

# Hempland Lane-Heworth Allotment Association



## Summer Newsletter 2023 Hot from the Hut!

### Committee Members

Name		Plot
Julian Ayres	Committee Member (Hempland Haven Rep)	67A & 67B
Ellen Bradbury	Committee Member	9
David Brinklow	Site Secretary and Treasurer	14
Nigel Collinson	Secretary	66
Alison England	Committee Member	49a
Gayle Enion-Farrington	Chair and Publicity Officer	34, 35
Moira Grainger	Committee Member	93a
George Hughes	Committee Member	108
Vacancy	Committee Member (Hempland Haven Rep)	
Lisa Tindale	Committee Member	59b
Vacancy	Committee Member	
Lorraine Wood	Shop Manager	64
Dave Wood	Shop Manager	64
Mark Farrington	Website Administrator (not part of the committee)	35

### Dates for your diary

#### Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 - Summer Fair in the Haven at Hempland Lane



Allotments 10am - 2pm. Starting at 10am with a coffee morning and merging into a 'Bring Your Own' BBQ lunch and refreshments from 12noon. There will also be a table top sale from 10am and an ice cream van visiting from 11am. BBQs will be lit at 11.30am, ready to start cooking at 12noon. BBQ (bring your own items to sizzle, but do not worry if you forget as some can be purchased on the day). Salads, bread rolls, sauces will be provided. See you there and please do not forget to bring something to sizzle, sit on (if you are not comfy on benches) and your favourite tipple!



#### National Allotments Week 2023 will run from 7<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2023.

#### Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 - Autumn Show in the Haven at Hempland Lane Allotments 10am - 2pm.

Starting at 10am with a coffee morning and merging into a 'Bring Your Own' BBQ lunch and refreshments from 12noon. There will be a produce show event and our **annual scarecrow competition** on the same day. The theme this year is **APPLES!** **Apple juicing event** - Bring all your apples on this day too and you can crop and press them on the day to create your own apple juice! We are hiring the apple press from St Nicks, who will also have a stall on the day. You will also need to bring your own containers for the juice! More information to follow so look out in Facebook or the posters around our site.



## Allotments, "Did you know"? "and one-liners".

There are currently 28,000 acres of land covered by allotments in the UK; I thought it would have been more than that!

At present there are around 250,000 plot holders in England with over 100,000 thought to be on waiting lists.

Apparently Carlisle has the highest number of allotments per 100k citizens at 66.

The majority of allotment sites are owned by local councils, parish councils & The Church of England.

To work and plant an allotment is to believe in tomorrow!

How many gardeners help with your plot? The most common answer to that one would be one or two. But, remember, in the very soil that you are working on all those smaller gardeners working 365 days a year, 24/7, helping your soil to survive & be alive. Watch out for them they are there albeit many of them you can't see with the naked eye.

Quote from Firs Estate Allotment Association - "Our association committee is youthful compared to most (Hemphall included): at least 50% are under 40, with a mix of genders, sexualities & diverse backgrounds!"

If you would like to volunteer to help reduce the average age & increase diversity of our association committee please contact Gayle our Chairperson. We are always open to new ideas so give it some consideration.

### **Wise words from Nigel**

I am sure the majority of you will have read the fact that "it is estimated that a teaspoon of soil contains 50 billion organisms, far more than the number of people on earth. So be kind to your soil giving it plenty of compost and mulch.

According to soil scientists the top metre of the world's soil contains three times more carbon than our entire atmosphere. So when we mulch & add surface compost we are helping to maintain this situation.

On the other hand, estimates say rotovating can damage this delicate ecosystem, just as much as a fire can decimate a forest. Certainly "food for thought"

As stated by the National Allotment Society (NAS) - an allotment is traditionally measured in rods (perches and poles). This is an old measurement dating back to Anglo-Saxon times. Ten poles (does anyone remember Tenpole Tudor - Throwing the baby out with the bath water?) is the generally accepted size of an allotment, about the size of a double tennis court.

As we all know with the immense strain on allotment waiting lists the normal nowadays is to be allocated half a plot!

A loyal & dedicated "plotter" is not your fair weather gardener. It is constant in the back of your mind, planning & thinking ahead. What you sow & plant today will be food for your table in the weeks & months ahead .....

