



COWBRIDGE  
PHYSIC GARDEN  
GARDD BERLYSIAU'R  
BONT-FAEN

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

# Newsletter

Issue 18 May 2013



## The Queen of Herbs conquers Cowbridge



The St Quentin Suite of the Bear Hotel was buzzing on the evening of 20th March. It was the occasion of the Annual General Meeting of the Physic Garden and it was (for once!) very well attended by members – but the real draw, as evidenced by the influx of people after the AGM was to hear a talk given by Jekka McVicar, founder of Jekka's Herb Farm in Gloucestershire and life-long horticultural enthusiast. (She is a multi-award winner at Chelsea and other RHS shows, and now sits on the RHS judging panel).

The presentations in the AGM itself were listened to attentively by those present; the garden is in good shape, in both cultivation and financial senses and the Chair, Mrs Jo Homfray, was very gracious in her thanks to trustees and volunteers for all their efforts to nurture and maintain it in its excellent condition.

After a short break for drinks, Mrs Rose Clay introduced Jekka. What were we expecting? An Open University lecture on cross breeding of hybrid herbs? A Latin lesson in the correct naming of the world's herbs? A culinary canter through the kitchens of the country, sprinkling dishes with herbal delights?

Well, we got all and none of the above! Jekka entranced her audience with anecdotes of her many years of passionate cultivation of herbs; there were stories of rock and roll, of rubbing shoulders with celebrity chefs and the golden thread running through it all; a fascinating insight into her world of herbs. If anything, there was almost too much to take in. She is currently developing a new "Herboretum" at her farm in Gloucestershire... we can sense a Volunteers' trip heading that way next year!

Thank you Jekka, for a delightful evening.

# Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



As we all know, spring has been very late in arriving this year and as I write this the temperatures still feel somewhat low for the time of year. However, at last we have experienced some sunny days which certainly lifts all of our spirits. The Physic Garden, and indeed the countryside in the Vale, has begun to burst joyfully into life.

Jekka McVicar gave us a wonderful talk on herbs and her new Herboretum back in March, which was excellently attended. I am sure I am not alone in having been inspired to purchase seeds and plants on her recommendations! The Plant Fair in April has also been a huge success, and my thanks go as always to the Volunteers for helping to make it so – a lot of work is entailed in the run up to this event by the Garden Volunteers, Marketing and Maintenance Groups. It is great fun and most rewarding.

In the Newsletter you will read in greater detail about some of these events. May I remind ALL our valued Members of the Physic Garden that the annual Summer Party is on Friday 21st June and I do hope we see as many of you as possible there. Let us hope for a balmy sunny evening, I think we deserve it!

In the meantime I hope you get a chance to enjoy the Physic Garden when you are in the Cowbridge vicinity. It is looking wonderful, and as the summer months progress, will become a riot of colour and beauty.

## Volunteers News

### February 2013



I think we are probably all pleased to see the end of February after a very grey and bitterly cold period. But the nights are drawing out at last, and I am being woken earlier by the light in the morning. Today, the last day of February, in the garden we enjoyed a pleasant day with a watery sun struggling to get through. We've lightly pruned the espaliered apple trees, and the pear trees, and Tina has set to on the shrub roses.

The Shrubbery Bed is looking grand by the office, with the *Cornus mas* (Cornelian Cherry) in flower, tiny little bunches of yellow flowers, the red stems of the large *Cornus alba* providing a backdrop for the green *Helleborus foetidus* and snowdrops. Along the Pergola bed primroses, many self-seeded, are looking beautiful amidst the emerging narcissi. Along the Fragrance bed and Old Hall corner, the *Daphne* are about to flower and in the beds *Pulmonaria* is well on with periwinkle's blue flowers beginning to pop up. And a special mention for the *Paeonia mascula* given to us by the Paeony Society which is just thrusting up through the earth. Jackdaws were busy this morning trying to catch the water from the fountain and what were probably two great tits were flitting around the Cornelian Cherry trees.

Recently we have made efforts to make sure there is a First Aid facility in the garden – three volunteers, Val Caple, Lin Edwards and Val Thomas – have now passed the Appointed Persons Certificate for Emergency First Aid at Work and also Esther Boots is a qualified First Aider. You should also know that in the unlikely event that we need a defibrillator, one is held in The Bear Hotel.

## March 2013

As March this year works its way through cold, wind and rain – a volunteer remarked the other day “it’s even too cold for the weeds to grow” – let us take heart from Rosemary Verey (The Garden in Winter) who says: “If your garden looks good in winter, you belong to a select band capable of bending nature to its will. If you master the worst that winter can throw at you – ice, snow, wind without remorse – you will have a sense of conquest.” Well, the Physic Garden looks fine, even now, and it is all thanks to everyone’s hard work!

