

Annual Report 2020- 21

How will we remember 2021?

We all thought that 2020 would be the year to remember but as we locked down again over Christmas 2020, we started 2021 with similar restrictions. As you will see from the detailed reports below, we managed to find creative ways to carry on when we could and since the summer, we have had a number of social gatherings.

The plots remained a sanctuary for us all in difficult times with a perfect way of meeting but keeping a distance. The committee would like to thank all plot holders/ members of the association for their help and commitment in keeping Shepherds Hill allotments such a safe and vibrant space.

What we did since last year's AGM

There were several activities we committed to at last year's AGM in our future plans.

The first was the completion of the Barn and to get some activities going. The Barn was completed, and we had a grand opening on the 1st August. The continued Covid restrictions caused some delays, but we now have a very beautiful social space, which we have started to use. From August we have opened once a month on a Sunday for a horticultural session and lunch. We have also been opening the Barn Café once a month on a Wednesday. These activities started slowly but more people are joining in and welcoming the opportunity to make new friends and enjoy some good food. We hope as time goes on that we will get more people involved and be able to run a variety of different sessions.

A thank you to everyone who has made the Barn and the communal garden such a great place for us all to enjoy.

The garden opposite the Barn has been skillfully planted and we now have a rota of plot holders to maintain it.

The second item on our plan was to address concern about food waste from the allotments and although we haven't cracked the problem, we have made a start with weekly donations of surplus fresh food going to the Hornsey Food bank in the high season. The cider makers continue to process surplus apples. Many people contributed surpluses to Gary for the stall he has at Ally Pally Farmers Market which raise funds for the Harington project.

The third issue to deal with from our plan was the problem in 2020 with unwanted visitors to the site including a number of serious arson attacks. We have taken steps to improve security of the perimeter of the site, by adding some fencing and anti-climb paint (see maintenance section below), putting up CCTV signs, and planting blackthorn bushes, and will continue to work on this. We did not proceed with changing the lock system at the site as the perimeter fence issue became more important.

We have worked with local organisations, Neighbourhood Watch, Shepherds Cot Trust and CREOS to try and improve security in the area, these organisations were experiencing similar problems. We also improved our links with the neighbourhood policing units, and they reported that they have increased their patrols through the site and surrounding areas.

We hoped to undertake some work on the unused plot 83b but this has not been possible, however a recent visit from an ecology consultant undertaking a biodiversity survey of Haringey sites was encouraging about it being kept as a wild space – that still needs some management.

An outstanding issue from our plan, carried forward to our plans for 21/22, is addressing the poor condition of the main roadways at Montenotte and Wood Vale gates.

Lettings and waiting List

There were 5 lettings during the year since the last AGM. We welcome all those new plot holders to the Association.

We opened the waiting list from the beginning of January for the short time it took for the 10 places on offer to be filled. Progress on lettings has been much slower this year and we have yet to decide whether the waiting list should be opened again on the same basis as last year (i.e., that we allow the same number

of applicants on the list as lettings that were made) holding the list at the same overall number.

Some people have dropped off the list, but it remains at just under 130. The people currently being offered plots have had a 5 year wait and this is extending all the time.

Trading Shed

For much of the year since the last AGM due to Covid, the trading shed ceased to have regular Sunday openings. Instead, individuals could email Annie and Liz and arrange to buy things at times convenient to all. Even with this restriction sales ticked over at a good rate. Potato day became potato weekend in order to avoid crowds.

Once we did get back to regular Sunday openings, we reduced our opening hours from two to one hour as most helpers ran the shed individually. Sales haven't suffered and we've decided to keep going with the single hour opening 11-12 for the foreseeable future.

Both Brexit and Covid have affected our supplies. Prices have gone up and some items are hard to come by, e.g., enviromesh. Since it's a by-product of oil refining it would be good to find a more sustainable alternative. In the meantime, using old net curtains may even be more effective against white fly.

We've also decided not to stock any products that contain peat.

The introduction of a card reader for trading shed transactions has proved popular with both customers and volunteers.

Tenants are now ordering their potatoes, onions and shallots for Potato Day/weekend which will be 26/27 February 2022.

The trading shed relies completely on the generous hours of volunteering, for which we are hugely grateful.

Events and Fundraising

Last November's Winter Warmer was done completely online but still managed to raise almost £600. This year we hope to be able to celebrate it in and around the Barn and serve food as well as run stalls on Sunday 21st November.

We held a very warm, jovial official Barn Opening, once we were able to have a gathering of more than 30 people. And since then, we have been serving teas, coffees and cakes every second Wednesday, and lunches on the third Sunday of each month. The lunches are preceded by a discussion of what to do on the plot in the coming month or a related activity. The most recent one was a yoga session on how to look after our backs when gardening.

All this again is provided by volunteers. We would welcome anyone who would like to offer to help with providing and serving teas and lunches. The events have been increasingly well-attended and clearly enjoyable. We are also looking to expand our range of allotment related activities for the hour before the lunches and to develop our use of the Barn at other times. Recently we had a visit from one of Haringey's local area coordinators (whose role is to support Haringey residents for any number of reasons) and are exploring how we might link up with her as a community resource.

The Plot 15 communal garden in front of the Barn has been created with the donations of plants from plot holders across the whole site. It is now looked after by small teams of plot holders who have offered to take on responsibility for one month in the year.

This is working well. However, we are still looking for volunteers to join teams for May, June and July. It's fun and really not very taxing. The garden is a lovely space for people to meet and chat in the open.

If anyone else would like to get involved in the Barn and Garden activities do email us at info@shepherdhillallotments.co.uk

Maintenance and Security

In the early part of the year the local Cricket Club kindly donated to SHA half a dozen large used metal fencing panels which the maintenance team were able to install at some of the more vulnerable points along our perimeter fence. Along with some big dollops of anti-climb paint we hope it has deterred would be intruders.

For three months from March to June the maintenance team and volunteers were very busy finishing the Barn. Installing the ceiling, painting the walls and floor, and finally constructing the kitchen and plumbing. There are still a few jobs to do such as the guttering on the rear of building and we need a log store.

Investigations have been going on as to the source of the water that drenches the track from the Queens gate to the small car park. We thought it was a mains water leak but when we turned off the mains water it made no difference to the flow bubbling up in the track. We then thought it might be a blocked drain that runs near to the leak - that proved fruitless. We have reported the problem to the Council, but no action has come of it. Thames Water is our next step.

A few weeks ago, the maintenance teams carried out a very extensive survey of trees on the site. The aim of the survey was to identify places where trees are overhanging the perimeter fence and shading plots. We also made a note of all the large and oversized trees and fruit trees that populate our plots and there are quite a few taller than the 3m height limit. We have asked Richard the tree surgeon from City Arb to make a start this autumn cutting back and overhanging trees. If you would like him to prune or cut down trees on your plot, he can be contacted on 07764 448 650.