

VALE ROAD ALLOTMENTS

by

Mick Botting

It's around fifty years since I first took a spade to my new allotment in Vale road, and it was my first attempt at growing my own fruit and veg. Now being one of the seniors I get all sorts of questions asked by newer members. I have to confess after all of these years I can still learn from others too.

This site was established around 1945 or 1946 and in the 80's there were dark rumours in that it was earmarked for building. It was decided to take a chance on an offer by the Council to become a self run site. It seems to have worked well without too much difficulty. We now have 90 plus plots mainly because most have been split up from the former ten rods to fives and two and a halves.

It stands to reason that plot holders are a sociable lot almost without exception, it must be because of all of the fresh air we get. Lawyers, Vicars, Postmen, Super market workers make up an eclectic mix. Gardening is a great leveler. It puts a smile on our faces when we take home the delicious vegetables and fruit.

There are a few however who I call 'Summer Gardeners' who seem to think early September is the time to pack it in until the Spring. They don't seem to realize an allotment had to be worked the whole year round. They are reminded of all of the produce that can be put in through the winter, but to no avail.

Our committee have a thankless task of trying to maintain the rules of the site, and are there to be shot down if they make unpopular but necessary decisions. Just recently we have had to lock our gates owing to numerous thefts from our sheds and plots, and there have been a few disgruntled members who don't like that at all.

We have different nationalities on our site, Italians, Mauritians, and Polish and they seem to have a wealth of knowledge about growing produce other than our normal English fare. The man from Sicily next door to me fills his plot with beans of every description. He will even ask for any old runner bean seeds that we have over and says they are fine to put in stews and soups. Others have introduced Grape vines.

My wife Val loves gardening and we do the Allotment together. We don't always see eye to eye, for instance I like to see a few raised beds but she hates them and says the wooden boards that I make them with are natural harbour for slugs and snails. We were the first to have chickens on the site, but have had to give them up We lost our first batch to the foxes, and then we had so much snow and deluges of rain last winter it became very hard work.

