

# A HISTORY OF THE “ORIGINAL” TILlicOUNTRY ALLOTMENTS



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This short paper traces the history of the “original” independent Tillicoultry Allotments from their establishment in 1933 to 2015 setting the development of these allotments within a Scottish working class social context 1880 – 1948, a Scottish Allotments Legislation context 1892 – 2009 and noting some randomly chosen significant ( to the author) world events 1926 - 1999

**The “Original” Tillicoultry  
Allotments**

**West Chappelle Crescent  
Tillicoultry FK13 6NJ  
30th. July 2015**

## A History of the “Original” Tillicoultry Allotments



“... the unemployed are easy prey to Red and Communistic agitators ...against which the Allotment Movement could be a strong counteracting influence if it really could be developed” - Letter from an Archibald Fischer to Secretary of State for Scotland July **1932**.

The SAGS secretary deemed **1964** “one of the blackest years in the history of the Society” Reformers called on the Association to rid their sites of the “firewood merchants and dog fanciers ... and to increase plot rentals as low rates tend to encourage riff – raff”

“The Community Empowerment Bill has now been passed by Holyrood. Thanks to the hard work of our members it establishes the principles of 250 sq.m. standard plot size, 5 year maximum waiting time and fair rents, we are delighted” Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) press release **June 25 th. 2015**

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### **Acknowledgments**

I wish to personally thank the following people for their contributions to this paper: Clare Wilson PhD who proof read the paper. Joan and Peter Mac Millan who provided the photographs and background information on the Beechgrove Garden visit (1997) and Ian Millar for the photograph on page 11 (the comments in brackets relating to this photograph are the authors). SAGS Victor Webb Archive, National Archives of Scotland and Glasgow University Archives Services for the photographs in Appendix 3. Photographs on pages 5 and 9 Google Earth and Google maps respectively

Page one Photograph the “Original” Tillicoultry Allotments - June 2015 (Ian Shovlin)

## **Introduction**

This short history of one of Scotland's oldest independent allotments will be set within a Scottish social context and the development history of Scottish Allotments from 1892 – 2009 with a specific focus on the developments of the “original” Tillicoultry allotments from 1933 to the present day (2015). During the period 1892 - 1948 the Poor Laws were the main source of help for the poor and unemployed.

The “original” Tillicoultry (established in 1933) are independent allotments. While there is data available on most Council run Scottish allotments there is no register or other source which holds information on the number (including dates established) of other Scottish independent allotments. “Around a quarter of all the (allotment) sites in Scotland are independently owned” (1). This makes the “original” Tillicoultry allotments not only important in terms of the history of the development of Scottish allotments but in relation to the social history of Tillicoultry. It will become clear later (see Para 2, page 14) why it is important to always refer to these allotments as the “original” ones in Tillicoultry to distinguish them from the other allotments in the village.

## **What is an Allotment?**

An allotment was originally defined in Scottish law (Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892) as a piece of land not exceeding 1 acre in size which can be provided (by a local authority or other body) for rental by an individual for agricultural or horticultural purposes. It is clear, from the buildings permitted, that an allotment was intended as much for grazing livestock as for growing vegetables or fruit. Subsequently the concept of an allotment garden was introduced. This was a smaller piece of land, not greater than 1/4 acre and intended primarily for growing fruit and vegetables for the personal and family use of the tenant. It is clear, again from the buildings permitted, however that there was an expectation that the tenant of an allotment garden might be allowed to keep poultry or pigs.

## **Brief overview Allotments in Scotland 1880 – 1999**

Allotment provision began around the end of the 1880's as land was put aside for the poor to feed themselves and escape the poorhouse. Between the wars people were encouraged to use allotments to help overcome food shortages. This measure was desperately needed due to rapid industrialisation and the lack of a welfare state.

An 1851 town plan of Edinburgh shows ‘Patriotic Society Allotment Gardens’ in an undeveloped area west of the town centre in Queensferry.

The Land Settlement (Scotland) Act of 1919 allowed the compulsory purchase of land to provide smallholdings and allotments to veterans of the war and removed “labouring population” references from the legislation. Despite the 1919 Act, the transfer of land was slow. Some land raids occurred especially by ex-servicemen who expected land on their return from the trenches, e.g. on Lewis, Uist, Skye and Sutherland.

A 1921 Parliamentary inquiry into allotments was followed by the Allotments (Scotland) Act in 1926 which included provision for compulsory purchase.

As has been noted there is no central collation of figures for allotment provision in Scotland and as a result it is difficult to accurately assess the current number of allotments and trends over time. The Food Trust of Scotland published a report on a survey of Scotland's allotments they conducted in December 1999. The survey identified 4,000 to 4,500 allotment plots in Scotland two-thirds of which were provided in four cities; Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. While the survey stated that not all of these sites were the responsibility of the local authorities it did not provide information on the number of private allotments.

This survey noted that allotment numbers declined following the Second World War (bingo and television were put forward as reasons contributing for this decline) but the situation stabilised in the 1990's. For example, Glasgow City Council had 25 sites, 19 Council owned, with 1,200 plots.

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To better understand the development of allotments, relevant legislation in Scotland and the original Tillicoultry allotments we need to consider the social conditions which existed in Scotland from 1845 – 1948 for the working class.

