

EALING DEAN ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

SUNDAY APRIL 17TH 2016 19.30

NORTHFIELDS COMMUNITY CENTRE

PRESENT: Retiring Committee

Crispin Harris, Simon Coleman, Jon Wilkins. Christina Fox , Kim Tompsett, Hilary Wright.

MEMBERS OF THE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY who signed in. There were plot holders from throughout the plot, a mix of ages and both new and established holders.

We had a quorum.

Plots represented:

147;149B;162;165;174;175B;176A;177;191;193;198;206B;207;208;211;212;218;232B;240B;243C.

SECTION A SUMMARY OF THE REPORTS FROM THE COMMITTEE

There was a welcome from Christina who explained that this was the Society's Second Official AGM as the first meeting was the establishment of the society.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

When the year end has happened and the accounts have been audited they will appear on line but Kim gave a summary of sources of income and the bottom line of the accounts at the time of the AGM.

INCOME

- Pathways has given us a Maintenance Grant of £3971 .
- Income from Open day £155
- Green This is now finished scheme gave £1000 for the Radbourne .
- Total £6334

EXPENDITURE

- We have spent money on Radbourne Walk
- One of the main items for expenditure are the skips but we are still clearing the rubbish from the hedgerow and people are improving/clearing plots.their
- Insurance for the RHS Affiliation

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Simon gave a Summary as follows;

- We have hired bigger skips; 4 in total.
- The metal recycling area is well used and a specialist comes and takes the metal away. They only get £30 a tone. We had 6 collections last year.
- We had 11 Volunteers days. We don't have one in January.
- We have been repairing the Long Walk and creating a flatter surface which has been re-seeded and mown.
- Notice boards have been repainted and updated.
- We have completed the pump project as a resource when the water is turned off
- The Hedgrow is being cleared, clipped and maintained.
- Woodchip is being provided free of charge
- The "crack" willows at the north end of the plot have been pruned. Pathways paid for this.
- The air raid shelter has been restored next to a heritage "war-time" plot and pump. (229)
- Radbourne walk is being maintained, cleared, tidied and re-established as a pleasant place to walk through.

JON'S REPORT ON THE WEB SITE.

Jon has taken over the Maintenance of the web- site and has created a map for its navigation.

- We are using it for information, including the minutes, contact and blogs

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

I thought I'd start with a few statistics...

	Total plots	New sign ups	Waiting List
2014	130	?	133
2015	134	30	73
2016	139	24	56

There are a total of 139 plots. We have 60 full plots and 79 half plots.

Since the last AGM I have signed up 24 new tenants. I double checked this figure because it seemed a lot. But we really do have 24 new ploholders.

We have 56 people on the waiting list. 15 of them have had a change in circumstances and have asked to go back to the bottom of the list and wait a little longer. So the person at the top of the list joined the list in August 2014.

Since we went self-managed we have reduced the wait for a plot from 5 years to less than 2 years.

I also have 15 people who said they wanted a plot on the open day in a holding pattern. After several reminders they still haven't completed an application form – so I can't officially put them on the list.

We have 100% occupancy.

Our allotment site would be a developer's dream. We are very close to a cross rail train station and new buildings are going up all around us. The threat of losing the allotments was the main reason why we opted to go to self management in the first place.

When we started there was such a long list of outstanding jobs that needed to be done, we always knew it would take time to improve the site.

We have now had a couple of years managing the allotments and people are really starting to notice the difference. My favourite story was told to me by Jon. He was on the bus and heard two people talking and one said that they had noticed the allotments had improved – it was as if someone else had taken over a couple of years ago. So all our hard work isn't going un-noticed.

We still need to be vigilant and keep improving the site – we were recently on a long list of possible sites for a new school or school playing fields. Luckily we didn't make the short list.

Volunteers

Certainly we have all our volunteers to thank for so many of the improvements.

Now when people look through the fence they see a place that is cared for and used by its plot holders.

I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has volunteered. We couldn't have turned the place around without you. There was so much neglect and so much that needed to be done. We have a small budget and buying in all the help needed just isn't an option.

Whether you attended on one volunteer day or ten – thank you for giving up your time. It really is appreciated.

I want to thank you for...

For baking cakes and selling them on the open day

For helping to put stuff in the skip

sifting soil in the path

pulling metal bed frames out of the hedgerow

picking litter in the Radbourne Walk

BBQing sausages

bringing a bottle of wine or beer,

So a huge thanks to all of you who have volunteered (I hope you enjoyed the sausages).

Hedgerow

Another big project is the hedgerow around the site. We have had several volunteer days to clear rubbish from the hedgerow. I have never seen the metal recycling pile so full. There was so much rubbish in the hedgerow - the best find was a newspaper from 1954!

Plus one of the most expensive things we've done is pollard our five willow trees. The willows were casting a lot of shade and dropping large branches. So the work was carried out by a professional tree surgeon and paid for by Pathways - as it was a health and safety issue. It cost £1,400.

I spent three days on site while the willow trees were being pollarded. Also helping with crowd control and moving branches was Christine (plot 166), Simon (plot 198), Dominic (plot 163B) and Felix (plot 233). A huge thank you to them for helping out.

