

ASH IN BLOOM



South West in Bloom Portfolio 2017

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Introduction

Our Village

Ash is a small rural village in South Somerset set on high ground on the southern edge of the Somerset Levels. At the time of the 2011 Census there were 261 households with a total population of 626 including the surrounding hamlets of Milton, Witcombe, Highway and Durnfield, all of which are in the Parish. Given our close proximity to the old Fosse Way there is thought to have been people living around here since Roman times.



As in most Somerset villages, the church and pub are close together on the highest ground. The Bell Inn is one of the oldest buildings, parts of which date back to the late 16th Century.

Holy Trinity Church by comparison is much younger, it's foundation stone was not laid until 1840. The first schoolroom was erected soon after in 1846. The schoolroom was used for village functions until the Village Hall was built in 1960.



Today, Ash also has a thriving Primary School, Pre-School, Recreation Ground, Pavilion and Children's Play Area. The Pavilion and Village Hall provide a choice of venues for village activities.



Main Street runs through the village.



Back Street and Burrough Street form a loop off Main Street where many historic buildings can be found.



Thanks to the efforts of dedicated volunteers, The Millennium Wood provides a natural amenity for the whole village right on our own doorstep.



Ash in Bloom - Our Short Journey



Ash in Bloom was set up very recently. A small group of residents got together with ideas for bringing the village together in a community effort to improve and maintain the overall appearance of our village. The first meeting of the group only took place in March 2017.

A Steering Group was formed and Antoinette Groves, the driving force behind the project, was appointed Ash in Bloom Co-ordinator.



With Ash Parish Council's backing we entered Ash into the South West Regional 2017 RHS Britain in Bloom. Going from a standing start with little funding and only four months to judgement day was always going to be a big challenge. However, we decided to go for it as it would provide a structure and sense of urgency to what we wanted to achieve.

Building on the Work of Others

Following the introduction of traffic calming measures along Main Street a few years ago, a small group of residents raised sufficient funds to purchase a number of planters that were installed along Main Street. Thanks to their hard work, additional colour and interest had been added along the main road running through the village and around the Pavilion. Ash in Bloom set out to support their efforts and to build on what they had already achieved.



First Year Objectives

- Prepare Action Plan for tidying, cleaning and brightening key spots in the village
- Because of lack of time and money, focus on extending the existing planting along Main Street
- Launch Ash in Bloom Competitions
- Have some fun



Story boards were used to develop our plans and to communicate our ideas and objectives when engaging with others.



Volunteers cleaned street signs, bollards and other street furniture.



Funding and Support

In four months we raised £1,026 in cash, £716 of which came from **Ash Parish Council**. We also obtained material assistance to the value of £384. Many, thanks to the following local businesses and organisations for their support.

Ash Parish Council

Howdens Joinery Co.

Morrisons

Paull's of Martock

Bradfords Building Supplies

Mole Valley Farmers

South Somerset District Council

Western Decorating Supplies

Tesco

Yeovil Fencing Centre

Yeovil Town Football Club

RRT Rapid Relief Team

Glen Prince of Great Britain

Palmers Garden Centre



District Council Support



Our thanks go to South Somerset District Council for responding to our requests for additional support. We also want to thank their Horticultural Team for their advice and encouragement.



First Year Review

March

- Ash in Bloom proposed by Antoinette Groves
- Ash Parish Council commits initial funding
- First Steering Group Meeting



April

- Second Steering Group Meeting
- Action Plan agreed
- Local businesses approached for sponsorship
- Plants and new pole-planters ordered



May

- First village clean and tidy-up day
- Kid's Craft Morning and fundraiser
- Third Steering Group Meeting



