

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

2/2001

Too plant or not to plant, to sow or not to sow! A decision to be made in this very wet, cold spring. Some have already prepared their ground and planted their early potatoes in the hope that they won't rot or be eaten by pests, but there are those of us who are finding the essential digging back-breaking and are hoping that better weather in later spring will help us catch up and return to normal gardening patterns.

While absorbed in the essential task of digging, you might like to contemplate the thoughts of Thomas Fuller, who far back in 1662 compiled a gazetteer of all the counties and their produce (shades of the National Census!) and wrote "Oh the incredible profit by digging of ground. For though it is confessed that the plough beats the spade out of distance of speed, yet what the spade wants in the quality of ground, it manureth, it recompenseth with the plenty of fruit it yieldeth; that which is set multiplying a hundred fold more than is sown". Good digging!

SUNNYSIDE OLD ALLOTMENTS & THE HOSPICE

Allotment holders must have read in the local news that the Hospice, in its search for a new site has been encouraged by Senior Borough officials to consider the possibility of Sunnyside Allotments. Ted Dyer has been monitoring the situation and reports below on the Council meetings he has attended so far:

"At a meeting of Berkhamsted Town Council held on 19th March, a letter received from the Hospice of St Francis was discussed. The Hospice are seeking a new site on which to build and have asked the Council to consider releasing a large area of 'C' Road on Sunnyside Old for the new building, car parking and landscaped gardens.

At this full meeting of the Town Council it was decided to delegate consideration of the Hospice's letter to the Council's Finance and Policy Committee which was held on April 9th. At this meeting, no decision was reached by the Council's committee as the Hospice are looking at two other sites which were not disclosed. Should these possibilities fall through and the hospice come back to the allotment option the Town Council will decide their position.

An undertaking was sought that the Town Council would inform our Society should the issue be raised again and it was agreed that this would be done. This will enable us to be represented at any meeting held to discuss the issue. We believe that there are other sites in the town which are more suitable whilst preserving the Town's scarce open space".

Your Committee Members

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

TENANCY CHANGES

Out

Chris Bragg New 42

In

Simon Heywood B6/8
Angela Wheeldon B16
Angela Walsh B20/2
Christine O'Callaghan B23
Bernard Axford B26
Bob Lathwell B29
Daniel Bartlett B31
Debbie Crooks A38b
Andy Delwyn New no 1

We extend a warm welcome to all the new tenants and hope that they will enjoy gardening at Sunnyside.

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

ALLOTMENT CLEARANCE DAYS

We have been very successful with our programme of clearance days this winter despite mixed weather ranging from very wet to pleasantly sunny. The number of plots cleared over the four Saturdays was 16 including two half plots.

It has been possible to cover partially with black plastic a number of the gardens cleared and these are as follows Old site and 47/48/49 on the New site.

Our thanks go to the tenants who gave their valuable time to assist with the clearance. Hopefully it will be possible to arrange further clearance days next winter and details will be given in future Newsletters.

Here are Olga's impressions of a clearance day:

Clearance parties on the hill – Going to a clearance party for me is an event to look forward to. Coming from Russia, a country where helping collective farmers with harvesting was not exactly voluntary, I was very much impressed by the spirit of enthusiasm and mirth, every clearance tends to engender.

There is also a great sense of pride at what has been achieved, which one gets from looking at neater gardens after our battle with the wilderness! The soup that Angela cooks is wonderful

and to sit on benches of the small and cosy enclosure with our cups admiring the scenery of Berkhamsted, is a real treat.

It is great to have this unique Sunnyside hill to revive one's spirit! There is a great deal of help and thought for each other and concern for the future of the gardens which are a source of joy and fulfilment for many, I believe.
Olga Lassman

ALLOTMENTS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Town Council has agreed to supply 3 further rolls of Black plastic to enable cleared gardens to be partially covered. Hopefully this will be delivered shortly and can then be laid to keep the weeds down.

WATER SUPPLIES

Notices have been put up at Sunnyside at the request of the Town Council advertising the availability of taps for those Tenants who wish to use pressure hoses. If it is your desire to take up this facility then you should visit the Council Offices in Berkhamsted to pay the water levy of £5.00 and to obtain a tap key on payment of a £2.00 deposit.

Each of the security taps have been fitted with a short length of hose pipe and you will need a hose connector to attach your own hose.

You will have to use your own judgement as to whether there is a tap close enough for you to use. There are still a large number of tanks at Sunnyside which have not been fitted with taps.

HAZEL COPPICE

In an effort to prevent further damage to the young trees by deer, Ken Harbord has erected some sycamore branches around the taller whips. Hopefully this will be successful, but only time will tell.

