

St John's Allotment Association 1983

AGM 12 April 2021

Plot Secretary's Report 2021

Plot Inspections:

The April 2019 plot inspections were well attended, but the follow up inspection for June was poorly attended. Despite this, some eleven plots were identified as giving some concern about their condition. These were followed up and the majority of tenants responded well. Three tenants have since relinquished their plots and these have been re-let.

Due to the ongoing situation with Covid 19, plot inspections were suspended for 2020. Plot inspections will be reinstated and will be held on 25 April and 27 June this year (2021). We now have a considerable waiting list for plots, so if you are unable to cultivate all of yours please consider going down to half a plot. Higher standards of cultivation are expected when we have a long waiting list. In the April inspection we expect to see your plot mostly dug and evidence that planting has begun. In June we are looking for the plot fully dug and mostly planted.

Working Party:

A working party was held in May 2019 and there were a number of skips to separate steel and plastic from general waste. A significant amount of waste was removed from the site. Many thanks to all who helped, especially Nick and Sue Sumners.

Plot Turnover:

In the year 2019 - 2020 there was a turnover of 17 plots. There were three untenable plots that had been vacant for several years and were in extremely poor condition, needing rubbish clearance and significant work to make them suitable for letting.

During last year (2020) the three untenable plots were cleared thanks to the efforts of a small group of volunteers and have been let to new tenants who were prepared to take on plots that required a lot of effort to bring them up to good working condition. Two of the plots are now in excellent condition and one is work in progress. This is all down to the efforts of the new tenants who have worked hard in a short period of time to turn these plots round.

During the current year there has been a turnover of 18 plots. Unfortunately there was one tenant eviction. The condition of this plot was extremely poor and had a significant amount of accumulated rubbish. A small working party and the cost of a skip hire was required to clear this plot.

The association has paid for a number of skips this last year, (six in total). This is a huge cost to the association and plot holders are reminded not to accumulate unwanted or unusable materials on their plots. It is the plot holders' responsibility to keep plots clear of rubbish and where this is not adhered to, they may be asked to remove this at their own expense.

Since May 2020, the association has had a full tenancy allocation and where plots have become vacant, this has been for a short period of time and new tenants have been allocated almost immediately on vacation of the plot.

The association has a very healthy waiting list and although this is a continuously fluid situation, we currently have a waiting list of circa twenty-five people (25). There has not been any major recruitment, but the higher than average waiting list is thought to be due to the Covid 19 factor, where people have become more aware of the value of an allotment space with its many advantages.

Bonfires:

We received a number of complaints regarding the nuisance of bonfires, from plot holders and from a neighbours, including the football club There is no change to the rules regarding bonfires, but Tenants are reminded of the rules relating to bonfires: *Rule 1.4.2 That bonfires do not cause danger, nuisance or annoyance to other tenants and/or the occupiers of neighbouring land. Only dry, organic matter may be burned, and fires may not be started with petrol, engine oil, methylated spirit or similar.*

Ecological Area:

Following the working party in May '20, there was an area at the top of track one where during our clearance works we had breached the neighbouring boundary hedge. The neighbour has questioned the line of the boundary and investigations concluded a defined boundary exists. This has since been re-established by the new dead hedge and existing tree line. This area was in poor condition and has now been accepted as an area we can use to establish an ecological habitat. Chris Othen has been working on this and has laid a dead hedge along the existing hedge line. Logs and timber piles have been laid to encourage insects.

Further improvements have continued to the area at the top of track one. Large amounts of rubbish and the remnants of a large wooden greenhouse have been removed. As already stated, one of the untenable plots is at the top of track one is now tenanted. The adjacent turning area was cleared of rubbish and is now part of the area that is now mowed. The ecological area continues to evolve and there are plans to further improve this area by planting hawthorn and other natural planting.

The association was approached as part of a wider study of allotments across Warwickshire to take part in an ecological study. This involved a study by Coventry University, where the thinking is that allotments have generally remained unchanged over the years, whereas agriculture is changing, having major impact on the countryside ecology. The survey was carried out on four discrete plots in different areas on the site, along with all the communal areas across the whole site. An Initial survey was carried out last summer and a follow up survey is due to take place this spring. The feedback from the survey will be shared once available.

Personal Thanks

As Plot Secretary, my personal thanks go out to Chris Othen. Chris did a sterling job as the previous incumbent for many years and is a hard act to follow. Since I have taken over as Plot Secretary in April '20, Chris continues to be available to provide advice and assistance when needed. Thanks Chris, very much appreciated.

Arthur Belgrove
Plot Secretary

