Update from the Chairman

Most important plea of the summer season is ... Please make a note to come to the AGM, which is at 7PM (please note the earlier time) on Thursday 21 November 2019, at the Westgate School as usual. It really is an important part of the life of the Society, so that you can see who your Committee are, check on our actions of the past year, look at our finances, and hopefully put us on the back and say what splendid chaps we are – but also to let us know if there is something different we should be doing. Please come and have your say, if you can. Usual excellent speaker and fantastic coffee tea and cakes! What’s not to like.

When walking round your plots and sites, if you see a dandelion flower or seed head (dandelion clock) please pull it up, or off, to help prevent the blighters spreading – if we all did that, as a matter of habit, plots would be better. (Rabbit owners may have a different view).

It’s always nice to say hello to others when you are passing down at the allotment – rather than passing by on the other side, though the temptation to do so when some rotten person has stolen some of your produce is very great.

Anyway I do hope you have all had a good year and look forward to perusing the new seed catalogues, buying more from the Trading Shed and coming to the AGM.

Happy allotmenting,

Jeremy

Jeremy Brecknell
Winchester 856 552
Email brecknell1@uwclub.net

Reminders

Communal Bonfires: From 1st October-30th April, inclusive.

WNAHS: AGM, 21st November, 2019
You may have already guessed that I am a hugely optimistic person. I took on an allotment when my children were still feral and whilst I was working full-time and studying. I always have great faith in every seed that I’ve ever planted, believing each one to have enormous potential. I always believe in my capacity to raise my children, run a household, hold down a job and walk through the door in the evening, after a quick visit to Park Road, laden down with baskets of fresh fruit and vegetables. I have to confess to being remarkably surprised that, every time I manage to get to allotment, the beautiful tapestry in my mind of the Park Road rural idyll and the awful reality of the weeds, slugs, falling fruit, long grass and general chaos that confronts me are not aligned.

I am also, in my the heart of my heart, eternally 17. The years have not aged me, nor the vicissitudes of life taken their toll. So, when I accidentally thrust the prong of a fork through my left foot in March this year, whilst trying to fill half-an-hour at the allotment with 60 minutes of gardening fun, I thought nothing of it. Nor did it occur to me, when my foot swelled up so much that I couldn’t do up my shoe, that there was any reason to be concerned - after all, I went to see the nurse and she didn’t seem to be at all worried. Nor did I worry when, a day later, I couldn’t breathe normally and my heart started pounding in my chest. I put this down to tiredness and went to bed slightly early (after picking up the stragglers from town, doing the washing up and generally mucking about – when I should have been listening to the wisdomous voice of my mother, who, in my youth, told me countless times to stop faffing and go to bed when tired!).

In fact, my belief in my infallibility was so great that I kept going to work, the allotment, driving round the country and staying up Way Too Late!

In May I took the children on a short holiday to Rutland (driving both ways) and then, not feeling quite myself, I went too see the doctor, who said (with a very earnest expression on her face) you need to give yourself a break.

Well, that was all the advice I needed to go for a three mile walk and then Visit The Allotment! Where I strimmed for three hours (my plot and the vacant plot next door).

I confess to not feeling quite right at this point, more tired than I expected, so I went home for lunch and to rest. By 11 pm I was so ill I was whizzed straight through A&E to cubicles and then, speedily, onto a ward, where I was looked after, with fantastic care, for five days. The diagnosis, sepsis (from the infection that had never quite cleared up).

The moral of the story ... never try to dig and talk at the same time (and please take care when working with tools on your plot).

Emma McMullan
Editor
emmamcmullan@btinternet.com
Membership numbers show that the society is in a very healthy position. We have 158 applications across all sites with four sites, Park Road, Edington Road, Greenhill Avenue and Trussell Crescent showing double figures. This may reflect a new interest in gardening and growing-your-own and there is no better way to grow-your-own than by acquiring an allotment.

Talking about a take-up of interest, Gardener’s World features an allotment in Bristol and my national paper has run a number articles on allotments. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient allotments, under the provision of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908. A national survey of allotments shows interest in the take-up of allotments, the majority having a healthy waiting list. The average waiting list ranges from 52-57 per 100 plots. Its not hard to understand why in an age when the environment is taking centre stage, allotments mean fewer food miles and they contribute to a greener low-carbon economy. Nothing tastes better than food grown locally and harvested quickly. Another argument for allotments is the health benefits. Recent medical evidence suggests that working on an allotment brings with it mental as well as physical health benefits. We are lucky in Winchester as local community groups have allotments which offer an alternative way of enjoying gardening.

