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COWBRIDGE
PHYSIC GARDEN
GARDD BERLYSIAU'R
BONT-FAEN

Newsletter

Issue 25 May 2015

Top of the Pots Plant Sale!

Pleasantish weather – not too windy and, thankfully, dry.

We made a net profit of £808 and we also sold £120 pounds worth of plants on the Thursday before, which was excellent.

This event involves all the Trustees, Volunteers and Members. The Gardening Group organise the visiting nurseries, supply many of the plants on the CPGT stand and keep the customers happy. A sub-group keep the stallholders supplied with baked cakes and serve endless cups of tea and coffee.

The Maintenance Group is responsible for erecting the gazebos, plus doing any other 'heavy work' required. Finally the Marketing and Publicity group distribute posters, organise the raffle and the sell merchandise. Then our 'preserver', Brendagh, provides all the jams and pickles on sale.

Finally the Members. Thank you to all who supported us on the day by donating plants and raffle prizes and spending money!



Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



It is hard to believe that we are already half way through the beautiful month of May – but we are, and like the countryside and hedgerows around us, the Physic Garden has burst into life. The Annual AGM has taken place where we enjoyed a super talk from Bob Brown of Cotswold Garden Flowers, and the Garden Volunteers held an extremely successful Plant Sale in April. As always, my heartfelt thanks to them for all the hard work that this entails.

Now we look forward to the annual Summer Garden Party on Friday 19th June, and I hope to see as many of you as possible there. Let us keep our fingers crossed that the sun has his hat on for that event!

This summer we lose one of our Trustees from the Board who has given us her advice and wisdom over many years. Rose Clay, one of our revered gardening gurus, has decided to step down, but promises to still dip in and out of the Garden as a Volunteer. I would like to thank Rose for all her generosity of time and help over the years. It has been hugely appreciated by us all.

Volunteers News

January/February 2015

Various volunteers tell me that the Christmas Roses are looking good and the Helleborus foetidus around the Fig tree are putting on a good show. There was a blackbird in the ivy on the wall who must have been eating the berries. As you come in from the Holy Cross end the lavender foliage looks pretty, and the snowdrops are out. And on my last visit in January the *Cyclamen coum* and primroses were decorating the Shrubbery nicely and the Winter Aconite was thriving along the Dye Bed Wall and around the base of the Fig Tree. Also on my last visit we saw our robin, and a dunnock.



In January we had our annual clear out of the tool shed and threw quite a lot of stuff away! Rusty devices, split pots and trays, bamboo sticks dangerously split etc.

We laid everything out and reorganised it ready for the new season. A very satisfactory day! We also removed the Wicker Crown as it was disintegrating. It has been an interesting addition to the garden.

Well, March is knocking on the door, the light is stretching out, and soon we will be wrestling with weeds, replanting and nurturing our seedlings again. Hopefully the weather will be a little drier.

March/April 2015

So a gloriously sunny April comes to an end and despite the very dry weather, the garden is looking beautiful. The weather brings out the visitors including Michael Prideaux, Chairman of the Chelsea Physic Garden, and his wife. He was – as they say in Wales – well impressed.

March was quite cold and we all felt spring was slowly dragging itself in. But in the meantime the Maintenance Group cleaned the fountain and it is a pleasure to have it working again – the jackdaws particularly enjoy it for their baths. Some of the volunteers cleared the overgrown ground around the Magnolia by the Church road entrance so we could see the snowdrops and we added primroses and *Pulmonaria*.

So what's growing in our garden! Throughout March and April the Pergola Bed comes into its own and has been a sea of primroses – they have been outstanding. Dotted amongst them we've had *Narcissus* and *Leucojum*. Elsewhere *Pulmonaria* abounds, the Rosemary plants are in flower and the little *Tulipa clusiana* and the lovely Martagon lilies have taken my eye. The Pasque flower is still in full flower even now in one of the beds and many visitors stop to enquire what it is.

Of course the fruit trees are blossoming, the pears have finished and the apples are mostly in full flower, with others coming up behind and the Quince by the office looks stunning. Not to be outdone, the little *Cercis siliquastrum* has started to blossom alongside.

Mary and Gillian have gone round the garden checking what we need to do and we have been issued with our instructions! This is really useful and keep us up to speed.



Visit us at: www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk

We are busy planting out little seedlings – cornflowers, flax, sweet peas, safflowers, broad beans, cosmos and so on. We've also tried to keep track of labelling on our lovely old tulips in the Pleached Bed and list which one is where. They do move around and some come up blind, so it is quite difficult!



On a sad note! When we were rebuilding the compost area, we discovered a robin's nest with five eggs on it. So exciting! Unfortunately, all the eggs disappeared! Squirrels? Who knows! But the blackbirds and robin follow us round one day we saw above us a crow harassing a passing buzzard. Goodness, it all happens here in our garden!

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

Another star performer at the AGM

Bob Brown, proprietor of Cotswold Garden Flowers in Evesham was the guest speaker at the 2015 AGM. The meeting was held in the St Quentin Suite of the Bear Hotel Cowbridge and as usual, was well attended.

After the "business" part of the evening was dealt with, there was a highly entertaining and thoroughly informative presentation by Bob Brown. His philosophy about plants and gardens is to 'let the plants do what comes naturally – don't attempt to create perfect order or symmetry. The plants know best.'

