



*We grow more than flowers here - we grow our community*





Blantyre is a special town. Almost 17,000 people call it, 'hame' and these people are what make it special.

Established back in 2017, Bonnie Blantyre celebrates our amazing community, every day! Everything we do is sprinkled with a touch of fun and there is often lots of laughter. You generally hear us before you see us! We don't take ourselves too seriously, although we often do serious work.

Susan and Margaret are a mother and daughter duo who transform into, 'Bonnie Bee' and 'Grumble Bee'. The bees buzz about Blantyre trying to infuse everywhere they go with community spirit, along with their small, but INCREDIBLE, bunch of volunteer pals. You can imagine the looks we get strolling through Blantyre in our terribly bad bee costumes!

Bonnie Blantyre isn't a formal group, nor is it constituted. It's more of a social movement. People support us because they simply want to do the right thing. From carrying out litter picks on their daily walks and watering plants in the summer months, to businesses providing voluntary financial backing, and the volunteers who build and create the many spaces that we have adopted. We are so lucky to witness and benefit from so much kindness, daily.

But it's not just about Bonnie Blantyre. We must acknowledge amazing, wonderful voluntary groups and charitable organisations in Blantyre who do such great work in the Town. We are so lucky to have them. Our entry in Beautiful Scotland focuses only on few of these groups, but we are so grateful to each one of the others for all that they do in our community.

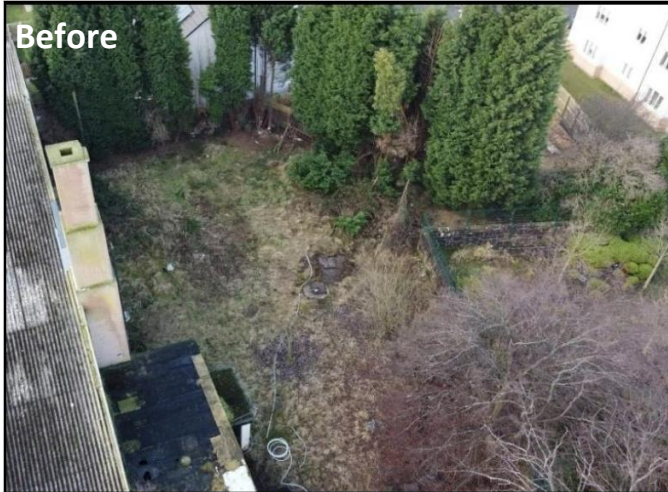
The groups in our entry have the same core group of volunteers in them, with a few other amazing people dotting in and out as they can. It's hard to believe that such a small group of people are involved in so many things, across so many different parts of Blantyre. You'll learn more about the groups, Friends of the Calder, the Blantyre Miners Community Garden, Blantyre Community Council and High Blantyre Primary School Parent Council.

As with anything, you always need a core group of people to lead change. We owe so much to those people who give endless hours to supporting the bees to make Blantyre the best that it can be. They are legends. Even although they are often shattered, each silly idea that Bonnie Bee comes up with, they go along with. Every last-minute event she introduces, they turn up and do their bit. How magical is that?

But Bonnie Blantyre and these community heroes have only been able to grow Blantyre due to the warmth and support shown by the amazing wider community, kind-hearted individuals, our local businesses, churches, community police, schools, nurseries and South Lanarkshire Council who work in partnership with our community groups. They respond to our calls for help and cheer us on when things seemed difficult.

This has been a challenging year in Blantyre, for many reasons, but we have still managed to achieve great things, thanks to our amazing community. We see the best of Blantyre every day and we want to share some of that with you.

# Horticulture



During covid, volunteers gathered to transform a disused piece of ground, owned by the Blantyre Miners Welfare, into the Blantyre Miners Community Garden. The garden is now home to Bonnie Blantyre.

The community garden is a working garden with an orchard, serenity garden, practical growing space, as well as a growing space for Bonnie Blantyre.

It is home to a 'Beehive' an educational space for Bonnie Blantyre has been created thanks to a £10k grant awarded to the garden.

The, 'Welfare Workshop' has also been built thanks to a £10k grant from VASLAN, which was awarded to the Blantyre Community Council as a partnership project.

