

SWAY ALLOTMENTS

Newsletter #3, April 2021

WELCOME

to the vaccine edition of
Sway Allotment News...

With the dark days of winter behind us Spring 2021 brings with it new beginnings and fond farewells.

At the end of 2020 Mike Cranidge hung up his dibber.

Mike is one of the longest serving Sway Allotmenters and uniquely has occupied all roles on the committee.

His selfless work brought benefit for all and the committee recognised this by the presentation of flowers (not pinched from the allotment) and a hamper.

I asked Mike for his recollections and these are captured in a fascinating article in this edition.

Brent Knox, Chair



Please see the noticeboard for the latest information. If you have an email address but did not receive this newsletter electronically, please check your spam folder and if it isn't there, please notify the Parish Clerk at clerk@sway-pc.gov.uk



SWAY ASSOCIATION OF ALLOTMENT HOLDERS

Chairman: Brent Knox ~ Secretary: Mike Cranidge

Committee: Ian Stone, Derek Elkins, Pam Capon, Mike Green, Tony Wade

Parish Clerk: Katie Walding

BOB'S JOBS

What needs doing, and when...

MARCH

Sow broadbeans, peas, carrots and beetroot. Plant onion sets and shallots. Prepare bean trenches. Carefully prepare ground and sow parsnips.



APRIL

Start planting out potatoes but if frost is forecast cover them. Plant summer cabbage and cauliflower. Sow carrots, peas, beetroot, lettuce and sprout seed. Plant sweet peas and gladioli (in case Dame Edna visits).



MAY

Sow runner bean, french bean, courgette, marrow and squash. Continue with carrot, beetroot, lettuce and radish sowing. Sow sweetcorn and winter greens. Plant dahlias.

JUNE

Plant out winter greens, runner and french beans, courgettes, marrows, sweetcorn and squashes. Plant flowers for cutting: Aster, Zinnia and Rudbeckia.



KEEP YOUR HOE MOVING TO SUPPRESS THOSE PESKY WEEDS!



Bob Marsh

THEFTS!

You should all be aware that once again we have had some thefts at the site so do not leave valuable tools on your plot. We have changed the code and are monitoring the situation. The code for the lawn mower will stay as the old code.

RATS

We appear to have reduced the rat problem but if all people with rat traps could keep them operational hopefully, we will avoid the serious problems we were encountering.

SPRING INSPECTION

A timely reminder is given that the spring inspection of plots and compost areas will take place at the end of April / beginning of May. This is to ensure that plots are tidy, free from weeds and 75% is being cultivated.

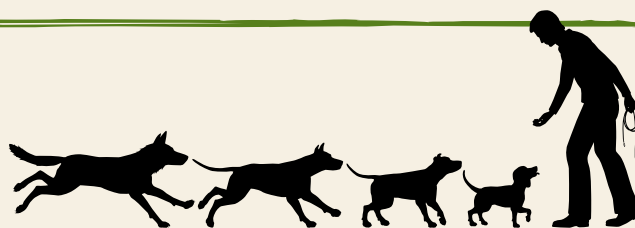
As we have many Sway residents on the waiting list for an allotment plot, if you are not using your plot or are finding the maintenance too onerous please contact the Parish Clerk as your plot could be reallocated.



From the desk of the Parish Clerk:

A huge THANK YOU to everyone for their payments in response to the renewal notice issued in October.

A REMINDER TO ALL THAT IF YOU BRING A DOG ONTO SITE IT MUST BE ON A LEAD.



A Personal Dig into the Past

by Mike Cranidge

After 40 plus years of 'allotmenting' you would have thought that by now I would be a horticultural expert but alas, with Bob Marsh as my neighbour throughout that time, my inadequacies have always been on display. In the beginning we had adjoining plots in the northwest corner of the north field, now long returned to its native inhabitants. In return for our good behaviour, we were given plots on the main drive thereby giving passing traffic a working example of vive la difference.

The allotment committee in those early years comprised the great and good of Sway whose village roots preceded the building of the railway: Buckle, Hewett, Rickman, Whitcher, Drodge; families that served Sway through the ages as the war memorial bears witness. When I first took up a spade, Pete Buckle was chairman and Pete Hewett, secretary. After Pete H stood down, the position was eventually filled by the recently departed and sadly missed Roger Snudden (another Sway name) who had been handed the short straw. However, once it was discovered I could write longhand and had one of them new-fangled computers I was offered the job despite not being Sway born and bred - after all mush*, I was a Hampshire Hog! (*Hampshire dialect)

(continued over)

The Allotment Committee then (and in many ways this has not changed) was made up of skilled doers and despite being the antipathy of a 'skilled doer' my administrative flair and self-belief (bullshit) squared the circle.

This was in the days before email and the Committee's contact with the Parish Council was by invitation to council meetings to which I, as Chair/Secretary, attended. I remember that we were normally fifth on the meeting agenda and living next to the Village Hall I was always in place before the proceedings started. These were the days when a young Barry Rickman, at the springboard of his meteoric rise in local politics, was the chairman and later the gavel passed to another Sway legend, Gwen Meaden. All under the tight control of the long serving Parish Clerk, the delightful Jackie Collins. The local press also attended. Such is the stultifying nature of council bread and butter topics that by the time 'Allotments' were called everyone was in need of light relief and even the reporter opened his notebook.

Barry Rickman and I share a common sense of humour and items such as manure, rats, rabbits, leaping deer and lodgers were grist to our mill. The lodger, by the way, made his home on the allotment sleeping in a portable pig container that was being used to store tools. A lifestyle never short of food but prone to flatulence! I was told by the reporter that agenda item five was the only reason he attended and many of his reports headlined the word 'manure'.

Time brought an end to the feudal period when villagers only planted veg to put food on plates. For as Sway grew so did the social mix with many new residents who, looking for a healthy lifestyle, a retirement occupation, or those suffering an addiction to the Good Life, embraced the self-sufficiency culture by taking a plot and thereby creating the cosmopolitan membership we have today. It is this that has ensured our survival and stopped the land being returned to Forestry England through lack of use. Although membership boundaries are now extended the core and heart is Sway and the allotments always were, and always will be, an important and integral part of the community. Over the last years, the Association has slowly changed from 'trade union' status to an operational arm of the Parish Council. Under the guidance and administrative skills of Parish Clerk Katie Walding, all matters concerning the running and maintenance of the allotments are dealt with through a partnership by the Parish Council and Allotment Committee. The changes of late reflect the success of this collaboration.

My departure after 40 plus years is more a farewell to my plot than the Association; I will continue in my very reduced roll of secretary treasurer. Like aging footballers that cannot give up playing my allotment career has gone from Premier to Non-league. From a full plot to half plot to quarter plot and finally to garden plot – I now have one less lawn! Sway is always home to me and Sway Allotments has, and always will be, an important part of my life.

Thank you all for enriching my life and for being there from me especially these last nine years following my wife Sue's death. And big thank you all for the presentation of a Christmas hamper complete with wine and a bunch of flowers. I was visibly moved.

Mike Cranidge