

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

4/2002

Since the last newsletter, we have enjoyed almost perpetual sunshine, extending our growing season and bringing a bumper harvest of crops. Conditions have been good for autumn tidying and digging, but we have not been without our excitements. Marauders, both human and animal have robbed us of tools and produce. You will read about the burglary of sheds and the proposed setting up of an allotment watch; you will probably have heard how badgers know exactly the right moment to steal the sweetcorn! Badgers may be a nuisance sometimes, but bees are essential in our gardens and we are grateful to Jane Dickenson for her interesting and informative article. Perhaps we should develop our bee-keeping!

The AGM is approaching on Saturday 30th November at 10.30am. Please show your interest by attending. Your committee needs your input.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will take place on Saturday 30th November at 10.30am and Sunnyside Rural Trust has kindly agreed to allow us the use of the training centre in Ivy House Lane.

The agenda for the meeting is attached to this newsletter and should be brought along to the meeting.

We hope that as many of you as possible will come along and have your say on the way the Society is run on your behalf, good or bad – we need to know.

All of the members of your committee are prepared to stand for re-election with the exception of your Chairman Peter Chapman, who has resigned. We would like to thank Peter for all the help he has given to the society in the past. There can be an election for any post and if tenants wish to nominate themselves for any position they should notify Jenny Sippings, our secretary, in writing, no later than 8th November.

Our audited accounts will be available for inspection at the meeting and our treasurer will explain them.

Once again it will be possible for you to pay your £2.00 subscription to the society at the AGM when they fall due for the year 2002/3.

Your Committee

Chairman	(Vacancy)	
Secretary	Jenny sippings	865890
Treasurer	John Savage	873877
Angela Wheeldon		874440
Patrick Stileman		874457
Clive Weakley		875373
Graham Hall		873408
Ken Harbord		865757
Fiona Duck		874334
Ted Dyer		872684

Site Representative

As mentioned in the August newsletter we do not have an elected Site Representative for Sunnyside, following the resignation of Peter Chapman. You will have the opportunity at the AGM to elect a replacement. We urgently need a volunteer as it is important for Sunnyside to have a voice and co-ordinator.

The job involves meeting prospective tenants, showing them around, issuing the appropriate forms which include shed and greenhouse application forms, and hopefully approving them before they are passed to the Town Council for their approval.

The down side is having to deal with complaints of one sort or another from tenants and local residents, which can be difficult to resolve.

Thefts

Watch Out! There are thieves about, so we all need to be vigilant. If strangers are seen on the allotments, don't let their passage go un-noticed and if they are somewhere where they shouldn't be ask the reason why. If we are polite there is little risk of causing offence and it shows that we are interested in what is going on.

Some tenants have had produce taken from their plots over the last few months, and more recently a number of sheds have been broken into and tools stolen. We assume the missing items will be moved on at Car Boot sales, so if you go, look out for our stolen property!

If you are able to mark your tools to enable ready identification then you should do so. The Police suggest that tenants exhibit notices alerting thieves to the fact that all items are security coded and readily identifiable. Put on your initials and postcode including your house number.

Following these recent thefts a special meeting has been arranged to discuss the formation of an Allotment Watch. This will take place on Friday 25th October at 7.30pm in Sunnyside Church Hall. We will be addressed by Jeff Ellis our Community Policeman.



Bonfires

Following a letter from the Borough Council's Environmental Health Department, the Town Clerk has requested that all tenants be made aware of the contents of the letter, as follows:-

"A complaint has been made to this office alleging nuisance is being caused by smoke from bonfires on allotment plots 20-25 on Ivy House Lane, Berkhamsted. Please take time to consider how your actions may be affecting nearby residents.

The complainant has been asked to keep a record of how they are affected and when the alleged nuisance occurs. If it is necessary we will carry out further investigations that may involve our making unannounced visits. If indeed there is a problem, you now have an opportunity to remedy the matter. Please contact me if you wish to discuss this matter in detail."

The Town Clerk advises that when the allotment rent invoices are sent out, a bonfire leaflet will also be sent to all tenants.

