

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

3/2002

As the growing season is reaching its climax, the pleasure of taking home our produce fortunately overshadows the fight we have had against the ravages of slugs, snails, flea beetle etc. and the damage caused by deer runs. Constant action with pellets, powder and even temporary fencing has been called for. There is another side to this coin however, and Karen Bevan writes in this Newsletter about the pleasure she has received from observing a family of bank voles on her plot.

During these last summer months we have celebrated the Queen's Jubilee, and held our second Open day and Barbecue on 28th June. It was rewarding to see more members of the public than last year. Several were prospective allotment holders and responded to the enthusiasm of those who showed them around. They must have been impressed by the general orderly appearance for much time and effort had been devoted to mowing, strimming, sign-posting and writing information about the wild life and conservation of Sunnyside.

A busy day was followed by a very successful barbecue. It was a happy occasion, friends and family, toddlers and teens all enjoying good food in golden evening sunshine, and then 'swinging along' with Peter's lively music.

Our thanks go to the Committee and all their helpers, who put so much hard work into organising these two events, and especially to the Sunnyside Rural Trust for allowing us the use of their facilities. Roll on next year!

IVY HOUSE LANE

A number of residents in Ivy House Lane have approached the Town council, through an Estate agent, for access from their back gardens onto the roadway to Sunnyside Rural Trust Training Centre. Clearly there are thoughts of putting in a planning application to develop parts of their back gardens. The request was discussed by the Finance and policy Committee and was declined, and this decision was later ratified by the full Council.

TOILET FACILITIES

An approach has been made to the council for the provision of Toilet Facilities. The Society has been requested to produce a proposal in time for the next meeting of the Allotments Management Team on 21st August and this will be prepared. It is likely that to enable the proposal to succeed there will be a need for the SAS to get involved in the physical works of pipe laying and shed construction. If there are any members prepared to assist in any way would they contact members of your Committee as soon as possible.

CAR PARK – SUNNYSIDE NEW

In the last Newsletter we said that the Car Park would not be built as Birse Construction would not be accessing the railway through Sunnyside New Allotments. we are pleased to say that through the efforts of Councillor Betty Patterson, Birse Construction have, after all, provided a car park on Sunnyside New which we hope will be well used by Tenants.

SUNNYSIDE CHURCH CAR PARK

At the full meeting of the Town Council held on August 5th it was stated that the lease for the Church Car Park had been agreed and would run for 21 years. The Church has applied for Planning Permission for the resurfacing of the roadway and car park. If you wish to see the plans, ask for planning application number 4/01623/02 at the Town Council office.

MANURE DELIVERIES

It is hoped to create a route across Sunnyside New below Plot 56 to enable manure deliveries to be made to assist tenants on the Ivy House Lane side of the site. If we can help ourselves by participating in the work initially, by site clearance, so much the better. Any volunteers?

YOUR COMMITTEE

Peter Chapman
(Chairman)

871470

John Savage
(Treasurer)

873877

Jenny Sippings
(Secretary)

865890

Patrick Stileman

874457

Clive Weakley

875373

Angela Wheeldon



MIDDLE ROADWAY – SUNNYSIDE NEW

Work will be done to widen the middle roadway but with little money available in the Councils budget, the society will need to get involved.

Are there any tenants prepared to give time to clear the under growth on both sides of the roadway? If so would you contact any member of the Committee to let them know you can help. Once the clearance has been achieved the work needed to widen the roadway can be assessed.

RAILWAY FENCING

As many of you will have noticed new fencing has been installed along the railway on both Old and New sites. The contractor concerned has tried to minimise inconvenience to allotment tenants even though some sheds and compost bins were very close to the old fence. Efforts were made to inform tenants on site of the work before it happened. Work was completed on Monday 5th August.

UNTIDY GARDENS

The Society has sent out letters to a number of tenants to give them the opportunity to explain their absence from their plots and in the event of a lack of response to our enquiry, it will be assumed that the tenancies are being terminated. the Town Council will be informed accordingly at the next meeting of the Allotment Management Team on 21st August.

TENANCY CHANGES Sunnyside Old

In

Peter Allen	Plot C1
David Robinson	Plot C19
John Anders	Plot B27a
Steve Burt	Plot A24

Out

Isobel Marsh	Plot B10
Sharon Longley	Plot A24

Sunnyside New

Out

Mrs P Cheshire	Plot 50
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WAITING LISTS

The town council no longer holds waiting lists for particular plots and in the event of a tenant wishing to take over a particular plot, should it become available, the site representative should be informed.

SITE REPRESENTATIVE – SUNNYSIDE

Peter chapman has decided to stand down as Site Representative on the Allotments Management Team. As a temporary arrangement, Ted Dyer will act as Site representative pending arrangements being made to find Peter's successor. Our thanks go to Peter for the work he put in during his time as our Site Representative.

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

One Sunday evening in June about a dozen allotment holders congregated on B15, hoping that the weather

would stay dry, to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Peggy's Jubilee Pasta Party was a delightful alfresco meal of pasta and wine, followed by fruit and cheese. Everyone contributed something; we toasted the Queen; it stayed dry; and the evening was a great success.

WILD FLOWER MEADOW

We are hoping to form a small Sub-Committee to take forward the plans for a Wild Flower Meadow on Sunnyside New. If you are interested in being included, please contact Angela Wheeldon or Jenny Sippings or any Committee Member before the next meeting on 10th September.

