

# Spring/Summer 2019 FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



## Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

### Dyffryn News

#### Extracts from the Dyffryn Newsletters Apr to Sep 2019

The works on the canal and Fountain Pool have been completed and the canal planted with waterlilies. The fountain was turned on once the aquatic plants had established.

Dyffryn has received some stunning new benches crafted by Oxford Planters from UK Oak. The design is taken from St Fagan's to fit the period and the parkland setting.

We're marking 110 years since the Pompeian Garden was built, giving prominence to Dyffryn's garden design drawing influence from the classical styling, grand architecture and stunning gardens of Italy. The three principle areas that bring this theme to life are the Pompeian Garden, the Mediterranean Garden and the Upper Walled Garden. Though the dappled shade cast by the unfurling leaves on the Vine Walk

are very reminiscent of a walk in the great gardens of Florence. Gardens have the power to transport you all around the world and as the sunlight glints on the arcing water from our fountains, it's easy to feel you've stepped into a Mediterranean summer holiday just minutes from home. The Italian Garden theme has been continued in the kitchen garden.

The South Front restoration has started, restoring long-lost views and reuniting the design of house and garden without the barrier of overgrown fastigate yews. I cannot wait to take the steps of the overlook on the Italian Terrace and look across to the treescape of the arboretum and take in all the stunning autumn colour.

The Volunteers are already preparing displays for Christmas. The illuminated Christmas tree trail will run from 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. To 5<sup>th</sup> Jan. will be along hard paths and the house will be floodlit.

## The Merchant's House and Malverleys

By Revd. Margaret Stark

A coach bearing 36 of the Friends travelled to Marlborough on Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> April. The weather was bright with the occasional shower. We descended on the Merchant's House in the High Street which was built by Thomas Bayly, a prosperous silk merchant, following the Great Fire of Marlborough in 1653. During the years 1653 - 1700 a fine timber and brick building was constructed. We were guided round the house by Jane and Trisha who pointed out the interior panelling with its brilliant wall paintings and a commanding oak staircase which has rare paintings of balustrades on the stair walls. The bedrooms have four-poster beds and handy commodes. Rooms were spacious, but the floors had interesting slopes! Work is still going on to reveal more painted decoration. The beautiful Panelled Chamber has a large oriel window with an unusual 17<sup>th</sup> century stained glass panel in the shape of a sundial. There were demonstrations of various craft works.

To the rear of the



Modern craftwork



Lower Garden

house is a lovingly restored town house garden. It was designed by Jeffrey Galvin-Wright, its construction and planting carefully researched to be as close as possible to a formal yet utilitarian garden belonging to a Puritan family in the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The garden was completed in 2007 and opened by one of the house's patrons, Sir Roy Strong. The lower garden is adorned with tulips, while at the top are a herb garden and an orchard growing old varieties of apples and pears. The bee hives are not occupied, for safety reasons!



Four Poster



Contemporary Clothes



Commode



While you Watch I Fly



After lunch in Marlborough, we set off for Malverleys, a new English flower garden set within the grounds of a country estate. The gardens were begun in 2010 and cover 10 acres, though part is used to pasture sheep and cattle. The gardens were designed by the head gardener, Mat Reese together with the owners, and are influenced particularly by Great Dixter in Sussex and the works of iconic gardeners Christopher Lloyd, William Robinson and Vita Sackville-West.

Mat took us on a tour of the gardens. We saw tall yew hedges around themed 'rooms' – a cool garden, a hot garden, a cloister garden with roses, and a large pond garden; the reflections in the pond were lovely, including the statuary at one end and a magnificent tree at the side. There is a walled garden for fruit and vegetables and cut flowers, also a white garden with small fountains overseen by a fine statue of Neptune.

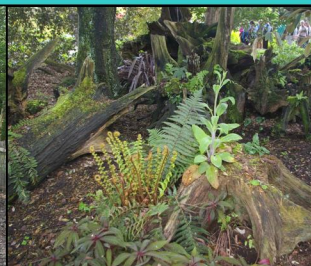
Generally, the gardens have long borders and many plants in the terraces. And there is a stumpery with ferns and other shade



Malverleys House



Hen House & Chickens



Stumpery

plants; and a topiary meadow. A delightful tree house springs out of a wooded area and behind that a hen house with runner ducks as well as hens and a rooster. A dark Brahma hen with intriguing feathered feet pecked about outside with her chick beside her.

After tea/coffee and cake hospitably provided in a barn, we returned to Dyffryn, thanking Keith our driver and Mary for arranging yet another successful trip.



Reflecting Pool



Scalloped Wall

## Visit to Lodge Park and the Cotswold Wildlife Park

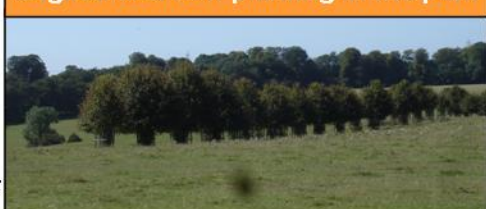
By Jean Bispham

On Wednesday 18 September 2019, thirty members of the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens woke early to be at Dyffryn before 8.30am. There they boarded a coach which took them to Lodge Park on the Sherborne Estate in Gloucestershire, the UK's only surviving 17th Century Grandstand. The site is owned by the National Trust and recorded in the National Heritage List as a designated Grade I listed building. The site is not normally open on a Wednesday, so the group had the site to themselves. The volunteer guide, Mike, split members into two groups. Whilst one group wandered in the grounds or enjoyed an included coffee and cake, the other group was shown around the building.

