Chair's Report 2022

Haslemere Allotment Association

Introduction

It has been another busy year on Haslemere. Much has been done to improve the site and its facilities and to increase access to try-out beds so that more people can experience allotment gardening.

Our site won its first award when we were given the status of Highly Commended in the Large Allotment Sites category in the 2021 Cultivate Ealing Allotments Competition.

Plot holder Maria Krichallo (plot 25B) was a winner in the Cultivate Ealing competition, taking 1st place in the Small and Micro Allotments category.

Haslemere was also the subject of a Photographic Exhibition at North Acton Playing Fields Park and featured in the Summer 2021 edition of the magazine 'This England'.

Thank you

The smooth running of the Association, the organisation of events and workdays, the management of projects and general maintenance of the site is dependent upon Committee members and other plot holders giving up their time to arrange them and take part, so it is only right to start by thanking those who do so for their efforts, which I am sure are appreciated by all members.

In the past year there have been several Committee changes: Rachel Walkowiak (plot 62B) stepped down, and Val Austin (plot 13B) and Stuart Alexander (plot 42B) were co-opted onto the committee. Furthermore, our treasurer Ann Tierney (plot 58A) and Ian Hayes (plot 23A) have decided not to re-stand for election. Many thanks are due to Rachel, Ann and Ian for their contribution to the work of the Committee.

Please consider joining the Committee or offering help if you feel that you can. The more volunteers we have, the more we can achieve.

Sadly, we also have to report the deaths of two long-standing plot holders who made a great contribution to the site over many years. Alan Raine was a valued member of the plot maintenance team that looks after the shared areas. Keith Massey was a Committee member with great expertise in allotment management. Both are much missed.

Plot Lettings

In the table below you will find some plot statistics. As you can see, the waiting list has kept growing ever since the start of the pandemic. The number of plots increased by one, due to a whole plot becoming available which was split.

Although the bare figures show that we have welcomed 13 new tenants, the story is more complicated. Two plots have both had three tenants in the last year, as newcomers have either given up voluntarily because they realised they lacked the time to manage a plot, or after receiving warning letters from the Committee about their lack of cultivation.

Other tenancies have also been short-lived. One plot holder gave up his plot to take on a raised bed on 48A. Unusually, three plot holders were issued termination notices this year: two for breaching the tenancy agreement and one for non-payment.

Year	Total plots	New tenants	Waiting list
2017	123	9	44
2018	127	15	15
2019	127	7	26
2020	130	18	26
2021	130	10	70
2022	131	13	81

Gardening Club

Because a number of new tenancies have proved to be disappointingly short, the Committee, after consultation with Pathways, decided to adopt the Gardening Club scheme used by our sister site at Northfields. Prospective plot holders now have to rent one of the try-out beds on plots 1B and 61B in order that both they and the Committee can assess whether they have the commitment to progress to a full plot. People on the waiting list were informed of the new policy and the reception was overwhelmingly positive, with all the beds now rented.



More information on the Gardening Club can be found on the website:

https://www.haslemereallotments.org.uk/gardening-club/

Events and Charity

Despite Covid restrictions, we managed to hold events that were both very enjoyable for plot holders and successful in raising money for good causes.

The Plant Sale in May raised £800, almost double the previous year's total, with the proceeds going to local charities such as Ealing Soup Kitchen and Ealing Food Bank.

In September, even more was raised at the Macmillan Coffee morning event, with a total of £850 going to this great charity.

Thanks are due to the plot holders who worked hard to organise and manage these events.





We could not have our summer barbecue again last year because of the Covid situation but hopefully we can have it this year.

Site Maintenance

Firstly, I want to thank John McArthur (Plot 14A) for his work in keeping the site well maintained by cutting the grass and looking after communal plots.

Here are some of the main maintenance activities:

- Waste
    - Two skips were hired for plot holders to use at a cost of £684. The last skip was hired mainly to deal with rubbish resulting from storm Eunice. The skip did not appear to fill up as quickly as previously, could this be a sign that the site is getting tidier? No further skips are scheduled for the rest of the year at this point.



    - A significant amount of rubbish was removed from communal plots 48A and 61B (partly resulting from dismantling the old communal shed) at a cost of £782.

