

Tudorville Allotments Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Coach Room, The Royal Hotel, Tuesday 21 September 2021, 7.30 pm

MINUTES

PREAMBLE

Apologies for absence. Jean & Bernard Staite, Veronica & Bryan Bunting, Mark Fewtrell, Dave Merritt, Felicity & Tony Hearn, Jeremy Walters, Tom Courtney.

Present. James Weatherhead, John Bosley (Secretary), Mike Ebert, Alan Merrett, Howard Foxwell, Tim Waters (Treasurer), Fred Ellis, Pauline Hemmingway, Graham Carter, Maurice Thompson, Avril Fuller (Committee), Lynn Howells (Committee), Jonathan Billinger (Committee), John Walters (Chairman), Peter Wade, Mary Chambers, Mike Hepden.

Minutes of the last meeting. No meeting was held in 2020 but AGM document were circulated to all member and were attached to the meeting email. The minutes from 2019 were circulated and have been on the notice boards for nearly two years. Again, they were included with the meeting email.

Approval of the 2019 Minutes. Approved.

Matters Arising from 2019 and 2020. None

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We seem to be seeing a steady getting back to normal in our everyday lives, I'm sure it will be some time yet before everyone feels completely comfortable with life, but we are getting there.

Looking back over last year's notes, I see that some things change whilst others remain the same. My worst runner bean crop last year has been followed by one of my best this year, but courgette supply continues to outstrip demand, parsnips still refuse to germinate on my plot, and the dreaded potato and tomato blight has reappeared. Moles seem to be less of a problem this year, probably put off by the number of cats we seem to be attracting.

The weather has not been boring again this year, dry and cold in March, colder in April, wetter in May, average June and a dull July and August. Not Ideal growing conditions but most plots have looked well, with a lot of produce making its way home.

A quiet year on the plots again this year, the main issues I think being the servicing of the mowers and strimmers by a third party and the Association re-joining of the National Allotment Society (NAS), both of which have financial implications.

I do feel that it is a shame that the machinery cannot be maintained in house but having said that I have not heard any horror stories regarding the machinery and will be interested in hearing members views on how we progress.

I have always been in favour of us being in the NAS, hopefully they would be able to at least point us in the right direction should we have any issues in the future, such as tenancy agreements. I would recommend visiting their website and accessing the members area, there are a number of interesting topics covered on there.

More details on both issues from John and Tim in their reports, and we can discuss them later if anyone feels the need!

We have had a healthy turnover of plots during the year, and I would like to welcome all of our new plot holders, the ones I have seen have all set about their plots with great enthusiasm.

We will be discussing re-election of officers later in the meeting. I will just say that whilst I am happy to stand for another term, I will willingly stand aside if we have anyone else wants to have a go.

This would be a good time for me to express my thanks to all of the committee and to John and Tim in particular, who do a lot of work to keep the Association ticking over, some of which we all see, but also a lot behind the scenes. Thank you all for that. As always new Committee members are always welcome.

It hardly seems possible to me that in my 2019 report I was thanking John Taylor for his sterling work as he stood down as Secretary, and again in 2020, when I was thanking him for his continuing dealing with the council lease. As you will all know John passed away earlier this year and I think it would be right and proper to mention him again in the minutes this year, to say a final thank you for all his work for us over the years, as well as his friendly face around the plots with his mixture of humour and common sense.

I would like to think that during the coming season, the committee will be able to meet a little more regularly, especially with our new members, and that a couple of work parties will be possible, to tackle such things as removal of the old shed and trimming of the boundary trees and hedges.

I think that's enough from me now, I will hand you over to John and Tim to work our way through the agenda. Thank you.

John Walters

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Members are reminded to collect their renewal notices and pay promptly, ideally by bank transfer. You should also check your contact details and advise me of any changes. Email is our main means of communication and there are now only four members who don't use it. Can you also take and deliver the invoices for any near neighbours who are not present tonight to ease the task of delivering the remainder.

In the past 18 months, particularly during the covid lock down we have had a large number of applications for an allotment. This has been a nationwide trend. We now have 14 on our waiting list and applicants are having to wait well over a year and I expect this to increase to possibly two years. We have let 6 plots this year and 3 last year. Some of the plots have been released by members splitting a large plot or giving up a second plot. Any member that finds their plot is becoming too much, should consider this.

Whilst we have a waiting list, they will take priority over an existing member having an additional plot. If you want a larger, or smaller plot, let me know and we will try to accommodate requests before releasing them to new members.

Previously Graham Carter has maintained the mowers and equipment but earlier this year he advised he no longer had the time. Many thanks Graham for his work. We asked if anyone else wish to take this on but there was no response. I asked several suppliers for the cost of servicing a mower and on average it was £100 per mower plus VAT. We have 5 mowers and 3 strimmers so we were looking at a large bill. Also, this was in March, the peak time for servicing and the lead time was long. We found someone that would service mowers for £50 plus parts. Although this was a considerable saving, the bill was still £467. We will be using him again during the winter but if you know of someone cheaper, please let me know.

The padlock on the main gate was never entirely satisfactory and that has now been replaced by a new digital lock which is much better. Thanks to John Walters for fitting it. We also took the opportunity to change the combination as it has not been reset for many years. In future we will endeavour to change it more frequently.

We have recently joined the National Allotment Society. As a committee we felt that it was right to support the main allotment organisation and that it gave the committee some support, eg legal, if and when needed. Like any insurance, it's an overhead that you may not call on, but you never know when it may be wanted. Membership does give each plot holder an individual indemnity insurance, if something goes wrong. There is also a quarterly journal which I will circulate by email. The cost of membership is £3 per member.

