

Newsletter Summer 2020

Guildford Allotments Society
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GU1 9HU



Why your invoices are late....

You may be aware that in November last year Guildford Borough Council (“GBC”) issued notice to Guildford Allotment Society to terminate the Lease for Allotment Sites pursuant to their plan to build houses on Old Farm, Lagoon and Parsons Green allotments (“Bellfields”). This gave a termination date of 29th November 2020.

Since then your Committee has been working with GBC and their Project Consultant to negotiate a solution satisfactory to GAS and GBC. In the event the Secretary of State, in August, rejected GBC’s request to build on the Bellfields sites and required it to remain allotments (see later in Newsletter). However the lease for our sites remained in negotiation, and by September it was clear that unless we could resolve the lease problem we could only invoice up to 29th November 2020. This was not wise as it would cost almost as much to raise the invoices as the income they would generate. We decided we had to delay invoicing until we knew what GBC were intending.

We are now delighted to inform you after many meetings two new leases were signed on 16 October. One lease is for Bellfields and the second is for all the other sites. Both leases are on exactly the same terms and for 25 years.

We are now able to invoice you for the full 12 months -1st October 2020 to 30th September 2021. We are sorry for the delay but hope you understand why this occurred. It would be greatly appreciated if you could pay as promptly as possible and certainly no later than 27th November 2020.

We anticipate that GBC will expect to develop Bellfields, at least in part, at some time in the future but as yet there is no proposal from them.

Son of GAS – Called GAS!

Following the resolution taken at the AGM of 2018 the Committee have been working to establish Guildford Allotments Co-operative Society Limited and we are pleased to announce that it was registered on 30th September 2020. Under normal circumstances an AGM or EGM would have been held but under the present Covid 19 restrictions this has not been possible and seems unlikely to be able to take place for sometime.

Therefore, under the terms of the Guildford Allotments Society Constitution and the new Constitutional Rules of the Co-operative Society the Committee have proposed that the existing Officers continue in post until the next AGM (whenever that is held), at which time you will be able to vote in your new Committee. It is also proposed that instead of renaming GAS as GACSL - we retain the name GAS for simplicity.

The plan is that GAS continues to 31st March 2021 with the Co-operative Society taking over from 1st April 2021. As a consequence of the change we have to make new tenancy agreements with each one of you and these will be effective from 1st April 2021. We plan to send these out in March 2021 and you must sign and return yours promptly if you wish to retain your plot. The provisions of the new Tenancy Agreement will be in line with the existing one.

One significant change will be that all members become shareholders in the new organisation. The shares are not transferable or refundable and will be forfeit upon the termination of the tenancy. The shares will have a nominal value of £1 per tenant/joint tenant.

None of these changes reduce your obligation to cultivate your plot and receive enjoyment from it.

Annual General Meeting

Sadly the Coronavirus situation with all its restrictions has made it impossible for your Committee to arrange the required AGM. This continues and although we had hoped to have the meeting in September we were not able to do so.

Whilst we could try to do what many have managed in this situation, the Committee do not think it would work to use Zoom or other computer style meeting. First of all we have a potential attendance of over 600 people with the right to attend and secondly not everyone will necessarily have the appropriate computer facility. We cannot set up something that would automatically disadvantage some of our members.

The Committee have therefore had to review the way forward and would like to propose the following:

The 2020 AGM will be moved to Summer 2021 (Covid-19 Restrictions permitting) and combined with the AGM for 2021. The key agenda item from 2020 is the adoption of the accounts 2019/2020. These were prepared and audited in due time and were circulated with the Spring Newsletter. We have therefore complied with our existing Constitution in regard to Accounts.

The Committee are sure that members understand and accept this proposal. If you should object to this way forward please email or post your objection to the Chairman (contact details on page 8). Such objections to be received no later than 27th November 2020.

The circumstances of the times have directed the Committee in making this decision. The loss of the AGM as a time to meet with and talk to tenants is regretted and we look forward to easier times when this can be done.

In the meantime we hope everyone stays well and continues to enjoy their allotment plot.

