

GROUNDBREAKING!

AUTUMN
2015

NEWSLETTER

of THE LOW MOOR
ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
www.lowmoorallotments.co.uk
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PLOT CRAWLERS



Low Moor marked National Allotment Week in August with its inaugural Plot Crawl, an event where interested ploholders gathered to tour the site looking at one another's allotments, discussing tactics and sharing ideas, finishing up with tea and cakes on the Kids' Plot. An eclectic group of all ages gathered: tenancies ranged from a few months to over 20 years and we tended various sizes, from half plots to two joined seamlessly together. We visited plots we'd only ever admired from the path and ventured onto parts of the site we rarely visit. While essentially our spaces start off equal, we all do something different with them: some concentrate on vegetables, others have a lot of fruit, while many included flowers and grassed areas, proving that there's no 'right way' to cultivate a plot! A lot of hard work had gone into all of them, with newcomers making good progress in a short time and longer-standing tenants improving their plots year on year. We saw a lot of interesting crops, including purple French beans, espaliered apples, huge beetroot and giant artichokes. Along the way it was heartening to discover that I'm not the only one who mixed up my squash and courgette plants this year, nor am I alone in failing to grow a decent cauliflower.

Everyone was happy to share their knowledge and tips and all were inquisitive about other plots and methods of gardening. We had a lot in common, including a shared frustration with rabbits (and neighbours who neglect their plots!). Every man has a plan (although the inspiration is often provided by a woman) and everyone knew to the gram what their potatoes had yielded. Above all, everyone



very much enjoys their gardening and the time they spend in their own valued space.

The sharing continued as we tucked into well-deserved refreshments – tea and coffee generously provided by the Allotment Association and a variety of cakes baked and brought to share. Kath made some scrumptious raspberry bakewells and Lucy made use of the glut of courgettes most plots were probably experiencing with Nigella Lawson's courgette cake (from 'How to be a Domestic Goddess'). Thanks must go to Lucy Wild who organised the event so well: hopefully it will become an annual fixture.



ALL CHANGE PART I

After over seven years in the post, Simon Wild has called it a day as Low Moor Site Secretary. When he shared the job with Penny Davies, Simon was primarily responsible for managing the waiting list, a gargantuan task on a big site with a rapid turnover of ploholders. He kept it under control by arranging gatherings of prospective tenants who could all look around the vacant plots at the same time and rank them in order of preference – an effective way to assign several at one fell swoop. Since Penny stepped down last year he has been operating single-handed, so he added dealing with tenants' queries and problems to his responsibilities; he always responded in a friendly and laid-back way. We'd like to wish Simon (and Sammy, his faithful labrador) all the best for their retirement – if you can call looking after two full plots retirement that is!

We're now going back to having two Site Secretaries, Lucy Wild and Christine Robertson. They've not formally split the duties, but are working together to learn the ropes and have already successfully assigned the first batch of new tenants!



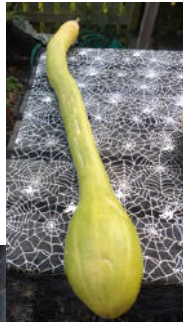
Lucy says: "I'm a part-time customer service advisor and a full time student, so I have a fairly hectic schedule. I've only been an allotment holder since January, but absolutely love it! My parents are very much Tom and Barbara Good so I had a little bit of experience – however nothing teaches you like getting stuck in. I have a totally mad rescue collie who accompanies me to the plot and tramples on my seedlings, but he is slowly (very slowly) learning manners, and now he has to learn how to be a Site Secretary's dog! Say hi if you see me on the site, I'd like to start putting faces to names (I'm the girl with the pink mini)".



And from Christine: "Hello! I'm really pleased to be one of the two new Site Secretaries. I've had a plot at Low Moor for about ten years (along the stray – defending everyone else from rabbits!) and I have always been a keen gardener. When I'm not gardening, I work at Natural England. The team I manage work across the North York Moors National Park and the Howardian Hills AONB looking after protected sites, National Nature Reserves, and working with farmers on environmental stewardship. Perhaps it's no surprise then that I am really interested in the wildlife at Low Moor and keen to hear about your newts, birds, bats and other sightings!"

