



The Aber Medieval Physic Garden

Education and Student Experience Award

Mid-progress event, March 4th 2026

Project Team



Dept. of History & Welsh History

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Student Steering Committee

Project Background 1



- **Maes Dysgu Aber Learning Field** est. spring 2022
- Formerly the Aber Living History Garden
- Prior ongoing projects:
 - Aber WWII Garden
 - Penglais Heritage Fruit Orchard
 - ACV Three Sisters Milpa Bed
- **A community garden project** run by volunteer AU staff, students, and the broader Aber community
- **We grow veg, inspired by history**

Project Background 2

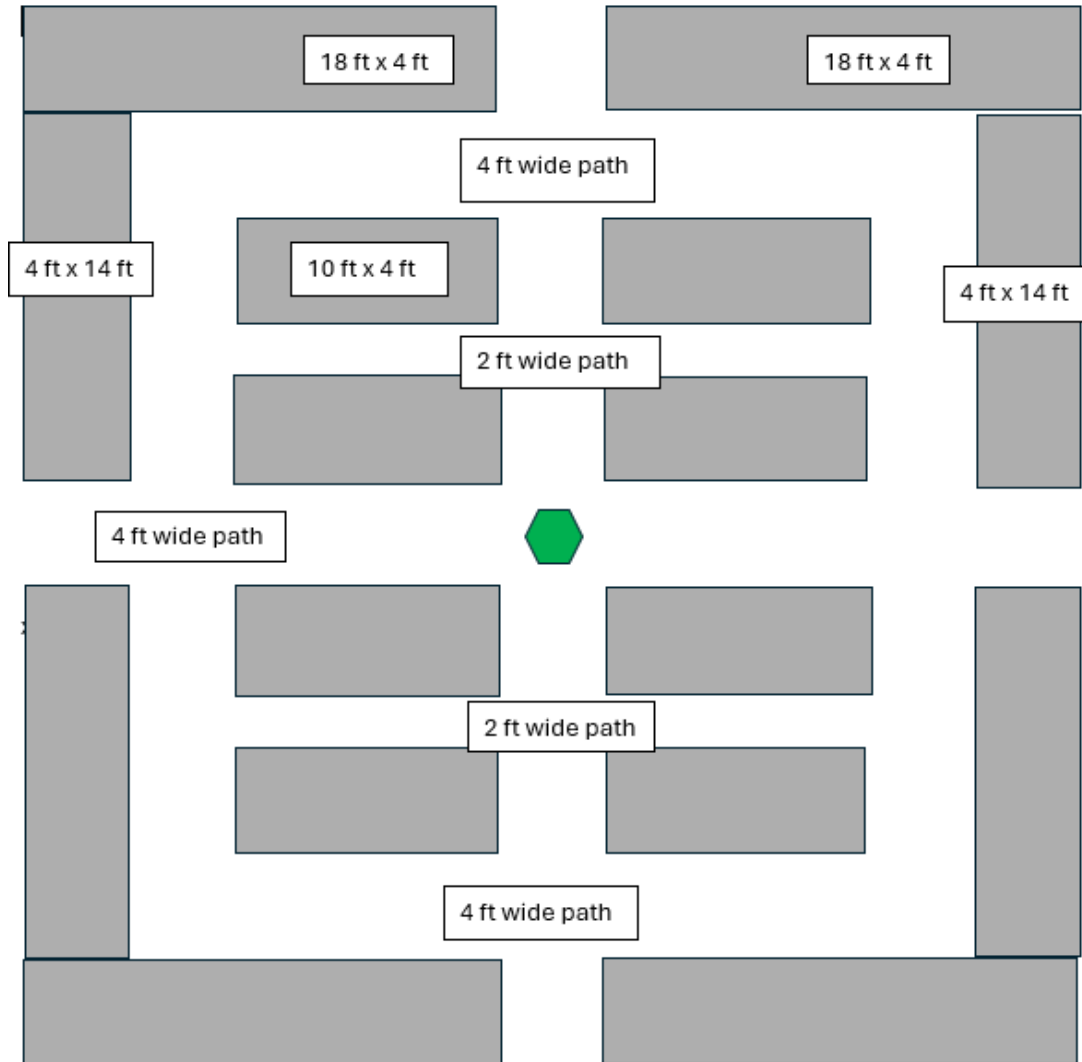


- Strong community of academics teaching and researching Medieval history at AU
- Thriving student volunteer group for Aber WWII Garden

