

Report for the Town Meeting on Tuesday the 17th of May 2008

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 summary of our 2007.

We had a very testing 2007 and it started very much as it ended, with the unexpected.

In January we 'planted' a Public Notice Board made from re-cycled plastic by the pedestrian entrance to Hanley Road car park. We had previously earmarked this spot for improvement and this is still an on-going project.

The winter months are fundraising and planning months for us and we started with a new and very successful event, a Musical Soiree at the Museum. Then just a month later, in April, we had our first setback when we lost two experienced members of the committee, our Chairman and Horticulturalist, this meant we had no plants for the summer. Fortunately we were able to enlist the assistance of Earls Croome Garden Centre and they played a big part in recovering from this stumbling block and the ones still to come.

On the positive side during these months we were fortunate enough to receive several small grants from: MHDC, The Halls Charity and the disbanded Local License Victuallers' Association. With Easter came another of our fundraisers, the Easter Raffle, also very successful and this followed by a, now regular event, a Choral Concert by Meadowsweet.

We were now starting to gear up for the serious business of 'The Bloom' and in May we bought a second-hand van, fitted a 1000 litre tank in it and set it up as our mobile watering system, "Florrie"! We started making new tubs and troughs and collecting old boats to use as planters. Things were really starting to get going!

In June we put an automatic watering system in the Old Churchyard to maintain the major bed, also the basket watering system was extended and simplified just in time for the baskets to be hung that month.

In July we were on the verge of our first judging, the regional Heart of England in Bloom when the river rose and undid a lot of the good work that had been done to spruce up the riverside areas. However with a lot of support it was made good and come the judging day we had super weather and a fantastic result, Gold and Category winners in HoE.

August beckoned and with it the BiB judging. Everything was set and then Upton had its very own monsoon, and everyone knows the consequences it brought. For us it was almost complete devastation of our riverside floral features, and with no time left to re-establish them.

After a council of war with a senior regional judge we were persuaded to re-build and go for it. All hands were put almost 'literally to the pump' as we put new plants and compost in most of the damaged beds. We got extra publicity with the interest of BBC's Gardener's World who filmed before and during the judging. We even gave interviews to German, Al Jazeera and Sky TV. No-one was spared our anguish!

Come the day we again had good weather and although our timings were completely thrown by the BBC it went as well as we could have hoped, under the circumstances. The result of a Silver Gilt was tremendous and a real pat on the

back for all who were involved. The real bonus was that BiB broke their own rules and entered us again for 2008, so we had it all to do again!

Another project we chose to undertake which was minuted in early October:

UiB would like to steer Upton to be “plastic bag free”.

(Now everybody seems to be doing it!)

Two members were tasked to investigate and report back to the committee and as I hope everyone now knows we are fast approaching the deadline we set, to persuade the traders to confirm they are committed to be plastic bag free by May 1st, 2008.

The year ended much as it began, fundraising, watering, gardening, fundraising gardening, watering and the bonus of some additional funds from the Flood Relief monies.

For nearly all of 2007 the small band of the UiB committee has remained the same. It has occasionally been supplemented by our “Friends”, people who are willing to give up an hour or two when we call for ‘more hands to make light work’, and it is their efforts which have been rewarded by our success in the Regional and National competitions.

So many things were done and so many people helped they cannot all be listed.

We have had tremendous support from all the Agencies we have contacted, including the Town Council and particularly the Mayor. I publicly thanked them at our AGM but I would like to do so again tonight.

Our sights for 2008 are set even higher and we are determined to get ‘Gold’ in Britain in Bloom, and if we can, be category winner. This year we just need the right kind of weather!

Peter Bellamy.
Chairman