


## SHAGS NEWSLETTER April 2023



*The spring is sprung, the grass  
is riz.*

Reports from all our sites show that our ploholders are catching up with getting their plots into full cultivation, despite the adverse weather we have had to endure for the first quarter of 2023; snow, ice, lots of rain, early Spring sunshine, more snow, more rain ... the good spell of Easter weather did get everyone stirring and the allotment shop was busy as soon as the seed potatoes were available, selling out of many of the varieties in stock. Packet seeds were in great demand, requiring a second order of many popular vegetables, beans, herbs and brassicas.

The grass has certainly 'riz' and the site reps have been busy cutting the headland paths. A reminder to all ploholders that they are responsible for cutting pathways and edges surrounding round their own plots. The mowers on site have nearly all been serviced this Winter and are readily available. If you are unsure on how to operate the equipment, please check with your site representative. On most mowers, to start them up the normal routine is to check oil and fuel levels and top up if required; then the fuel pump (big red button) needs pushing 3 or 4 times, hold the safety bar against the handles and gently pull the starter cord a couple of times to draw fuel into the carburettor and turn the engine over until you feel some resistance then a short pull should start it ...

There are lightweight 'push' mowers available for those not mechanically minded.

A reminder about petrol supplies that all fuel should be E5 – marketed as 'super' and easily identified as it is about 10p a litre dearer. Save your till receipt and claim it back either at the allotment shop on Sunday mornings or email a copy to our Treasurer Carole Pamphlett [carolepamphlett@hotmail.com](mailto:carolepamphlett@hotmail.com) with details of your bank a/c and payment will be made direct.

Our 2 stroke trimmers are being phased out as they are the most troublesome machines to start, are heavy to use and also very noisy. Over the last year we have been trying out battery operated equipment with a battery trimmer at Oakley Road, which has proved popular with most ploholders, and we plan to get more machines for each site through the summer. Two battery mowers are on trial with a large machine performing well at Aldwickbury and a smaller machine at Piggottshill which has performed well, but has refused to run after winter storage so is under investigation by our supplier.

Charging the batteries will be the main problem as we change over from petrol to electricity with only Piggottshill with a mains electricity supply. At present site reps are keeping the batteries charged up at home. Solar power may be a solution, but the equipment is expensive to install and also is very vulnerable to theft. Discussions continue on our future use of petrol equipment.

## TOPSTREET MILESTONE:

Michael Beck celebrated 60 years of being a plotholder at Topstreet in March, with a gathering of friends and neighbours in March. Mike Lawson and his wife supplied drinks and a large cake to mark the occasion as well as an allotment model plaque. Michael and his late wife Muriel took on their plot in 1963, helped by their daughter Elaine, and have been prizewinners since the awards scheme was introduced in 2000.



Michael Beck (l) and Mike Lawson (r) with the allotment model plaque 25<sup>th</sup> March



and the cake !

Has anyone had their plot longer than that ? We have one other contender, Albert Callewaert at Piggottshill, who worked on his Dad's plots in the 1950s before taking them on in his name, but perhaps after 1963 ?

S.H.A.G.S. NOW ON FACEBOOK:

Rachel Andrew has taken over our Facebook page which is gaining popularity week by week.

Please take a look at the contributions and comments and the numerous photos of up to date activities.

If you have anything you would like included contact Rachel [rx994@gmail.com](mailto:rx994@gmail.com)

NEGLECTED PLOTS PROCEDURE:

Following on from our successful site reps meeting in March discussions are now under way to update our neglected plot procedure. Currently an inspection of each site is undertaken during May each year, where if a plot is needing attention the plothead will get a letter listing items required to be rectified within 6/8 weeks, prior to another inspection in August. If this work is not carried out it can lead to a termination letter being sent, giving 28 days notice to vacate the plot. This means that a plot cannot be relet until October, wasting a complete growing season. The suggested alteration for 2023/24 would mean that an inspection would be made in December and an improvement letter sent out prior to renewal with the proviso that if no work is not done the renewal invitation would not be sent out, making plots available by end March for new plotheads on the waiting list. These suggested changes would have to be approved at this year's AGM.

A reminder of plothead's responsibilities:

- Keep pathways and edges between plots regularly trimmed
- Maintain a minimum of 50% of the plot under cultivation within the first year
- No rubber backed carpet to be laid as weed control
- No glass on site
- No tyres brought onto site. Tyres used as raised beds must be removed at the end of a plothead's occupancy
- Fruit trees planted on plots should be dwarf stock and planted well clear of pathways

If you are having difficulty with your plot please chat to your site representatives who are always willing to help find a solution. The Society is run entirely by volunteers and help is always appreciated. If you have any skills helpful for jobs on and around the site please get in touch.

The complete list of committee members and site representatives is available on our website.

Mike Cobley

SHAGS Chairman

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