

## **Gorton Horticultural Society, based in Gorton, Manchester recognised with Queen's Award for Voluntary Service for 2015**

A voluntary group from Gorton who works in the community to promote Gardening, Healthy Living, Community Cohesion and Biodiversity has been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

GHS manage one of the largest Allotment sites in Manchester, looking after nearly 100 allotment plots on behalf of Manchester City Council. As well as administering Gorton Reservoir Allotment Site, the 100% voluntary team at GHS maintain a programme of community activities and events, hosted in their exhibition hall on the site. Events over the past 12 months have included Bat Walks, Bug Hunts, Plant & Tree identification, Scarecrow Building, Halloween Pumpkin Carving & Fun Night, Building a Bug Hotel as well as the groups annual Plant Sale and the Flower, Veg and Craft Show. With a view to raising awareness of biodiversity, and by providing workshops promoting community cohesion, GHS have successfully increased attendance at these events, and membership of the Society. The non-profit making organisation provides all of these activities at no charge, (and often includes a BBQ!) – raising funds for the events by selling home-made bird houses, bug huts and bird-feeders, made from recycled materials. Future plans for activities include the creation of a community plot on the site of a redundant allotment, providing growing space for the 'Knowing about Growing' and 'From Seed to Plate' projects.

GHS is one of 187 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year, (The group equivalent to the MBE). The number of awards handed out to groups have increased by over 60% from 2014, due to an increase in high quality nominations, showing that the voluntary sector is thriving and full of innovative ideas to tackle community challenges.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work in their communities. The awards were created in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee and winners are announced each year on 2 June – the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. Award winners this year range from Ablaze, a charity helping to raise academic achievement amongst disadvantaged young people in Bristol to a volunteer rescue boat service on Loch Lomond.

GHS will receive the award from the Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester later this summer.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Committee Chair, former broadcast journalist Martyn Lewis CBE said:

"I warmly congratulate all of the inspirational voluntary groups who have been rewarded for their community work with a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The judging panel for this year's awards were struck by the quality and breadth of all the successful groups. The thousands of volunteers who give up spare time to help others in their community and to help solve problems demonstrate the best of democracy in action."

Minister for Civil Society, Rob Wilson, said:

“I would like to congratulate all groups who received this year’s Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, in recognition of their fantastic achievements. The hard work and commitment that goes into the work of these organisations is surpassed only by the passion and motivation of the individuals who volunteer. I hope these groups continue to inspire others to get involved and make a positive impact so that we can continue to build a bigger, stronger society.”

[If Lord Lieutenant can give a quote, please add this in]

GHS Chairman, Chris Kennedy, said:

“We are delighted and honoured to learn that the tireless work of our volunteers has been recognised by the receipt of this award! The projects and events we have been holding for the local community have generated a great deal of interest in Home-growing, Healthy-living and Biodiversity. Along with managing our large Allotment Site at Gorton Reservoir, our core team of volunteers including committee members and allotment holders, plan, organise and run fun, family events, often in partnership with other local organisations, which aim to teach about the wildlife and wild plants in the locality. Future projects will include workshops based on ‘Backyard Gardening’, ‘Knowing about Growing’ and ‘From Seed to Plate’ – all intended to enable anyone to grow and use healthy fruit and veg at home.

I would like to thank the GHS Committee, Society Members, Plot-Holders and everyone in the local community that have come together donating their time and skills to help make GHS the proud organisation we are today.

Please see our website for further details of any upcoming events  
[www.gortonallotments.org.uk](http://www.gortonallotments.org.uk) – all welcome to attend

#### **Notes to editors**

1. Lord Lieutenants are the monarch’s representatives in their lieutenancy. There are 98 Lord Lieutenants who cover all areas of the UK.
2. This year there were 187 winners of The Queen’s Award Voluntary Service from across the UK. More information on the winners can be found at the London Gazette <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>
3. Any group of two or more people that has participated in voluntary work for more than three years can be nominated for the award. Full details on how to nominate are available at <http://qavs.direct.gov.uk/>
4. Nominations for the 2016 awards close on 18 September 2015