

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2009



Car-hubcap paths, plank and tin fireguard edging, forget-me-nots - and winner of best plot 2007...

...meet the HAS' new chair

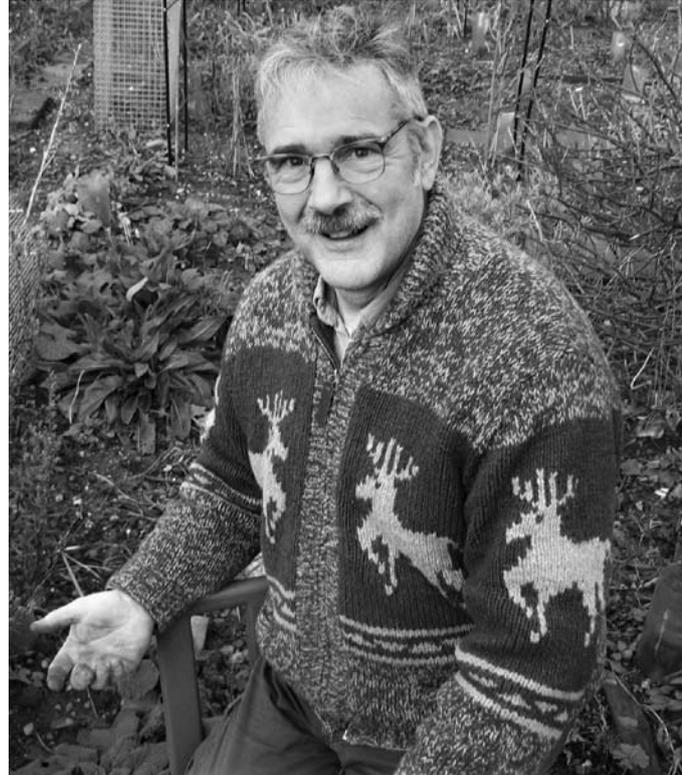
I have had my allotment since 1999. It was in pretty good shape when I got it and relatively easy to knock it into shape.

I wasn't a complete gardening novice, but by no means any kind of expert. My philosophy was to spend as little money on it as possible... and apart from the cost of seeds, potatoes and an occasional barrowful of manure, succeeded. I've laid the space out with found car-hubcap paths, plank and tin fireguard edging and anything else I could find.

I divided the plot up into rectangles the size of A1 paper. I reckoned that if I can fill each small bed with a different veg/fruit/herb, then I stand a good chance of some success and of eating most of the things I grow, instead of either getting nothing OR having to face 20 lbs of courgettes all at once.

My plot is in Leaside, a site tucked away and secure. I manage to get there for an hour or two once a week, even over this tough winter, to tidy up if nothing else... and try for twice/three times a week in busy seasons. This can be difficult to fit in. I work as a freelance book illustrator, the work comes in all at once sometimes... PLUS I volunteer a day a week at London Zoo... at the moment helping to look after the reptiles and amphibians.

I usually grow my seedlings at home on the window ledge and transplant when I think they have a good chance of surviving.



RIGHT: David at his plot

I like to grow lots of flowers between the veg and my most successful crop, I'm embarrassed to say, are forget-me-nots. Hardly nutritious but I have a wonderful blue carpet in March/April that makes even the dandelions look gorgeous.

And my tips?... One is a bit late actually: plant your broad beans in November, you get good strong plants free of black fly, and you get an early crop which frees the space for a summer crop. And... invest in a good pickle/chutney recipe book (Sarsons Vinegar used to do a free one if you wrote in.. Pumpkin Marmalade... yum).

As the chair of HAS, I hope to be able to help represent the views of current and prospective ploholders, and I welcome any comments or issues which you or your site reps would want raised at committee!



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD 1ST OCTOBER 2008 ST MARY'S COMMUNITY CENTRE N16

PRESENT: Maggie Wilkinson (Chair), Sue Carling (Secretary), Jackie Breakwell (Treasurer);

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Mary Connolly (minutes), Jessica Datta, Henrietta Soames, Amanda Scope, Gavin Everall, Eugene Clerkin; 17 members from the waiting list, 7 from Aden Terrace, 4 from Church Walk, 4 from Leaside, 3 from Spring Lane, 2 from Spring Hill, 2 from St. Kilda's and 1 from Overbury Street.

