

Grass Cuttings

The Newsletter of Sale Horticultural & Allotment Society – June 2004

Chairman's Report

Those of you who came to the general meeting in April will know that four senior members of the SHAS committee; Graham and Carol Purkiss and Wendy and Geoff Talbot, resigned. The AGM was presented with evidence that there were very difficult issues of mismanagement which had to be addressed. Their resignations resulted from this.

At the AGM the membership were asked for volunteers who would be prepared to help sort out the problems and take the society forward. There has been really positive support, with some joining the committee and others helping in other ways such as the Trading Hut, Newsletter publications and the web site.

The new committee members are:



Don Jackson
Chair



Sylvia Steer
Secretary



Jonathan Richards
Treasurer



Ken Bostock
Membership



Nicola Lewis
Allotments



David Taylor
Equipment



Kevin Brooks
Groundsman

and
Ray Besso
Eric Pickup

We are already in the process of putting together an action plan setting out the way forward. We are all united in our determination to work for the benefit of the society in an open and transparent manner. Communication with all SHAS members –both general and plot holders- will be a priority and we are currently looking at different ways of doing this.

Let me bring you up to date with recent happenings:-

Our financial accounts are now in a more organized and healthier condition - see Jonathan's article.

On 14 July, two representatives from each of Trafford M B C allotments sites are having a Tour of Selected other Allotments in the Borough and SHAS Grosvenor Road Allotments are one of the sites selected. We therefore ask **each one of our allotment holders to complete a special tidy of their allotment including cutting all surrounding paths prior to the 13 July**; this request is for both appearance and for safety reasons. Trafford and SHAS will also be judging the best plots for awards in early July

Electricity is laid on into the Amenity Building, but we await the installation of the meter! Our requests for grants to pay for the electrics and to fit out the inside have been very successful, The Manchester Airport Community Trust donated £2324 for the electric connection, Sale Charities Management Committee for Brooks Institute have donated £1000 towards the fitting out and AGE Concern have donated £120 for 2 folding card tables. SHAS wishes to thank each of the organizations for generosity. There is one outstanding request for folding chairs, tables and accessories which I will keep you posted. We have bought the materials and started to install the roof and wall insulation. By the first week in July **we will be looking for volunteer painters** who can spare the odd half hour to help, we will be having small working parties each Monday and Tuesday night from 6.30 – 9.00pm, if you can help

please just turn up with a medium paint brush or put your name when you can help on the Amenity Hut notice board or give me a ring.

We had a visit to our allotments by around 60 pupils and 4 teachers from Park Road Junior School on the 30 May, the purpose was to show how fruit and vegetables are grown and to encourage interest in gardening, I felt the visit was very successful and it will be repeated later, my thanks to Ken Bostock for helping

We know how many of you value the SHAS social events. As well as the chance to get together, the events can be interesting and informative and fun for everyone. The revenue raised can be used to generate more socials and other benefits. The committee feel that the organising of these events have so much potential and are too important and to be left just to us to organise. For this reason we are asking if anyone would be interested in helping with organising socials, share ideas or simply help on the day. So many of our members have really valuable skills and buckets of energy and enthusiasm - if you can help contact me or any of our Committee.

Our Show and Charity Sale has had to be postponed until next year, but we will be holding a Table Top Sale on Sunday 11 July 10 am - 2.00 pm where produce and other items can be sold similar to a car boot sale, see separate news item for cost details.

Don Jackson

Treasurer's Report

Hello everyone-well the good news is the plans put in place in February now seem to have us back on an almost even keel. The plant sale made around £400 and the administration costs have been slashed by around £600 on what they were this time last year. This is **real** money in our pocket! So much so that for the first time in what seems an eternity, we have had cash to pay for equipment servicing and repairs – see Nicola's article.

We have cash now to provide at least one or two skips on site this year. The Trading Hut continues to operate at around £40 per week sales when it is open, so not only is it providing a service to members, it is contributing a little to the overall finances of SHAS. We aim to use some of these profits to partly fund some sort of gala evening/hot pot supper type event for members later this year –watch this space!

