

Annual Report 2025-26

What we did since last year's AGM

Barn Events and Fundraising

The Barn continues to be a fantastic hub for the social life of the allotment. The monthly discussion groups are always well attended by both old and new plot holders, and with the help of Juliet's excellent facilitating, they are a great forum for knowledge sharing and exchange. Typically the discussions follow the annual growing calendar, with a focus on what to do/grow in that particular month. In autumn last year Jenny Gledhill facilitated an informative discussion on growing flowers for cutting, Nevil Yildiz led a talk on composting, and in January Nevil and Steve Scott-Robson led a discussion about biochar. The February discussion included a popular seed swap.

Monthly discussions are followed by a Barn lunch, with homemade soup and bread on the winter menu, and salads and dips for the summer. Delicious cakes are served throughout the year. We are planning to include many of the recipes in the forthcoming centenary cookbook (see Future Plans). We have a great band of volunteers who each month cook, bake, serve and wash up – a big thank you to all who help. The Barn lunches both raise funds for the Association and provide an opportunity for tenants to meet and chat with each other, in the winter sitting around the wood burning stove, and in the summer enjoying the outside space of Plot 15.

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.

The big event in the allotment calendar is our annual plant sale, which last year was as successful as ever. As well as being a lovely social occasion, for plot holders and the local community, we raised a record £2,700, half of which we donated to the Harington Scheme.

The other big fundraiser of the year is our Winter Warmer, held in November. This year we raised £1,800 and donated 50% to the Hornsey Food Bank. We also supported the Hornsey Food Bank through donations of fruit and veg throughout the summer months.

Also during the summer months Gary Sycamore runs a stall at the local Farmers Market to raise money for the Harington Scheme, with his own produce supplemented by contributions of flowers and fruit from plot holders. This year he raised an amazing £7,750. This was a record amount, up over a thousand pounds from last year.

At last year's AGM Bruno told us that 2026 was our centenary year. 100 years of growing on Shepherds Hill is definitely something for us all to celebrate, and the committee, with generous offers of help, have drawn up an exciting schedule of celebrations to mark our 100th birthday. First up was a 2026 centenary calendar, with beautiful photos of the site through the seasons. Our thanks to Liz Denver for coordinating this. Next was the publication of a history booklet, launched at Potato Day in February. With lots of help from plot holders, Jill Russell has researched

the history of our site, drawing on Haringey and Hornsey Historical Society archives, and oral histories from plot holders who have had their allotment for 40 or 50 years or more. Over 160 copies have already sold, with £1.00 from each sale donated to the Hornsey Food Bank. More centenary events are planned – see Plans for 26/27.

This year Fiona Godfrey took over coordinating work on the communal garden space outside the Barn from Annie. Fiona writes: the communal plot is bursting into life once more. It has grown from an overgrown and weedy plot into a flourishing and wildlife centred garden thanks to volunteers and donations from fellow plot holders. It is much used when we have Barn events with seating where visitors can sit and chat over tea and cake. The commitment to help is not too arduous and different volunteers meet for an hour or two each month. If you are able to help please get in touch, more willing helpers are always welcome Fiona at figodfrey@outlook.com

The Barn continues to host a regular Bridge group, with excellent tuition from Garry Doyland. If you are interested in joining the group (meetings are arranged on an ad hoc basis) write in to info@ and ask to be added to the Bridge WhatsApp group.

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 communal garden 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 project that has taken up lots of maintenance time this year has been the communal composting site. We've held several working parties and had a great response from volunteers. Working out how best to organise the site, and the best way to produce compost has taken some experimentation, but we are now beginning to get some good results and hope to re-open the site soon, with clear instructions on how plot holders can make best use of it. Our thanks to the composting sub-group for their hard work on this.

A new drainage channel has been created alongside the west wall of the Barn. Over the winter rain water has been running down the hill and forming a boggy patch at the corner of the veranda threatening to flood the Barn - hopefully that is now cured.

Talking of boggy patches. The grass directly in front of the entrance to the Barn is also a wet spot and has caused a number of people to slip on the mud. To try and prevent this happening a set of three large rubber mats have been laid in front of the Barn to act as a bridge across this treacherous ground. We hope this works, if not we might have to dig some serious drainage in front of the Barn.

The maintenance team have been laying down extra hard core along the track to Montenotte Rd and at the Wood Vale gate. We have cleared drains to allow rain water run-off. We also fixed several taps and valves. There were also some repairs needed to the guttering on the front of the Barn. A new lock has been fitted to the Trading Shed and a new very smart aluminium notice board on the outside of the Trading Shed. We have also started work on repairs to the fencing running behind the wood chip bins and along the Montenotte Road track.

We have cut down a number of trees around the site that were threatening to fall and were blocking light. We have also cut down two trees alongside the Barn as they were dying and in a poor state.

Lettings and waiting List

There have been 10 lettings 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. In January 2026 20 people were added to the list.

The waiting list currently stands at 103. People near the top of the list have been on the waiting list for about 3 years.

Trading Shed

Report by Liz Denver (plot 20) and Annie Griffiths (plot 53a), Trading Shed Co-Managers:

It has been a calmer year again for the Trading Shed. We have continued to use Shaws for top ups of Manure and Compost, as George who delivers is always on time and very helpful. We continue to use KG Loach, based in Cheshire, for the other goods. We can always use help on the days that KG Loach are delivering as we sometimes have to ferry the goods from the main gate, and Annie and I are always open to offers of help with the Trading Shed.

Following the decision to lift the complete ban on bonfires we are now stocking Incinerators as they are better for reducing smoke.

The shed has continued to open regularly every Sunday from early February to early November and fortnightly November to end of January. It has never missed an opening thanks to our committed team of volunteers. There were over 70 orders for Potatoes, Shallots and Onions which were collected on Potato Day in February.

The new Trading Shed is such an improvement as a working environment but also a place customers like to be for a gardening chat. From our increased sales this year it is clear that the Trading Shed is highly valued by the plot holders.

This year we have also been really fortunate in having local Duke of Edinburgh student volunteers who have painted the floor.

But of course all this works because of the team of brilliant volunteers.

Other activities of the Committee

In addition to the above, the committee undertook a wide range of other tasks during the year.

In response to views expressed about the bonfire ban the committee organised a site wide poll, in which 46% voted yes to keep the ban, and 54% voted no to the ban, with many suggestions for more restrictive and responsible burning practices. As a result of this poll the ban was amended and bonfires are now permitted between 1st Nov – end February.

Other ongoing committee tasks include:

- Responding to info@ emails
- Sending out regular newsletters and other notices
- Dealing with insurance claims following site break-ins
- Attending Haringey Allotment Forum meetings
- Liaising with Haringey over invoicing issues
- Showing plots to prospective new tenants and liaising with probationers
- Responding to Haringey's communications re. Japanese Knotweed on site.