APOLOGIES: Andrea Montgomery (Overbury Street), Diana Whitworth (Leaside), Joss Bany, Pat Corrigan (Spring Hill), Yvette Cuff (waiting list) and Chrissie Bowler.

MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the AGM 2007 were agreed as accurate and there were no matters arising.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

There were fewer contentious events over the last year and a good deal of progress.

PROGRESS OVER THE YEAR

Springhill - good co-operation from park manager John Zeraschi, more benches and gate keys from him, help with rubbish removal; wheelbarrows bought, new composter built and most excitingly orchard planted in Dec 07.

St Kilda's - at last trees on adjacent land taken down, thanks to Henrietta and Mary for tracking down Hackney Homes man in charge, achieved for good price.

Queensbridge Road - huge improvement - new arrivals. Water butts and water collecting organised, good news after long difficulties.

Aden Terrace - pollarding done in spring.

Compost news - 14 tonnes delivered to Leaside free from London Waste in Edmonton. However access an issue on some other sites

* Delivery to Clissold Park in May of compost from Hackney Council – end product of all our brown bins and bags.

* Leaf mould was available in Springfield Park via park manager.

AIMS FOR THE COMING YEAR

* Possibility of more raised beds at Overbury Street.

* Fencing: two repairs outstanding

at Aden Terrace and Spring Lane. Delay may have been caused by turnover of our contact at the Council – we now have a new contact. This is Susan Ellis, newly arrived, and we look forward to working with her.

* This last year we were unable to host an Open Day but hope that it will prove possible next year.

WAITING LIST

Waiting list frozen for the moment - to be discussed again by the Committee after current spell of renewals. Currently almost 300 on waiting list, becoming unmanageable. There were 17 plots re-let; 18 Neglected Plot Letters (NPL), 5 Notice to Quit letters, over the last year. Of course not all NPLs lead to re-lets, they often lead to medium or major improvement.

* We hope to encourage those disappointed to lobby for more sites.

* The top 25 numbers waiting list numbers are on website and not necessarily consecutive as some people drop out, move away, don't renew or find other interests or commitments.

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

* Springhill might remove large shed to provide space for 2 plots.

* One O'Clock Club – consultation results showed 30% in favour of turning it into allotments, 33% in favour of nature reserve – we wait for news.

* Dalston site mentioned last year came to nothing - negative attitude from Hackney Homes would have made Society's presence untenable. It was also very shaded with many

trees and there were safety issues.
* As we suggest each year, let the committee know if you discover a potentially useful site. Remember that the state of the land is important – soil not concrete – for likely council support. Access, safety also to be considered.

LASTLY

Plea to anyone with travel plans – we have had two or three occurrences in the last couple of years of members deciding to go abroad for a spell. One was given “leave of absence” on the grounds of apparently planning good support, clear return date, good reason for absence (pregnancy) and good standing as a plot holder. However the friends let the member down, the absence continued longer than promised, and it all went pear shaped. We regret now allowing the leniency as the plot was wasted for a year. Contrast this with another member leaving London, who gave up their plot in a good shape, went to the top of the waiting list, and on their return was able after a short wait to get a new plot. No waste, no hassle. We ought to consider whether we can be a little flexible when members in good standing have a short term travel possibility; I would suggest that arranging for friends to tend over a short period of say 6 weeks may be acceptable as long as they do tend - longer than that, better to relinquish the pot and go to the top of waiting list. The Committee might want to think of a bye-law or guideline over the coming year. As always, keep an eye on saplings and paths.

Some members express surprise at receiving a NPL . If you are struggling or ill tell your site rep.

