

Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire

West Lancs Schools Celebrate Growing Success



The Community Food Growing Project has worked with 25 West Lancashire primary schools over the last 3 years to encourage food growing. To celebrate their achievements and to mark the end of the School Support Project the schools were invited to a 'Show What You Grow' festival on 4th July at West Lancashire College.

Over 60 children from 9 of the schools attended, bringing scarecrows and displays of drawings, paintings, photos, and poems of their gardening work. The Mayor and Mayoress of West Lancashire opened the day and the children enthusiastically gave them a tour of their work. They then took part in competitions such as 'Make a Veggie' face, and participated in a Taster Test of 6 veggie meals cooked by college students using recipes from Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative (SCFI). They also enjoyed a talk given by SCFI on 'Rocks for Lunch' describing the importance of minerals in your diet. After a healthy veggie lunch prepared by the college, the children took to the stage to give presentations about their gardening clubs and the day ended with prize giving.

The event was organised by the Community Food Growing Project with West Lancs Allotment Federation, Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative and West Lancashire College.



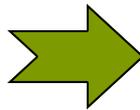
October 2013



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Community Sites Update

Since 2010, the Community Food Project has helped to set up 6 allotment sites. As the project is now shifting its focus to encouraging more people to not only grow but also to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables, we revisit the new sites to see how they are faring...



Roby Mill Community Allotment Group

Established in March 2010, Roby Mill was the first site that the CFG project helped to set up and is still going strong! A picturesque setting in the middle of the village, the site is leased from the Methodist Church and houses 11 plots.

The group have a communal shed for tool storage and although there is no mains water, they secured permission from the Methodist Church to use the water run-off from the church hall roof. A system was rigged up last year to capture the run-off and is working well.

Roby Mill



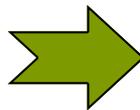
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Hesketh Bank Allotment and Leisure Growers Association

HBALG was set up in June 2010 by the Parish Council. There are now 64 plots and 17 people on the waiting list. The local scout group has a plot rent free and raised beds have been created for use by disabled people.

Plottolders are actively engaged in developing the site as whole. Work recently finished on 'The Triangle' - a communal social area, now planted with espaliered fruit trees, with benches and bbq. One-third of an acre within the site has been set aside for the establishment of 'New Shoots' permaculture area and planning and planting is already underway (for details, see the feature in next Dig In). Future plans include creation of large communal shed for tool storage and selling items.



Hesketh Bank

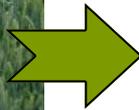
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2011



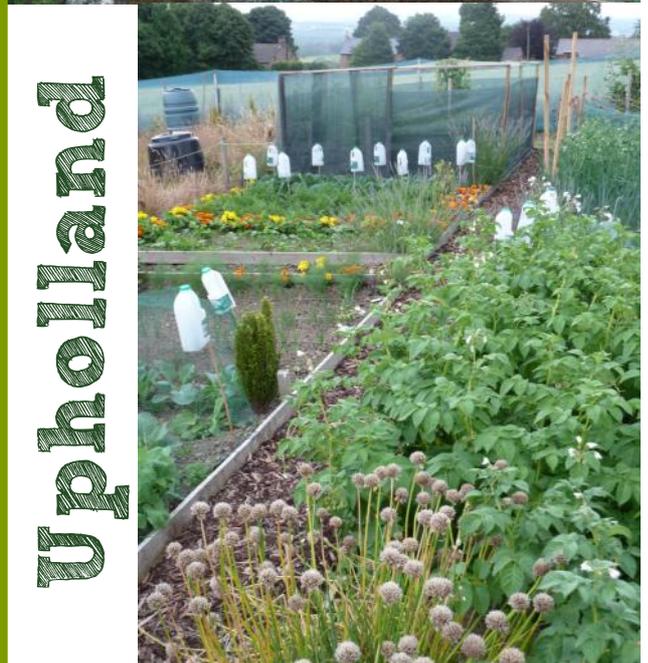
2013

St Teresa's Allotment Group (STAG)

Things have been going well at this beautifully situated site, set up in February 2011. As well as the 34 plots, the group has constructed a new path access from the church car park to the site and now has a communal shed for tool storage.

The site does not have mains water, but various options are being investigated to collect water.

There is currently no waiting list for plots. The site also has two plots for use by a community group. These are currently vacant and STAG would love to hear from anyone who could use this resource. Email Andrew at ajsouthworth63@btinternet.com



Upholland



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Owen Avenue

Owen Avenue is a small council owned site that had fallen into disrepair. A group of dedicated local people took on the site in 2011 - clearing the rubbish and bracken growth and bringing the allotments back into life and production. There are 11 plots and all are enthusiastically tended and highly productive.

