

Framfield Site Profile

A Portrait of Framfield Allotments

It is perhaps somewhat disconcerting that I can no longer recall exactly how it was that my partner convinced me to engage in the very British pastime of tending to an allotment. Mention the word ‘allotment’ and for a lot of us, it probably conjures up images of the stereotype retired male obsessively planting regimented rows of carrots, onions and potatoes... But clearly he succeeded; six years later we’re still very much committed to, and enjoying, the plot. And, as this summer draws to a close, we’re planning our seventh season with just as much enthusiasm and, hopefully, a little bit more wisdom that when we first started out.

Part of me is certain that what has sustained our passion was being able to secure a plot and become a part of the community at Framfield Allotments after we moved to Hanwell. Having come from a small site in northwest London whose only ‘facility’ was running water from a tap, imagine our wonder and amazement when we first set foot in Framfield. I’m sure I nearly squealed with joy when we walked in and saw the fully-fitted kitchen and full-service flushing toilet. Even the small cluster of basic wooden sheds by the toilets, though not in the finest state, filled us with great satisfaction as it provided precious space to keep some of our gardening tools dry and secure.

Our regard for Framfield was sealed when we caught sight of its idyllic wildlife area, complete with a pond and picnic tables. The pond was dug for wildlife by the council in a very wet section of the allotments in February 2000 and was enlarged and landscaped by a



Framfield wild-life pond

small but dedicated team of plot holders in the summer of 2009. Their efforts were deservedly rewarded in 2012 when the site won the Community Garden section of The Big Wildlife Garden Competition (organised by RHS and the Wildlife Trusts, sponsored by DEFRA). The site was subsequently featured in the Guardian Gardens in October of that year. Framfield had previously won third place in the Allotment category of London in Bloom 2009.

The abundance of wildlife and the overall quality of the site means that there are always points of interest to pique the curiosity of young children from neighbouring schools and nurseries when they pay a visit – which happens fairly regularly.

The site was originally part of Hanwell Park Estate, the grounds of a large country house situated on the site of what is now Drayton Manor High School. Hanwell Park House was demolished in 1913, and the streets that exist today were built to the north and south of what would become the allotment site. Just two years later the allotments themselves were laid out. In these early days, the site was simply named North Ward Allotments. By 1918, there were 117 plots on the site, let for 9 shillings for 10 poles per year. Permission to keep pigs on the allotments was granted in the same year; although today, it is mainly chickens that are kept. Last year, however, the site was briefly home to a lovely little pig by the name of Cecil. Sadly, he very quickly outgrew his pen and had to be re-homed. However, all the children were very taken with Cecil while he was in residence.



Children from the nearby nurseries

Saying hello to Cecil the pig

The site became known as Framfield Allotments in May 1934. It covers around 3 ha (7 acres) of land, approximately the size of 85x10 pole plots. Today, there are around 120 plot holders (the majority have 5 pole plots) of all ages and backgrounds. All plots were taken towards the end of 2009 and there has been a waiting list since then. Some plot holders are ‘rookies’ battling our solid London clay for just a few months, others have been toiling away for many fruitful years.

Framfield Allotments Association was formally established in November 2007 with the main purpose of organising activities for the benefit of the whole community at the site. Past successes have included Framfield Bonfire parties on Guy Fawkes Night and an outdoor play staged by a small group of talented actors from the Mikron Theatre Company, titled ‘Losing The Plot’. The production was fantastic and hilarious and was a delightful way to have spent a sunny Saturday afternoon – a nice change from weeding and digging.

To me, the Association’s success is evident at every Summer Social when community members come to support the event, feeding the crowd with truly multicultural food better



*A great turnout at the Summer Social 2013;
with Steve Pound in full flow*

of local MP Steve Pound - a great show of support for the community; his tongue-in-cheek comments never fail to raise laughs during the drawing of raffle prizes.

There is no doubt that Framfield is a thriving allotment community. The dedication of the Association's committee members to making it an oasis for wildlife and humans alike, and the overall friendliness, generosity and helpfulness of the plot holders we first experienced on our arrival three summers ago, continue to today. And I'm confident it will stay that way for a long time to come.

*Joanne Song,
September 2013*

than some so-called street markets that we've been to in London. Equally important is the chance it gives to recognise the great work that community members have put into their plots. Winning Plot of the Year (and other accolades) surely must go a long way in making up for the frustrations of failed crops and the sacrifice of countless weekends – at least to me it would. Every year my partner and I half-jokingly say that we must redouble our efforts in order to win the crown. Perhaps next year... or the year after that... Another great plus at the Social, is the attendance