



The Big Onion

Report on the years events from Nicola
Autumn 2013

ROUND UP FROM NICOLA

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Hi All,

What a year it has been again - As the end of season event approaches I get to look back through the photos (I have to say it does make me a little exhausted to see what we did!), the emails, the paperwork, the ups and downs of making things work, and see once again all the hard work that went in on a regular basis to make the year a success.

Our special thanks this year are many but particularly to Ruth who has gone across all 4 of the Big Onion's arms to be involved in the School Garden, Planting and maintaining things in village, and the Events and Shop!

Also Hazel who has worked tirelessly trying to work out the finances and money working in the shop!

Jeannie's enthusiasm and drive to get it going. Suzanne's set dressing in the Mill Yard stall. And Debs hard work planning and proposing all kinds of great things and carrying them out at the school garden - more of that later.

The Autumn saw Karen Bentley Brown stepping down as chair - Thanks and appreciation to her was given in September's meeting and a big welcome to our new Chair who has been working with us on all sorts of mix of the projects and advertising this year - and will be helping us decide on what's next in 2014 -Isobel Stoddart.

In the yearly order of which it happened-

After the Christmas brainstorming event it was decided to break the Big Onion up into 4 work groups - Events - Easter, Seedy Sundays to get people growing, Apple day and Pumpkin day! The new Mill Yard stall project, and Public Planting around the village and managing the recreation ground, sheds and school garden needs. And the new project of the School Garden.

Seedy Sundays

The Seedy Sundays went well with the Average Cabbage selling multiple organic seedlings into the community, supplying them for our pots and beds and the usual seed and seedling swaps.

Jackie and the gang (Jack O Dandy) also provided music for events, and Deb in the kitchen with the girls kept it special with wonderful mixes of great cakes - Yum.

Easter



We started with our usual Easter event. Added fun this year was the Easter bonnet competition and the live chicken! All of which contributed to raising money to run things across the year.

School Garden

The new season saw the partnership emerge at the school garden. Ruth and Debs put in lots of work putting together a year plan and arranging meetings at the school to inspire what would work best. Along with meetings with Eleanor who had been running the garden for years with Suzanne a way of working emerged. I was able to go to some of the first Thursdays setting up. If any of you fancy something very rewarding next year this is the way to go. Not only is it great to work with the kids but the garden is on a lovely sunny slope and well funded from supermarket points, the coffee morning and other events.



This year's highlights included:

- Enthusiastic children keen to get stuck in gardening (and tasting the produce!)
- A stall at the school summer fete
- Growing an enormous pumpkin, which the kids are making into pie!
- Work parties from young people from the Community Roots project, painting the shed
- The series of *Get Growing* sessions with Diane Hubbard sharing lots of great tips for growing your own veg in Cumbrian conditions! (Thanks to Cumbria Community Foundation and the LDNP for supporting these sessions.)

And Alan, myself and Dave went up at the end of year to build a compost heap from old pallets - then spent an hour in the redcurrant bushes filling boxes for the stall.

The garden linked well with the stall, with surplus produce being sold in the stall, the

money being given back to the school garden. Although not a lot it is the start of a nice link.

Please talk to Deb and Ruth if you want to be on next year's Rota.

Mill Yard Stall

The stall started well although it took quite a bit of work with Alan, Dave, Isobel Nicola and Ruth doing evenings and Saturdays to get it all built and set up with shelves, cupboards etc. Ready to open. Thanks to you all - great job.



It has moved on considerably and with some walls from my old office and furniture I had it's got now a series of areas that work well - Produce, Woodland products, Cards and gift tags, jewellery, crafts, pictures and the new one for next month - Christmas!



Suppliers are welcomed, and we now want to create a sheet about each of them so that we can feature makers and suppliers. The shop committee has met many times at the Duke and

there are about 8 volunteers working a Sunday Rota.

Jeannie's enthusiasm, hard work and input from the other shop she does at Sedbergh, with Suzanne's flair for set dressing and everyone's contribution is starting to emerge into a great space.

Financially we weren't sure if it could manage but so far it has paid the rent and had a little to spare. SO A VERY BIG thanks you to Hazel for all her hours behind the scenes working on the accounts, a time consuming task.

Public Planting

The planting group had a very busy year, and amongst all our activities however given the total number of volunteers this is the one that may have to go next year- from making planters and putting them out in spring to planting up the planters and baskets on the Mill Yard and the rec - maintaining them through a red hot summer, the work became a bit endless. And unfortunately as I was working away over summer, some complaints and observations of the sad and dying pots - usually not a problem as it rains so much!