As you know I am standing down

as chair after four years and some earlier years doing the minutes. If and when I retire from my full time job I will be happy to offer my services if there are vacancies, but don't know when that will be. Having an allotment is a wonderful privilege but that privilege will only continue if the Society does, and I urge you to support the committee in any way you can. Please remember none of the officers are paid employees, they like to get out too and do a bit of digging between emails. My leaving may be a minor irritation – but I can tell you this, if you lose the current Secretary, without more support in place before that terrible day, then you really will notice the difference.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jackie Breakwell presented the statement of accounts and reported that income had exceeded expenditure. However, rent and rates had increased since last year as had site expenses with the improvements to Spring Hill and the high cost of rubbish removal.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ARISING FROM CHAIR'S REPORT

Jessica Datta confirmed that there is contact with the Council about the possible extension of the boundary and re-use of the fence at Spring Hill to provide extra plots.

* There was a discussion regarding the use of derelict land and recycled ballast containers to provide allotment plots. It was agreed that Penny Miller be co-opted to lead on new site development.

* Henrietta Soames confirmed the existence of a large mound of good quality compost in the Council bay near the Clissold House cafe.

* The key to the mews gate at Queensbridge is held by Gavin Overall.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

David Shenton - david@davidshenton.com - was elected as Chairperson.

Sue Carling - 7254 8351 - suecarling@waitrose.com - was re-elected as Secretary.

Jackie Breakwell - 7249 2051 - was re-elected as Treasurer

Henrietta Soames - 8809 4725 - was elected as Vice-Chair

June Lancaster - 7254 55756 - june.lancaster@rubicon-benefit.com - was elected as Vice-Secretary

Amanda Scope - ascope@mac.com - was re-elected as representative of members on the waiting list and as Newsletter editor

Maggie Henton and Bob Geater were re-elected as auditors.

SITE REPRESENTATIVES

Aden Terrace:
Martin Klucowicz - 8806 1968 - klucowicz@hotmail.com - was re-elected.

Church Walk:
June Lancaster - 7254 5756 - june.lancaster@rubicon-benefit.com - ➡

SKIP PROVISION

Members requiring a skip for large-scale clearance should contact their site representative in the first instance and, if approved, help obtain quotes and liaise with other plot holders regarding siting and sharing the skip.

of the Society's cash balance, the Treasurer explained that the money was mainly held in anticipation of major improvement works at new sites and the maintenance of existing sites particularly expensive tree works. Any suggestions for expenditure should be addressed to the committee.

SOCIETY FINANCE

Following a query regarding the size The meeting closed at about 9pm.

← was re-elected.

Leaside Road:

Guy Dehn and Neil Irons were elected as joint representatives.

Overbury Street:

Stephen Palmer - terrieandstephen@hotmail.com - was re-elected. Andrea Montgomery was elected as joint representative.

Queensbridge Road:

Lorraine Cooper from the waiting list was elected.

Spring Hill:

Eugene Clerkin - 8985 5008 - eugeneclerkin@hotmail.com -, Jessica Datta - j.datta@blueyonder.co.uk - and Phillip Pearson - philip.pearson@blueyonder.co.uk - were re-elected.

Spring Lane:

Gavin Everall - gavin@bookworks.org.uk - was re-elected.

Springdale Road:

Annie Wilson - 7254 0972 - vellalawilson@yahoo.com - was re-elected

St Kilda's Road:

Henrietta Soames - 8809 472 - was elected.

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Joss Bany was re-elected, Mary Connolly is standing down.



Plot Awards 2008

Plot inspections were held in July; criteria for the awards were variety of produce, creativity, productivity, most improvement. Congratulations to the winners!

Best plots

LEASIDE ROAD

Mr Saha
No 1

SPRING LANE

Tom Byrne
No 14

SPRING HILL

Emel Yuksel
No 37

ADEN TERRACE

Bronwen
Lloyd Jones
No 14

E5/E8 SMALL SITES

Jane Christie
No 6 Overbury Street

N16 SMALL SITES

Deborah and Martin
Jefferies
No 5 Church Walk

Special mention to

BEST NEW PLOT

Joe Chown
plot 1
Queensbridge Rd

MOST IMPROVED

Anna Harding
plot 2
Overbury Street

RAISED BED

Shane Cashin
plot 5
St Kilda's

Special mention from the Chair

If committee members had been included in the judging there is no doubt that an award would have gone to Henrietta Soames at St Kilda's, for best plot, best new plot and most improved plot! It is exquisite.