Over the past two years 4 committee members have stood down and we do need more to volunteer to join the committee, particularly someone from the Walford Road site.

We have been chasing members who do not maintain their plot, resulting in one resignation, and members taking action including reducing their plot size. If you have a neighbouring plot which is obviously not maintained, please let me know. I send out the odd email whinging about maintenance, but these are really aimed at the minority; generally, it's a great site and most people treat it well.

I would like to thank John Walters for providing manure which is good stuff. Over the past few weeks, he has been regularly delivering it to the site.

John Bosley

TREASURER'S REPORT

You will see from Income and Expenditure Account for the year that the net income is £66.37 taking our available funds to £2386.85. However, with a very wet and cold spring this year our water rate was £135 less than last year when we had a glorious sunny spring.

It has also been necessary this year to pay for mowers and strimmers to be serviced. Service cost was £343 for five mowers and three strimmers plus parts which totalled £126. This will be an ongoing annual cost. We have now re-joined NAS at an annual cost of £166. The committee felt with these costs in mind the rent for coming year should be increased. The fairest way is to introduce an annual standing charge per member. NAS charges per member £3 and it was thought reasonable for each member to contribute towards the service cost of the equipment. The standing charge is to be £5 with the charge based on plot size remaining unchanged.

Our current funds give us a modest reserve, but we must be mindful that price of mowers etc. continues to rise. It is also good to have funds available for any unexpected expenditure.

Tim Waters

SEED REPORT

Kings Seeds offer a scheme for Societies like us and every member qualifies for a 50% discount on all vegetable, herb and flower seeds. In addition, seed potatoes are charged at a bulk rate even if only one pack. The third saving is postage and packing on all products in their catalogue which includes fruit and vegetable plants and a good range of sundries and books. Plugs are not included in the P & P saving. The only extra charge is £1.30 per order for individual packing, which for the convenience I think is well worth it.

In 2020/21 the seed order value with Kings was £1123.66, up from £817.45 in 2019/20. After discounting the seeds, members saved £561.83. Adding in the non-discounted sundries a payment was made by the society

to Kings for £849.58. 27 members took up the offer, up from 19 the year before. Average gross order value was £41.60. Average saving per member £20.80.

Catalogues with order forms and instructions have been placed in both machinery sheds, together with a box for orders to be left ready for me to collect and collate. Payment can be by cheque and left there safely. If paying by cash I would recommend dropping the order into my home address which is given in the ordering instructions.

There were some issues with Kings being faced with unprecedented demand due to the pandemic and we experienced a delay in delivery of the main seed order into January. I have therefore brought forward the final order date to hopefully receive our order by Christmas. The closing date for orders to reach me this year is Sunday 31st October.

Plants and sundries are delivered direct to members' addresses, again P+P free. Potatoes are delivered to me in January and I will be careful to give you notice for collection if the weather is frosty.

I would encourage everyone to support the scheme and take advantage of the savings on offer. September/October is a great time to be planning your next year's crops as the memory of this year's is still recent.

Jonathan Billinger

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Income and Expenditure 2020-2021 as at 31 August 2021

Balance b/f	£2320.48
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INCOME

Rents to date	£1336.58
Members' King Seeds payments	£859.76
Total	£2196.34

EXPENDITURE

Postage for rents	£0.00
King Seeds	£849.58
Welsh Water	£183.88
Marsh Commercial Insurance	£83.64
Mower maintenance	£473.53
Petrol	£101.23
Manure	£100.00
Printing & stationary	£28.76
Digital lock for gate	£143.35
NSALG (Allotments Assoc.)	£166.00
Total	£2129.97

Net income	£66.37
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Balance at bank c/f	£2386.85
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Approval of the accounts was proposed by Lynn Howells, seconded by Jonathan Billinger and unanimously accepted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer are all elected for two years. The incumbents were all due for re-election and all were willing to stand again. As there were no other nominations the posts remain:

- Chairman – John Walters
- Secretary – John Bosley
- Treasurer – Tim Waters

Avril Taylor, Jonathan Billinger and Lynn Howells are on the committee and other members were invited to stand.

Pauline Hemmingway, Bryan Bunting and Graham Carter will join the committee.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Jonathan Billinger proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for supplying what everyone considered to be high quality manure.
2. A question was asked on what grade of petrol should be used for the mowers now that standard petrol contains 10% ethanol. It was quite clear from the discussion that there was confusion, and no one had any idea. It was decided to clarify the situation outside the meeting and inform members later. **Post-meeting note:** We should be using the more expensive E5 (super unleaded) fuel and not the standard, and cheaper E10.
3. Maurice Thompson advised that his newly installed compost bin had been hit by someone whilst driving on the site. The chairman reminded everyone to drive with care.
4. Bryan Bunting had emailed: "So much remains unpicked on allotments and goes to waste - I wonder if I found an old table and placed it near the entrance plot holders with spare, picked or unpicked, could leave give always on it or even a note saying help yourself with a note of the allotment number." This was discussed and the meeting felt that it was a good idea that should be followed up. One suggestion was to install a shelf under the main notice board.
5. Bryan Bunting had emailed: "Maybe a firmer hand could be taken with plot holders who don't bother at all about cutting the grass or any sort of control of their plot's weeds." The chairman reminded everyone of their responsibilities for plot and site maintenance.
6. James Weatherhead echoed the chairman's comments regarding the death of John Taylor and felt that John should be commemorated in some way, possibly with a seat. The meeting supported this idea and the committee will investigate. Jonathan Billinger suggested that members be asked if they wished to make a donation.
7. Jonathan Billinger asked that password for the members' area on the NAS website be circulated to all. The secretary will do this, and others added that the site has some good and interesting content.

The meeting closed at 20:15.