

Irthington Village: Britain in Bloom Finalist and Cumbria in Bloom Entrant 2022.

What Happened Next.

In February 2022 we learned that we were Finalists in the National Competition of Britain in Bloom as well as entering the Cumbria in Bloom's Pride in Your Community Award.

As a community, there was an awful lot to do. It was going to take the whole village and more to achieve what had only began a few months earlier, thanks to Danny Poland, who entered Irthington into Cumbria in Bloom 2021 with the theme 'Help Our Pollinators.'

It was all a bit of a whirlwind to get up to speed with the level expected for a national stage. St Kentigern's Church and friend's was at the heart of the village and our entry, as was Irthington Village School, and the community who came together with time, support, and much needed help!

The theme was Nature's Friends and what happened to support this was out of this world amazing.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust donated one of 100 community packs of 150 wildflowers, part of a County initiative during one week called The Big Plant. The whole of Irthington Village School came to plant the wildflower plugs and they did the most incredible job. A beautiful bespoke metal bench was gifted so people could enjoy the wild flowers and have a seat when visiting the churchyard.

Carlisle County Council supported us with a £1000 grant and we received a lot of practical support from our Parish Council, the City Council and our wonderful MP Dr Neil Hudson.

Brampton and Longtown Rotary Club supported Irthington Village School to help the village for the second year in a row.

A Pocketful of Herbs was created from 2 pallets made by Andy Booth of Irthing Joinery. It looked sensational and was placed on the parish corner. Anyone could take a few herbs to cook their meal, and replace it with herbs for others to share. Andy also maintained the communal bench making it look as good as new. The tree in this area was used to hang eco wooden discs for Wildlife Wishes and Environmental Hopes. Every young person in the school and village received a disc and the tree looked especially beautiful, with many inspirational designs and words hanging from it.

Plants chosen to support and benefit our local wildlife were planted by Danny in the parish corner and in planters around the village, the largest being the Signature planter, situated on the main way in, entering from the airport.

The 'We Support Ukraine' border was created on the Village Green with a planter nearby. A 'Plant and Picnic' was organised with our incredible young people who gave up their spare time to come and help. This was a really special activity and they did us proud.

Irthington Village School were outstanding in their efforts to support their village. A garden survey was handed to every resident with results collected and conclusions given. An art competition, discs designed for the tree, their own school garden filled with wildlife friendly plants. A visit from the RSPB to teach the children about Giving Nature a Home and built bird boxes with the children, helped by the community, with ages ranging from 3-85!

Gwenny Gummidge asked nature questions and was found at the pond, looking at the clouds and was even discovered up an apple tree. Planters and plants as well as hanging baskets were placed in the playground and along the front fence, which definitely gave the Wow! Factor.

A new bin replaced an old rusty one, helping to make our village look its very best. Our MP Dr Neil Hudson offered us his 100% support, (the only MP to be involved in any of the villages in Britain in Bloom) and he stepped in when it looked like we would be let down by a footpath sign with letters missing. Thanks to him, it was changed in the nick of time and we were ready at last to represent the village category for Cumbria.

On a shoestring of a budget, but with the most generous amount of time, help and gifts, judging day was catching up with us.

The village was kept looking spick and span with regular litter picking, some fabulous volunteers did an outstanding job.

Gardens in Irthington were filled with colours, pots and baskets and looked out of this world lovely.

The Churchyard Volunteers keep St Kentigern's churchyard immaculate all year round, year in, year out. For Britain in Bloom and Cumbria in Bloom's judges, this meant that even more time and attention was given. The churchyard could not have looked better.

Irthington WI were celebrating their 100th anniversary and put together an exquisite display inside the church. Brampton Flower Club transformed the font, decorating it with a diverse range of local flora and fauna, it looked magnificent.

A floral display on a pedestal at the front of church was stunning. Martin Mynott produced a very interesting and well researched History of Irthington display. The church sparkled from all of the care and cleaning. The refreshments were outstanding, homemade by the community and beautifully served by the Church Committee and residents.

Cumbria in Bloom judging day came and went, followed by the big one!

Ian Beaney and Dale Hector were the Britain in Bloom judges for the Village Category. They really were fabulous and it was a pleasure to show them what everyone had accomplished.

The results are as follows:

CUMBRIA IN BLOOM.....GOLD!

BRITAIN IN BLOOM.....SILVER GILT!

A huge well done and enormous thanks to everyone involved. What a year! Who would have believed we could pull it off in the shortest of time (unprecedented in the history of Britain in Bloom, it usually takes a place 4/5 years to achieve the level required), and was only reached because so many people gave so kindly and generously in every way needed. An absolutely great result. Thanks to all.

