

# ALLOTMENT NEWS

SPRING 2006

newsletter of the friends of windmill allotments

Welcome to the first newsletter about allotments to be published in Lambeth. We have never done one before and the fancy publishing packages won't run on our computer so we will make do and with help from all who contributed to this issue we will learn as we go along.

This newsletter has been made possible by the support and grant from the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest. The aim is to help bond allotments together and to spread knowledge to all people interested in allotments.

This is a newsletter offering you an opportunity to contribute and to encourage more people to get involved in the health giving experience of allotment gardening. This next year looks set to be as challenging as last and we will reflect all the excitement in these newsletters.

Did you catch Monty Don in BBC's Gardeners World on March 3<sup>rd</sup>? It was an inspiring programme showing the many allotments hidden within Birmingham city. The variety of the people and the styles of cultivation, but not least the sense of real community there.

Here in London, we too have a proud history and a hidden oasis. The land has a tapestry of activity upon it but we are the people who grow things and so we look back into history for people who did that too.

In 1816 an Irish family opened up a farm in the fields that surrounded the little village of Brixton. The Ashby family continued until 1935, and all that is left to remind us of them is the windmill and the recently discovered knowledge that Ashby created a garden behind the mill house and grew rare species of plants; he was also a member of the Royal Botanical Society, a man inspired by plants.

As Lambeth grew the wind was blocked and millers turned to waterpower. Ironically as time passed the Municipal Waterworks opened up on what had been Ashby land and created allotments for workers- the tradition of gardening for survival in this area was kept alive.

Today the windmill is once more being restored and in its shadow a hectare of land is still gardened, but now by a multi national community of people who's ages range from 85 to 2.

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In 2006 more and more people are looking to cultivation and community as antidotes to the stresses of modern life. Allotment gardening is becoming popular again.

Inside London local authorities have protected open land sites from hungry developers by Policies( Acts of Parliament to protect Allotments are suspended in the inner cities) The Windmill, the covered Reservoir and the Allotments behind Brixton Hill have survived because of this policy of protection.

Today it is Lambeth's Unitary Development Plan that is committed to protecting the land from redevelopment but crucially it is also committed to protecting the allotment from change of use.

Such policies are only as strong as the people who support them and it is only by staying alert, and impressing on our elected representatives, that this protection is important that it will stay in place. The stakes have never been higher – a new housing estate, a school, a playing field, an industrial park, a supermarket on the surface they are all important, we have to show that allotments are as important as any of these.

To make up a vibrant community we need a tapestry of life enhancing activities for all ages. If we all work together we can preserve the allotments for generations to come. Come and join the allotment movement and help us GROW.

NOTICE OF 1st AGM of Friends of Windmill Allotments to be held at

8PM Thursday APRIL 27th 2006

venue

Clapham Youth Centre 61 Lyham Road SW2 ( nearer to acre lane than to new park road)

NOMINATIONS are invited for the posts of officers of the executive to be received in writing by the by w/c april 10th to Secretary FOWA c/o 61 Thornbury road London SW2 4db [fdgclarey@aol.com](mailto:fdgclarey@aol.com)

#### AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of last meeting
3. Annual Report
4. Secretary's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Elections ( honorary posts)
7. Constitution ( possible changes)
8. Funding
9. AOB
10. Date of Next Meeting

## Noticeboard

### ANCIENT COMPUTERS

**Jack Dudley-Swale from Spa Hill Allotments says ancient computers work better on SUSE (novell) Linux**

John Clark has recently downloaded a free programme called OPENOFFICE (from Sun Microsystems' SunOffice) - [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) – a fully featured office suite - well worth learning. Any more ideas welcome.

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### SURFING THE ALLOTMENT

Thanks to the dedicated work of Ali Knapp, Farley Heath has donated the building of our website which can be found at [www.windmillallotments.org.uk](http://www.windmillallotments.org.uk)

We hope to develop the site so that everyone can enjoy the seasons and the produce. But like all new projects we have to get used to it and we need volunteers who can help it grow and update it. Are you interested, skilled or have ideas of how it can improve? Please contact us.

