Update from the Chairman

A time for reflection and sweeping up the leaves, turning over the allotment or being so glad you adopted the “no dig” approach. In my case, a time for hoping that the anti-pigeon cages don’t blow down or get crushed by snowfall. A time for saying thank you to our magnificent band of volunteers who keep the machinery of the Society running in a smooth and effective fashion. If you were at the AGM (and if you weren’t you missed a jolly good one) you will know what a massive contribution Bryan Hammersley made for well over 20 years, and how much that was acknowledged and appreciated. Please make a New Year Resolution to be especially nice to your Convenor and Site Reps, who really do a great deal of work to make the allotment process work, the fences mended, the trees cleared, the plots let and in good order.

Next year’s AGM will be in the same place (The Westgate) but half-an-hour earlier – so it will start at 19:00. We will have the same speaker, but we can give him 30 more minutes of talking time, so he won’t need to stop in mid-flow. It will be on 21 November 2019. Please make a note in the electronic or paper diary NOW and make a point of coming.

Another Resolution you might want to consider is to use the Shop as a first point of call for all your horticultural needs – no doubt organic Barley Straw and SB Invigorator will be on the stock list, if at all humanly possible.

Most of all though do have a marvellous Christmas and a most productive New Year, stuffed full of bumper crops, with sun and rain in the right quantities and at the right time.

Jeremy

Jeremy Brecknell
Winchester 856 552
Email brecknell1@uwclub.net
As an avid news reader I have been fascinated by the rise of community allotments and the reasons given for them … Brexit (Yes! Really … well … at least the concern people currently have for getting food to their plate in a world that they are increasingly uncertain of). And you thought allotmenting was free of politics! Whatever the reason for the current rise in community growing there are many interesting co-farming models in the UK, from community supported agriculture to community food grower’s networks. Many of these have evolved from the Transition Movement, whose aim is to address some of the global challenges we are facing by starting local. In this issue of the WNAHS newsletter there is a piece about the community allotment at Edington Road. Perhaps you know of someone who would like to try out growing fruit and vegetables but doesn’t have the time or confidence? If you do, please get them to contact the society, there may be ways we can help.

Bryan’s contribution to allotment life was celebrated at the AGM, a well-attended event held in November. Apart from ensuring we met our legal requirements, we had a wonderful talk from Ray Broughton, on the subject of “80 things you may not know about fruit and vegetable growing”. Things that I (and the family …) could cope with were: dunking the blades of your secateurs in tomato ketchup overnight (this makes them sharper AND cleaner), storing potatoes in organic barley straw over 2” gravel (but never limestone) and, dig your rhubarb up for the winter, they need frost to thrive!

As for my plot, I believe you’ve all got your over-wintering veg in! … sigh! I promised myself that I would get my onions in before December but I’ve only dug over a fraction of my plot (I hang my head in shame). I trust my failings give some of you hope, just as they give me something to improve on each year. On that note (careful segue into next point, almost as though I planned it). All the volunteers at WNAHS would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a bountiful New Year.

Holiday reading section
Further information about community growing

- https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/what-is-transition/
- https://www.cfgr.org.uk/about/
- https://www.sustainweb.org/localactiononfood/growing_food/
- https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/what-is-csa/

Emma McMullan
Editor
emmamcmullan@btinternet.com
I can report good news. We have in total 11 sites and all either have applicants or are full. The waiting list is standing at 76 across all sites. Park Road and Edington Road, our biggest sites, are in double figures. Current vacancies stand at three. This is a very healthy position to be in.

This year we made changes to the way we managed rent payments. We shortened the payment period from two to one month, and this worked well. From 430 current members only around 20 were late payers and these paid by mid-October, once we sent a reminder.

From my point of view, as a volunteer, prompt payments reduce my workload, which can be full-on during September – October. The best method to pay, and I encourage all members to adopt it, is by electronic transfer. It is simple, immediate and secure. I can cross-check payments and input members payments on the database without being dependent on receiving their individual payment slips in the post. Prompt payments frees me to focus on sending out detailed paperwork to new members, because October is our biggest change-over of plots.

Prompt payments also allow me to focus on AGM notifications, which quickly follows on the heels of October payments. I do this by email but we have a small percentage of plotholders who we have to notify by post. This is time consuming and not an efficient way of making sure our members receive all the information they need. Therefore, with regard to AGM notifications, I strongly recommend all our members supply an email address to the society. This is the quickest, simplest and cheapest method of communication, essential to effective working.

To conclude, I am sure that I speak for all when I say a big thank you to the Convenors who work so hard and who are the key to the success of Winchester Allotments.

