

Issue Number 2

DOWN TO EARTH

On a number of occasions I make comment about having an allotment plot fully dug over by Christmas. Well this year I've failed to keep to my yearly schedule. The unusually mild winter and then dry January has unfortunately meant that my patch is a tad green but a few hours with my spade will get it sorted.

As the new growing season arrives I reflect on a busy few weeks with the Kings seed order and the potatoes and onions arriving from Horticultural Supplies at Gt Blakenham. I must thank the committee who have assisted in this process. With well over 200 members this does take some arranging and organising not least handling of the money which Guy the

seeking to have an open day at the Cowpasture site on 25th June as part of the National Garden scheme in conjunction with a Felixstowe resident who will also open her garden. The scheme is also about raising money for cancer charities. I very much hope members will involve themselves on this day, show off their plots with visitors enjoying our company, at the new hut at plot 39 (see p.2 and picture below), close to our shop. More information will follow but please 'save that date'.

NEV'S NEWS



Treasurer does each year without complaint.

By the time you read this newsletter our winter meetings will have commenced with the AGM in March and a guest speaker in April. The FAA is

Last year members at Cowpasture saw the benefit of a summer trial with a fully serviced 'festival toilet' The association is now in conversation with the Town Council to see a permanent

toilet at the two largest sites. I will need to be realistic and say that some expense is likely both for the initial purchase of the two units let

'Down To Earth' is the newsletter of the Felixstowe Allotment Association
www.fsalg.org.uk
Edited by Peter Constable



Felixstowe ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

alone the regular servicing costs. That negotiation has been started and I will keep you informed.

The Cowpasture site has seen huge changes over recent months linked to the Trelawny Place development. Guy will provide more details in his article but for our members your patience is appreciated especially as access to the site at times has been reduced and frustrated by the roadway changes.

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I look forward to an exciting growing season with Association members tending the plots across the town. I also hope to see an early summer visit to a local food supplier growing a crop that most of us seek to grow each summer.

Watch this space.

Neville

We have a new hut!

It's been amazing to watch and to be involved in the purchase and building of the new community hut at Cowpasture plot 39. The Association successfully



The old hut...



...the same view 3 days later

applied for a grant via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) administered by the Town Council, to purchase a ready made building to replace an ageing and decrepit shed.

Linked to the purchase, from Dunster buildings, we

sought monies to provide a firm foundation for this and the Garden Club shed which sits on the same site. The foundations were possible thanks to a smaller grant controlled by The Mayor and councillors and guided by Chloe Lee, the Communities Officer for East Suffolk Council.

Shown are photographs of the original hut, the cleared site, the foundation preparation and then the building which arrived (in pieces) on a lorry.

I must, on your behalf, pass on my thanks to those members who embarked on the project with gusto and an eye to detail second to none. The building was erected and painted within 3 days. The

outside patio area was taken into use immediately. One tenant with an adjoining plot kindly agreed to lose a small section of his empire to enable the buildings to be correctly sited.

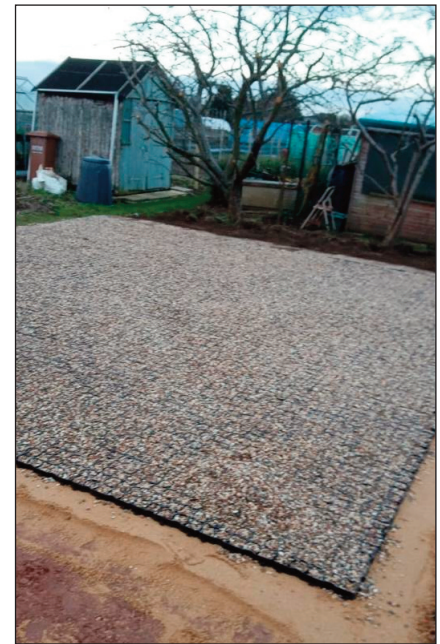
The changes made have also provided the opportunity to house a 'festival toilet' as mentioned earlier. This means that all visitors to the site can now enjoy all the amenities (old and new) centred on the new hut. The interior of the building is being painted by members and is then

to be fitted with suitable furniture including a small sink.

