



Cyril making two sheds into one!

Emergency Contacts

Water

Polsted Rd supply: William Macphee
 29 Armour Road 0118 9414873

Armour Hill supply: Rod Mills
 5 Wendover Way 0778 9765652

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
 Email tplc@talktalk.net

Please give Jenny the URN number
 for any site crime you report.

Inform Stephanie of any wind
 damage to trees on site.

In response to the the suggestion for help in getting going, Dave is leading a hands on course for beginners. See over for details.

The members meeting on Thursday 3rd March 2016 will include time for patch discussions and a seed/seedling swap event. Plot-holders can meet their plot neighbours to chat. We can share fund-raising ideas and swap funky planters!

Reading Planning

The RBC Local Plan update starts in early January. The severe housing crisis and the need to update have prompted a consultation. You are asked to comment on land use until 2036. Comments are welcome on all land in Reading including the TPLC allotments off Chapel Hill and all the land between Kentwood Hill, Armour Hill and Polsted Road. You can say if you want land to remain as allotments, recreation grounds, etc. Comments about policies like open space (CS28) are also welcome. Keep it or change it. Any ideas about finding more housing, particularly reasonably priced housing for families, or any other issues you raise, will be considered for inclusion in later draft documents.

This initial consultation closes on 15th February. For more information look on the RBC website or contact Tilehurst Allotments or phone Jenny.

AGM

Our AGM in September was attended by 32 plot-holders and 2 representatives of the Charity. For the first time in 16 years no one stood for Chair leaving the chairmanship vacant. The committee are now pleased to report that Dave Griffiths has agreed to take on the role. Currently our committee is quite small and needs more members and people to help deliver Dig It newsletters three times a year. Please think about doing a stint.

Grouping plots into patches (outlined in the Dig It 70) got off to a reasonable start at the AGM. The discussion in groups was a successful innovation. More people took part, many useful points were raised and passed to the committee for consideration and action.

Several people requested social events. Ideas include jam and preserve tasting, soil testing and making plot number boards. Could you persuade a friend to help you organise an event? The Society would meet cost of room hire and help with publicity. The committee really needs a social secretary, could you take on that role?

Dig It

Plot Holders Committee 2015/2016

Chair	David Griffiths	PB10	9421141			
Secretary	Jenny Cottee	AA8	9425169			
Treasurer	Karen Fidler	PB12				
Committee	William Macphee	PC2	Colin Robinson	AA20	Mary Bartlett	AB7a

Padlock trials

Armour Hill Padlock has been fixed; you can still use the same key. After a good 18 months of problems getting the padlock to release their key, at worst people have had to abandon the key. Keys have clearly suffered too. Metal fatigue was probably the cause of the recent breakage when part of a key was stuck in the lock. Now, after excellent efforts by Stephanie and others, the padlock has been repaired and the root cause removed. This padlock is now like the Polsted Road one, and releases the key with a spring mechanism. A major source of stress has been removed from our lives. Many thanks to all.



Chapel Hill

RBC refused the planning application to build houses on the Chapel Allotments. They gave 6 reasons for refusing. Each refers to proposed breaches of policies in the Local Plan and national planning rules. Only one reason could be overcome if the applicant undertook more work or made adjustments to their plan. It is very unlikely that any building will be allowed on this site in the foreseeable future.

The Charity will wish to secure an income from this land. We hope that the best allotment site in Reading will soon have tenants restoring order and benefiting from the healthy hobby of allotment gardening. The ex-tenants of Chapel Hill are sad and upset, missing the plots they had to leave 13 months ago.

We hope the landlord will give their ex-tenants the chance to return to the site, ideally rent free until September 2016. We don't know how many would wish to take up the offer but it seems the kind and right thing to give them the choice. There remains the problem of dumping and rubbish that has arrived on site whilst it has been vacant. We offer to help clear up so new tenants do not have to contend with the mess.



Ken, Steve and George make light work of shifting a load of manure

Safety reminders

Cover water-butts on your plot.
Tidy up sticks and sharp wire.
Remove hidden hazards from paths.
Drive courteously and dead slow in Polsted Road. It is a private road and very young children play in the road.
Watch out for wasps in your Compost heap.



Waiting List

Our Society is keen to ensure as soon as a plot is vacated it should be let. We are pleased to note that Stephanie rented out two plots early in October, but regret no more have been let since then. We hope there will be a flurry of activity and the 8 vacant half plots will be filled rapidly so the reported waiting list of 7 will be cleared.

The longer plots are left empty the more matters deteriorate. Perhaps it is now time to consider a pro-rata rent reduction for people who take on plots for less than 11 months.

Reading Town Meal

A very big thank you to everyone who made Reading Town Meal 2015 such a great afternoon of fun and feasting in Reading's Forbury Gardens.



Membership Details

Our membership secretary, Mary, is pleased with the response to her request for contact details. She would like all plot holders to update her. We keep your details safe and use them only for allotment business.

Stephanie asks new tenants if they wish to be members of our society. Membership is free and ensures people receive Dig It and can be easily contacted in case of emergency.

Pamper Your Plot

Manure improves heavy clay and light sandy soil. Plot-holders have used two regular suppliers: Mrs Dayton (9572379) and Tim Metcalfe (9428001) who both supply well rotted manure. Check the price when you phone. Ask if you only want a half load (about 35 reasonable barrow loads).



If you have transport you can collect mixed straw and horse manure from many stables or you can use pigeon litter to speed up your compost heap. This is available on site in plastic bags near the crossroad notice board. First come first served.

Christmas

All gates, Both pedestrian and vehicle, will be locked from sundown on Christmas Eve until sundown on Christmas Day.

Water is expected to be turned off: on 1st December until 1st March. This is a frost protection measure. Please do not turn it on again, even for a short time.

RBC will collect Christmas trees from the car-park (see press for dates) and return us the chippings to use on paths. Please help yourself to the chips.

Merry Christmas to all plot-holders.

Get growing in 2016

Managing your new allotment plot

A short practical course on the allotment site introducing the essentials to help you:

- Use your time effectively
- Enjoy your plot and grow what you want
- Feel confident

Successful gardening is a lot about timing and being prepared.

Dave Griffiths, plans a course with monthly half-hour sessions covering aspects of gardening so you are ready to tackle things in good time.

Just turn up at Plot PB10 with your tools in gardening clothes, boots and gloves at 10.00 am ready to work and compare notes. We expect most course members will have recently taken on a plot but all are welcome.

- 5 Dec Starting - clearing, digging
- 9 Jan Building a compost heap
- 6 Feb What to grow: choosing seeds
- 5 Mar Early seeds in trays
- 2 Apr Potatoes
- 7 May Planting runner beans
- 11 June Hoeing and sowing

For more information: Email TilehurstAllotments or Call Dave on 9421141