Mike was an excellent guide, explaining how John 'Crump' Dutton created Lodge Park in 1634 to indulge his passion for gambling, banqueting and entertaining. He built the Grandstand as a place to have a fun day out with his friends and family. There was no sleeping accommodation there at the time. Invited guests were able to look down on a mile-long track from either the balcony or the roof terrace. On either side of the track six-foot-high walls were built. Between the walls two greyhound type dogs chased a deer. The deer was able to escape at the end of the race to the deer park by jumping a ditch too wide for the dogs. Pairs of dogs raced throughout the day until an overall winner was proclaimed. No animal was hurt but Dutton and his friends may well have lost



The Charles Bridgeman plan and the original and new planting in the park



considerable amounts of money as they placed bets on each dog.





lost considerable amounts of money as they placed bets on each dog.

By the time the two tours had finished, the sun was shining and it was sunshine all day. Members re-boarded the coach for a fifteen minute journey through beautiful countryside, arriving at the Cotswold Wildlife Park in time for lunch. After sustenance, members were free to wander the extensive park in small groups. There was an amazing variety of animals and birds, which included giant anteaters, very large tortoises, amusing meerkats, beautiful parrots, majestic lions, unusual sheep, goats and guinea pigs, and much, much more. Some members walked through the grounds; others boarded the small train which travelled around the site. At 3pm, members were able to hear a talk by a keeper at the penguin pool. Although the talk given by one of the keepers was interesting, it was hard to concentrate as whilst he was talking, another keeper was throwing pieces of fish over the heads of the penguins. They swerved and



darted around the pool trying to ensure they got their fair share. It was a lovely sight. The keepers made sure the older penguins who stayed away from the competitive ducking and diving of the younger ones, were also fed.

Mary Ponting is a superb organiser and once again everything went to



## A Summer Musical Evening at Dyffryn

By Dr. Paul Knoyles

A very enjoyable Musical Evening was held in the Gallery at Dyffryn on June 11. The success of the previous event in 2018 encouraged the committee to organise a similar evening and the response was very positive. The St Hilary Choir, led by their choir master Chris Mowat again offered their services gratis. Those present enjoyed a wide repertoire including Welsh favourites. The concert was preceded by a very attractive buffet prepared by Hannah the catering manager ably supported by her staff.

The committee is very grateful to the Membership for their generosity which has allowed the Society to reach its goal of raising £3300, our contribution towards the cost of a second buggy, much needed to cope with increasing visitor numbers.

After the concert, Gerry Donovan kindly gave us a tour of those parts of the Gardens undergoing development, part of the long term plan to replicate the original designs of Reginald Cory.

Thanks was given to all who had played a part in organising a successful evening and underlines the



value that members attach to social gatherings. The committee will take this into account when organising future events.

## Extracts from the Friends of Dyffryn AGM

By Barbara Hodges

### Report from Chair

**Dr. Paul Knoyle** said that the society had enjoyed another successful year well supported by members. Membership has increased and he extended a warm welcome to the new

members. News about the activities can be followed on the Web site and Facebook.

### Treasurers Report

**Dr. Joan Andrews** said that the balance at the end of the year is £7,580.53 as against £5,876.48 last year.

John Tovey, Mary Ponting's father and a loyal friend to Dyffryn sadly



died last year. In his memory friends and family have made further donations to our fund for a second buggy at Dyffryn. This fund is augmented by other donations at our coffee mornings and Christmas Party.

### **Hon. Secretary's Report**

Mrs Barbara Hodges commented that once again we have had interesting presentations at The Cory Education Centre as well as outings to other venues. These include an interesting insight into "The Future of Dyffryn" by Geraldine Donovan.

### **General Managers Report – Ms. Geraldine Donovan.**

This has been a roller coaster year for the gardens. March and April were a complete contrast to last year and targets were exceeded – over 28,000. The ambition is to get 275,000 within the next five years.

There has been a step up in Marketing – some people in Cardiff still haven't heard about Dyffryn. Advertising is now on buses, bus shelters, large digital displays e.g., the Capitol Shopping centre. The fact that visitors can now cross the River Severn for free is in our favour. The vision for Dyffryn is to be internationally recognised. Dyffryn is famous but aiming to be better. It has fantastic staff and volunteers ranging from photographers, buggy drivers and catering personnel.

**Changes in Staff.** The Assistant head gardener seconded from Clifton is going back and five candidates are being interviewed.

**House.** Exterior stone repairs to the Mansion will take place costing in the region of £300,000. The Margaret

Lyndsey painting 'Imprisoned Soul' is being restored. A Gentleman in Pontypool saw the sister painting on sale in America and will loan it to Dyffryn.

