



## Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

### 110th Anniversary of Dyffryn Gardens.

By Joan Andrews.

The National Trust celebrated the 110th year of Dyffryn Gardens and Mawson's design of the garden with a variety of events over the summer. The Friends of Dyffryn were invited to hold a celebratory lunch as part of the celebrations, and this was held on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

The rain came down, Gerry Donovan, our friend and the general manager at Dyffryn Gardens was detained in Bristol and we had to use the Exhibition Hall rather than the glories of the house because of the number of members who accepted the invitation.

Despite this we enjoyed each others company. The cakes made by Clare Williamson tasted as good as they looked. The musical entertainment, Matthew Clark singing and accompanied by his friend Ben on piano, even for the tone deaf among us was much enjoyed.

We thank Barbara for arranging the event, Mary for recommending the musicians for their performance and Clare for her baking skills.



The afternoon was topped off by a splendid tour of a rather damp Dyffryn with our head gardener, Chris Flynn.



Chris Flynn guiding members around the gardens, including a visit to the pigs while Ceridwen feeds them



## Get into your Garden From Barbara Hodges

It has been shown by various studies that:-

1) Gardening can help to lower blood pressure, increase feelings of well-being and help people with

depression.

2) Mowing the lawn releases a chemical and freshly mown grass can help people feel happy and relaxed.

(You could just sit near the lawn and watch someone else mow it!)

## Dyffryn Events 2016

### Botanical art course

Join Debbie Devauden for a one day course and learn how to draw a botanical subject from the beautiful gardens.

Saturday 17th September + 3 other dates. 10.00 to 16.00  
Booking essential

### Welly week

Grab your most colourful wellies and raincoat for loads of things to do during half term

8 days from Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2016,  
10.00 to 17.00

For more information contact  
Dyffryn staff or see:  
[http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/  
dyffryn-gardens](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens)

## Visit to Blaencwm Cottage & Aberglasney

By Rev. Margaret Stark

The day was bright but a cold wind blew and we had to dodge the occasional heavy shower. Our skilful coach driver negotiated the narrow lanes of Carmarthenshire to bring some 28 of us safely to Blaencwm Cottage which is set in a wooded valley with a stream flowing along the bottom of the garden.

Up and down and around the little garden we went and in and out of sheds, admiring Pat and Robin's vast range of auricula plants. Also known as *Bears' Ears* because of the leaf shape, they were at their bright best in late April, showing off a great variety of colours and patterns. Pat and Robin are holders of the National Collection of Border Auriculas; they explained later in a talk held in the house at Aberglasney that a perfect auricular petal is rounded rather than pointed and many have a farina (flour-like) deposit.

There were other plants to see, of course, including the more sombre hellebores and dainty violas. I must also mention Dylan (not a plant but a lovable collie dog) who basked in vicarious glory, and the lovely lady who sustained us with coffee and Welsh cakes.

After a greatly enjoyable hour rain fell so we scuttled back to our coach.

Blaencwm garden—and Dylan



Fifteen minutes driving and we were at Aberglasney. There were some gardens in medieval times but records of house and gardens have survived only from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The magnificent house, with its Georgian/Regency façade, had an exhibition of art work on the ground floor. Outside we found the Ninfarium, a sheltered warm and humid area, full of brightly coloured sub-tropical and exotic plants. The gardens as a whole, Joseph the Head Gardener told us, cover some 11½ acres, and at this time of year boast a great many varieties of flowering bulbs. For example, daffodils lined some of the walls in the Cloister Garden, and tulips and camassia were blooming in the Upper Walled Garden.

Joseph walked us through a new tunnel-shaped trellis where climbing roses will flower soon. And then to the Wild Garden with banks of primroses and bluebells; and then past some long-flowering magnolia trees with their narrow-petalled white blossoms. Another, older tunnel is formed of arched yew trees. Good food in the café, plants to buy in the shop, and then

back to Dyffryn on our coach; all in all, an enjoyable and informative



Aberglasny



## Visit to Broadfield Court and Stockton Bury

By Rev. Margaret Stark

We travelled to Herefordshire on a dull and chilly but dry morning. We received an exuberant welcome at Broadfield Court from Alexandra James, a remarkable woman who is not only an actress but also the owner of a vineyard started by her father-in-law in 1971. She showed us around some of the estate, pointing out a fine tulip tree and a giant redwood, the recently replanted David Austin Rose Garden (David Austin is Alex's cousin), and a large kitchen garden; and then to the vineyard, with its rows of carefully trained Seyve Villard, Reichensteiner and other white grapes. She explained that rose bushes are grown at the end of rows to act as a warning against disease.