Two main aims:

- Create an outdoor amenity for staff and students that supports education and recreation on campus
- Enhance students' learning through collaborative mentored historical research, gardening, and public engagement

Garden layout

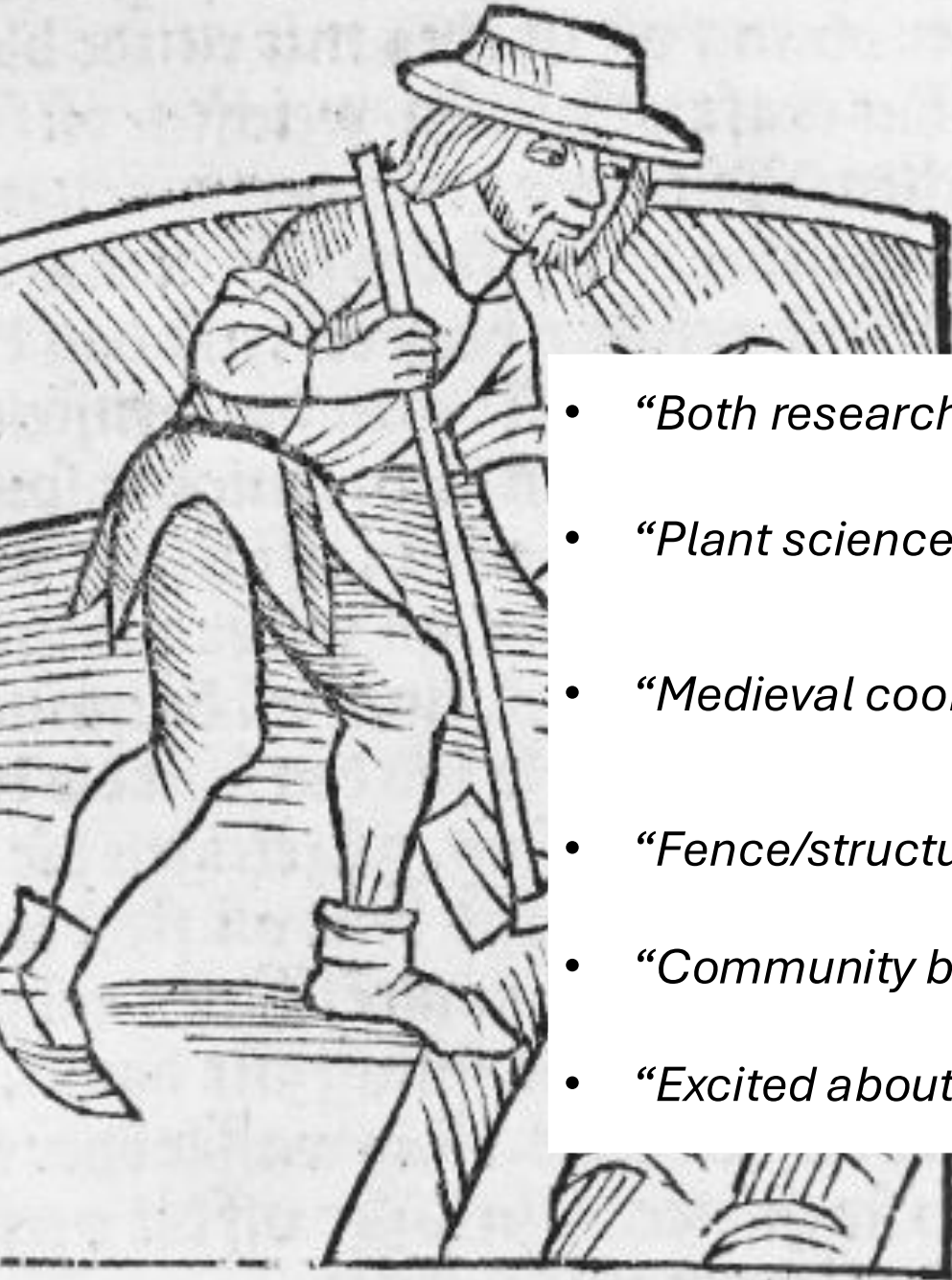


- Outer perimeter 40x40ft (12x12m)
- 8 central garden beds divided by footpaths
 - Themed beds, based on a student vote and student-led historical research
- Outer beds for scented herbs and flowers
- Memorial tree for Prof. Björn Weiler
- Based on the medieval herb garden at the Abbey of St Gall, Switzerland.

