

BVGA Chairperson's report 2017

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 2017. 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 Suzanne and, shortly, Julia. 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 continue to spread the load of running events through the use of subcommittees and this year added an Open Gardens subcommittee.

2017 has been a year of transition for the BVGA. Jean and Richard decided it was time to step down as the Open Garden organisers. Knowing that they would be a hard act to follow we decided that a team of organisers would be needed. On a glorious July day we welcomed large numbers of visitors to Braunston to enjoy 15 gardens; 5 of which were new to opening, and as a result we were able to donate £2000 to Macmillan Cancer Support and a little over £200 from the plant sale to Friends of All Saints church.

The Community gardening programme has also gone through a significant period of transition in 2017. Following concerns raised by the Parish Council regarding visibility for traffic and our reducing number of volunteers who are able to carry out the required pruning and weeding we returned the responsibility for maintenance of the central shrub bed of the Village Green to the Parish Council. The shrubs have been removed and the area grassed over. This reduction in responsibility has been very positive for the BVGA community gardeners and we now feel that our weeding and pruning is more manageable in the Jubilee Garden. In the last few weeks we have agreed to maintain the newly created Village Hall planters to brighten up the car park. One of the planters has been jointly funded by the Community Café and the BVGA. While our new seat in the Jubilee Garden was funded through the Waitrose Community Funding scheme.

The 2017 Show benefitted from new ideas as we saw the full transition of the Show Secretary role to Helen. An idea developed with Braunston Bakes prior to the 2016 Show resulted in a new trophy this year in memory of Carol Davey. Each year this beautiful glass cake stand will be awarded to the person achieving the highest number of points in a selection of the Home Produce classes. As a result the number of Home Produce entries doubled from last year. It is interesting to note that we had the highest number of entries for at least 17 years with 30% more entries than 2016. Yet the number of people entering remains at around 80.

We were delighted to join in with the Braunston at its Best event held by the Village Hall. We ran our Spring Plant Sale at this event. Having enjoyed the experience of holding an event alongside other village organisations we are looking forward to a joint event next May with Braunston Bakes.

So after all these changes I am delighted to report that we continue to provide a wide programme of events for our BVGA Supporters. The Garden Store continues to be a popular place for composts, canes and chat! Our talk about herbs was well attended and our record breaking Death in the Garden talk at Halloween entertained 58 people. Our visits included an interesting evening tour of the National Herb Centre where we learnt a great deal about hedgerow plants. Then in September we enjoyed a day visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. Once again we were able to congratulate the residents and businesses of the village through the awarding of prizes for the Gardens competition. We have started to investigate the RHS Britain in Bloom competition. But as a small and busy planning team we need to ensure that the BVGA committee are not too overstretched in 2018.

As we head towards a quieter time for the BVGA we can think back to our annual meal in Dunchurch last February and be pleased with all that we have achieved in the last 10 months.

So looking ahead to 2017 we have decided to return to our monthly meeting schedule to avoid overlong agendas and reduce emails! We are increasing our community gardening mornings preferring "little and often" to keep on top of the weeds. So a big thank you to everyone this year for all your support and in encouraging even more people "to develop an interest in gardening" by getting involved with the BVGA.

Kate Mawer
Chairperson
December 2017