CONGRATULATIONS

21st September will be the wedding day of Daniel and Kylie (Plot B31). It is lovely to think that they have chosen to get married in Berkhamsted, instead of their native Australia. We wish them a happy day and a very happy life together here in England, or wherever they choose to be.



Far Left: A toast to the Queen.

Left: A sunny evening made the barbecue a great success.

A VOLE STORY

by Karen Bevan Plot B41

One of the great pleasures of gardening at Sunnyside for us, is the sight and sound of the wildlife that lives here. This spring we had some (very cute) visitors to our allotment, which is near to the Sunnyside Church car park.

Our first clue that something was happening was that we found a ball of finely cut grass under our weed-suppressing carpet, as well as some well-worn tracks or runways. The ball of grass was a nest, with an entrance hole and a very cosy centre of finely shredded grass.

Next time we looked under our carpet we discovered that our guest was a Bank Vole, which ran off very quickly. Bank Voles are not like mice, although they are a similar size, adults 9-11cm in length (head & body), with a short tail of 4.5-5.5 cm. They have a long shaggy coat, blunt nose, small eyes and ears and short legs as well as the short tail.

Bank Voles are similar to Field Voles (which may also appreciate the environment at Sunnyside), but they have a rich reddish brown upper coat, where Field Voles are grey. There is one famous member of the Vole family – Ratty, from the Wind in the Willows was a Water Vole, and not a Rat at all, although Water Voles are a similar size to Rats.

The next time we checked, we saw an adult which ran off very quickly, and in the nest was a huddle of babies,

with their eyes not yet open. This saved us some digging as we couldn't disturb the family! A further check a couple of weeks later found the nest empty – but very warm, with a young vole rushing away.

They are thought to survive 18 months or so in the wild, with the young weaned at 2.1/2 weeks. Bank Voles are mostly nocturnal, and are taken by most birds of prey and carnivores. Tawny Owls are probably their main predator, but Kestrels take them too, as they are able to see the ultra-violet light radiation given off by the Voles urine in their runs (yes really!)

We've appreciated our visitors and were pleased that they were able to raise a family at Sunnyside.





"I've always been a gardener; I suppose it's in the blood. My grandfather had a small holding up at Northchurch where he kept pigs and chickens and as kids we used to help feed and muck them out. My father had an allotment at Northchurch too, and my brothers and I were expected to help out at the weekends.

I got married at Sunnyside Church and we moved to Ellesmere Road and it was then that I got my first allotment, on Sunnyside New it was. That was in about 1937. I put my name down for a garden and I had to wait quite a while. In those days all the plots on both sides of Ivy House Lane were taken; it was really a sight to see. Of course everyone grew their own fruit and veg then to make the poor wages go farther. And people didn't move around much; the population was more static, so you had to wait for someone to die before you got a plot. I gardened over on Sunnyside New for a bit and then I moved to the top of 'C' road on Sunnyside old. It was all well cultivated up there then. I do remember we had trouble with rabbits there – you had to net everything if you wanted a crop. Mind you I expect a few got put in the pot! After awhile I moved again, this time to B1 where Peter and Betty Fowell are now.

During the war I remember a US plane crashed onto the railway embankment near Netherfield. There was a lot of black smoke as it circled – it was probably trying to land at Bovingdon. For ages afterwards I was digging live ammunition out of my plot! It must have scattered on impact. Talking about the war, I remember when a bomb destroyed the railway bridge on Ivy House Lane. Of course the railway was a target for the German bombers to disrupt supplies and communications. There were a lot of troop movements too. Luckily an oncoming train managed to stop short of the bridge but I remember people being

Lionel Batchelor celebrates his 90th birthday on 10th September. Not only is Lionel our oldest active allotment gardener – this year his runner beans were up and climbing the bean poles before many of us had even sown the seed – but he has been gardening at Sunnyside for an impressive 65 years. So we would like to congratulate you, Lionel; on this memorable achievement and wish you a very Happy Birthday.

Lionel has seen a lot of changes on the allotments over the years and recently spent a little time reminiscing.

helped off the train. It took ages for the bridge to be repaired and we had to use a makeshift footpath to get to the allotments.

People talk a lot now about the weather being more extreme. I don't know, but I do remember a heavy fall of snow in June – was it 1957? My peas were just coming into flower and they were covered with snow. It was so heavy that several branches broke off the row of chestnut trees.

Soon after this I moved down onto A road and joined the 'professionals'. I was quite proud of that – this was where they all had their gardens. Several of them grew for exhibitions at the horticultural shows. The fierce competition led to some real disagreements! we had several chrysanth growers. I remember they used to rig up shelters to prevent the plants being damaged and even put little caps on the flowers themselves to stop them being spoilt. We didn't go in for Annual Shows but we did have an annual competition for best allotment. I won it one year – I felt so proud to have beaten the professionals, but I can't remember now what I won.

I don't remember badgers and deer being such a pest in the past, but there were always pigeons. They used to shoot them. Of course there's a lot more choice of seed variety these days and some of the F1s are very good. But some of the old favourites are still worth growing.

People have always been ready to help when I've needed a hand and I'm grateful. But I would like to thank Ted especially for the help he has given me recently."

A special birthday coffee party will be held for Lionel on 10th September at 11am on B15 – all are welcome.