

Secretary's Report - Oct 2023- Sept 2024

Summary

This has been a very busy year with far more allotment plots changing hands than is usual. I think it is fair to say that the weather took it's toll this year making growing conditions and particularly plot maintenance very challenging for many of us.

The introduction of organised 'Working Parties' led by the Site Team, Louisa and Andrew has been of great benefit to those who have struggled from time to time and has particularly helped many new starters who inherited plots in a poor condition. I'd like to thank all the volunteers who assisted on those working parties. Your help is much appreciated.

Social activities increased during the year with regular coffee mornings and bacon-butties mornings, a trip to GARDENS and the Open Morning was a particular success with the weather finally playing it's part and giving us a good morning. The members showed their generosity once again this year by raising a total of £330.70 for MacMillan Caring Locally, a very worthy Charity.

The best allotment competition was well supported again this year and we will be pleased to present the trophies at the end of this meeting.

The enthusiasm for 'allotmenting' remained very high during this year despite some strange weather conditions which gave us bumper crops of somethings and very poor crops of others. No significant evidence of blight this year (again) but Blackfly got the better of many of us.

Membership

There was a lot of movement in Tenancies this year - changes to 63 Plots. A number of ploholders downsized, a couple upsized , some took on a Joint Tenant – or changed their Joint Tenant – some 'shed' their Joint Tenants and went Solo. Many gave up their plots allowing those on the Waiting List to come and join us. Our Membership increased at 345 from 330.

	Full	Half	Mini	Accessible	Total
1 st Dec 2024	18	131	75	6	230

Waiting List

The Waiting List has finally started to decline after the amazing growth during and following the Pandemic. Having said that there is still a steady stream of new enquiries and new applicants, primarily through the Website. Difficulties in contacting many people of the Waiting List has made this a taxing activity this year and we have removed 23 people who have failed to reply to my emails, telephone calls and letters. A further 26 were removed from the list because they have either moved from the area, taken an allotment plot elsewhere or no longer want a plot. Despite that, and bringing in 45 new Tenants, the number of people from our Waiting List who have taken plots, a total of 94 people, our Waiting List is currently stands at 197, a reduction of 39 on last year. That means during the year we have had 55 new applications.

We have no vacant plots

Associate Members

Interest in our Associate Membership continues and many provide valuable resources by volunteering in the shop, with site maintenance and cleaning & we are very grateful for their input.

We intend to continue to provide services and social event invitations to them as well as to our Full Membership in the coming year.

Site – Maintenance & Developments

General repairs and maintenance has continued throughout the year and we are very grateful for our small band of regular volunteers who help to keep our site in good order. There is always much to do – both regular maintenance (toilets, guttering, hedges, main paths, fences, outside furniture, seating areas, chipping bays, etc, etc) and ad hoc repairs and task work (clearing empty plots, helping members when in difficult times, moving the occasional shed from one plot to another, repairing the accessible beds, helping to install rain water collection systems, local collections, deliveries and ‘tip-runs’ and so on).

We want to continue to develop and improve our site and new Volunteers are always welcomed – and soon put to work!!

The Shop has been fully open all year and we continued to offer a ‘click and collect’ service. Peter Clarke and his band of volunteers keep the shop well stocked and an enjoyable place to visit for your essential allotment supplies. Ideas for new items for us to stock are always welcomed. Volunteers who work in the shop (alongside a Committee Member) make all the difference. There is usually plenty to keep them busy during shop opening hours – and even outside those hours such as when help is required to unload our delivery lorry. If you can assist us in any of these tasks, Peter would be pleased to hear from you.

Communications

Throughout the year our Quarterly Newsletter was published and we continue to receive high praise for this publication. – well done Susannah and thank you. New items of interest are always welcomed and she would love to hear your ideas, recipes, unusual news items and anything else that might be of interest to our readers.

The New Website continues to receive some high praise. It has attracted a lot of external attention and we receive many enquiries about Membership and Associate Membership through the Website.

We try to keep in touch with all our Members, Associate Members and those on our Waiting List via the Website, Newsletters, regular e-mail (and by postal) bulletins and Facebook and Twitter as well as our traditional Notice Boards, all helping them to stay abreast of what is happening in our Society.

Community and Social Activities

We enjoyed a very successful Open morning, Macmillan Coffee Morning and Christmas Social and our communal facility has been used frequently by Members. We hope to encourage greater use of this facility in the coming year.

Our links with local community projects is increasing and our thanks to Clare, and others, for all the work they are putting into these initiatives.

Thanks also for the Bacon Butty initiative. What a great, but simple, idea.

Committee

Our Society couldn't function without our Committee. Each one is a busy plotholder, just like every other Member of our Society. Each dedicates some significant amount of their time fulfilling their duties whether it be as Treasurer, a member of the Site Management Team, Shop Manager, Communications Officer, Chair or one of the Committee Members.

This year there were, initially, 11 of us, 5 ladies and 6 men, until, of course, we lost Hilary Sullovan. Several have served for many years and we are very keen to attract new members onto the Committee, both to keep the Society running and to modernise it in preparation for whatever the future holds.

The Committee members bring with them some vital knowledge and experience to enable us to manage BEAS Ltd for the benefit of its members, whilst complying with all the necessary legislation, rules, regulations and demands of our Landlord, the FCA, Health & Safety Executive and many others.

From me personally, as Secretary, I would like to thank each and every one of our Committee not only for the teamwork, support and cooperation they bring and share, but also for the frank and interesting debates which ensure that we, as a Committee, continue to do what is right for the Society and its' Members.

My personal thanks to all of you

I would particularly like to thank Simon Kavanagh who will be stepping down from the Committee this year and especially John and Geraldine Pitcher who will also be stepping down after many years serving actively on the Committee. They have worked so hard supporting our Society and I am sure they will continue to provide help and advice in the future.

We must think to the future. We would really like to encourage our Members to come and join us – maybe just as volunteers or observers to start with. See what we do, how we do it and MAYBE help us to provide an even better service to our Members in the coming years.