Philippa Wright, Chairman

Please note some of the following articles have had to be modified following the amendments caused by the delays explained on page 1

Message from the Chairman

Well! What strange times we are living in. Although things were easing it seems we are going to be living a curtailed life for some time yet. How lucky we have been to have our allotments – a privilege that many do not have. I don't know how I would have survived if I had not been able to spend time planting, weeding and digging! It has been good to visit some of our sites and to see how you have all been coping and I have to say maybe we should have lockdown every Spring! The sites are generally looking very good – so well done on keeping paths cut and plots cultivated.

It is likely that we were getting Covid weary and a bit “de-mob happy”. However with the developing situation we do still have to be vigilant. Please remember to sanitize the padlock and gate handles every time you use them. We are allowing equipment to be shared if the Warden is willing to cope with the restrictions. Likewise, toilets can be opened. It is important that you follow any guidelines given. I hope you have all had a good harvest!

Philippa Wright

Message from the Editor

Having an allotment was the ‘silver lining’ of lockdown - being able to get out in the fresh air with constructive exercise and the added bonus of being able to have a chat with fellow plot holders albeit at a distance. I can't remember the last time our allotment was so tidy, and so productive with all the extra time we have been able to spend weeding and watering.

It's a shame that Guildford in Bloom was in a different format this year, as I'm sure that we would have improved on our previous silver award. However, I hope that lots of you entered the #GIB2020 photo competition. In total, 698 photos were submitted and several of our plot holders did very well to reach the final selection - Congratulations! The results were announced on 17 August and can be found on the Guildford in Bloom website.

Bonfires

Please remember that bonfires are only allowed on sites from 1st to 10th November.

News from your allotment sites

Your committee is always pleased to hear about social and community events held on our allotment sites.

Aldershot Road

A question tenants ask repeatedly is what should they do with their surplus crops? As we know, these cannot be sold to raise money for charity but they can be given away to benefit others.

Pam Keale, a plot holder since 2017, set up a collection box at Aldershot Road to gather excess fresh produce for donation to the local Park Barn Centre where it is distributed to vulnerable local residents. Look out for the collection box located on a table by the metal machinery container and please give generously. Anything and everything you can spare will be gratefully received.



Perhaps other sites could do something similar?

So, this year, please pick up those fallen apples, pears, plums, figs, apricots, ginormous courgettes etc and pop them in the food box rather than letting them rot on the ground.

Thank you.

Lorna McGregor

Bellfields

In a recent ecological survey of the Bellfields site, a rare wildflower was discovered with the unusual common name of **Weasels Snout**.



GAS would like to welcome our recent new tenants to Lagoon and Old Farm. You have taken over derelict plots and turned them around in a very short period of time. The results are amazing and a credit to everyone involved. The mood on site is noticeably upbeat and buzzing with activity (excuse the bee pun!). So welcome to our Bellfields allotment community and a huge thank you for all your hard work. Happy growing!

Lorna McGregor

Burpham

Pruning Demonstration. Leading on from the successful demonstration on Winter Pruning given by Mike Beckwith whilst we were in the grip of Storm Dennis a few months ago, we followed up with Summer Pruning, this time amidst Covid 19!!!

Mike kindly gave up his Saturday and Sunday mornings to climb ladders, and grapple with the plum tree on our community plot, which has not been pruned in living memory. The weather was kind on the Saturday but decided to drizzle and be miserable on Sunday however both days were well attended despite this. The course moved on to a tenants plot to cover Espalier and Cordon apple and pear trees, followed by plenty of questions from the tenants.



Everyone who attended was well pleased with their new found knowledge and a round of thanks was passed on to Mike Beckwith. We are planning other demos and lessons to improve everyone's knowledge of gardening, as well as getting to know other tenants in a social setting rather than just across a plot fence.

Curry lunch Burpham was recently pleased to welcome new tenants who took on plots after patiently waiting to reach the top of the waiting list. One of these couples, Pragathi and Raj, were so grateful for being made welcome by everyone on site, and especially for the help and assistance they received from the wardens, preparing their plot and finding seedlings etc. for them to plant that they provided an al fresco lunch on the community plot.

They arrived with home cooked Lamb Biryani Chicken Korma and Pilau rice and a crate of chilled lager. Lunch was delicious and everyone had seconds, plus cartons for doggy bags appeared which were rapidly filled. It was an unexpected treat to be thanked in such a delightful way.



