



COWBRIDGE  
PHYSIC GARDEN  
GARD D BERLYSIAU'R  
BONT-FAEN

Patron: HRH the Duchess of Cornwall

# Newsletter

Issue 16 October 2012



## Mrs Jo Homfray, our new chairperson

Dan Clayton-Jones has served as Chairman of the Cowbridge Physic Garden since its inception and has been a steady and inspirational guiding hand in the garden's development over the last eight years. Dan has now decided that due to his other pressing commitments the time has come for him to stand down. However, he will still be involved with the Trust as he has agreed to become our President.

In a manner befitting the appointment of the Speaker of the House of Commons, (being ceremoniously and with sham reluctance dragged backwards towards the chair by two members!) Jo Homfray has agreed to take over the leadership of the garden as Chairperson. Jo's tireless devotion to the garden is legendary and all the trustees, volunteers and members are thrilled that we have someone with her talents and drive to take the garden forward and ensure that the high standards already achieved are maintained and even exceeded.

Jo commented, "Having been a trustee of the garden since its very first planting I have great admiration for Dan's leadership through the all-important years of establishing the garden as an example of what can be achieved with the right vision and team. I hope I can continue to nurture and promote the garden as a horticultural gem, a destination, an asset to Cowbridge and the Vale, and a haven of peace and tranquillity for everyone who walks through it, enjoys it and leaves with a smile on their face."

The trustees are enthusiastically supporting Jo in her new role within the garden and have promised that they will attempt to share the "burden" as much as they can! *Martyn Hurst*

# Volunteers News

## June 2012

I'm looking at the entry for 16th June 2002 in "The Ivington Diaries" by Monty Don and it says: "It has rained for twelve days now. Occasionally it stops, regroups, tries to soften you with a blast of hot sunshine, waits until bits of clothing are scattered irretrievably around the garden, before hitting you with another sudden downpour... This is not *bad* weather – just wetter than normal..." Hm! It certainly sums up June 2012.

However! Amidst the rain and wind the garden is looking stunning. The old shrub roses are at their best, the Damask roses and the Gallica roses – goodness, which are the most beautiful? And the pergola looks great with the beautiful *Rosa avensis* 'Janet B. Wood' twisting up the supports. It was well worth the struggle Tina and Val B. earlier in the year to tie them round!



New to the garden is the display stand by the office, displaying Sue's early pre-1800 pelargoniums, most of which I think she has raised from cuttings..

Another huge thank you to Rebecca and Jo for organising the Volunteers' trip this year and particularly to Jo for driving the minibus in and around the roads of Herefordshire to the Black Mountains.

Val C. tells me she is making Elderflower Champagne (allegedly non-alcoholic!) from the flowers of the Elder in the Dye Bed – I last saw her wielding some extremely long secateurs.

## July 2012

Well, yesterday July 19th, we volunteers actually had lunch outside in our shirt sleeves following the monsoon rain period! Despite the atrocious weather, the garden is looking stunning with the giants of the plant beds coming into their own. The *Elecampane* and Lovage towering just above the lovely tall Hollyhocks. At their best at the moment are the Purple Loosestrife, Mallow, Chicory – with its gorgeous blue flowers, the yellow *Verbascum*

spires, the Dyers Greenwood covered in tiny yellow flowers and the mauve/blue Goat's rue (*Galega officinalis*). My eye was also caught by the spires of the less showy, but interesting, *Acanthus spinosa* – Spiny Bears Breeches. The bees are buzzing round the Vipers Bugloss – *Echium officinalis*, the Wild Carrot flowers and, of course, the Borage.

We're delighted to see the little robin fledgling boldly following us around the garden and one of the volunteers thought some young sparrows had been raised in the bird box on the toolshed end of the Pergola

We've been working hard on the box hedging. The older ones are surviving with a few losses and this year we have pruned them individually with secateurs, carefully catching and removing any dead leaves which may be diseased

On the lighter side we have been sharing Val C's delicious elderflower champagne made from the garden's elderflowers!

## August 2012

As I look back on August in the Physic Garden I am still reeling from the spectacular meadow planting at the Olympic Park in London which I was fortunate enough to visit. Then I look at the Physic Garden and our lovely wild flowers – I think we have most of their lovely wild flowers – many covered in bees at this time of the year – catching my eye as star-bee attractors are the Asters, the *Echinacea* (Coneflower – spectacular at the moment and pausing visitors to stop and ask what the plant is), the Borage, Marsh Mallow, and of course Purple Loosestrife.



