



# Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol

## National Trust

### Abertawe Centre

Newsletter 150

October 2025

#### Chair's Report

It has been a superb year for evening talks and once again Anne Thomas has organised some excellent speakers for our Autumn and Winter monthly talks. The latest programme is below.

We have had three wonderful days out at Chastleton House and Moreton-in-Marsh, Picton Castle and Narberth and Great Chalfield Manor and Bradford-upon-Avon. Kathleen Boyce's work has ensured that we have a great day out and is much appreciated. The holiday to Caernarfon and North Wales was fully booked. Kathleen Boyce and Hazel Harrison chose a really good hotel, six different National Trust properties to visit and time for us to explore Beaumaris and Caernarfon. Once again their planning and organising skills are first class and we really appreciate their time and effort on behalf of the Centre.

Ken and Mary Owens continue to provide excellent arrangements for our lunches at Norton House. The Spring Lunch was excellent. Details of the Christmas Lunch are in this newsletter.

We are working on getting the website re-activated. The committee has looked at our constitution for the first time in nine years and it has been simplified and put into a format that is more logical. The main simplification is to have just two membership categories Life members and Single members. From January 2026 the Life membership remains at £50 and the Single membership will be £10 p.a. There will be no joint membership. This will be presented to the members at the October meeting after the talk.

I hope that you will be able to join us at the evening talks. The mini-holiday in 2026 will be based in Winchester from Thursday 3 September to Monday 7 September. Make a note in your diaries. I look forward to seeing you at our October Meeting. Best wishes.

*Janet Thomas*

**All meetings are held at St Paul's Parish Centre, Sketty at 7.00 for 7.30 pm. Meetings are open to non-members for a £3 charge. Bring your friends and neighbours, they would be most welcome.**

#### TALKS PROGRAMME 2025-6

***22nd October 2025 "The Mansels of Margam" Steven David***

***26th November 2025 "Elizabeth I – How to Govern and Survive" Kathleen Boyce***

***28th January 2026 " Portable Antiquities" Nicola Kelly National Museum of Wales***

***25th February 2026 AGM and Quiz***

***25th March 2026 "The Stackpole Estate" Gareth Mills***

***29th April 2026 TBA***

## March 2025 talk

Dr Elaine Davy, the architectural historian, gave us a fascinating talk on the life of Sir William Goscombe Johns (1860-1952), the sculptor and patron. Not many of us had heard of him



and unbeknown to us his works are to be found all over Wales and in London, Liverpool, in museums and public buildings. The Titanic Memorial in Liverpool is his. He was prolific and we will have all walked past one of his works not knowing about its creator. Elaine gave us some superb examples and I particularly liked the memorial to Sir Arthur Sullivan, the composer of light operas, with the muse of music weeping on his plinth. It was described at the time as the most erotic statue in London! If you were looking for a sculptor for a public statue in bronze, marble or stone between 1886 and 1948 he was your go to sculptor and was especially in demand for war memorials after the Great War. He rose to be a Fellow of the Royal Academy and was knighted in 1912 after his design of the investiture of the Prince of Wales, the

future Edward VIII, in 1911. So next time you are in a museum or walking down a street or looking at a war memorial or just strolling through a public park, the statues that you see could well be by Sir William Goscombe John.

## April 2025 talk

Once again we welcomed John Richards to talk to us. This time it was on the Romans in South Wales and he gave us such a knowledgeable and amusing talk on every aspect of Roman life in South Wales. This covered the military clashes between Caratacus leading the Silures against the Roman legions' military might (often coming out the winner) to the construction of buildings and how the Romans would have lived in their military camps and villas/ farmhouses. Knowing that there were

just sixty Roman officials to administer Britannia and four Roman legions, one of which was based in Wales, enhances our knowledge of how the Roman ruled. John was able to put us in places where the Romans marched, along the Julia Maritima, the present A48, to possibly the furthest westerly villa, under Oystermouth church



where lots of tesserae have been found. All this fascinating information made many of us want to visit Caerleon or Caerwent or the auxiliary fort at Blaen Cwm Bach.

## Chastleton House and Moreton-in-Marsh – Thursday 5 June

Chastleton is superb, and many of us loved its faded grandeur, its romantic decline and its domestic disorder. As we went round we were either in the 1650s or the 1950s with nothing in between. We loved the ambience, the smell, the Jacobean architecture both outside and inside with superb ceilings and the gallery at the top of the house with its barrelled ceiling.



