

Curry Rivel in Bloom

2017



Our first entry into Britain in Bloom South West

Getting started and keeping the community informed

2017 marks Curry Rivel's first entry into Britain in Bloom South West. Prior to 2016 there was very little of horticultural interest in the public areas of the village, although some beautiful gardens, as seen on the Village Open Gardens Day in June 2016, were to be found in private hands. A traveller passing through the village on the main road would not have been impressed - they would have been aware of the frustration of having to negotiate many parked cars on the sides of the road, but little else. The Bell Hotel, at the crossroads in the centre of the village, looked derelict and there were no floral displays on the few High Street shops or the garage the traveller would have passed. Had the traveller looked north as they approached the crossroads they would have seen the War Memorial and noted that the garden around it was unkempt and full of overgrown shrubs and trees that had not been tended for many years.



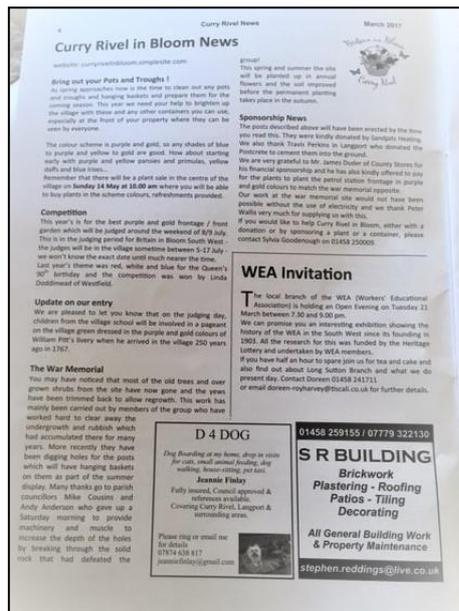
Curry Rivel 2016



The group that produced the Curry Rivel Parish Plan, which consisted of volunteers under the auspices of the Parish Council, were proud of their village and aware that it was a very friendly place with much going on, but also aware that it

did not show its' best face to those passing through. Feedback from the community in response to the Parish Plan suggested that many villagers felt the same, and thus a steering group, chaired by a member of the Parish Council and otherwise consisting of volunteers, was set up to work towards an entry into Britain in Bloom South West, as this seemed to be a good way to provide the incentive to improve our environment. Our entry is therefore also under the auspices of the Parish Council, who are our main financial sponsors. The steering group was set up in January 2016 and has met regularly since, with new volunteers joining during this time. We now welcome around 12 people to each meeting in a private house in the village. Two public meetings in our Village Hall have been held to keep members of the community informed; before the most recent meeting in the Village Hall the

group delivered over 400 flyers to houses in the village advertising the event. We had a stall at the Church Fete last summer, with members of the group available to discuss with passers by. A list of those expressing interest was made and this has provided useful contacts. The Group has a monthly column in our highly regarded village magazine, the Curry Rivel News, which is delivered free by a volunteer team to all houses in the village and is also available at various local outlets. Our website - curryrivelinbloom.simplesite.com- has a link from our section of the Community website, There is also a Curry Rivel Facebook page linked to the Community website.



In 2016, to prepare the community for our first entry, the Group ran a very successful competition for the best front garden display in red, white and blue over the June weekend when we were all celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday and the village hosted its' second Open Gardens event, with 15 gardens around the village open from 11am until 6pm on the Sunday. Four village organisations benefited from the profits made at this event. We were very pleased with the number and standard of the entries received in the competition - the winner was dealing with a new garden and she had sown annuals in a border in front of her house to form half of the Union flag.



She was presented with the first Curry Rivel in Bloom trophy at a presentation evening held in one of the Open Gardens gardens, and, together with the two runners-up, she was also given a garden token.

In early October 2016 members of the group worked with the local branch of the Rotary Club of Great Britain to plant 400 purple crocuses in an area close to the Twinning Tree, a site beside the main road through the village. Curry Rivel is twinned with the village of Chevilly in France and the tree was planted during one of the early visits to the village of our friends from France. We welcomed a large party of families from Chevilly again for a weekend at the end of April 2017.



The crocuses were part of the Rotary Club's 'Purple for Polio' campaign, but it was a happy coincidence that the colour purple is also one of our 2017 theme colours and another that, together with the daffodils that were already growing close to them, they reflected our purple and gold theme completely.

Finally, a well attended Plant Sale, with refreshments available, was held in the centre of the village in May, both giving villagers an opportunity to purchase annuals in our theme colours, alongside other plants, and also adding to the coffers of the Group.



