

GROUND BREAKING!

Summer
2016

NEWSLETTER
of THE LOW MOOR ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
www.lowmoorallotments.co.uk
@LowMoorAllots



The Low Moor Plot Crawl Saturday July 23rd 2016



Back by popular demand, after a successful debut in 2015, the idea is to travel around the site in a group and to spend 10-15 minutes on each participating plot. You can see what other people are growing, share experiences (good and bad) and pick up ideas, advice and tips. It's great to find out that you aren't alone with your frustrations and failures and to have others appreciate what you are trying to do.

It's not a competition, so don't be put off if your plot isn't up to RHS standards! Look on it as an opportunity to meet fellow tenants and to visit parts of the site you don't usually venture to. We finish up by sharing tea, cake, ideas and maybe even a bit of hot gossip.

Contact Lucy Wild by July 15th to register your plot (this will help with the organisation) and to get involved!
lucyawild@gmail.com

AGM REPORT

A well-attended (21 members and a dog) Annual General Meeting covered a wide range of topics this year.

- At the beginning of the year we surveyed members about installing a composting toilet on site. The response was very low, only around 20 replies, with opinion firmly split and strong feelings on both sides, so the committee decided not to pursue the project.
- Some new members – Joe Lyons, Lindsay Maxwell and Tess McMahon – joined the committee, bringing fresh ideas and input and bolstering our numbers after some retirements over the last year.
- The meeting agreed that the association will start to meet the cost of the storekeeper's plot rental. This recognises the hours that Chris puts in to run the shop to such a high standard and the fact that it is such an important asset both to the site and to the local community.
- We know that there are changes on the way from the Council in terms of how allotments are managed and funded and Site Secretary Christine Robertson filled us in on what she knows so far. We expect all tenants to be mailed in the not too distant future and attendees agreed that once the Council's proposals are known a further General Meeting to

discuss them would be useful.

- There was some discussion about the sort of problems tenants encounter, such as adjoining an overgrown plot. The best way to deal with any issues or queries you have is to contact the Site Secretaries.
- We also touched on the shop roof, which intermittently leaks and will need repair or replacement at some point. Is there anyone on site who could take a look and perhaps advise us on our options and the best way forward?

We finished off with cakes and drinks and a chance to socialise. All agreed that the change of date (we held the AGM later in the year than previously) and continuing to hold it on site contributed to the much-improved turn out and that it was nothing to do with the lure of refreshments!

WORKING PARTY



Lindsay Maxwell joined our third working party, held in June; here's what went on.

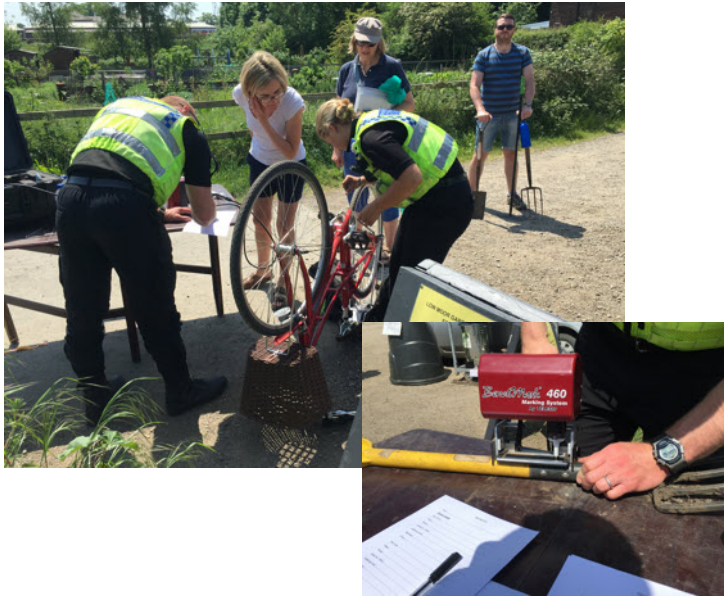
A small group set out around the allotment in search of the dreaded Himalayan Balsam. This is a very invasive weed, each plant producing up to 800 seeds, and it quickly takes over areas it is allowed to flourish in, out-competing other wild flowers. However, it is an annual with shallow roots and very easy to pull out and the seed only remains viable for up to two years with most germinating in the first year, so it is potentially relatively easy to eradicate.

We covered all the paths through the allotment pulling up any we found and bagging it ready for green binning. There turned out to be surprisingly little of it, given how much was spotted on the site last year. Presumably this is due to the success of people pulling it up before it was able to flower in the last season. So we can hope that with this effort and with people continuing to keep a lookout for it we may be able to keep it at bay. Certainly the lanes and public areas are clear, but please check your plot and if you do see any do pull it out straight away before it has time to flower.

