

# Slopefield

## ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION



### Still growing: another successful year at Slopefield

It hardly seems any time since I wrote in our last newsletter about our success in 'Its Your Neighbourhood', but it is with real pleasure that this year we have continued to grow and grow in so many ways. A relatively favourable growing year saw plots bursting with vegetables and flowers, and our verges full of wildflowers and sunflowers. Our contribution of over production to TAMS (The Allotment Market Stall) generated funds for the Association and we continued to work to improve the biodiversity of the site through our native tree and other planting, and our refurbishment of our bug hotel. We,

as always, are extremely grateful to Rose Toney, the North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan Coordinator for all her help with both the plotters and Airyhall Primary School.



Everyone has played a part – from people giving up an hour here and there to plant the borders, projects on the Community plot, supporting our work with the School, giving talks, baking cakes, or indeed all those small gestures such as removing rubbish, composting on plots or sharing a conversation with a new plotter to help them out. Everyone at Slopefield has contributed to the site and the wider community and I thank you all.

But it is not just at Slopefield that this has been recognised. We were delighted to be recognised again for the third year and presented with an 'Outstanding Award'

in this year's 'Its Your Neighbourhood' Awards. Not only that but we were awarded as 'Certificate of Distinction' for our year on year growth and development. This is a fantastic accolade and one in which we should all be proud. Many other allotment sites look to us for guidance and advice about the things we have done and it is rewarding to be part of that wider collective. There has never been such a positive time for allomenteering for a very long period.

Our work with the school has also brought rewards. The kids absolutely enjoy their time here and the special feature on the school in this newsletter will give you some lovely insights into that project. In addition, the schools project was announced as runner-up in the Aberdeen EcoCity Awards 'Community Award', another fantastic recognition of our community work.

So, as we move now into another busy growing season, I hope that Slopefield provides you with great enjoyment and you can find a little time to meet your fellow plotters or at least join us for a cup



of tea and some cake at the community events.

Finally, don't forget our annual BBQ on the afternoon of Sunday 11th of September at Slopefield – an event which has got bigger and bigger every year. It's a fantastic day for all of the family. And also our great fun quiz night on the evening of Friday 18th November at Aberdeen Grammar FPs Club on Queens Road. Hope to see you all there!

Sue Callan, Chair





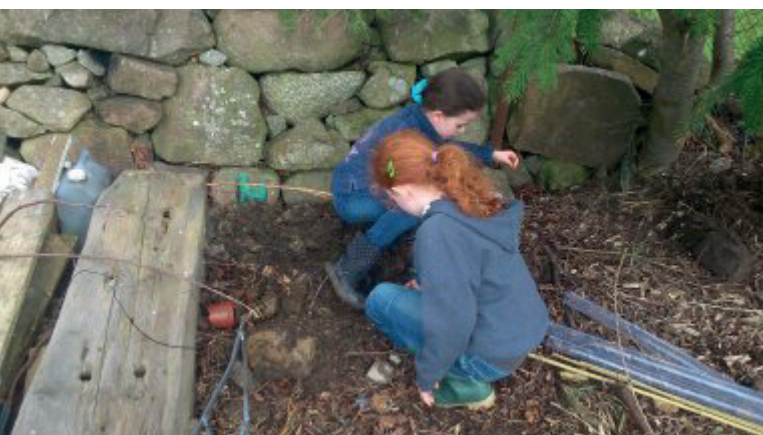
# SLOPEFIELD COMMUNITY

## 2015-16: 'A Year at Slopefield'

### MARCH 2015

We held our AGM on Thursday 5th March at Aberdeen Grammar FPs Club on Queens Road where we reviewed the past year and discussed plans for the coming year.

We were awarded a £250 community grant from KSB/Tesco Plastic Bag scheme which was available to groups who had taken part in the IYN campaign in 2014 and were to take part in 2015. The grant money was spent on a generator for the Hutton Hut.



On our Community Day on 29th March a further 105 native fruit trees were planted around the borders of the site. The trees were supplied free to us by the Woodland Trust.

