

Summary of SHAGS Committee Reports for
March 2023

Chairman's Report

(Mike Cobley)

With such a short month there is not much to report other than March is a very busy time in SHAGS calendar with rent renewals, seed potatoes at the shop on sale and Spring in the cold air. Following the rent collection day on 5th March we have to look forward to the Site Reps meeting on 18th and nearly a full house expected. HTC are anxious to get our maintenance budget spent from April, so schemes to consider will be tidying up overhanging elder and a dead elm at CF, repairs to the fencing outside the main gates at AB and a request for cutting back a neighbour's sycamore at PH which overshadows the nearest plot making it almost impossible to grow anything. We are booked for our regular HTC Allotments Working Party on 16th March. As discussed last month the idea for a Coronation BBQ is gaining strength, so my forthcoming newsletter will seek suggestions and more important volunteers. I have spoken to Roger G and he has started his chemotherapy, but it is leaving him very weary all the time. His neighbouring plot holders are keeping his plot at AB under control

Treasurer's Report

(Carole Pamphlett)

Another very short report as I'm in the middle of rent renewals. Our bank balances should at £25,977.12 on the morning of 4th March, but this does not include the monies we took in the TAR this Sunday morning, or monies received online. The bank balance changes daily at this time of the year.

I was asked at the last meeting about our insurance, I have to be honest as from as I'm concerned, we are covered by our Employers Liability and Public & Products liability. If Alex needs more specific information, I'm happy to give him the contact details of our insurance agents. There was also some discussion about the shop cash register, as the totals do not always tally. I have produced guidance notes for the Sunday morning ladies, we were only 25p out last week.

Sites:

Aldwickbury (AB)

(Roger White /Hazel Upton/Richard Mottram)

Nothing to report this time

Churchfield (CH)

(Keith Davison)

Nothing to report this time

Cross Lane (CL)

(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)

We have had a request to allow a group of artists onto Cross Lane allotments to paint based on scenes from cross lane allotments including the wild flower meadow. I am very keen for this to be accommodated but as they are not allotment members we

need to discuss if this is possible and if so how.

We are endeavouring to arrange manure supply but as we are new reps it's been a little delayed.
No other major events to report.

Harpenden Rise (HR)

(Marcia & Roger Dorey)

The alley hedge which runs through our allotments has now been cut back and the trimmings disposed of. A third new plot holder has joined us and already made good progress on their plot. Other plot holders have been busy and most of the plots are now beginning to look 'ready to go'. Roll on summer!"

Oakley Rd (OR)

(Rod Cooley)

- After great work by Alex Davis we now only have two plots vacant this coming year. These are Plot 10 and Plot 11.
- Plot 10 needs clearing. I have taken two car loads of pallet wood from plot 10 to the recycling centre. One OR plot holder has taken a whole pallet for their own plot. The tenant has said that they will remove what is left.
- I have not turned the water on yet as there have been several recent cold weather warnings. I will turn it on as soon as the weather outlook is better.

Piggottshill (PH)

**(Fraser Gordon/Mike Cobley/Geoff Bateman/
Syd Marvell/Rich Waight/Rachel Andrew/Steve Case)**

The water was turned on last weekend, the meter read and then turned off straight away. One of the taps had sheared off the standpipe due to frost damage. The hardest job was getting the broken off brass thread out of the cast iron fitting, but this was achieved on Sunday and the water is back on. A couple of worn taps need replacement, so taps are on order. The plumbing leak in the shop has been repaired. The new handrails outside the TAR are due to be fitted this month. The gatepost is also down to be done at the same time, the transport co's insurers have now agreed to pay the claim, but at a reduced figure.

Rich and Mike did a tidy up in the pond and saw at least 50-60 frogs there! So we're hoping for a bumper season of frogs spawn this year!

Rich has also dug out the broken post at the lower manure pit at PH. Rich will speak with Mike about getting a new post and concrete to replace.

Sibley Ave (SA)

(Peter & Helen Loveland)

Sibley Avenue is looking very tidy, with signs of cultivation on some plots. Just waiting for this relentless cold wind to ease so that early planting can commence.

Topstreet Way (TW)

(Mike Lawford)

Increased activity has been witnessed on site with some clearing and digging of plots ready for the coming spring. Substantial piles of combustible material are being gathered ready for a final big-burn at the end of March.

The water has already been turned on a couple of times briefly for a few specific purposes but is now back on full time.

Work has started on preparing the base for our new communal shed, with the unique opportunity presented to plot holders to donate any unwanted plot-generated stone collections as hardcore for the concrete base.

Letting's Secretary Report

(Alex Davis)

Lettings

There have been 9 more resignations during February, as people decide ahead of renewals. Some of these have been re-let. Waiting lists are now well down (with the usual exception of Harpenden Rise). We continue to get enquiries and I would expect this to pick up with warmer weather.

GDPR issue

One of our plot holders has pointed out a potential GDPR issue with a monthly committee report on our web site. One report on the web site includes the waiting list with the names and contact details in the Lettings report. Rod has now deleted the details in the offending monthly report. To avoid this in future, I will just report on summary numbers for the waiting list. The personal details of those on the Waiting list will be available to site reps (and other committee members) on request.

Renewals

The renewal emails were sent out on the 23rd February and the postal ones delivered in the following days. 318 emails were sent to plot holders and 6 postal renewal letters. 39 Associate renewals were sent out (34 email, 5 letters).

Response has been positive with around a third of all plot holders having paid by the end of February.

Carole has been busy reconciling bank payments.

We have the usual issues of identifying payments made in a different name to the plot holder, over-payments etc etc;

Once we have got through the bulk of payments it will be about focussing in on the final stragglers and chasing down payment.

Actions

Insurance documents. Carole kindly circulated the old policy documents. I read through and it appears that as long as someone working on a plot is a society member, or authorised by a society member to work on the plot, then the insurance covers them. This just leaves establishing that the current policy has the same terms. I am happy to pursue if someone can provide some contact details at our current underwriters.

Machinery Manager's report

(Roger White)

Nothing to report this time

Shop (Mike Cobley)

Steve Case has started his role as Shop Manager and has placed our first big order for composts, slug pellets. It is a relief for me and one less task to worry about after covering this job for most of the last 30 months. Our first Sunday when the seed potatoes were on sale was one of our busiest ever, where we took over £700, 00 (roughly £6/minute) so many thanks to Susan, the day's cashier, working flat out.

We are looking at fox proofing the compost compound to prevent future damage, where the cuddly cubs have chewed the bags for no obvious reason. Last season's cubs are too fat to get through the gap between the railings, but how many new ones will there be this year?

Communications and Webmaster Report

(Rod Cooley)

- Various emails including Shop News have been sent to all members.
- The website has been updated with the latest shop information