

Tudorville Allotments Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Conservative Club, Wednesday 17 September 2025, 7.30 pm

MINUTES

PREAMBLE

Apologies for absence. Mary & Rob Bell, Jacqui Belcher, Bryan Bunting, Guy Gregory, Pauline Hemmingway, Maurice Thompson.

Present. Paul Bailey, Chris Bartram, Jonathan Billinger, John Bosley (Secretary), Mary Chambers, Lee Davis (Treasurer), Dave Doel, Howard Foxwell, Peter Gratton, Felicity & Tony Hearn, Tony Horton, Kim Howell, Bryony Long, Graham & Jane Pye, Jane Roberts, Peter Smith, Avril Taylor, Peter Wade, John Walters (Chairman), James Weatherhead and potential member Keith Bullock.

Presentation. The formal part of the meeting was preceded by a talk, *Lazy Gardening*, given by Andrew de la Haye from the Ross branch of Herefordshire Wildlife. Andrew described his approach to gardening on a one-acre plot on Howle Hill. He believes in Permaculture gardening to create productive, low-maintenance, and resilient gardens that work with nature and the environment. He emphasized building healthy soil, increasing biodiversity and turning waste into resources to reduce labour. Key practices included no-digging, mulching, companion planting, and creating self-sustaining systems that support both plant and animal life. Members asked several questions and Tony Horton proposed a vote of thanks.

Minutes of the last meeting. The minutes from 2024 were circulated and were posted on the notice boards.

1. **Approval of the Minutes.** Approved.
2. **Matters Arising.** None.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – JOHN WALTERS

As usual I will run through what I see are the highlights of the last 12 months and then leave John and Lee to give more details in their reports. Please do feel free to ask questions, preferably at the end of the reports or in AOB towards the end of the meeting. Remember this is the one time of the year when there are so many of us gathered, so is an ideal time to raise concerns.

Last year I reported on slugs, caterpillars and potato blight, this year it has only been caterpillars, but they have been joined by pigeons, cats, rats, voles and even a possible badger and snake. The prolonged dry spell has tested the patience of plot holders with water troughs being regularly emptied and literally wheelbarrow loads of water being applied to plots. The extremely high daytime temperatures lead to several plot holders becoming nocturnal.

That said the wet winter followed by a mild spring and the absence of cold nights contributed to some bumper fruit crops with many tree boughs breaking under the weight of the load. I wondered again this year if we should be looking for a way of using more of the unpicked fruit, it seems such a shame to watch it fall and rot on the ground. I have spoken to someone in the last couple of days who has taken produce to the Ross Community Gardens, so perhaps there is an outlet there for us to use in the future.

Undoubtedly the low point of the year was the collapse and death of Tony Edwards in March whilst working his plot. We sent condolences at the time to his family and friends, and I would like to do so again here. His

friend Jonathan has done a great job of keeping Tony's plot up to a standard that Tony would have been proud of.

John will no doubt give us the details, but it seems that we have had quite a large turnover of plots this year which will make a dent in the waiting list. As a number of people have given up or downsized their plots due to old age and/or health issues we have seen a lot of new entrants and I would just like to welcome them all and reiterate what John has already told them, that if they need any help or advice please ask their neighbours or any committee member and we will do what we can to help .

One big step forward this year has been the signing of a ten-year lease with the council. This comes after many years of consultation and frustration, indeed the whole discussion was started pre-covid, by John Taylor our previous secretary. Thanks are due to John Bosley for persevering with it, we got there in the end! John will run you through some of the salient points in his report and we can discuss them further if necessary. The only fly in the ointment is that the whole process has been costly and will eat into our reserves, although the small rent increase this year will help. Overall though it must be a good thing as it gives us a lot more security for the next ten years.

This would be a good time for me to thank the committee for all their hard work throughout the year, whether through attending meetings, arranging social events or practical jobs such as Tony and Graham giving the communal shed some much-needed TLC.

