



Allotment News

Membership-fee freeze for plot-holders *Most will only pay £2 after Committee re-think*

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EXPLAINER:

Weybridge Land Charity (WLC) own the Churchfields Allotments site and are its landlords, managing all areas apart from plots.

WAHGA represents plot-holders' interests and manages all issues relating to plots, including plot allocation, assessment and rent collection

Rental income goes to **WLC**. **WAHGA** charges members a membership fee and runs the shop..

PLOT-HOLDERS at Churchfields Allotments will enjoy a membership-fee freeze for 2021-22 after WAHGA's Committee decided to hold rates at £5.

The Committee has also decided to give a rebate of £3 to all plot-holders who paid £8 last year—an additional £3 having been charged to pay for membership of the National Allotment Society.

WAHGA signed up to the NAS on the basis that the organisation might provide it with useful legal guidance, as we prepared to take on an extended lease on the Churchfields site. But, in the event, NAS was unable to offer the advice we needed and we were obliged to carry out our research through other avenues.

"Although members at the last AGM voted in favour of NAS membership, we as a committee could not ask plot-holders to pay for a service that was not being provided satisfactorily," said Acting WAHGA Chair, Phil Murphy. "We didn't pay for 2021 membership and so it is only right that we return the £3 paid by plot-holders for 2020-21."

WAHGA will urge WLC to follow suit

Phil added that WAHGA would also be encouraging Weybridge Land Charity (*see panel explaining roles, left*) to follow WAHGA's example and freeze the amount they charge for rents.

"Plot-holders faced rent increases averaging around 15% in 2019 and, as we have seen from WLC's last accounts from that year, the Charity is in a comfortable financial position.

"WLC's income was just under £61,000 and its outgoings less than £25,000. You could also argue that any exceptional expenditure — such as the repair or replacement of water-tanks — was only necessary because of previous failures to maintain them properly. It wouldn't be right to ask plot-holders pick up the tab for that. That ongoing maintenance is what plot-holders pay rent for."

WAHGA accounts, which have just been published, show that the Association now has reserves of around £31,000 — a figure that has been swelled over the past year by increased trade in the shop and lower expenditure due to the constraints imposed by Covid 19.

Historically, reserves were held principally as a fighting fund to combat any attempt to sell the land but, despite the fact that WAHGA was not offered the lease it had hoped would secure the site for at least 14 years and so the threat of a sale theoretically still exists, the Committee has agreed that it does not need to keep such a high level of financial back-up.

"We will come to the AGM on July 19th with some outline proposals as to how we might spend some of our reserves to improve services to plot-holders and to strengthen our relationships across the community in Weybridge," said Phil.



Jim's back — stand by your plots

AS WE reported a few months back, national allotment expert, Jim Buttress, is returning this year to judge our *Best Kept Allotment* competition. There are prizes for the best quarter-, half- and full plots, plus awards for the best newcomers' plots. Because of Covid, we will have newcomers since 2020 and 2021.

The judging will take place on July 23rd from 11am. For newcomers, when we say, 'Stand by your plots.' we don't really mean it. Just e-mail Lesley Tilling with your name, plot number and the category or categories you are entering (les.tilling@care4free.net) and Jim will come along and judge your plot. You don't have to be there!



WAHGA 2020 accounts



By outgoing Treasurer, Guy Phillips

IN 2020, WAHGA made a **surplus of £4,771**, compared to a surplus of £513 in 2019. **This gives us a total reserve of £31,441.**

This significant increase was caused in part by a near doubling of shop turnover to £10,639 and improved profitability; both due to the hard work and dedication of Lesley Tilling and her team who kept the shop operating even when it could not open for casual purchases, and there were few other places open for horticultural supplies due to lockdown. It is to be hoped that all the people who used the shop for the first time or for things they normally buy elsewhere, will keep supporting the shop when we return to more normal times.

Overall, the shop contributed £3,218 to WAHGA's income after expenses. This increase more than offset the loss of the profit from the quiz, which was so successful last

year, but could not be repeated this year due to lockdown. The membership subscription income of £2,600 was broadly similar to the previous year.

