

which has developed its own digital of shops is easy to understand.



City Diary

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They came, they saw and they took time to smell the roses

The consensus was that there were fewer people there than in previous years, but last night's Gala Night for the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show certainly boasted as many bankers as ever.

Among them was Stephen Hester, the RBS chief executive — who, bystanders reported, declared the Laurent-Perrier stand to be his favourite — and Russell Chambers, of Credit Suisse. Private equity was represented by Martin Halusa, the chief executive of Apax Partners.

There were former bankers, too, among them Sir Tom McKillop, the ex-RBS chairman, and Eric Daniels, no longer Lloyds TSB's chief exec. And doubtless to keep tabs on the throng, Lord Turner of Ecchinswell, the FSA chairman, was spotted peering into a shrub.

Regular stalwarts included Sir Christopher Gent, the former Vodafone chief executive, and Lord Browne of Madingley, the former BP chief. For the railways, Sir John Armitt, the first Network Rail chief executive and latterly Locog

supremo, was present, as was Gerald Corbett, the ex-Railtrack chief.

Ted Tuppen, the Enterprise Inns chief, said he was more of an expert in growing vegetables than flowers. Sir Philip Green was seen chatting with Charles Dunstone, the Carphone Warehouse chief; Carphone's co-founder David Ross was the fittest-looking corporate guest, having just completed the 3,300km charity cycle ride from Olympia to the Olympics Park organised by Lawrence Dallaglio and Andrew Flintoff. No sign of the latter, but there was the old master blaster himself, Sir Vivian Richards.

Others spotted included: Gerard Lyons, global chief economist of Standard Chartered; Richard Solomons, chief exec of Intercontinental Hotel Group; Archie Norman, ITV chairman; Mark Price, Waitrose's managing director; and Terry Smith, the Tullett Prebon chairman. And looking positively presidential as he strolled the gardens was Tidjane Thiam, chief executive of Prudential, whose fund management arm M&G is the event's main sponsor this year.