

CLITHEROE GARDEN CLUB

Chair's Report – September 2022

When we elected our new Chair (Tracey Lawton) and Treasurer (Sarah Withers) at our last AGM in February 2020 we had no idea what was in store for us. By March, when we would normally be looking forward to our first Speakers Meeting of the year and the reopening of the Sales Hut, we were in Covid lockdown and all activities were cancelled. Thanks to the valiant efforts of some of our volunteers the Hut was able to open later in the year whilst committee members began to acquire the necessary technical skills to meet on Zoom and members were kept informed via e-mail and newsletter.

Though the AGM for 2021 was postponed the Sales Hut did open in March with appropriate social distancing measures in place. Because so much activity had had to be cancelled the committee decided that fees paid in 2020 should carry over to 2021 and collected from new applicants only, though some kind souls insisted on paying their membership regardless. In May both Tracey Lawton and Sarah Withers resigned and it looked as if the club might fail for lack of committee members. Thankfully Gordon Preston and Chris McNeal stepped forward as acting Chair and Treasurer respectively while in July Katy Marshall took over from Beverley Cooper as Speakers Secretary.

Though life began to return to some sort of normality there was still a lot of uncertainty around the risks posed by social gatherings. As a result, the Speakers Meetings for the early part of the year and the Annual Show were cancelled. In August the committee met face-to-face for the first time, albeit outdoors, and with the approach of winter reverted to Zoom meetings until finally feeling safe enough to meet indoors in December. With an eye to recommencing Speakers Meetings it was felt a change of venue to allow more social distancing was desirable and after exploring various possibilities an agreement was reached with Clitheroe Rugby Club.

By the beginning of this year 2022 it really did feel that life was returning to some sort of normality and thanks to the efforts of Noel and Elaine Hodgson who had taken on the role of Social Secretary we kicked off the year with our Annual Dinner at the Calf's Head, Worston. The Sales Hut opened as usual at the beginning of March and Speakers Meetings recommenced at the new venue. Despite some initial glitches, like double bookings and speakers contracting Covid, the meetings were well attended and it was gratifying to see so many loyal members returning to the club. A visit to Jacqueline Iddon's Hazelwood Gardens in June was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended and we look forward to hearing further from her at our December meeting.

Not everything, however has returned to normal. Sadly our very popular Annual Show has had to be cancelled for the second year running since there is no-one able or willing to take on the job of Show Co-ordinator. Our long-standing Hut Manager, Trevor Mitchell has retired after many years of dedicated service and passed the baton into the hands of the ever-capable Lesley Taylor. We wish you well Trevor and know that we'll still see you at the Hut when other duties allow. Kevin Miles, who has kept the Newsletter going all through lockdown and beyond despite being out of town for most of it, has handed over the editor's role to Noel and Elaine Hodgson. Thank you once again Kevin for your expertise and dedication.

Other members have left us for good and though we regret their passing we celebrate their memory.

What a couple of years it's been! But despite it all The Club remains strong and resilient. Both membership and finances have remained healthy and it's a testament both to our members and our dedicated team of volunteers that the Club has not only survived the last two years but continues to thrive.

Gordon Preston

Chair