**Membership Renewal**

At the beginning of September members will receive their notices for plot renewals. Plot fees will be going up from £5.00 per rod to £5.50, a small increase which still means that having your own allotment is still great value for money. Can I remind members to pay their fees promptly by October, and so avoid any surcharge of £8.00 for late payment after that month. I would encourage members to pay by using electronic payment through their banks, also accessible via tablets, phones and PC’s.

Mike Moore
Membership Secretary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE SUMMARY</th>
<th>September 2018</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Site</td>
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<td>Cromwell Road West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edington Road</td>
<td>157</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firmstone Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenhill Avenue</td>
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<td>Princes Place</td>
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<td>The Valley</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Trussell Crescent</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>563</td>
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APS = Average Rod Size
Trading Shed Matters

Activity in the Trading Shed this summer has been brisk thanks to the great support of our volunteers and customers. If you’ve not been in to visit recently, please stop by to check out our latest stock and share top tips.

Trials
‘No rake’ moss killer has been confirmed as successful by our customers, with moss removed from lawns with minimal effort.

Invigorator is proving to be a great organic pesticide - good results on white fly, black fly and grey aphids on plum trees reported. (If you’ve tried to get this after being recommended it at a Horticultural Society talk or at Sparsholt college, you’ll know it’s not available locally and costs more on-line than at The Trading Shed.)

We are trialling a peat free version of our very popular SBM seed and potting compost. We’ll let you know how this performs as it has been hard to find a good quality, peat free seed compost in the past.

Buy now
September is a good month to start autumn lawn work – lawn seed to repair bare patches, weed killing, moss removal, nematodes to counter leatherjackets, or a general autumn lawn feed.

As you clear your plot, you can sow green manure to improve the soil and act as a weed suppressant.

We sell a wide range including phacelia, alfalfa and mustard. There are also a number of vegetables you can sow/plant now for a quick crop in Autumn or to overwinter, including Chinese cabbage, pak choi, chard, spinach, lettuce, radish as well as herbs. Over-wintering broad beans and peas are usually sown in Sept/Oct. We sell cloches and netting to protect over-wintering crops, and mypex for cleared ground that does not have a green manure.

Coming Soon
In September, the autumn planting onions, garlic and shallots will be in store. We’ve selected more varieties of shallots and garlic this year as both were so popular last year. Autumn planted onions seem to do particularly well in Winchester, I presume as we have less water logging of soil (a reason to select spring planting sets).

Autumn planting flower bulbs and tubers will be arriving in September, including hyacinths and amaryllis for Christmas blooms. We’ve selected more and different varieties of flower bulbs from previous years so please do stop by and see what we have to add to your spring flower display.

Planning ahead
It’s been another year of variable rainwater supply. If you haven’t already got a water butt on the plot or at home, please do consider installing one as rainwater is much better for plants than tap water and essential for ericaceous plants such as blueberries. We stock both the standard and slimline sizes at a great price! Don’t forget a compost bin too, as compost is good as a mulch and aids water retention, as well as fertilising the soil.

We are now taking orders for ‘Joan J’ - the very reliable heavy cropping autumn raspberry. Our bulk vegetable seed order will be sent off in October. Please come in and browse the Kings Seed catalogue and let us know if there are any particular varieties you would like us to stock next year. We have to order a minimum of five seed packets of each type, but luckily there are lots of adventurous gardeners in Winchester.

Potato planning starts in late November. As per last year we are carefully not over-ordering, so, please complete your order form early to ensure you get the varieties you want.

Volunteering
We’re always on the look out for more volunteers, so, if you can spare two hours a month please let us know.

Best wishes and look forward to seeing you soon

Jo Townsend & Janet Thornton

WNAHS newsletter
Edington Road News

Edington Road
I hope you’ve all had a good growing season. I’ve had a glut of dwarf (Safari) and climbing (Cobra) beans as I planted more than in the past, expecting the slugs to get at least half of them but the slugs didn’t seem to appear. Similarly carrot fly hasn’t affected my carrots (Maestro and Flyaway). Only a third of my sweetcorn seeds germinated, and those that did were in one area of the plot, I must be doing something wrong there. My harvest of gooseberries was very small compared with last year, when I had a abundance. I pruned the bushes as I had done previously so it must have been the weather.