The decision of the National Trust not to restore it was a good one so it has kept its authenticity. The guide showed us a photograph of the reverse of one of the wonderful tapestries which showed what a kaleidoscope of colour the front would have been. Several of you mentioned the bible in the library which supposedly was being read

when Charles I was executed in 1649. The information sheets gave us a glimpse into the history of the house and the domestic life of its last owners. The last owner was always cold and had 20 cats! The gardens both vegetable and flower were beautiful and belied the National Trust's description in 2024 – "a sleeping beauty preserved in graceful decline." One book I saw in the library was "Miscellaneous Reflections on the Preceding Treaties and other Critical Subjects, A Notation of the Tablature of Judgement of Hercules with a letter concerning design". I just had to look it up. The third Earl of Shaftesbury, used the story of Hercules at a crossroads to pursue his views on painting. In Naples, he wrote this art-theoretical treatise in which he explained the principles of painting and methods of executing an exemplary historical piece on the subject of Hercules. So now we know. One bug-bear was the long walk from the car park to the house. A buggy ride would have assisted several of our members. Chastleton House was a real surprise and a joy to visit.

## Picton Castle and Narberth – Thursday 10 July



What do you need for a great day out? Glorious sunshine – tick, a fabulous castle with an exceptional guide – tick, a walled garden that is full of beautiful, colourful plants – tick and a

really cheerful coachload of friends and companions – tick. We had them all for our visit to Picton and Narberth.

The guide was so good at hitting the right note with a touch of humour and even provided chairs for those who could not stand for long. We saw incredible fireplaces, a unique family chapel with its stained glass, and a kitchen full of kitchenalia, some of which we still had at home. Then there was the debate (as shown in the BBC's Fake or Fortune) on whether that painting was a Renoir or not. Watch the programme to find out!

This was a castle with a long history and amazingly the original owners were Terry Wogan's ancestors. The food in the restaurant was excellent and there were so many surprises, the toy museum where I recognised some of my childhood toys, a mortuary room which one of our group loved (isn't that weird?) and a lawnmower museum for the real gardening aficionados amongst us.

The day was topped off by a visit to the town of Narberth. For me the best shop was Ultracomida with its shelves of wonderful Spanish produce. Once through the doorway you knew you would buy olive oil or cheese or cured ham. And we were back in Swansea by 6.00pm, a really great day out.

### **Great Chalfield Manor and Bradford-upon-Avon – Thursday 7 August**

Great Chalfield Manor is one of the earliest surviving Tudor manor houses and it was fascinating with its oriel windows and beautiful stonework. Our genial host made us so welcome and brought the family history of the manor and church alive with his explanation of the five hundred years plus existence. The church with its rood screen and paintings round the organ was a gem. The hall and the dining room were a treat with the connection to the Gothic revivalist design of the House of Westminster by Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin. You noticed the leather curtain that could be drawn over the front door, the wonderful original furniture, the 15<sup>th</sup> century painting of the first owner, Thomas Tropenell in the dining room and the spy hole to see who was at the front door.

And for all of us the garden was a delight. Imaginative planting and the use of sage greens, purple and orange using a limited number of plants made the borders spectacular. The little stream flowing down to the pond was beautifully framed in low lying plants, the roses were scented and the yew trees stood proud in the water. Everything



was in harmony creating a peaceful atmosphere. Those of you (at least two) who ate a mulberry from the tree were easily recognised by your red stained fingers!

It is not often that we visit a house and gardens where there are horses in the stables but this was a family home, albeit a posh one. You could tell that by the fact that the facilities did not have a sign for "Toilet" but a sign for "Lavatory" – very Nancy Mitford U and non-U! It is a place I would happily return to.

## Caernarfon 8-12 September

Five National Trust properties and one garden in five days makes a very busy and fascinating holiday. From the medieval Chirk Castle, Plas Newydd with its superb views across the Menai Straits to the mountains of Eryri, the beautifully original Erddig with its photographs of servants where nothing was ever thrown away, the vulgar opulence of Penrhyn (below right) built on the hardships of the slate miners, and the Indian treasures in Powis, there was



something in every property for the 45 members on the holiday. Everyone loved Bodnant Garden (left) and a trip back there next spring to see the laburnum arch in flower is a must. We were driven around by Gordon whose good humour and skill in threading the coach through narrow gaps was amazing. Mention has to be made of his ability to reverse off the Menai Bridge (with Peter Russell's

help) on to a roundabout when the coach would not go through the bridge's entrance. North Wales gave us great scenery and the drive through the Llanberis Pass was stunning. Yes there were showers but we are a hardy lot and there was also sunshine so the showers did not spoil our visits. Kathleen and Hazel booked a good hotel in the Royal Celtic in Caernarfon and their holiday organisation was once again exemplary. A big thank-you to them.



