



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

For all Plot Holders and Associate Members

Welcome to the Spring edition. The first thing to say is thank you to Angela Dicken who at the AGM stepped down after being a wonderful Harlow Hill Allotments Association secretary for many years.



SUCCESSFUL AND ENJOYABLE AGM



This year's AGM on 23rd March was chaired by the acting-chair Richard Wriglesworth. After welcoming the 32 members who attended, Richard thanked Angela Dicken who is standing down as secretary and member of the committee for all her hard work for Harlow Hill Allotments Association. Since 2011, Angela has not only been the secretary for many years, but she has also taken on other responsibilities, including those of acting chair, representing Harlow Hill Allotments at the Harrogate and District Allotments Federation, running the allotment shop, doing the lay-out for the newsletter, creating and regularly updating the website, and organising the seed and potato order. Richard said he also valued her opinion on many matters that have risen. On behalf of the Harlow Hill Allotment Association, to warm applause, Richard presented Angela with two vouchers, one for afternoon tea at Swinton Estate, and the other a RHS voucher.

The meeting was updated on actions since the previous AGM. The site manager role has been filled. Gez Byrnes is coordinating all the work that needs to be done. Andrea Stanley is looking after the gate locks and Simon Claridge and Shona McQueen will be purchasing the petrol for the mowers. We still don't have a Chair and two more committee members would be welcome. We now have the contact for the blue tubs used for water collection. Signs have been put up stating weed killer should not be used on plots, and the tenancy agreement has been updated to this effect. A work weekend took place in 2022, and it is intended to repeat this in 2023. The Committee is hoping that a Facebook page can be set up in the near future.

In her Secretary's Report, Angela told the AGM that a successful Open Day on 29th May enabled local residents and plot holders from other sites to have a look round our site. Lots of people came to see us and the event raised £250 for Harrogate Homeless Project and £250 for Resurrection Bites. Many thanks to everyone who has donated to Resurrection Bites throughout the year and to Sian Gamble for delivering the produce every week. Another event was Picnic-on-the-Plot on 6th August when 20 of us came along, shared tasty treats, and also shared tales of gardening successes and woes.

Harlow Hill Allotments was again third in the Harrogate Site Judging which took place on 8th July. It was thought that a small number of uncultivated plots reduced our score. After the judging some allotments

sites expressed concern about the lack of transparency in the judging; this has now been reviewed, and a new process will be in place in the coming year. The Allotment Show in the Sun Pavilion on 21st August was an enjoyable day and the weather was kind. Nine members from Harlow Hill put in entries. Thanks to the many members from Harlow who gave valuable help.

Angela thanked everyone who has used the allotment shop. It now opens twice a month including a monthly email order and this seems to be working reasonably well. Steph Byrnes took over the Kings' Seed order and it has all worked very smoothly. Paul Knight stepped down as Site Maintenance Manager and we can't thank him enough for the efficient way he has looked after the site, improving the drainage, adding new taps, repairing the gates, organising the hedge clipping, and generally keeping the site well-maintained. Angela said we are very grateful to everyone who helps out with tasks on the site. As a self-managed site, we need everyone to contribute.

Angela said "she's worked with some great people and made many new friends and thoroughly enjoyed getting to know lots of interesting people". She would like to thank everyone for their support. She is hoping to have a little more time now to "potter around on her plot."

Richard Wriglesworth, the Lettings Manager, said that Harlow Hill has 122 separate plots and at the time of last year's AGM had a waiting list of 37 people. During the year 14 plots became vacant and were re-let, and 20 new applications were received. The last person to be given a plot had waited just over 2 years. The waiting list stands at 39.

The Treasurer, Chris Dicken, said that the year saw a larger excess of income over expenditure (£1,154 compared to £585) than in the previous year. With the stepping down of Paul as site manager, it is likely we will have to make more use of external contractors and the cost of this item is likely to increase. After many years of auditing the accounts, Duncan Burns is stepping down. Duncan was formally thanked for his much-appreciated contribution over the years. His final comments were that the financial state of Harlow Hill Allotments Association is very healthy and the accounts are in excellent order.

Steph Byrnes becomes our new Secretary, and all the other officers and committee members have been re-elected. Co-opted committee members were formally elected. The Committee still does not have a Chair. The winner of the Roland Buckton Cup for the most improved plot was Isabelle Holmes (plot 4b), and Judy David (plot 53A) the winner of the Harry Newport Cup for the best leeks.

