

# In Touch



A Newsletter from  
Hart Allotments Ltd

Issue 3

December 2013

## Roll up, roll up, get your allotment here!

**Exciting news!** The management committee are in discussions with local farmers who have a field in Hitches Lane. Pilcot farmers, Phil and Ian, are offering to lease land to Hart Allotments so that we can provide allotments for local residents.

The current situation is that we are trying to gauge interest in the site - and the more application forms (and payments) that we get in - the more our chances of finally having a plot (for next year). If sufficient interest is gained we can then go ahead and sign a lease (estimated to be 5 years). Phil and Ian will plough and cultivate the field in preparation for us to lay out the plots ready for planting. **So that we can assess the viability of the site for next spring we need to have your application forms in by 31st December 2013** or earlier if possible!

You need to be on the Hart Allotments waiting list in order to qualify for a plot.



**Merry Christmas!**

Application forms to **apply for a plot**, along with the associated costs (and to be put on the waiting list) are on the website [www.hart-allotments.org.uk](http://www.hart-allotments.org.uk).



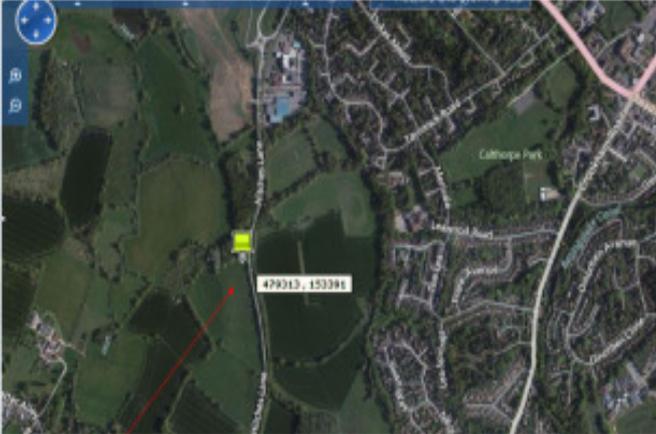
*Pilcot Farmers - Ian & Phil*

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## Pilcot Allotments

The entrance to the proposed field for the allotments is on Hitches Lane at the end of what we are calling the 'lay-by' just down the road from the Hart Leisure Centre. The lay-by is what used to be the old Hitches Lane before it was straightened.



We are in discussions with Hampshire County Council as to whether plot holders may be able to park their cars on the lay-by. Currently it is being used to store 'green' environmental waste before onward travel for disposal. If partially cleared for our use it would need to have an access gate & keys to ensure that travellers do not use the space and illegally camp there.

Since car parking on the actual field is expensive the farmers would like to be satisfied of the long term viability of the site before investing thousands of pounds for car parking on this facility. The long term viability is affected by 'competition' from other allotment sites that are currently being created (see update) and also the proposed Edenbrook allotment.

Following the AGM folk took the opportunity to visit the proposed Pilcot site where example plot sizes had been laid out.



On that day, the site was rather boggy due to the torrential rain and the farmers' cows had also churned up soil. Discussions are taking place to see about the possibility of moving the site further up the field to a drier area.

## Hart Allotments has become a 'Co-operative' (an Industrial & Provident Society - IPS)



**Sylvia (the Secretary) explains the process and what it means for us.**

At the last AGM attendees voted for us to become an IPS when the committee deemed the time appropriate. Back in the summer the committee decided to apply to become an IPS so that we could apply for grants and be ready to sign leases with the Council and farmers. We were sponsored by the National Allotment Association and used their model rules. In September 2013 we achieved IPS status and we became **Hart Allotments Ltd.**

An IPS has a structured management committee and members. We are now inviting folk to become members of Hart Allotments Ltd. On becoming a member, a share certificate will be issued. Only members will be able to vote at future AGMs (next one due Jan 2015). The timing of this will allow us to produce accounts and to submit an annual return to be sent to the Financial Conduct Authority.

