

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

3/2005

When is it not a difficult year for gardening? Perfect conditions are always elusive and this summer has been no exception. Too cold in May for planting, with frost damaging the early potatoes, too hot in June for growing, too much wind, not enough rain, but it all seemed to come right in the end as we approached Open Day. This year it coincided with National Allotments week, and we were pleased to show the public what we have achieved.

Nationally, we have gone through difficult times these past few weeks and I have since read a comment that gardening is helping to hold together the fabric of society, that it gives Britain a culture and slices through racism and the class system like nothing else. Serious food for thought as we enjoy the relaxation and peace of Sunnyside.

On a much lighter note, we have also had some pleasant social occasions, which are reported on below, including the family barbeque in June, which was a splendid opportunity for us all to relax together.

National Allotment Week 8th-14th August.

The aim of National Allotment Week is to promote the awareness of allotments all over the country. We supported the drive by holding our annual Open Day at this time. The objective is to promote gardening and vegetable growing and eating and to persuade the public to see the benefits of this life style. We want to encourage new members from people who have never thought of having a plot before and as NSALG points out the use of as many plots as possible will protect sites against government plans for mass building projects and you will read later, why this is particularly relevant to Sunnyside. We are pleased to have had quite a few new tenants this season but there is still room for more.

Grass Cutting

A major part of the preparations for Open Day, and also the general maintenance of both Sunnyside Old and New, is the grass cutting and care of the paths. It is the responsibility of every tenant to keep their surrounding paths free from stones, the edges tidy, and not to encroach over their boundaries. Until now, Ted Dyer has spent a considerable amount of time, mowing all the paths, but because he now feels that he is obliged to spend more time on his plots following a complaint from the Council about untidiness, he can no longer help in this way. We must thank Ted for all his past efforts on our behalf. In future, mowers will be available to tenants, on request to Ted.

Vandalism

Unfortunately, we have again suffered from a shed being broken into, this time on Sunnyside New. Also there has been a broken arm on a tank valve and soft fruit seems to have disappeared. It is up to us to be vigilant and question any strangers who appear to be acting suspiciously or walking about in unusual places. We hope this will act as a deterrent

Toilet Construction Works

Contractors, working on behalf of Thames Water have now completed the connection to the main sewer. The concrete base for the building was laid on 24th. June and we are very grateful to those tenants who wheeled concrete down to the site and our thanks especially go to Fred Jackson for all his work in laying and levelling.

Since then, Jim Ellisdon has constructed the frame at home and it has been transported to the site by Roy Thompson. The frame has now been erected and clad, but the roofing felt is not yet in place. There are still plenty of jobs yet to do, like tiling the floor, fitting the toilet and basin, plumbing, and painting, but the end is now in sight!

Renewal of Sunnyside Rural Trust Lease

The First Secretary, John Prescott has decided that the Council leases of Sunnyside land to SRT should be renewed for a maximum of 5 years rather than 14 years sought by the Council. The decision letter also recommended that before long term decisions are made about allotment sites, the Council should complete the Allotment Strategy. This is a very favourable decision for the future of the allotments and we are very grateful to the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners, for their support.

Plot Rents and Water Charges

We would like to remind you that the Council will be sending out new tenancy agreements to all tenants after 29th. September, when rents are to be increased to £1.30 per pole. It would be helpful if you could return these as promptly as possible. The annual charge for the use of a pressure hose is also going up to £8.



1st Prize Adults - "Hula Sunnyside"



1st Prize 7 yrs + "Stanley"



1st Prize up to 6yrs - "Pappi John"

Seed Catalogue

Next year's seed catalogue is now out and will be distributed with this newsletter to fully paid up members of the Society.

Daniel and Kylie Bartlett

We are very sorry to have had to say farewell to Daniel and Kylie. Most of you will probably know that they have decided to return to Australia, after spending four happy years in Berkhamsted. They were very keen gardeners and quickly adapted themselves to local conditions, which they explained were very different from their experiences in Canberra and Sydney. They played a full part in the activities of our society, Daniel, taking on the role of Treasurer for the past two years Goodbyes were said at a cheese and wine lunch held on the allotments which many tenants attended.

They were presented with a picture, painted by a local artist to remind them of many happy hours spent on Sunnyside. In return they donated a lovely black cherry tree in a very fine pot, which can be seen outside the tea hut.

As a result of Daniel's departure, John Powell has been co-opted to take over the position of Treasurer, which will hopefully be ratified at the A.G.M. in November. We are grateful to John for accepting this responsibility.

