



## Gorton Horticultural Society

Annual General Meeting – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018

### Chairman's Report



**2017/18** - Another excellent year for GHS and Gorton Reservoir Allotment Site. Yet again we were lucky enough to be awarded further grants to help with our site improvements, we were joined by Debra Conroy (Our MCC Allotment Manager) at the Allotment Competition Presentation Evening, where Eric McHale won the Harry Sharpe Cup for his points gained (best plot in East area), and GHS walked away with the Cllr Hugh Lee Cup! (best allotment Society in Manchester). We continue to enjoy full-occupancy, and maintain a substantial waiting list.

**The Plant Sale** – As usual a great success. The majority of plants were sold over the first weekend – we continue to break-even financially, despite being able to donate left-over plants to MCC Youth project in Hulme in return for a substantial amount of wood. (To be used to build more accessible raised beds)

**Scarecrow Day** – The scarecrow-building workshop continues to attract a great number of families, in turn helping to increase the footfall at our Show. This year the Gorton community will be taking part in their first ever Scarecrow Festival – This event is being run by GEC and linked to Gorton Carnival. In addition to our usual workshop we will hold an extra Scarecrow-building event here on our site, and one in Debdale Park for the wider community.

**The Show** – Great news again from our show last year. Once again we achieved one of the best attended and exhibited shows in Manchester. Our schedule continues to evolve to reflect the current trends in growing and showing, including the re-introduction of wines and cordials, which attracted several entries into these classes. Thanks must go to Jackie Percy who agreed to judge these, along with the craft classes. Thanks also to Gordon Bird and Ron Carter who judged the usual Flower and Veg classes, and to Allan Grafton MBE for presenting the prizes.

**Halloween** – Our usual Halloween festivities went off without a hitch again last year, and were enjoyed by all. We were asked again to provide a pumpkin carving workshop in Debdale Park during the October half-term, and the money raised by doing this along with our ticket sales paid for the GHS Halloween event.

**Meet Santa** – We decided to offer our our guests the chance to meet Santa free of charge this year, we had a Christmas film running, every child met Santa and was given a selection box as a present, and there were other Christmas activities on offer to keep the kids busy.

The event cost £82 to put together, and we received £65 in our donation buckets which went back into the Events Fund. So the whole day only cost the fund £17!

**Nature Garden** – We made a start on converting the old plot behind Alice into a Nature Garden, but between lack of volunteers and the weather, progress has been slow. The garden will form part of the Nature Centre which we will be hosting on site in the cabin, where our bird and animal inhabitants can be observed via video feeds. We will also use the Nature Centre as the base for our future GO Wild events.

## **Toilets:**

As you will have noticed, the site toilets have now been replaced. It was reported last year that we were looking into this, and we were fortunate enough (owing to our work within the community), to be invited to pitch for funding at another One Manchester Community Soup event.

The evening was hosted here by us, and went very well with us coming first place in the final vote for funding! Expecting maybe £2,000 for winning, we were astonished when One Manchester announced that we had won £5,000! – Our Toilet Fund was started off very nicely!

Then we were encouraged to apply for another MCC NIF Grant, and were successful in receiving a split award from Gorton North and Gorton South Cllrs totalling another £5,000!

We had estimated the total cost of removing the old toilet block, preparing the ground, building the decking and purchasing the new disabled-access composting toilets would be around £10,000, so we discussed our options within our Committee meetings and went ahead with the work.

Luckily Redgates offered to remove the old toilet block and scrape the area flat for us, free of charge, so in the end we had enough money left to buy the parts to construct another 2 composting toilets which will be placed on the Car Park (In 1) and the Graveyard (In 3) – The grant has been spent, the parts have all arrived and these will be built and installed ASAP.

## **Future Plans:**

We **STILL** have the Solar-powered gate lights waiting to be installed at the top of each of our lanes, but just haven't been able to get them put up yet. – I personally guarantee this will be done before the nights draw in this year.

I would like to see the Nature Garden completed this year too, and we will be pursuing possible sources of one-off volunteer labour to help us with this. There is still £800 of the Postcode Lottery Orchard/Garden grant left to pay for any materials we need.

We will be looking into the pro's/con's and requirements for obtaining Charity Status for the Society, which was mentioned to most people during October at rent time. This change would not affect any of our ploholders or members in any way, but would enable us to access further sources of funding as a legally recognised charity, as opposed to a constituted voluntary group. Most people were in favour, or had no view on this matter when asked, but I propose a formal vote to clarify our authorisation to go ahead with this as a committee.

I would like to thank everyone involved in making this Society and Site 'The best in Manchester' (as proven by our Cllr Hugh Lee Cup!) including our committee, our ploholders and our members. Also an extra thank you to the few people who go the extra mile who help with different tasks and projects as they come along (or as I think them up...!) for their continued support and contribution to the community spirit that makes us all proud to be part of Gorton Reservoir Allotment Site.

Good luck to everybody for this next growing season and Best Wishes.

Chris Kennedy  
Chairman