

Village Safari is a blooming success

Hunton came alive for the first Safari on the second Sunday of June when around 300 people walked the streets and drove around the circuit to visit the 14 Open Gardens, raising nearly £1,400 for village organisations.

Praising organiser Christine McSweeney and her team of helpers, one elderly resident said it reminded him of times between the two world wars when Saturday evenings were busy with people wandering up and down West Street to visit the Prince of Wales pub and the club!

Christine was pleased with the success and now there is a possibility that it could become an annual event - although it is too early to make a decision. Perhaps the event could be arranged over a longer period than the three hours allowing more time for people to pay their garden visits?



The gardens open included three at Barn Hill. As well as being lovingly nurtured over the years, situated on the warm south facing slope they have picturesque vistas of the surrounding countryside.

Lantern Cottage was transformed over 20 years from an old woodland to a garden full of hidden treasures; New Cottages offered teas and boasted rose and kitchen gardens, herbaceous borders and a pond; while Hillside was developed from a derelict site bounded by a 19th century wall, pond area and apple orchard.

Visitors to the village manor house of Hunton Court, home to former Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman, were able to wander the vast parkland while taking in the charming courtyard with its swimming pool and garden borders.

Four homes in the Square opened their gardens ranging from the well tended cottage style frontage to the informal garden based on a woodland theme reflecting the owner's interest in wildlife and organic gardening to the cottage garden with a watery theme (where wine was on sale for the day's fund-raising) to the simple garden of shrubs and lawns.

Grove Lodge has an elegant, simple garden with sculptured yew hedging and a collection of pots from around the world, while Southover is known to gardening enthusiasts from this country and abroad, where the emphasis is on encouraging wildlife and integrating with the surrounding countryside.



Wanderers were able to take a welcome refreshment break with strawberry cream teas at Rose Cottage where children were invited to buy sunflowers for entry into a competition.

Teas were also served at the organiser's home at Bishops Oast where the gardens have been developed over the last five years and are now boasting leylandii 'totems' and a potager vegetable patch.

Finally an idyllic low maintenance garden with water features was on display at Elphicks Farmhouse while the owners of Durrants Farmhouse have developed their garden over the last seven years with the aim of balancing the needs of a young family with the parents' love of plants and wildlife.