

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



Friends of Dyffryn Gardens Newsletter

AGM May 2022

By Gerry Donovan.

The AGM was well attended; in fact the Cory Education Centre was full. It was lovely to see such support for the society and people coming out to meet again.

The committee was re-elected and a request put to members for anyone interested in joining the committee, particularly to help on arranging talks during the autumn and winter.

After the AGM proceedings, an illustrated talk was given on the proposed stonework repairs for the mansion. The speakers were Ellie Jones, NT Project Manager and Sarah Parr, NT Building Surveyor for the South Wales Region. At that point in time the project was waiting to get the full green light to proceed. Great preparation had been made in terms of researching the stone type and mapping all the priority problem areas. As extensive scaffolding was

going to be needed, there was an opportunity to include works other than stone repairs such as fixing the leaking flat roofs and improving the rainwater collection system to make it easier for the onsite staff to maintain it clear of nests and leaves.

As many of you will be aware, the green light was given, and the contractor has been on site during the summer. Scaffolding has been erected and most of the flat roof issues already resolved. Works will continue well into next year and before the scaffolding comes down the exterior will be refreshed with new paint to the render and windows. It will be a delight to see the mansion looking splendid again at the heart of the garden.

Since the AGM there have been several meetings between members of the Friends Committee and Lizzie Smith Jones, General Manager South East Wales, to discuss future collaborations.

Landough Castle, Cowbridge

By Cynthia M. Merrett

A bright, sunny, day welcomed the Friends of the Society to their first outdoor meeting since the outbreak of the Covid Pandemic in 2020. I, like many others, had never visited this amazing, restored, building before, and after a welcome by our new Chair person Gerry Donovan, we were treated to a guided tour by the owner and her gardener, followed by afternoon tea relaxing in the sunshine on the immaculate lawn alongside the house.

The lower part of the garden which surrounds the castle is allowed to remain semi natural, where wild flowers and shrubs flourish annually and where rabbits are kept at bay with wire netting in the early part of the year. This area is adjoined by a wood, containing many beech trees and underplanted with a grand display of snowdrops. At the edge of the wood a large Tulip tree was just beginning to show new life and we were told that in full flower it was a magnificent sight. The wooded area is very much on the slope but we all managed the climb back to the castle and the far side of the building which contained an impressive white summerhouse and a courtyard sheltered by the remains of the original old castle wall.

Another tranquil area was the decorative pond, at one time used for swimming and presently the result of hand clearing and reshaping to reveal a pleasant rest area which is fed by a small stream.

The castle has remained occupied, preserved and extended throughout its long history by various owners and for various reasons such as recuperation



for colliery children with chest disorders; by military personnel during the 2nd World War; and for Jewish refugee children during the same period.

While not the easiest

place to access because of the narrow country lanes, it provided a most enjoyable venue for our first return to outdoor activity as a Society after two stressful years.



Images

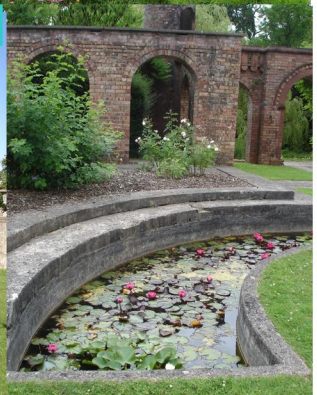
By Val Caple



July



October



Gilestone Manor

By R D White

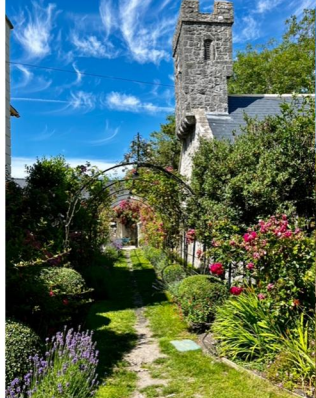
On a beautiful mid-July afternoon, over thirty Friends of Dyffryn Gardens assembled at Gilestone Manor in the vale of Glamorgan.

