

# HAA COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR AGM 27 APRIL 2024

All AGM papers can be downloaded from the April 2024 AGM section of HAA website at [www.highgate-allotments.org/documents](http://www.highgate-allotments.org/documents) (scroll down)

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## **“Chairman Jim” 1934-2024**

Derek James (“Jim”) Greenhill died recently at Highgate Care Home, and his funeral was held at Islington Burial Chapel on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Highgate Allotments Association sent flowers on behalf of all tenants past and present, and a number of his friends from the site attended.

In addition to being an accomplished allotmenteer over decades, and on several plots, Jim was a long-term member of the committee of volunteers running the site (particularly the Shop), earning his affectionate permanent title of “Chairman Jim”. Most tenants will of course have first met Jim when entering the Shed Shop to be greeted with “Well, what do we know?” – often followed with his trademark booming laugh. He must have put in thousands of hours behind the counter, doling out goods and advice in equal measure.

Recently some tenants shared his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with him in his wonderful care home, and we showed him the bronze plaque which has now renamed the Shop in his name. He will never be forgotten!

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## **Plot Lettings** *Maggy Meade-King*

19 plots were let in the calendar year 2023 and 8 so far in 2024. Of these, two probationers gave up their plots and asked to defer taking on a plot, and 21 were subsequently approved to become full tenants. Four sets of tenants are currently undertaking their probationary period, while they have a chance to see if allotment life is for them and we have a chance to see if they are prepared to put in the necessary work. As per Haringey policy, we have split larger (8-10 pole) plots into two new smaller plots when they fall vacant.

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## **Jim Greenhill Shop** *Sara Jolly*

The Jim Greenhill Shop is open every Sunday from 12 noon to 2pm, and additionally, every Wednesday from 5pm to 6pm for the duration of British Summer Time. In addition to paying by cash, tenants and probationers may now pay directly to the HAA Trading Account using a smartphone with banking app: HAA account details are on the Shop counter.

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## **Biodiversity** *Rita Drobner*

Extending hedges and dead hedges in the communal orchard and alongside the tool container has been successful. The mini-ponds established well, with thanks to all plot-holders who donated plants. Rainwater capture from the shop roof has been installed, providing water in butts in the communal orchard/wildlife area. The system would benefit from upgrading at some point.

HAA participated in the Big Butterfly Count and organised three sunset bat walks: foxes, tawny owls and bats were recorded. The bat detector identified the foraging bats as two types of Pipistrelle, and one Myotis species. HAA contributed to the Highgate Ecofair in June: the stall was themed on home produce - apple cider vinegar, kefir cultures and nettle and damson pestos were tried. The left-over tomato seedlings from the plant sale were handed out, and donations were passed to the Harington Scheme.

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## **Probationer Support** *Dan Hackett*

My contribution is to help new plot holders who might need advice, on what will work for them and help identify what they are finding - in terms of vegetation and soil mainly. What do they want to grow? How to prioritise their efforts?

Information is available in the HAA Newsletter, on the HAA website, and in books, magazines, seed catalogues etc. - but in practice, an on the spot visit is one of the main ways to welcome a new plot holder to start out. My contact details are given out by our lettings officer and several of the ‘incumbents’ have indeed contacted me and we have met by arrangement at their new plots, but of course, not all.

I encourage ploholders in general, not just probationers, to ask or rather share their aims and observations. This overlaps with all sides of environmental concerns -about pests and diseases and soils, as well as observations and provisions for wildlife. We want everyone to remain friendly and feel rewarded by their time in this beautiful spot, keeping it and ourselves as healthy as possible.

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## **Tool Sharpening & Equipment Hire** *Rita Drobner and Hinchee Hung*

A spring workshop for tool care and sharpening by Hinchee, Rita and Dan was well received. Plot holders brought tools by the bucket-load and blades of all manner and sizes were tackled from rusty to shiny and from blunt to sharp.

Motorised tools such as mowers, strimmers and wood chippers continued to be hired out at low cost to cover the equipment maintenance and fuel. Tool hire needs advance booking, for example through the dedicated email address [haaequipment@outlook.com](mailto:haaequipment@outlook.com).

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## **Haringey Allotment Forum (HAF)** *Geoff Kembball-Cook*

Quarterly HAF meetings continued in 2023. Information exchange and discussions take place with reps from across all the 25+ Haringey allotment sites. HAF helps to monitor problems and formulate sensible policies on allotment management which can be applied across the Borough, with direct access to Council managers and our dedicated Allotment Coordinator. During 2023 key guidance covering expected plot cultivation levels, fruit tree planting and use of co-workers were finalised and circulated to tenants at all sites. More guidance (particularly helpful for volunteer Site Associations) is on the way: a Site Association Information Pack, and Devolved Management Responsibilities, which aims to define what Haringey are expected to do, and which tasks are handled by local site associations.

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## **Plots of Concern and Haringey Inspections**

Last year (2023) we had two formal inspections by Haringey: as a result a number of tenants were encouraged to improve, and two tenants had their tenancy terminated by Haringey due to lack of cultivation. To help support tenants, HAA has now convened a small "Plots of Concern" group, to help tenants prepare for annual inspections. Terms of Reference for the group will be available on the HAA website Document page.

In advance of the first inspection to take place in May 2024, a new "Cultivation" document agreed by the Haringey Allotment Forum has been issued by Haringey Council and circulated to all tenants across the borough: this seeks to make expected levels of cultivation much clearer than it has been in the past. It is also available with much other useful information on the HAA website Documents page.

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## **Defibrillator** *Sally Jones*

The Committee bought an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) for the allotment site. This is a portable life-saving device that can give a casualty's heart an electric shock, when it has stopped beating normally in a sudden cardiac arrest. By using a defibrillator before an ambulance arrives, you can significantly increase someone's chance of survival. It is kept in an unlocked cabinet attached to the Shed Shop. It would be helpful if all tenants and probationers watched the four-minute St John Ambulance training film on [this link](#).

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## **Site Secretary** *Geoff Kembball-Cook / Sally Jones*

### **Rent Invoices for 2024**

As many of you will know, early last year (2023) was a disaster for Haringey's rental invoicing, with thousands of incorrect invoices being issued, despite the Haringey Council Allotment service providing accurate information on plots and plotholders. Tenants, our Allotments Coordinator and Site Secretary worked endlessly to correct all of the errors and re-send corrected invoices. This year's invoicing (2024) has gone much more smoothly, thankfully.

### **Allotments Waiting List**

Our Waiting List was closed to new applicants in May 2021 with over 250 on the list. Since the last AGM, as a result of plots being vacated but also of some "waitlisters" no longer wanting a plot, moved away etc., the number waiting has come down modestly from 210 to 175. Currently the waiting time for those now at the top has increased slightly to around five years. The situation is monitored in order to decide when it may be sensible to reopen to fresh applicants, for example when the list drops to below 100, which is likely to be in around 2-3 years.

### **Contacts with Tenants and Probationers**

HAA maintains an email list for sending out information to tenants and probationers. Requests for email addresses to be added or removed from this list should be sent to [highgateallotments@outlook.com](mailto:highgateallotments@outlook.com). HAA's website at [www.highgate-allotments.org/](http://www.highgate-allotments.org/) is accessible to all tenants and gives a variety of useful information, particularly on the Documents page, including information sheets, forms and Minutes of Committee and Annual General Meetings.

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