

Barrow in Bloom 2024



Introduction

Barrow in Bloom volunteers have worked hard on various projects since the EMIB judges were in the village 3 years ago. They have responded to the observations made by the judges, continued with plans detailed in the 2021 portfolio and implemented many fresh ideas.

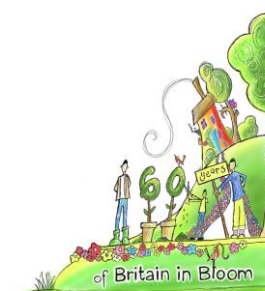
Established village groups such as The Footpath Group, Community Litter Pickers and Wild About Barrow continue to go from strength to strength.

Barrow in Bloom continues to work closely with Barrow upon Soar Parish Council, The Canal and River Trust, Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council.

The Gardening group who for many years have maintained Jerusalem Island has recently disbanded and Barrow in Bloom and the Parish Council are now responsible for keeping up the good work and ensuring that this village feature remains the colourful centre of our village.

Location and Topic of Display Boards	
Deep Lock and Riverside View	Before the areas were 'bloomed up'
King George V Field	Volunteers making a difference
Holy Trinity and Peace Garden	Installation of Swift Boxes and the expansion of the rose beds
Railway Station	Platform 2 future artwork before Platform 1 was beautified
The Scout Hut	Before the major landscaping and new shed

The Barrow in Bloom Committee would like to thank local artist Stuart Pawley who has kindly created artwork for this portfolio.



Review of Judges Observations (2019 observations that were outstanding 2021) – updates

Horticultural Achievement:

- ✓ 2019 - Bench to be added at the WI Garden (Now called the Nott Garden) - an existing village bench was relocated after a new bench celebrating how the village came together during covid was put in place by Marans Garden.
- ✓ 2019/2021 - Marans Garden to be enhanced - French Lavender has been added and costs are being researched for an information board for the anniversary year in 2026.
- ✓ 2021 - Bulbs at Deep Lock - photos have been included in the 2024 portfolio.
- ✓ 2021 - Colour theme to be consistent - the colours of yellow, pink and purple are used in all displays in the village.



Environmental Responsibility:

- ✓ 2019 - Water supply to Jerusalem Island - has now been installed. The Nott Garden has been relocated further forward from the Hornbeam trees to aid with natural rain watering and has been very successful.
- ✓ 2019 - Compost mulch to be used - recycled household garden waste compost from a local farmer has been used on Veolia at Jerusalem Island, Nott Garden, and the War Memorial in recent years.
- ✓ 2019/2021 - Harvesting rain water - water butts are used for King George V Sensory Gardens; The High Street planters and a new one will be installed at the Railway Station.
- ✓ 2021 - Demonstrate wildlife activity - artwork at the Railway Station will incorporate local wildlife.
- ✓ 2021 - Deep Lock notice board – this displays information on when/why the canal was established.
- ✓ 2021 - Deep Lock hide from view – the project development is ongoing.
- ✓ 2021 - Weeds in road - Leicestershire County Council weed sprayed the village in the middle of June.
- ✓ 2021 - Judges to view some recycling projects - all of Deep Locks planters are made with second hand decking donated to the group.

Community Participation:

- ✓ 2021 - Permanent information boards - plaques acknowledging the contributions made by volunteers are on display at King George V Sensory Gardens, Barrow Railway Station, Riverside View and Deep Lock.
- ✓ 2021 - Fossil Trail - leaflets will be given to the judges on the visit.



Deep Lock-- The Grand Union Canal

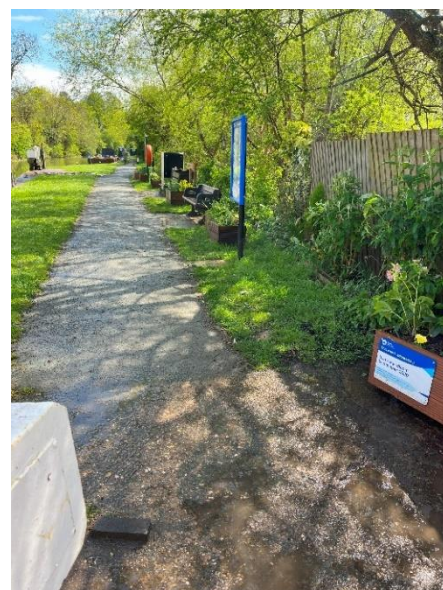
Volunteers began looking after **Barrow Deep Lock** in 2021 under a Partner Group agreement with The Canal and River Trust (CRT). Plastic containers in all shapes and sizes were replaced with wooden planters made by the volunteers using recycled/donated decking boards from residents and businesses. An additional bench was donated by the Parish Council in 2022 and the existing bench was refurbished.



