

Glasgow Allotments Forum Newsletter

Issue 2007-2008

Glasgow Allotments Forum was set up as an independent organization to provide a forum on allotments. It was constituted in 2004 to support and promote allotment sites in Glasgow by representing the views of ploholders and working in partnership with Glasgow City Council. All ploholders are welcome to attend the Forum's meetings, either as representatives of their Allotment's Association or as individual ploholders who would just like to know more about the wider allotment community.

It provides a very valuable communication link not only between individual ploholders from different Allotment Associations but also between the Associations, Glasgow City Council (GCC) and the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS).

The meetings which are organized by ploholders are held six times a year and attended by Robert Watson, Allotments Officer, G.C.C. as well as a representative member of SAGS.

Please see page 6 for details of meetings.

GRANTS TO GAF

In 2006 GAF successfully applied for a grant of £1,000 from the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust.

Essentially, it was to be used for the promotion of horticulture which is exactly what GAF was set up to do in the area of allotment gardening. The grant has enabled us to plan ahead and book a convenient central venue for regular meetings. It has funded the GAF events for 2006 – 2007 and, importantly, has enabled us to design and print promotional leaflets and to buy some useful, permanent display materials. We could not have achieved so much without this generous help and are very grateful to the Trust.

This year (2007) we are the beneficiaries of a grant of £500 which is being used to help meet the printing and postage costs of a newsletter (this one) for every ploholder in Glasgow.

We would like to acknowledge our gratitude to the Incorporation of Gardeners of Glasgow for this grant and to the Horticultural Section, Land and Environmental Services, for nominating us for the grant.

GAF SPRING EVENTS 2006 & 2007



The GAF Spring Events, started in 2006, were thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by those who attended.

Different areas of horticulture were explored with valuable tips exchanged freely. We now know much more about growing potatoes, carrots and brassicas. We heard experts on composting, soil and how to improve it, also insects, creepy crawlies and why we should love them (some of them) and the art of planning and planting. At no expense we were very privileged to have Glasgow ploholders sowing seeds and speaking about their own long experience in organic gardening and 'companion planting.'





SPREADING THE WORD....

Last year GAF members designed and planted up a 'model allotment' at the Glasgow Show. It attracted a great deal of attention, won the gold award and established GAF's reputation forever amongst the regulars at the Show. This year, we downsized to a Stand with photographs (mostly of Ellen's plot), plants and promotional leaflets. We also took a Stand to the BBC Springwatch Event where there was a good buzz round the Stand. At Linn Park our Stand was manned by two GAF members who bravely tholed a cold, dreich afternoon to do it.

It is gratifying to see waiting lists for plots increasing year on year, over the City. Of course there are many reasons for this – but one of them has to be the work of GAF in promoting the value of own-grown vegetables and cheap, soft fruit – with, of course some flowers to add to the biodiversity and new friends to give pleasure.



GAF Members Alex and Joyce and Treasurer Betty are very proud of the Gold Award

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Publications.

In 2005 three members of GAF wrote a booklet *'Allotments and Biodiversity – gardening in harmony with nature'**

The aim of the booklet was to highlight the importance of Allotments as habitats for wildlife and to bring together the best ideas of how biodiversity could be enriched without changing the essential purpose of an allotment garden as a plot of land to be cultivated for the production of vegetables, fruit and flowers.

The booklet was distributed to all ploholders in Glasgow. It was well received.

The Biodiversity Officers, Edinburgh City Council asked for and were given consent from GAF to replace our photographs with their own local photographs so that the booklets could be 'localised' for distribution to all of Edinburgh's ploholders.

* Published with support from:
Biodiversity Dept. Glasgow City Council
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society

Responses to Draft Reports.

The following reports, when finalised, will all be significant and important policy-reference documents on planning and will define how our city looks and functions.

2005 Strategic Review of Parks & Open Spaces

2006 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP11)

2006 City Plan 2, Glasgow.

2007 Glasgow Core Paths Plan.

During the consultation period of each, GAF has contributed to the documents with the aim of ensuring that Allotments are recognised and included as important green urban areas which not only benefit local communities and biodiversity but are an essential part of a healthy city.

GLASGOW'S ALLOTMENTS' STRATEGY

Since its inception GAF has consistently argued the case for Glasgow to have a written and agreed allotments' strategy.

This long awaited document is now in draft form, but has been delayed because of the recent restructuring within Glasgow City Council.

GAF looks forward to participating in the process of developing this strategy.

ST. MUNGO TROPHY

Every year Glasgow's ploholders can compete for this Trophy. Information about how to enter is sent in the Spring to each site secretary and it would be good to see more ploholders participating.

Plots are assessed by external judges who assign points to the following categories: vegetables, flowers, cleanliness and the concept of continuity within the plot.

