

Chairs Report May 2021

Since my last report in May 2020, the time of our last AGM, we have all faced a year of uncertainties and challenges. Our lives have been turned upside down with a global pandemic that we did not foresee and many people have lost loved ones to this dreadful Covid Virus. I am sure, that like me, we have all been grateful for the amazing work undertaken by the NHS in caring for the sick and now for administration of the vaccine and trust that we will see some level of normality returned to us over the coming months.

For Sandwich in Bloom it has been a year of frustration; however we recognise that we are but a small player in the scale of the issues that our residents and businesses, indeed the world has had to face.

Three areas of significant disappointment were;

Our inability to supply summer floral displays for the barrier baskets on the Quay along with hanging baskets at the Guildhall,

Not being in a position to enter the South East Bloom Competition

The inability to hold our Floral Competition for residents and businesses alike.

I appreciate that there is little point in dwelling on negatives and am certain that you will all appreciate the problems and restrictions incurred during the Covid crisis.

So faced with many challenges what did Sandwich in Bloom achieve?

The winter planting at the Quay went ahead and it was wonderful to see the upturned baskets brimming once again with flowers and small shrubs that have thrived though out the cold, dark and often depressing months of the year. We have received many complimentary comments from residents and visitors alike and really hope that these displays brightened your trips to the Quay.

We have managed to organise two Litter Picks in Sandwich, and are planning to join the Governments initiative for another Spring Clean on Sunday 6th June so do hope you will all be able to join us with this campaign. We are also working, in conjunction with the Town Team, on a Strategy for tackling the blight of litter.

During the Autumn we were fortunate enough to be offered thousands of crocus bulbs by Sandwich Rotary Club and Sandwich in Bloom distributed these to be planted across the Town. The Rotarians have long supported the charity that aims to eliminate polio and the crocus flower is the emblem for this charity. The success of this charity in many parts of the world is evident by the decrease in those affected by this crippling illness. It was wonderful to see these flowers popping up during the Spring adding colour and beauty to many open spaces in Sandwich.

As Christmas drew closer there were concerns of a further lockdown and family gatherings and celebrations were looking increasingly unlikely. However, wanting to create something special for the

children, we worked with Archers Low Nursery and created a Christmas Tree Trail. We attached a different colour bow to the top of each tree and added some lights. Creating a quiz that would help the children find the trees, we then encouraged them to put their own colour co-ordinated decorations on each tree. We were amazed by the support that this gained and even more astounded by the hundreds of decorations that we found on the trees which included hand crafted and ingenious designs. Clearly we have many budding young and talented artistic in Sandwich. We also made a donation to the fabulous Christmas Tree that stood proudly and glittered with light in the middle of the Guildhall Forecourt.

And so to 2021. A donation in 2019 from Finns the Estate Agent helped us to plant a Jasmine in the corner of No Name Street. This will eventually grow across the wall with creamy flowers and a wonderful scent during the summer with the leaves turning red to add colour to this area during the drab winter months. The yellow rose has been pruned and hopefully this too will now continue to thrive. Two planters at the entrance to St Peters Church path will soon be filled with small trees and colourful planting, thanks to a donation from Collection of Sandwich. Chris and Veronica Day and his volunteers at the church gardens will care for these plants with the same love and dedication that they have given to the entire area of St Peters Church Gardens and Milk Alley. We are so proud of our association with this team who have transformed these spaces into beautiful, tranquil gardens in the middle of our Town. We are also very proud to be associated with work undertaken in the grounds of St Clements where there are plans to recreate a wildflower area and to introduce a bee hive.

This year we are delighted that we can be involved in floral displays for No Name Street. Thanks to new ownership of No Name Shop the current planters are being renovated and Sandwich in Bloom, with the expertise from Archers Low Nursery, will then supply the flowers. We have long wanted to create a floral spectacular in this iconic spot and now we have the opportunity to do so.

Happily the summer floral displays will once again be blooming at the Quay this year as will the hanging baskets at the Guildhall. Thanks to the support of Sandwich Town Council and Dover District Council an automated watering system will be in place at the Guildhall so our hanging baskets should flourish all through the summer. Sandwich in Bloom is also contributing to floral displays at the Train Station. With confirmation of the Open being played this year, the station will become an attractive and welcoming place for our visitors.

A big thank you is extended to our many volunteers for their hard work and willingness to help whenever they are asked. A special note of thanks must go to Dean Macey who stepped in to help with the watering of the riverside planters during the long hot summer months. We really value your support and commitment to Sandwich in Bloom. Expanding the Bloom Offering in Sandwich is a permanent agenda item for discussion and while identifying spaces for beautiful and creative planting is easy the stumbling block is who will tend and water these areas. As volunteers we would welcome your ideas on how to tackle this problem or perhaps you would be willing to adopt a spot/planter and take ownership of it. We plan to hold a Volunteer Day as soon as we are able to safely meet up in person so please come along with your thoughts on this issue, A reminder too that we are always looking to expand our committee so please be assured that you would be most welcome to join us.

I must also say a very big thank you to our current committee who have worked so hard during the last 12 months to support our Sandwich in Bloom initiative. Bob Ward, our Treasure, Janet Haines and Beth Sellwood, who shared the secretarial role, Karen Hodgson for keeping our website and facebook page working and for her periodic notes to our volunteers , Sarah Doyle and the mad, mad team at Archers Low, and John Van der Dol, Karen Kennedy, Cllr Anne Fox and Colin Wiles. Their contribution has been invaluable.

Of course Sandwich in Bloom relies heavily on our Sponsors and while I have mentioned two specific business that made donations there are many others that continue to support our initiative. We fully appreciate that so many businesses experienced months of extreme difficulty and it was for this very reason that Sandwich in Bloom did not seek sponsorship from our loyal supporters last year. We must , though thank all of them most sincerely for their continued support and encouragement. Sandwich In Bloom would not be possible without them.

So what ideas do we have for the future of Sandwich in Bloom? Well currently we are working closely with DDC and Nikki Warden Sandwich Tree Warden and are exploring the possibility of planting Cherry Trees at entry points to the Town. We are also researching the idea of wild flowers on the grass verges and we would really like to upgrade the Rose Gardens along the Rope Walk.

I trust that Sandwich in Bloom will meet your expectations in the coming months ensuring that once again the Town is blooming with wonderful flowers.

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