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### WASTED LAND

Land that has been allowed to become overgrown created a useful buffer zone to curious and maybe naughty children or intruders, but now with the well designed fence Thames Water has constructed the buffer is just so much wasted land. This land needs reclaiming. In the 1950s there were many more plots on the allotment site and there could be more today and of a variety of sizes to meet differing needs and time available but we have to lead the way.

To begin with the land clearance is hard manual work, but eventually it settles to a soothing land cleaning process where time slips away and more meditative feelings encompasses all involved.

We need volunteers to engage in this reclamation and maybe while the land condition is being restored we should try growbags, a polytunnel or even containers to get some produce from the space.

If you want to get those muscles toned and want to grow something this year come along and volunteer.

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### NEWSLETTER TEAM

**Do you want to get experience researching growing techniques, exploring horticultural byways and highways, report on national or local gardening issues, even interviewing politicians, or garden celeb? Well join the editorial team. Of course we do some nitty gritty stuff, too, like stuffing envelopes. There is something for all to do, so come and give it a try, all in a happy atmosphere. You can email contributions too - there is something for everyone. Can you give time to create the newsletter? Anything from a couple of hours to a couple of days per issue do get in touch.**

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**VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED** Can you site clear? Dig? Design raised beds? Build raised beds? Improve paths, level them?

**Help the elderly?**

**Do you want to help, want to learn ?**

**Then join us either pair up with someone needy or join a working party.**

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### VEGETABLES IN CONTAINERS

**RHS 10 top vegetables to grow in containers.**

Choose the largest you can 40 + centimetres wide and the same deep

1. TOMATO “Gardeners Delight” put in a well lit position indoors until March and /or buy /transplant plant in May
2. PEPPER “Redskin “ position and timing as Tomato
3. ONION “Turbo “ plant sets in February
4. LETTUCE Little Gem plant in March onwards
5. Dwarf French BEANS “Ferrari” sow in MAY
6. BEETROOT “Pablo” sow in March

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7. CARROT "Napoli" plant February on protect with fleece
8. Salad POTATO "Mimi" tubers in March protect from frost
9. TURNIP "Market Express" sow in March.
10. Salad Onion Guardsman" sow march on

If you have limited space or are waiting for a plot's ground to improve then utilise this idea there is no reason to be without fresh veg this year.

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### SPROUT THOSE SEEDS

Wash your seeds in a sieve and soak overnight for 12 hours then rinse them off.

If you have a germinator put them in avoiding cramping them

Put in a well lit spot but avoid direct sunlight

Keep at room temperature water daily.

In 4-6 days sprouts should be ready to harvest, rinse them thoroughly and keep in a fridge

Consume within 5 days

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### GOLFING ON THE RESERVOIR

The Aquarius Golf Club at Honor Oak is built on top of Europe's biggest underground reservoir. Nineteen million bricks were used to create the Reservoir. Inside its huge more like a Cathedral than an industrial space. On the top the still and calm of a highly manicured Golf Course gives no clue of what lies below.

The name Aquarius was taken from the in-house magazine of the Metropolitan Water Board Staff Association, It has a logo; on its shield there are six drops of water into which emphasise the links between the two enterprises. The reservoir was opened in 1909 and was known as the Beachcroft Reservoir.

World War 1 closed the golf course in 1915 but at the end of hostilities it reopened in 1919. All went well; in 1963 the Club celebrated its Golden Jubilee. Then problems began to appear, in 1971 the tennis courts had to be dug up to install more water pipes below. By 1990 major works of repair and improvement to the reservoir put the club in real jeopardy.

Luckily a sound lease drawn up in the past by its Founders and good will from the land- owner Thames Water saved the club. While the work went on short holes were played for some time

but now they are back to full strength, in fact better than ever, a real gem of a course.

