



COWBRIDGE  
PHYSIC GARDEN  
GARDD BERLYSIAU'R  
BONT-FAEN

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

# Newsletter

Issue 26 February 2016

## Paradise Regained an important talk after the AGM

The CPGT AGM is being held at the St Quentin Suite, Bear Hotel, Cowbridge on Wednesday 23rd March at 6.30pm and all members are invited. Then, at 7.30pm, we are delighted to announce a presentation by Helen John of the National Botanic Garden of Wales (NBGW) who will outline a most exciting project: the restoration of the Regency Landscape. Please buy tickets for yourselves and your friends for the talk.

The NBGW occupies an important, historic parkland (Middleton Hall) covering approximately 560 acres, which incorporates a National Nature Reserve and organic farm, as well as showcasing some of the world's most endangered plants. It embodies the old and the new, with 18th century features set alongside the futuristic, iconic single-span glasshouse.

The Garden is 1 year into the 5 year, restoration project, "Middleton: Paradise Regained". The aim is to halt the loss of one of the most significant water-parks in Britain that was created at the end of the 18th century. The restored lakes, bridges, dams, weirs, cascades and their surroundings will delight Garden visitors, young and old alike, and will give a deeper understanding of the Garden's heritage and its position in world history. Helen will outline the progress of the project and its importance to the garden and its ecology. It promises to be a fascinating evening.



The image shows the landscape as it was painted in 1815.

# Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



This Thursday, down at the Physic Garden discussing Garden matters with the Volunteers, the SUN came out! It has made such a rare appearance for the last few months that its arrival was just joyous! Despite the grey skies and wet days the garden is in good shape, and brave little aconites, hellebores and snowdrops are heralding a new spring. Do visit the garden as it comes to life once more.

This year, 2016, is the Tenth Anniversary of the Cowbridge Physic Garden and we have much to celebrate. Please join us at the AGM in The Bear Hotel Cowbridge, after which we will have a treat in store with a talk from a representative of The National Botanic Garden of Wales about a most exciting new project!

The new pillars for the summerhouses look fabulous, and the rest of the restoration to the pediments will be done as soon as the weather is dry enough, together with some other maintenance necessities. The wonderful legacy from Sir William Asscher which has enabled this to be done is an excellent example of why leaving a legacy to the CPGT is so hugely appreciated. Leaving a legacy in your Will to the garden will safeguard this gem in the Vale of Glamorgan for generations to come.

Our Annual Plant Sale is on Saturday 23rd April where you will find an abundance of plants – some most specialised – selling at an absolute snip! Do come and purchase for those spare gaps you have in your own gardens!

With very best wishes for a happy, and above all healthy, 2016.



## The Pestle and Mortar

This antique cast iron mortar is believed to be Georgian and was dug up from a garden at Rose Cottage, Trehyngyll some 20 years ago. It was purchased by Colwyn Jones who says, "Having seen a re-production mortar and pestle in a small Physic Garden at Hitchin, Herts. I felt it would be appropriate in the Cowbridge garden". A wooden pestle was made to accompany it and the Rotary Club of Cowbridge presented a pedestal to display it. We believe it is a complementary period addition to the garden. Thank you to Colwyn and Pam Jones for their generous gift.



# Volunteers News

## November/December 2015

"It is strange what weather we have had all this winter; no cold at all; but the ways are dusty and the flies fly up and down, and the rose bushes are full of leaves, such a time of the year as was never known in this world before here." No, not 2015, but 1661, the entry in Samuel Pepys' diary for January 21st. And the Rev. Ralph Josselin of Essex writes on 20th January 1661:

"A very wet season, great floods".

Well, it could be now! The narcissuses are poking through in the Pergola Bed, the grass has germinated, and the snowdrops are coming up under the Magnolia *grandiflora*.

It certainly felt like spring on our last Thursday before Christmas – it was wet, but mild, our robin was singing his heart out and blue tits and sparrows were chasing each other. We got together for a festive cup of coffee, mince pies, chocolate brownies etc. and a wander round the garden. The tiny *Cyclamen coum* are flowering by the Old Hall gate and in the Shrubbery, and some of the plants provide a lovely structure to the garden – the two young *Hydrangea quercifolia* in the shrubbery, the magnificent *Magnolia grandiflora* with its wonderful bronzed undersides of the leaves, the bare pleached apple trees and the superb bare branches of the Ginkgo tree provide interest in the winter garden. A special sight was a Goldcrest in the yew hedging.

