

Camberwell and District Allotment Society
AGM Minutes of Main Society held at Scout Centre
(Saturday 26 March 2022 11am)

1. Welcome

Attendees:

Grange Lane

Adrian Hill (CDAS Chair), Sarah Thurman (Chair), William Stanley, Vaulda Simmons, Maureen Erny, Frank Kunna and Sarah Knight.

Gunsite

Philip Milner, Maggie Jarman, Tony Robertson-Jonas, Liz Brunton, Linda Craig, Jeannie Harris, Lorna Mills, Phil and Kathy Heeps, Mike and Judith Patrick.

Grove

Andy Whittingham (Grove Chair), Elaine Broadbent (CDAS Treasurer and Grove Secretary), Emma Davidson (Grove Lettings Officer), Clive Broadbent

There were over 20 members present so the meeting is quorate.

2. Apologies for Absence

Tyrrell Evans (Grange Lane)

10. Election of Officers

The following officers were elected (as proposed by the meeting):

Chair	Philip Milner (Co Chair)
Secretary	Tony Robertson Jones
Treasurer	Elaine Broadbent – Proposed by Adrian Hill

Other CDAS committee members are nominated by Sections on an ad hoc basis for each CDAS committee meeting.

Philip offered to stand as a Co Chair but would prefer to have another Co Chair standing with him. All sites to actively recruit for another Co Chair. Grove may have someone who would be prepared to be a Co Chair. The second Co Chair can be appointed during the year and the appointment will be ratified at the next CDAS AGM.

Adrian Hill was appointed as Honorary President.

Approval for the above elections was given by the meeting; no objections were recorded.

It would be helpful to have a job description of the above roles to assist in recruitment.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and no objections were raised.

4. Chairman's Report

Adrian Hill gave the Chairman's report as follows. Discussions on structures are in progress. The Sections are conscious of the need to have rules in place which are acceptable both to the Dulwich Estate and to the membership.

5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts

Elaine gave the Treasurer's report.

The Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021, year ending 30/9/21, is provided with these minutes (as an email attachment), with the following notes:

1. CDAS receives money from the three Sections as follows:
 - Rent (which is passed directly to the Dulwich Estate)
 - National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) membership fee (£3 per member), which is passed directly to NSALG)
 - A 10% levy on the rent which is used for the CDAS insurance, payment for use of the room to the Scout Centre and any incidental expenses.
2. CDAS has previously made an annual donation of £100 to the Scout Centre for meeting facilities. However, both Grange Lane and Gunsite make payments to the Scout Centre on receipt of invoices. Elaine has paid £30 invoice to the Scout Centre in place of the annual donation.
3. There is a Trustee Protection account which contains £6176.27. In addition, the Trustees have indemnity cover via the Society's insurance policy.
4. CDAS was charged £160 (tree consultation) and £810 (tree work) by the Estate for Grange Lane, both items being incorrectly charged by the Estate. The amounts were invoiced in 2019/2020 accounts. Note that the refunds were processed as a reduction on Grange Lane's Oct 2020 DD to the Dulwich Estate in the 2020/2021 accounts.

The CDAS levy is currently set at 10%. This covers the insurance, room hire and any incidental expenses with about £100 to spare. If the insurance costs increase significantly, we will need to look at raising the CDAS levy to cover costs.

Auditor requirements – The CDAS Membership Card and Rules states the CDAS accounts should be audited by someone who is not a member of the CDAS committee, ie a CDAS Officer. Elaine requested the meeting to agree the accounts and this was agreed. Kathy Heeps said she is happy to review the accounts next year. Kathy Heeps attends some CDAS committee meetings but is not a CDAS Officer.

Payments for the insurance and NSALG membership were previously done by cheque (with two signatories), but are now done via BACS by the Treasurer solely. From now on, authorisation of ad hoc payments will be done via an email exchange between two Trustees. This is now becoming standard practice among societies. Rent payments to the Dulwich Estate are made via BACS and are not considered ad hoc payments.

The members gave a vote of thanks to Elaine for her work as Treasurer.

6. Secretary's Report

Michael Villeneuve has now stood down as CDAS Secretary due to ill health. All normal secretarial processes have been carried out throughout the year.

The new secretary is Tony Robertson Jones.

