



COWBRIDGE  
PHYSIC GARDEN  
GARDD BERLYSIAU'R  
BONT-FAEN

Patron: HRH the Duchess of Cornwall

# Newsletter

Issue 14 February 2012

## Plant some new members in the garden!

As you know, Cowbridge Physic Garden is a charitable trust. Annual operating and maintenance costs are met by donations, the various fund raising activities that take place during the year, plus of course, the annual subscriptions collected from enthusiastic friends of the garden.

The membership currently stands at just under 400 – we really need to increase it and this is a rallying call to everyone to try and recruit some new members. (There is an application form in the enclosed new garden leaflet)

The benefits of membership? The pleasure of being involved in what is universally regarded as a wonderful garden, the opportunity to become a volunteer (we always welcome more help in the garden, with maintenance or events), invitations to special events and, of course, to receive Newsletters like this.

So please think of neighbours, friends and relatives who you could approach to consider becoming a Friend of Cowbridge Physic Garden. You are also welcome to arrange membership as a gift for someone by contracting Val Caple, the CPGT Membership Secretary. Let's see if we can increase the membership to the magic figure of 500 by the end of 2012!



# Volunteers News

## October 2011

Well, October is drawing to a close and we are in the process of putting the Physic Garden 'to bed'. In fact the Dye Bed is coming into its own and is well worth a visit. We have cleared much of the overgrown shrubs and iris to reveal the little *Ilex aquifolium* in all its glory.

The berries are stunning this year against the variegated foliage. The dogwood, *Cornus sibirica*, is looking beautiful with its white

berries, as is the spindle, *Euonymus europaeus*, with its slightly unusual reddish fruit.

And finally the privet is also covered in berries echoing what seems to be happening this year throughout the land of unusually good autumn fruits.



But for me, top dog now is the Medlar tree in the fragrance bed, covered in bronze coloured medlars and the foliage turning a yellowy bronze colour. It is spectacular.

## November 2011

'Best, as my mother used to say, just get on with it. There is much to do... Everything that can be cut back has had the chop. The result is a lot of bare earth, hidden since the spring. This, then, is the time to get our bulbs in.' (Monty Don, Ivington Diaries, 24th November 2002). And this is exactly what we have been doing. The rare collection of old tulip bulbs have been planted in the pleached bed

The autumn fruits, apples and damsons have been made into jams, jellies and chutneys, for sale at the Physic Garden. Thank you Tina and Brendagh. Also on sale is Gillie's lovely Christmas card and notelet – *Sorbus aucuparia* – Rowan or Mountain Ash Val Caple has harvested the grapes from the Clisson vine on the pergola. She tells me she has 9 lbs (4.3 kg) of grapes which has made 1 gallon (4.5 l) of wine which fills 6 bottles and will be drinkable in a year's time!! Meanwhile she has produced 2 wine bottles full of pure grape juice which she will donate to the Volunteers Xmas party

The wallflowers are in and the garden is quietening down for the winter. Still the *Ilex aquifolium* – the variegated holly – is stunning in the Dye Bed. And we continue to leave the hollow stems of large herbaceous perennials as insect homes for the winter.

## December 2011

The final December entry from the Guardian's selection of Christopher Lloyd's journalistic writings called 'Cuttings' (2007) reads: "It is a grey morning as I write, the sky above us like a dustbin lid, to borrow Beth Chatto's apt simile, with a threat of rain... Fergus and his team always work doggedly through it. (I do not, seeing as I am getting on)." Well, I think we have worked doggedly through it this year and the Physic Garden looks really good, even at this gloomy, dark time of year.



We have cleared large parts of the fragrance bed and mulched the ground with our compost, pruned the shrub roses, and cleared the little bed by the office under the pear tree so the snowdrops will have room to push up. By the main entrance, the Pyracantha (covered in berries) has been tied up, the stakes and ties have been checked (good thing too after today's great storms) and the garden has pretty much been put to bed.

Sue is having a go at bletting the medlars (letting them deteriorate and soften) so to try making some medlar jelly. Rebecca's has organised the Christmas tree in the Church festival – the theme this year being 'The Holly and the Ivy'.

Well, that's all for 2011.

## January 2012

Firstly, a Happy New Year and hopefully a successful and prosperous New Year in the garden! Now's the time for New Year resolutions, so come and join us on Thursdays just for an hour or so, it all helps.