### **The Poor Law in Scotland 1845 - 1894**

The Poor Law (Scotland) Act 1845 established parochial boards in rural parishes and towns, and a central Board of Supervision in Edinburgh. Its main provisions were:

- The continuing administration of poor relief through “the parish”
- Parishes to be able to raise funds for poor relief through property rates
- The ability of parishes to combine for the administration of poor relief
- Power to set up poorhouses, or combinations, whose population was at least 5,000
- No poor relief for the able bodied

The parochial boards built poorhouses (there was an alms house in Tillicoultry for 2 men and 2 women) for those categories of paupers who did not receive 'outdoor relief', normally in the form of small weekly sums of money. More often parishes combined to build larger 'combination poorhouses'. Stirling originally operated its own poor relief system and erected a poorhouse in 1856/1857 between Bridge Street and Union Street. Its location and layout are shown on a 1922 map (See Appendix 1 page 15)

Around 1865 Stirling was joined by St Ninian's to form a combination Poorhouse. Kilsyth joined around 1866, followed by Alloa, Alva, Clackmannan, Denny, Dunblane, Dollar, Tillicoultry and Kirkintilloch. Total population of member parishes in 1881 was 71,354.

In 1894 Parochial Boards were abolished and replaced by elected parish councils, but their functions remained practically unchanged.

### **Scottish Welfare Provisions 1894 – 1948**

The worldwide trade depression of the 1920s led to the abandonment of the rule that the unemployed were not entitled to poor relief (Poor Law Emergency Powers (Scotland) Act 1921).

In 1930 parish councils were abolished (Local Government (Scotland) Act 1929). Thereafter the poor law authorities were to be the county councils, large burghs and the four cities, acting through Departments of Public Assistance (or Public Welfare). These maintained a system broadly similar to that of their predecessors until 1948, when the existing poor law was entirely abolished and almost all of it replaced by a national system, the forerunner of the modern 'social security' (National Insurance Act 1948).

### **Scottish Allotments developments and a Chronology of Scottish and the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments 1892 – 2015 and some significant (to the author) world social events 1926 – 1999.**

1892 the original statute relating to allotments is enacted i.e. *Allotments (Scotland) Act*. Much of this Act still stands but various provisions were amended and repealed by a series of later acts. Most importantly the *Land Settlement (Scotland) act of 1919* and the *Allotments (Scotland) Acts of 1922 and 1950*.

The Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892 obliged Scottish local authorities to provide allotments for the 'labouring population' if six or more ratepayers came forward to express an interest and a need. In 1912 the first municipal plots were established in Edinburgh. The Scottish National Union of Allotment (SNUAH) holders were established (later to become The Scottish Allotment Gardens Society - SAGS). Between 1914 and 1917 allotments were a valuable source of food production.

The first ever General strike takes place in 1926 following miners being told their wages would be cut by 13% and their working day would go up from seven to eight hours.

In 1928 the Representation of the People Act gave women the vote in the same terms as men.

The Wall Street crash occurred in 1929. The USA called in all their loans, put up custom barriers to stop the import of foreign goods which created a depression across the world.

In 1932 the Quakers and the SNUAH formed the Scottish Allotments Scheme for the unemployed

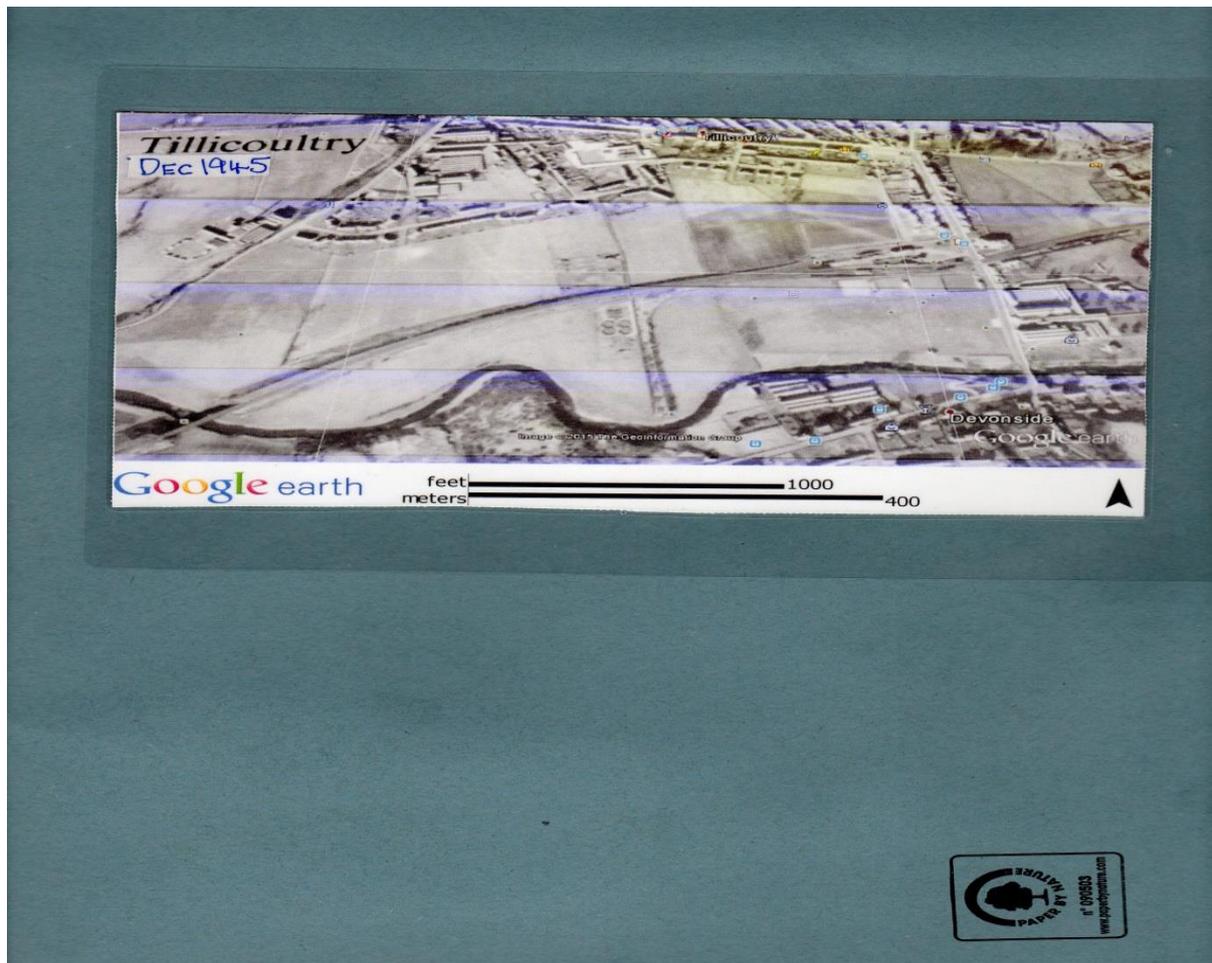
In January 1933 the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments were established by Major Wardlaw Ramsay for the unemployed of Tillicoultry to rent to grow potatoes (2). Appendix 3 contains photographs of allotments/allotment holders in Glasgow and Edinburgh 1933- 1942 pages 16 -20.

