

THE GATEWAY GARDENS TRUST

The Gateway Gardens Trust creates and pays for special tailor-made visits to historic parks and gardens in Wales and the West Midlands for a diverse range of community groups, schoolchildren and Lifelong Learners.

For more information about **Bittersweet** or our other visit programmes contact: Jeanette Hill 01558 669158

Additional information about the history of the slave trade can be found on the following websites: www.antislavery.org, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition, www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/slavery, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/



From 1690-1807 British ships captured and transported approximately 2.8 million West African people across the Atlantic Ocean.

One third of the people captured, died within the first three years of their life on a Plantation.



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Helpu Pobl i Ddarganfod Gerddi



THE GATEWAY GARDENS TRUST

Helping People Discover Gardens

www.gatewaygardenstrust.org

BITTERSWEET



Tŷ Enfys DADS

visit

The National Botanic Garden of Wales

in

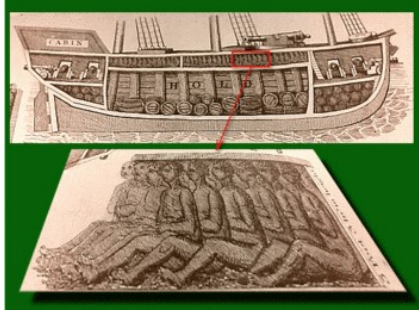
National Tree Week

on

Monday 3rd December 2007

2007 commemorates the 200th anniversary of the **1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act** in Britain. This meant that British ships would no longer be allowed to transport slaves, but slavery continued in the New World: in the British Empire until 1834, in the French Empire until 1848, and in Brazil until the 1880s. Our new **Bittersweet** Project looks at the links between the slave trade and historic gardens, their makers, what they planted, Welsh abolitionists and the wider links with the local community in Wales.

In the hundred years before the slave trade was abolished in 1807, approximately 5,000 slave ships commenced their voyages from Liverpool 2,000 from Bristol and 3,000 from London. The conditions aboard the ships were appalling and many people died. The ship logs of the slave vessel *Elizabeth*, bound for Rhode Island in 1754, listed provisions of "yams, plantain, cornbread, fish and rice."



On the plantations throughout the British empire cornbread was a major part the diet of many of the slaves.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales is built upon land that was once part of the Middleton Estate developed by William Paxton. In 1824 Edward Hamlin Adams, a wealthy merchant from Jamaica, bought the hall and estate. He was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1777, where his family had moved during the British civil war. They were wealthy plantation owners. His wife came from Philadelphia, America, where her father had been a privateer. He had earned enough money at sea to have a large house built called Mount Pleasant, he too, would have had slaves as servants.

Christmas was the most favoured holiday of the year for most slaves. In Virginia, slaves began getting ready for Christmas several weeks beforehand. The Christmas season began with a number of festivities. **Corn shucking** was one of the more memorable events. During the end of November and the beginning of December, large plantation owners sent invitations to the slaves of neighbouring planters to come and shuck corn on a particular night. At the event, one to two hundred slaves sang and shucked corn throughout the night. A break was given, and supper was served. After about an hour, the slaves went back to work and continued shucking corn into the early morning hours.



Shucking is a US verb that first appeared in 1819, derived from the older noun shuck which means husk, pod or shell. So, shucking came to express that one is removing the shuck.



Corn as we know it today would not exist if it weren't for the humans that cultivated and developed it. It is a human invention, a plant that does not exist naturally in the wild. It can only survive if planted and protected by humans.

When Europeans like **Christopher Columbus** made contact with people living in North and South America, corn was a major part of the diet of most native people. When Columbus "discovered" America, he also discovered corn. But up to this time, people living in Europe did not know about corn.



Today there are many uses for corn. Just as Indians depended on corn as a major part of their diet it would be difficult for any person today to live without it. Fabrics used to make your clothing are strengthened by cornstarch. The chickens that laid the eggs you eat were fed corn. Many of the soft drinks you enjoy are sweetened with corn syrup. Books are bound with cornstarch.

The ink used to print them contains corn oil. **Ethanol** is made from corn. Some cars are powered by fuel containing ethanol. Corn is also used in such products as glue, shoe polish, aspirin, ink, marshmallows, ice cream and cosmetics. New ways of using corn are being developed every day.



The most common types of corn are flint, dent, sweet and popcorn. **Flint corn** also known as Indian corn, has a hard outer shell and kernels with a range of colours from white to red. Today, most flint corn is grown in Central and South America. **Dent corn** often called "field corn" is often used as livestock feed. It is also the main kind of corn used when making industrial products and various foods. It can be either white or yellow.



Sweet corn is often eaten on the cob or it can be canned or frozen. Sweet corn is seldom processed into feed or flour. Sweet corn gets its name because it contains more sugar than other types of corn.



Popcorn, a type of flint corn, has a soft starchy centre that is covered by a very hard shell. When popcorn is heated the natural moisture inside the kernel turns to steam that builds up enough pressure for the kernel to explode. When the kernel explodes the white starchy mass forms.

The first **Thanksgiving** in America was held in 1621. While sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie were not on the menu, Popcorn possibly would have been. Colonial housewives served popcorn with sugar and cream for breakfast making it the first "puffed" breakfast cereal eaten by Europeans. Who knows perhaps Edward Hamlin and his family had it served to them, here at Middleton Hall, two hundred years ago.



Today many people continue to use threaded popcorn to make eco-friendly Christmas decorations.