In the office 2 Christmas cards awaited us – one from HRH the Duchess of Cornwall, our patron with a lovely photo of her and Prince Charles, and a second from the Highgrove Office with a view of some impressive topiary.

In the garden the Pergola Bed has been grassed over and planted with fritillaries and narcissuses and the Shrubbery and Dye Beds are being improved.

*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)



# Meet the Volunteer



## Eifiona Jones

Although a 'Swansea Jack', having been born in Swansea, I was brought up in the Bridgend area. Both parents are Welsh speaking, my mother from Pembrokeshire and my father from Swansea Valley so it was natural for Welsh to be the first language of the three children. Ces fy addysg Gymraeg yn Ysgol Gynradd Coety ac yn Ysgol Uwchradd Rhydfelen.

After school, 3 years in the Welsh School of Pharmacy resulted in a pharmacy degree which, after a year 'pre-reg' at Boots the Chemist, Porthcawl started a career in pharmacy. This lasted over 30 years and included working in hospital pharmacy, clinical trials and retail pharmacy. I was given the opportunity to study for an MPharm degree which I completed 10 years after my original degree and decided not to go back to college again! This was not to be as I soon realised that you never stop learning and my further education included managerial, professional and political aspects.

In 2011 I decided to try something different while I was physically and mentally able. A lifelong interest in 'pottering in the garden' and the desire to make my garden more manageable 'in old age' resulted in me doing a course in horticulture at Pencoed College. Three years later I was let loose with a Diploma in Horticulture and the exciting prospect of starting my own business 'pottering in other people's gardens'.

During my time at college I started as a volunteer at Cowbridge Physic Gardens. Thursdays in the garden are enjoyable, more like relaxation therapy than work. Combined with working in a variety of other gardens, including my own, I couldn't ask for more.

Wedi gyrra o dros 30 mlynedd ym myd fferylliaeth newidiais gyfeiriad i fyd garddio. Yn ogystal a gwirfoddoli yng ngardd berlysiâu'r Bontfaen rwy'n garddio i bobl eraill fel rhan o'm busnes sef 'Garddoleg' (gwyddoniaeth garddio). Cael fy nhalu i wneud rhywbeth rwyn'n mwynhau. Beth gwell?



## 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)

# Gillian Griffiths' Flowers of the Physic Garden

In 2007 I started creating a Florilegium of the flowers, shrubs and trees of the Physic Garden. A Florilegium is a collection of pictures largely or entirely of flowers.

When I first started painting botanical illustrations of flowers it was always very difficult and expensive to obtain adequate specimens. Now I have a whole specialized garden at my disposal and I am like a kid in a sweet shop. What shall I paint next?

I have always loved colour and so it is not surprising that I have initially concentrated on painting colourful specimens that excite me. I may eventually get around to the more boring tiny flowers such as Vervain and Catmint which, looked at through a magnifying glass have their own beauty. To date I have painted 62 botanical paintings which include such wonderful examples as Magnolia Grandiflora; Paeony *Paeonia mascula*; Borage *Borago officinalis*; Quince *Cydonia oblonga*; Echinacea *Echinacea purpurea*; Almond *Prunus dulcis*; as well as the delicate – and white – Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*; and the Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*. There are many many more left, if I should live that long!

A couple of my paintings – Nasturtiums and Opium Poppy – have been superbly reproduced on tea towels and there are packs of cards with mixtures of flowers for sale at the Garden.

In 2015 I compiled a photographic Catalogue of all the plants of the Physic Garden according to their beds e.g. Shrubbery, Dye and Strewing, Fragrant, Pergola, Pleached and the individual medicinal beds. I attempted to include a photograph of every plant – a few are yet to be captured – along with their usage and history. It currently consists of 351 pages and can be viewed in the Volunteers' Shed.

*Gillian's paintings and photographs feature in the Newsletter.*



Introduced from southern Europe in the 13th century, possibly by the Augustinians when they settled on the tiny island of Steep Holm.