The other factor in our increase surplus was our expenditure fell to £1,168, compared £3,763 the previous year. The main areas of expense that were reduced were maintenance and waste collection, and cancelling our National Allotment Society membership. The reduction in maintenance and waste collection was due to a combination of lockdown and a decision not to take on any landlord responsibilities for the Weybridge Charity. The WAHGA Committee took the decision not to re-join the NAS in 2020 (a saving of £664) after a disappointing level and quality of legal advice from them in 2019 during the discussion on a site lease.

In addition, WAHGA received a £5,000 grant from Elmbridge Council under their Greenspaces initiative for environmental projects on the allotment site. £2,774 of this was spent on materials and labour in 2020. This is recognised as both an income and expense in the WAHGA accounts, so does not affect our operating surplus.

Churchfields Photo Gallery

'Weybridge Men in Compost Bins'...and a shed to die for



WHEN new plot-holders David and Eileen Jackson wanted to begin composting, they struggled to find an easy way of getting their new bin down to the plot. In the event, David realised that the easiest way to transport it was by wearing it! So, that's what he did! Wonder whether it might catch on...???

PLOT-HOLDERS who have been around for a couple of years will recognise the landmark shed that stood for some time, on a plot by the main path, defying inclement weather and the laws of physics.

While we've been having a drive to tidy up the site, some of us still miss it. Perhaps not so much a shed to die for as a shed to die in...



New to Churchfields Allotments?

Our resident expert, Diane Ewart, offers some tips to new WAHGA members just starting out as to how they might make a success of their plots

Which basic tools do you recommend I buy?

A garden spade, fork, hand fork/trowel and one or two watering cans are all you need to start. Secateurs are useful for pruning fruit bushes, and general trimming back. I'd also make, or buy, a compost bin.

I have an overgrown plot; what should I do first?

Think about, and be realistic about, the amount of time you have each week and tackle the plot in stages. Work on the area closest to the water supply, dig out the weeds, get the soil ready for planting and start growing. Gradually work from front to back and before the season is out the plot will be cleared.

What can I do with all the weeds I've dug up?

You can either bag them up and take the off-site to the 'dump' or household brown bin, or compost on-site.

Which are the easiest fruit and vegetables to grow for a novice?

Rhubarb, potatoes and onions/shallots are simple, almost foolproof, options. Onions sets can be planted in the autumn for harvesting next year, it's a bit late for potatoes now but worth preparing a bed and setting aside an area for them. You might be lucky and get a rhubarb crown from a fellow plot holder in the autumn, otherwise they can be purchased. In the meantime, sow other quick-growing and easy options; carrots, salad veg, radish, beetroot, and rocket (more slug- and pest-resistant than lettuce). All beans are easy to grow, my favourites are runner and french beans - you might still be able to buy some plants now. Sow kale now for harvesting through the winter. But, most importantly, grow what you like to eat!

When should I harvest my produce?

For a lot of the veg, I recommend picking while the produce is still young, so smaller than the average



supermarket produce. This applies to courgettes, runner beans, broad beans, french beans, mange tout, peas. For root veg, again carrots are so easy to grow; just pick them when they're small. Small new potatoes are delicious. Sweet corn is best harvested when just ripe, and the flavour when picked and eaten on the same day is sublime.

Many veg can be left in place and harvested when you need them through the winter, broccoli, potatoes, parsnips, sprouts to name a few, so just pick when you need them.

"For a lot of vegetables, pick while the produce is still young — smaller than the average supermarket produce"

Where can I get seeds?

The allotment shop has a wide range of seeds at very competitive prices. They stock the most popular tried and tested varieties that work in an allotment environment. Otherwise all the local garden centres have seeds and, on-line, try Sutton's, Thompson and Morgan, Chiltern to name a few that I've used.

[CONT on page 5]

What Churchfields Allotments mean to me...

“The feeling you get from just being down here — it’s so therapeutic”

*A chance remark by a work-colleague a few years ago led to Churchfield Allotments becoming a central part in **Christine Durrant’s** life. Here, she tells **Allotment News** how it came about and what her plot means to her.*

WHEN Christine Durrant moved into a flat in Weybridge several years ago, she realised that it was the first time in her life that she had had neither an allotment nor a garden.