There is much to learn from history

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### LOOSING THE PLOT

**What can be done when allotments are under threat?**

**In Harrow in Middlesex the tension was growing --so many allotments were under the threat of the axe. The frequency of redevelopment seemed to be growing so in May 1998 five allotment secretaries decided that collective action was a good idea, they created Harrow in Leaf.**

**This is an umbrella group which now has 25 volunteers representing the majority of Harrow's sites. They have been joined by horticultural associations, park user groups, and local beekeepers and have formed a partnership with Harrow Council.**

**See Harrow in Leaf at [www.harrowleaf.org](http://www.harrowleaf.org)**

John Prescott the Deputy Prime Minister has ordered a land assessment project through out Britain to identify land for housing development, but incidentally marginal and small pocket sites have been uncovered. In Lambeth this operation is known as the Domesday Project and a lot of spare space has come to light that could be allotment land.

There are even old allotments sites that shortage of funds has caused to be left closed, neglected and forgotten.

Volunteers are needed to encourage Lambeth to cooperate with us to utilise all this wasted space and maybe like Harrow in Leaf we could form a collective of like minded organisations to protect our precious heritage.

Dr Iain Boulton of Lambeth Parks has expressed an interest in creating a Forum for Allotments to support one another, this could be a first step to Lambeth in Leaf.

If you are interested contact us.

# Noticeboard

## LUNAR PLANTING

The moon is said to control moisture levels in the earth there are 2 periods

1. With the moon from new to full this is called the waxing moon. Moisture in the soil is at its highest. This is the optimum time to plant.
2. From full to the last quarter this is the waning moon. Less sap rises and the soil moisture is lowest – this is the time to prune.

**\*\*LET'S TRY AN EXPERIMENT\*\***

**On Monday April 10<sup>th</sup>.sow some autumn broccoli (not purple). Plant in one row with seeds at 9 inch intervals. Label the row with planting date and the number of seeds sown.**

3. On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April do the same with a second row. Label with date, seed number and name.
4. If the lunar calendar is right these dates should bring differing results.
5. On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> August harvest your first Broccoli row only. Cut at ground level and weigh each plant in grams. Add up the weight of the plants in the row and divide by the number of seeds sown.
6. On Saturday August 12<sup>th</sup> repeat the process for row two.

The moon's passage round the zodiac should reap rewards root crops like carrots and potatoes benefit from being sown in front of one of the earth constellations Taurus, Virgo or Capricorn – that happens about every 9 days in the growing season.

In 2005 the Moon rose higher in the sky so from our allotment where in winter it shone romantically first through trees and then through the sails of the Windmill, now the moon hangs way above these landmarks – creating a cinema set lighting effect. Will this effect planting?

Any one with more knowledge or comments, write in to our soon to be created letters page.

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## KEEP IT TIDY

**MUD and wheels : Can we acquire a site brush to keep the path clear of spills.?**

**If anyone is delivering or digging and soils the path please clear it off because wheelchair users find getting dirt off their wheelchairs a job. Lets get into the habit of being disabled friendly and keep the path mud free and clear of obstacles.**

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## FROGSPAWN

**Email Fiona if you need some then contact [fdgclarey@aol.com](mailto:fdgclarey@aol.com)**

**SPRING begins March 21<sup>st</sup>**

**The onion and its cousin the shallot were said to have arrived here with Claudius The Romans acquired the taste in Egypt and Judaea. The genus Allium was mentioned in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by Aelfric.**

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## RAISED BEDS + DISABLED ACCESS

The allotment population is growing older but we don't want to loose people because their health makes gardening harder. We don't want to deter people joining because of health issues either. In fact gardening lengthens life expectancy and makes people happier in themselves. There are many people in our area who want to feel the earth again, so soon raised beds will be available if we can build them.

If you are handy at DIY contact us, Toby is searching for wood, so help and wood is all that is needed to make a start. A spot has been agreed where the new path ends just past the hedge on the left. This part plot has been promised for the first raised beds.

