

# Annual Report 2019 -2020

## **We will all remember 2020**

How lucky we were when the lockdown was announced in March that the allotments were kept open for “exercise”. The weather was glorious and if we could measure footfall it would be much higher than in normal times – the individual allotments showed the benefits of extra attendance and the whole site became even more of a delight.

Keeping up with all the rules and restrictions became a bit of a daunting task for the committee but with the help of all allotment holders and their sensible approach to the rules we managed without incident. Thank you to everyone.

## **What we did since last year’s AGM**

You will recall that there was much discussion at last year’s AGM about starting work on the new social shed – called the Barn. Most of you will have seen that it is now up and almost completed. We have, like many things been delayed by all the Covid restrictions. The base was completed just before lockdown and we then had to wait until construction could start again. Once we were able to start again the Covid restrictions became somewhat of a force for good with the number of volunteers being available because of lockdown. The building went up in record time and I am sure you will all agree it looks beautiful.

Like many building projects the costs were a bit higher than we anticipated but with increased funds being put in by the Association and a brilliant fundraising effort on Just Giving we raised all the money needed to complete the Barn – both inside and out to a very high standard.

All we need now is for the Covid restrictions to be lifted so that we can enjoy the fruits of everyone’s hard labour. The finishing touches to be made include installing a wood-burning stove (eco-design ready for forthcoming DEFRA regulations), which will be great for winter events.

A big thank you to all those who helped with building, put their hands in their pockets or made refreshments for the builders – it is a pretty sizeable group, probably the most allotment holders we have had involved in any project.

You will also see that work has begun to clear and landscape the upper part of the plot. More on that in the plans for next year.

Another discussion at the AGM last year was about food waste, Unfortunately Covid rather delayed any plans on this. However, two things did happen. When the first lockdown came, we had some unsold seed potatoes in the trading shed. They were planted on the upper part of Plot 15 ( above the Barn) in part to clear the ground but we also made a link with a food bank project via one of our plot holders and once they were ready they were dug up by the food bank volunteers and distributed to families in need. The other bright spot was the newly established Cider Club. We were given a cider press and equipment by Sarah Burke to whom we give our thanks. A group came together to process the apples in the autumn, apples being wasted was one of the obvious food waste concerns. It probably did not deal with all the apples that get wasted but it is a start, and the brewing is going on as we speak. Those that donated apples will be the first to get a taste, the rest of us will have to wait with bated breath!

### **Lettings and waiting List**

There were 10 lettings during the year, and we welcome all those new plot holders to the Association.

The waiting list remains closed and there are still 132 people on the waiting list. Given the turnover of plots on the site people currently at the end of the list are likely to have to wait 10 years for an allotment to come available. However following discussion, it has been decided that we should re open the waiting list in the new year for a restricted period to allow the same number of people as the number of lettings we made last year( i.e. 10) to join the list, so that we keep the waiting list at the same length. To let it grow any larger seems to give people waiting unrealistic expectations and makes it very difficult administratively to manage the list.

The number of enquiries has been much higher during lockdown, we have had 130 enquires since the beginning of April.

### **Trading Shed**

Annie Griffiths and Liz Denver took over the trading shed in September 2019; Liz doing the ordering of stock and Annie managing the shed.

Thanks to detailed handover from Lynn and Julia it was reasonably straightforward, and all was well until March 2020 when Covid-19 restrictions closed it down.

Because of the good weather and people being unable to travel, the allotment became their go to place for sanity and exercise, and we were very aware that people needed compost etc. There had just been a huge delivery to the shed, but it was then impossible to get more supplies until May 2020.

We were able to find innovative and safe methods of getting supplies to people by responding quickly to requests via the site email so shifted a huge amount of stock despite lockdown.

Since May we have managed to re-stock the shed fairly regularly and have added a few new items including slug collars, which are a great long-term investment and would make good Xmas gifts for courgette growers and winter potatoes. The Spring potato and onion order has gone in. Because of socially distancing rules, Annie and Liz have unloaded all the deliveries without the usual help from volunteers.

A huge thank you must also go to all the shed volunteers who do the sales on a Sunday especially during such difficult times.

### **Fundraising**

We normally have several fund-raising events during the year, but this has been severely curtailed by the Covid restrictions on gatherings.

In November last year we held a very successful Winter Warmer event, raising £540 from the sale of preserves and other Xmas gifts, and much enjoyed, soup, cakes, mulled cider and more.

We were able to hold the potato day in early February.

The plant sale was cancelled and unfortunately the second lockdown put paid to the planned winter warmer.

There was glimmer of hope in the late summer when we opened the newly completed(shell) of the Barn so plot holders could take a look, and we raised £190 from sales of delicious homemade cakes and coffee.

The main and highly successful fundraising was through the Just Giving appeal, which raised our target of £3,500.

### **Maintenance and Security**

We continue to receive an annual grant from Haringey for the maintenance of the site. As with previous years the main concern is the perimeter of the site. We have had a number of incursions into the site, most are annoying but some have resulted in vandalism, broken greenhouse panes , stolen items – including produce etc., but 2 arson attacks over the last few months have caused major damage and concern. After the first attack we thought we had identified where the fencing was being breached and we applied anti climb paint. This was not sufficient to deter intruders and we are now looking at raising the height of the fence between the site and the open field below.

We have also discovered that local groups in Shepherds Cot and Creos have suffered similar incursions so we will be working closely with them and the local police to try and deal with these issues.