



City of Ely Allotments Association

Spring 2016 Newsletter

www.elyallotments.com

View from the Chair

So another year has rolled by and the Annual General Meeting is nearly upon us once again.

The year has been a strange mixture of moving forward in some things and standing still in others. The implications of the Southern Bypass on the Bridge Fen site are clearer but we still do not have a date for its commencement, just a statement saying it should be finished in 2017. The threat to the New Barns site from the cemetery expansion has virtually disappeared due partly to a change in the burial regulations and the freeing up of more space on the site.

The winter weather has been, apart from a recent cold spell, mild and wet. However we do not seem to have suffered from the amount of surface water on the plots, particularly on New Barns, as we did last year.

We only have vacant plots on Bridge Fen, the other sites being full. There is still a waiting list as allotments continue to be in demand. The waiting time at present is about six months, although this will probably increase as we usually find with the arrival of spring, more people will apply for a plot.

Several years ago our situation was very different, New Barns was under threat, the effect of the bypass on Bridge Fen was unknown and our waiting list was over fifty. At this time we were invited to consider a proposal for the Association to take over the running of the Deacons Lane allotment site. However, after many meetings and with the easing of our situation it is now felt, by the committee, that this is not a viable proposition. The North of Ely developments are still going ahead with land for allotments defined within the plans, so more plots will become available in due course.

Let us now hope for some dry weather in spring and the chance to lay the groundwork on the plots for a productive growing season.

Graham Bond
Chair
Ely Allotments
Association



Secretary's Report

Thanks to everyone for paying the rents promptly. Several members contacted us last autumn inquiring if annual rents could be paid by bank transfer. We are looking into this and hope to offer this facility for future rent renewals.

We are working on a Welcome Pack for new plot holders. This is to introduce the Association and events, and how to go about being an allotmenteer.

Linda Adams
Secretary to the Ely Allotments Association

AGM

Annual General Meeting of the Association

Don't miss this important event!

**7.30 pm Wednesday 9 March at
Centre E (the Youth Centre)
Barton Road, Ely.**

**Note this is a new venue as we have
outgrown the room previously used.**

This is your opportunity to have your say on running the Association, and to elect the committee to do so on your behalf for the next year.

All the documents you need for this meeting are circulated with this newsletter

Site Updates

Bridge Fen – report by Linda Adams

The AGM like New Year's Day is a time to look back as well as forward. Sadly I have to report that we have lost two stalwarts; Bill Lennie, who passed away in January, and Alex Atkin, who has given up his plot. The unusually wet summer meant that the weeds just kept on growing which made things more difficult than usual for us all and led to several people either downsizing or giving up completely.

At the last AGM we mentioned we had happily accepted an offer of a supply of free horse manure for Bridge Fen. Sadly since the initial approach there has been no further contact from the potential supplier.

The bypass has been looming for some years now, and it has already led to some changes and people having to move plots. We will keep you updated with news about what is happening as we get it, by email and on the notice-board.

I would like to welcome the new plot-holders. Growing on the fen peat is an interesting experience. Like a lot of the plot-holders it was totally different from any gardening I had done before and I'm still learning. Bridge Fen is like a giant growbag, the crops grow well and unfortunately so do the weeds. I would like to pass on some advice from Ken Brown who has lots more experience than me, he says it's a waste of time trying to grow Swift potatoes, swede and normal tomatoes. He recommends anyone wanting to grow tomatoes should try Crimson Crush which are resistant to potato blight. Diablo sprouts are the only sprouts to grow on fenland.

Since the gate was fitted there has been a big decrease in thefts from the site. It is important that everyone remains alert and reports any suspicious activity or thefts to the police and remember not to leave anything valuable in sheds. We will continue to monitor the situation and we have a lock and chain ready to use if the thefts do start again.



New Barns – report by Peter Clarke

As I sit here writing this report I look out of my window at our fourth hard white frost of the winter covering the ground and I am thinking that at last this hopefully will kill those nasty bugs and break up the soil. We have all suffered this winter with water logging of our plots, so roll on the spring when hopefully things will be better.

Our New Barns site is full at the moment with no plots vacant at the time of writing and on behalf of our Site reps Graham, John, Roger and myself I would like to welcome all this year's new plot holders to New Barns.

Graham and I have repaired the fence at the back of Plot 20b where we were getting incidents of trespass from the cemetery side. We also have built a barrow store for the two wheeled barrow we are renovating ready for site use and soon to be RED BARROW MKII !!

We will be having a skip on site in March, more details later using the New Barns group emailing system recently set up (see page 4). All sites will have this system which will allow site reps to notify plot holders of any news, events etc.

Finally I would like to welcome a new addition to the New Barns team, 'Chateau' the allotment cat (photo above). She is a great mouse enforcer and likes to watch you work. We have three plot holders who feed her and allow her to shelter in their sheds.

Happy Gardening

Upherds Lane – report by Peter Holden

Well, here we are with spring fast approaching, and from the look of Upherds plots many are ready for planting and sowing, as soon as it dries out a bit. We are wet, but thankfully not as wet as some areas of the country.

The new tenants are making their mark, please do not hesitate to ask for advice or help from your neighbours, and also come along to the AGM to meet other plot holders from our site and the others in Ely.

You may be wondering, why there is no action yet following notice of tree removal and skip provision. Both these things will happen in the near future, so be prepared, and keep an eye on the notice board and email, as help will be required to clear the site of unwanted materials.