Mike Moore
Membership Secretary

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<th>SITE SUMMARY</th>
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Trading Shed Matters

It’s been a busy two autumnal months in the trading shed, and a steep learning curve for Janet and myself – thank you Bryan for your continued guidance and support.

The autumn planting onions, shallots and garlic absolutely flew off the shelves ... we ordered more and they were similarly gone quickly. Unfortunately our supplier then had no more, so if you weren’t early enough for our autumn planting bulbs please keep space in your crop rotation plan for the spring planting onions and shallots.

Sales were strong for grass seed and lawn fertiliser to repair damaged lawns from the very hot summer, and green manure for the allotments to fill the bare patches after lifting crops.

Now allotment minds and sales seem to be focusing on clearing crop space and wrapping up for winter - fleece, bubble plastic and mypex, alongside winter wash, greenhouse smoke bombs, Jeyes fluid and creosote.

Not forgetting the planning for New Year with fruit cage constructions and sowing the few vegetable seeds that are hardy enough for this time of year - overwintering broad beans and peas and hardy winter lettuce varieties.

We will shortly have our new season seed delivery so please pop in for a browse whilst you’re planning the plot for next year, and don’t forget to complete your potato order form if you’ve not yet placed your order.

Lastly, we are now promoting our ‘just in’ items on the website as well as the board outside the Trading Shed, so please keep an eye out for the latest on our deliveries.

Best wishes and Merry Christmas
Jo Townsend & Janet Thornton

Notes for the diary

Winchester Horticultural Society

This holds two meetings a month on topics of interest to gardeners, it also organises visits to gardens in Hampshire and adjacent counties. Visitors are welcome; there is a fee of £3.

For further information or to join, telephone 01962 866818.

Winchester Film Society 2018-19

A relaxing evening watching a film can be a welcome antidote to a hard day spent digging, so it’s worth considering joining, or just seeing the occasional film from the varied programme at Winchester Film Society, which has been recommended by many plotholders over the years.

Sixteen films from across six continents are featured, with wide-ranging themes, and the season runs roughly fortnightly from October till the middle of May. Films which rarely appear at mainstream venues, but shouldn’t be missed if you love cinema.

So check out the films at: www.winchesterfilmsociety.co.uk
My reports tend to be of various disasters which have happened on one or more of the Stanmore sites, or of major projects we have been carrying out. Neither of these apply to the period since the last newsletter. The most significant event of the autumn in WNAHS is the issue of annual rent bills and the sequel. Every year a number of existing plot holders decide not to renew their membership, usually because of old age, health issues or just because they have other things which they prefer to do with their time. This year, seventeen plots were surrendered, more than a tenth of the Stanmore total. Sadly, but inevitably, many of these were in a poor state and I am very grateful to all those of you who helped me to make these plots reasonably presentable by removing rubbish and excessive weed growth. Then came the interesting process of offering plots to applicants on the waiting list. At this time of year I am able, in many cases, to offer applicants a choice of plots, and it is fascinating that some of them are unhappy with aspects of certain plots which others see as positive advantages. A few applicants decide that they don’t want a plot, usually because of a change of employment between applying for a plot and receiving an offer, but I had a ‘first’ this year when a gentleman told me that he was getting married in a few weeks’ time and felt that this was not an appropriate time to take an allotment. One may think that if he was getting married a few weeks after an offer of a plot he may have had some inkling of it six weeks previously when he first applied for one.

All plots in Stanmore have now been let and it is good to report that many of the new members have set us all a good example with the work they have done on their new allotments. Whether you are a new or existing member, I remind you that the time to prepare your plot for the next growing season is NOW. If you can clear your plot of weeds, they will not regrow before you are ready to start sowing and planting. If you wait until the spring, new weeds will be appearing as fast as you can remove the old ones, making it very difficult for you to get the plot under control and to keep it under control.

David Barber 01962 849910
Another year ends, and another new set of plot holders gets to grips with their plots. We had slightly more than usual 10% turnaround in 2018, partly due to people moving away from Winchester. The hot summer proved challenging for some, but most of us have learnt a bit about what thrives in hotter weather. I have planted a couple of outdoor dessert vines, having seen the good results people had this year with outside grapes, and will certainly try more tomatoes outside and hope that 2019 will also see little blight.

As always, we rely on people pitching in and giving us a hand with various projects. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, especially first time helpers. It’s always fun, and everything seems to go quicker with more boots on the ground.

The biggest challenge was moving Ali’s huge new poly-tunnel from a plot a fair distance away. Daunting as it looked, eight people made light work of it one sunny morning, after the task had been postponed due to heavy rain the week before.

