

Slopefield News

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A Note from the Chair

The highlight of the year was without a doubt our IYN assessment when we received the top award for a second year 'OUTSTANDING' with a 95% mark. Our assessor said: 'They are what a good allotment association should be, full of enthusiasm and ideas and encouraging everyone to develop'.

Keep Scotland Beautiful invited us to give a talk at their annual seminar and IYN Awards Ceremony in Stirling. This was a particular compliment as it was the 50th anniversary of Britain in Bloom. Huge thanks go to Wendy who prepared and delivered a talk on 'Growing a Community' to 170 people – she hasn't recovered yet!

Other successes this year include the annual BBQ & competitions, school open day, photographic competition and resulting calendar. Just recently we had a very successful quiz night where we welcomed many visitors and raised nearly £600 for community projects. TAMS, the Allotment Market Stall, was again hugely popular and thanks go to all who contributed, with Greg and Liz helping to organise collection and sales of produce at the stall.



In addition we have our very own prize winners at Slopefield. As well as winning many prizes for his amazing flowers at national shows, Terry has also been honoured by the Royal Horticultural Society with the highest possible accolade – a lifetime achievement award (The RHS Scotland Certificate of Merit). This award is only given in exceptional circumstances and is earned for achievements made over a long period, so very well done Terry. And Johan, with her beautiful floral art, has won prizes at RHS shows in Aberdeen and Banchory.

Our ongoing partnership with Airyhall Primary School, whose pupils visit once a week, continues to thrive. Thanks to Jane, Terry, the three Liz's, two Gordon's and various others who all pass on their gardening skills to the next generation. In addition, our important partnership with the James Hutton Institute continues, and look out for their activities as part of the 2015 International Year of Soil.

One of our aims this year is to record and enhance the biodiversity we have at Slopefield. You can read about what's been happening at the site on page 5 and you can also watch Rose Toney's camera trapping video on our website under Latest News (<http://slopefield.webs.com/latest-news>).

Thank you to everyone who joined the Community Days throughout the year – it makes Slopefield the lovely place it is. And finally I'd like to thank the committee and all our plotters for their hard work this year. I think we've achieved a lot and I look forward to another successful year!

Sue (#80)

AGM



AGM

The 2014 AGM marked the first anniversary of Slopefield Allotment Association's existence as a formally constituted organisation. We enjoyed a sociable and fun evening, and also got up to speed with new developments at Slopefield and discussed important issues – site security featured quite prominently. Over 35 plotters attended, and we were delighted to welcome some new members to the committee. Gordon C organised a very successful fundraising raffle; the finger buffet was delicious; and thanks to all who attended and contributed.

The 2015 AGM will take place on **Thursday 5 March** at 7.30 pm at the Aberdeen Grammar FP Club, 86 Queens Road, and we hope to see you there

Microplots

Microplots and New 'Buddy' System

The Slopefield allotment site now has a total of 12 microplots (an increase of 4 since last year) which are one-quarter the size of the larger plots. I am the representative for the people working these plots, and am always available to answer questions via email (matt.aitkenhead@hutton.ac.uk) or you can catch me on the site! There are also 'buddies' who are available for advice and guidance, with each microplot having two buddies:

Plot 62: Sue Callan (#80) and Bob McGregor (#84).

Plot 65: Gordon Collier (#17) and Matt Aitkenhead (#7).

Plot 76: Catherine Ritchie (#44) and Terry Stott (#24).

Matt (#7)

James Hutton Institute

The James Hutton Institute and the IYS

The United Nations has declared 2015 the International Year of Soil. This is an important year for soil scientists at the James Hutton Institute, and we are promoting the importance of the soil and our own activities as much as possible. If you go to the Soils@Hutton website there are a number of links to what we are up to and events that are planned:

<http://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/themes/safeguarding-natural-capital/soilshutton>

As a Slopefield plotter I am also well aware of how important the soil is, and I'm sure everyone else at Slopefield is too. There are going to be meetings and events throughout the year at the site, including a number of Open Hut Surgeries. Myself and a colleague will be talking to pupils from Airyhall Primary School on 19 March, and I'll be doing at least one event during a Community Day later in the year. This will be a chance for people to ask questions about soil in general, and an opportunity for me to (hopefully!) amaze you with facts about soils and show you some pictures of different soils from around the world.

