

Hopton in Bloom Report 2013-14

We began our year following the AGM last November giving thanks to the Club for hosting an excellent evening for Hopton in Bloom's Celebrating Gold and Best in the Village Category and Meet the Team on Friday October 25th following our success in the Yorkshire in Bloom campaign.

We planned to put red and white geraniums on the war grave to W Sykes from WW1 and the two graves from WW2 but little did we know that this would develop into such an excellent, well researched and well-presented WW1 exhibition on a grand scale which will we hope is to be captured in a book for future generations.

Our plans for a Community Orchard had more or less ground to a halt but two new projects were initiated, the village marker and enhancing the entrance to the recreation ground.

In January we were so proud and a little apprehensive when Upper Hopton was confirmed as a representative for Yorkshire in the **2014 RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finalist** in the Village category. We already had lots of great ideas to improve our village and the RHS campaign ensured we were all focused and carried most of them through to completion. The whole community was involved and supported us in every possible way. This is a tribute to the wonderful community in which we share and to the huge amount of work undertaken by many people who give freely of their time, talents and resources to the benefit us all.

As with all things, communication is the key to ensuring everyone is kept in the loop and our new village website www.upperhoptonvillage.co.uk, which includes sections for all the organisations in the village, has played a most important role. The web site now gives a single point of reference for the UHCA, Hopton in Bloom, Hopton Club, St John's Church and the Cricket Club. Additional pages for Hopton Art group, HIB Nature Watch, Garden Trail, Updated News and events page, together with WW1 page, have been readily created by webmaster John Farren. We have had 49490 hits (visitors) and know that it has received hits internationally when we received an enquiry from China about the K6 telephone box! Nearer to home, visitors to Croft House and the Garden Trail or individuals looking to hire the facility have found the web site useful and easy to navigate.

In preparation for our Britain in Bloom judging, Brendan Mowforth, Chairman of Yorkshire in Bloom, toured the village and met our team on our usual Wednesday morning. He was very impressed by the strong community spirit and our industrious team. He gave some useful pointers to improve our entry. He suggested we request Kirklees to re-bark the children's playground and kill the longstanding weeds around the village and address the crumbling tarmac on the footpaths.

Thanks to Vivien our mayor and Mirfield Council for awarding us £500 in recognition of the achievements of Hopton in Bloom, we were able to purchase six new self-watering barrels to replace some of the old wooden ones which were deteriorating.

In the area around Croft House four new trees (2 White Beam, *Sorbus aria* and 2 Ornamental Pear, *Pyrus calleryana Redspire*) were planted in the autumn to replace the diseased trees felled in the spring. New circular beds were dug out in the banking in front of Croft House and were planted up with primulas and tulips for Spring and a poppy design using red gazanias and alyssum in the middle circle in recognition of WWI and the outer two circles planted with marigolds and lobelias to represent wheels in recognition of the Tour de France.

We were pleased to welcome pupils from Ravenshall Special School who came to sow poppy and wildflower seeds in the border of the churchyard on Wednesday April 30th with the poppy seeds being donated by Wakefield Diocese and by Roger. Jessica Wilkinson, one of their GCSE pupils designed a fantastic poster for the Britain in Bloom judging day. One of our team has a regular commitment at the school helping with the allotment. Children from the Playgroup helped to plant sunflower seeds from the RHS to celebrate 50 years of Britain in Bloom. The seed heads will be source of winter food for the local birds.

James received 100 entries in the photographic competition for the 2015 Hopton in Bloom Calendar and in a new initiative to invite under 16's, there were 12 entries. Tricia again organised the sponsorship and all but 2 sponsors were willing to sponsor again and she has 2 new ones so is back up to 23. On Friday June 6th members of the team met in Croft House to choose the photos for the calendar and the winner of the Under 16's was Holly White and she was presented with her vouchers at the Art Festival in September.

