

grass CUTTINGS

APR-2020

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, how do I start? we are all in 'odd times' to say the least and if the crystal ball gazers are correct, this status will continue for quite a period. Back to normality to our allotments and gardens, hopefully the bad weather has gone, some seeds and plants have germinated/started to grow after our spade work and raking. The fruit trees blossom has opened, now it's up to the bees and insects to complete their germination. I am about to plant out my onion plants which have been growing in the greenhouse, including the red variety from our Trading Hut, nicely packed by Elaine. Oh by the way, our regular nesting Robin has

continued its' activities during the Trading Hut closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. And talking about birds, I am watching the live Osprey web cam from Dunkeld via Google, which is approaching high interest of egg laying/incubation. An added plus whilst watching, you can check the weather near Stirling! Even our daughter in the USA is able to watch the happenings at Dunkeld.

May I wish you all to continue to safely isolate, remain healthy, enjoy the sunshine and hope for better times.

Best regards, Don Jackson

SHAS ANNUAL PLOT AWARDS

Trading Hut vouchers were awarded at the AGM to plot holders who have worked extremely hard to transform their neglected plots into productive spaces during the 2019 growing season:

Plot 57b - Best New Plot Holder

Maria Sykes and her sister, Irene

Plot 17a - well maintained plot

Andy Blacker

Kip Sumner was also mentioned for his transformation of Plot 62a, and Chris and Fiona Robinson for making a great start on Plot 40a.



Maria Sykes // Plot 57b



Andy Blacker // Plot 17a

// STOP PRESS We will **NOT** be doing an April plot inspection due to the current lockdown, not all members have been able to come down to the allotment site. Plot inspections will commence in June providing the current restrictions have been removed.



NEW PLOT HOLDERS

Welcome to our new plot holders, we wish them a rewarding and productive allotment experience.

Plot 9a // Louise Jeffries

Plot 34 // Drew Royal

COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Guidance from the National Allotment Society has been pinned to each gate. When visiting the allotments please take care, follow social distancing guidelines and stay safe.

TRADING HUT

Our Trading Hut is currently closed, however, we are looking at ways in which we can reopen. We'll let members know the details by email and on our website: www.shas.org.uk/TradingHut. The Hoedown remains closed until further notice.

SHAS ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Regretfully we have to cancel this year's annual bedding plant sale in view of the current Covid-19 restrictions.

FIRES AT THE ALLOTMENT

Fires are not allowed at the allotments from 1 April to 1 October.

GRASS PATHS

The cutting of the grass paths has once again restarted. Can all plot holders please cut back any plants overhanging the paths which might get in the way of the mower, and maintain a tidy 0.5 metre border around their plots. Any stones, bricks, or pieces of wood should also be cleared from paths around your plot as these can damage the mowers. Your help is greatly appreciated, as I'm sure everyone will agree, our grass paths are always very well maintained. **Thank you.**

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AGM 2020

Our AGM was held on Tuesday 3 March 2020 at 7.30pm at The Salvation Army Community Hall, Ashton Lane, Sale. Tony Turnbull chaired the meeting as, unfortunately, Don Jackson was unable to attend. Tony welcomed everybody to the meeting and began by reading out Don's report in which he noted that 2019 had been a good growing year, with flooding at a minimum thanks to United Utilities maintaining the River Mersey's banks and the benefit of drains laid in the past. Don reported that activity on the plots remains constant and we have a healthy waiting list. Don thanked all the members of the committee for their hard work during the year and Roger Snowden for cutting the grass paths. Particular thanks went to David Taylor who has now moved to Wilmslow to be nearer to his daughter. David has been helping out on the allotment for at least 15 years, and has been responsible for maintaining all the Society's ground care equipment. Ken Bostock has volunteered to take over looking after our equipment from David. **We wish David well for the future.**

Jane Lucas (Secretary) thanked committee members for their help and support over the year, including Janet Cripps for putting together Grass Cuttings. Jane reiterated the recent request for people to consider coming forward to join the committee to help manage and maintain the site.

Tony Turnbull (Membership Secretary) noted that at the end of 2019 membership numbers are stable, with a total of 146 members of whom 101 are active plot holders.

Tony reported that our current 10 year lease of the site ends on 31 March 2020. Negotiations with Trafford Council for a new lease, which will include a review of the rent, are due to commence shortly and we will endeavour to get the best possible deal for the Society. Rents were last increased by the Council in 2017 when, for a standard 250m² plot, the charge went up from £78 to £104 – a 33% increase. As this was such a large increase, the Committee decided to help plot holders by phasing in the increase over 3 years, with the 2019 increase still keeping the cost slightly below Trafford's full charge. Tony said that at this stage we do not know what Trafford's future rental charges will be, but they have indicated that future rises are likely to be in line with inflation.