### APRIL

We enrolled in the University of Sussex 'Bees n Beans' project which aimed to highlight the important role our native fauna has on the propagation of crops. This will be monitored throughout the grow-

ing season and the results are part of a National assessment programme.

On our Community Day on 26th April we held our annual Seed Swap, weeded the wildflower beds and continued with the bottle greenhouse and BBQ building on the community plot

### MAY

On our Community Day on 31st May we held another Seed Swap, more wildflowers and sunflowers were planted in the borders and the bottle greenhouse was finished.



### JUNE

On our Community Day on 28th June we held an 'Open Hut Surgery' with a presentation from Cath Pilley from The Allotment Market Stall (TAMS). TAMS collects excess fruit and vegetables from allotments and sells them at a market stall in Duthie Park.

Plotters with a little excess summer production (we can never eat all those courgettes everyone grows!) are encouraged to place produce in the blue box by the notice board at the end of the drive and it will be collected by TAMS. As you will find out later, the proceeds from the sales come back to Slopefield to be used for the benefit of the community. So please don't waste produce but support this local initiative.

On 2nd June Slopefield was invited to the ACC Growing Smarter event at the Beach Ballroom. Slopefield was invited to 'inspire' other Aberdeen IYN groups by giving our 'Growing a Community' presentation and this provided much discussion and many groups found it extremely useful to learn more about how the community at Slopefield has developed.





We were also invited to present at the annual Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society Conference in Dunblane (20th June) which was attended by Dr Aileen McCloud, the Minister for Environment and Land Reform. Wendy kindly gave the presentation on our behalf.

## JULY

We managed to secure another £500 grant from ACC and this was combined with the £600 raised from the very successful Feb 2015 Quiz Night to buy a poly-tunnel for the use of the community and school. The £500 grant from ACC was because of our involvement in the 'Its Your Neighbourhood' initiative and reflects how important it is to be part of this scheme in order to be eligible for support.

At our Community Day 26th the 'Open Hut Surgery' focused on the International Year of Soil and a presentation was given by Matt Aitkenhead from the James Hutton Institute. We also tidied the school plot, pond area and refurbished the bug hotel.



'Open Hut Surgery' focused on Biodiversity Recording with Rose Toney (Biodiversity Co-ordinator NE Scotland) and Alistair Allan from NE Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC). We started Slopefield's species list that day and will continue to update records when possible. All information contributes to the national database. Plotters are encouraged to add to the list as it develops: please just ask your row rep for more information.

We also continued with improvements to the Hutton Hut with joiners from the James Hutton Institute fitting additional shelving and providing recycled lockers for storage

## SEPT

Our annual BBQ and competitions was held on 13th September on a splendid sunny day with much fun, good food and laughter. The day also included our first biodiversity photo competition with a superb collection of really beautiful pictures.

The Airyhall Schools Slopefield Open Day was held on 24th Sept. This is an opportunity for pupils at the school to showcase all their efforts to the visiting parents who were all suitably impressed. Well done to all the kids for their efforts this year in what is an extremely rewarding experience for them all.

At our Community Day on 28th Sept the 'Open Hut Surgery' focused on Pallet Gardens with talks from Jim Henderson and Wendy Suttar. Pallet garden competitions are becoming more widespread at the various flower shows around the country and it is hoped that in the future Slopefield might like to develop and show our own pallet garden. This community day was also our first 'community introduction visit' by potential new plotters to let folk see what we get up to before they sign up!



## AUG

The 'It's Your Neighbourhood' (IYN) assessment was undertaken at Slopefield on 4th August. As part of that assessment we estimated that over 1200 community hours had been undertaken by plotters Aug 2014–Aug 2015. All those couple of hours add up pretty quickly, so many thanks to all!

Scotland in Bloom judges visited Slopefield on 5th August. The judges were very impressed by the IYN groups and Aberdeen City won 'Gold' in the Beautiful Scotland City Category. The same day Judy Wilkinson from SAGS visited Slopefield to discuss the implications of the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill.

