

## Summary of SHAGS Committee Reports for November / December 2022

### Chairman's Report

(Mike Cobley)

Our maintenance budget is likely to take a big slice out of it with the prices received for fence replacement as CF. There is also a request for repairs outside the gates at AB, but it was felt this is not allotment repairs but should be out of HTC budget and there is a problem at HR with the gates and fence either side of the dividing footpath.

The last items outstanding on the new doors for the TAR and the shop were completed, and now all we have to do is paint the new architrave woodwork.

The new lighting has been fitted in the shop. New outside lights were fitted but as yet are not working as the suspect wiring needs to be further investigated.

Another meeting is due with HTC Green Space development Officer, to discuss our maintenance budget for 2023 and the ongoing boundary complaints that have been received from neighbours at HR, TW and CF.

### Treasurer's Report

(Carole Pamphlett)

Our current bank balance stands at £20,562.10, but we started the with £24,792.77. As I have said before this is the very first time we have spent more than we received, which means we have a deficit of £4,230.67 to date. This month I have paid £1,617.50 to Castle Water which covers a 6 month period. I will have a few more bills to pay before the end of our Financial Year on 31<sup>st</sup> December, which happens to be my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. I still have to pay 2 years donation from the shop to SHAGS.

As ever I monitor the shop finances and the current bank balance stands at £18,842.48, as I said I still have to pay SHAGS, which will probably be £1,00.00.

I'm sorry to say we have not been able to go through the Annual Plan bids, we were due to hold a meeting recently, but unfortunately had to cancel as poor Mike tested positive for CV after coming through two and a half years with no problems. We will let everyone know in the New Year our decision. I had four main bids, but we are look for a workable action plan. My next big job will be doing the Year End accounts, both for SHAGS and the Shop. Fraser has said he would do the stock take figures again this year; this was a very big help last year.

I hope to see most of you at the meeting, if not I'd like to wish you all a festive Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

### Sites:

#### **Aldwickbury (AB)**

(Roger White /Hazel Upton/Richard Mottram)

No report received.

#### **Churchfield (CH)**

(Keith Davison)

Most of our plot holders are tending their plots, collecting produce and preparing plots ready for a start next spring.

All Churchfield plots are now once again all occupied. None of the plot holders have advised me of their intentions to vacate their plots next year. If this proves to be the case, it will be very pleasing.

Last month I isolated the Cold-Water Main supplying the site and took a meter reading. This information has been sent on to our Treasurer.

A hedging contractor (likely to be St Albans Council, as they maintain the Co-op car park trees & hedges), has cut back the pyracantha hedge along the outside of the allotment fence by the site entrance, which had become very overgrown. This is the first time it has been cut in 2 years.

The HTC Green Space Development Officer is due to visit site on 16-12-22 with our Chairman, to inspect the works carried out by JOC Ltd, their hedge cutting contractors. He will also inspect the wooden perimeter fencing around the site, which require attention and repairs.

We still have a problem with our Mitox hand strimmer which refuses to start and this has been the case all this year. We have had a strimmer on this site for at least 10 years and it has been a very useful tool, enabling our plot holders to keep their path edges trimmed properly. Therefore, would the Society please consider replacing this machine, for our plot holders to use next year.

Incursions on site by foxes, continue to carry out destruction to plot holders produce and materials, bringing in rubbish onto site and defecating on the plots.

#### **Cross Lane (CL)**

**(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)**

Following on from my last report, woodchip delivery magically arrived at cross lane. It is much appreciated. I am not sure how all of this is organised, but the new delivery is a welcome sight.

In our last report I did not put in any budget requests but we would like to procure useful hand tools such as a good set of long tree loppers and one or two other quality tools that plot holders would not purchase themselves due to only using them infrequently, but collectively they would be very useful.

#### **Harpenden Rise (HR)**

**(Marcia & Roger Dorey)**

##### **November 22**

The big event has been the sad loss of a plot holder's wedding ring and although the whole of the Society kindly offered help and support it is not yet found. Thank you to everyone.

We are now into the manure season and will be receiving a farm load every week for the foreseeable future. This is all preordered by plot holders and paid for in cash in advance. This year we are being very careful not to block access at our main gates.

A long-standing plot holder has just left and a new plot holder welcomed in her stead. This family has been waiting at the top of our list for a number of years. She has special needs in her family and for a long time held out for the plot next to her garden fence. As this is not forthcoming, she has accepted the newly vacated plot. She told me that SHAGS had granted a way leave to put a gate in the fence by her garden and this was done on Tuesday 8 November.

Another plot-holder has asked that his friend also be permitted to receive a load of manure as well as himself. Last year we believe we saw this person removing manure that wasn't his and we complained to him. We are pretty sure this may be the same outsider. It is my wish to refuse access to HR site (which would mean his having the gate code) as my feeling is that the allotments are purely for those covered by the insurance as plot-holders? Please advise?

