**Kilgetty Community Garden**

 **Kilgetty, Pembrokeshire February 2020**

Background information / describe the area/ when & how the group started

As you arrive in Kilgetty the community garden can be seen from the road, creating a welcoming entrance to the village. There are also planters by the bus pull-in outside the garden and across the road.

Originally the land was owned by Pembrokeshire County Council and when the bypass road was built, the spoil was dumped on this land along with dredgings from Saundersfoot harbour. The Co-op own the community hall next to the land.

Around 2000 the land was purchased by Kilgetty Begelly Community Council, the initial idea being to build a community/sports hall, which failed to materialise. As part of the initial agreement it had to be fenced off, so the site is now very secure and the land is safeguarded in terms of green space as it is designated on the LDP for sports and recreation.

In 2005 Begelly Kilgetty Community Association asked to set up a community garden, which the community council gave permission for. Over the years since then, volunteers have created the garden space.

The Co-op were involved in helping to clear another part of the land for the second phase - the children’s adventure playground. This has now been adopted by the Community Council who look after it.

Two initial grants have enabled the garden project to proceed. Firstly a £1,000 set up grant from Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services followed by a further £5,000 from Awards for All for the accessible paths in 2007. The garden was officially opened in 2008.

The site has some lovely features including a long pergola as you enter the garden, a willow sculpture, various seating areas (stone and recycled plastic), a central island bed and raised beds (using Australian Jarrah sleepers carefully selected to be untreated). 15 tons of top soil was added to the long bed initially.

There is a Spring garden, a summer meadow and an arboretum. The group also moved a First World War Memorial to the gardens where it now has a lovely location on a stone plinth and can be accessed by everyone. This came from the local Zion Chapel.

The area has a strong mining heritage and there is an underground railway linked to the harbour via a tunnel. To commemorate this local feature, four of the volunteers went on a stonework course to learn skills. They then put these skills to good use making a fantastic replica tunnel entrance and also a coal wagon on tracks. In the wall surrounding the tunnel entrance is a time capsule.

Group aims and how many members

There are around 12 core volunteers who meet every Tuesday morning throughout the year. All of them are retired, and they take on different roles such as collecting resources, working on the garden, even growing seedlings at home for the garden, church, and all round the village including the bakery.

The aims of the group are:

* To enhance the village facilities
* To make an area for everyone to use
* To provide a pleasant place to sit, walk & socialise;
* To help keep the local community fit & healthy
* To create a social/recreational space
* To create a play area for children
* To link with sports area across the road.

Main audience and volunteers

The garden has been a big community effort by a small core of volunteers supported by some local groups. The local men’s shed do some of the repairs to gates and fences. The local women’s institute have also been involved, along with the golden age club. The only paid worker does the mowing now as the group’s mower and strimmer were stolen.

Many local people visit and use the garden including families, disabled groups and people waiting for the bus. There is a dog walking area accessed through the garden which has 600m of mown paths around the common.

There are regular events including book sales, music evenings, plant sales and strawberry teas put on by the church. The garden is a well-respected and used recreational area with people coming to sit and enjoy the garden. The local school use the attached play area and also do some planting including a recent spring bulb planting sponsored by the Rotary Club.

What the project is achieving

There are many lovely achievements in the garden, such as a willow project involving a local disabled school group. The children created a lovely horse willow sculpture and also a living willow hedge, involving willow moved from the common to create hedges. Other volunteers have gained new skills such as hedgelaying, coppice management, conservation management for butterflies and birds etc.

Money is raised for the garden through Association events and also donations from library lending. The committee decides what money is allocated to the garden.

How group got permission to be on the site/ was it difficult?

The main challenges have been working with the difficult ground, which has a maximum of four inches of top soil and certain areas are not free-draining due to the poor subsoil. There was also horsetail to be dealt with initially. Rabbits have been a challenge too, and volunteers have had to learn what to plant that will survive.

The group used to have a rota to lock the gates at night but now they are open all the time. There is very little vandalism, the only occasional unexpected visitors being grazing horses belonging to the local traveller community.

A quote from the group about how they enjoy managing the site/ working with people on the site/ Any support they have received, particularly if they have worked with the Community Land Advisory Service Cymru.

“It’s nice to see an area we’ve created over the years. We’re out there in all weathers yet we keep doing it. It’s also really nice to see it used by residents and visitors and very rewarding to hear people say it looks lovely. It’s us not the council, we’re just a volunteer group but we get pleasure out of it. We get on ok and all work together - it’s as much a social occasion as a work group.”

What they hope to achieve in the future/ aspirations for a Green Flag Community Award

Plans for the future include:

* Develop the wildflower areas
* Renovation to the willow horse
* Manage land and hedges
* Continual maintenance
* Possibly a future kiosk for teas (as part of the common project)
* Improve the Men’s shed.

There is a new project with the wider community looking at the common (Rural Futures programme) which has its own steering group and has created a new environmental group. This group has plans for tree planting, a bee friendly project, bird boxes, creation of more walks and a picnic area on the common. There may also possibly be allotments in a different area of village.