### **Allotment conversations, do any of these ring a bell?**

Since I became the proud "renter" of an allotment I have luckily met many new like-minded people who I am happy to say have become friends. It is very well documented in nearly every newspaper, internet or gardening magazine article how good allotments & gardening in general is very good for peoples general well-being both mental & physical. What often are never mentioned are allotment conversations that people hold on virtually a daily basis? Following are a brief list of the most often discussed topics in general recently, in no particular order!

A new word that came into our lives, and vocabulary, not that long ago was **BREXIT**. It was certainly a divisive word as the voting confirmed being a nigh on 50/50 split with us leaving the EU. A lot of the talk was about "possible shortages" and how lucky we were to have access to an allotment to bolster our larders.

As perennial a subject to mull over with fellow "plotters", as much as bindweed or ground elder, is of course the **WEATHER**. It is something that affects all plot holders irrespective of if it's York, Kent or Cumbria. We obviously have no control over the weather cards we are dealt, high winds, heavy rain, late frosts, heat waves or fog. Whatever we wake up to & are challenged by we talk about it for hours. Chilly breeze today isn't it, it would be nice to see some sun, that frost dabbled my potatoes last night, the soil is so dry and on & on & on.

We like to know our fellow plot holder's **WELL-BEING**, which is good. I have not seen Sid from plot\*\* lately, do you know if they are okay? Muzzat from plot AB has been poorly do you know if they will need any help? We always like to know if people are okay & are they managing not just their plots but in general.

Another new word in our lives has been **COVID or Corona Virus**; we talked about it in bucket loads, for nigh on two years & at two metres distance. With people sadly being laid off work or furloughed it drove up national waiting lists for plots. All aspects of the illness were discussed from symptoms, to vaccinations, to effects on the NHS. Certainly virtually 100% opinion was how lucky we all were to have our plots to retreat to for some peace away from the constant media coverage.

**WEEDS**, I would think are discussed every day on allotment sites all over the country. Somewhere in most conversations mares' tail, docks, nettles, thistles, ground elder, bindweed, couch grass & buttercups crop up - other weeds are available! All suggestions from hoeing, digging out, strimming, weed killer (last resort), no-dig approach, eating them (where safe) & composting are considered. All plot holders will have their own way of dealing with them, some ideas possibly handed on from their dads or granddads?

**WAITING LISTS**, usually comments about the size of them & how they have grown in recent years. Most plot holders do appreciate how lucky they are to have a plot or half plot, and they are pleased they are not on the waiting list at present. Akin to this is the often passed comment have you seen plot BC, it has been uncultivated for ages, why isn't something done about it?

**PROGRESS** "how is you plot doing?" My potatoes are looking well this year but my carrots are struggling, my peas are cropping well but I had trouble germinating my parsnips. Everybody wants their plot to do well & to be productive. Even the most experienced plot holders experience failures & setbacks, most people seem to accept this & are quite happy to talk about it.

**SUNDAY REFRESHMENTS** - this gets a lot of comments in conversations & in itself is a great place to have conversations on a Sunday morning. It is greatly appreciated by plot holders, dog walkers & visitors to our site.

**HEMLAND ALLOTMENTS** - Thankfully many people express how much they enjoy visiting & walking around our site. It is obvious how much work goes on by us & how welcoming it is here. This I think is a "fitting end" to this conversation article.

**Nigel plot66**

**Plant Labels** - Love them or hate them plant labels are an important part of a "plotters" life. We have all either forgotten to put a label on a tray or pot of newly sown seeds and we may well recognise them when they germinate as lettuce or fennel, but what variety?

Some may say "does it matter", well to myself yes it does. If a particular variety does well I want to know so that I can grow it again the following year. Also it is a good reminder when I am doing my Kings seed order in the autumn via our association to re-order a successful cropper! On the other hand if turns out to be poor I want to avoid wasting my pennies on it in the future.

As for labels well the obvious choice are the basic plastic ones generally 4 inches & 6 inches in length like we stock in our shop. With careful use they will last for many seasons, just give them a good wash in winter possibly in a little bleach (be careful), a good scrub with a brillo pad and away you go for another season.

Alternatives are available as we all try to move away from using plastic. Used lollypop sticks work well, painted stones for use outside on your plot - a good project to get young children involved? Slate labels are good but purpose bought ones are expensive. If you can acquire some old slates & very carefully cut them they can be a winner. Homemade painted or varnished wooden labels can be good & again with care can last several seasons. Let us have your ideas!