7. Section Reports

GRANGE LANE ALLOTMENTS REPORT FOR CDAS AGM – Sarah Thurman

Governance

Changes to committee in 2021/22: Nigel Grant stood down as Chair and Martin Beard as Treasurer at our November 2021 AGM. Formal elections took place in February 2022 following the production of role descriptions for committee members (9 different roles) and an extensive call-out for new committee members. Sarah Thurman and Tyrrell Evans are Co-Chairs, Maureen Erny, Secretary and Sarah Lyness, Treasurer. Long-standing Membership Officer, Peter Allen and also Susan Miles stepped down but we have two new members – Frank and Alex.

Our warmest thanks and gratitude to Martin and Nigel for their commitment and hard work over the years.

Documents produced: A 'Role and Responsibilities of Helpers' (Associate Members) was produced and approved at the November 2021 AGM and, following significant consultation with members, a Code of Conduct was produced and approved by the membership in January 2022. In 2022 we will be drawing up a constitution.

Electronic consultation and voting: we have introduced electronic consultation and voting at Grange Lane, successfully trialled with the survey and documents above.

Survey of Members: In September/October 2021, we carried out a survey of members to get their views on structures and rules, the role of the committee, priorities, concerns, etc. There was a great response and the feedback will inform our work over the next year or so but top of the list of concerns were paths and drainage.

Site Issues

Forest School. Following an approach from the DC Primary School (DUCKS, below the site), the bottom wooded corner of our allotments is being handed over to them for use as a Forest School with the agreement and formal endorsement of the Dulwich Estates. We have stipulated that the facility should be open to other schools/children in the area.

Paths and Waterlogging

Over the last few years, committee members have met with drainage experts to see what can be done to improve the drainage of the site. Opinions have varied and quotations for the work have been extremely high but all the professional advice has indicated that a coordinated approach to diverting water down and away from the plots and under the main paths is critical. We have initiated a project to start this process, starting with vacant plots. Last week we put out a call (and instructions) to plot-holders in support of this co-ordinated effort.

Top Fence: The top fence, adjacent to the Dulwich Woods, has continued to deteriorate and the various lockdowns resulted in even more problems as many people used the woods came through (or broke through) the fence on to the site.

Dulwich Estates has now agreed to replace the fence once the lease issue has been resolved. We hope this will happen in 2022.

Waiting List. Our waiting list has been closed since 2017 and we will be opening it soon. The Committee is looking at how to do this in a fair and considered way.

Membership

Sunday Socials. Over the past year, the monthly social events at the hut have re-started and proved very popular. We ran 3 plug plant sales at 3 of the socials.

Tribute to Verney

Following the death of longstanding Committee member, Verney Montoute, we commissioned a bench in his honour which now sits at the top of the site. Verney was a well known and loved plot holder who served on the committee for many years and helped out in various ways on the site.

GUNSITE ALLOTMENTS REPORT FOR CDAS AGM – Maggie Jarman

1 Gunsite's own AGM was held 'live' at the Scout Centre in early December. Significant ratifications were made there:

Change to tenancy agreement:
the addition of the following clause to the Tenancy Agreement (Clause 2) was approved unanimously:

Plot holders and their visitors must show tolerance and respect towards all individuals using or visiting the site. Discrimination, harassment, threatening behaviour or abusive language will not be tolerated.

In addition, under "no annoyance" the addition of "headphones must be used for audio, video and gaming" was approved unanimously.

2 **Risk Assessment:** Importantly, this is now in place and warning signage much improved; many thanks to Mike and Judith Patrick for their detailed work on this.

3 **Waiting List:** Since the Inspection in summer 2021, over 20 half plots have new holders (not all surrendered plots were failures, some were natural wastage). The Waiting List has reduced from 260 (at which point it had been closed in August 2020) and will reopen when it has dropped to 150 names. To accommodate more applicants, all newly let plots will be 2.5 rods; this practice has been followed since at least 2017 and is now adopted as a formal part of the Letting rules.

4 **Gate and fly tipping:** There has been concern that the gate now has no lock and that fly tipping could continue. Last summer, there were a number of thefts of produce. However, the lock and gate are the responsibility of the Dulwich Estate - their contractors, and Southwark, use the site daily. The DE is unlikely to reinstate the lock on the gate unless fly tipping becomes unmanageable. They have asked for photographic evidence of fly tipping; plot holders warned they should only take photos if they can do so without compromising their personal safety. All plot holders are requested to close the gate and wind the chain round so that it looks as if it is locked.

