



NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

As most of you will be aware, the Association has been negotiating the terms of a new lease, which will run from next April. The next meeting with Fareham is scheduled for 30th November so the terms may be agreed in time to be presented to members at the A.G.M. The committee entrusted the negotiations to a sub-committee whose members were the acting Chairman, the Treasurer, the Secretary and Kit Colson, one of the Warsash Site Managers. The association has received the proposed revisions and these were discussed at the November committee meeting. The main points are outlined in greater detail later in the Newsletter.

One particular item, though, has been rejected unanimously by the committee --- this being the proposal by Fareham Borough Council to change the start of our year from October to April. The change was resisted when the present lease was negotiated, meeting with the same strenuous response.

Our present arrangements, instigated by the old Fareham Urban District Council, are based on the traditional quarter-days (these being Lady Day-25th March; Midsummer Day-24th June; Michaelmas-29th September and Christmas-25th December) when rents were payable and tenancies began. As well as continuing with tradition, the present arrangement has considerable practical advantages for the Association.

Firstly, rent collection, preparation of the accounts and organisation of the A.G.M. occur at a time when the workload on one's plot is minimal, i.e., at the end of the growing season. Secondly, new tenants have the longest period in which to prepare their plots and growing plans. Thirdly, a start in April or May would compress the growing season and create unacceptable pressure to get plots cultivated. Finally, a considerable amount of additional maintenance would be created for site managers to tidy up unlet plots at the busiest time of the horticultural calendar.

Why does everything have to conform nowadays so that individuality and tradition are suppressed? It is particularly galling in this instance because one cannot see that our internal procedures have any bearing on the processes of local authority since we do not have to pay them any rent. The committee would welcome your views on this matter. A few letters of support would strengthen our negotiating position considerably.

FINDING ANOTHER CHAIRMAN

One did not think that this item would appear in this Newsletter, but regrettably Ray Brown, the Acting Chairman, has informed the committee that he does not wish to be considered for election as Chairman at the A.G.M. and that he will also be resigning as a Sarisbury Site Manager. His short reign in the chair has made a considerable impression in the committee. In the 23 years that your editor has been a member of the association, there has never been a time when every plot in Sarisbury had a tenant, as was the case this summer. Ray is an activist in the honourable trade unionist tradition (not the Fred Kite

image of *I'm all right Jack*) and he gets people moving --- his repartee will be missed at the committee meetings!

This therefore means that the Association now has to find a replacement. If anyone would like to try their hand, or can persuade a colleague to stand, please provide the details to one of the Officers. The duties are not onerous. Other than presiding over the bi-monthly committee meetings and attending the quarterly Liaison Meetings at the Civic Offices there is an optional commitment to assist in the annual Fareham Allotment Competition.

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

My brief spell of 10 months as Acting Honorary Chairman has been busy but very enjoyable. During the past year we have endeavoured to clean up the sites, which with your help has been very rewarding.

I serve on five other committees and haven't sufficient time to devote to allotment business. From the Secretary, Treasurer, Jim Lett and Site Managers you couldn't find a more dedicated bunch of people! I valued their assistance very much.

If you have any friends that would like a plot please hurry them along. This is a great

association and everyone has information to impart and we also operate every day of the week.

Many of you will have completed your winter digging, don't forget to plant your broad beans and lay dug-up rhubarb crowns on the surface to catch the frost. Put your nettles and Hoover bag rubbish on your compost heaps and please keep your paths cut and free of debris.

To my successor I say don't wait for it to happen, go out there and do it. The plot holders and Site Managers will appreciate you for it.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous and fruitful New Year. R.B.

JIM LETT HUT

OPEN SUNDAYS 10am NOON

Those of you who have visited the shop recently would have seen that we have already received next year's supply of manures, growbags, chemicals and potting composts. Many thanks to the willing hands that assisted with the unloading and stacking of the items in the shop. Without your assistance we would be unable to purchase these items in bulk.