Alison was so pleased that Upper Hopton had another fabulous day for the Garden Trail on July 11th. The weather was beautiful again; we don't know how we do it year after year. We had a good turnout, almost as many as last year. Over 470 people visited us and again they came from all over, the first through the door for coffee and a cake being from Barnsley. As usual the gardens looked brilliant and reflected all the hard work everyone had put into them. The comments we received at Croft House from visitors were very complimentary. They loved the private gardens, thought the village was wonderful and many were envious of our community spirit. We were all very proud.

On the day of the garden trail, St John's Church held the first limited showing of the WW1 exhibition together with the children's poppy paintings from the Team Parish children's workshop. The Club had a motor bike exhibition as well as showing off their fabulous mural which has been created on the outside wall by local artists depicting local scenes.

Hopton in Bloom would like to thank D Aveyard Opticians, Lower Hopton News, The Club and the Travellers Rest for selling programs for us; Maughans Bakery for their continued support and the many people who baked for us and all our helpers. Our biggest thanks are for the gardeners without their support we couldn't have a Garden Trail. Thank you.

In total we raised £3100, our best Garden Trail yet. All the money raised will be spent in the village.

Alison is open to new ideas and would love to see a horse and cart providing lifts around the village.

Next year's Garden Trail will be held on Saturday 11th July 2015

Chris reported on the judging day for **Britain in Bloom August 4th 2014** that thanks to a combined effort from the whole community, we certainly showed the judges, Sue Wood and Kim Parish, the village at its best on a beautifully sunny day. We not only wanted to make the village look nice with lots of flowers and demonstrate that it is a great place to live but also a haven for wildlife, flora and fauna. And importantly, residents' front gardens which also contribute to the marks gained.

The HiB team are not all gardeners; we benefit from people who bring a variety of skills, horticulturalists, engineers, wall builders, cake bakers, web master, photographers, naturalists, calendar compilers and others who want to get involved and learn as much as they can about gardening and the local environment.

This year as well as our usual displays, we completed some special projects, which the judges really enjoyed seeing and they took lots of photographs:-

- the three new circular beds at Croft House, representing 2 wheels and a poppy,
- the fantastic mural at the Club, depicting life and events in the village thanks to Gail, Richard Hill and Alice, and the new quirky flower beds around the car park.
- the new village marker, with grateful thanks to Richard Haigh for the tenter post and oak beams and to James Lumb for designing the sign, and to John McMullan for permission to put it on his land.
- the wonderful World War I, exhibition in Croft House, thanks to genealogist Rudie Thramer for all her assistance and research into the family histories, and Ben Plimley who helped to compile the information as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. We also planted out red geraniums on nine graves where the soldiers are commemorated in the churchyard at St John's Church, which pay tribute to some of the men from Upper Hopton killed in the Great War.
- the brilliantly installed yellow bicycle flying through the telephone box which we tried to keep as a surprise for the judges but they caught sight of it on their way to Croft House from the station.

We are also grateful to Alex and Chris at the Traveller's Rest who invited Kim and Sue to see their floral displays even though they have only been in residence five months.

Of special interest was our composting area and the judges remarked that they have never seen such posh and well organised compost bins.

Their parting words as we said goodbye at the station were "You cannot buy such wonderful enthusiasm" so well done everyone and a huge thank you.

The team was invited by Yorkshire in Bloom to take the calendars and the power point presentation which was prepared for the judges, to the Awards Ceremony on York. We enjoyed the day but were somewhat underprepared and if invited again will need more ideas for the display stand.

John has now removed the flying bicycle from the phone box and is busy stripping it down and renovating it completely. Another ongoing project is the proposed enhancement of the entrance to the Recreation Ground with wooden gates to compliment the churchyard gates. Two surplus stone gate posts from the wall behind Croft House have been installed at the entrance of the Recreation Ground. Hopton in Bloom have agreed to pay for the gates and plans are in hand to lay sets under the gateway. John is also renovating a hand pump and barrel donated by Richard Haigh and ideas as to where it might be sited are welcome.

