



WESTERN WARDS ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Occasionally, an event occurs which provokes considerable pleasure and a feeling of pride that one is associated with it. On October 2nd, in Fareham Borough Council Chamber, sometime after 7.30 p.m. such an event will happen, because it is then that the Mayor will present a plaque to Minnie Thomas of our Warsash site in recognition of her 75 years' association with allotments. She started in 1921 by helping her parents and has for many years now been the tenant of her mother's former plot, after her father's plot became part of what is now the car park.

The loyalty and friendship that is engendered by so long an unbroken and continuing relationship is, for your Committee, a welcome antidote to the apparent indifference shown by most members to the efforts to encourage the social activities of the Association. About 20 tickets were bought by members for the Classic FM Gardening Forum broadcast, and about 12 tenants expressed interest in our proposed trips, out of a membership approaching 300.

There is an opportunity for members to show that the Committee is realistic in wishing to broaden the activities of the Association by forwarding suggestions of how to celebrate our 25th Anniversary next year and the Millennium in 4 - 5 years' time (which is it, 1999, 2000 or 2001?). The broadcast of a year ago was intended to fulfil the former occasion, so new ideas are needed. If any of you have proposals, please pass them on to your Site Managers or the Officers. Any received will be reported in next January's Newsletter.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Once again it's Newsletter time and once again it's rent renewal time. Where has the year gone since I am sure the seasons get shorter and closer together the older you get? Did we really have a winter between last year's heat wave and the current one?

At a recent meeting of the Allotment Associations and the Council we were advised of two problems that had occurred on allotments. Some new houses on a site next to an allotment had reported a problem with rats, which were traced to heaps of rubbish stacked up against the boundary fence. In another case a fire was started by vandals on an allotment and because of the rubbish stacked up against the boundary, the firemen had difficulty in preventing damage to the householder's fence. This could have led to legal action against Fareham Borough Council. The outcome of these discussions is that all Associations have

been asked to seek the co-operation of their tenants who have plots adjoining property to ensure that a strip one metre wide is kept clear along the boundary fence. This does not mean you cannot grow crops up to your boundary, just do not establish or maintain rubbish/compost heaps within the stipulated area. If you do have a compost heap against a fence, could you please move it or start a new one away from it.

Finally, congratulations to this year's prize winners in the annual Allotment Competition. This year, our Association had 8 entries out of which 4 received mentions in dispatches. I wish they would share the secret of their success with me. I can assure you it's not only hard work, since no matter how hard I toil I seem to achieve nothing. My wife is convinced I have a full-time job down there, although it may have something to do with trying to keep out of the way!

I am sure that most of you are aware of the very competitively priced range of products on sale in the Jim Lett Hut. If not, then it is high time you paid us a visit and found out. We offer exceptionally good deals on many items with a loading service second to none.

**The bargain this Autumn is undoubtedly Autumn sown onion sets.
They are now in the shop priced at 50p per ½ lb.**

I have grown this English variety for the past eight years and have found them a very useful addition to the allotment. From about April they can be used in salads and then as they develop in late May, just when you have used up all the onions you had in store over the winter, they can be used as a normal onion. The flavour is similar to that of their Japanese counterparts, fairly mild and sweet. Plant them

as for normal onion before about mid- October, give them some protection from birds (cutting away the tails helps, the onion tails not those of the birds although this would probably be just as effective !), give them a feed in February / March and you will be well rewarded with very early onions to keep you going until the main crop arrives.

Bill Jacob

We shall shortly be losing the services of Ron Holbrow, for the past twelve years Jim's right-hand man and stand-in. During this time, besides all his outstanding work in the Jim Lett Hut, he has been also a well-informed and loyal member of the Committee, maintained all our machinery for six years, and was able to help many of our tenants with sound horticultural advice when asked. His knowledge on the use and abuse of fertilizers is unrivalled.

- THANKS, RON, FROM ALL OF US -

This obviously raises the question of future arrangements for the hut. Ideally, we would like someone who could spare two hours most Sunday mornings and would be willing to learn the ropes so that they could take over the running of the Trading section when Jim finally "retires". The Association recognises the valuable role of the members who help run the Hut by awarding honorariums to them, although this cannot equate to the value of the service they provide. If you are interested in helping please contact the Treasurer.

Although this is the Committee's preferred solution, if no one volunteers, we will look at the possibility of establishing a rota system to assist Jim. In this case though, payment of honorariums will present problems, and as the Committee believes that service to the Association should be rewarded where possible, a voucher system could be introduced to be used to obtain items from stock. Please let us have your thoughts on this idea.

RENTS FOR 1996 - 1997

The terms of our lease allow the Committee to raise rents in line with the Retail Price Index, if they so wish. Last year it was decided, in view of the reasonable balance sheet, not to raise rents particularly as this would have involved asking tenants to pay rents involving awkward sums, and we have enough problems already trying to find change for those who pay by cash. It has been agreed that Association membership fees remain unchanged. However, now that it has been possible to formulate the number and cost of maintenance projects, the Committee has decided to increase rents this year.

