

Chairman's Report for 2018

Ray Keppler

1) Introduction

Overall, it's been a good year for *THACS*. We successfully ran ten events and made good progress on some projects, but we did not achieve everything we set out to do. Let's start by reviewing the events.

2) AGM

The first event of 2018 was the seventeenth *THACS* AGM, which took place at Tewin Memorial Hall on Monday 15th January. It was followed by a talk entitled ***A Worm's Eye View of Bringing a Garden to Life*** by Richard Fishbourne. In his own informative and entertaining way, Richard challenged us to re-consider some of our views about the role of wildlife in the garden.

3) Shows

The Spring and Autumn shows ran smoothly and showcased some of the many skills of the exhibitors. There were exhibits of Flower Arranging, Horticulture, Arts and Crafts, Photography and Culinary, all enhanced by delightful displays of childrens' art.

Whilst the Spring Show attracted an impressive 350 exhibits, the Autumn Show had less than 250 exhibits, making it the smallest since detailed records began in 2010. The exceptionally dry summer made it difficult for gardeners and no doubt contributed to the smaller number of horticultural exhibits, but the judge said that Tewin had done rather well in comparison with other local shows.

I'm not unduly concerned about the lower number of exhibits at this stage, but it did remind me of the need to constantly strive to improve the shows. I would welcome ideas for improving future shows. I would be particularly interested in any suggestions you may have about how to make the schedule more appealing to potential exhibitors and how to generate more interest and entries. If you have any suggestions this evening, then please enter them on the forms during the break.

4) Open Gardens

Alice Greenwood and Jim Hall organised the Open Gardens event for Sunday 20th May.

Ten local gardens opened to visitors and there was a very wide variety of garden sizes, designs and styles including Tewin Allotment Association, who kindly opened the allotments.

The weather on the day was warm and sunny and the number of visitors to our village was high. More than £700 was raised from paying guests for tickets and nearly as much again was donated for the charities that were being supported.

5) THACS plant stall

Nick Whiting organised the *THACS* plant stall at the Tewin Village Fete on 30th June. It had an impressive display of plants and flowers, thanks to Bull's Green Nursery for their generous donation and all the villagers who also donated plants and garden items. The proceeds of about £390 went to the Tewin Memorial Hall.

6) Visit to Wisley

I organised a coach trip on 25th July to RHS Garden Wisley in Surrey which attracted 32 people. It all went well and was a great day out.

Photographs taken during that visit were made into an album on Flickr with links from the Tewin Village website (thanks to the help of Felix Green). This proved to be a significant improvement over previous attempts to show photographs of *THACS* events, so we used the same technique for the Autumn Show.

7) Workshops

There were three workshops in 2018, all ably organised by Joanne Allen.

The Creative Writing workshops in March and October were run by Frances Wilson, who inspired the participants and enabled them to express their creativity.

The Art workshop in November was run by Jude O'Sullivan. The subject matter was *Experimental Watercolour* and examples of the work are displayed here tonight, so do please look at them during the break.

8) Arts & Crafts Fair

The last event of 2018 was the annual Arts & Craft Fair, again very well organised by Hilary Tipping and held in Tewin Memorial Hall on Saturday 1st December. There were 25 stalls selling a huge variety of crafts and produce as well as the potter's wheel. There was a good number of visitors, with many looking for original hand-made Christmas presents.

Hilary put an enormous amount of work into the Charity Cake Stall which was as popular as ever and raised £270 for the chosen charity - our local branch of the Samaritans. Many of the other stallholder's profits also go to their chosen charities.

These events were the most visible aspects of our work, but there was plenty more going on as well!

9) Donations to charity

We donated £100 to Digswell Nurseries (St John of God Hospitaller Services), using the money raised from the sale of produce at the two shows. Digswell Nurseries is a horticultural centre selling a wide range of plants whilst providing a supportive working environment and training for vulnerable adults. (You can find out more at their website www.digswell.org.uk).

10) GDPR and THACS Data Protection Policy

We also had to deal with the implementation of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into force in May. This highlighted the need for a *THACS* Data Protection Policy. Our work on this policy mainly consisted of formalising our existing practices but it did also lead to a review and improvement in the way your data is safeguarded. The resulting policy was published in the September newsletter and then posted on the *THACS* webpage

11) Allotment for Tewin Cowper School

THACS has been working with the staff of Tewin Cowper School for several years, trying to find a viable and sustainable way to make gardening an integral part of the school life. I'm delighted to report that we have finally succeeded with this.

The school now has its own allotment and has been eagerly taking advantage of the space to grow plants, flowers and vegetables to enhance the children's learning. Of all of the things we achieved in 2018, this is the one that has given me most satisfaction!

John Sheridan (Chairman, Tewin Allotment Association) was instrumental in getting the project started and arranged for the ground to be cleared. Lynne Burgess and I cleared the overgrowth from behind the patch. Teacher Joanna Tebbutt and her class planted a variety of fruit and vegetables, mostly donated by *THACS* and members of the Allotment Association. Help and expertise was on hand from John Sheridan and Ray Cattermole on most Thursdays when the children make their visits to the allotment.

THACS has donated a storage container and a set of new, child-sized tools to allow a lot of children to be gardening at the same time. The Year 4 pupils and their teacher began learning and enjoying how to tend the earth and grow flowers, plants and vegetables. *THACS* committee members Lynne Burgess and Alice Greenwood were also on hand to walk the children to and from the allotment, and share their enthusiasm for the new project.

It's a joy to see not only the plants growing but also the way in which a new dimension has been brought to the children's learning, which they are loving. We have some budding gardeners!

12) Newsletter Editor

From the highlight of the school allotment, we turn to the disappointment of our failure to find anyone to take on the role of Newsletter Editor.

Production of the *THACS* newsletters has ceased, resulting in loss of advertising revenue and the risk of poorer communications with members. However, our finances are sound and in good hands, so we feel confident that we can cope with the loss of advertising revenue. As far as poorer communications are concerned, we are striving to minimise the impact on members by developing a revised approach to publicity and communications.

13) Helpers

The committee works well together and I am very grateful for their ongoing dedication and support. They have done a great job.

We are also thankful for the staunch support of those people who have freely given their time and effort to the benefit of us all.

In particular: -

- 1) Joanne Allen for organising the two Creative Writing workshops and the Art workshop,
- 2) Hilary Tipping for organising the Art & Craft Fair.
- 3) Nick Whiting for organising the plant stall at the village fete.
- 4) Pat & Alf Fulford, who have dealt with the advertising and the maintenance of the *THACS* page on the village web site.
- 5) Linda Crawford and her team for organising the catering at the two shows
- 6) John Sheridan and Ray Cattermole for their invaluable help and guidance with the school allotment
- 7) The show judges, who generously put their experience and expertise to such good use at our shows.
- 8) Those generous people who opened their gardens to the public.

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

- 1) The staff, helpers and children at Tewin Cowper School, Tewin Under-Fives Pre-school and the Tewin Parent and Toddler group, have all supported our shows.
- 2) Bull's Green nursery for donating plants for the plant stall
- 3) Tewin Stores for selling Open Garden tickets and being a collection point for the show schedules.
- 4) The Rose & Crown for selling Open Garden tickets

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