

Leominster Allotment Association Annual General Meeting 2022

Saturday May 7th at 2 pm, on Ginhall Lane Allotment Site, Community Garden, Leominster.

Committee members present: Kay West, Samantha Shakespeare, Hilary Tuite, Graham Millard, Jane Lacey, Glenys Millard.

Others present: Stuart Sidebotham, Sue Morris, Claire Powell, Marcus Williams, Diane and Phil Eames, Mary Lacock, Heather Davies, Jen Turner, Margaret Coldman, Gill Ding, Lucy Sockett, and 3 x junior plot holders with parents.

Apologies: Viv Pearson

Minutes: Samantha Shakespeare

Minutes Approval

The minutes from the previous A.G.M. meeting, Wednesday 7th July 2021 at 7 p.m. in the Town Council Offices were approved as a true record of last year's meeting.

Opening matters

Kay welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Everyone introduced themselves. A brief explanation of the format of the meeting was given for the benefit of newcomers: reporting on activities and projects that have taken place since the last AGM and the opportunity for discussion and questions re items on the agenda or for A.O.B.

Report from the Secretary, Samantha Shakespeare

Three meetings have taken place since the last A.G.M - Sept 8th, Nov 3rd, March 2nd all at the Town Council Offices at 7pm. Sam also mentioned activities (**Refer to item 2 re activities**)

Report from the Chair, Kay West

After the A.G.M. of July 7th 2021 various covid restrictions came and went. In spite of this, we were able to fit in a couple of events as mentioned in item 6 on the agenda.

When walking around the allotment site it is always interesting to see how the individual plots have been planned and planted and how they develop over time.

The allotment site has a mix of experienced gardeners, beginners and plot holders of all ages. There are many thoughtful people, unbeknown to others, who have helped out another plot holder in some way. These acts of kindness and the situation of the allotment site make it a special place for many plot holders.

The Committee members are very supportive of each other and have worked closely with the Town Council and plot holders to maintain and improve the allotment site. I would particularly like to thank the other members of the Committee for their efforts. Sam has helped paint sheds, plant the hedge, and run the stall at assorted plant Fayres. Viv Pearson has provided many plants for plant fayres and then helps to sell them. Jane has been invaluable for advice and information as she was on the original committee when the allotments were set up. Julie, Town Council Clerk, is very supportive and the Committee were delighted when Stuart became responsible for managing the allotment site because, as a plot holder and a local person, he has a good understanding of what is happening or needed at the allotment site.

Activities during the year

Leominster in Bloom, It's Your Neighbourhood Assessment took place on July 3rd 2021 and report was received September 2021. The criteria for assessment were explained along with comments from the assessors and positive aspects of the allotment site and suggestions for improvement. (The full report was made available as a hard copy on FB and the Allotment web site when it was first issued in September 2021. The comments about making the allotment site more environmentally friendly were discussed (**see below**).

1 - Encourage efforts to include more bat and bird boxes and bug hotels across the site. (The Council looked into this and the person who was going to assist was unable to. This is something that the Committee would still like to happen and set up as soon as possible.) Stuart explained the situation and has said it was something that would be followed up. It was mentioned that Echo could be approached for bat and bird boxes.

2 - Make maximum use of rainwater butts rather than mains water. Not all plots have sheds but a few containers could be used for collecting rain water. This is good advice as using water from water butts is more economical than paying the costs of mains water, which is metred.

3 - Continue to persuade all plot holders to garden organically. It was mentioned that there are hedgehogs on the site and a number of them had ended up with HELP 4 Hogs at Shobdon as they had been poisoned. It was suggested that signage to inform plot holders of hedgehog might help make them more aware that they were on site.

4 - Ongoing work on wildlife area – planting trees and flowers to attract insects and creating a small pond

5 - Consider whether to set out a (sponsored?) flower arrangement near the entrance gate. LIB have offered planters to the Town Council. We have said we would like them for the allotments and are waiting for them to be emptied of current plants before they can be moved to the allotment site.