The Pergola Bed looks beautiful with our native primroses flowering all over the bed and many Narcissus in flower as well. In the Fragrance Bed the *Daphne bholua* is in flower and some clumps of sweet violet and a struggling cowslip! In various beds *Pulmonaria officinalis* also looks lovely – one of my favourite plants. By the office the Quince is just starting to sprout and along the Church Road wall the *Leucojum* and the *Cornus mas* are ignoring the cold and flowering well.

Lynne offers this poem, written by a friend of hers to celebrate the still flowering Hellebore.



### Poem for Lent

*Flower of Lent; purple for penitence  
Hidden below its own leaf canopy  
Inward looking, head bowed down  
Colours of mourning - mauve, violet, plum.*

*Down on one's knees gains a better view  
Sombre beauty; discrete symbol of the season.  
Gently nodding blooms, introspective  
self-contained, thoughtfully, quietly renewing.*

*Gentle hands cupped around the flower  
To carefully upturn the bell shape  
Discover a surprising centre – sun yellow  
Redeeming light in the darkness.*

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## April 2013

Well, the last few days of April have brought us some lovely dry spring weather. As Esther commented: "The garden is full of expectation and hope!" In the Shrubbery and the Church Road bed, anemones and primroses abound, the *Vinca* and sweet violet, *Leucojum* and *Muscari* look wonderful. Also notice the little clumps of the unusual *Hacquetia* beneath the battered but blossoming pear tree.

In the beds, *Pulmonaria* is at its height with its spotty leaves and lovely red and blue flowers and the cowslips look beautiful. Pushing up is Lily of the Valley, Paeonies, Lovage, and *Angelica* (the latter two looking meek and small before they turn into the giants of summer) with the Woad well on in the Dye Bed. Perhaps top of the list of emerging plants are the wonderful wands of Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum*) with their bulbous heads waving in the wind.



Mary and Gillian have done sterling work checking the beds and making sure the volunteers know what is missing or needs to be added to the beds and Tina has sorted out the compost heaps which we have been using.

## Charitable Donations

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

## 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.

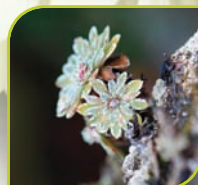
Should you wish to remember the Garden in your Will (and we hope that you will!) the following form of words should be included in your Will.

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.

# Volunteers' visit to Aberglasney and the Wallis's garden

The latest outing for the Physic Garden Volunteers took place on Wednesday 10th April. The first visit was to the Aberglasney gardens. Most of the volunteers gathered at the town hall in Cowbridge at 9:30. Jo Homfray took up the responsible task of driving the minibus packed with volunteers. After arrival and a quick coffee, Joseph Atkin, head gardener at Aberglasney, gave us a fascinating tour round the garden. Because of the cold weather there wasn't much flourishing at that moment, but Joseph could tell us a lot about all the work that has taken place in the past few years and spoke with great enthusiasm of the plans he still has for the future, including putting together a national daffodil collection. It was all very interesting and he was really amusing.

After a good lunch sitting outside in the sunshine, we went off to Bob and Rannveig Wallis's garden and alpine nursery in Porthyrhyd. Here Jo excelled as their entrance driveway was narrow and the minibus just squeezed through. Bob and Rannveig are experts in alpine flowers, they divided us in two groups and steered us round their beautiful garden and greenhouses full of brilliantly coloured flowering bulbs until our brains were spinning! They were delightful hosts and entertained us with tea and biscuits afterwards. It was a lovely day.



*Thank you to  
Esther Boots for  
her lovely photos.*

## Membership

The garden exists year by year on the loyalty and generosity of the Friends of the Physic Garden. For what is a modest annual fee, you enjoy (or we hope you do!) the Newsletters, garden updates, opportunities to join planned trips, partake in special "Friends Only" events such as the garden party and have a voice at the AGM.

But to keep the garden in wonderful condition and ensure its future, we do need to increase the number of "Friends", so please think of someone you know who would appreciate joining us. A Membership leaflet is enclosed but they are always in the garden, or they can apply online. ([www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk](http://www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk))

**You're a member.  
You've got friends.  
Get them to be  
members, too!**

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

# Cowbridge Physic Garden Plant Fair



The day started early for all the Volunteers. Luckily it was bright and sunny but with a cold wind, though not as stormy as last year. There were many tasks to complete before the advertised opening at 10.00 am – and we knew that customers would arrive before then.

Most of the plants, kindly donated by supporters or by-products from the garden itself, had already been labelled and priced, but welcome contributions always arrive on the day. The maintenance men had the task of putting up the gazebos and, more of a challenge, the banners, before the Volunteers display could be set up.