Before work began February 2021



Green Flag Award – initially awarded in July 2022, then again in July 2023, with volunteers hoping to have it awarded for a 3rd successive year in 2024



After towpath upgrade May 2024

In July 2022 the lock area was part of a 40km section of the River Soar that won a Green Flag Award. The award was retained for 2023/2024 and results from the 2024/2025 inspection are expected soon.

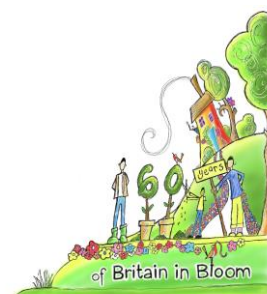
The towpath in front of the lock was upgraded in 2023 by Bloom volunteers working alongside the Canal and River Trust Loughborough Towpath Taskforce Volunteers.



Spring bulbs February 2024

Further repairs along the village section of the towpath are ongoing.

Judges will be shown this site during their tour.



Riverside View – River Entrance to the Village

Riverside View is a great example of how volunteers work closely with local businesses and Charnwood Borough Council to improve village areas. Prior to October 2021 this space was weed infested and very unsightly. Volunteers began to make improvements by adding new planters, refurbishing the benches, and painting railings, but much more was needed. For several months they spent endless hours removing weeds and gravel using only hand tools. In June 2022 local businesses Bespoke Landscaping and Fencing and JRC Landscaping/Driveways and Groundworks stepped forward to help and a total transformation was made.

The gravel was removed and replaced with 20 tonnes of top soil which was then seeded and the paths were topped with fresh grano dust. All materials, plant hire and labour were donated by other local businesses and work was completed in a single day.

Volunteers take turns each week between May and September to weed and water the planters which now contain a selection of perennial and annual plants. Planters and benches are stained and painted each year.

Masses of spring bulbs such as Daffodils, Snow drops and Crocuses have been planted in recent years.

A Memorial Bench, which replaced an existing bench, has quickly filled with named plaques and provides a welcome place of reflection for many residents.

Renaming of Riverside View - A village competition was held to decide on a new name for the area and '**Riverside View**' was selected from over 400 entries.



Volunteers laying the topsoil June 2022



Weeds and gravel Oct 2021



Memorial Bench March 2024 with spring bulbs behind



Dogwoods for winter colour



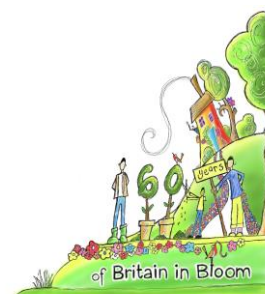
Spring bulbs brightening the area



Parish Council Planters – A High Street Feature

The Parish Council considered replacing the current High Street planters with self-watering ones. These were found to be very expensive and self-watering systems were installed as a simpler, better, more affordable option.

New summer bedding was added to the planters, including Petunias, Geranium Cherry Blossom, Cineraria Silver Dust and some French Lavender Lavita White. A mixture of spring bulbs, Daffodils and Tulips were taken out and will be reused at the Cemetery. A water butt has also been installed at the back of the Parish Council Office which will be used to keep the Planters watered throughout the summer.



Jerusalem Island – The Centre of the Village

Jerusalem Island was gifted to the Parish Council in 1952 to mark the Queen's Coronation. It has been maintained by volunteers since the late 1980's. Unfortunately, Barrow Gardening Club who looked after the island in recent years disbanded in early 2024, but the same volunteers have continued to care for the island. They meet monthly as a group and often weekly in pairs to tend to the planting. A water tap has recently been installed to keep the garden green during the drier summer months and a new hand rail has been added to the steps as a safety measure.

The Gardening Club have bequested two teak memorial benches to Barrow to commemorate their long standing contribution to the village.

Judges will be shown this site during their tour.



