



SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk
email: info @sunnysideallotments.org.uk

1/2008

We look ahead to the promise of another productive gardening year, always hopeful that this year will be better than last. But no doubt, as usual, it will bring many different challenges which we will find ourselves discussing among our allotment colleagues in attempt to make the best of the conditions which will face us. Gardening is never dull, and never quite knowing what our increasing mercurial weather has to offer, is what makes it so interesting. For example, it has just been announced that we have just experienced the warmest January night since records began!

At the moment with all the rain we have had, we cannot believe that the drought conditions of two years ago will return. But should this occur, the successful water project carried out over the winter will ensure that it will be easier for all tenants. This is what our society, SAS, is all about. There is a great sense of communal effort which has been encouraged and valued by our past Chairman, Angela Wheeldon and will no doubt be continued by our new Chairman, Freda Earl.

We are grateful to Freda for taking on this role and we are lucky to have a gardener at the helm who is also well experienced in the ways of the Council and can guide us with an expert hand through any future problems.

The new year is well on its way with it's attendant economic problems. All the more reason to be self sufficient in 2008!

Report on SAS Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on Saturday, 24th November at Sunnyside Rural Trust. It was well attended by about 40 members and we are very grateful to the Trust for letting us use their premises again for this purpose.

Past successful activities were reported on. The annual Open Day in August had been a social and financial success and helped to contribute to the strong financial position of the Society. It was felt that it provided the opportunity to share our site with our neighbourhood which was very much appreciated. The highlight this year had been the Photographic Exhibition. The entries had been of a very high standard and several had been included in the Society's calendar which Jenny and Angela had produced again this year. There had been arranged visits, including toddlers from the local nursery and other social contacts which were all about promoting public awareness of growing good local food.

General maintenance is always an important and vital task. Looking after the car park, watching the bird boxes, maintaining the roadways are ongoing and necessary jobs so help is always needed at the winter working parties. The big project this last winter had been the laying of 700 metres of water pipe to provide a water supply with built in flexibility. It had been very challenging, a real example of self help, to which many had contributed, but special thanks were given to Fred Jackson and John Driver for their major roles. It was completed on time and within the budget which included £3500 contributed by the Council.

The problem of infestation of rabbits and rats were discussed and reported on. The council will not allow shooting, so a ferreter had been brought in and had some

success and feral cats would be introduced to the Old site. There are signs of myxomatosis but many tenants thought fencing in their plots was the only answer. It was reported that Network Rail had been very slow to respond in any way to the rabbit problem. Some tenants on Sunnyside New were worried about the increasing number of rats and this point had been put to the Council.

In her report, the retiring Chairman, Angela Wheeldon commented on the past strange gardening year, early drought, July damp bringing blight, early frost in the autumn meant most vegetables, except beans were poor, but fruit was at its best for years.

She said that implementation of the Allotment Strategy, organised by Bruce Jones, our former Chairman had been begun by the Council, boundaries were being surveyed, there was now protection of the greenways and the roadways were to be being closed to the public for one day a year.

Allotment information packs had been produced by the Society and were now available for all tenants and could be collected from the Civic Centre.

She was pleased that there were only 16 plots to let and that the letting of half plots had become very popular so the Society was flourishing.

Angela explained that she had only taken on the job of Chairman for one year. Freda Earl was elected in her place and Angela was thanked for all the hard work and effort she had made on behalf of the society in her short term of office.

If you were unable to come to the AGM, copies of the 2006 minutes and accounts are in the Tea Hut.

Christmas drinks

The Christmas drinks party on Sunday, 16th December proved very popular. Perhaps it was the bright winter sunshine which encouraged tenants to come and share a delicious winter mulled wine, a hot cup of coffee and some tasty savouries and festive sweetmeats. It was a very happy start to the Christmas party season and probably the only one which was held outside in the fresh open air!. Thank you to Ag for the delicious wine which got the party going. I am sure we would all like the recipe.

SAS Calendar 2008

Those of you who haven't bought a calendar this year have missed a real treat. It contains some stunning photos of Sunnyside and its tenants. It has recipes for jam making, pickling and all sorts of preserving. Everything we grow can be used in some enterprising way. All we need now is the time to follow the recipes!

If you would still like a copy, contact Jenny Sippings on 01442 865890, or jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com or ask at the Tea Hut before the end of January.

Working Parties

Saturday 2nd February

Saturday 1st March.

We need your help on these days. The bigger the group, the more work we can get done. On the first date we will be finishing the weeding and mulching of the Jubilee Coppice (at the top of Sunnyside New) and other general maintenance which will benefit us all.