The final phase will be to upgrade the existing fences and future-proof the site should other needs arise in the future.

We also see opportunities to use some solar energy,

although the Association does have access to a small petrol generator.



The new foundation



The new hut arrives!

We can look forward to using these facilities for many years to come.

Neville

Shop Price changes

As the growing season approaches we have been issued with a new catalogue by Horticultural Supplies.

In short we have to accept some significant price hikes. We have sought to keep our overheads as low as possible and to take advantage of any offers but it's inevitable some rises will be seen.

The reasons given are the same as we hear from other shops and suppliers and transport costs have spiralled almost out of control. Fuel costs being at their highest level in many a year.

The prices quoted we hope will be stable for the next 12 months but in truth there are no guarantees.

Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Neville/John (aka Arkwright's)

Trelawny Place Development

By the time you read this, I hope that the Candlet Road junction with the access road to the development will have been finished and the new traffic signals will have been commissioned and be working satisfactorily. The cycle track/footway on the north side of Candlet Road should also be finished and the length beside Grove Road from the Cowpasture entrance to the Grove Medical Centre should be approaching completion.

We have been working with the developers, Persimmon, and their roadworks and drainage contractor, Barconn, to try to minimise disruption to our access and they have very kindly provided, laid and compacted a substantial quantity of asphalt planings (taken off Candlet Road) to reinforce the access track to the site gate and a bit beyond. They have also provided us with a small stockpile of planings for us to repair the potholes on the site roads. We are very grateful to them for their generosity. We will be looking for some volunteers to help do these pothole repairs!

Because the track rises, the

additional depth of the planings has meant that the gate has had to be changed to open outwards to avoid it scraping through the new surface. We also hope that the long-standing problem of puddles by the roundabout, after rain, will have been solved by the re-shaping of the entrance off



the roundabout to accommodate the cycletrack.

We are also concluding discussions about a new, secure pedestrian gate being provided by the developers into the north-west corner of our site. This will allow access not only from the development but also from a parking layby that is to be built in that area on the new distributor road this will replace some of the parking that has been lost from the former laybys on Candlet Road.

Persimmon have appointed an architect to develop the proposals for Phase 2 of the development. This will fill in the gap between Phase 1, currently under construction, and The Grove woodland.

Condition of Allotment Tracks

There has been a general deterioration of the condition of the tracks at Cowpasture and Ferry Road.

At Cowpasture, we will be using the stockpile of planings from Candlet Road to fill the potholes. These develop

because of the wet conditions combined with people driving at inappropriate speeds. The 5 mph speed limit is there partly to safeguard allotmentholders and their children and partly to limit the damage to the surfaces. Please keep your speed down!

At Ferry Road, the main central north/south track is very easily damaged by vehicles and it is likely that a bollard, which can be locked in the up or down position, will be installed so that the track can be blocked off just north of the car park when conditions indicate that damage will be caused by its use.

Ferry Road Parking

Members may have noticed that the fruit trees on the grassy area beyond the hardened car park have been moved. This is to allow the grassy area to be used as an overflow car park. The pruning of the hedge has made more room to park and the number of parking spaces will be optimised by parking end on to the hedge. The demand for the parking here will be assessed over the summer to see whether the surface needs to be reinforced in some way.

Guy Pearse

March is the Time of Great Expectation, when Nature starts sprinkling new life into hedgerows and gardens and we allotmenters get twitchy fingers, longing to open packets of seeds and fill the greenhouse with trays of hope and promise.

The plot is (almost) a blank canvas at this time of year, the last of the winter leeks have gone and the spring cabbages are beginning to heart up. The autumn-planted shallots and onions are throwing out fresh green shoots to replace those yellowed by rain and frost and the buds on the soft fruit and the apples and pears are swelling, ready to burst in a few weeks.

