

CRADLEY VILLAGE HALL PRODUCE SHOW 2019

Another year, another Cradley Village Hall Produce Show. This is our 15th year and (touch wood) we do seem to have become a village fixture. To keen gardeners at any rate -- it still (even after a decade and a half of doing this) astonishes me that in a village of, say, 1200 souls we still haven't cracked that magical 100-entrants figure yet. We'll keep pushing! Still, this year we had even more entrants, and far, far more entries...

...Amongst which were some quite extraordinary ones. The baskets of fruit/veg this year were all outstanding; the photographic and art classes were heavily subscribed, with some splendidly imaginative (in the photos) interpretations of each brief. There were mouth-watering cakes (I lusted after a particularly luscious Victoria sponge, but realised, sadly, that I'd've had to give myself a whole needleful of insulin to stay on my feet!), and some spiffy-looking bread rolls which, I was told by comestibles judge Keri Backhouse were 'as light as a feather' -- and they deservedly won. And this from someone who's never made bread rolls before -- but that's one of the top reasons for entering a Produce Show: you never know your luck! And, quite often, you never know your own skills, until you actually try to cook, grow, sow (and sew, come to think of it), make, nurture. Quite often we surprise ourselves.

Talking about surprises, there was a huge one to do with the Fruit section which, this year, was **not** won by Mark Davies -- who, as I may have mentioned before in these columns, has the infuriating habit of sauntering in to the village hall at 10 o'clock on the day of judging, taking a quick gander at the fruit section, then disappearing to his garden across Rectory Lane, and returning, with just minutes to spare, with a basket of top quality fruit -- and winning the cup! This year he **didn't** win -- although, its true, only because he was on holiday.

Another pleasant shock (for the winner) this year in the 'rose' section. We alternate each year with 'The Last Rose of Summer' (a song by the Irish bard Tom Moore), and 'One Perfect Rose' (last line of a Dorothy Parker poem). This year, the latter -- and won by Julia Maclagen, who for the last four years has come 2nd or 3rd, but who this year at last nailed it! Congratulations!

Perhaps the most dazzling creativity was shown not by a fruit-'n'-veg grower, or cake-maker, or, indeed, any adult -- but by Leila Meager, in the 7-11 class 'I Made This', whose 'Cradley Monopoly Board' was a little masterpiece of imaginative design. Well done, Leila -- we hope you'll go far!

One other major shock to report. Last year I mentioned newcomer-to-the-village Holly Cooper, who came first in the cake section (virtually her only entry). This year she waltzed away with the Cradley Village Hall Cup for 'Best Female entrant', with 176 points (her closest rival Joy Edwards, with 106). So all you old female hands -- next year she's the one to beat!

Well done all participants. Our judges were John Deem, Keri Backhouse, Caroline Rayner, Jane Munford, and your correspondent (who judged the poetry section: and the excellent winning entry may be read elsewhere in this issue).

As ever, our Village Hall show could not exist without the aid of so many people -- Ken Nason, Louise van Vuren (back from Oz for a brief visit), Chair of CVH Jeff White, Gillian Lowder, June Nason, John and Maggie Edgar, Jerry Thomas and Tony Madsen. Grateful thanks to all -- and see you next year!

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