'The Kipper' Monument on Jerusalem Island



The Cemetery, Cotes Road – A much needed Extension

Background

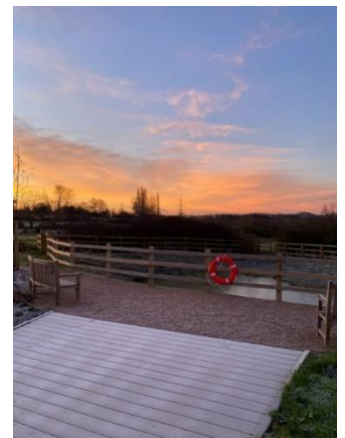
The Parish Council were tasked with extending the Cotes Road Cemetery because it was running out of space. Land adjacent to the Cemetery was purchased in December 2019 for this purpose. A committee was formed to take the extension project forward and the design was created by Cemetery Development Services and work completed by contractor idverde.



Work started in February 2022 and was completed by June that year. A major drainage alteration was required to reduce waterlogging and was achieved by installing a detention pond and 2 pumps. As a result, drainage has also improved in the existing cemetery areas. There have been some teething problems as the sides of the pond were built too steeply and started to collapse. A geo mesh has now been

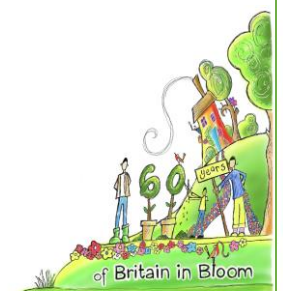
installed to alleviate the problem and a new land drain installed to channel water from an existing drain which was discovered during the project work.

The Cemetery can be dry and windy due to its location and planting was planned to cope with these conditions. Prairie plants such as grasses were planted and their progress is being monitored. There are two main wildflower beds with natural paths specially mown into them. 119 new burial spaces have been created which will help to secure the Cemetery for the future.



The Cemetery is maintained by a contractor and a small group of volunteers help to look after the flower beds. The Cemetery Chapel is used for small funerals and is also opened up on special days such as Mother's Day and Father's Day. We also hold a ceremony at the Chapel on Armistice Day and lay wreaths on the soldier's graves in the Cemetery.

Judges will be shown this site during their tour.



King George V Park – A Sensory Experience

In 2021 volunteers began maintaining the **Sensory Gardens**. Over the winter of 2021/22 many of the overgrown perennials and shrubs were removed.

The following summer a Community Event was organised and a huge selection of donated plants and shrubs were planted into all three sections of the garden. Since then, volunteers have been gradually increasing the range of planting and visit the garden most weeks during spring and summer to weed and water.

Tarmac (Mountsorrel) recently donated 2 pieces of granite to hold plaques that recognise the contributions made by the volunteers.

Daffodils were planted during family community events and flower either side of the gardens each spring.

Judges will be shown this site during their tour.



Community Event July 2022



October 2023



Rudbeckia October 2023



Dahlia October 23



Hellebores Spring 2024



Spring 2024

The Rose Beds at Holy Trinity Church

Work on transforming the area began in 2021 after permission was granted by the Leicester Diocese. During September and October, the volunteers removed weeds, planted numerous Rozanne Geraniums and rescued some of the existing roses.

Geraniums were chosen for their low maintenance characteristics and volunteers attend to weed the beds on a monthly basis.



Removing the weeds in early October 2021



Planting up October 2021

Volunteers have refurbished the 4 benches surrounding the flower beds and re-stain them each year. They also cut the boundary hedges every year and will plant more Roses into the beds during 2024.

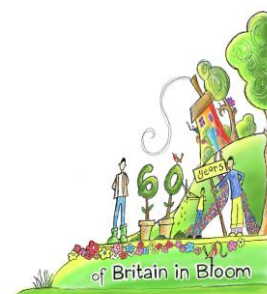
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Beds in May 2023



Volunteers weeding May 2024



Barrow Railway Station – Keeping it Pink



Our Big Pink Planters - installed June 2023

Platform 1: After months of delays due to difficulties gaining essential permissions, work eventually started in September 2023. Volunteers were able to install over 60m of planters using sleepers to create a front edge along the original platform kerb. The sleepers were back filled with soil. All materials including nearly 100 sleepers and 12 tonnes of recycled topsoil were moved down the 42 steps by hand.

The gardening team researched the most suitable planting to reflect their vision and planting began in October 2023. Further planting is planned for summer 2024 using a selection of perennials. The area receives full sun throughout the year but is protected by large overhead trees.