**Garden changes.** The yew trees are being removed and replaced with new ones. The old ones will be used in the garden e.g., the stumps used in the stumpery and the rest of the wood turned into useful objects. The remaining pieces will be shredded and composted. Nothing will be wasted. The new Yew trees will be shaped into columnar style and planted as soon as the site is clear. This will open up the front of the house and enable it be seen more clearly.

The shrubbery at the side of house by the panel garden will be removed and unusual shrubs planted. Gerry thanked everyone for fund raising for the second buggy, a smaller one that already in use. Thanks were also given to the Friends who have given books to be sold: £27,000 was raised last year. A book auction site is referred to when more unusual books are given.

The AGM was followed by a tour of the poly tunnels behind the scenes by Chris Flynn, the Head Gardener. We were all very jealous of the fantastic,





well grown plants, especially the succulent displays . If the pots had been smaller we would have been tempted to slip some in out pockets!

## Kew Gardens and the Dale Chihuly glass sculptures

By Dr. Val Caple

The coach trip to Kew was organised by the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust but Friends of Dyffryn and members of other local groups were invited. Pick-up points were Cowbridge, Culverhouse Cross and Newport, everyone was on time and we actually left Newport with 48 passengers 10 minutes early! The only delay on the road was between the M4 and Kew itself, so we arrived, full of enthusiasm at 12.00.

Once there everyone scattered – some were looking mainly for the famous glass sculptures by the international contemporary glass artist Dale Chihuly. The

exhibition is called 'Reflections on Nature' and were planted or hung around the garden in beds, glasshouses and other buildings. Others planned to explore Kew itself with its myriad of plant displays.

Mary and I took a route based on the plan of the sculptures, but was mainly garden based. We started off in the walled garden connected to Kew Palace, which was recommended by a friend who knew of my involvement with the Cowbridge Physic Garden. The planting here included many herbs which we have in Cowbridge and the well designed labels gave



information on their uses and history. I was interested in which plants were included and must





now research whether I can recommend any new ones for Cowbridge.

Our next stop was the garden attached of the Royal Kitchen. This contained a different variety of plants for use in food – fruit, vegetables and herbs. Again it was beautifully laid out and maintained

We passed several amazing sculptures on the way to the Palm House and admired others outside the building. My favourite was in the Lily House, but the one hanging from the roof of the Temperate House was truly spectacular. I am still mystified as to how they were made, transported and constructed.

After a brief lunch, we moved away from the 'glass route' to visit the Princess of Wales Conservatory, where it was easy to get lost among the various rooms



where different environments sustained a range of exotic plants. We then walked through the students' kitchen gardens, where we

checked out the tomato plants, and back to the coach waiting at the Elizabeth Gate ready for the smooth journey home

## A Visit to Marimurta Botanical Garden

By Barbara Hodges.

Carlos Faust, 1874 - 1952, was born in Germany. During the 1920's, with a vision and passion for nature, he devoted his hopes, efforts and fortune into making a beautiful garden in Blanes, Costa Brava, Spain - known as the Marimurta Botanical Garden. The word Marimurta is derived from the name myrtle.

The garden is dedicated to Mediterranean plants - approximately 4,000 species. There are also sub tropical plants, a large collection of cacti and plants from arid areas e.g., central America and Africa as well as those endemic to Catalonia.

It is built on steep slopes, has a large lake and a long vista of steps leading to the Linnaeus Temple.

In spring the steps are a vision of pink provided by Drosanthemum plants, known as the Midday flower, and Queens Hair. This plant is a native of South Africa and requires a lot of sun to bloom well. (no problem in the Costa Brava).

The steps represent a

promise of love between two people - weddings are held in this area with the bride walking down the steps to the Linnaeus Temple for the ceremony. From the Temple there are beautiful views of the sea and tiny coves hidden amongst the rocks.

In mid October there were still a lot of flowers blooming providing an explosion of colour in some areas, the tall bamboo stems were whispering in the breeze and the warm sun was shining, a very pleasant day was spent there.





## Programme of Events 2019/2020.

**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 Malverleys.**



Wednesday 16th October 2019	Propagation meeting with Chris Flynn. 2.00 pm meeting in the Cory Education Centre  <b>Numbers are limited so please let Barbara Hodges know if you would like to come</b>
Wednesday 20th November 2019	Coffee morning with a presentation by Eirian Edwards entitled "Mainly Orchids". 10.30am to 12.00M.D. in the Cory Education Centre
Tuesday 10th December 2019	Christmas Lunch at the Blue Anchor, Aberthaw  <b>See Application Form for Details</b>
Wednesday 15th January 2020	Gardeners' Question Time lead by Dyffryn Staff. 11.00am in the Cory Education Centre.

**For more Information about above events, please contact**

Mrs Mary Ponting or Mrs Barbara Hodges (addresses on page 11) or visit [www.dyffryngardens.org.uk](http://www.dyffryngardens.org.uk)

For National Trust events contact Dyffryn Gardens