



A short history of the Itchen Valley Flower Show.

This report is adapted from an article published in the Itchen Abbas and Avington village news sometime in the late 1990s. The author was not recorded.

On the 13th of August 1949, the Hampshire Chronicle recorded that "the annual garden show of the Itchen Valley Horticultural Society at Avington Park last week saw an increased entry over last year". Whether the Itchen Valley Flower Show followed on directly from this event is uncertain, but there is no doubt that the Edmonds family were much involved, with Mrs Margaret Edmonds as Hon Secretary and Treasurer. In 1961 the Committee consisted of three others from Itchen Abbas (Messrs King, Howard and Marsh), two from Easton, one from Martyr Worthy, and (surprisingly) one from Alresford. Until 1966 Olive Porter from Easton was Chairman-

In 1967 the origin of the Rose Bowl for Cookery is of interest. In 1912 the Itchen Abbas Tug of War team won it at the Kingsworthy Horticultural Show, and again the next two years. It passed into the custody of Rev Mugliston, who eventually sent it some 50 years later to the Rev Greenway, the then Rector in Ichen Abbas and thence to the Flower Show!

In 1967 Mrs Margaret Edmonds became Chairman, and her Committee were Mrs Haslain, Mrs Nelson, Miss Grant, Mrs Stent, Mrs Earte, Mrs Dee (Hon Sec), Mr Howard, Mr Chalke, Mr King and Mr Marsh. 1969 saw the presentation of the Scatchard Challenge Cup for the Childrens' Section, PC Scatchard being our local 'village bobby' at that time.



In 1970 it was proposed, “that the Committee reserve the right to visit the gardens of exhibitors”! This was further discussed at a second meeting, the rejection of the proposal causing the resignation of one Committee member that same year there were numerous criticisms of the judges!

In 1974 the Show was enlivened by the Morris Dancers performing outside. In 1975 Mrs Edmonds stood down as Chairman, her place being taken by Mrs Dee, with Mrs Hewitt as Hon Sec assisted by Dr Bullock. Margaret Edmonds was presented with a goblet “as a token of affection and appreciation of the service she had given”. She sadly died in 1977. In that year the entry fee was 8p, and admission to the Hall was 10p. The high cost of hiring the Hall (for two days, £18.45) was questioned.



By 1985 Margaret Nelson was in the Chair, with the Committee comprising Sheila Edmonds, Betty McKay, Molly Earle, Sue Glasspool, Liza Hewitt Albie Marsh, Duggie Symes. Tony Sheppard, Lyn Breslain (Treasurer) and John Baxter (Sec). That year there was a sad incident when certain exhibits were sold in error after the show - something that has subsequently happened from time to time. Also a long discussion about the length of courgettes, the Judge having disqualified those over 6in, a RHS rule,

In 1987 Gill Graham Maw joined the Committee, in place of Liza Hewitt, and took over as Chairman from Margaret Nelson in 1991 to 2006. In 1988 Lyn Bresslain who had been Hon Treasurer since 1974, said she wanted to resign, but was persuaded to stay until 1998! Also in 1988 an ex-gratia prize was awarded to an individual whose egg 'was disqualified through mistaken identity'. The minute does not make it clear whether the egg or the entrant was misidentified.



In 1991 the Hampshire Chronicle quoted a judge saying that the herbaceous perennials were the best he had seen that year. Albie Marsh won the Macklin Challenge Cup for vegetables and flowers, as he had done in many previous years. His carrots measured 20in

from top to tip. By 1993 Albie Marsh had died and there were some new faces on the Committee including George Stoney, Joan Bickerdike, Molly O'Keefe, Peter Littlewood and Jim Chalke. Betty McKay took over from John Baxter as Secretary, followed by Joan Bickerdike, Margaret Nelson stood down after 29 years on the Committee.

In 1994 it was first suggested that there should be a class for children's flower arranging, a feature that has subsequently developed, with many excellent entries from the Village School. Compared to financial stringency of earlier years, the Flower Show now had a healthy balance in the bank- Dr Fred Haslam joined the Committee. Entries that year totalled 498, the highest yet recorded.

In 1996 the prizes were presented by Sue Glasspool, the then Mayor of Winchester. Hanging baskets were first introduced. For 1997 Philip Windsor- Aubrey, on behalf of the Upper Itchen Valley Society, donated a salver for the winner of the craft section. Molly Earle stood down from the Committee after serving for 31 years. She presented the prizes at the 1998 show, when Lyn Breslain finally ended a spell of 24 years as Treasurer.

In 2000 the flower show moved to its new home in the new and bigger Itchen Abbas and Avington Village hall, where it has continued to thrive. It is hoped in that it will continue to do so for many years to come.

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