

CULTER IN BLOOM

Chair Report 2016

Based on the old adage that a picture is worth 1000 words I'll keep this part short and use the slide show with Sandy Cook to remind you of our work over the year.

In 2016 we continued the wide range of the community planting and environmental clear-up work for which we are well-known in the village, but the year was marked by one major new development, the completion of the community memorial orchard on Millside Street, for which we were grateful to received support from many groups. I'll cover the orchard in more detail with some slides in a few minutes. First just a few words under three other headings – planting, environmental and the Beautiful Scotland competition

Planting

I'm sure you are all already aware of the many containers, barrels, and troughs we plant up, most of them twice annually. I've tried to count them all and have reached the amazing total of 177. As we rely almost entirely on watering by nearby residents, we are very grateful to those of you who do this. Although sometimes the results are patchy, even disappointing due to inadequate watering over the summer, our committee does not feel that we have enough resources at present to expand our role in this way, and we rely at present on gentle reminders and neighbourly support by residents! I should mention that ACC waters our 52 hanging baskets – we would not ask any residents to do that! – but for a handsome fee of nearly £1500 per annum.

Environmental

In addition of course our work includes a major litter pick around the village in Spring, another in the vicinity of the school with primary pupils. We particularly value our link with the school where Maureen Macdonald already does a sterling job keeping the nursery garden smart with just a little help from us, and every year we have new projects for older pupils. We hope to build on this link with new projects in future years. Last autumn we have tried to sow patches in Coronation Park with yellow rattle, a wildflower which is intended to weaken the coarser grasses there and allow other wildflower species to thrive. During the year we obtained a grant to publicise Coronation Park our local "Field In Trust" by means of two finger posts which you will have seen on Coronation Road..

Beautiful Scotland

On 1 August we were visited by two judges from the Beautiful Scotland competition to assess the village for an award, and as you may have already heard we were given a Silver Gilt, the second highest certificate available. We were third on our category (Urban Community) behind Uddingston, who won the category and Dyce. This is the fifth award we have obtained at this level, and although we know we are improving and we do seem to gain a few points each time we are still well short of the coveted Gold.

To be precise our score was 161 out of 200 – and the score for a Gold would need to be around 180!. We still have to decide whether to enter the scheme for the coming year. On the one hand we know that by entering we secure encouragement and assistance from the City Council, on the other the preparation process for the assessment itself takes a lot of time and we know that a lot of additional work, some including the new theme for the award scheme which this year is "birds, bees and trees" would be required to get anywhere near the standard of the current winners. You can be

sure that whatever we decide – whether to remain in the scheme or undertake a “CulterExit” or “Crexit” - we will aim to continue to make improvements in the village, and are at present discussing an exciting new project involving possible three way co-operation with ACC and the Heritage Society. All this will be included in our new Facebook page Watch this space for up to date news !

People

Finally, turning to more serious matters we lost a good friend and former member of Culter in Bloom due to the tragic and sudden death of a former CIB member Tim Ramseyer, who, along with his wife Helen, has over the years made a fantastic contribution to the appearance of our village by his work on the Heritage Hall garden and until recently the village hall garden.

We were also sorry to receive the resignation of our long-standing member Anne Watson, who is now a resident in Tor-na-Dee. Anne’s enthusiasm for the work of Culter in Bloom since we were founded over ten years ago is a reminder that age is no barrier to helping us – and may encourage others who may feel they are too old to volunteer. We can always find suitable work for you!

On a brighter note we were pleased to welcome Gibby Connon and Brian Yule to our committee last year – as two of our younger brethren! However the ever-increasing workload and our own advancing age mean that we are also looking for help from still younger people. If you cannot come as committee members, just looking after a small area routinely or being available to help on our regular planting and clearing sessions would be a tremendous boost for us – so please give us your names (or suggest a name to us!) and we will be in touch . There are many ways you can help and we can “agree a package” for you.

Obviously I have to thank our whole committee, without whom none of the work I’ve discussed would be possible. They are Deputy Chair Sandy Cook, his wife Jean, Treasurer Catherine Lacy who manages to find the time to combine this role with her many other community jobs, Secretary Carol Page and members Christine Mackie, Bill Cooper, Dick Gagel, Donald and Francoise Macdonald, Malcolm Sharp - and especially our new members Gibby Connon and Brian Yule. Their “package” consists of coming to our meetings, discussing new ideas, planning new projects and then turning up reliably to deliver them – in rain or shine. If you would like to help us with our planning as well as our regular work, feel free to chat to them about what membership entails – or of course to contribute suggestions.

You would not expect me to conclude without a “plug” for our fundraising initiative. As you’ve heard we can sometimes gain grant aid for new projects, but never for planting up our many flower containers, beds or baskets, which is by far the major part of our costs. Fortunately we do regularly receive some assistance for this from the local retail businesses and we also get some very generous support from one that is not so local (Milltimber) but wishes to remain nameless, but the support of individual local residents (such as yourselves) means a lot to us, and as you know each year we try to reciprocate in a small way by gifting a plant. This year we decided on a lilac, and you can claim one with a donation of £10 or more – but all donations, however small, are very welcome and encourage us by ensuring that we can continue with our work “planting pride in the community” – in 2017 and beyond. On behalf of our whole committee I thank you for your continued interest and your support. Those of you who use Facebook – please remember to keep in touch with us under our Culter in Bloom page or via the website. Ideas and comments always welcome – maybe in the conversation which will follow the slide show!

Erik Stien, chair Culter in Bloom February 2017