Happy gardening



Summer at Upherds Lane—yes, it will come again

Canterbury Avenue – report by Bill Mansfield

A new year, a new start

Firstly, I would just like to say how sorry we are to lose one of our longer standing plot holders. Angela Causton unfortunately had to give up her allotment activities this year. She will be greatly missed and is a sad loss to our small community. We wish her and her family all the very best.

So 2015 is over, it started out with lots of hard work from all the plot holders. We cleared the entrance and planted some wild flowers such as birds foot trefoil, wild thyme and marjoram. Then we had a blitz with trimming the hedge and removing the waste. It was a great time to meet every one and get to know one another. Once this work was done, we all got stuck into our own plots.

For me this turned out to be hard work, a long year and a steep learning curve. This was my first year on an allotment, a big step from a raised bed in my garden! I had read the following quote: "It is a regrettable truth that the better the quality of the soil, the bigger and more prolific the weeds." I discovered this to my detriment during 2015. I had dug my plot, prepared the soil, added compost and planted my first seeds. I just didn't have as much time as I hoped and after just a couple of weeks' absence, the weeds had taken over! The lack of water also meant the crops I did have were not doing nearly as well as I hoped! But it was fun and what I did manage to harvest from the plot tasted so much better because of it!

Now 2016 is here and I have many plans. I'm sure everyone is just as keen and eager as I am to get on your plots, tidy them up and prepare the ground for the coming growing season. The weather isn't on our side though. This winter has been a bit barmy and instead of a traditional cold winter there has been a lot of heavy rain and strong winds. In my opinion it has just been miserable and I have not been motivated to do anything!

Things seem to be brightening up though now and there are breaks in the weather with calm, sunny days. So what can we do on these days? Top of my list has to be clean up the plot and dispose of all of the damaged and rotten crops (and weeds!). The soil is a bit too heavy to work just yet, so I am not going to worry too much about it for now and just concentrate on clearing the way for a February/March blitz; weather permitting of course.

2016 will see the fruits of our labour at the entrance. We should be blessed with a splash of colour and perfume as we enter the plots. I look forward to watching things bloom here and seeing the bees and the butterflies buzz and flutter about. I also look forward to seeing everyone again, it has been too long.

A bit from the webmaster

New email address cityofelyallotmentsassoc@gmail.com



The Association now has its own email address as above. If you are an email user and we have your address on file you will receive occasional messages from cityofelyallotmentsassoc@gmail.com. It might be worth adding it to your address book to prevent emails getting lost in your spam or junk folders. Please let us know (by email to the above address) if you do not wish to receive information emails from the Association. This address is also available for receiving incoming email, please use it to contact the committee if you wish.

The website www.elyallotments.com continues to operate as previously. There is a 'Contact Us' link on the website where you can also send messages to the Secretary. The website serves well as a public face for the Association and most new inquiries for plots come via the 'Apply for a plot' page. We would like the website to be useful to existing members as well so if you have any suggestions for content you would like to see there please let us know.



John Mitchell

City of Ely and District Horticultural Society

I write to introduce myself and to tell you a little of what we do as a society. I am Teresa Bye and I am the General Secretary of the society, we have a committee currently made up of ten society members. The society is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society.

We run the Stores in the grounds of Ely Beet Club in Lynn Road, monies made from selling items at the stores goes towards funding the Great Autumn Show which is held over the last weekend of August each year, as such this is a non-profit making venture. The Stores are situated to the right hand side of the car park at the Beet Club and are open on a Monday evening from 6.30pm to 8.00pm and on a Saturday morning from 10.00am to 12.00 noon. You are most welcome to visit the Stores where we sell a range of gardening items, which includes flower pots, seed trays, canes, sprays, feeds, composts, fertilisers, netting, fleece, bird foods and much, much more. Here you will meet some of the committee members who volunteer to run the Stores. If there is an item that you are looking for that we do not stock, we may be able to get this in for you. Items at the Stores have two prices, one is for visitors, and the second is for society members – which include a discount of 10%. It costs £8.00 per year to join the society and you will then receive a membership card which entitles you to this discount.

We run a seed scheme in the autumn, Kings Seeds provide seed catalogues for us and give a discount for all seeds ordered, so you can make a saving on your seed purchases. We also run a seed potato scheme, a list is provided of the potatoes that can be ordered and these arrive for collection in early February, these are also discounted.

The Great Autumn Show is held annually in the sports hall at the Paradise Centre in Ely on the last Saturday and Sunday in August. This year will be our 89th show. We do have “professionals” showing flowers and vegetables, but the show is open for anyone to make entries. If you think your vegetables are not quite up to “professional” show standard do not worry, there are sections for Ely allotment holders to enter, no names are shown unless you win a placing. An entry to a section will cost just 30p, 1st, 2nd and 3rd places receive a certificate and a small cash prize. There are sections for vegetables, cut flowers, pot plants, flower displays, embroidery, knitting, baking, wine making, woodwork and photography. If you make five or more entries into the show, you will be entitled to one show pass. The show is open to the public with a small admission fee usually £2.00, discounted to £1.50 for members. The Stores have a stall of produce for sale, there is a raffle held on each day and tea, coffee and cakes are available.

The flower garden in front of St Marys Church is planted and tended by members of the Horticultural society.

I hope this has given you an insight into what we do as a society and that we shall have the pleasure of meeting you at the Stores or the Show.

If you are interested in joining the City of Ely and District Horticultural Society or would like any further information about the Stores or the Show you may contact Peter Holden on 07949 274513 or me (Teresa) on 01353 610370