In 1936 poverty and mass unemployment among the working classes across UK as high as 70% in some parts of country. Appendix 3 contains a photograph of a drawing from a SASU 1936 report of “an allotment holder” (page 17).

Germany occupied and annexed Austria in 1938. Appendix 3 contains photographs of some Glasgow allotments/plot holders in 1938 (pages 17 and 18).The UK declared war on Germany in 1939. In 1940 Battle of Britain and evacuation from Dunkirk takes place. Auschwitz opens. Japanese attack Pearl Harbour

Appendix 3 contains a photograph of the front cover of the SASU report of 1942 (page 19). 1944 D Day

1945 The “original” Tillicoultry Allotments ariel photograph



In May 1945 – the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments (1.65 acres) were sold by Mr. Hugh Mc Intyre, farmer, to Tillicoultry Unemployed Association for £180 -current 2015 value £7,123.85, (2). Victory in Europe followed in August by victory over Japan, United Nations established. Division of Korea into North and South.

In 1950 the Allotments (Scotland) Act improved among other things compensation for allotment holders. The Korean War breaks out. From the 1951 census onwards, questions were asked about 'amenities'. In 1951, these were piped water, a cooking stove, a kitchen sink, a 'water closet' meaning a flush toilet, and a 'fixed bath', as distinct from a tin bath hung on the wall between uses (4).

The Polio vaccine was created in 1952 and Hillary climbs Everest the following year (the same year Stalin died)

Berlin wall built in 1961 the same year Soviets put the first man into space.

Cuban missile crisis occurs in 1962 which was the year the first James Bond movie was made.

In 1964 the Vietnam War starts and Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life in prison.

First man walks on the moon in 1969

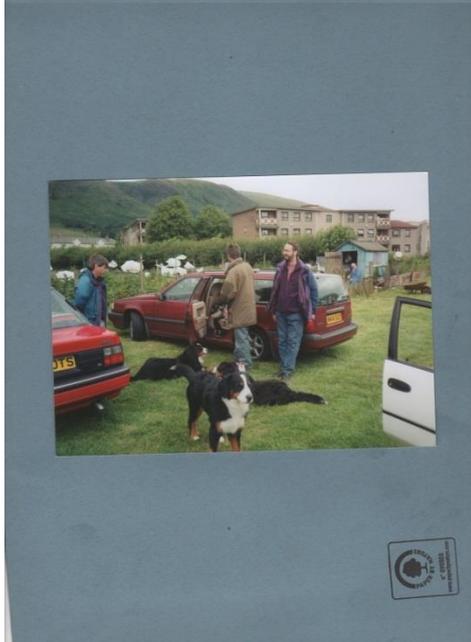
Between 1971 and 1979 the UK changed to the decimal system, Watergate scandal takes place, USA pulls out of Vietnam, Cambodian genocide commences, first outbreak of Ebola, Elvis found dead. In 1976 there were 300 names on Edinburgh's allotments waiting list.