5 **Bee Policy:** The decision to have one was ratified by our AGM in January 2021 and, although some clauses have proved tricky to negotiate, it is now well on the way to completion. Bee Keepers (of which there are 6) are signing a Bee Tenancy Agreement and paying a nominal rent. Many thanks to Liz Brunton for her perseverance in achieving this.

6 **Shop:** This is currently thriving and its reopening on Sundays for 'in person' trade between 10.00 and 11.00 most welcome. Online purchasing remains in place. After some 10 years at the helm, Philip Milner, and his more recent recruit, William Marshall, have enlisted two new, and excellent, Shop Managers, Rosemary Danielian and Mike Gavin. Many, many thanks to Philip and William for their dedicated work; among their many achievements, the fund raising for 5 wells for Project Well should be particularly noted.

GROVE ALLOTMENTS REPORT FOR CDAS AGM – Andy Whittingham

2021 went well at the site. Fewer covid restrictions meant higher attendance at the site and more maintenance tasks completed. For example, rubbish has been cleared from the site, brambles cut back from our small but growing orchard, and ditches kept clear

The new shed had been installed, a relief after several years of planning. We are now in the process of moving items back in, improving accessibility (we are building steps) and planning for its use over this year, for example we are aiming to start deliveries of compost and fertiliser for members to purchase.

Previous problems with our water rates have been resolved, and bills are now at a sensible level.

Manure and chippings were regularly delivered.

Drainage at the site continues to be a problem during periods of heavy rain, but we're gradually improving matters.

We held our AGM on 13 February. Richard stepped down as chair, and two new and enthusiastic members joined the committee. The meeting was not quorate so we could not ratify our updated policy on associate members, so we are planning to hold a short meeting at the beginning of our first workday of the year in April, and encourage the required 20 people to attend.

Financially we had a strong year, making a £900 profit over the year. We intend to increase reserves if possible over the coming year, to put the Section in a good position to manage any further unexpected financial demands and to fund future investment projects, such as kitting out the new shed.

We welcomed five new members at the site. The waiting list is still long so we've not reopened it yet.

In conjunction with the adjacent tennis club, markings were painted onto the resurfaced car part and hatching introduced to indicate the single space reserved for Grove members. This has alleviated the problems experienced over last summer with cars parked inappropriately, causing difficulties accessing the site.

We are in the process of establishing our policy on structures at the site. We've surveyed opinions from members - somewhat mixed results, but a large majority favour having structures on site but with sensible restrictions on height and coverage, and importantly on not shading adjacent plots.

Matters to consider in the year ahead include: making best use of the shed, and installing amenities such as running water and possibly electricity; improving site security, as a number of thefts, both of produce and gardening equipment, were reported last year; removing three dead trees (a fourth came down in Storm Eunice); completing the risk assessment for the site; holding social events (for example, the official opening of the shed); improving attendance at our 3 workdays per year (only about 50% of members attended last year).

8. Structures at Sites

Sarah summarised the situation: The Dulwich Estate were made aware in mid 2021 that all three Sections have structures which are not allowed by the leases. The Dulwich Estate has suspended Grange Lane's account until this is resolved.

The Dulwich Estate has requested new wording in the leases to allow structures at the Sections, so that we are not in breach of the leases. Each Section is to have their own rules as part of their tenancy agreement. The leases will be updated to state that the rules for structures are located in the Section's tenancy agreement. The Dulwich Estate is looking for consistency across leases. This will be achieved by locating the Section specific rules in the Section's tenancy agreement. Note that each Section is likely to have different rules regarding structures.

Grange Lane and Grove have carried out surveys of their membership. Both surveys had good responses. Grange Lane generally supports structures on plots, but there was a clear mandate for restrictions on structures on plots, with concerns on number of structures, shading and the use of various types of materials. Grove's survey produced a complete range of responses ranging between members who didn't want any type of structures on plots and plastics banned, to members who wanted any combination of shed/greenhouse/polytunnel on a plot.

One way of dealing with the proportion of a plot taken up with structures is to set a limit on the % of the plot used for structures. We can also introduce size and height limits. Concrete bases will be banned on individual plots.

