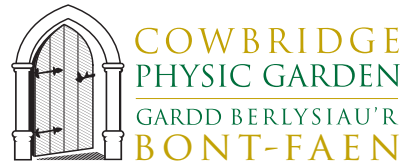


Patron: HRH the Duchess of Cornwall  
President: Dan Clayton-Jones OBE, KStJ, TD, DL



# Newsletter

Issue 27 May 2016

## Cowbridge Physic Garden: Celebrating Ten Years of Spadework!

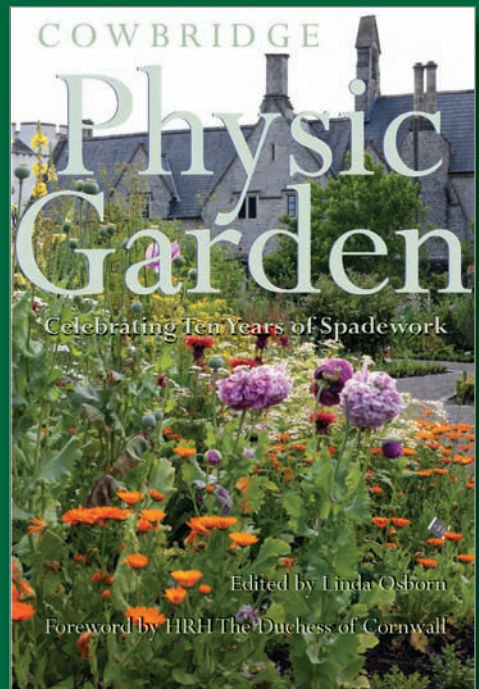
The new book tells the story of the founding of the garden and the ideas and people who inspired the creation of one of this country's great gardens.

Its historical context is established within the history of the physic gardens of Europe and a sampler of the medicinal plants grown in the garden describes how they might have been used in former times by monks, physicians and apothecaries. A Volunteer's Diary gives a vivid insight into the life of the garden throughout the year.

Written and researched by Physic Garden volunteers and with a Foreword by the garden's Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, the book is lavishly illustrated with full colour photographs, mostly taken in the garden by Robert Moore, and with watercolours by Gillian Griffiths.

This will be a book to treasure as well as a perfect gift.

It will be available at the Members' Garden Party, or can be ordered in advance using the order form.



# Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



At last the sun has put his hat on and we have felt the promising warmth of summer! The garden is bursting into life beautifully: tulips, forget-me-nots late daffodils, wallflowers and fruit blossom add great colour and joy. The lawn is verdant and the community is once again enjoying being able to stroll and sit in the tranquil garden.

We are 10 years old! The Members Summer Garden Party on 24th June is a must! There will be the celebratory cake, champagne, canapés and a viewing of Gillian Griffiths' remarkable Florelegium of the Physic Garden. Please put this special occasion in your diaries. Meanwhile enjoy watching the garden become truly lush.

## Volunteers News

### January/February 2016

Well, a wet and fairly miserable winter in the garden so far with a touch of frost. Work has been slow but Gillian has made huge inroads into the Shrub borders and they are beginning to look loved and cared for. In the Dye Bed Val has started pruning the Privet which was growing all skew whiff!, tidying the lovely spindles and pruning and coppicing some of the Cornus, letting in light at the back of the border. And Mary has been pruning in the corner plot by the Old Hall entrance.



We've had one or two glorious, alpine like, sunny days giving us time to have a walk around. The *Leucojum* or Snowflake are thriving in the Shrub beds, the Cornus mas is in flower as are the *Helleborus foetidus* under the Fig tree. The winter aconites, *Hyemalis*, are going over now, but have been excellent this year and are spreading nicely along the Dye Bed wall. The snowdrops have popped up under the Magnolia, cowslip and primroses are flowering at the end of the Pergola and Sue's *Pelargonium* in the faux lead pots have continued to thrive. Finally, the charming *Cyclamen coum* with their delicate flowers make you stop and look.

The best thing for me at this time of the year are the stunning skeletons of the trees.

