

Both Sam and Nick Brabner followed this policy. The former by extremely hard work and the gift of propagating practically anything, and the latter by expanding the garden further by careful planting and the use of modern machinery, so that today, the whole area can be maintained in around 20 hours per week.

For the Millennium 2000 trees were planted on the Northern boundary, which include over 40 different specimen trees. Residents on the 1st January 2000 were invited to choose a tree from the list of specimens and various locals and longstanding guests sponsored trees. These are now recorded in their name for posterity.

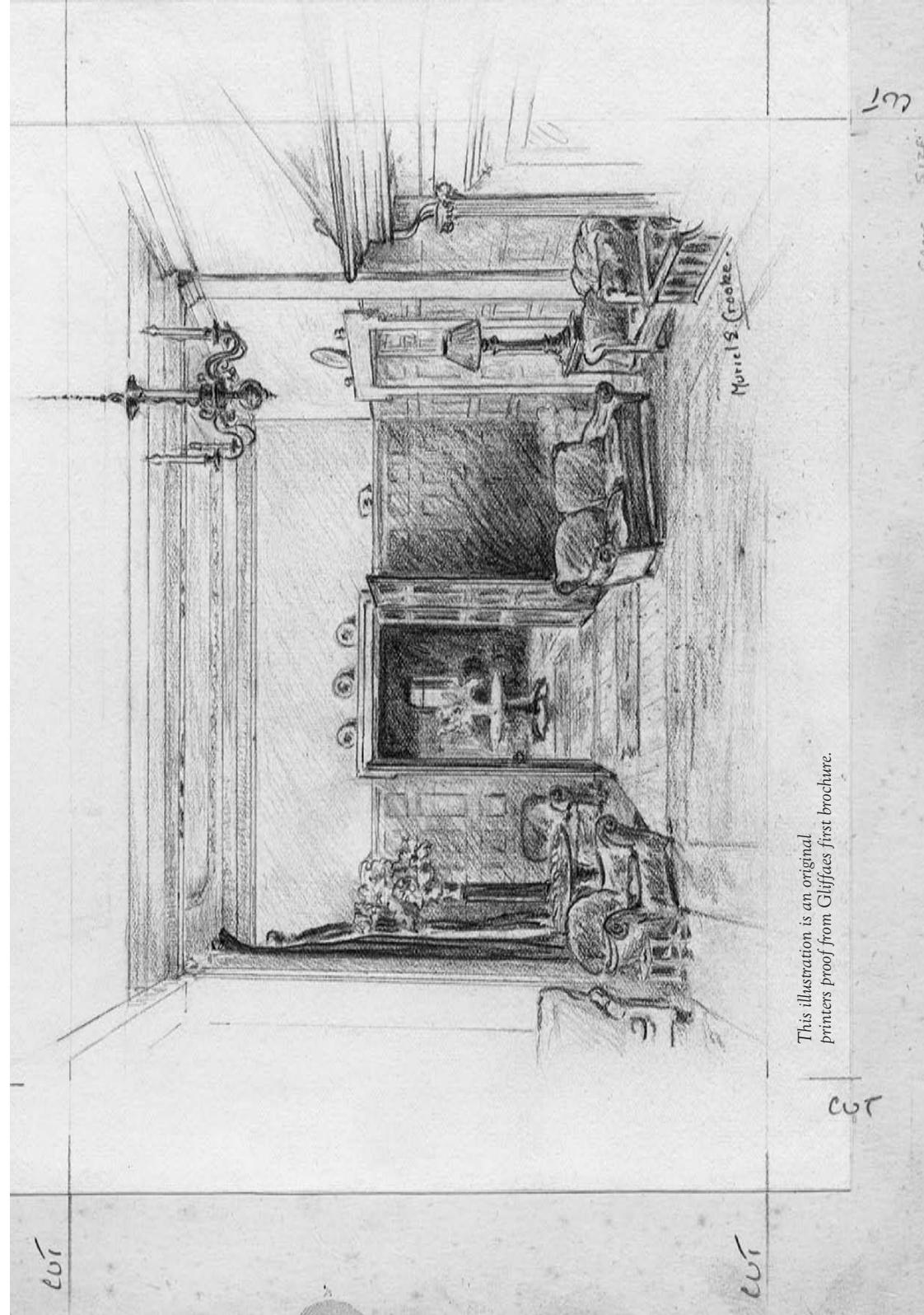
Time does not stand still in a busy hotel and it is a constant battle to maintain a large Grade 2 listed building.

We continue to look after, repair and refurbish both inside and outside. However, our efforts do not go unnoticed and we were awarded Best Welsh Country House Hotel for 2009 by the Good Hotel Guide and also Gold Awards for "outstanding quality, exceptional comfort and hospitality" from Visit Wales in 2011 and 2012.