However, in spite of all these efforts, we have been unable to fulfil our original intention to do some work on all the pieces of land owned by the Parish Council. Plans were drawn up plans for planting on a corner of our small village green. But they were not popular with some of the residents around the green and so the project has had to be dropped for this year. However, the judges will see our beautiful St. Andrew's church, which is situated at the north end of the green. There is a wonderful horse chestnut tree in the church yard and the churchyard itself is very attractive, particularly in the spring, when the graves are carpeted with spring flowers.



Our theme - William Pitt 1767 and 2017

Curry Rivel is a village and civil parish in Somerset, England, situated 6 miles west of Somerton and 10 miles east of Taunton in the South Somerset district. The parish includes the hamlet of Burton Pynsent. The unusual name Curry Rivel, comes from the Celtic word *crwy*, meaning boundary and *Rivel* from its 12th century landlord Sir Richard Revel.

In 1767, William Pitt the Elder came to make his home at Burton House. He had been left the Burton estate by William Pynsent, in gratitude for his assistance in preventing Parliament passing a cider tax which would have ruined his business. He arrived, with his retinue in their purple and gold livery, in the village exactly 250 years ago to take up residence at Burton. One of the first things he did was to build the Burton Pynsent monument, which was designed by Capability Brown and is still a landmark in the area, in memory of his benefactor.



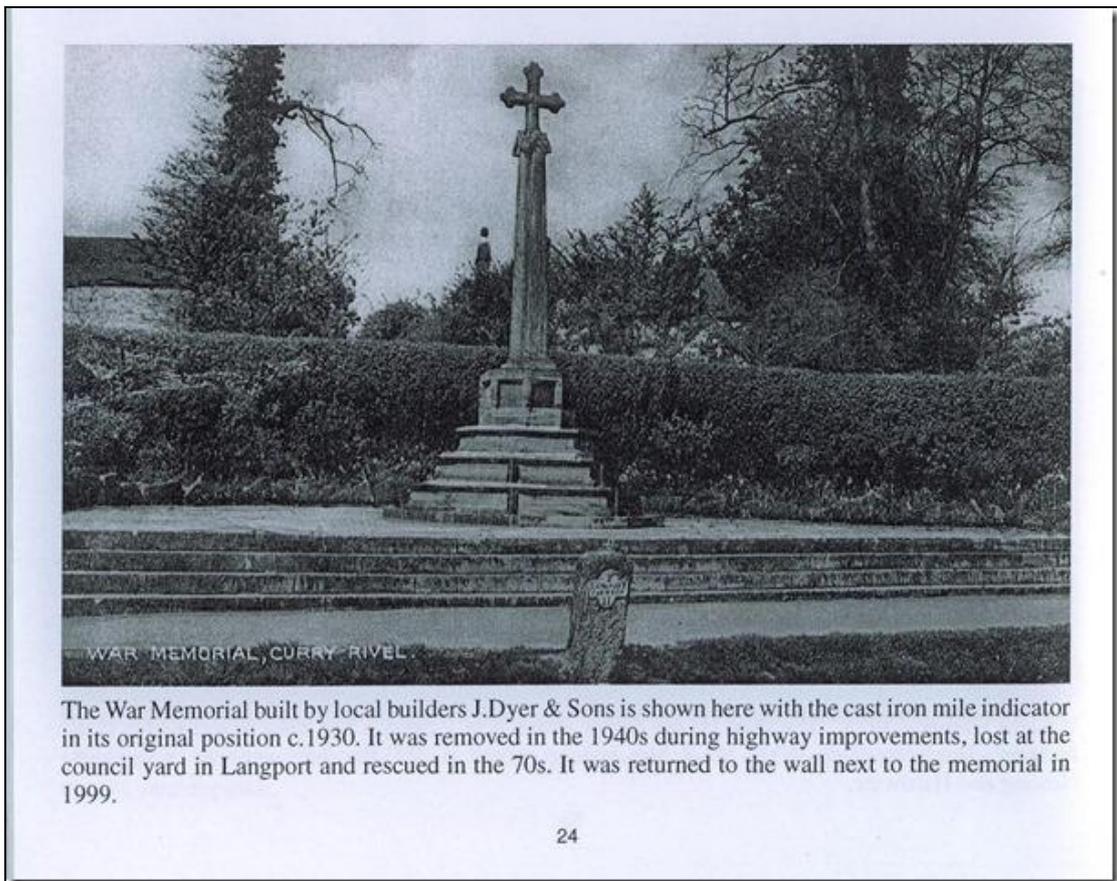
To mark the 250th anniversary of this event in our village history we have taken purple and gold as our theme colours for 2017. Following on from our successful competition in 2016 the Curry Rivel in Bloom Group has run a competition for the best front garden display in these colours, with judging over the weekend of 8/9th July. The school has enthusiastically involved itself in the celebration and the judges will see some of the children's participation on their tour.

