

Allotments AGM Report March 17th 2023

It is now some 15 years since the creation of our allotment site. I'm delighted to report that this special facility continues to flourish. We currently enjoy full occupancy and benefit from a small waiting list.

Our finances remain in reasonable shape with the end of year balance a little lower than in previous years due to the one-off purchasing of Event Shelters, apple press, beehives and apiary infrastructure.

Weather-wise, horticulture during the second half of 2022 became particularly challenging due to a prolonged drought where we received no rainfall along with searing temperatures between Mid June and Mid August. This significantly impacted harvests of many crops and prevented the sowing of winter season vegetables and salads. A call to the membership for volunteers to maintain a weekly watering regime to save our 40 plus newly planted trees was very well supported and I'm delighted that all trees survived.

A measure of just how far reaching the Climate Emergency has become was demonstrated by our large wildlife pond. This area become totally dry for the first time since it's creation in 2011.

The heatwave extended well into the autumn and the extreme freeze in December has also taken a serious toll, even affecting some perennial planting.

We have continued to carefully maintain the site and held several successful work parties attending to such tasks as tree planting, orchard pruning etc. We continue to be very grateful to Mike Capps for his invaluable assistance in scything the wildflower meadow and also to Des Merrill for very kindly regularly bringing his tractor and gang mower to maintain the large grass areas.

A significant addition to our site for 2022 is an apiary. Managed by an enthusiastic team of members this great new facility has proved a highly stimulating and welcome new development. Helpful in boosting pollination of the nearby orchard along with of course, our crops, this multi-hive installation has occasionally proved something of a learning curve for our newly qualified volunteers. We are so grateful to Bob Mitchell for his regular guidance and mentoring in this area.

Helped by the generous donation of a commercial sized BBQ, a Summer BBQ party held on site was well attended and enjoyed by all- we hope to now make this an annual event. Also at this time, we invested in two large 'Event Shelters' thus ensuring a degree of protection from the elements at future outdoor events on our very exposed site.

During October we held our first allotment-based Apple Day. Blessed with superb sunny weather a very pleasant time was enjoyed by many, preparing and pressing a range of apple varieties then sampling the resulting juice. This was the first outing for our newly acquired Vigo Fruit Press. We hope to now make site-based Apple Day's a regular feature of the Allotments calendar.

The Wildflower Meadow continues to perform reliably well with an excellent showing of flowers between May and August. It has been some 14 years since the establishment of our Community Orchard and many trees have reached a good size. The many narcissus and cowslips introduced in this area are providing a spectacular show of early colour further enhancing this unique and spectacular feature.

Over at the Wildlife Pond we continue to enjoy the many Common Spotted Orchids along with a great range of other wildflowers. Sadly as fore mentioned, both pond pools dried out completely during the drought and we are hoping that the Winter rains might restore the water to a healthy level.

To summarise: all of this has happened thanks to a great team of Committee members and Allotmenters who in addition to managing their own plot, regularly volunteer to help maintain the site for everyone's benefit. We are very fortunate to have so many members and supporters who make our allotments into a viable, creative and thriving community.

Andy Pearce. March 2023