

CULTER IN BLOOM

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

In this report I'd like to go quickly through the year's work chronologically and then discuss two major themes that we have been dealing with over several of our regular committee meetings. One difference from many previous years and a simplifying factor for us in 2017 was the absence of the need for preparation and planning for a Beautiful Scotland judging visit, as we decided early in the year that we would not enter this national competition in the summer. This choice saved us a lot of time in compiling a portfolio and preparing and organising a minute by minute itinerary for a tour by the judges. None of this work is visible to any of our residents or passers-by, and despite the damp summer our displays were well received.

During the year we had 7 committee meetings of roughly 2 hours duration and I'd like to start by paying tribute to all our members who take part in these essential planning discussions – I know that some of them think they are too long but at least everyone has a say! The hours spent doing work “on the ground” are of course much more than that – and I have to confess that due to family commitments involving extended trips to Canada and Australia I haven't been on the scene as much as in past years..

Review of 2017

So what have we done last year? January to April was a quiet time as we waited for the result of our autumn bulb planting to emerge, but we had an unusual early year job last year– instead of planting flowers we were planting fence posts! The post and rail fence along Malcolm Rd was broken and unsightly in many places and I agreed with Gordon Investments Ltd, the landowners to fix it for materials cost and a donation. Brian Yule and I did the work, which yielded a donation of £250 for our funds from the Gordon family– an example of “planting pride in the community” – or at least restoring pride in a slightly different way.

With the Spring Culter Courier we launched our annual fundraising with an offer of a lilac shrub to donors – thanks to so many of you who contribute regularly to support us. At the March meeting we held a discussion on a topic which I'll refer to later, a new village entrance feature to replace the embanked area at the East end at the top of Pittengullies Brae..

May saw the Gala which was a success through generous support from Drum and Fox Lane Garden centres and June saw our major planting day, ably managed by Jean and Sandy Cook, with support from a few enthusiastic volunteers. The 52 hanging baskets from Cove Bay Nurseries were hung later by Mike Mackie, Bill Cooper, Gibby Connon and Dick Gagel and we also organised 18 “adopt a baskets” for homes on North Deeside Road. You may have noticed that in some of the Lowlander containers (the round ones in the main road display) this year we tried some experimental plants suggested by the City Council, to compare them with the more usual begonia and geranium. However we did not feel that the results were effective enough to justify mass use in future years – begonias still reign supreme for colour and durability!

Turning to our Community Orchard, now in only its second year, by July and August the fruits were beginning to appear, which gave a worthwhile picking for the early birds in our community! The Cubs were no longer able to tend the two raised beds there due to lack of supervisors, and so Malcolm one of our members planted them up for his own use! We've decided that that unless a volunteer group is willing to take them over we will just sow them with wildflowers next year.

Almost too soon it was time for clearing and autumn planting, this time very efficient and well – supported due to active canvassing by secretary Carol, with pansies, polyanthus and dwarf daffodils to the fore. We also planted some new drifts of naturalised daffodils in the orchard along Millside St, and a new “biodiversity mix” of small bulbs opposite the shrubbery and seating area at Kennerty Community corner which we created back in 2008

Our November meeting was taken up with plans for the coming year as the cycle resumes. It’s clear that we will need to replace the soil on all our major containers - and replace some of the containers themselves completely - and we will have to choose an appropriate style which will blend in with the current ones.

We rounded the year off with an entirely new experiment in December – LED Christmas lighting on six of the orchard trees to brighten the Community Orchard – no competition with the Christmas lights, just a bit of DIY help!

Key Themes

Two themes which have run consistently through our discussions this year have been

1. A new village entrance feature to replace the raised bed at the East end - and
2. The need for closer co-operation with the City Council grounds team

Turning to the first of these, our objective is to make a stronger impact on traffic arriving from the city without affecting safety sight lines from Pittengullies Brae. We briefed a local professional garden designer back in 2016, but felt that the proposal we received from her was too radical and out of keeping with the village image. We were then offered an “in house” alternative design from one of our supporters which we felt would be more acceptable. The Community Council has also seen and approved the design and it has been on display in the Pop In window for the last three months. It was also checked with the city council who were happy with it and even offered to assist by relocating the village sign to blend with it. The project should be under way in the Spring.

Regarding the second theme – council liaison , during the winter last year we had a useful meeting with the City Council and the Heritage Society to discuss a joint project to enhance the station yard and platform area. One of our main objectives (resurfacing the platform to make it more suitable for car parking) was not achieved for cost reasons, but they did agree to tidy the area and to pay half the cost of the three handsome cast iron plant containers now on the platform, and the Heritage Society also created and installed a new and much better station sign.

Since then we’ve also agreed with ACC to pay half the cost of a new wrought iron commemorative bench on the path through the community memorial orchard, as we feel this area is still somewhat under-used, probably because the stone wall which the designer conceived as a bench is not quite comfortable enough to sit on!

A third area of co-operation with the council has been the verge from the Malcolm Road junction to the new bridge. You will recall that a large part of this was planted with some ancient, struggling roses, still just surviving from the glory days of the “City of Roses”. We offered to replace them at our cost, but our ACC contact suggested we should plant something else as the ground would be “rose sick” after so many years, so they removed the old stock, agreed to keep the grassed area nearer the new bridge under better control, and we have planted the verge with cornus, better known as dogwood, underplanted with perennial geraniums for year-round interest.

However we still experience some difficulties, often due to misunderstandings or poor communication on both sides. For example last year we had a wildflower bed mown down on Kennerty Brae opposite the community corner, and after planting buddleia shrubs on the railway platform we found that they had been strimmed out of existence by an over-enthusiastic workman. This is partly our fault and we now have a direct line to the area grounds supervisor which should help reduce these incidents,

The future

Looking to the future, plans yet to be fulfilled include the repainting of the wee train at the east end of the village and replanting with some new purple heathers in the adjacent bed. This will be sponsored by a member of the community in memory of a deceased relative. I'd like to make the point that we sometimes receive donations from bereaved families and try to meet their suggestions as to how to use the donation, but we prefer not to identify these features by name, as the creation of a precedent might become too overwhelming in a small village.

Thanks

In conclusion I'd like to thank all the members of our committee who have helped to make our plans and deliver them through the year, Sandy Cook, Secretary Carol Page, Treasurer Catherine Lacy, members Jean Cook, Francoise and Donald Macdonald, Christine Mackie, Bill Cooper, Malcolm Sharp, Gibby Connon, Brian Yule and our newest member Agneta Calderwood who joined us last year. On behalf of our whole committee I also thank all our supporters for your continued interest - and your generous donations, and hope that you feel that we are still achieving our goal of "planting pride in the community".

Those of you who use Facebook – please keep in touch with us under our Culter in Bloom page or via the website. Ideas and comments are always welcome!

Erik Stien

Chair

Jan 2018