I note that committee meetings are taking a little longer these days, which is good as we getting a lot more discussion, ideas and involvement, so thank you all for that. As usual we are always looking for new committee members, feel free to attend a meeting to see what is involved, but be warned, I attended two meetings as a plot holder and on the third I was seconded onto the committee. Seriously though please consider it.

The Allotments again took part in the Ross Open Gardens at the end of May. As in previous years, attendance was not great, but all visitors seemed glad that they had made the effort to find us, with a lot of people not knowing we were there. The visitors this year were asked to vote for the best plot as they walked around the site. There were some reports of bribery and other dubious practices being employed to win votes. We will find out later if they were successful when the winner is announced along with that for the tallest sunflower and best wildlife friendly plot.

I ought to mention a couple of things that have taken up committee time this season, untidy plots and Health and Safety.

Plot 18 has been much discussed and has been mostly cleared ready for reletting as three smaller plots. We do plan to fell and dig out the trees on Plot 18 soon, but it has raised the question as to when we should intervene as plots fall into a state of neglect. I know that a couple of people John has shown plots to have turned them down due to their condition. Whilst some people are happy to take on the challenge of a rundown plot others are not or may not be physically able to. Plot 18 is also a case in point regarding trees on plots. Overhanging trees in general is probably one of the biggest complaints I hear so I have asked for it to be included in AOB for further discussion

As for Health and Safety, it's a sign of the world that we live in that it is becoming more of an issue. Every time a topic is considered then it seems to raise another question. As far as I can see there is no right answer to it, but we do all need to be aware of our own safety whilst on our plots and that of all others on site. I can see communal workdays being frowned upon, probably leading to us asking plot holders to do smaller tasks toward the common goal of keeping the site tidy. Things such as spending 10 or 15 minutes with the mower or trimmer or general tidying up around the site, will go a long way towards this. The committee have updated the Health and Safety Risk Assessment earlier this year, but this is ongoing and any ideas or involvement from any plot holders would be appreciated.

You will see from the agenda that I am due for re-election this year. As I have stated before, I am happy to continue in the role but am aware that I have been doing it for quite a while now and would have no problem in stepping aside to let someone new take over.

We have 54 members and 1 vacant plot, although there will be 2 further plots at the end of October. The number of plots vary each year as we split and re-combine plots and this year, we have re-combined two plots that were previously split. I try to balance requests from existing members for a smaller or larger plot with new applicants.

Since the last AGM 10 people have applied for an allotment and we have allocated 7 plots, although one gave up after 3 months and the average waiting time was about 20 weeks. 3 of these new members have rejoined after previously giving up. We still have 2 on the waiting list. We get the most applications in the spring and plots become free in the autumn. I believe that having a reasonable waiting list is healthy and if you know anyone that wants a plot, encourage them to apply.

Although we have a good turnover of members some seem to have been here for ever. I have been a member for 8 years and 21 of today's members were here when I joined. This year 3 elderly members have given up after many years – Fred Ellis, Alan Merrett (both 95) and Tom Courney.

Of our 54 members, all except 2 use email and all except 14 use WhatsApp. Another trend associated with modern life is that all except 6 now pay by bank transfer.

Our average size plot is about 80m² and the largest holding is 180m². These sizes seem to suit us and we accommodate requests from members to upsize or downsize. The traditional size for an allotment, by comparison, is 250m². Many new members prefer a smaller plot until they understand what is involved and this seems sensible.

The committee usually meets 4 times a year. I don't routinely publish minutes, but they are available, if you ask. Two members of the committee have just left; thanks to Helen Klingopolis and Graham Carter for their work. Helen will continue to handle the seed orders although she has left the committee. If you are interested in joining the committee or have specific skills that might be useful in running the allotments, do let us know.

This year the committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing Health & Safety. This followed an incident during a workday last November when a member was injured after falling from a ladder. We realised that we were badly exposed had he decided to sue us. As a result, we have increased our insurance cover to include employee protection. Legally you are all employees if you do any work for us such as cutting the grass or trimming a hedge. We have also reviewed the H&S Policy and risk assessments which have been circulated to all and are displayed on notice boards.

