

BVGA Chairperson's report 2016

I would like to thank all the members of the BVGA committee for their contributions of ideas at planning meetings and their time at our many events during 2016. In particular I would like to thank the officers for all their hard work between meetings ensuring that we have agendas, accounts and accurate reports of our events. We always like to welcome new members, and this year we say hello to Veronica. We have a continuing interest and involvement from our BVGA Supporters who join us at talks, garden visits, the garden store, community gardening, the show and plant sales. We are spreading the load of running events by building on the success of The Show subcommittee. This year we have a Garden Store subcommittee and will be putting together an Open Gardens subcommittee for 2017.

At the start of the year we returned to Dunchurch, although this time visiting the Dun Cow, for our annual meal. Numbers were lower than in previous years due to the active nature of our committee and their diary clashes. But we all enjoyed the food, the company and a time to talk about things other than gardening. To leave or remain in the EU was one of the topics of conversation. A great deal happens in a year.

Marie Le Nepveu from Rimo Growers, Thurlston was a very popular speaker, attracting people who know her through the garden centre as well as Myton Hospice charity where she donated her fee. 46 people attended this talk in the spring to find out more about "Gardening for summer colour". It is interesting to note that in the autumn when we invited Dr Hazel Roberts with a theme linked to growing your own food, as requested by some villagers, "How to grow food not gluts" we had a lower number in the audience, 29. We are taking this into consideration when planning the speaker programme for 2017.

Colour continued as a theme when one of our supporters donated bearded irises, dug from her garden, for fundraising, shortly followed by autumn fruiting raspberry canes. We saturated the market and sold buckets of both at every opportunity during the early months of the year. Next year we hope that the Braunston spring will be dominated by purple as we have partnered with Danetre Rotary Club and the national campaign Purple 4 Polio. The BVGA planted purple crocus in the newly developed beds around the Village Hall car park to join the other planting that Chris has been doing for the Village Hall during the year. We have also planted a few on The Triangle. However, the main ambition of this project was to engage with other Braunston organisations. Jetty Fields Association, Women's Institute, Beavers, Cubs, Playing Field Association, Worship on Wednesday and the Parish Council have all been busy planting the 5000 purple crocus bulbs around the village for flowering in 2017.

One of the highlights of the year for me was the evening visit to Canons Ashby gardens. Bob Illingworth and Chris Smith led a fascinating tour on a beautiful May evening. 21 members enjoyed the colourful borders, spectacular trees, scenic views and learning about the redesigning of the garden in recent years. Ensuring that we did not clash with the church fete we decided to organise our long distance garden visit in the autumn and then managed to clash with the Air Ambulance day! We will try to do better next year, but it is difficult in such a busy and active village. So in September, travelling by coach, we went to Birmingham Botanical Gardens. It was lovely to see 29 people visiting these gardens and enjoying the glass houses with their fascinating displays of hot house plants, cyclamen and alpines as well as butterflies. There was a great variety of borders ranging from dahlias to tree ferns to roses and rock gardens. Although not very warm a few hardy souls, Margaret and Linda, had a picnic, while others of us enjoyed the tea rooms. I spent some time in the garden thinking about our friend, Thelma, as it was this time last year that Birmingham Botanical Gardens had been suggested by her as a possible destination for a visit in 2016.

During the year we have worked hard to maintain our community gardens. The herb garden has been planted up so that the herbs will be established for the planned launch of the Help Yourself Herb Garden in 2017. The Jubilee Garden continues to thrive and be admired. Planting on the south side is working well, but we are still aiming to encourage more plants on the north side to clump up under the canopy of the oak tree. Through the year members like Debbie, Barbara, Chris and Margaret have been visiting the garden when they can to keep on top of the weeds, especially if they have been unable to get to the work days at the weekends. It seemed more appropriate that the Pre-school took over the flower bed against the wall and within their playground area so this happened in the second half of the year. We have started to fund raise to add a seat to the Jubilee Garden that Richard and Jim will be happy to install. We have received a donation from the Community Café and hope to be able to combine this with one from Waitrose Community Matters in the New Year.

In the autumn the BVGA committee decided that maintaining The Triangle to standards acceptable to all residents was no longer possible by our small group of volunteers. We have sent a memo to the Parish

Council explaining that from 1/1/2017 we feel unable to maintain the Triangle on behalf of the village as well as outlining the works completed over the last two years in terms of replanting The Triangle i.e. digging out old shrubs on the north and east side and replanting and increasing the frequency of weeding and pruning.

I am delighted to say that the BVGA committee is never complacent. This year we turned our attention to the Gardens Competition and looked more closely about how we could promote this amongst businesses and local residents. We then got swamped with the detail and came out deciding that we needed to tweak the information for Richard and Jean who were showing the judges around this year. We may do more to promote the competition with businesses in the future, so any volunteers for this role let me know!

Our two main fund raising initiatives were the plant sale and the Garden Store. At the plant sale we reintroduced the sale or return of bedding plants from Barby Nursery. With both bedding plants and our home grown perennials and annuals selling out before the end of the morning we have decided to reinstate the May plant sale as an annual event. We could not have run the event without the BVGA Supporters, some of whom came very early in the morning. Barbara, Margaret and Janet created amazing aromas around the hall with the bacon butties. However, it appears that Braunston residents are well fed at this time in the morning and so we may decide not to do refreshments in future at this event. The Garden Store is now run by a sub-committee. I would like to thank the two Alans and Geoff for their organisation through the year. Pre ordering was introduced, although limited in its uptake it is something they plan to continue with into 2017. 50 buyers visited the store in the season and although sales were slightly down it still provides a valuable income for the BVGA funds. Towards the end of the year we were invited to run the raffle on the Wednesday evening of the Braunston Players, which added a few more pounds to our income. We need to plan for this in next year's calendar of events.

We had joint show secretaries this year to enable Helen to shadow the role. Once again The Show sub-committee took on the organisation of the event with many hours behind the scenes discussing class titles, collecting prizes etc. Thanks to Jim and Di for overseeing the tombola again this year. We maintained a good number of entrants, 81. A significant increase in the handicraft section was due to Helen's contacts with the art club and some beautiful sunflower entries appeared as a result of a new class for children. However, the overall number of entries fell slightly to 411. While it has not been a particularly difficult season in terms of weather there have been a number of personal reasons for some of our exhibitors that led to a lower number of entries. On the day of the show a heavy rain storm at 2pm delayed and reduced the number of the afternoon visitors. As a result we delayed the clear down and prize giving by 15 minutes. This is the first time we have had to do this, but it ensured that all the paying public had the chance to see the exhibits. It was great to see one of the youngest members of the Parish Council saying how much she had enjoyed entering the Braunston Show this year when she was writing in the BVN.

In the last 12 months we have continued to promote the BVGA with a monthly events page in the BVN. Chris G promotes us via the Daventry Express, Chris S via the Braunston website and Helen via the Braunston Bugle. Having asked gardeners for some feedback about climate change I will finish by telling you that the Braunston Village Gardens Association is named in the Community Pack Toolkit publication for the National Climate Change Campaign; For the love of! I now know how it feels to be quoted out of context!

So looking ahead to 2016 in addition to the established activities on our calendar we are planning to have fewer meetings and more meeting opportunities at events as we continue to encourage even more people "to develop an interest in gardening" alongside the BVGA.

Kate Mawer
Chairperson
December 2016