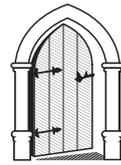


Patron: HRH the Duchess of Cornwall
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COWBRIDGE
PHYSIC GARDEN
GARDD BERLYSIAU'R
BONT-FAEN

Newsletter

Issue 31 November 2017

Stratford Garden Visit

Earlier this year the Volunteers enjoyed a trip to Stratford-upon-Avon having been invited by Glyn Jones, Head Gardener for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Glyn is now responsible for restoring the 5 gardens in his care. He visited the Cowbridge Physic Garden while working at Dyffryn Gardens and is using our design in his plan for a physic garden bed at Hall's Croft, the home of Shakespeare's daughter Susanna and her husband Dr John Hall, a renowned apothecary.

We also visited New Place, which was restored in the 1920s with herbaceous borders, an oak palisade and a knot garden. This has been updated with some striking sculptures depicting some of Shakespeare's plays, and beautiful planting in keeping with a Tudor garden. Glyn has great plans for Anne Hathaway's Cottage garden but, rather than repeat the Tudor theme, he is being inspired by the design of Ellen Willmott, the gardener who laid out the 3 beds around the house in the 1900s. Glyn has already been busy in the neighbouring arboretum.

If you visit Stratford, I do recommend a visit to these 3 beautiful gardens.



Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



It is proving to be an excellent autumn for fruit and the apples in the Physic Garden have produced delicious jams and jellies made by Brendah. The golden light adds to the beauty of the berries and seed heads which glow with such rich reds, golds and yellows. Despite the early morning nip in the air, there is still some colour from asters and glowing coppery marigolds, and various birds are to be seen swirling and chattering as they gather for their long journey to foreign lands in the south.

As always there has been much activity in pruning, tidying, and preparing for the winter months perhaps one of the most energetic jobs being the removal of the leggy, ancient and large lavenders and the replacement of new ones to take us through the next few years.

As we race towards the hectic run up to Christmas, do go and restore yourselves with five minutes of serenity in this local haven.

Volunteers News

May/June 2017

Well, all our work has left the garden launching as usual into a jungle (but organised!) of wonderful plants and flowers. We have had several group tours round the garden and once again people were very complimentary – it was of course the time of the year when the roses are spectacular and their scent wafts across the garden.



The almond tree has had to be removed and unfortunately the Fig Tree came down. Gareth has kindly winched it up, pruned it well back, and attached it to the wall – so we hope it might survive. He is also encouraging back the Black Mulberry which is encroaching over the path. We have been fighting box blight again and have sprayed with fertiliser regularly. Summer pruning is going ahead with a vengeance and we keep filling up green bags and chopping up the garden rubbish for the compost bins.

The birds are thriving. We have had tits in the bird box and the resident blackbirds and robins fly in and out whilst the jackdaws continue to take baths in the fountains. As we peer round the towering Elecampane, Tansy, Cardoons, Mulleins and Lovage, we look forward to a lovely summer.

July/August 2017

*“And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel.
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.”*

So September creeps in.

David kindly finished pruning the tops of the pleached apples and Mary and Sue completed the vine pruning. We've been collecting up the fallen apples and pears.

The August colours have been, as usual, lovely – the *Verbena bonariensis* is thriving, the Hollyhocks along the South-facing wall are huge, the Asters are just coming into flower and the Echinaceas and Purple Loosestrife are covered in bees. Well, roll on season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.

Val Thomas for the Gardening Group



Meet the Volunteer

Jan Thomas

Two wonderful things happened in my life in 1991: I got married to Bryan Thomas and I started a full-time course at Pencoed College. I went on to get a job of a lifetime, working with plants, mainly in the 6 big greenhouses in the College.

I retired after 11 years. Bryan is a wee bit older than me and we wanted to travel around the world while we could. Bryan's interest is very different plantwise to mine. He is cacti and succulents; I am perennials, trees, alpines, ferns! We travelled extensively: the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and some of the Canary Islands.

My great friend and mentor at college, Mary Wallace, sparked my interest in becoming involved with the Physic Garden many years later. I love being a volunteer; I have learnt so much about plants, I knew they existed but not the medicinal and healing purposes, all very interesting. Meeting each Thursday with like minded friends is a joy and long may it continue.

We meet a lot of the general public. If I can help someone with plant identification and answer any questions on where best to site a plant and chat about the properties. It's very uplifting and makes me feel good.

Visit us at: www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk



It wasn't a wash-out, but...

Friday 23rd June promised so much – it was close to midsummer's eve, the garden was in full bloom and looking glorious, the champagne was chilled, canapés prepared, loan's harp was standing by, and guests started to arrive for the annual Members' Garden Party. It started fine, a tad on the chilly side perhaps, but the clouds were well-behaved and held their moisture at bay... to begin with.

Sadly, our normal balmy summer evening for the Garden Party was not to be this year. But we still enjoyed ourselves and braved most of the shower, until the rain became steadier and more persistent. Ah well, there's always next year! *Photos by Mike Wilcock*



More Awards for the Garden

Sue and Graham Duffield attended the 50th Anniversary Awards ceremony of Wales in Bloom, hosted by Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council.

These awards had categories which included cities and large towns, small villages, hotel gardens, pubs and campsites and school gardens from all over Wales. The chairman of Wales in Bloom gave the introduction and pictures of the winning gardens were screened.



