



Pete Edwards has had his plot on Chapel Hill site for 33 years

Emergency Contacts

Water

Polsted Rd supply: William Macphee
 29 Armour Road 0118 9414873
 Armour Hill supply: Rod Mills
 5 Wendover Way 0778 9765652
 Chapel Hill supply: Michael Geater
 0776 8902634 or 0118 9420767

Bees Martin Moore 0772 9620286

Vandalism

POLICE for EVERY incident: call 101
Call 999 for trouble in progress

The landlord's agent,
 Stephanie Keighley,
 can be contacted on 0789 979 8335

Dig It Special Issue

This issue of Dig It has been produced to inform plot-holders about the "Notice of Termination" letters delivered to our plot-holders on the Chapel Hill site.

Dig It

Notice to Quit

All 8 members with plots on Chapel Hill site have been given notice of termination of tenancy in September 2014. The termination letter from Trustees does not explain why, or offer compensation.

Chapel Hill

Many allotments are tucked away out-of-sight, not being open and viewable to all that are passing. Chapel Hill is quite unique in that it is on a busy pedestrian route and school run being viewable to all who wish to stop and talk about the work being carried out on the allotments. On our invitation we encourage accompanied children to 'pick a strawberry' or come and see 'how potatoes and other vegetables grow', thereby providing an educational opportunity. Our view is that these children with their Mums and Dads could be future allotment holders. By taking Chapel Hill Allotments away this unique educational facility will no longer exist.

Chapel Hill Allotments also provide a lifestyle to a number of like minded people, some younger some older. The camaraderie is second to none. Our older members have been there for over thirty years. It is unlikely they will want to move. They are more likely to give up completely. The psychological impact could be quite severe to these allotment holders with a big negative change in lifestyle. David Cameron has tried to promote the 'Big Society', I believe we fall into this category and to have the allotments closed will deny future generation this social amenity.

Successive Governments have been making everyone aware of their 'Carbon Footprint'. By removing Chapel Hill Allotments local people will have to travel further to and from an alternative allotment necessitating the use of motor vehicles. Currently the majority of allotment holders at Chapel Hill are able to walk to and from the site.

Nigel Rowland

Plot Holders Committee 2012/2013

Chair	Richard Buckingham	PD13	07738 003057			
Secretary	Jenny Cottee	AA8	9425169			
Treasurer	Karen Fidler	PB12				
Committee	William Macphee	PC2	Kate Jones	AB9a	Mick Geater	CH
	Colin Robinson	AA20	David Griffiths	PB10	Ken Phillips	AB14

TAS Committee

Our TAS constitution says that the Tilehurst Allotments Society must promote:

Allotment gardening on land owned by the Tilehurst Poores Lands Charity.

Good communication between plot-holders and the Trustees of the Poores Lands Charity.

For the Plot-holders at Chapel Hill, the only choices are:

- when to get off the land,
- whether to take up the offer of a plot on the main site.

The Trustees secretly kept main site plots vacant for eight months in order to have them available to offer Chapel Hill tenants. These are now very weedy plots!

Allotments are best close to where people live. There are no others near Chapel Hill. People are waiting for plots. However, the Trustees have decided to close the Chapel Hill site and deprive the locality of this much needed facility. Once lost it is gone forever.

Chapel Hill Site

Tucked in a corner of Chapel Hill is a small allotment garden. It has four



200 sqm plots and four half this size. The site has taps, a communal area and smart sheds. The facilities were provided by a developer in

1975 as part of the deal when the Charity sold off a big parcel of land (originally part of Kentwood Common, now Normanstead Road). This difficult site for building was selected for allotments.

Plots at Chapel Hill are popular, involving a long waiting time. The site is very handy for many and home to a tight community. There are few weeds, healthy crops, people sweep the concrete paths and socialise. The site is secure, being easily seen from surrounding roads and has houses on two sides. It and the neighbouring cottages make an attractive landscape feature on the hillside.



History

200 years ago common land was enclosed and a charity was established to help needy residents of the ancient Parish of Tilehurst. Nowadays, the registered Charity (no. 204048) gives grants for items like electrical goods and furniture. Names of possible recipients are usually passed on by council departments. The Charity also grants rent reductions to plot-holders who rely on state pensions or benefits.

Charity Commission rules say the Charity's annual reports must show that benefits have been distributed properly and that the Trustees have behaved 'like a prudent businessman' in their financial dealings.

The Charity originally owned many patches of land. Now it has two. Early sales were generally for agriculture. Post-war sales have been for housing. Planning laws and policies control changes of use. Reading Council has a complete up-to-date development plan with policies and a land-use plan as required by central government.

In 2000 the Trustees hoped housing would be allowed on allotment land off Kentwood Hill. They evicted the tenants and sold an option to buy the land for £40,000 capital and £1000 per year for ten years. However, the land was not identified for housing, falling foul of Reading's planning policy. The option income has finished. The Charity spent lots on surveys and fees. The Trustees keep this land vacant.

The Charity's finances are tight. It makes about 60 grants per year averaging say £220. Regular income comes from investments, and rents from allotments, the Victoria Recreation Ground and the builders yard off Kentwood Hill. This has not been enough, in recent years the Trustees have also spent capital.

After the Kentwood Hill experience, TAS want to know why tenants must again leave their plots. The Trustees hope to build on the Chapel Hill site, but we say planning laws make this a pipe-dream. We don't want any allotments left unused.

Planning law

Permission to build relates to a specific bit of land, not to the applicant. Charity status is irrelevant.

Reading's policy CS28 prevented building off Kentwood hill. It protects all open space in Reading including the Chapel Hill site. CS28 says:

'Development proposals that will result in the loss of open space or jeopardise its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. In exceptional circumstances, development may be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that replacement open space, to a similar standard, can be provided at an accessible location close by, or that improvements to recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided to a level sufficient to outweigh the loss of the open space...'

It doesn't matter whether terraced houses or a palace are proposed. Policy CS28 protects all open space in Reading.

The 2012 RBC local plan makes success at Kentwood Hill and Armour Hill even less likely. The planning inspector ruled that the large area of land off Kentwood Hill, (including the Victoria Recreation Ground and the main allotments) should be planned as a whole. This makes building anywhere here particularly risky, and costly, whilst not solving the Trustees' CS28 problem.

What do TAS want?

Your committee urge the Trustees to:

Look after the allotments properly; no more secretly keeping plots vacant and letting them become overgrown.

Explain why Chapel Hill tenants have been given notice. Will a property developer wish to gamble on ignoring CS28? What about the compensatory provision?

Be open, explain and think again; can they justify spending yet more cash on consultants fees? Do they intend to ask the Charity Commission to close down the Charity through their lack of funds? Must they evict the Chapel Hill tenants first?

Find out more

For the Charity its finances and the 7 Trustees see www.tilehurstplc.org.uk Read annual reports in the library, and contact the Charity Commission.

For RBC planning policies look at www.reading.gov.uk/businesses/Planning/planning-policy