**Nigel Collinson Plot 66**

### **Engineering for beginners**

I didn't realise when I got my allotment how much time I would be required to spend Building Things. I was prepared for digging and watering, I had heard of composting, and I was certainly ready to grow things. It turns out, however, that it is as much about black thumbs as it is green fingers...

The first hint I had of the structural requirements of fruit and vegetable growing came with the realisation that if I was going to actually get any strawberries to eat I would need to cover them over somehow. The prospect was daunting, but the handy allotment principle of "use whatever happens to be lying around" came to my rescue. Surely the wooden panels covered with ripped plastic netting lurking behind the shed were intended to either keep something out or something in? They looked very useful - or would be when the rotten corners had been bashed back together. This was quickly done by whacking in a few rusty nails with a half brick, in best DIY fashion. The torn netting, it turned out, could be mended with string, which felt faintly like old fashioned pictures of fishermen repairing their nets.



I love the allotment ethos of making do and mending, which dovetails very nicely with a birth right (Yorkshire) tendency to thriftiness (or meanness, as the unkind call it). My enthusiasm is however constrained by an absolute inability to see or execute a straight line - as witness my wavering rows of plants. I am also, it turns out, incapable of putting up more than two sticks to the same height, which is a great disadvantage when making anything for beans to climb up, or worse still anything remotely resembling a cage. My climbing roses are supporting their arch - I'm sure it's supposed to be the other way round... Neighbouring plots are adorned by structures of beauty - sheds made from scratch, squash activity centres that would grace any child's playground. There are even plots where plants seem to be secondary to the joy of constructing something with an enviable skill. I feel I should warn one of my very able neighbours (who has been known to use a *spirit level*) to look away when I'm attempting a bit of DIY, in case he sees something he may find upsetting.

Regardless of ability, though, there is satisfaction to be had in using old raspberry canes and tree pruning's to weave a frame for sweet peas, or in successfully preserving most of a crop from birds or caterpillars by judicious use of nets, sticks and a ball of string. I've also learned a couple of useful tips, which I'm very happy to share - dwarf kale doesn't need such a big cage, and birds don't seem to eat yellow autumn raspberries so there's no need to net them. Onions and sweetcorn blissfully require no mechanical help at all (begging the question of how some crops ever survived before gardeners were invented), so I consequently grow more of both than I can eat. I've noticed that this year I seem to have avoided most brassicas, and I suspect that it's because I'm subconsciously put off by their housing requirements.

My efforts may not look remotely like the lovely structures on offer in gardening magazines - not even the less delightful ones made of plastic rather than wrought iron - but they (mostly) do the job, and they are pleasingly economical. Some build to garden, for others gardening allows them to release their inner Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It is one of the many ways in which having an allotment calls for quite surprising talents.

**Alison England Plot 49a**

#### **Some amusing quotes:**

"Eleven months hard labour and one month's acute disappointment".

**John Heathcote-Amery "On Gardening" 1962**

"Perennials are the ones that grow like weeds, biennials are the ones that die this year instead of next and hardy annuals are the ones that never come up at all".

**Katharine Whitehorn**

#### **Fame at last!**



Nothing much to talk about on the allotment from except to note that the produce seems to have suddenly started to grow. My potatoes and the peas seem to be thriving now and today I noticed several strawberries are appearing (they are new plants this year).

Last Sunday was very busy on the Haven refreshment morning with the teas and coffees etc. About 10.30a, two

ladies arrived that I had not seen before. They perused the choice of cakes and ordered a drink to go with the cake and off they went to sit a table and enjoy their relaxing environment.

After half an hour one of the young ladies comes over and asked if she could speak to me about what we do every week and how the Haven came to exist and all of the allotment site. She said that she worked for a Swedish newspaper. But is based in London and would it be possible to do an interview with me. I said of course that was fine (nothing extraordinary about that!!). She asked me a million questions and later on she spoke with some of our regular customers.

She thought the whole concept was lovely and the cakes were amazing. I explained that it was all about bringing the community together to chat and make new friends. Obviously we made money from the produce and the coffee morning which is an added bonus. I had to talk for a long time which was very challenging for me 😊 But I obviously coped! I am happy to sign autographs of course! Bye for now. love Moria 😊

**Moira Grainger Plot 93a**

If you would like to write something for the next newsletter, please email it to [gayle.farrington@btinternet.com](mailto:gayle.farrington@btinternet.com).