For the first few years, she simply dealt with the situation but then her sister in Martin’s Heron took on a plot and a friend at work said to her, ‘You should go and see about getting an allotment.’

“It was like a light-bulb moment. It was about four or five years ago and I contacted Carlye (Case — former WAHGA chair, now Weybridge Land Charity trustee) and she said I can show you some plots this weekend,” says Christine.

‘It was like a light-bulb moment’

She had been expecting a wait of about a year but there was no waiting-list at that time; Carlye showed her a few plots and, when she asked when she might be able to start, Carlye said: ‘What about now?’

It was the start of the Easter holidays and, though the weeds on the plot she selected were knee-high, within a couple of weeks of hard work, she had it shipshape.

Christine had considerable insights into the art of allotting because her mother had had a plot at their home in Sawbridgeworth, in Hertfordshire, when she was little.

“You literally walked out of our back gate and the allotment was there. And we were alongside some homes for the elderly so we befriended a lovely couple — Mr and Mrs Radley. It was quite magical. When I stepped into

that allotment, it was like entering Narnia.”

The plot Christine chose at Churchfields, 125a, is itself a little like a magic garden. It is hard to describe its particular charm but, although it is quite close to the car-park, set back from the main paths, it feels like a little haven.

Many of her friends have clearly tuned into its special atmosphere too.

“I’ve got a queue of people who say to me, ‘When can I come to your allotment again?’”

Friends queuing up to visit

Christine has been fortunate in that her 29-year-old son — one of three boys she has — is a carpenter so he makes raised beds for her, she gets bricks for edging from a builder friend and two of her best friends like to mark her birthday by doing special jobs around the allotment. A handsome stretch of paddock fencing is one such gift. They have also helped with repairs and replacing beds.

“They are an enormous help,” says Christine.

She likes to grow what she calls ‘the easy stuff’: tomatoes, courgettes, cavolo nero, dwarf beans — but, because she still lives in a flat, she likes cut flowers too.

Christine works in the Special Educational Needs Department and counsels students in emotional literacy at Heathside School and, for her, the tranquility of the plot first thing in the morning or in the evening is special.

“Sometimes I come here before school and it is just so tranquil. It’s just a little bit of peace before work.

The feeling you get from just being here — it’s so therapeutic.”



Christine (centre) mixes hard work on her plot with ‘socials’ with her friends

New to the Allotments?

Tips for new plot-holders (cont from page 3)

Where can I get plug plants?

Garden centres stock veg plug plants - though their supplies may be running down at this stage in the growing season. For mail order plug plants Rocket Gardens (rocketgardens.co.uk) are tried and tested and their customer service and plants are excellent.

I've seen a lot of plots with vegetables covered with white mesh, others with netting - what needs to be covered and what can be left uncovered?

Brassicas - cover with butterfly proof netting as cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, kale are all susceptible to being pecked by pigeons and also to the caterpillars of cabbage white butterflies

Carrots - if growing in open ground cover with insect proof mesh to prevent carrot fly. Alternatively sow in a large high sided tub as carrot fly don't fly above 60cm.

Sweet corn - having had a crop of sweet corn destroyed by crows, we now net the sweet corn against birds

Leeks - leek moth is the main pest, so cover leeks with insect proof mesh

Soft fruits - the following need to be netted against birds:

Summer raspberries, strawberries, red currants, black currants, blueberries,

The netting and mesh mentioned is all available from the allotment shop.

If you can't be bothered with netting grow the following:

Parsnips, courgettes, squash, all types of beans, radish, spring onions, onions, shallots, chard, asparagus, potatoes, autumn raspberries, tree fruits, blackberries.

What can I do during the winter months on the allotment?



Winter is the perfect time to prepare the allotment for the next growing season. You'll still have plenty of produce to harvest, potatoes, parsnips, kale, sprouts, cabbage. In autumn sow green manure.

Mulch the soil with your own compost, composted manure. After the first frost, clear away courgette debris, beans,

put away nets, bamboo canes and have a general tidy-up. In February, cut back autumn raspberries, prune fig trees, shape the beds. On a cold day sit indoors go through the packets of seeds you already have, prepare a seed list and work out what you're going to sow and where.

Finally, do chat to other plot holders and glean information and learn from their experiences. Walk around the site to see what others are growing and get inspiration for setting out your plot.