For new members of the association may I introduce you to our trading hut. It was named the Jim Lett Hut in appreciation for all the work that Jim has carried out on behalf of the Association over the 17 years he has been our Trading Secretary. He is willing to carry on for another year!

The shop sells a wide range of potting composts, John Innes mixtures, manures, seeds and horticultural sundries. At the appropriate time, one is also able to purchase onion sets, shallots and seed potatoes. For crop protection and weed suppression various types of fleece and plastic sheeting are sold by the metre or yard at about half normal retail prices. All advice comes free-of-charge.

In order to see our full range, visit us any Sunday morning. You will be surprised at the range and the low prices. If we can't beat B & Q prices we don't stock it. B.J.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ALLOTMENT AND LEISURE GARDENERS (NAALG)

One of our newer tenants at Hunts Pond Road, Harry Head, is an individual member of NAALG. He has suggested that the benefits to our Association might be discussed at the A.G.M. With this in mind, he has kindly written the following note to provide members with a brief introduction.

Since seed ordering time is here again and as a newish Titchfield Common member I was interested to know if our Association is affiliated to the NAALG. No, we are not members at the moment. This organisation suffers from a somewhat old-fashioned image, which in my opinion is quite a wrong one.

True it was established at the birth of the allotments movement and has an

interesting history, but it is well managed and backed by the Environment Agency. The main advantage to ordinary "plotters" is, of course, the discounted seed list. Kings Seeds take a pride in providing top class seeds to affiliated members at about 40% of current catalogue prices. Their list offers more choice than almost any other, including latest varieties, continental types and old favourites.

Association benefits are the provision of specialized insurance policies with competitive premium rates to cover buildings and contents, growers' advice service, the strength of a national group to our committee, including legal advice. At £1 per membership (we have about 300 members currently ed) many associations consider it good value and is worth consideration at the A.G.M. Harry Head

THE NEW LEASE

Introduction

In 1994, the Association negotiated a new lease with Fareham Borough Council that was radically different from any of the preceding leases. The essential difference was that the Association could retain all rental income but would be responsible for nearly all site maintenance. In previous agreements most of the rents had been handed over to Fareham who then carried out the maintenance. The new arrangements have worked well, and the lease was extended by mutual agreement for a further year so that it now finishes at the end of March 2000.

Maintenance

Fareham recognizes that the leases have worked satisfactorily and therefore do not oppose the Allotment Associations' application for new tenancies. Fareham are concerned that some aspects of maintenance have been neglected by some associations (not the WWAA) with the result that they have incurred unscheduled expense caused by neglect. They are therefore proposing that the associations create annual maintenance schedules and costed project schedules. The committee sees no difficulty with this since we already generate most of this information for the auditor to include in our annual accounts.

Trading Hut profits

Fareham is concerned that profits from the Trading Huts are not being used appropriately and are asking for details of Trading Accounts. Again we provide this information for our annual audit and we do not think that the WWAA will have any difficulty with this. One can visualize a certain amount of earnest discussion if there is an attempt to constrain too closely how the profits should be spent.

Rents

At the moment, rentals are required to be raised annually, generally in line with the Retail Price Index. We are the only Association to have done this, albeit at biannual intervals for convenience, with the result that our rents are now higher than those of the other societies. Fareham wants to ensure that allotment rentals are uniform throughout the borough, and are therefore proposing that they be set at £1.75 per rod on 1st April 2000 and be raised biannually by all associations. A survey by Fareham has shown that allotment rents in the borough are now well below those of neighbouring authorities. We proposed that flexibility should be allowed in the formula for calculating rents so that if all parties were in unanimous agreement, then the rents could reflect the circumstances prevailing at the time. Fareham have agreed to this proposal even though they might be in a 3:1 minority!

Length of lease

It is proposed that the new lease should run for 16 years. There are considerable legal complications (but do not ask what these are) if leases run for more than 21 years, so the committee has accepted this proposal.

