Colwich Allotments Association

Report to Environment Committee of Colwich Parish Council 09/11/26

The main talking point for our members this year was the incredibly hot Summer months. Plotholders have endured the warmest summer on record and those who managed to keep up with watering were rewarded. However, crops needing regular watering have generally suffered with potatoes in particular, being of a smaller size than usual. The intense heat of the summer months has resulted in many fruits ripening much earlier than usual and the season was effectively compressed.

As a consequence of the heat, high quantities of water were required to maintain crops over the Summer. With little rain, water butts were soon emptied and never replenished meaning plotholders having to use mains water. This comes with the obvious cost implications to the Association, with August's bill alone being £526. We continue to enforce the rule that if a plotholder applies for a structure on their plot it is one of our conditions that they collect the rainwater from that structure.

Some information regarding the Summer heat in Colwich:

The average daily high during June, July and August was 24.1C

This is 3.5C above the long-term Summer average between 1991 and 2020.

We had 29 days above 26C – the temperature threshold for a heatwave in our area.

On 5th July we again opened the allotments to the general public for Open Gardens and had many visitors that were complimentary about the site. Two weeks later on Sunday 19th July we held our 6th Annual Allotments Open Day. Quite remarkably this year's renewal proved to be the most successful yet. Our members provided fruit, vegetables and flowers, together with jams and pickles. We also had many cakes and pastries donated. Our members also gave books, DVDs, jigsaws, etc and the community police once again attended. Our very generous visitors donated nearly £1,500. We share this money with Katharine House Hospice, so with monies already collected this year, we were able to present them with over £800. Anything that didn't sell was also taken to the Katharine house shop the following day.

At the end of September, we held our 2nd annual pumpkin competition. It was won this year with a pumpkin weighing 24kg.

We have agreed to help Colwich Primary School with their 'Roots to Learning Project'. This garden seems a wonderful idea, and I will be meeting the organisers on Thursday 5th November.

Each year to supplement our income (as part of the National Association) we sell seeds from the Kings catalogue to our plot holders, and we receive 15% of the amount sold. On 7th November we will be meeting at the trading shed to hand out the purchased seeds. As we did last year there will be complimentary mulled wine (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) together with mince pies for all attending.

We have 46 full plots, 5 threequarter plots, 24 half plots, together with the childrens plots meaning 76 plots in total and 130 members paying insurance. There are now 15 people on the waiting list. It is interesting to note that this figure was as low as 7 before our Open Day.

During the course of the year we improved our compost bays at the bottom of the site from wood to concrete section and they are proving to be a great success. We also cleaned out the bay at the top to make a compost bay and a manure bay.

As part of our ongoing improvement programme we removed the bank near the communal shed and at the end of August grass-seeded it to make a larger communal area. When the grass is properly established, we will move the bench and seat at the top of the hill to give a fine view over the site and onwards to Cannock Chase.

Chris Johnson