

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

1/2001

Wet! Wet! Wet!

The dismal pattern of the last few months and the freezing temperatures at the turn of the Year have probably made fireside gardeners of several of us, where the most energetic thing we have done is turn the page of the seed catalogue! But the intrepid have looked after the chickens daily and continued to dig and turn the soil. They turned out in ceaseless rain for hazel coppice maintenance, pipe laying and a clearance day in November. January brings new plans and ideas and those of us who take our flowers seriously will enjoy Peter Block's article on growing dahlias.

And among our new year resolutions can be to attend the next **CLEARANCE DAY** on **SATURDAY 27TH JANUARY**.

Report on the AGM, Saturday 25th Nov. 2000

This was the Allotment Society's fourth Annual General Meeting. Last year's minutes and the Society's accounts were approved. Funds are good and the Society is in a healthy state. Patrick Stileman is master-minding the hazel coppice scheme and his report on its objectives is included in this newsletter.

The importance of the clearance of gardens was discussed at length. It is essential to maintain a good general standard of tidiness. Several tenancies had been terminated by the Council and it is very important for the future of the Society to try and encourage new tenants. Clearance on Sunnyside New had already achieved this, with its vastly improved appearance.

Members were reminded by the Chairman that discount vouchers are available for a rent free year, if bad allotments are taken over.

The possibility of hiring of machinery for clearance days was proposed and discussed, but only a minority of members were in favour.

As Ted Dyer was standing down after many years in office, elections had to take place for the representative on the Town Council Allotments Committee, and the Chairman of the Society. Peter Chapman was elected representative on the Committee and then reluctantly agreed to becoming Chairman as no other member was prepared to be nominated. We are very grateful to him for taking on these responsibilities and he will be supported by Ted Dyer as Vice-Chairman.

The Committee was elected as follows:

Peter Chapman	Chair	871470
Ted Dyer	Vice Chair	872684
Jenny Sippings	Secretary	865890
John Savage	Treasurer	873877
Ken Harbord		865757
Fiona Duck		874334
Rod Cottrell		384964
Patrick Stileman		874457
Clive Weakley		875373

Angela Wheeldon organised an interesting photographic exhibition of the Society's many and varied activities. Her enthusiasm for the Society shone through the effort she had put into this display.

Pipe Laying – 28th Oct. 2000

Our thanks go to Alistair Clayton, Peter Phizackerly, Tom Whyte, Ken Harbord, Clive Weakley and Fred Jackson for turning out on a very wet day to carry out pipe laying. Fred's expertise in the operation of the digger was critical to the success of the works undertaken.

Following the pipe laying on Sunnyside New, the water tank has been moved, sited and plumbed in, ready for next year.

The hazel coppice maintenance was completed and the site looks very tidy.

About ten tree stumps were removed by the digger before the weather finally got the better of us.

*** BERKHAMSTED TOOL HIRE ***
10% Discount for members

Patrick Stileman's Report – Hazel Coppice

In February last year, approximately 50 hazel 'whips', of between 60 and 90cm height were planted on Sunnyside Old. After their first growing season, every tree has survived, and a large number of them are already growing out of their 1.2 metre tree guards. This great success can be attributed to a number of factors:

- Healthy plants to start with, with well developed root systems
- High rainfall during the spring and summer
- Weeds on the site kept down by Dr Ken Harbord with his strimmer
- Individual trees kept well mulched with woodchips.

Congratulations to every one who has been involved.

The overall objective of this scheme is to provide allotment holders with a sustainable supply of locally grown bean poles and pea sticks. Many gardeners are currently forced into buying bamboo canes which were probably grown in China. Rotational coppice has the additional benefit of providing a varied habitat which is good news for wildlife.

When large enough, probably in six years time, the first of three tree groups will be cut to ground level. The hazel, which has a strong ability to coppice, will send new shoots up from the stump which will be straight and fast growing. After three years, these should make good bean poles. By cutting the other two groups in the next two subsequent years, a rotational system will be set up whereby bean poles are cut each year.

