

The Story of the Tin Garden

John Charles Williams (1861-1939) ('JCW'), the great grandfather of the current owner, developed a passion for breeding daffodils in the 1880s. He constructed this potting shed then and the surrounding area was fenced with sheets of corrugated tin as you can see in one of the pictures.

Literally thousands of new varieties of daffodils were bred and raised in Tin Garden by JCW and his daffodil gardener, Mr Gregory. The idea was to develop new strains of daffodil which flowered early in the season so that Cornish farmers could create a new commercial crop for sale to the flower markets in Birmingham and Covent Garden at a time of depression and near famine in the countryside.

By 1900 JCW had expanded his interest in horticulture and gardening far beyond daffodils and he began to fund plant hunting expeditions to China by the great Chinese plant hunters, Ernest Wilson (1876-1930) and George Forrest (1873-1932). The seeds of the new varieties of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias which were sent back to Caerhays between 1902 and 1932 form the basis of the 140 acre woodland gardens which you see today.

Over the generations the daffodils in the Tin Garden were planted out into the garden and, by the 1950s, vegetables were grown here for the castle by Gordon Trudgeon who lived nearby at the Pound.

By the 1970s trees were planted in Tin Garden and it became a pheasant rearing pen.

In 2019 the Tin Garden was again cleared of trees to make way for a commemorative planting following Julian Williams's ('FJW') death on 5th January 2019 at the age of 91. The family, tenants, staff and friends have all contributed. The new planting which you see includes plenty of JCW's daffodil crosses which are still available commercially today but, more importantly, it features many of the camellia, magnolia and rhododendron hybrids which Julian Williams bred and raised during his lifetime's work since 1955 with head gardeners Philip Tregunna and Jaimie Parsons. Several of the plants are named after Delia Williams, FJW's wife who died on 16th July 2013.

The new granite gateposts at the entrance were a gift from Roger Grose of Trevarrick and generously installed by Frankie Tregunna who, with Ross Collins, cleared and created this historic new garden feature in Caerhays Castle Gardens.