

Alloa Allotments Association Keilarsbrae, Sauchie



Where: the site is situated at Keilarsbrae in Sauchie. This is at the side of the Arnold Clark Garage, across from the new hospital.

What: Alloa Allotments is a traditional allotments site established in 1995. An old Council yard was turned into 26 allotment plots and the plot holders formed Alloa Allotments Association. Each plot holder rents a plot and maintains the sheds which were originally put in by the Council. The Allotments Association pay a yearly nominal fee to the Council for the lease of the land and was granted a 25 year lease in 2012.

Since 1995 the number of plots on the site has increased to 44, but only 14 of those are now what is termed a "full plot". The rent for these is currently £60/year. 18 plots are half plots at £30/year and there is also 12 "starter" plots on site which are 1/3 the size of a full plot and cost £20/year. This works well for the Association as very few people can maintain a full plot these days. If you share a plot the shed is shared too.

The plot holders also support Deer Park Primary School and a Syrian refugee family who now live in Alloa with half a plot each.

Fruit, vegetables and flowers are grown on the site and a plot holder (called the flower man) also looks after the planters in front of the community hospital nearby.

Why: Allotment gardening is a wonderful activity, combining gentle exercise in the fresh air with the satisfaction which comes from growing vegetables and fruit from seeds and seedlings to maturity.

But that's one of the strengths of allotments - they are a community, and there's always someone who can provide you with advice. Most of all, allotment gardening should be a pleasure. Whether you choose to compete in one of the local competitions or prefer simply the enjoyment of being out of doors, almost in the Countryside, yet just a step away from home; it is a time of relaxation and creativity.

1. What are you most proud of?

We are proud of the community spirit on the site. Everyone helps each other – young and old. We share excess produce and help people with their starter plots. Starter plots are essential; a lot of people feel that they can't handle a ½ or full plot of approx.250m2.

The plot holders have also been very helpful to Deer Park Primary School in establishing their plot by donating plants and giving practical support. The children are desperate to see what happens next once they planted something and the plot holders enjoy their presence on site.

Recently when a ½ plot became vacant we decided that we wanted to make that available to Syrian families that have come to Alloa. Via Derek Stewart past Provost we got in contact and now have a family who look after the plot. They have come from Hell, so we want them to feel welcome. I have even downloaded an English-Arabic App, so we can discuss what to plant.



2. What was hard?

It has been hard maintaining the sheds to the require standard especially if plot holders are not DIY-minded. It can also be a struggle to find funding for something like sheds.

3. What surprised you?

Plot holders can be a bit worried about change, but once you speak to them at tidy up days and get-togethers for all they are open to suggestions. Once people are on board they have lots of good ideas.

The Council have been and are very helpful to us. We have made use of the payback scheme and they have supported us with a grant to erect a new fence.

Local businesses including Buicks, Tesco, ASDA, Morrisons, Robertson Facilities Management have been very good to us and have donated materials and plants.

It's great that we now maintain the planters at the new hospital. They are put there to stop people parking and the facilities management struggle to have time to maintain them. The agreement is that they buy the plants and compost and we look after them for all who visit the hospital to enjoy.

4. What would you do differently?

We would like to make improvements to site that could benefit all, such as a new compost system and new greenhouses for sharing possibly in the woodland bit. We are currently keeping an eye on Gumtree and picking up old greenhouses that people don't want any more.

We also need to update our website and make use of social media to promote the Association.

5. What advice would you give to others?

If you are starting out as an allotment holder start small! A bigger plot can be too much for some people and they end up handing the keys back.

We do plot inspections every month to encourage tidiness and make plot holders proud to maintain their plot. If people are not able to it is better to share plots and help each other out.

Lifestyles have changed since I was young and a full plot is really for the minority now.

6. Contact

Alloa Allotment Association

Derek Robertson, Tel: 01259 722960, email: val.del@btinternet.com

Mike Hodge Tel: 01259 760711, email: mikehodge@alloaallotments.org.uk

Website: <http://www.alloaallotments.org.uk/index.html>

Clackmannanshire Council

Andy Macpherson, Development Officer (Sustainability), Tel: 01259 452 639, email:

amacpherson@clacks.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.clacks.gov.uk/community/allotmentassociations/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GrowClacks/?ref=bookmarks>

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society

Website: <http://www.sags.org.uk/>



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