

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE AGM, 4 MARCH 2024

I am pleased to report another successful year for the Club. All events except two garden visits took place as planned, were well attended and were appreciated by members and visitors. Furthermore, our membership numbers have been maintained, thanks to Mary Gregory our Membership Secretary.

We were able to hold Spring and Autumn Shows. Both were successful in terms of entries and visitors, and we were able to award all the prizes. Chris Impey, Sally Strang and others worked hard to prepare and run the shows – thank you.

A coachful of members went on the tour of Lincolnshire gardens in June. It was very enjoyable, with a rich variety of beautiful gardens and a lovely base in historic Lincoln. Tony Russell is leading a tour of Somerset Gardens in June 2024; at the time of writing most of the places have been taken. Our thanks especially go to Edda Smith and Gillian Impey for their work liaising with Travel Editions.

Sadly, we were unable to fill coaches for visits to Hampshire in May and Warwickshire in September. Without any doubt a key factor has been the steep rise in coach hire costs. However, the self-drive visit to the Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens took place in September and was much enjoyed by those who went. In the light of experience, we are planning mostly self-drive visits for 2024. They are Lord Heseltine's Thenford House in February, RHS Malvern Spring Festival by coach in May, Blewbury Water Garden in July, and Rycote Manor in September. Thanks go to Jane Annett and Russell Ansell for overseeing our visits programme.

The Club enjoyed a full set of talks, starting with the AGM in March when the Village Hall was filled with members and guests for Lara Cowan's talk on Mindful Gardening. The Spring Social saw us listening to Chris Day speak about container gardening, whilst in the Autumn we had another visit from the resourceful Ray Broughton, this time on the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. Finally, our Winter Social included a talk by Bob Brown about Unusual winter plants, with probably a record attendance. In all, a very good programme, full of interest and variety - thank you very much Penny Guy for organising. We are starting 2024 with a talk about Waterperry Gardens at this AGM, then we have Composting for big vegetables (Spring Social), How to make the best use of your greenhouse (Autumn Social), Crayfish on the lawn with Joff Elphick (Winter Social) and a return visit from Pip Smith on Drought resistant gardening at the next AGM.

We were pleased to welcome James Bretherton as our new President last summer. James took over from Henry Prince who sadly died earlier in the year. We are grateful to the executive committee who met three times (May, October, January) to review and plan our activities. Helen Ward took up the role of Secretary, and we coopted two new members towards the end of the year, one of whom hopes to widen our membership by raising our social media profile. We thank two members who are standing down: Neil Whiting (Treasurer) and Edda Smith (Tours). The Chair is not standing for re-election but is willing to continue on the committee. AGM nominations will be welcome for these roles.

Please continue to make use of our website, www.cumnorgardens.org.uk. We try to keep it up to date with details of our programme, contacts and news.

Chris Scruby – Chair
January 2024