I think Kevin from Wildwood Trees has done a great job. Next year I'll be looking for a basket weaver who might want the willow whips! So if you know anyone who might be interested let me know.

Guidelines

New ploholders using ask me if there are rules on certain things they can and cannot do... So, we have started to get together guidelines for ploholders.

You should all have received our guidelines on what is non-cultivation. This came about because a plot holder asked what non-cultivation and queried how we assess a plot when we do our surveys.

I researched best practice on other sites and came up with our guidelines which we approved at committee. We will use this as our basis for plot inspections and a copy is given to all new tenants when they sign up.

Hilary (plot 243C) is working on a whole range of guidelines from fruit trees to bonfires.

Stuff costs money...

We are always looking of alternative sources of funding.

Last year Christine and I went to the launch of GreenRedeem an initiative to reward recycling efforts in Ealing. We were one of the groups that people could donate their earned rewards to. A few months back I visited the site to find that we had reached our target and we got £1,000 towards the Radbourne walk.

Our open day managed to generate some cash from tea and cake and plant sales.

We had a trial photo fashion shoot on site. Philip Waterman (plot 234B) is a professional photographer and asked if he could use his plot for a photo shoot. He contacted some of his neighbours to ask their permission to use their sheds/plots as a backdrop. The images look great and I hope we can do more shoots to earn some extra cash.

All of this helps to pay for expensive items like skips – which I know everyone appreciates.

Break-ins

We have had several break-ins and sheds broken into. I know people are reluctant to call the police – but I must stress you really must call the police.

Fingerprints were taken after one break-in and the person responsible was identified and prosecuted.

Bonfires

We also get complaints about bonfires from the residents in Loveday Road. We are trying to get bonfire times changed on the tenancy agreement. At the moment it states...

Bonfires are permitted on the allotment site from 5pm and 7am GMT (Northfield)

...which doesn't make sense – you can't have a start time without an end time.

Noise

We've also had complaints about noise and so I had an interesting conversation with Rose Dindol of the Noise Pollution dept at Ealing Council – (her contact number is 020 8825 5638).

She explained that there are officially no time restrictions on when we can or can't use our mowers, strimmers and chainsaws. As an allotment - she said it would be reasonable to expect us to use them and operate them on any day of the week. I specifically asked if we must not use them on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. She said there is no restriction on those particular days.

In our conversation she used the word "reasonable" quite a few times and that mowing and strimming are "expected" activities on an allotment (or garden).

But it is up to us to be good neighbours. Perhaps not having a bonfire on a sunny Sunday afternoon when people want to enjoy their garden (or plot).

And finally

As part of my role as chairman I get invited to meetings and conferences

I attended one a few months ago at city hall. One of the speakers said something really helpful. He said often charities and community groups tell people WHAT they do – and forget to explain WHY they do it.

Well at the last volunteer day Simon and I met at 09.00 in the morning. The sun was shining – the birds were singing – the sky was blue - it was a perfect day. And we both agreed there was no better place to be.

I felt the same at the open day. It was all pretty much perfect.

Things like that remind me why I care and why I volunteer to do all this stuff.

The allotments are a very special place and they are worth preserving for another hundred years...

If we don't do what is needed to maintain and manage it - we could lose this magical place...

And as I always say to new tenants – I will not let that happen.

And I hope you feel the same way too.

SECTION B

Resignation of Committee members and Election of Officials.

The retiring Committee resigned and were all re-nominated and elected.

SECTION C

DISCUSSION POINTS/AOB

OPEN DAY

Saturday 15th August was our open day – the first ever. We had 361 visitors and so far I've received no complaints. Just lots of people saying what a great day it was.

Huge thanks to Dominique and Fran

So the next open day is on Saturday 25th June.

Earlier – before people go on holiday.

We have several attractions...

Beehives

Anderson shelter

Tea and Cake

Guided tour

New attractions are

Potager on plot 174

Oldest allotment in London

We need volunteers

To greet people at the gate

Make cakes for the cake stall

Help make tea and sell tea and cakes

General helpers

One plate of veg

Composting toilets

We want to buy two composting toilets.

One will go on plot 229 near the Anderson shelter

The other on plot 170B - the maintenance plot.

They are chosen because they are about halfway along the Long Walk.

So no-one would need to walk too far to get to the toilet.

Christine and I went to visit Blondin allotments composting toilet. But theirs cost £10,000

However a few months ago Horsenden allotments bought two composting toilets from Dunster House. They are £1,200 each.

Paid for by Greenford Ward Forum.

Walpole Ward Forum has a budget of around £70,000 to spend on Walpole projects.

I had asked at the previous meeting if we could have some of the Ward Forum money for a composting toilet. I handed out info to the councilors about the Dunster House toilet. Hopefully we will get some money.

I am hopeful we will get some money.

We can allay people's fears that the toilets are not smelly, hygienic, practical and provide an amenity on the site.

Communication.

How do we communicate with plot-holders/ Pathways etc.?

- Internet. E-mail. Facebook. Web-site
- Notice boards and notices posted on the gates.
- Traditional mail.
- Phone
- Face to face.

Can we improve on this?