

***Crowhurst & District Horticultural Society***  
***50th Anniversary Party – Sunday 3rd July 2022***  
***Show Secretary's Speech***

Hello everyone. When I started looking into the history of the society earlier this year, I was hoping to find some details about the early years of the society back in the 1970s. I particularly wanted to find a newspaper article about the first flower show which the society held in the summer of 1973.

That didn't really work out and unfortunately I didn't end up finding much new content from that era at all. To my surprise though, I came across some much older articles in some newspaper archives talking about flower shows being held in Crowhurst.

After a bit of digging, the earliest reference I came across to a Horticultural Society in Crowhurst was from 1897, when the then M.P. for Rye, Colonel Brookfield, visited the 'Crowhurst Cottage Garden and Flower Show'. The article alludes to the first such show being held the previous year (in 1896) in the school rooms. That's some 126 years ago!

After the First World War, another society (this time 'Crowhurst Horticultural Society') was formed and held its first flower show in 1920. By far the most interesting show they arranged appears to have been in 1926, when the Bexhill Observer reported that:

*During the afternoon and evening, the Hastings British Legion Band played selections, and in the evening supplied the music for the dancing. Much amusement was caused by the competitions for the best pair of ankles and bobbed hair.*

*Mr. Vernon won the competition guessing the weight of a cake, which was in the charge of Miss Border, and Mrs. Brown won the competition guessing the number of potatoes in a bushel, Mrs. Bye and Mr. C. Philcox tying for second place.*

It seems that some things do move on over the course of 100 years, but holding a flower show in Crowhurst is not one of them!

While I'm here, I wanted to also commemorate another anniversary. Back in 2010, Mary took over the role of Chairman of the Society after our previous chair 'Tilly' (Sandra) Smallwood, sadly passed away after a short illness.

There have been many times over the past 12 years where the society would have folded if Mary hadn't being willing to keep going.

With COVID, we haven't had a suitable opportunity to properly thank Mary for her hard work and dedication to the society over the past decade. So, as a small token of our appreciation, the committee would like to present Mary with this bouquet of flowers and I hope you will all join me in thanking her for her years of dedicated service to our Society.