WCHS Chairman’s Report for AGM, December 7th 2020

2020 has been a strange year for us all! I was just getting into my stride, having taken over the role as Chair of the Society before lockdown ensued. We started the year with three, very entertaining talks. Helen Picton reminded us of many wonderful plants to inspire and enthuse. Samantha Hope’s love of all things Hepaticas came through in February and in March we learnt about stumperies and plants suited to this environment with Andrew Tolman.

Since April however and Covid-19, we have not been able to meet up as a society in the village hall. Along with many other societies and clubs we had to move online.

Initially, we arranged articles for members to enjoy via the website. May’s speaker, Victoria Summerley wrote about ‘Secret Gardens of the Cotswolds’ and Paul Picton about ‘Peonies’. These were both very informative, entertaining and illustrated with wonderful photos.

In June, we had our first meeting on Zoom given by Ross Barbour. Special thanks to Ross for helping us dip our toes into ‘virtual meeting!’ This was followed by talks delivered by Gary Bristow, Robin Pearce and Will Stanger. All have been enjoyed by members and non-members. Thanks to Ian Thwaites for initially letting us use his Zoom account. In October, I took out a subscription on behalf of the Society. This also allows the Committee to get together to discuss business as usual. It’s not quite the same as meeting in person, but we are learning to make the most of it.

For the foreseeable future, monthly meetings will continue on zoom and the programme will be posted on our website as soon as it is finalized. It promises to be an exciting programme and we hope the number of people joining us on zoom will continue to grow. We have been happy and will continue to be happy for members and non-members to join us for these zoom meetings.

James Alexander-Sinclair has been re-booked for the 2021 PPML. Let’s hope that this will be able to go ahead.

As a committee, we have been trying hard to reach out to members and I would like to thank the committee for their efforts in phoning round all members of the Society. Special thanks to Lynne Mitchell who did more than her fair share. Our main reason for doing this was to keep in touch and let everyone know that we were planning. We also wanted to encourage members to sign up to receive notifications of posts on the website. This remains the best way of receiving information about talks and events and how to join up for the zoom meetings.

Our evening visit and Grand Day Out were cancelled. As to whether we can organise these events for 2021 remains to be seen. I would like to thank Megan Taylor for all the hard work she did in organizing the GDO.

Huge thanks to Kay Smith and Heather Hughes for all their hard work with growing and selling plants through lockdown. They both found ways to continue with plant sales and we can still give the PPMF a cheque.

Our usual summer show in the village hall was replaced with a virtual summer show. This was great fun and in total we received 124 entries. A great deal of work went into the planning of this event and especially by Paul Picton who agreed to receive all the photographic entries, collate and display them! In recognition of all his hard work and to show our gratitude, the Committee presented Paul with the RHS Banksian Medal at the September meeting. As this was a great success, watch this space for a virtual Spring Show in 2021.

On behalf of the committee and the wider membership, I would like to thank Geraldine Yates for her help and support over the last few years as she steps down from the committee.

I sincerely hope that we will be able to meet again in the village hall at some point in 2021. In light of this uncertainty the Committee have decided that membership fees for 2021 will be waived so no fees will be payable till 2022.

Liz Thomas