The garden is just waiting for the spring and already some snowdrops are out, as are primroses and the stinking hellebores (*Helleborus foetidus*). Take a look at the winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) by the Old Hall corner of the garden under the fig. Also look at the espaliered apple trees now looking stunning and standing by themselves as the main upright ties have been removed.



Seeds and some plants are now being ordered for the Physic Garden for the coming year. Still some clearing up to do in the garden and if it is dry next Thursday we hope to clear out the potting shed which definitely needs doing!

*Val Thomas, Gardening Group*

*Excerpts from the monthly Newsletter for the regular volunteers.*

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

# A Day, other than Thursday, in the Life of the Garden

I think we are all aware of the sterling work the gardening volunteers undertake every Thursday in the garden. But did you know that there are many other volunteers involved with the garden on other days? The trustees do many jobs that we may be unaware of but there are others contributing both in and out of the garden on a regular basis.



I love to get to the garden early in the morning before Peter unlocks the doors and turns the fountain on. This is the best time to give the summerhouses a good sweep before the first visitors arrive. The fragrance seems to get trapped in the garden overnight and is at its most intense, while the birds make the most of the undisturbed hours. Occasionally I meet John tending to the gravel pathways, also enjoying the quieter moments. However, I never catch Roger, who tends to the grass. I think he must cut it in the night! The same with David, Graham and Robert who undertake the maintenance work. The water feature has presented them with many a challenge.

We have Saturday gardeners as well. John and Allyson must get to see lots of visitors on a sunny day. Not all volunteers can be seen working in the garden though. Hilary researches and produces the 'Plant of the Month' articles, and Val writes the monthly volunteers newsletter. Another Val keeps in touch with members, and we have a whole team who undertake talks and tours. In 2011 we provided 8 talks and 8 tours to outside groups, and thanks to Carys, these can also be provided in Welsh.

So, as you can see, you don't need to be a gardener or great botanist to contribute. If you have skills in IT, speaking, cleaning, marketing, organising trips, tourism or making Christmas tree decorations please do contact a volunteer or trustee. As the saying goes 'the more you put in the more you get out' and I can vouch for that.

*Rebecca Exley, garden volunteer*

## Cards and gifts

A range of Notelets, including the new Rowan (Mountain Ash), are always available from The Bay Tree, Cowbridge. Also the superb quality Physic Garden umbrellas, which can be ordered on **01446 774534**. These items, plus a range of plants, are available for sale from volunteers in the Physic garden on a Thursday. All proceeds are used to support the garden.

# Introducing the Trustees

## Robert Cope, Vice Chairman



At age 16 Robert was asked, "What do you want to be, besides an artist?". Unpredictably, good fortune (or otherwise!) led him to achieve an Honours Degree in Engineering. This in turn led to a career in R&D with ICI, which also provided ample opportunity for his creative work to flourish.

Gardening has always been an important part of Robert and his wife Marylyn's life, but since retirement, Robert has become more focused on the architectural and restoration aspects of gardens. Some major work on County House, Brecon, featured on both BBC and ITV programmes. However, it was never anticipated that a unique garden lay not only on the horizon, but also on his doorstep!

Dan Clayton-Jones introduced Robert to the Welsh Historic Garden Trust's concept of a Physic Garden in Cowbridge. The first team meeting was held in April 2004, leading to the formation of a formal body, limited company and the Charter Trust that exists today. The garden, of course, appeals at all levels and to all senses; colours, tastes, fragrances, horticultural development and history. It has also been the inspiration and catalyst for other successful town projects such as the Town Walls restoration and the Old Hall Gardens themselves. Hopefully, the high standards set by everyone within the Cowbridge Physic Garden will continue to be an inspiration and a delight to all.

## Sponsors' Book

This book, presented to Cowbridge Physic Garden by The Cowbridge Bears Association, records the names of individuals and organisations who have sponsored items within the garden or given generous financial support, and also names the many individuals who have given, and continue to give, their time and skills in support of the garden.

The book was bound in blue leather with gold tooling by Abbey Book Binding of Cardiff, and all the entries have been beautifully inscribed by Gwynfryn Petty of Porthcawl a skilled calligrapher. The book will be on display at the Annual General Meeting and at future events. To make an appointment to view the book at other times is please ring **Genevieve on 01446 774534**.

