



# SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

No: 2 April 2011

Readers should ignore my (lighthearted) suggestion in the last newsletter about using tomato seedlings in sandwiches. It seems that the leaves are toxic – I quote from a Wikipedia entry:  
'Like many other plants in the nightshade family, tomato leaves and stems contain atropine and other tropane alkaloids that can be quite toxic if ingested. The ripe fruit does not contain these compounds. The leaves, stems, and green unripe fruit of the tomato plant contain small amounts of the poisonous alkaloid [tomatine](#). Tomato leaves in the form of a tea have been linked to at least one death, but the levels of tomatine are generally too small to be dangerous, so foods such as [fried green tomatoes](#) are safe to eat. Ripe tomatoes do not contain any detectable tomatine.'

I've recently come across a clever idea: a garden centre group is offering plots to people who would like an allotment but can't get one. A 90m2 plot is £5 a week or £10 with a shed a greenhouse. For more information here is the link to the website:  
<http://www.thegardencentregroup.co.uk/GYOPLOTS>

**Chris Locke**

## From our chairman:

The spring is sprung, the grass is riz..... and what on earth is going on at Sunnyside Old. Perhaps members can come up with a sensible suggestion about what is going on and what we should do about it.

We at Sunnyside Old and New reckon to be good neighbours with the people whose houses adjoin the site in Grantham Mews, Millfield, Meadway and Ivy House Lane. We are good neighbours with Sunnyside Church and Sunnyside Rural Trust who share the site with us. In the church's centenary year we ran a big raffle of our produce at their event in George Street. We use the SRT's building for our AGM and the summer barbecue/picnic and plans are afoot to help each other with security.

On a wider scale we invite everyone in the town to our famous summer open day. We host regular visits from groups of artists. We regularly show children from the Baptist pre-school round when members are on site to dig up vegetables for the children to marvel at and we do the same for school groups of older children from time to time. We welcome joggers and birdwatchers and well behaved dog walkers. We join in the BTO's nest box scheme in Birtchnell's Copse.

We help the Town Council save YOUR money by providing free and willing labour for projects to improve the allotments. In the last ten years we have provided thousands of pounds worth of site management and labour for a proper toilet (not a spidery hut with a bucket), new water mains on both sites with re-instatement of the roadways, rabbit fencing along the railways, skips to enable old dangerous rubbish to be cleared from the sites after we had sorted and recycled the metals. All done at no cost to the Town Council apart from materials. We have regularly done minor repairs to plumbing and read the water meters while the Town Warden was indisposed to check for leaks. We maintain the structure of the internal earth roadways on both sites by which tenants can bring in their manure and carry away their tools and crops as there is no secure storage on the sites.

In fact on a good neighbour scale of one to ten we think we are about fifteen and a half!

Imagine our amazement when the Town Council proposed without even consulting us or the Allotment Management Team to allow our immediate neighbours to ask permission to access the backs of their properties with vehicles through the allotments.

## WHY?

The only reason we can get from the Town Council is  
"We have to be good neighbours"

Your chairman is totally at a loss to understand this reply.

The present Town council's record on the Allotment Management Team has been rather patchy. Four years ago the allotment reps on all sites had to fight off proposals to raise the rents by an unjustifiable amount based on some very dubious figures (including a share in the cost of the Town Warden who was in any case entirely paid for by the Borough council, not the Town Council). We would also have been responsible for a share of the Council's running costs which no other council activity had to pay.

After a year of hard negotiation a fairer system was agreed and for the last two years Allotment Management team meetings have been amicable and constructive.

**NOW THIS PROPOSAL, KEPT SECRET FROM THE AMT, HAS BEEN DUMPED ON US WHICH IS LIKELY TO LEAD TO A SITUATION HIGHLY DETRIMENTAL TO SUNNYSIDE OLD. Because it has not come to AMT we have had no chance to discuss the proposals with the Council and are reduced to public participation at Council meetings which has no element of discussion.**

One resident at the end of Millfield has put the council under pressure to allow vehicle access to the back of his property. Residents in Ivy House Lane have sought access before and been refused. If the council caves in and the Millfield access is granted in any form, it will be difficult to refuse the others if they apply again. The original refusal seems to have been based on the belief that there was too much land on our borders ripe for back land development.

## What has changed?

There has been a proposal for housing in Millfield refused on access grounds. The SAS has no policy on what people do in their back gardens but we do not want any sort of road traffic coming into the allotments to service it either at the time of building, on any scale, or afterwards..