We enter the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood category for volunteer organisations that green up and improve community spaces. The awards are graded from 1 to 5, from new beginnings to outstanding. We were delighted to again receive a level 5. We also got a special mention from one of the judges who told the audience that, if they were in Cowbridge, they should visit our "absolute gem of a garden".

Sue and Graham were seated for lunch with other winners, including the chairperson of Brachla community council, park rangers from Pembrey Country Park and the gardener and owners of the Atlantic Hotel in Tenby. Interesting to talk about the very different gardens.

Iris Simpson and Val Caple attended the Green Flag Award ceremony on Barry Island which was again hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council to celebrate the continuing trend of increasing the number of parks and gardens gaining awards.

For the 9th year the Cowbridge Physic Garden was given a Community Garden award. In total Keep Wales Tidy gave Green Flag status to 9 sites maintained by the council while 9 community sites also received Green Flags. With only Cardiff boasting more Green-Flag sites and Swansea coming third, the considerably smaller Vale significantly over-performed.

Again the afternoon tea was delicious!

Welsh Enterprise Awards, hosted by SME News, announced that, after weeks of intensive research, the Cowbridge Physic Garden has been awarded Best Public Garden – South Wales. For more information see www.sme-news.co.uk/awards

Visit us at: www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk

A woman with short grey hair, wearing a bright blue long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, is leaning forward and talking to a group of young children. The children are dressed in school uniforms, including yellow polo shirts and dark blue sweaters. They are standing in a garden with various green plants and a stone path. In the background, other people can be seen walking through the garden.

Visit by Jenner Park Primary School, Barry

Trustee Linda Osborn and several volunteers were on hand to welcome an enormous crocodile of 37 little children, along with six helpers, from Jenner Park Primary in Barry. Teacher Sharon Ridley had arranged the visit for year-2 class, who are helping to develop their own garden in school and wanted to learn more about scented plants.

The children were shown a variety of plants in each medicinal bed, all of which they could smell and touch. They enjoyed exploring the maze of paths around the parterre and identifying the human body parts to which each bed relates. The fountain was also a big attraction.

A display of herbs had been set up for the children to feel and smell along with some scented pelargoniums whose leaves smell distinctly of lemon, orange, peppermint and one very modern variety which smells of coca cola! The children were given plants for their school garden.

While they visited the Old Hall Gardens they were joined by unexpected special needs folk from the Barry Support group who were pleased that the gardens were so accessible and wheelchair-friendly. With the weather so nice the support group said they had enjoyed a very interesting and pleasant day out.

An email message the next day from Sharon said: 'A fantastic day was had by all.' She said she was going to spread the word among other Barry schools. This is welcomed by the CPGT as we are keen to liaise with local schools.

Photos from The Gem



Restoration of the Fountain

The new replacement base for the dolphin in the fountain is now fixed. It has a lead facing and looks great. The fountain also has a very smart new lead apron at its base to protect the stone from erosion. Thanks to the Maintenance Group who helped to clear and assist with the capping of the base and a big thank you to Craig Fricker for his skill and craftsmanship.

The fountain was sponsored by Des and Anne Williams when the garden was first planted but has been damaged by the weather.



The Pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella in Florence

At the end of a week walking part of the Via Francigena in Italy this September, we ended up in Florence. Many of the Members will have visited the remarkable Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, but to those of you who have not, and who might find themselves in Florence, I urge you to go to this fabulous place.

The Pharmacy is one of the oldest in the world and was established by Dominican monks shortly after their arrival in Florence in 1221. The friars began cultivating medicinal herbs in their gardens to prepare medications, balms and ointments for their convent's small infirmary – they believed that rose water was an effective disinfectant against the plague. The pharmacy became so famous in Europe that in 1612 it opened to the public, and it is thriving today, based in its original magnificent building with a frescoed ceiling! Today everything that is sold is still based on herbs and natural lipids, many of their products from ancient recipes. The famous perfume sold today 'Acqua di S.M. Novella' is the same as that which was commissioned by Caterina de' Medici in 1533. Medicinal plants still used in their products grow in the pharmacy garden. The herbal shop and wonderful museum are well worth a visit and totally inspiring.

Jo Homfray

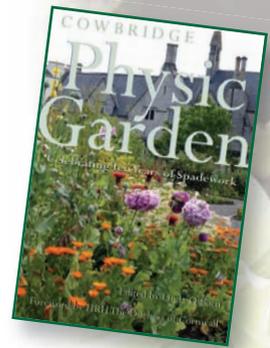


Cowbridge Physic Garden Gifts

Our splendid book of the garden is going to make a lovely Christmas gift for lots of people this year. You can obtain copies in the garden on Thursdays, just ask one of the volunteers, or from The Bay Tree, The Cowbridge Book Shop, W H Smiths and Dyffryn Gardens bookshops.

Christmas presents all wrapped up in 160 pages!

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.



More Dates for your Diary

Walking Nativity, 8th and 9th December 2017 starting 6.30pm

Churches Together in Cowbridge and district are again staging the 'Walking Nativity'. The participants will be passing through the Physic Garden on their journey to Bethlehem.

CPGT AGM, Wednesday 21st March 2018

The AGM will be followed by a fascinating talk on historic gardening tools. Details in next issue.

RHS Show Cardiff, Friday-Sunday 13-15th April 2018

The CPGT is hoping to again have a stand in Bute Park.

Annual Plant Fair, Saturday 28 April 2018

Please save plants you propagate from your garden over the winter for us to sell at our annual plant extravaganza.

Members' Garden Party, Friday 22nd June 2018

Make a note so you do not miss the annual members' party.

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