



Newsletter March 2013  
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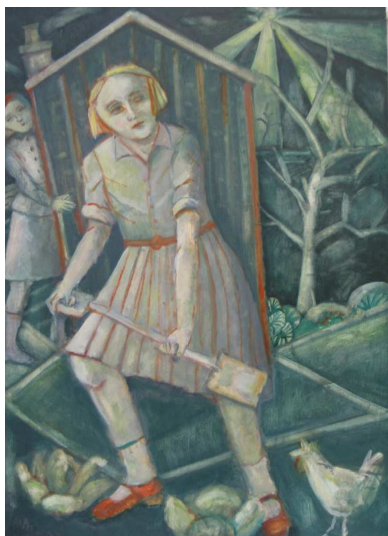
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# Scottish Allotments Newsletter

## Allotment heritage inspires art exhibition

Jill Gerber

Compass Gallery in Glasgow is presenting an exhibition on the theme of Allotments. Entitled 'Still Spaces' it will take place throughout May and June 2013. Over 40 carefully selected artists coming from every corner of Scotland have been invited to research and visit every possible kind of allotment to absorb the atmosphere, then with their own distinctive notions of the plots and plot-holders, create a special work of art. The exhibition will include a wide range of styles and breadth of imagination. The owners, structures, sheds, wildlife and all cultivations in different seasons and lights have been translated into collages, sculptures, prints, paintings, drawings and stained glass. Included will be the work of some of the newest recent graduates starting out in their careers, hanging alongside some of Scotland's most established names. Asked to explore the history, culture and impact of the Allotment heritage in Scotland, and their relevance in today's changing economic and environmental climate, the exhibition speaks for itself.



Dig for Victory: Joyce W Cairns



Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh: Michael McVeigh

Participating Scottish artists range from well established, to young, up and coming, and includes eminent folk like Sandy Fraser, Joyce W. Cairns, John Inglis, Frances Pelly, Philip Reeves, Lys Hansen, Tom Shanks and Barbara Rae.

**Compass Gallery is proud to collaborate with The Glasgow Allotments Forum and The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society, who are sponsoring the exhibition. This is a selling exhibition with a fully illustrated catalogue, in which we are sure there will be something for everyone. The private view is on Thursday May 2, 5.50 - 7.30. Open to the public from May 3. Contact the gallery for further details or to get an invitation to the private view:**

**Compass Gallery, 178 West Regent Street, Glasgow. Tel: 0141 221 6370**

### On other pages:

- News from sites around the country
- Allotment Law
- Lawn Clippings  
Edible Garden  
How to meet SAGS team
- SAGS conference, useful organisations

### Do you have time to help?

SAGS' work to reverse the long term decline of allotments in Scotland has raised the profile of allotments with politicians. It is important to keep up the pressure.

SAGS members man stalls at events round Scotland distributing leaflets. We monitor political activity, suggest parliamentary questions to our representatives and lobby to ensure that allotment provision is considered when government and councils write policy documents.

***If you have time to help in any way please contact the SAGS secretary. Email: [secretary@sags.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sags.org.uk)***

### ***New per plot subscription rates for allotment sites :***

Fee SAGS only: £0.80  
Fee SAGS+NSALG: £2.00  
This is a reduction of 20p per plot. It is possible because of savings achieved through use of email and the web site.

# Around Scotland.....

## South Lanarkshire

### Cambuslang allotment group find growing space

(Margaret Kerr of Cambuslang Allotment Forum)



After 5 years of looking for land and trying to get support from South Lanarkshire Council, the Cambuslang Allotment Gardens are ready for their first growing season. We exhausted all the options of local authority land and finally approached the Salvation Army Eva Burrows 1<sup>st</sup> Stop Project in Halfway, Cambuslang who have extensive grounds. The Project provides temporary accom-

modation for the homeless and people with low-support needs.

We started last April removing the turf and turning the soil. We applied to Pride of Place for funding to purchase a polytunnel and build 20 raised beds. This work was finished in September and we are now ready and eager to have our first proper growing season.