It is such a shame that because of the Covid-19 restrictions we have been unable to hold our summer barbecue. The social side of allotmenting is expanding at Burpham and becoming very multi-cultural with Eastern European, Asian, New Zealand and many other nationalities joining our community and growing vegetables alongside each other. When we eventually return to normal, we are planning to have an internationally flavoured barbecue and other events.

Mike Flarry

Dagley Lane

In December last year, about 20ft of the hedge was 'traditionally hedge layered' by a retired dairy farmer, Andy Hall from West Sussex, with a little help from the warden. This task was done free of charge. Furthermore, he did not want any transport expenses for the four days it took to carry out this project.

Members are most welcome to view this hedge laying works.

Peter Morley

Larch

The late frost hit the new vines at Chateau Larch very hard. Surprisingly all recovered and, much to our surprise, even developed fruit despite the frost and only being planted in April. First vintage could be 2023/4!!

Alastair Watson

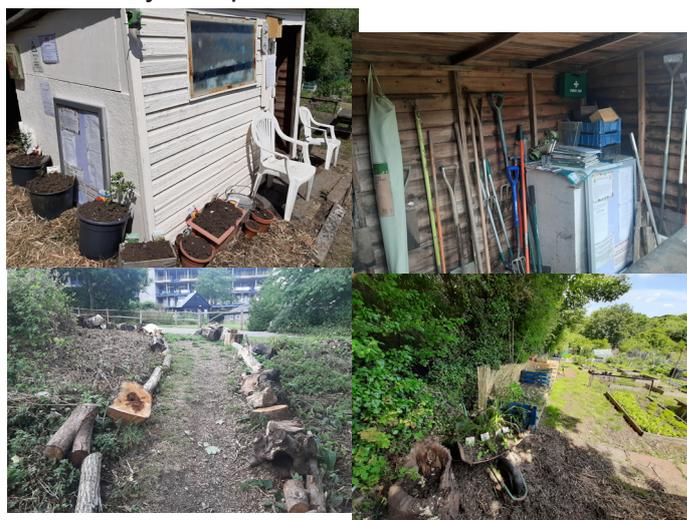


Lido

The new Warden, Dylan Thomas, and Assistant Warden, Vicky Russell have been busy tidying up the Lido site over the last few months. Vicky and her partner have given the communal shed a makeover with the signs back up, and a bird box. The communal tools have been tidied up

plus a seat inside in case of a heavy downpour. Wood chippings now surrounds the shed with containers and pots filled with seeds, bulbs and plants to give colour through the summer and into the autumn. There are also four chairs for people to sit on - being mindful of social distancing.

The new community area, includes a planted bed, a bed made of pallets for vegetable seeds which are growing well, an old wheelbarrow planted with flower seeds and a rose planted inside an old hollow tree trunk. There is also a pond, waiting for pond plants, plus two new community compost bins as well.



We have also opened up the entrance area to make it more accessible and made use of logs for edging. Regular amounts of woodchip will be dumped at the gate entrance for all plot holders to take for their plots.

We recently found out the Lido site was built in the 1940s for Dig for Victory and there is a small orchard area next to the site with cherry and apple trees and blackberries which can be picked. The Wildwood cafe near the site is now open for icecreams etc. and they have agreed that allotment holders can use their toilet.

Tenants and visitors entering the Lido site, need to obtain a parking ticket; you must punch in your vehicle registration number and display the ticket in the windscreen when arriving. It is free for the first 4 hours, after that you have to pay. Usual rules apply, failure to display a ticket and you will have to pay the appropriate fine.

In 2021 we are planning a BBQ day for all plot holders, two site tidy days, enter the site into the National Garden Scheme where people visit the

site, also Surrey Heritage weekend as the site was built in 1941 for Dig for Victory.

Dylan Thomas

Lime Grove:

There has been a turnover of tenants at this small site in the past 12 months. Although there are no vacant plots at present, we need new people to apply to our waiting list which is now depleted. This site is open to all to apply for an allotment but is particularly popular with local residents. There is a strong community feel at Lime Grove as the majority of allotmenters are friends or neighbours. So existing tenants, please spread the word. Many thanks.

Lorna McGregor

Merrow

We are encouraging everyone to comply with the rules over Covid-19 i.e. wearing gloves, sanitising the locks when opening and locking the gates and when using the taps. We currently are not allowing the use of the toilet or access to the community shed or tools.