In the restaurant/shop building on arrival, we had consumed coffee and yummy cake; later, a ploughman's lunch including three cheeses, freshly baked bread and salad dressed with the famous original Granny Tiggy sauce which Alex's sons prepare. But before lunch we did some wine tasting. Alex showed us how to note the meniscus, the legs (!) and the practically colourless appearance of a white wine that has no additives. We sampled some six fine wines, mostly of a dry sort, and some champagne, and enjoyed ourselves immensely. The



Broadfield Court and Alex

splendid lunch was certainly needed afterwards to soak up the alcohol! And then we spent our last half-hour (and money) in the shop. A very instructive and enjoyable morning.

Stockton Bury Gardens cover four acres of ground surrounded by farming land and is the official garden of *The English Garden* magazine. We were given a short introduction by Ray Treasure, the head gardener, before setting off to explore. The Gardens are planted with a vast array of flowering species, some quite unusual. At the outset, our attention was caught by the walls of the medieval farm buildings which were dripping with glorious racemes of wisteria. As we wandered around, we came across a grotto, a pillar garden, a mock ruined chapel and (the clever ones among us) a secret garden.

Around and among them were lady's slipper orchids, tree peonies, Solomon's seal, shelves of potted auriculas, an araucaria tree, camassias, lupins, peonies, euphorbias, tulips and magnolia trees, and many, many more usual and unusual

plants and trees. We also spotted a terracotta Peter Rabbit guarding the onions in the kitchen garden, sun dials, water features and wonderfully weed-free lawns. In an adjoining field, somnolent sheep lay contentedly snoring. Elsewhere, a row of watering cans, each one smaller than the next, could have been Daddy, Mummy and their offspring!

Purchases were made in the plant shop before we headed for the tithe barn where we were served delicious cake and tea. Keith, our helpful driver, told us that our coach had a defective water pump and had been losing water; he had made a temporary repair but, for safety's sake, we changed coaches at Raglan. It had been a splendid day. Thank you, again, Mary, for your unobtrusive organisational skills!



Stockton Bury

## Fern Afternoon: 19 Westfield Rd, Pontypridd

By Margaret Stark

What better way to spend a wet Sunday afternoon in late June than to potter round a woodland garden near Pontypridd! And it was well worth getting a bit wet. We had come especially to see Brian and Sue's fine collection of ferns (we go to view their snowdrops in winter). In the dry of their bungalow, we were able to watch through the window bird after bird visiting their feeding station. Brian gave a talk on the characteristics of ferns – including the often manifold divisions of each frond, their favoured habitats, how they reproduce, and their place in the evolution of plants. He showed us a number of different examples, ranging from the small hart's tongue fern to larger ones of the *Dryopteris* species.

While Sue gave a talk on propagation, some of us wandered around the wooded garden a bit more, noting other plants that were in flower, including geraniums, euphorbia, alliums, roses and orchids, some interesting trees – one with a climbing rose (Paul's Himalayan Musk) in its upper branches - and moss-covered stone walls and pathways. Wild plants popped up here and there, including a variegated dog's mercury, the pyramid orchid and the quite rare

herb paris. Back indoors, we dried off over a raffle of plants in aid of Dyffryn Gardens, and slices of scrumptious home-made (by Brian) parkin and carrot cake, plus tea or coffee.

Thank you very much, Brian and Sue, for imparting your expertise and for your hospitality. And we are most grateful once again to Mary for organising another enjoyable Friends' outing.

### Fern garden



## Snowdrop appeal

We made £109 from the raffle etc. on the Fern afternoon. The Dockerill's would not take any money for refreshments and they donated plants to the raffle. The money has been donated to the Dyffryn Snowdrop Appeal as Brian and Sue's other love is snowdrops.



## Coach Trip to Camers and Rodmarton Manor

By Rev. Margaret Stark

After a pleasurable drive into west Gloucestershire, we alighted at Camers near Old Sodbury, a listed Elizabethan farmhouse and private garden which was open especially for us that day. Tea/coffee and cake fortified us to venture out into the garden. This covers 4 acres, 2½ acres of which are occupied by cultivated plants with wild flowers popping up here and there. We were handed a plan of the garden, showing the great variety of smaller gardens making up the whole. These

included the Hot Garden containing fiery red lilies and other 'hot' plants, and a newer area with its statuary and water features and glasswork. There was also an area with ferns, and then, down the stepped terrace from the house, bushes of glorious pink hydrangeas. Lower down in the garden was a tunnel of established trees. On the edge of the woods the figure of a stag peered through the vegetation. Elsewhere we came across a hand carved out of the trunk of a tree and wooden birds of prey about to land on it. In the small garden containing colourful double daisies, a tame young robin entertained us by



Camers and robin





hopping very close to our feet whilst trying to elude our attempts to photograph him for posterity. Some of us bought plants to take home including magnificent sedums.