One issue with sheds is that sheds could be regarded as a possible dwelling place. CDAS representatives plan to meet with the Dulwich Estate to confirm if:

- The Estate is planning to put any restrictions on Sections re structures, or allow Sections to update their tenancy agreements with the new rules for structures.
- If there are any concerns re sheds as possible dwelling places.

One option is for Sections to mandate that any new structures must be approved by the committee before being set up.

9. Insurance - Health & Safety

Our insurance was renewed via Chris Knott Insurance brokers in January 2022. We were originally insured via NSALG but moved our insurance to Chris Knott a couple of years ago since NSALG does not insure wooden sheds.

As part of the negotiation for renewing the insurance this year, it became clear that some of the statement of facts provided was incorrect. For example, the insurance documentation stated there were no bees at any of the Sections. In fact, all three Sections have bees which must be monitored by bee keepers with appropriate experience via the BBKA or equivalent experience. After much negotiation with the insurers on 'equivalent experience', there is an endorsement on the policy relating to this. All three sites comply with the endorsement.

The insurance information also stated that there are no ponds at the sites. However, all three sites have ponds on individual plots, plus there are drainage ditches and water butts throughout the sites. These all represent a significant Health & Safety risk for the Sections.

Elaine provided aerial views of the main drainage ditches to Chris Knott and obtained sign-off for these for the three sites as long as appropriate signage is in place.

We now have the following endorsement on the insurance policy:

Pond Endorsement

Insurers will not pay any claims resulting from injuries suffered in any pond at the Club Address unless the

following safety steps have been taken to ensure young children are kept away:

- Fence around the pond or plot where the pond is located that is no less than 1m high
- All sections of the fence should be clear of objects that will allow a child to use them to climb over the fence
- If a gate is fitted, the gate should be self-closing and open outwards from the pond with the latch/lock being fitted to the inside

Or

- Any other safety arrangement that We have given prior written agreement

Elaine has emailed Liz Bunting at NSALG regarding their requirements for dealing with water hazards at a site. No response has been received yet. NSALG may give us a better idea of how to deal with our current insurers.

Action: Elaine to follow up with Liz Bunting at NSALG and then update Sections.

The insurers define a pond as anything containing water for 11 months of the year. If the pond is at ground level or below, it needs the fencing stated above. If the pond is above ground level, it needs to be netted. We may need to tell plot holders they need to fill in their ponds, particularly if they are small, or to substitute them for bird bath type ponds if they are small. Large ponds will need the required fencing. Or we may be able to negotiate with the insurers re '*Any other safety arrangement that We have given prior written agreement*'.

The onus is on the three Sections to ensure that sites have robust Health & Safety procedures in place. One suggestion is for each site to appoint a Health and Safety officer, or have this as an additional responsibility for an existing officer. A concern was raised re training for this. It was also suggested that a Health and Safety category is added to the plot inspection requirements.

Gunsite produced a comprehensive Risk Assessment last year. This covers site wide issues (eg the main drainage ditch, rubbish piles, bonfires) and risks specific to plot holders (eg cuts, back strain, tripping on tools). Mike Patrick (Gunsite) offered to send their Risk Assessment to Maureen, Secretary for Grange Lane. Elaine has produced a first draft for Grove. This will help each Section identify risks and produce robust Health and Safety procedures. The Risk Assessment should be regularly reviewed by the Health and Safety officer.

One option is to move our insurance to NSALG next year and obtain separate insurance for wooden buildings. However, each Section still needs to address Health and Safety issues.

11. Trustees

Adrian is standing down as a Trustee. It's conventional for each site to nominate a Trustee. Grange Lane is actively looking for a Trustee to replace Adrian. When Grange Lane has found a replacement, they should let Adrian know, and he will do the necessary paperwork. The Dulwich Estate needs to be notified of changes to Trustees. When the lease is renewed, the correct Trustees will be entered on the lease.

Philip Milner currently represents Gunsite.

Elaine Broadbent currently represents Grove

12. Any Other Business

The meeting proposed a vote of thanks to the Officers for their work during the year.

The meeting thanked Adrian for his long years of service as Chair of CDAS and presented Adrian with a gift.

The meeting was then formally closed by Adrian.

Minutes produced by Elaine Broadbent (Grove Secretary)