



APRIL 2020 NEWSLETTER

for all Plot Holders and Associate Members



Daffodils on the allotment

Happy Days are here again! Well sort of. As I write this, we're in a glorious spell of early spring weather. The nights have been cold and frosty, but from mid-morning to mid-afternoon the sun has been nice and warm. Winds from a more easterly quarter have dried out the soil and it is now a pleasure to work. And the hedges have been coming into leaf, spring flowers are blooming, the birds twittering, and plot-holders chatting happily with other plot-holders – albeit at a safe distance. Pity about the virus!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello All, I hope you are all keeping well in these challenging times. According to current guidance, we can continue tending our plots as long as we follow the rules. Just to remind you we have included the rules in this newsletter. The key message is keeping your distance from other plot-holders. I was reminded yesterday that this includes not stroking plot-holders' dogs as dogs don't seem to understand social distancing!

If you are self-isolating and cannot get to your plot please don't worry. In these difficult times we expect some plots to remain untended for some time. If the advice changes be assured we will keep you posted.

Stay healthy.

Ian Clarke, Chair

CORONAVIRUS – YOU CAN GO ON YOUR ALLOTMENT BUT OBEY THE RULES

The latest news (24th March) is that the government is permitting allotments to stay open and we can continue to cultivate our plot, which is very good news. Harrogate Council is also allowing allotments to stay open (see below). Covid-19 notices have been put on all Harlow Hill Allotment Association gates, and these notices state the rules that must be obeyed. Plot-holders must avoid close proximity with others (I would suggest at least 3 metres). If you take children to the plot, ensure that they stay within its confines and do not run around on communal paths and spaces. Children are just as likely to transmit the disease as anyone else – that's why the schools have been closed. Wear gloves when opening the locks and gates because these are contact points that lots of people use. Wear gloves when using the mower and using the lock and door of the mower shed.

Harrogate Borough Council has announced that the Council “will not be closing the allotments. They are an excellent source of fresh food and also exercise. However, we would remind all users to strictly observe the official government guidance on social distancing”

COVID -19

We are all facing restrictions on our life style and it may be that our allotment is the one place we can safely spend our time.

The government has introduced new measures that are intended to help control the spread of COVID-19. Please note the following:

1. **Social distancing** – We understand that people want to work on their plots, but close proximity with neighbours should be avoided.
2. For **people over 70** the advice is stricter. If you or your neighbours are over 70 please take extra care and ensure that you maintain physical distance.
3. Please do not share tools.
4. The shop will be closed after Saturday 21st March.
5. The Work Day on 28th March is cancelled
6. The plant sale and open day is also cancelled.
7. Opening the locks and gates will mean there are contact points that lots of people are touching. Please use gloves when opening the gates and locks, but, if this is not possible, sanitize or wash your hands or make sure you do not touch your face after opening the gates. **Do not** wash your hands under the taps
8. Use gloves when using mowers.

The committee will not be able to meet face to face for the next few months, but we will stay in regular communication and will continue to make *and advise you of our decisions*.

We wish all plot holders well. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact one of the committee.

Ian Clarke, Chair.

ALLOTMENT SHOP CLOSED INDEFINITELY

The allotment shop is currently closed indefinitely due to the coronavirus epidemic. We opened one morning (Saturday 21st March) just before the start of the lockdown. We organised ourselves so we could keep 2m apart, just served customers from the back of the garage door and asked everyone to pay by bank transfer or cheque, so we didn't have to handle cash. 35 people came to buy and we took £754.50 which must be a record for one morning in the shop. Stocks are now quite depleted. We'll open again as soon as it is safe to do so.

Angela Dicken

ALLOTMENT TOILET CLOSED INDEFINITELY

For Health & Safety reasons, the toilet will not be open until after the coronavirus epidemic is over.

OPEN DAY & PLANT SALE which was scheduled for 30th May is now cancelled.

THE WATER IS BACK ON. HOSEPIPES REQUIRE A LICENCE

The water is back on. Please do not wash tools, vegetables, or your hands under the taps, and please fill up the butt again after you have used it. If possible, it's a good idea to have a water butt on your plot. If you want to use a HOSEPIPE, you must purchase a water licence. This cannot be purchased from the Allotment Shop in the current circumstances, but you can purchase a water licence by paying the £10 fee by bank transfer (sort code: 05-04-54: account number 16743453) using plot number and name as reference and then emailing the treasurer, dicken_chris@hotmail.com to let him know. If you are not able to pay by bank transfer, please email Chris or ring (505748) and he will make arrangements with you. Thanks to Chris for making this facility available.