The Beechgrove Garden visited the "original" Tillicoultry allotments July 1997. The following four photographs were taken by Peter McMillan (plot holder then and now)



Going from the left clockwise on the grass:

BBC film crew, Johnny Kerensky, Bill Torrance (presenter), Tom Mc Connachie and Stuart Little



**Top Photograph** – some plot holder’s names from bottom up Mrs. Spalding, Harry Bringham, and Peter Mac Millan

**Bottom Photograph** – BBC film crew, Jimmy Cleminston at his hut and Peter’s Bernese dogs Jodie, Daisy, Heidi



setting up

Tom Mc Connachie and BBC crew

Between 1990 and 1999 Germany was re – united, Nelson Mandela was freed, USA invaded Nicaragua, the Soviet Union collapsed, Desert Storm took place, Bosnian genocide starts, the Cold war ends officially, mad cow disease identified, and NATO bombs Serbia.

House of Commons publishes “Future of Allotments” report in 1998 in which they state that “allotments are an important feature in the cultural landscape combining utility, meaning and beauty with local distinctiveness” and the Food Trust of Scotland publishes “A Survey of Scotland’s Allotments and Agenda for Future Action” (2000). In the 2001 census, the list of key amenities was shorter than in 1951 (see Para. one page 6): central heating, and 'sole use of bath/shower and toilet' (5). Although none of our three measures are entirely consistent over time they do, in the author’s opinion, add to our understanding of some of the changing social conditions over the previous 50 years.

### **Other Legislation affecting Allotments**

Allotments are also affected by other, general statutes and by Common Law. For example there is a **common law duty of care** owed by the occupier of land to visitors and the *Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act of 1960* adds to this.

These lay responsibility for injuries suffered because of negligence onto the landlord and tenant of land. Allotment Associations holding events such as Open Days should be aware of this, and may wish consider insuring themselves against the resulting risks, The *Control of Pesticides (Amended) Act of 2008* places a duty of care on anybody using pesticides to store, use and dispose of them in a safe manner. This obviously will also apply to allotment gardeners as much as to professional horticulturists. I suggest that although the allotment acts make no mention of private allotments these regulations must also apply to all none council allotments.

The allotment acts all definitively give the duty to provide allotments and the powers to develop allotments to the local authorities. Appendix 2 (page 15) contains details of Duties imposed on Local Authorities/Tenants by the acts)

Since devolution the Scottish Government has maintained this arms-length approach to allotment provision. However it has signalled its approval of allotments by specifically mentioning allotments in *Scottish Planning Policy 11* and *Planning Advice Note 65 (2008)*.

Allotments are also contained in a strand of the Scottish *Food and Drink Policy 2009*.

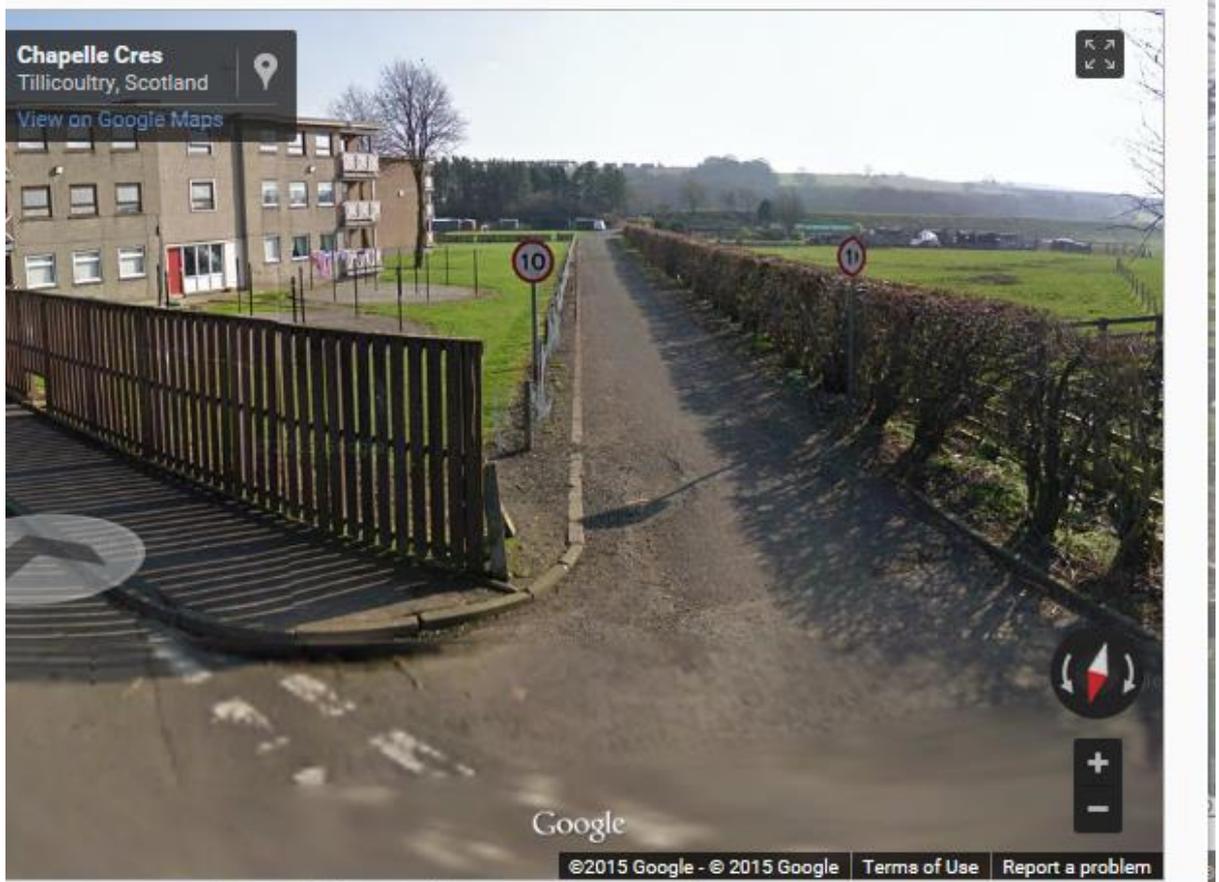
Hens are allowed on **all** council owned allotments in Scotland.  
Section 7 of the Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892 which is part of the existing legal framework for allotments states that a fowl house is permitted on council allotments in Scotland. Although this act is quite old these rules are still in force today. A Council may however have local rules to specify that no livestock or hens are allowed.

