

**BEAUCHAMP ROAD & GREEN LANE ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION
Annual General Meeting – Minutes**

Held on

Monday 7th November 2016 at 7.15 pm

At

St Mary's Church in the Church Hall, St Mary's Road/Bell Road, East Molesey, KT8 0ST

Members present: 21

David Sleep, Fred Catling, Linda Thomas, Andrew Gee, Roy Pool, Michelle Birchall, Neil Porter, Richard Farmiloe, Alan Howard, Sarah Maitland, Ken McCarthy, Robert Welland, Tom Hardy, Wendy Hardy, Ken Morgan, Kerry Morgan, Chris Mullin & Feliters, Brian Rideout, Jeremy Schomberg, Bill Gotch.

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

Chairman and Acting Secretary Ann Bailey opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. Ann said she was disappointed that there weren't more attending, given that an email was sent out and it was known that 130 recipients had opened it – and it was known both when and by whom. Ann continued that to those who didn't deem it was important enough to come and support their AGM, "shame on you!" But, Ann said it was great to see those attending tonight and thanked them for turning up.

Apologies for absence were received from Erica Nunn, Pam Sicklemore (both of whom are poorly) Dave Nottage and Elsie Shaughnessy.

Ann introduced members of the Committee, so that when emails were received or when people met down on the site, Members of the Committee would be known.

- Victoria Moore
- Tina Roden - Membership Secretary
- Keith Davies who Ann said it was hoped would be elected onto the Committee this evening. He has been helping us for the last several months
- Ian Whitehorn
- Ron Bailey
- John Bavin
- Jane Poole
- Doug Watson – Treasurer

Ann introduced Monica O'Connor taking the Minutes - Pam historically has done it, but unfortunately is currently unwell and unable to do so.

2. **Adoption of last AGM Minutes**

With everyone having had a copy of the Minutes of the last AGM, it was agreed these were a true record of last year's Meeting and all in attendance confirmed they were happy to adopt the Minutes of the last Meeting.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising from the previous Minutes.

4. **Chairman's Report**

Before introducing the Chairman's Report, Ann said she would skip from the preamble from the Report sent out, except to say that following the AGM, refreshments would be served, to give members the opportunity to chat with other plot holders and indeed Committee Members if they wished to do so.

Ann continued 'I've said it before, and I will say it again, I'd like to thank all the members of the Committee for their hard work, time and commitment to the Association. I would like to remind all plot holders that we are a self-managing site and plot holders need to understand that without the Committee our site is in jeopardy of closure. We are answerable to Elmbridge Borough Council to ensure we meet their lease requirements and maintain the site to expected standards. We all enjoy the facilities that having an allotment at Beauchamp Road provides and the running of the site cannot and should not be left to a handful of members to maintain our wonderful site. Everyone needs to make a contribution in time and effort to our facility and not leave it to a dedicated few. Without your valuable support, we won't be able to maintain our outstanding site and its facilities.

We have had two working mornings on site, hence the newly painted toilet block, (complete with crocheted bunting and toilet roll holder covers!) potholes have been filled in on roadways and car park, water tank tops have been painted, glass has been cleared and the car park and access road has been weeded and strimmed on several occasions now. The manure compound has been completely cleared and fenced. These working parties are advertised on the notice board and plot holders are asked to give their time for two hours on a Saturday a couple of times a year. We have refreshments (thank you Tina – not only for the crocheted bunting, but also for the homemade flapjacks that we have enjoyed!) And we do have a lot of laughter – there is a great team spirit there. Thank you to the Committee that lent their support and sourced supplies for the tasks and also Brian, Rob, Darin, Elsie, Sandra, Pam, Peter, Lesley, Robert, Barry, Erica, Richard and Jeremy and his team and to everyone else who joined in the fun and helped out. You have all made a difference to our facilities.

As advised to you all last year at the AGM, our lease is now in the process of being renewed, as I write – and still as I speak. Originally Elmbridge offered us a five-year lease renewal. I felt that this was unacceptable and as some of you may have seen in the local press, I sought the help and support of our local Councillors to fight this

short lease renewal period, and I am pleased to say – WE WON. The lease renewal being negotiated now is for 25 years. It is and has been both time consuming and stressful.

When the lease document arrived I sought the help of Justin who is both a Solicitor and conveniently a plot holder. Justin has been excellent in steering us in the right direction and we owe him our gratitude for his valuable time and effort, which is greatly appreciated. He had hoped to be here this evening, obviously he is not, but thank you to Justin anyway.