All the produce is organic and is donated to our community



We have made some of the fresh produce into soup for people in our community



Oor Margaret and Mary

Volunteer Mary leads the way with gathering the crops which she then distributes to places including the Hamilton Churches Drop In Centre, the local foodbank, St Joseph's Church and the Blantyre Old Parish Church, 'Warm Hub'.

Friends of the Calder and Bonnie Blantyre work across the whole community, although we have had a close relationship with High Blantyre Primary School for seven years. Supporting them to achieve platinum level of the Woodland Trust Green Tree, Award and the gold level of the RSPB wild challenge and the RHS gardening award in 2019, by visiting the school and carrying out activities with the children.



Due to covid, we could no longer get into school and grow with the children. We are delighted that the school and nursery actively grow, thanks to dedicated staff.

This was something we always hoped would happen, but staff in schools and nurseries are so busy, we didn't think they could ever lead this kind of work. But we are pleased to say that High Blantyre Primary School and nursery have lots of wee active growers.

The school nursery also uses the Calder orchard to grow so that the staff can water what they have planted during school holidays. A great use of this community space.

Two year groups from High Blantyre Primary School who we had worked for years, many since nursery, were finally able to get back to working with us last year, but now at the Blantyre Miners Community Garden instead of in their school grounds. We worked with the children for a whole block and the children have planted strawberries, peas, beans, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers.

Our vision has always been that we want children to cook what they grow. Anything the children grow in the garden is theirs to cook and eat. At the end of term, we celebrated the success of their strawberries by making strawberry tarts.





We have struck up a fabulous relationship with, 'Chef Robert' who is an employee of the Council goes around schools in South Lanarkshire teaching children and families how to cook together, on a budget.

From the minute we seen him work with kids at High Blantyre Primary, we knew that he aligned perfectly for our vision to cook what we grow with kids in Blantyre.

We were delighted to welcome him along to the Blantyre Miners Community Garden this year to cook with families from Auchinraith Primary School.

The kids had seconds... and thirds!



We were delighted to support Chef Robert at Blantyre Old Parish Church, 'Warm Hub' when he was teaching children and adults alike, how to cook in a cheap and healthy way.

We very much look forward to strengthening our relationship in the community over the coming year.

This year, we were delighted to work with a small group of young people from Calderside Academy. This was the first time we'd ever worked with secondary aged children at the garden but this is definitely the start of something, as we all had such fun. The young people grew pumpkins and sunflowers to keep in the garden, but also planted beautiful flower displays to take home.



Last year, pupils at High Blantyre Primary School successfully grew pumpkins in our community garden.



This year, we visited four out of five primary schools to plant pumpkins with the primary 7 pupils. Pupils were given the opportunity to take their seeds home or to give us them to grow in the garden. We now have about 40 of the young people's pumpkins starting to bloom at the garden.

We will engage with their secondary schools to update their progress. We believe this is a good way to explore working relationships with the secondary schools.



Although we usually work with people from our community, we had a great time working alongside young people from St Ninian's High School along to the garden this year. They wasted no time in rolling their sleeves up and getting stuck into some gardening.





For the 7<sup>th</sup> year running, the 'Sunny Blantyre' sunflower growing took place this year. Over 2000 kits were distributed across our 5 Blantyre primary schools and nurseries. Once again, the children in our schools made up the sunflower kits, which were then used in the competition. This was an activity that used to take Bonnie Blantyre weeks. We feel that by making the kits up, schools have more ownership of them and are more engaged in the competition.

We are constantly learning and refining as we go. The wonderful relationship that we have with South Lanarkshire Council's Ground Services means that we can work together to make changes. The Pit Disaster monument means a lot to the people of our Town. The Council always keep an amazing lawn and edging here. We worked with them to remove an old flower border around the monument and around the edging of the grass. It had been planted up with wildflower. After four years, it wasn't putting on a good show. Last year the Council grassed the outside border at our request and this year they have grassed the border right next to the monument. We planted over 400 bulbs around the monument. We were delighted to see that they still gave a beautiful show through the grass.



This year, the Council has removed the final wildflower area at the pit disaster monument, replacing it with nice stones and a planter. We planted up the planter and it now looks great. We will add Spring bulbs to this planter so that it continues to look amazing in the Spring.



Our pit bogie planters continued to look amazing in the Spring, as did the bed at the Leisure Centre. However, in summer, the Leisure Centre bed looked pretty bad, with wildflower looking like weeds. It was an eyesore Alex and John acted and strimmed it all down and this will be a project for the coming year. But for now, it looks so much better.



