

ICKLETON ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT – 1 February 2016

This is our eighth Annual General Meeting and I'm not sure we've had, what you might call a typical weather pattern, in any of the eight years since the allotments were set up.

I'd like to start by thanking Gerry Smith who has been the chairman for the last three years, but stood down for personal reasons in the Autumn. He took over at a difficult time when nobody was prepared to take on the job, he was always positive and controlled the meetings with a light touch. He was also very keen to promote social events such as the summer BBQs and Christmas get togethers to try and bring members together, for which we all benefited. As a lasting legacy, shortly before he left the position, he manufactured and erected an identification number for each plot which has made the administration of the site much easier.

The most significant event of 2015 was the installation of a piped water supply on the site. Through donations from the Parish Council and The Welcome Trust, a grant from the South Cambs Community Chest and generous rent holidays from our landlord Lewis Duke, we had actually raised sufficient funds to go ahead by the end of 2014. Unfortunately due to a number of frustrating delays the actual installation didn't take place until 21st July last year, which was too late to have a major impact on the growing season. However, we have high hopes for this year and intend to add an additional standpipe at the top of the site in early Spring.

Due to the lateness of the installation we are unclear as to the likely annual cost of supplied water but it is our intention to keep the subscriptions at their present level for as long as possible. To help with this, please continue to use your water butts as much as possible to minimise the cost and please note, standpipes are only for filling containers and hoses may not be used.

We had around 25 members last year, which is down from our peak of about 40 soon after the allotments were established when, although it's difficult to believe now, we actually had a waiting list. Nowadays we are always on the look out for new members and to that end have informed the residents of Ickleton, Elmdon and Great Chesterford that we now have water on site. Hopefully, this will generate more interest - if anybody feels they would like an allotment and are not sure they can manage a whole plot there are varying sizes we can offer so please contact any of the committee members who will be happy to guide you with your requirements.

We have been asked to again take part in the Ickleton Open Gardens, which this year takes place on 19th June. We were involved in the last event 3 years ago but although the gardens proved very popular very few visitors made it as far as the allotments. We will work with the Open Gardens committee to see what we can do to change this and perhaps use it as part of a recruitment drive.

When the allotments started in 2008 the late Cecil Vincent acted as our mentor and he also chose the winner of the annual allotment of the year. When he passed on to tend the Great Allotment in the Sky, we changed the judging so that the previous year's winner chose the current champion. Last year we decided to revert to a more independent system and asked Lewis if he would consent to be the judge, which he kindly agreed to do. You can see if you agree with his choice later in the meeting.

Andrew Stipetic who used to help keep the site tidy by mowing and strimming, at very reasonable rates has left the village. However his protege Lucasz has continued to carry out the good work, for which we are very grateful.

Newer members might not be aware that, in earlier years we suffered a number of thefts from the site, but far as I am aware we didn't have any break ins last year (or in fact in 2014), so hopefully our strategy of not leaving any valuables in our sheds or on the site is proving succesful. Our ongoing advice is to take home with you any valuable tools and shut, but do not lock, your shed to indicate it contains nothing worth stealing.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work over the year. To Chris, our treasurer who ensured we kept our head above water and also obtained some lovely manure. To Ros for taking the time to show prospective ploholders around the site and letting everyone know what was going on. To Lorraine, for liaising with The National Allotment Society and co-ordinating the seed orders and to June for picking up everything else that didn't fit under those categories. I'd also like to thank Tim, for being our link to The Parish Council and to Terry for auditing the books and shed painting.

Finally it was nice to see the daffodils we planted around the communal shed in the Autumn of 2014 in memory of Jenny Pell, bloom last Spring as a floral tribute to her enthusiasm and spirit.

Hopefully 2016 will bring a more traditional weather pattern helping us all to make the most of the allotments. Any new members on the committee will be made very extremely welcome. May I wish you all a very productive and drier year ahead.