Site Security
At this time last year there had been some incidents of vandalism and theft and I asked for your views of having a padlock on the entrance gate but I had little response to this. Since then there has been theft and damage on 7 plots over the space of a couple of days and so I am endeavouring to procure a proper security gate for the entrance. This will take time to put in place.

Once the gate is in place it will probably take some time to distribute keys to all plot holders before this can be put into action.

Trees
A reminder that all fruit trees should be of dwarf stock. I appreciate that there are a number of trees on the site which are not of dwarf stock but they were probably planted before this rule came into force. Later in the year I will be arranging for a tree surgeon to carry out some work. If there are any members who have large trees on their plot which they are not able to prune for safety reasons please let me know and it can be part of the this work.

Mower
Recently the society has purchased a new mower for cutting the grass of the central path. The old mower had been causing me problems with various things going wrong with it and the new mower makes cutting the central path that much easier.

Bonfire
Just a reminder to keep the communal bonfire area clear until 1st October.

Working Party – Saturday October 19th
Please come along from 10 a.m. and help us with general tidying tasks – this helps us keep the site in good shape and also allows you to meet some of your fellow plot holders too.

There are instances where a plot holder may not be able to do some particular job on their plot and this is an opportunity for the working party to take that on. Get in touch if you need help.

Nigel Dobbie
Edington Road Convenor
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01962 866497
A week or so before I started writing this, we experienced winds of 45 mph. Apart from runner bean lines and the usual compost bin lids, the damage to plots and structures has been slight, but please check that your greenhouse glass, shed roofs and other structures are firmly fixed before the return of strong winds in the autumn and winter. This spring the winds took unfixed items, including a polytunnel, into neighbouring gardens.

If only we could predict the weather… The very warm spell in April made my celeriac, usually a success when planted early, bolt, and put its strength into the foliage rather than the root. However potatoes and onions have done well, and a massive plum crop had virtually no maggoty fruit, thanks, it seems, to spraying with Plant Invigorator (available in the Trading Shed) just before the fruit turned colour. Collecting fallen fruit of any kind from the base of trees helps to prevent pests overwintering, ready to go next year.

Impressive efforts from new plotholders again, and even those who took plots late in the year, have produced great results. It’s good to see new young plotholders with families in tow enjoying being on their plots, and I hope they will stay as long as some of our older people.

Against this positive news it is sad to report that there are a few plotholders who don’t feel it necessary to turn up regularly and work their plots, and seem to regard having a plot as a right, which doesn’t come with any
obligations. So please don’t hog an unworked plot but remember that you need to keep your plot as weed-free as possible and fully planted with vegetables, fruit or flowers, adding manure or compost to enrich the soil regularly. We now have a long waiting list, so if you don’t enjoy using it as an allotment should be used, please give the plot up or prepare to be asked to move on.

We are indebted to all the people who mow the tracks. They are volunteers, and they don’t enjoy hitting stones as they work as this does damage to the blades and can be painful to the people mowing. So please ensure when weeding near the edge of your plot that stray stones don’t land on the tracks.

Remember that pigeons are not only keen to feed on brassicas but will also strip strawberries, gooseberries and other fruit, so they need to be protected too. It’s a tradition to leave excess plants, fruit and vegetables outside or inside the Trading Shed, where they are usually snapped up quickly. Other unwanted things also find new homes - bean poles, netting or mesh and so on. If you want to recycle large or more unusual things, by all means have a go, but if they are still there after a week, please take them to the Bar End recycling facilities.

The editor mentioned (in the previous issue) noticing a decline in insect activity, but I have been happy to see and hear bees and bumble bees busy on my lavender and sunflowers over the last few months, so hope that they still thrive at Park Road and will continue to do so, helping to pollinate, as long as we encourage them with flowers they like.

The more you can do to leave a plot ready for next year by work in the autumn, the easier things will be in the spring when you start to sow again.

Best wishes for the rest of the year and good planning for more successful crops in 2020.

