

AGM 2008, Chairman's Report

We make a special effort to obtain any publicity we can for Upton in Bloom and the Town so I hope there will be no one in the room who has not heard of our work over the last twelve months! But for the purpose of this meeting I will provide just a short review of 2007/8.

The launch of the Friends at last year's AGM has been successful and a real benefit. We have been able to share the work over the last 12 months. We were given the theme of Local Roots for HoE and BiB, we interpreted this as river trade of Upton. The Trow on the Churchyard bed and the variety of boats on the river for our judging day were the visible signs of it. We have been told it is the same for next year so any suggestions will be welcome!

In an effort to save money on plants we tried but failed to over winter a lot of our plants. Nevertheless we are going to try again this year.

We held a variety of fund raisers over the year, a Pudding Evening at the Museum in November, a Christmas raffle, a remembrance 'Tree of Light', an Easter raffle, a Meadowsweet concert, The Duck race at the Folk Festival and a Race night. No one and no month was missed out!

We started a plastic free campaign earlier this year and regularly reminded the people and traders of Upton of the objective. In particular we held a two day exhibition here in the Memorial Hall. I am pleased to report that the majority of traders have now been able to embrace it and only those with large stocks of plastic bags have not been able to change to the greener alternatives. Our investigations even included a visit by a number of the committee to Hillmoor recycling centre in Throckmorton.

UiB was given money from the Flood Relief fund to expand its flowers and Baskets, it provided the much appreciated barrier baskets, the lamp baskets, their flowers and some addition equipment for 'Florrie', our mobile bowser. It also enabled us to install a watering system for them.

Two of our committee attended the BiB Spring Seminar. They came back with a scoop, getting Mathew Wilson RHS to agree to make a visit to Upton. He will give us planting ideas for our 'difficult' beds by the riverside AND to do a fundraising talk in the evening for UiB on March 5th 2009.

We enhanced the community notice board with quarry tiles beneath and climbers behind in the new fencing. We also finished off the beds behind that with some permanent planting.

Some of the committee took part in a lantern workshop, the results of which were seen at the Water Festival and will be seen again at Christmas.

Every time we are judged, the judges' comments are given to us as guidance for improvement. One area we have not done so well in the past was with school

involvement so this year we started several projects with local schools. This has included the support of the gardening projects at Welland Primary School.

A re-usable bag making project with Hanley Castle. And most visibly, the bridge mural, also by the pupils of Hanley Castle School, with the assistance of Ann Harker.

We feel this was so worthwhile we hope to repeat the mural exercise again next year, this time on this side of the river.

The committee is conscious that most of our work has been between the river and the playing field and felt we ought to include a wider area so, this year, we have given assistance to an area at the far end of Rectory Road, nicknamed 'Driftwood Corner' and also supplied plants for the new Surgery.

All the things we have done have involved the committee, the friends and lots of the people of Upton, it has been a real community effort. It would be impossible to thank them individually. So a very big collective thanks to you all, it wouldn't have happened without you!!

However a special mention must be made to Brian at Earls Croome Garden Centre, he has been more than a supplier, he has been a 'friend', in every sense!

Peter Bellamy.
Chairman