

APWGG AGM 18th FEBRUARY 2026

Chairman's Report

INTRODUCTION

As the Chairman of APWGG, it is my privilege to present the Chairman's Report for the year 2025. This report encompasses a detailed review of our accomplishments, challenges and strategic initiatives over the past year. It also outlines our vision and objectives for the forthcoming year to ensure sustained growth and success.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Our financial position continues to be healthy, as per the Financial Summary figures state. Graham, our new treasurer who was elected at our last AGM has brought us into the 21st Century! Expenses and payments can now be made by bank transfer instead of cash and cheques and membership fees and donations can also be paid directly into our bank and people attending our events can now pay for refreshments and make donations by card, using the card payment reader introduced by Graham. This has greatly increased our income and is welcomed by our visitors, who don't always have cash available. In addition to donations from the sale of surplus produce grown in the garden throughout the year, we have received several generous ad hoc donations from individuals and companies who support our work. Funds have been raised from membership subscriptions and proceeds from events held throughout the year.

EVENTS

January – Our annual Wassailing event in the orchard was led by Tim and despite the rain it was a great success as always. The King & Queen trees were decorated with tinsel and blessed to ward off evil spirits, thus ensuring a good crop that year. Everyone joined in singing the Wassailing song and followed the Morris dancers round the orchard, while banging saucepans and metal spoons, again to ward off any evil spirits. Complimentary warm spiced cider, apple and orange juice was then served to warm everyone up.

June – Our 25th Anniversary Picnic, led by Nina was a great success. It was so nice to see families and groups of friends enjoying their picnics, playing traditional lawn games like quoit, skittles, tin can ally, croquet and connect 4 etc. We also had an Anniversary trail and Name the Scarecrow trail for the children. Pride of place on the refreshment stall was an Anniversary Celebration cake which we shared with all our visitors. Amazingly, to coincide with our Anniversary event we managed to purchase and install a circular teak bench in the centre of the garden, a bench of this design was in the original plans for the garden, way back in the year 2000. The cost of the bench was mainly funded by generous donations from supporters and well-wishers over the past 2 years. A list of these people is on display in the Pavilion. Finally, to close this special event, we were entertained by a Ukulele band who encouraged us all to sing along with them.

August – Tim led a demonstration of traditional scything in the wildflower meadow. Many visitors and supervised children enjoyed having a go and the children had great fun playing in the soft hay.

September – Keith Draper led the Heritage Weekend Sunday event. He had grown an impressive collection of ‘Beans from around the World’, supported by laminated signs giving the history of each variety. This attracted a lot of interest, with many visitors taking photographs. Keith also created a great display in the Pavilion of colourful posters advertising events which were held in garden over the past 25 years. Tim gave a couple of tours round the garden pointing out things of particular interest, while talking about the history of the garden.

October – We weren’t sure if our annual Juicing event could go ahead, as due to the hot summer most of our apples and pears had ripened early and had been sold. Also, we were unable to obtain a fruit press and juicer, but we all pulled together and ‘the show went on’ with a few changes. We had a great refreshment stall and served apple-based cakes and treats. Keith created a model of William Tell’s son, and we put an apple on his head, Chris made some rustic bow and arrows and the children ... and their parents had great fun trying to dislodge the apple with their arrows. We also brought out the traditional lawn games and held composting and orchard quizzes.

December – To celebrate our year end we went out for a pre-Christmas lunch at The Holyhead. We had a lovely time, reminiscing about our successful year and already suggestions were ‘flying’ around for ideas in the garden for 2026!

OPERATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

We have had some new volunteers join us and we have a great team, bringing their different skills and experience to the garden.

Water Irrigation. Keith Parkins has greatly improved our watering system by introducing a generator to pump water from the natural well in the garden into the large storage tank behind the Pavilion.

Pavilion. Chris Whitford has repainted the Pavilion with an additional coat of fire-retardant paint.

Compost Bays and New Shed. Chris and Keith P have built 3 new compost bays and erected a new tool shed and carried out any maintenance/repair work requested by Helen.

Wildflower Meadow and Orchard. Tim has done a great job with the wildflower meadow in the orchard and with assistance from Robin has pruned and ‘cherished’ our fruit trees and what a great harvest we have had this year!

Newsletters. Keith Draper has continued to produce an excellent newsletter at regular intervals throughout the year, which he has circulated to all members and supporters of the walled garden. He has also produced ‘eye catching’ posters to promote the events we have held throughout the year.

Website. Ching Hua has continued to manage our website, which promotes our events and attract enquires from potential volunteers.

Garden Management. Helen our ‘Head Gardener’ has done a fantastic job planning and working the garden with the support of her great team of volunteers. Helen is a natural team leader and is responsible for creating the strong camaraderie spirit in her team of volunteers.

These volunteers not only dig, sow, weed, deadhead and pick produce in the garden. They help at events, baking cakes and serving refreshments, making jam and preserves, provide hot water from their homes (one even lets us plug into her domestic electric supply if required!), sew and make bunting – the list is endless and without them we could not operate.

Council Support. Since the reorganisation of the Councils Parks Department, we have had several constructive discussions regarding storage facilities and weed control. It is hoped that these will be completed during 2026.

COMING YEAR

Improve use of the natural well in the garden.

Re-label the laminated tree descriptions.

Resolve the storage and weeding issues (in conjunction with the parks department).

Wassailing 2026 (already held).

Other events will be discussed and scheduled at the next committee meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my gratitude to our committee, volunteers, members, supporters and visitors who have contributed to the success of the Allesley Park Walled Garden in 2025.

Thank You

Nina Kennedy

Chairman

APWGG