



Thirty Years of HAS

David Shenton's speech at the AGM commemorating three decades of growing vegetables in Hackney

Thirty years ago, in 1979, an article appeared in the 'Hackney People's Press', a now defunct free radical paper. The article was written about the borough having empty land and wanting to find a use for it. It was written by a man called Ashley Godfrey who worked in the Planning department. Some locals responded to the article suggesting allotments and an open meeting at the Town Hall was arranged.

The very first site was in a road off Mare Street... the Committee held a ballot to see who would get it – and it went to two of the frailest old ladies who looked the least likely to be able to develop it...

The Council grabbed it back soon after. BUT it went on from there: Springfield was the

first of the larger sites – and others were collected on the way. We have Ashley Godfrey, the Hackney Planning Officer to thank as our godfather... and Jon Fuller (our President) and Chris Waller, one of the original committee members. None of us would be at this meeting tonight if it wasn't for this pioneering group of veg growers.

Spring Hill site had been an allotment site during the war. With the support of the National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners the Council were persuaded not to charge full rates for rent of the land.

Leases were negotiated and the Society was subsequently registered as a Charity in 1986.

Subsequently, Aden Terrace site which was managed



by Stoke Newington
Gardeners Guild integrated with the Hackney Allotment Society in 1990.

ABOVE: HAS inauguration with Mayor Ken Hanson, as covered by the Hackney Gazette

GREEN-fingered Hackney Mayor Ken Hanson opens 30 new allotments at Spring Hill sports ground in Upper Clapton with Dr. John Fuller (extreme left), president of the Hackney Allotment Society. Between them are Jean Allen and Eileen Warren who prepared the food and drink for the opening party. After cutting the tape Mr. Hansen, himself a keen gardener – last summer he was making news with a whopping 8lb cabbage – toured the grounds and said he hoped even more allotments would be opened... perhaps to give him more competition in the cabbage-growing stakes!

NOTICEBOARD *Have your say*

COMPOSTING WOOD

Here's an idea that I read in 'Organic Way.' Instead of shredding branches and other wood, compost them. This is achieved by making a large compost bin, for example from pallets or bricks, etc. Put in anything that won't rot quickly, eg. leaves, twigs, prunings, branches, christmas trees, even broken wooden furniture and old fencing! Once a year, in late summer or early autumn, take out the dry material from the top, and 'harvest' the lovely wood compost from the bottom, then replace the unrotted branches etc, and add to throughout the year. The resulting 'wood mould' will be high in potash and can be forked in or used as a mulch. Penny Miller, Chair

FRUIT TREES

<http://www.bernwodeplants.co.uk/>
will be moving to
www.bernwodefruittrees.co.uk
This is the website of a lovely place that sells nearly 500 apple varieties and lots of other fruit too ... a little far, near Oxford, but well worth knowing about. Very helpful lady who was happy to talk to me for hours about apples and pears ... The website does not give all the info that is in the catalogue so it is worth buying the catalogue ... ahem ... if you are interested in fruit trees of course!! *Martin Klucowicz, Aden Terrace*

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD 7TH OCTOBER 2009 ST MARY'S COMMUNITY CENTRE N16

PRESENT: David Shenton (Chair), Sue Carling (Secretary, minutes), Jackie Breakwell (Treasurer), Jon Fuller (President);

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: June Lancaster, Amanda Scope, Phillip Pearson, Joss Bany, Jessica Datta, Martin Klucowicz, Neil Irons, Henrietta Soames
Plot holders: Aden Terrace 7, Church Walk 3, Overbury 1, Spring Hill 7, Spring Lane 5, St Kilda's 1, Springdale Rd 1
Waiting list: 7 + 4 later arrivals.

APOLOGIES: Sarah Kissack, Elsa Hamaz, Eugene Clerkin, Guy Dehn, Diana Whitworth, Chris Waller.

MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that June Lancaster (site rep Church Walk) had attended and her name had been omitted from the minutes of the AGM 2008.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

David Shenton presented his report to the meeting:

On 2nd and 3rd of February this year, London saw one of the heaviest snowfalls in 18 years. Boris Johnson said "It's the right kind of snow, just the wrong quantities" as Hackney ground to a standstill. This late deep winter was followed almost immediately by a very warm spring. All the blossoms and insects arrived at the same time, there was a massive pollination this year. Most of us have seen the best ever red and blackcurrants, gooseberries, plums and sloes. I even had 18 bunches of grapes from my little vine.

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS FROM THE SITES:

Each site has reported a peaceful year on the whole, with, and I quote, greatly loved, well maintained plots. Probably influenced by programmes on the telly, a lot of site holders have abandoned back-breaking gardening and have invested in raised beds instead, to good effect and because communal areas, during well organised site-clearing days, are being looked after too, sites look very good from outside the fence. Excellent stuff!

The forecasted 'Barbecue Summer' didn't quite pan out as you all know, and the staycation most of us were forced to take this year because of the credit crunch, turned out to be wet and muggy. Everything grew though, including the weeds.

