



# Byelaw Men's Field newsletter

Spring 2011

## Bees!

In the autumn newsletter it was explained how we had to remove the beehives from the allotment to an apiary in the countryside near Swillington. This move, whilst successful had regrettably a detrimental effect on the honey we were able to obtain in the autumn. Our very experienced bee mentor, who had helped us remove the bees, suggested we should double the space in each hive. This would reduce the need for the bees to find more space by swarming. Therefore an extra hive, brood box was added and the bees expanded into this extra space creating brood and storing honey. We had four hives entering the winter with strong colonies and ample honey to get them through plus one very small colony which we did not expect to survive the winter. Sorry to say all this extra work for the bees meant there was only a small surplus of honey to remove.

Regrettably one hive was blown over during the severe gales in late February and an inspection in mid March revealed that a second hive had perished too but fortunately the small colony had come through. Ever the opportunist the bees from the remaining hives have 'robbed out' the honey of these two hives. Such is bee keeping we started 2011 full of confidence but we are already down 40% of our anticipated honey crop and we have yet to negotiate the swarming season. Don't count your chickens..... comes to mind



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## Allotment Competition Summer 2010

### ALLOTMENT COMPETITION: SUMMER

Our result in the competition was a disappointment falling from joint third the previous year to 9th place. Below are the judges' marks which I feel was not an accurate reflection of our site particularly when one considers their marking criteria.

- Judges expected to see water collection where sheds were present on site and plot
- Evidence of composting on individual plots is expected
- Crops (apart from some seed collection) should not be left beyond harvesting stage for judging!

Evidence of succession in crop planting is expected

Predominantly unsatisfactory was the score of 36% for the overall condition of the plots

and was not, in my opinion, an accurate reflection of plots on the site. Nonetheless we did not manage to generate much enthusiasm to help prepare our site prior to being judged. The two days we identified to clear and tidy was poorly supported; even the enticement of a barbecue following the second day did not work. Perhaps our 'off the cuff' approach did not help and we should have had in place a more formal plan.

If we decide to enter the competition again this year, and I think we should then I suggest we have a small planning/working group to move things along.

It would help if anyone who has any spare bedding plants would donate them to plant on the site, even better if you can grow some extra.

### Best Allotment Competition

	Overall condition of plots on site	Condition of communal areas	Condition of inter plot paths	Debris on site	Notice Boards/Display of information	First Aid & other Health & Safety requirements	Communal Site Equipment	Conservation Measures	Site Development	Total Score per judge
Max poss score	100	20	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	200
ByelawMens Field	36%	9%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	9%	76% total score

### Best Allotment Plot Competition

Site name	site ref	name	plot no.	max poss	Criteria	Crop Quality	Variety of Crops	Weed & Pest control	Successional sowing	Composting	Use of Space	Innovative ideas	Total	Total Score
Byelaw	12	Harvey & Pat Dickinson	20s & 23	percent		50	20	10	5	5	5	5	100	600
						42%	16%	9%	3%	4%	3%	3%	80%	478

## Cultivators/Grass cutters/Strimmers

We now have more than enough machinery to cut the grass and to rotavate plots: this includes two new cultivators and a recently refurbished one. Unfortunately we finished the autumn with several of the machines damaged but were fortunate that Reg Holdsworth and his apprentice, Peter Smith have been able to repair and service them during the winter months. Reg will be 83 years old this year and he feels that he has serviced the machines for the last time. We owe a debt of gratitude to Reg for all the money he has saved us over the years to the point that we have lost sight of what it costs to service and repair equipment. This year if a machine breaks down we might have to arrange for it to be taken to a repairer then collected and paid for. If so we will have to monitor how much this is costing us and to consider, in the future, whether we need to add a charge to the annual rent to cover this increase cost.

Meanwhile we can exercise care when using the equipment, for example grass cutters should not be used for rough cutting weeds on plots;



use one of the strimmers for this. In order to ensure everyone knows how to operate machinery properly, particularly the two new cultivators. It is proposed we hold a short 'familiarisation session' for those who intend to use the equipment this year.

If a machine breaks down when you are using it please let Reg, Peter, Harvey and Tony know so that repairs can be arranged. Please do not put it away and say nothing.

## A big Thankyou

Hi there. Just a quick message from Austhorpe Primary School. Thanks for all your support over last few years in allowing our Year 1 children to visit your allotments. The children have always thoroughly enjoyed the trip out and learned lots of facts about the things you grow there. Perhaps more importantly, we have also been inspired to create our own allotment style garden in the school grounds. With funding from our PTA and lots of help from Julie Fletcher, we now have a raised bed for every class and vegetables are being grown in our greenhouse which we won a few years ago. We also have an after school gardening club and the children are all looking forward to seeing their vegetables grow and then being able to harvest them later in the year. Every child has designed a scarecrow and we plan to create the winning entries and display them in our garden during the Summer term. We are considering having a 'Grand Opening Event' complete with a 'Mini Scarecrow Festival'. We will let you know via Julie when this will be as you would be most welcome to attend. In the meantime, if anyone has any spare plants / seeds or even time to volunteer to help, please let Julie Fletcher plot 21 or Mrs Haigh at the school know as we would be most grateful.



## Budding Photographer



**AGM.** Has been arranged for 10.30am Sunday 8th May. Items for the Agenda to Christine Pickles, Secretary by 1st May please

## SKIPS

It does not look promising that we will get skips in the future. Meanwhile if you have any rubbish will you take it home to dispose of please to avoid an accumulation.

## KEEPING OUR SITE SAFE AND SECURE.

Now the light evenings are with us again please ensure that the sheds and gate are securely locked if you are the last person to leave the site. Remember you may not be the last person to leave but you could be the last person to use the tool shed. If there are anyone working please check if they want the tool shed to be left open. Several times last year the tool shed and gate had been left open all night.

A big thank you to Jack Fletcher for the use of his photographs on the cover of this edition. To the left are a few more wonderful pictures he has taken over the past year to brighten up our newsletter. If you have any pictures or articles you would like to see in this publication please send them to tony.ryan@byelawmensfield.org.uk