Thanks to the Disabled Discrimination Act and the support of Thames water the allotment has a new disabled access gate and pathway which is transforming our lives in muddy weather. TW has said if anyone else on the site has access issues they will look kindly on applications under the above legislation, so if you have walking difficulties, or balance issues, get in touch; the path could be extended to make your access to the site safer .

## Noticeboard

### **THREATS TO THE ALLOTMENT: SCHOOL GROWTH; ROOM FOR ALL**

In July 2005 Lambeth Council decided to extend its current schools and build one more but NOT to support the campaign to put a school on the Brixton hill end of Thames Water/RWE waterworks site, using the allotments close to Lyham road as a playing field.

We all relaxed and began to plan our planting schemes and look forward to the future again. New people attracted by the campaign joined the allotments and old hands retired from work and settled down to the luxury of a daily visit to the plots.

But the issue has not gone away. In The Rose, the Labour party news sheet delivered to every home in Lambeth. Cllr. Steve Reed writes: "Lambeth must look again at the decision. We desperately need a new school in Brixton"

M.P. Keith Hill has met Thames Water/RWE officials and Lambeth Education officers on the allotment site last month. Remember that only last summer Thames Water was willing to sell the allotments for £1 million pounds, but they refused to discuss selling or leasing the covered reservoir which lies dormant and would seem from a community point of view a better option for playing fields.

The figures about real school need keep changing. Lambeth Council in the past thought schools would be underused so they sold many of them notably the large secondary school called Dick Shepherd on the side of Brockwell Park now developed into a housing complex. In Lyham Road the primary school called after the Ashby family (Ashby Mill School) with its well used swimming pool once regularly shared with all the

community around it . Gone, redeveloped as loft apartments.

Local primary school heads now say a boom in 3-11 year olds is due in the near future and Lambeth's population is rising yet others say the school roll will drop. Some parents want a new well-resourced school nearer to their homes and, as there is Government money sitting there waiting to be used, they are pressing harder and harder for that. It is also fair to say that at first they did try to get Thames water to lease or to sell the covered reservoir to them. At that time the Company would not discuss it. The pressure group then turned too the allotment site because the site the school could be built, on at the Brixton Hill end, had too small a footprint to include outdoor play space.

Whatever the truth about Lambeth demographics, allotments are a precious service to a wide age range of people. Where else in modern society do different aged people share common interests these days? With central Government rediscovering the need for Community surely it is only sensible to protect these precious resources and not set one part of the Community against another part.

Allotments benefit from being on as large a piece of land as possible so you get a wide range of people and conditions to grow a wide variety of produce and you benefit from the economies of scale that can make life easier for allotment holders to form communities that work together, helping one another.

On the Brixton Waterworks site there is of course room for us all, even if a school were really needed there and no other site was available. Room for us all

## Noticeboard

provided Thames water released the use of the covered reservoir which would make a lovely and convenient playing field. The allotments would remain unharmed and their history, so closely allied to the newly restored Windmill, would be there for generations to come.

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### BUCKETS OF STAG BEETLES

Deborah Harvey writes:

**Stag beetles are in decline in Britain, and so to help them, create a nursery for their larvae. All you need is a plastic bucket, some wood chip and lots of patience. The bucket needs holes in it about 3cm in diameter all around from top to bottom – with one or two in the base. Take a plastic bag and half fill it with soil and woodchip and mix together. Find a place in your garden or allotment that is neither too exposed or too shady and dig a hole just deep enough for the bucket to fit in leaving its rim showing. Put the bucket in the hole and fill with the mixture.**

**About every two months for the next 18 months check your bucket, top up with the wood chippings as required, but DO NOT be tempted to disturb or dig up the bucket.**

**After 18 months dig up the bucket and carefully empty out its contents onto a sheet. Sift through and sort out all the different creatures into different containers - yogurt pots are fine. Count and identify all the species, any that need help photograph with a digital camera preferably using a coin or ruler to add scale. Then email it to me or with a detailed description and I will get back to you. Refill the bucket with the contents and the creatures and replace the bucket in the soil. Now leave your bucket alone, just topping it up now and again and checking it at yearly intervals.**

**Please email me at: [deborahjharvey@btopenworld.com](mailto:deborahjharvey@btopenworld.com) to tell me who you are and where you have put your bucket ,and I will send you a monitoring form. [www.stagbeetlehelpline.co.uk](http://www.stagbeetlehelpline.co.uk)**

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### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Employers often encouraged workers to grow their own food, it helped feed their families, it was a healthy lifestyle and it kept the demand for higher wages down.

