



Bexhill in Bloom



PORTFOLIO

2019-20

Covid Special!!!

Introduction:

Although Bexhill in Bloom has been in existence for many years, the new committee took over in December 2018.

We worked really hard to put lots of things in place for the judging in both categories.

Yay! We won 2 Silver Gilt in 2019!!! For such a 'young' organisation, it was such a wonderful experience. We had worked hard, but we had achieved much. The big thing was we had the Judges' comments from both SSEiB and Britain in Bloom to enable us to plan and move forward. We want you to know we are a learning organisation and we actually implemented changes in between judging rounds.

SSEiB judges thought they spent too long in travelling and in future, should concentrate on the Seafront and Bexhill Old Town.

- ✚ We revised the route for Britain in Bloom and that seemed to work well enough.
- ✚ Judges also didn't think we had made enough of our heritage.
- ✚ We changed that for Britain in Bloom by ensuring judges heard about the Bexhill Heritage Group and were able to talk to Ray Konyn
- ✚ We took Britain in Bloom judges to meet the gardeners at St Barnabas Church

During that time, we were also busy organising our Bexhill in Bloom Awards ceremony!



The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Lynn Langlands presented the certificates and cups.

On to the Judges' Comments:

Manor Gardens: Both sets of judges were really impressed with the way the gardens were tended.

Observations were made about the rose bed, which needed replanting. Also about the annual planting scheme.



Rother's Parks and Gardens Officer Brian Griffiths promised to look at the Rose bed and indeed, here it is in summer 2020 completely replanted with Rose 'Moody Blue'.

SSEiB judges also thought that a 'Friends Group' could work for both Manor Gardens and Egerton Park. There used to be a Friends Group in Egerton Park, but it petered out over the years. However, we were interested in recruiting more members and volunteers so maybe that would be a way forward.

SSEiB judges thought more work needed to be done around environment. We knew of Bexhill Environmental Group and didn't want to 'tread on their toes' so needed to make further links.

Other comments related to having sponsorship, and reliance on grants from RDC. We have tried. Bexhill in Bloom is becoming better known and several shops and companies might be interested in sponsoring us when we are better known in the area.

Britain in Bloom judges thought the seaside walk (West Promenade) could benefit from some attention. We will explain what we have done so far later on. **Then came our next phase....**

Planning and Execution!

We held our planning session in October 2019. We invited colleagues from Rother District Council and together we went through both sets of Judges' comments noting what changes were required to obtain a Gold Award for 2020. We also agreed that we needed to:

- **Work** with RDC to see if we could organise volunteers to work in parks and gardens
- **Look** for Area Champions – perhaps local councillors, to motivate local groups to create 'Blooming Bexhill'.
- **Create** more members – use HFS shop to have a volunteers/Members recruitment day
- **Find** funding for marketing and branding Bexhill in Bloom – Banners, badges etc.
- **Need** to find sponsors. Agreed lack of accounts from previous years could be a problem.
- **Needed** a firm basis in law to move forward so agreed to look at charitable status.

It was a lovely time, when we all came together. But lots of work ahead as volunteers meant having the correct paperwork such as Volunteering policy, Volunteer Agreement and Health & Safety policy and risk assessments and of course, insurance to support them. Fortunately two of the committee had prior experience in this area which came in handy.

The planning meeting was met with approval from RDC with Officers setting up a meeting with our Council Leader Cllr Doug Oliver. It was a very productive meeting with Cllr Oliver becoming a member of Bexhill in Bloom and subsequently asking his colleague, Cllr Terry Byrne to be our contact and to attend meetings. This proved really great as we also had access to the Press Team at RDC who can assist with publicity etc.



**Part of the Committee with
Council Leader Cllr Doug Oliver**

The new charitable constitution was agreed at our AGM in December, we can't actually apply for charitable status at this time as our turnover is less than £7,000 – but we are now a Charitable Association. Our foundations are good!

We held an information day at the HFS shop, we were able to sign up a few new members/volunteers. We asked them for their names and addresses and then sent our newly created application forms to them to be filled in. We also thought long and hard about GDPR at this time and the amount of personal information we would hold, and made sure that the application form enabled volunteers to agree to BiB keeping their data safe.

We were aware that once we started working outside, others might want to volunteer. So we planned our initial meeting with our prospective volunteers with grateful thanks to Rother who offered the use of a space at the Town hall to meet. We realised we would need an induction day. We had a discussion Rebecca Owen and Brian Griffiths who asked if we could start working on the West Promenade, as that had been mentioned in the Britain in Bloom Judges notes.

In the meantime, our chair, Margaret Garcia noticed that the Lottery had a small grants opportunity under their 25 year Celebration scheme, so we applied for funding for gardening equipment, badges, Hi Vis vests and publicity equipment. We would have to wait until the end of January to find out if we had been successful!

We really were very busy at that time. Making sure all the paperwork was in place, contacting new volunteers and members, then the good news arrived that we had been successful with our £750 bid to the Lottery so we could begin to order all the things we needed for our volunteers. We spent an interesting time purchasing equipment and publicity and marketing material! We were hoping to use it this year but the best made plans of mice and men!

Rebecca Owen and Brian Griffiths organised an Induction Day for us and our team of new volunteer gardeners. We have a garage in Egerton Park that we store our equipment in. We only managed 3 weekly sessions before the pandemic forced us to close down, but here are some photos of our new team!





We obviously want to resume as quickly as possible, to continue to trim and cut back where necessary, but we don't know when that might be. However, we will continue to plan and hope to see you back here in 2021!

Finally: Manor Gardens in the spring



Anemones in Manor Barn car park



Levetts Wood



Orchids in Bexhill Cemetery

From all of us to all of you, thank you for what you do. Stay safe!

The Bexhill in Bloom Committee