- **Picnic on the Plot on Sunday August 15th2021**- this was attended by members of the L.A.A Committee and one other plot holder.
- **Plant Fayre** on Saturday September 18th2021- several courgettes donated but all other items were from the Community Garden, Sam's plot and from Viv Pearson. The stall was run by Hilary, Sam, Viv and Kay. The £26 profit was used to purchase blue wood preserve which Sam and Kay used to paint the Community Shed.
- **Harvest Supper** on Friday October 8th, 2021- The L.A.A used money from the funds to subsidise drinks and food. As usual, those that attended contributed an amazing selection of savoury and dessert dishes. There was the usual quiz but no awards were given as it was felt that the Covid situation had impacted on the amount of time that individual plot holders could commit to attending their plots.
- **Security Marking** sessions - A session for West Mercia police to carry out security marking was arranged for Saturday July 10th but this was poorly attended due to the short notice. Another date for security marking was organised for Saturday October 23rd from 1p.m. until 3p.m. but once again, no one turned up, even though it was advertised well in advance on FB, allotment web site and posters on the notice boards. It was suggested that instead of wasting police time security marking should be carried out by the plot holders themselves and that they use the resources left in the Community Shed from the previous police visit.
- **January 28th-30th R.S.P.B Garden Birdwatch at the allotments.** - Kay and Sam provided bird identification sheets and relevant forms (obtained by Sam) on the allotment notice board and in the Community Shed. Notification of this was given on the Allotment Web Site, Face Book and posters on the noticeboards. Only three people took part- Kay, Sam, Hilary.

Other Matters arising from last year's A.G.M.

- **Thefts/security Closing the entrance gate** - large signs were put on the gate requesting plot holders to close the gate after entering and exiting the allotment site and to lock it if they were last leaving. Most people abide by this. However, the padlocks/gates can be difficult for some people to manage, myself included at times. Ask for assistance if this is possible. Several weeks ago, a car parked in front of the open gate so it could not be closed. This might have been a walker using the allotment site for parking and not wishing to be locked in? It had been suggested in a previous LAA meeting that a post to prevent the gate swinging 180 degrees into the hedge would make it impossible for anyone to block the gate and help stop the gate from dropping on its hinges. The post might need to be removable, padlocked in place to allow easier access for Council vehicles.
- **Anti-social behaviour**- There have been a couple of isolated incidents but, luckily, the allotment community is mostly very respectful of others. However, there is a slight issue with littering as some seem to think it appropriate to put plastic bottles, bags and cans on a cordoned off compost heap or by/over the fenced off wildlife area. Littering is classed by law as antisocial. ([Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003](#) and [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#)) Kay and Stuart have removed five black bin bags full of assorted litter in the last few weeks.

Matters arising from last year's A.G.M.- Town Council issues

- **Communication with plot holders** - secure post box. This is now installed in the Community Shed plus an additional information notice board on the side of the Community Shed. Old notice board enables plot holders to access forms and Information. Communication continues to be an issue for the following reasons- The LAA do not have a list of contact details for all LAA members as this was handled by the Town Council staff and data protection laws prevents them from passing on personal details. See report from membership Secretary, Hilary Tuite, on how this will be resolved. The other issue concerns prospective new tenants. They are told about vacant plots but they are not shown round so no one to explain the existence and use of the Community Garden area and its facilities. Perhaps a welcome sheet would be useful? Gill Ding highlighted the need for simplifying all notifications and announcements to avoid confusion.
- **Compost loo** - became usable as soon as Covid regulations permitted this,
- **Recycling area/ Wildlife area** - work in progress. This was strimmed and Sam and Kay have planted a hedge of various species, donated to the Town Council, from the Woodland Trust as part of the Queen's Jubilee plant a tree initiative, Chris kindly donated three crab apple trees and Quince. Steve has donated a small walnut tree which is being grown on to give it a better chance of thriving in the wildlife area. It was noted that Mark had kindly offered to give the area another trim and many thanks and appreciation for all his hard work that morning were expressed at this meeting.
- **Disabled facilities/toilet to be actioned** - Raised beds to be constructed on the old recycling area. Application for a grant is needed to help cover the cost of a toilet suitable for those with disabilities. Raised beds made from recycled plastic were researched and Stuart and Kay filled out a grant in the hope of receiving a grant to help pay for the costs of these. Unfortunately, this could take such a long time to be successful that having wooden raised beds is being considered. Stuart is looking into the cost of timber needed for this.
- **Numbering plots** – over the years plots have been subdivided and the original numbering system has caused issues. Many thanks to Stuart for organising new number plaques and attaching them to the plot gates. Plot holders were given advance notification of this action on FB, the allotment website and posters on the allotment noticeboard. Sam and Kay helped Stuart to place number plaques on every plot.
- **Retiring plot holders “Veterans” scheme** - Notification and forms available.
- notification on FB, allotment website and posters to inform plot holders of this scheme. A registration form for this is available from the allotment notice board by the gate. **NB** The Committee consulted the Town Council and agreed to use some of its funds to pay for two people to have Veteran membership for a year. Both have been plot holders. This is in recognition of all the hard work and support that they have given to the LAA over many years. The appropriate paperwork has now been completed for one of these people.
- **Rotovators** - Stuart reported that they need attention as they are not working reliably.
- **Site lease renewal** - Julie is negotiating this.
- **Vacant plots** – none. 6 people on the waiting list.