We've completed the summer pruning of the *Malus*, (Apples trees) and Pear trees, the vines have good bunches of grapes growing, whereas the apple crop will be poor (as in many gardens as a result of our sodden summer).

Well, it's the end of August and, "At this stage of the year dusk creeps forward week by week. Strange to think that only two months ago was the longest day, light by four in the morning and still light enough to water the garden at ten in the evening. In June the sun sinks down by a notch just by the church tower that sits to our north. Now almost daily, it is edging back westwards across the sky..." (Monty Don – the Ivington Diaries). Sorry, bit of lyrical rambling!!

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



## September 2012

'The Michaelmas daisy season reaches its peak in the middle of this month and there are many delights to tempt us. Many, also, that we should be wiser to resist, although, having said that, I have a sneaking feeling that it is no bad thing to yield, savouring the moment uninhibited'.

Christopher Lloyd (Cuttings, A Year in the Garden with Christopher Lloyd) is referring to October here, but judging by the comments of visitors to the Physic Garden, the Asters have the visitors' vote now at the end of September.

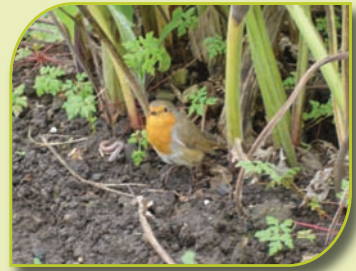
Other plants in their prime in the garden include the lovely seedheads of many of the taller architectural plants such as the Fennel, the tall *Elecampane*, *Mullein*, *Acanthus spinosa* and *Cardoon*. We were delighted to see a goldfinch on the *Elecampane*. Some of the volunteers have also seen a little harvest mouse and we continue to delight in the antics of our robin.

We have also been looking to the future and Gardening Group has discussed some possible new shrubs and herbaceous plants for the garden in particular for the outer beds. Details of plants we do acquire I will list as we get them. The old variety Tulips will arrive shortly as indeed will Narcissus varieties which will be planted soon.

*Val Thomas, Gardening Group*

*Excerpts from the monthly Newsletter for the regular volunteers.*

*The latest issue of the Volunteers Newsletter is available on the website at [www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk](http://www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk).*



## CPGT Website and Newsletter

Please let me have any items or photographs for inclusion in future issues of the Newsletter, or on the Website. Also if you have suggestions for improving the website or Newsletter, please contact me, a volunteer or a trustee. *Val Caple*

# Snippets and Snatches from the Summer Garden Party

Friday 22nd June was a chilly (but thankfully dry!) evening for the annual Members' Garden Party. Our roving reporter, who for reasons of confidentiality and not wishing to upset the Leveson Enquiry into press standards, wishes to remain anonymous, recorded the following comments from some of those present...



"A glass of champagne? Why, thank you..."

"Doesn't the garden look lovely..."

"Raffle ticket? Well, twist my arm."

"I wonder if there will be a crop of apples this year?"

"I say, these canapés are delicious..."

"A glass of wine? Well, just a small one."

"That wicker Jubilee crown looks great, doesn't it?"

"Brrrrrr! Bit chilly, isn't it? Perhaps a glass of red would warm me up."

"Have you seen the tea towel?  
Great present for Aunt Agatha."

"No Johnny, I've got all the raffle tickets  
I'm going to buy thank you!"

"Mmm, another of those canapés? Why not?"

"You know, we're so lucky to have the  
Physic Garden on our doorstep."

"Ah! How are you? Haven't seen you since  
last year's party!"

"I do hope the box borders continue to thrive."

"More snacks? You're spoiling us!"

"Well, I'm not driving, so yes, a little top up  
would be nice, thank you."

"Very nice party... shall we do it again next year?"

... And as the daylight faded, the groups happily went their ways into the evening with fond memories of companionship, conviviality and shared love of our beautiful garden.

Thank you to the Maintenance Group for putting up the marquees and everyone who contributed food and drink or braved the cold weather to support us.

*Martyn Hurst*

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

# Introducing the Volunteers

Gillian Griffiths



Throughout a career of 23 years as a secretary with the South Wales Police, Gillian pursued her passion for painting flowers and attended non-vocational courses in Botanical Illustration at West Dean College, Chichester.