In the past we have had notices posted on both sites regarding bonfires and these still exist on some notice boards. Please read carefully both the notices and leaflet from the council.

Rubbish Clearance

If you have unwanted glass, metal or plastic items on your plot then now is the time to get rid of these blots on the landscape. Once again we will put up SAS markers and unwanted material (no green rubbish please)

should be left there. Dumping sites as usual will be at :

Sunnyside New – Bottom car park,
Sunnyside Old – Car parks at Netherfield end and adjacent to the Church.

Please use the facility and keep our sites tidy. Between now and the end of November when the dumps close, we will arrange several trips if necessary, in order to improve the appearance of our sites.

Allotment Clearance Days

A number of clearance days will be arranged this coming winter and details will be advertised on the notice boards approximately two weeks prior to each date.

Initially we will concentrate on tidying up those plots which were cleared last winter but have not as yet attracted new tenants. The work should not therefore be too arduous.

The more tenants who volunteer to help, the more can be achieved each time. These are social occasions with hot refreshments being provided in the middle of the day. Come and join us and carry out a worthwhile task.

Report of Allotment Management Team Meeting of 21st August.

Terminations: The council was given a list of Tenants for 'terminations'. They had already been written to by the Society and given the options to continue.

Toilet: The two main options were put forward. The preferred option is

for tenants to have access to the toilets in the Sunnyside Rural Trust building. The council is exploring this with SRT. Plan B is to make use of the sewer pipe running along the bottom of the allotment. This will need an approach to Thames Water.

Grass Cutting: The Council will put the grass cutting contract out to tender before the next meeting. Coopers, who did our cutting this season, were complimented on a good job.

Water Siphoning: After a long discussion as a result of a siphoning hose being left unattended causing overflow and waste of water at Dellfield, it was agreed that tenants should be reminded not to allow their butts to overflow when siphoning to prevent wasting water. Reps were also asked to remind tenants to make sure taps were properly turned off when using their keys, and that keys should be removed for safe keeping to prevent unauthorised use.

Wild flower meadow: It was agreed that topsoil from the proposed Wild Flower Meadow site area would be used to widen /level the middle roadway on Sunnyside New Site. It was also agreed that the haul route on plots 40 & 57 (SSN) (to enable manure to be delivered in a more convenient place) should be cleared by volunteers in the autumn.



Far Left: Lionel celebrates his 90th birthday among gardening friends.

Left: Daniel & Kylie cutting the chocolate wedding cake.

Gardeners Clippings

Free of charge (buyer to collect)
Aluminium Greenhouse 6x5
(approx) with 1 sliding door and roof
vents.

Contact Morris Winfield on
874106 for more details

Discount Scheme

All members are reminded that we are entitled to a 10% discount off all hire charges at Berkhamsted Tool Hire (on the High Street near to Swing Gate Lane). Just mention Sunnyside Allotment Society when you arrange the hire.

Social events

September 10th, Lionel's 90th birthday, happily dawned sunny and bright after torrential downpours the day before. A group of allotment colleagues and old friends gathered at B15 for the birthday celebrations.

The lawn was decorated with balloons and bunting and looked very festive and Lionel was given an album of photos of familiar allotment views to mark the occasion. Angela Walsh baked and decorated the birthday cake and Betty Fowell baked chocolate and coffee cakes. All were pronounced delicious and we spent a happy morning chatting in the sunshine.

Kylie and Daniel's wedding took place in the Clock room on September 21st, and shoppers were amused to see the bride and groom leading their guests on walkabout (originally an Australian concept?) through the market stalls to the lawn behind St Peter's for photographs.

This set the relaxed mood which continued at the reception in Tring. Allotments seemed to be a recurring theme. They were mentioned in the groom's speech and that of the best man and the delicious rich chocolate wedding cakes were made by a fellow allotment holder. The allotment is obviously an important part of Daniel and Kylie's life – long may it be so! We wish them every happiness together.