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION AGM

Chairman's Report

Ian Clarke, the Chairman, reported that the committee had consulted plot holders about the most appropriate use of the £3,700 in "commuted funds" offered by Harrogate Council and to be spent in the next 8.5 years. The committee had agreed that from this sum a new noticeboard for community notices related to horticulture should be purchased and placed outside the shop above the Waste Not Want Not collection point. Other improvement to the site from these funds would be additional water butts with a different tap configuration that would allow a hose pipe to be used at the same time as leaving a tap free for watering cans, and a shed to store lawnmowers on the smaller site.

The chairman told the AGM that Waste Not Want Not (a charity scheme run by local churches) has continued throughout the winter. Ian thanked plot-holders for their generous contributions which he collects every Monday morning and takes to the co-ordinator who has expressed her gratitude. She assures us that everything is made good use of, supplying food to local community groups.

Ian thanked plot-holders for their efforts in winning the HDAF medal for Harlow Hill once again.

Letting Manager's Report

23 people are currently on the waiting list, 7 plots have been let since the start of the year, and 5 new people have been added to the list so far this year. The latest figures (27th March) are that 29 people are now on the waiting list, 9 since the start of the year.

Treasurer's Report

Chris Dicken, the treasurer, presented the accounts for the past year ending 31st January 2020 and reported that shop takings and seeds income were both down compared to the previous year. The water charges were substantially less than those in the previous year with its very hot summer. There was large expenditure on site maintenance particularly because of work done on the hedges and the nature area (where it was necessary to use professional tree contractors). However, there was still an excess of income over expenditure of £36.16. Over all, Harlow Hill Allotment Association was over £12,000 in the black at the end of the financial year.

Election of Officers:

Chair: Ian Clarke

Secretary: Sian Gamble

Treasurer: Chris Dicken

Lettings Manager: Richard Wriglesworth

Site Manager: Paul Knight

Committee Members: Angela Dicken, Anne Ellis, John Hammerton, Phil Massey, Keith Wadd, Tricia Wilson.

Ian thanked Anne Ellis who stood down as Secretary and she was presented with a token and a basket of garden flowers. Many thanks, Anne, for all your hard work. Anne is replaced by Sian Gamble to whom we give a warm welcome.

Future Plans/Ideas

It was agreed that there would be an Open Day and Plant Sale on 30th May and a Work Morning on 28th March. Both of these events have now had to be cancelled.

Presentation of Trophies

The Roland Buckton Trophy for the most improved plot was presented to Gordon Coates (plot 58B who was commended for his hard work in remedying the neglected plot which he took over. Mike and Jean Lowsley (Plot 26A) were worthy winners of the Harry Newport Trophy for best leeks.

Any Other Business

Peter Gregory asked about the type of shed purchased through commuted funds and informed that it was standard quality with good security features. In response to a question from John Hopkins about the bees, Graeme Knowles Miller said that there was little bee activity because the weather was too cold, and it was therefore difficult to assess the state of the hives. Last year bad weather had affected the production of honey.

An entertaining and informative short talk by Carolyn Rothwell of Horticap preceded the AGM. Carolyn described Horticap's development and its work in the community. She brought from Horticap a selection of plants to encourage ground cover for invertebrates and to provide food for bees when their supply is scarce. The plants were on sale during the interval.

Thanks to Angela Dicken and Tricia Wilson for doing the refreshments.

THANK YOU

As you know I stood down as HHAA secretary at the AGM and I would like to thank everyone for the beautiful basket of garden plants given to me at the AGM and for your patience and support over the last 3 years.

I am pleased that Sian Gamble has kindly taken over. She's doing a great job and will be a brilliant secretary. I am sure you will join me in wishing her well in the role. Hope you all stay healthy.

Anne Ellis

LEEK WINNERS TELL THEIR SECRETS

Congratulations to Mike and Jean Lowsley on winning the Harry Newport Leeks Trophy. In their own words, this is how Mike and Jean did it:

“We planted out and grew the following varieties: Musselburgh, Giant Winter, and Below Zero F1, all acquired from our seeds supplier, Kings. If we had to choose one variety, it would be Giant Winter.



Musselburgh leeks

Prepare the soil with manure or compost over the previous winter or sprinkle Growmore over the plot at planting out time. We used to sow the seeds in January in plant pots but have been more successful sowing them directly very thinly in rows into a seedbed when the ground is warm enough in early to mid-April and air temperatures are fairly consistently at or above 12 degrees during the day. We do three lots of successive sowing about 3 weeks apart.