A few people had to shield during lockdown and, because of this, they couldn't go up to the site. A few of our other plot holders were very kind in helping those plots to be maintained. We are very grateful to them for helping and also weeding and edge cutting on the Community Plot.



We have a Community Sunflower. We didn't plant it - a bird must have simply dropped a seed and it grew into the monster you see here. It's about 9ft tall now and it gets watered regularly.

Chris & Ross Rzechorzek

Pewley Hill

Site Warden urgently needed.

An email has been sent to tenants and so far one tenant has responded BUT they would like to share the duties with another tenant. It is very important that each site has a warden, for example they get information from the Committee, raise site issues with the Committee, check that the equipment is maintained safely, make sure the machinery is filled with petrol etc. etc. So step up to the plate please!

Wardens working from home?

The "Working From Home" initiative, resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak, is nothing new for Neville Griffin and Derek Dickenson, our wardens at **Westborough Bungalows** and **Lime Grove**. They have been doing this for years as their "place of work" is at the end of their gardens - literally.

Both sites, with just 7 and 12 plots respectively, are surrounded on all sides by residential property where Neville and Derek have their family homes. All it takes to get to "work" each day is a short stroll down the garden path and straight onto their allotments. And being so close to home they never miss a tea break, who wouldn't envy them? From plot to pot in seconds, I don't think fruit and veg comes any fresher than that and not a single petrol mile clocked up when harvesting. Wonderful!

Lorna McGregor

Worplesdon Road

Despite Worplesdon Road being one of our smaller sites, earlier this year, our warden Peter Clarke and some of the tenants had a tidy up of half our site and filled a skip. Encouraged by this we now need a skip to tidy the other half.....

Jean Wickens

Waiting List

Since lockdown started on March 23rd, the number of requests for plots has risen considerably - **127 new requests as at 22nd July. We now have 217 on the waiting list as at 17 Aug. As a very rough guide, since May 2020 our figures have gone up about 10% per month** as people have realised the benefits of having an allotment and growing their own fruit and vegetables. If you are planning on giving up your allotment, please let the Committee know asap so that your plot doesn't lie idle and overgrown when we have so many people waiting for a plot.

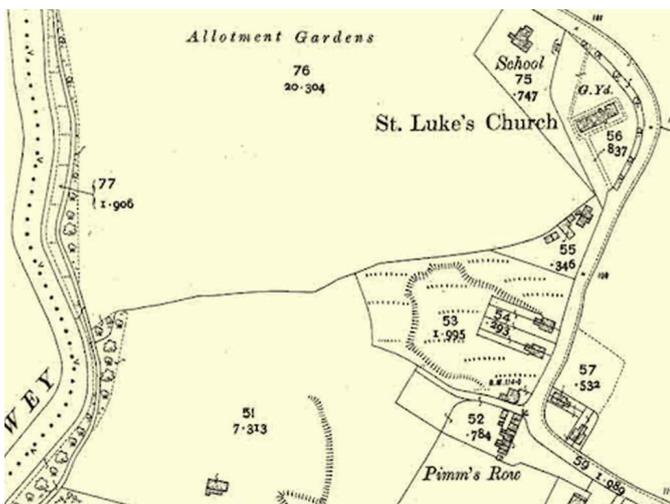
Glass on Allotments

A reminder that if you use glass on your plots for cloches, cold frames etc you must be very careful in its use. Please do not use it next to main site paths as it could be a hazard if someone trips and falls on to it. If the glass becomes broken do not dispose of it on site, please take it home and dispose of it as you would broken glass at home

Grow Your Own History Of Burpham Allotments

This article was originally published in Burpham Pages.

Due to the Coronavirus lockdown perhaps we will be encouraged to grow our own food in the future? Apparently, the amount of land for allotments has dropped by over 50% since the 1960s. Getting fruit and vegetables from supermarkets has become the focus of panic buying. The Burpham allotments in Bower's Lane might be an alternative – they are managed by the Guildford Allotments Society.



The 1914 OS maps showed Allotment Gardens behind Burpham Primary School, edged by the river on one side, Burpham Lane on the other, and extending down to the old brick field next to Pimm's Row. In the 19th century and earlier most houses had a small garden where some vegetables could be grown.