In allotment sites across the country no access at all is granted to the site through the boundary fence to the neighbouring gardens – ever. It is regarded as a way of reducing the value of the land by allowing outsiders to gain rights over it as well as being bad for the tenants. OUR Council says it has taken legal advice and will not be granting any rights of way. They will however be granting an expectation of permission being granted which could lead to future litigation. A sound principle is to keep it simple. The more words there are the more gaps for a good lawyer to wriggle through. (cont. overleaf)

The system the Council seems to be intent upon is very complicated and has no thought given to how it will be administered or who will have the job of accosting drivers to ask if they have a right to be driving along our roadways and evicting them if not. Is it any wonder that a couple of tenants have said to me "Is this trying to destroy the allotment ready for selling off as building land for huge sums?" The reply to that is that the Council can only sell allotment land with the permission of the Secretary of State and that will only be granted if there are sites to move people to. That's all right then. Or is it?

Information sent out last year stated that more land was being sought for allotments. A nice big field full of couch and thistles up by Shootersway would answer the case. Don't forget that good, well cultivated thriving allotments were destroyed to make room for the Olympics. Allotment land is always at risk and the legal safeguards are not always able to save it.

Those of you on e-mail will have seen my request for tenants to tell me how they feel. There is already a substantial group of members willing to help fight this foolish proposal and others willing to be counted but not able to take part for various reasons. If you have not already replied, please consider your position and tell me what you think so that your committee can make decisions about where to go next.

(There has not been time to hold a committee meeting at the time of writing so these are the views of the Chairman.)

**Freda Earl**

I have been asked by a seasoned plot holder to mention the following points for the benefit of new members:

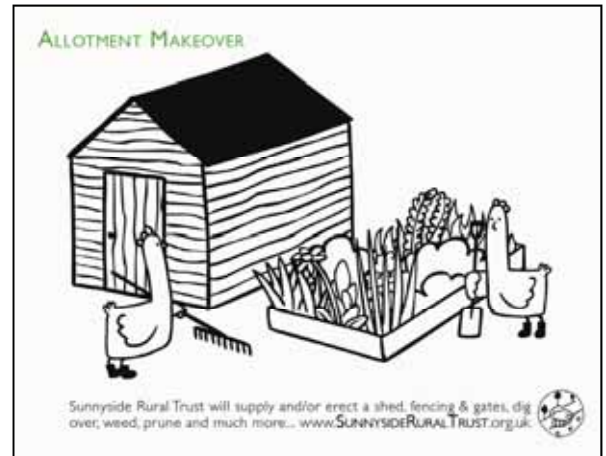
The Tea Hut is Angela's personal shed but everyone is welcome to make a cup of tea or coffee and share the biscuits (donations in the polystyrene cup by the tea and coffee jars please) and conversation. The door should always be kept shut even if someone is just having a drink at the table as rats will quickly slip inside.

Ted has a lawnmower which is his personal property and he kindly lends it to people. The petrol is donated by various allotment holders - it doesn't come out of the allotment funds. If allotment holders want to use Ted's lawnmower or anyone else's then they should make a contribution to the petrol.

The same member also has a complaint: "Bonfires: on the weekend of 19/20th March it was a lovely sunny weekend. I went up to my allotment about 2.30 pm on both afternoons. Each time, really smoky bonfires were burning. The smoke was drifting over to the houses adjacent to the allotments as well as onto any unfortunate allotment neighbours who were trying to work on their plot. Some sensitivity should be used when lighting bonfires. If it is a nice sunny breezy day assume that people don't want to be engulfed by the smoke from a bonfire. The rule is that bonfires should be lit later in the afternoon or early evening when it has got a lot cooler. Bonfires should not be left burning when allotment holders go home. Alternatively, allotment holders can use their tall green bins that the council empty on a fortnightly basis. Or bag it all up and take it to the local dump."

Another alternative of course is to compost.

If you are struggling to maintain your plot do let a member of the committee know so that we can advise you and perhaps find temporary help. One possible solution is Sunnyside Rural Trust who have recently advertised their services to help plot holders who need help with various tasks.