Princess Anne HRH visited the Salvation Army Project in October 2012 and we were delighted to be given the opportunity to meet her and to show her our community garden.

We have 20 raised beds which we are renting out at £10 per bed per year to local residents but with the funding from Pride of Place we are able to waive this fee for the local unemployed or low income families. We also have a community bed and the polytunnel where we will grow vegetables for the benefits of the residents at Eva Burrows.

It is £5 for annual membership to our Association and the only restriction is that people have a South Lanarkshire postcode. We can be contacted at [cambus-allot@live.co.uk](mailto:cambus-allot@live.co.uk).

## Highland

***Highland Council have taken a positive decision to encourage the development of new allotments. In the past year 3 new sites have been created in Cromarty, Nairn and Ullapool and further sites are planned for the near future.***

The council is not managing

allotments itself but has a policy of supporting local groups in finding land and raising funds.

One of the council's policy aims for encouraging allotments is an expectation of mental health benefits.

People who take over new allotments in the Highlands will be asked to complete surveys designed to assess

how the gardens benefit their mental health.

Highland Council will use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, a measure of mental health developed for NHS Health Scotland.

The scale involves asking people questions such as if they feel useful, loved and are interested in new things.



# .....successes and developments

## Glasgow

### Shettleston Growing Project on path to success



*With the help of a grant of £116,000 from the Scottish Government's People and Communities Fund, Shettleston Growing Project have developed a "Green Volunteer" scheme. The idea is to give more local people the chance to get involved in*

healthy, outdoor activities, to learn new skills and to help transform other derelict areas into productive and attractive spaces.

Despite winter continuing well into March there have been lots of tasks to tackle on the SCGP site at Eckford Street and Ardgay Street.

The main project in recent weeks has been the construction of a path in the community garden to make it more accessible for wheelchair users and people

with walking difficulties. Fortyone volunteers worked for 8 days in the wintry March weather to complete the task.

SCGP are looking for more volunteers and expect to release some new allotment plots in the near future. So anyone living in the Shettleston/Tollcross areas interested in growing vegetables should contact project coordinator Marion Bate. Details of how to do this can be found at [www.shettlestongrowing.org.uk](http://www.shettlestongrowing.org.uk)

## Clackmannanshire

### Allotment Association finally signs lease

After operating since 1996 with a temporary draft lease, the Alloa Allotments Association finally signed a 25 year lease with Clackmannanshire council in December last year.

Their three acre site at Keilarsbrae, Sauchie, has 36 individual allotment plots all of which are fully occupied at present.

Chairman of the Association, Mike Hodge, said: "It is a

milestone day for all of us to be signing this lease. It finally gives us the security we have been trying to get for the past 16 years. It means we are a properly constituted association and can apply for grants."

## Aberdeenshire

### Climate Challenge Fund success for Aden Community Allotments

***The Aden Community Allotments Association has just obtained a grant of £77,133 from the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund.***

The money will be used to create 42 allotments and a community garden in the grounds of Aden Country Park

in Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire. The project will provide the local community with the opportunity to grow their own food, compost and reduce waste. This should reduce the community's carbon footprint. It will also provide non-members with a chance to learn valuable skills associated with growing their own

fruit and vegetables

The allotment project has been brought forward by the Buchan Development Partnership working with Aberdeenshire council using 'Investing in Ideas' funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

## Should allotment law be modernised?

Allotment law in Scotland is contained in at least 5 separate bills passed between 1892 and 1950. Since the Allotments (Scotland) Bill 1950 nothing positive has been added to allotment legislation.

However, negative actions have been taken. For example the 'public health general assessment', mentioned in one of these acts as a source of funding for allotments, disappeared in one of the Local Government reorganisations and no alternative allotment budget has ever been established.

