Halesworth is an attractive small market town (population of just under 6,000) in the Waveney District, south-west of Lowestoft. It stands on a small tributary of the River Blyth, 9 miles upstream from Southwold. The town is served by Halesworth railway station on the Ipswich–Lowestoft East Suffolk Line. Halesworth is twinned with both Bouchain in France and Eitorf in Germany.

A Roman settlement, Halesworth has a medieval church, St Mary’s, with Victorian additions and a variety of houses, from early medieval timber-framed buildings to the remnants of 19th-century prosperity, when the town was a centre of malting and brewing. Former almshouses are now used to house the Art Gallery. Halesworth & District Museum is situated at Halesworth railway station. There are two Town Trails: one on the Town’s history and one on the botanists and explorers Sir William Jackson Hooker and Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, former Directors of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Halesworth is primarily centred on a pedestrianised shopping street known as the Thoroughfare. Each year the Thoroughfare hosts many fairs and festivals. Halesworth is the home to the New Cut Arts Centre, which hosts the acclaimed annual Halesworth Arts Festival. Halesworth has a lovely Town Park and the largest Millennium Green in the UK, with around 55 acres of grazing marsh providing a haven for wildlife close to the town centre. The rivers in this area are home to herons, kingfishers and otters.

This is our first formally printed Portfolio, which we hope will allow more people to get to know what Halesworth in Bloom is doing and why.

We would in particular like to thank Halesworth Town Council and its chairpeople, the indefatigable Town Clerks and, last but not least, Richard Hackney from Waveney Norse, who is still giving valuable advice and support despite huge financial cuts and the loss of ‘in house’ expertise. We have also received letters of support from our County Councillors and MP.

Halesworth in Bloom Aims & Objectives

- Providing beauty, spiritual enhancement, culinary delight and fun
- Ensuring maximum local community participation by all ages and backgrounds, including those physically and mentally challenged
- Encouraging our young gardeners through supporting schools, youth organisations & young teenagers, as well as establishing our own Young Gardeners’ After School Group
- Giving local produce to the housebound and very elderly on a regular basis
- Taking seriously the importance of global and local sustainability, and the need to protect natural habitats and their plants and animals, especially bees and other pollinators
- Working within the scope of the changing harsher environment
- Recognising and celebrating our horticultural heritage
- Giving formal recognition and encouragement to successful local people and businesses in respect of the above, both privately and in groups around the town
- Encouraging more people to come to Halesworth to enjoy the natural and created amenities, and to use the services
- Learning as much as we can to improve our own horticultural knowledge and skills in support of our town
1. URC gardens - 2016 Special Needs Conquest Art Group Nomination
2. Brownies garden - 2015 U12 Nomination & 2016 Award winning ‘Sunburst’ competition
4. World Land Trust - Halesworth in Bloom Partner
5. Library Hub & Children’s Stories Garden with 2015 Grow Your Own Community Herb Bed
7. Memorial Garden & Hooker Arboretum - Over 40 plants including Hooker in their nomenclature; 2016 Community & Business Project
8. St Mary’s Church and churchyard
9. Market Place & Tilly’s Garden – House of Flowers help for Housebound; Community Entry with Thoroughfare; Carole Griffin frontage (small is beautiful)
10. Nolly’s allotment - 2014 Grown Your Own Nomination
12. The Limes - 2015 Special Needs Planting Nomination; 2016 Grow Your Own Nomination
13. London Road recesses - Community Initiative 2015
14. Children’s allotment & Garden Club - 2016 Under 12 Gardening Nomination
15. Fred Burgess allotment - 2015 Biodiversity Nomination
16. Community Heritage Orchard - 2016 Orchard Nomination
18. Halesworth Closed Cemetery - 2015 Silver Award; 2016 Cemetery & Drought Friendly Planting
19. Refurbished Town Signs & Planters
20. Hammonds Motors - 2016 Entry for Industrial Support
22. Fishing Lakes & Rare Trees - 2013 Shortlist Nomination Conservation
23. Spectra - 2015 Shortlist Nomination for Best Industrial Planting
24. Town Roundabouts - Drought Resistant Planting Anglia in Bloom Major Award Winner 2014
25. Halesworth Town Park - Green Flag entry first year 2016 & Public Green Space Nomination
26. Halesworth Station & Station Yard - Queen’s 90th Birthday Gardens & Greening the Grey Bulb planting
September
Anglia in Bloom results
Horticultural training – Woottens
Strategic review by team and target setting
Herb Garden rejuvenation
Autumnal clear-up

October
Gifts of locally grown apples in hedgerow arrangements to the Housebound
Preparation of children’s allotments
Making benching for polytunnel at Swan Lane Allotments
Men's Shed – creating planters for Thoroughfare and Station
GAPPA reach goals for new play equipment in Town Park
Town bulb planting – fourth year of ten-year programme
Town Civic Dinner with floral tributes
Halesworth businesses Scarecrow Competition

November
Remembrance Day floral arrangements in St Mary’s Church
Edith Cavell Exhibition and floral displays on the role of women in WW1
Bulb planting

