

## **CHAIR'S REPORT 2016**

This report reviews the activities of Over Allotments Association for the twelve months since last year's AGM, November 2015 to October 2016.

### **Security**

It is good to be able to report a year in which we have had no known break-ins to the site, unlike the previous year when we were targeted four times.

We are grateful to WTC for the considerable improvements made throughout the year to improve site security, specifically the changing of the gate locks, an improved locking mechanism to the Moss Bank gate, together with the heightening of that gate. As you have heard in the WTC statement, this has been done at considerable cost to the Council, and the Association is grateful to the Town Council for the action they have taken to improve site security.

The Association has been given a quantity of UV marker pens by Cheshire Police, suitable for marking personal property. If you have not yet picked up a pen, you will find them in the Plotters' Rest – please help yourselves.

### **Our events**

Our events have continued to follow the pattern established over the last few years, with the addition of a coach trip to the Edible Garden Show at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, in March, enjoyed by all who went.

Our fifth annual town centre plant sale took place in May, and has quickly established itself as a fixture of the Winsford community calendar. As ever, the logistics of growing and then transporting well over 1000 plants into town, ready for an 8:30am start, was an immense effort on the part of all involved – but it was well worth it, not only financially as you have heard from the Treasurer's Report, but from the camaraderie and team spirit shown by all, and which cannot have gone unnoticed by the townsfolk who came out to support us.

June saw the eighth annual Children's Open Day, when children and staff from nine Winsford and Whitegate primary schools were given guided tours around the plots, and in return they brought us a new crop of scarecrows, this year on the theme of HM the Queen, in this her 90th year. About 120 children attended throughout the day, and members of OAA guided them around the site. One school informed me how much they look forward to this annual visit, as they use it as a transition event, for children moving on from one school year to the next.

Our tenth annual Public Open Day was held in July, and we achieved record takings at the stalls, helped along by sales of our first batch of Over Allotments' Honey. All 54 precious jars were sold by lunchtime, and we could have probably sold double that amount.

A feature of Open Day was, as it always is, the awarding of prizes by WTC to tenants, and congratulations to those members who were recognised by the Council for the high standard of their plots – better luck next year to the rest of us!

The highlight of Open Day was, of course, the official opening of the Plotters' Rest -- our new community room which has quickly become the social hub of the site, as was hoped. It was a great delight to welcome the former Town Clerk of Winsford, Mr Alan Warburton, to be our Guest of Honour and to declare the new building 'open'. Alan took the opportunity to tell us that he had a special affection for Over Allotments, having been born at 16 Moss Bank – a house at the entrance to the Moss Bank track, and which overlooks

the site – and that as a child his father had worked as groundsman at Over Rec.

As for the Plotters' Rest, this has been the Association's major project this year, and our grateful thanks go out to all members who helped turn it from an idea into reality. We must also record the support we received from WTC who allowed us to build on their land, local CW&C members for grant funding, and the Winsford business community, whose generosity in terms of materials, discounts and labour has helped us create a building that will serve generations of plot-holders to come.

Our annual vegetable competition was once again held in August, attracting a high number of entries. This year we had a new award to make – the Hamlett Cup for Best Collection of Vegetables. First awarded in 1928, when Over Allotments were just four years old, we are grateful to WTC for allowing the Association to bring this historic trophy out of retirement. The Plotters' Rest now displays honours boards recording past winners of trophies, and if you have not yet seen them, do have a look next time you're passing.

The Mikron Theatre Company returned in September for their sixth show promoted by the Association, and the audience of 250 who saw them perform "Canary Girls" had a night to remember. We now have good contact with Cheshire WI groups who made block bookings, and one group has already asked for the same seats next year – I think that can be arranged!

### **Our partnerships**

We have been supported by several businesses and organisations throughout the year:

- Cliff Dickenson & Son and Contour Showers loaned vans to help move plants and tables at our Plant Sale;
- Job Worth Doing, Indigo Products, Howdens Joinery, Winsford Co-operative Funeralcare and Manchester House Carpets supported the work on the Plotters' Rest;
- Winsford Educational Partnership gave a £300 grant for Children's Open Day;
- Huws Gray, Winsford, donated timber for the Children's Open Day scarecrows;
- Mid-Cheshire Beekeepers' Association continues to give advice to our bee team;
- Winsford Cross Shopping Centre allowed us to stage our Plant Sale on their premises, and displayed our Plant Sale and Open Day banners.

Our grateful thanks to them all for supporting the Association.

Our greatest thanks goes to Winsford Town Council, with whom our good relationship continues. The Association wishes to express its grateful thanks for ongoing support. This takes the form of loaned equipment, particularly gazebos, the provision of skips, sponsoring gardening tokens for schools at Children's Open Day, and a considerable amount of printing and office support.

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

### **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 40 have been issued this year). We hope you feel we have kept you informed.

The Association's website has been regularly updated, and we have had write-ups in the Winsford Guardian

Membership of the Association has remained high, and we are grateful that we had a high

rate of renewal in June. While many new members were welcomed to Over Allotments Association throughout the year, it was sad to learn of the passing of two members – Ted Tomney in November, and Dave Humphreys in March, both of whom are remembered on the memorial bench

### **Charity partners**

Our charitable giving this year has been to St Luke's Hospice and Macmillan Cancer Support, who will receive a donation to the value of £964.12, divided equally between them. The cheques are to be presented next Monday.

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

On behalf of this year's Committee, I wish to express sincere thanks to our members who have supported the Association.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my fellow committee members, who've gone "the extra mile" this year in more ways than one. The good year we have had is to your credit as members of this group, and as citizens of the Winsford community. Thank you.

John Malam  
Chair  
Over Allotments Association

27th October 2016