

HALTON GARDENING GROUP

Chair's Annual Report for AGM on Tuesday 17th November 2020

This year has been like no other, with the Covid-19 pandemic regulations keeping us indoors and at a safe distance from others, masked up and plastered in sanitizer, to a brief flurry of relatively normal activity during the summer months. However, Halton Gardening Group prevailed and now in Lockdown no 2 we look back at what has been achieved during the past 12 months.

The new committee took over in November 2019 and immediately set to work on modernising our communication and organizational systems. A Google account was created and its systems and nuances steadfastly learnt by Anne Snowden, our new Secretary, and adopted by others. They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but boy are they wrong. All members have taken to this new way of working like ducks to water, and it has proved invaluable due to the restrictions we have all faced. Zoom meetings are now commonplace and after a few teething problems and the vagaries of Halton's internet infrastructure, we mastered the art with aplomb!

The Centre Terrace was duly completed in January 2020 and a modern planting scheme was developed, incorporating new plants and soil replenishment. Although the Covid-19 restrictions made it difficult to buy the new plants and improve the soil ready for planting, the original planting designed by Marianne was further enhanced by Anne Snowden and the work was eventually completed by Ann Wilson, Anne Snowden and others. We look forward to Spring when the new bulbs and plants will appear to show off their colour and form.

Plants have been hard to come by this year and with shopping restrictions in place our members have had to be innovative in the planting of their cared for areas. Nevertheless these areas continue to add value to the village's public spaces and continue to draw appreciative comments from villagers.

In July a decision was made to spend our dwindling monetary resources on Spring bulbs which members have duly planted in all areas of the village. We look forward to these displays and feel certain they will brighten up our Spring.

The disappointment of cancelling our annual plant sale in May was not only felt by members but also by the community, however, the community appreciated picking up our prepared plants for free at members' garden gates. Fortunately the September plant sale, held on a beautiful sunny day, was a huge success raising over £600 for our planting projects. Customers enjoyed strolling around the village buying plants from garden gates and the gazebo at the centre field. In fact, its success was quite remarkable given the restrictions and last minute changes. It has also given us a blue-print for our future plant sales.

Fortunately the September sale boosted our coffers and this money will now go towards renovating, refurbishing and replenishing the Memorial Garden, with the Parish Council's permission and support. To this end a Memorial Garden sub-group has been formed to raise further funds and draw up a strategy to carry this project forward into 2021 and beyond.

This past year has shown us just how resilient we all are, and that our aims can still be fulfilled no matter what restrictions are put in place. During 2020 in particular, Halton Gardening Group has provided a much needed community resource for members and villagers alike. Working together not only creates a common purpose and shared responsibility but also provides much needed companionship (especially during difficult times). Halton Gardening Group is keeping our members and volunteers active both physically, mentally and socially whilst getting to know others in the wider community. We know we are appreciated and will continue to work for the benefit of the village as a whole.

Monica Williams
Chair HGG
November 2020.