

WNAHS newsletter

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August 2026

Update from the Chair

Our climate continues to change at a faster rate than we probably ever imagined, even a few years ago. Temperature records were broken in June and, as I write this in the middle of July, we are already well into our third and longest heat wave of the summer. The level of water in the River Itchen and its ancient aquifers, the source of the majority of our water here in Winchester, continues to fall. Southern Water has initiated domestic hosepipe bans and other controls over water usage for the third time in the past five years.

As allotmenters we are used to having to adapt to our surroundings. Each year tends to highlight a different problem. While previously we might have just checked our plants for aphids, now we must also inspect them for signs of stress due to lack of water.

Over the last few months, the Committee has published advice on the WNAHS website, through a series of leaflets and by the attachment of 'memory jogger' notes to taps, highlighting the fact that the adoption of best practice, ie "water roots, not leaves" etc, can avoid the wasteful use of water and promote stronger, healthier plants. If you have not already done so, I would encourage everyone to read them.

The use of watering cans, rather than reliance on a hose, focuses the mind. We now all recognise that we must water more mindfully than we are used to, aware that tap water is becoming an extremely scarce (and expensive) commodity on which our whole community and way of life is dependent.

As for the weather outlook for the next few months ... who knows?

The old adage that we should 'plan for the worst, hope for the best' is perhaps most pertinent, as the evidence now suggests that prolonged heatwaves and consequent periods of drought are becoming a permanent feature of our summers. If so, we will need to further adapt the way in which we manage our allotments in the future.

Finally, having completed five years as Chair of WNAHS, I will be stepping down at the end of September. If any member would be interested in taking on this role, please contact me through the WNAHS website and we can talk through what the role entails.

I hope you all enjoy the rest of the summer.

Chris Pearce

Reminders

Bonfires permitted from October to end of April (March at Park Road).

Please only burn dry matter when the wind is blowing away from any neighbouring houses.

WNAHS: AGM, 7pm on Thursday 19th November, 2026

From the Editor

I planted an asparagus bed this year, a long-term commitment to allotment life that I hope will provide us with asparagus for many years to come. When I told my mother about my labours, she told me about the asparagus beds at the house she lived in from 12 years old, Langley Park.

Langley Park, Lodden, is a Palladian mansion that was built in 1739 for George Proctor. When he died in 1744 he left it to his nephew, Sir William Beauchamp-Proctor and it stayed in his family until 1957, when it was sold to Langley School (which had rented it from 1946, when my headmaster grandfather, John Jevons, relocated the senior classes of Norwich High School for Boys there).

When the boys moved to Lodden, so did the headmaster's family, and my mother has oft described the excitement of moving from a city to the countryside, and how much her life changed thereafter.

Even though the house had been rented out since before WWII – the army were resident during the war – the estate still employed a number of staff, including the gardeners who had, in 1913/14, planted out the new asparagus beds as garden boys in their first employment. The asparagus beds were set in a 1.5 acre walled, kitchen garden, which supplied the school with all its fresh fruit and vegetables, and even though the gardeners appeared to be very

elderly when my mother lived there, they still tended the orchards, greenhouses, kitchen garden and the asparagus beds they first planted – and which were still going strong when my grandfather retired and handed over the keys to the governors in 1965. The twentieth century wreaked havoc on so many families and it surprised me to hear that the two garden boys were not called up in either of the two world wars. The Proctor-Beauchamp family were not so lucky, both the incumbent baronet and his nephew were killed at Gallipoli and the hereditary line eventually fizzled out.

During my grandfather's years as headmaster, any Langley boy who was deemed to be a 'malefactor' was put on gardening duties and tasked with helping with caring for the pigs, general weeding and the clearing up of any of the large estate's overgrown areas. And, of course, all the home-grown produce was brought into the kitchen, which still employed a cook, under-cook and scullery maids, who prepared meals for the the boys, the staff and my mother's family with the estate's organic, seasonal produce.

Although I was still very small when my grandparents lived there, I can just about remember staying and wandering around the outside of the house to look at the pigs and geese (which were terrifying!).

This is a story of how the passage of time changes everything, families lose their children, their wealth and suffer immeasurable losses; buildings and gardens decay, but plants endure. The Langley Park asparagus beds survived for many years, feeding hundreds of people from the first world war until shortly after my grandfather left. Sadly, the next headmaster dug up the kitchen gardens and turned them into all-weather sports pitches; dismissed the kitchen staff and contracted external caterers to feed the school ... I have my fingers crossed that WHAHS prevails and that the asparagus I have planted will last at least as long as those my mother remembers.