The autumn raspberries are poking their noses out but I'm

wondering whether a couple of plants may have succumbed to the wet conditions.

I'm a little more nervous this year, given how global warming is noticeably confusing the natural world around us. In September one of the apple trees suddenly decided to burst into flower and then proceeded to set fruit, albeit fruit the size of oak apples, which soon withered and died. I've never seen this happen previously so can only assume it was the unusually warmer autumn that caused it. And by the start of the winter you'd never believe that the trees had been given the obligatory short back and sides late last August for the summer pruning - all the branches trimmed then had regrown, a lot of them like water shoots, so much more susceptible to disease. I pruned again early last month but there's a risk that this will prompt even more new growth this year, drawing the trees' precious energy away from fruit production. I never thought that fruit trees could be so complicated!!

It does make me wonder whether it may be best to delay planting the first early potatoes for a couple of weeks. Weather is unpredictable at the best of times but with the seasons changing I'm worried that we may start to get later frosts. A fair few varieties of second early and maincrop spuds will shrug off the occasional light frost, however first earlies are gentle, sensitive souls and a sudden drop in night-time temperatures can prove fatal. Even if you provide some protection with horticultural fleece, there's still the risk that, where the covering touches the leaves, the damage can be too great. As much as Mrs Monty adores the taste of

new potatoes, I'm inclined to wait a bit longer than usual and err on the safe side.

The same goes for other plantings around this time. The broad beans, originally sown in pots in the greenhouse in late January, are ready to go out, but I'm leaving them in the cold frame for another week or so, so they'll be fully hardened off, before I introduce them to the plot. The same goes for the spring-planting shallots. I've grown Longor

again this year (just £8.95 for 500g from Kings) as they have kept well over the winter in the

shed, much better than any shallot

I've grown before, and taste gorgeously butter-sweet.

Being a little less hasty to get planting also means the soil can warm up a couple of degrees. I've covered a lot more of the plot in weed control fabric this past winter. This is mainly because I'm lazy and don't like hard digging!! I used it in 2020 for the first time and found it was extremely effective at preventing almost all weed growth. But because the fabric is black it draws in the heat of the sun and helps keep the chill out of the soil. It's a very economical way of managing the plot during the winter months, 25m of 2m wide fabric costs around £25 on eBay and will last 4-5 years if looked after sensibly. It really does make life easier!!

I'm at that stage in life where time doesn't matter quite so much, so I'm going to resist any urge to rush, instead taking the allotment more slowly and being a little more patient with things. With what the changing environment is throwing at us, I'm thinking this might be the best approach!

Whatever the weather, enjoy your allotment! Stay safe.

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday 24th March Annual General Meeting

Thursday 28th April Meeting at OFCA

Saturday 25th June

National Garden Scheme Opening and Opening of the New Hut at 39 Cowpasture

Thursday 22nd September Meeting at OFCA

Don't miss out!

MONTY SAYS
Great Expectations...