Platform 2: Between August 2022 and May 2023 volunteers painted 60m of fencing to create a tidy backdrop to new artwork by local artist and volunteer Stewart Pawley. The artwork will be painted with the help of various community groups.

Permission for one test piece was received in summer 2023 and Barrow Scouts painted the raised flowers in this first 3D artwork depicting local wildlife. This is being monitored to see how it copes with the weather and fence loading tests have been carried out to assess whether they can create more artwork.



Image of half of the planned artwork



Test art work



Barrow Scouts also helped to create our **Routes of Remembrance Artwork** in conjunction with seven other groups and this can be seen at the Station. It forms part of a larger artwork that can be seen at Derby and Nottingham Railway Stations.

Judges will be shown this site during their tour.



The Scout Hut Grounds – Volunteers and Community Coming Together



In 2022 a group of volunteers formed to maintain and improve the Scout's historical HQ building and grounds on Grove Lane. In 2023 a huge project commenced to replace the old shed and landscape the gardens. Demolition of the old shed and renovation of the outside of the main building was carried out by the volunteers. A Victorian cobbled path that served the original cottages on the plot was unearthed, removed and repurposed to form the new flag pole circle and the path on the John Wilford Memorial Garden.

The rear lawn was levelled and new borders formed, with extensive planting carried out and wild poppy seeding on the front and railway borders. Plants and shrubs were donated by local residents and businesses including B & Q, Dobbies and Waitrose. The Scouts made bug houses for the front fence and a water butt was installed. Garden benches were purchased with a £500 grant from British Gypsum.



View from the bottom of the garden



View from the top of the garden



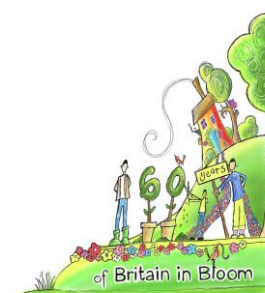
Newly installed picnic benches purchased with a grant from British Gypsum



Victorian granite setts



Victorian granite setts repurposed



Millenium Park

There has been a focus on developing biodiversity in three areas of the park as follows:

1. A new bed has been developed at the entrance to Millenium Park and a warden appointed to oversee its success. Volunteers prepared the ground and sowed a mix of 23 different British native species, including perennial and annual seeds recommended by the RHS as perfect for pollinators. One hundred and fifty spring flowering bulbs were planted including Winter Aconites, Bluebells and Snowdrops. Also, Foxgloves and Cornflowers were planted and added to the wonderfully colourful display. Viper's Bugloss has been sown ready to plant out this summer and will provide a valuable food source for Hoverflies, Honeybees and Wild Bees.



Community Event sowing wildflowers and seeds April 2023

2. A 'wavy bed' on the bank in the centre of the park was introduced in October 2021 and continues to delight with a range of native plants including Primroses, Meadow Cranesbills, Oxeye Daisies and Yellow Rattle. Volunteers have secured permission and funding from the Parish Council to extend and resow the wave in October 2024.



The Wave in May/June 2023

3. At the bottom of the park is another wildflower area. This area was largely forgotten and left to its own devices. Work has been carried out to reduce the dominance of a garden escape Geranium and British native seeds were sown earlier in the year to enhance the biodiversity of this grassy area. The bordering trees and hedges have been managed to allow in more sunlight and the resulting cuttings made into brash piles to create another habitat.



Primrose Millennium Park March 2024



Clearing overgrowing tree branches from old wildflower area Dec 23



Nott Garden and Library Planters – A shady spot to take a break

The Nott Garden - This small raised garden on Nottingham Road has been looked after by various groups in recent years. It was transferred from the Girl Guides to the Women's Institute in 2014 and then to Barrow in Bloom assisted by two volunteers from the Women's Institute in 2023.

The garden was in a challenging location, being heavily shaded by two hornbeam trees. With agreement from Charnwood Borough Council, the garden was moved forward a few metres in order to benefit from more sun light and rainwater. Most of the plants were saved for the new site and approximately 3 tonnes of soil was removed for recycling at the Railway Station. The old site was levelled and reseeded with grasses and wildflower seeds.

In April 2023 the new site, just in front of the recently relocated village bench, was dug over and replanted using many of the plants from the previous garden, including two Centenary Rose bushes originally planted by the WI. More perennials have been added since to provide year-round colour.