The Walnut in the Dye Bed, the *Ginkgo* Maidenhair tree by the Church Road entrance and the Fig Tree in the corner all create wonderful winter architectural shapes in the garden.

We have been accompanied by our resident robin and pair of blackbirds throughout and the magpies and jackdaws make passing inroads into the garden and then hurry on.

## March/April 2016

Well, after a warm and sodden winter we have struggled into a cold spring including hail and bitter winds. Usually, as volunteers, we get to have our lunch outside on Thursdays but have really struggled this year. Thank heavens for the mess room and the radiators. However, today as I write this I see the temperature is about to reach double figures at last! Albeit only 11 or 12 degrees.



Our visiting jackdaws seem to ignore the weather enjoying splashing in the fountain and looking for titbits amongst the beds and we have been cheered by our resident blackbird(s) who follows us round as we hoe and dig and has (have) become extremely tame.

Here now at the end of April the cherry and pear trees are in full blossom on the South wall and the pleached apples are in bud. The small species tulips look stunning and the red and white *Tulipa clusiana* by the office stand up amongst the Primroses and Cowslips – both of which have been spectacular this year. Tina planted several dozen Snakeshead Fritillaries in the Pergola Bed, and with some relief they have come up beautifully. The grass sown in that Bed has taken mostly but will be added to with some more sowing. The Box hedging, always a source of some anxiety is looking very good – Eifiona fed them in the autumn and again recently and we are delighted with the results.

All along the South wall the Coltsfoot has been thriving and the Pasque flowers are in full swing. The lawn has been scarified and improved and Tina and David have done sterling work pruning the pergola climbing roses.

The *Narcissus* are mostly over. These lovely plants are native to large parts of the Mediterranean but the Lent Daffodil, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus lobularis*, and the Tenby daffodil, *N.p.obvallaris*, grow wild in Wales today. Our pre-1800 collection includes these together with the Queen Anne daffodil, N. 'Eystettensis', and the Hoop Petticoat daffodil, *N. bulbocodium*. A constituent of the Daffodil is the alkaloid Galantamine which is extracted from the plant to treat Alzheimer's disease.

Well, the harbingers of spring are pushing up - the Lily of the Valley and Solomon's Seal are in evidence so all we need now are some warm sunny days!!

*Val Thomas for the Gardening Group. See the website for the latest Volunteers Newsletter*

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

# The AGM and the talk 'Middleton: Paradise Regained'

The AGM was well attended this year, with both accounts and reappointment of Trustees being accepted by those members present.

After the AGM, the guest speaker was Helen John, the project manager of an exciting development at the National Botanic Garden of Wales.

The garden at Middleton Hall, Llanarthne in Carmarthenshire was once regarded as one of the finest water gardens in Great Britain and last year, work commenced on a £6.7m restoration to rejuvenate the landscape and also tell the story of the association of the East India Company that had such an influence on this part of Wales. Helen's talk was highly informative and entertaining and although so much bigger than our own little physic garden, there are strong parallels to be drawn in terms of accurate historical representation. Yet another reason to pay Llanarthne a visit!



## RHS Show Cardiff

Many thanks for those who volunteered to help man the stand over the 3 days. Everyone was amazed at the amount of interest from those who had never visited the garden, as well as the pleasure of meeting old friends who told us how much they enjoyed it. We hope to be able to be there again in 2017 and will again be looking for support



## Europe Day 2016

Jo and Martyn celebrated Europe Day in the Garden as a thank you to Creative Rural Communities, the Vale's rural regeneration team who supported the garden with European funding 10 years ago.

# Meet the Volunteer



## Tina Edmunds

I have been looking after the Fragrant Bed in the Physic Garden since I first volunteered to help in 2006.

At this time of year there is an air of anticipation that every plant will soon flower and scent the garden for the summer months. The roses will occupy centre stage in this respect and being all pre-1800 varieties they more than make up for some of their awkward characteristics by seducing us with their gorgeous perfume.

