

Physic Garden a prominent tourism flagship for the Vale
Cowbridge Physic Garden continued to be a prominent flagship project for the Vale of Glamorgan Chairman Dan Clayton-Jones told more than 30 people who attended the organisation's annual general meeting.

He said that the garden, now attracting well over 80,000 visitors annually, had become a prized addition to the town, supporting other initiatives sponsored by the Chamber of Trade, the town and Vale Councils and the Cowbridge Charter Trust to promote town as a major tourism centre for the region.

Dan Clayton-Jones went on to explain that the garden's new Patron, HRH the Duchess of Cornwall, was keeping a close interest in the welfare of the garden and wished to be involved in further visits, probably during 2010.

He thanked all the volunteers, together with their organiser, Jacky Thorne, for the invaluable work they were continuing to perform for the cause.

Jacky Thorne told the meeting that the project's gardening group was about the task of removing all the box plants from the borders of the garden because of the scourge of box blight, which had become a nationwide problem. Urgent attention was being paid to finding suitable alternatives, if at all possible.

Four new trustees were elected to join the ranks - Dr Val Caple, Mary Wallis, Phillip Chappell and Linda Osborn.

Other directors and trustees who were re-appointed by rotation comprised Jo Homfray, Michael Meredith, and Robert Moore

The meeting closed with an illustrated talk by Rose Clay on plants for the summer and autumn

Flowers and Foliage for the Autumn Garden

For those members who missed my talk after the AGM here are a few of the points I made. The garden can be interesting and colourful right up to the end of October and beyond, if the frosts hold off, and shrubs, perennials, grasses and bulbs all make a contribution, not to mention trees which I will ignore here.

Starting with shrubs, I think the various cultivars of *Hydrangea serrata* are particularly good as they do not get as big as the



macrophyllas. They mostly have lacecap flowers in shades of blue or pink according to the acidity or alkalinity of the soil and in late summer the outer sepals turn over and assume much deeper shades. *Leycesteria formosa* 'Golden Lanterns' is a form of the well-known Pheasant Bush (so called as it used to be planted by gamekeepers) with deep gold foliage which contrasts well with the purple hanging bracts and white flowers turning to black berries. *Berberis thunbergii* 'Silver Beauty' is well worth seeking out as the green and white mottled summer foliage turns a brilliant orange-red very early on in the autumn and the shrub is quite compact. Hardy fuchsias are good autumn plants and I would particularly recommend the cultivars of *F. magellanica* for their foliage and *F. 'Tom West'* and *F. 'Genii'* for their foliage and flowers. There are many cultivars grown for their flowers.

Moving on to herbaceous plants, *Chrysanthemums* are good, particularly 'Meikyo' (pink) and its offspring 'Purleigh White', 'Bronze Elegance' and 'Nantyderry Sunshine' (yellow) which all have small flowers covering the plants and are very hardy and reliable. *Dahlias* 'Bishop of Llandaff', 'Roxy' and 'Twinings After Eight' have dark foliage contrasting with their bright flowers (red, magenta and white). *Euphorbia ceratocarpa* has an incredibly long flowering season but grows rather large. *Sedums* have good autumn flowers, particularly 'Matrona', 'Autumn Joy' and 'Purple Emperor'. *Rudbeckia* "Goldsturm" makes a splash of deep yellow as does *R. triloba*, a short-lived perennial with smaller flowers. I only grow Michaelmas Daisies that do not get mildew, such as *Aster x frikartii* (starts flowering in August and goes on and on), *A. macrophylla* 'Twilight' (flowers early, takes shade and has good seedheads), *A. Schreberi* (white flowers) and one of the best, *A. 'Little Carlow'* (blue, tall). *Kniphofia* 'Brimstone' is a good late yellow poker. The Kaffir Lilies, *Schizostylis*, are reliable late flowers, *S. Coccinea* 'Major' is red and there are various pink cultivars. They prefer a bit of moisture but are not really fussy.

I think grasses are good value and *Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata', *Hakonechloa macra* "Aureola", *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yakushima Dwarf' and *M.s. 'Morning Light'* plus *Pleioblastus viridistriatus* (a dwarf yellow bamboo) are some of the best I grow.

Moving on to bulbs, *Colchicums* are lovely. They are often called autumn crocus but actually belong to the lily family. They have huge foliage in early summer so need careful placing. *Allium tuberosum* has good white flowers and the flat leaves can be used like chives. *Nerines* are surprisingly hardy and reliable late flowerers. *N. bowdenii* 'Linda Vista' which was discovered in Abergavenny is one of the best.

Box Hedging

As can be seen from the photograph on the right, the Box hedging around the centre beds was doing extremely well and looking strong and healthy in June 2008.