April 2023 – new site dug over and rose bushes replanted



April 2024

The Library Planters - The library became the first Community Library in 2015 and volunteers built the planters. Library volunteers plant various displays throughout the year with others taking turns to water and weed. The wooden planter is painted each spring to keep it looking fresh.



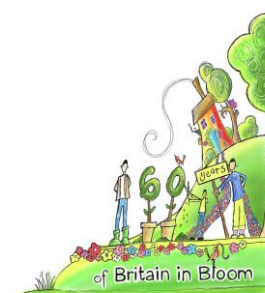
May 2024 – planter next to fossil in front of Community Library



June 2024 – in front of Community Library



Library planters – a different view



Environmental Responsibility

Woodchip is donated every year by Charnwood Borough Council and Tindle Tree Care. Used at King George V Sensory Garden, on the Holy Trinity Church Rose Beds and Barrow Railway Station, it restricts weed growth, helps moisture retention and enhances the appearance of our green spaces.

Watering is done by hand using recycled water where possible. At King George V Sensory Gardens, a local resident has installed a water butt and garden waste recycling bin for use by our volunteers. Water is also donated by local business Eaton Electrical. The Parish Council's water butt and self-watering systems are used on the High Street planters. At Barrow Railway Station a water butt will be installed, but at the moment water is kindly supplied by a nearby resident. The Big Pink Railway Station Planters are fitted with water reservoirs.

At Riverside View, Deep Lock and Deep Lock Approach there is an agreement with the Canal and River Trust to draw water from the canal to water the planters, which is done by hand by volunteers on a rota basis.

Only peat free compost is used for planting and 12 tonnes of recycled compost was used for the Railway Station Planters. Recycled garden waste is supplied by a farmer for Veolia at Jerusalem Island, Nott Garden, and the War Memorial Garden.

Rivers are kept clear of Pennywort and rubbish by our volunteers.

Charnwood Borough Council Relaxed mowing trials

The Council look after more than 900 acres of open spaces across Charnwood. As part of their commitment to the local environment, they are undertaking a three-year trial to help increase biodiversity in 16 green spaces across the borough. From May 2024, they will be reducing mowing in four specific locations in Barrow. They aim to attract more wildlife, such as bees and butterflies and other invertebrates, which in turn attracts birds and mammals to the areas.

Their partner idverde will mow each of these areas twice a year instead of sixteen times. These areas are not parks, or playing fields, they are pieces of open land in the Council's ownership. The total area involved is around 21 acres, around 2% of the open spaces we manage. All the areas included in the trial



are owned by the Council and were chosen following recommendations by an ecology consultant. Information signs will be placed at the sites to make residents and visitors aware of this biodiversity project.

The Council will continue to mow around the trial areas to ensure that they do not become overgrown. A decision will be made following the trial on whether it will be extended and expanded to further open spaces in Charnwood. The trial is not expected to make a financial saving.

Wild About Barrow Group – ‘Think Global Act Local’

Wild About Barrow was established four years ago in response to the nature emergency faced by the world. It has three aims:

**Wild
About
Barrow**

- to increase biodiversity.
- to encourage residents to participate in activities supporting these aims.
- to increase understanding and knowledge of the living world.

Regular nature notes are posted on their Facebook page and the Parish Website to connect with villagers and anyone else interested in their work. They aim to involve and inform people about how they can contribute to increasing biodiversity and see the steps being taken to improve this, celebrate wildlife through photographs, delve a little deeper into topics such as the world wide web and give suggestions on what to do and see in the area.

NatureSpot
wildlife and wild places of Leicestershire & Rutland

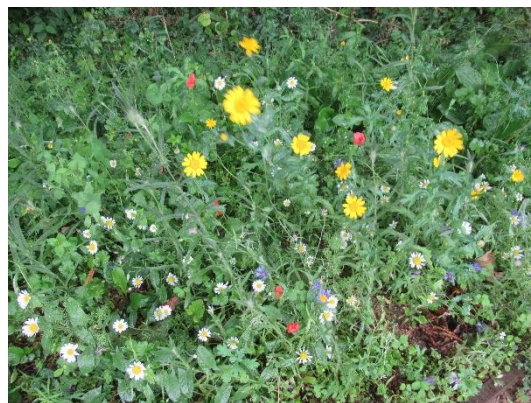
Cotes Road Verge

This verge was adopted by **Wild About Barrow** in 2022 and graded ‘good’ by Nature Spot.

