

**MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S
7TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER, 2003
at
SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST**

Present:

Bruce Jones (Chairman)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary)
John Savage (Treasurer)
Jean Barnett
Brenda Baynes
Philip Biss
Peter Block
Bill Brinklow
George Brown
Julian Critcher
Sue & Gabrielle Dabbagh
Jane Dickenson
John Driver
Fiona Duck
Ted Dyer
Freda Earl
Victor Earl
Peter Fowell
Hazel Grimwood
Graham Hall
Simon Heywood
Elizabeth Jones
Ian Knight

Peggy Picco
Richard Pollock
Anne Powell
John Powell
Clive Smith
Patrick Stileman
Adam Stokes
Angela Walsh
Chris Watt
Clive Weakley
Mary Weakley
Angela Wheeldon
Sarah Wood

Apologies for Absence:

Daniel Bartlett
Kylie Bartlett
Lynne Bennett
Jim Ellisdon
Nicky Fisher
Rachel Scott

Bruce Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained his informal style and invited members to participate. He also thanked Sunnyside Rural Trust for the use of their hall.

1/03 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above).

2/03 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record by all those attending.

3/03 Chairman's report

Bruce Jones said that he had not thought when he entered the AGM last year that he would now be in the Chair. He reported that it had been a very enjoyable year and he had been particularly impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of members. And it was getting even better, the number of paid up members have increased, there is more money in bank, and more wood on the wood pile!

The Committee had met several times during the year, on one occasion in a pub, on another in Bruce's house. Informal meetings are virtually continuous, usually at about 11 o'clock each day at the Tea Hut!

During the year there have been several clearance days, mainly on 'New' and we have also been involved in supporting a similar event at the Butts Meadow Allotments – hard work and long days but great fun! A highpoint was always the lunch! The dates for 2004 have been published in the News letter.

There have been two Open Days and a barbecue which have been very successful although the second one was not quite the 'harvest festival' we had intended, due to the unusually hot summer hastening the ripening of produce. We have also worked to raise the profile of allotments and the Society, by attending events such as the Lions Fete and Community in Action. These resulted in some new tenants on plots. Sunnyside Old is nearly fully tenanted, but some gardens are available on New. The work on the toilet facility continues, largely by Ted.

Work still to do:

Much was set down to be discussed later in the agenda but for Bruce everything centred on the need for there to be a council policy commitment to promoting allotment gardening and for bringing vacant plots back into use as individual gardens. He felt that the Council should be encouraged to see the benefits of a firm strategy for the future of the allotments to be published following a comprehensive review of the views of allotment gardeners and other residents and local organisations as to how to maximise the use of an incredibly valuable asset.

Bruce has been unable to discover any grand plan or broad vision against which decisions affecting the use of the allotments had been made. The putting of vacant allotment land to uses other than as individual allotment gardens does not seem to be based on any research into the latent demand for gardens. There are however some encouraging signs of some movement in this area but we are going to have to push the issue.

It is difficult to see how any fundamental decisions can properly be made in the absence of an allotments' review and the creation of a strategy and business plans. We mentioned in the

Newsletter the ideas for increased rents. Of course rents should be periodically reviewed, but how can this be done without better information about the extent of the latent demand for gardens and the effect of such changes on attracting new allotment gardeners. How can the increased funds from possible increases be applied to improvement projects unless the most worthwhile improvements are identified, costed and marshalled into priorities. This work to encourage the management and promotion of the allotments to be similar to that achieved elsewhere would be a major work of the year ahead.

4/03 Consider and approve the Society's accounts

John Savage thanked George Brown for auditing the accounts.

Over the last year subscriptions were up by 50%, and also donations. The two Open Days raised over £300 for the Society and the seed order more or less covered the NSALG membership. This year we made a donation in memory of Ken Harbord to Gossoms End and planted a tree in his memory and bought a plaque.

In all there was £363 excess of income over expenditure, compared with £78 last year. There is £649 in the bank. It was agreed to keep subscription levels at £2.

The accounts were approved.

Bruce thanked John for all his hard work as Treasurer over the years.

5/03 Open Days and Barbecue

These went very well and raised a lot of money. The second Open Day was an experiment, but went very well. Discussion took place on whether we should hold two open days per year, as there was a lot of hard work beforehand organising them, done by a few people. There were arguments for and against, but it was the general view of the meeting that we should have two. It was suggested that we might have 2 separate sub-committees and co-opt non-committee members on to these. The second open day could be made different by holding a competition e.g. scarecrow or sunflower growing. There could also be a guided tour of the allotments as well as of Birtchnell's Copse.

The barbecue was also very successful and Patrick suggested booking the Sunnyside Rural Trust building now. Jenny will write to Rita Drew to confirm.