One difficult issue has been the use of mowers and strimmers as currently anyone is free to use them and we feel that must change. We will introduce a system whereby in future they can only be used by authorised users and members wishing to use the equipment will have to sign a form to be authorised. New members will be given a short training session, but existing users will be able to self-certify that they are competent. I will be circulating the information shortly.

For at least the last 8 years the lease that we have for the allotments from the council has been under discussion as the previous lease appears to have long expired and didn't include the Walford Road site or the plots near the houses on Woodedge. However, this has now been resolved and we have now signed a new agreement with the Town Council for the next 10 years. Although the rent to the council is only £1 per year there is a downside in that we must register the lease with the Land Registry which will cost us just over £700.

The allotments were open as part of Ross Open Gardens and 54 people visited us. The allotments are a considerable way from all the other gardens, mostly in the centre of town, so we were not expecting large numbers. All visitors were highly complementary about the site and typical comments were "we didn't know this was here" and "I've never seen such great allotments". Thanks to those who prepared their plot, cut grass etc. Thanks too to those who helped steward which is quite rewarding explaining to others what we do.

I would like to thank John Walters for providing excellent manure and Rob Bell (plot 29A) for providing wood chips which many have used around the sites.

TREASURER'S REPORT – LEE DAVIS

BACS payments have continued to increase for rent and seeds and are much appreciated due to the closure and reduced operating hours of many banks, as BACS are quicker and easier to manage. Significantly less cheques and cash received in 2025 compared to previous years.

A mixed bag of considerations with regards to water usage and bills. An exceptionally dry 12 months, in stark contrast to the previous year, has led to the increase in water usage and costs for the year are up approximately 65% on the previous year. However, 2024 was 45% down on 2023 due to an exceptionally wet 12 months. Rising operating costs by Welsh Water will no doubt have a negative impact on 2026 bills, especially if we have another dry 12 months, and further cost increases are expected.

The 2025 seeds order was approximately 23% up on the previous year. It is fantastic to see so many members making use of the opportunity to order seeds at a discounted price, but I feel there are more members who could still sign up and benefit from savings! Alternative options have been researched but the current method is still viewed as the best value for money for our members. Thanks to Helen for her continued organisation and communication to help save members money!

Mower servicing and repairs were down approximately 16% on the previous year, largely down to the removal of one of the trimmers from the main site.

Petrol costs for the year are down 55% on the previous year, with prices at the pumps having remained consistent. Reduced costs can be explained by the dry weather and the lack of growth in our green spaces! Thanks to John B who is always the person to replenish the petrol supplies on site.

There has been investment on the site this year, with several members volunteering to repair the communal shed on the main site and Ross-on-Wye's Men's Shed building new covers for the water troughs. TAA have covered the cost of materials, but the work has been done for free, and I would like to express my thanks to Graham and Tony for their time and efforts with the shed repairs and Jeff and the Ross on Wye Men's Shed for making the water covers.

Other outgoings, such as NSALG Membership and Insurance, are comparable to the previous year, with marginal increases seen in line with inflation.

There is now a "Service Charge" to pay on the bank account of £4.25 / month. We have moved the bank account around in the past to avoid bank charges but have finally conceded that a charge will have to be accepted as most, if not all, banks have moved to charging community accounts. There was a cost of £50.00 to cover expenses of our guest speaker at last year's AGM.

Finally, due to the ever-increasing costs of services and consumables a small rental increase was agreed upon for 2025 / 2026, and I am pleased that this has been seemingly well received by members. There is a significant bill, of approximately £750.00, due imminently to cover the costs of our new 10-year lease that will take approximately 20% of our current balance. It is important to maintain a healthy balance so that we can rise to meet any unforeseen challenges in the future.