Emma McMullan

Editor

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From the Membership Department

At the beginning of September members will receive their notices for plot renewals. Plot fees will remain at 6.50 per rod which is outstanding value. Can I remind members to pay their fees promptly by October 1st 2026. I would encourage members to pay by using electronic payment through their banks and accessible via tablets, phones and PC's. If plot holders wish to pay by cash, they must do so at the Trading Shed and have the exact amount. The Trading Shed will not be expected to give change and can refuse payment if the exact amount is not tendered.

Each year we have members who do not pay by the deadline set. If you are going to pay late for whatever reason, please inform the Membership Secretary since it will save a lot of time and effort chasing up late payments. It is also important that you confirm with your site convenor whether you wish to renew your plot holding for the coming season. This will help save the society time and money.

Mike Moore
Membership Secretary

SITE SUMMARY		August 2026				
Sites	Plots	Taken	Vacant	Rods	Waiting List	Waiting Times (months)
Park Road	270	267	1	1416.3	146	26
Edington Road	161	159	1	670.0	127	25
Cromwell Road West	23	21	2	93.5	12	12
Kingsley Place	28	27	1	114.0	4	11
Lisle Court	11	11	0	54.5	10	11
Paulet Place North	26	24	2	87.0	8	17
Paulet Place South	29	28	1	91.0	10	20
The Valley	35	33	0	150.0	20	12
Princes Place	13	13	1	57	16	7
Greenhill Avenue	13	13	0	52.5	45	32
Trussell Crescent	12	12	0	52.5	41	17
Firmstone Road	6	6	0	18.0	38	No offers
Totals	627	614	10	2856.3	476	

Trading Shed Matters

Introduction

It has been another busy few months for the Trading Shed (TS) at Park Road, with all our merry band of shed volunteers doing a great job, making sure it provides a wide variety of products and good advice for you, the plot holders and members.

Once again Jo and I wish to thank the team of volunteers who support us at delivery times and in the TS, you may not know, but it has been a testing time with deliveries – drivers no longer deliver to the shed, and we often have to wheelbarrow the heavy bags of compost from the car park to the TS – so thank you team, to all of you, for your contributions and hard work.

Also, thank you for all the donations of plants for the TS – these go very quickly, so get in quick if you would like some. Big shout-out to Maria for her dependable donations of plants.

Once again, this year's best sellers have been grow bags and chicken pellets, which prove very popular for those looking for bulk fertiliser, and, they are very competitively priced.

Forthcoming dates of note:

Becky, from On Point Sharpening Services, will be at Park Road, on Saturday, 8th August 2026, during TS's opening hours – to sharpen knives and all tools

New dates for her service will be published in the new year.

Becky can be contacted at On Point Sharpening Services: 07393 600630, or: onpointsharpening@outlook.com

Supporting the 'Making Every Drop Count' water-saving campaign the TS can help you achieve water reduction in many ways including :

- Water butts – we have various sizes;
- Shading and ground cover materials – sizes cut to your needs;
- Net tunnels are a great way to keep young plants and seeds shaded – these are available in the TS;
- Watering cans – we have a good selection – these are very useful for getting right down to the roots, and also when the hosepipe ban comes in

Jobs & Tips (August to October)

August

- Start sowing all your winter lettuces, spicy salad leaves and greens like spinach, chard or kale, and coriander towards the end of August or early September for under cover;
- True spinach planted outside during this month can crop wonderfully in the spring;
- The first early apples will start ripening, so think about harvesting and storage;
- Strawberry runners should be ready to separate and pot up, or plant out;
- Summer onions may be ready

– give each onion a gentle tug a few days before harvesting, to help them ripen, and lift on a sunny day;

- Try sowing some green manure – many varieties are stocked in the TS – look in the seed section.

September-October

- Get ready for the Autumn change over;
- Remove any spent crops from outdoor beds and mulch with compost and manure- to protect your soil over the winter;
- Sow crops for the 'hungry gap';
- Harvest and store your orchard crops;
- Harvest squashes and pumpkins;
- Collect leaves to make leaf mould for extra mulch;
- Sow more onions for over wintering undercover to be ready in June – try Augusta – onions come into the TS this month;
- Also, garlic and shallots arrive in October ready for sowing;

TS volunteers can help with seed selection, and many other things besides – if there is something missing in our stock please let us know.