Our main horticultural projects

As a group we are very aware that there are many areas of our village that can be improved, but, given limited resources, we decided to concentrate our efforts for 2017 on two main areas. These are our War Memorial garden, which has been neglected for the last half century, and the High Street, with its' challenge of very narrow pavements on either side of the main road, which is lined with old, though picturesque, cottages, many of which have very small front gardens and lack garages.

Other smaller projects around the village have sought to bring attractive planting to otherwise utilitarian areas, such as bus stops, and there has been much community participation in looking after these displays.

The War Memorial garden



The War Memorial garden c1930

The War Memorial garden, consisting mainly of evergreen trees and shrubs , including yew and privet, had become very overgrown and, judging by the number of empty drinks bottles and cans we found behind the bushes, a haven for the local youth to congregate during the evenings. It was not doing justice to our fine memorial and the men it commemorates.

War Memorial Garden in early November 2016



We waited until immediately after the Remembrance service at the memorial in November before starting to clear the site. Work parties were organised and the site was cleared without any cost to the community - in fact, since one villager collected some of the wood and gave us £5 and a packet of biscuits in return , we technically made a profit! We need to emphasise how much work this clearing involved - three very large yews and the remains of a complete privet hedge had to be dug out, with other smaller shrubs and vast

amounts of ivy. The site was full of stones, barbed wire, wooden posts and rubbish and these all had to be collected up and disposed of in environmentally friendly ways. Stones were used in potholes in local lanes, wood from the trees was provided to several villagers for their fires and everything else was recycled. The site then had to be levelled for the willow fence, completely dug over, posts erected, rope for the swags sourced and ordered and the plants for the baskets and ground planting obtained. Thus the display the judges will see on their tour is in our theme colours, with hanging baskets of yellow flowers on poles linked by rope swags, and purple-leaved *Cannas* and *Euphorbias* below. The posts and Postcrete to cement them in were supplied free by local firms, the ground-level planting was sponsored by a member of the community and the hanging baskets were supplied by a wholesale nursery in the village at a special sponsored price, as was the willow fence which provides the backdrop to the garden, which was woven on site by a local firm and represents one of our traditional local industries.





The garage opposite the memorial has matching baskets and planting in front of it and its' owner sponsored this and the hanging baskets at the memorial site.

The High Street

The challenge of the narrow pavements has been very successfully overcome as a result of some innovative thinking, which led to making use of the wide walls in front of the cottages to support troughs and pots of annual plants. Pots in the small front gardens incorporate them into the scheme. The containers were utilised for Spring plants before the Summer planting and they will be used throughout the year from now on. The set-up costs for this scheme were met from the grant provided by the Parish Council for 2016-7 and we are grateful to them for their ongoing commitment to support the group in 2017-8.



High Street in April 2017

And in May....





Using pots in the troughs, which are permanently attached to the walls, allows plants to be added and removed easily, so ensuring there is always a good display The trays under the troughs hold water.

There is further new planting around the village, including troughs and baskets at the front of the Village Hall and at the bus-stops. Plans for the future include work around the Village Green area and more development of the Twinning tree area.



Some of the pots and troughs donated by villagers





Maintaining displays

We are grateful to those members of the community who are providing water points so that those on our watering rotas are able to get water close to our sites. The War Memorial garden is the greatest challenge to keep watered and fed - without the donation of a large water butt, which is now stationed at the edge of the garden, and the use of water from the house behind to fill it on a regular basis this could have proved quite a problem.

June to Nov 2017				
	Watering, weeding, dead-heading			
Week:		High Street	War Memorial	Other
June	4th	Derek		
	11th	Judy	Lesley McIntyre	
	18th	Avril	Deacons	
	25th	Julia	Naomi Powell	

Sample of a rota in construction - people were asked to take on one week of watering, weeding and dead-heading, either alone or in conjunction with friends and neighbours.

