

GROUND BREAKING!

Summer
2017

NEWSLETTER

of THE LOW MOOR ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

www.lowmooralotments.co.uk

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PLOT CRAWL

Eleven plot holders met to walk around and view their different plots. And how different they all were! Some showed the results of just a few months' work since new tenants had taken ownership and "sketched" the ideas they had for future developments. Others were the product of some years' labour, but still were presented as a "work in progress". Ideas were shared, hints offered about successful ways of tackling problems and suggestions made as to things to avoid. It is said that "a problem shared is a problem halved" and I think we all learnt something that could be of help in the future.



Nick points out parts of his fruit plot to the group

And finally Ceon took us round the Kids' Allotment, before we sampled together some delicious cakes – lemon drizzle cake, gooseberry, redcurrant and orange cake, salted caramel cream cake and carrot cakes. A lovely way to bring the walk to an end.

Next year we can see how many of those aspirations and plans have become a reality.



Zoe explains parts she likes & problems she has encountered on her plot

COMINGS & GOINGS

We're sorry to report that Lucy Wild has given up not only her plot, but also her positions as Secretary to the Association and Site Secretary: her student days are over and she's found a proper job that is demanding a lot of her time. She did a fine job on the committee, for example coming up with the idea of the plot crawl. She was always rushing around juggling her various commitments – she once rushed into a committee meeting, having reluctantly abandoned her pony in Sainsbury's car park after a competition! (No harm came to it, I hasten to add.)

At the recent Annual General Meeting, Jessica Ochalek took over as Association Secretary and John Gower also joined the committee: there's room for more members if you're interested. Due to ongoing uncertainty about the future

management of allotment sites in York there won't be another Site Secretary appointed just now, so Christine Robertson will work on her own, at least for the time being.

CAN YOU HELP?

At the AGM members talked about the possibility of organising some social events e.g. barbecue, harvest festival, bonfire party. We discussed this at Committee and the feeling was that ideally we would like someone to join the Committee to focus on this area of activity – we all feel busy enough doing what we currently do. So if there is a prospective Social Organiser reading this, please get in touch. We'd be delighted to have you involved.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The future management of allotments in the city remains undecided. Simon Wild and Adam Myers are attending meetings to form a new structure to take over from the council. They are doing so as individuals, not on behalf of the Association nor as representatives of Low Moor, but it's very reassuring nonetheless that the experience of these capable chaps is being fed into the project. The group's proposal is for one organisation with a board of trustees to cover all the sites in York; this is seeking approval for charitable status from the Charity Commission. The plan is to change as little as possible and certainly not anything that is currently working well. Our relationship with the board of trustees should be the same as it is now with the council; they would liaise with Site Secretaries who will continue to be the channel of communication. The aim is for the new body to take over in September, but this may be delayed. Before that, Dave Meigh from the council will be contacting all allotment holders in York to let us know what is happening.

WATER, WATER

So far, the weather this summer has been very up and down, baking hot one day, pouring with rain the next. So this information from Darren Lovatt, the Allotment Officer, is worth passing on. He reminds us of point 16 on the tenancy agreement: The Tenant shall not use any water supply which may be made available for use by tenants of allotment gardens, other than for filling butts and containers, prior to distributing their contents on the Allotment Garden.

He continues: "It would be fair to say that the taps, which normally have a full water butt under them, are to be used only for the filling of watering cans/buckets/butts, to be used sparingly on a person's plot to water their crops. Where plot holders have sheds, I'd suggest they consider adapting the guttering to collect water into water butts. Irregular filling of water butts to top up can be allowed, but we would hope not abused. The water supply is not to be used for watering/filling wildlife ponds or to be connected to sprinklers".

The water is metered, so the more we use the more it will cost. While we have plenty of taps, they are a shared facility, so please be considerate and don't hog them with your hosepipe on a hot day!

