Chair's Report 2023

Haslemere Allotment Association

Introduction

It's been another busy year on Haslemere, with improvements to the communal areas and to the security of the site. Haslemere Allotments has come third in its class in the Cultivating Ealing 2022 competition – a step up from the previous year's Highly Commended - awarded the first time we entered. And plot holder Maria Krichallo (25B), who the previous year won the Small and Micro Allotments category, this time took second place – an amazing achievement.

Haslemere was also the subject of a photographic exhibition at Blondin park.

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. Sean Lewis (Plot 33A) stepped down from the Committee during the year – we thank him for his work.

Please consider joining the Committee, or offering help if you feel that you can. The more volunteers we have, the more we can achieve. And several members of the Committee, including myself as Chair, are now coming to their fifth term, which is the final term permitted under our constitution.

Sadly, we have to report the death earlier this year of plot holder Basil Allen, who was associated with Haslemere Allotments for many years.

Plot Lettings

Last year we welcomed the fewest number of new tenants in four years, just 9. Meanwhile the waiting list continues to grow and now stands at 85. This growth disguises a certain amount of churn. Several people were removed from the waiting list as they could either not be contacted or because they told us they have moved away from the area. Two tenants were evicted for failing to cultivate their plots. The number of plots has increased by one as one whole plot was split, with the plot holder downsizing to a half plot.

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
2023	132	9	85

Events and Charity

Once again, we held a very successful plant sale, blessed with glorious weather, and plot holders raised an amazing £550 through their donations of plants and purchases. The proceeds have been donated to the Ukraine UNICEF fund. This year's sale is provisionally planned for Saturday 13 May.





We also had our first annual summer barbeque since the pandemic, in July. It was a lovely event thanks to the nice weather and we a good turnout, complete with a face painter and the burgers and sausages supplied by top-class butchers, Lidgate's.

In September, £720 was raised at our second coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Thanks are due to the plot holders who worked hard to organise and manage these events.

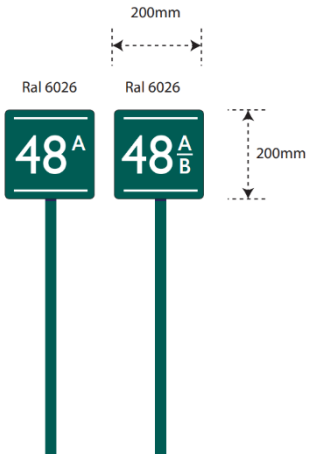
Site Maintenance

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. I would also like to thank Steve Embleton (Plot H50A) for looking after our water supply and Ian Hayes (H23A) for maintaining the trolleys.

Here are some of the main maintenance activities:

- New Plot signs

  Anyone who has been involved in plot lettings or inspections (or indeed helping deliver manure) can confirm that it can be very difficult to work out the numbers of many plots.

  For this reason, the Committee has agreed to order plot signs from Grahame Ridley, a local company that has done a lot of sign work around Ealing, including Northfields. They are made of solid powder coated aluminium, rather than composite, as it is durable and should last a long time.

  In total, 73 will be provided. Each single sign is for a whole plot, covering both A and B, except for plots 44A and 44B which need separate signs due to their layout. The total cost for the signs is £3,356 + VAT of which £2,000 is covered by an external donation – so the cost to the allotments will be £2,027.

  The Committee will organise the installation of the signs, and we will notify plot holders in advance. In some cases, it may be necessary to clear a small area for them.

- Fencing

  In January, Harrow Fencing were on site to replace 22 meters of old fencing backing onto an alley way leading to Chalfont Way. Part of this section had deteriorated to a state where it had had fallen down. To make sure the new fence is secure and durable, it has concrete posts and gravel boards which should last a very long time. The total cost for the new fence was £3,027, which was paid out of our sinking fund.

- Waste Disposal
  - In October, one skip was hired for plot holders to use at a cost of £372. We are planning to hire another skip in autumn.





  - More rubbish was collected after clearing plot 57B – this plot was left in a bad state after it had been vacated by the previous plot holder.
  - 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
  - Several large plum trees as well as an apple tree were pruned on plot 36B to significantly reduce their size after the plot had been vacated, as well as a large bay tree on plot 6B.
  - An apple tree was removed on plot 65A as it had grown too tall with no growth at the bottom.
  - The apple and cherry trees on the communal plot 1B were pruned and reduced in height.
  - In total, £876 was spent on tree surgery which was paid for by Pathways against our maintenance budget.





    - 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 £204.
- Equipment
    - The association purchased a Stihl HLA 135 cordless long-reach hedge trimmer (£885) which is used by the site maintenance team.
    - The trolleys have had numerous repairs and parts replacements over the year. Over £124 was spent on equipment maintenance, all of which was on trolley parts or repairs. Please try to avoid loading too much into them: each wheel costs £30 to replace or repair.
- Water
    - We are continuing to look to increase water availability by increasing water tank capacity through joining tanks together. An extra tank has been installed near plot 42A.
    - 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 plot holders 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 to supplement the mains supply.

Communal Projects

We had a community workday most months this year - don’t forget they are held on the first Saturday morning of every month, and all are welcome!

Thanks to everyone who comes to help. A lot was achieved this year - supported by cakes, tea, coffee (big thanks to Gillian!) and much banter:

- A new Gardening Club shed was created on 61B with water butts attached to collect water
- Guttering and water butts added to the Gardening Club shed on 1A
- Some extremely neglected plots were cleared of the worst of waste and junk to make the tasks for the new plot holder less monumental
- Trees and hedges were trimmed, tree clippings transferred to the shredding area
- Base prepared for a communal tea hut on 48A







Plans for this coming year:

- Construction of a larger communal shed on plot 48A, to provide tea-making facilities, a gardening library, and somewhere to store the BBQ
- Install further water butts on communal greenhouse
- Annual summer BBQ event on plot 48A

In addition, we have ongoing maintenance of the communal/gardening club structures, keeping trees and shrubs under control, and odd jobs that pop up from time to time – so there's always something you can help out with!

The composting toilet on 61B is a great success - much appreciated on our BBQ day and by parents of small children. Don't forget you can have the access number if you are prepared to go on the rota to keep it clean and tidy.

The Gardening Club is now established. It seemed to work very well last year and has had the lovely unintended consequence of connecting these new plot holders with each other - building links in our allotment community. All but 3 of 2022's cohort have graduated to their own plots. 11 new GC tenants have just started for 2023.

The easing of COVID restrictions last year meant that we could use the Community Greenhouse as planned for the first time; shelf space was rented out to 12 plot holders for six months. This year tenure has been extended to 12 months, apart from the day of the annual BBQ in the Summer when the tables and stools are needed. The lucky 12 were selected by ballot in January and the nominal rent paid goes towards the upkeep of the greenhouse.

Committee

Johan Ditmar, Chair (Plot 36A)
Orla Kelly, Vice Chair (Plot 41B)
Stuart Alexander, Treasurer (Plot 42B)
Colin Hewson, Secretary (Plot 42A)
Caro Sanders, Committee Member (Plot 41A)
Helene Edgar, Committee Member (Plot 20A)
Val Austin, Committee Member (Plot 13B)