

Chairman's Report for 2020

Ray Keppler

1) Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic changed everyone's life during 2020. The committee had a full programme of live events planned for the year but we had to cancel them all because of the pandemic. In order to continue to function under these circumstances, we had to change our ways of working, abandon habitual behaviour, think differently and be willing to try new things and develop new skills. It's been an interesting experience!

The result has been a move away from a full programme of traditional live events to a smaller programme of innovative virtual activities, with a much higher reliance on technology.

2) AGM

The *THACS* AGM was to have been held on Monday 23rd March, but that event was cancelled. All members received a notification of how the committee dealt with the implications of the cancellation.

3) Virtual Open Gardens

The Open Gardens event was planned for Sunday 17th May, but had to be cancelled.

Following this cancellation, we worked with the Open Gardeners to bring you an alternative way of seeing their gardens. They supported the initiative and even the driest April since records began did not deter them from producing an excellent display of photographs for our first *THACS* Virtual Open Gardens display on the *THACS* webpages of the Tewin village website.

Eleven private Tewin gardens took part, together with Tewin Allotments. We thank all of those gardeners for their willingness to open their gardens to the public this way and for providing the delightful pictures.

One of the gardens was owned by Maureen Yates who sadly died last May. Maureen was a keen gardener and an enthusiastic plantswoman. She had been a member of *THACS* since its formation and had actively supported our Open Garden events. She supported this Virtual Open Gardens initiative before she died and we dedicated the Virtual Open Gardens display to her memory.

Maureen's interest in plants extended to her time working voluntarily at Tewin Stores, where she focussed on supporting the sales of plants. Through these activities, she supported and encouraged the development of horticulture in Tewin. In recognition of this, we made a donation of £50 to Tewin Stores in her memory.

4) Christmas Card Competition

In the autumn, we ran a Christmas card competition, open to adults and children. Participants were invited to paint or draw a picture for the front of a Christmas card on A5 paper or card and then submit it by 5th November.

The competition was very well supported by Tewin Cowper School, Tewin Under Fives and some of our village residents. The standard of entries was excellent, in both adult

and children's categories, causing great difficulty for the team of judges who studied around two hundred very well produced cards.

The judges were so impressed with the quality of the children's entries that they decided to award a first, second and third to each school year. The designs and colours were excellent and it was clear to see how much time and effort had been put into each picture. Well done to all the children who took part!

The overall children's winner was an 11-year-old girl from Tewin Cowper School. Her winning picture was used in a printed Christmas card and she was presented with a batch of the cards to use as she wished. The adult entries - whilst fewer in number - were excellent. The winner received prize money of £20 and the second-place entry received £10. Pictures of all the prize-winning entries were posted on the *THACS* web page.

5) Tewin Writers Online

We had a Creative Writing Workshop planned for 16th March but it had to be cancelled at short notice. A few days after the cancellation, Gerry Murphy asked those who would have attended whether they would like to write a piece of poetry or prose. He suggested a few titles. The response was quick and the results formed the first pieces of writing that would become Tewin Writers Online. The response also gave Gerry the idea of publishing a piece of writing weekly on the Tewin website. This was well received and inspired Gerry to produce the booklet *Lockdown Times and Tales* which is a collection of the writings published on the website. Since then, Gerry and the writers have added an audio version of the writings on the website for those who might wish to hear it spoken. It was hoped that this would be a boon for villagers who might find the spoken word companionable in these times or who might not be able to read it.

Tewin Writers Online was one of the most successful ventures of 2020. During the year, the number of writers has grown and they continue to be active.

We thank all of the creative writers who contributed. Our special thanks go to Gerry who created and developed this project, encouraged the writers, created numerous works himself and effectively curated the collection.

6) Creative writing competition

In September, we ran a creative writing competition, in which participants were invited to write short pieces (no more than 500 words) relevant to the context of *Lockdown Times and Tales* and submit them by email by 22nd September.

The competition was open to anyone aged 16 and over and it was free to enter.

There were five entries, all of which were enjoyable and thoughtfully written. The judging panel selected the top three winners who were awarded prizes of £20, £10 and £5. These three winning entries were then published on the *THACS* web page.

7) Publication of *Lockdown Times and Tales* booklet

THACS and Tewin Writers Online produced and published a fine little booklet entitled *Lockdown Times and Tales*, consisting of 25 stories and poems that have appeared on the Tewin village website this year (22 from the Spring & Summer writing collection plus the three winners of the creative writing competition). The writings cover an interesting and wide range of topics.

The booklets were offered for sale for £2 each, in aid of the NHS and local charities. Several local outlets kindly agreed to sell them, including Tewin Stores, Rose & Crown, Tewin Bury Farm Shop, Datchworth Stores, Bumpkins at Tewin Hill Farm and the tailors at Welwyn North Station.

The booklet has been sent around the world and the response has been enthusiastic and inspiring. One person to whom it was sent in Devon was so taken with it that she has decided to see whether she can develop the idea in her own area.

8) Helpers

The committee members all worked well together and I am very grateful for their ongoing dedication and support, especially under such challenging circumstances.

I am grateful for the support we have received from: -

- The staff, helpers and children at Tewin Cowper School and Tewin Under-Fives Pre-school, who supported our Christmas card competition.
- All of the local retail outlets for selling the *Lockdown Times and Tales* booklet.

I would also like to thank a few other people who have freely given their time and effort to the benefit of us all: -

- Gerry Murphy for the creation of Tewin Writers Online and for managing it so successfully
- Gerry and Jackie Murphy for producing, editing and publishing the *Lockdown Times and Tales* booklet
- Felix Green for her vital help, advice and technical support on all website issues, including the creation of the platform for Tewin Writers Online.

Last (but certainly not least!) I thank you, our members, for remaining loyal during these difficult times.