The situation this year can be seen in the garden and in the bottom photograph. The Box hedging has become victim to blight, which is particularly widespread throughout the UK at present, and there is no cure!

After much deliberation it has been decided that to replace the Box, at this stage, would be unwise and too costly. The risk of re-infection is too high.

We are therefore removing all diseased Box and restricting the planting of the remaining surviving Box to the 4 central beds. Any decision to replace the diseased Box will be reviewed at a later date.
Sue Duffield

June 2008



April 2009

Volunteers replanting
the Box May 2009



Volunteers

The gardening is once again beginning to grow, we've even had pear blossom on the two original Edmonds Pear trees, which is an absolute miracle considering when the garden was cleared in 2005 they were chopped to a shear stumps.

Please make sure you visit the garden in June/July when our 71 Roses will be in Bloom, last year they were spectacular.

³ We are always looking for new volunteers to help maintain the

garden. As well as the established Garden Group, we now have a Maintenance group to do all those little jobs in the garden to maintain the fabric, tidy the paths or clean the fountain etc. An extensive knowledge of plants is not required nor do you have to commit to specific hours/time. However, if you come along on Thursdays between 10 and 4pm with a pair of gardening gloves you can learn from the other volunteers.

We also need help with organising fund-raising events and we are regularly asked to give talks or show groups round the garden. Please contact me, or talk to one of the volunteers in the garden any Thursday

Come down on a Thursday and get to know the gardening volunteers, we can give advice about gardening or simply explain about the medicinal plants, you are always welcome, if were not too busy we might even make you a cuppa!

Jacky (Volunteer Coordinator).

Gardeners Question Time

The organisers were delighted that the first winter event held to raise money for the Physic garden was so well attended. Over 100 tickets were sold and, together with the money from the sale of raffle tickets, we raised £399.82. I hope everyone enjoyed the evening and had some of their problems addressed.

Many thanks to Rose Clay and her team of experts: Claire Jenkins, Sue Dockerill and David Hart who answered all the questions with a thoroughness which showed

that a lot of research had been conducted by them before the event.

Also to all of you who sent in questions. These covered a range of topics, from the problem of ivy spreading everywhere in a garden—climbing trees, clinging to stone walls and running along the ground - to advice on how to prune an olive tree

Val Caple



Robert Cope introducing the panel

A Chapter comes to an end at the Physic Garden

Jacky Thorne, who has been our Volunteer Coordinator for over three years, will be leaving her post in October. Jacky took on her role in June of 2006, just as the "hard landscaping" work on the paths and walls were nearing completion. Hers was the daunting task of building a "team" from the individuals who had volunteered to work creating a garden, where for many years there had been only wilderness!

But "cometh the hour, cometh the man" (in this case woman!) No one was better qualified or more suited to take on this task! With her Masters Degree in Garden History, and further qualifications in Garden Design and Amenity Horticulture, Jacky was ideally qualified and suited to the challenge! Under her guidance, and with the full backing, and enormous commitment, from the volunteers, a truly beautiful and much loved garden has been created!

This simply could not have happened without the dedication and hard work of the volunteers, and much credit must go to Jacky for the leadership role she has played.

Her communication skills are excellent. She initiated a weekly newsletter to the volunteers on email, while phoning those not on computer. She has certainly made each volunteer feel, not only needed, but appreciated as well! The volunteers at the Garden have become a formidable team and an exemplar of how a well conceived community project should be managed, and executed.

Jacky must take much of the credit for these achievements. Originally she was hired on a one year contract, funded by the Heritage Lottery. A further grant was forthcoming to extend her time to two years. It speaks volumes for the high regard the Board of Trustees had for her continued involvement, that her contract was extended for a further year, paid for by the Trust's fundraising.

The loss of Jacky to the Garden in October will be a setback, with the burden falling on those volunteers Jacky has worked with and in some cases, trained. However, I have no doubt her legacy will



Jacky receiving a gift from
Clisson Cowbridge's twin town

continue. She has made an outstanding contribution to the creation of the Cowbridge Physic Garden, and if you want to see her achievements, just look around you !

Dan Clayton-Jones

Plant Sale

The Plant Sale held on April 25th in the Physic Garden was again a great success, despite the inclement weather

A grand total of £1125 was raised from the sale of plants, cards, books, raffle tickets and fees from the 6 local nurseries who hired tables

Many thanks to all the volunteers who propagated, priced, sold and moved the plants and to the members and their friends who came and spent their money. We hope you think you had some bargains.