Termination of lease

If, for whatsoever reason, a lease should terminate, we asked what would happen to trading stock, banked monies etc. held by an association. Fareham would require a sum to cover the cost of any repairs and maintenance that would be needed during the period paid for by the individual plot holders, e.g., hedge-cutting. Fareham could also demand that they be reimbursed for any maintenance backlog. The stock and remaining balances could then be divided between association members (about £30 each if this were to happen now!) or disposed of in an approved manner such as a charitable donation.

Required maintenance

Our present lease allows Fareham to demand that specified repairs are completed within three months — typically hedge cutting. The wording in the existing lease is such that it would seem that Fareham could do this and send us the bill. We have asked that the wording be clarified so that we are given the opportunity to carry out the work ourselves before they take action.

Sheds

We asked that maximum sheds sizes could be the same as for greenhouses, i.e., 8 ft x 6 ft. This has been agreed.

Trading hut opening hours

The present lease requires that the huts "are open" for 4 hours per week. We asked that this be amended to "may be open" and this has been agreed.

Water supplies

The good news is that Fareham are still prepared to pay for the water supplied to allotments. They have suggested, however, that should extra outlets be installed (which we are required to pay for in our existing lease), then the council would be within its rights to require the association to meet the extra costs. We will obtain clarification of this point at the 30th November meeting since this may restrict our ability to provide extra taps on our sites.

Position of tenants resident outside Fareham

The present lease restricts tenancies to residents of Fareham Borough Council. We asked that this be altered to reflect our usual situation of having non-Fareham tenants and vacancies and that we be allowed to grant tenancies to "outsiders". We were willing to give Fareham residents priority on any waiting list, should there be one, which would have meant that we contravened the present requirement that applications for plots are treated on a first-come first-served basis. Fareham have agreed to this but with the condition that Tenancy Agreements for new non-residents include a clause whereby if demand should change the tenancy could be terminated on 12 months notice. We expect to be able to confirm that this condition does not apply to existing tenants.

Responsibilities of Fareham on present lease

Fareham are required to carry out major repairs which shall include additional site huts, new toilet huts, new access roads and parking areas, structural repairs to existing buildings if this is due to fair wear and tear and not neglect, life expired roofing, ventilation necessitated by statutory regulation and removal of hazardous materials (e.g. asbestos in site huts, but not in tenants' huts). These items are mandatory on Fareham.

The considered opinion of the committee is that the new lease is acceptable. We hope that you agree with us and endorse the new lease at the A.G.M.. If anyone has any comments, please contact one of the members of the sub-committee so that your views can be reflected in the discussions at the meeting in Fareham.

MISCELLANEA

- **Current letting position.** The position this year is much improved when compared with last year thanks to the improvements at Sarisbury and Hunts Pond Road. At Hunts Pond Road, there are currently about 165 rods vacant, with a dozen tenants not having paid. Even if they all give up, we will still be considerably better off than with the 315 rods vacant last year.
- **Vouchers.** At its November meeting, the Committee agreed to create a voucher system, redeemable in the Jim Lett Hut, to reward anyone who has given notable unpaid help to the Association. To safeguard the interests of members, the vouchers must be countersigned by the Chairman and Treasurer and will need to be accompanied with the normal maintenance form. They will be limited to £20 in value, to match the sum that Site Managers can authorize without a second signature, and must be used in the association's year in which they are issued.

AND FINALLY

I hope you enjoy this contribution by Brian Coles, our former chairman, as much as I have. I know the feeling well

*I'm used to my arthritis,
to my dentures I'm resigned.
I can cope with my bi-focals
but by heck I miss my mind.*

*I sometimes can't remember
when I'm standing on the stair
if I'm going up for something
or coming from up there.*

*Before the fridge so often
my mind is full of doubt,
Now did I put that stuff away
or come to take it out.*

*I walk to the allotment
with bucket, spade and fork
all full of good intentions
of doing lots of work.*

*When I arrive down on the plot
I stand and wonder where
I'm going to plant those seedlings,
whether here or over there.*

*At last I've made my mind up,
I'll get my rake and make a bed
I'll put it over there.
D*** it's back home in the shed.*

*When evening comes and I relax
I think it's true to say,
retirement is such a busy time
and what a shocking day.*