

Henley-on-Thames Allotments Association

Peter Herbert Secretary: 4 School Cottages Greys Green Rotherfield Greys Henley on Thames
Oxon. RG9 4QG

Telephone: 01491 628632 E-mail: peteherbert321@btinternet.com

Web Site: www.henleyallotments.org.uk

April 3rd 2014

Henley Allotments continue to Grow!

It has been another good year for Henley's allotments, with lots of people deriving pleasure from 'growing their own'.

1. Allotment Use at an All-Time High

- a) Tenant numbers continue to rise. We have nearly 200 plot holders on the two sites, Watermans and Greencroft. Demand continues to be accommodated by splitting 10 pole plots into 2 x 5 pole plots and introducing starter plots of less than 5 poles. Also, our site managers Doug Richards (Watermans) and Lewis Every (Greencroft) do a very good job in managing the plots. If a plot holder is in difficulties with maintaining their plot then they are offered help before an eviction process is started. Both sites are looking tidier than they have for years.
- b) The proportion of families and younger tenants has increased, particularly at Watermans. This can be attributed to the following factors: 1) Trendy TV programmes encouraging vegetable growing. 2) People having a better understanding and appreciation of the health benefits that allotments provide. 3) Children are being encouraged to understand where their food comes from, and how it is cultivated. 4) People are realising that home-grown food tastes better than supermarket-bought food, and it is cheaper too! 5) People want to 'do their bit' for the environment by reducing their food miles, and by recycling as much as they can of their food and garden waste via composting
- c) Communication to tenants is much improved, with a newsletter going out to tenants 6 times a year. The newsletter is used to update tenants on current issues, as well as to promote the busy social calendar. Over 60% of newsletters are now e mailed rather than posted, which has helped the AA keep costs down.

2. Social Events

- (a) We held our Christmas Dinner at Christchurch and it was very much enjoyed by all present. Thank you to Doug Richards and his team.
- (b) The Plant Swap and Sale in May with Henley in Bloom went very well, providing the Association with good publicity and useful funds.
- (c) Britain in Bloom judges visited Greencroft this summer and seemed impressed with what they saw.
- (d) We had a most enjoyable Boat Trip with excellent food. Thanks go to Hobbs for the use of their boat and crew and to Sally, Alison and Liz for organising the food so successfully.

- (e) The Mikron Theatre Group again entertained us brilliantly at the Eyot Centre on a lovely evening with 'Beyond the Veil', a murder mystery with bee keeping connections. Thanks to Dave and Sally McEwen for arranging this.
- (f) We had a marvellous visit with guided tours to the Oxford Botanic Gardens and the Nuneham Courtney Arboretum. The sun shone and everyone appreciated our tours around the sites. Thanks to Marisa Francini for organising this.
- (g) Thanks also to Margo Dapper for organising the Seed Ordering Scheme. This enables members to order very cheap seed from King's Seed Company. The association then benefits depending on the overall size of the order. This year over £100 was raised for Association funds

3. The Allotment Assn and the Town Council

- a) Becky Walker continues to provide the Town Council and the Allotment Association with a single point of contact for all day-to-day allotment matters. Marisa Francini from the AA has worked with Becky and the 2 of them have done a brilliant job with the administration; speeding up communication, better-managed tenant lists, rent collection, and tenant policing. Becky is responsible for maintaining the tenants' list, managing the Tenancy Agreements and collecting rents. The two Site Managers (on behalf of the Council) manage the existing tenants, maintain the waiting lists, agree the new tenants, give notice to rogue tenants and manage the sites on a day-to-day basis.
- b) Closer relationships with Henley-in-Bloom have been developed, which has benefitted the HIB campaign. Joint events have also taken place, such as Gardeners' Question Time and the Plant and Seed Sale/Swap in the Market Place.

4. Finances

- a) The cost of a 10 pole allotment for this year is £39. Starter plots cost £15 for a year. Pensioners are given a discount of 33%. There will be increases of 5-7% in October 2014 to £41 for a 10 pole plot and £16 for a starter plot. However there will then be a freeze in prices for the following 2 years.
- b) For the last few years, the Allotment Assn has been paid a management fee of £400 by the council in recognition of the work that the assn does on behalf of the council - see 3(a) above. Up to now the association has raised money to cover the essential expenditure that it has, for example on public liability insurance as well as the honoraria that is paid to officers in recognition of the work that they do. The Town Council felt that they should put the assn finances on a firmer footing and agreed the following:
 1. that the management fee be increased from £400 to £550 to cover £350 honoraria, insurance costs (£120 for 2013/14) and £80 towards the costs of the AGM and newsletter.
 2. that the Allotment Assn receive an allowance (£350) to cover urgent day-to-day repairs, such as repairing taps and pumps, fence repairs, strimming unkempt plots etc

5. Site Improvements

Work continued at Watermans tidying the site, old sheds were removed together with a huge amount of rubbish and scrap iron. The Community Support Workers did a great job at Watermans and helped at Greencroft to clear the North West corner of the site in order to make an area for new sheds.

6. Neighbourhood Plan

The assn was very relieved to find that Watermans allotments had not been put forward as a potential housing site and we appreciate the support of the Town Council. Demand for allotments is increasing year-by-year with the current level of population. If 450 new homes are to be built then we believe that the provision of additional land for allotments should be included as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. Awards

The following annual awards were presented at last October's AGM:

	Plot	Plot holder
Greencroft Best Allotment	47 & 52A	Paul Gillbard
Watermans Best Allotment	11	Roger Goodall
Greencroft Best Newcomer	55A	Martin Bidlake-Corser
Watermans Best Newcomer	54A	Liz Fielding Smith

A new award was presented: the Henley in Bloom Community Award, given to a plot holder who has made particular contributions to the well-being of the site and fellow plot-holders

Watermans - Mick Blackall Plot 13
Greencroft – Graham Jones plot 16