Potato Ordering 2026-27 and beyond

- There was no comment on our proposal for changing the way we manage the potato orders this/next year – so we plan to

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go ahead and order potatoes as normal in July, for the February order, and also, arrange some dates for the potatoes buying/ collection weekends;

- We will still need to spend some time weighing out the potatoes in various weight quantities – we will require willing volunteers for this task. (usually takes a few hours);
- We are keeping the types/ varieties roughly the same, and, this year we are also going to try:
 - ◇ Pink Fir Apple;
- There will be over 21 different

varieties to choose from, including the old staple favourites – an information sheet will be available online, and in the Shed, to help with those difficult choices;

- So, NO pre-ordering this time.

If you still wish to comment on this proposal then please let me know.

Also, I am very keen to hear about any suggestions for things to be stocked in the shed – so, if you have an idea of something that might be useful – please let me or Jo know.

Finally, we are always looking for volunteers to help in the shed – so if you are keen to help please let me or Jo know – the team are very friendly and keen to have more people to help – it can be as frequently as you wish – come and have a chat.

Thank you for your ongoing support and custom.

Andrew Cable

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Edington Road News

Having been volunteered to write something, and then having procrastinated until near the deadline, a couple of suggestions were gratefully received.

One request was a note on the origins, history and effect of our Community Allotment Group at Edington Road, run by Incredible Edibles Winchester. I'll stick with that! Our tenth anniversary was around this year in March. Only two of us still there now were there at the very beginning, and that's our best guess. IEW is part of the Food group in Winchester, Action on the Climate Crisis (WinACC), and is involved with diverse projects in Winchester,

such as showing school children how to plant seeds and grow food at their schools, reducing food waste, and running demo planters at the railway station and Abbey Gardens. The Community Allotment project was conceived to give access to growing things to people who weren't confident enough or had time enough for a whole allotment. There are several groups who run WNAHS plots with a similar intent. These groups are all pretty inclusive in their own ways. We have had many people join us over the years, some for a few weeks, some for years and years. We have also had people occasionally turn up from NHS social prescribers, the Night

Shelter, schools, Beavers ... they seem to get what they need, which mostly includes access to nature and learning how to grow plants. There is a strong social aspect as well, both on the plot (coffee time does a busy trade), and occasionally elsewhere (Christmas Lunch at the King Alfred is very popular).

So how did it start? The idea was brought up at Park Road, but at the time Edington Road didn't have a locked gate, so going there was suggested as it was easier just to let members in. We were allocated a plot which hadn't been cultivated for a few years, and we started digging out the bindweed and

grass. On the basis that you might as well ask, we applied for a Community Project grant from Tesco's and got it! That got us a shed, tools, two large fruit cages and more. It also allowed us to repair a donated greenhouse. We applied for a second plot, and by the time that came about, the group had grown enough to tackle it. It was much more overgrown than the first one – bad enough that we weren't charged rent until the next October!

We now have working parties on Saturday and Tuesday mornings.





Anything harvested gets shared after coffee. We think there are at least eight people who joined us, liked allotment life enough to apply for their own plots, and eventually got them. They still join us to help out – and for coffee!

We all decide what crops to grow – anything suggested gets tried at least once. Standard crops mostly work. We don't always do it the 'right' way. Parsnips only seem to germinate well in root trainers, and planting them out without

breaking the tap root is tricky. We grew a pea crop overwinter in a greenhouse, and harvested it in April. Similarly we grew some very nice Anya new potatoes which we harvested in May. Some things haven't grown well (sweet potatoes). Some grew well but in the end no one really wanted the produce (red quinoa, flax – both pretty though). Some are works in progress; this year – blue oyster mushrooms. We often save seeds, just because we like to, and the pollinators really appreciate it.

Above all though, it's fun, and there's always someone to water the greenhouse!

Jim Morgan

Park Road News

It's a long-standing joke that the British mostly talk about the weather, but this year has certainly been a challenge for allotmenters as they coped with a lot of early rain, then very late frosts and now extreme heat.

I have made a note to sow tomato, chilli and pepper seeds a month later next year, as I lost most of the first outside tomatoes to late frost. I was surprised that lettuces and cauliflowers were not affected by the cold, and had good early crops of both, but worth delaying most things till the risk of frost has gone.