For those that are interested, summary half yearly accounts will be available on request sometime mid July. There is summary of the trading hut weekly sales available to view in the trading hut every Sunday morning and the Executive Committee get a monthly update and projected cash flow position. All in all a vast improvement on the information that was previously available.

Best Regards, Jonathan Richards

Allotments

Just a quick note to tell you about the changes you will see over the next few months in the management of the allotments.

It seems that over the years there have been a number of drafts of the tenancy agreement. This means that many of you will have different versions of the rules that govern the site. As a newly formed committee we recognised that in our drive for clarity and improved management the tenancy agreement should be revised. The new agreement will be clearer and more concise. With everyone having the same straightforward agreement there should be no-one who feels that the rules of the society are unfair or unclear. The new agreement is one of the first priorities and you will be hearing more about this shortly.

We are continuing the process of plot inspections as there are a number of plots in a very unsatisfactory condition. With over 12 people on the waiting list and interest in vacant plots growing on a weekly basis, we can not justify allowing plots to be uncultivated. The plot holders identified will be approached sensitively to find out if they have been experiencing particular difficulties that have meant they have been unable to work their plots. If you wish to give up all or a portion (half) of your plot please contact me as soon as possible.

Other changes:

- re-measuring of plot boundaries
- provision of a skip for the disposal of non green site rubbish
- reassessment of site facilities such as machinery and manure provision
- mowers and strimmers are now available –contact Kevin for details
- Limit on the number of plots held placed on any one plot holder to the equivalent of two full plots from 1st January 2005

Memberships

We are rapidly approaching the middle of the Society year and to date there are approximately 50 members who have not yet renewed their membership for 2004. A small proportion of these are plot holders and if they do not renew their membership they are in breach of their Tenancy Agreement. Please would all people who wish to continue as members bring their memberships up to date as soon as possible. There is a list in the Trading hut of all memberships for which I have no record of a 2004 payment being made. If your name is on this list and you are sure you have paid, please contact me and I will attempt to reconcile the problem.

Amenity Building

With regard to our Amenity Building progress has been slow over the winter and spring periods mainly due to lack of light and power. We have only managed to lay a new floor and carry out a limited amount of internal painting. The electricity supply mains cable has been laid into the building and the meter is due to be installed by mid June. Once we have the power available we are not bound by the limits of natural light and work can be done at any time. The next task is to complete the installation of wooden cladding to the internal walls of the building. The roof will then be insulated and all the gaps under the eaves sealed. On the outside of the building we have to paint the gutters and seal the base of the walls and floor to stop the ingress of water under the walls. By winter this year we should have a cosy and warm building. Will all volunteers for painting please leave their names on volunteers list to be posted on

the information board on the front of the Amenity Building?
Many thanks, Ken Bostock.

Help needed!

Our trading hut is one of the focal points of the society and we depend on our volunteers for its operation.

Keith Jones has long been spending his Friday mornings bagging up fertilisers and compost for us. This is an arrangement he says is 'set in stone'. What a gem! He has now also taken on the task of ordering from our suppliers. On a Sunday morning you can survey the results of all this hard work on the shelves.

Can I appeal to you to spare the time for an occasional Sunday morning duty in our trading hut? It is not an onerous hour and a half. Most of it is spent in listening to pleasantries such as 'my spuds have got the blight', or 'you should see the club root on my brassicas' or 'those ***slugs have eaten every one of my little gems!' A smiling face and sympathetic ear can cope with such situations. During the busy time of year, three people together make the job easier. From 10.30am until 12.00 you sell our stock and write receipts for members, totalling up at the end and passing the takings to the treasurer. It's a good way to feel involved without taking on a regular commitment like Keith.

Please contact any committee member if you are willing to be put on the rota. To those already helping, my heartfelt thanks.
Sylvia Steer

Seed Scheme

Thank you to all who made use of our seed scheme this year. Kings and Marshalls offer very good value on multiple orders so our society gets the benefit. By now you should be seeing results from those tiny dried up fragments. From peas and pansies to sunflowers and strawberry sticks, may all your seeds flourish this year.

Stop Press

There will be a stock take in the Trading Hut over the next week or so resulting in a few items available at cost or even cheaper-make sure you're there on 11th July for these bargains!