At our Community Day 30th Aug the 'Open







We also did the final harvest of our 'Bees n Beans' project and all the beans were weighed and the data sent to the University of Sussex for analysis.

A further ACC Small Grants Scheme award of £300 was spent on granite dust, tamper, etc for road maintenance. I'm sure all of us would like to acknowledge the generous efforts of the 'roads team' (you know who you are guys!), in relaying the surface drive to the site. The potholes and rubble of before have now be replaced by a smooth driveable surface which benefits everyone. A really great job, many thanks.



## OCT

At our late season Community Day on 28th Oct we cleared the wildflower beds and herbaceous borders and generally tidied the community areas.

At the IYN Annual Seminar and Conference, Albert Halls in Stirling we were awarded an 'Outstanding' (for a third year in a row) by Beautiful Scotland /It's Your Neighbourhood, as well as receiving a special certificate of distinction which is given for consistent improvement over several years (a minimum of 4 years). The latter was a big surprise!! We should all be rightly proud of this achievement and many thanks go to the many volunteers who give up an hour or two over the summer to help on the various community projects, it has been a really community effort, fuelled in part by the excellent home bakes at tea time!



## NOV

This month we received bulbs from ACC for community areas (250 daffodils, 400 crocuses). Some of the bulbs were planted by Airyhall school children, but mostly by plotters

All IYN participants were invited to 'Gold - Celebration of Success' (Beautiful Scotland) at the Beach Ballroom to meet with the other groups in Aberdeen and share ideas and discuss future plans. We have a great relationship with the other groups in Aberdeen and are always learning from each other.

We held our annual bonfire on 8th Nov, which was a great way of disposing of the excess combustible material from the site (THAT CANNOT BE COMPOSTED). Look out for details of our next one later in the year.

We found out that our collective contributions to TAMS had raised a staggering £235.29 from all our excess production. This money was used to fund our camera trapping equipment for biodiversity recording and also a new gas heater for the Hutton Hut.



It was awards month again for Slopefield and we were runners-up in the Aberdeen EcoCity 'Community Award' 2015 for our work with Airyhall School. The EcoCity awards are for the best green initiatives in Aberdeen, and the 'Community Award' is open to all local community groups, charities and the voluntary sector making a difference to the local environment. Our £250 prize money will be used for crop protection on the school plot – to deter the flying soft fruit thieves!

## JAN 2016

In the winter months we might not all be busy on the plots but that does not stop the creativity and our plotter Sandy Menzies redesigned our association signage with a new sunflower logo. You will start to see that appear around Slopefield and on signs, notices, documents . . . and even mugs!

We have also been developing a new improved web site including a section on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to support new plotters with commonly asked questions about what works well and what doesn't at Slopefield. We are also embracing the digital age with more notifications coming out through Twitter and Facebook.

## FEB

Although cold and challenging our fearless team, led by Terry, started the construction of the community poly-tunnel which will be sited on the school plot. Watch out for further details as it moves to completion.



## Airyhall School

At Airyhall School we have a very important commitment to our Eco Schools Green Flag and we cover all of the ten eco topics throughout the year. However, there is one very special and treasured part of our green flag and social studies curriculum that the children are incredibly enthusiastic about and that is 'Food and the Environment'.

Every week in the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms we have one class visit Slopefield Allotment and with the guidance and assistance of Slopefield plotters the children get to investigate the area, plant, maintain and grow their own produce. When the children have harvested the produce they then take it back to school to cook and bake with. This year we are even hoping to share some of the produce with the school catering team who will use the produce in the school meals. We also look at the biodiversity aspect at Slopefield with the bug hotel and wormery.

The activities that the children take part in vary from class to class and we make sure there is a progression in their learning. This

year Terry and the pupils have been planting onions, sweetcorn, lettuce, potatoes, broad beans, peas, carrots, cabbages, radishes and beetroot. The pupils were even given the chance to take care of their sweetcorn and lettuces at home over the Easter holidays.

This year the pupils have taken part in the 'Bees n Beans' project from Sussex University.