## Membership

**We need your support!** The whole idea around an IPS (co-operative) is that the work that is done benefits its membership. **Consequently we need members.** Although many voluntary hours have been spent by the committee our actual expenses are quite low. However, once we actually have allotments the costs begin to go up as we need to obtain such things as insurance, pay annual fees to the National Allotments Association for each member and annual fees to the Financial Conduct Association etc. A forecast of the fees that we expect to have was sent out prior to the AGM. This showed that in the first year we expect to make a slight loss and need to dip into our funds by £491.

**£10** Our income is based on 100 members each paying £10.

So whether you want an allotment now on Hitches Lane, or Edenbrook when they become available, or just want to support the work that we do please become a member. Applications forms to become a member are on the website. (Currently the application form includes membership and an application for a plot on Hitches Lane. If you only want to become a member, only complete that section of the form relating to membership and return it.)

## Hart Allotments AGM



**Sally Martin, Chairman, gives an overview of the AGM held on Saturday 9th November 2013.**

A total of 52 people attended the AGM this year. Attendees voted on changing the rules to allow us to use an accountant's report or unaudited accounts. Since no accountants were available to produce a report, the attendees voted for unaudited accounts this year which means that the Secretary and members of the management committee scrutinise the accounts before presentation to the AGM.

The new proposed site was discussed and the farmers Phil and Ian were on hand to answer questions.



Dave Bell, the Treasurer, reporting on finance issues, mentioned that once again we had spent very little this year. Most of our £118 expenses had been on costs to apply to become an IPS, membership subscription to the National Allotment Association, website registration and admin costs such as stamps, photocopying etc. The reserves in the bank at 13 October were £1076.34 .

Attendees also voted on (and got volunteers for) having an independent appeals committee for our complaints and appeals policy.

Full details of the AGM are available as a separate document.

## Now that allotments are on the horizon Sally gives her tips for the basis of a great allotment.

The biggest mistake gardeners make is not preparing the soil. Before planting anything in your plot, prepare your beds by digging to loosen the soil and adding organic material! This prep work can save you untold disappointment and, perhaps more than any other factor assure a bountiful and delicious harvest.

If you're working with a brand-new plot (or one that fell fallow and you're bringing it back to life), you can stake it and get it ready the autumn before you plan to plant. This act gives the soil and the amendments you've added time to settle and meld. It also means less work next spring.

If an autumn start isn't possible or practical, go ahead and prepare the ground in spring — but don't start too early. If the ground is still semi-frozen or soggy, digging in the soil can compact it and harm its structure. How do you tell whether it's ready to be worked in? Grab a handful and squeeze — it should fall apart, not form a mud ball. Follow these steps when preparing your soil:

**Dig deep** - Most plants are content with 6 to 8 inches of good ground for their roots to grow in. If you're planning to grow substantial root crops (potatoes, say, or carrots), go deeper still — up to a foot or more (yes, you can use a technique called *hilling*, where you mound up good soil around crops like potatoes, but this method doesn't excuse you making a shallow vegetable garden).

**Fill up** - Add lots and lots of organic matter! Try using compost, dehydrated cow manure, shredded leaves, well-rotted horse manure (call nearby stables), or a mixture. If you happen to be blessed with fertile soil, adding organic matter is less crucial, but most soils can stand the improvement. Mix it with the native soil, 50-50, or even more liberally.



Maybe your area's soil is notoriously acidic, or very sandy, or quite obviously lousy for plant growth. The good news is that organic matter can be like a magic bullet in that it helps improve whatever you add it to. You

have to replenish the organic matter at the start of every growing season or maybe even more often. (If the soil stubbornly resists improvement.) If you are growing roots do not use manure too soon before planting as this will cause the roots to fork.

If you are unsure of the soil type a cheap soil tester can be purchased from any garden center.

**Happy planting!**

## Update on other allotments in the area

The last thing we want to do is to go ahead with the Pilcot allotments and then find that people cancel as they have obtained an allotment elsewhere. This would not be fair on the Pilcot farmers who need to be assured that if time and effort has gone in to making the site available that it does not collapse due to lack of plot holders!

We are therefore encouraging folk to contact their parish councils to find out eligibility and likelihood of obtaining a local allotment before signing up for the Pilcot allotments. The Pilcot allotments are open to all - wherever you live - unlike the allotments provided by the councils for their local residents. Here is an update on the status of sites that we have been given. Please contact them directly for more information.