Net income for the year is at £130.73, with a balance on 31/08/2025 at £3,607.75.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The summary of the accounts as 31 August 2025 is attached and these were unanimously accepted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

The Chairman (John Walters) and Secretary (John Bosley), having been in post for two years, must stand down but both were willing to stand again. There were no other nominations for the posts, and both were re-elected.

The Chairman reminded members that others were welcome to join the committee.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

It is a long time since awards were last presented. The *Best Plot* was judged by visitors to our site during the Open Gardens at the end of May and the other by three members of the committee in mid-August.

Best Wildlife friendly plot. We were looking for things to encourage wildlife and variety in planting and structure, rather than just straight lines and neat edges. There were quite a few small ponds and a log pile and dead hedge were seen. Roger Burton (11) had several bird boxes and had also put some around the main site. The winner was Steve Barnett (47) who had taken unused ground near his plot and, with his son, constructed a new pond and a wildflower bed.

Tallest Sunflower. There were quite a few sunflowers around the site up to about 2m in height but nothing exceptional. Roger Burton (11) had planted a lot giving a good display but the tallest at 2.5m was planted by Avril Taylor (26). It would be nice to collect the seeds from Avril and in the spring offer them to members to plant around the site.

Best Plot. This was based on votes from the public the during Open Gardens weekend. 13 plots received votes but there were 4 plots that received 8, or more, votes: Jonathan Billinger (5), Graham and Jane Pye (12A), Tony Horton (36 & 37A) and our chairman John Walters (24 & 23A). It was very close, but the winner was Graham & Jane Pye with 9 votes.

In each case the prize was a £25 garden centre voucher. Let us have suggestions for awards for next year.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Trees.** John Walters said that one of the biggest problems that we deal with is large trees. They are planted without thought to their final size and there are now several across the main site overhanging paths, the boundary fence and shading neighbouring plots. He said that the new lease from the council states that trees must be planted so they remain within the confines of the plot.
2. **Pests and poisons.** John Walters said that there had been discussion on WhatsApp about holes appearing on plots, possibly due to rats, and poison being used. He said he didn't know if these were due to rats, voles or even moles. He felt that there were likely to be rats on the site but most probably in compost bins and near boundaries and not in the open. However, members should be careful in using poisons since they can be picked up by other animals and children and if used, they should advise other members.
3. Jane Roberts (50 & 51) referred to the request for new members and advised that we should contribute an article to the Ross Neighbourhood News (next edition in November) and that we should consider joining the Ross Community Development Trust.
4. Dave Doel (46) noted the seed scheme delivered in December which was too late for onion sets to be planted in the autumn. There was then a discussion about places to buy onion sets – basically any good garden centre.

The meeting closed at 21:20.

Tudorville Allotment Association

Accounts Report for 01/09/2024 to 31/08/2025

2023 - 2024	Income	2024 - 2025
£ 1,950.69	Rents	£ 1,941.12
£ 740.78	Seeds Order	£ 917.94
£ 2,691.47	TOTAL	£ 2,859.06

2023 - 2024	Expenditure	2024 - 2025
£ 737.30	Seeds Order	£ 934.30
£ -	Printing and Stationery	£ 8.31
£ -	Site Maintenance	£ 288.53
£ -	Bank Account Charges	£ 25.50
£ 222.22	Welsh Water	£ 366.85
£ 209.34	Insurance	£ 271.39
£ 629.03	Mower Servicing and Repairs	£ 525.74
£ 105.62	Petrol	£ 47.85
£ 180.00	NSALG Membership	£ 199.50
£ 200.00	Digestate	£ -
£ 25.58	Protective Equipment	£ -
£ -	AGM Talk	£ 50.00
£ -	Rent Refund	£ 10.36
£ 40.00	Memorial Tree	£ -
£ 2,349.09	TOTAL	£ 2,728.33

2023 - 2024	Balances	2024 - 2025
£ 3,134.64	Brought Down	£ 3,477.02
£ 342.38	Net Income	£ 130.73
£ 3,477.02	Carried Forward	£ 3,607.75