ENVIRONMENT FAIR & LIONS COMMUNITY FAIR

Volunteers are needed to provide a presence on the Society's stand at both of these events. The Environment Fair is to take place on the 8th and 9th July in the Civic Centre with setting up on 7th July.

The Lions Community Fair is to be held in the autumn in either the Civic Centre or the Old Town Hall and further information will be given in the next newsletter.

If you are available to assist at either event please let Angela Wheeldon or Ted Dyer know in the coming weeks. Any pictures of allotment activities which you may have would be welcomed by Angela who can be contacted on plot B15 Sunnyside Old or at home at 10 Chapel street.



SPRING NEWS FROM THE HEN HOUSE

No-one has envied Angela and her task of looking after the chickens in the dreary weather of the past few months, but thanks to all the tender loving care shown daily, they look very happy and enhance our environment. Angela reports:-

Clara decided to go into a full blown moult just before the cold spell at Christmas. It takes a hen about 6-7 weeks to lose her feathers and another 2 or 3 for them to grow back fully. In the meantime she looked very moth-eaten and sorry for herself. She became quite timid and the others tended to pick on her, so we fed her separately to make sure she got her full rations. She now has beautiful feathers with a fine sheen, but she still expects special treatment!

We now fully appreciate the phrases - 'hen-pecked' - and 'pecking order' which presumably originated in the hen coop. Hens fight one another to establish a pecking order or hierarchy. But this can change for a number of reasons not readily apparent to us. If the appearance of one of the birds is perceived as threatening - eg proud, erect posture, large red comb - it can be attacked by others in the group. If she loses the fight she will adopt a submissive posture and the others will lose interest and a new pecking order is established. Clarice is currently subject to hen-pecking, but instead of becoming submissive, she fluffs up her feathers, obviously affronted at the outrage, and cackles crossly which seems to incite the others. We are currently keeping her separate during the day, but she seems quite content to roost with them in the hen house at night. When

the weather improves we have decided to put them all together again so that the pecking order is resolved, while we are there to monitor what goes on. Meanwhile Clarice is happily laying her eggs in the rabbit hutch.

The constant wet weather this spring has made the feeding and mucking out much more of a chore. Everything gets covered in mud and walking up the paths has been like wading through liquid chocolate. But liberal use of wood chip (thanks to Patrick) in the run has certainly helped to soak up the wet. The hens enjoy spreading it themselves by scratching about in it for worms.

We're all looking forward to some warm dry weather in the next few weeks.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Gill and Patrick Stileman on the birth of their second daughter Hazel.

Sympathy and condolences go to Lionel Batchelor on the sad loss of his wife Olive and I am sure that we all wish him well at this difficult time for him.

OPEN GARDEN - SUNDAY 6th MAY

Members are reminded that Peter and Jean Block's garden at 22 Hall Park Gate will be open to the public from 2-6pm as part of the National Gardens Scheme. Teas will be served and the proceeds will go to the Lions. It is a beautifully planted garden well worth a visit.

TRIALS AND SUCCESS OF A FIRST-TIME ALLOTMENT HOLDER

If you read *The Garden*, the journal of R.H.S or can get hold of a copy, there is a three part series following the setting up and progress of an organic plot. February's article described the plans, June will explore the pests and disease, September will celebrate the first year's harvest.

We hope that the promise of a warm summer given by some forecasters will materialise and give us all cause for celebration!

PROPOSED SOCIETY EVENTS

OPEN DAY

We are considering holding an Open Day at Sunnyside to encourage new tenants to come and join us. Would you be prepared to support such an event by being present on your plot, or by showing people around the Sunnyside Allotments explaining what the Society has achieved since its inception?

BARBEQUE

We are planning a barbeque to be held in the gardens of Sunnyside Rural Trust, who have kindly offered the use of their gardens and the facilities within the building. It has been proposed that it should be in the evening of the Open Day, and the most likely date is Saturday 30th June, starting at about 4pm. Details are still to be decided and will be made known nearer the date.

OUTINGS

Would you be interested in a coach trip to gardens like Wisley in Surrey or Ryton in Warwickshire?

Approximate coach fare would be £10.00 plus admission charges

Please could you fill in the short questionnaire below and return it to Fiona Duck at 29 Shrublands Avenue or plot B43 (next to the church yard) or any Committee Member so that we can evaluate whether this idea is popular or not.

Please tick the boxes where relevant

- ☐ Yes, I am interested in Day outings by coach with the Society.
- ☐ No, I am not interested in Day outings by coach with the Society.

Which gardens would you like to visit?

Ryton ☐

Wisley ☐

Kew ☐

Hidcote ☐ Other suggestions?

I would prefer a weekend trip ☐

I would prefer a weekday trip ☐

It would help us if you could include your name and plot number, Many thanks

Name Plot No