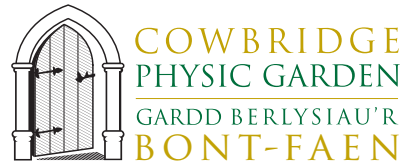


Patron: HRH the Duchess of Cornwall  
President: Dan Clayton-Jones OBE, KStJ, TD, DL



# Newsletter

Issue 29 January 2017



## A star for our AGM on Wednesday 8th March, 2017

We are delighted to announce that our speaker after the CPGT AGM at the St Quentin Suite, Bear Hotel, Cowbridge, will be Helen Picton of Old Court Nursery and the Picton Garden, near Malvern. The talk is entitled 'Old Court Nurseries A Potted History'.

The garden was established in 1906 and Helen is the third generation of the family to run the business and look after the garden itself.

The Picton Garden is famous as it is home to the National Plant Collection of autumn flowering Asters. It also holds the accolade of being an RHS partner garden.

Helen's father, Paul, grew and donated the Michaelmas Daisies in the Cowbridge Physic Garden.

So do be sure to come to the AGM on 8th March and stay to enjoy what we are sure will be a fascinating and enlightening talk by one of the country's foremost plants women.

Please use the booking form provided to get your tickets early.

# Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



A New Year has rolled in, and I hope it is healthy and happy for all our Volunteers and Members. The Physic Garden sleeps mostly now, and this gives the Garden Volunteers time to plan for the months ahead.

Seeds are ordered and divided up amongst willing helpers, the potting shed is sorted and cleaned, and the compost bins are turned over. Each area of the garden is given 'the once over' by the gardening gurus and notes are made as to what needs to be done: replacements, pruning, moving, digging, new ideas are tossed around!

But there is a very tiny little bit of awakening taking place... look carefully and you will see some sunny little aconites and snowdrops heralding a new spring. It won't be long now, so make the most of your log fires because the days will begin to get longer very soon!

## The Dowager Marchioness of Salisbury

The Marchioness, who sponsored the Childbirth bed in the Physic Garden when it was created, died at the age of 94 on 14th December.

Born Mollie Wyndham-Quin she was brought up in Ireland and Wales and loved gardens from an early age, plotting little flowerbeds as a child. Having married the Sixth Marquess in 1945 she set about transforming the gardens at Hatfield House and Cranbourne Manor. Despite lacking any professional qualifications her knowledge and wisdom soon made her much in demand – in many ways ahead of her time, the garden there became organic in 1948 when she banned all pesticides. Renowned for her historical scholarship and interest in homeopathic plants, she had always been a great supporter of the Chelsea Physic Garden. Knowing of her affection for South Wales I invited her to play a part in the creation of our Physic Garden here, and she was absolutely thrilled to be given a chance to sponsor one of our beds.

Mollie Salisbury was a delightful and highly respected gardener, slightly bohemian in dress and totally unpretentious, renowned in her youth as being an outstanding beauty. How satisfying that here in Cowbridge in the Childbirth bed of the Physic Garden, a little bit of her beauty lives on. *Jo Homfray*

# Volunteers News

## September/October 2016

A warm and dry couple of months and the garden moves into spectacular autumn – the glorious Ginkgo tree by the Church Road entrance is really showing off! The Spindles, with their strange almost clashing orange and pink fruits, look lovely and the leaves of our two new *Hydrangea quercifolia* in the Shrubbery are turning a subtle red.

Brendah has been quietly working hard making endless jams, marmalades and chutneys from our apples. Delicious! Some of the pears have now gone over or dropped but the Black Worcester is weighed down with produce.

Among our visitors was Catherine Lewis who is a dyer who appeared on the BBC “Country file” programme recently. She came to look at the Dye Bed and took some Woad, Sorrel Root, Cornflower and Marigold and she plans to come back and show us the strips of dyed cloth she would produce.



Yesterday I disturbed our resident toad who was sheltering under the leaves by the Old Hall wall and a grass snake was also disturbed when one of the compost bins was cleared. We have to check the Potting Shed for our resident robin before we leave and Gillian has seen a wren. So the garden is alive with animal life.

And so we are putting the garden to bed – even though with the mild weather the nasturtiums and some of the pelargoniums are still flowering vigorously! Next stop winter!

Visit us at: [www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk](http://www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk)

## November/December 2016

As the season has lurched from unusually mild temperatures to some lovely frosts, our work in the garden has gradually died down in as we await 2017.