We were greeted warmly and given a short history of this Queen Anne Grade II listed manor, which dates back to the 14th century, and the changes which began in 2010 when it was acquired by Josh Llewellyn and Lorraine Garrad-Jones.

The head gardener, an articulate handsome young man then took us on a grand tour of the garden, or should I say estate, as it covers nine acres?

We began with the area nearest to the house where old out buildings have been transformed into luxury overnight stays for wedding guests and old roses cover the walls. A delightful village church is at the disposal of wedding ceremonies and has been lovingly restored.

As well as ancient roses, old apple trees have been identified and nurtured in their own orchard. Thousands of trees have been planted



as wind breaks each chosen for a specific quality. Old trees have been transformed into a children's fairy glen and

new bedding areas have been created, each with its own theme.

Finally, we emerge into the open where we

are in full view of the Bristol Channel, and a lake with ducks, which is the view directly in front of the Manor house.

After that comes the wedding walk and a multitude of animal enclosures (chickens, lama, sheep). More herbaceous borders and open lawns then the welcome sight of tea/ coffee and cake in the



wedding marquee.

A fantastic afternoon, thank you Mary! Yet another very successful trip



Manuka Honey

By Paul Knoyle

Manuka honey is made from the nectar of the flowers of the Manuka Tea Tree or bush, *Leptospermum Scoparium* a member of the Myrtle family. It dominates scrubland and forest areas on the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand and grows profusely. Its medicinal properties have been known as far back as 1769 when Capt. James Cook circumnavigated the Islands and his men made medicinal preparations and tea and beer from the leaves.

New Zealand produces 1700 tons of Manuka honey each year and is certified by the NZ Government. It is gathered from mid December to early February and has a cool but strong savoury taste. The finest honey is monofloral, so called because it comes predominantly from the Manuka tree or bush. It has healing and antibacterial properties and is effective against the potentially fatal staphylococcal and MRSA infections. The active ingredient is methylglyoxal (MGO) the



amount of which is indicated on the label of every jar. Another measure of potency and purity is the Unique Manuka Factor (UMF). The price of a jar also reflects its efficacy and can cost up to £100 a jar, hence the reference to “liquid gold”.

The antimicrobial properties of the honey has caught the imagination of hospital medical staff and researchers at Cardiff Metropolitan University with the creation of a bee garden complete with hives and specialist plants which it is hoped will allow further research into the antibacterial properties of Manuka honey. The honey will be used on infected wounds that are currently resistant to existing broad spectrum antibiotics. There is still much to learn about nature’s panacea.

Visit to Paris

By Marion Davis

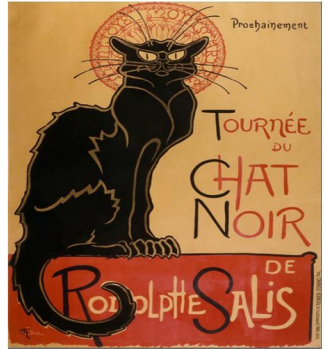
On March 29th Rita White treated us to a wonderful visit to Paris – to see the sights and to hear some very atmospheric French music. Our tour took in – the Musee D'Orsay, La Defense, Les Galleries Lafayette, the Palais Garnier, Montmartre, Les Bouquinistes de Paris and included photos from different viewpoints that showed us fascinating views of the city. The excellent photographs and images were brought to life by Rita's expert commentary and the accompanying music had been skilfully chosen for the different aspects of the city.

La Defense is Europe's largest purpose built business district and its location is an extension from the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Elysees. Unbelievably the Arc de Triomphe could fit under the main arch of La Defense. It has been planned with pedestrians in mind and has the benefit of numerous green spaces in which there are over sixty works of arts.

