

HOTWELLS & DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

October 2019

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INTRODUCTION - BOB CORFIELD (EDITOR)

Welcome to the October 2019 HwDAA Newsletter. Yes – it's only a couple of months since the last newsletter but we need to get the agenda for our next AGM out to everyone and there is more information about our relationship with the National Allotment Society by answering the question "What do we get for our National Allotment Society subscription". This was raised by some after receiving their 2019/20 invoices from the Treasurer. The answer is "quite a lot" – see my article below.

Many of the key members of the committee have been in their posts for a number of years and our association would not be the same without their sterling work. However some are beginning to feel a bit jaded so we are looking for a couple of replacement volunteers – see the article below...

FROM THE CHAIR - JENNY HENDY (CHAIR)

Much of this newsletter is about the work people put into keeping HwDAA running and thriving. We need our volunteers and appreciate them. A lovely recent example is the success of our annual Cream Tea, enjoyed by over 100 people and raising over £250 for Child.org. Many thanks to all who organised, baked, served, washed up and made it fun.

And now, of course, we are looking for new volunteers. There's more information on two roles about to become vacant below and I want to add my thanks to Steve and Lesley who have provided tenants with basic allotmenting requirements (seeds, potatoes, onions, compost, netting, tools etc etc), a service which also contributes to much needed HwDAA income. They have great experience to hand on and we are now looking for volunteers to work alongside them and eventually take over. Please contact Steve, Lesley or me if you are interested in helping out.

As noted in the last newsletter, we will continue to monitor developments in the plans for Western Harbour and Ashton Court Mansion House, assessing any potential impact on our allotments. Thanks again to any tenants who contact us with information about this and anything else affecting our allotments.

Many tenants have told us about the happy rats they see on the allotments. We occasionally employ a rat catcher as a last resort but are asking all plot holders to turn compost heaps regularly, and rattle around in and under huts to avoid making life too comfortable for them.

Lastly, I hope all plot holders are enjoying productive Autumn plots, bumper harvests of squash and greens, and lovely October weather.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020.

Annual General Meeting to be held at 14:00 Saturday 4th January 2020.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and 'In memoriam'.
2. To approve the minutes of the AGM held on 5th January 2019.
3. To consider any matters arising from those minutes unless on this agenda.
4. Presentation of awards by the President: (The Harry Green Shield for the best kept plot and The Eric Grimes Cup for the best newcomer).
5. Chair's report.
6. Treasurer's report and presentation of HwDAA accounts for the year ending 30 September 2019.
7. To vote on the audit of the 2018/19 accounts.
8. To approve the 2018/19 accounts.
9. Notice of plot rents with effect from 1 October 2020.
10. Election of President.
11. Election of Committee Officers to an agreed maximum.
12. Any Other Business

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL ALLOTMENT SOCIETY. - BOB CORFIELD

What does membership of the National Allotment Society mean for us? In their own words:

The National Allotment Society (NAS) is the national representative body for the allotment movement in the U.K. It is our job to represent the views of our members on a national level and raise awareness of the social, cultural, heritage and health benefits of the allotment movement and its relevance to wider environmental issues. We work with government at national and local levels, the media, NGOs, environmental charities and landlords to provide, promote and preserve allotments for future generations to enjoy

As you can see from these broad aims, the NAS looks after the interests of all member allotment associations and societies such as ourselves in a number of areas. There are other advantages which I will highlight below, but just to deal with one example of these broad aims first. The NAS will help allotment organisations threatened by closure because the local authority want their land for housing or other use. The NAS legal team will take up a case such as this and challenge closure decisions and in many cases will win allowing a society to continue to flourish. Indeed, as Jenny highlighted in our previous newsletter, the Ashton Court saga could be one such case. It's very unlikely that any of our association's sites will be threatened by closure but it's nice to know that the NAS is looking out for us should the need arise.

Other advantages on NAS affiliation.

Seeds Scheme: Kings Seeds is one of the UK's largest commercial seeds companies, it has been supplying seeds to NAS members since 1971 and every packet sold comes with a no-quibble guarantee. Seeds cost on average 40% less than when bought on the high street and if they are ordered as part of an association, then we are entitled to further discounts totalling 22.5%. Furthermore, any unsold seeds can be returned for a refund at the end of the growing season.

Tenant's Liability Insurance.

This was introduced last year and covers you as a plot holder for any third party injuries etc that you might be, as a plot holder, liable for. The annual premium is covered by your NAS subscription of £3.00 which I think is a bargain. If you don't pay your £3.00 you're not covered by the insurance scheme. Full details on our website.

Legal Advice: the NAS in-house lawyer and assistant offer initial legal advice on a range of issues e.g. tenancy agreements, leases, land disputes, rent rises, health and safety, environmental, contract and company law and data protection.

There's a lot more that membership of the NAS offers – there's a PDF document on our website which gives more details. So, I reckon that your £3.00 annual subs for membership of the NAS is money well spent.

SHOP NEWS - STEVE FAY & LESLEY WOODWARD (SHOP MANAGERS)

Another year completed and the team here (Lesley Woodward, Phil Cass and me) are pleased that the shop continues to thrive. If it is successful it means we are meeting the needs of our membership which is, of course, the aim of the game. And our thanks to Angie Tonge and the volunteers who serve in the shop – no volunteers, no shop.

As always details concerning location, opening times etc. can be found at www.hwdaa.co.uk.