We have made changes in the Dye Bed, thanks to Gareth. He has taken off some huge branches from the Elder, opening up a large space, so the Black Mulberry gets some light and struggling small perennials such as the *Ajuga* can spread. He has also gently forced the Black Mulberry back from the path, and we plan to 'prop up' the main branches (as tradition had it), as its habit is to grow outwards and not upwards!

Gareth has also coppiced the Hazel. Wikipedia tells us that Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management which takes advantage of the fact that many trees, like Hazel, make new growth from the stump or roots if cut down. In a coppiced wood, called a copse, young stems are repeatedly cut to near ground level. In subsequent years new shoots emerge and after a few years the coppiced tree, or stool, is ready to be harvested and the cycle begins again. Evidence suggests that coppicing has been continuously practiced since pre-history

All these changes have made a huge difference to the Dye Bed which was getting overgrown and will open up new opportunities for new planting.

Rebecca tells us that an S4C film crew visited the Garden to film part of the Welsh Version of Songs of Praise to be broadcast on 23/03/2017 and 23/04/2017.



Peter Andrews (previously of the Llanerch Vineyard) gave us a Master Class on pruning the vines and our volunteer Paul has agreed to take responsibility for pruning and training them. Welcome to our new volunteer, Glenn, who has done sterling work in rotating the compost heaps.

Thanks to Gillian and Lin for decorating our tree in the Holy Cross Christmas Treefestival. The theme was a celebration of our 10th anniversary. We look forward to the New Year and another 10 years of spadework!

*Val Thomas for the Gardening Group*

*See the website for the latest Volunteers Newsletter*



# Meet the Volunteer

Paul Williams



My first experience at gardening was while I attended Burry Port secondary school, where I learned all about the skills for soil preparation to grow vegetables and flowers. It is surprising what results you can achieve only with the basics. As an adult living in the village of Pembrey, I grew vegetables for the family at various properties. One particular year I grew outside tomatoes for the first time which produced a huge crop, which I could not ripen quickly enough, so I ended up making wine out of the green tomatoes; this was also a success.

More recently I started taking an interest in growing fuchsias which was a delight, this is where I learned about the hardiness of plants and how certain types need to be housed and protected from the British winter. I also learned how to take cuttings from these beauties. My favourites are the giant variety, (white King and Holly's Beauty). With a little bit of imagination these flowers look like ballerinas, the stamens as they hang down look like legs with ballet pumps on the ends.

My lovely wife Chris first introduced me to the Physic Garden. I was surprised how beautifully peaceful it was. Cowbridge is a busy town but the garden has the ability to shut the hustle and bustle out. After a few visits to the garden I mentioned to Chris that it would be great if I could become a volunteer, so I applied. I had to wait another six months for a vacancy and I became a Thursday boy, alongside the Thursday girls.

The other volunteers told me about the chaos that existed prior to setting up the Physic Garden and the effort that was needed for it happen. From that chaos this tranquil garden exists. It reminds me of similar event that happened a long time ago and a garden that was created out of chaos: that was the garden of Eden which God created for mankind to share his presence. I'm not sure how the Physic Garden measures up to the garden of Eden in splendour, what I am sure of is that God loves gardeners, and gardeners love plants. Here are some of the favourites among the volunteers; geranium, sweet pea, snowdrop, old English rose, fuchsia, pelargonium, hydrangea, cyclamen.

We work together, as colleagues and friends, with the joint goal of preserving this lovely haven.

Visit us at: [www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk](http://www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk)



# Orto Botanico di Napoli

The wrought iron gates to the Naples Botanical Garden might have been the Pearly Gates. On one side there was the chaotic Neapolitan traffic, made worse on the day of my visit by a train strike, on the other a calm green paradise.

The garden was founded as an autonomous institution, 'Real Giardino delle Plante' (Royal Garden of Plants), in 1807, and is now managed by the University. It includes greenhouses (warm, temperate and cold) and a range of buildings used for research into plant biology, as museums of paleobotany and ethnobotany and as a seed bank for fruit and seeds collected in the garden and in nature.

The knowledgeable guide led us round the garden, which is laid out in plant families or climatic zones. We walked past huge trees in the arboretum, through the damp sunken fern garden and past the dry succulent beds. The *Toxicodendron radicans* (Poison Ivy) took our eyes as it lives in its own cage – perhaps we should have caged our Rue instead of digging it out when we discovered some volunteers were sensitive to it!!

