

Report on Cornwall Gardens Trust visit to Penwarne Manor

We had glorious weather for our return visit to Penwarne. It was five years ago that we were last here, and this time we were delighted to present the Trust's Record of the garden to Ruth Sawyer who, with her husband Stuart, has overseen a continuing programme of management of this lovely private garden.

Penwarne lies in the area of valleys just west of Falmouth that produced so many important gardens from the nineteenth century. In the medieval period the Penwarne estate was much larger and included Penjerrick, Trebah and Glendurgan. A free chapel formerly existed in the area of the present walled garden. The Penwarne family sold the estate in the 18th century and Sir Michael Nowell built the current house in 1786. It is from this time onwards that the existing gardens began to take shape, but it was principally from the 1860s to the 1900s, during the ownership of Rev. Peters and his son-in-law Rev. John Tonkin, that they were developed.

There was a succession of owners during the 20th century. The Ingrams (1927-1939) planted seedlings collected by Kingdon Ward, and the Williams made further plantings of rhododendrons and camellias. Mr Beister, from 1983, planted up much of the northern part of the garden, while the Sawyers are particularly working on the areas to the south of the house, which covers ten acres.

We were privileged to be shown around by both Ruth Sawyer and head gardener Simon Lawson, who has been at the garden for eleven years.



The main, south-east, façade of the house is approached by two drives and the main lawn slopes down to south-east, bordered with mature trees and shrubs, including a magnificent copper beech (*fagus sylvatica*) and several magnolias.

A path leads north-east to the duck pond with a late 19th century water tower. The pond is fringed with tree ferns (*dicksonia antarctica*) and a variety of specimen trees including a *camellia reticulata* 'Captain Rawes' and a *magnolia mollicomata* 'Lanarth' grown from seed by the previous gardener, Peter Hart, in the 1970s. A view has been opened up by cutting back some rhododendron to show a *davidia involucrata* and the Japanese garden that the Sawyers have created.



Continuing down a path from the duck pond, and passing a *rhododendron Penjerrick Cream* and a *rhododendrom fragrantissima*, both in flower, we came to an area where acers and Japanese flowering cherry *prunus Tai Haku* have been planted around a pond to create a Japanese garden.

To the east of this area is a woodland garden which boasts a wealth of interesting plants, including a *gingko biloba*, a *magnolia denudrata*, an evergreen *magnolia delavii*, a *magnolia x veitchii* and a *rhododendron montroseanum*.

Continuing downhill, we reached an area of denser planting, evocatively named the Jungle. A few years ago a large beech fell after succumbing to ganoderma leaving one part of the area as a jungle clearing. The Sawyers have used this as a wonderful opportunity to plant a large number of Asian rhododendrons, many of which came courtesy of Tom Clarke (formerly gardener at Trelissick), including *Rh. Arboretum delavyi*, *Rh. Davidsoeanum*, and *Rh. Sinogrande*. As these grow to maturity the clearing will once again grow in to dense jungle.

Below the jungle is a shelter belt which marks the boundary of the garden. This is stocked with mature tree and is being refreshed with conifers and alder - Penwarne means homestead on high ground near an alder grove, so this is particularly appropriate.



From here we went to the Orchard, which is well stocked with apple trees. This sheltered area lies below the main lawn and is terraced into an upper and lower orchard, with steps up to the lawn.

Skirting around the west a walk leads around past the coach house and stables and up to the walled garden. This is the area reputed to have been the site of a medieval chapel. Architectural fragments around the site include parts of a Perpendicular window, presumably from the chapel. The stone of the chapel may have been used to build the walled garden. The area was laid to lawn by Mr Beister, and the Sawyers have created a productive garden with box hedging around the beds.

The Victorian greenhouse survives, with the pipework from its heating system (the boiler, outside the walled area, does not survive) and a below ground cistern for watering and humidifying. Outside it is a fruiting orange tree, which has here for the last ten years since being moved out of the greenhouse.

We finished back at the house in a lovely small yard with raised beds which was a perfect setting to end with a very welcome cup of tea and some lovely scones.