

Ledbury Food Group



Acting Chairman's Report for the year to 31st March 2020

This has been another busy year.

We started with a joint event with the Ledbury Library Development Group featuring a talk by Helen Browning, Chief Executive of the Soil Association and Tim Finney on Monday 15th April. Our Book Club had been reading Helen's book "Pig – tales from an organic farm" and more widely on sustainable farming. Nearly 80 people joined us for an entertaining and absorbing evening in the Burgage Hall where Helen and Tim highlighted the many challenges that farming faces in the future. Thanks to Gilly Powell for making the introduction with Helen and Tim.

As is now usual, we attended with a stall at Ledbury Community Day on Saturday 8th June meeting many people and publicising the Ledbury Evening Farmers Market of which more later.

Our next major event was the Ledbury Celebration on Sunday 14th July – this year in a new venue St Katherine's Car Park. This proved a surprisingly good setting for an event of this kind and attracted nearly 30 food and drink stalls. The event's attendance was enhanced by the added attraction of the Sealed Knot marching through Ledbury as part of their "Battle of Ledbury" weekend. The Ledbury Poetry Festival, Ledbury Fringe and the Ledbury Romanian Community provided a rich and varied programme of entertainment which kept the crowds on what was a very hot and sunny day. Thanks also to Ledbury Town Council and the Friends of the Master's House who also contributed to the day, and to Neil Chambers and the Nest and the Herefordshire Community Foundation for help with the costs of holding this popular free event.

Thursday 4th July saw the start of Ledbury's Evening Farmers Market at the Barn, St Katherine's as a 6 month test to see if such a market at such a time would work. Thanks to Fran Robinson and Helen Pull who did a splendid job in bringing stall holders together, organisation and publicity, the first market attracted many customers and, importantly, good trading for the producers. This continued through the 6 month run of the market ending with a "Christmas" edition at the beginning of December. It had been planned to start this market again in April 2020 but Covid-19 intervened. We hope this initiative can continue when times and circumstances allow.

We again organised Ledbury's "winter food festival" the Ledbury Big Breakfast at the end of January featuring about 20 of Ledbury and District's retailers of locally produced food – cooked or fresh. A huge range of breakfasts was on offer and those taking part reported good business. The event remains a good way for promoting local food at a time when the local media is short of news content.

Alongside events we continue to maintain an informative and well used website featuring "food blogs", regularly recipes, a local food events calendar and our local

producers listing. Helen Pull who has administered the website since 2012 has now “retired” from the task handing over to David Hewitt. Many thanks to Helen for her assiduous work keeping the website up to date. Thanks to David for taking over and to Liz Whattler for supplying the popular monthly recipes.

We had started some work on reducing plastic use last year. This has now transferred to a new Ledbury organisation with wider objectives for a greener environment -Sustainable Ledbury.

We had hoped to be contacting you this Spring with our plans for another food related talk and a farm visit to a celebrated local farmer and maker of food products. These plans have had to be put on hold, as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions.

We have also cancelled this year’s summer food festival the Ledbury Celebration, held normally on the final Sunday of the Ledbury Poetry Festival.

In the meantime, we have been using our website to keep our members and supporters up to date with the various new arrangements that local food retailers and producers have creatively put in place to get their goods to their customers in the absence of regular markets, outlet closures and the needs of customers to isolate. We hope you are receiving our updates – we now have a Local Food Information page on the website – please share our news with others.

On the organisation front Fran Robinson resigned as Chairman in August and from the committee in December on completion of the Farmers Market initiative. Fran has been a lynch-pin of the Group since it was formed taking forward many of our activities. Her contribution will be missed.

Finally thanks to all those I haven’t mentioned individually who have enabled another successful year for Ledbury Food Group.

Keep supporting our local food producers and retailers!

Griff Holliday

Acting Chairman, Ledbury Food Group

10th June 2020