**Six more photographs of the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments, Current membership and Constitution Objectives 2010 - 2015**

**(1) Google maps the “original” Tillicoultry allotments March 2010**



- (2) Google maps, street view - Chapelle Crescent, leading to the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments – 2010 (You can see Les’s house from here!)



**(3) Chapelle Crescent June 2015 (note the pigeon heading for Danny's brassicas!) - Photograph Ian Shovlin**



**(4) View of the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments taken from the bottom of Chapelle Crescent 2012 (can you spot Peter’s chair and Harry waving?) - Photograph Ian Millar**

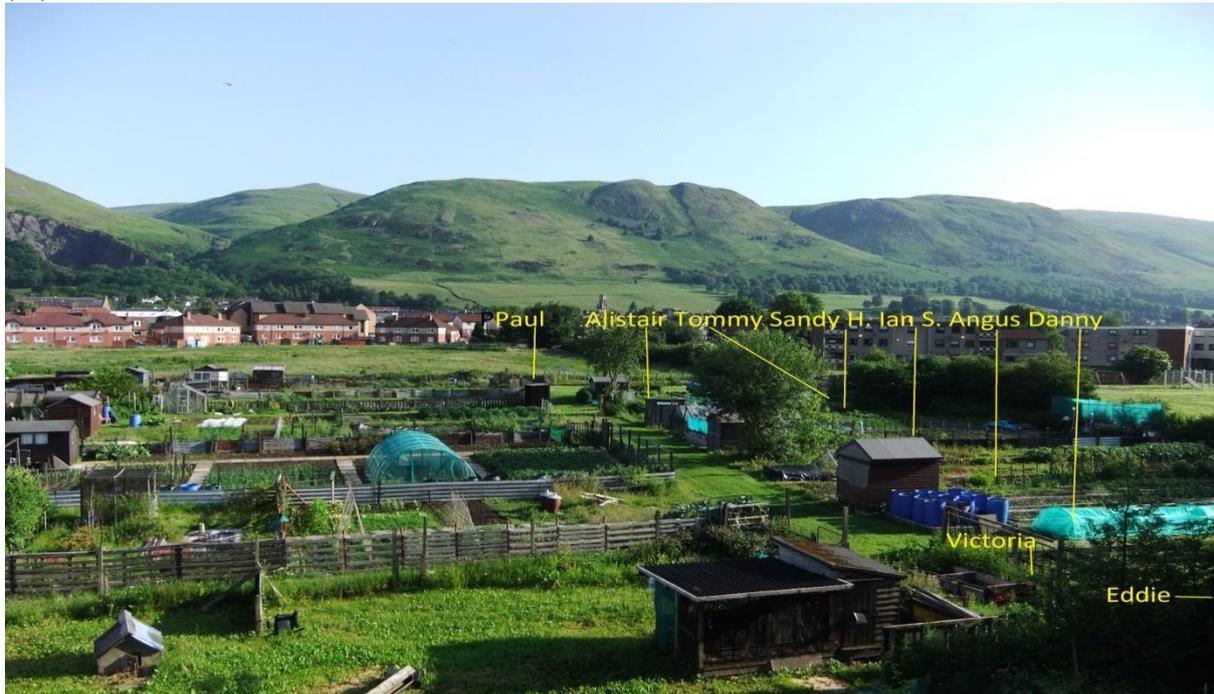


(5a) Plot Holders June 2015 - Photo Ian Shovlin



Paul Ian D. Dave Sandy Alistair John Vic & Clare Cathy Peter Harry Jean Jennifer Les

(5b) Plot Holders June 2015 - Photo Ian Shovlin



Paul Alistair Tommy Sandy H. Ian S. Angus Danny

Victoria

Eddie

The “Original” Tillicoultry Allotments joined the Scottish Allotments and Garden Society (SAGS) in July 2015

While the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments are independent, open to all Tillicoultry residents, owned by the tenants and have no connection with the Local Authority there are other allotments in Tillicoultry (350 yards east of the “original” Tillicoultry allotments) called the Tillicoultry Allotments Association. They were established by the Local Authority in 1978 and are currently recorded on the SAGS web site as the Tillicoultry Allotments, Chapelle Cres. (East side)

As of July 2015 there are 22 tenants (which includes four couples). Two of the 22 tenants grow vegetables **and** keep poultry and one of the 22 tenants only keeps poultry. 45% of tenants are retired. There are six female members (27%). There is a “community” shed which houses the communal allotments tools.