This summer we have all had to learn new skills. Shading young plants from strong sun is essential, so cloches or tunnels covered with fabric are very helpful, saving plants from being burnt and moisture is retained better under cover too. Crops in shaded greenhouses do better than those with the glass left unprotected from the sun. While it's more exhausting to carry watering cans, it gives a better quality of watering than using a hose, so you can miss a day knowing that water has reached the roots from the can.

When hoses can be used again, never use unless they are fitted with a sprayhead which can be turned on and off.

If you have a shed, please make sure you have guttering and a

water butt or two. Rain may be in short supply over the summer but it's handy to use saved rainwater early in the season and saves the society's water bill.

I think most people know to remove the little shoots or suckers that grow between the main stem and side leaves of tomatoes. These can be rooted easily, especially if taken from the bottom of the tomato plant, and will produce good productive plants.



If your plot is next to a boundary hedge, please keep the hedge trimmed back to make access easy. It is a plotholder's obligation to keep adjoining paths trimmed and level, and hedges cut back.

This year the most common thing people have complained about is the rat problem. I think most plots have been affected by these voracious creatures. When we had six cats on site, they kept rats under control.

To tackle the problem, I have just acquired two feral cats, currently confined, but soon free to start

ratting. In the autumn, when it's cooler, we will get more, and I very much hope that next year there will be fewer rats and pigeons doing damage at Park Road.

Once the cats are free to roam, we will give them one feed a day so we can check on them, but leave them to find their own food otherwise. They are here not as pets but to control the rat population, so please don't leave out food for them. As they have never been exposed to traffic, please take especial care to observe the 5mph speed limit at all times.

If you'd like to offer some cat food for the daily feed occasionally, there will be a dustbin by the Trading Shed for cat food donations.

The next most frequent moan I hear is about plotholders being asked to water their neighbours' plots. Most people are happy to do this for a weekend, but, especially when temperatures rise, it's not on to ask someone to do a week, or two weeks' duty, when they have their own plot to do. So don't take advantage of nice people who find it hard to say no.

I have mentioned this more than once, but please remove any Mypex on your plot if it's being used as permanent weed suppressant. Wood chip can be

used instead round fruit bushes if you don't like to hoe the weeds. Apart from leaching plastic particles into the soil, Mypex becomes extremely difficult to remove as weeds grow through it. It's fine to use as a temporary cover over winter.

Always check that the netting round your fruit cage is securely fastened. Every year, birds get trapped inside, and though mostly they find their way out, it's better if they can't get in.

In spite of this being a very challenging year, all the new

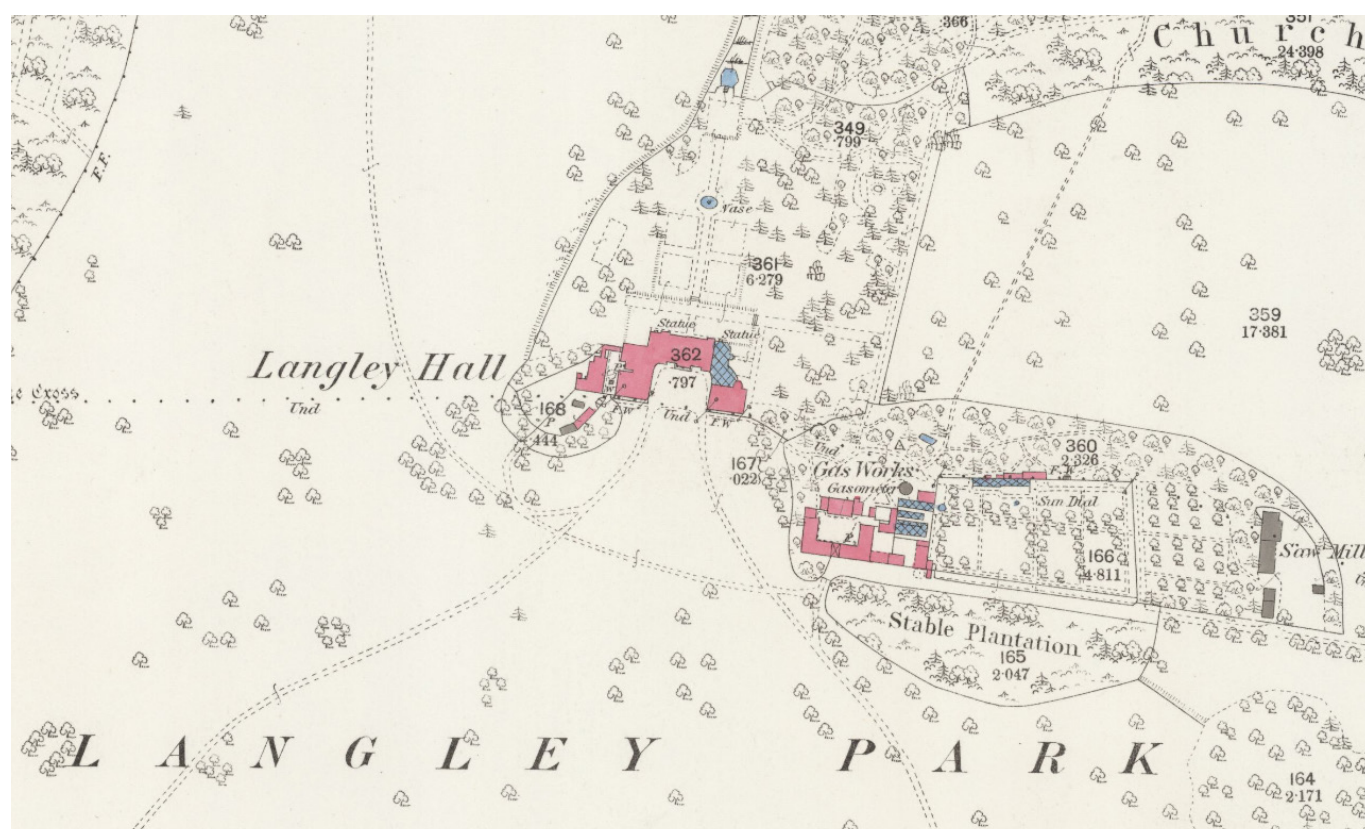
plottolders have made great efforts. Some plots needed a lot of work, but this has been done willingly and the results are pleasing to see.