Sunnyside Rural Trust refurbishing Chris Locke's shed

## Tenancy changes

Welcome to:

New  
Cliff Canavan-King

### Your current Committee Members

<b>Chairman:</b>	Freda Earl	865661
<b>Vice Chairman:</b>	John Eaton	865307
<b>Secretary:</b>	Jenny Sippings	865890
<b>Treasurer:</b>	John Powell	878640
<b>Minutes Secretary:</b>	Prue Schofield	878559
<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	Chris Locke	877326
<b>Other members:</b>	Debby Figueirido	877607
	Nick Hood	878331
	Annick Mulcahy	862572
	Andy Walker	07966 245732
	Angela Wheeldon	874440
<b>Associate member:</b>	John Driver	862734

### Greenhouse available

2.5m long x 1.9m wide, arch-shaped, 2m+ tall at the apex. It has a metal frame (assembled with nuts/bolts) & a sliding door. Glass panes are about 60 x 60cm. There are 4 or 5 missing/broken. There are also 2 slatted wood potting benches: 1m (& 1.3) x 60 (x 90cm high).

Contact: [suegrahamsmith@gmail.com](mailto:suegrahamsmith@gmail.com)

### Sunnyside Allotment Picnic

This year in place of the traditional Allotment barbecue is a summer picnic for allotment tenants and their families. Please bring your own food and seating arrangements.

If you are a musician and would like to play on the day or help organise games for the children please contact Matt Shapland 01442 865052.

At Sunnyside Rural Trust Garden  
Ivy house Lane, Berkhamsted  
4pm to 8pm Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June

### Open Day 2011

This will take place on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August. More details will be in the next newsletter. But this is advance notice that we will be holding another Scarecrow Competition. This time there will be a theme: your scarecrow should be a recognisable celebrity from 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, so start getting creative!

### Interesting Leaflets

You may have not seen 'Allotments: a Plotholder's Guide' which can be found on our website here: <http://www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk/Downloads/plotholdersguidea.pdf>. This is part of the new tenants' 'Allotment Information Pack'.

You may also be interested in the Allotments Regeneration Initiative who have an excellent website and they produce regular newsletters which you can find here: <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/resources/ari-newsletter-mainmenu-148>

### Report on Working Parties for 2011

Three working parties have been held this winter. They take place on a Sunday and their purpose is to make improvements to the sites and to do essential maintenance work which, if the council had to do, would result in increased rents. The work we do ultimately benefits us all and we would encourage as many of as possible to get involved next year, even if you can only spare a couple of hours. We always have a good lunch and it is an opportunity to get to know fellow tenants.

In **January** we did some hedge maintenance in Birtchnell's Copse and some scarifying of the grass clearing to impoverish the soil which will support natural wildflowers in future. In **February** we installed a hand rail down the slope to the Tea Hut. We also tidied up and built a containment for the wood chip and leaves on SSOld – the contents of which together with those on SSNew are freely available to tenants. We created wooden plot numbers for SSNew. (It is up to tenants to make sure that their plot no. is clearly displayed – this is essential for the committee when letting/reviewing plots and helps orientate new tenants. But please feel free to exercise your artistic talents and create your own individual signs in whatever material you choose.)

In **March** we started to redecorate the toilet and summer house. They have both been rubbed down and given an undercoat. We are looking for someone to sand down and redecorate the loo door, inside and out. If you are bored with gardening, or if your plot is so up to date that you could spare the time to do this, please contact me! The 'bird, butterfly and bee' garden on SSOld was spruced up and bees and butterflies have already been seen on the pulmonaria and heather flowers. We also coppiced the second half of the Millennium Coppice. The 2 hazel coppices are cut on a 4 year rotation to provide us with a supply of pea sticks and bean poles; there are still some available at the bottom of the Millennium Coppice on C Road.

**Angela Wheeldon**



Millennium Hazel Coppice

### Please keep your paths clear

It is the responsibility of all tenants to keep the paths bordering their plots clear and to remove stones or any other obstacles that could cause a hazard to others.

Tenants are also required to keep their paths mown. If you have difficulty doing this then you need to talk to your neighbours to come to an arrangement.





Woodchip and leaf mould containment



Painting the toilet



Pear blossom



Primroses

**Allotment society subscriptions for 2010/2011** are now overdue. If you're not sure whether you've paid yet you can check with John Powell on 01442 878640. One advantage of being a paid-up member of the society is that you can take part in the 'seed scheme'.

### Sunnyside Allotment Society Subs

Subs for 2010/2011 (£3.00) can be sent with this slip to John Powell (20 Castle Hill Avenue) or left at the tea hut on B15. (Cheques payable to Sunnyside Allotment Society please).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Plot Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

cash/cheque (please circle)