The allotments are due to hold their first ever BBQ on 16 Th. August 2015 in view of the numbers of new members joining in years 2014/2015.

The Objectives of the “original” Tillicoultry allotments as per its Constitution are:

- To manage allotments for the benefit of members, in accordance with the appropriate Terms and Conditions of Tenancy
- To promote, by whatever means agreed by the membership, the suitable provision of allotments.
- To provide, by whatever means agreed by the membership, support for plot holders.
- To promote the interests of all members in their gardening activities and to take joint action for the benefit and protection of members.
- To maintain harmonious and productive relationships within the allotments and the local community
- In pursuit of these Objectives the Association is non-political and shall act in a fair and non-discriminatory way (6).
- 

Since joining the “original” Tillicoultry Allotments four years ago, I can confirm that I have found it to be a place “... like a traditional village street where neighbours have to walk past each other and share trials and tribulations such as weather, slugs and pigeons” (7) and much more. It’s a community where there is always ready advice, humour, coffee/tea and biscuits to be had, the sharing of ideas (including many opportunities to “put the world to rights!”), tools/materials and assistance given with projects which I have greatly appreciated. In particular I would like to thank Peter, Danny, Sandy H, Harry, Les, Alistair, Paul, Tommy and Vic and Clare.

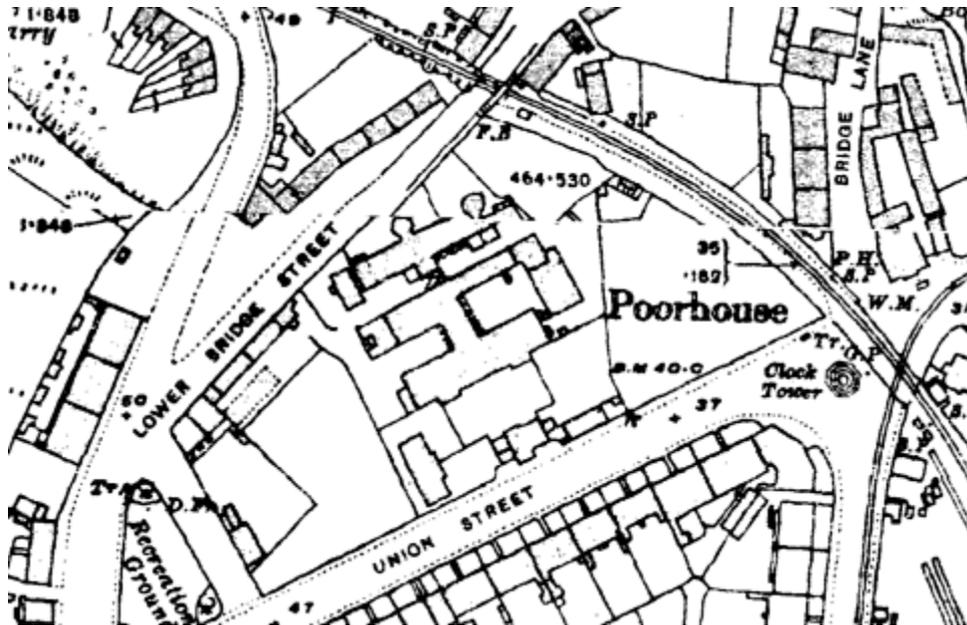
Ian Shovlin – Plot holder and Committee member

Date 30 Th. July 2015

**Update 2016** – Allotments added to Historic Environment Scotland Canmore Database. Canmore ID350879, Classification Allotment 20<sup>th</sup> century, site No. NSPPNW125

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 *Stirling Combination Poorhouse (which also catered for the poor of Tillicoultry) site, 1918*



Separate male and female accommodation was provided at each side. Protrusions at the rear may have been circular padded cells. After 1930, the poorhouse became known as Orchard House Poor Law Institution. Many poorhouse buildings have been demolished. A day hospital still operated on this site until recently.