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

# Your Link with the Garden can Live on

At the Cowbridge Physic Garden, some of the funds required to establish and keep the garden flourishing and well-maintained come from personal legacies.

Should you wish to remember the Garden in your Will (and we hope that you will!) the following form of words should be included in your Will.

**I GIVE** the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ Pounds (£ \_\_\_\_\_) to the Charity known as The Cowbridge Physic Garden (Registered Charity No. 1110127) c/o The Cross Llanblethian Cowbridge Vale of Glamorgan CF71 7JF and declare that the receipt of the Treasurer or other appropriate Officer of the legatee which is a charity shall be a good discharge to my Trustees.

## Charitable Donations

Donations to the CPGT can now be made at [www.btplc.com/mydonate](http://www.btplc.com/mydonate)

## Seasons greetings from our Patron

The Trustees were delighted to receive a personal card from HRH The Duchess of Cornwall.

Wishing you a very Happy Christmas  
and New Year

From  
Cecilia



## Cecil England

Apologies for reporting the name as Cyril England in Issue 13 of the Newsletter.

# Florists' Tulips

The Physic Garden was extremely fortunate to have been given our first tulips three years ago by Timothy Clark. He has made it his life's work to maintain and grow some of these very rare bulbs which are not available commercially. Since then he has given us additional bulbs, both last year and this, and we are very grateful to him.



The last remaining Florists' Tulip Society, the Wakefield and North of England Tulip Society have managed to keep going some of the old forms which otherwise would have been lost to garden history. They still show their blooms in the traditional way in beer bottles every May.

It was in the seventeenth century when tulipmania was prevalent in Europe and vast sums of money were gambled on the colours of the flowers and the bulbs were sold at astronomical prices. It was in these days that they were grown by the rich and famous. In the town of Hoorn in Holland a plaque was found during the demolition of three houses, the plaque showed that these houses were built on the proceeds of the sale of just five bulbs. Later the growing of tulips was ridiculed by Addison and Pope and they went out of favour. It was the dedication of enthusiastic and skilled working men who ensured the survival of the plants in the nineteenth century by setting up the Florists' Societies.

The flowers are divided into various groups under the following headings. Firstly, base, relating to the colour of the bottom of the flower, which may be either white or yellow. Those with a yellow base are known as *bizarre*, and those with a white base and purple or black stripes as *Bybloemen*. Either of these may be subdivided into two further groups; *feathered*, where the colour is confined to the edges of the tepals, or *flamed* where the colour runs up the middle of the tepal and branches out to the edges. *Rose* is where the flower has a pure white base and red markings on a white ground. *Breeder* is the name given to a self-coloured tulip which has not been infected with the tulip virus. Once it has been infected it becomes striped and is termed *broken*.

We hope that this wet winter will not have affected our bulb collection and that we will be able to provide a good display in May, and we will be adding our contribution to the retention of the older cultivars for the future.

*Mary Wallis, Trustee and garden volunteer*

*Photographs taken in the garden by Gillian Griffiths*

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

# CPGT Website and Newsletter

As a result of a request by a member, the 'What's in the Garden' webpage now contains information leaflets prepared by various volunteers, including copies of Hilary's 'Plant of the Month', which she has researched over the past 2 years. The Volunteers' webpage includes the latest issue of their Newsletter – see extracts from the previous 4 issues on Page 2 – and back issues of the CPGT Newsletter are on the Friends webpage.



The papers for the forthcoming AGM have also been made available by the Trustees to save on paper and postage stamps. If you have suggestions for improving the website or Newsletter, please contact me or other Trustees. We would also welcome contributions from any of our members – this is your Website and Newsletter! *Val Caple*

## Dates for your diary!

### CPGT AGM 14th March 2012

The business meeting will be followed by A Brain-Tickling Gardening Quiz! Lots of fun, lots of prizes, lots of interest and even education!

### Annual Plant Fair Saturday 28th April 2011

Please bear in mind the April Plant Sale, and if you can grow some plants, take cuttings, grow from seed etc. please help to swell the plants we will have on offer. Also please support us by buying plants, raffle tickets, cards etc. on the day.

### CPGT Members Garden Party Friday 22nd June 2012

This is advanced notice of this enjoyable annual event. The invitations will be sent out with the next issue of the Newsletter

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