The Palais Garnier also known as The Paris

Opera was built between 1861 and 1875, a young architect Charles Garnier won the competition to design the building when he was only thirty-six. The building was commissioned by Emperor Napoleon III, and it included a separate entrance for the Emperor. It was made even more famous by the publication of the novel 'The Phantom of the Opera' by Gaston Leroux, and it is true that on one occasion one of the chandeliers came crashing down. The building was designed as a temple to music and the lyre motif can be seen everywhere. A more recent embellishment is the new ceiling painted by Marc Chagall in 1964.

Les Bouquinistes de Paris – the open air book sellers on the banks of the Seine are an instantly recognisable feature of Paris. It is thought that books have been sold on the Banks of the Seine since the mid 1500's although books could not be left overnight until permission was given in 1816. The familiar green boxes in which the books are stored and displayed are now an UNESCO World



Palace Garnier



Heritage Site. Rita showed us some very interesting black and white photographs which illustrated the history of the book shops which now cover 4km on both sides of the Seine.

The photographs taken from a variety of viewpoints to show different views of the city reminded us just how beautiful Paris is, with so many gardens and areas of green space. Rita's talk was a real tonic which was hugely enjoyed by everyone lucky enough to be there.

Dyffryn Fernant Garden

By Val Caple



Dyffryn Fernant GARDEN



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After Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed in May 2021 I escaped to Fishguard with my dog, still hesitant about close

human contact! After the months of Lockdown I have never appreciated the Pembrokeshire landscape quite as much

before.

Among the places we explored the most surprising was Dyffryn Fernant Garden, an RHS

partner garden 3 miles north of Fishguard just off the A487. It is being planned, built and maintained by owners Christina Shand & David Allum.

The drive down a twisted lane took us to a spacious car park – and there were a few other visitors despite it being midweek in May. I picked up a copy of the map and made my plans. To see the whole of the garden involved a ramble around a farmhouse through woods, field and watery landscape, but the description was intriguing.

We started in the ‘The Quarry’ where the original the lane trundled on past here towards the house. We walked down steep steps to ‘Hopeful Wood, a small copse of ornamental trees with a corten steel sculpture of cartwheelers called ‘Head Over Heels’. From here the view widened as we crossed ‘Nicky’s Field’, with *Quercus sessiliflora*, the western oak in the centre surrounded by a grid of 50 beds, each containing one variety of ornamental grass or sedge.

From here you can see ‘David’s Wood’ with birch planted in 2003 and then on to ‘The Beyond’, with ‘The Pond’, wild flowers and specimen trees and a large slate table and chairs



Head Over Heels



Nicky’s Field



The Pond



The Beyond

to sit and watch. Maisie decided to explore 'The Cwm', where the deep bed of the Fernant stream is overgrown with branches of willow covered in mosses and lichens.

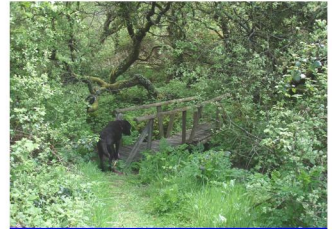
The trail leads past some interesting sculptures back towards the farmhouse, passing by 'Waun Fach', an ancient rush pasture, largely left to its own devices and full of wild flora and fauna; a wild Welsh marsh. The problems with developing the site, which included a lack of top soil, an abundance of rock, marsh, bog and an underlying thick blue clay is demonstrated by the 'Bog Garden', with a stainless steel obelisk rising out of the mud, monolithic stone seats and slate slab paths to keep you from sinking. The planting reflects the damp environment.

We then came to the areas near the farmhouse where Christina and David started with their 'design' in 1996. This contains the paved 'Front Garden', with its 'country garden' style, and the productive 'Kitchen Garden' with 3 small greenhouses, cold frames and a large work

table and a new polytunnel. The 'Rickyard' has the Long Barn at one end, the 'Nursery Garden' behind. The Orchard is centred on a *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, with borders of mixed planting with a variety of herbaceous perennials, grasses and fruit trees. We were too early for the roses and other summer flowers but all the gardens were beautifully maintained and made me jealous when I think of my attempts at home! Unfortunately the café and 'Library' were still closed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

On the way back to the 'Quarry' we passed through 'Sheepfold', a small, sloping garden lying under the shade of a large ash tree surrounded by a curving low stone walls, a spiralling path and a circular centre. Then past the Azalea Bank which was in full colour. Various acer and ericaceous shrubs were underplanted with hellebores, snowdrops, narcissi, wood anemones, lily of the valley and iris reticulata for a spring show.