Today allotment gardeners still exist who have gardened their plot for 50 years on the same site. Their memories are illuminating. The Employers saw the Allotments as an extension of the workplace, a privilege or a perk. The employer was fastidious in his role, the paths were laid and reinforced and kept up by the employers, indeed the site itself was much larger than today. An overseer of some kind must have checked the commitment of each plot holder, because if a man become lazy or lost interest in his plot so that weeds began to grow, quick as a flash a note would appear upon his desk.

Imagine it today, just a note, would that have much effect? But in the 1950's that note might mean a black mark on your character, a blocked promotion, a loss of respect – whatever it was the note was the only tool the employer used. No one ever lost their plot because, like a miracle, the man laid back into his task with new vigour.

Paternalistic employers who cared for their workers from the cradle to the grave have slipped into history; perhaps only in Japan has the tradition lingered longest. Now the site ,still a water company, is no longer the municipally owned Brixton Waterworks but was privatised in the first wave of privatisations and called Thames Water. Perhaps you or your parents bought shares in the water industry, or in fuel or the phone company BT. It was a time when ordinary people bought shares for the first time.

Then once again ownership changed. Thames Water with its British shareholders was bought out by RWE a company based in Germany primarily interested in the energy industry but now it diversified into water. All British shares were recalled.

Thames Water/RWE put the allotment site up for sale in 2005 for £1 million. Retired water workers still garden the site, it must have been a shock! Some vital philosophical link between the allotments and the company had broken, people felt adrift, some people became deeply upset, some people went into denial. Some people hoped that history and commitment to the local community might prevail to save the allotments for another 100 years.

## Noticeboard

Looking down on the allotments the Windmill seemed to offer hope. Its land had seen diversification over the years supporting a farm, the gardens, the waterworks, the windmill - now an historic monument, and the allotments. If the windmill is to be regenerated let the allotments and all the good values they encompass and their history be regenerated too. In the crowded Borough these links to the past are unique and a valuable educative tool.

Britain is full of changes of name; they call it branding. Sometimes it hides the past, but here it turns a spotlight onto the origins of the land and helps people identify with a part of history they may have forgotten. The allotments were renamed Windmill Allotments and a Friends Association formed in May 2005 to protect, preserve and encourage the allotments.

Long-standing plot holders are cherished, their history is valued. We respect the origins of the allotment site, we do not wish to undermine any part of its past. Today Brixton has grown larger and the allotments could be lost if they do not find a way to dig their roots even deeper into their current site. To align with the Windmill is a positive act and reinforces the deepest values we all stand for. Values of local food production, food production without pesticides and carried out on a human scale, valuing ordinary people's skills and effort in tilling the land.

### **A NEW CHARITY- APPEALS FOR RECYCLING OF MOBILE PHONES**

Neil Dixon has formed with other trustees a new charity named the National Allotment Garden Trust [www.NAGTrust.org](http://www.NAGTrust.org) hopes to build on the regeneration work done by ARI (the allotments regeneration initiative) and its supporters To raise funds the new charity asks for donations of old mobile phones and spent cartridges; also contact D. Rawlings if you want to hold a fund raising event for them.

**National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) AGM is on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006 in Derby. The Friends of Windmill Allotments are members of NSALG and anyone wishing to attend must book by March 31<sup>st</sup>. There is cost. See website.**

### **TESCO : MUST YOU DO THIS ?**

The supermarket TESCO has made an application to build in Sheringham it would involve the demolition and rebuilding of a FIRE station, houses for the elderly-- relocating them on the Weston Terrace Allotment gardens!