Also the hot summer meant much produce bolted and the weeds grew like wild fire -so keeping up was too hard as there were only a few volunteers on the planting days.

However with the help of Suzanne and Lee and Peter and Carol we did finally finish, and plant up the two new beds on the rec. Two beautiful

sunflowers came from nowhere, and Isobel who popped in some lettuce left us with a summer full of salads with lovely flowers in from the pots.



The rhubarb didn't do so well, but the fruit bushes seem to have taken along with the trees on the rec by the sheds.

However more complaints and disgruntles are caused by this activity than anything. Mostly because they are public places and are seen. If we don't keep on top of them they do create an eye sore rather than a joy. So we need to brainstorm next year and see whether to carry this activity on or not!

Apple Day

Apple day was fab and the pictures pretty much speak for themselves. The kids had a blast! The music was great - Amy, Kat and Catherine wrote a special apple song for the event - it was just great.

Lee's apple rolling game attracted a large crowd. Anne Salisbury - on the pin the worm gave lots of kids a smile. The apple detective Phil Rainford stayed on, as he had a queue. The long line of juicers spoke for its self... And Wilfs did a great job of making the space, creating apply treats and helping with the organization.

THE SUN CAME OUT! And we all sat enjoying freshly squeezed apple juice to the sound of fiddling and cries of happy children! Well done Ruth who organized the day. The shop had apple pies that were delicious and other apply

produce. Did anyone see Fiona's great apple on the shop sign beautifully painted for the day!



You're such a talented lot! Wendi's bunting adorned the Yard and everyone gave great feedback.



Pumpkin Day

And now we approach the end of the season with Halloween. This will be a great day with pumpkin soup, carving for the kids and music again from Jack O Dandy. Pumpkin soup from Raymond's pumpkins - fresh into the shop this week with marrows and apples, which are always a delight!

Why not come along for guess the weights of the pumpkin - which will be the prize? And of course get your ticket and join us for the end of season Jacobs Join in the evening at the Pavilion - bring your own drink and enjoy our end of year awards.

Highlights

For me some of the highlights include:

- Our first veg box being put together and sold!
- Some of the great ideas for making things and recycling things in the shop_ take a look!
- The Easter bonnet dance!
- The Easter chicken!
- The letter off Planning saying we can't put signs out on the a591 without a £300 fine!
- Apple day dolls!



- Isobel getting buried in wood chips!
- The pile of 1-foot deep donkey poo on the rec!
- Suzanne's apron window display!
- Getting Raymond's Pumpkins!
- Having guests and taking them out to the village to pic the salad.
- The school garden - full of food. The kids planting potatoes with Deb giving them a ruler to mark them out!
- Eating berries and drinking elderflower cordial and jam from the shop.
- Anne Salisbury's apple pie with the local apples for apple day.
- Apple raspberry vodka mint and ice cocktail!

Finally as many of you know I have put an enormous amount of time and effort in running and overseeing these events over the last three years. Last year we put out an advert to encourage a new lead to come forward. Unfortunately no one has come forward. So last year we had a brainstorming and started to look at how each of the areas could run themselves as sub groups and feed back into the Big Onion main meetings. This bottom up approach is so much better and we want to continue and innovate it.

In running the organization I have learned huge amounts and had many great lessons. But now due to my expanding workload (alot of which will mean I am away next year work) I am finally taking a rest as Big Onion lead. I do hope someone else will take on some the role, and have fresh energy and ideas. I will continue be a Big Onion and SENS member and want to continue building things like new beds at the school garden, the Yard and doing some events. As such there will be a brainstorming and reassessment of the set up with everyone who wants to come, at the end of the year AGM in the duke. Date tbc.



models to run it, in which we all are a part and contribute to the whole. I am quiet excited to see what emerges.

As usual Ruth has been taking on more, as I have been able to do less - Everyone should thank her.

I have had some great times in the last 3 years, and see the big onion grow from the seeds of an idea, to becoming an exchange,

realizing what is and isn't there and adapting to stay innovative and meet some of its objectives. I love the emergence and hope to encourage more of the micro business that supply the shop and thank all of you however much or little time you have volunteered for us creating the things we have today. Mostly a great community within a community, my memories are rich.

Nicola



I encourage everyone to come so that we can carry on the legacy of what we started. If anyone would like to take on any of the lead roles even if just as a one off great. We will be looking at different and hopefully better



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