Report on Membership - Hilary Tuite

Membership fees that affiliate the L.A.A. with the National Association are payable by the end of August and will now be collected directly by L.A.A. This will mean that L.A.A. will be able to have a record of all members available that will enable us to access free insurance under the umbrella of the National Association amongst other benefits.

Collection will start at the May Plant Fayre and membership forms will also be available in the notice board by the gate at the allotments from the end of the month.

Once the L.A.A. has a record of all members it will be easier to keep in contact and inform people of any events and news.

Report from the Seed order Co-ordinator, John Braithwaite and Jane Lacey, Kings seed Catalogues 2022/23

These will be available for Allotment Association members to collect from John's home address, 11 Ryelands Road, between 10 and 12 on given days of the week. (To be announced.) Also, orders can be collected from this address. Facebook, the Allotment Web Site, the Allotment notice board and post box in the Community Shed will be used for relevant information.

August - Catalogues arrive.

Start of November - hand in first orders.

Mid December - goods arrive

Early December - second order, about a month after the first one.

Report from Treasurer Hilary Tuite

Since taking over as treasurer in December 2021 the only income we have received has been from King's seed order for £332.45, with only 10 members taking part last year.

Expenditure of £295.69 to King's seeds, £161.56 for plot insurance and £25.00 for a table at the Craft and Plant fair to take place on 21st May leaves a balance of £1138.36 in the bank. There was a profit of £36.76 on the seed orders. The insurance payment for members will hopefully not be necessary next year with the members' details being held by L.A.A. the committee should be able to take advantage of the free insurance as part of the affiliation to the National Association.

Election of Officers

Kay and Sam explained that they were relinquishing their roles but would remain active for the LAA. Sam works full time, long hours and not locally so is finding it increasingly difficult to give time to LAA matters. She also explained how time consuming our roles were because there were so few Committee members to spread the work load. People are keen to make suggestions but tend to expect others to action them. Kay said that she was prepared to support the new Chairperson but not to be tied up with all the admin that this involved. She wished to be active in developing the wildlife area. Kay would also take responsibility for 2022 LIB paperwork as this was an ongoing project from last year.

- **Claire Powell (Chair)**
- **Sue Morris (Secretary)**
- **Hilary Tuite (Treasurer and Membership Secretary)**
- **John Braithwaite (Seed order Co-ordinator with support from Jane Lacey)**
- **Graham Millard (committee member)**
- **Glenys Millard (committee member)**
- **Kay West (committee member)**
- **Samantha Shakespeare (committee member)**
- **Viv Pearson – (committee member - Veterans Representative)**

These appointments were seconded by Jane Lacey and passed by those attending the meeting.

Any other business

- **Harvest supper 2022** - New categories for harvest supper awards were given to Stuart and Julie. Plot holders were asked for suggestions via FB, web site and notice board posters but only two people responded. All categories will be judged independently. Stuart will organise judging.
- **Removing old leaf compost bay** - In spite of it being taped off it continued to be used. Unfortunately, there was plastic waste, including bottles, and tin cans in with the compostable material. Kay cleared the top layer as this could be burned. Stuart and Kay will be clearing more of it on Wednesday May 11th.
- **Allotment website - is it needed?** Question raised by Kay West as the L.A.A pay for this facility? Kay would like it noted that Chris Conlon does an excellent job as L.A.A Web Site Administrator.

Pros - It holds all sorts of documents on the Documents page, to which people can refer.

It's a good way of disseminating information, news, rules and regs.

Good contact point for those who are thinking of taking on an allotment.

Con's - There is a cost to the website.

People use Facebook rather than look at a website.

Not everyone has a computer/lap top.

- **Swap Shed** - the aim is to make it more weatherproof so that items placed on it are not blown into the nearby hedge or get wet. Notices re forthcoming events could also be pinned on it.
- **Funding for proposed events and projects** - Claire mentioned some local businesses who have helped out with various community projects. Howdens will give away old pallets, Cadburys and Kingspan will provide work parties for some projects.
- **Social events?** - Involve children more by organising a sunflower growing competition, a scarecrow competition?

Dates

- **Next A.G.M.** - Saturday May 6th 2pm 2023 at Ginhall Lane Allotment Site Community Garden
- **Next L.A.A. meeting** - Sunday July 10th 3pm at Ginhall Lane Allotment Site Community Garden
- **Leominster in Bloom I.Y.N. assessment Saturday** - July 16th at 11 a.m.

Kay West then thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the meeting was closed.