December
Halesworth in Bloom Presentation Ceremony at The Cut for Best Children’s Horticultural Project, Best Business Floral Frontages, Best Front Gardens, Best Allotments, Outstanding Personal Contributions
Christmas Tree Festival in St Mary’s Church – HIB living trees
Gifts of festive pots of bulbs to the Housebound
Christmas Fair

January
Green Flag application for Town Park completed
Grass and litter pick along Thoroughfare and Market Place

February
Clearance of brambles, ivy and dead trees in Cemetery
Spreading snowdrops in green
Town Park Management Plan completion, consultation and launch
Millennium Green – blessing of the Community Orchard
Tree Wardens training

March
Halesworth Town Park Green Flag judging
Halesworth Antiques Street Market
Halesworth Day of Dance in town centre
Gifts of Spring flowers to the Housebound

Launch of Children’s After School Allotment Club
Town litter pick with Community Service
Creating children’s raised beds at Allotment

April
Tree Warden meeting
Brownies design competition for floral sunburst bed at United Reformed Church
Anglia in Bloom Spring launch, Bressingham
Thoroughfare Pop Up Shop fundraising and publicity, 14th–20th April
Launch of children’s courses on plant growing

May
Gifts to the Housebound
Plant up winning Brownies design for floral sunburst bed
Halesworth in Bloom garden barbecue and lunch
Town litter pick
Relaunch of Halesworth in Bloom website

June
Queen’s 90th Birthday celebration party at Station – with Station Adopters and Halesworth in Bloom
Halesworth Lions Carnival
Halesworth Open Gardens, 18th June
Tree survey
Front garden judging
Visit to Halstead in Bloom
Composting course

July
Anglia in Bloom judging
Halesworth Library – In Bloom exhibition, 25th June – 16th July
Gifts for the Housebound – Summer floral arrangements
Front garden judging
Judging of Halesworth business planters
Halesworth Notable Tree Survey

August
Allotments celebration and barbecue
London Road recesses make-over
Memorial Garden make-over prior to Joseph Hooker bicentenary 2017
Beekeeping and bee-friendly planting course
Barley Meadow Green – community preparation for winter planting of trees and bulbs
**Making an impact**

We are concerned to spread the work we do in such a way that the town develops a **coherent floral profile**. We began in 2006 by replanting the weed-filled planters in the Thoroughfare, working with the Halesworth & District Gardeners’ Society. From there we found that our small businesses would help with some financial support but preferred to provide expertise and in-kind offers. To make them feel involved in a more practical horticultural way we came up with the suggestion that each business should create its own floral entrance, which they designed, planted, watered and cared for. These could be moved inside at vulnerable times, such as after closing-time at weekends. This has proved to be very effective and, to encourage their planting, we offer the **Lesley Pyke Trophy** for the Best Frontage as perceived by public vote. Such individuality is fine because it adds to a more thematic planting in the planters, which are now second generation. This is now not confined to the Town Centre but has spread to the Market Place and other areas. We love this because it means everyone is growing plants – whether flowers, herbs or vegetables. (Lesley Pyke, an internationally recognized glass engraver based in Halesworth, has donated all our wonderful engraved glass trophies for the town for: Best Business Floral Frontage, Best Front Garden, Best Allotment, Best Children’s Horticultural Project and Significant Contributions to Halesworth in Bloom.)

**Themes**

We have taken to heart the RHS current campaign **Greening Grey Britain** and the fundamental reasons for this:

1. **Green is better than grey**

   We love green – herbaceous, wild, suited to our dry climate and variable temperatures. We were awarded an Anglia in Bloom Special Award in 2014 for our drought-friendly planting on our roundabouts. The increase in planting around the town has significantly increased both the greening and the brightening of our town environment.

2. **More is more and bigger is better**

   We use a wide diversity of plants for all year round interest and economy as they last from year to year. We also mix flowers with vegetables and vice versa.

   We have spread out onto open untended spaces in a way that makes what we are doing both coherent and noticeable. Our award-winning drought-friendly planting uses plants we know will grow because we have grown them ourselves from seeds.

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**Halesworth new planting in 21st century continuing:**

- 2000 – Millennium Green conservation work
- 2006 – Thoroughfare planters
- 2008 – Community Orchard, Library Garden
- 2010 – Children’s School Garden (closed 2014)
- **2013 – First year entry to Anglia in Bloom**
  - Thoroughfare planters & business frontages
  - Memorial Garden & Hooker Trail
  - Rare tree planting at Halesworth Lakes
  - Bulb planting – start of ten-year programme
- 2014
  - Beech House Alzheimer’s garden
  - United Reformed Church gardens
  - Halesworth sponsored roundabouts
  - Town Park entrance gardens
- 2015
  - Town Signs planters
  - The Limes Special Needs garden
  - Brownies garden and activities
  - Halesworth Cemetery – sponsored White Gardens & hanging baskets London Road recesses community project
- **2016**
  - Halesworth Children’s Allotment Club
  - Halesworth Closed Cemetery grounds clearance with Mencap
  - Halesworth Station weed, litter clearance and establishing new planters, mangers and hanging baskets and signage
  - Sponsored Station Approach planting
  - Queens Drive community entrance bed
  - Barley Meadow Green community planting project

Our ten-year **Bulb-Planting** Programme, now in its fourth year, is becoming a feature worthy of positive praise from everyone, and this last year we added tulips to our swathes and ribbons of ‘Tete-a-Tete’, ‘February Gold’ and mixed narcissi. We began with the town entrances in Bramfield Road, the Walpole Road greens, Castle Hill and then the Norwich Road. We have already planted over 20,000 bulbs.

