



KENILWORTH ALLOTMENT TENANTS ASSOCIATION K.A.T.A.



NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2014

It is with great sadness that I am penning these first few paragraphs in our 'interim' news-letter, for those of you who have not yet heard of the untimely death of our longest serving Committee member, Roger Bennett. It came as a great shock to us all, when in 2011 Roger first told us that he had a rare cancer. Many of you will only have known Roger as the 'Editor' of our regular newsletters, but he had many more talents besides and was highly respected and loved by all who knew him, both professionally by work colleagues at the County Council, family & friends, members of the Talisman theatre company, and not least by those of us who were fortunate enough to share his wisdom and knowledge on the Allotments.

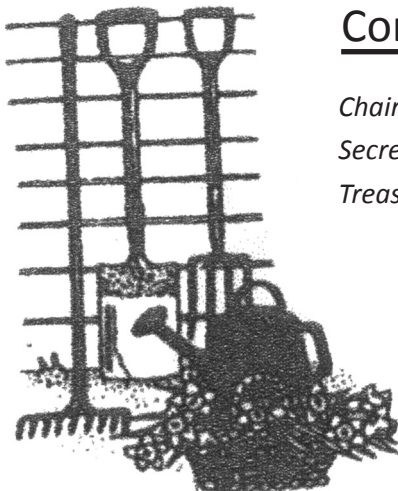
Roger first took on an allotment around 1980 over at what was then known as 'The Cemetery site' in Oaks Road. This was closed down in 2000 when he then transferred over to the 'Odibourne site'. It is difficult to ascertain from the sketchy hand written records in our possession, exactly when he joined the Committee, but his name was first recorded as a Committee member by John Dixon in 1990, as when John took over as Secretary, he covered the meetings in much more detail than had previously been done. Records have since been found by Roger's wife Debbie of the very first newsletter headed 'Allotments Newsletter No 1'. However this was not dated, but we are pretty sure that it was from 1990, as it is followed by another dated 'Autumn 1990'. So suffice to say, that with around 30 years on the allotments and well over 20 years of that as a Committee member and newsletter editor for K.A.T.A., Roger certainly served us well. He was often the one chipping in with 'the voice of reason' settling some of our more heated debates in Committee when the rest of us seemed to have lost the plot!

Roger also contributed greatly to the public events we now hold in the Abbey Fields, coming into his own with his supreme knowledge and obvious love of plants. Members of the public, some being regular visitors to these events would come to the shows especially to ask his advice on certain plants. His gentle and caring nature would shine through in his responses.

He came through his surgery in 2011 and throughout 2012 he made a great recovery, putting back the weight he had lost and the colour returning to his cheeks. He managed to produce just one more news-letter for us in March 2013, but by then the cancer had returned with a vengeance and sadly he passed away on 30th June 2013.

Roger will be greatly missed by us all.

Lily Brownjohn, Allotments Secretary



Committee members

<i>Chairman</i>	Mike Hitchins	864801	79 Odibourne
<i>Secretary</i>	Lily Brownjohn	855291	51 Odibourne
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mark Cotton	07974 662750	2a Odibourne
	Robin Ashby	853560	68a Odibourne
	Chris Coton	513268	3a Spring Lane
	Paula Hallam	856480	44 Odibourne
	Dave Harwood	511220	58b Odibourne
	Peter Jones	853930	18b Odibourne
	Martyn Partridge	854890	15a Odibourne
	Catherine Pettman	748456	10 Beehive Hill
	Keith Rockett	863143	6 Beehive Hill

Given the task of producing an interim newsletter, I can now see what Roger was faced with!!! How do I fill these blank pages?

He was such a mine of information and his writing flowed so easily. However, I will simply endeavour to provide the basic information of our forthcoming events, plans for the future, and hopefully keep you as up to date as possible.

Please help us to keep in touch...

Briefly touching on last year, we had a major drive to collect email addresses from our members, but still we don't seem to have all of them. This information would be especially useful to Paula Hallam, our 'Events' organiser, so that she can more easily and quickly contact our volunteers to ascertain their availability for our public events throughout the year. So, if you didn't submit this information at rent taking time as was requested, please contact either Paula or Lily with your email details. Paula is always keen to enrol more helpers for these events, so if you would like to be involved, please contact her directly on 856480.

