**Date: March 2013**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

DIP INTO OUR FACT & FIGURES FILE FOR A TASTE OF WHAT GIVES OUR SEVEN GARDENS THEIR INDIVIDUAL CHARM

**Aberglasney Garden, Carmarthenshire**

‘We are making edible hedges with low step-over apple trees as edging all through the kitchen garden. And everything we grow in the vegetable garden goes straight into the café when it is harvested, and what is not used there is sold at the shop.’ Head Gardener Joseph Atkin.

Of all the wonderful restoration work done at **Aberglasney**, what’s been the most satisfying is the amazing eco heat-exchange system that uses the water from the 14m x 20m pool to heat the mansion – and is so efficient that it keeps the heating bills to zero.

**‘Aberglasney** is the place to see the famous Welsh Tenby daffodil in spring. We do daffodils in a big way and have planted more than 400 varieties; that’s every kind of daffodil there is.’ Head Gardener Joseph Atkin.

**Bryngarw Country Park, Bridgend**

It’s good to get on your bike here. There are some 20 miles of cycle paths through and beyond the 113 acres of **Bryngarw** linking together a community network that connects the nearby Garw and Ogmore Valleys.

When you cross over the streams at **Bryngarw** make sure you look for the dippers nesting under the bridges. Polecats are harder to spot, as are pygmy shrews and bank voles but they are all there at the river’s edge if you keep your eyes open. In early summer evenings bats and owls will be swooping past.

**Colby Woodland Garden, Pembrokeshire**

Take a family walk thought the woods and add a swim! From the top of the hill at **Colby Woodland Garden** you can glimpse the beautiful sandy white beaches of Amroth at the bottom. With a Blue Flag award it is the perfect picnic-and-swim spot – if you don’t mind the climb back up the hill again afterwards!

The game that keeps the children enthralled for hours at **Colby Woodland Garden**? A modern take on Pooh sticks. Duck racing with a yellow plastic ducks and seeing how long they take to bob through under the bridges.

We are definitely for children having a good time playing naturally, says Colby head Gardener Steve Whitehead ‘We want kids to climb trees and swing ropes over the stream, we give them nets to go pond dipping in their own and we encourage den building and tree climbing and we don’t even mind if they pick the flowers- we have plenty of them.

**Cwmdonkin Park, Swansea**

**Cwmdonkin Park** is closely linked to poet Dylan Thomas, but once it was known for being the first public reservoir established as far back as 1790 to improve the health of the neighbourhood.

The very tall pencil sculpture in **Cwmdonkin Park** is a tribute to the talent of Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, but if you look closely at it you can see it is cleverly carved from the trunk of an old monkey puzzle tree.

Remember those geography lessons that taught us about ‘**corries**, **cwms** or **cirques’**? The ‘cwm’ in **Cwmdonkin** means a valley, often one that is the starting point of a moving glacier. This makes the area particularly sheltered and, in its Edwardian heyday, the park was admired for its display of 15,000 species of plants, many sub-tropical.

**Margam Country Park, Neath Port Talbot**

The rare Chinese Pére David deer at **Margam Country Park** are now extinct in the wild. The Chinese thought them odd, and called them the ‘unlikely four’ with the neck of a camel, the hooves of a cow, the tail of a donkey and only the antlers of a deer.

Are you brave enough to come face to face with a ghost? Book a night’s stay at **Margam Country Park** in Port Talbot. Upstairs the house is spookily bare and quiet and at night, they do say, the ghosts roam abroad. Legend has sightings of gamekeepers killed by poachers, and ladies in crinolines sweeping down the staircase.

The restored 100m long **Margam** orangery, is the longest in Britain. The yellowy orange panes of glass are original ones. Look out, too, for the row of skulls on the front – put there to ward off evil spirits.

For the first time in decades, the fragrance of oranges is filling the elegant restored citrus house at **Margam**. Built in 1800 over an even older building, it was designed as a grand show-off gesture to walk guests down its heavily scented 44m length.

**Penllergare Valley Wood, Swansea**

The rescuing of the hidden ‘Picturesque’ terrace garden at **Penllergare** is a painstaking job involving working on steep slopes and digging out enormous rhododendrons roots that have spread over the area. The work is being mainly done by some 40 volunteers – the oldest being 84. Gardening must be good for you.

