

Gorton Horticultural Society

Annual General Meeting – 20th March 2016

Chairman's Report

2015/16 has been another eventful and productive year for GHS. We have now completed the Trading Shed renovations, and this year's Events Programme attracted higher footfall, local dignitaries and even TV cameras!

Plant Sale - once again, majority of plants sold over the first weekend - great response to advertising (Large planters were a perfect, timely donation, which we recycled, re-filled and made ready for re-sale)

Scarecrow day - Another successful scarecrow-building day meant that once again we attracted the attention of youngsters and their families to the show in August, meaning the show entries were higher, and the show footfall was again a bit higher.

The Show – Once again, the standard of our own exhibits was second to none, our judges had a terrible time trying to pick the prize-winners from such a high-class of entries (despite the poor growing weather last year) We attracted our usual outsiders from other allotment sites, and even stole back 'Best in Show' from Levy Phil! - We had more requests for stalls on the show field than we could accommodate, and had to borrow marquees and gazebos from the park and GEC, and we even attracted Irish TV who came and covered the event. Local dignitary, Gorton MP, Father of the House, Rt Hon. Sir Gerald Kaufman said he looks forward now every year to his invitation to come and open the show, and sample our 'famous' hotdogs from the barbeque!

Halloween - New 'scary' video is being produced this year, everyone who attended said they had a great time.

Wildlife days - No Matt Holker or LRC involvement anymore, but thanks to grant funding we have invested in some equipment of our own, which will allow us to carry on running similar events, raising more awareness and generating interest in the site from the community, in turn attracting further funding.

Funded –n-part by The Rotary Club, our Bird-Box TV is currently recording the roosting and the building of nests - hopefully we will soon see eggs, and maybe then chicks!!

Meet Santa - Extremely successful event used to promote and sell the Holly wreaths and decorations. Many thanks to PCSO 'Sam' who volunteered to be our Santa for the day – We were nearly overwhelmed with the number of families and children who turned up, and some more planning and work to do over this year to improve some of the props and decorations in order to make this even bigger and better next year!

Meantime, more wood has been collected to build more bird boxes , bird feeders, and bug huts (always a big hit at the show and the carnival) - this all goes towards funding the community events, (this year help also from Wates and MCC Cash Grant) Still have some event fund left towards the next activities, and some left for event marketing.

Our involvement with FODP has opened up links further afield with many other local community groups and projects including GHT which has generated 'inward spending' of some of their grant money, with those groups coming to us to buy materials and services for their projects.

Gorton Carnival - Raising awareness and lifting our profile in the community, and with local councillors etc - helps with things like getting Alston Road/Cow Lane looked into. (and helps when it comes to Council funding applications too!)

The new Park Manager (Debra Conroy) and the council reshuffle due to budget cuts etc, has brought about several changes to the way MCC operates, specifically regarding allotments, and the future appears to have further changes on the horizon with 'Colony' information system being introduced to look after tenancies and rents etc. (more info to follow)

Future:

We are currently waiting to hear the outcome of a grant application made to the Peoples Postcode Lottery for £2,000 which will enable us to clear the rest of the 'Graveyard' site and turn this into a Wildflower Garden and Orchard, using the seeds we have from Grow Wild, and the fruit trees we got from MCC (part of the Clean City Funding). This will create a wildlife oasis in the centre of the site, and develop this previously unused, derelict and overgrown area. We are also looking into funding for: Community Learning Garden – (Abbey Hey School) – the derelict plot behind 'Alice' has been partially cleared, and we aim to turn this into a space where we can invite people to learn about growing – New fencing, growing beds, greenhouse or polytunnel, shed – we already have interest from AHS wanting to form links with us to help the children develop their skills so they can look after their own 'allotment' areas at the community centre and in the school grounds.

Solar panels – To become more green than just 'Green Fingered', we aim to install as many solar panels as we have roof space! – a project which could see us join forces with The Donkey Sanctuary, we are looking for companies who specialise in community solar installations to give us quotes so we can hunt for funding to buy solar panels to cover the Trading Shed and 'Alice' and The DS roofspace to enable us to obtain free power, and possibly a small income for both organisations.

Solar Site Lighting – We already have some solar-powered, motion sensor lights ready to install (when we find some posts that need a new home!) – these will soon be in place near all 5 lane gates making getting in and out of the lanes safer and easier if you end up there in the dark.

Meanwhile, we will continue to upcycle anything and everything that comes our way, which is of course what we as plotters always do! – Not much goes to waste here, we can usually find a use for almost anything!

All of this is being carried out on top of the administration and organisation needed to keep the site and society running smoothly and in accordance with the Council's requirements. All of this is carried out by volunteers, who work for the benefit of our plotters, members and local community, and I would like to extend our thanks to those people – some are committee members, and some are not, but without the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of that small, but productive team, none of the activities, projects or events would be possible.

I look forward to another year of successful growing, prize-winning shows, and fantastic events here at Gorton Reservoir, and feel privileged to be able to work with the team at GHS.

Chris Kennedy
Chairman