Our RHS **Greening Grey Britain** Award this year for Halesworth Station is allowing us to transform our dingy Station, which up till now has been overgrown, dirty and forlorn (although our Station Adopters have maintained planters for several years).

This year it is also the **Queen’s 90th birthday** and we are going for **red, white and blue** in all our planters, both around the town and at the Station. We already have red and white roses in the Thoroughfare. These are repeat flowering robust fragrant floribunda roses ‘Hot Chocolate’ and ‘Champagne Moments’, both of which were selected as roses of the year in 2006. For blues we are using the stalwart lobelias such as ‘Midnight Sparkle’, lavenders and salvias, together with a blue Hebe ‘Blue Surprise’. We have chosen many other different red and white plants, including begonias and geraniums.
Expertise
We have an excellent relationship with Luci Skinner and Lizzie Loftus at Woottens, Eddie Krutysza of Hattens Farm Nurseries, and the teams at Homestead and Ladybird Nurseries. They are a wonderful source of expertise and are valued advisers, as well as giving us very special rates. We have also taken advantage of the Suffolk Master Composter courses and are trying out the Hot Composter alongside our own versions.

Woottens and Peter Beale courses on all aspects of horticulture are excellent, but we also really value the courses available at all the Anglia in Bloom events. In 2018, we will be copying the stunning winter garden wave of Cornus we saw at Bressingham and the wonderful drought-friendly winter garden at Villandry in the Loire.

We also follow the principle of Learning from the Best by visiting In Bloom Award winners. So far we have visited Frinton, Hunstanton, Halstead and Sidmouth in Dorset. These visits highlight the warm generosity and mutual support between In Bloom groups and we were thrilled to be able to reciprocate by welcoming Hunstanton back in June.

Our local horticultural talent includes:
Tony and Jen Eden have a large riverside garden of their own, but were prepared to create a raised bed area to support a group from Mencap. Tony was not only our local Tree Warden but also a planter of rare trees.

Another rare tree champion and grower is Linda Gray, a woman with very green fingers. She has successfully grown several rare trees, including 26 Sorbus domestica from seeds she gathered from the Henham Estate. She was even able to resuscitate a ‘dead’ Magnolia hookeri from our Hooker nomenclature collection. Linda really values the Tree Warden courses as she is being groomed by Tony to take his place. She is also the proud possessor of a vintage Rover, which most judges have enjoyed being taken around in!

Karen Austin is a trained horticulturist, originally with Woottens, who does all our drought- and bee-friendly planting. She was working at Woottens when in 2014 our four sponsored roundabouts (which survive without any additional water and get better each year) were awarded a Special Award. We now have similar drought-resistant and bee-friendly planting in both our Town Sign planters and in the two White Gardens at our romantic Closed Cemetery, which gained a Silver Award in 2015. Karen has produced plant lists for all three Dry Gardens we now have in Halesworth.

Stephanie Hammond is the other skilled horticulturist on our team. She has designed and oversees the planting in the Memorial Garden and Hooker Arboretum as well as the new beds created in 2015 at the entrance to our Town Park. This has transformed the Park entrance.

Near Halesworth, Rumburgh and Bramfield villages are keen to become Bloomers and both have great knowledge and skills. We share Gardeners Question Time, visits and talks with Rumburgh.

Woodbridge Horticultural Society have already booked to visit us in June 2017 and to follow the Hooker Trail for the bicentenary of Joseph Hooker’s birth in Halesworth.

Building teams
By working in 16 small groups, which usually meet weekly, we have developed a strong team spirit. Our experienced and knowledgeable leaders are willing to share but also learn new tricks. A schedule of work for each of the 16 working groups is published in the Community News and is posted in the Thoroughfare and in the Library.

The Lesley Pyke Awards for Best Front Garden and Best Allotment are now in their third year.

We find this a really enjoyable part of our work as HIB volunteers. Along with members of Halesworth Town Council (including Chair Anne Fleming), we tour the whole town (with over 1,000 gardens and allotments) to search out wonderful floral frontages as well as mouth-watering vegetables. Despite the ‘bigger the better’ principle, sometimes little can be stunning. Every garden and allotment is judged by two people using criteria agreed by Halesworth and District Gardeners’ Society. Those owners whose gardening meets the criteria receive a letter of congratulations and a Certificate of Excellence and are invited to enter for the Lesley Pyke trophies. We want to recognize all horticultural talent and achievement and it is a great way of involving more people in our volunteer team. We calculated last year that our volunteers clock up over 3,500 hours a year for the town (with a value of well over £35,000 for the town).