WAHGA's Website features an excellent month-by-month guide, with lots of effective tips about how to manage your allotment throughout the year. Check it out: CTRL + click [here](#)

The allotment facebook group is also a great source of useful information and a great place to ask questions! CTRL+ [Click here](#)

"Walk round the site to see what others are growing and get inspiration."

Meet Laura—our new Treasurer



LAURA Yates, who now tills Plot 69D with her family, has signed up to be WAHGA's new Treasurer.

Laura is Director of KPMG UK's Integration and Separation Advisory department. Trained as an accountant, she now works in the deal advisory arm of the multi-national auditor and management consultancy company.

We are extremely grateful to Laura for taking on this role—particularly as in the last few weeks, she has given birth to her second daughter, Alice.

We are enormously grateful to her for carving out some time from her busy professional and personal life to help us out.

Charity trustees — EBC nominated Board member slot left vacant

ELMBRIDGE Borough Council's Appointments Sub-Committee failed to nominate a Weybridge Land Charity trustee at their latest meeting on June 21. This means that Cllr Vicki Macleod is the only Elmbridge Councillor on the Board of Trustees.

In recent months, councillors Michael Freeman, Glenn Dearlove, Tim Oliver (formerly Elmbridge, now Surrey County Council), Barry Cheyne and Peter Harman have either resigned or have been timed out of trustee roles.

In November 2020, WLC made formal changes to their governance rules. This reduced the number of EBC nominated trustees from six to two. Those changes also included time-limits on terms served, limiting trustees to two four-year terms. As a result of that change, Peter Harman was recently 'timed out'.

It is not clear why a trustee was not nominated by the EBC Sub-Committee but, given the number of external posts on the sub-committee's agenda, it may well have been that a decision was simply timed out.

A council official said: "The Appointments Sub-Committee will consider appointing a representative, if one is forthcoming, in line with the Charity's constitution and any requests that the Charity may have made in respect of the type of skills they ideally would like to assist the Charity."

Currently, WLC have just seven trustees listed on their Website, though their November 2020 resolution suggests that the Board should be made up of "11 competent persons". New non-EBC trustees are chosen by existing trustees "after satisfying an appropriate selection and evaluation process established by the Board of Trustees".



ODDS & SODS

CONTACT US

If you have something you would like to share in the next newsletter or want to give us feedback, please e-mail [here](mailto:info@wahga.org.uk)

WAHGA Website
[click here](http://www.wahga.org.uk)

On the waiting-list? Don't despair!

FOR a variety of reasons, since 2017-18, when a proposal to sell *The Triangle* section of the site was mooted and defeated, Churchfields Allotments has moved from a situation where it had no waiting-list to one where there are around 50 people on the list.

If you are one of those on the list, don't despair. Since the Autumn, everybody who applied in 2020 and maintained their interest in a plot has now been offered one.

However 48 people have applied for a plot in 2021. Our plot-monitoring exercise in Spring is enabling us to free up some plots and we are now offering viewings and making offers to the first of those at the top of the list from this year.

We're also urging people whose plots look unkempt to consider offloading part of their plots, if they don't want to relinquish entirely. So, be patient, keep up your interest and we'll find you something as soon as we can.

Plot monitoring — progress...and a new site plot-map

The Committee and other volunteers completed the plot monitoring process some weeks ago and are now following up on plots that appear to be neglected.

If you are asked about the condition of your plot, don't take this as a personal criticism. We are trying to be fair to all plot-holders and to those on the waiting-list—and we do take into account extenuating circumstances.

The process has helped us refine and update our site plot-map. You can see the latest version on our Website

New logo

A BIG thanks to portrait painter Robin-Lee Hall for designing our new WAHGA logo. It has

been some time in the drafting as her friend, Lesley Tilling, former WAHGA Secretary and now Shop Manager was something of a perfectionist about it and we had multiple iterations. But here it is — and we all love it!

AGM

As you should now be aware, our AGM will now take place at St James' Church Hall on Monday, July 19th (6.30pm for 7pm start), having had to be postponed due to Covid meeting restrictions.

Do try to attend and let your views be heard and do let us know in advance for catering reasons.