Vandalism on the site was discussed in Any Other Business as there had recently been a couple of instances when this had occurred. The Committee at its next meeting will consider what action to take. And Peter Gregory reported that all our bees have died. Efforts are being made to replace them.

Prior to the formal AGM, Hilary Dodson from the Northern Fruit Group gave an entertaining and useful talk on fruit pruning. She brought to the meeting several practical examples in pots, and fully engaged her audience by asking for suggestions on which of the twigs and small branches should get the chop. That way, her audience learned quite a lot. And remember this advice: prune stone fruit (i.e. plums) in May. Many thanks, Hilary.



It was an enjoyable and constructive AGM. Thanks to everyone who helped.

Keith Wadd

THIS YEAR'S OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN: **Gerry Hansford**

SECRETARY: **Steph Byrnes**

TREASURER: **Chris Dicken**

LETTINGS MANAGER: **Richard Wriglesworth**

COMMITTEE: **Jane Ayre, Sian Gamble, Tony Gamble, Keith Wadd, Tricia Wilson**

Subsequent to the AGM, Gerry Hansford was voted in by the committee as Chairman and **Jayne Mitchell** offered to join the Committee. She will be co-opted at the next meeting of the new committee.

TIME FOR PUTTING THE SEEDS IN?



I usually set some of my seeds straight into my plot in late April. I shall set beetroot seeds (with another sowing about 3 weeks later), leek seeds (if all goes well they will be transplanted in late June), and carrots. I've usually set lettuce seed straight into the ground too, but this time I'm going to do the first sowing in a pot and then transplant. I'm intending to sow lettuce every week or so to provide fresh lettuce throughout the summer. I'll also set a row of peas, though only about half of them will make it for one reason or another; maybe I'll sow a few in pots as back up. About twelve of my autumn broad beans have survived the winter, and

I've recently filled in the gaps with a variety called Witkiem. I shall set more in the next few days, maybe also a few in pots. I might also stick in a few onion sets if I get round to it. It's a very busy time, but full of hope. I still get pleasure from seeing the first seeds germinate.

I shall leave the potatoes for another two weeks or so. If after the shoots have surfaced, they catch a May frost (not uncommon), it will put them back two or three weeks, maybe damage them permanently. I shall not set my runner beans or dwarf beans till late May (in pots and then transplant). They don't start making growth till late June in this part of the world. No prizes at Harlow for being early, more likely disappointments.

Advice to new plot holders. Try to "keep on top of it" and spend an hour or two on your plot every other day. Young plants and seedlings need constant attention, and the annual weeds grow like the clappers (whatever they are) from May onwards – much easier to pull them out whilst they are still small.

Keith Wadd

PARKING

Please ensure when you park at the allotments, and particularly on the cul-de-sac, that you give residents' cars plenty of room for manoeuvre, even if this involves parking a little further away. We much value our good relations with our neighbours and do not want to give them any cause for complaint.

OPEN DAY



Open Day this year is on **Saturday 3rd June** and if it's anything like last year, it will be an enjoyable event. Don't forget to put it in your diary. We invite members of the public, and particularly people who live nearby, to have a look round our allotment site and see what we do. Members of other allotment sites are also very welcome, and several came along last year.

Open Day 2022

The event will be advertised by posters on the gates, in the Harrogate Advertiser, and by leaflets through the letterboxes of local residents.

On the day we'll have refreshments & cakes in the gazebo and a plant stall, as well as guided tours of the site if people want to walk round with someone.

We would like to have your help please. Perhaps to donate a cake or other confections for the refreshments stall, or if you have any spare plants (veg or flowers) please can you give these to the plant stall. Last year on the plant stall we also sold produce – rhubarb was a best seller! If you'd like to get involved either in the preparation or on the day or you have any good ideas for building on last year's successful day, then please contact a member of the committee.

Steph Byrnes

TADPOLES IN WILDLIFE AREA POND



Ragged Robin

Spring has brought the Wildlife Area to life. The pond now has lots of tadpoles in it. Some blue tits are showing an interest in the nesting box, although they've not taken up residence there yet. Earlier in the year we had some recently planted native snowdrops come into flower. There are now a few other wildflowers in bloom including wood anemone, cowslip and celandine. We have some ragged robin to plant and we're also preparing a small area to plant some wildflower seeds – hopefully these will germinate and then seed again for next year.