In 1986 she was awarded a Gold Medal at the Royal Horticultural Society's exhibition in London for a series of paintings of Ornamental Flowering Crab Apples. She was subsequently awarded two silver-gilt medals and in 2002 a further Gold Medal for paintings of Alpine Primulas and Auriculas.

After an inaugural one-woman exhibition in 1988 at the Heritage Centre, Southerndown, she resigned from her job and became a full-time professional artist and teacher. She specializes in flowers and wildlife, still life, seascapes and river scenes, but her passion is still for botanical paintings. After retiring from full-time painting in 2007, she is now recording the flowers and shrubs of the Cowbridge Physic Garden for pleasure.

She has a painting in the acclaimed Shirley Sherwood Collection which was initially exhibited at Kew Gardens before embarking on a world wide tour. Her collection of paintings of Carnivorous Plants was purchased by Cardiff Museum.

She has taught and exhibited at the National Botanic Garden of Wales, St. Fagans Rural Life Museum, Cardiff Museum, Glynn Vivian Gallery Swansea, Aberglasney, and annually at the Heritage Centre, Southerndown.

She has been an active volunteer at Cowbridge Physic Garden since it started in 2006.

Gillian has an exceptional talent which she possesses artistically but she has contributed so much to the Cowbridge Physic Garden since it was created as a regular volunteer on the gardening front, but also in helping all the rest of us volunteers to stay organised on the practical office matters, galvanising us into action with humour and energy. Her generosity of spirit is extended into a small botanical art class which some of us are lucky enough to belong to – despite our obvious limitations she determinedly fills us with hope! The pleasure she gives so many of us is immeasurable.

*Jo Homfray*

# The Garden wins prestigious Green Flag Award for fourth year running.

At a ceremony at the Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells, Jo Homfray, Chair of the Cowbridge Physic Garden received the Keep Britain Tidy Green Flag Award. This is the fourth year in a row that the Garden has been recognized for its quality, high standard of maintenance and management, and overall beauty as an asset to Cowbridge.

The Green Flag scheme this year has recognized over 1,000 parks and green spaces throughout Great Britain – though a great many more apply but fail to reach the required standard. The fact that Cowbridge Physic Garden has now received the accolade for the fourth successive year is a fitting tribute to the hard work, dedication and gardening skills of the team of volunteers who plan, plant and maintain the garden in such an impressive way.

Jo Homfray, on receiving the award commented, "I'm thrilled that yet again the Physic Garden has been recognized and rewarded with its fourth Green Flag. We wouldn't dare assume we would automatically win it. We know how high the judging standards are. So it's especially gratifying that our volunteers' hard work in making the Physic Garden such a wonderful herbal and horticultural gem is recognized in this way. Well done to all!"

The organisers of the Green Flag Award scheme, Keep Britain Tidy, also commented on the achievements of all the winners, and especially wished to thank the more than 800 volunteer judges who assessed the record-breaking number of applicants this year.

## Eisteddfod

A big thank you to Carys and Linda for planning a tour of the garden in Welsh. Also to the volunteers who sold cards and plants during the week and took £245 for the CPGT.



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# 2012 Christmas Card

Gillian Griffiths has generously given us a superb painting called 'Winter's Morn' for this year's card. It will be available in the garden during the Cowbridge Food and Drink Festival on Saturday 27th October, in the Bay Tree, Cowbridge and in the garden every Thursday morning.

## Cards and gifts

The new Physic Garden Tea Towel, and a range of Notelets and cards, are always available from The Bay Tree, Cowbridge, and from volunteers in the Physic Garden on a Thursday. Also available are the superb quality Physic Garden umbrellas, which can be ordered on **01446 774534**.

All proceeds are used to support the garden.



## Dates for your diary!

### CPGT AGM 20th March 2013

Please put this in your diary. Jekka McVicar has agreed to give a talk after the business meeting. Over the past 25 years Jekka's Herb Farm has evolved from being an organic wholesale nursery, to an award winning RHS gold medallist. Jekka is an elected member of the RHS Council, the governing body of the RHS responsible for its strategic direction, and sits on a number of RHS committees. See [www.jekkasherbfarm.com](http://www.jekkasherbfarm.com)

### Annual Plant Fair 27th April 2013

Though it is a long way ahead, please put it in your diaries and start taking cuttings and splitting perennials which we can sell!!

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