Student engagement

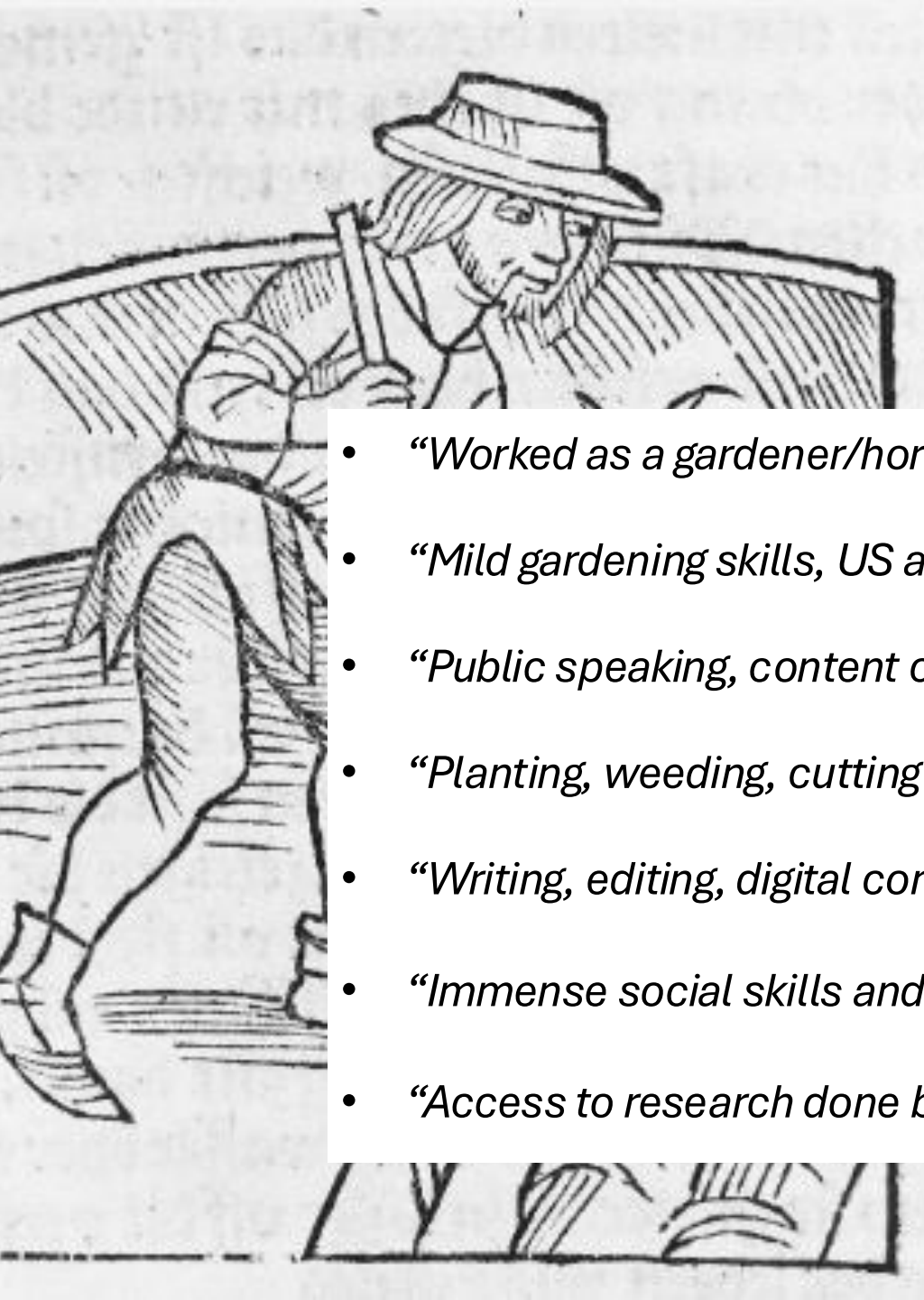
- 13 students attended an introductory meeting about the MPG in Yr Undeb
- Initial meeting asked students:
 - 1) What interests you about the project?
 - 2) Which skills can you bring to the project?
 - 3) Which skills would you like to develop through the project?

