

NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Well that was a year to quickly put behind us.

In and out of Lockdowns / Firebreaks/ Circuitbreaks, what can we do, where can we go, who we can see – it seemed to change every other week! The “Rules” in Wales were often different to those in England which also added to the confusion.

So surely 2021 will be a better year?

The roll out of the vaccine will hopefully help a degree of normality to return.

The resumption of branch meetings and events will still be on hold, their return will only be when it is considered to be safe for all to do so.

So continue with the painting & decorating, gardening, exercising in whatever form is suitable for you, and keep well and safe. You could order in some holiday brochures to keep you cheerful and perhaps find something to look forward to in the spring and beyond!!!

NATIONAL CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY



*and the
Winner is...*

Sian Evans



Runner up

Marion Mardell (not influenced by the “aw factor”!!)

Dyffryn Gardens – *from Lin and Frank Learner*

Part of our coping strategy throughout Covid 19 has been photography and painting in watercolours. Luckily Frank is a member of the local photography club - invaluable for Lin as a great source of locally 'commissioned/requested' photographs. Lin persuaded Frank to ask Barry Camera Club to provide two photos a month for Lin's local art group to paint. Shown is one of these source photos - by Frank - of Dyffryn Gardens, and matched by Lin's watercolour interpretation.



Dyffryn Gardens is one of the best Edwardian gardens in Wales and now cared for by the National Trust. The garden was created by Thomas Mawson (a well-known landscape architect) and the Corey family whose wealth was largely based on Welsh steam coal. The old walled gardens for growing fruit and vegetables were retained from the previous sixteenth century mansion. The rest of the garden was Mawson's design; he was inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Near the house are formal balustrade terraces, lawns, flower beds and statuary east and south of the house. The Great lawn draws the eye to the southern edge of the garden, bisected by the water lily canal and the recently restored fountain in the lower basin/pond. Reginald Corey had an exceptional collection of water lilies – modern replacements are spectacular in the warmer months.

In the colder months, the long range of greenhouses in the kitchen gardens are a sheltered warm haven for sketching or photographing cacti, succulents and a myriad of sub-tropical plants – we've never visited when some of the orchids are in flower.

Leading south from the kitchen garden is a gated archway into the south-west facing Herbaceous Border running the entire length of the kitchen garden wall. Beyond the Herbaceous Garden are the 'garden rooms'; each of these has its own character and pre-date the famous examples at Hidcote and Sissinghurst. My favourite varies as to the time of year; in spring it is the Pompeiian Garden when the wisteria is flowering; later in the year I have spotted a grass snake basking in the sun.



We live four miles away from Dyffryn Gardens, St Nicholas. Lin volunteered there as a gardener when she retired from Health Visiting. For her it was a much-loved place from childhood visits to the gardens and open air theatre. She really loved gardening there for a few years but unfortunately developed tennis elbow after an especially gruelling session - trying to shift 'sleeping beauty's briar' from a thicket in the out-of-sight and overgrown southernmost part of the garden beyond the great lawn. This area is a natural depression in the ground; Reginald Cory planned a lake there and built the red brick observation tower and arcading, south of the Lavender Garden (also called the Pool Garden, these small pools have crested newts in them). This project was scotched when filling the lake led to flooding of Dyffryn house's cellars.

The photo is of the Italian Terrace, now called the Herbaceous Garden, at its best in summer 2019. This view is the same as that famously painted by Edith H. Adie in 1923. The original

painting is now in the RHS Lindley Library. Most of Mawson's plans for Dyffryn Gardens and all of Reginald Corby's papers were destroyed at Corby's death - it is by contemporary photos and Edith H. Adie's paintings that we know now what this garden looked like at that time.

We do enjoy our regular visits to Dyffryn. During the pandemic, the house and main café (outside reception) have been closed with a one-way route round the garden. We love the Gallery café at the back of the house which is usually open; it does real coffee and Frank is occasionally 'allowed' a sausage roll! You can sit inside, but Frank and I sit on the terrace enjoying the garden view if it's dry. Best to check the opening times and you may need to book in advance for weekends.

All best wishes and hoping to see you when the meetings resume.

Lin & Frank Learner

Newport Wetlands

Sunday 22nd November was a cold but sunny day ideal for the group to meet up.

The café had re-opened, an opportunity for coffee before setting off.

The chosen venue was Newport Wetlands, a nature reserve that lies between the Severn Estuary and River Usk on the South Wales coast at West Nash Road, Newport.

By definition the wetlands consist mainly of reed beds and estuary habitat, ideal for a variety of bird species. Apparently otters have also been seen, but not today!!!



At that time of year one of the spectacles to be observed are the murmurations – a large group of birds, usually starlings, which all fly and change direction together in a split second, returning to their winter roosts after feeding. Regular visitors informed us that up to 40,000 birds locally take part in the murmuration.

Ornithology SIG