Newsletter Eight
March 2017

Slopefield ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Note from the Chair

We had another great year in 2016–17! Have a browse through the newsletter and read about some of Slopefield's projects, activities and achievements. Also: see our new Website, Twitter and Facebook pages which are brimming with a lot more information. Enjoy!

SUNFLOWER LOGO

The Slopefield 'sunflower' logo designed in 2016 by Sandy Menzies is now being used in all Slopefield Allotment Association literature, business cards, signage, notice boards, website and social media. Our huge 'sunflower' signs look very eye catching on the front gate and the Hutton Hut, and have been much admired.

NEW WEBSITE

We just launched our wonderful new website in November, which contains pages on the history of Slopefield Allotment Association, our projects, partners, photo gallery, recipes, growing guides (still in development), upcoming events, plus lots more besides. Check it out! Thanks Sandy!

http://www.slopefieldallotments.org

TWITTER AND FACEBOOK

Visit our new Facebook and Twitter pages for all the latest news from the allotments.

https://twitter.com/SlopefieldAA

https://www.facebook.com/SlopefieldAA/

THE ALLOTMENT MARKET STALL

Our plotters contributed more 'excess produce' to the TAMS stall than ever before. A very successful season! Our 2016 TAMS dividend was £344.67 and this will be used to help fund the running costs of the site.

JAMES HUTTON INSTITUTE, SLOPEFIELD ALLOTMENTS and AIRYHALL SCHOOL

A great article written by Rose Toney, North East Scotland Biodiversity co-ordinator which appeared in the June IYN newsletter entitled 'Green Fingers, Green Space, Green Awards' beautifully illustrates the three-way partnership formed between Slopefield Allotments, Airyhall School and the James Hutton Institute to provide a safe learning environment for children to become more aware of where their food comes from and provide biodiversity enhancements for local wildlife.

AGM 2016 and COMMITTEE

At the March 2016 AGM we changed our constitution to allow the plot holder to nominate the person who is working the plot to join the committee. We are very keen to attract new committee members, so even if you are very new to Slopefield, please speak to a row rep, buddy or committee member if you think you might be interested in helping out in any way.

BIODIVERSITY

A trail camera, bought with our 2015 TAMS dividend, was set up for biodiversity recording to monitor our mammal, bird and insect life, and we have placed a 'BioBox' on the community plot which contains wildlife identification guides and NESBReC (NE Scotland Biological Records Centre) recording forms for all plotters to use. We refurbished our bug hotel and also planted KSB Bee Diverse seeds all around it. We weeded and planted the wildflower borders, and along with Airyhall school, got involved with a Citizen Science project run by the University of Sussex called 'Bees n Beans' which teaches the children all about pollination by insects and its importance to our food chain. We would like to thank Rose Toney (see above) for her great support and for providing us with inspiration.

COMMUNITY DAYS AND SITE MAINTENANCE

We trialled several 'community evenings' along with as our regular 'community sundays'. These events foster community spirit and mutual support, and there is tea, cake and conversation when the work is complete. What could be better?! We have worked hard to maintain our community areas including verges, roads, and community plot and pond, and we also completed construction of the community poly-tunnel. We planted 250 daffs and 400 crocuses supplied by ACC, and have supported the Rotary 'Purple4Polio' project, by planting a further 500 crocus corms (along with the Airyhall School children and parents at a school visit) as well as fundraising. Plus lots more! Our new Website has a list of 2017 events, and see Twitter,

Facebook and the notice boards around Slopefield for up-to-date info. Thanks to all plotters who have contributed in so many different ways towards making Slopefield the very special place it is. Many hands make light work!

NEW SWAP AREA

There is a new 'swap area' in the community plot where you can leave any extra plants, seedlings, bulbs, potatoes etc. Please use it!

'OPEN HUT SURGERIES'

There were four 'Open Hut Surgery' talks throughout the year with Annie Robinson from Aberdeen University giving a talk on the scourge of New Zealand flatworms (with many plotters also taking part in a survey), Matt Aitkenhead from the James Hutton Institute gave us a talk on 'UN Year of the Pulse', Cath Pilley and Greg Welsh talked about the work of TAMS, and Jennifer Brodie, from Remin Volcanic Rock Dust, spoke about the remineralisation of the soil. Thanks to all our speakers!

COMMUNITY POLYTUNNEL

The community poly tunnel situated on the Airyhall school plot was completed by a dedicated team led by Terry. This is used to grow plants for community use, by Airyhall children and also by individual plotters. A great asset! However, we do need more help with the watering rota for this and other community areas, especially over the summer months.

AIRYHALL SCHOOL

Airyhall School visits recommence on 9 March and a different class each week will continue learning all about producing their own fruit and veg. The children enjoy getting their hands dirty whilst sowing, planting, weeding and, of course, harvesting. Parents are invited along to an Open Day in the Autumn (as well as the 'Purple4Polio' crocus planting session) and are always amazed at what the pupils, with a little help from Terry and his band of volunteers, manage to achieve. If anyone would like to help out for an hour on Thursday afternoons, they would be most welcome.

