

## **Cirencester Science and Technology Society**

**The June lecture was given on “Plants for Life?” by Professor Monique Simmonds, who is the Head of Sustainable Uses of Plants in the Jodrell Laboratory Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.**

**The speaker touched briefly on the general economic value of plants in providing food and fuel, before expanding the theme of the medicinal uses of plants in the developing countries but also in the west. She mentioned the reliance on local remedies which had prevailed in China, India and Africa and that with the co-operation of local people the relevant plants are being collected and identified. Seeds are being preserved in the Seed Bank at Wakehurst, while chemical and DNA analyses are carried out at Kew. These give information on food values as well as medical ones. The project Plant Resources of Tropical Africa together with the Survey of Economic Plants for Arid and Semi-arid lands based at Kew, are tackling the problems of feeding people on poor land using local plant material and much valuable information is being collected. It is important that this is done in a sustainable way and with conservation issues in mind.**

**The increasing popularity of “Alternative Medicine” in the west necessitates the correct identification of species used and their efficacy. Compounds extracted and analysed at Kew can be compared with synthetic ones and the efficacy determined. British plants are being analysed and “Old Wives Tales” examined.**

**Examinations of stomach contents of some murder victims have enabled the police to identify the country and location of origin leading to successful arrests.**

**Prof. Simmonds ended on a more topical and pleasant subject. She confirmed that chocolate is beneficial BUT only in its raw and unsweetened state.**