The Trophy, presented at the Glasgow Show was won this year by Mr E. Krebs of High Carntyne Allotments. The second place also went to a High Carntyne gardener, Mr A. Tczynski. Third place was won by Mr S. Malcolm of Berridale Allotments. All three plots were a joy to see and our congratulations go to these worthy winners. Especially this year, to Mr Krebs and Mr Tczynski who knew that there was no 'next year' for their plots in the High Carntyne site as this much loved old site is to close this year after the ploholders harvest their crops and pack their belongings.



Ernie, who is a previous winner of this Trophy, being presented with it again for 2007 at the Glasgow Show

RELOCATION OF HIGH CARNTYNE ALLOTMENTS

Due to the development of the East End Regeneration Route, the long predicted and dreaded *flitting* is now due to happen. The old familiar huts and greenhouses which have been built, rebuilt and developed – many to near owner-perfection - over many years will be left behind and their occupiers will hit the trail to a brand new site being developed by Land and Environmental Services in nearby Duchray Park.

The new site which adjoins Kennyhill Allotments will have a wooden hut and a greenhouse supplied and already erected in each plot. The site will also have a new, community cabin and easy access toilets. The ground itself is virgin parkland and with the addition of new topsoil, soil conditioner and everyone's best wishes, it all sounds very tempting.....



Ernie's prize winning plot at High Carntyne





Glasgow City Council Run Sites

* *Balornock Community Allotments*: Paths have been resurfaced.

* *Kelvinside Allotments* (Julian Avenue): Plans and now funding are in place for building raised beds for easy access.

* *Mansewood Allotments*: Has a new skip base and new security fencing.

* *Oatlands Allotments*: This site is also scheduled for relocation in the near future. This time it is for housing development. The developers are to provide an alternative site nearby with 14 rather than the existing 20 plots – a decision made some years ago based on the then-plot occupancy.

* *Saxon Road*: Although listed as an allotment site, it is still to be developed as such. The option being considered is to leave it as a grassed, green space and develop the planned plots in an extension of the existing Trinley Brae Allotments' site.

* *Sighthill Allotments*: These were closed some time ago because of contaminants in the soil. Planned future use is as a Peace Garden.

* *Westthorn Allotments*: Has new gates and now has a composting toilet with wheelchair access. If anyone wishes to see this, they should arrange a visit with the Allotments Officer. (Robert Watson 0141 287 5729)

Independently Run Sites.

* *Merrylee Allotments*: A new water supply was installed and new paths made – then the Members Hut was refurbished. It was all done and financed by the ploholders themselves with matched funding from the South Area committee, G.C.C.

* *South Western Allotments*: Has done extensive drainage, fencing and boundary work. Has also installed new gates. External funding was obtained from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Scottish Natural Heritage and the South and South West Area Committees, G.C.C. Land and Environmental Services also helped with funding and provided invaluable, in-kind support.

This site now has a web-site:

www.swallotments.co.uk

PLOT RENTS / CONCESSIONS

The annual rental for 2007 for a plot on the Council sites was £29.50. This year for the first time ploholders can apply to pay a concession rate, by submitting evidence of eligibility to Glasgow City Council. The concession rate at present is £25. It is anticipated that further reductions in this rate will be made. The rental for 2008 has not yet been decided.

SITE OWNERSHIP

The history of Glasgow's Allotments still waits to be researched. At present, work is being carried out by Glasgow City Council to clarify the ownership of each site. The sites run by the Council do not all belong to Glasgow and those which are under city ownership can be 'managed' by different Departments. All very confusing.

RECYCLE BINS ON SITE

Discussions continue about the possibility of having these, should the site wish. Access to bins for green waste may help to prevent the inappropriate addition of organic material going to landfill sites in skips from some Allotments.



OPEN DAYS

Allotments are becoming more popular as places for people to visit and more sites are responding to this interest by having an Open Day.

GAF's list of dates and times of the Open Days of Glasgow's Allotments is distributed widely. When your Allotment's Association committee confirms your site's Open Day details, please send the information to GAF as soon as possible and we will include it on the list: email: gaf27@hotmail.co.uk or telephone Robert Watson at 0141 287 5729 who will pass on the information.



At the Glasgow Show one of the attractions in the Horticultural Tent is always the long table of flowers, fruit and vegetables displayed in their different categories and judged by experts.

Regrettably there were few, if any, entries from allotments this year and from what we saw of the standard, allotment grown vegetables, they could have been up there with the best.

(In fact we can report, in a totally unbiased way, that some of those who bought our rhubarb said that it looked far better than the stuff on the Show table!)

Some vegetable categories had no entries at all.

Plot holders used to show their produce quite regularly and while we appreciate that a July date is early for some things, it would be good to see more from allotments on the Show table.

