



COWBRIDGE  
PHYSIC GARDEN  
GARD D BERLYSIAU'R  
BONT-FAEN

President: Dan Clayton-Jones OBE, KStJ, TD, DL

# Newsletter

Issue 55 October 2025

## Holy Cross Flower Festival

**Last June the Physic Garden volunteers were asked if we would like to get involved in a flower festival in Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge. The theme was to be 'Women in the Bible' and we were given 'Eve'!**

We jumped at the chance to create a 'Garden of Eden' in the church. Sue Bisson, Melanie Hurst, Deb Hill, and Rob Evans were all involved. Sadly Deb died just before we started to 'build' our garden. Deb was a wonderful willow weaver and was going to make Eve out of willow. We were very fortunate to have Anne Marie Hawkins step in and paint 'our' Eve.

Rob was very generous and brought over shrubs and plants from Pheasant Acre Nurseries. We then dedicated our display to Deb who was very much involved in the Physic Garden.

The whole Festival was a big success and enjoyed by so many people.

*Melanie Hurst*



# Message from the Chair, Jo Homfray



What an incredible summer we have had – glorious golden sunshine for weeks on end.

Indeed, watering became the headache of the weeks! But now, as if God has turned the page to a new chapter, autumn has marched in with very little warning! The fruit this year has been abundant and the trees laden. For the first time in many years we have had apricots in the Physic Garden, along with apples of course, masses of damsons, and even some walnuts. Certainly a feast for the wildlife.

The summer has had its sadnesses too – we have lost some dear friends of the Physic Garden, one of whom was a much-loved volunteer. Deb Hill made the most fabulous willow creations for gardens and gave all the proceeds to us – she also made the beautiful willow obelisks for our sweet peas and broad beans. She is much missed, but we are fortunate in having her husband Adrian still working with us, who is able to turn his hand and spade to a myriad of man jobs!



Soon we will be back to thinking of lighting fires, having bonfires, and walking through fallen leaves, but we can also enjoy the golden light that clothes the countryside at this time of year, we can sit back and plan our seed purchases and think of all the plants we should have planted, and which we didn't, and make resolutions to do better next year!

A date for your 2026 diary is the AGM on 11th March, when our Guest Speaker will be Stephen Anderton, well known for his regular column in the Times. This will be a treat to look forward to.

Meanwhile I wish you all a blessed Christmas, and health and happiness in the forthcoming year.



## Derrick Charles Kingham: a Tribute

On Wednesday, May 14th Mrs Jo Homfray and I represented the CPGT at the funeral of Derrick Kingham in Talygarn where he had died in April aged 99 years. Few now remember the part he played in the creation of the CPGT, nor his involvement in so many heritage and charitable projects in South Wales.

Derrick moved to Wales as the site manager of the Talygarn Miners Rest Home, then run as a hospital and recuperation centre for injured coal miners. It is indicative of the way Wales has changed that even as late as the 1960's and 70's, there were so many coal miners to support such a major institution. Today there are virtually no coal mines in Wales.

Derrick resided in an estate house overlooking Talygarn Lake. Living in this beautiful rural location, he developed an abiding interest and love of nature. The outstanding Grade II\* site with gardens, landscapes and woodlands

created by George T. Clark, Ironmaster, Antiquarian and Vice President of the RHS as a setting for his Italianate Mansion were mainly neglected and reverting to nature but the Talygarn estate still possessed enormous beauty and had become a wildlife refuge.

I first met Derrick in the 1970's when we both served on the Board of a Building Preservation Trust, rescuing Welsh vernacular buildings, many of which were not listed. He was also a committed Christian, involved in his local church and running their Charity shop in Pontyclun.

We became colleagues again in 2002, when I was invited to become the Chair



of the South and Mid Glamorgan Branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. Derrick was a member of its dynamic and committed Committee which included such stalwarts as Jean Reader, Hilary Thomas, Dot Thomas, Jackie Thorne and Val Caple.

We were determined to undertake a project, and the abandoned walled garden at Old Hall, Cowbridge, presented itself. The Committee developed a plan, a budget and a vision for a Physic Garden plus approval from the Vale Local Authority. We then hit a real problem; the Board of the WHGT could not support our project in case it failed financially, imperilling the very existence of the

WHGT. Faced with this ultimatum we created The Cowbridge Physic Garden Trust and started applying for grants. Most of the members of our local WHGT Committee, including Derrick, joined the new Trust, and several key members volunteered from Cowbridge thus ensuring the success of the enterprise.

Derrick Kingham was a kind and sensitive man who loved nature, his dogs, and gardens. A gentle man, whose ethos was the Christian teaching of "love thy neighbour" and his guiding principle was "if you want to change the World, then start by changing things locally for the better".