50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF KSB

We held a scarecrow competition to fit in with the Keep Scotland Beautiful 50th anniversary celebrations, and many plotters, as well as the Airyhall school children, let their imagination go wild, and we had around 15 scarecrows around our site! We even had our own community scarecrow – a wonderful 'crow' named Wilson, with feathers attached by indivdual plotters, Airyhall children and partners, which took pride of place on the community plot. Thanks to Sarah for designing this. Other celebrations included planting pots and hanging baskets in KSB colours, and creating a pallet garden which we entered into the Aberdeen Flower show at Duthie Park in August, and were awarded second place (with £30 prize money!). See all our scarecrows on the back page!

IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD 'Outstanding' Award and 'Certificate of Distinction'

We were delighted to receive a Keep Scotland Beautiful It's Your Neighbourhood 'Outstanding' Award for the fourth year in a row, scoring 96 points out of a possible 100, along with a special 'Certificate of Distinction', given for consistent improvement. These awards reflect Slopefield's achievements throughout the year, taking into account IYN's '3 Pillars' of 'Community Participation, Environmental Responsibility and Gardening Achievement'. Juliette Camburn from KSB has been a great support to us for many years and in May we were very pleased to welcome to her to Slopefield for the first time.

ABERDEEN CITY WINS 'in Bloom' 'Gold' Awards

Aberdeen City won 'Gold' in both 'Scotland in Bloom' and 'Britain in Bloom' this year, and a big element of the judging in this category hinges on 'community participation'. ACC brought the judges to visit Slopefield in their tours of the city and we believe that our enthusiastic participation in It's Your Neighbourhood, along with our amazing scarecrow collection and special plantings inspired by the KSB 50th anniversary celebrations, contributed to the city's success.

NEW PLOTTERS

We are continuing to develop ways to help new plotters succeed, including encouraging close contact with 'Buddies' and Row Reps, writing growing guides, and arranging visits to Slopefield for potential plotters whilst still on the waiting list.

BARBEQUE

A very successful barbecue with competitions was held in September and a good time was had by all. 'Mr Scary Potter' (designed by Brian on plot 73a) was chosen as the winning scarecrow, and we all enjoyed taking part in the 'Throw the Wellie' competition.

QUIZ NIGHT

In November we held a fantastic Quiz Night at Aberdeen Grammar FP Club when we welcomed many friends and supporters of Slopefield Allotments. It was a very tightly fought quiz with the 'Hosta la Vista' team winning by a very small margin. Lorraine correctly guessed the weight of the giant courgette and 'The Timmernappers' offset their receiving the wooden spoon by winning best team name. Thanks go to everyone who helped out on the night as we raised over £280 for association funds.

PROMOTING SLOPEFIELD

Representatives from Slopefield have attended many events over the past year run by ACC, IYN and Beautiful Scotland, which have provided opportunities to learn from other groups and organisations, and to share what we do at Slopefield. People seem very interested! In February 2017 we gave a presentation to the Franco-Scottish Society called 'Growing a Community at Slopefield Allotments' and Rose talked about 'Biodiversity in the North East of Scotland'.

2017 EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

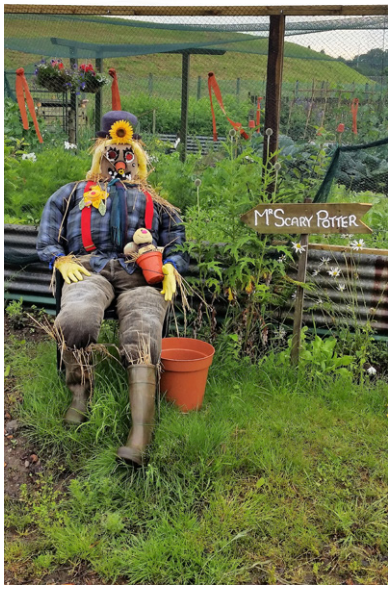
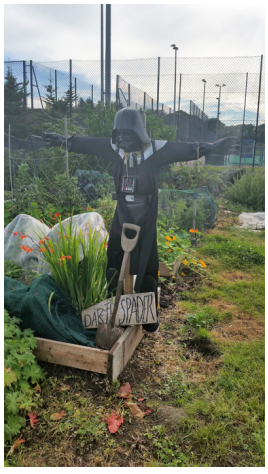
Please see Slopefield's Website and new Facebook and Twitter pages, and notice boards onsite.

AND FINALLY, THANKS TO

JAMES HUTTON INSTITUTE for supporting the Slopefield and Airyhall School partnership in many ways including maintaining the Hutton Hut; providing plants, seeds for Airyhall School; delivery of compost and scaffolding boards.

ACC for support, and supplying Keanan's compost, manure, bark, leaf mould and bulbs.

ABSCAFF providing scaffolding boards

2016 Scarecrows

The winner: Mr Scary Potter
by Brian, Plot 73a