1. What interests you about the MPG?



- *“Both research and gardening”*
- *“Plant science/chemistry”*
- *“Medieval cooking”*
- *“Fence/structure building”*
- *“Community building, outreach”*
- *“Excited about the history, also excited to get back in the garden!”*
- *“Learning about medieval remedies”*
- *“I like herbs”*
- *“Gardening, researching, living history”*
- *“Media production (e.g. flyers)”*
- *“Gardening”*

2. What skills do you already have?

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- *“Worked as a gardener/horticulturalist”*
 - *“Mild gardening skills, US and UK, path building”*
 - *“Public speaking, content creation”*
 - *“Planting, weeding, cutting grass”*
 - *“Writing, editing, digital content creation”*
 - *“Immense social skills and a mystical affinity with plants 😊”*
 - *“Access to research done by other medieval reenactors”*
 - *“Research skills”*
 - *“Scheduling teams”*
 - *“Gardening”*
 - *“Outreach skills”*
 - *“12-ish years of gardening in the US”*



3. What skills would you like to develop from the MPG?

- “Project planning”*
- “Layout for gardens”*
- “Better knowledge of modern and medieval gardening tools”*
- “Awareness of different medieval gardening/herbalism texts and knowledge”*
- “Medieval medicine knowledge”*
- “Research skills”*



Research workshops

- 28 students invited to the workshops via the e-mailing list
- Research Workshop 1:
 - Students proposed a longlist of themes for the 8 beds including:
 - Stress and anxiety support
 - Common ailments, e.g. coughs, colds, and indigestion
 - Medieval beauty and skincare
 - Veterinary care
 - Medieval charms
 - Dyes and pigments

Collaborative research spreadsheet

- Research workshops – protected time for students to conduct targeted research and input information into the shared spreadsheet
- Low but loyal attendance – core group of research volunteers from various departments including history, maths, and information studies

For example:

1	shepherd's purse	oleoselin on (MM)/ St James' Wort (HH)	<i>Capsella</i> <i>bursa-pa</i> <i>storis</i> (HH)	herb	name comes from small heartshaped seed capsules, that looks similar to a shepards purse, same family as cabbage and same botanical group as Honesty and wallflowers. Dark, deeply cut leave like dandelions, can get to 30cm < high. prefers sunny spots, thrives in poor soil. (HH) DW	Main uses are medicinal, Generally used for bleeding related issues, wounds, heaving menstrual bleeding.
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Breaking ground

- Marked out a 12x12m plot, including inner beds, internal paths and outer beds.
- Removing turf from planting areas so we can plant directly into the soil



Inter-departmental collaboration

- University Farms providing willow poles from plant trials
 - Donations of poles expected in Mid March-Mid April
 - Redistributing materials around AU
 - Will be used to weave hurdles/borders around marked beds in the MPG
 - Rabbit protection (hopefully!)

<---- (Low willow fences like those ones)





Involving students across AU

- 30 student volunteers on our mailing list (27 UG, 3 PGT)
- Main subject area is DLS (incl. plant biology, agri, ecology, vet. science)
- Second largest subject area is History & Welsh History
- Other subjects/departments represented include DGES, TFTS, Interpol, Maths, Law & Criminology, Welsh & Celtic Studies, Fine Art, and Cultural Heritage Studies
- Broad appeal of the project – practical, outdoor activity AND collaborative research

Student Steering Committee



- Five volunteer members across roles including garden design, site logistics and communications
- Support communications between student volunteers and staff
- Regular (weekly/fortnightly) meetings with the staff team
- Imminent activities: designing a logo, creating a WhatsApp group (students' preferred method of communication) and Instagram page for the project

Project challenges so far



- Persistent wet weather
 - Hazardous conditions, gardening sessions cancelled
- Staff time
 - Timing sessions around student and PT/volunteer staff availability

Next Steps



- Students to vote on shortlist of garden bed themes, reducing 14 themes to 8
- The Big Dig in collaboration with ACV
 - 11th March
 - Continuing turf removal
- Continued research on the 8 bed themes
- Finalise the seed/plant shopping list
- Collaboration with PhyteClub
- Potential for local trips, e.g. NLW, RCAHMW, to view relevant collections.