PUMPKIN COMPETITION

Fabulous weather for the Low Moor pumpkin competition on October 31st and some very 'gourd' efforts on the table! We had an enormous Atlantic Giant pumpkin, which needed two people to carry it, some very spooky carvings and a few weird and wonderful varieties – some pretty and some not so attractive! A great time was had by all, let's hope for a few more entries next year.



ALL CHANGE PART 2

One of our longest serving members, Mandy Waggett, has stepped down from the committee. Mandy looked after the notice boards, organised the pumpkin competition for several years and she was also a familiar face in the shop on Sunday mornings. We'd like to thank Mandy for her contributions to Low Moor life.

We are always looking for new committee members and the ideas they bring (it was new members who suggested refreshing the website and holding the plot crawl this year), as well as more people to join the shop rota. If you'd like to find out more and get involved please contact any of the current committee.

KIDS' COMPETITION 2016

A new idea for 2016 is to hold a competition for the many children who garden on Low Moor. We don't want to make it too prescriptive, just to encourage and mark the efforts of children, whatever they are getting up to. I'm sure many parents already do this, but when you are planning for next year, please have a think about giving your child a dedicated area or responsibility on your plot – a kids' allotment on a small scale, where they can grow and plan however they see fit! Perhaps they'll grow a variety of crops (maybe giants or weird varieties) or create a pond or wildlife area – there are plenty of possibilities. More details in the next issue.

DOT TO DOT

Our tool marking day on Sunday July 19th was a huge success. Items arrived by the wheelbarrow load, everything from (t)rusty saws to a Mac Book. Nothing proved too tricky for the magic property marking machine. Officially called 'dot peen', it indents items with tiny unique codes and links them to the Police Immobilise Database. On this, the item can be linked to information such as the site's postcode or your email address, which increases the chances of things being returned to you if stolen. We're currently getting great support from the local police, with patrols taking place regularly, including after dark, so this is a boost to their efforts.

With 246 items, including 12 bikes, marked over the course of the day, we comfortably beat all the other sites in York and Allotments Officer Darren Lovatt presented the committee with a cup to mark the achievement. The cup is so small and curvy that it's officially an 'unengravable item', one of the few that the machine couldn't handle!



Still on the subject of site security, in the last issue we encouraged plotholders to enter details of any anti-social behaviour, vandalism, thefts etc. in the book in the shop and also to report incidents to the police, however trivial they may be. That way the police get accurate statistics and can follow up reports. It's worth noting that an arrest and conviction arose recently from a report to police – your information is taken seriously and acted upon.

TAKING STOCK

Kerry and Chris are looking back on what has been a hectic and successful first year in charge of the shop. Both are very modest about their considerable achievement, but they should be proud: the shop has been very well-used, both by tenants and locals, (over 40 pay a subscription) and especially in the early months it was very busy. They won't be making any massive changes next year, although you may find some new items in stock, including some different varieties of potatoes. They've put in a lot of hours, many when the shop isn't even open, making sure it's clean, tidy and well-stocked.

We'd like to thank all the volunteers who staff the shop and/or work behind the scenes – without them the shop couldn't run, nor could it keep its prices so competitive. If you'd like to join the team, please get in touch; it's good fun meeting other tenants, you get 10% discount off purchases and proper training – the only thing missing is a staff uniform!

The last day this year is Saturday November 28th, with reopening planned for Saturday February 6th 2016. New Year's Resolution: make it your first call for your gardening supplies next spring – you'll be able to get all you need, it's cheaper than town and it's right on your doorstep! Keep an eye on our Twitter feed for updates.



AND FINALLY...

As the season draws to a close, but before you put your feet up for the winter, just a gentle reminder that now's a good time to trim hedges (every tenant is responsible for their own boundaries). It's a great excuse for a fire – just make sure your cuttings are dry and check and turn piles beforehand to keep hibernating hedgehogs safe.

CONTACTS

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