Below - advice on the plants and how to look after them was available at the May Plant sale



July	2nd	Derek	Goodenough	
	9th	Judy	Potts	
	16th	Julia	Tony Greenaway	
	23rd	Julia	Neil Coombes	
	30th	Derek		
Aug	6th	Judy	Anne Davis	
	13th	Avril	Peter Wallis	
	20th	Julia		

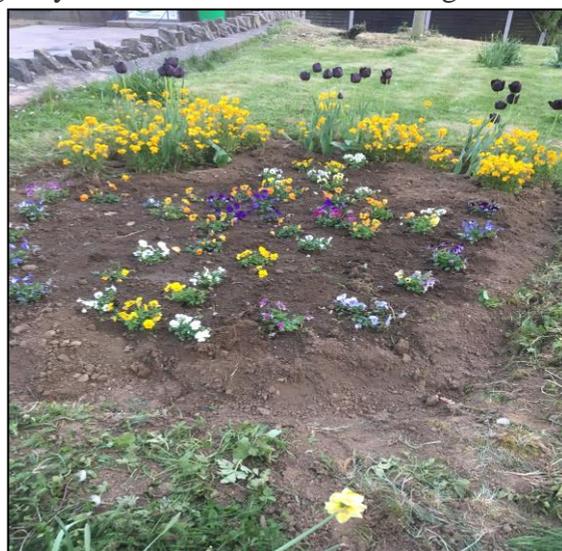
Community participation

As previously described, the community has been kept informed throughout the process by our website, the Community website, our monthly column in the Curry Rivel News and our public meetings. The Plant Sale in May both provided those who visited it with the chance to buy plants and to ask questions of the experts who had grown them. The Curry Rivel Junior School has been involved in planting their own garden in the theme colours and in preparing a display for the Village Green on judging day. Members of the Twinning Association have taken charge of the area around the Twinning Tree, mowing the grass regularly and planting the summer bedding and tubs that the judges will see. Before those came yellow wallflowers and deep purple tulips, replacing the crocuses that made a brave display in February.

Planting up the area by the

Twinning Tree in early May

The ancient church of St. Andrew's is at the north end of the Green. St. Andrew's Flower Guild is a group of ladies who are enthusiastic flower arrangers, who make themselves responsible for the weekly flower arrangements in the church, on a rota basis. The Guild also decorates the church with special arrangements on specific occasions, notably the church fete in early July. By a happy coincidence the fete is the weekend before the judging, and the Flower Guild plan to decorate the church porch as well as inside so the judges can see some of their work without needing to enter the church if time prevents this.



St. Andrew's church and the Green



Our Group has met on a regular basis for the past 18 months in members' houses. From a very small number at the first meeting we have increased considerably in numbers and have been particularly pleased to welcome a member of the family that owns and runs three businesses that together provide many jobs in the centre

of the village. Sandpits, Living Pretty and The Firehouse are a great asset to the village and their owners' keen participation in our project, providing floral displays around all three, has been extremely helpful. We are also very grateful to our other sponsors who have provided us with the money and materials to make our entry possible:

Our Sponsors

Curry Rivel Parish Council	£1000 grant + £900 towards willow fence
James Duder (garage owner)	£400 for War Memorial garden + garage display
Travis Perkins Langport	14 bags of Postcrete
Sandpits Heating	7 x 3m posts for the War Memorial garden
Greenshutters Garden Centre	Compost and plant food
Coates Willow	Willow fence at War memorial at reduced cost
Private individuals	Plants, electricity, water, plant containers Time to weed, water and feed planting

Environmental responsibility

Curry Rivel is situated on a ridge of land above the Levels, where recent excessive flooding caused major problems. Since then farmers and the Environment Agency have been working together to establish a balance that preserves the natural and unique ecosystem of the Levels, while not preventing landowners from making a living. There are also some small communities on the Levels and, though water levels are controlled by a network of pumping stations, this has proved not be sufficient to prevent habitations from flooding under extreme weather conditions.. As a community we are very aware that rain landing on the ridge will make its' way down to the Levels and we are doing our best to mitigate this. As a spin-off from the Parish Plan, members of the Parish Council are now working with the local Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) on their Hills to Levels project. This involves persuading local landowners to allow the building of storage ponds on their land. These would contain excess rainwater and release it slowly , thus reducing run-off to the Levels during heavy rain. The village school has flooded several times in the past due to water running down the aptly named Water Street and it is hoped that the storage ponds in this area will also help to protect our school.

There is a Wildlife Group within the village that records and monitors animal and plant species in our environment. The Parish Council owns a 4 acre site called Eastfield, and they have been persuaded to allow the majority of this field to become a wildflower meadow. From 2017, It will be cut once a year in late July, with the grass being cut once a year in late July but otherwise allowed to develop naturally.

Eastfield is adjacent to another , more established, wildflower meadow, named Batty Piece, which is owned by a syndicate of adjacent householders.



Eastfield in early May

Together, the two meadows provide an extensive wildflower and wildlife resource for the village.