### Your committee

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- **Anne Bennett**, Vice-Chair and Secretary. 11 Cefn Llwyn, Swansea SA1 7DR, Tel: 07743 926697 [anne.bennett1@gmail.com](mailto:anne.bennett1@gmail.com)
- **Ken Owens**, Social Lunches. 117 Saunders Way, Swansea SA2 8BH, Tel: 01792 201850, [kenandmaryowens@btinternet.com](mailto:kenandmaryowens@btinternet.com)
- **Peter Russell**, Treasurer, Tel: 07817 150801 [peter.russell40@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.russell40@btinternet.com)
- **Kathleen Boyce**, Membership and Joint Outings & Holidays, Tel 07795 374314 [kathleenedieboyce@btinternet.com](mailto:kathleenedieboyce@btinternet.com)
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- **Peter Horry**, Newsletter. 43 Beaufort Drive, Kittle, Swansea SA3 3LD, Tel 07598 285481, [f.horry@btinternet.com](mailto:f.horry@btinternet.com)
- **Anne Thomas**, Speakers Secretary.
- **William Bennett**, Hall Steward.
- **Shirley Thomas**, Publicity.
- **Anita Walters**, Refreshments.
- **Christine Hughes**

## Christmas Lunch

Below is the menu for the Christmas Lunch on Thursday 27 November. The form for completion is at the back of this newsletter. If you pay by bank transfer instead of a cheque it will save the Abertawe Centre money.

### NORTON HOUSE

Thursday, 27 November 2025

National Trust Abertawe Christmas Lunch

12.30 for 1.00pm

2 Courses £29.00, 3 Courses £34.00 (includes gratuities)

#### Starters

Winter Vegetable Soup with Crusty Bread (vg) (gf\*)

Traditional Prawn Cocktail with Bread & Butter (gf\*)

Farm-House Pate served with a Festive Chutney & Crostini (gf\*)

Goats Cheese, Pear & Cranberry Salad (gf) (v)

Squash & Celeriac Parfait, Festive Chutney & Crostini (vg)

#### Main Course

Traditional Roast Turkey served with Stuffing, Pig in Blanket, Honey Roast Parsnip, Roast Potatoes & Gravy (gf\*)

Rolled Pork Belly with Sage & Apple Stuffing, Apple Gel, Roast Potatoes & Gravy (gf)

Pan Fried Salmon, Crushed New Potatoes and a Sparkling Wine, Cockle & Laverbread Veloute (gf)

Roast Beef with Yorkshire Pudding, Honey Roast Parsnip, Roast Potatoes & Gravy

Persian Carrot & Cashew Nut Roast with Roast Potatoes, Maple Glazed Parsnip & Vegan Gravy (vg) (gf)

All served with a selection of seasonal vegetables

#### Desserts

Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce (vg\*)

Winter Berry Eton Mess (gf)

Apple & Cranberry Crumble with Custard (gf) (vg\*)

Sticky Toffee Pudding with Butterscotch Sauce

Trio of Sorbet (vg) (gf)

Followed by Tea/Coffee and Mince Pie (gf\*)

## Christmas Lunch 2025 – Booking Form - Norton House

**Thursday 27 November 2025 12.30pm for 1.00pm**

Please reserve me.....place(s) for the Christmas Lunch

First Full Name.....

Contact Telephone Number.....

Second Full Name.....

Third Full Name.....

Fourth Full Name.....

Fifth Full Name.....

If any of the named people have paid by bank transfer please tick the box next to their name

Please tick the appropriate box below: the first column for the first person named above, the second column for the second person named above and so on. If the gluten free alternative is your choice please put "gf". If the vegan alternative is your choice please put "vg".

		1	2	3	4	5
Starters:	Vegetable Soup (tick or gf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Prawn Cocktail (tick or gf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Farm-House Pate (tick or gf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Goats Cheese Salad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Squash & Celeriac Parfait	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Main Course:	Roast Turkey (tick or gf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Rolled Pork Belly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Pan Fried Salmon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Roast Beef	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Carrot & Cashew Nut Roast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dessert:	Christmas Pudding (tick or vg)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Eton Mess	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Apple Crumble (tick or vg)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sticky Toffee Pudding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trio of Sorbet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please enclose your payment, 2 courses £29.00 or 3 courses £34.00. Pay by bank transfer - (**Lloyds Bank plc**, Sort Code **30-95-46** A/C no. **00177350** and enter **Your Name** as the reference) then send this form to **Ken Owens, 117 Saunders Way, Derwen Fawr, Swansea, SA2 8BH**. Tick the box above for those who paid by bank transfer. (Our preferred method of payment).

Pay by cheque - cheques payable to: **NATIONAL TRUST ABERTAWA CENTRE** and return the booking form with the cheque to: **Ken Owens, 117 Saunders Way, Derwen Fawr, Swansea, SA2 8BH**. Please note that Lloyds Bank charges the Abertawe Centre 50p for each cheque.

Payment made and Forms returned by no later than **Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2025**.

### Seating Preference

If you would like to be seated with people not mentioned on the booking form, please note names below: