



Willaston in Bloom 2018

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1.0 Introduction

Once again Willaston in Bloom is proud to be taking part in North West in Bloom, having been awarded a Gold Award for a second consecutive year in October 2017.

In January 2018 I was appointed as Chairman of Willaston in Bloom, after my predecessor Wayne Lewis stepped down at the end of 2017. I would first of all like to pay tribute to his chairmanship and dedication to Willaston in Bloom in leading the group to achieve many awards over several years, including the recent Gold Awards.

Since last autumn there has been an array of activities involving the local community engaging with greenspaces through events such as tree planting, carol singing, weed clearance and also recycling of plants too. This season there have been some new and exciting changes to the way we engage with the local community – which is highlighted within this portfolio.

I would like to thank my Committee colleagues, Councillors Wayne Salisbury and Keith Ward for their support and commitment to Willaston in Bloom. I would also like to thank our main supplier and contractor – Crewe Road Nurseries for devising the bedding schemes this year and also keeping them healthy and looking stunning during what has transpired to be a demanding summer period.

On behalf of Willaston Parish Council and our residents, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our floral village and to invite you to explore our greenspaces and its many floral displays.



Cllr Craig T Bailey MCI Hort AMLI
Chairman of Willaston in Bloom

2.0 New developments

2.1 Community tree planting

On the morning of Sunday 19th November 2017, around 20 residents turned out to help plant over 250 trees on the Lettie Spencer Playing Field. The trees, including Birch, Rowan and Hazel species, were planted in specific areas with the aim of improving wildlife habitat as well as visual interest for park users. Shrub planting also took place on the Spinney in the afternoon. The event was organised by Councillor Craig Bailey who applied for the free trees from the Woodlands Trust early last year.



2.2 New bench – The Spinney

During September and October 2017 landscape students from Reaseheath College worked on installing a paving area as a base for a new council bench for the green space users to enjoy. The College provided the paving materials, with students setting out the area, laying the paving flags to a high standard and securing the bench in position.

Afterwards, the Chairman of the Council, Cllr Maurice Jones met the students and their lecturer, to thank them for their work. The bench has since been dedicated to Peter Bebbington, a former Clerk to the Council who died in January 2018.



Josh Slater, Cllr Jones, David Craddock and lecturer Steve Williams.

2.3 Greenspace proposals

As part of a green infrastructure project, undergraduate landscape architecture students from the University Centre Reaseheath undertook a comprehensive desk and field based assessment of the village which led to proposals being produced for the weakest site which also had the most potential.

The proposals are for land adjacent to a site on Crewe Road, which is being redeveloped into a specialist care home for dementia patients. The students want to develop and improve the wetlands, wood and scrub adjacent to the new development into an inspirational area for education, recreation, health and wellbeing. Their suggestions include a pond and bridge, boardwalks, sensory planting, play area and a seating and picnic area.

With funding made available through Section 106 via recent local developments, it is hoped the proposals will be realised.



Willaston in Bloom Chairman and UCR lecturer, Cllr Craig Bailey, Chairman of the Council, Cllr Maurice Jones, Cllr Sarah Pochin and landscape architecture student Will Parks.

2.4 Annual and perennial scheme – The Spinney



Volunteers helping to weed the bed on the Spinney ahead of a new wildflower scheme being planted.



Wildflowers being grown at the National Centre for Horticulture the Environment and Sustainable Technology.



2.5 Plant re-homing scheme

In April 2018 in a move to reduce the green waste from the winter/spring bedding displays, signs were positioned on beds stating, “Free plants – please help yourself”. Over a two-week period around 65% of the previous seasons plants were taken out by residents. The scheme received some excellent feedback from residents who said that several Primulas and Pansies had found new homes in their gardens. The scheme is planned to be repeated at the end of the summer season as an effective method of engaging volunteers in Willaston in Bloom whilst also increasing environmental practices.



2.6 Friends of Willaston in Bloom

In February 2018, the Friends of Willaston in Bloom was established via social media in a move to appeal to residents online who may wish to volunteer with as much or as little commitment as suits them. Previously, volunteers have been encouraged to join the Committee, but it was seen that this sometimes 'put people off' as it was seen as too much responsibility. The Friends of Willaston in Bloom initiative has been successful with many engagements on social media, and a positive volunteering effort in clearing the previous seasons plants from beds around the village.



2.7 Love on the Rocks – Willaston



Pebbleart has been making an artistic impact in Willaston thanks to a local community facebook group, Love on the rocks!

Participants are encouraged to paint a rock and then hide it in the hope of making a stranger smile when they find it.

The pebbles are then hidden or placed in places such as next to a path, a park bench and often in flowerbeds and planters. Anyone who finds a painted pebble can leave it where it is or re-hide, then take a photo of it for the Facebook group page.

3.0 Horticultural Achievement - spring

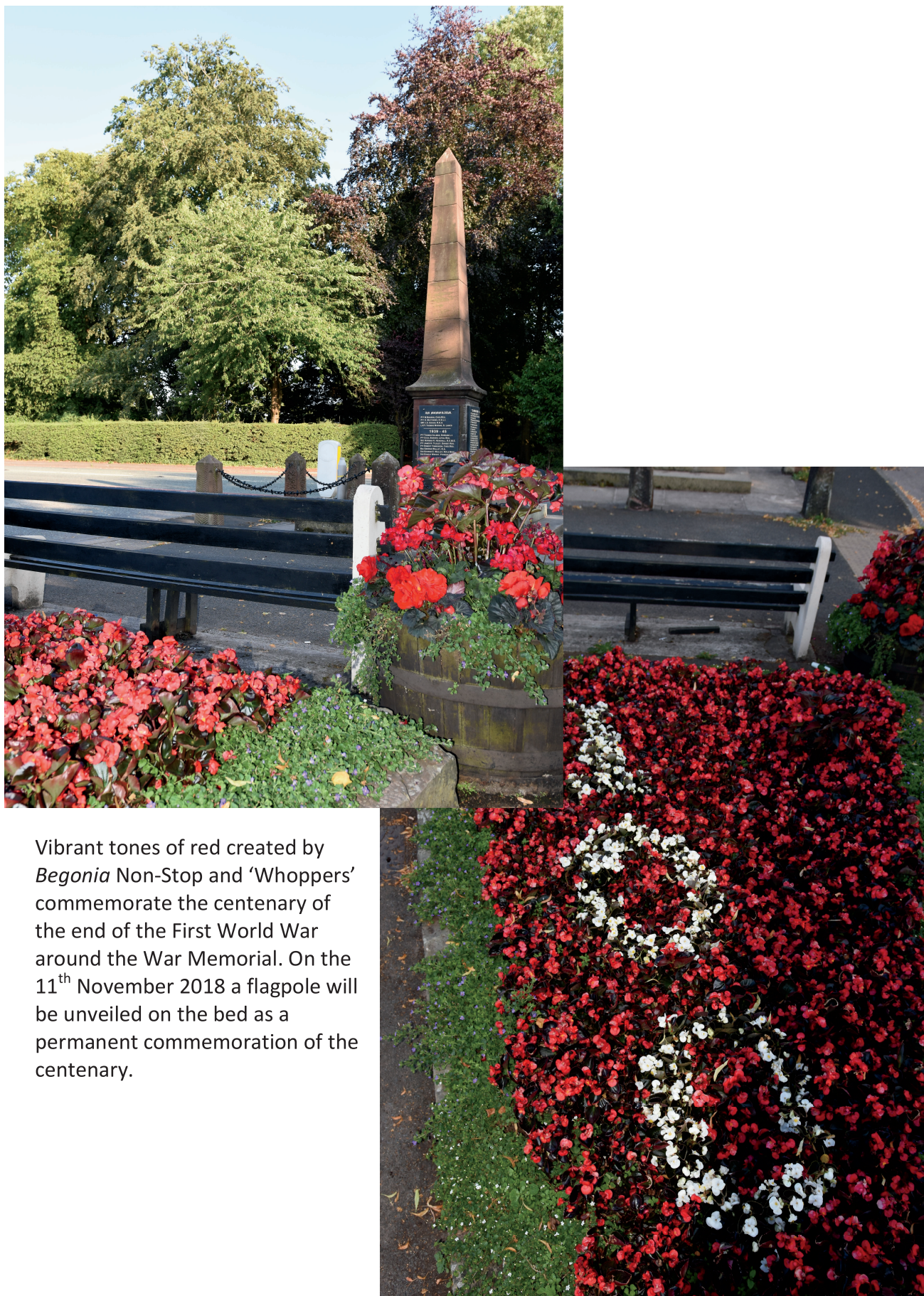


Once again, the spring displays of Narcissus, *Hyacinthoides* and *Muscari* bulbs provided vibrant up-lifting colours around the village.

3.1 Summer displays – Mike Heywood Green



3.2 Summer displays – War memorial



Vibrant tones of red created by *Begonia* Non-Stop and 'Whoppers' commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War around the War Memorial. On the 11th November 2018 a flagpole will be unveiled on the bed as a permanent commemoration of the centenary.

3.3 Summer displays – Wheel Beds



3.4 Summer displays – Coppice Road Edible Bed



This year we have decided to take a different approach with one of the large beds.

Inspired by the Incredible Edible scheme (which is growing in its popularity around the UK) we have dedicated one bed to community growing. A range of herbs, salads and fruit and vegetables have taken the place of ornamental summer bedding. It is hoped that passing residents will take from the harvest and utilise in their cooking!



3.5 Summer displays – Cedar Court



3.6 Summer displays - The level crossing



The level crossing in the centre of the village retains its strong character with traditional picket style white fencing giving unobstructed views of passing trains.



4.0 Environmental Responsibility

4.1 Biodiversity

In 2016 we introduced a wildflower scheme on The Spinney to create visual interest and provide ecological habitat. The wildflowers have been successful for two years, but towards the end of last year a number of perennial weeds started to colonize and out compete the wildflowers. This year thanks to the work of volunteers, the bed was thoroughly weeded, dug over and a contract grown scheme of annual and perennial wildflowers planted.

We have once again aimed for reduced mowing on the Spinney and around the boundary of the Playing Fields for benefit of wildlife, resulting in a strengthened local ecosystem. In November 2017 residents turned out to take part in planting several hundred saplings on the Lettie Spencer Playing Field and The Spinney. It is hoped that once established, the trees will significantly enhance habitats for a range of mammals and invertebrates.

Bat and bird boxes around the village continue to be well used in spring months.

4.2 Sustainability

All bedding plants have been sourced locally from Willaston's Crewe Road Nurseries, limiting transportation costs whilst also supporting local business. Wildflowers, herbs and vegetables were supplied locally by Reaseheath College. The plant re-homing initiative significantly minimized green waste from our winter/spring displays, and it is also planned to take place at the end of the summer season.

4.3 Green Infrastructure assessment (GI)

For a second year running undergraduate students in landscape architecture from the University Centre Reaseheath have carried out a detailed analysis of the GI assets in Willaston to determine their quality and value. The assessment was followed by outline enhancement proposals for the land off Crewe Road (on page 5), which aims to increase the socio-cultural and ecological benefits of the space.

5.0 Community Participation

5.1 Remembrance Sunday



At 1:00pm on Remembrance Sunday the community came together to honour the fallen from two world wars.

Willaston Scouts led the laying of crosses - one for each named on the war memorial, followed by wreaths laid by civic leaders and local residents.

Willaston in Bloom ensures that this important greenspace looks its best for events such as this.



5.2 Willaston in Bloom Awards Evening

In July and August 2017 experienced Willaston in Bloom team members undertook judging residents front gardens to identify Willaston's best private gardens, commercial premises and the best allotment plot.

The winners were announced at an awards ceremony held in Willaston Social Club on 6th November 2017, at which approximately 40-50 residents attended.

During the evening the North West in Bloom Gold Award was officially displayed along with the 'its Your Neighbourhood Awards' given to the Allotments and Beech Tree Close.



Winners were:

- Best Frontage – Mr Flackett
- Best Commercial – The Nags Head
- Best Allotment – Mr Brownbill



5.3 Christmas lights and Carol Service

In early December 2017 Willaston in Bloom Committee members and volunteers put up the village Christmas lights on Mike Heywood Green for the festive period. On the 14th December around 60 residents of all ages turned out in the snow to partake in some festive carol singing in the heart of Willaston.



5.4 Beech Tree Close



In 2017 residents on Beech Tree Close were surprised and delighted to receive a level 3 Advancing 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Award for their commitment to their floral displays and tree planting in their central greenspace.

5.5 Willaston Allotments

Also in 2017 the Willaston Allotments received an 'It's Your Neighbourhood' award as level 4 Thriving. Our allotment holders pride themselves on the maintenance and management of their plots, with some winning multiple awards at RHS Flower Shows and featuring on BBC broadcasts of Shows.



6.0 Our contractor

Over many years, Willaston based Crewe Road Nurseries have been supplying high quality plants to Willaston in Bloom. Established in 1986, they are a family-run nursery specialising in high-quality bedding plants, hanging baskets and tubs, serving local homes and businesses.

In 2018 we were delighted to accept them as our main contractor responsible for devising the bedding scheme, supplying plants, plant establishment and care for the summer season. This then allows volunteers to focus greater time on other activities and new projects.



