

Association of Manchester Allotment Societies

PLOT-HOLDER

Free Bi-monthly Newsletter - Issue No. 1 (Jan. 2006)

This newsletter is an attempt to communicate with the 2000 plot-holders on the 40 allotment sites throughout Manchester. Our aim is to build on this small 'starter' with your contributions and we welcome your comments and suggestions for future editions.

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Want a Plot?
Then ring
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YOUR PLOT UNDER THREAT!

What does your plot look like from outside the gate or over the fence where the public can see? This is the point of contact for that first impression.

A good looking site will make an important point to any visitor, welcome or not! It is very important to give a positive message. A well maintained site not only looks good but shows that it is cared for and used.

At the Edge Lane site this was not the case, and a development company, *New East Manchester*, looked over the fence and decided that the area was ripe for house building!

Discussions then took place, in secret, for over 12 months with the council with a view to developing the site. These discussions have now continued in the open now for several months and **AMAS** has been involved.

Notices to quit were issued to plot holders early this year, but have been withdrawn after **AMAS** objected. These notices should not be issued until after permission to dispose has been granted by the Secretary of State.

To grant permission, an alternative site must be agreed, and a development plan for the site approved. Neither of these vital steps has yet been carried out.

What can you do about it?

Improve your site, especially around the entrance. All plot holders need to get involved, if only in a small way.

Join the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners and **AMAS** who will help you should your site come under threat.

Spread the word about the 'green gym' - all the fresh air and exercise plus the best fresh vegetables available in the world.

How often does this happen?

Edge Lane is a situation that has just started, in the last year or so, but **Parrswood** has been going on for **17 years**.

In April 1991 Chesney Hawkes was at number 1 in the charts with 'The One and Only', Kuwait has just been liberated & Iraq accepts the terms of a cease fire, and Robert Maxwell 'falls' off his yacht. This was when the plot holders at Parrswood were served with their first 'Notices to Quit'. Every year since, the remaining plot holders have been served with these Notices.

January 2006 and the replacement site is still not ready for use! The new site is much smaller, i.e. smaller and fewer plots. Even this has **not** been welcomed by the local councillors. No proposals have yet been made to replace the lost plots in the Parrswood/Didsbury area where there is a large demand for plots.

The estimated cost of the new site is £450,000 however the existing site is expected to raise in excess of £3,500,000, a profit of more than **£3 million!**

Cherry-picking?

Parrswood and Edge Lane are both Statutory Sites protected by Law. Is the Council going round the City cherry-picking allotment sites for housing development?



HEALTH & SAFETY

Manchester Leisure's Health & Safety Officer addressed November's **AMAS** Meeting.

Do you have any of the following on your site?
Barbed or Razor Wire, Ponds, Open storage tanks for water, Rats, Asbestos, Broken Glass.

All these and many other items can be considered a hazard to ourselves and others.

We have a duty to protect anyone on our site and plot, from any harm. Reasonable safety measures that should be taken - or example, barbed wire should not be used at a height of less than 2 metres (6 feet) - Razor wire cannot be used at all.

UNWELCOME VISITORS!

The Health and Safety Act requires us to remove **all** risks to visitors onto the site both **welcome** and **unwelcome**. These risks not only apply to fixed risks but also to any risks caused by the way we work.

All committees have a detailed handout listing all the hazards around allotment sites and suggestions on improving safety.

Checks should be carried out regularly on all fencing, hedges, gates etc. to see if they are in good condition and not likely to cause injury. Building, huts and other structures also need checking. Roads should be in a good state of repair and not obstructed.

Individual plot-holders need to be aware of their responsibilities - no storage of chemicals in pop-bottles, proper storage for flammable materials, clearing away of broken glass. Ponds and water storage containers must be protected from anyone, including children from falling in and drowning.

Open days and Shows provide additional responsibilities and should be checked by having a risk assessment done on the event.

It is advisable to carry public liability insurance to indemnify the society against any claims that may be made against the committee - again our National Society and **AMAS** provide help and assistance.

Manchester Harvest

Allotment Week 2005 saw an allotment set up in St. Annes Square by plot holders from the North-west. Crops were grown in pots from free seeds supplied by Kings Seeds and other company donations.

Volunteers were on hand for the week, to look after the growing crops, give demonstrations and answer questions. The plot was **very** popular and had many visitors.

GOING FOR A TRUST!

This may be a new idea to some, but the idea has been talked about for just over a year. What is it and how does it affect me and my site?

The idea of a **Trust** to run the allotments in Manchester in place of Leisure Services came out of the discussions of the strategy group of **AMAS**. The trust would be a body of elected plot holders who would take over the running of the allotments in Manchester.

It would be financed by an annual grant from the council. A plan of improvements would be laid out and a rolling program to implement them would be set up.

All sites would be involved in the planning and operation of these improvements. It is possible that new ways of completing the work can be used, allowing the individual site to be paid by the **Trust** to do the work themselves.

The set-up of the **Trust** is still being discussed in detail together with details of its method of working and the finance. As progress is made reports will be given at the **AMAS** bi-monthly meetings, but you can be sure that no decision will be made without the agreement of plot holders and that suitable financial arrangements and safe guards being made.

Allotment Presentation Evening

took place on 7th Nov.2005 and was attended by over 150 people.

The Lord Mayor presented the trophies and certificates that were awarded to Plot holders.

An interesting and entertaining talk was given by **Medwyn Williams** on ten years of gold medals at Chelsea Flower Show.

The evening finished with an excellent Buffet.