Halesworth Station
We were fortunate to be among the 40 lucky winners of £500 from the RHS towards greening our Station.
Thoroughfare and Market Place

The Thoroughfare was pedestrianised in 1991 and this has created a wonderful place to wander, browse, meet friends for a drink or buy from wonderful local shops. Our planters have small crab apples ‘Golden Hornet’, ‘John Downie’ and ‘Neville Copeman’, together with ‘Tete-a-Tete’ narcissi in the spring, herbs, heucheras and some bedding and look good throughout the year. We are early risers, working there at 7.00 am on Mondays and far more often when needed. As well as planting and weeding, we litter and ‘fag end’ pick and paint the street furniture, all of which enhances the area and gives it a very happy and strong community feel, which is remarked on by visitors. Having lost our free hour’s parking, our town centre must draw people even though they have to pay to park. The businesses’ floral entrances are a talking point and source of delight. Virtually every business participates, and HIB helps where necessary.

Town Park entrance gardens

Stephanie Hammond writes:

Over and above road safety, there’s an extra reason for taking the underpass from the Town Park into the town centre (or vice versa): the path leads pedestrians between three borders that offer interest whatever the season.

Planting here by HIB volunteers has aimed particularly at creating structure and colour in winter months when these are at a premium. The blossom on the winter-flowering cherry breaks as early as November – before even the January pink of *Virburnum bodnantense*, planted here to contrast with the vivid winter stems of red, green and yellow dogwoods. Gigantic silver-leaved cardoons are stately for all twelve months of the year. And, at the road edge, multi-stemmed silver birch trees, *Betula jacquemontii*, are beginning to make a pretty screen between the road and the park beyond.

Much of the herbaceous plant stock has come from volunteers’ own gardens, so the look here is first and foremost informal, with surprises! There are *Rosa rugosa* planted many years ago by the District Council, held in check from over-running the site but as valuable to it as the self-seeded Welsh poppies, *Nigella* and *Cosmos* that, thanks to attentive weeding through the year, add more charm and interest.

Green spaces – Halesworth Town Park

Originally the Town Park had formal bedding along the main path and a large formal garden between the Town River and the Navigation, including a bed of memorial roses. This has long since gone and Waveney District Council had downgraded the Park (as residents have always called it) to a public open space. By entering the Park for the Community Green Flag Award we hope to make sure it is once again a high-quality park managed in an environmentally sustainable way. This year is the first year we have been able to enter our Town Park for the Award. Clive Olley visited us in March and was very supportive. We have worked very hard, establishing a Friends Group and producing and consulting on a Five Year Management Plan.

Our Town Park entrance planting is well established, the Spring bulbs look lovely and our key priorities now are seating, information boards and signage, which we hope we can address by 2017. For 2018 we plan an area of winter colour inspired by visits to Bressingham and Villandry.

Town entrances & hubs, roundabouts, Town signs and planters

Karin Austin writes: “central to our planting has been the edict ‘Right Plant, Right Place’ – choosing plants that naturally grow well in the conditions of climate and soil available to them and issues of sustainability. Every effort has been made to minimize the input needed to create and maintain our planting schemes. None of the roundabouts have required artificial watering since the initial planting and minimal weeding will be required as the plants mature. As well as the perennial nature of our herbaceous plants, we have chosen varieties of bulbs that are long-lived and will increase over time.”
Grow your own

Audrey Drake of The Limes Sheltered Housing Complex writes:

“Our main focus as residents has been our lovely, large listed greenhouse. It is here that we meet and scheme for our growing plans. Andy our leader keeps us all focused. We have really transformed the greenhouse into a working, growing space. Andy, Hazel, Viv and I now grow tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, lettuces and herbs and a lot more. We are also growing melons and looking after the grapevine given us by HIB. During the winter we took cuttings of flowers and shrubs and it has been so satisfying to plant them out to brighten up any dull spots. Outside the greenhouse we have a nectarine and an apricot tree plus more courgettes. Other residents, for example Barbara, Ruby and Daphne, are busy looking after the areas near their own little gardens.

“We are now planning to grow flowers for next year’s planting – wallflower, Sweet Williams. It is wonderful to wander over to the greenhouse to meet others and to get immersed in growing things. I am seriously ill and this means so much to me and I am sure helps to keep me focused on anything but myself. Others, too, have health issues but feel that working in the gardens has been beneficial for their health.”
Biodiversity
The Convention on Biodiversity defines biodiversity as encompassing all the natural world and all the living things within it, including plants, animals, bacteria and micro-organisms and the dynamic relationships or ecosystems between them. Our human impact upon this is profound.

Halesworth in Bloom Eco-Charter

- Recycle Recycle Recycle – water, plant waste, wood, cardboard and paper
- Use water butts and compost bins
- Encourage worms
- Grow pollinator-friendly flowers
- Use organic pest control such as nematodes and garlic
- Use organic fertilisers like our own compost and fermented comfrey!
- Take advice from the RHS, In Bloomers, organic gardeners, Garden Organic (formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Association) and its Heritage Seed Library

It is a principle of both the RHS and its work with In Bloom groups that all of us must be sensitive to and act in such a way as to protect our environment, living things and their ecosystems. We must at least be neutral in our impact and at best improve things. Many species face extinction or dangerous declines in their numbers. This is also why involving everyone, but most particularly our young people, in demonstrating care for our environment is crucial. The work done through schools, Brownies and other groups, as well as our young horticulturalists, is of prime importance.