The first photograph of the moon was taken in 1857 from the Observatory at **Penllergare**, Swansea built by John Dillwyn Llewellyn. The Observatory was restored in 1981 and still works. The original photograph is in the library at Swansea Museum.

Great news for ramblers. A new path will be made along the valley that passes under the M4 motorway at **Penllergare** allowing links to the route between the Brecon Beacon and Gower.

**Penllergare’s** Big Society really works. The Penllergare Trust, a charity of volunteers set up regenerate the area has joined up with the 180 members of the Friends of Penllergare, to restore the secret garden and plan to train another 250 people in woodland skills to help.

**Scolton Manor, Pembrokeshire**

The sheep at **Scolton Manor**, Haverfordwest, were chosen to for their West Wales connections. Llanwenog sheep originated about a hundred years ago in and around the broad grasslands of the Teifi valley and with their good wool, pretty black faces and placid temperament they were a good choice at Scolton to mix with the children. Jamie Oliver likes them too - for their excellent meat, but shh… don’t tell the children that.

From a secret camera visitors to **Scolton** can peer deep into the heart of a working beehive and watch how the worker bees made that so-precious honey. From June this year visitors will be able to pop into the newly-opened ‘Honey Kitchen’ and Beekeeping Centre where honey from the estate is processed and bottled.

‘Margaret’ a colourful Victorian steam engine, has long been a popular attraction at **Scolton Manor**. Built for the Maenclochog railway in the 1870s she was used to bring slate down from the mountain quarries and named after the quarry owner’s wife.

**Fabulous Facts and Figures**

**250** Champion trees in the British Isles. And one of them – a Japanese red cedar -- is at Colby Woodland Gardens.

**2** The streams that converge at Colby - so there is never a water shortage

**50,000** is the number of spring bulbs planted at Aberglasney- including **400** varieties of daffodils

**9** The number of gardens recorded at Aberglasney during the 15th century- and that’s not counting the vineyards

**800** years of history have gone into making the gardens at Margam Country Park

**100** metres long, the orangery at Margam Country Park which is the longest n Britain

**12** miles of paths are waiting to be restored at Penllergare Valley Woods

**113** the acreage of woodland at Bryngarw to explore for wildlife

**99** years since Dylan Thomas was born. The centenary party has already started at his childhood park, Cwmdonkin in Swansea

**20** TheGlamorgan cattle (could be more this spring) which have been saved from extinction at Margam Country Park

**84** The age of the oldest volunteer helping to restore the secret garden at Penllergare

**45** The number of rare Peré David deer that live in the park and which are now extinct in the wild

**18** different varieties of step-over apples have been planted to edge the borders in Aberglasney’s kitchen garden

 **20** miles of paths weave in and around the woods at Bryngarw to walk or cycle through

**10** The number of hives filled with bees busy producing honey for tea at Scolton Manor Farm

**1** String wire to swing along at the Swansea park of Cwmdonkin Park, where poet Dylan Thomas played as a child

**3** Lakes to go canoeing and kayaking on at Margam Country Park

**10,000** The number of people likely to turn up to events at Margam ‘the people’s park’ at Port Talbot , such as the Victorian Day on Bank Holiday Monday May 27th

***50*** *Things to do before you are 11 ¾* is a National Trust campaign this spring - and most of them can be done at Colby Woodland Garden from building a den to calling an owl

**400** years old, **30** metres long and **2** metres high - the unique yew tunnel at Aberglasney is a record breaker

 **90%** of what is sold in the café at Aberglasney is local – either from the gardens or nearby

**1857** When one of the first pictures of the moon was taken in South Wales from the observatory at Penllergare Valley Woods

**2** Welsh Llanwenog sheep will be donating their fleece to be woven at Scolton Manor Farm

**5.6** kilometres is the Cwm Philip Trail at Margam Country Park around an iron age fort which is great for deer spotting

**40,000** bulbs have been planted in the wildflower meadow at Colby Woodland Garden

**200** the age of the spreading beech tree at Margam country park- and 6 the number of people needed to reach round it.

 **5** stars the holiday cottage has that can be won for a week stay in the fabulous competition

**Notes to Editors:**
1. One Historic Garden is part-funded by EU’s Convergence European Regional Development Fund through Visit Wales and Welsh Government.

2. Website launches on 25th March 2013

3. Press trips available

4. Large selection of images available

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