Doug Watson has kept our finances in good order and is an essential and valuable member of the Committee. Tina Roden has done a brilliant job as our Membership Secretary this past year and we are delighted to have her on the Committee. Richard Farmiloe, whilst not a Committee member has again very kindly dealt with our water issues for us and it is greatly appreciated. Thank you again very much Richard. Thank you again to Jane Poole who has continued to undertake 'toilet cleaning' duties – not the most glamorous role! A heartfelt thanks to Jane. May we request members **not** to help themselves to the toilet rolls or try to flush blue hand towels down the toilet – it blocks the system which results in temporary closures! Victoria has created our Facebook page, which is proving very popular. We have wonderfully amusing notices and lovely photographs that she puts on it so thank you very much, Victoria. Do please support us here and keep up to date with our site activities.

In January we were hit with heavy rain and a dusting of snow, February Storm Imogen brought more wind and rain, March saw more very strong winds and heavy rain, this time on the back of Storm Katie (These women!) April we had a mixed bag of sun and showers and then in May the temperature reached 26c but this was short lived and we returned to more thunder and rain. June followed suit. July was a much sunnier month overall. All of this contributed to heavy, cold soil and subsequently late planting out of many varieties and a frustrating time for us all. The winners seem to have been copious weeds, and more weeds and slugs and the snails! Some we win and some we lose. Fingers crossed again for next year when hopefully the weather will be kinder to us all.

We have again supplied skips on site, which have enabled plot holders to remove bulky items from their plots, and we plan to continue with this practice as they have proved to be very welcome and successful. However you have to watch the noticeboards – that's what they're for after all - to advise you of skip dates and other matters relating to the site in general.

The roadways will be closed again this year when the water is turned off. In fact Richard has just turned the water off so there is no water and of course the toilets are now closed. So the lanes will be closed, they've just been mown now for the final time this year so they will be closed to protect them, and they will be opened again during the spring.

I mentioned in my report, that we had our pumpkin party coming up, and I will mention that again later on, but it was a great success.

There are a few matters that I would like to highlight this evening, firstly the very important issue of the new site lease. As I have already said, the lease renewal has been both time consuming and stressful. There have been months of negotiations with Elmbridge Council and without the unstinting help of Justin, it couldn't have been achieved.

We have got the last final outstanding issues resolved, it has been back and forth, back and forth. I won't bore you all with the details but for example the Council were suggesting that we could have A greenhouse or A shed or A polytunnel, well lots of you have got greenhouses and sheds and some more than one so we didn't feel that that was acceptable, so we had to go back to the Council and say these are structures that exist and we wouldn't want to have to turn around to somebody and say, well you cannot now have both of these on your plot, so they have seen sense over all these various nit-picking things, but its quite important that we have this set out for us to move forward. So they have agreed our point of view and there won't be any issues for us, the same with fruit cages. They said existing fruit cages could remain, but you couldn't install new ones, well that's daft, so these things have been ironed out now, so I'm just waiting for the final document to drop into my inbox so we can get it signed and get it back to the Council. So it is imminent, I was hoping that I would be able to say tonight, its done and dusted – it just about is.

Many of you will have heard the rumours about the Trading Hut. Today we are still unsure if they are staying or moving to Hampton Court Way. EMGS are still waiting to hear if they've got planning permission from Elmbridge Council, and as ever the Council are dragging their feet. However, this potential move only came to light because of a conversation I had with Councillor Mallet when I called him to enlist his help with our lease renewal back in March. When we finally know what is happening with the EMGS Trading Hut, then we will let you know – but currently we are in limbo as far as the renewal of their sub-lease is concerned. I'm afraid It's a watch this space.

Our Pumpkin Party and Tea was a great success and well attended. It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon – there are some photographs that we've had printed in a folder down there, if you'd like to have a look at those after the Meeting. And I think they depict the fact that it was well enjoyed, it was great fun, and some of our winners, in fact at least one of our winners is here. (Fred's here). So we do intend to hold this event next year, but we're hoping that more of you will join in the fun and compete. And thanks to the Committee for organizing all the food and refreshments and to Phillip Finch for all his help with the judging.

Bonfires – our rules for having bonfires have largely worked and been very successful – with a few exceptions. It is the exceptions that create problems for everyone. Recently a member of the Committee asked a plot holder to put a fire out – it was in fact on the day of the Pumpkin Party and the fire was smoking very badly. This

request was met with defiance and abuse! This is totally unacceptable and if that plot holder repeats it his plot lease will be terminated. Fair warning. He's not here tonight unfortunately.