    - Waste removal is very expensive and takes a lot of effort - particularly as skips have to be managed by volunteers to ensure that they are loaded efficiently - so plot inspections do focus on rubbish accumulation.
- Tree surgery
    - Two large prune trees were removed from plot 36B and a very large cherry tree from 39A at a cost of £372. This was paid for by Pathways.
    - The large apple tree on the communal plot 61B was pruned and reduced in height by at a cost of £204. This was again paid for by Pathways.
    - A “chipping day” was organised to let plot holders dispose of their prunings without the need to burn them. This is not only better for the environment, but also minimises the impact that bonfires have on the surrounding households. The cost was £192.





- Communal trolleys
    - Two more trolleys were purchased at a cost of £270.
    - The trolleys have had numerous repairs and parts replacements over the year, mainly due to them being overloaded or being used for large loads that bend the sides. Over £240 was spent on equipment maintenance, of which over £100 was on trolley repairs. Please try to avoid loading too much into them: each wheel costs £30 to replace or repair. Also remember that the trolley sides fold down to create a flat bed.
- Water
    - Water availability through the taps and dip tanks has been problematic in years when we have had hot, dry summers and a large number of plot holders are watering at the same time. However, there were fewer reported water issues in the previous summer due to cooler, wet weather
    - Nevertheless, we are still looking to ensure greater water availability during the hotter months. Last year we trialled float valves to ensure tanks are always full but these proved to be unreliable and actually increased the risk of wasting water
    - We are now looking to increase water availability by increasing water tank capacity through joining tanks together. An extra tank has been installed near plot 50a and the next installation is in progress.



    - If any plot holders have any spare plastic or metal tanks similar to those currently being used then they would be gratefully received
    - We remind plotholders that we pay for all water used on the site on a metered basis; the more we spend on water, the less we have to spend on upkeep of the site generally. We would urge all plot holders to install guttering to their sheds and greenhouses and connect to a water butt in order to supplement the mains supply

- Storm Eunice
    - Whilst a number of greenhouses, sheds and other property suffered damage, the communal property did not suffer much.
    - Some damage to the greenhouse roof and the notice sign on the Midhurst side fell over. Both were repaired at the following communal workday, a special thanks to Nick Lee (plot 60) for repairing the notice sign.
- Restricting vehicle access
    - Following an incident where both a car and the recovery vehicle sent to the rescue got stuck in mud, causing a good deal of damage to the main path and adjacent plots, the Committee decided to ban all vehicles from the site until further notice to allow the remedial works to bed in. There is a case for making this a permanent exclusion, and we have therefore tabled a motion for decision at the AGM.





Communal Projects

Despite COVID, we managed to keep our monthly community work days going; don't forget they are held on the first Saturday morning of every month, and all welcome!

Thanks to all the plotholders who come to help, a lot was achieved -supported by cakes, tea, coffee (big thanks to Gillian!) and much banter.

April 2021 to March 2022

- The old storage shed on 61b was taken down and a new shed erected on a new base
- The composting toilet on 61b was completed, and a rota set up to keep it clean and tidy
- 2 new water butts attached to collect water from the composting toilet roof
- A dead hedge was created on 61B and an insect hotel on the main path at the other end of the allotments
- Some extremely neglected plots were cleared of the worst of waste and junk- to make the tasks for the new plotholder less monumental
- 7 new try-out beds were created on 61b – for the new gardening club tenants
- Trees and hedges were trimmed, tree clippings transferred to the shredding area
- Water tank sites prepared for the new double tank schemes

Plans for this coming year:

- Construction of a new small shed for the gardening club on 61b
- Construction of a larger communal shed on 48a, to provide tea-making facilities, a gardening library, and somewhere to store the BBQ
- Install further water butts on communal greenhouse
- Reinstate the annual summer BBQ event on 48a

The gardening club plots are now all rented out to 11 people near the top of the waiting list; the scheme has had the lovely unintended consequence of connecting these new plot holders with each other - building links in our allotment community.

The communal greenhouse table spaces were rented out to 12 plotholders for the first time; the spaces are assigned from January to the end of June, then the tables and stools are need for the summer BBQ. It's great to see our self-built greenhouse being used as intended. We are also hoping to use the space for talks/demonstrations later in the year if we can persuade some of the gardening gurus to share their vast knowledge with us!

Committee

Johan Ditmar, Chair (Plot 36A)
Orla Kelly, Vice Chair (Plot 41B)
Colin Hewson, Secretary (Plot 42A)
Ann Tierney, Treasurer (Plot 58A)
Caro Sanders, Committee Member (Plot 41A)
Ian Hayes, Committee Member (Plot 23A)
Sean Lewis, Committee Member (Plot 33A)
Stuart Alexander, Committee Member (Plot 42B)
Val Austin, Committee Member (Plot 13B)