Plants are for sale in the garden every Thursday. Pots are priced—please ask one of the volunteers for help

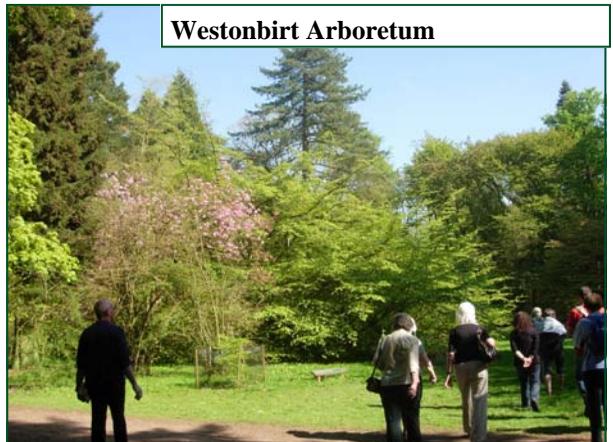


Plants on sale

Garden Volunteers have a Royal Bond

On a lovely sunning 21st April 2009 23 lucky volunteers set off for a guided tour of the gardens at Highgrove, having waited two years for our invitation to arrive. Despite the problems of arriving early we all passed through security and were treated to a guided tour of the very personal, and rather quirky, but lovely gardens. We were shown many Welsh made seats and gifts, in particular from LATCH. We learned that the children visit the garden near Christmas each year to decorate a Christmas Tree and to play in the garden. We also understood the problems they are experiencing with Box Blight and marvelled at the hostas in an organic garden. We were treated to a cup of tea and a really warm welcome from the volunteers at Highgrove.

In the afternoon we headed down the road to Westonbirt Arboretum,



Westonbirt Arboretum

where we had booked a Friend of the Arboretum to give us guided tour. At £30 this proved to be a very worthwhile addition and I would recommend this to any future visiting groups, it certainly enhanced my visit.

Thanks to the volunteers at the 2 gardens we had a most lovely and memorable day.

Rebecca Exley

Adult Learners Week

Two presentations about the garden and herbs were given at The Old Hall in May 2009, and both were fully booked. On Tuesday Rebecca Exley gave a talk on the garden and a visit. Nineteen attendees came from as far as Bridgend and Barry, bought cards and were very enthusiastic about visiting again with their newly acquired knowledge. More will learn about potting with Jacky on Thursday. The garden receives money from these, and other talks, and the demand seems to be high!

Rebecca Exley

Donations to the garden

We are very grateful to all those generous people who have made donations of money to the garden. The Treasurer records the names of all these individuals and trusts.

However we have also like to thank the donors of many gifts of goods and plants over the years as well as specialist advise.

We are very grateful to Fiskars for the recent donation of a magnificent collection of gardening tools, to Timothy Clarke, who writes horticultural features for various journals such as The Garden, has donated a collection of old tulip varieties and to Paul Picton, who owns the Aster collection for the UK, has helped with the dating of the various species and cultivars and has had to propagate some of the plants he has donated specifically for us.

Membership

We continue to look for new members to help with the finances for the maintenance of the garden—and to show the Trustees and other volunteers that their efforts are being appreciated.

At present we have 399 members and we are very grateful to those of you who have joined since the last issue of the Newsletter or who have encouraged their friends to join. However we did miss our target of 500 members by the 2009 AGM.

Please remember that our only income is from subscriptions, money raising events and sales of cards, plants etc. Every one of you is contributing to the upkeep of the garden

Interesting insects – what's pollinating your plants

Last year we asked for volunteers to grow some calendulas from seed and to spend one hour noting down how many insects visited the flowers. In total, 311 of you managed to grab an hour of sunshine during the wettest August on record to conduct the survey. Members recorded an average of 45 individual insects visiting their flowers — that's 45 potential pollinators within the space of an hour. Hoverflies were the most commonly sighted insect by members, closely followed by flies and bees. Colourful blue damselflies and a number of dragonflies were also spotted (although these aren't pollinators).

Sue Duffield from South Wales planted her calendulas at the Cowbridge Physic Garden where she works as a volunteer. Despite having a huge variety of other flowers to choose from, Sue reported a whopping 117 individual insects visiting her calendulas, which shows just valuable they are for enticing pollinators into the garden' *Gardening Which in September 2008*



Sue at work recording

Dates for your Diary

Art Show

An exhibition of botanical art by members of the Cowbridge Physic Garden painting group will be held at the Cowbridge Library during the month of August.

All members of the painting group are Physic Garden volunteers. Do make a point of visiting this exhibition. Provisional date: 3rd to 29th August 2009.

Garden Party

This year's party will be held on September 4th 2009 in the Physic Garden. Details and booking form are enclosed

Cowbridge Food and Drink Festival

Visit us in the Physic Garden on October 24th 2009 when you will be able to buy plants and cards