And then we climbed a steep path leading up to 'The Magic Garden'.



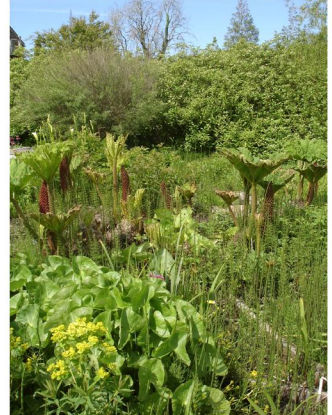
The Cwm



Waun Fach



The Bog Garden



First, a small circular meadow, then a mound or tump and then sloping pasture fields, often dotted about with sheep, leading through mixed hedgerows down to the sea. From the top of the mound there is the magnificent view of Garn Fawr hillside, part of the Preseli uplands, rich in pre-history and from whence came the Bluestones for Stonehenge. In fact this is where previous house was built and the remains of a 4' wide wall can be seen. This garden is set by the large group of rocks left by the last glacier that passed through about 10,000 years ago. This area reflects the age of the land, much older than the house. I agree with David who writes 'The

wide variety of environments and the abundance of sitting places invite you to take your time and to investigate this place from different angles, from different perspectives, to bring your own beliefs, thoughts and feelings to your experience of the garden'.

An amazing garden designed by the owners to reflect their love and appreciation of the land.



Magic Garden



Kitchen Garden



Front Garden and House



Azalea Bank

**Call for memories:
Celebrating The Friends of Dyffryn
Gardens Society's 40th anniversary.
By Gerry Donovan**

Next year will be the Society's 40th anniversary since its inception in 1983. In those intervening decades much has happened at Dyffryn and throughout this time the society has continued to support it in being ambassadors for the gardens as well as raising funds.

Do you have any special memories you could share with us about a Dyffryn Friends event you attended?

Were you there for the planting of Sir Cennydd Traherne's tree in the arboretum? We would like to collate some special times as part of our celebrations. If you do have any stories or photos, please send them to barbara.dyffryn@gmail.com over the next few months. We look forward to reading them and will share a compendium towards the end of 2023.

We have been in talks with Dyffryn to hold an exclusive Friends evening event in the gardens in May or June in 2023. We will be sending out more details as soon as arrangements are finalised.

Friends of Dyffryn Committee

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Treasurer

Julie Walters

Dyffryn Garden Representative

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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

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 were unable to hold events membership fees were waived for 2020—2022. However members have been asked to renew their subscriptions for 2022—2023 and many have already

done so.

We already have a talk and 2 events planned for this autumn, winter and spring and hope to be able to arrange coach trips and other events next year.

We do hope you will continue to support us and will renew your membership.

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.

Programme of Events 2022—2023

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 Gilestone Manor 2022.



Monday 21 st November 2022	A Christmas Star Workshop Fully Booked
Wednesday 14 th December 2022	Christmas Lunch at The Blue Anchor, Aberthaw - 12.30 for 1 pm See Application Form for Details
Friday 21 st March 2023.	Alex Summers, Curator, National Botanic Gardens Wales, will talk on the National Arboretum plans. Joint meeting with the WHGT S&M Glamorgan Branch. Details to follow

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

Visiting Dyffryn Gardens

- The garden, shop and tearoom are open 7 days a week.
- Reception is via the shop but the tearoom has not yet been re-installed
- The house and some areas remain closed.
- They no longer operate a booking system in place for visits. Please follow Welsh government guidelines when visiting.