The next to arrive were the other stallholders who 'hire' a stall to help swell the funds for the garden. The number increases every year and they offer a wide range of beautiful plants which help give the event a real buzz and attract customers from near and far.

As we transfer the plants from the Physic Garden to Old Hall using wheelbarrows, trolley (or muscles!) we realise how generous everyone has been this year. We need another table outside the gazebos to display more and we will still have to hold some plants back until later. Meanwhile other volunteers start plying us and the other stallholders with hot drinks and delicious homemade cakes, a process which will continue throughout the day. A table is set up to display the raffle prizes, including a Gillian Griffiths painting, and the Physic Garden items which are for sale. We are ready!

Customers start arriving about 9.45 am, hoping for the pick of the crop, and from then on there is a trickle and then a flood of enthusiastic gardeners. Dan Clayton Jones, our President, requires the services of the trolley to carry away his booty while other customers struggle away with bags. It may not be the last Saturday of the Chelsea Flower Show, but a steady stream of plants are being carried triumphantly out of Old Hall garden.

Lunch time arrives with a delivery of sandwiches for the stallholders and more hot drinks and cakes for us all. Eventually the number of customers starts to drop and at about 2.30 pm, while serving the few who remain, we start to pack away. Plants are returned to the Physic Garden where they will still be on offer every Thursday, gazebos are collapsed and banners put away until next time. All the stallholders are pleased with their sales and the garden funds have benefited with a profit of nearly £1000.

This annual event is becoming an important part of local gardeners' calendar. Everyone involved should congratulate themselves for contributing to its success, and many thanks to all our customers who made our efforts worthwhile. See you next year!

# Introducing the Trustees

## Val Cagle and family

This series was originally my idea, and now I am told it is my turn to reveal all! I was born near Nottingham and went to Sheffield University before moving to Wales where I worked for 30 years as an industrial chemist. I inherited my love of gardening from my father and his family and this continued after I married Ray, also a keen gardener. Another interest we had in common was archaeology – we took part in digs in Wales and England ranging from Stone Age barrows to a Medieval castle and Victorian Cardiff.



This led to an interest in garden history and joined the local branch of the Welsh Historic Garden Trust which aims to encourage an appreciation of historic designed landscapes and help protect them. It was at one of our committee meetings that Dan Clayton Jones, then Chairman, suggested we plan and manage a project to convert the neglected 'Cowbridge Grammar School Kitchen Garden' (originally part of Old Hall garden) into a Physic Garden – and the rest is history.

When I was appointed as a CPGT Trustee I took on roles where my 45-year experience with computers was invaluable – as membership secretary, webmaster and newsletter editor. These activities continue to raise valuable funds for the Physic Garden. Ray was also involved as he completed the archaeological watching brief, as part of the planning approval, when the site was originally landscaped.

Although I continue to enjoy my administrative roles, my real pleasure is to join the other volunteers in the garden on a Thursday morning. I can lose myself in the challenges of maintaining the Nerve bed or, when the weather is inclement, enjoy coffee and cakes in our 'snug' mess room with colleagues. I am usually attended by a canine companion, first Sheena, and now Maisie, a 16-week old Labradoodle, who is already charming visitors.

We always welcome new volunteers whatever they can contribute. Do you have any skills which you could offer? This could be computer skills, public speaking, marketing etc. Please contact us and you could benefit the garden and at the same time join in the fun!

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

# Cards and gifts

The Physic Garden Tea Towel, inspired by a vibrant watercolour of a nasturtium by our own illustrious artist (and volunteer) Gillian Griffiths, has proved a great success, and we are about to order more umbrellas.



A range of Notelets and cards, including images of the garden, are always available from The Bay Tree, Cowbridge. 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.

## Dates for your diary!

### CPGT Members Garden Party Friday 21st June 2013

Music will be performed by Deuiar, duo Ceri Owen-Jones and Elsa Davies, who play Welsh folk music on harp and fiddle. Elsa says "it will be special for us to play some of Iolo Morgannwg's work in his bro. Ceri recently wrote an article on them but the best way of keeping them alive is playing them to people!"



To ensure that you can get tickets please reply by June 14th.

# NGS – Gardens Open for Charity

Our Chairman, Jo Homfray, is opening Penllyn Court garden on 16th June as one of the Penllyn Gardens.

Newsletter design by

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Supported by  
**The National Lottery**  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund

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Ariennir a hwylusir Erthygl 33 gan Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru dan Gynllun Datblygu Gwledig Cymru  
Article 33 is funded and facilitated by the Welsh Assembly Government under the Rural Development Plan for Wales



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Registered Charity Number: 1110127 Company Number: 5118600

Registered Office: The Cross, Llanblethian, Cowbridge CF71 7JF

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