In Greece the flower was named to honour Paeon the Healer and it was one of the earliest flowers to be recorded there in cultivation.

Taken to relieve haemorrhoids and to treat varicose veins. Also to constrict blood vessels.

Entry from the Catalogue.

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



# Staghorning Sycamore and Pushy Pagoda

JV Tree Services have recently removed two trees for the Trust. They did a remarkable job with nil damage and only a bit of sawdust to show really! It is sad to see them go but the right thing.

The Norway maple, *Acer platanoides*, by the Grammar school wall, had become dangerous and was very dead in the top half. This was in the garden when we took it over and the age is unknown.

The Pagoda tree, *Styphnolobium japonicum*, was planted by the north wall, but was too big and would have needed regular pruning to avoid damage to the wall, path and other plants. Our neighbouring members, Eddie and Jane John, are absolutely thrilled to be able to see from their bedroom window. The sponsors agreed that the Gardening Group should select and pay for a new specimen tree, and a record will be made in the Sponsor's book. We will let members know when a decision is made.



# Walking Nativity

Bethlehem came to the garden in December courtesy of Churches Together in Cowbridge. The Nativity, with parts all played by adults drawn from local churches, was set in the atmospheric surroundings of Old Hall Gardens and the Physic Garden.



About 180 people gathered in Old Hall gardens to watch Mary and Joseph make their way along the Town Walls in search of somewhere to stay. As they went, the audience followed and carols were sung at each stage of the journey.

In the Physic Garden, the wise-men met Herod and the drama continued. Finally, everyone arrived at the stable to celebrate Christmas.

This is the 3rd year the event has taken place, and we look forward to helping host it again next Christmas.

# Holy Cross Christmas Tree Festival

The gardening Group Volunteers again contributed a decorated tree to the annual festival.

The main ornaments were the beautiful seed heads of the Cardoon, *Cynara cardunculus*. The name comes from the flower-head bracts which are supposed to resemble dogs' teeth. They were introduced into Britain in 1658 and *Culpeper* claimed they 'provoke lust.'



## Volunteers needed for the RHS Show in Cardiff!

For the very first time, the CPGT will be taking a stand at the RHS Show in Bute Park, Cardiff. It will be in the 'Learn and Grow' Marquee and the show dates are Friday 15th to Sunday 17th April.

We are looking for volunteers to assist on the stand, answering questions about the garden and encouraging people to visit. Pamela Haines has kindly volunteered to co-ordinate a rota, so please get in touch with her to secure your slot!

The benefit is, of course, you gain free access to the whole show. We are allocated two free passes to the show, which need to be 'recycled' by handing over tickets to the next pair on the rota.

You can reach Pamela on [pmhaines@btinternet.com](mailto:pmhaines@btinternet.com). Telephone 01656 654330



## Dates for your diary!

**Cowbridge Food and Drink Festival** Sunday 29th May and Monday 30th May.

We are hoping to have volunteers in the garden to help visitors.

**Members Garden Party 24th June 2016** Details to follow.

23 April  
2016

# The Annual Plant Sale

We are always very pleased to accept your rooted cuttings, divided perennials plants or seedlings to sell on the CPGT stall. This has become a favourite event for local gardeners. We hope to see you there.

The following nurseries plan to support us by hiring tables. Most have websites and plants can be ordered in advance.



## Bordervale Nursery

Specialising in more unusual hardy perennials and roses.

## Elworthy Cottage Plants

Unusual herbaceous perennials, especially hardy geraniums, geums, grasses, pulmonarias, astrantias, crocosmias, violas & primroses.

## Herbs in Wales

A wide selection of herbs available.

## Ian MacDonald

Diverse selection of rewarding Perennials.

## Neath and Port Talbot College

A variety of student grown plants. Auriculas.

## Pheasant Acre

Specialising in Gladiolus, tulips and young potgrown dahlias.

## Sir Gâr Plants

A small nursery specialising in Ferns and Hydrangeas.

## Tradewinds Nursery

A wide range of choice plants including herbaceous perennials and shrubs.

## Tinpeny Plants

Many rare and unusual plants grown in small quantities by a well renowned plantswoman.

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