

**MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S
9TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
SATURDAY 26TH NOVEMBER, 2005
at
SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST**

Present:

Bruce Jones (Chairman)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary)
John Powell (Treasurer)
Michael Barwise
Brenda Baynes
Peter Block
Vera Chambers
Sue Dabbagh
Jane Dickenson
Barbara Driver
John Driver
Fiona Duck
Ted Dyer
Freda Earl
Jim Ellisdon
Betty Fowell
Peter Fowell
Hazel Grimwood
Jaxkie Guest
Graham Hall
Elizabeth Jones
Richard Pollock
Garry Rooke
Prue Scofield
Clive Smith
Patrick Stileman
Billy Wall
Chris Watt
Clive Weakley

Mary Weakley
Angela Wheeldon
Mary Wilkinson (Herts Organic Gardeners)

Apologies for Absence:

Bernard Axford
Karen Bevan
Philip Biss
Karin Huber
Bob Millard
Peggy Picco
Rachael Scott

Bruce Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting and he also thanked Sunnyside Rural Trust for the use of their hall again. Bruce stated that we do not just use the hall for the AGM, but during the year too for the barbecue and Open Day. We are very grateful and value their friendship.

1/05 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above).

2/05 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record by all those attending, apart from Freda Earl being omitted from the list of attendees..

Mary Wilkinson, Chairman of Herts Organic Gardeners (Herts branch of HDRA) addressed the meeting. It costs £15 for an organisation to affiliate. They meet in St Michael's Church, St Albans. They hold 6 meetings per year with guest speakers. They also have an arrangement with Chase Organics for a 10% discount on seeds. Membership for individuals is £7, family £12. They produce 4 newsletters per year and it costs £1 to attend their meetings.

3/05 Chairman's report

Bruce reported that it was the end of his third year as Chairman. The last 12 months has been a busy time, but all that we have achieved has been due to the hard work and enthusiasm of tenants (and the members of the SAS Committee).

At the last AGM Bruce spoke of the disappointment of not having completed the allotment loo. A high point of this year must be its completion and official opening by the Mayor Geraldine Corry. Our particular thanks to the Berkhamsted Town Council for footing the quite considerable bill for the sewer connection. Many tenants have been involved in the building project from the pouring of the cement for the base to the decoration of the interior. Who would have thought that such a small building would involve so much work! The building work made use of recycled materials most of them acquired (and carried to the allotments) by Ted Dyer, so whilst not a composting loo it is a recycled loo.

It has also been the year of the big machinery. During the year we improved the middle road on Sunnyside New, thanks to the expert help of our drivers Fred Jackson and Clive Weakley (also Adam Stokes) and the assistance of the many volunteers pushing barrows and raking etc. All sustained, as on our clearance days by the lunches provided by the ladies. Special thanks to Angela, Ag, Hazel, Olga, Rina, Prue and others not mentioned. The roadway is a great improvement and can be clearly seen by the folks on the other side of the town. Again, our thanks to Berkhamsted Town Council for funding part of the hire of the 'big boys' toys'.

We think that the allotments are now blooming, and very popular. As Allotment Rep a great deal of Bruce's time has been taken up showing new tenants over the allotments. Most enquiries result in lettings. Sunnyside Old is completely full and when plots become available they are quickly let. The standard of cultivation and tidiness is improving, but not to the extent that it loses the 'a bit rough around the edges' feel, the Sunnyside character of mixing high standards of cultivation with something a bit more natural, which is so important. During this year Bruce has been maintaining a waiting list for OLD.

It is particularly gratifying to have had such a major take up of plots on Sunnyside New. We have just about 12½ long term vacant plots available, and if the current demand continues we would expect to have let them by the next AGM. Then we will be pressing for more of the statutory allotment land to be brought back into use.

It is gratifying to see that increasingly the new tenants are young families, often mothers and their young children – future generations of allotment gardeners in the making. And we must always have the continuity of the allotments in mind, we have something very precious, and we must be sure that we make the most of it. Whilst there is a general increase in the interest in allotment gardening and a growing awareness of the need to take exercise and eat organic food, we, and the Council, have also done our bits in increasing awareness by taking stalls at local events, notably the Lion's Fete and the Community event in the Town Hall.

During the year we have been involved with the Berkhamsted Town Council and others about the future of the areas of statutory allotment land, which are temporarily out of allotment use. The wheel of demand for allotments has come full circle and the Society's committee is now concerned to ensure that there is sufficient land in allotment use to satisfy that growing demand. Sunnyside Old is completely occupied and Sunnyside New with probably no more than a year's supply of vacant full plots, and that is even if the Council does restrict new lettings to Berkhamsted residents.

