

**MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S
10TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER, 2006
at
SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST**

Present:

Bruce Jones (Chairman)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary)
John Powell (Treasurer)
Brenda Baynes
Peter Block
Bill Brinklow
Diana Calderwood
Dennis Casserley
Shirley Casserley
Sue Dabbagh
Anna Dolan
John Driver
Fiona Duck
Ted Dyer
Betty Fowell
Peter Fowell
Rebecca Gee
John Goffey
Hazel Grimwood
Graham Hall
Elizabeth Jones
Chris Locke
Chris O'Callaghan
Ray Phipps
John Savage
Prue Scofield
Clive Smith
Billy Wall
Angela Walsh
Angela Wheeldon

Apologies for Absence:

Philip Biss
George Brown
Andrew Calderwood
Chris Davidson
Jane Dickenson
Barbara Driver
Geoffrey Giles
Karin Huber
Ian Knight
Sarah Knight
Bob Millard
Spiros Taylor

Bruce Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting and he also thanked Sunnyside Rural Trust for the use of their hall again and for allowing us to use it on the other occasions throughout the year.

1/06 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above).

2/06 Minutes of the Last Meeting

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

3/06 Chairman's report

Bruce Jones reported:

Four years ago on a Saturday in November 2002 I attended my first Sunnyside Allotment Society AGM. I had recently retired (or 'moved on' as I prefer to put it) and had begun to spend time working on Liz's allotment – which she had 'inherited' from our daughter Kate! We had just popped in to see what it was all about. There was apparently a vacancy for chairman and despite my protestations that I was not even a tenant I got the job. Three AGMs later and here we are again. But now I am moving on again.

The year since the last AGM has not been so earth moving (in the literal sense) as the previous years with the 'big boy's toys' and the construction of the roadway on Sunnyside New, or the building of the Allotment Toilet. We erected a new glazed building as part of the Tea Hut Complex that is the Sunnyside equivalent of 'Mission Control'. All done as a very slick operation led by John Driver.

During the year we have worked with Berkhamsted Town Council and the representatives of Butts Meadow and Dellfield Allotments to introduce an appropriate 'constitution' for the Allotment Management Team. It is of course the Allotment Management Team or AMT that manages the allotments as a Working Group of the Town Council. We have our moments but it generally works well. Most recently, with colleagues from the other allotments and the Town Council, we have finally achieved a detailed Allotment Strategy and a commitment by the Council to adopt the recommendations of the Allotment Good Practice Guide in performing its role as Allotment Authority. I am very pleased that this has been achieved before my chairmanship ended. It will help to ensure the future of the allotments for the people of Berkhamsted.

We have, as in the past done our bit to raise the profile of allotments in Berkhamsted by attending various fetes and functions. We had stalls at the Lion's Fete in August, and the Community Exhibition in the Town Hall in October. A new event this year was the National Trust's Plot to Plate day. We had a stall with promotional material and did our usual raffle for a basket of produce and were able to give the Trust the £60 proceeds. And there have been the events on the Allotments. The Open Day in August, a Sunday for the first time, which was very successful and for once the weather shined on us - another entirely successful day contributing to ensuring that the people of Berkhamsted are positive towards the allotments. We had our usual visits from our Artists and the Baptist Church Toddlers.

None of this would have been possible without the work of Angela. It is as Chairman that you really get to understand the extent of the contribution made by others. Brenda and Fiona for the Newsletter, the secretary role by Jenny, John Powell to look after our money, and all of the other work done by the Committee and others. And then there is Ted to whom we all owe

an enormous debt of gratitude for the vast amount of work he does. It is vitally important that allotment holders look outward to the local public and that we are seen as being part of a 'good thing'. If, or perhaps when, things get difficult for us it will be to the people of Berkhamsted that we shall look to for support.

We also had visits from the Tring Allotments Association/Society who were interested in 'allotments the Sunnyside way'. We were also visited by a group from Chesham comprising allotment representatives, elected members of Chesham Town Council and Council staff in connection with a 'value for money' survey they were carrying out. Both groups seemed interested in our experiences. It is only by this sort of contact with other Councils and allotment representatives that we get a true sense of how others do things and what their problems are.

An important achievement this year has been reaching the point where all available allotments are let. We now have a short waiting list. Which I predict will grow over the next year. It has been an enormous pleasure meeting the people applying for allotments – it is certainly the best part of the Site representative's job. They are all such nice people!

The challenges for next year and beyond will be to work with the Town Council to implement the Allotment Strategy, and to establish the real extent of the demand for allotments in Berkhamsted. John Driver wrote in the Newsletter about the mysteries of 'poles' and the number of plots on the Sunnyside Allotments. You will remember that the count came to 235. But of these, 85 plots, some 36% are not at present available as allotment gardens for the people of Berkhamsted. A difficult task the Council as Allotment Authority and the AMT will be to meet the growing demand for allotments, from that total resource. It will be essential to ensure that the allotment gardens are used to best effect for allotment gardeners and there will need to be some thought about the future of the wild life areas.