According to records in the early 20th century Burpham had several market gardeners, smallholders and nurserymen, presumably many of them used the allotments, including the Kemps, Kilbys and Russells. Residents in Pimm's Row grew produce in the gardens in front of the cottages. Leonard Vincent, who was a market gardener well into the 1960s, donated some of the land by his house in Bower's Lane to the Council for allotments.

The 1934 OS map showed Market Gardens still there beside and behind the school. During the war the children were encouraged to grow vegetables, then after the war some of the allotment land was taken to provide a playing field for the school. However, the school lost

some of that land when the A3 was built in the 1980s.



In 2007 there was a spate of attacks on allotments around Guildford. A Surrey Live report said: "The devastation at Burpham was unbelievable. It was like a First World War battlefield. They had chopped the greenhouses to bits. It was a mess." It seemed that the black-market value of aluminium was the cause, but the result was improvements to the fencing around the site and a locked gate. One of the Burpham allotment plots was the overall winner in the Guildford in Bloom 2015. There are vegetables, fruit, flowers, sheds, greenhouses, cages and polytunnels – even the occasional table and chairs for those social or rest moments.

Moira McQuaide *Moira is a local historian who has written 2 books on the History of Burpham Primary School and Burpham - Gateway to Guildford.*

Guildford Allotment History

It would be very interesting to have a 'History of Allotments' in Guildford. If you have any information on past or present sites please let Jean Wickens know. (contact details back page)

Security Update

We have given advice in the past (Summer 15 Newsletter) on how to deal with security issues. While theft and vandalism to some extent 'go with the territory' of allotments, sometimes more serious events occur. This has recently been the experience at one of our allotment sites.

If you find yourself faced with a situation which is potentially threatening, (in this case a group of disruptive teenagers) your first concern should be your own safety and that of anyone else on your allotment site. Do not confront them as this may make matters worse. If possible, phone 999 on your mobile to alert the police - but only if you can do this in a way which will not incite the situation.

Remember your safety should be your prime concern - not the protection of your plants or equipment.

Bellfields Redevelopment

We are delighted to report that we at last have the Secretary of State's response to Guildford Borough Council's application to dispose of the Bellfields Allotment Sites. In pursuance of his powers under section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925, **the Secretary of State refuses to grant consent** for disposal of 3.5 hectares of allotment land at Bellfield Allotments, Guildford.

Quoting from the letter received by GAS Chairman the principle point of concern is stated as *"The Secretary of State considers that the statutory criteria is not satisfied. Guildford Allotment Society (GAS), who manage the site, a third party and National Allotment Society (NAS) object to the disposal as it currently stands, raising concerns on the adequacy of the alternative provision. They are concerned that the alternatives are not entirely suitable in terms of access, safety of users, and the condition of the alternative provision. Therefore, the Secretary of State cannot be satisfied that adequate provision is in place for existing plot holders."*

We do not yet know how GBC are going to respond. There is an appeal procedure which they may take up.

Philippa Wright

Finances & Water Charge

Many of you will be aware that our income comprises the charges we make upon tenants, and grant funding from Guildford Borough Council. The latter enables us to improve our sites and bring them up to a higher standard over a period of several years, as well as cover much of our management costs. The income from tenants covers machinery costs and direct site costs, water, membership of the National Allotment Society, and insurance.

The water charge is the big challenge at present. Our water is paid at commercial rates, and is not regulated in the same way as domestic water charges. We were notified in March that our charges from 1st April would be increasing by almost 10 per cent; this was unexpected, and had not been allowed for in the billing for the current year. Our water consumption this year has been higher than expected because of the dry spring and early summer; hence our water

bills have been higher than budgeted. This is not a problem in the short term, as we have delayed some spend to next year, but we have reviewed our water charges for future years, as we need to cover our costs.

Dry springs and early summers seem to be becoming the norm; water consumption in these months in three of the past four years have been higher. Maybe we are all too keen to water our crops. But the outcome of this is that we need to increase our charges to tenants, in part to cover the increase in price and, in part, to take account of our increased consumption. The charge of £2.50 per rod for 2020/21 reflects these.

You might have seen articles in the press and other media recently about the need to save water, particularly in this part of the country. Demand for water is increasing, and no doubt is why the price is increasing too. So – please use water wisely, and don't waste it.