In our search for a Community Orchard an area adjacent to the North East perimeter of the cricket field has been identified and will be ideal. The Cricket Club was approached and Tracey reported that the cricket club committee supports the community orchard wholeheartedly and there were no objections at all. It is hoped to involve children in this project. Advice is to be sought on soil sampling and on the selection of the best species fruit trees/root-stock for the environment.

Roger and I were privileged to represent the team at the RHS Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony in Bristol and were delighted with our Silver Gilt award. It was fantastic to see Hopton Drive displayed on the big screen amongst such giants in the horticultural world as Shrewsbury and Harrogate.

Thanks are due to so many people in the village, most already mentioned and including Brian Thornhill who arranges extensions to our insurance policy for special events and Simon Dedman who supplies us with thousands of tulip bulbs each year. Also to Knowl Park Nurseries and Horticulture who supply us with wonderful healthy plants at discount prices.

For the year 2014-2015 we have already developed some plans and have some more in the melting pot but would welcome everyone's ideas of how we can make the village a better place to live for all age groups of our community.

Also we need to address the judges' comments for improvement

Areas for development

- The judges felt it was very appropriate to plant the red geraniums on the war graves. If funding allows perhaps these could be replaced with a red shrub rose in the autumn. The begonias along the path edge add a 'wow' as you enter and are well tended but some permanent planting to mark the path edge could be used to be more in keeping with the rest of the churchyard. Alternatively there are other permanent planted areas where it would be useful to do some further work.
- The judges saw some exceptional horticulture throughout the route but also saw some that was not as strong. Consider showing the judges the best while ensuring the judging criteria is covered.
- The rose bed outside Croft House could perhaps do with some replanting in places to create the 'wow' that the other planting in the area created.
- The judges appreciated the new tree planting but the species choice and planting distances will mean the trees will grow into one another. For subsequent planting consider either using species that will not grow as large or spacing the trees further apart.
- The recreation ground is a great resource and it is good to see the community enhancing the planting but the planting at the upper end seemed a little ad-hoc. Perhaps this shrubbery could be made a project for winter/spring of 2014/15. Identify the shrubs that are to be retained, consider moving some into a more suitable position and plan the plants needed to infill the gaps and provide ground cover.
- The village was clean and tidy and a credit to everyone involved. The judges particularly liked the phone box and bus stop, and suggest an audit of the street furniture and programme of maintenance put in place.
- The judges liked the heritage trail with the map and photographs at Croft House. It would be lovely to see this developed further into a trail around the village for residents and visitors. It could possibly include some of the important information that was discovered as part of the First World War exhibit. Would there be an opportunity to further research the headstones in the Old Chapel graveyard?
- The judges realise the First World War exhibit was to mark the anniversary but it was so thorough and important that it would be nice that it could be retained for future generations, considered if it could be made into a booklet and further exhibited locally.
- The tour was very thorough and met all the judging criteria. The wildlife bed in the park was good; consider adding an interpretation board. The judges would like to have found out more about your conservation and diversity. The community mural at Upper Hopton Hall (Club) is fantastic, fun and factual! Perhaps the idea could be taken into some of the other public areas, for example the park, and involve schoolchildren?
- It was great to meet so many members of the community of differing ages. The judges realise it is the school holidays, but it would have been helpful to have met some young people. It may be useful to record their work throughout the year and show the judges this as part of the initial presentation.
- The judges acknowledge the idea of a community orchard and appreciate it is early days but look forward to seeing this project develop.
- Would the Hopton Club consider entering the RHS Its Your Neighbourhood competition through Yorkshire in Bloom?

To sum up all in all this has been a most fantastic year of teamwork, friendship and most enjoyable coffee and cakes.

Chris Breare Honorary Secretary Nov 2014