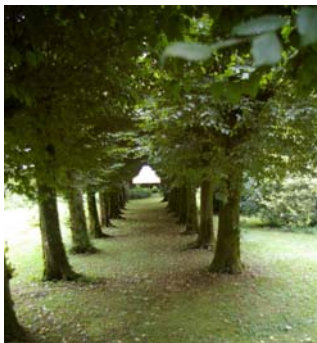
Camers is an inspiration; we came away with so many ideas to try out in our own gardens.

Forty minutes later we arrived at Rodmarton Manor and Garden, built at the height of the Arts and Crafts movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by members of the Biddulph family. Skilled local craftsmen had worked on site using locally sourced materials and traditional methods. Lunch was served and then we were taken round the Grade 1 listed house by a member of the family.

The beautifully crafted furniture was created by the Barnsley brothers and Peter Waals. This included a fine grand piano decorated with tiny images of flowers, desks, chests of drawers and tables

and chairs of all sizes, plus a beautiful half tester with scallop shells carved around the edge designed for Margaret Biddulph nee Howard.

After visiting the chapel, we were given a guided tour of the vast garden by another member of the Biddulph family. We heard that the garden had been planned by Ernest Barnsley and planted by the first head gardener, William Scrubey, and Margaret Biddulph who had herself studied horticulture. The garden covers some 8 acres and is notable for its herbaceous borders, topiary and vistas. We wandered round the herbaceous borders where the hollyhocks etc. grew to such a height that there was access also at the rear of each border. Elsewhere we found many types of dahlia, and fruit trees burdened with apples and pears ready for picking, and other interesting trees and bushes. As we walked



Rodmartin Manor Garden



around and looked back there were many fine views of the

house. Finally, at the edge of the garden there was a ha-ha which served to keep pasturing animals from encroaching on the plants and lawns whilst allowing an uninterrupted view over the fields. The day had been cloudy but, thankfully, the rain held off. Many thanks once again to Mary for organising yet another enjoyable

outing.



## Extracts from the minutes of the AGM

**From Barbara Hodges**

Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016

### John Kirk: Vice-Chairman

John said that it is imperative that a Chairperson is found for the organisation as after three years he is unable to continue to Chair meetings on a temporary basis. He said that it is a joy it is to see the transformation of the Pompeian Garden and Paved Court and encouraged us all to visit them.

### Joan Andrews: Treasurer

The financial statement for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 was distributed. Joan The balance is £4,042.93 as against £2,682.28 last year.

### Geraldine Donovan: General Manager Dyffryn Gardens

The Fire at Clendon house caused management to have a re think about upgrading the fire system at Dyffryn House. The attic will need

to be divided - Bats have to be taken into consideration before this can happen. There is continuing decay to some of the original stone work; this will need work to be done in the future. Fundraising projects include the sale of second hand books, so far £9.000 has been raised. Another buggy is necessary.

### Constitution.

The Constitution has been amended to include our connection with the NT. It was accepted with a majority.

The meeting was followed by a very informative visit to the Propagation unit and the biomass boiler centre with Hazel Robinson.



## Programme of Events 2016-2017.

**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 Aberglasny**



Monday 17th October 2016.	Coach trip to Stourhead  <b>See Application form for details.</b>
Wednesday 5th October 2016	Coffee Morning. Presentation by Alan Kearsley-Evans (National Trust) on the management of Whiteford Burrows and Sand Dunes 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Tuesday 15th November 2016	Coffee Morning. Sally James from Lydney Park Gardens 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Saturday 19th November 2016	Victorian Christmas Fair - Picton Castle & Gardens  <b>See Application form for details.</b>
Wednesday 15th December 2016	Christmas Lunch at 'The Blue Anchor, Aberthaw  Details to follow
Thursday 26th January 2017	Coffee Morning. Talk by Joan Andrews entitled 'The Gardens of France' 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Wednesday February 8th 2017	Coffee Morning. Presentation by Rita White entitled 'Le Paris des Parisiens' 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre
Tuesday March 7th 2017	Coffee Morning. Presentation by Gwerfyl Gardner entitled 'Treachery of the Blue Books' 10.30 am in the Cory Education Centre

### For more Information, please contact

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