Matt (#7)



It's Your Neighbourhood

We were all delighted at Slopefield to receive the top award of 'OUTSTANDING' (for the second year running!) in the 2014 Keep Scotland Beautiful/RHS It's Your Neighbourhood' National Awards scheme, and very honoured to receive a congratulatory letter from MSP Lewis McDonald.

IYN

The IYN seminar is always an inspirational and enjoyable day, and gives a unique opportunity for community groups from around Scotland to come together to celebrate their achievements, share ideas, make friends, and find out about the work of other groups. Catherine and I went to the annual Seminar and Awards Ceremony in the Albert Hall in Stirling in October to receive the certificate on behalf of the Association.

This year, however, not only were we receiving an award, but we had also been asked to talk about our own experiences. When we went to the seminar in 2012 (our first year in IYN), I would not have believed for a minute that only two years later we would be asked to share our story! However, I found myself up on the stage, giving a presentation called: 'Growing a Community', proudly outlining what we have developed at Slopefield over the past few years. Only two or three other IYN groups had been asked to present this year, and as 122 community groups had participated, it was a real compliment for Slopefield to be asked.

The link below takes you the KSB/It's Your Neighbourhood site, and if you click on 'Slopefield' Allotments' you can access our 'Growing a Community' presentation and lots more besides.

<http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/local-environmental-quality/its-your-neighbourhood/>



To mark the 50th anniversary of RHS Britain in Bloom, the 2014 'Bloom' theme was 'Growing for Gold' – hence all the sunflowers and other 'golden pollinators' around Slopefield this year. The RHS theme for the next three years is 'Greener Streets Better Lives', and entries to IYN 2015 can apply for Nasturtium seeds.

The 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Marking Assessment is on the website for everyone to see. I think the assessor's comments can make us feel all feel very proud of what we have achieved in improving our allotment. There is also a section on areas to develop, and our main drive in 2015 is 'Biodiversity'.

Wendy (#4)



Community

Community Days

Our Community Days (last Sunday of the month from 2–4pm) continue to go from strength to strength, and the lure of the home-bakes has seen many people giving up an hour or two throughout the year to help keep the community areas of Slopefield maintained and wildlife friendly. Last year on our Community Days, we planted wildflowers, trees, finished the pond, started on the plastic bottle greenhouse, helped dig over and layout our new micro-plots, and build the permanent BBQ's. We also ran the 'Open Hut Surgeries' with talks about the TAMs programme, biodiversity and a composting practical. We aim to do more such events in the coming year. Even if you've been busy on your own plot please feel free to come along and meet your fellow plotters at 3.30 for a cuppa and cake. One particularly pleasant Community Day finished with a bit of a party for Ethel Stewart, who, with her husband Norman (also an ex-plotter) was moving to Edinburgh. Ethel has done much over the years at Slopefield to help build the community and we thank her for all her efforts on the Committee and wish them both well in their new adventure.



Airyhall Primary School Plot

2014 saw the fruition of the labours of the children from Airyhall Primary school in Plot 10. A class came to Slopefield almost every week between February and November with their teachers and helped to grow lots of vegetables. Activities to teach the children about the environment and growing food were led by Terry, Jane and other volunteer plotters, and local Biodiversity Co-ordinator Rose Toney (see Biodiversity article page 5) also led sessions. Feedback from the school has been really positive and we look forward to another year's work. Our grateful thanks go to all the helpers, especially the three Liz's – Penny, Halliday and Lindsey and to the Hutton for their kind donation of fruit bushes and cereals.

Jane (#70) School Liaison Officer

Leaf Mould & Compost

Leaf Mould, Wood Chippings and Compost

Please help yourself to wood chipping and leaf mould from the bays and the pile nearest to the entrance to the site. This coming spring the James Hutton Institute is supplying Slopefield with the contents of its compost bays (leaves, grass cuttings, woody debris, etc. from its grounds). The Hutton Institute have kindly organised to transport it to our site. Please note this material has not been sorted and must be used and accepted as seen. Watch out for notices about its delivery.