Ormskirk



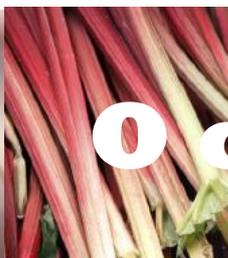
Appley Bridge

Appley Bridge Allotment Society

Appley Bridge is the most recently established allotment site with 14 microplots being established there in Spring 2012. The site has no vehicular access and no fencing but has been largely vandalism free and proved a popular local addition to the canalside Meadows area.



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Skelmersdale

Digmoor Inspired Growers Allotment Society

The DIGAS site was one of the most difficult sites to get up and running and is testament to the determination of local people to 'grow their own'. 2010 saw them start the battle for planning permission, get grants to put up security fencing to reduce vandalism, buy a storage container, negotiate land boundaries with neighbours, and start to clear the site of saplings and years of dumped rubbish.

Now in 2013, the site is thriving and highly productive, with a waiting list of 15 for the 8 plots. The annual seed and plant share held early each year provides the perfect start to the growing year. There are plans to create a communal orchard, a blackcurrant hedge and some hazel trees to provide bean poles.



Views from all the new sites

WE made it all, so we feel responsible for it. It's a legacy for the future and we feel so proud to have done it

The people have been the best thing; meeting people with the same interests and convictions

Eating a lot more veg! As well as getting outside more and trying new things—eg making jam

The neighbours are delighted and they look out for the site

Best thing about setting up our site...

We could design the site ourselves and design it well. We set our own guidelines—eg size and position of the sheds—which keeps it looking neat

The community spirit—we've been through it all together

It's been the start of a new community, with everyone starting at the same time, and lots of younger people became involved because of that

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*Would do it exactly
the same next time!*

What we would do differently next time...

*I would manage things
more tightly from the
outset— making sure
committee members are
fully active and plots are
up to standard from start*

*Would be good to give
new allotmenters a
quarter plot to work,
before allocating them
their final plot*

*Maybe introduce a few more
curves into the site design,
and design in some central
composting areas*

Other News

Free Trees

West Lancs have launched their Free Tree scheme for this year. A free fruit tree (Victoria plum, Conference pear or Bramley apple) or a hedging pack (10 hawthorn, 5 blackthorn, 5 rowan, 5 hazel) is available to each household in West Lancs. Go to: www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/heritage_and_environment/trees_hedges_and_woodlands/free_tree_scheme.aspx

Closing date for applications is 25th October

New Fence 'Opening' at Burscough

Jan Kellie - Secretary BAS reports:
'Burscough Allotment Society officially
"opened" their new fencing in June this year so
we put up the bunting and held an open day.

'Despite the poor weather we had a good turn
out of visitors to sample our cordials - (rhubarb
and blackcurrant) - our cakes (courgette and
beetroot), our flower "bombs", scarecrows,
spare plants and garden books, and "borrowed"
some chickens for the day. All our plots were
looking great- we have had a wonderful
productive year and all of us are enjoying our
plentiful produce. We hope to repeat the open
day next year'.



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Report from West Lancs Allotments' Federation

July proved that we really can get long hot summer days. It was also a very busy month for us building a garden at RHS Tatton Park Flower Show. Our individual allotment garden, 'Recycle and Grow' earned us a 'Highly Commended' Award. We featured a greenhouse made from recycled bottles, a compost bin made from recycled pallets and raised beds from recycled pallet collars. We also demonstrated a selection of mulches from recycled materials that included wood chip, leaf mould, seaweed and straw, also Nettle and Comfrey liquid manures. The larger joint venture with the other North West Region Federations; The NAS 'The Magic of Growing' received a 'Best Show Feature' 2013 Award.



The mayor of West Lancashire, Iain Ashcroft and wife Beverley, along with the mayors from most of the other boroughs involved, came along on the first press day. The next few days we were kept busy talking to hundreds of visitors, the bottle greenhouse being the highlight. On Saturday Rosie Cooper the Member of Parliament for West Lancashire paid us a visit on our allotment garden to join in the celebrations.



Pictured L-R: Terry Lake WLAf, Mayoress and Mayor of West Lancashire, Ray and Myra Fowler WLAf.

The weather stayed hot and sunny right through to the last day—when we were treated to heavy rain and flooding. Monday was breakdown day and six of us got wet all over again—with added thunder and lightning.

Our thanks to all those un-named allotmenters from around the Borough who helped with this production. And a very special thanks to Terry Lake who project managed the whole venture. **Ray Fowler, Chair**

The West Lancs Community Food Growing Project aims to get more people involved in growing their own food and eating more healthily. We are working with local communities and schools to set up community food growing initiatives and providing help in finding the land (and funds) that might be needed.

Martin Trengove
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John Hutchison,
Clare Cooper
& Terry Lake

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Keep up to date at our website: www.wlcvs.org/index.php/services/community-gardening



West Lancashire Council for
Voluntary Service

NHS
Central Lancashire

West Lancashire
Local Strategic Partnership



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