Most site reps report on the increase in wild life this year... both friends AND foes: foxes, frogs, flocks of wood pigeon, massive bright orange slugs... tons of native ladybirds and the alien harlequin type.

A noticeable increase in inner city butterfly and bee numbers this year on the plots, despite the general decline... plus sightings of brand new enemies which include the rosemary beetle (*Crysolina Americana*), a golden looking ladybird type thing that kills rosemary, lavender, sage and all woody herb bushes.

On our site there is a tiny black bug with a bite that is so virulent... some people call them NO-SEE-UMS. From June on I usually go to my plot covered in Jungle Formula but this one bit me on my eyelid and my whole face ballooned out for 2 days. I've tried to discover exactly what this insect is and even after consulting

with friends in the bughouse at London zoo, all I can come up with is the ORIUS, a man-introduced thrip bio-control. If anybody knows any better – or can suggest a repellent – please let me know.

SPECIFIC SITE REPORTS

* **Aden Terrace** - A dangerous section of high fencing has been replaced after much council chasing by Sue.

* **Church Walk** - The only critical observation made by your rep is that a bit more boundary control is needed in terms of trimming and cutting back any overhang from your plot.

* **Leaside** - Leaside has become, at long last, a great community site. Plot holders are now working with a team spirit organising bulk compost delivery, shed sort-outs, putting up gutters and installing rain barrels, holding barbecues and have even installed a straw-box loo behind the aforementioned shed.

* **Overbury Street** - This site has suffered extreme dehydration throughout August because Clancy Docwra (replacing Victorian water mains) cut off the water supply completely. It's been quite a job tracking down who was responsible... I gather that's all settled now. Still, not much joy to plot holders who could only watch their lovely crops die of thirst.

* **Queensbridge** - Queensbridge, too, suffers from water shortage problems... there isn't a supply on site there at all, and plot holders still have to rely on clever ways to catch as much rainfall as possible.

* **St Kildas** - St Kilda's has got rid of the none-too-safe brick raised beds and has designed and replaced them with new wooden ones.

* **Springdale Road** - Springdale's year has been, I am assured, a very positive one. They are especially enjoying their new fencing and have managed to gain access to a neighbour's garden to cut back a 15ft hedge which was causing severe shading problems.

* **Spring Hill** - I'm afraid I have had no annual report from this site.

* **Spring Lane** - More repaired fencing enjoyment on this site too, plus a mended pump.

Thanks to all our site reps who have obviously been doing a great job keeping an eye on the security, maintenance and general upkeep on all these sites. If you don't know who your site rep is, you should find out tonight. Any Committee queries you have should be addressed to them in the first instance.

Well done all.

SITE FIGURES AND WAITING LIST

The Society has 114 full size plots, 11 half plots and 2 raised beds:

Aden Terrace 26

Church Walk 8

Leaside 17

Overbury 8 + 1 raised bed

Queensbridge 2 and 1 half

St Kilda's 4 + 1 raised bed

Springdale Road 4

Spring Hill 33 + 7 halves

Spring Lane 16 + 3 halves

The number of members on the waiting list is 193 (this time last year was almost 300). It's coming down, but as only 9 plots were relet this year, the Committee has decided to keep the waiting list closed until the numbers become more realistic.

Some plots have been split into two for gardeners who are finding a full plot too difficult to cope with... and some split plots have been rejoined.

As we suggest each year, let the Committee know if you discover a potentially useful site, soil, not concrete preferably – some access and safety to be considered.

Although only five Neglected Plot Letters have been sent out this year, we had a complaint that the wording was too harsh and could be upsetting to some people. This letter, in my opinion, should wake you up to the fact that your messy plot has been noticed and something has to be done about it, and a no-nonsense letter is needed. Anyway the Committee has had another look at it and has made it that bit kinder and friendlier looking... but the message remains the same: Use it or lose it.

LASTLY

I am very impressed by the Society's website. It is always up-to-date with the things we're up to. It is very nice looking, sleek and professional... and one thing I like a lot is by clicking the Google map that shows the location of my Leaside plot, an advert pops up which says "BOOK HOTEL NOW".

David Shenton then gave a vote of thanks to Sue Carling who has held the post of secretary for 11 years and is standing down at the AGM.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS ON THE CHAIR'S REPORT

Phillip Pearson gave a verbal report on Spring Hill site to the meeting. During the

year there has been damage to the gate and boundary fences due to work carried out by contractors on behalf of Thames Water. The Council have now taken responsibility for the repairs. It was noted that the longest standing plot holder present tonight was Tim Maby who had held a plot at Aden Terrace for 24 years.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jackie Breakwell presented the statement of accounts and reported that income is reduced from membership fees as the waiting list is closed. Interest from the investment account is also down due to the current economic climate.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO THE TREASURER

Tim Maby asked the Treasurer how the accumulated capital might be used. The Treasurer explained that this could be spent appropriately for the benefit of the Society and any ideas and requests would be considered and decided upon by the Committee at the monthly meetings.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Vehicle Access to Spring Hill Site
Access by car has been prevented since the Parks Department changed the lock earlier this year and have been reluctant to give access. Jessica Datta, the site rep, agreed to take this up further with John Wade, Head of the Parks Dept, L.B. Hackney.