Last year Radio Leicester visited the site during a seed sowing and planting session as part of their series of programmes on volunteering.

The verge is large and tricky to manage so a warden has been appointed to help ensure that they continue to monitor and improve biodiversity.

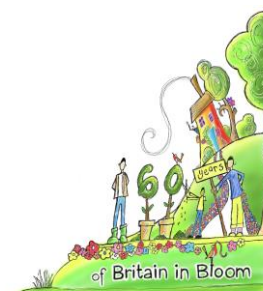
Foxgloves were planted in spring together with Greater Stitchwort, Pink Campion and Betony, which were grown on from plug plants last year. In addition, Yellow Rattle was sown to reduce the vigour of the grass and develop a more diverse flora and fauna.



British native annuals and perennials



*Hoverfly on bindweed,
Cotes Road verge*



Barrow Greener Living – “Lets Live a Greener Life”

Barrow Greener Living is an initiative aimed at encouraging environmental sustainability in Barrow upon Soar. The group's mission is to improve awareness and support for projects that positively impact biodiversity, local food production, recycling, plastic waste reduction, and clean energy. Their objectives are multifaceted, including community engagement at local events, publicising their cause through articles, acting as a source of information on green living initiatives, and raising funds through grants and donations. They work collaboratively with other groups to exchange information and run an effective group.



Space for insects and grandchildren!

Membership is open to all who share the group's vision, ensuring inclusivity across gender, race, nationality, disability, sexual preference, religion, or belief. Each member has a voice, with the right to vote on issues that shape the group's direction. For those interested in joining or learning more about their activities, Barrow Greener Living maintains a presence on social media and offers resources like the 'Save Energy - Save Money' booklet, which provides practical tips for reducing energy consumption and carbon footprints at home, the Heat Loss Survey project which uses a thermal camera to detect areas of heat loss in people's homes and a poster competition encouraging children at a local school to produce artwork about walking to school.

Artistic Villages Coming Together to Help the Bats

In summer 2023 a well attended Bat Box Workshop was held by the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group. idverde and the RSPB

demonstrated how to assemble the boxes. Participants decorated the boxes before going on a guided bat walk, where three species of bat were detected. Fourteen Bat Boxes were installed around the village in locations advised by experts, adding to the five boxes installed last year.





Holy Trinity – Providing a Home for Swifts

The idverde/RSPB partnership is running a project to install Swift boxes into suitable church towers throughout the Midlands to support their declining population. Swifts have suffered a 58% population decline over 25 years (1993-2018), mainly due to a lack of viable nesting sites to return to after a migration of up to 4000 miles.

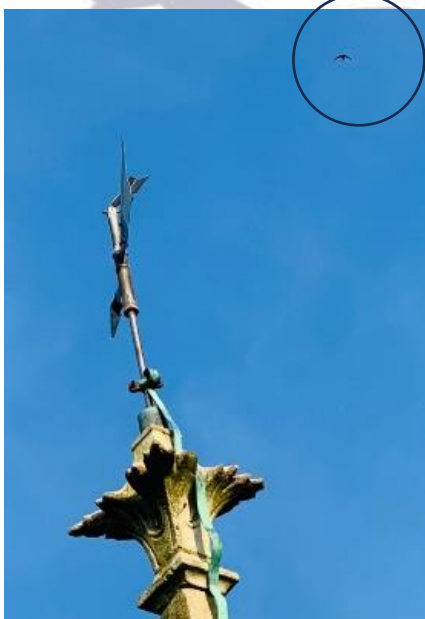
Swifts have become accustomed to nesting in man-made structures, but modern building methods and materials are making it difficult for them to gain access to small holes, gaps and 'nooks' in roofs, walls and cavities.



Churches are providing Swifts with a life-line because they prefer to nest at height (generally over 5 metres), in concealed places away from disturbance. Easily accessible louvre systems in church towers provide the ideal places for man-made nesting boxes.



idverde working in partnership with Barrow Upon Soar, Holy Trinity Church, Barrow in Bloom and Charnwood Borough Council fitted ten boxes to the church tower in April this year. This followed a process of assessing the suitability of the church tower, health and safety requirements and obtaining all the necessary permissions from the Diocese and PCC. A solar power Swift caller was attached to the flag pole to help attract and alert returning Swifts to the newly installed boxes.

