

Chairman's Report for 2015

Ray Keppler

1) Introduction

It's been another good year for *THACS*, with a full and varied programme of events.

2) AGM

We started with the fourteenth *THACS* AGM, which took place at Tewin Memorial Hall on Monday 12th January and was well attended. It was followed by a talk entitled *The Evolving Landscape of Panshanger Park - Past and Future?* by Kate Harwood. It was an informative presentation on a topic of considerable local interest and it was well received by the attentive audience.

3) Shows

Our two annual shows were the main events and certainly involved more members than any of our other events.

The *THACS* Spring Show on 11th April helped celebrate the arrival of Spring. There were 121 exhibitors who entered 293 exhibits, with classes for Flower Arranging, Horticulture, Arts and Crafts, Photography and Culinary. The standard was high and the judges had to work hard on their adjudications. There was a great deal of interest from the viewing public and a satisfying feeling of a packed house.

The Autumn Show on 19th September attracted a record 147 exhibitors who entered 371 exhibits. We were delighted that, thanks to the efforts of Tewins' playgroups, nursery and primary school, we received entries from 110 children. It was also encouraging to see 37 adults exhibiting, several for the first time.

4) Visits

To give our members another opportunity to visit inspirational gardens, we organised a visit to Audley End house and gardens for 7th July. Unfortunately only 23 people booked for this, so it was cancelled because of lack of support. This surprised us, since the visit to Wrest Park in July 2013 was made by 40 people and we expected a similar level of interest in Audley End. If you booked for Audley End, then I'm sorry that we disappointed you by cancelling the visit. We'd like to avoid such disappointment but we need to understand why this proposed visit failed to attract enough people. If you would have liked to have gone but did not book, then please help by letting us know what factors influenced your decision.

5) Workshops

We ran five workshops again this year, to enable members to pursue their interests in particular arts and crafts. The subjects were photography, creative writing, calligraphy and painting.

5.1) Photography

Eleven people attended the photography workshop on 2nd March, entitled *The Judge's Eye*. It was run by Bob Norris, who has had a lifetime as a professional photographer, lecturer and judge and judges at some of the *THACS* shows. Bob gave a useful explanation of the points a judge will consider, such as composition, and gave advice about printing and presentation. Some of the participants brought along pictures of their own and Bob offered constructive comments on these. He also gave us a fascinating insight into the creative processes he uses to produce some of his own landscape images.

5.2) Creative writing

Joanne Allen organised and hosted a Creative Writing Workshop on 16th March. It was attended by seven people, ably tutored by Frances Wilson. The day was inspirational and there were requests for a further day in the autumn.

In response to these requests, Joanne Allen organised and hosted a second Creative Writing Workshop on 19th October, this time with six participants. This was again a very successful day under the guidance of Frances Wilson.

5.3) Calligraphy

Anna Clark organised a calligraphy workshop which was held at Burnham Green Hall on the afternoon of 9th August with eleven attendees. It was lead by Mark L'Argent, a professional lettering artist and calligrapher, who also judges the calligraphy at the *THACS* Spring shows. We had hoped to run further classes in the autumn, but there was insufficient interest.

5.4) Art

Joanne Allen organised an Art Workshop, which took place on 26th October. It was held at Bramfield Village Hall with twelve participants, and it was ably run by a new tutor, Alison Howells.

The workshop dealt with techniques for painting glass and objects seen through glass. It also experimented with pastels. Alison gave very practical demonstrations, which made everyone feel confident in making a start, and she was attentive to each participant, helping them at each stage. Everyone was pleased with what they had done and enthusiastic to do more.

6) Sales

The workshops attract small numbers of enthusiastic practitioners but a way of fostering a wider interest in plants and local arts and crafts is to make the products available to buy in the village. Consequently, we held two sales.

6.1) *THACS* plant stall

Nick Whiting organised the *THACS* plant stall at the Tewin Village Fete on 27th June, which was a great success. The selection was good and we must thank Bulls Green Nursery for their generous donation and all the villagers who also donated plants and garden items. The proceeds of about £350 were given to the Tewin Memorial Hall.

6.2) Art & Crafts Fair

Our Arts and Crafts Sale has now become an annual event and this year it was held on 31st October. It was organised by Hilary Tipping and was very successful. The weather was very kind to us and we had a steady stream of visitors all day. The enthusiastic stall holders offered a wide variety of locally-produced goods and it was a joy to see that there is so much talent around our village.

7) Helpers

The committee works well together. Although each of us has our own specialities, we've all pursued the aims of the society, "to promote the good cultivation of gardens and allotments, to foster interest in garden design and plants and to encourage village arts and crafts."

Most of this work goes on behind the scenes, but I'd like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the contribution of Lynne Burgess. She has been the driving force in making *THACS* a society for all ages. In preparation for the spring and autumn shows, Lynne goes into our local school and other children's groups, speaking to children and staff about the art and craft they might produce. The results have been some delightful and very interesting artwork. Her inspiration certainly adds to the buzz of the shows.

Your small committee has only been able to present this full and varied programme of events because we have been able to spread the load beyond the committee members. We are thankful for the active involvement of several *THACS* members who, although they are not on the committee, have given their time and effort to support *THACS*.

Five of the eleven events were organised by committee members and six were organised by four of our other members, so my thanks go to Joanne Allen, Anna Clark, Hilary Tipping and Nick Whiting for their significant organisational help.

I'd also like to thank Pat & Alf Fulford, who have continued to handle the advertising and the *THACS* page on the village web site.

We've also benefited from the considerable support from numerous village organisations:-

- 1) The staff, helpers and children at Tewin Cowper School, Tewin Under-Fives Pre-school, Tewin Tots Pre-school and the Tewin Toddler group, have all supported our shows.
- 2) Tewin Stores have been a collection point for the show schedules.

Our thanks also go to all of the other numerous willing members and supporters of the society, who reliably help with many diverse tasks. Thank you all!