It has been suggested that more of you might be able to help on a Sunday, rather than on a Saturday, which always seems to be busy day. What do you think? Please let us know.

Wet roadways

The roadways are very wet at the moment. They are very soft and slippery and are easily churned up by any sort of vehicle, so we would be very grateful if tenants would be mindful of this and not attempt to drive along them while we are having so much rain.

Diamond Jubilee

The Gaddesden District Village Produce Association (GD-VPA) are celebrating their Diamond Jubilee at their Winter Show in Little Gaddesden Village Hall on Saturday 2nd February at 2.30pm. Admission is only 40p (20p for concessions!).

On display will be a wide range of exhibits covering, Vegetables, Fruit, Preserves, Cookery, Floral Art, Handicraft, Photography and Art. The prize giving at 4pm.

The GVD-VPA was formed in April 1946 and came about through the War Time 'Dig for Victory' campaign when thousands of 'Village Produce Associations' were formed throughout the UK, of which there are just 40 are still in operation. Today, the GD-VPA has over 300 members and with an annual subscription just £3.

The GD-VPA also runs a Garden Store next to Little Gaddesden Village Hall every Sunday morning from 10.30am to 12noon from Sunday 28th January where a wide range of garden materials and seeds etc. are on sale.

Tenancy Changes

Goodbye to:

Peter Block C21, 23, 25

Welcome to:

Simon Chasey &

Sarah Rimmer C23

Allotment open day

The Open Days over the past few years have been very successful, but these events bring a lot of work in organising the various elements. Angela and Jenny have been instrumental in this endeavour, but the Committee feel that the event can only carry on with the help of new volunteers and with them possibly new ideas.

The provisional date set for this year is Sunday 17th August which links in with National Allotment Week.

If you feel you could be part of the organising team or have any fresh ideas please contact Jenny on 865890 or email her on jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com by March 10th and a decision will be made at the next committee meeting in March.

Newsletter articles

We are always on the lookout for interesting articles for the newsletter. If you would like to contribute please contact Brenda Baynes our Editor on 01442 865853 or email her at brenda.baynes@btinternet.com.

Your current Committee Members

Chairman :

Freda Earl 865661

Vice Chairman:

John Driver 862734

Secretary :

Jenny Sippings 865890

Treasurer :

John Powell 878640

Fiona Duck 874334

Angela Wheeldon 874440

Brenda Baynes 865853

Ted Dyer 872684

Anna Dolan 870918

Prue Schofield 878559

John Eaton 865307

Message from the new Chairman of S.A.S. – Freda Earl

Someone told me last week that getting your hands in the earth acts as an antidepressant. I haven't seen the proof but if it is true, how lucky we are to have the Sunnyside allotments.

I have just been elected Chairman of the SAS, taking over from Angela. I came to Sunnyside because Ted and other people had a stall at the Lions Community Fair and I thought "this is special". There are many different styles of gardening from traditional to organic and there are all sorts of people growing good food. (There is someone on the waiting list who wants to try Permaculture and for Christmas I was given a book on Biodynamics which looks interesting.)

The allotments belong to the Town Council and the SAS works with it for the good of all the sites in the town, but especially Sunnyside. As your representative on the AMT (Allotment Management Team) I hope to get a good deal for Sunnyside. The SAS does not just want to take; in the last year we have saved the Town Council £10-15K by installing the new water pipes.

If you have problems you wish to discuss with me, leave me a note in the SAS tea hut or e-mail mrsfredaearl@talktalk.net. There are still some of you I have not met but I hope to put that right during the year.

FREDA EARL

Turn over for pictures
of our latest endeavours...

Please Note: To offset rising printing costs, an electronic version of future editions of the newsletter will be sent to all those people that supply an email address to Jenny Sippings – (jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com).

Subs for 2007/2008 (£2.50) are now due and can be sent with this slip to John Powell (20 Castle Hill Avenue) or put into the post box on the tea hut on B15. (Cheques payable to SAS please).

Name:

Address:

Plot Number: Telephone:

Email:

Amount enclosed: cash/cheque (please circle)



Above: Some of the happy band of volunteers that made the water pipe project a real success. Well done to all who were involved!



Christmas Drinks: Gardeners and friends of Sunnyside gathered to chat and enjoy some festive refreshments on a crisp, sunny December day.

NB. If you have digital photos of Sunnyside that you would like feature in future editions of the newsletter, please send by email to: fiona.duck@ntlworld.com