



GODMANCHESTER IN BLOOM 2020



Whilst 2019 was fairly quiet, 2020 was intended to be a very busy year! We planned to have the biannual Open Gardens, and the Scarecrow and annual Front Garden Competitions, until the Coronavirus hit us (more on that below). Meanwhile, we have continued with our programme of tree and bulb planting, and caring for the planters around the Town, We are also supporting the expansion of gardening activities at the schools and nurseries. After a hiatus, the War Memorial roster was reinstated, and will continue to provide fresh flowers every week until Armistice Day.

We continue to maintain and enhance the Critical Care Centre Garden at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, improved using the grant from *TESCO Bags of Help*. The **Greener Streets, Better Lives in Godmanchester** initiative continues to add to the quality of life around the Town, particularly in areas with little or no front garden. The pots outside the West Street cottages, part of the **Greener Streets** programme, have been filled with perennial and summer plants and continue to prosper. Trees continue to be donated and planted around the Town, the latest being three Chanticleer Pear at the Comrades Club commemorating people from the Town. There have been litter picks and weedings around the Town, with an increasing concentration on collecting and recycling plastic.



Some years ago Godmanchester in Bloom volunteers and a dozen or so young ladies from the College of Animal Welfare planted a hedgerow on the upper stretch of Silver Street. It continues to flourish, but it will be some years yet before we see the full value of the project. The bench, provided courtesy of a grant from the Looker Energy Foundation, continues to provide a resting place for walkers in Silver Street. Similarly, the Town's second orchard, Michelle's Orchard planted on Wigmore Meadow, continues to thrive but it will again be some years before we can enjoy the fruit; the first, in Devana Park, is already providing a good supply.

The bluebells and snowdrops provided by the Town Council, and planted by school children and young members of the uniformed organisations on the recreation ground river bank in 2018 again showed their faces this year, although they did have a considerable soaking when the recreation ground was flooded! A good number of Daffodils continue to be planted at strategic locations around the Town, principally on main thoroughfares to be enjoyed both by Townspeople and those simply passing through. In addition, streets are starting to introduce group planting to enhance the overall ambiance of their area. One such is Almond Close, where the grass verges and a number of trees have been planted out. Another is the West Street Triangle, where pots are displayed, and an innovative display provided by one of the residents.



The Front Gardens competition was to be run from late June to Gala Day, when the results were to be announced. However, the pandemic resulted in Gala Weekend being cancelled, and the competition run independently with results announced in late July (after The Bridge went to press). The 2019 displays again showed the quality of gardens across the Town, with the winner an outstanding choice. The hanging baskets, containers and pots were of a similar excellent quality, as were the commercial premises. 2020 is expected to show a similar quality, notwithstanding the lockdown, and the extremely variable weather. The Country Park is progressing slowly. It will be some years before public access is possible, but preparations continue, with the addition of thousands of tons of top soil being added to the area. Sand Martin boxes close to one of the lakes are now in place - we just hope that next year they are detected and occupied. Sand Martins were present when the gravel pits were originally in use. Now we just wait for them to arrive from Africa !

We continue to work with the schools and nurseries in the Town, planting bulbs and filling pots, and getting both children and parents involved. The planters in front of the Community Academy are the latest project, with a new organisation, Young Bloomers (mums!), responsible for planting and caring for them. Youngsters from both schools and nurseries are so enthusiastic, helping with the In Bloom planters, and to plant trees at Judith's Field. St Anne's has an established front flower garden, which is cared for by both parents and children. The head has begun a new school garden for flowers, fruit, vegetables and herbs at the back of the school, which the children will tend. A large area of raised beds is in situ, and the Community Champion at Dobbies Garden Centre was approached, and has been happy to help with funding for plants, compost etc. Planters outside the Bridge Academy continue to flourish, and we are making good progress with Ducklings nursery. The Star Gardener each week will receive a certificate, with a "press release" for the nursery to inform parents and hopefully get volunteers. A crowdfunding page has been opened at https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ducklingsnursery?utm_term=DG8yWWNWq. Top soil and sand have been donated by Mick George, along with the offer of free labour from local builders.



New projects have been started, whilst others continue, including the Garden Club, which usually meets on the second Monday of each month in the Church Hall in Chadley Lane. September 2019 saw the latest annual Town Show in St. Mary's Church, with hundreds of entries. The quality of entries was as high as ever, especially the Children's Section.

Sadly the Pandemic has had a serious affect on activities, with so many of the areas noted above being changed significantly, delayed or even cancelled. The Garden Club has been suspended until further notice, probably early in 2021. Open Gardens was to have taken place over the weekend of 20th and 21st June, but the event was cancelled. However, after “a lightbulb moment”, and sterling efforts by gardeners and John Smith, a virtual Open Gardens was organised. Images and videos were uploaded to the Godmanchester in Bloom website Godmanchesterinbloom.co.uk, and continue to be available for all to view. The theme for the Scarecrow Competition was to have been The Olympics. However, following the Covid-19 outbreak, and the valiant efforts of so many people, the theme was changed to Key Workers, and it was a great success with so many innovative models. This year the Town Show was planned for Saturday 12th September, again in the Church, but sadly it too has now been cancelled for this year. Previous years’ images can be found at: www.godmanchestertownshow.uk.

There are always things to do around the Town, and we welcome anyone who wants to help. Each year we plant several thousand bulbs, and there are always plants and trees to be planted and watered.

There has also been a change in leadership for Godmanchester in Bloom. After more than a dozen years John Thackray has decided to stand down. We would all like to thank him for his sterling efforts over the years to make In Bloom the success it has been, and wish him and Bizz well for the future. Until the AGM, which we hope to hold early next year, the interim Chairman will be Mary Stokes (mtestokes@gmail.com).

And check out our web site Godmanchesterinbloom.co.uk.