

GLYNNEATH & DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

www.glynneathgardeningclub.com



Members' newsletter

April 2013

Hello everyone

A very Happy Easter to you

Below you will see the programme for the next six months, and we hope there will be plenty to interest you all.

Over the last few months it has been very noticeable that the evening meetings are not as popular as the daytime ones, and so the Club has decided to hold the meetings monthly in the Training Centre on a Friday afternoon. From April, we propose to start at 1 pm instead of 1.30. This will give us time to have a cuppa and chat, or take out a library book, before the speaker begins.

In addition, we will be having our trips, beginning with a visit to the National Botanic Gardens on Saturday 11th May, when the West Wales Food Festival will be taking place.

We look forward to welcoming members old and new.

Our website address is: www.glynneathgardeningclub.com

2013: Programme for April – September

Please note the Friday afternoon meetings in the Training Centre will begin at 1 pm.

Friday 26 th April	1 pm Training Centre	"A discussion – Sowing, growing and showing vegetables" with Keith & Bill
Saturday 11 th May	TRIP £14 to include bus fare & entry	NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS
Wednesday 22 nd May,	1 pm - Training Centre	Dilys Ayling "Perennials for the small garden"
Please note: Wednesday, not Friday, this month only		
Saturday 29 June.	GARDEN PARTY 2 pm (No charge but voluntary contributions to Neath MIND)	Garden party at Isobel & Andrew's garden. PLEASE NOTE: Saturday this year, Not Sunday as in previous years.
Saturday 20 th July	TRIP £13.50 for bus and entry.	TREDEGAR HOUSE, NEWPORT. 17 th century house & garden recently taken over by the National Trust.
Friday 26 th July	Local Visit. 1 pm	Meet at 1 pm in Neath Victoria Gardens for a talk and guided tour of the gardens.
Sunday 4 th August	TRIP TO GOWER SHOW	The show is held in the grounds of Penrice Castle Park, Reynoldston.
Saturday 7 th Sept.	HORTICULTURAL SHOW. Glynneath Town Hall	Show opens to the public at 2 pm
Saturday 28 th Sept.	TRIP £24 each, for bus and entry to the Show.	RHS AUTUMN SHOW, MALVERN.

At present we have four trips planned for the coming months.
If you would like to come on any or all of them then get in touch with Diane
to reserve your seat. Her telephone number is 01639 721034.

**SATURDAY 11TH MAY
THE NATIONAL BOTANIC
GARDEN OF WALES**



**The West Wales Food Festival
will be taking place in the Great
Glasshouse -**

There will be top chefs, local food and drink producers, tastings, demos, master classes, music, magic and much, much more.

Also, some of the best photography in the world will be on show in the International Garden Photographer of the Year exhibition. This is the first year this internationally-renowned exhibition has come to Wales.

The cost will be £14 per person, which includes the coach & entry to the Gardens.

There will be a small extra charge if you want to go on a conducted tour of the Gardens.

Leaving Glynneath at 9 am

**SATURDAY 20TH JULY
TREDEGAR HOUSE, NEWPORT**



Tredegar House is one of the architectural wonders of Wales, built in the 17th century, and situated within 90 acres of beautiful gardens and parkland.

For more than 500 years it was home to the Morgan family, and now belongs to the National Trust.

The trip will be £13.50, which includes the coach fare and entrance to Tredegar.

Leaving Glynneath at 10 am.

The Training Centre is closed during the school holidays, and so instead of a meeting in August, this year we are planning to go to the Gower Show. (see below)

SUNDAY 4TH AUGUST

THE GOWER SHOW

The Gower Agricultural Show is held in the beautiful grounds of Penrice Castle Park, Reynoldston, on the first Sunday in August.

If you enjoy the countryside or are looking for a great day out, you will enjoy the Gower Show.

The cost of the trip will include the coach and entry to the Show.

Leaving Glynneath at 9 am.

SATURDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER

**RHS AUTUMN SHOW,
MALVERN**

By popular request, we are returning to the Malvern Show this year.

The cost of the trip is £24 per person, This includes the coach and entry to the Show.

We will be leaving Glynneath at 8.30 am.

What else is happening ?

**Wednesday 22nd May
1 pm
in the Training Centre**

**Please note that the meeting in
May will be on a Wednesday
afternoon, instead of Friday.**

**DILYS AYLING WILL BE COMING
TO TALK ABOUT "PERENNIALS
FOR THE SMALL GARDEN"**

**We were particularly keen to get
Dilys to come back as we have all
enjoyed her talks so much in the
past.**

**Saturday 29th June – 2 pm
GARDEN PARTY
BRYNGOLWG, PONTWALBY**

The garden party this year will be on a Saturday to enable more members to come. Bring along a bottle of wine if you wish.