Unfortunately, it has been noted that there are a number of tenants who cause the Association considerable trouble, irritation and expense by failing to pay their rents within the period allowed by the rules (the end of October). In view of this, the Committee has agreed that a rebate is to be offered to tenants who pay their rents before the end of October. The rents for 1996 - 1997 are listed in the table

RENTS FOR 1996 - 1997

No. of rods	Full price (£)	Price after rebate (£)
2.5	5.50	4.50
5	9.50	8.50
7	12.70	11.70
8	14.30	13.30
10	18.50	16.50
12	21.70	19.70
15	26.50	24.50
18	31.30	29.30
20	34.50	32.50
25	42.50	40.50
30	50.50	48.50
40	66.50	64.50

ALLOTMENT COMPETITION

The following tenants were successful in this year's competition.

Plots over 5 rods	Don Paul	Sarisbury	2nd prize
	Robin Halliday	Hunts Pond Road	3rd prize
	Jason Ford	Hunts Pond Road	Runner - up
Plots under 5 rods	Ron Shipp	Hunts Pond Road	Runner - up

The prizes and certificates will be awarded after the next Allotment Liaison meeting on October 2nd.

MISCELLANEA

- ◆ **Plots clean - up.** The Committee has decided that as from next May, there will be an inspection of all our sites, and eviction warnings will be issued to those who have failed to cultivate their plots and cannot offer reasonable extenuating reasons. Until two years ago so much of our income was paid to Fareham that we could not afford to do this since we would have been in danger of defaulting. The Committee thinks it is time to improve the overall standard of our sites, now we are in a position to do so.
- ◆ **Committee changes.** Barbara Marjoram, who has represented our Hunts Pond Road site for three years is resigning. The Committee is grateful for her contribution during this time and wishes her well for the future. We are fortunate that Norman Hatch has agreed to be nominated for the vacancy.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The A.G.M. has been arranged for ^{20th} ~~31st~~ **WEDNESDAY 20th NOVEMBER**
in the **LOCKSWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Any items for inclusion on the Agenda should be submitted in writing to one of the Officers by
SUNDAY OCTOBER 20th

Any proposal or nomination must have a proposer and seconder to be accepted.

WATER

Finally, a postscript to the water debate raised in the last Newsletter. First, it appears to the Committee that there has been an excellent response by most tenants to the pleas to reduce consumption, judging by the lack of hoses lying around the sites. We have also been fortunate in that one of our Warsash tenants was able to obtain, free of charge, a considerable number of large blue plastic barrels suitable as use for water butts. He has indicated that more may be available next year, so if you need one for your plot, please let your Site Manager know. It was also a pleasant surprise for the Editorial Office(!?) to receive the letter reproduced below. Dave Randall is a long-established Warsash tenant. Apologies for the small font size of the letter, space is at a premium but the letter is quite controversial and raises several points worthy of further discussion.

Dear Sirs,

The question of water use on the allotments (especially if we are lucky enough to have more summers like 1995) has become a major point of discussion and, as you requested comments, may I put forward this alternative , albeit controversial, solution to the high use of water which is the current practice of many allotmentees ... REMOVE ALL TAPS AND USE RAINWATER ONLY.

We know water is a valuable and limited natural resource and should be conserved. Over the last few years - because of the need to maximise the limited time I have available - I have worked my allotment on this basis "Plant it, water the plant to settle it - and, from then on, it's on its own." I do not water any crop once it has settled and this has meant that my water use is limited to a few watering-can-fulls a year. To achieve good results requires planning and preparation - the main points of consideration are :-

- 1. Most allotments have areas that keep moist longer than other areas. Enhance this by good soil preparation - incorporating as much humus as possible, stable manure, compost, even annual weeds will all help.*
- 2. Hand digging in the late winter / spring to "fluff" the soil up to avoid compaction by weather, raking, or treading - down. It is vital, at all costs, to avoid digging during the summer because of the immediate moisture loss created by turning in the top soil and exposing the moist lower levels.*
- 3. Plant crops so that their water requirements match the moisture profile of the allotment - i.e. early maturing crops (early peas, broad beans or over - wintering crops which have long growing seasons) should be planted in areas which dry out first and crops which require moisture in the height of the summer should be planted in areas which retain moisture longer.*
- 4. Maintain a programme of hoeing so that crusting of the soil cannot occur. The benefits are the cutting down of evaporation from the soil; allowing the immediate absorption of any rain and the avoidance of competition by weeds for the valuable moisture.*
- 5. Provision of shade, or a mulch, at the roots of the plants to cut down on evaporation.*
- 6. Under no circumstances start watering once plants are able to stand without severe wilting. If you water this will draw the plant roots to the surface - root growth is promoted when they go deeper to find moisture. Plant in depressions to shade the roots - thus placing the roots into deeper soil layers and concentrate on the initial watering in.*

I realise most of the points outlined will be akin to "teaching my grandmother to suck eggs" but I have better things to do with my time than trying to coax out the dribble of water which is available - generally - from the allotment taps. With some thought and preparation the need for the thousands of pounds worth of water that are used can be cut dramatically and we could be wearing out the deck chairs and getting suntans.

Yours faithfully
D. Randall