This year, work needed will be minimal. Competition from weeds

will have to be suppressed by strimming, and the woodchip mulch should be replenished mid-summer. One cause for slight concern are reports that some of the tops have been nibbled by deer. This will have to be closely watched. The trees have been planted in apparently deer-proof guards. Perhaps the Sunnyside deer have reached super-deer proportions as a result of a plentiful supply of fresh vegetables!

Allotment Management Committee

As a result of the interest shown in the hosepipe scheme, the Council propose that a further four taps be installed at Sunnyside.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to meet everyone's aspirations straight away, but the majority of interested tenants wishes will be met when the additional taps are installed in time for next summer. Your representative has been requested to decide which tanks should be fitted and proposes that these should be – plot 6 & 36, Sunnyside New. A27 & C39 on the Old site.

Initially no specific regulations for the use of the hosepipes will be introduced, other than payment of the levy and key charge,

but if problems arise it may be necessary to review the situation. The tenants interested in the scheme are:

Sunnyside Old

Jenny Thorburn
Phil Andrews
Moyra Bird
Karen Bevan
Peter Block
John Driver
Alistair Clayton
Jean Barnett
Jackie Wharam

Sunnyside New

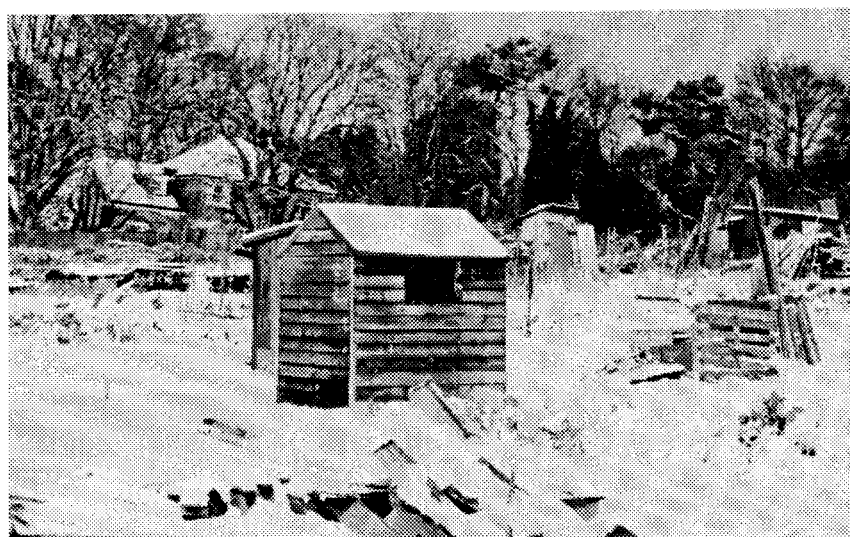
Spiros Taylor
Mrs Seabourne
Edwina Wilkes
John Pilkington
Clive Weakley
Harvey Gosling
Billy Wall

Gardeners Clippings

Sunnyside Rural Trust at Northchurch have available for disposal ten 28lb bags of Growmore at £5.00 per bag. The Trust would be able to deliver the bags.

If you are interested please contact Ted Dyer.

Below: A carpet of snow transforms the allotments



Allotments Maintenance Contract

The contract for grass cutting and hedge cutting for 2001 has been given to Frank Cooper & sons, who were the contractors prior to 2000.

Future Clearance days

It is proposed that further working parties take place on the following dates:

Saturday 27th January

Saturday 24th February

Saturday 24th March

Initially efforts will be concentrated on Sunnyside New to finish the plots started in December and to clear Plot 1 again, before covering with black plastic.

We meet at 10.00 am in the Church Car Park, but if you cannot make it at that time come over to the other side and find us, starting on plot 49 at the top.

It would be nice to see some new faces, as the more people there are the quicker we progress. Come along and help as it would be a treat to be able finish the work started in December and perhaps start on further plots.

Hopefully the February and March dates will be spent on Sunnyside Old, as there is a need to tidy up vacated gardens on 'B' road.