Now for the Chairman's groans. This will now be my 4th year acting as Chairman and this past year I have been acting as Secretary and doing some of the plot reviews as well. I personally feel disappointed that the same dedicated members of the Committee run the site for you all to enjoy. We all have busy lives too believe it or not and we need some new members to join the Committee and lend a hand. We meet in an evening about 6 times a year. Without the Committee, as I have repeatedly said the site doesn't function. Our lease is one of self-management – if we don't do it – we lose it! So please can I ask some of you to give some consideration to stepping up and volunteering to help out and give something back”.

5. Treasurer's Report & Adoption of Accounts

Ann then introduced Doug Watson (Treasurer) to give his Report and Adoption of Accounts.

Doug Watson advised “There is a copy of the Accounts on the seats, I hope you have all got a copy. A copy will go up of course, on the notice board and Vicky will put one up on the website. They have only just been audited, that's why they haven't been circulated previously.

The plot rental and subscription revenue has been very healthy this year, which is great news as it reflects the strength of our membership. I think that's very important to be aware of, that we are a strong working allotment association, with all our plots rented. I would also take the opportunity to remind you all – I've had some questions over the last year, that the subscription is NOT a subscription to the EMGS, it's a subscription to The Association, and without being a member you cannot have a plot, so there are two aspects to what you pay. One is the rental fee, and one is your membership to The Association. So one without the other is like a cart without a horse – it doesn't go very far.

This year we've done a substantial investment and I will come on to that, in making sure that the allotment area is up to scratch, and one of the reasons is as Madam Chairman has mentioned, is to get through the lease. We didn't want them to do a surprise inspection and for us not to be up to scratch. And we have improved the fencing, we had some professionals to do some additional fencing for us. Unusually, we have had the cesspit emptied (I know this is a bit boring but...) we have had the cesspit emptied twice this year. Normally, it's about once. I think its just another sign of our success, is that we have got a lot more people using the toilets! There's not a lot we can do about that!

However, this additional expense this year has actually pushed us into a deficit – this is the first deficit I've seen (which is not a bad thing) – it's the first deficit I've seen on

the allotment in the last 2 or 3 years and that's why we have a reserve to cover issues like this.

As you know we didn't have the BBQ this year, that's always an additional expense but we did have the Pumpkin Party as Madam Chairman has mentioned. I was there – it was great, it was fantastic – in fact, in my view and I hate to say this to anybody who used to run the BBQ, I think it was as successful – it was more fluid, more flexible and I think it worked very well.

In terms of additional expenses - sundries this year have been broadly in line with historical trends, with the exception that the skip hire this year – we have had more of them this year, and that in part was to take away all the clag from the plots that we've been clearing up.

I would like to openly thank Trevor Marshall – yet again he has audited our Accounts and approved them, so they are fully audited and I will issue a copy to the Council shortly.

When I took this job over, Peter who was my predecessor said, "Douglas, you're going to have a couple of problems – one of them is getting them to pay the money!" And actually 95% of you pay within two weeks of getting an invoice, maybe a month maximum. However this year, I think I got my last payment about three weeks ago. Its not good, we are an Association, so I am just flagging if there's any challenges on this that we do need to be paid on time and this isn't actually reflecting on the current people, its to go into the Minutes so that when its circulated you think 'ooh I meant to pay it on time'

Sometime ago when Ken was Chair Person of the Association, we voted through a process of indexing rents so that we could increase them on an annual basis. I've reviewed that this year. We haven't increased them for 4 years, I think perhaps even longer. One of the reasons we haven't increased them is because inflation has been almost flat and there's no point. But I'm flagging all members, that at some stage this windfall will probably go away particularly in the light of Brexit etc. and the likelihood that inflation will go up 2/3/4% over the next few years. I'm just giving you an early warning that we are likely to increase the prices at some time in the future.

Just one point of clarification – just looking at my notes, when I was talking about Membership of the Association, there is a portion of that that is paid to EMGS but I would hasten to add that its not expensive, it's a small, very reasonable amount.

And one final thing, any of you who pay by cheques, please make them payable to THE BEAUCHAMP ROAD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION (this is the name on the pass book) I get some weird cheques – I got one payable to TINA RODEN, that was a challenge! It worked out in the end, don't write BRGL on it, fortunately the building society, the office that I use know me very very well, and keep asking me for your

courgettes, I don't know why! But they now trust me and if they see BRGL on occasion they will push it through or they will write it on the top.