I lived in Scotland for many years, and often moaned about the constant rain, but I'm hoping for a good thunderstorm, or just a shower or two, here, before too long.

Park Road is full of wonderful plottolders who are prepared to help out when needed, and share time, crops and advice. Recently a plottolder gave an unwanted

shed to someone with a rather tumbledown one, and another donated a large amount of very useful long, strong boards suitable for raised beds etc. The recycling space by the trading shed is used on a regular basis, and redundant items are snapped up quickly. We're also very grateful to Chris for letting the cats have sole tenancy of his greenhouse, while they settle in. Thank you everyone.

Maria Keniston 07769 562493
parkroadconvenor@outlook.com



Other news

Beating the heat

If the current summer weather is to be the new normal, then we must very likely change the things we grow for more heat-loving plants.

On many plots in late July, tomatoes are doing better outdoors than in greenhouses or polytunnels. So maybe it will be possible to grow chillies, peppers, melons and aubergines regularly in the open air in future.

Other plants which do better in hot weather include most root crops, beetroot tolerates dry weather once established, sweet corn, and Swiss chard, as opposed to ordinary spinach, which tends to bolt in the heat. It's a versatile



vegetable which can be used in stir fries, curries and, with the addition of a few onions and potatoes, make a good soup, hot or cold.



All the squashes, especially butternut and pumpkins, thrive in hot weather as they produce a lot of foliage which shades the growing point, and thus they need less water. Sweet potato, another spreading plant, should do well too, as it needs a long, warm period to produce large tubers.

Growing rows closer together also produces a shadier environment, and allows leeks to do well and continue when the temperatures lowers.

Early or second early potatoes generally don't suffer from extreme heat as they are usually

ready by the advent of hot weather, especially if planted early. Potatoes planted mid-March may suffer a touch of frosting in late April or May, but this doesn't affect the crop. Maincrop potatoes are generally smaller in a heatwave.

Young fruit trees need to be given a bucket of water each week for the first few years. Plants with deep and established roots, like artichokes and rhubarb, also survive the heat.

Obviously it's best to avoid a lot of salad plants which are very thirsty, as well as runner beans. Brussels sprouts are generally able to grow well in hot summers but cabbages and broccoli struggle more.



Dwarf French beans can cope though still need watering.

Onions, garlic and broad beans sown in the autumn have a good chance of getting established before the heat takes its toll but may need to be protected from wind and rain.

So mulch and manure your plot well in the autumn, and focus on things which have done well this summer. Take a view on whether to struggle on with plants which hate dry conditions and heat, and consume a lot of time and water to be successful.



A relaxing afternoon at the annual Cromwell Road summer picnic!