Christmas News from the Hen House

A festive Christmas wreath was found discarded on the allotments, so, true to our tradition of recycling, it was put to good use to decorate the hen house. Apart from worrying remarks about their plumpness, and questions as to whether one of them was destined to grace our Christmas table, to our surprise and delight they are continuing to lay, although the average has fallen to 3/4 per day. The newly sown grass in the second run is growing quite well and on really wet days, we allow them to strip graze a section, which helps to keep them occupied.

With the coming of the colder weather and the snow, we have made the hen house warmer with extra layers of newspaper under deeper straw. The roof has been covered with a kindly donated carpet (thanks Fred!) so they are quite cosy. They definitely disapprove of snow. They peered out at it in horror and refused to come out. Eventually we laid a path of straw from one feeding station to the other which tempted them out, and they were able to enjoy the rare winter sunshine.

Photographs

We have been told that Betty Patterson is organising another Environmental Fair in June, to show various aspects of environmental activity in Berkhamsted.

This will be good publicity for the allotments and we have agreed to put on another display of photographs. So, between now and then, please take your camera up to your allotment and take pictures of what goes on, on your plot!

Photos to Angela Wheeldon either at the shed on B15 or 10 Chapel Street.

Annual Subscription

The £2.00 subscription to the Society is now due and if you have not yet paid would you kindly pay to John Savage as soon as possible.

Allotment Clearance – 11th Nov.

Another very wet day, but we did manage to do parts of three gardens on Sunnyside New. Our thanks go to Clive Weakley, Peter Phizackerly, Angela Wheeldon, Peter Fowell, Clive Smith and Olga Lassman for turning out in such appalling conditions.

A supply of black plastic has been obtained and once the vegetation cut down has been burned we will cover the ground to minimise re-growth. Hopefully the wet weather will cease to enable the two gardens partially cleared to be finished off.



Left: A break from the hard work!

Dahlias by Peter Block

My father grew dahlias, so I suppose it's not surprising I caught the bug. I didn't start keeping the tubers over winter until 1974, when I had one each of 15 varieties. Only one - 'Gay Princess', a tall pink waterlily has survived to today. I grow 30 varieties now, about 1000 plants in total, plus some for friends.

One or two tubers of each variety are lifted in mid-November, washed clear of soil, and stored under peat in a frost free greenhouse. At the end of December, I inspect them. They seem to have come through the recent cold spell, except that many are slimy about the stem; they've been given another dusting of sulphur.

On 1st March, I'll water them and switch on the underground heating cable. Shoots will appear in April for cuttings or division. They are potted on to 3 1/2 inch pots, and then into 5 inch in mid-May, hardened off and planted out in mid-June. I'm unsuccessful with about 10% of the tubers, so I buy replacement plants or newer varieties.

Dahlias can be grown on the same patch for years so long as it is well manured each spring. I apply 'Growmore' when planting out, and rose fertiliser twice during the season. I am not troubled with earwigs, but last year capsid bugs had several meals from the new shoots, and mildew affected the leaves in September.

Although I am not interested in exhibiting dahlias (too much of a commitment!), I do aim for better blooms and longer stems by removing all buds that appear before mid-July, and then once a week remove all side shoots from the two upper leaf axils on each branch. Most summers they need a good watering twice a week.

From mid-August to mid-October, surplus blooms are sold at charity stalls at the Saturday market. At three for a pound,, they sell fast!

Editors note: Peter's garden in Hall Park will be open on 6th May and 19th August under the National Garden's Scheme. Further details in our next issue and the Yellow Book..

Clearance of rubbish dumps

The borough Council have been requested to clear the accumulated rubbish and it is hoped that by the time you read this, it will have taken place. Please do not deposit any more items at the dumps until further notice.

Message from Ted Dyer

At the last AGM, when I stood down as Chairman, I had a very humbling surprise. A number of you had banded together to purchase a gift of a VCR and tapes which were presented to me at the meeting. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation of your generous gift.

(The video recorder given to Ted by members of the Society has now been set up and Ted is watching videos of steam trains while eating his breakfast!)

A Happy and abundant New Year!!