BBQ



BBQ & Competitions

Our annual BBQ was held on 14 September, and was a wonderful occasion which brought together over 50 people including plotters, their families and our special guests to share delicious food, homemade salads and cakes. Bob McG once more did a great job manning the BBQ! We were delighted that Prof Iain Gordon, CEO of the James Hutton Institute, was able to judge our annual competitions. Gordon C's skills of persuasion were put to good use running a Treasure Hunt, and he was also the mastermind of Slopefield's inaugural welly-throwing competition. This was brilliant fun, enjoyed by adults and kids alike, despite a few close shaves for the nearby greenhouses! I think this competition looks set to become a regular BBQ fixture! For the 2014 Competition Results please see the website. The 2015 BBQ will be held on **Sunday 13 September**.

Our Year of Biodiversity

As highlighted elsewhere we have been building up our efforts to enhance biodiversity at Slopefield. Over the years this has included the planting of wild fruit trees and bushes, our bug hotel and wildflower verges. Most recently we have been building bat and bird boxes, established a community pond and filmed the variety of biodiversity at Slopefield to the delight of the children. This year we aim to focus on increasing our collective awareness and improving our site and this is a specific area for development in our IYN assessment. In particular, we will:

- plant our 105 native fruit trees received from the Woodland Trust on our Community Day on 29 March;
- hold additional Community Days where we aim to build bat and bird boxes, and hold talks on biodiversity, in collaboration with Rose Toney our local Biodiversity Co-ordinator (rose.toney@hutton.ac.uk);
- take part in the RSPB Birdwatch and record all the birds which visit Slopefield;
- prepare species sheets for bees and butterflies to record what's on your plot;
- advise on suitable 'Apps' for species recording through Citizen Science.

Biodiversity



Site Security

The gate locking system has been running for a year and while most plot holders have been locking the gate on entering and leaving there is still a minority who have been either leaving the gate unlocked or even open. Aberdeen City Council recently wrote to plot holders reminding everyone that they require the gate to be locked at all times and advising on the dangers of not having a secure site.

It is sad to report that the lock and gate were vandalised but now the locking system has been repaired and functioning again. The lock was modified to make the padlock access easier to access from both sides but we have frequently noticed that it has been locked in an 'upside-down' position which makes it difficult to access from the inside. Please be aware of this and try to leave the padlock in a downward position – many thanks.

Petty crime is also a concern to the Committee and if you have any issues please contact your row representative – details of which can be found on the community plot noticeboard.

Bob McG (#84)

Security



The Allotment Market Stall (TAMS)

The Allotment Market Stall is set up in Duthie Park on Fridays and Saturdays during the summer and autumn season to sell excess produce from around 8 allotment sites in Aberdeen. TAMS seeks to cut waste from allotment sites, offer volunteering opportunities, provide healthy, locally-grown produce to the community and donates any surplus produce to the food bank network.

TAMS operates in conjunction with CFINE – Common Food Initiative in the North East and the Community Payback team. Some of the money raised from the stall comes back to the participating allotments and Slopefield's money will be used to support community projects on the site. This year the TAMS project was Runner-Up in the Eco Award for new community projects in Aberdeen

TAMS

Surplus produce is always welcome and is usually collected from the box on site on Thursdays so please help support this if you can. Help with collection can be arranged. Volunteers are always welcome to man the stall.

Liz (#74)

Slopefield Yahoo Site/ Email/On-site notice board/ The Red Box



Woodland Trust

Photography

Communication

The association can only really help you if we know what your issues are. Although we try as much as we can it is important that we receive your feedback, either by email, a note in the red letter box, or through chatting to one of the row reps or Committee. No issue is too small.

People can leave messages on a whiteboard in the Community shed on plot 11. So if you have spare plants or are looking for a new shed or greenhouse – why not write it up and see if anyone can help. We want messages to go both ways – offers and requests, so why not get in the habit of looking at the board and see what available. You will be amazed what offers turn up.

If you have not already done so, you can become a member of the Slopefield Yahoo group by accessing the website

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/slopefield/>

and following the instructions to join. Newsletters, minutes of Association meetings, etc. can be found on this site. In addition you can contact Slopefield group members by sending an email to slopefield@yahoogroups.com

And check out the website! <http://slopefield.webs.com/>

Scaffolding Boards and Pallets

If you would like scaffolding boards or pallets please speak to our Site Manager Terry (#37) who can organise this (for a small donation to Association funds).

Woodland Trust Native Fruit Trees

The hedge of native fruit trees we planted in 2013 is growing beautifully, with over 90% success, and we are delighted to report that 'Angela's Oak' (planted by Slopefield's local Councillor Angela Taylor) is also in very good shape! We recently made another successful application to the Woodland Trust, and will soon be receiving a further 105 native fruit trees, to be planted at our Community Day on Sunday 29 March 2015. Please come along and be part of this important event.