Chris & Eva will provide the music again this year, and when you have looked round the garden, we hope to keep you busy with a game of boules or croquet.

Unfortunately there is very little parking space, so let us know if you need a lift, or alternatively, the buses stop on Pontwalby Bridge.

There is no charge, but if you wish to make a voluntary contribution, then Isobel & Andrew will pass it on to Neath MIND, who provide support for people with emotional distress in the local area.

ngs gardens open
for charity

**BRYNHEULOG, 45 HEOL Y GRAIG,
CWMGWACH, NEATH, GLAMORGAN, SA11 5TW**

Opening dates and times: Wednesday 19th and Friday 21st June (2 - 5pm)
Visitors also welcome by appointment, May to October

Admission: £3.50 each, children free – to **NGS charities**

Refreshments: Home-made teas

Contact: **LORRAINE RUDD** Telephone: 01639 722593
Email: lorraine.rudd@bbmax.com

Bryngolwg, Pontwalby, Glynneath, Neath SA11 5LH

Andrew and Isobel are opening their garden for charity this year on request during June, July and August. Much of the one acre garden is still in the course of development while areas of greater maturity were planted by Isobel's parents and grandparents.

Admission: £3.50 each, children free. Money to a variety of NGS charities, eg Marie Curie, Carers Trust, Macmillan, Help the Hospices.

Tea & cake: £1.50 – money to Neath MIND

Contact: Isobel Carter & Andrew Smith. Telephone: 01639 720237
Email: brynbriallu@btinternet.com

Please bear in mind there is no parking, so park on or near Pontwalby Bridge. Alternatively, park at the GeoHeritage car park, walk down the Glynneath Bank, cross at the sign towards the viaduct, and turn right at the kissing gate to walk along the Gwrelych River. At the junction with the road, turn R and R again to Bryngolwg, at the top of the hill.

SELAR Margaret Walters

Driving home from Abercrave the other evening, just before beginning the downward slope into Glynneath, my attention was drawn to a line of lights on the mountain opposite. It was the Selar opencast site, floodlit at night. Only now could I appreciate the extent of the excavations. In daylight, trees and shale and mud banks shrouded it almost, if not quite, concealing it from view. At dusk, still there, but now a line of lights, almost fairy like from a distance. Most certainly lending 'enchantment to the view'.

I know what the site is like in reality, having been on a visit there with Ben Evans, a geologist so inspired by the strata and natural habitat of our area, that he can bring it to life and captivate his audience, as some of our Gardening Club members know. It is like a moonscape. Acres of barren, dusty earth and huge craters so deep that figures at the bottom appear like little Lego men. We were able to go down into the depths and there, amazingly, just where they had been abandoned, were trams and rails from the old Blaengwrach Drift Mine, abandoned because the coal face had become too difficult to work, not knowing that there were still millions of tons of coal to be excavated.

Selar to us today is synonymous with opencast mining, but The Selar was originally a hill farm, which surprisingly, won first prize for ploughing with oxen in competitions with the lush and more easily worked farms of the Vale of Glamorgan. Could this have been due, I wonder, to the quality of songs sung to the oxen by the ox-driver? It seems that cattle were fussy and would not work to any old music. They needed tribans (metric triplets) composed especially for them and each ox-boy adapted well known songs to his own circumstances. The ox-boy had to have a sweet and melodic voice to please the oxen and get the best from his charges. When ploughing with horses was first introduced, Glamorgan was the last county in Wales to take on this new fangled notion. The oxen were part of the community, respected and admired, and had been, for thousands of years. One ploughboy's praise to Sela's oxen went like this:

Mae son drwy'r Fro a'r Blaena'
Am ychin mawr y Sela
Y nhw of Fargam i Golhuw
O lawer yw y gora

There's talk from Vale to Uplands
Of Sela's massive oxen
From Margam to the ends of earth
By far, they are the finest*

This fine farm met its Waterloo when coal was discovered hundreds of feet below its green fields. While roadways were driven underground and men worked night and day to excavate the black gold, Selar, on the surface, went into decay and disrepair.

After many years of profitable production, difficulties underground saw the eventual abandonment of the mine, but not a return to farming. Selar just lay in wait for new technology to discover another, easier, way of extracting the coal that still lay there.