June

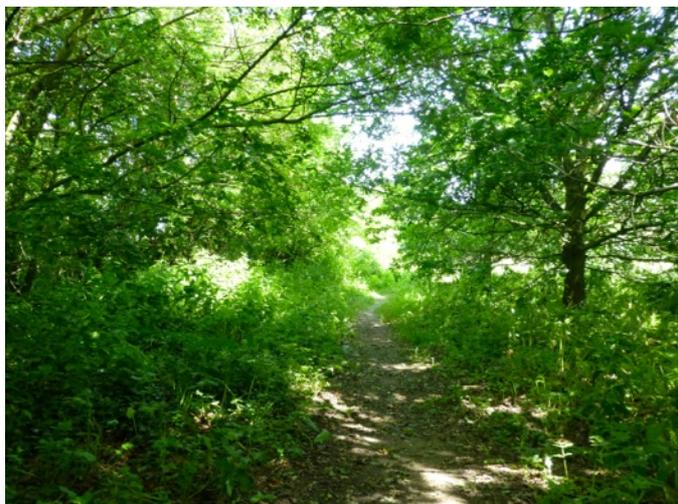
- Existing planters planted
- Ash in Bloom Competitions launched
- New pole-planters installed
- Spots on Main Street planted
- Fergus Dowding's History Walk & Talk around the village
- Alzheimer's Cupcake Day at Village Hall
- Fourth Steering Group Meeting
- Creative work installed around the village
- New ground and railing planters installed



Environmental Responsibility

The Millennium Wood

In the year 2000, to commemorate the new Millennium, the villagers of Ash got together to plan and plant a new wood for the benefit of the village. The site was 4 acres of rough grassland close to Ash Primary School. The land was purchased by Ash Parish Council from Somerset County Council.



The 120 trees planted by volunteers included beach, oak, cherry, birch, rowan, willow, field and Norway maple, horse chestnut, yew and hazel. The site was left to fend for itself over the next decade. The trees grew well but scrub, rough grass, nettles and hogweed became predominant.

Four years ago the Parish Council agreed to appoint a manager for the wood. A strategy for the development and maintenance of the wood was prepared, It's main aims are Amenity - Nature Conservation - Community Involvement - Sustainability.



Volunteers were sought and funding obtained from a variety of sources. Under the leadership of wood manager Mick Wooden, diverse habitats have been created.

With careful management the overgrown grassland is being transformed into a wildflower meadow.



Ash Primary School pupils help sow wildflowers.



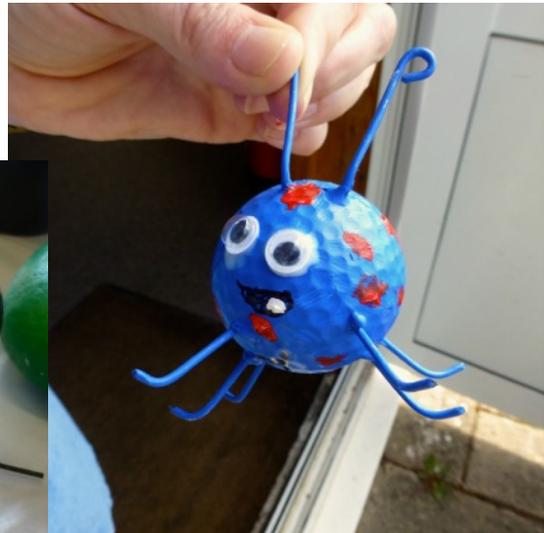
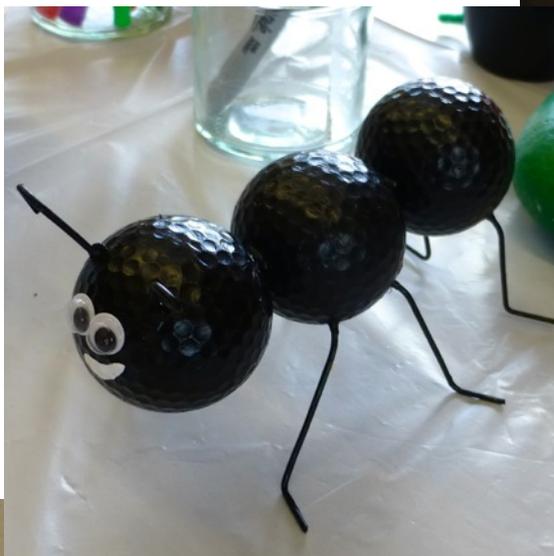
Bird and bat boxes and bug-hotels are installed as part of the nature conservation programme. More trees, hedgerows and woodland bulbs continue to be planted.



Recycling

Through our own actions we try where possible to minimise demands placed on natural resources and harmful impacts made on the environment. We support others who share these aims.

Old golf balls become giant ants at the Ash in Bloom Kid's Craft Morning.