Suggestions needed...

While we are on the subject of 'Events', we always plan well ahead for the following year, but at the end of 2013 we had a bit of a shock when checking the date of this year's Kenilworth Festival (Party in the Park) – one of our best fundraising opportunities, usually held in May in the Abbey Fields. We realised that the date has been drastically changed and it isn't now taking place until September, which is no good for our early Spring Plant sales or the copious armfuls of rhubarb for which we are now renowned throughout Kenilworth!!! If anyone can think of an alternative venue/ event that we can take part in during May, bearing in mind we will still be taking our usual stand at the Lions Show in June, please let either Lily or Paula know your thoughts as soon as possible. The original early Festival timing (although working the two events within a month of each other is extremely hard work) was a very good opportunity to sell off our early surplus Spring plants and rhubarb and we usually raise a considerable amount of money from each individual event.

Our thanks go to Paula Hallam (with backup help given by Sylvia Jones and Ann Barry) for all the hard organisational work she puts in rounding up our helpers and booking them in efficiently so that all runs smoothly on the event days. This also includes our Open Day in August. Can I take this opportunity to once again also thank all the volunteers as the funds raised would not be possible without your much valued help.

Committee news...

There have been a couple of new additions to Committee, and we have lost another Committee member who has decided to retire and just enjoy her allotment. Madeleine Sexton has served on Committee as a representative for the Beehive Hill site for the last couple of years and during that time has provided us with valuable assistance in preparing

first class raffle hampers for our Abbey Fields and Open Day events and also for organising superb buffets for our Presentation Evening with the help of Judith Walmesley. Although Madeleine has stepped down, she is prepared to continue to give this assistance to the Association, and we are extremely grateful for that.

The new Committee member at Beehive Hill is Catherine Pettman on plot 10. The new Committee member at Odibourne is Martyn Partridge on plot 15a.

Still with Committee...

Those of you who keep an eye on the notice boards will have noted last year that a request went out for someone to assist with administration work, and we are now once again indebted to the generosity of Chris Coton who has taken on the role of 'Committee' Secretary. Chris now takes the minutes at our meetings and when required helps with posters, printing of certificates etc as well as organising our seed orders and the distribution of our newsletters. All of this in addition to fulfilling his role as site representative at Spring Lane. Needless to say he is another much valued Committee member.

The Shop, re-cycling corner and loose compost...

Robin and Sue Ashby are now well and truly au fait with the running of our shop at Odibourne having taken over the reins from 'the girls' – Annie Ashton and Jane Harwood a couple of years ago. We now also have a wealth of shop volunteers who also contribute their time to the shop during opening hours on Saturday and Sunday mornings as well as those who help unload the deliveries of stock. Robin and Sue have tried to include more organic items, but the cost has proved prohibitive on most items.

The re-cycling corner is due for a sort-out as I have been promised some items from friends who are now down-sizing their homes and have big garden sheds to clear out. If you are in the same position or are just having a spring clean, please don't take any garden items to the tip. We can re-cycle them at the shop providing they are in good serviceable condition. These items can very often help new allotment gardeners, many with young families to support, to 'get started' at a much lower cost. We can re-cycle most things from a garden shed or greenhouse to smaller items such as hand trowels, garden forks, wheelbarrows or spades. If you are in any doubt about what items are suitable, please contact Lily on 855291 who can advise.

We are frequently asked whether more loose compost will be coming in, but again the cost of transport is now prohibitive, so if anyone can come up with a solution to that one, please let us know.

This year the shop had a turnover of £6031 from a combination of stock, plant sales, compost and re-cycling, of which around £1500 was profit. As the shop facility is primarily for the convenience of plot holders and their families and friends, a very small mark-up is applied, and all profit made is ploughed back into improvements over all three sites. Once again we are indebted to our wealth of volunteers who give their time at weekends.