But of course, despite all the frantic activity below ground, life quietly goes on above. Trees are planted, gardens are dug and importantly, land exhausted of coal. is restored to some semblance of the original landscape. It becomes green once again. Even the old slag tips have a covering of grass and weeds that soften their harsh, grey expression; and lip service is paid to the requirement to be eco-friendly and to preserve wild life. At least our valley today is a more 'green and pleasant land'. A world away from the days of coal tips and the stack which belched out black, sooty, smuts, that on days when the east wind blew, caused all the housewives to run to gather their washing from the lines.

So Selar, although we know you are there, can we take comfort from the fact that you are not exactly intruding into village life and that your monetary contribution will at some time provide facilities and improvements to the communities that exist in your shadow?

*Diwylliant Gwerin Morgannwg
(The Folk Culture of Glamorgan) by Allan James.



We are grateful to Margaret Walters for her article on the Selar opencast site, and to Emlyn Jones for his delightful poem below.

If you would like to write something for the newsletter, we would be pleased to receive it, as we are always looking for new ideas. Bring it along to one of the meetings, or email us:

Isobel: brynbriallu@btinternet.com
Margaret: margaretjcurtis@btinternet.com

MORNING RISE AND SHINE



How I love the morning when the birds begin to sing
The sweet song of the aerial Sky Lark on the wing.
The Thrush busy nesting a sign of early spring
The mimicry of the Starling, oh what joy these birds do bring.
The beautiful trill of the Willow Warbler, and the sight of coloured Jays
Arrival of the Swallow heralding warmer days.
The Swallow searching for a suitable place to build its nest
After flying from South Africa and breeding in the west.
The all year round singer the Robin with its scarlet breast
I admire these flyers and I don't know which is best.
With the Dunnock and Wren with almost similar songs
The birds with their songs up there where the pair belongs.
The terrestrial chat and grey back of the Wheatear
The echo of the Cuckoo the sign that spring is here.
I love the late evening when the night birds come alive
In search of food so they can still comfortably survive.
The silent flight of the wise old Owl preying on voles, mice and rats
The erratic in and out movement of our flying Bats.
So thank God for our feathered friends and wild life all around
For I sincerely love it when I hear music coming from the air and ground.



J. EMLYN JONES.

SOUND AS A POUND

DISCOUNT STORE, PET & GARDEN SUPPLIES

Stephanie Williams
38 High Street,
Glynneath

Tel: 01639 722444

THE LAMB & FLAG GLYNNEATH

Tel: 01639 721995

Weekly food offers:

OAP Menu
Tuesday & Thursday
12 – 3 pm

Carvery - £7.50
Sunday
12 – 5 pm

NELSON'S COACHES

Tel: 01639 720308

We do a wide variety of
day trips, so if you fancy
shopping,
the seaside,
Bristol Zoo, Longleat or
the Royal Welsh Show

There is a trip you will
enjoy.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Lily of the Valley is a plant which, like us, enjoys life in this area. It sprouts relentlessly between stones and pavings, its daintiness, elegance and heady perfume belying the fact that it is a native wild plant, and the food plant of several moth and butterfly larvae. The Latin name Convallaria Majalis refers to its chemical makeup, which in large quantities is poisonous but in small amounts has been used, like digitalis, to treat the heart. The Majalis part of the name refers to its flowering in May.

Lily of the Valley continues to play a part in popular culture, both Johnny Cash and Freddie Mercury having written songs that refer to it.

In pre-Christian legend and tradition it was associated with purity and humility and continued to be a symbol of humility in religious painting. Later the flower became known as Our Lady's tears or Mary's tears as it was thought to have sprung from the tears wept by the Virgin Mary at the crucifixion.

In the language of flowers it signifies "the return of happiness" and often features at weddings, being famously a part of the Duchess of Cambridge's bouquet. In popular belief it was a sign of Christ's second coming and was considered to empower people to envision a better world. It was also associated with the nightingale, both appearing at a similar time of year in May and had many local names connected with the May month.

Despite its generally being regarded as full of good omens, like many other white flowers it was "lucky to grow in garden, but not to bring into house".



Grey
Squirrel
Deterrent

Grey squirrels can be a problem in gardens and the wider countryside. What can you do to keep them out of your backyard?

Strong chilli powder or pepper sauce (eg Tabasco) can be dusted onto bird food. Birds are not bothered by the chilli, but squirrels cannot put up with the burning sensation, and will leave the food alone.

All other methods have been tried but this advice from the RSPB really works - they don't come back for at least a week!

We are circulating this newsletter to members, past and present, in the hope that you will find there is plenty going on in the coming months to interest you.

If you have not rejoined yet for 2013 then it is NOT TOO LATE.
The membership fee is £12.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN SOON
EVEN BETTER, BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU – NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.