Financial Statement - Year Ended 31st December 2021

Opening Balance at Bank - 1st January 2021	Deposit a/c	£10,441.83	<i>credit</i>	
	Current a/c	£2,111.65		
	Petty Cash	£310.26		
	Total	£12,863.74		
	Cheques not presented	£15.00		
		£12,878.74		
Income:				HUT 39 SHOP
Membership Fees for 2022	£1,534.00			Sales
Membership fees for 2021	£ 262.50			£2,941.03
Fundraising Raffles	£0.00			£2,941.03
Refreshments	£16.50			Opening Stock
Hut 39 Shop	£2,941.03			£576.82
Kings Seeds	£2,780.69			Add Purchases
FSALG Potatoes/Onions	£1,137.85			£2,459.21
Hut 39 Replacement	£10,000.00			Less
Site Improvements	£300.00			Closing Stock
Interest on Deposit account	£1.11			£862.81
Donations	£260.64			Cost of Sales
	£19,234.32			£2,173.22
				£2,173.22
				Surplus
				£767.81
		£19,234.32	<i>Total paid in</i>	
		£32,113.06		
Expenditure:				
Meeting Expenses	£0.00			
Raffles	£0.00			
Refreshments	£50.40			
Speakers	£97.50			
Awards	£100.00			
Hut 39 Shop	£2,459.21			
Kings Seeds	£2,703.45			
FSALG Potatoes	£1,249.27			
Hut 39 Replacement	£2,050.31			
Site Improvements	£561.13			
Committee Exp's/Misc	£85.60			
Insurance	£315.79			
Unders/Overs	- £4.45			
NSALG/OFCA Subs	£25.00			
	£9,693.21			
				- £9,693.21
				£22,419.85
Confirmed deposit account Balance - 31st December 2021		£19,442.94		
Confirmed current account balance - 31st December 2021		£2,845.73		
Cash in hand at 31st December 2021		£85.68		
Total		£22,374.35		
Add cheques /BACS not credited		£33.50		
Add cash not paid in		£0.00		
Total		£22,407.85		
Less BACS/cheques not presented		£0.00		
		£22,407.85		

I have prepared these accounts for the Felixstowe Allotment Association in accordance with the funds as I have received and recorded them.
Guy Pearse - Hon Treasurer

I have examined the above financial statement showing income and expenditure and funds held and confirm that it accounts with the books, statements and receipts made available to me.
Examined by Keith Horn

Allotment Production Survey

Maurice Barber once said to me that it would be interesting to record what we produce on our plots so that people could be sure it wasn't all a waste of time

This was a few years ago and I think that's what he said. Anyway, we took up the challenge to record our production from May to October that year. The results surprised me – but not my wife who has a better idea of the value of things than I could ever pretend to. We carried out the same exercise a year or two later with similar results but, with two plots this time, we had some very pleasant findings.

It was a simple exercise to weigh all that we harvested and to compare the values against Coop prices at the time.

This year we are repeating the exercise but will extend it to cover the full year, January to December, and include the time spent doing useful things. The non-tangible benefits of allotmenting will not be forgotten. This includes the exercise, fresh air and social aspects that we call pottering.

This time we will use Tesco basic on-line prices and forget that what we produce is organic – Tesco's organic vegetable prices are far too high. Costs of seeds, plants and rent will be offset against the recorded harvest values.

If anyone would like to join us in the survey then we will be happy to discuss the project with you. It is not intended to be competitive but some useful lessons could be learned. A joint report at the end of the year for the Association might benefit others.

For anyone interested I have developed an Excel spreadsheet as an aid to recording which I can let you have.

People often say that what they produce does not cover the costs. With a bit of simple recording it is possible to show that this is not true.

John and Delia Holmes

New Members

Ferry Road Christine Slaven
Liv Heeroma
Ian Mackenzie

Railway Hill Veronica Deri
Taunton Road Carl Cracknell
Cowpasture David Harvey
Paul Nelmes



**FAA MEMBERS
save money
at the FAA shop**

**Open Saturdays
9am till 12 noon**

The following are on sale:

Compost 60 litres **£6**

Chicken Pellets 4kg **£4**

Bonemeal 3kg **£3.50**

Fish/Blood/Bone 3kg **£3**

Growmore 3kg **£4.50**

Potato Enricher 3kg **£4.50**

Fine or Large Mesh **£1.50** or **£2** per metre

Bamboo Canes out of stock:

Fleece 35g **£1** per metre

Garden Lime 3kg **£2** or **£7.50** per bag

Paper Potato Bags **£1.50** for two

Plastic Pipe for hoops **50p** per metre

**Come along to take advantage
of these money-saving prices and
your FAA membership!**

You may also get a free cup of tea or coffee...