

Leisure Times - gardening

by **Carolle Doyle**

Hall gardens returning to their former glory

THE gardens of Bryngwyn Hall wrap around the house and melt seamlessly into the surrounding parkland. Walk across the lawn that slopes down towards a ha-ha and the lake beyond and you will look across to a rising swell of sheep nibbled turf on the far bank.

"The garden is at the fun stage," so its owner, Lady Linlithgow tells me for she can finally plan embellishments such as a poison garden and under-plant the monumental trees that were once part of the surrounding parkland. It has been a long, hard haul to this point for on the sudden death of her grandfather, Major General Sandbach, her grandmother was forced to abandon the nine-acre garden in 1929 and it quickly returned to the wild. Sycamore and elder sprang up and brambles choked the rhododendrons brought back from Bhutan by her grandfather when he was stationed there. These have now layered themselves and in the spring they bloom in shades of red and pink and white. Her grandmother's rose garden has been reclaimed and its formal, rectangular shape emphasised with a surrounding yew hedge. A sundial sits at its centre and steps lead down towards the water. You can walk beside the lake once more now that it isn't entirely obscured by thickets of self-sown trees, a lake incidentally that was excavated by Napoleonic prisoners of war. Wild fowl rise up in skeins as we approach a flat stone bridge at the pinch point which leads to a stone bench on the far side of the lake.

Once the garden had been restored Lady Linlithgow began to plant trees. "I love trees," she says simply and so she envisaged an under-story beneath the great oaks and

planted all the little trees, Japanese acer, Rowan, Amelanchier, Stewartia and Cercidiphyllum with their fiery autumn colours or bright berries. She has also begun a stone circle which stands, at present, as a crescent of standing stones each representing an old friend and a fond memory.

At this time of year the garden glows with all the autumnal daisies, cosmos and dahlias. Scarlet dahlias fire up against the dusky purple leaves of Ricinus, the castor oil plant, and Cotinus, the smoke bush with an airy curtain of Verbena bonariensis between the old fossil rich wall of the ha-ha and the dahlias. These and the large bed that lies just beyond the wall of the courtyard are the work of gardeners, Andrea Atherton, who has brought colour and inspiration to Bryngwyn. They plot and plan together, talking of removing straggly growth on the far side of the pond and replacing it with a pair of fine oaks, Quercus robur Cimson Spire which, as the name suggests will stand like great, glowing torches in the autumn. For this is a garden where you must think big to keep it true to itself. The Palladian house is at one with the ancient yews, the great curve of the lawn and the lake set in the dip of the hills at the foot of the village of Bwch-y-Cibau.

Bryngwyn Hall www.bryngwyn.com

Opens to the public for charity each year and welcomes groups and societies by appointment for tours of the garden with home made tea or buffet lunch but there are plans to open the garden to volunteers. If you would like to spend some hours working in the garden then Lady Linlithgow would like to hear from you. You can e-mail her on enquiries@bryngwyn.com or telephone 07967-821191.



LADY Linlithgow with her Labrador, Faith, by the ha-ha.