Photographic Competition and Calendar

We have talked for many years about holding a photographic competition and this year we finally got it off the ground! Over 60 beautiful photos were entered and judging took place at our November bonfire day. All plotters had the opportunity to vote, and the top choices were guaranteed to feature in our first ever Slopefield Calendar. We produced a small number this year, as a trial to see how they looked, and also to test the market. We need not have worried . . . it has been a great success! This year we would like to hold another photo competition and hopefully produce another calendar.

Many thanks to everyone who participated, and especially to Loraine who organised the competition and created such a fabulous calendar, the sale of which has raised significant funds for our community projects.

So please get snapping again this year! The photo Competition (date to be announced) may be at the BBQ in September and if you think you may be able to help in any aspect of the competition or calendar production please get in touch.

For a look at the 2015 calendar see <http://slopefield.webs.com/latest-news>

Photography (cont'd)

Quiz night

In February we had a popular quiz night with 70 people squeezing into the bar of the Grammar FP Club. We were delighted to welcome teams from Cove Allotments and Cove in Bloom, as well as our own plotters, friends and families. There was stiff competition on the night but the outright winners were 'Neeps 'r' Us' who finished 5 points ahead of second place 'The Bees Knees'. The winning team won a carrot-eating giant bunny and a bottle of champagne. Anne, the winner of the turnip competition, won a bottle of whisky which was kindly donated by a fellow plotter.

We raised nearly £600 for our community projects through ticket sales and competitions. Gordon C ran 'Guess the Weight of the Turnip' and we also had 'Heads & Tails'. The food for the finger buffet was also kindly donated and delicious. A big thank you to all who attended and who contributed in any way to the event (especially our quizmaster Patty!).

Quiz Night



Juliette's 'Thank You' Flapjack Recipe

At the end of the IYN Stirling Seminar, Juliette Camburn from Keep Scotland Beautiful gave me an unexpected gift of a hand tied bag of flapjacks. What a wonderful surprise! She had spent the night before the seminar baking flapjacks for all the speakers as a 'thank you' present. We shared the mouth-watering flapjacks on the way home on the bus and I resolved to ask for the recipe! **Wendy (#4)**

Recipe

Ingredients & method:

250g porridge oats	handful pumpkin seeds	75g light muscavado
150g butter	handful chopped apricots	sugar
75g golden syrup	handful sunflower seeds	grated ginger

Melt the butter, syrup and sugar in a saucepan. Take off the heat and then mix in the oats, the seeds, apricots and ginger. Bake at 175°C (gas mark 4) for 20 mins or until golden. Makes one swiss roll tin's worth.

With Deepest Sympathy

It is with a heavy heart that we have to report on our plotters who passed away over this last year. Sadly missed but not forgotten – Ronnie Robertson, Hugh Shepherd, James Burnett and Jane Lund (community liaison at the James Hutton Institute).

Sponsors and thanks

Once again we thank our sponsors for their generosity in supporting Slopefield.

- **Kudos and Abscaff** for providing and delivering scaffolding boards.
- **Keep Scotland Beautiful Community Grant Scheme 2015** (proceeds from the new single-use plastic bag charge at Tesco). We were awarded a grant of £250 which will be put towards buying a generator for the Hutton Hut.
- **Woodland Trust** for native trees.
- **Royal Horticultural Society** for seeds and bulbs.
- **James Hutton Institute** for fruit bushes & continued support of the Hutton Hut.
- **Keep Scotland Beautiful** – thanks to all staff for continued encouragement, advice and support.
- **Aberdeen City Council** for deliveries of road plainings, leaves, and wood chip.



Events and competitions 2015

March 29 Tree Planting

April 26 Seed Swap and Wildflower Border Preparation

May 31 Plant Swap and Wildflower Border Preparation

June 28 Community Day

July 26 Community Day

Aug 30 Community Day

Sept 13 BBQ & Competitions

Oct 25 Community day

Nov 8 Bonfire and possible
Photo Competition

2016 Events:

Photo Competition

Quiz Night (date TBC)

Pallet Gardens Talk (date TBC)



Thank you!

Events

Check the Yahoo Site for more details
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/slopefield/>

and the website! <http://slopefield.webs.com/>