

Chair's Report for 2022

Introduction

It is a great pleasure to be able to welcome everyone to our AGM.

Sadly, I must begin this AGM by mentioning the deaths of three stalwarts of our Society this year, Liz Thomson, Claudine Fear and June Brookes. They were instrumental in organising the Society to become self managing in 2013 - an enormous task. Claudine was Chair of the Society for six years and June was allotment secretary at Gordon Road for over twenty years. Liz Thomson, who died in Spring 2022, was treasurer for four years before she left to live in North Wales in the spring of 2017. We hope the new community orchard by Dollis Road will be a tribute to them all.

The Third FHS Garden Lecture will be given by Lesley Wertheimer from The London Orchard Project

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 buildings and public liability insurance from Liberty through the RHS.

The Committee considers the charges for rent and services each year and have decided not to raise them this year.

I would like to say a personal thank you to all General and Allotment Committee members who have been such a great team this year and on whose support I am totally dependent.

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 (Sylvia Berente, Elaine Wright and Penny Igoe), Security Officer (Tony Ingram), Website Manager (Marcos Scriven), Newsletter Editor (Elena Cook) and Judy Woollett, who does everything else.

The Allotments Committee met every other month during 2022 both via Zoom and face to face. Committee members are Rosa Baden-Powell, Philip Cuttell (Chair), John Hale, Mark Hanslip, Eric Hess, Felicity Nock.

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

a) The Charity Veggie Box Scheme was a huge success again and this year our donations went to Food Bank Aid, a local organisation. Thanks to Judy Woollett for organising this. Food Bank Aid supports North London Food Banks and operates as a central donation and distribution hub, sourcing, collecting and sorting donations of food, toiletries and

essential household goods and distributing them to the food banks across North London where there is most need.

They are a community-led charity which supports all denominations and demographics. Our members grew extra food and donated surplus fruit and vegetables so that every week we donated two or three boxes to the scheme.

b) The Allotment Committee continued to clear the overgrown area by the fence towards the brook. This will probably take a year or two to complete.

c) New shelving was installed in the Trading Hut making it easier to find what you need.

d) The small poly tunnel at Gordon Road had its cover replaced by members of the Allotment Committee and volunteers in the autumn.

e) A no bonfires policy has been trialled. Green waste at Gordon Road that cannot be composted has been put in a skip to go to a green waste facility for composting.

3. Future Projects under consideration

- A new roof and structure for the Piggery tea hut and hard standing for the seating area
- Re-organising the Plant Sale preparation to make it more manageable for Catherine and Christine
- Housekeeping for Tenancy Agreements - all to be reissued and signed agreements issued to plot holders
- Electrical Safety checks
- The Allotment Committee will continue to clear the area by the fence along Dollis Road with the hope of planting a community orchard. Fruit may be donated to the Food Bank.
- Use of the log cabin for art activities subject to H&S requirements
- Topping up the raised beds at Gordon Road which have become depleted

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

In 2022 the General Committee sent out invoices for rents electronically. This proved to be a successful way to distribute invoices and meant that payments were generally made on time. Our thanks go to Cliff Abelman who managed this project.

6. Membership and Benefits for Members

We had 145 members in 2022 and 106 were plot holders.

We continue to have a concessionary 10% discount on 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.

Prizes 2022

In the Barnet Allotment Competition, Gordon Road won first prize in the medium site category, Brent Way won second prize and Nethercourt Avenue won third prize in the small site category.

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 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 Elain Wright.

8. Security

We had no break-ins this year, perhaps in part due to the new fence at the Gordon Road site. The damaged perimeter fence on Dollis Road, caused by a car losing control on the bend in the road, was repaired in early 2022.

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

The Trading Hut was open from March to September 2022 and many volunteers kindly served in the shop each Sunday. Tuuli Taylor has taken on the long term running of the Trading Hut for which we are very grateful. Its financial success in 2022 is testament to the value of this asset to the membership.

11. Wildlife Plot

Helen Skelton, the wildlife plot manager, held a successful Bug Safari and Craft Day for children in the summer. An assortment of creatures including beetles, butterflies, wasps, bees, hoverflies and spiders were spotted. Sophie Dave provided the craft activity in the Log Cabin. They hope to repeat the event this year.

12. Bees

We are fortunate to have apiaries on the Gordon Road site, which promote a healthy ecosystem and enable us to sell honey with no food miles.

13. FHS Newsletter, Website and Social Media

The Grapevine continues to be published four times a year and is full of advice and interesting articles. Copies are sent to all members via Mailchimp. Thanks to Winkworth Estate Agents who print a few copies for those members who do not have a computer and who continue to support us and all our events. Thanks to Elena Cook, the editor, for producing the Grapevine. Thanks also to Toby Cook who supports Elena with the design.

Many thanks to Marcos Scriven for managing the website for this year. We had 2,600 visits to our website in 2022.

Felicity Nock and Judy Woollett manage the Facebook account. Grateful thanks to them. The development of our social media presence is part of our effort to be more outward facing and a part of the local community.

14. Outings

Happily we were able to reinstate our annual garden visit this year. A group of 35 FHS members and friends visited the wonderful RHS Garden at Wisley in June. Thanks to Judy Woollett for organising this trip.

15. Events

The FHS held three social events in 2022 - a summer BBQ, the Pumpkin Soup Night and a Christmas lunch. Thanks to Tony Ingram, Rowena Bridge and Young Mi Oh for organising these events, which were hugely well attended - showing how desperate we all were for social contact.

The Plant Sale raised over £3,000 and members and local residents were delighted to have the opportunity to buy vegetables and flowers as well as enjoying a cup of tea and home made cakes in the Piggery garden. We experimented with an earlier date in May than usual and we decided to hold it in the afternoon; the experiment was a success and we'll repeat the formula for 2023. Thanks to Christine Williams and Catherine Schmitt for organising this wonderful event and to Elain Wright for the refreshments.

The FHS organised two workshops this year to support members. Thanks to Eric Hess for his great workshop on composting and to Lucy for taking comprehensive notes. A report is in the Autumn Grapevine 2022.

Lesley Wertheimer from the London Orchard Project gave an informative workshop on pruning stone fruit trees on a hot Sunday in the summer. Notes are in the summer Grapevine 2022.

16. 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.

17. 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.