

## **Braunston Village Gardens Association Chairman's report 2021**

In 2021 the BVGA managed each activity separately, reviewing the level of risk in relation to Coronavirus to determine whether an event should take place. Then mitigating the risks at these events through careful planning.

The gardening team enjoyed being outdoors on Fridays keeping on top of the weeds in the Village Hall gardens, chatting to passers by at distance and having the chance to catch up with each other. We have been pleased to add to the gardens by providing new wooden planters alongside the Welton Road fence and replacing the Help Yourself Herb Garden signs. Towards the end of the year, we took the opportunity to finish with a coffee at the Wheatsheaf pub. We enjoyed many sunny Fridays sitting overlooking The Green. Now, while weeding has stopped for the winter, we will continue to meet as and when we are available on Fridays at 11am. It has been a lovely way to get to know each other and welcome new volunteers.

The Garden Store opened at the end of February, and like the previous year, developed the delivery system alongside the regular Sunday opening. We were very well supported by the village with many people placing pre orders. Customers were pleased to be able to choose from a wide stock list and to pay by BACs. However, it has been a very difficult year for the wholesalers. Irish products held up at ports and increased demand by large retailers led to delays in our wholesaler being able to process our order, especially the peat free products. However, the delivery day arrived and we were able to arrange for most customers to pick up their orders from the Village Hall car park on the day or we delivered to them. The Sunday store opening continued with pre orders and timed collections to reduce infection risk. Due to the store's success, we placed a second order and the season ended with a record-breaking turnover.

It was lovely to run the plant sale in May, having cancelled last year's. We made full use of the Village Hall car park, spreading out the tables to create plenty of space for the customers. Once again we linked with Braunston Bakes and Jetty Field Association. This year we decided to not stock sale or return plants from Barby, instead all those on sale had been donated. For many people it was the first village event they had enjoyed for a while and although the weather was not warm it was lovely to meet up with so many familiar faces once again. Interestingly, we took more money than our previous sale in 2019.

By the time spring arrived we were feeling more confident that Open Gardens July 2021 would be able to take place. After discussions about the format we decided not to run the refreshments in the Village Hall, but instead promote the local businesses that serve or provide food. Similarly, it was decided that there would be no central plant sale and instead individual gardens would host plant and other stalls if they wanted to. The Welcome Desk and 18 private gardens were busy throughout the day. We were pleased to welcome four new gardens to this event and that the Braunston School, Cub Scouts and Jetty Fields joined in too. At the end of a busy day we were able to donate a record breaking amount to the Daventry branch of Macmillan Cancer Support. Bragborough Hall decided not to open this

year, but instead, under the BVGA, to open in 2022. It was felt that this would avoid diverting visitors away from the village gardens, while at the same time, still raise money for Macmillan. In July there was still restrictions on numbers meeting. We were able to run the follow up tours of the gardens for all the contributors and helpers but, sadly, we were unable to host the usual social events to say thank you.

The Gardens Competition took place this year with Braunston gardeners being praised by the judge for their colourful displays. Shortly after the judging we were contacted by a BBC researcher looking for gardens that could be filmed for a short piece about managing lawns for wildlife. Although Braunston was not mentioned in the programme the winning garden in our competition was included alongside others.

We continue to think about how we can plan sustainably for our events. BVGA members contribute to the Braunston Carbon Action Network. We have linked with Braunston Cub Scouts, both by recognising their gardening achievements with some awards and by helping at their meeting when they were working towards their gardening badge. A key role for the BVGA is to raise awareness of environmentally appropriate gardening within the community. We will continue to plan how we can do more in the coming year.

We were disappointed that we were unable to run the Braunston Show. At an outdoor committee meeting we discussed all the options. Although at the time the Coronavirus situation was improving, we felt that our show is about the fun of the interactions between people and it would be too much of a risk to run the show in 2021.

We have a full programme planned for 2022 and so are delighted to welcome new members to the committee, with new ideas and approaches. So, a huge thank you to all the committee and supporters for all you do. It is appreciated.

Kate Mawer   Chairman's Report December 2021