



Jorg Koster



Jan Baldwin

A uniquely warm atmosphere pervades the gardens and grounds of Ballyvolane, created largely by the mixture of mature deciduous trees, and formal, semi-formal, walled and woodland gardens, not to mention the wide variety of wildlife that thrives here.

According to Justin Green, who runs Ballyvolane House with his wife Jenny, the gardens were originally laid out when the house was built in the early 18th century by the Pyne Family. The planting of the trees on the estate was undertaken by Thomas Pennefeather, a cousin of the Pynes, who came to visit for a fortnight and ended up staying for 40 years in the position of agent. He planted most of the mature deciduous trees in the gardens and surrounding parkland, nurturing them in their formative years and ensuring their lasting presence for the centuries to come.

"My father Jeremy does all the gardening here, from mowing all the lawns, which takes three full days to complete, to growing all the vegetables in the walled garden," explains Justin. "Over the past 15 years, he has restored the lakes, and has expanded the woodland garden where he has planted hundreds of rhododendrons, azaleas and hydrangea plantations. In 2000, he installed a Laburnum arch to mark the new millennium.

Justin's grandfather Ian Benson who died in 2011, wrote an essay on Ballyvolane's Garden and Woodland walks, capturing the romance and whimsy of the garden.

"Standing with your back to the front door there is an upward slope to the right, with flowering trees and shrubs on both sides of a grass path, which winds beneath

left: gardener Jeremy Green



GARDEN CORNER

Ballyvolane Gardens

Ballyvolane translates as 'the place of springing heifers' which hints at the fertility, richness and natural diversity of the land on which this estate lies

James Fennell



Jan Baldwin



Justin Green

beautiful mature timber parallel to a fine stone wall," Ian wrote. "On the upper slope there is a large open expanse bedecked by a carpet of Bluebells, which provides a rare image hard to forget. Bluebells require 80 years to form a carpet, it is said. Artists frequently struggle to capture colour and the amazing effect accentuated by tall trees that cover them high. Soft scents waft. A path at the top of this open space leads to the entrance gate."

Ian wrote also about the huge and ancient deciduous trees that have valiantly held their place for over 300 years. "In the 1990s a freak wind uprooted a few giants creating temporary chaos. Immediately, planting and under planting took place. Now young trees or rhododendrons bask in light long excluded," he said. "A large Copper Beech grows dramatically at the far end of the formal lawns. Left slant across the lawns reveals a walled garden where an inescapable aura of peace and well-being prevails. There are flowering trees, shrubs, flower borders, fruit

THE PLANTING OF THE TREES ON THE ESTATE WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THOMAS PENNEFEATHER, A COUSIN OF THE PYNES, WHO CAME TO VISIT FOR A FORTNIGHT AND ENDED UP STAYING FOR 40 YEARS IN THE POSITION OF AGENT.



Jörg Koster



James Fennell



Pawel Bebenca

and vegetables. Beyond this large and well maintained area, the original size of the old garden can be seen."

In his affectionate tribute to the gardens, Ian also wrote about a feeding house specially constructed for red squirrels. "A little cavity to contain nuts is surrounded by stones except for a small access. A flat stone is placed across the threshold upon which any larger marauding bird must stand that it may reach the nuts and when it does so the lintel is too low for the head to enter the cavity. Small birds help themselves anyway – who cares? In seasons of their choosing these small beautiful creatures now rare, can be watched without disturbance by a few. The habitat belongs to the squirrels and is not for us," he mused.

Contact: Ballyvolane House, Castlelyons, Co. Cork, T: 025 36349, E: info@ballyvolanehouse.ie, W: ballyvolanehouse.ie

Open: March to October, from 9am until 5pm, gardens open by appointment only as the house and grounds are rented out to private groups from time to time. Please phone in advance on T: 025 36349 to check if Ballyvolane is open or closed.

ON THE UPPER SLOPE THERE IS A LARGE OPEN EXPANSE BEDECKED BY A CARPET OF BLUEBELLS, WHICH PROVIDES A RARE IMAGE HARD TO FORGET. BLUEBELLS REQUIRE 80 YEARS TO FORM A CARPET, IT IS SAID.



James Fennell