Similarly, it has come to my attention that a plot-holder has sublet part of her plot where a friend can come and garden. Again, I feel that the plots are purely for members who are covered by the insurance and not for friends unless just coming to have a look occasionally. I intend to speak to her the next time I see her and explain the situation. Again, please advise whether I am right?

### **December 22**

Our weekly deliveries of manure are well under way and will continue into January. We have been very upset as cannot gain access to the water meter to turn off the water, as the manhole cover seems to be rusted into place. A plot holder is going to attack it with his toolbox this weekend. In the meantime, we have tried to lag the taps as best as possible.

### **Oakley Rd (OR)**

**(Rod Cooley)**

The water was turned off and the meter reading was sent to Carole Pamphlett.

The 2023 Annual Bid form for Oakley Road was completed, after consultation with the OR plot holders, and sent to Carole Pamphlett.

The grass paths on the site have been cut as the grass was getting long, even in the cold weather.

### **Piggottshill (PH)**

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

The bonfire on 5<sup>th</sup> November was well attended, despite the damp weather throughout the day. The drizzle stopped about 6:29 for 6:30 light up and the fire went very well, clearing a great deal of rubbish gathered from around the site. Many thanks to the bonfire builders, Jim, Geoff and Rich for their help during the day.

We need to clear up some of the woodchip pile so that another manure delivery can take place.

### **Sibley Ave (SA)**

**(Peter & Helen Loveland)**

Sibley Avenue site is now bedded down for the Winter and generally looks quite tidy. Some kind soul has mown much of the common grass areas, which indicates that the new mulching mower is very good at coping with long, wet grass. The water was turned off in mid-November and the reading sent to the Treasurer. We await the onset of Spring.

### **Topstreet Way (TW)**

**(Mike Lawford)**

The basic human instinct of fire-making was satisfied at the end of October with our autumn bonfire. It was felt to be a really satisfying and relatively quick burn. And it generated no complaints from the surrounding neighbours as far as we know!



This fire did include finally disposing of a substantial amount of branches and trunk from a neighbour's tree that had blown onto our entrance way last year but had never been removed by the owner despite our many requests to do so.

Three trailer loads of manure were delivered by JCB (!) mid-November and now has been liberally spread across twenty-plus plots. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to make use of the unexpected presence of such a powerful digging tool to seriously short-cut turning over my plot or indeed any of the other plots on site.



I have asked the plot-holders if there are likely to be further plots being given up next spring, mostly so we can get a head-start covering any already neglected areas before they become too bad and correspondingly less likely to attract new owners. One plot remains vacant, but now covered over.

We have submitted a bid for funding for a new metal shed, to expand beyond our existing Andersen Shelter-esque facility which requires almost tetris-like powers to fit all our current machinery inside, even before thinking about future additional tools.

Thankfully we have only one on-going dispute with a neighbour – who has reacted badly to cutting back her hedge to the boundary line; believing they could veto control of their encroaching vegetation right up to several feet onto the allotment site. The council rep was onsite with commendable speed when the matter was escalated to them by said neighbour (less than an hour), but confirmed we were fully within our right to prune back to the boundary line. However, as the neighbour continues to press their case the council have left it to us to close the issue. So watch this space for further updates!

### **Letting's Secretary Report** (Alex Davis & Jim Machin)

#### **Lettings**

Over the last month the lettings have quietened down considerably. As of the end of November there are only 3 vacant plots across the estate. With Single plots available at Cross Lane, Oakley Road and Top Street Way. Waiting lists are still very low (except for Harpenden Rise).

#### **AOB**

I thought it might be useful to send out an email to all plot holders in late January reminding them of the renewal process. If we can issue an early update, it might reduce some of the manual effort involved in resolving questions e.g. emails not being received, retrospective claim of pensioner discount, plot resignations etc. We could also use to notify of any change to the rate per pole (if any). I am happy to draft something and circulate.

#### **Actions**

None

### **Machinery Manager's report**

(Roger White)

No report received

### **Shop**

(Mike Cobley)

The last few Sundays have not been very busy, on 27<sup>th</sup> there were no customers at all.

Steve Case has expressed an interest in taking over the role of shop manager in the New Year. The shop is now closed until Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January.

The annual stocktaking is due, and volunteers are required either 18<sup>th</sup> December or 8<sup>th</sup> January.

The 2023 seed order is now being put together, then the summer bulbs.

### **Communications and Webmaster's Report**

(Rod Cooley)

Geoff Bateman's request for articles for Plot So Far was sent to all members.

The Bonfire Night news was sent to Piggottshill plot holders.

Regarding the missing wedding ring at the Harpenden Rise site a society members got in contact with someone called Ian Buckler. Ian is an experienced metal finder and offered to use his equipment and look for the missing wedding ring for free. He found someone else's wedding ring on a previous search. His details were sent to Marcia and Roger Dorey.