Dear Members,

**Newsletter No 19**

After such a lovely September, with a good harvest for many of us, a very wet Autumn is upon us. As usual there are a number of different communal tasks which have to be carried out to maintain and improve our allotments.  Remember that these are your allotments and some effort by all members is essential for them to continue being a success.  If you have not helped in any of the previous work parties the committee and I hope that you will be able to do so in these.  Hot drinks and biscuits are provided and it is also a good opportunity to meet up and chat with fellow plot holders.

**Work party dates have been set for two weekends – 25/26th October and 1/2nd November with the** necessary work being carried out between 10am –1pm and 2pm- 5pm on each day.  If a further weekend is required that will be on 8/9th November.

A major task this year is to improve the drainage from the path leading down to the lower field lawn by laying a land drain down to a small pond area just before the bee enclosure. Hopefully, this will also help to drain the adjoining plots on either side of the path.  Obviously this cannot easily be done by hand and plot holder Andy Dodds has volunteered to do the first stage (weather permitting) with a digger on Saturday 25th October, but then more hands will be needed to lay the drain and refill the trench. Also, whilst we have the use of the digger we plan to remove grass and other vegetation matter from the unused area at the north/west corner of the lower field, with the longer term aim to make this another communal area, possibly an orchard.

To improve allotment security between us and the cemetery, we have acquired some Heras fence panels which we plan to fix to the existing rails in the more vulnerable areas of the boundary.

There will be the usual clearing of paths, cutting back of brambles and blackthorn etc, and a vacant plot has to be covered to suppress the spread of horsetail, so please come along to help.

The annual bonfire party and BBQ will be held on Friday 7th November at 7pm (display starts at 8pm) on the lower field to coincide with the firework display at Kingsmeadow.   Mulled wine and soft drinks will be provided and there will also be a charcoal BBQ where you can cook your own food.  Please bring your own alcoholic drinks, fireworks, sparklers etc.  There will be a designated area on the lower field where you can pile up any unwanted timber (after 25 October) and the bonfire will be built just before the party.  Please note that timber with plastics/formica attached cannot be burnt.

If you have braved the rain in the past week you’ll have noticed that the main gates to the upper field have been replaced. The old gates had become misaligned and were often very difficult to close, so we negotiated with the council for them to be replaced, but still keeping the existing padlock. Because of the gate design the padlock is slightly more awkward to lock (use the second opening from the gate edge to get you hand in with the key), and the locking bolt is still a bit stiff - but I am told it can be adjusted in a few weeks once the gates have been in use for a while.

The manure scheme commences from October each year and there has just been a fresh delivery.  If you are already part of the scheme or wish to join it (to pick up 30/40 barrow loads each year) please pay the annual £5 subscription directly to me or Joan at 9 Grove Lane or at the Allotments.

Also, everyone can help themselves freely to as much wood chippings as you need for paths, mulching etc.

The annual late summer BBQ on Sunday 7th September was a great success!  Over 50 participants – plot holders with their families and friends enjoyed the sunny weather, their freshly cooked food and the wonderful cakes submitted for the cake competition.

Plot holder Chris Hupp and his friend Sue from Mill Street entertained us with a selection of songs and were very much appreciated – many thanks to them both for helping create a great atmosphere.

The fun competition results were as follows:

1.  Best cake with allotment ingredient 1st – Pascal Boulvais     2nd – Linda Moore

2.  Heaviest squash   Joint 1st - Pete Sinclair’s son and Tom Morrell’s huge 17 kg pumpkins outstripping any others

3.  Tallest flower    1st - Joan McConn with a 3.45m Echium (loved by Andy’s bees) - though Paul Naylor had a hop flower at 4.5m, but supported by his wonderful hoframe. We all enjoyed his great beer at the BBQ made using his own hops.

4.  Weirdest vegetable      1st  - Sue Whitehorne with her “flying saucer” squash

Many thanks to Andy Watters for the generous donation of six jars of his delicious honey, four of which were used as first prizes in the competition and the others were given as prizes in the raffle.  Also, many thanks to the other donors of prizes, and to everyone who helped make the afternoon so enjoyable and successful.  The raffle raised £28.50 towards the cost of the event – so many thanks to all who bought a ticket.

I look forward to seeing you on some if not all of the workdays, and at the bonfire party.

Karol Smal

Chairman

On behalf of the AGAA Committee