

Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners

News Sheet No 12 Summer 2015 www.kfag.org.uk

Working together for Kingston's allotments

Protecting Allotment Sites for the Future

The question which seems to come up time and time again recently is "How safe are our allotment sites" and "What can we do to protect our site"? The need for further protection was also a concern raised in the Council's public consultation for last year's review of the "Allotments Strategy".

Allotment gardening has been enjoying a revival in popularity for some years now with full sites and waiting lists for plots all over the country, Kingston included. We currently enjoy a good relationship with the Council and have no reason to suspect there are any plans which may put our sites at risk; however, it is easy to become complacent and assume that our sites will always be safe from redevelopment.

Allotment sites have some degree of protection in law from redevelopment in the 1925 Allotments Act if they have 'statutory status'; they are sometimes referred to as 'permanent' allotment sites, this is awarded by the Council. K FAG and Rob Waite, the Council officer responsible for allotments, have discussed protecting the allotment sites and we have asked him to find out the status of all the sites in the Borough. Rob is currently waiting to hear back from the legal department. Should any of our sites not be statutory then we will look into how this can be achieved.

However, as we know from the ongoing case of the Farm Terrace allotment site in Watford, the protection offered by the Allotments Act is not 100%. The Farm Terrace website states that "Since 2007 there have been 132 separate applications to close down allotments under section 8 of the 1925 Allotments Act. Out of these 132 applications 97% were approved (128 cases) and only 4 cases refused." This is a worrying situation.

What can be done to protect your site for the future?

A fully let, well worked and well managed site is the best protection a site can have.

If you are still Quadron managed then you can take positive action and take control of your site yourselves, become voluntary managed and ensure that you do not meet the 'disposal' criteria of the 1925 Allotments Act.

A management committee of ploholders is able to ensure that all plots are let and worked and that their site is thriving and therefore better protected from possible development. A V.M. Association is also in a better position to advertise and promote its site and to maintain an up to date waiting list. The 12 year renewable V.M. site lease gives an added layer of protection and security.

If V.M. is not attainable then it would be helpful to set up a Ploholders Association so that your site has a collective voice. *(Continued above)*

At the least it is vital that Quadron managed sites have an active site liaison volunteer to help with lettings and inform and remind Quadron of any problems at the site so they can hopefully be dealt with promptly before matters get out of hand.

Once allotment land is redeveloped it is lost forever and it is up to us to take steps to try to secure our sites for future generations.



The Federation aims to:

- Promote and encourage allotment gardening in the Borough of Kingston upon Thames.
- Provide information, support and advice to sites considering voluntary management of their Allotments.
- Build relationships within and between the allotment sites so that ideas and experience can be shared.

For general allotment enquiries and information sheets about setting up a Plot holders' Association and Voluntary Management of allotment sites please contact the Secretary:

gloriawallis@hotmail.co.uk

Tel: 020 8942 9686

PTO

Criteria for allotment disposal

Allotments Act 1925, Section 8. Disposal of statutory allotments and relocation

Where it is proposed to dispose of statutory allotments land to a purpose other than allotment use, the consent of the Secretary of State, DCLG, is required. In considering whether to grant or to withhold consent to disposal, the Secretary of State is required to take into account at least five rigorous criteria:

- * The allotment(s) in question is/are not necessary and is/are surplus to requirements.
- * Adequate provision will be made for plot holders displaced by any such disposal, unless any such provision is not necessary or is not reasonably practicable.
- * The number of people on the waiting list has been effectively taken into account.
- * The municipal authority has actively promoted and actively advertised the availability of allotment sites.
- * The municipal authority has consulted the NSALG.

Further details of the necessary criteria for disposal and relocation of a site can be found on the Department for Communities and Local Government website, published in January 2014. www.gov.uk/government/publications/allotment-disposal-guidance-safeguards-and-alternatives

A brief history of TUDOR ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

In 1985, Wolsey Drive, Park Road and Barnfield sites were run directly by the Council (RBK) who approached Kingston Horticultural Society about taking over the running of the three sites on a voluntarily managed basis. The Council were having negotiations with the owner of Park Gate House, who wanted to exchange some of his neighbouring land with the allotment land so that his garden would have a more even shape. The owner had indicated that he would compensate plot holders, through the Council, for any inconvenience they suffered.

Three KHS members met the Council to discuss VM and it was decided that it was appropriate for the allotment holders to set up an allotment association of their own.

Messrs Percy, Canfield and Huckle helped to set up Tudor Allotment Association in 1985. Barnfield was not taken on as there were security concerns as the gate was always open.

The Park Gate House owner agreed on a sum with RBK to cover the reorganisation of the land boundaries and some plots were lost as they were to form part of the owner's garden while RBK created a smaller number of plots from the land he had given up.

A shed was moved from the old site to the new one in 1986 for KHS purposes as they were also affected by the reorganisation of the land. (This remains the property of the KHS and was replaced recently after the storm of 2014.) The main KHS shop on the site, which has been reroofed since the storm, was provided by the Council to replace the old building on the original site. It remains RBK property. The sites at Park Road and Wolsey Drive have been run by the Tudor Allotment Association since 1987 and Barnfield site has continued to be run by the Council.

The official name of the Park Road site is actually Park Gate House, which is how TAA describes the property of the person who carried out the land exchange in 1986 and Wolsey Drive is officially the Richmond Park Estate!

The above account is not a complete history of the site, but we think from aerial photos that the site was first set up around 1945. If anyone knows any of the early history of the Park Road, Wolsey or Barnfield sites, we would be very pleased to hear from you..

