

BRIAR ROAD ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION (BRAHA)

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

Introduction. This report covers the period from the last Annual General Meeting in June 2019 to July 2020. The 2020 AGM has been cancelled due to restrictions on meetings and gatherings caused by coronavirus legislation and guidance. *[Developments of note after July 2020 are shown in italics.]*

The Committee. In December our long-standing Chair Gill Ware stood down. The Committee is extremely grateful for the time and effort Gill devoted to BRAHA. A replacement Chair has yet to be found.

The current members of the Committee are: Jim Boocock, Alan Charles, Tom Crossland (Hon. Treasurer), Graham Day (Deputy Chair), Helena Fogel (Minute Secretary), Alison Horwood, Dennis Leigh (Site Co-ordinator), Philippa McCabe, Ben Renton (Hon. Secretary), Gill Ware, Gill Whitelegg. In the absence of an AGM this year all members of the committee are willing and able to remain in post until the next AGM takes place. Any BRAHA plot-holder interested in joining the committee should speak with an existing committee member.

The Site. Almost all plots are let. One of our few unlet plots is one where Japanese Knotweed was identified about three years ago and on Council instructions remains vacant until further notice. The waiting time for plots in the borough is currently some 2 to 3 years and over 200 people are on the waiting list. At the present time the Council is not filling vacant plots from the waiting list. *[This restriction has recently been lifted.]*

Untended plots.

Regrettably some plots have been neglected this year, either due to illness, self-isolating or through lack of interest. The committee has written to plot-holders whose plots have been left untended for a while to offer extra assistance, and check that they still want to continue with them. Some have given up their plots as a result.

The Finances. As at 30 June 2020 the BRAHA financial situation was: Special Account £1982.76, BRAHA Account £260.67. Expenditure this year has been modest, mainly on keeping the community hut sound and weatherproof. Money was also spent on refurbishing a notice board, providing a new key box at the Meadway entrance and extra parking permits to meet increased demand. The cancellation of the Twickenham May Fair this year deprived the Association of its main opportunity to raise funds, usually in excess of £1000.

Covid 19. The coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact of many peoples lives. Fortunately allotments were not affected by lockdown measures and many plot-holders were able to make good use of this to work their plots to a greater degree than normal, aided by favourable spring weather. On the other hand some plots suffered because their tenants were either self-isolating or caring and unable to visit. The Community Hut has also had to be closed.

Travellers. In September 2019 Travellers moved onto Kneller Gardens. There was a small amount of trespass on our site but no major damage or losses were recorded. After three days in situ the Travellers moved off elsewhere.

Pre-Christmas Social. As usual all plot-holders and their families were invited to attend this event, which took place in mid-December, in the community hut. In addition to the usual raffle the weather was kind enough to allow us to have a barbeque, making up for the one planned in October but cancelled due to bad weather.

May Fair. This event, held annually on Twickenham Green on the Spring Bank Holiday Monday, was cancelled this year. Traditionally it has been the main raiser for BRAHA funds, so the cancellation was a major blow for us. The Fair has also seen our stand win many awards for its appearance and style.

Green Gym. We are indebted to members of the Richmond Green Gym who have come onto our site, cleared pathways and tidied plots in need of attention as a way of getting healthy exercise in the open air.

Woodchip. Plot-holders have been able to take advantage of surplus quantities of woodchip lying in the community orchard across the road from the Meadway gate.

Plot Numbering. The absence of visible plot numbers of many plots and the quirks created by dividing large plots into smaller ones over time is a major headache for the Honorary Secretary and those charged with carrying out plot inspections. Plot-holders have been asked to prominently number their own plots this year with encouraging results.

Meadway Entrance Gate. After many years of waiting the council have now fitted a standard padlock to this gate, allowing access to our site from each end. This is a great improvement for many people. It also means that if necessary the emergency services have easier access to our site. Plot-holders are reminded of the importance of keeping both site gates locked at all times.

Parking Permits. Our site is now surrounded by the West Twickenham CPZ which effectively operates all day, six days a week. Stocks of visitor parking permits are held at both entrance gates and may be used by plot-holders on payment of a small annual fee to cover the cost of sourcing the permits.

Hampton Court Flower Show. BRAHA was invited by the shows organisers to design and produce a stand on the theme of Gardening for everyone; reuse, recycle and reduce waste for the 2020 show. As the show was subsequently cancelled this year we are now aiming to produce something similar for next year's show.

Hot Bin. The communal compost bins alongside the River Crane are popular and well used but they are unable to process some of the more difficult to compost material that arises on site. In an effort to overcome this problem the committee refurbished a previously used hot bin to see how effective it was. The initial outcome has not been promising because the bin did not break down bindweed and perennial weeds but the trial continues.

Bonfire Ban. Richmond Council has now confirmed that a trial bonfire ban on all allotments is now permanent all year. It has offered us assistance in removing material that would otherwise have been

burned but we ask that plot-holders take away as much of their non-compostable green waste as possible.

Wildlife. Our site is known to be home to a wide variety of wildlife – birds, amphibians, insects and mammals (including hedgehogs). Plot-holders are asked to do whatever they can to ensure that this diversity is maintained.

Volunteer Days. Each year the committee organises several volunteer days to ensure that the site is kept looking presentable and the compost bins are emptied. Due to coronavirus restrictions volunteer days are presently suspended. We thank all of those people who have given their time, usually on a Sunday morning, to make volunteer days a success.

Summary. An unusual year, especially from March onwards, due to Covid 19. Setbacks have been the bonfire ban which inconveniences many plot-holders and creates problems for all in getting rid of difficult waste, and the May Fair cancellation which has had a major impact on our fund raising efforts. On the plus side many plots have been worked more intensively than for many years. Also, in addition to having access to plenty of free woodchip, we have a fully functioning composting system producing plenty of free sack-loads for plot-holder use. And finally we can now enter and leave via the Meadway gate as well as Andover Road.

BRAHA Committee, November 2020.

(ALLOTMENT~ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 FINAL)