The partnership with Slopefield Allotments, the Hutton Institute and Airyhall School is a great success and the pupils gain a great deal of knowledge and experience in the areas of food and the environment, biodiversity and sustaining our world. It has inspired the school to





Name Finlay S

## An Afternoon with Terry

First we put on  
comfy wellies and  
left for Slopefield  
Allotment.  
It was last Thursday  
the 2nd of June. It  
was so cloudy.

Then when we arrived  
I went to start  
off planting juicy  
tomatoes and bright  
sunflowers. We went  
because <sup>our</sup> topic  
was good and farming.

Next we went inside  
a giant hut. We  
read a story. It  
was the Hungry  
Caterpillar. We made  
a colourful caterpillar  
on <sup>our</sup> own.

Finally we rushed  
back to school.  
Thankfully we had  
just enough time.  
I hope we go  
back again soon.



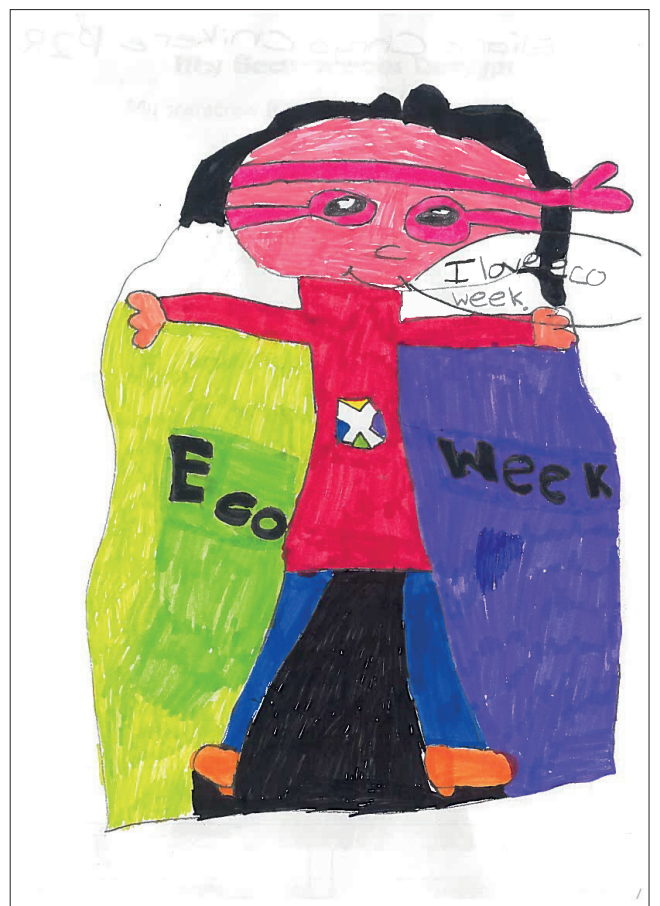
purchase their own poly-tunnel so that we can grow our own fruit and vegetables on the school grounds. This allows our younger pupils, in primary one, who don't yet go to Slopefield, to take part in similar activities. We have also developed our own school garden with help and advice from Terry.

We have been very busy and have planned out our activities for next year already. We are looking forward to learning more about biodiversity from Rose and Apithanny from the Hutton Institute. We plan to release some butterflies and also make sure we complete even more insect friendly planting. In fact as well as our link with Slopefield Allotments and our own school garden we are beginning to take all the knowledge we have learned from Terry and we are going to create an Airyhall Community Biodiversity Garden in the green space next to the school. Also, look out for our scarecrow entries for the competition at Slopefield. We are entering a Princess and an Eco Super Hero.

If anyone would like to come along and assist with the school then please feel free to pop along to Plot 10 on a Thursday afternoon, you would be most welcome.

### My Scarecrow Design

My scarecrow is an Princess pupil





# Communication

We are pleased to announce that Slopefield Allotment Association is now on Facebook and Twitter.

To view our public Facebook page go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/Slopefield-Allotment-Association-1324903540981467/>

Press the escape button if prompted to login and you should be able to view it. This is totally public and can be used by external parties to see what we do.