Other Social Activities

Our hardworking Chairman, Bruce Jones, had an auspicious birthday in the spring and we were very pleased to celebrate this with a fish and chip lunch. It was all beautifully hot, straight from the shop, and we were lucky enough to have a very fine day. We hoped Bruce and Liz enjoyed this occasion. It was a very small way of saying thank you to Bruce for all the time and effort he spends on behalf of Sunnyside and its interests in the future.

At the end of June, we held our annual family barbeque. It was organised as usual by Patrick, David provided the wine, Sunnyside Rural Trust the venue, and Peter played the music which helped to make a rather damp June day, a jolly occasion. The children obviously enjoyed the party and we were especially pleased to welcome Alfie, who at one year old, was our youngest ever guest! Thank you to everyone who worked hard for our enjoyment.

Lizards

As many of us have discovered, lizards are quite numerous on Sunnyside Allotments. Last year a herpetologist inspected the lower area of Sunnyside New and advised that heavy equipment should not be used to clear the grassy eastern end as it would destroy valuable habitat for the common lizard, which we are

not allowed by law to disturb.

We currently have a student, Sharon Woods, studying the lizards on SS New for her BSc dissertation. She has set up a series of 'refugias', using squares of corrugated iron, roofing felt and rigid plastic on vacant gardens on the bottom of SS New. Please do not disturb them; they are there for a purpose. She is working on the correlations between the heating up and heat retention properties of the materials and their attractiveness to lizards.

Lizards need to bask in order to get their metabolism working. She will be checking and recording the refugias daily, morning and evening. She has already recorded quite a few lizards and encouragingly has seen a lot of baby lizards.

Open Day 2005

After all the hot sunshine we have had this summer, it was disappointing to have rain on the Open Day, even if we do desperately need it. But in spite of a wet afternoon, we had a very successful and enjoyable day, with more visitors than usual. We made about £250.00 and acquired three new tenants.

We were delighted to welcome allotment gardeners from Butts Meadow, Dellfield and Northchurch and further afield from Tring, Hemel and Aldbury.

The produce stall is always popular and tenants serving refreshments were kept busy from start to finish. The Art Exhibition of paintings done on the allotments, the second-hand book stall and the bric-a-brac stall on SS New 54 were additional activities.

A big Thank You to all who helped on the day and who provided produce, home-made cakes, books etc.

The main attraction this year was undoubtedly the scarecrows. We had 18 entries and they all showed amazing ingenuity and imagination. We are grateful to the Mayor, Geraldine Corry, for judging them on the Friday and then attending the Open day and presenting the prizes. The prizewinners were:

1st prize – up to 6yrs:

Jemma & Holly Driver C33
"Pappi John"

Highly commended:

Annabel & Alex Hall SS New38

1st prize – 7yrs upwards:

Harry Barnes B11
"Stanley"

Highly commended:

Gabriella Garnham B43

1st prize – Adults:

Yvonne Smithies & Elke Loschel A33
"Hula Sunnyside"

Highly commended:

Sarah Wood & Ian Knight B24
"Patriotic Gardener"

Tenancy Changes

IN

Chris & Lisa Jones	N39
Simon Tooley	N12
Adam & Liz Hall	N38B
John Hill	N4
Melissa Murray-Jones	A44A
Judith & Peter Ward	A44B
Victoria Fox	N40A
Ian & Lesley MacDonald	A41A
Neil Laidler	N7
John Whittington	N43

OUT

Simon Bird	A44
Merryn & Rupert Criswell	A41
Dan & Kylie Bartlett	B31

It would be helpful if tenants could put number signs on their plots to help identify them.



Above & right:
The concrete for the new toilet was barrowed and then levelled by a happy band of volunteers!



Above: Kylie and Daniel were given a special lunch to wish them farewell.



Above: Children of all ages loved the flower pot painting at the Open Day.

Dates for your Diary

Monday August 29th

Lions Fete at the Cricket Club

We will be doing a display and a raffle. Volunteers required 1-5pm, please contact Angela Wheeldon B15.

Sunday September 18th

Because so many tenants were away, we are going to display the remaining second-hand books for sale, before offering them to one of the charity shops. There will also be bric-a-brac for sale as well. 11-4pm on B15.

Saturday September 24th

Lions Community Market, Town Hall

We will provide a display to publicise allotment gardening and we need volunteers 9am-1pm. Please contact Angela Wheeldon on B15.

Committee Members

Chairman:

Bruce Jones	866078
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Vice Chairman:

Ted Dyer	872684
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Secretary:

Jenny Sippings	865890
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Treasurer:

John Powell	862734
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Fiona Duck	874334
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Patrick Stileman	874457
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Brenda Baynes	865853
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Angela Wheeldon	874440
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Clive Weakley	875373
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John Driver	878640
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