WORKING PARTY



Two new plot holders responded to Angela's appeal for volunteers to help tidy up the car park area. The target set was to trim back fairly well the pyracantha growing alongside the Gardeners' Store and clear the area at one end of the Himalayan Balsam, now in flower. We were conscious that the task would inevitably affect the berries on the pyracantha, but needed to try and bring some control back after a couple of years of neglect. We achieved our goals, leaving a goodly number of berries to ripen for the birds. Evidence of the amount of work is shown by the size of the pile of vegetation left to dry in the corner before being burned in a few weeks' time. We enjoyed achieving the goal we set ourselves and hope that more will join in the effort on the next work session. In late Autumn we plan to reduce the shrub further and tie it more strongly into the wires on the shop wall.



A further work session will be needed to clear the area behind the manure bays and any other eyesore corners. And then there is the pétanque pitch to tackle.... and some of the hedges alongside pathways and..... (AJ)

As Angela says, there is plenty to do on the site. If you find it difficult to commit to one of the scheduled sessions, just get in touch (as one willing plot holder has already done) and she will explain how you can help. I'll be getting my secateurs out and clearing some of the foliage threatening to poke my eyes out on my route to my plot – I will leave blackberries, roses and similar plants intact though!

HEDGELAYING

At the beginning of the year we held a training course to learn hedgelaying skills, bought the tools (all funded by the Association) and then held several productive sessions working on the south side of the site to improve the condition of the hedge. Work had to stop between March and October to protect nesting birds, but we plan to run a further training course and then schedule more sessions from October/November onwards when the birds will have departed and the hedge will be dormant.

We are looking for more people to get involved and continue the good work during the winter months. This is a quiet time for plot holders, so a spot of warming outdoor exercise with

good companions could fit in nicely. Those who have already taken part enjoyed learning the technique, meeting fellow tenants and making a real impact on the state of the site at the same time – please get in touch if you are interested.

SITE SECRETARY'S CORNER

Once again, I'd like to welcome new tenants – we seem to be doing this a lot with so many new lettings! I'd also like to gently remind folks that they are responsible for their own boundaries. Every path through the site should be kept clear and accessible enough for a wheelbarrow to make it through, while hedges and fences should not exceed the recommended height of 1.5 metres. If tenants have overgrown boundaries, it would be really helpful if they could trim these back. Those rare sightings of Council mowers are only possible if there is access!

MENTORING

We'd like to remind everyone of our mentorship scheme, which aims to pair experienced gardeners with new and/or inexperienced plot holders. We don't expect the mentor to do the actual work, rather it's a case of advising, supporting and befriending your 'trainee'. It shouldn't be a huge time commitment and you'll help to give someone a solid start on the site. For a new tenant it's a chance to tap into general gardening advice, local knowledge and fellow feeling if something goes wrong! Please let us know if you'd like to participate on either side of a duo.



At this time of the year the shelf under the main notice board really comes into its own, as surplus crops

for sharing pile up. Please don't leave anything too big: if you do have anything sizeable to get rid of, just pop a notice on the board or ask me and I'll email out to association members on your behalf. Broken and damaged items also get left from time to time: please don't dump rubbish, just leave items which are intact and could be of use to someone else.

Get ready for the Pumpkin & Squash Competition on Saturday October 14th!

Email will follow with more details.

OVER TO YOU

The last issue of this newsletter for 2017 will come out towards the end of the season and I'm looking for your contributions to a review of the year. For example:

- ❖ How the season has turned out for you – what has gone well or badly?
- ❖ Anything that you've grown for the first time or that has grown particularly well that you'd recommend to others.
- ❖ Your favourite buy from the shop.
- ❖ New tenants: what are your first impressions of Low Moor?

These are just a few ideas that spring to mind and I'm sure you'll have plenty more. Please join in – maybe I can achieve a long-held goal of having to write none of the articles myself for an entire edition! Email helen.balawajder@gmail.com

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