The only two pre-1800 varieties of sweet pea extant, named “Cupani” and “Painted Lady”, are just beginning to take root by their supports after this slow, cold growing period we have experienced but I think they will soon be producing the colourful, scented flowers they were bred for.

The pergola roses are two of my favourites, “Old Blush China” and “Janet B. Wood” which surround the volunteers’ favourite bench for coffee and lunch! We plot and scheme the future of the planting etc. on such occasions and although it looks as though we are just having a good sociable time we are in fact quite productive! One consequence of this planning is that, alongside the pergola we have established a “mini meadow” with Snakes Head Fritillaries in what was a difficult area to deal with and it seems that the idea has paid off.

I enjoy taking people around on garden tours and talking to all the different visitors to the garden including our “regulars”. It is also very good fun working with a group of plant mad volunteers every week.



## Cards and Gifts

The new tea towels, 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 – just ask any of the volunteers.



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



# An Organic Gem in the Czech Republic

If you get a chance to visit the Czech Republic, you will be naturally bowled over by the charms and treasures of Prague, but take time to leave the capital and visit the rural village of Ostra nad Ladem. This is the home of a remarkable little company called Botanicus. It is a toiletries, cosmetics and herbal products business that was founded shortly after the 'Velvet Revolution'. At the heart of the company is a large, organic garden that is both productive and decorative; sections of the garden are devoted to herb production, vegetables, fragrant herbs and flowers and even areas for green compost production.

Botanicus is a family-run business and the majority of the labour force comes from the village of Ostra. There is a wonderful Botanicus shop at the headquarters, as well as shops in Prague, other Czech cities and towns, and outlets in Austria, Germany and the Far East.

Back in Ostra, adjacent to the wonderful garden, is a faithful re-creation of a mediaeval Bohemian village, with a variety of traditional crafts being demonstrated, including candle-making, pottery, soap-making, wood carving, rope-making, paper-making and printing, even a mint. There's fascination for everyone!

For more information, look at the Botanicus website: [www.botanicus.cz](http://www.botanicus.cz)

*Martyn Hurst*

## Dates for your diary!

### Members Garden Party 24th June 2016

Ioan Wardlaugh will again be playing the Celtic harp, canapés and Champagne will be provided and drinks available for purchase.

Please apply for tickets using the form provided for the event of the year.

# Seychelles Botanic Gardens

In January I stopped off briefly in the Seychelles and visited The Botanic Gardens at Port Victoria, Mahe island. We had a marvellously fun but intimidating guide called Nadia, who introduced us to their most famous plant and seed - The Coco de Mer. The plant boasts the largest seed in the world, and The Vallee de Mer is a world heritage site set up to protect one of the best Coco de Mer forests.

We also saw the beautiful *Duranta Erecta*, a species of flowering shrub of the verbena family, with its showy, glorious sky blue and lavender flowers. These attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Other lovely trees were the *Cassia fistula* (the golden shower tree) – its profuse yellow pendulous flowers have been known for millennia for their medicinal properties in Ayurvedic medicine, and *Dillenia Indica* (the Elephant Apple tree), the fruits being a great favourite food of the Asian elephant, who therefore effectively spread the seeds!

The gardens, although not outstanding, were a most welcome tranquil haven on a very hot and humid day.

*Jo Homfray*



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# All the Fun of the (Plant) Fair

The sun shone, the crowds turned out and there was a feeling of spring in the air as everyone looked to purchase something new to enjoy in their gardens in the summer ahead.

For the first time the number of stalls hit double figures, and they formed a colourful roundabout in Old Hall Garden. The stallholders tell us they enjoy this event, but we are unsure whether it is the quality of the venue or of the tea, coffee, cakes and filled rolls which they were supplied with throughout the day. Thank you to the volunteers who did the catering on top of playing other roles.

The job of packing up was enlivened by the arrival of a wedding party who posed for their photos while we looked on.

For the first time we made over £1000 for the garden, thanks to the generosity of members supplying both plants and raffle prizes and to everyone who supported us on the day.



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