It is to be hoped that future decisions about the future of the total area of allotment land can be taken with the benefit of wider consultation and discussion as envisaged in the good practice guide. Allotment gardens are precious, allotment land is always in demand. Allotments have reduced by 50% over 30 or so years. We really cannot afford to let up on the pressure to maintain, and if possible expand the numbers of allotment gardeners. The Allotment Strategy is the means to achieve this – but it will not be easy and there are always the interests of others, such as our good neighbours Sunnyside Rural Trust, to be taken into account.

I wish you and my successor well. I am leaving with real regrets that I cannot be here in the interesting days that lie ahead. But I suspect that I will kept pretty busy with our new 2 ½ acres 'allotment' in North Wales. And remember that what everyone remarks upon, even more than the spectacular location of the allotments, is the Sunnyside atmosphere, the way that everyone gets on together. We may not be the smartest allotment – and we are a little frayed around the edges - but we are probably the happiest. Please keep it that way."

Discussion of Chairman's report:

There were no questions after Bruce's very detailed report. Brenda Baynes thanked him for all his hard work and efforts over the years.

4/06 Consider and approve the Society's accounts

The annual summary of accounts was available at the meeting. John Powell reported that there was a surplus of income over expenditure of £450 this year.

Jenny Sippings suggested that our subs should be raised to £2.50 for next year. Chris Locke then suggested it should be £3. This was necessary because of the increasing running costs of the Society. It was proposed by Dennis Casserley and seconded by Billy Wall that the subs should be £3 from December 2007.

5/06 Future Open Days

Ted pointed out that the work of organising Open Days has fallen on the same few people, over the past years. Ted suggested that we need more people to run the event to give the others a break. Ted also pointed out how much time Bruce spent doing tasks that should have been done by the council.

Chris Locke suggested that there should be a sub-committee to organise Open Day and John Driver suggested a list of jobs should be published in March's newsletter. The following people volunteered to serve on a sub-committee: Sue Dabbagh, Anna Dolan, Chris Locke, Hazel Grimwood and Chris O'Callaghan. Diana Calderwood offered to help before the event and Jenny and Angela will prepare a list of tasks for the newsletter.

6/06 Future Events

There will be *Christmas Drinks* on 17th December. Members will be asked to bring a bottle and contribution of festive food.

7/06 Future Projects

Working Parties The dates were published in the last newsletter. They are 6th January, 3rd February and 3rd March 2007. Tasks that need doing are: Birtchnells Copse, trees on roadways, hazel coppice, fencing, the gate to GranthamMews and the summerhouse needs completing.

8/06 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members

Bruce had resigned from the committee as he is moving away. All other committee members were willing to stand again. However Ted was willing to stand down from the committee if someone else wished to stand.

Other nominations received were:

Angela Wheeldon	Chairman	proposed by Jenny Sippings, seconded by Sue Dabbagh
John Driver	Vice-Chairman	proposed by Ted Dyer, seconded by Jenny Sippings
Anna Dolan	Committee	proposed by Clive Smith, seconded by Angela Wheeldon
Prue Scofield	Committee	proposed by Angela Wheeldon, seconded by Sue Dabbagh

9/06 Election of officers and committee

The committee elected was:

Angela Wheeldon	Chairman	874440
John Driver	Vice-Chairman	862734
Jenny Sippings	Secretary	865890
John Powell	Treasurer	878640
Brenda Baynes		865853
Anna Dolan		870918
Fiona Duck		874334
Ted Dyer		872684
Prue Scofield		878559
Patrick Stileman		874457
Billy Wall		871425

10/06 Election of Allotments' Representative on Town Council's Allotments Management Team

Angela agreed to be the site rep, with Ted as deputy.

11/06 Any Other Business

Hazel Coppice Diana Calderwood asked for another volunteer to trim the hazel coppice which her husband does at the moment. Ted, John and Clive volunteered. She also mentioned that there has been a proposal to build 5 houses at the bottom of Meadway, above C Road. The council has refused a request for access along C Road for private building works.

Gates in boundary fences Bruce mentioned that the council will write to residents who have put gates leading onto allotment land.

Rights of Way Ted said that we should block access to B and C Roads once a year to stop them becoming rights of way.

Newsletter Clive thanked Fiona and Brenda for their work on the newsletter.

Rabbits There might be a night shooter to shoot rabbits for the council. We don't know if he has been yet. We have not heard yet whether Railtrack will pay for rabbit fencing along the railway fence.

Lawn mower John Powell suggested that the SAS should purchase a mower to do paths. However this is not possible because of Health and Safety issues and insurance. John Driver said that the Trust has trained clients to use trimmers and that maybe we could ask them to trim before Open Days.

Leaving presents Angela presented Bruce and Liz with presents and thanked them.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m. Next year's AGM will take place on 24 November 2007.