Last year, we placed almost 50 'mini gardens' across Blantyre, along with pots outside local businesses. These were funded by the generosity of our Town, bringing in over £2000 (which was managed by High Blantyre Primary School Parent Council on our behalf) and the £1000 leftover from last year. When we brought in all the summer tubs last year, we cut down the plants and saved many for re-use this year, along with taking cuttings.



Because of the amazing feedback we received last year, we wanted to continue placing, 'mini gardens' across Blantyre. However, we were conscious that we didn't have the number of volunteers required to dead head the plants, although many volunteers to water them.

As with the previous few years, we worked with expert grower, Andrew Scott of Raynards Nursery to select plants that would be slightly easier to take care of. We also replaced many of our round planters with long wooden planters, which were made in the 'Welfare Workshop' by Alex from scaffolding board. The Blantyre Community Council awarded us £500 to create new planters and this was the most cost-effective way to get new planters.

Thanks to the Council's participatory budgeting scheme, we were awarded £4000 to replace planters and purchase plants this year. Almost all of this money has been spent, with some being used over the next month to buy Spring flowering bulbs.



Friends of the Calder carry out regular practical workdays. The woodlands have been designated Local Nature Reserves and the group has worked with the Council to create new native wildflower meadows. The meadow at Greenhall Park has 21 wildflower and 6 grass species. The saplings planted last year from Ovo Energy iDig Trees and the Woodland Trust are thriving, along with the 600 trees planted by the Council as mitigation for ash dieback. There are plant species which are indicators of ancient woodland (that is, there has always been woodland there), including bluebells, wild garlic, wood anemone, dog's mercury and many fern species. The Countryside Rangers monitor and survey these areas and report back to the group.



# *Environmental responsibility*



We know that we are doing things right when we have such an array of amazing wildlife on our doorstep. The lesser known third bee, Jim Bee, or Jim Brown, captures amazing photos of our wildlife and we share them right across the Town and beyond, Encouraging people to get out and explore and also take care of where they live.





The annual bat watch hosted by Friends of the Calder and the Council Countryside Rangers was a huge success with two types of bats recorded.



As well as taking part in regular litter picks with High Blantyre Primary School and Friends of the Calder, it was great to be joined by the Blantyre third Scouts who were disappointed not to find as much litter as they had hoped! We still have people litter picking on their daily walks which we are grateful for.



A big achievement this year was supporting 55 young people from High Blantyre Primary School to complete their John Muir Award in the Calder woods. They carried out exercises such as den building and insect identification. They also carried out lots of conservation exercises like litter picking, creating bird feeders and homes for hedgehogs. Each child completed over 20 hours carrying out activities in the woods – a massive achievement.

The nursery children, along with the primary 1 and 2 children spent at least one day per week exploring the woods. We are educating the young people to take care of the woods from a very early age.



Despite your best efforts, not everything goes to plan and it's important to us to tell that story too. We believe it's how you respond to these mishaps that matters. A bench that was donated to Friends of the Calder and was set on fire and destroyed last year. The company who donated it, donated three others in place of them – which was amazing.

One was placed back on the original site. It was then vandalised and thrown in the river, not once, but three times. Each time, it was recovered by kind members of the community.



After being reinstalled onsite, sadly, a few months ago, the bench was set on fire and destroyed. We will not be deterred and are currently investigating a metal bench as a suitable alternative as the bench was so well used and enjoyed by our community.





For the past three years, High Blantyre Primary Parent Council have run hugely successful Christmas jumper and Halloween costume swaps. As well as doing their bit for the environment by reusing clothing, it also saved families money, which is key at a time when we are always looking at ways of reducing the cost of the school day for families.



# Community participation



Being sociable is very important to Bonnie Blantyre. We invest a huge amount of time uploading content to social media, it's a full-time job itself. Our main platform for engaging with our community is Facebook, where we have almost 6000 followers – 1000 more than last year. We have over 1000 followers on X and this is the place that we engage with schools and other organisations. We have almost 2000 followers on Instagram and we find that many of our community aren't on Facebook, but are on this platform, so we try and post on all three tools whenever possible.

We make and share videos to keep things interactive. We regularly, 'go live' on Facebook so that we can show the community what we are working on. We also request content from our community so that we share their photos of what they are growing whether it be for the sunflower growing competition or in their gardens.

