

Usk in Bloom

News – Aug 2018

It's been an extraordinarily busy time for the volunteers of Usk in Bloom as they have faced rather extreme weather conditions since the long winter, wet Spring and recently the heatwave that has seen the driest start to a Summer since 1961. Coupled with this, they have been judged three times in 6 weeks! The first was Usk's inaugural entry into the Communities (World) in Bloom challenge when two judges from Canada and America were given a full days itinerary on 27th June that started with a presentation / working breakfasts at the Olway where Paul Matthews Chief Executive of MCC and Nigel Leaworthy Head of Operations led the way with wonderful explanations on how Usk's community volunteering module is being seen as the way forward for other communities in trying financial circumstances.

Then followed by a busy tour of Usk that ended at 5pm and included a hosted buffet lunch by the Mayor of Usk Cllr Alec Leathwood and his fellow councillors as well as Bloom volunteers who have been integral to the community effort that Usk is so proud and famous for. The day finished with a Hog roast at Usk Castle where the Buskulees entertained around 100 volunteers and guests. The judges were mighty impressed as they visited Usk Church in Wales Primary School, The Sessions House, Jane's Meadow, the Park project, Usk Museum, Bridge Street, Usk River, the Girl guides Garden, the WI beds, Jonathan Stephens's lake, many private gardens and finishing in the magnificent multicoloured Twyn Square floral displays.

Special thanks are due to Matt and Nic at the Olway for sponsoring the accommodation, Up Market flowers for the beautiful blooms placed in the judges rooms, Paul Matthews, Usk Town Council, Henry and Rosie Humphreys, the Buskulees and everyone who gave up their time to prepare, present and show Usk at its very best. Many said Usk had never looked better - MCC Staff were outstanding in the run up cleaning, clearing weeds, rubbish and cutting hedges especially!

Wales in Bloom was equally challenging in the heat and to condense the 8 hour tour into 2 hrs. Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions judging allowed another half hour. As ever, all the respective judges were poker faced on their final verdicts which will be given in September / October in Canada (World), Belfast (Britain) and West Wales (Wales). Fingers crossed that the outcome will be positive and a fitting end to a long summer of hard work and wonderful floral displays that drew in over 2000 visitors for Usk Open Gardens and. I doubt boosted by over 1 million viewers for the BBC TV programme Blooming Marvellous!