## Appendix 2

### Duties imposed on Local Authorities/Tenants by the acts

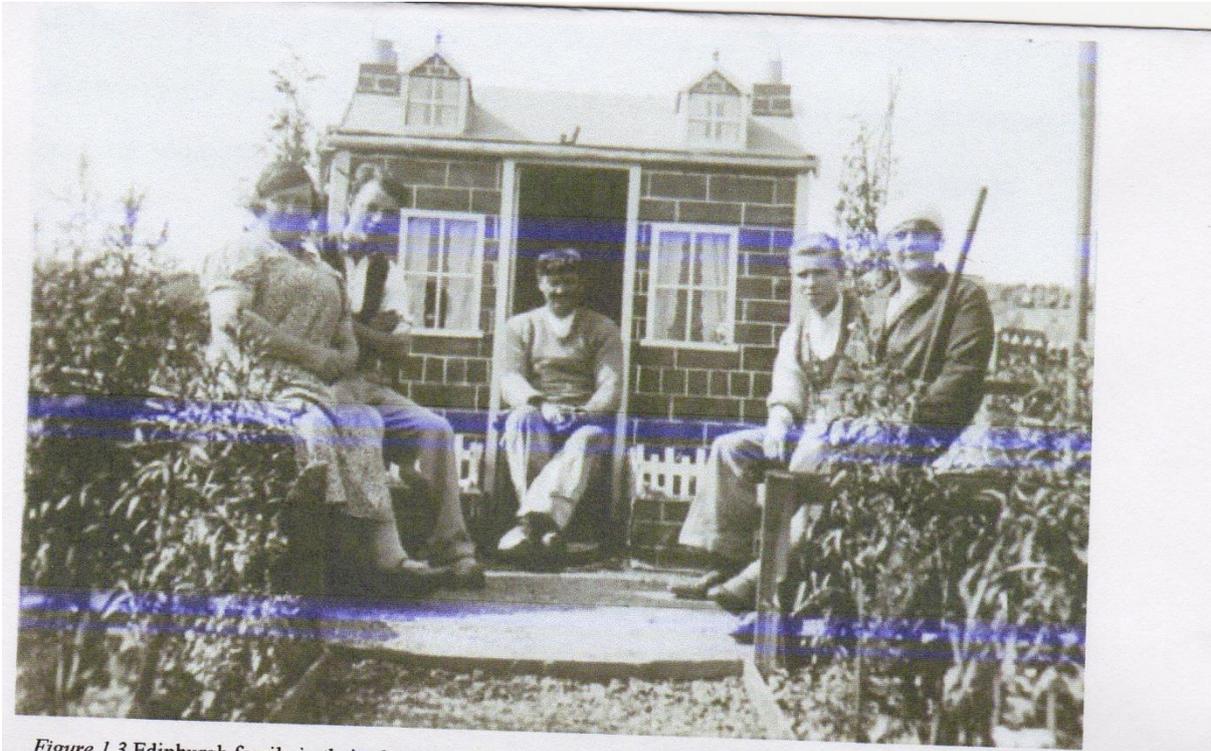
If six or more residents of the local authority area (more precisely people who are Council tax payers or on the electoral register) make representations to the Council that there is a requirement for allotments in the area the local authority must consider these representations. If on due consideration the local authority determines that there is such a requirement then it *must* either purchase or lease sufficient land to provide allotments and let these to residents in its area.

### Obligations on the tenant

The primary legal obligations of the tenant of an allotment are to pay the rent in good time, to cultivate the allotment in accordance with the regulations and to live in the Local authority area, or not more than 1 mile outside the boundary. The local authority may retake possession of the allotment on 1 months' notice if rent is in arrears by 40 days or greater, or if the tenant after at least 3 months possession of the allotment is not cultivating it in accordance with the regulations or if the tenant moves more than 1 mile outside the boundary of the local authority area.

Ref: Allotment (Scotland) Act 1892

**Appendix 3** – Photographs of some Glasgow/Edinburgh Allotments/Allotment holders, cover images from the Scottish National Union of Allotment Holders Report 1933, the Scottish Allotment Scheme for the Unemployed Report 1942 and National Archives of Scotland ( the author is very happy that the lace curtain/ chimney fashion trend has passed! and doesn't think they could all fit into their "wee" house if it rained!)



*Figure 1.3 Edinburgh family in their plot at the Warriston allotments for the unemployed, 1932. National Archives of Scotland, File AF 66/100.*



Figure 1.2 Cover image. SASU Report for Season 1933. SAGS-Victor Webb Archive, Glasgow University Archive Services.

