

CM Parish Council meeting - April 2017

Cleobury Mortimer Horticultural Society

Two of the Society's objectives are of particular interest to the Parish Council and the local community:

1. to promote interest and knowledge of horticulture and gardening.

To further this objective, the Society holds an annual Cleobury in Bloom event, the format of which changes each year in order to stimulate and maintain the interest of local people in gardening and horticulture more broadly.

For the past four years, we have focused on a competition for children in local playgroups and nurseries, as well as for those in local primary schools; around 300 children, ranging from those under one to around 7 years of age are actively involved in it. We set a brief and provide the seeds, tubers, plants and growing containers depending on the brief that has been set. Each pre-school setting or primary school also receives a bag of compost kindly donated by Farlow Farm Nursery. The competition requires them not only to grow whatever the brief specifies, but also to analyse, experiment and keep a log of their progress and the knowledge of horticulture that they are acquiring. In July, we judge the produce and the logs and an award event takes place at the Methodist Hall where prizes are awarded to winners and runners-up in the two categories of pre-school settings and primary schools.

In previous years, we have focused on growing foodstuffs such as potatoes and peas. In 2016, given that it was the Queen's 60th birthday in June, we asked the children to grow sweet peas in royal colours having sourced seeds called *Flying the Flag*. Four primary schools and seven pre-school settings entered, lovingly tending the seeds that we gave them in March. However, the late frosts, cold temperatures and driving rain caused mayhem and despite their best efforts, only four pre-school settings and three schools managed to get their seeds to germinate and grow to sturdy plants. In early July, an external judge, joined by two members of the Horticultural Society, judged the plants and the logs that the children had kept detailing their trials, tribulations and what they had learned from the experience.

On Saturday 9 July, despite torrential rain, well over fifty people turned up at the Methodist Hall in Cleobury Mortimer to find out who had won. We were very grateful to Muller England for sponsoring the prizes.

Abkats Day Nursery scooped the winner's prize in the pre-school setting category, with Ever After Day Nursery as runner-up; Grassroots Playgroup and Rising 5s was highly

commended and Kinlet Family Playgroup was commended. Kinlet Church of England Primary School won the primary school category, Cleobury Mortimer Primary School was the runner-up and Farlow Church of England Primary School was given a special prize for outstanding achievement.

As always, the judges were amazed at the activities that the children had been involved in as part of the sweet pea project - reading, drawing, writing and photography to mention just a few. Abkats treated us all to a rendition of a sweet pea song that they had learned, acting out the sprouting and growing of the seeds as they grew into plants.

In 2017, we are returning to growing potatoes but focusing on the growing, taste and cost of different varieties. We have a bumper entry - all six local primary schools, Moffats independent school, and six local playgroups and nurseries. We'll let you know how it goes!

2. to promote increased awareness of the local environment and to seek to improve it.

The Society's members continue to plant and maintain the flower trough outside The Talbot Hotel. We also weed and tend the borders around the seventeen lime trees that gracefully stretch the length of the town. The trees are pleached annually by a specialist company in a joint venture between Shropshire Council which, in 2016, paid half the cost, Society members and local residents who contributed around £400 and Cleobury Mortimer Parish Council, which paid the balance. We hope you agree that the trees look fantastic all year and that the top and bottom sections are now forming the solid pleached structure we set out to achieve.

In the 2017-18 financial year, Shropshire Council has had to reduce its financial support by almost £1000, but we are grateful that there will continue to be a £500 donation for this year's pleaching process. In addition, the Horticultural Society and donors hope to contribute a further £500. We are very grateful that the Parish Council has agreed to fund the remainder and that Lewis Arborcare will once again carry out the work around the beginning of November before the erection of the Christmas lights. If you would like to contribute annually, no matter how small the amount, or know others who would, then please get in touch so we can set it all up!

The Society continues to be very grateful to David Robinson, a well-known local farmer, who currently leases part of his land to us to accommodate a number of allotment plots. There are some vacant plots, so we hope local residents will come and start to grow their own - details of how to get a plot are on the noticeboards on entry to the town.

Flo Hadley: Chair - Cleobury Mortimer Horticultural Society