THE SOCIETY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Thanks to Jessica Datta and in particular her daughter, for the slide show provided at this meeting. The photographs of the sites included some historical photos of the official opening of the Spring Hill site in 1984 by Mayor, Ken Hanson.

Jon Fuller, the President of the Society, spoke of the 30-year history of the Society, summarised in the Chair's Report. Jon noted that he and Chris Waller are the only two remaining original members of the Society from 30 years ago. Chris Waller gave up his plot at Spring Hill earlier this year.

The Chair invited the membership to stay for refreshments after the meeting to celebrate the anniversary and look forward to the next 30 years of allotment gardening in Hackney.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Penny Miller - pmsrink@yahoo.com - was unanimously elected as Chairperson.

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

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

Henrietta Soames - 8809 4725 - was unanimously elected Vice-chair.

Amanda Scope - ascope@mac.com - was re-elected as Newsletter editor and elected as Vice-Secretary.

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

Joss Bany was re-elected as Committee member without portfolio.

SITE REPRESENTATIVES

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

Church Walk: June Lancaster - 7254 5756 - june.lancaster@rubicon-benefit.com - was re-elected.

Leaside Road: Guy Dehn and Diana Whitworth - dianawhitworth@aol.com - and Neil Irons - mail@neilirons.co.uk - were re-elected.

Overbury Street: Anna Harding - anna@modrex.com - and Amanda Scope - ascope@mac.com - were elected.

Queensbridge Road: Phillip Turner - pturner@ahmm.co.uk - was elected.
Spring Hill: Jessica Datta - j.datta@blueyonder.co.uk - and Phillip Pearson - philip.pearson@blueyonder.co.uk - were re-elected and Emily Mytton - emilymytton@yahoo.com - was elected.

Spring Lane: Simon Hughes - samphire66@yahoo.co.uk - was elected.

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

St Kilda's Road: Henrietta Soames - 8809 4725 - was re-elected.

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chair thanked the site reps standing down, especially Lorraine Cooper from the waiting list covering Queensbridge Rd, Eugene Clerkin from Spring Hill, and Gavin Everall from Spring Lane.

Phillip Pearson acknowledged the important work of all Committee members during the year. Sue Carling thanked David Shenton for his work as Chair during the year.



Plot Awards 2009

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

Best plots

ADEN TERRACE

Chris Coe

No 5

E5/E8 SMALL SITES

Anna Harding

No 2 Overbury Street

N16 SMALL SITES

Marie McShea

No 1 St Kilda's

LEASIDE ROAD

Hilaire Kerr and Jack Eldon

No 18

SPRING LANE

Rowena Altheer

No 13

SPRING HILL

Sophie Matthias

No 36

Best effort by a new plotholder

E5/E8 SMALL SITES

Shane Cashin

St Kilda's raised beds

David Shenton presented certificates and gift vouchers personally to Rowena Altheer and Jack Eldon who were present at this meeting.



GARDENER'S CALENDAR - FEBRUARY/MARCH www.rhs.org.uk

During February there are signs of the approaching spring, with bulbs appearing and birds and wildlife waking up as light levels and temperatures increase. There's plenty to do indoors this month, all in preparation for the season ahead. Outdoors, the garden is coming to life again, and it's time to prune shrubs, such as Wisteria.

TOP 10 JOBS IN FEBRUARY

1. Prepare vegetable seed beds, and sow some vegetables under cover
2. Chit potato tubers
3. Protect blossom on apricots, nectarines and peaches
4. Net fruit and vegetable crops to keep the birds off
5. Prune winter-flowering shrubs that have finished flowering
6. Divide bulbs such as snowdrops, and plant those that need planting 'in the green'
7. Prune Wisteria
8. Prune hardy evergreen hedges and renovate overgrown deciduous hedges
9. Prune conservatory climbers
10. Cut back deciduous grasses left uncut over the winter

Spring usually arrives by mid-March and the frequent sunny days provide the opportunity for an increasing range of gardening tasks. It's time to get busy preparing seed beds, sowing seed, cutting back winter shrubs and generally tidying up around the garden.

TOP 10 JOBS IN MARCH

1. Plant shallots, onion sets and early potatoes
2. Protect new spring shoots from slugs
3. Plant summer-flowering bulbs
4. Lift and divide overgrown clumps of perennials
5. Top dress containers with fresh compost
6. Mow the lawn on dry days (if needed)
7. Cut back Cornus (dogwood) and Salix (willow) grown for colourful winter stems
8. Weeds come back in to growth - deal with them before they get out of hand
9. Start feeding fish and using the pond fountain; remove pond heaters
10. Open the greenhouse or conservatory doors and vents on warm days