*Dan Clayton Jones, President CPGT.*

## Meet the Volunteer

### Pat Watton

I retired after 52 years as a registered NHS nurse and then volunteered in a hospice in Staffordshire for 7 years.

In 2021 I moved to Cowbridge, but I knew the area well as, for 30 years, I regularly visited my daughter who lives in Glamorgan

One day I was sitting in the Physic Garden and began to chat to Sue Bisson about gardening. She suggested I speak to Jo Homfray re volunteering. I was quickly accepted because the garden was now open to volunteers and visitors post Covid restrictions.

I absolutely love it. The volunteers are a friendly, knowledgeable, enthusiastic group and we all work as a fantastic team. The work is interesting and we also support each other as a social group.

PS. Pat also helped, on behalf of the Holy Cross Church, with a display for the Flower Festival entitled 'Lydia, a seller of Purple' together with Angela Strong, another volunteer.



## The Fountain is Working again after a Major Operation

As you will have been aware, the fountain was out of action for much of 2024 and the beginning of this year. It is now joyously mended following a complete overhaul.

This was a major job, and we are very grateful to Russell Hawkins and his team for taking on the task. They found out why the fountain was leaking and worked with incredible efficiency and care, with minimal disruption to our garden visitors. Hopefully we are now well set for many years of fountain pleasure!

This was a costly piece of renovation, and our sincerest thanks go to Allan Sutcliffe, John Roberts, Michael Bradley and Eddie and Jane John who gave such generous financial support to help us complete the job.

*Matt Jones*



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



# Members' Garden Party



This year we were blessed with a balmy summer evening, unlike last year!

Thank you to everyone who helped organise the event, Anabel Clay who supplied canapés, and, more important, everyone who came to support us.

I hope we all enjoyed seeing the garden at its riotous best.

*Val Caple*



## Music in the Physic Garden!

During the Cowbridge Music Festival we were very fortunate to have the world premiere of a piece of music composed by local composer Lynne Plowman called 'Beacons' performed in the Physic Garden.

Musicians played in different areas of the garden as well as Old Hall Gardens ending up by the fountain playing together.

The sun shone and it was well supported by passers-by and school children. Certainly a must next time, weather permitting!

*Melanie Hurst*



## Amaryllis /Hippeastrum Growing Guide

### General:

- Keep in bright indirect light watering only when top inch of the compost is dry
- Rotate pot regularly to keep stem straight
- Use high phosphorus fertilizer during growing period
- Ensure your pot has plenty of drainage holes

### Watering:

- When potting up water thoroughly with lukewarm water
- Water regularly when the top of the compost is dry
- After flowering continue watering to help the bulb for the following year

### After flowering:

- Cut finished stems as close to the base of the bulb as possible
- Allow the bulb to continue growing (can be placed outside after the frost)
- During August the leaf will start to yellow.
- Keep pot dry
- After the leaf has yellowed and withered move the bulb to a cool dark (8-12C) and allow to remain dormant during September

### Repotting:

- Once you are ready to restart the bulb, cut off any foliage and repot it ensuring the top 1/3rd of the bulb remains above the compost.



*Rob Evans,  
Pheasant Acre  
Plants*



## Social Media Pages

We still have over 2200 'followers' on Instagram enjoying the visual delights the Physic Garden. Search for Cowbridge Physic Garden on Facebook and follow [@cowbridgephysicgarden](https://www.instagram.com/cowbridgephysicgarden) on Instagram.

Please send us your favourite photos of the garden and encourage others to visit the place you love it by tagging them [#cowbridgephysicgarden](https://www.instagram.com/cowbridgephysicgarden) or sending them to [matt@cowbridgephysicgarden.org](mailto:matt@cowbridgephysicgarden.org) *Matt Jones*



# You Can Now Buy by Card in the Garden

Thanks to Genevieve we now have a card reader which works in the garden and does not cost more than we take!

Items for sale (cards, tea towels, books, etc) are also available at Happy Days Vintage Home Store, just by the till. We are very grateful to Cath Jones for her support.

The latest Iris and the Magnolia tea towels, based on an original watercolour by acclaimed artist and garden volunteer Gillian Griffiths, are available. Also a range of notelets together with the book 'Cowbridge Physic Garden: Celebrating Ten Years of Spadework'. They are also available online at [cowbridgephysicgarden.org](http://cowbridgephysicgarden.org) and the book is available at the Cowbridge Bookshop.

You can also buy plants and the above items on Thursday mornings in the garden – just ask one of the volunteers.



## Dates for your Diary

The **2026 AGM** will be held on **11th March**, when our Guest Speaker will be **Stephen Anderton**, writer, lecturer in the UK and abroad, on plantsmanship, garden design and garden restoration, well known for his regular column in the Times. He is a three-time winner of the Garden Writers' Guild Award.

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