He did, however, give a great insight into the way he encourages new varieties and breeds plants not only for colour, but for vigour, as well.

Bob had loaded his vehicle with plants which were displayed in the St Quentin Suite; not surprisingly, he took very few home with him!





Meet the Volunteer

Lin Edwards

I feel I should start this short biopic by saying I am obsessed by flowers and plants and have been since the age of 5 and thankfully nobody has managed to cure me yet although several have tried (anxious parents wanting me to have a 'proper' job!).

I was urged to go down the secretarial route but, whilst working in Covent Garden for Sir Terence Conran, I made my escape! The journey to work involved a brisk walk through the old Covent Garden flower market and the joy and perfume of the flowers are still unforgettable – along with jolly banter of the tradesmen!!

It was in the early 70s that I decided that I just had to look for a career which involved my passion and I resigned from my job and enrolled at the London School of Floral Design, Kensington Gardens. Much to my surprise I emerged with my Diploma and fulfilled several placements in the large London hotels helping the 'in house' florists create their wonderful works of art!

I married and became a fulltime mother which has been equally joyful. I now have two grandchildren which are my latest obsession. They are already being indoctrinated with sowing seeds.

Currently I am minute secretary for the Trustees' meetings but volunteering in the Garden gives me immense pleasure. It is great to belong to such a jolly and dedicated band and there is always something new to learn! It is so rewarding when visitors pass through the garden and express their appreciation of the oasis of calm and tranquillity!

Cards and gifts

Tea towels, cards, notelets and umbrellas are on sale at The Bay Tree, Cowbridge. Merchandise and plants are for sale in the Garden Thursday mornings – just ask any of the volunteers.



A vibrant garden scene featuring a winding stone path through a variety of colorful flowers, including purple and pink blooms. The garden is set against a backdrop of dense green trees and a clear blue sky. In the distance, a building and mountains are visible.

A Garden full of Sunshine

On the outskirts of Somerset West in the Cape region of South Africa, is a very old wine estate called Vergelegen. It is still a highly productive wine farm but for many, the main attraction is the sensational garden that surrounds the original homestead.

Space is rarely a problem in South Africa (they have so much of it!) and the gardens stretch for acre upon acre. There are formal sections, vast lawns, a rose garden, herb garden, vegetables and an arboretum. The garden is famous for its camphor wood trees: there are six of them, believed to have been planted by Willem van der Stel, the founder of the estate around the year 1700. They are truly magnificent and are noted as a South African National Monument. (When US President Bill Clinton made a visit to President Mandela, and Vergelegen was proposed as one of the venues for their talks, the US Secret Service wanted them cut down as they thought "they could conceal a terrorist with a sniper's rifle". Thankfully, commonsense prevailed and the glorious trees are still there.)

By the way, the wine of Vergelegen is very fine, too.





Opium Poppy

*Latin: Papaver somniferum,
Welsh: Cysglys*

Native to Greece and the eastern Mediterranean, the Opium Poppy was known to the ancient civilisations of Babylon (Sumerian) and Crete (Minoan).

The ancient Greeks and Romans recognised the value of the plant as a soporific and for its medicinal properties which were described by Theophrastes in the C3rd BC.

In Greek mythology the Opium Poppy is associated with Hypnos (the god of sleep) and his son Morpheus (the god of dreams). The name opium derives from the Greek opos/opion (juice/poppy juice). Its Latin name translates as sleep-inducing poppy (*somniferum papaver*). In the medieval period, poisonous plants such as poppies with known soporific qualities were grown in infirmary gardens of monasteries.

The C17th herbalist Nicholas Culpeper described 'the white poppy' as the source of opium which he recommended as a treatment for ergot poisoning also known as St Anthony's Fire.

Until the end of the C19th, a tincture of opium dissolved in alcohol and known as laudanum was extensively used as a sedative. Iolo Morganwg's well-known poem 'In Praise of Laudanum' is inscribed on a plaque on the west wall of the Physic Garden. Thomas de Quincy's 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater' was published in 1821.

The flower and fruit of the Opium Poppy appears on the coat of arms of the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

The exploitation and abuse of the Opium Poppy as a narcotic over many centuries has caused untold human misery. But this plant is the source of two of the most effective pain killers known to man, opium and morphine, and is widely grown for medical use. Heroin, the highly addictive narcotic derived from opium, is associated with the illegal drug trade, the scourge of modern society.

The Opium Poppy is grown in this country, legally, as an attractive garden plant.

Hilary Thomas

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Get Your Fix!

The second Cowbridge Physic Garden limited edition tea towel is ON SALE but will be formally launched at the annual Members' Garden Party.

The subject, Opium Poppy, is from a watercolour by acclaimed artist (and Physic Garden volunteer) Gillian Griffiths who has donated another superb image to this collectable series.

A mere £7, this lovely image in radiant purples and subtle greens is printed on linen union so it can be a piece of art for your wall... the perfect present for the person who has everything... or a jolly good hard-working tea towel...

The package will also contain the above information on the poppy, supplied by Hilary Thomas.



Dates for your diary!

Members Garden Party 19th June 2015

Celtic harp music will again be provided by Ioan Wardlaugh and food and wine will be available. Please apply for tickets using the **form provided**



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