It is a popular belief that the law obliges a local authority to provide allotments if 6 local residents represent in writing that there is a demand. This belief is not really accurate

The law is not nearly so clear. What the law says is that the representations must be 'taken into consideration'. If as a result of such consideration the local authority decides there is a de-

mand, then the law says that a sufficient number of allotments must be provided.

However there is absolutely nothing in the statute to fix the criteria for determining a demand. There is nothing in the statute to set a time limit within which the demand must be satisfied. With the modern changes to law there is nothing to state how the cost of meeting the demand can be met.

This vagueness is typical of much of the currently valid allotment legislation. For example the 1950 act states that a Local Authority must charge a 'fair rent'. There are authorities, some in cities where rents for flats and offices are high, charging less than £20 per annum for an allotment. Edinburgh, to fund allotment provision, is proposing to charge £100 per annum from 2014. What is the definition of a fair rent for an allotment? The legislation does not enlighten us.

The recent consultation on the

Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill contained questions specifically related to allotments and allotment legislation. Several Scottish local authorities commented on these questions in a thoughtful and helpful way.

However 8 out of the 32 local authorities either did not respond, or merely said the current legislation was satisfactory. How can laws that have resulted in Scotland having fewer allotments than Birmingham really be described as 'satisfactory'?

Many local authorities would like to devolve the responsibility for the funding and management of allotments to local allotment communities. The vagueness of the current legislation creates a terrifying black hole. Ordinary residents, whose main qualification for running an allotment association is a love of growing, should only take on such responsibility if the law is clear and simple.

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## Update on Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill

*Judy Wilkinson*

We reported on the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill in the last newsletter. The responses to the consultation are on the government web site at [www.scotland.gov.uk/communityempowerment](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/communityempowerment)

SAGS has extracted all the local authority responses relating to allotments - see <http://www.sags.org.uk/weblog//wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CouncilResponsesCERB2013.pdf>

As a result of the strong response to the questions about allotments in CERB, the Scottish Government is launching a new questionnaire about changes to

allotment legislation. While welcoming this, the SAGS committee is concerned that the local authorities will use this as an opportunity to water down existing legislation. The allotments community needs something that is robust, workable and makes an impact; legislation that the local authorities cannot walk away from. We are producing a briefing paper that contains the sections of existing acts that we would like to be retained, concerns and suggestions for improvement and questions that should be debated. Please check the website for discussions and updates on this..

## How to use your grass clippings



If you have grass paths on your plot then the clippings can be used in lots of different ways, so you can never have too much. However if they are just piled in an airless heap they will go soggy and smelly because the bacteria that make garden compost will not be able to work.

### **As a mulch**

Where you have bare soil around

a tree or a shrub cover the ground carefully with a layer of paper or cardboard. Then tip on the grass clippings and keep topping up every time you cut the grass. The paper/cardboard layer will stop the weed seeds in the grass clippings from growing.

### **As a hot bed**

Courgettes like to put their roots into warm soil. The best way of warming the soil is to dig a hole a spade's depth and shovel in horse manure. However instead you can put a thick layer of grass clippings into the hole and top up with soil.

### **In the compost heap**

A thin layer of grass in your compost bin provides moisture and

also helps to create the heat that kills off the weed seeds. This will work best if you mix the grass with other, dryer materials.

### **Warning**

Some lawn treatments contain herbicides that are so persistent that the clippings are unsuitable for use in the garden, and should not even be used in council composting schemes. Ideally you should ensure that your grass clippings come from an untreated lawn or path.

The most common problem herbicide is *clopyralid*. This is so dangerous that it has been banned in New Zealand and some parts of the USA.

## Next course for the Edible Garden

Following the first successful two years of the Edible Garden Project, and secure in the knowledge that funding is available for another two years, there are ambitious plans to develop the project in a number of significant ways.

Ultimately the whole Demonstration Garden will be transformed into a community space in which people of all ages, background and experience are involved in and growing fruit and vegetables and sharing practical gardening skills. With the help of additional volunteers joining the Edible Garden task and building on an excellent relationship with community groups and service providers we will be expanding and diversifying the Project participants, creating new and exciting opportunities that can transform lives.