We've now got quotes for fencing the pond in and we've applied for a grant from Community Sums to help us pay for it. Once we hear back about this, we can commission the fence.

Steph Byrnes

BUT SADLY, OUR BEES HAVEN'T SURVIVED

I am very disappointed that the three hives of bees that looked ok in the autumn did not make it through the winter. I am not sure why this was – the site, however, is not ideal, being the highest part of Harrogate and somewhat exposed and windy. I don't think they ran out of stores or got diseased. I am not giving up on keeping some bees there, but it could be difficult to replace them, because it is quite expensive to buy a colony commercially and there might not be many swarms around. If anyone hears of any 'spare' colonies, please let me know.

Peter Gregory

MOWERS

The mowers are often having to be taken out of use and repaired because twine, wire and plastic products get entangled in them. The easiest way to avoid this happening is to check your path before mowing it. It also helps a great deal if any mower-unfriendly items are disposed of straight away - taking them home to put in the bin is probably the easiest.

Please also ensure that any wet grass is removed from the under surface of the mower when you have finished using it.

Keith Wadd

DOGS ON THE ALLOTMENTS

A serious incident recently occurred when a plot holder's dog bit another plot holder. The dog was not on a lead.

Plot holders are allowed to bring their dog to the allotments, but note that the tenancy agreement states: "Dogs must be on a lead at all times". Breaching the tenancy agreement can result in a plot holder forfeiting their plot. Following a recent committee meeting on the subject this will be strengthened to say that Dogs must be kept on a lead and in the confines of their plot except when arriving/leaving the site when they must be on a short lead.

Steph Byrnes

NEWS FROM OTHER LOCAL ALLOTMENTS SITES

Tenancy agreements across the sites have much in common, but there are some differences. Most sites have long waiting lists, more or less equivalent to Harlow Hill taking into account the size of the various sites. Some sites appear to be more pro-active on Health and Safety than we are currently. We will be reviewing our Health & Safety procedures at the next committee meeting.

Vandalism occurs on some sites. In the main it is damage rather than theft of produce. It appears to be caused mainly by teenagers. The damage has been particularly bad at St Andrews in the past, but a police presence has cut this down.

From report of Site Chairs meeting on 28th March attended by Chris Dicken.

HARROGATE & DISTRICT ALLOTMENT FEDERATION

Plans for the HDAF Allotment Show in the Sun Pavilion, Valley Gardens on **Sunday 21st August** are well underway. Harlow Hill will be running the tombola stall again, so keep saving anything you think may be useful as a prize on the tombola stall.

At the Site Chairs' meeting in March, the new scheme for judging the Harrogate Sites was agreed. The site judging will take place on 29th & 30th June, this year. More details will follow nearer the time, but these are the dates when our site will need to look at its best.

Angela Dicken

RAISED BEDS OR NOT?

There is of course a good case for them, one reason being that they probably make the whole plot more manageable. Another reason is that you are not all the while treading on the ground that you are cultivating. It also makes crop rotation easier. I'm less convinced about the argument that it saves you bending – the bed would have to be raised a long way before it made much serious difference.

However, raised beds are not mandatory and there are reasons against. The strongest reason against is that the raised soil level dries out more quickly, so much more water and watering is needed throughout the summer. Another reason against is that they are a waste of space because the paths between the beds take a lot of room.

Keith Wadd

ALLOTMENT SHOP

Many thanks to everyone who uses our Allotment Shop. Please come and look around if you're on site when we're open. As well as the goods to buy, we have a large collection of gardening books, which you're very welcome to borrow.

Remaining shop opening times for 2023:

Month	Opening dates 2023	
	Saturday 10.30 – 12.00	Sunday 10.30 – 12.00
April		23 rd
May	6 th	22 nd
June	Closed	Closed
July	8 th	Closed
August	Closed	Closed
Sept	9 th	24 th
Oct	7 th	22 nd
Nov	11 th	Closed

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

OPEN DAY:	Saturday 3rd June
SITE JUDGING:	29 th & 30 th June
WORK WEEKEND	Date tbc
PICNIC ON THE PLOT:	August (date tbc)
HDAF ALLOTMENT SHOW	Sunday 20th August

Keith Wadd, Editor, email: tansley22@btinternet.com Formatting/Layout by Angela Dicken.