VOLUNTEER REQUIRED (1) - STEVE FAY

As mentioned by the Chair I will be standing down as shop manager by the end of next year. I will have been doing the job for about 7 years so I feel it's time to hang up my pinny and let someone else take over and give the thing some fresh impetus. **If you're interested in taking over have a word with either me, Phil or Angie if you see us about.**

A change can be made any time between now and next September but I personally think July would be ideal as there is the breathing space of August to become familiar with the set-up. I will be the only change (although Lesley is looking to shed some of her responsibilities) so Lesley and Phil will still be there to lend support and I will be available if advice is needed.

I am living proof that no previous experience is needed but there are a couple of points to consider. Firstly, running the shop is like having a second allotment – the attention required is little but often. And secondly, significant allotment experience is desirable to ensure you stock relevant items. Buying stuff which doesn't sell is a problem best minimised.

VOLUNTEER REQUIRED (2) – LESLEY WOODWARD

I have organised the seeds and perishables side of the Shop since 2012. However I would like to reduce my work load from autumn 2020 by handing over the running of the perishables (onions, garlic, potatoes and shallots). I will continue to be in charge of Seeds. It would be good to have my replacement(s) working alongside me by January next year, when we take delivery of the potatoes and the first batch of onions and shallots. As Steve says above, no previous experience is necessary but a deft hand at weighing would be a real asset. Unlike Steve's side of the Shop, the perishables work mainly falls in 2 periods: January – February and then September to October.

If you are interested in taking on a really enjoyable (assuming you like potatoes) role in the Shop, and would like to know more, please contact me (Lesley Woodward) via the website contact page.

STOP PRESS – NEW SEEDS ARRIVING IN EARLY NOVEMBER – LESLEY WOODWARD (SEEDS REP)

It is nearly the time of year when 2,261 packets of seeds land in my Hallway. And the fun begins. 230 varieties are on order, of all shapes and sizes. Our seed buying habits are without doubt changing, with brassicas giving way to fancy salad leaves. But the old favourites still reign supreme: Beetroot 'Boltardy' (105 packs sold this year) ; Courgette 'Zucchini' ; Rainbow Chard; carrot 'Autumn King'; Kale 'Nero di Toscana' ; leek 'Musselburgh'; spring onions; 'Little gem' lettuce; Butternut and 'Crown Prince' squash. But there are plenty of other choices and the best time to shop is when the seeds arrive.

Don't forget, sowing NOW: onions; shallots; broad beans; green manures and Sweet Peas. Sown into still warm (just) and moist soil these will get a good start, hunking down over winter and getting growing again in Spring. The aim being to get your crops a few weeks earlier than spring sown plants. And give you something to fuss over in the long cold winter months....

HOW'S YOUR ESPALIER? - LESLIE WOODWARD



An espaliered tomato plant is a real possibility if you have a South Facing wall. This is a photo taken at the end of September of 'Mountain Magic' happily growing outside and laden with fruit.! The plant was tied in to wires on the wall , in a large hole filled with compost and well rotted manure. It was far healthier and more productive than the plants grown under glass.

MANURE SUPPLIES - BOB CORFIELD

Just a quick reminder about manure suppliers.

Supervision.

Tenants should meet their delivery at the gate and remain with the person delivering the manure until the delivery is complete. Suppliers must not be given the gate codes. Any manure deposited on hauling ways must be removed immediately.

Delivery by Tractor & Trailer.

Please tell your manure supplier that the maximum width of any vehicle delivering manure on-site is 2.1 metres (7 feet). This is to avoid any damage to the hauling ways and water fittings which have occurred in the past. If damage does occur the tenant is responsible for reporting it immediately to the site rep and may also be charged for any repairs.

Touting for business

There have been instances of a supplier (Willgrow) touting for business by trying to gain access to our sites unannounced. Please do not let them in or deal with them.

HWDAA BIGGEST LEAK CONTEST. – PAUL FINCH

KL2 is leading with hopefully no others in the pipeline. On 5th September a serious gush of water was apparent coming from the KL2 site in Kennel Lodge Road running across the pavement and down the road. Terry, KL2 Site Rep, had a stream of well thinking allotmenters and general public flooding him with concerned messages.

The following day Bristol Water inspected the area and determined the problem was on KL2 proper and confirmed it was *before* our meter. They followed their procedure and advised the landowner (Bristol City Council). As with many large organizations it takes time to get the (water) wheels moving so stage two of Bristol Water's protocol meant a more meaningful notice was sent.

Once the nature of the lease had been substantiated HwDAA was eventually contacted. Unfortunately this trickle down effect took some weeks but the Assoc did spring into action immediately.

Early one morning a pool of experts assembled: Plumbing contractor, Phil Cass (AM Site Rep and #1 maintenance man) and Terry. Helped by Pete (KL2 Asst rep) and Jenny (Chair) the problem was soon being addressed. A stop cock was located further along the road and turned off. L'eau and behold the leakage stopped. A hole created in the hawthorn enabled Terry and Phil to dig a pit at the strategic point. After an hour's digging in clay, mud and water (which made a welcome change for Phil from AM's Septic Tank) the Plumbers were able to replace a small section of the pipe and the problem was solved. It is thought the hawthorn roots may have damaged the pipe. Fortunately our treasurer has a contingency hedge fund for such emergencies but it's still a drain on resources. However, it is still going to cost several hundred £s (and possibly more). Thanks to Phil and Terry's huge efforts hiring a digger was not necessary which has helped keep costs down enormously. This episode illustrates the vital importance of keeping the HwDAA expenses down. We're not flush with money as ultimately the Association is funded by Plot rents and shop income. Whilst on liquidity one way of reining in the outgoings is for us all to harvest as much rain as possible. We are in negotiations to secure some disused wheelie bins to help tenants save water. We should all be collecting the free H2O.....Butt of course.