Mr C Nickerson regional representative of NSALG in Norfolk writes " Ride a coach and horses through the legislation designed to safeguard the public interest against those who would wish to enclose public property for their own private profit!

In addition ask the Government to overrule the 1965 Protection of Common Land Act to allow vehicular access.

Concrete over back gardens serving a happy community where fresh food travels a few yards. No petrol. No pollution. Instead bring onions from Spain and carrots from New Zealand. A system DEFRA estimated to cost the country £9 billion a year in petrol and pollution. Is this Agenda 21's sustainable use of energy and land resources?"

North Norfolk District Council's Planning Committee are to consider Tesco's scheme.

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### **THE ALLOTMENT GARDEN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

**One northeast and the "Coalfield Regeneration scheme" have funded an allotment garden for disabled people with 13 raised beds, a poly tunnel, and a fine gravel compacted surface. The DrPit Allotment Association did the work. Many more Trusts joined Castle Morpeth Disability Association who manage the site and Bedlington Day centre has been pleased with their clients level of interest. 10 people have begun to garden already.**

**In London One tree Hill Allotments have created raised beds for people in wheelchairs and FOWA plan to follow suit.**

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### **FETES AND FESTIVALS BIG THANKS**

**This year we sent representatives to a variety of shows:- Lambeth Green Day, Roots and Shoots, Museum of Garden History,**

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Furzedown Festival, Abbeville Fete, Thatu Jaluba at Holy Trinity Church, Windmill Festival and Lambeth Country Show both days!

We thank them all for making us welcome.

Special thanks to the volunteers. You know who you all are; you make it all possible.

Craig, Meredith, Pam, Polly Ferilith, Irene, Jock, Fiona, Ali, Helen, Simon, Annik, Alex, (Gordon for the country show fee and Fiona the web rental) Anthony, Pat, Adriano, Fernando

If you're not on this list tell us. Join us, we are a great crowd of people.

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### TRAINING FOR ALLOTMENT VOLUNTEERS

We are researching a variety of training opportunities from LVAC for computers, newsletter production, fund raising for small organisations, improve your minute taking, managing admin responsibilities, organising your office, chairing a volunteer organisation, accounting for voluntary organisations. - and other trainers for Web site skills.

If volunteers would like to take some training to play a role in this group please contact Helen [hsharrock@aol.com](mailto:hsharrock@aol.com)

For specific skills: beginners level - Spa Hill Allotments are doing training at £15.00 current course is basic knowledge: how to dig, compost, container growing,

**SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006 10am start to 3-30 includes lunch and Spa Hill membership. Further more advanced courses available too contact 07879 007 156 [www.spahill.org.uk](http://www.spahill.org.uk) or [training@spahill.org.uk](mailto:training@spahill.org.uk).**

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### GARDENS LINK THE WORLD

All year we have met in Margery's house and this donation of space was invaluable to the success of the Friends of Windmill Allotments. Thank you Margery!

The greatest irony is that while Margery helps the Allotments here she had also formed THATU in South Africa supported by Nelson Mandela and aiming to feed people through the power that self help gardening brings to them. WELL DONE!

[www.thatu.org](http://www.thatu.org), email [info@thatu.org](mailto:info@thatu.org)

### Roles in Friends of Windmill Allotments

**Chair person** helen sharrock  
02086745136  
[hsharrock@aol.com](mailto:hsharrock@aol.com)

**Vice Chair** vacant

**Treasurer** gordon lang

**Assistant** vacant

**Secretary** fiona clarey  
07956 891 424  
[fdgclarey@aol.com](mailto:fdgclarey@aol.com)

**Membership secretary** vacancy

**Newsletter coordinator** tba

**Web site coordinator** ali knapp

**Volunteers supporter/coordinator** tba

We welcome new people and can find lots of opportunities for people to feel they are playing a part - don't be shy give it a try.