



**FINCHLEY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
80TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
ZOOM
7.30PM TUESDAY 23rd MARCH 2021**

Chair's Report for 2020

Introduction

This is our first Zoom AGM. Many thanks to Barnet Allotment Federation (BAF) for enabling us to share their account.

The Allotment Sites remained open throughout 2020, for which we were all hugely grateful. Regrettably, the FHS was unable to celebrate 80 years of allotment life. Finchley Horticultural Society was founded in 1940 as The West Finchley (Wartime) Allotments Association, part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign.

June Brookes, Allotment Secretary for over 30 years at Gordon Road, retired from the post in April. Sadly, because of the Pandemic we were unable to give her the celebration and acknowledgement she deserved, but we all very grateful to her for the huge contribution she made to allotment life during this long span. We were not fully aware of the huge number of roles she performed until she stepped down and we realised how many gaps we had to fill!

Thank you so much June!!

Many of her duties have been taken on by Sylvia Berente and others have been shared amongst the Allotment Committee.

We continue to be members of The National Society for Allotments and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) and Barnet Allotment Federation (BAF). We are affiliated members of the RHS and obtain insurance by Liberty through the RHS. Given the limitations of the pandemic we had a successful year broadening our support for the local community, completing one project, and starting others.

We have not raised rentals or service charges for 2021 and the Committee considers the charges for rent and services each year.

1. Committees

The General Committee met regularly throughout the year. Membership of the committee consisted of The Chair (Jo Cuttell), Treasurer (Chris Ouseley), Membership Secretary (Christine Williams), Allotment Secretaries (June Brookes, Sylvia Berente, Elaine Wright and Penny Igoe), Security Officer (Tony Ingram), Website Manager (Judy Woollett), Newsletter Editor (Jo Cuttell).

The Allotments Committee met every other month during 2020 via Zoom. Committee members were Rosa Baden-Powell, Philip Cuttell (Chair), John Hale, Mark Hanslip, Eric Hess, Felicity Nock. Mark Hanslip is Mower Manager and holds the key for the mower.

Philip Cuttell, Rosa Baden-Powell and Eric Hess run a one to one induction session for new members to the Gordon Road site as do the Allotment Secretaries at Brent Way and Nethercourt Avenue.

2. Completed Projects

The Charity Veggie Box Scheme was a huge success this year. This is the first time we have ever done anything like this and Judy Woollett, who was the driving force behind its establishment on our sites, was thrilled with the enthusiasm with which it was adopted. Members grew extra food and donated surplus fruit and vegetables so that every week we donated two or three boxes to the scheme. The Scheme gave our donations and those of other Barnet Allotment Sites to the Felix Project which provides food to the homeless and others in need.

Over the winter the plant sale raised beds were renovated and smart new beds with more durable edging and wider paths reorientated to the parking area, were put in place. The project was led by the Allotment Committee, particularly Mark Hanslip and Philip Cuttell but many members helped over the weeks.

The Allotment Committee also put in a new hedge alongside the Dollis Road fence. It will help to screen the site visually and acoustically from the road and the mixed native hedging will provide a habitat and food for birds and insects.

3. Future Projects

- Continuation of the fence along Gordon Road: planning permission has been gained and a grant money received to finish this project which we hope to finish in 2021.
- The overgrown area by the fence towards the brook has begun to be cleared with the hope of planting a community orchard or developing a new allotment plot depending on the quality of the soil. This will probably take a year or two to complete
- Canopy over the barbecue
- Use of the log cabin for children's activities subject to H&S requirements
- Demarcation fence for the allotment plots at Nethercourt Avenue. This will require planning permission.
- Replacing the second poly tunnel cover at Gordon Road
- Tackling the rot in the timbers of the disabled gardeners raised beds at Gordon Road

4. Accounts

Thanks to Chris Ouseley for producing the accounts for independent examination. We thank Jane Healy for examining the accounts and she has agreed to examine them again next year.

5. Invoicing

This year the General Committee decided to send out invoices for rents electronically. This hopefully is a more efficient way of reaching members, especially during the pandemic. Our grateful thanks go to Cliff Abelman who stepped forward undaunted to take on this mammoth task.