With so much resting on tests in school, only experienced head teachers feel able to let children learn outside. Fortunately children are more out than in school, so it is possible to foster a love of growing things and seeing the results.

Farmers and gardeners can have an impact by respecting and caring for natural habitats alongside their cultivated areas. Rather than planting monocultures, by using the RHS advice of diversifying and creating natural nature reserves they reap big benefits – with many more pollinators and the containment of pests and diseases. Instead of using nitrate fertilisers, which cause polluted run-off, and harmful pesticides and herbicides, gardeners and farmers can use soil additives from natural sources: composted garden and animal waste (from organically raised pigs, chickens and horses), nettles, comfrey, and green manures. Gardeners do not need to use peat-based compost, and bagging up dead leaves provides superb compost and mulch after a couple of years. Pollinator-friendly planting is also essential and we favour plants recommended by the British Beekeepers Association, local beekeepers and the RHS.

County recycling schemes in Suffolk are now under threat and it falls upon In Bloom groups to encourage good practice at a local level. We have taken advantage of the Suffolk Master Composter courses.

Cost considerations – recycling and home made!
Wherever we can, we reuse materials – from polytunnels to pallets to derelict greenhouses and unwanted water butts and chemical containers. We make many of our own compost bins, raised beds and planters from recycled wood, and our liners are cut in half plastic containers that once housed almond oil!

Most of our planters, notice boards and raised beds have been made for us by a local master craftsman, George Spindler, with support and materials from local builder Eric Hurren and garden landscaper Dave King.

Nature reserves
Halesworth has a significant proportion of land in and around it that is untouched, such as our railway embankments and the River Blyth network and the old Navigation. These provide long green corridors for animals to travel and large areas for wild plants and animals to thrive and spread undisturbed. We also have many wild areas adjacent to the Blyth and the Town River that are inaccessible and undisturbed. As they are on the flood plain, they are relatively safe in the long term.

Our Heritage and Notable Tree Survey, started in 2005, is being undertaken by our Tree Warden Linda Gray. The survey draws attention to over 50 stunning old and very beautiful trees that enhance the Town Park, the Millennium Green and the town’s boundaries.
Conservation

The Halesworth Millennium Green was established to preserve as naturally as possible the 55 acres of water meadows and old gravel pits adjacent to the Halesworth railway lines, the Halesworth Navigation and the River Blyth and its tributaries. It is managed to protect the biodiversity of the area and to support wildlife by adding suitable habitats, nesting sites and boxes for endangered species (barn owls and other birds), leaving some areas untouched, and by ensuring there are the grazing cattle essential for retaining the flora of the water meadows, which often face extinction in other areas. Grass cutting uses traditional methods and dyke and river clearance is done to encourage more wildlife. Regular observations and recording of plants and animals on the Green bear witness to the healthy increase in wildlife populations. There is a rolling programme of evening slide shows, talks and walks on different aspects of the Green.

Preserving and publicising our local heritage

We have been working for some time in Halesworth to publicise our connection with the Hookers (both William and Joseph), who lived in Brewery House, now Hooker House. We really valued the help of Christopher Mills, Head of Library, Art and Archives at Kew Gardens, over the production of a Town Trail on the Hookers. New planting in the Joseph Hooker Memorial Garden includes some beautiful well-established plants with Hooker in their nomenclature, including *Crinodendron hookerianum*, *Inula hookeri* and *Salix hookeri*. We have listed these in our Trail booklet, available on site and around the town. [Elizabeth Grant]

The New Reach Navigation is a half-mile stretch of disused canal that runs through the centre of Halesworth, between two derelict locks. With the cooperation of the Environment Agency, it has been agreed that the water can be maintained at its current level of 2–4 feet, ensuring a short watercourse is available all year round.

The New Reach currently hosts wildfowl, water voles, kingfishers, pike, and even the occasional otter. The towpath is home to a variety of flora including irises, reed mace and willow. A working group was formed recently to maintain the waterway by strimming the towpath, selectively removing and replanting trees, restoring the benches, and removing water-weed and litter where necessary. Funding for this work has come from Halesworth Town Council and voluntary donations. [Gerald Burns]

We dream one day of returning the New Reach to something of its former glory, when it was used for both business and pleasure. Meanwhile, we plan to restore the waterway as an attractive amenity for both the local community and visitors.

[Elizabeth Grant]

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Since we started entering the Anglia In Bloom Competition in 2013 we have taken this aspect of our work extremely seriously.

Our aims are to ensure maximum local community participation by all ages and backgrounds, including those physically and mentally challenged. It is an integral part of what we do.

Our core team is listed later but altogether we have over 100 volunteers representing all sections of the community. Our latest list of working party groups is published in our Community News and on our notice boards.

**Children’s activities**

Our first success came when we gained an Anglia in Bloom Special Award in 2013 for our primary school garden run by Katie Burge, where every child in our only local school participated.