And our twitter page:

<https://twitter.com/SlopefieldAA>

This will help us externally and of course there is information we can store there for ourselves.

Our website remains the same although we have reached our free limit so no pictures, pdfs or updates to any pictures that are currently there. We are looking into costs of setting up a new website. At the AGM the majority of plotters were happy with the current email system so that will stay too.

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## Branding

Sandy Menzies (plot 33) kindly agreed to develop a new brand logo for the Allotment association. Below is his inspiration and thoughts on the new design:

*I had seen Wendy use a sunflower image on a few occasions in presentations and other communications and it seemed an appropriate background image for the association. A bio-diverse, sunny, cheerful plant, much loved by insects and birds and with many fine examples growing around Slopefield. I found a black and white line drawing of half a sunflower, printed it out and then redrew the lines to sharpen it up. I then photographed the image and painted in mid yellow for the petals, mid tan for the background and flower head in Photoshop. I then created the lettering, 'Slopefield', in Bush Script font to look like 'our' signature in white and 'Allotment Association' in Tahoma font in mid grey.*



The logo is designed to be modern, simplistic and descriptive of 'what we do' and 'who we are'.

Our thanks to Sandy for all his efforts and we hope you enjoy the new signage across the site.

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## Onion Bhaji recipe by Julia, plot 35

300g onions, sliced thinly

8-10 tbsps chick pea flour

½ tsp baking powder

1 tbsps rice flour (optional for crispyness)

¼ tsp turmeric powder

¼ tsp (or less) chilli powder or 1 small green chilli

¼ tsp ground cumin

¼ tsp ground coriander

salt according to taste

a little water

For a healthier option you can add coriander, or finely chopped spinach

Add the vegetable oil in to a large pan and heat over a medium to high heat. Then make a batter: in a large bowl add all the dry ingredients and mix well. Then add the sliced onion and mix with a little water until the onion is well coated with the batter. Adjust the amount of gram flour and water so that the onion just holds together.



Check the temperature of the oil by dropping a small cube of bread in to it. The bread should brown fairly slowly, not burn or go dark brown straight away.

Carefully drop spoonfuls of the bhaji batter (or do it by hand) into the oil (do not overcrowd as they will stick together) and fry and turn until they become golden brown and crispy.

Remove the bhajis with a slotted spoon and allow them to drain on kitchen paper. Enjoy!

## Coriander Chutney

½ bunch coriander leaves (if big bunch take less)

1/2 inch ginger

1 green chilli (if not spicy enough add two)

1 small onion

1 small garlic clove

4 tbsp desiccated coconut

¼ tsp lemon juice (adjust according to taste)

salt

Place all the ingredients in a blender with little water and blitz to make the chutney. Enjoy!

Julia, plot 35

## Acknowledgements

As always we would like to thank the many plotters at Slopefield for their continued support in building and strengthening the community spirit, improving the site for the benefit of biodiversity, and assisting those new to allotmenting with advice and guidance. In addition, we would also like to thank the James Hutton Institute, Abscaff and our partners Airyhall School. Aberdeen City Council merits special acknowledgement and we thank them for their assistance and supporting grants which we use for the benefit of the community and the improvement of the site. IYN and their assessors provide incredibly invaluable feedback on our development and provide links to other organisation such as Beautiful Scotland.



Finally, an invite to all those at Slopefield to come along to one of the community events and meet your fellow plotters. If you have a spare hour to help one Sunday then great but if not you are always welcome to come along for cake, coffee and a chat, attend the various 'Open Hut Surgeries' on different topics or come along to the Seed Swap or annual BBQ.

## So what's new for 2016?

Look out for . . .

- Free compost deliveries from Keenans and the James Hutton Institute
- Get the annual BBQ and Quiz night in your diaries – respectively
- The grand unveiling of the new community poly-tunnel
- IYN . . . Get those scarecrows in place by July!
- New Slopefield signage appearing around the site
- Hutton hut – new opening hours for teas and coffees
- Extra midweek community evenings
- New Zealand flat worm survey being undertaken by the University of Aberdeen



As always – check the notice boards and website for further details.