

CHAIR'S REPORT 2014

This report reviews the activities of Over Allotments Association for the twelve months since last year's AGM, November 2013 to October 2014.

Our year got off to an uncertain start, as an effective committee could not be formed at last year's AGM. Faced with the prospect of winding up the Association, members rallied round and a full committee of twelve was elected at an EGM called for that purpose. And then it was back to business as usual.

Our events

The first of our annual events was held in May, with our third town centre plant sale. Despite the grey skies and heavy rain outside, business at our pop-up plant shop was brisk, and by mid-afternoon our tables were as good as empty.

June was a busy month, with two events. It began with the third visit of the Mikron Theatre Company, who performed the final instalment in the lives of the plot-holders from Thistledale Allotments. 'Till The Cows Come Home' was enjoyed by an audience of about 120, in the superb new theatre at Winsford Academy.

June ended with the sixth annual Children's Open Day, when children and staff from 10 Winsford and Whitegate primary schools were given guided tours around the plots. Once again they brought us scarecrows, themed this year to coincide with the Football World Cup.

Our eighth annual Public Open Day was held in July. Now we all know that allotmenters are a hardy bunch of people, so we didn't let a little bit of light drizzle spoil the day. Others might have described it as 'heavy rain and torrential downpours'. The new WTC gazebos were a great help, and we are grateful to the council for allowing us to use them – the best umbrellas money can buy!

August saw our annual vegetable competition, which this year had seven new classes for members to enter. The show attracted our largest number of entries to date – a total of 153 individual exhibits were staged.

The Mikron Theatre Company returned in September for their second visit of the year with 'Troupers – Concerts at the Front'. An audience of over 200 watched spellbound as the cast took us back to the muddy fields of the First World War. For all who saw the show, it was quite simply an unforgettable performance that will linger long in the memory.

Our partnerships

The good relationship with Winsford Town Council continues, and the Association wishes to express its grateful thanks for ongoing support.

Officers of the Association have attended WTC Allotments Committee meetings, and issues raised by Association members have been addressed.

Cliff Dickenson & Son kindly loaned a transit van to help move plants and tables at our Plant Sale, and the Winsford branch of Co-operative Funeralcare has offered to provide a new trophy for us to award at future vegetable competitions.

Our grateful thanks to them all for supporting the Association.

Our communications, publicity and membership

The Association has continued to keep members informed through notices on the site noticeboards and by frequent personalised emails (about 50 have been

issued this year). We hope you feel we have kept you informed throughout the year.

We have continued to receive good press coverage from the Winsford Guardian, which has helped to maintain awareness of Over Allotments.

The Association's website has been regularly updated with both text and images, and it's pleasing to see that we have visitors from across the UK, and further afield.

Membership of the Association has remained high, and we are grateful that we had a high rate of renewal in June.

Our finances

We have had a highly successful financial year, with all fund-raising events making significant contributions to our bank balance. As you have heard in the Treasurer's Report, we end the year in the best financial position we have ever been in.

In addition to our own efforts, we received grants totaling £1300. Winsford Educational Partnership once again funded the cost of materials given to schools that attended Children's Open Day (£350), and Cheshire West & Chester local members funded the cost of the veg bags given to Open Day visitors (£350). We have also been awarded £600 by Winsford Town Council at the Your Money Your Choice event, for the purchase of a new beehive and related equipment.

Funds have been used to purchase a number of items:

- wooden bench in memory of all who have loved these allotments
- x6 tables
- beehive
- solar light for the toilet

In addition, we have continued to purchase manure, soil improver, gas and stock for the shop.

We have also made donations to St Luke's Hospice (£359.91) and the Poppy Appeal (£204.50). These donations were from agreed percentages from profits raised at this year's events.

We hope you feel the Association has carried out its duties and obligations to the best of its ability during the last year.

On behalf of this year's committee, I wish to express sincere thanks to those members – known and unknown – who have supported the Association.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my fellow members of this year's committee. It's been a pleasure to work alongside you. Thank you.

John Malam
Chair
Over Allotments Association

30th October 2014