Since then we have supported the Halesworth Brownies, who regularly take their Gardening Badge and have created a lovely vegetable and flower garden encouraging bees and birds. They design bee labels, which are put out around the town wherever there is planting encouraging pollinators. They have also made cane guards from decorated ping pong balls and are currently planting their own sunburst designed garden bed with summer bedding (the winner was chosen by the Town Council from all their lovely designs). They also regularly help create floral and Christmas displays as gifts for our Housebounders, which are then given out to 30 locals by the Halesworth Befrienders.

Our HIB Housebounders Gift Scheme of local flowers or fruit runs on an eight-week cycle and is now in its fourth year.

Planned over three years, our latest Young Gardeners’ Group run by Gill Coulson and Val Rutterford with a lot of preparatory work done by Vic Coulson meets regularly every Thursday after school. HIB volunteers help up to 10 youngsters to grow vegetables, fruit and flowers on our designated Children’s Allotment. All have onions, chives, rosemary, mints, cauliflowers, potatoes and carrots in their individual raised beds and are growing runner beans, charting their height and competing for the highest and the most prolific! Their pumpkin patch will provide both lanterns and a pumpkin pie feast. The children have already feasted on long radish this year and have lettuce and tomatoes in their polytunnel (donated to them with a watering system sponsored by the Adnam’s Charity).

There are guest visitors planned, including the Bangladeshi owner of our Indian Restaurant, who grows all his own specialist vegetables and herbs and is giving the children some edible gourds to plant.

The Library has a lovely Children’s Story-telling Garden, which was created with financial and practical support from Eastfeast, with wonderful murals painted by Meraylah Allwood. It is maintained by HIB volunteers. It is regularly used by the Saturday children’s groups and is open to all to sit in and enjoy. The Library’s children’s activities also included the Winter Glow Worms Festival at the Community Orchard this Autumn in conjunction with the Millennium Green. This lovely orchard regularly hosts picnics and other celebrations supported by many, including our USA Ukulele Group and Mencap. Apple pressing is scheduled for the Autumn.

Just outside the Library, at the end of our community-created floral town centre, is the Community Herb Garden managed by Valerie Large, where everyone is encouraged to pick the herbs and to take a leaflet on using the herbs from the box on-site. This has proved really popular.

Last year, 16-year-old Zoe Smith-Howell won our HIB Young People’s Bursary for her business enterprise, growing plants that she sells on a roadside stall to fund her education. She was also given free entry by Woottens to all their horticultural training courses in 2015 and is considering horticulture as a career as she has been growing plants to sell from the age of 11. This year, Noah Gonzales, another 16-year-old resident, is being awarded the HIB bursary for assisting us in remodelling our website, Facebook, Twitter and blog presence.

**Helping the physically and mentally challenged residents of Halesworth**

In 2012/13 Mencap were supported in creating a series of raised beds to grow vegetables and fruit in an HIB volunteer’s garden. Since 2000, Mencap have regularly helped alongside other volunteers with the Millennium Green, clearing, planting and maintaining the lovely water meadows along the Halesworth Navigation and the River Blyth. They enjoy the events scheduled at the Community Orchard and on the Green. This year, Mencap members have also helped HIB with clearing brambles and scrub in the Halesworth Closed Cemetery.

In 2014 we worked with Beech House Residential Home and entered their remarkable Alzheimer’s garden, which was given an Anglia in Bloom Special Award that year.

Last year we entered the Sheltered Housing Complex ‘The Limes’, whose amazing team of gardeners captured one of our judges and we had great difficulty in prizing him from their midst! They wish to be seen again this year as a community Grow your Own project because they have gone from strength to strength and would like their gardens and greenhouse...
planting to be recognised. This year we are working with and supporting Conquest Art. This national charity was set up for people with physical and emotional disabilities and the Halesworth Group was started by HIB volunteer Pat Simon four years ago. Pat designed and created the beautiful gardens outside the United Reformed Church, whose congregation all support both the gardens and the charity. Pat has handed over the gardens to the Conquest Art group as a setting for their superb artwork – Halesworth in Bloom features in this year’s Conquest Art national calendar as their June entry, fittingly a riot of blooms. The garden has a new willow crown made by artist Dawn Pretty bedecked with their own work and their own willow dragonflies made with help from Mary Pendered, artist and chief gardener for the charity Eastfeast supported by HIB. A relative of one of the Conquest group, Martin Dominic, is now their head gardener and spends each Wednesday working in the garden. We strongly believe art and gardening belong together.

Community spaces that bring us all together

We are truly fortunate to have four remarkable areas within our town which will be showcased to the Judges this year. All have different roles to play in creating a wonderful town to live in or to visit.

The Market Place and pedestrianised Thoroughfare have brought the whole community together. We still have the most remarkable group of independent local shops (not chains) and over 18 different eating and or food outlets. Once jammed with hulking smelly lorries, our town centre is now a space for people to walk, meet and talk, shop or just sit. It lends itself to regular antiques and craft fairs, scarecrow competitions, Days of Dance and Christmas Lights festivities. By enlisting all the businesses to create their own floral frontages, there is lots to admire. Our floral decorations transform the curved street. It starts with Tilly’s Garden at the Market Place, then the peaceful Memorial Garden by St Mary’s Church. At the other end of the Thoroughfare are the Community Herb Garden and the Children’s Story-telling Garden at the Library.