**SHOP OPENING TIMES FOR 2014:
SATURDAY & SUNDAY MORNINGS**

Starting from w/e Sat 15th & Sun 16th February
ONE HOUR ONLY – NOTE NEW TIME: 11AM–12NOON

From March through to end of September
TWO HOURS: 10AM–12NOON

Throughout October until Sunday 26th
BACK TO ONE HOUR ONLY: 11AM–12NOON

Beehive Hill goes 'National'...

Last Summer, one of our tenants at the Beehive Hill site, Bob Aulton, approached me with a suggestion that the site be included in the National Garden Scheme 'Open Gardens' walkabout, the date now having just been confirmed as Sunday 22nd June 2014. We had an 'on site' meeting with the representative from the National Open Gardens scheme and she was delighted with our Beehive Hill site. The site was approved on the spot for inclusion in the schedule alongside the beautiful gardens in Fieldgate Lane, Bridge Street and Malthouse Lane – a real honour I would say to be accepted for such a prestigious event. Well done to all the tenants at Beehive Hill for setting such a high standard. There are only a handful of allotment sites in this scheme throughout the whole country and the Committee have agreed that we should participate. Your site Representatives Keith Rockett and Catherine Pettman will be in touch in due course to let you know all the details of what will be required on the day. Meanwhile, keep up the good work! Bob has suggested that any volunteers from Odibourne or Spring Lane would also be welcome to help out on the day if they wish. Please come forward and let Keith 863143 or Catherine 748456 know.

The Beehive Hill 'communal' lawnmower is about to have a bit of an overhaul, (thanks to our enthusiastic 'fixer' of all things mechanical – John Travers on plot 6 Odibourne (better known as Dorset John) and if you would like to be on the maintenance team to keep the main path at Beehive well-manicured, please tell Keith and I am sure you will be welcomed onto a rota for the job. The more help, the lighter the workload! The boundary hedge also needs to be kept well-trimmed and most of you are doing a great job individually. Done regularly, it is not difficult and the Association has a hedge trimmer should anyone wish to volunteer to whip it over the entire boundary occasionally.

Maintenance of plots generally, plot inspections and the waiting list....

One of the less enjoyable jobs that your Committee has to do is plot inspections. Sometimes this leads to us having to give notice on plots, which are not being well maintained. The reactions to notice or indeed just letters stating that work needs to be done varies considerably ranging from, 'Sorry, yes I know, I just have not had time – my circumstances have changed and I've been meaning to let you know' etc etc. and they graciously concede that they have not been able for whatever reason to uphold the rules of the Association which require them to keep their plots virtually weed free and well cultivated with crops. These tenants either get on with it or down size or give up with good grace. Often the release from the stress of not coping that well is a relief for them. Others react most unreasonably (only a minority fortunately) and refuse to see that they are not upholding the rules of the Association and only kick back at us with accusations

of harassment or worse. No matter how 'reasonably' and 'logically' the letters deliver notice or just a request to tidy up, this type of person behaves in a most irrational way.

Steps have been taken over the years to help Committee with the job that inevitably has to be done, but also to protect themselves from abuse from tenants, which they should not have to be confronted with. For example: when a new tenant takes on a plot, they now have to sign to say that they understand the procedure and steps taken when plots are not being well maintained. This procedure always starts with a simple phone call, to establish whether there has been a problem, and this alone usually sorts out the issue one way or another. New tenants are also encouraged to be pro-active and if they have a problem, to contact us. It is a two way procedure. There may be mitigating circumstances, which we can make allowances for. Where 'time' or 'lack of it' has been a problem, we are sometimes happy to reduce the size of a plot holding, rather than give notice. What could be fairer?

The waiting list is now at around 130, so whenever a full plot becomes vacant, we usually split that plot and only let half plots go. This is beneficial as it both helps reduce the waiting list, and a smaller holding of land is easier for new tenants to manage with the busy lives everyone leads today.

Plot inspections usually start around mid to late April, but plots are monitored on a regular basis to catch the first signs of something going wrong. Notices will be put up at the beginning of April to advise on timing of these inspections. Once again, and to protect ourselves against accusations of for example 'victimisation', plots are inspected by Committee members from other sites so that they are not familiar with names or personalities and they are given blank maps which are just numbered. Therefore they can make clear cut judgements on plots without any bias feelings towards personalities or previous records.