I have been asked about electronic banking. Quite frankly sending a cheque out is a pain in the proverbial, I hate cash – it disappears. I've had a number of people say that they've put £33 through my door – its not there. And then I discover they've put it through the neighbour's door and the neighbour's door is a nursery so who knows who got it. So I do prefer cheques because I can see and there's a trace on them. Re electronic banking, we use the Nationwide, you can use electronic banking with Nationwide, but I can't tell where the money has come from, so I can't trace it. I am going to look this year, not in the next few months, but probably before I send out the renewals, at using Metro Bank as I think they do a reasonable service, so that we can go down the electronic banking route but at the moment its just not available to us because Nationwide provides a service that actually pays us interest and we don't have to pay them fees that would normally be associated with an organisation or company."

Douglas asked for a vote to accept the Accounts.
Accounts approved.

6. Membership & Plot Maintenance Report

Ann then introduced the next item on the Agenda, which was the Membership Report. Ann said that Tina has been very active this past month or so with new members and also this last year and as said earlier has done sterling work as Membership Secretary, she has been absolutely brilliant.

Ann handed over to Tina for her Report. "I took over as the Membership Secretary from Pam Sicklemore back at the beginning of the year. Stepping into Pam's big shoes has been something to behold. Pam was a dedicated Member of the Committee as everybody knows for many years and we're all indebted to her for her service.

So back in January when I took over, we had 11 applicants on our waiting list with 7 existing members waiting for an additional plot. Today we have 8 applicants on our waiting list; two of which have requested a plot no earlier than next year, the last 6 applicants have joined us in the last month with 3 existing members waiting for an additional plot.

During 2016 we have let a total of 17 plots to new and existing members. There is a constant and continual turnover of plots especially around the time of the annual renewal when people start to pay for the new membership. There is a big turnover then of people giving up their plot. Having said that, I have just found in the last week or so that people are starting to say they are going to give up their plot now or give it up in the springtime.

So currently we have only two vacant plots, one of which was a plot, which the Committee have paid to be cleared due to the previous plot holders leaving the site in such a mess. And the second plot became available last week. Plot clearance is paid for through the £25.00 deposit that all members have to pay and throughout this year we have had three plots cleared, so that's where the deposit was used.

New members receive a Welcome Pack these days like this by email, so its imperative that I do have everybody's up to date contact information. So we need your email addresses and there is a list at the back if you want to put your email address – now is the time to do it. That's how your communication will be coming through going forward. If you don't have an email address, that's fine, we can send it out by post but to save us money it is better to be done electronically. Again if you want to get hold of any of the Committee we do have an email address which is beauchampallotments@yahoo.co.uk If you want to get hold of me that's the best way to do it."

Ann thanked Tina and then continued "As I having been acting as Secretary this past year, and as Doug has said, we have replaced some of the perimeter fences that were in a poor state and they have been replaced by us.

The padlock has been changed – twice in recent months. The one (three ago) lasted a long long time, and we've had to replace it twice in recent months. And I would just repeat that if it is sticking please do not put oil on it – just a small squirt of WD40 should suffice.

When the lock froze a couple of months ago on a Sunday – I received no less that 11 calls at my home to tell me about it – it seems everyone is very prompt to report a problem – but not to put their hand up to help! And by the end of the evening I was a tad fed up!!

As you will have heard, we had a serious accident on site in May. The emergency services were hampered by the building works being carried out at 104 Beauchamp Road. Scaffolding has now just come down again for the 2nd time, so I'm hoping that they have finished extending their property and obviously inconveniencing us. It did cause disruption to our site, not only for emergencies but also for skips and manure deliveries, because we didn't have the height clearance from the scaffolding overhang into our feed road. They also built a very smart garage at the rear of their property – with their proposed entrance into our feed road. And that was another battle that I undertook with the Council to ensure they were not permitted to use it – and as you've all seen that garage entrance is now behind a fence, so I would suggest that they have built themselves a rather expensive shed at the end of the garden.

In October we had a very unpleasant situation with the toilet block. A plot holder obviously had some difficulty whilst using the toilet. The result was that the toilet was blocked. The cesspit was full and the toilets left in a very unsanitary and

dreadful state. Jane, Keith and again Richard came to the fore and sorted it out – a very unpleasant task for them all and one that I hope never happens again. Richard, we owe you another debt, thank you very much indeed.