There is an interesting orchard of the different citrus plants (the Ugli isn't very ugly) and a bed of plants of economic interest, such as the avocado, sugar cane and prickly pear. A small greenhouse hosts the biblical plants myrrh and frankincense (sadly no gold!)

Of particular interest to me was the small section of plants used in medicine and essences which contained many of the Mediterranean plants we grow in the Physic Garden

Real eye catchers were the signs and benches made of colourful locally made ceramic tiles. This is beautifully laid out and maintained garden which everyone should visit when in Naples. For more information, see <http://www.ortobotanico.unina.it> Val Caple

# Christmas greetings from HRH the Duchess of Cornwall

Again we were delighted to receive a card from our Patron. The photo shows her and Prince Charles on their tour of Croatia in March 2016.



## Walking Nativity

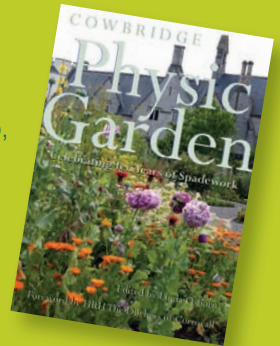
Churches Together in Cowbridge and District staged the 'Walking Nativity' on the 9th and 10th December 2016. They made their progress to Bethlehem via Old Hall Garden and the Physic Garden lit by lanterns and candles and accompanied by carol singers. Participants took home a lovely reminder of the origins of Christmas. *Photo by Mike Wilcock*



## Cowbridge Physic Garden Gifts

Our splendid book of the garden can be bought in the garden on Thursdays, or from The Bay Tree, Cowbridge, Cowbridge Book shop, W H Smiths and Dyffryn Gardens bookshops. Alternatively contact Genevieve Thomas on **01446 774534**.

The tea towel, cards, notelets and umbrellas are on sale at The Bay Tree, Cowbridge. Merchandise and plants are also for sale in the Garden on Thursday mornings.



## RHS Flower Show, Cardiff, 7th to 9th April

The Physic Garden will again have a presence in the 'Discovery' marquee at the prestigious RHS Cardiff Show, held in Bute Gardens, next to Cardiff Castle.

Pamela Haines is kindly organising a rota of volunteers to do a 2 hour 'shift'. From last year's experience, the time flies by as you meet all sorts of people who want to know more about the garden and who you can encourage to make a visit.

Volunteers will have free entry to the show so that, either before or after your two hour slot, you have plenty of time to browse around the rest of the Show.

Please get in touch with Pamela on **01656 654330** or email [pmhaines@btinternet.com](mailto:pmhaines@btinternet.com)



# Plant Fair – Saturday 29 April 2017

10.30am to 3.00pm, Old Hall Gardens, Cowbridge

We are always very pleased to accept your rooted cuttings, divided perennials plants or seedlings to sell on the CPGT stall. This has become a favourite event for local gardeners. We hope to see you there.

The following nurseries plan to support us by hiring tables. Most have websites and plants can be ordered in advance.

- **Bordervale Nursery**

Specialising in more unusual hardy perennials and roses.

- **Elworthy Cottage Plants**

Unusual herbaceous perennials, especially hardy geraniums, geums, grasses, pulmonarias, astrantias, crocosmias, violas & primroses.

- **Herbs in Wales**

A wide selection of herbs available.

- **Ian MacDonald**

Diverse selection of rewarding Perennials.

- **Neath and Port Talbot College**

*(to be confirmed)*

A variety of student grown plants. Auriculas.

- **Pheasant Acre**

Specialising in Gladiolus, tulips and young potgrown dahlias.

- **Sir Gâr Plants**

A small nursery specialising in Ferns and Hydrangeas.

- **Tradewinds Nursery**

Having a wide range of choice plants including herbaceous perennials and shrubs.

- **Tinpenny Plants**

Many rare and unusual plants grown in small quantities by a well renowned plantswoman.

## Date for your Diary

Members' Garden Party Friday 23rd June 2017

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**treganna**  
design

mail@tregannadesign.co.uk

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Editor: Val Caple, Milestone, Penllyn, Cowbridge CF7 7RQ email: [val.t.caple@care4free.net](mailto:val.t.caple@care4free.net)