Maria Keniston, parkroadconvenor@outlook.com
We have had another very dry summer, though at the time of writing lots of rain is forecast. Despite the conditions, most crops seem to have done well. On my own plot, salad crops, peas, most beans, brassicas, sweetcorn, potatoes, onions and soft fruit have done well. The big failure was of the spring sown broad beans, which were devastated by blackfly, and, I was not alone in having this experience. Having spent most of my adult life in Scotland, I have never grown winter sown broad beans but plot holders here who sewed a winter crop this season really scored over those of us who waited until spring – and they were able to harvest good crops before the blackfly got going. I will certainly follow their example this winter.

As we approach the end of the current season, and look forward to the next one, there are always a number of plot holders who decide not to renew for reasons of health, age or other change of personal circumstances. One member who will not be renewing this year is Les Jones, who has cultivated plots at The Valley for 73 years! I am offering a large prize to anyone who can prove that he or she has kept a plot for longer than this. In the ten years I have known Les I hardly ever visited The Valley without finding him there, and he kept a ten rod plot in exemplary condition, producing masses of top quality vegetables of every variety. Sadly, he now has a major mobility problem and has been forced to give up. We wish him well in the future. He will be greatly missed by the plot holders who know him well, and who have learned a lot from his experience. At the other end of the scale, we welcome our newest member, Charlie, who, a couple of months ago joined his parents, Dan and Elizabeth, on their plot at Cromwell Road. Dan says that he is not much help on the plot yet but he is already an established member of the Cromwell Road community.

Finally, my perennial moan about neglected plots. I don’t understand why some members take plots, pay for them and then don’t cultivate them, sometimes reacting with indignation when it is pointed out to them that allotments are for using. Anybody can have problems relating to health, family and employment, when keeping an allotment is not a first priority, but there comes a time when a decision has to be made about whether to continue. Some of the plots being compulsorily repossessed or given up voluntarily this season require a great deal of hard work and money to get them into, what I regard, a lettable condition. Please, if you are not going to be able to use your plot, let someone else have it, someone who will be keen to cultivate it.

David Barber
The Firmstone Road allotment site is a small one in Winnall which doesn't feature very often in the society newsletter. But, when it was visited as part of the official inspection programme in June, every plot was considered to be in excellent condition. It is true that there are only six plots, but in my experience, this is a first for any site – and has not been achieved, even by Firmstone Road, before.

My congratulations and thanks to all six plot holders, and a special mention to Narendra Thapa and Rana Maga, who took over the neglected plot 4 last autumn and have made a first class job of it.

David Barber
A Community within Our Community

It started with an unwanted and overgrown plot, full of rubbish, at Park Road allotments. Nobody was keen to take it, but in May 2009, it became the start of the now thriving Perlins Community Project.

Brothers Daniel and George wanted to start a project for adults with learning difficulties based in the community, and felt that a fairly large allotment would be a great community to join. A grant for a polytunnel, and building raised beds and a shed for shelter enthused everyone. They got off to a fine start and the whole project has been an ongoing success.

“When we started,” Daniel remembers, “we were a very small project, a pilot project really. We worked with just a few members, some of whom still attend. We spent each day at the allotment, right through the winter. It was hard work, but a really exciting time.”

As the project expanded, Perlins moved into a workshop with a kitchen, office, art studio and woodwork shop, and even heating. It is a far cry from the early days, which some of the founder members still occasionally hark back to with nostalgia.

35 people attend the group, different people coming each day. The aim is to give people opportunities they wouldn’t normally get, to allow people to be respected as individuals and have the chance to make choices.

The patience and gentle encouragement of the community staff is evident, as is the delight the members take in their time at the allotment. Team work, and focus on personal skill development such as communication, can make a huge difference to the participants.
Celebrates 10 years at Park Road

When a group comes to Park Road, as well as working on their plot, they are always happy to help other people when they need an extra hand or two. All the woodwork for our second loo was done by the Perlins Community project.

To celebrate the past 10 years on the allotment, Perlins will be holding several afternoon barbecues during September. Cooking food harvested from the allotment (something that’s on the menu at the workshop most days throughout the year), it will be a chance to share the success and happiness of the plot with friends and family members of Perlins attendees. And any plotholders around at the time will be made more than welcome. M.K.

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 2019-20

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