The Project aims at getting people gardening whatever their circumstances and enjoys the full backing of the Botanic Garden as well as support from the Scottish Allotment and Garden society.

## Meet the SAGS team

*Gardening Scotland is at The Royal Highland Show Ground, Ingleston, Edinburgh from Friday 31st May until Sunday 2nd June. SAGS will have a stand in The Living Garden area and hope that visitors to the show will have a moment to drop by and introduce themselves, ask questions, and tell us about their site.*

*Highland Council are organising an Allotments and Community Growing Conference in Inverness on Friday 21st June to engage with people on their plans to support community growing projects throughout Highland and a networking event for allotment growers too. Representatives from SAGS will be at the event, keen to meet aspiring and existing ploholders, share experiences and answer your questions*

# SAGS resources and partner organisations

## Countdown to our Annual Conference on Saturday June 15 2013

Preparations for our Annual Conference on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June at the Victoria Halls, Dunblane are well advanced. The final programme and registration form will be on the SAGS website shortly.

We hope the programme will provide interest for plotholders and others involved in allotments and a friendly atmosphere for everyone to network with delegates from all over Scotland. Please pass on details to all your plotholders - everyone is welcome.

We are delighted that Jim McColl from the Beechgrove Garden will open the conference and join in a panel session on growing problems on your site. Conference will also welcome Derek Mackay, MSP, Minister for Local Government and Planning, who will be launching SAGS' new publication "Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide". There will be an opportunity to discuss the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill (CERB) and the new Site Design Guide.

The ever-popular slot for new and developing groups to report on progress will include presentations from Yetholm, Tollcross, Perth and Kinross Council and Nairn. Nick Cooke from Butterfly Conservation will give a presentation to be followed by a practical workshop on moths. There will also be workshops on using Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide which should be of particular interest to developing groups.

## Edinburgh Garden Partners

Edinburgh Garden Partners (EGP) was formed in February 2011 to continue and develop a garden share project which had been running across Edinburgh for the previous two years. EGP is driven by a desire to support people to remain independent in their own homes and by a wish to increase accessibility to gardening, food growing and the environment.

Over the past year, thanks to donations from the People's Postcode Lottery Trust, the Scottish Community Foundation, and Liberton & Gilmerton Neighbourhood Fund work has been concentrated in the Gilmerton and Liberton areas of the city. An Awards for All grant and money from Leith Decides has enabled this work to be extended to areas in the North and East of Edinburgh.

## More Organisations

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens supports, promotes and represents community managed growing projects, [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

Funding Scotland is a new social enterprise organisation that aims to improve the process of identifying and communicating funding information in Scotland. Their web site records information about grants and funding programmes accessible to organisations operating in Scotland. <http://www.fundingscotland.com>

The SAGS website contains information and advice on a wide range of issues related to allotments, as well as back copies of the Newsletters. <http://www.sags.org.uk>

## About SAGS

SAGS is a voluntary organisation funded by the subscriptions of its members. We offer a forum through which plot holders can work together to make sure that allotment sites will flourish in Scotland in the next millennium. If you care about allotment provision in Scotland then join SAGS.

In particular we plan to:

- Work together to lobby Members of the Scottish Parliament for improved and increased allotment provision in Scotland.
- Maintain contact with the Parliament so that we can represent gardeners' interests during the consultative stages of legislation which may affect Sites.

SAGS provides an opportunity to:

- Share experiences to resist the takeover of Allotment Sites when these are threatened by building or other developments.
- Find examples from other sites on the best terms of let or lease when these are being negotiated for a Site
- Act as a forum for the exchange of information on Site Management experience giving advice on good practice in forming and preparing a suitable Constitution and formulating a missive-of-let

Contact SAGS on:

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[treasurer@sags.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@sags.org.uk)

Any items or correspondence for the next newsletter should be sent as an email to:

[webmaster@sags.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@sags.org.uk)