6. Membership and Benefits for Members

We had 133 members in 2020 and 110 are plot holders.

We continue to have a concessionary 10% discount off plants at Finchley Nurseries for all FHS members. Suttons seeds give 50% discount on seeds and 15% discount on other items when ordered with the unique FHS code. Through The National Society for Allotments and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) members can buy discounted seeds from Kings.

There are three tickets for two people to visit any RHS garden with 30% off the entrance fee. Any member can borrow these tickets from Jo Cuttell. They can be used for an unlimited number of visits. Please take advantage of them.

7. Allotment Sites

Vacancies and waiting lists

There were very few plots that became vacant this year at any of the three sites. There is a waiting list for all three sites.

Deliveries

Thanks to Eric Hess for organising deliveries of wood chip to Gordon Road. Members from Brent Way and Nethercourt can collect wood chip from this site.

Thanks to Chris Ouseley for organising deliveries of horse manure and straw to Gordon Road. Members from Brent Way and Nethercourt can book and collect from this site. Brent Way organises its own manure delivery - thanks to Elaine Wright.

8. Security

Thankfully, we had no serious break-ins this year. However, we did have a someone sleeping rough in one of the poly tunnels on the Gordon Road site. Given the good security of the site with the new fencing we were surprised that anyone could get in. Tony Ingram, security officer, found the weak spot and with the co-operation of one of our neighbours we were able to rectify this breach.

9. GDPR

FHS is compliant with current GDPR regulations which require us to contact our members annually and ensure that the data we hold on everyone is up to date. We do this using our invoices for rent, which ask members to check the details are correct and to inform the Allotment Secretary or the Membership Secretary if they need to be changed.

10. Trading Hut

Despite the pandemic the Trading Hut was open from March to September 2020 and many volunteers kindly served in the shop each Sunday. Tuuli Taylor and Munira Grainger got the Trading Hut set up after June Brookes stepped down (another of June's many responsibilities) and Tuuli Taylor has taken on the long term running of the Trading Hut for which we are very grateful. Its financial success in 2020 is testament to the value of this asset to the membership.

11. Wildlife Plot

Helen Skelton, Ekta Shah and Edo Kacej have begun work on the wildlife plot to develop its biodiversity and provide habitats for pollinators and protected species. They hope to put in a bug hotel and to turn the ponds into bog gardens and have written a comprehensive plan for this.

12. FHS Newsletter, Website and Social Media

The Grapevine continues to be published four times a year. Copies are available in the Green Room and are sent to all members via Mailchimp. Thanks to Winkworth Estate Agents who print this for us and continue to support us and all our events. Elena Cook has taken over as editor of The Grapevine from me, and produced her first Winter edition in January. She was helped by Shoko Higashitsuji and this looks like being a very productive partnership.

Many thanks to Judy Woollett for managing the website for the last five years. She has now decided to step down to make time for her other interests. Marcos Scriven has taken over the reins.

Felicity Nock and Judy manage the Facebook account and Lesley Ludlow manages the Twitter account with occasional input from James Robbins. Thanks to all of them.

13. Outings

Owing to the pandemic, social distancing and lockdown we were unable to have any outings in 2020.

14. Events

Similarly FHS was unable to hold any events in 2020.

Nonetheless, the much reduced Plant Sale still raised over £1,300 for the Society and members were delighted to have the opportunity to buy some vegetables and flowers in a safe, socially distanced way.

The Committee is very grateful to those new volunteers who have taken up roles that support the Society: Cliff Abelman, Elena Cook, Marcos Scriven, Helen Skelton, Ekta Shah and Edo Kacej.

15. Our President

Catherine Schmitt has kindly agreed to remain as President of the FHS for the coming year. She has an unprecedented knowledge of plants and horticulture which she is always happy to share.

16. Conclusion

A big thank you to everyone who works so hard to keep all three allotment sites in good order and who do all the behind the scenes jobs that go unnoticed until they are not done!

We will continue to promote our Society and hope that we will again be able to publicise our events and activities to the people of Finchley and contribute to the community promoting our ethos of friendliness, care of the environment and community spirit.