The Hooker Memorial Garden and Arboretum has an HIB collection of over 40 plants named after the famous past resident Joseph Hooker, a friend of Darwin. This is a place for reflection, sitting in the Edwardian shelters with their paintings of fields of poppies (ASBO group), looking up at St Mary’s Church.

This has wonderful Flower and Christmas Tree festivals and hosts a Gardeners Question Time run by HIB volunteer Karen Austin.

The Halesworth Town Park covers 3.5 acres created from land gifted by residents or bought by the Council. It caters for children, including those with special needs, skate boarders, basket ball players, as well as those who like to stroll or sit by the Navigation watching kingfishers and admiring the bulrushes, kingcups and water lilies; or under some stunning notable trees, enjoying the Spring drifts of snowdrops, wild daffodils and crocus; or the myriad greens of Summer; as well as the beautiful HIB-created entrance gardens.

Gerald Burns (aged 70) heads up the New Reach Preservation Group and has just completed a challenging sponsored kayaking trip along the Halesworth Navigation and River Blyth to Southwold, raising £1,000 for this important work.

Our Millennium Green, the largest in the country, is a remarkable richly biodiverse area managed by a charity for conservation and people’s enjoyment. A team of over 40 volunteers meet regularly to work on the Green, clearing, mowing, putting up bird boxes, monitoring wildlife and occasionally litter clearing. They run a highly popular programme of walks and talks on the geology, heritage and wildlife – bats, glow worms, owls and otters – as well as organised pond dipping and community eco-festivals and celebrations at the Community Orchard, with its collection of Suffolk heritage fruit. Running through the Green and bringing everyone access – from those in buggies and wheelchairs to bird watchers and pond dippers, families, lone walkers and cyclists – is part of Cycle Route 1, which travels 5,942 km from the top of Norway. This cycle route goes around the coastlines of all the countries bordering the North Sea.

Many cyclists stop off to enjoy our small town and its floral identity.
Keeping our whole community in the know

For the first time this year our portfolio is being published with the encouragement of Britain in Bloom winners Hunstanton, who generously shared their expertise with us. This will allow us to give recognition to all our local supporters and businesses as well as Halesworth Town Council.

We have a lovely, specially built noticeboard in the Thoroughfare decorated with flowers by children at Holton School, and another on the road down from the Station to the town. There are also new information boards about both Halesworth in Bloom and our Hooker Trail, using four defunct boards in strategic positions around the town. Every area we work on has a small sign with our logo designed by Anna Badar. As can be seen from our site map, these highlight how we have covered the whole town.

A floral imprint is revealed in the Spring when over 30,000 bulbs show themselves on all the entrances and key sites around the town. Now in its fourth year of a 10-year planned programme of bulb planting, involving all in the community, this welcomes us to a new year of floral expression.

We regularly report to both Parish and Town Council meetings, and we send them our monthly press bulletins. We are also linked to the Council website. We could do more and as you will have read above we are enlisting young expertise to help us with that process.

We are lucky to have a widely read monthly Community News where we can let everyone know what we are doing. The local Beccles and Bungay Journal is really kind and we regularly feature on the front page. (Our Chief Reporter also helps the town in another capacity, working with young offenders to help with their community service – litter picking!)

Since winning an RHS Greening the Grey Award this year, we are being helped by skilled RHS publicists as well as by Alison Findlay, our own RHS Advisor on our work this year at Halesworth Station. Together with the Station Adopters, we are celebrating the Queen’s 90th birthday (with help from the RHS, Abellio Greater Anglia and Network Rail) by having a tea party at the Station. There will be a musical train with band playing, bunting, and all our new planters, mangers and hanging baskets sporting red, white and blue. This follows a picnic lunch in the Town Park.

Halesworth Open Gardens scheme

This is the second year of our Open Gardens. Last year we raised nearly £1,200 for the East Anglian Air Ambulance Service. This year our charity is local – the Halesworth Volunteer Centre, which includes a Befrienders scheme and the Men’s Shed group, all of whom we have good reason to thank. Each year we have showcased 18–20 wonderful Halesworth gardens, all different, all showing a wide range of imagination, skill and love for growing things – from the tiny garden created on a former parking space, to an amazing series of romantic outside rooms, including effective use of an air raid shelter and several stunning true plantswoman’s jewel-like creations where every plant enhances and you could spend hours looking, smelling, touching and learning. We have six new gardens entering this time and more for next year. This is another way of building up a community of gardeners, as well as including the Children’s Story-telling Garden at the Library, the Conquest Garden, Tilly’s Garden and the beautiful Flower Festival in St Mary’s Church in the centre of town. This year, the winner of the 2015 Lesley Pyke Trophy for Best Front Garden is showing off his garden with pride and his trophy!

