

National Trust Events to be held in Dyffryn Gardens

From Rhiannon Gamble,
Interpretation and Learning Officer

Meet the Gardener.

Monday-Thursday, 11am –1 pm,
June—July (weather dependant).
Check the blackboard on the day to see where you can see the garden team working and ask our gardeners questions and take home some tips

Heritage Pruning Techniques, -

Summer Pruning 19th, 26th & 2nd, 9th
September, 11am—1pm
Botanical Art courses 13th June, 18th
July, 15th August. Booking Essential

Late Night Opening

We are trailing late night opening in the summer with six late night Thursdays 23rd, 30th July, 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th August.

Bat Night

7th August, 7.30 pm. Booking essential

Story room project

The new project in the house will be starting in July.

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

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.

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 Kapunda Plants



Wednesday 5th August	Yeo Valley Organic garden See Application Form for details
Wednesday 26th August	Bruce McDonald to organise a walk around Wenvoe Orchards Please contact Barbara for further information
Thursday 22nd October 2015	Coffee Morning. Talk by a volunteer from the Cowbridge Physic Garden 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
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. Details to follow
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

For more Information, please contact

Mrs Mary Ponting, 4 Church Terrace, St Mary Church, Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan, C71 7LU, maryponting@talk21.com
or Mrs Barbara Hodges, Greenfields, Eagleswell Road, Boverton, Llantwit Major, CF61 1UF. fodyffryn.sec@virgin.net