

Annual Report 2023-24

What we did since last year's AGM

Barn Events and Fundraising

Our programme of activities at the Barn continues to go from strength to strength. In the last year we have held monthly Sunday discussions, on topics such as 'what to do on your plot this month', the no-dig method, and Esther's popular beekeeping through the seasons talks. Our thanks to Juliet for coordinating these. The discussions are followed by lunch, where homemade soup, bread and cakes are served. As well as raising funds for the Association, these lunches have proved a popular social occasion for tenants, old and new, to meet and chat with each other.

We have also continued to run monthly mid-week café at the Barn sessions. These are generally quieter, but much appreciated by those who come along, particularly in the cold winter months, with a chance to sit and chat by the fire.

We have set up a successful WhatsApp group to coordinate help at lunches and café events, which now has 20 or so members – thank you to all who have volunteered and made delicious soup and cakes, and helped with washing up!

Other Barn events in the last year include regular Bridge afternoons, Art at the Barn sessions coordinated by a local artist, craft afternoons, a very popular winter wreath making workshop as part of our annual Winter Warmer event.

Events at the Barn have had a significant boost in the last few months, with the addition of lighting! We successfully applied to the North London Re-Power Communities Fund for a £2K grant for solar panels and lighting for the Barn, and Ian Potts and Garry Doyland from our maintenance team generously gave their time and expertise to install these.

We also put in two unsuccessful applications during the year. The first was to the Lottery Fund Awards for All for £10,000 to rebuild the Trading Shed. The feedback we received was that we need to emphasise more how our project "will make a difference in our community and how we came up with the idea in conjunction with local people". Following more discussion with tenants, and

more research into the options for repairing/rebuilding the shed, we plan to put in a revised application this year.

The other unsuccessful application was to the North London Waste Authority Community Fund for establishing a communal composting area for green waste on site. This had a tight deadline, and we thought it worth a shot, but now feel it's a project that needs considerably more discussion with tenants and research on its viability. We will start the discussion at the AGM. The aim would be to reduce the amount of green waste that is taken off site, and the burning of green waste on site, and at the same time produce a plentiful supply of good quality compost for tenants.

We spent some time this year researching and discussing the pros and cons of having a toilet on site, and the different options (composting, cesstank type, etc). This is another future fundraising project, along with further discussion with tenants about how cleaning and maintenance would be organised.

In addition to fundraising for the Association, we continue to support and donate to the Harington Scheme. We also continue to collect produce during the summer months to donate to the Hornsey Food Bank.

The communal plot 15 has, with the help of volunteers continued to be a lovely space where people meet and chat and eat and play cards. A big thank you to all the volunteers who put their name down for a particular month in the year and then as part of a team, organise themselves around watering, weeding, pruning etc. This Spring Annie has managed to get 50 small hedging trees from the Woodland Trust, and 100 thin whips hawthorn from London Trust for Conservation Volunteers, which volunteers are now planting as hedging around the plot.

We are always keen to hear suggestions for new activities/events at the Barn, and for offers of help (for example making soup or a cake, volunteering to join the Plot 15 maintenance rota, or helping to organise and run an event). If you can help please get in touch with the committee at info@shepherdshillallotments.co.uk

Maintenance

As ever, the last year has been a busy one for maintenance of the site. The maintenance team has spent many hours on a wide variety of jobs: regular maintenance of wheelbarrows, repairs to the central footpath, improving security

at weak points in the perimeter fence, and with the help of Richard, the tree surgeon, we have carried out a programme of tree pruning, of trees that are overhanging plots along the site boundary and causing problems or are unsafe, and on plots that become available for letting but have unmanageably oversized trees.

We have spent time looking into the options for improving the poor state of the Montenotte Rd track. We have met with three contractors to get quotes for different types of repairs, and are waiting to hear back from Haringey Council on whether they might contribute towards the repair costs.

We have continued to organise regular Sunday maintenance working parties, asking tenants to give a couple of hours of time to help the maintenance team with essential tasks and repairs. Thank you to those who turn up and help and a big call out to others to come along and support this work. Be it cutting back brambles or checking tyre pressures on barrows, helping maintain plot 15, or giving a whole day to dig drainage trenches to get rid of excess water, we need everyone's help in little or large ways.

Lettings and waiting List

There were 16 lettings during the year since the last AGM plus 3 probationers. We welcome all those new plot holders to the Association.

We continued our policy of opening the waiting list at the beginning of the year to allow roughly the same number of applicants onto the list as lettings made in the previous year. This meant that in January 2024 20 people were added to the list.

Some people have dropped off the list, but it remains high at 97 (this includes 33 people who have reached the top of the list but were not ready to take a plot at that time). The people currently being offered plots have had roughly a 6 year wait.

This year we took the opportunity afforded by having to issue tenants with new gate keys of ensuring that all co-workers are registered. Approximately 40 people are now registered as co-workers.

Trading Shed

Report from Liz Denver and Annie Griffiths, Trading Shed Managers:

The year started well, with regular deliveries from Horticultural Supplies based in Ipswich. However, due to a family bereavement this company closed in the summer and we then had to look for an alternative.

We found one in Cheshire that supplies virtually everything we need but unfortunately they deliver via a haulage company that insists on bringing our goods in an 18 ton lorry that can't be driven down to the Trading Shed, this is in spite of clear instructions to only use a small lorry. So myself and Annie along with help from Nev and others have had to ferry the bags of compost and manure from the main gate to the Trading Shed. This is not sustainable and I am currently investigating alternative suppliers for compost and manure, including Shaw's of Edgware for compost and Thompsons of Crews Hill for manure. We are in touch with the Ally Pally Allotment people who are having similar problems.

I left a copy of the Kings Seed catalogue in the Trading Shed and asked allotment holders to look through it or look on the website at <https://www.kingsseeds.com/home> and I only received one request. I ordered more seeds this March so would appreciate any suggestions on how I might find out what people want to buy.

The Spring Potato and Onion order will go ahead again this summer and we will aim to hold Potato Day again in 2025.

We are eternally grateful to the volunteers who turn up without fail to do the selling on a Sunday. This year three more volunteers have joined us and lightened the load for the rest of us. A questionnaire put out to the whole site made us aware of just how valuable the Trading Shed is to the site and in all sorts of ways and much loved despite it being a gloomy, cobwebby shed with a large crack in the floor. We were unlucky with the last Lottery bid to rebuild/replace our shed. But we are hoping to re-bid and one way or another replace the shed with something brighter and better as soon as we can.