The planting-out area should have the top finely raked over; if the surface is very dry, lightly sprinkle with water as this will prevent the soil migrating into the dibble hole. Gently lift the plants from the seedbed when they are 8 to 10 inches high, plant out 8 to 9 inches apart with a similar distance between the rows, and about 5 to 6 inches deep. The dibbler is an old hoe shaft with a rounded point: it saves bending down. Nip off the long roots to about ½ to ¾ inch long and nip off the tops at about 2 inches above ground level. The holes should be filled with water, and wash the soil in to prevent a damp home for slugs. The plants should need no further attention except for occasional weeding, or watering if there is a prolonged dry spell.”

Unfortunately, a photograph of the winning leeks in their full glory in January could not be taken as they had all been eaten – and what better recommendation!

HARROGATE & DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS FEDERATION ANNUAL SHOW

Our Diamond Jubilee Show is due to take place on 16th August 2020. We are currently still planning for the show, but aware that we may well have to cancel. A final decision will be made at Easter. It seems likely at the moment that our Diamond Jubilee will be in 2021

Angela Dicken.

NEW ZEALAND FLATWORM FOUND ON HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT PLOT

Sian Gamble reported on 13th March:

“Just to say hello as your new secretary and give you some news!

An interesting visitor has been found under a plank of wood today and has been beautifully photographed by Teresa Clements (plot 28B)

It's a New Zealand flatworm!

Please don't handle flatworms as their slime can be an irritant and we don't need another reason to wash our hands at the moment.

They are not a gardener's friend (they eat earthworms), and up to you how you dispose of them.”



Flatworms were first discovered in the UK in 1963. They have a purple-brown upper surface, buff-coloured margins and underside, are 1cm wide and 5 to 10cm long. Their eggs are like shiny blackberries and are usually found during early summer and late autumn. Juvenile flatworms are creamy white or yellow in colour. Flatworms are predominantly found in gardens where they can reduce resident earthworm populations.

Flatworms are not easy to get rid of. Conditions that make the soil more suitable for earthworms will help tip the balance in the earthworms' favour. Compost heaps should not be in direct contact with the soil surface. *(Information supplied by Sian from Advice to Gardeners issued by the James Hutton Institute)*

Vegetable Quiz - to keep you amused while you're staying at home!

1. Which popular type of winter cabbage is named after a region in France?
2. Which vegetable's name comes from the Italian for 'the flowering crest of a cabbage'?
3. Which vegetable was the first to be canned?
4. Which vegetable derives its name from the Latin word for milk?
5. Which vegetable comes in varieties called cheddar, skywalker and graffiti?
6. According to Mark Twain, which vegetable was 'nothing but a cabbage with a college education'?
7. Most commercially canned baked beans are made from which type of bean?
8. Elephant garlic is a variant of which vegetable?
9. 'Pentland Javelin' and 'Desire' are all varieties of which vegetable?
10. What name do the British normally call snap peas and snow peas?

(supplied by Richard Wriglesworth. Answers on last page)

BEE LINE



Graeme Knowles-Miller reports (25th March): “Checked the bees after the AGM and the weather wasn't as glorious as it is now. Both hives are awake now that the worst has passed, and were not very happy that I was poking around when their supplies are so short. Now is a vital time before they kick-start spring brood and prepare for the bounty of a long summer and autumn. I gave them each a block of fondant, as we know that snow can creep into April and even May. This will give them a back-up if the weather turns.

During these uncertain times the allocation of keeping bees has been adjusted by the government to keep them more in line with livestock. This will allow us more access at all times, letting us deal with bad weather, swarms and other events out of our control. Luckily the bees are oblivious to our plight and will continue to produce beautiful golden honey as the season continues.”

AUTUMN-SOWN BROAD BEANS

Hope those of you who took up my suggestion and sowed Aquadulce Claudia broad beans last autumn now have plenty of healthy plants that have survived the winter. I've seen two very good beds of them, and the plot-holders should be enjoying fresh beans from late June onwards. Not me, I regret to say! After having achieved lots of early broad beans over the last few years, I made a cock-up of it this time, and only a few plants have survived (might have helped if I had netted them). I set a row of Witkiem last week and hope these do better.



Broad beans in early Spring on a Harlow Hill plot

NEW LOGO FOR HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

A friend of Sian's has designed the new HHAA logo seen at the top of this newsletter. If there are any budding artists or computer wizards out there, please feel welcome to suggest other logo designs for consideration. Feedback, comments or ideas to Sian, haasecretary2@gmail.com

Good luck and happy gardening!

All material by the newsletter editor unless otherwise acknowledged.

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Formatting by Angela Dicken

Quiz Answers:
1. Savoy, 2. Broccoli, 3. Peas, 4. Lettuce, 5. Cauliflower,
6. Cauliflower, 7. Haricot, 8. Leek, 9. Potato, 10. Mangetout