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL AUTHORITY SUPPORT

We would not have started our Anglia in Bloom journey had not the Halesworth Town Council asked us to get involved and regularly financed us. As a result, a real community spirit has developed in our town and our task has become easier and easier.

Our local shops and businesses give us enormous support, whether in kind (such as children’s tools, wheelbarrows or compost), financially with regular donations, or, more importantly, by creating their own special floral frontages. We help where needed, but mostly they take great care to put their own stamp on their floral creations. By moving these inside they can be secure at vulnerable times and more easily watered and managed. Banyan have even had specially created for them two trolley planters with detachable handles made by the Men’s Shed group so that Jo can move them easily despite a bad back!

Local organisations encouraging and giving material support

Halesworth Town Council, Halesworth and Blyth Valley Partnership, Waveney District Council and Waveney Norse, together with local community groups including GAPPA.
Halesworth businesses supporting Halesworth in Bloom

HALESWORTH IN BLOOM FUNDING: 1 JULY 2015 – 30 JUNE 2016
Funding by businesses
Our sponsorship officers have had less time to visit businesses this year, but many local companies continue to support Halesworth in Bloom with both substantial donations in kind and raffle prizes. For example, Woottens not only sponsor and maintain one of the roundabouts, but also provided free horticultural training to 16-year-old Zoe Smith-Howell in 2015. Our other roundabout sponsors – Angel Podiatry, Central England Cooperative, Hammonds, and Slimming World – pay for the roundabout maintenance (carried out by HIB volunteers).

In particular, Lesley Pyke, an internationally recognized glass engraver based in Halesworth, has donated all our wonderful engraved glass trophies (for Best Business Floral Frontage, Best Front Garden, Best Allotment, Best Children’s Horticultural Project and Significant Contributions to Halesworth in Bloom).

Grant funding
Halesworth Town Council very generously increased their grant to £3,000, partly in recognition of our plans to celebrate the bicentenary of Joseph Hooker’s birth in 2017. We’ve also been granted £500 by the RHS Greening the Grey Awards towards horticultural improvements at the Station.

Cash donations
Our main income has been from large individual donations and sponsorship of particular projects (£200 towards a planter, £500 towards seating in the Town Park), as well as £151 from the winding up of Halesworth in Transition. We’ve also received £530 from Friends of HIB.

Fundraising
We made £366 from two raffles and £25 from the sale of plants.

TOTAL INCOME 2015/16: £6,724

Volunteers
HIB has about 100 dedicated volunteers who spend over 3,500 hours on a great variety of tasks: planting, watering, weeding, propagation, undertaking training, maintenance, painting street furniture, installing water butts, running Children’s Gardening Club, Brownies garden, business research, preparing & delivering gifts for the housebound, documenting data, photographic record-keeping, administration, keeping accounts.
We are determined not to let the bicentenary of Joseph Hooker’s birth go unmarked here in Halesworth and we want to have a focus weekend of events and exhibitions around 30 June 2017. Our preliminary ideas for the Joseph Hooker bicentenary, shared with the Director of Kew Gardens, include:

- A special new Town Trail booklet on the Hookers.
- New planting in the Joseph Hooker Memorial Garden; we already have 40 plants with the name Hooker within their nomenclature, which are labelled; a new information board.
- A special exhibition on Joseph Hooker in the Halesworth Museum, together with a Museum publication.
- A children’s exhibition in Halesworth Library of work researched by them on Joseph Hooker and of portraits by children of the Hookers as they imagine them.
- A Scientific Luncheon, with someone representing Kew, and a talk (possibly by Michael Palin) at The Cut Arts Centre.
- An exhibition on Joseph Hooker in conjunction with the World Land Trust and the Linnaean Society and (we hope) Kew.
- A Joseph Hooker Walk within an acre of woodland, with associated under-storey planting, adjacent to Halesworth Town Park. The owner of this wood has generously allowed public access for this.
- Planting, with Anglia in Bloom and Kew Gardens, a memorial tree for Joseph Hooker.
- A bronze life-size sculpture of Joseph Hooker.

Our other plans include:

- Continuation of the ten-year programme of town bulb planting (10,000 per year).
- Maintaining all communal areas that HIB is now caring for: Market Place & Thoroughfare planters, Community Herb Garden, Memorial Garden, Halesworth Station, Town Park entrance beds, Hooker House planters, London Road recesses, Queens Road entrance bed, the roundabouts, Town Sign planters, Closed Cemetery White Beds and hanging baskets and keeping graves clear of brambles, scrub and undergrowth.
- Delivering on the Town Park Five Year Action Plan – information boards, seating and entrance notice board and signs. Working to achieve a Community Green Flag Award.
- Creating a winter garden in the Town Park.
- Supporting and developing our Children’s Allotment Club.
- Entering and participating in Anglia in Bloom events by raising the bar in all three areas: Horticultural Excellence, Biodiversity and Conservation, and Community Participation.
- Supporting Beech House Alzheimer’s Garden, The Limes sheltered housing residents, the Brownies, and the Millennium Green Volunteers.
- Continuing the Halesworth Open Gardens scheme to raise money for charities.
- Improving our fundraising activities.