

Allotments Newsletter

Issue 7 – December 2013



The Newsletter is intended to provide information about the allotments as well as an opportunity for tenants to communicate with other allotment holders. We are very pleased to include an article by Juliette Newsham '*And nothing is lost*'. Anyone else who would like to write an article or include any comment about the allotments please get in touch with Ian Orton, Parish Clerk on 01943 864728 or parishclerk@burley-in-wharfedale.org

Now is the time!

The Parish Council manages or owns 44 allotments of various sizes all of which are occupied. But there are 98 Burley people on the waiting list for an allotment. The Parish Council has tried to buy or rent land all over the village but have yet to acquire any more land to create allotments. Spare land in Burley often goes for housing at considerably more than the Parish Council can afford! But can you help? Do you know of any parcels of land in the village that someone might rent or sell? If so please contact Ian Orton or any parish any parish councillor.

We want to hear from you!

If you have comments or queries regarding your allotment or the allotment site please contact Ian Orton the Parish Clerk on 01943 864728 or parishclerk@burley-in-wharfedale.org. Every Wednesday morning Ian or a member of the Parish Council is in the Parish Council Office in Queens Hall between 9.30 and 11.30am. On the 3rd Saturday of the month in January, April, July and October Parish Councillors are also available at St Mary's Parish Centre from 9.30 to 11.30am.

How the Parish Council spends Allotment Money!

Last year the Parish Council spent over £1500 on the allotments and is planning to spend a similar amount this year. You have two representatives on the Environment, Maintenance and Allotments Committee Juliette and Peter who advise the parish about allotment issues but could the parish do more to obtain the views of allotment holders about how to spend 'your' money? The Parish Council will invite you to an informal meeting on **Monday 3rd February at 7.30pm at the Queens Hall** where we can share views and we ensure the money is spent on projects you support.

Looking forward to seeing you there! Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available!



Contributions to the newsletter are very welcome and we thank Juliette Newsham for the article below.

Life and Death on the Plot:

'And nothing is lost. And in the end is harvest'

Someone told me how she had been on the allotments when she heard a distressing commotion. It was a young thrush calling its mother and on looking in the cherry tree she found the mother thrush hanging dead in the netting. With tears in her eyes, she said that she found this so upsetting that she would never use netting again to keep birds from eating the cherries.

Another person related how they had found a young crow caught by its feet in netting put there to keep the rabbits off. They had managed to release it but the bird was lame. The mother crow was watching all this from a tall tree nearby and she continued to feed and guard the youngster. We don't know what the outcome was for that bird. I suspect these are not unusual happenings and it raises questions for us as allotment gardeners and for me personally as a mother.

Many of us are tormented by rabbits interfering with newly planted seedlings; nibble nibble and they're gone. We feel murderous and resentful that expensive wire must be bought to keep them out. Then we find the baby rabbits can push under the smallest gap in the wire to get to the desired tender greens. We plot to shoot them or send in the storm troopers of the warren; the ferret.

Someone repeatedly removed a ferret keepers contact number. Was she right to do that? Did she have the right to prevent others choosing to employ his services? What about the woodpigeons who pluck only the young brassicas, and the slugs, who in wetter years can disappear a row of seedlings? It does not seem so bad to kill slugs with metaldehyde, but baby bunnies? Its not obvious why the two are different.

I used to have a magnificent cherry tree but we hardly ever had the pleasure of eating one because the epicurean blackbirds waited until the fruit reached perfection and then scooped the lot. As a mother I can imagine the distress caused by the death struggles of a mother bird or the suffering of a snared fledgling. I can choose not to kill rabbits and the woodpigeons; I can banish netting from my garden without my children starving as a result. Other people in other places may not be able to make such choices.

We can ring the ferret man to come with his ferrets, but do we want to witness the rabbit's terror and screaming any more than we want to visit a slaughterhouse? Death is everywhere on the allotments. So is sex but that is another story. There are few easy answers or solutions to these dilemmas we face as gardeners. We make decisions or muddle along in accord with our own conscience. What about live and let live?

I found as the summer progressed that my hatred of the rabbits faded, especially the cute baby one that took to staring at me as I glared at it. I know from visiting Sun Lane Nature Reserve and seeing the rabbits dying of myxomatosis; that nature has a way of its own.

Parish Council Allotment Inspections Autumn 2013

The allotments were inspected in June with a further inspection in October to follow up on matters raised with specific tenants. In June the Councillors were generally pleased with the condition of the allotments and the diversity of planting reflected the hard work of many allotment holders. A number of plots are consistently excellent in all respects. After the June inspection the tidiness of the beck side and the cutting of perimeter hedges were brought to the attention of a number of tenants. At the later inspection the tidiness of the beck side had been addressed but there were still a small number of tenants who had still to cut the hedges adjoining their plots. It has become very difficult to find the posts numbering some individual plots and we would ask that tenants keep the area round the posts clear. A few problems remain which have been discussed with individual plot holders. On a general note it was felt that some allotments were underutilized with unnecessarily wide paths and uncultivated areas.

Demand for allotments is very high and any tenants finding it difficult to cultivate their existing plots can always consider reducing their plot size. This summer has seen an abundant crop of fruit and it was a shame to see much unharnessed fruit at the time of both of the inspections. It is appreciated that not all fruit grown can be used by the individual tenants but it would be nice if some sort of

scheme, as already exists in other communities, could be devised to share these excess crops. Perhaps this could be discussed at the proposed meeting for allotment holders.

Thanks to Prospect Rd tenants and thanks to tenants on the site who were around to speak to visitors and answer questions at the Open Allotments event during Burley Summer Festival. People expressed their pleasure at being able to see what was being grown.