ALLOTMENTS REGENERATION INITIATIVE

www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

One of the aims of the ARI is to increase the profile of allotments nationally, locally and with the government.

On a very practical level it produces many helpful pamphlets on all sorts of topics of interest to Allotment Associations.

It also sponsors a network of mentors who, on request, can give expert advice on allotment regeneration issues.

Ian Welsh is the local ARI mentor. His contact details are given on the website.



ECO-SCHOOLS PROJECT

This project which can help a school towards achieving Eco-School status and prestigious Green Flag awards is aimed at raising children's awareness of the environment and of healthy living. It is run by Education Services.

Land and Environmental Services work in partnership with them to arrange provision of allotment space for those schools which wish to include allotment gardening in their programme.

Allotment sites already involved include Balornock Community Allotments and Queens Park Allotments.

Several sites, on an informal basis, have made plots available to their local schools.

SCOTTISH ALLOTMENTS & GARDENS SOCIETY

www.sags.org.uk

SAGS have had a very busy campaigning year. Its report 'Finding Scotland's Allotments' identifies and gives details of all the allotment sites in Scotland. Also, in collaboration with twenty other gardening organizations, it produced a report 'Growing Scotland' (*see the website for both reports*).

This report was sent to all the new Scottish Government and shadow Ministers asking for recognition of the importance of gardening to the well-being of the nation to be reflected in future policies.

A successful event, sponsored by five MSPs from different political parties, was then held at Holyrood.

An earlier petition to Parliament did lead to the COSLA report 'Allotments in Scotland', which hopefully, will persuade all local authorities to have a strategy for allotments in their area.

The Annual Conference will be held in Dunblane on June 21st 2008 – open to everyone and free!

GAF SUBSCRIBES TO SAGS

At the AGM in 2006 it was agreed that GAF should show its support for the work of SAGS by becoming a federated member of that organization. This was confirmed at the AGM in 2007.

Individual allotments should continue to subscribe to SAGS and through that to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) as this is their only access to cheap Public Liability insurance.



HINTS & TIPS

Carpets and Plots.

The radio pundits are still recommending old carpets as a weed suppressant. (Have they ever had to single-handedly, shift the heavy, sodden, slug-infested object six months later?). The latest information is that all carpets, including best wool ones, have chemical components which leach into the soil and can produce a mix of toxins in your plot. Black polythene is a far safer option.

Comfrey Tea.

Comfrey can be made into a wonderful liquid feed – it is quite simple.

Just fill a bucket with comfrey leaves, cover with water, and leave to stew for a few weeks. The foul-smelling liquid makes an excellent, high potash, liquid, plant food, which should be diluted with at least 10 parts water. Ideal for tomatoes as the first fruits set. Comfrey added to the compost heap is an excellent, natural activator.

ONE OF THESE DAYS.....

Seed Exchange.

At the recent AGM it was suggested that a 'seed exchange' event could be organized. This sounds like a good idea. If you are interested please come to a GAF meeting where the possibility of organizing this can be discussed.



Tips for New Plotters.

We were disappointed at the numbers of new plotters (hardly any) who came to the GAF Spring Events as there were lots of relevant topics discussed. Those of us who did attend and who learned a lot from the experts and professional gardeners as well as from the experienced plotters, may put something in writingone of these days.

NEWSLETTERS

Meeting the cost of printing and delivering a newsletter to every plotholder in Glasgow would not have been possible without the grant from the Incorporation of Gardeners of Glasgow. We gratefully acknowledge their help with this.

Thanks also to those site secretaries who have the task of addressing all the envelopes to their fellow plotters.

GAF hopes now to produce an annual newsletter. However, its arrival on individual plot-steps will have to depend on delivery within sites, or on collection at a GAF meeting.

DETAILS OF GAF MEETINGS

* *Time:* Wednesdays, 7.00pm – 9.00pm.

* *Venue:* Woodside Halls, Glenfarg St.
off St Georges Rd.
(near St George's Cross)

* *Dates for 2008*

16th **January**

12th **March**

7th **May**

2nd **July**

3rd **September**

5th **November (AGM)**

Meetings are always interesting, friendly, informative, relevant and OPEN TO ALL PLOTHOLDERS who would like to attend.

Job vacancy

Alison Drummond of Holmlea Allotments, has resigned as secretary of GAF due to pressure of time. She has done a great job and her secretarial skills will be missed, but she will continue to be an active participant at the meetings.

We need a new, unpaid secretary now and if anyone out there would like to volunteer, GAF would be delighted.

NEXT EDITION

As already indicated, Glasgow Allotments Forum hopes to produce an annual newsletter from now on, so if you have any comments on this edition or anything which you would like to see included in a future newsletter, please send the information to: gaf27@hotmail.co.uk