Membership Fees – These are used to help cover day to day running costs including insurance, printing of Grass Cuttings and subsidies for social events and talks. They have remained constant for the last 13 years,

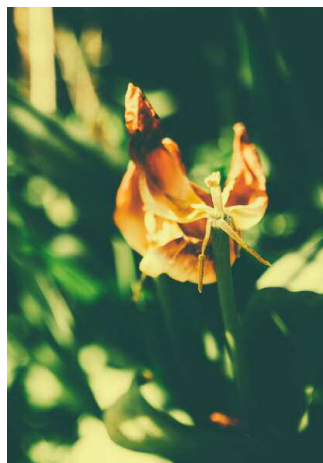
at £4.50 for full members and £4.00 for concession members. Members agreed to keep the membership fee at the same rates in 2021.

Peter Baggeley (Treasurer) presented the annual accounts for the year ending 2019, noting that we currently have a healthy bank balance. He thanked Jim Howling for once again auditing the accounts.

Louise Black (Plot Secretary) advised that 12 plots had changed hands in 2019. The weather had been very wet in January and February and some plots had been inaccessible. One plot holder had moved because of flooding, and another had moved to a larger plot. Regular plot inspections throughout the year ensured that, on the whole, plots are well maintained. The waiting list stands at about 10, with people generally waiting less than a year for a plot.

Elaine Watson (Trading Hut Manager) reported a busy year in the Trading Hut, made all the more enjoyable by our resident family of robins! Unfortunately, prices rose across the board but still remain competitive with garden centre prices. During the year concentrated seaweed extract was trialled which was a success and has now been added to the regular stock, information about it can be found on the website. Elaine thanked all the volunteers who help keep the Trading Hut running by serving in the shop or helping with deliveries.

Because of concerns about climate change, Elaine has been thinking about how much single use plastic is used in the Trading Hut and how this could be reduced. Any suggestions for ways in which we could reuse and reduce usage of plastic bags would be gratefully received.



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APPOINTMENT OF SOCIAL SECRETARY

Valerie Mulligan (Plot 8) has volunteered to become our Social Secretary. This is a role which, unfortunately, might be somewhat curtailed for the next few months because of the current Covid-19 emergency! But watch this space.

RETIREMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Tony advised that Don Jackson will be retiring as Chairman at the next AGM. Don has given a lot to the Society over many years as a plot holder, Committee Member and Chairman. The Committee are now looking at the role of the Chairman and how to fill this gap. There are interesting times ahead and the membership will be central in putting together ideas and initiatives, and getting actively involved in shaping the Society and taking it forward for the future. All members are asked to consider how they can offer their service and experience — if any member is interested in joining the committee or helping in any other way, please make yourself known to a Committee Member!

There was a lively discussion about the reports and a number of questions/points were raised by members:

// Capital/improvement plan: Tony explained that once we know the cost of any new commitments in the new lease, the Committee will be considering possible projects to improve the site and its facilities, and consulting with our members.

// Plot holder insurance – we were asked what public liability cover is included in the Society's insurance; does it cover only named plot holders, or all members, or friends and helpers? Clarification of this will be sought from our insurers and confirmed to members.

// Membership charges: It was suggested that the Committee should review the Membership charges to see if they are still appropriate for all types of members – full and concession, active plot holders and 'social' members, individuals and families. It was agreed that the Committee would look at this and report back at next year's AGM.

// Hedge cutting on the Grosvenor Road and Glebelands Road boundary. It is likely that the new lease will state whether hedge maintenance will be the responsibility of SHAS or the Council. When the new lease has been agreed and we know our commitments, hedge cutting options will be discussed by the Committee.

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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Tony Turnbull Membership, Plot 21
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Peter Baggaley Treasurer, Plot 7
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Louise Black Plots, Plot 36
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Elaine Watson Trading Hut, Plot 43a
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Janet Cripps Newsletter, Plot 44
T 962 3277

Kenneth Bostock Equipment, Plot 46
T 07982 622481

SHAS Website www.shas.org.uk

// Apple Press – a proposed social event, to be discussed at the next Committee Meeting.

// Bee Talk – details were passed to Valerie, to be discussed at the next Committee Meeting as another possible social event.



ROBIN IN THE TRADING HUT

On a happier note, a Robin made a beautiful nest under the counter in the Trading Hut. When the Trading Hut had to close at the end of March it contained five eggs. Elaine is pleased to report that all the chicks have recently fledged!