We share a little bit of ourselves on social media. We have a laugh and give people a laugh. We believe part of our success is our ability to reach out to our community, no matter where they are. And some of them don't even live in our Town anymore, but they want to be part of our journey. We have followers from all over the world



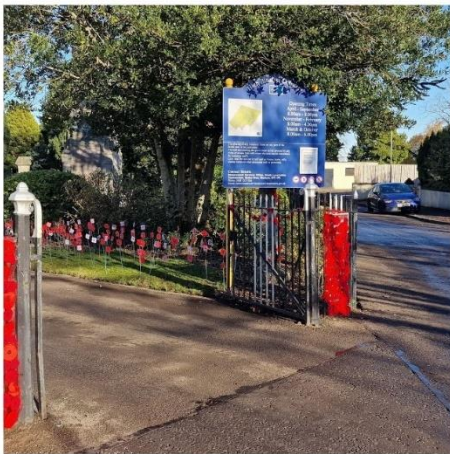
Whether it be as Friends of the Calder's, 'Crabbit Rabbit' or Bonnie Blantyre's Grumble and Bonnie Bee, we have created fun characters that have become known in our community. Whilst we do very serious work, we do it in a fun way as this is what engages our community. Many people don't think twice when they see the bees walking down the street, although we do tend to attract many 'toots' from people's cars!

For the third year running, Bonnie Blantyre, in partnership with the Blantyre Community Council, received funding from kindhearted individuals to buy 2500 selection boxes. These were given out across our 5 primary schools and 7 nurseries, as well as our local care home. We travelled around Blantyre with Santa, the elves and Santa's helpers, getting a lot of smiles along the way!



Our community get right behind our ideas and appeals. They have never let us down yet. At Christmas, we put out an, 'Amazon Wish List' to appeal for toys, for the second year running. Approximately £4000 of toys and bed clothes were donated – it was outstanding. We were given anonymous wish lists from families, which we fulfilled, working from a classroom in High Blantyre Primary School. This year we also provided food parcels to each family. This is another example of how Blantyre is fueled by kindness.





For the 4<sup>th</sup> year, we created poignant displays at both Blantyre war memorials. Using poppies which were knitted, crocheted or coloured by our community, we ensured that Blantyre always remembers those who lost their lives in war. Over the past 4 years, the displays across the town from other organisations and individuals have grown, which is excellent.



Friends of the Calder hosted their annual Easter Egg Hunt, taking over 500 people from the local community into the woodlands for a free, family funday. Whenever possible, we provide events for free in Blantyre, so that cost isn't a barrier to participation. This event was funded by a £500 microgrant from Blantyre Community Council and fundraising. It only cost about £800 in total.

For the first year, the community garden held a community fundraiser for Macmillan Cancer Support. Guests came along for homebaking, homemade soup and good chat, with over £600 being raised for the charity.





Our annual pumpkin carving competition was a success for another year – we think the adults are more competitive than the kids!

We held our second annual plant sale at the community garden. Almost £2000 was raised for the community garden from the tubs and hanging baskets that volunteers had made. High Blantyre Primary School also raised £1300 for their funds by selling plants from Raynards nursery.

This event was hugely supported by the community with a massive queue at the gate half an hour before we opened and the majority of our hanging baskets sold within 15 minutes!



Every time we reach out to our community for something creative, we are always overwhelmed by the amount of amazing things that they make for us.

We rely on our community to water our plants. On dry days, we communicate through social media, asking our 'watering team' to 'assemble'! Many of the people we never meet! We were touched when the Rainbows went out to water one for us! It speaks volumes that our volunteers spend weeks planting the planters and tubs and our amazing community come out and water them for us. It really is magical!



The amount of volunteer hours that Blantyre clocked up over the last year is hugely significant. Whether it was people working away on their own or as part of a team. We are forever grateful.

Along with the Council, so many businesses and individuals provided donations of money and goods to keep the different voluntary groups going. Asda Blantyre and Gavin Watson Printers provided brilliant support. Tom Brown, Chief Executive of Gavin Watson was an invaluable part of the Bonnie Blantyre team, a legend.

The future is uncertain. But one thing is for sure, if we continue to bring all these amazing people together, we are sure to keep achieving great things for the place that we all love.