All in all it felt like a job well done, and in addition we had a very pleasant walk around the allotments at a time of year when the plots are looking particularly lovely.

TOOL MARKING

Great support from tenants and the local community made our second tool marking day on June 5th a resounding success. The police worked solidly for four hours in searing heat, marking 150 items – spades, forks, hand tools, strimmers, hedge cutters, loads of bikes, bike trailers, kids scooters, iPads, phones, cameras and our Danish trolley, which appears outside the shop during opening hours (I'd like to meet the thief who thinks he could make off with that beast!). As an extra this year, the Fire service also attended to give advice. Last year, 246 items were marked on the day, but the session lasted much longer, so we are quietly confident of beating all the other allotment sites again this time around!



LAST DITCH?

Once again, the pétanque pitch (at the far end of the site, by the entrance from the stray) is looking sorely neglected. While at one time it was a popular amenity, in recent years no-one seems to have played regularly and the only maintenance that has been carried out has been done sporadically by groups of volunteers. Unless someone comes forward who wants to use it and is willing to keep it weed-free and tidy, the committee feel they have no option but to consider changing its function, a sentiment that was endorsed by attendees at our recent AGM. If there's anyone out there who would like to take on the challenge, please get in touch. Otherwise, we will look at other options for the area at the end of the season. There are already some fruit trees and places to sit, so initial thoughts are a low-maintenance wild flower area, but we'd be happy to consider any easy to look after alternatives.

GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME IN YORK

This popular radio programme was recorded in York in April. The event was organised by Scarcroft Allotments and took place in Clements Hall, off Nunnery Lane. The programme is pre-recorded and so it was interesting to see and hear the process. The Chair, Eric Robson, requested that we clap loudly and laugh at the jokes offered during the programme, and then introduced the Panel – Matthew Wilson, Christine Walkden and Bob Flowerdew. On arrival there had been an opportunity to submit a question, and 10 were chosen for the recording session. Ones that made it through to the final programme were: the popularity and purposes of show gardens; supermarket pots of herbs; climbers to be planted

on a redundant climbing frame, in a shady part of the garden; trees and shrubs suitable for a small garden that will be attractive to wild life; and a problem non-flowering shrub.

Two questions came from allotmenters, but neither reflected the usual problems encountered on allotments. One wanted a remedy for water-damaged gladioli and the other asked for ideas of suitable plants to make an impression, to go in raised beds in a community garden. The final question came from Graham Sanderson of Scarcroft Allotments, who asked for names of politicians who might be encouraged to take up gardening and what they should grow. Answers were fairly predictable: Donald Trump should find some calm and grow rosemary; Christine and Bob thought all politicians should take up gardening to 'ground' them in real life issues; and Matthew suggested they grow Brussels sprouts to eat so that they could experience how much "hot air" they are generating!

All in all an enjoyable occasion, with the odd good suggestion that I might take forward. (Angela Johnson)

EDIBLE YORK 2016

Edible York is a local charity which manages lots of city centre growing spaces (such as the beds near the Barbican Centre), helps schools to grow, plants lots of



trees with communities across York and supports communities to develop their own edible gardens. They are holding their Edible Open Gardens event on Saturday 16th July 2016 between 10am and 4pm. On the day many gardens across the city will be opening their gates to showcase their efforts and encourage more people to get involved with making York an Edible City. At the time of writing about 20 gardens are signed up to welcome visitors, giving you the chance to explore some of the hidden gems and unusual private edible gardens around York. Check out their website at www.edibleyork.org.uk for more details.

One participant is our own award-winning Kids' Allotment, which will be open between 10.30am and 1pm. This well-established project plays host to a group of children every Saturday morning throughout the season, introducing them to gardening and giving them responsibility for areas and plants of their own. It's a lovely spot and the children and adult helpers would be delighted to welcome any Low Moor plot holders interested in seeing what goes on. Refreshments will be available.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

These little nuggets come from *Dig on for Victory*, written by C.H. Middleton (said to be the Alan Titchmarsh of his day!) in 1945.

- An allotment is rather like the army. The first month is the worst: after that you begin to enjoy it.
- Take digging easy at first, or you may get blisters or lumbago, and call the spade anything but a spade.
- True gardeners never enjoy the fruits of their labours unless they can share them with others.

CONTACTS

Angela Johnson: Chair, Treasurer & Kids' Allotment
☎ 07982431687 ✉ angela3147@hotmail.com

Lucy Wild & Christine Robertson: Site Secretaries
☎ 07876 393522 ✉ lowmoorallotments@gmail.com

Council Allotments Team
☎ 01904 553433 ✉ allotments@york.gov.uk