Orchid in Batty Piece



Bee Orchid in Eastfield

Curry Rivel has a large area on the outskirts of the village set aside for allotments, and these are very popular with members of the community. There is a management committee of allotment owners which oversees the running of the area.



Like all communities, Curry Rivel suffers from litter, even although the Parish Council has sourced a large number of litter bins and distributed them round the village. Several litter picking weekends have been designated in 2016-7 and large quantities of litter have been removed from our verges and public spaces by volunteers organised into areas and provided with safety jackets and litter pickers by the Parish Council.

As a village community we are keen to recycle as much as possible. There is a well supported collection point for clothing to be recycled in aid of our local Air Ambulance in the village car park. Material for recycling is collected fortnightly by the District Council and there are good facilities for recycling in Langport and Somerton.

In our entry we have reused baskets and troughs where ever possible and have collected containers of all sizes and shapes from members of the community to use in floral displays. Many of our plants, including for the Plant Sale, have been raised from cuttings taken from volunteer's own garden plants.



An attractive display in a small front garden

18 months in Curry Rivel

2016

January: Following an earlier public meeting with Terry Porter, the decision to work towards an entry into Britain in Bloom South West taken by the Parish Council. A steering group of volunteers was set up and meetings arranged.

March: Two members of the group attended the seminar in Exeter and reported back to the group. At the seminar they made contacts with the Hutton group, who have great experience in the competition and who invited the CR group to see their entry in July.

April/May At the regular meetings it was decided that we should wait until 2017 to make our first entry. Plans were made for work on the War memorial to start in November and the “Red, White and Blue” competition was announced in the Curry Rivel News.

June: Curry Rivel Open Gardens, event with 23 gardens open to the public on Sunday June. The Red, White and Blue competition was judged over the same weekend and the first Curry Rivel in Bloom trophy was awarded to the winner at a presentation ceremony to which all entrants were invited.

July: The group had a stall at the Church Fete and a list of contacts was drawn up from the forms completed on the day.

A new competition to design planting for the war memorial garden was publicised in the Curry Rivel News. Entrants could either submit a design for 2017, (which, because clearance of the site was going to have to be over the winter and the soil needed to be renewed before any permanent planting, had to consist of annual plants), a permanent design or both. The competition was to close at the end of September.

September

The design of the war memorial garden closed. The judge, who is involved in Yeovil in Bloom, chose a 2017 design which utilised our theme colours, but was unsure of which permanent design had greatest merit and in the end suggested taking elements of two designs. This is something the group has to concentrate on after the 2017 judging.

October

400 purple crocuses were planted by the Twinning Tree in conjunction with the local Rotary Club. Some wallflowers were also planted to provide late Spring colour. Plans for the High Street were drawn up and discussed at meetings. Troughs and plug plants were ordered.

November

Work parties were organised to clear the war memorial garden site, started on the day after the Remembrance Day service. Some plants were removed and potted up, most were cut down to ground level. Large amounts of rubbish were removed. Wood from the trees was made available to members of the community.

December/January

Work continued on the war memorial site.

February

Holes were dug for the posts to carry the hanging baskets in the summer display. Members of the group dug holes down to the bedrock and two members of the Parish Council, one of whom is a builder with the necessary equipment, worked with members of the group to make the holes one metre deep - needed to support the 2 m poles above ground. The posts were then concreted into place.

A public meeting was held in the Village Hall, having been extensively advertised, to inform the community about our plans for the entry. Seats had forms on them for people to fill in identifying areas in which they were prepared to help.

Euphorbias and Cannas for the War Memorial garden were obtained as bare rooted plants and, potted up in a member's greenhouse.

March

Some of the group attended the Britain in Bloom South West seminar in Torquay early in March and came away with some useful ideas. Plants for the High Street display were obtained and potted up in a member's polytunnel. Clearing work continued on the war Memorial garden.

April

Some of the large roots were dug out of the War Memorial garden and the back was levelled in preparation for the willow fence to be woven on site at the end of the month. In the High Street the trays and troughs were installed on the walls by inserting vine-eyes into both sides of the walls and passing wire between them through the troughs to anchor them in place.

May

The Plant Sale was a great success, encouraging villagers to buy plants in our theme colours and also providing additional funds for our projects. The final roots were removed from the War Memorial garden and it was then dug over to a spade's depth as it had been very compacted by the previous work. Plants were replaced in the High Street and donated pots and troughs were placed and planted up in various positions within the village.

June

The rope swags and brackets for the hanging baskets in the War Memorial garden were put in place. Ground planting was done and the hanging baskets positioned. A large water container was positioned on site and filled from a neighbour's water supply. The rota for watering etc. came into force.