Olga hosted a special Russian meal held outside B15, on a dry October afternoon. We enjoyed vegetables from her allotment in typical Russian salads, beetroot bring a very important ingredient, followed by Vodka and Russian dumplings, eaten to keep out the cold of a Russian winter. They certainly kept us warm and merry and we are grateful to Olga for organising such a friendly, happy occasion.

Congratulations...

To Dave Thomas and his wife on the birth of their son.

Don't Forget

**AGM – Saturday 30th November
at 10.30am in Sunnyside Rural
Trust building.**

Bumblebees, Mason Bees, Two Bees or not Two Bees

by Jane Dickenson (A10 Sunnyside Old)

I have always had an interest in honeybees because they make one of my favourite foods – honey!- but last year, an article in the HDRA magazine about mason bees made me realise there was a lot more to bees than honey. Mason bees are solitary bees (they don't live in nests with other bees) who lay their eggs in old walls. Did you know that mason bees are being used as commercial pollinators in many places because of the decline in the honeybee population worldwide due to the varroa mite? They are particularly useful for pollinating early-flowering crops, and you can encourage the native population by providing sites for them to lay their eggs. The article had an address where you could get Red Mason Bee 'nester kits' from the Oxford Bee Company, and I immediately sent off for one and attached it to the shed on my allotment in April last year. The nester kit looks like a mass of wide cardboard straws in a plastic tube – the bees lay their eggs in these straws as they would in holes in walls.

I waited with bated breath for red mason bees to line up for their nest, but it was bee-free by the time I went to the Chelsea Flower show at the end of May. The Oxford Bee Company had a stand there and they assured me that bees would appear. Lo and behold when I strolled up to the allotment that evening, several of the straws were full and bees were flying round the nester! I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but to me, Red Mason Bees look like small honeybees. The females lay their eggs in the nester, and several eggs can be laid in each straw, each egg sealed with mud. You can empty the nester and keep the straws inside during the winter if you like. I watched the bees all flying out in the spring and felt very chuffed. This year I bought another nester as the first one filled up by the end of April!

After this rip-roaring success, I started to read more about bees, and discovered that there are 254 species of bees in Britain (24 of which are bumblebees) and about 20 –30,000 in the world (this rather vague big number points up the fact that we just don't know how many there are!). How many different sorts can you remember seeing? There are carder bees, who use the woolly bits from leaves to line their nest, and leaf-cutter bees who take semi-circles out of your rose leaves, honeybees of course, and there are all those bumblebees. Apparently, bumblebees are also being used as commercial crop pollinators, in the same way as mason bees, and they are credited with the establishment of New Zealand's sheep



and cattle farming industry in the last century (imported bumblebees improved the clover crop massively, apparently). I set up a bumblebee nest kit on the allotment this summer, but with less success than with the mason bees. I had two bumblebee nests during the summer – one under a compost bin and one under the shed – but none in the nester. However, there's always next year! The bumblebee favourite nest spot is usually an old mouse nest under a hedge should you be interested.

The bad news for bees is that a quarter of British bee species are endangered. It's the usual story of increased pesticide use, change of agricultural practice resulting in less diversity and destruction of hedgerows. I feel that gardeners and allotment holders can do their bit and can make a difference – we should all do our bit to be as bee-friendly as possible, especially on the allotments where we rely so much on their pollinating. Ideally we should have a patch of flowers for bee-food available from March to October. You can find lists of bee-friendly plants in many books, but I have found that borage, comfrey, limnanthes (poached egg plant), phacelia, clover, thyme, lavender, snapdragons and hollyhocks are all very popular with various different sorts of bees and can be fitted in patches round the allotment. The first five are often good as cover plants while a patch of ground is empty – you can compost the growth when you need the space. They are often sold as 'green manure' but strictly you should dig them in before they flower for this purpose, and no flowers, no bees! Bees are also very fond of the flowers of peas and beans.

The Oxford Bee Company has a website at www.oxbeeco.com, and as well as nesters, they sell books and other wildlife paraphernalia. Come and have a look at the Red Mason Bee nesters on the shed on A10 and then go and buy yourself a nester for next spring!