Andy Simmonds

GAS Committee

Following the easing of lockdown, the committee and wardens' meetings restarted in the summer. You may have seen us on one of the allotment sites with our own chairs and drinks and socially distanced. This enabled us to keep GAS running and deal with any problems which are inevitable with 13 sites and over 700 plots. These are much easier to sort out face-to-face rather than by phone and email. However the recent 'rule of 6' has curtailed our wardens meetings once again.

GAS Website and Facebook Page

Following our plea for people to help run the website and Facebook in the last newsletter - we received two very welcome offers of help.

Susie Merry has taken on the task of updating and managing the website. The committee is very happy with her new look for the website, which went live at the end of July - so if you haven't already done so - please have a look at it. Susie hopes to keep it up to date with relevant information and news from the committee.

www.guildfordallotments.org.uk

Vicky Russell (Assistant Warden at the Lido site) is now managing Guildford Allotments Society Facebook page and, like Susie, intends to keep it up to date with news. This will be for a trial

period of six months when it will be reviewed by the committee. Please use it or lose it. If you feel you can help GAS in any capacity - either on the committee or in some other way please contact Philippa. (contact details below).

Current Advice on Covid-19

Updated advice on the use of equipment and toilets (where applicable) are on your noticeboards or displayed on your sites. Please pay attention to these rules.

These may change if the situation changes and lockdown is reintroduced. We intend that any new advice will be on the website and Facebook pages and available from your site wardens. Please respect and comply with any rules necessitated by Covid-19 - these are for the safety of yourselves and all our tenants.

Kings Seeds 2020/21

Each year Kings Seeds produce a special National Allotment Society Members catalogue for both individuals and association members. (GAS is an association member). The prices in the catalogue are heavily discounted and this is a valuable benefit for our members.

The catalogues were distributed to site wardens in late August. Unfortunately, we do not receive enough copies for everyone to have their own copy. The catalogues are available for you to borrow from your site warden, so that you can make your own individual orders using the special green order forms, which we have for everybody.

Permission for Polytunnels etc

Recently wardens and the committee have had to deal with a number of cases where tenants have put up polytunnels, greenhouses and sheds or planted fruit trees without permission.

It is a requirement of your tenancy agreement that you get permission to put any of these on your plot to ensure they are in line with GAS rules e.g. not too large, not shading neighbouring plots; and in the case of fruit trees are on dwarfing rootstock.

In future this rule will be enforced strictly and you will have to remove any structures or trees put on your plot without permission.

National Allotments Week

National Allotments Week was celebrated from 10 to 16 August, and although GAS were unable to arrange any events this year, the week was acknowledged by the Guildford Heritage Team. They put items on social media relating to the week: items held in their collection including a painting of Merrow Allotments by Jenny Kisler and a pair of Gertrude Jekyll's boots; a photo of Guildford Castle Grounds; and a photo of one of the Worplesdon Road allotments which the plot holders have had for 31 years.

The GAS Committee welcomes your ideas for celebrating National Allotment Week in 2021..... please send them to the GAS Secretary.

UPDATE YOUR DETAILS WITH GAS

Please remember to let the Secretary know if any of your contact details have changed. Please also remember to tell your site warden if you are unwell and/or unable to keep your plot in good condition - this will save you receiving a warning letter and possible eviction.

Who to contact at GAS

Your site notice boards have details of your warden's email and contact details; please contact them initially with any queries you have. If you need to contact the committee, details are as follows for queries relating to:

Existing tenancy matters, security and general enquiries:

secretary@guildfordallotments.org.uk

Invoices

treasurer@guildfordallotments.org.uk

Waiting list and new tenancies:

waitinglist@guildfordallotments.org.uk

There is also information on the website:

www.guildfordallotments.org.uk

Please do not copy your emails to everyone on the committee; and remember we are all volunteers and are unlikely to be able to respond to you immediately. **When you contact the committee please give your full name, plot number and site name.**

If you don't have access to email. Please contact us at the address on Page 1.

Next newsletter

The next newsletter will be available spring 2021. Please send any contributions, articles, letters, gardening tips, comments etc to the editor – Jean Wickens - **jeanpwickens@gmail.com**