

Autumn 2016 - Bonus Issue



A Visit to Midmar: Another Allotment Story Sharing Skills and Experience

Jenny MacKenzie writes: Midmar, Oh Midmar! Yes we all love Midmar, surely the most beautifully situated allotment site in all of Edinburgh. Seriously rolling slopes that yield spectacular views of Arthur's Seat and distant spires, this collection of 160-plus plots tucks in at the foot of Blackford Hill.

On a prime piece of Laing Trust land leased at a peppercorn rent since 1917, Midmar has always set hearts thumping and mercury rising at phrases like 'ripe for development.' It's whispered that one politician has said he would be first to lie in the way of bulldozers.

Yet despite this background squeeze on their security, Midmar ploholders are generally devoted and industrious, often demonstrating a community spirit that has benefited the site greatly over the years.

One such plot-holder is former committee Chair Liz Grace, a retired clinical scientist in cytogenetics (chromosome analysis to you and me), and a grandmother, whose eyes light up when wearing her all-in-one bright green dungarees and talking about sweetcorn.



Liz on the plot.

“A Chair before me helped us to win lottery funding and a Neighbourhood Partnership grant for our on-site cabin,” she says. “It’s a beautiful structure that has hosted open days, BBQs and various educational events. We are very fortunate to have this central meeting point.”

“When I became Chair I also had lots of ideas and enthusiasm and this lasted for several years. I aimed for good communication and social contact and providing education about running a plot. We were successful with some of those goals. But I would advise any committee not to stay too long – make sure you keep attracting new people and rotating the posts. It’s just as important to do this work too. Otherwise everyone becomes jaded.

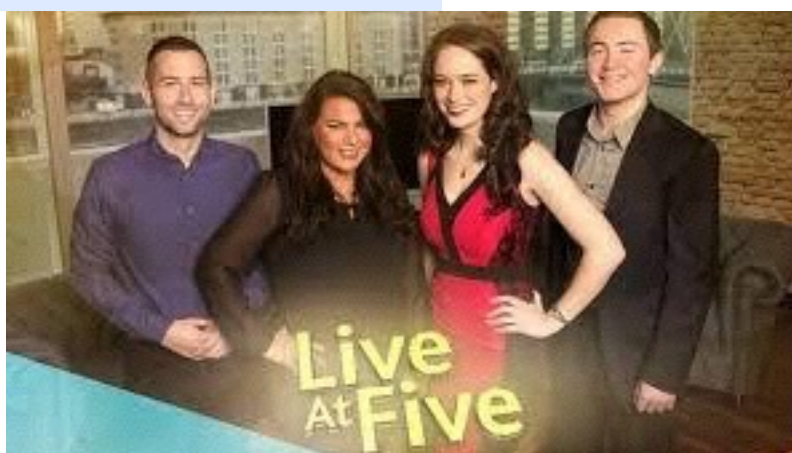
“Of course my husband and I love our plot. It is after all the Green Gym. There is substantial research that concludes that older people who are plotholders are healthier and fitter than their peers. Excuse me now because I have to turn the soil in my lovely new compost bins.”

Liz and John Grace have had an allotment plot for 40 years. The first three were spent at Saughton Mains, at a time before the Water of Leith flood controls had been installed.

One morning they arrived to find that their shed, which was positioned near to the gate, had floated without obstruction or further incident, right to the other end of the plot where it rested comfortably on the sodden grass. That was the past times bad news. Recent good news is that John has just won the Robin Harper prize for organic vegetables at the FEDAGA Allotment Show.

A mixed assortment of experiences that every serious plot-holder would know only too well. Midmar has many other interesting stories such as these, and we hope to bring more of them to you in the coming months.

Allotment Stories on TV



STV Edinburgh's Live At 5 programme will be further enhanced with the addition of Bridgend allotmenteer Moira Warren's regular slot looking at the capital's allotments - and their inhabitants.

First up on the show during the week commencing Monday 19th September and available on the STV Player [here](#) is a look at the recently established bee hives at Bridgend.

Moira is keen to hear from you. She would dearly love to take the cameras to other allotment sites in Edinburgh and talk with their plotheolders. Older hands will be sure to have the benefit of experience which we all could learn from. But she is equally interested in hearing from those at the other end of the scale who are just starting out. Everyone has something to tell and Moira will find out what that is. She is looking forward to getting out there and meeting you. All you need to do is get in touch with her. Please contact Moira at - moira.warren@hotmail.com

Apple Pressing Time



The FEDAGA Apple Press is available for affiliated sites to borrow to convert that unusable glut of windfall into delicious apple juice - or maybe even cider.

Dates set up so far include Restalrig (1st and 2nd October) and Midmar (15th and 16th October). More sites will be arranged over the coming days. Check the FEDAGA [Events](#) page to find out if the Apple Press is coming near your plot.

Showing Success



Best In Show (pics - thanks to Paul Kerr)

The start of September saw the return of the Edinburgh Allotment Show. The new location, the Methodist Church Hall in Nicolson Square, proved to be a hit. It's a beautiful, spacious and central venue with a cafe and the janitor was exceptionally helpful and welcoming. There are even inexpensive car-parking facilities right next door in the Edinburgh Central Mosque carpark for those dropping off their precious exhibits. Or, if you're good at quick deliveries a small space right at the front door if you're prepared to make a fast getaway.



Bonnington Bees receive their trophy from Cllr. Lesley Hinds

Amongst comments received: "Just to let you know that I visited the Allotment Show yesterday and was really impressed. I thought the venue was lovely (I stopped off at the cafe for soup and a roll) and the competition entries inspired me to try harder on my plot so I can perhaps enter something myself next time. So well done for all the hard work that must have been put in by FEDAGA and well done to all the entrants, winners or not."

So, the Show was a success and we have resolved to do it all over again next year. It is vital in our efforts to try to bring people together and generally have a good time. If you'd like to get involved we'd love to hear from you.

There are more photos from the Show [here](#).

AGM Reminder



The date for the FEDAGA Annual General Meeting has been set for 25th October. Further details including links to the official papers for nominations can be accessed [here](#).

This year we are delighted to have Dr. Brian Boag of the James Hutton Institute as our guest speaker. Brian is an expert in the study of New Zealand Flatworm which, as we know, is a mortal threat to our earthworm population and consequently the health of our soils. You are invited to come to hear his presentation and ask questions. Also, FEDAGA is looking for fresh volunteers to help to take us forward. Some of us have been doing this for quite a while and might be in need of a rest!

...and now for Something Completely Different



FEDAGA committee member and Chair of Inverleith allotments Stuart MacKenzie has many strings to his bow. One is that of volunteering in a care home, working with the elderly residents. As his professional background is in information technology he specialises in bringing the wonderful world of computers to those who have thus far negotiated their way through life without SatNav or TripAdvisor. One day he was asked by an old gentleman if these gadgets could record music. Who could have believed what this simple request led on to? Click [here](#) to find out what happened next.

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