## Church Crookham

### Crookham Park allotments

(deputyclerk@churchcrookham.org.uk)

From the Deputy clerk for **Church Crookham**, Sally du Gay we have had the information as follows:

“There will be the equivalent of **120** plots available. Church Crookham Parish Council are expecting to take the whole allotment site at Crookham Park early in 2014 (to be confirmed). The Parish Council’s allocation policy allows residents of Church Crookham to be included on waiting list 1 however the Council also holds waiting list 2 for residents of Crookham Village, Ewshot and GU52 residents not in Church Crookham. Plots will be allocated on a first come first served basis and applicants on waiting list 1 will always be given priority over those on waiting list 2, however at present there are plenty of plots available. Details of the Council’s allocation policy and an application form can be found on the Parish Council’s website [www.churchcrookham.org.uk](http://www.churchcrookham.org.uk).

Plots are being offered in 3 sizes: Standard 125 square metres, Small 60 square metres and Starter 30 square metres at indicative rents of £30, £15 & £10 respectively. The Council is currently finalising terms and conditions of tenancy and rent, please be aware that the rents may yet be subject to an increase.”

## Edenbrook - Fleet

Waiting list held by Hart Allotments Secretary:  
Sylv.HAA@gmail.com

When these proposed allotments (access to them off Pale Lane) will be available is still unknown as it depends on the developer applying for planning permission of stage 2 of the development.

Currently the planning application is late due to problems regarding sewers on the site. However, the Head of Planning has agreed that they will require the builder to provide these allotments as one of the first things to be done on the site. The Council regard this site to be a ‘premier’ site and will provide plots for Hart Voluntary Action and schools along with other facilities. Size estimated to be 100 plots.

## Elvetham Heath - Fleet

### Elvetham Heath (EH)

(clerk@elvethamheath.org.uk)

From **Jan Hyatt** Clerk to Elvetham Heath Parish Council we have the following update:

“Our allotment site is only small and we have **20** plots of around 55-60 sq metres. It is virtually complete but we are waiting for the water to be connected. We now have about **70** names of interested people and are about to work out how best to allocate the plots and how much to charge.”

## Yateley

### Swan Lake Allotments

(office@yateley-tc.gov.uk)

“Our new allotment site is currently under construction along with the rest of the land which will form the new Swan Lake Park. Ownership of the land is currently being transferred to Yateley Town Council as part of the planning permission for the new houses being built adjacent to the site.

The allotment site will have **44 plots in a range of sizes**. The process of allocating these plots to the residents on our waiting list is currently underway. We don’t have an opening date yet for our new site as this depends on the legal transfer which is in the hands of our respective solicitors.”

## Management Committee re-elected.

The following were re-elected at the AGM.

**President** - Cllr Sharyn Wheale

**Chairman** - Sally Martin

**Treasurer** - Dave Bell

**Secretary** - Sylvia Cresswell

**Committee members :**



*Martyn Garvey*



*Alan Jones*

**New** members of the committee were elected. These were:



*Martin Stephens*



*Barbara Doel*



*Diane White*



*Tim Buswell*

We could think of many things to say about Tim's photo however the safest one that we've gone for is to remind you that the committee has been busy with creating various policies including the **Livestock policy**. See the following website item to find where they are on the website.

Thanks to our retiring committee members namely David Fisher, Mikki Hall, Bruce Reece-Russell and Jim Haffrey.

## Hart Allotments Website

[www.hart-allotments.org.uk](http://www.hart-allotments.org.uk)



*Stephen Janaway*

At the AGM Stephen Janaway showed how the new website had been updated to include a section on 'Rules and Regs'.

This section lists all of the **policies and**

**procedures** that the committee have developed. This portion of the website includes a copy of the tenancy agreement that each plot holder will need to sign up to if they wish to have an allotment.

The website also contains lots of other useful information and links, and will contain more helpful hints for plot holders once the Pilcot Farm site is up and running. We also post the latest news to the website so why not subscribe to receive updates as soon as they are available. If you have any ideas for other information you'd like to see on the website then please let us know.



Many thanks to Stephen for taking care of the website for us.