6/03 Future Projects

Toilet This is still on-going. The council wants more detailed information in order to make an application for planning permission. We are waiting for quotes to connect the toilet to the main sewer (the contractor has to be approved by Thames Water) The town Clerk is trying to contact Sub Terra. The amount set aside by the council is insufficient to cover additional planning fees etc. Additional expenditure will need to be approved by the full council. Ted explained that the original quote was only an estimate and asked the meeting how much the Society might be prepared to contribute. The toilet will not be maintenance free, as well as cleaning etc. the water will need to remain on all year, and therefore tanks will need draining. The general feeling of the meeting was that we should not offer to contribute, at least initially, the council has a duty to improve its property.

Other Events	6 th December	Clearance day
	10 th December	Tree planting Sunnyside Rural Trust orchard
	21 st December	Christmas drinks
	10 th January 2004	Clearance day
	7 th February 2004	Clearance day (Birtchnell's Copse)
	6 th March 2004	Clearance day
	26 th June 2004	Open Day & barbecue

Last week a hedge was planted round the Sunnyside Rural Trust orchard on New and we assisted Butts Meadow in a clearance day a few weeks ago.

7/03 Publicity for Allotments

Bruce reported that something that he has been struck by the enthusiasm and hard work put into 'profile raising' (and having a good time). Both Open Days have been very successful (and financially rewarding). This year was the first to have a second open day which was intended to be something of a harvest festival, but the season raced on and the harvest was pretty much gone by September. Off-site promotion at the Lions Fete on the August Bank Holiday and the Community in Action event in the Town Hall, have both been really successful and gained new recruits.

Bruce informed the meeting that this month saw the creation by Jenny of the **Sunnyside website** which is very, very, impressive – 100 plus visits? And another initiative (by Jenny, with help from Angela) was the creation of the **Sunnyside Calendar** (on sale after the meeting at £3.25 each). Members were also asked for photos for next year's calendar so it can be produced much earlier and sold at the summer events. Brenda made an appeal for articles and photos for the newsletter and Jenny likewise for the website. Bruce commented on the value of the newsletter and Liz asked whether it ever appears in the local paper. Last year we were featured in the Gazette leisure section.

Bruce asked the meeting whether members are content that we continue to raise profile – can anyone suggest any other initiatives?

Freda said that the council are hoping to hire a market stall for voluntary organisations such as the SAS to use. Ted informed the meeting that there was likely to be an Environment Fair next year.

8/03 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members

All the existing committee members are prepared to stand again for election, apart from John Savage (Treasurer). Dan or Kylie Bartlett (unable to attend AGM) would be prepared to take on the role.

9/03 Election of officers and committee

The committee elected is as follows:

Bruce Jones	Chairman	866078
Ted Dyer	Vice Chair	872684
Jenny Sippings	Secretary	865890
Daniel Bartlett	Treasurer	877109
Brenda Baynes		865853
Fiona Duck		874334
Graham Hall		873408
Patrick Stileman		874457
Clive Weakley		875373
Angela Wheeldon		874440

George Brown agreed to continue as auditor.

10/03 Election of Allotments' representative on Town Council's Allotments Management Team

Ted Dyer is retiring from this post, having continued reluctantly in the role for the last year. The committee came to the conclusion that the work undertaken by the site rep needs to be shared amongst committee members, but Bruce will be the named person to liaise with the council and attend AMT meetings. Proposed by Angela and seconded by Peggy. Angela and Ted also attend AMT meetings as ex officio, co-opted members.

Bruce suggested that there would be specified times to show tenants around e.g. Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Patrick suggested that this should be by prior arrangement and Sarah suggested vacant signs should be put on untenanted plots, so people could look around on their own if they wished. Bruce suggested that we should have a register of all plots with details, available to all committee members when showing prospective tenants around. This needs further discussion at a future committee meeting.

It was suggested that a site plan should be on the website, also indicating vacant plots, outlining condition.

We also propose to produce an Allotment Welcome pack for new tenants (this will also be available on the website).

11/ 03 Any Other Business

Calendars on sale at £3.25

Subs to be paid at £2

Please sign email addresses on list so we can update records.

Website – members invited to contribute photos and it was agreed that any article that had appeared in the newsletter could be used on the website (unless the author specifically asked for it not to). It was suggested we could put an article on the website, written by a new tenant about their experiences.

The suggested rent increase in the last newsletter was discussed. Apparently the suggestion came from the Butts Meadow rep. Bruce again made the point that until we had a strategy in place with identified priorities, a rent increase could not be considered. It was pointed out that members should make their views known to Ted, Angela or Bruce to feed back to the AMT.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m. Next year's AGM will take place on 27 November 2004.