Ash Craft Group turned unwanted fabric into "jellyfish" tree mobiles for our public displays and used compost bags into decorations for the Play Area fence.



A decommissioned phone box was converted into Ash Book Exchange.



Why burn it? Ivy and yew from the churchyard becomes mulch for young trees in the Millennium Woods.



Ash participates in the District Council's Christmas tree recycling scheme.

Local Heritage



Local historian Fergus Dowding lead's a History Walk and Talk around Ash organised by Ash in Bloom.



Enhancing Our Environment



Repairing



Painting



Cleaning

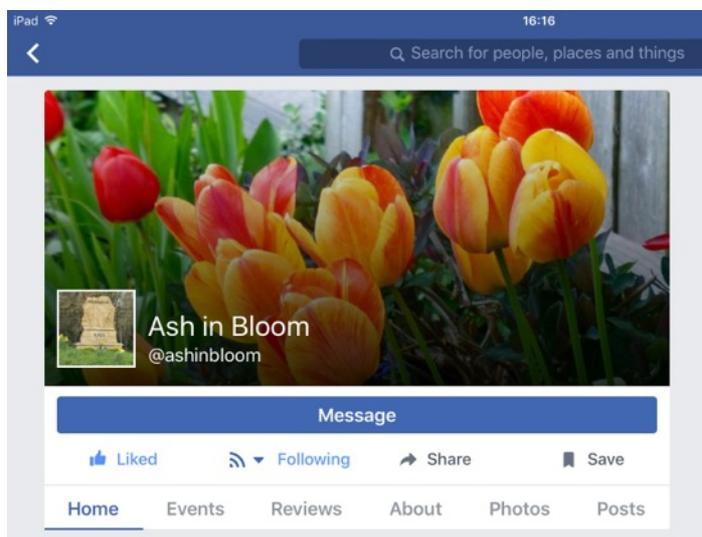


Litter Picking

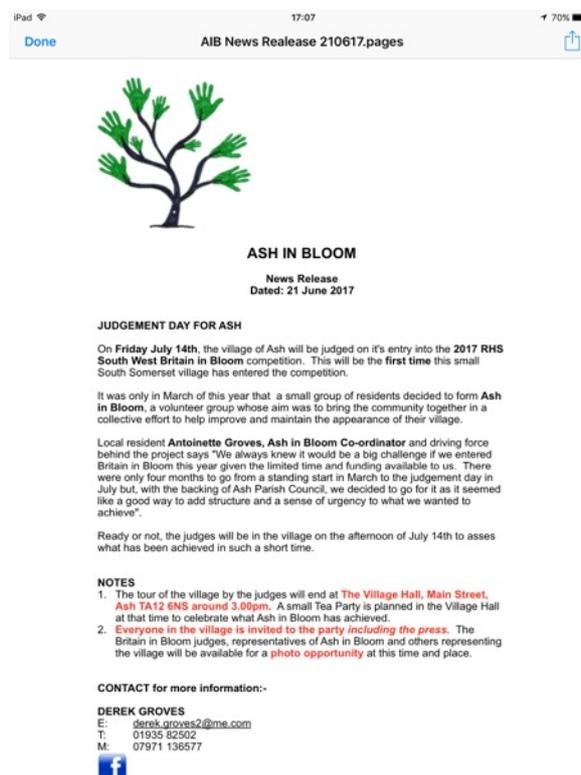
Community Participation

Spreading the Word

Ash in Bloom has used the Ash Newsletter, social media, email, the local press and village notice boards to increase awareness of its aims and activities and its need to recruit volunteers, supporters and sponsorship.



Follow *Ash in Bloom* on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/ashinbloom



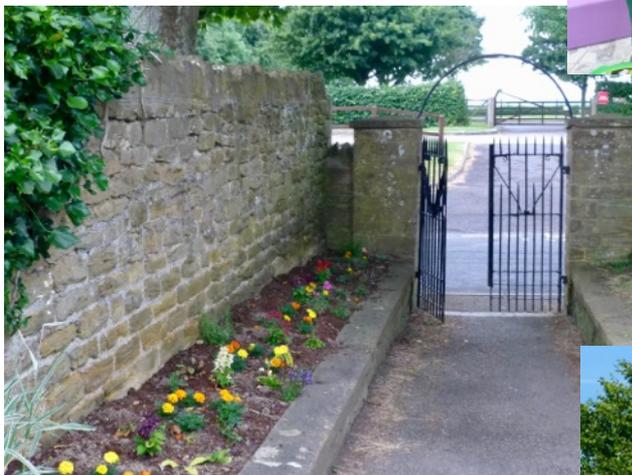
Involving the Community

We approached our village groups, clubs and organisations and explained what Ash in Bloom was about. This helped spread the word and created a support base we can build on going into next year's campaign. We thank them all for their interest and support.