Next, a team met to grab a sledgehammer apiece and smash slabs and other brick or concrete pieces to make a hard standing base for extra car parking, before a top load of smaller stone is delivered. Nick Nott’s son, Theo, joined the group, and is pictured in action on the following page. It probably seemed to him an easy way to spend the morning as his hobby is Parkour, the dangerous-looking obstacle-clearing way of crossing urban terrain, testing endurance, strength and flexibility, derived from French military training courses.

Early in November, the annual rubbish collection took place at Park Road. After four years, I was as surprised as anyone that there was still so much unwanted wire, wood and general rubbish lying around, as the site generally looks tidy and in very good shape. I know that many people take loads of unwanted weeds which are not suitable for composting (or allowed in the rubbish collection) to the Bar End tip. Please carry on doing that. It’s not acceptable to stuff your unwanted brassica stalks in the boundary hedge, so please don’t do it again. You know who you are!
If you are planning to erect a shed, greenhouse or poly-tunnel, please check the size and siting of the structure with me or one of the site reps beforehand. Mowers, barrows and people carrying heavy objects need space to access the narrow paths between plots, which is why we ask that any structures are sited 18 inches from a path. Please also check that no trees or bushes overhang paths, - they also need to be carefully sited when first planted.

Remember to check out the Society’s website now and then. It’s changed recently, for the better. More colour, more info and news, especially from the Trading Shed. www.wnahs.org.uk

I wish everyone at Park Road a very happy Christmas and fruitful New Year, with just enough hard frost to kill off the annoying white flies, but short-lived, to let us get on and prepare for next season’s crops.

Maria Keniston, Convenor
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Edington Road News

Over the last year we have had 21 new plot holders which is a larger number than in previous years. Of course people’s circumstances change and it’s necessary to give up their plot but I have noticed that a high percentage of people giving up their plots have had them for a relatively short period of time. Whenever I show prospective plot holders around, I try to emphasise the amount of time that needs to be given to their plot and this is also brought out in the FAQs on the WNAHS website. Remember – Use it or Lose it.

Wasp Nests
This year we had three wasp nests on the site, one in a large fruit tree and two in compost bins. The nests found in compost bins were in bins on plots which hadn’t been used for some time. Please let me know if you come across one anywhere on the site, and be particularly wary of the wasps later in the year as they become more aggressive as the year goes on.

Bonfire
I put a plea out every year not to put compostable material on the communal bonfire but it still happens. Please take old plastic bags to the tip or your wheelie bin at home as I have to remove many from the bonfire as I think I should not be burning them.

Tree surgeon
At the beginning of December various works were carried out and it will be an ongoing thing of reducing a number of trees both in size and location.

Working party
Apologies to anyone who turned up on October 20th for the working party having not seen my notice changing the date to October 27th. With just four of us we were still able to work on clearing three plots, which enabled me to offer a plot which hadn’t been worked properly for some years to a new plot holder. Welcome to that new plot holder, Krishna Gurung, who with his family and friends have carried out a lot of work in a short space of time to bring the plot back to how it should be.

Equipment in shed
There are various items in the allotment shed, two petrol rotavators and two petrol strimmers, which possibly need some repairs, amongst other items. If you would like to use them, after perhaps repairing them, please let me know. In the past we stopped members using the equipment as it was being misused and the servicing costs were too much but these particular items are surplus to our needs. There is also a tool box (1500 long x 600 wide x 600 deep) which someone without a shed may like, again let me know.

Nigel Dobbie
Site Convenor
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Community Allotment Open Day
The Community Allotment at Edington Road has just completed its second growing season. We held an Open Day, on Saturday October 13th, to celebrate getting this far and to show visitors what we do and how it works if they want to join in. Luckily the rain stopped just before the kick-off, and the sun shone nicely for the rest of the day. Just over 50 people visited, and quite a few have come back since.

We would also encourage involvement from anyone who is waiting to start their own plot or who wants to keep growing but no longer wants to keep their own plot going. There’s always someone around who likes digging, or weeding, or is happy to drop in to do the watering (a huge advantage this year) so there’s no pressure to do it all or to always be there! If anyone is interested, we have open sessions from 10 – 12 am on Saturday mornings, and 9.30 – 11.30 am on Tuesday mornings. We’re half-way down the broad grass track, by the signs on the left hand side. There’s always someone there, unless the weather is too dire. We grow anything anyone wants to try, including all the usual suspects, and an increasing range of less usual crops. Please either just come along, or contact Jim Morgan (jimmorgan88@gmail.com) or Samantha Watts food@winacc.org.uk

Edington Road Community Allotment