We are very keen to see further work on the Allotment Strategy so that it is indeed a clear way forward for the allotment service; and for the allotment service to continue to be provided in partnership with the Council. At times even the best of partnerships can get strained. But it is in all of our interests to get on well together, with the common aim of promoting allotment gardening - and we will continue to work for this.

There are a lot of things to do, there is still the issue of conserving water and it is high time the allotment bonfires were brought under control. We know that the Chairman of the Allotment Management Team is keen on this and Bruce is completely behind her. Bonfires are a hot topic and whatever is to be done will not please everyone.

The Allotment Management Team is to consider its constitution and how it works within the Council structure and the part played by the allotment representatives, to deliver the allotment service. We think that this really is particularly important to us all and look forward to contributing our views.

Bruce stated that we will be considering the election of officers and the committee later, but having served for three years now, Bruce will be putting himself forward as Chairman and Site Representative but this will be his final year.

Discussion of Chairman's report:

Freda Earl raised the issue of bonfires and said that the council will write to tenants for ideas to improve the problem.

Clive Smith raised the issue of unsightly sheds, some of which appear to be built on stilts. He also mentioned the shed that has a water tank on the roof on New, which is not only unsightly, but dangerous.

Someone else suggested that tenants should only have one bonfire per year, and the material must be dry. Michael Barwise responded that he has a large clearance job to do, therefore one bonfire per year would not be enough.

4/05 Consider and approve the Society's accounts

John Powell was co-opted on to the committee mid-year and took over the treasurer's role from Daniel Bartlett. John has gone back to manual books and is running a profit and loss account.

The accounts were available at the meeting for members to peruse. John commented that we have actually spent £15 more than we raised this year. John also stated that he is opening a cheque account instead of the Building Society Account.

Most of the income this year resulted from the calendar, seed scheme, sales of produce, Open Day income, more subs paid than ever before and donations for wood etc.

5/05 Open Day and Barbecue

Open Day was very successful; the weather was mixed, but nevertheless there was a good turnout and some plots were let to new tenants. The scarecrow competition was quite a draw. The scarecrows were of a very good standard and thanks were given to Geraldine Corry and Bruce for judging the competition. It was agreed by the meeting that we should continue with just one Open Day per year and that it is good to hold it in National Allotments Week. It was decided to hold next year's on a Sunday rather than a Saturday.

The barbecue was also very good and it was agreed to continue with this in the future.

6/05 Future Events

Michael Barwise suggested that allotment holders could speak at other people's events. Bruce said that he would be speaking to the Lions in January.

Barbara Driver commented on Open Day parking if the church was holding an event or service. However this was not felt to be too much of an issue

07/05 Future Projects

Michael Barwise raised the issue of the haul route on New. As few tenants had shown interest in this it is now Plot 57 only. Plot 40 has been let.

On future clearance days we need to look at fencing, some tree clearance on Old and middle pathways between A and B road plots.

Freda informed the meeting that the AMT are considering re-surveying the allotments. Clive asked whether this would be expensive; Freda said not.

John Powell asked if there would be any interest in a vegetable record keeping scheme. It would not be a competition, but just records of the largest/heaviest vegetable etc. Bruce asked anyone interested to talk to John.

8/05 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members

All the existing committee are prepared to stand again.

Other nominations received were:

John Powell	Treasurer
Billy Wall	Committee member

Thanks were also expressed to Clive Weakley who has recently stood down from the committee.

9/05 Election of officers and committee

The committee elected is as follows:

Bruce Jones	Chairman	866078
Ted Dyer	Vice Chair	872684
Jenny Sippings	Secretary	865890
John Powell	Treasurer	878640
Brenda Baynes		865853
John Driver		862734
Fiona Duck		874334
Patrick Stileman		874457
Billy Wall		
Angela Wheeldon		874440

10/05 Election of Allotments' Representative on Town Council's Allotments Management Team

Bruce is willing to be the site rep for another year.

11/05 Any Other Business

Bee keeping Chris Watt (SRT) raised the idea of bee keeping. Angela Wheeldon responded that the idea had been discussed in the past, but that some tenants on New were allergic to bee stings.

Birtchnell's Copse Patrick Stileman said that there had been a good clearance day the previous week. Patrick asked for donations of oak trees as several had failed last year to due lack of watering.

Auditor John Powell has established that we do not actually need an auditor. We just need a responsible person at the end of the year to check and approve John's accounting records. The constitution will need amending; the word auditor to be replaced with examiner. This was proposed by John Powell and seconded by Fiona Duck. Thanks were given to George Brown for auditing the accounts in the past and Peter Block and Barbara Driver volunteered to be examiners.

Calendars On sale at the end of the meeting for £3.50

Subs These can be paid also - £2

The meeting closed at 11.45 a.m. Next year's AGM will take place on 25 November 2006.