

INFORMATION NOTES

A brief history of the Cowbridge Physic Garden site



The Walled garden at Cowbridge Old Hall, c. 1926
Watercolour by Mrs Eleanor Edmondes whose home was at Old Hall

The land on which the Physic Garden now stands has had a variety of land uses over the past two hundred years.



Most recently, up to 2003, this was an abandoned tree nursery, with tall trees and saplings competing with each other in their search for light, and growing very close together. This impenetrable woodland had to be cleared: the trees had to be felled and roots grubbed up, before the development of the Physic Garden could begin. South Glamorgan Council had developed the tree nursery soon after 1975, but soon afterwards abandoned the idea, leaving the trees growing but untended, a situation which continued after the change-over to the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

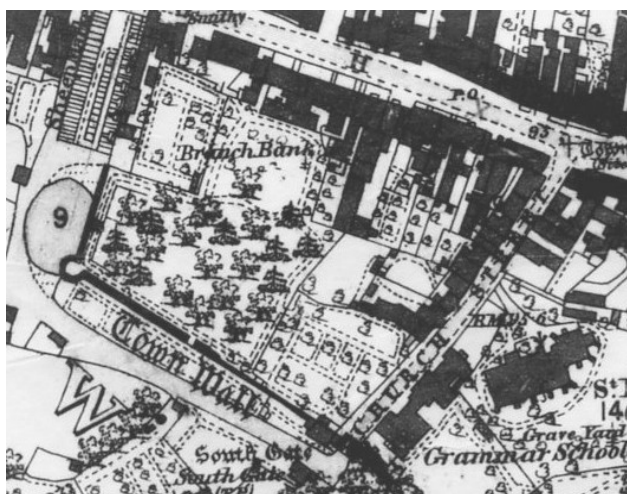
INFORMATION NOTES



From 1932 to 1975 the ground had been the kitchen garden of the boarding house of Cowbridge School, but when boarding ceased in 1975, the need for a vegetable garden also ended. There were greenhouses on the south-facing wall, fruit trees, and especially vegetables in abundance. Especially during the 'Dig for Victory' campaign of wartime, the schoolboys were often enlisted to help in the cultivation of vegetables. *The Bovian*, the school magazine, records . . . "Teams of boys engaged quite capably in digging, weeding,

planting and watering . . . while Mr Penny (the school gardener) detailed squads of boys for this job or that". By the summer of 1941, the garden not only supplied the boarders' kitchen, but also managed to yield nearly all the vegetables for the day boys' dining hall, which provided 400 meals a week.

Our garden, before 1932, had been part of the garden of Old Hall, owned by the Edmondes family for nearly two centuries. The greenhouses on the north wall had been built by the family, as had the two sheds (which now accommodate the volunteer room and potting shed) on the southern boundary of the garden. The greenhouses, tall and south-facing, had been heated by furnaces, the remains of one of which having recently been excavated in the north-west corner of the garden. The watercolour on the front of this leaflet, painted in 1926 by Eleanor Edmondes, shows a feast of colour and a wealth of flowers in this area, but no doubt there were vegetables set back a distance from the main pathway leading to Church Street which appears in the middle of the painting.



The earliest pictorial record of the garden is the first edition OS map of 1879, which shows a rectangular layout of paths in 'our area', quite different from the large trees shown in the main part of Old Hall garden. This must have been the organised, cultivated, part of the gardens of the property. Probably something like this existed on the site ever since the Edmondes family developed Old Hall in the 1740s.

This leaflet was prepared in February 2007 by Jeff Alden, a volunteer at Cowbridge Physic Garden