After the sudden death of Nick Brabner in 2011 James & Susie have taken up the challenge of the on-going tree planting, enhancement of the grounds and conservation of the river bank that Nick was so passionate about. We hope to build upon the already impressive collection of mature trees with the addition of more specimens, the labelling of the trees and creating a 'tree walk'.



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This illustration is an original
printers proof from Gliffaes first brochure.

Gliffaes lies between the River Usk and the Myarth Hill. It is this position which gives it its name, as Gliffaes is a corruption of Gwlydd Faes, the dewy field. The river mists rise and are trapped by the hillside, falling as heavy dew. The name is mentioned in the twelfth century by the half-Welsh, half-Norman historiographer, Giraldus Cambrensis. A Normanised form of the name appears in a document of 1234, as Wlythfays. For the next five centuries records of all but the major families and manors are minimal. The Beaufort family held the land and much was parcelled out to tenant farmers. A lease document of 1705 names Thomas Williams, his wife Susan and their son, Daniel, of "Glithvaes in the parish of Cwmdu and the county of Brecon". The Residents rolls of the Beaufort Estate list all males between 12 and 70 years old, but until 1760 give no details of dwelling place. At last in 1780 there is William Jones of Glithvaes with his son (also William) and a servant, Thomas Petter. In 1819 Thomas James of Gliffaes is listed with two male servants.

These names appear in the lists for tenants and residents not freeholders, so it seems Gliffaes was one of the tenant farms, probably of reasonable prosperity to warrant two male servants, and who knows how many unlisted female ones! The next resident was Mr. William Henry West.

The Glanusk edition of Theophilus Jones History of Brecknockshire records that Mr. West retired here and "the demesne was much beautified by him, many rare trees being planted". This gentleman was an Ironmaster, that is, he was involved in the running of the ironworks over the hills, in his case Beaufort. He had family ties with the two founders of the works and by 1828 must have been in one third partnership, as he is one of three signatories to a lease for land and mining works from the Duke of Beaufort.

Theophilus does not say when Mr. West moved here, but he was a member of the Breconshire Agricultural Society in 1819 and was of sufficient standing by 1833 to be High Sheriff of the county for that year. It seems probable that he moved here not later than 1819 after Thomas James. In 1856 Sir Joseph Bailey (also an Ironmaster), owner of the adjacent Glanusk property increased his lands by an Inclosure Act, giving him all the common lands of the Myarth except 40 acres added to the Gliffaes estate of Mr. West. Gliffaes no longer seemed to be a tenant property, though we do not know when Mr. West bought it outright. He lived in the original house opposite what is now the hotel. The 1844-6 tithe map shows this building, but not a house on the hotel site, nor the present driveway. The house was the brainchild of Mr. West's son, the Rev. West, and was built in 1883-5.

The Rev. West had travelled extensively, especially in Italy, which could explain the Italianate style of the house with its campanile at each end. Until recently it was thought by some historians that it could have been a Lugar design or the work of the Rev. West's brother, Clifton, who was an architect and redesigned Llangynidr Church in 1873. However, the original designs of Browne & Gill of Bath have now come to light. It must have been an exciting commission for them as a change from their normal housing work for the Bathwick Estate.

The house appears on the tithe map of 1885 as does the lodge and the drive. The Reverend was not thrifty with his father's fortune, indeed he is said to have run through three fortunes in his life and left a penniless widow. This explains why he seldom lived here. He let the property to Sir Shirley Salt whom we assume was in residence by 1895, since sadly his third son was buried in Llangynidr churchyard in that year. In 1903 Sir Shirley bought Gliffaes.

During the last century Gliffaes passed through several hands. A Mr. Bailey bought it in 1919, followed by the Bois Family in 1927 and Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Beard in 1936. The Beards were the first to open the house to paying guests and by coincidence, Sam Brabner's elder brother, Dennis, was one of the first!

However, in 1948 Mr. & Mrs. Philip Glazebrook took over with Mr. & Mrs. Sam Brabner. During 1970 the entire ownership passed to the Brabner family. In 1972 Nick and Peta Brabner came to live here and in 1998 their daughter Susie and son-in-law James Suter settled at Gliffaes with their two daughters, Alexandra and Olivia. Four generations of the family lived at Gliffaes for 9 years until October 2007, when Mrs Sam Brabner died at the age of 93. Gliffaes has remained in the same family now for over 60 years.

The foundations of the garden were undoubtedly laid in the early 19th century by W.H. West, whose love of beautiful and rare trees inspired its evolution. When the big house was completed a typical Victorian garden was created with it. Many gravel paths, small lawns, herbaceous borders, vast rose pergolas and trimmed bushes made an interesting but fussy and highly labour intensive garden, maintained by 14 gardeners.

After the war when the Brabners arrived in 1948, a large part of the garden had been neglected and it was at this point, with the expert advice of C.H. Taudevin - the landscape gardener and father of Jane Brabner - that the plan for opening up the area to include interesting flowering shrubs was started.