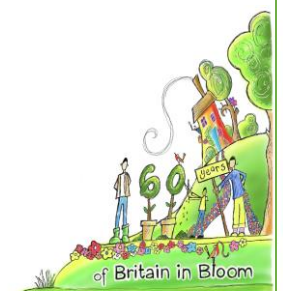


Swift flying over church tower

Various other bird boxes have also been sited around the village, these include Robin/Wren, Blue Tit and Great Tit boxes and also six Starling boxes donated by the RSPB.



Starling box King George V Park



Litter Picking-- A Community coming together for a Cleaner Village

From groups to individuals and families, litter picking is a growing pastime for our villagers.



Clearing away flood rubbish Mar 24

The Litter picking Group has been running since 2019, originally hosting well attended family events across the village which were supported by The Soar Bridge Inn who provided post pick refreshments for all.

After 2020 the monthly group meetings became adult based as village schools and children's groups began to offer their own group activities. They also have regular 'solo' pickers that keep the village areas tidy as well as all roads into the village clear of rubbish.

'The Great British Spring (or September) Clean' events are well supported and help to keep larger areas of Barrow free of litter.

Extensive flooding and storms brought a huge amount of rubbish down river during the winter of 2023/24 and the group cleared over 120 bags of rubbish as a result. Charnwood Borough Council and The Canal and River Trust kindly provided support by removing the waste from site.



The Footpaths Group – Keeping the Paths and Jitties Accessible and Beautiful



Clearing Church Lane in May 2024



Buttermere Way to Stancliffe Lane

The Group has been running since late 2018 and regularly has 10-12 volunteers. Working groups of volunteers are run every 2 weeks except between June and August when they get together every week to try to keep on top of the new growth.

Excellent support is received from partner agencies such as Barrow Parish Council, Charnwood Borough Council, The Canal and River Trust and this year they have a pilot scheme with Leicestershire County Council.

The group also look after many of the green spaces around the village.

Creating Hedgerows

This project started in September 2021 and is one where the group put trees in the ground rather than cutting them back. Ten volunteers worked on the footpath linking Buttermere Way and Strancliffe Lane, adding a great mix of approximately fifty saplings to the hedgerow. Dogwood, Hazel, Hawthorn, Wildcherry and Rowan donated by idverde and Charnwood Borough Council in their Autumn Tree Giveaway were interspersed among the existing plants. The saplings were safely overwintered and in April were planted with cane supports and guards to help protect them from mowing machinery.

The Pennywort Group – Intrepidly Tackling the Invasion



Water based volunteers in August 2023

This group formed in 2023 to try to keep the local waterways free of invasive Pennywort which can clog the Rivers and Canals, preventing navigation, but also reducing oxygen and light in the water for wildlife. The group have equipment provided by the Canal and River Trust, and this year have also been able to partner with British Canoeing, Paddle UK and Leicestershire Outdoor Pursuits Centre.



The Railway Station Adoption Group – A Village of Pink Warriors

Volunteers began looking after the station in 2022 with the aim of brightening the place up with colourful planting and artwork. Initially the group met on at least one Sunday a month.

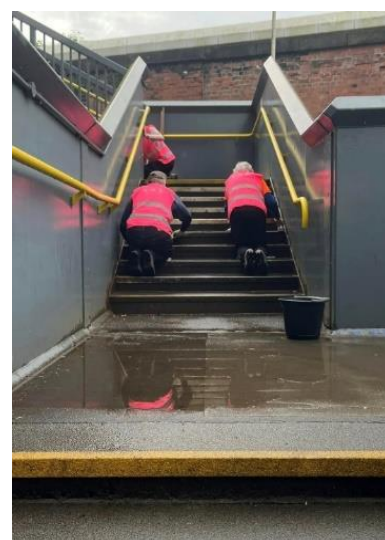
The gardening team have a rota for weekly watering and weeding while the plants settle in, and also meet up monthly to discuss how the plants are faring in the conditions – hot and sunny whilst sheltered from rain by overhead trees.



Completing the fence painting May 2023



In June this year they were contacted by BBC East Midlands to take part in a news item to promote the East Midlands Railway Adopt a Station initiative. Knowing the benefits it can bring to a small station, the group were happy to help. Bill and Andrew two of the volunteer team took on the daunting challenge of a tv interview.



Cleaning the steps June 2024