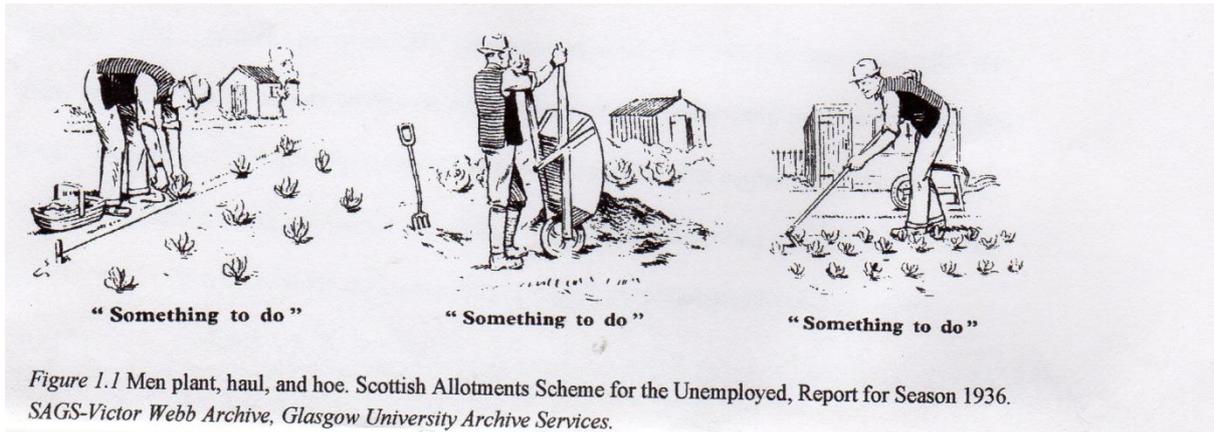
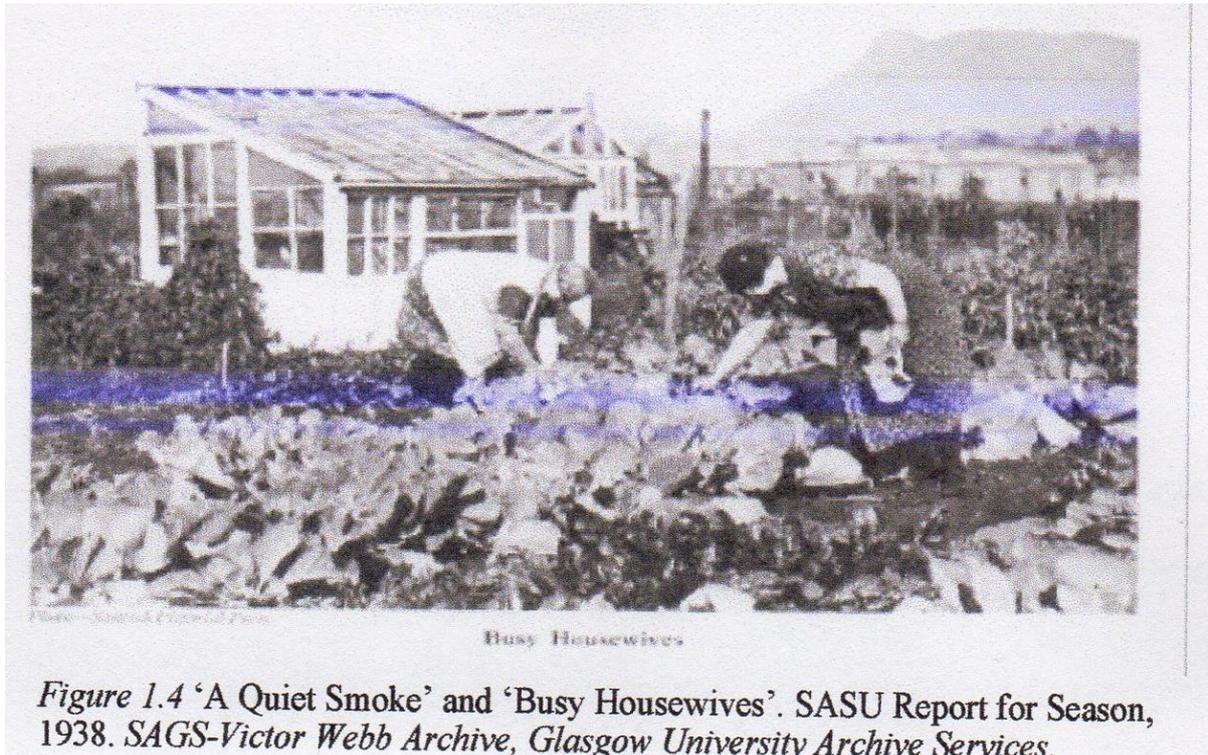


Figure 1.1 Men plant, haul, and hoe. Scottish Allotments Scheme for the Unemployed, Report for Season 1936. SAGS-Victor Webb Archive, Glasgow University Archive Services.



Figure 1.4



## REFERENCES

- (1) Raising Spirits Allotments, well – being and community Jenny Mollison, Judy Wilkinson and Rona Wilkinson, 2014, page 97
- (2) Tillicoultry A Centenary History 1871 – 1971, Eric J. Evans, page 47
- (3) The “original” Tillicoultry Allotments Title Deeds
- (4) 1951 Census
- (5) 2001 Census
- (6) The “original” Tillicoultry Allotments Constitution ( page 3)
- (7) Raising Spirits - Allotments, well – being and community Jenny Mollison, Judy Wilkinson and Rona Wilkinson, 2014, page 20

## LIST OF CONTACTS

Allotment Regeneration Initiative - <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/>

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities – <http://www.cosla.gov.uk>

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens - <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>

HDRA (Henry Doubleday Research Organisation) - <http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/>

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National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners - <http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

Soil Association Scotland - <http://www.soilassociationscotland.org/>

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society - <http://www.sags.org.uk/>

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy - <http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/>

Scottish Government – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>

Scottish Natural Heritage - <http://www.snh.org.uk/>

Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI) website: [www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society website: [www.rchs.co.uk](http://www.rchs.co.uk)

Beechgrove Garden website: [www.beechgrove.co.uk](http://www.beechgrove.co.uk)

Macaulay Institute website: [www.macaulaysoils.com](http://www.macaulaysoils.com)

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Scottish Parliament – [Local Government Committee 4th Report 2003; Report on Inquiry into Allotments](#)

Scottish Parliament – [Allotments; Research Note, November 2000](#)

House of Commons – [Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Fifth Report 1998: The Future for Allotments](#)

Local Government Association - [A new future for Allotments – an Advocacy Document for Sustainable Living, October 2000](#)

## **LIST OF CONTACTS (contd.)**

City of Edinburgh Council - [Cultivating Communities – An Allotment Strategy for the City of Edinburgh, 2002](#)

Glasgow City Council - Biodiversity and Allotments

DETR, Greater London Authority, LGA and Shell Better Britain Campaign - [Growing in the Community – a good practice guide for the management of allotments, 2001](#)

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

Scottish edition of the Plotholder's Guide (2010) published jointly by SAGS and ARI

Merlin Trust Report, September 2001, Caitlin O'Brian DeSilvey

SAGS Newsletter April 2015, Issue 31

Raising Spirits - Allotments, well – being and community Jenny Mollison, Judy Wilkinson and Rona Wilkinson, 2014