Should anyone currently find themselves struggling with their plots for whatever reason, please let us know. We do listen, and we may be able to help. Please remember that your neighbours will and DO complain to us when the weeds on your plot turn to seed and these blow over onto their clean plots. This is so very unfair on your neighbours.

Future projects...

The building of a toilet block, (now with the addition of a secure building for our maintenance tools) at Odibourne was also mentioned on our notice boards last year in the absence of newsletters just to keep everyone informed, but I am repeating it here for the benefit of those who missed the item. Planning permission for the toilets can be submitted once plans have been done, but we cannot apply for lottery funding until we have a lease in place. The hold-up with the lease seems to be between the Town Council and their legal department at County Council. This toilet idea was first proposed in 2007 so no rush! We are sorry that you all keep on having to ask us for progress reports.

Also mentioned on the notice boards was the positioning of an extra footbridge across the river at the Washbrook bridge end, which would benefit those tenants almost opposite the shop. It would save many of the tenants on the Lower Ladies Hill side of the river the long trek round to use the shop. Barrowing heavy bags of compost back to your plots is not always easy for some of us. The logistics of this idea are currently still being investigated.

Dates for your diary.....

February	Sat 15th/Sun 16th	Shop re-opens. Please be aware of new times during Feb & Oct
April	(date to be advised)	Plot inspections – Please keep an eye on the notice boards
May	(please observe notice boards)	Alternative outlet/s needed for sale of early Spring plants & rhubarb!
June	Sat 14th	Lions' Show
	Sun 22nd	'National Open Gardens scheme' Beehive Hill Allotments open to the public
July	w/com Mon 7th/14th (Date TBC)	Judging of plots by Moreton Morrell Agricultural College
August	4th – 10th	National Allotment Week
	Mon 4th/Tues 5th	Judging of Scarecrows
	Sun 10th	Open Day held at Odibourne site
	Towards end of month	Measuring of tallest sunflowers
September	Sat 20th & Sun 21st	Rent taking in shop – notices will be displayed as a reminder
	Sat 27th & Sun 28th	Rent taking in shop – notices will be displayed as a reminder
	30th	£5 late payment fine! Last day for rent payment is 29th Sept! Check out your lease!
October	Sun 5th/12th (Date TBC)	Pumpkin weigh-in at Engine
	Thurs 23rd	AGM – Held at Royal British Legion
	Sun 26th	Last day for your seed orders!
November	Fri 14th	Presentation Evening – Held at Royal British Legion

Best Cultivated Plot – Judging Schedule 2014

Category	Points
CULTIVATION AND CROPPING	
Types of produce (1/2 point each type).....	15
Seasonal Produce (Extra point for Winter/Spring produce ...	5
Soft fruit (1 point each type – includes rhubarb).....	5
Attractive features (flowers etc)	5
Herbs (1 point each type)	5
Quality of crops.....	10
HUSBANDRY	
Compost/manure heap (quality of)	10
Freedom from Annual weeds	10
Freedom from Perennial weeds.....	10
Rubbish (freedom from)	5
Label showing variety and maturity cropping time	5
ENVIRONMENT	
Rain water saving.....	5
Plot number prominently displayed	5
Paths/roads neatly maintained.....	5
Judges discretion – the 'wow' factor for that extra 10% ..	10
TOTAL:	110

Gardener's World Live June 12 – 15th

How would you like to get involved as part of a team creating a model allotment display or simply helping to promote allotments? Go to: www.nwa.btck.co.uk or gwl.nwaf@gmail.com for further details (time is of the essence here).

A special message...

Our congratulations go to Ann and Rob on plot 68b Odibourne site who got married on December 23rd 2013

Abbey Radio...

are looking to recruit volunteers to help out with creating a gardening programme. Contact Lily

And finally...

I am handing over all this information over to our new Committee member, Martyn Partridge who will hopefully turn it into something that resembles a news- letter!!!