The reviewing system has continued to be implemented and reviews will commence again early in the New Year, and I would ask you please to pay particular attention to your pathways because this was something that did hamper the emergency services when they came on sight. Getting stretchers down – I hope the situation doesn't arise again – but we just never know and they did have difficulty getting along the pathways because the grass was too long and it hampered the emergency services with stretchers, so I would like you all to bear that in mind please. "

7. Committee – Elections

Ann continued to the Election of Committee Members. She said "Those members of the Committee who are up for re-election and I would say, thankfully are prepared to stand again are

- **Jane Poole**
Nominated by Ann Bailey and Seconded by John Attwood
- **Victoria Moore**
Nominated by Phillip Finch and Seconded by Elsie Shaughnessy.
- **John Bavin**
Nominated by Ron Bailey and Seconded by Pam Sicklemore
- **Keith Davies**
Keith is going to act as our Review Officer coming up in the future. Obviously it's a learning curve for him, as I know that Keith's attitude is 'Use it or lose it!' but we won't be quite that harsh! He is nominated by Barbara Harding and Seconded by P Faulds. Keith has been working with the Committee for several months, and he has been invaluable and as I say if elected will be undertaking the plot reviews in the year ahead, with some initial help from John Bavin who has done it for many years, so thank you to you both."

As there was no one objection, Ann suggested to do this is one fell swoop – and asked to have a show of hands to vote all these members onto the Committee for 2016/2017

There were no objections received and Ann declared, "You've all got yourselves another role."

Ann then continued, "Now that I've had my moan, may I ask, is there anyone in the audience who on reflection, feels that they would like to come and join the Committee, would you like to put your hands up?" (No hands raised) Ann said "Oh dear. We really do need someone to act as Secretary to come along to the Meeting

and take our Minutes. I can't stress strongly enough, I've done 4 years, I don't know how many years Ken did before me. I wanted to be able to stand down this year. If we all decide that we've had enough then there is a major issue with the site, so you all need to bear that in mind. So if someone would like to come and talk to us afterwards and find out what is involved, we have other people that volunteer, like Richard that help us, but we cannot all continue - its just too big an ask."

8. Annual Member Working Parties

Ann continued "Those of you who have joined in and helped the Committee on our working mornings as I've said earlier, we have made some improvements for the benefit of all plot holders, and it has been fun and will great team spirit. And we just need more of you to join in and give a couple of hours of your time. The Committee all tip up and if we are lucky we might get 6 or 8 more to help us. We will put up notices giving details and as I say, please use the noticeboards, we've installed them and they do tell you when the skips are coming, when we are having working parties, when we're having a Pumpkin Party. They are our noticeboards to advise you of what is going on. "

9. AOB

Ann said that she hadn't been advised of any issues that were to be brought up under AOB but was quite happy if anyone had any queries or anything that they would like to know to speak and happy to deal with those things.

Richard asked a question about the roadway from the footpath to the gate and asked if it was our responsibility to maintain it?

Ann replied, "Yes, it is and that's was another issue that came out of the lease. It's amazing what comes out of the woodwork. And the Council wanted a level of repair that should we have to give forfeiture of the site then it would have to be basically brand new. That's not possible, we do maintain it, but as you know, you in particular know because you've helped to fill the potholes etc. so we do keep it in good repair, but yes it is our responsibility.

Richard asked if the access road is our responsibility as he thought when the allotment site was handed over to us it was not? Ann confirmed it is our responsibility and that's another issue that I used in our defence with the Council over 104 Beauchamp Road, I said we are responsible for the feed road and they are going to be using our feed road as access and we are going to have to pay to maintain it, apart from the fact of course that its going to be a hazard given that the entrance to their garage is adjacent to our entry gates, so you know the emails went backwards and forwards as you can imagine but yes, it is our access road to maintain.

Andrew Gee made an observation about the working parties by asking if there were

Any jobs that could actually be undertaken by an individual rather than have a group?

Ann said “there are the odd jobs, Keith in the last couple of weeks has been repairing and rehangng the doors on the Committee Storage shed and that now needs re-roofing before the winter sets in, but of course that’s not a one man job, and I know that Richard and Keith have discussed that and are undertaking that. We keep a schedule of things we are doing on the next working party, and its done on a Saturday between 10 am -12 noon with enormous team spirit, its great fun and we get a lot done and so we have a list of the things that need to be done but if you speak to us afterwards, then yes I’m sure there are things that need to be done but largely its easier if its done in pairs, especially if its lifting and wheelbarrowing this sort of thing. “

Ann ended the Meeting by asking if there was anything else anyone wanted to say or ask. At 8.00 pm the meeting was closed.

Members stayed and enjoyed talking to one another and enjoying the refreshments provided.

MOC
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