Ash Craft Group making our "jellyfish" tree mobiles.

Peter Hughes of Ash Art Group painting one of our street art installations. The Group will stage an exhibition of their work in the Pavilion.



Flowers were planted in the churchyard and the congregation organised a prayer tree.

The School's Garden Growers took part and pupils helped in the Millennium Woods.





Ash WI who presented a seat to the Millennium Wood will provide tea and cakes at the end of the judging.

The Purple Quilters decorated the Children's Play Area fence.



The Gardening Club donated plants

Church bell ringers will provide a welcome peal for the judges.



The church flower arrangers will display flowers on the day of the judging.

Alzheimer's Society Cupcake Day

Ash in Bloom took part in this national fundraising event by holding it's own cake sale in the Village Hall. Whilst the Bloomers' sale of cupcakes raised money for the charity, local resident, Peter Ludbrook, ran a dementia awareness session.



Involving Children

We have involved the younger generation in our activities wherever possible and have organised children's events and competitions. Ash Primary School is represented on our Steering Group.



Kid's Craft Morning

Saturday 13th May 2017
10am to 12pm
The Pavilion, Ash Recreation Ground

Bring your children/grandchildren along to start their entries into the Ash in Bloom children's competitions.



- Create a crazy bug by painting stones and golf balls. *Suitable clothing advisable!*
- Plant a sunflower seed to take home and nurture.

Other fun activities on the morning:

- Face Painting
- Colouring

Light refreshments available





Giving the grown ups a hand.



Ash in Bloom Competitions

The Ash in Bloom Competitions were launched in May and will be held annually. They will be independently judged during the week commencing 31st July with the results announced at a village event currently being planned. There are separate competition categories for children to enter.

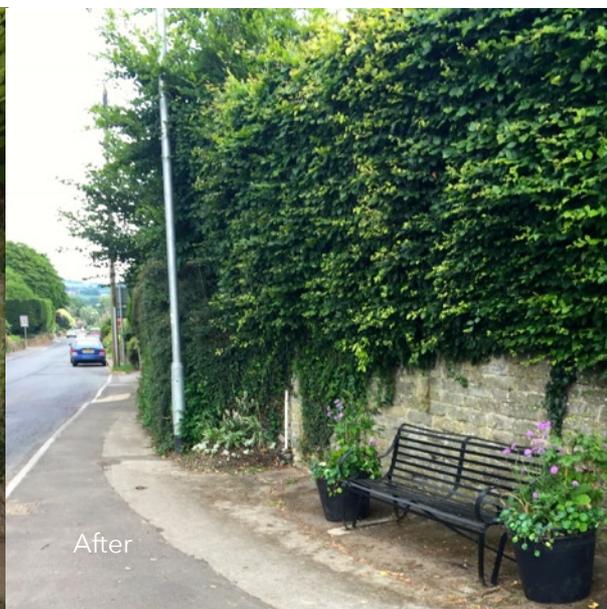
- Adult Categories for the best:- front garden; hanging basket; container/planter; most unusual container /planter; flower or fauna photo
- Children Categories for the best:- sunflower; planted Wellington boot; hand-made bug; flower or fauna photo.



Conclusions

Key Achievements

- Steering Group and nucleus of helpers now in place
- More planters installed the length of Main Street
- Key spots along Main Street tidied and brightened
- Ash in Bloom Competitions launched
- Village clubs and groups involved in our campaign
- Parish Council see Ash in Bloom as a catalyst for improvement



Future Plans

- Increase fundraising
- Recruit more helpers
- Develop a year round plan
- Add more impact with more plants at entrances to the village and elsewhere
- Work towards a co-ordinated theme and colour scheme for future planting





Railing planters with strawberries and tomatoes installed outside school gate for children to enjoy.





