

A photograph of a lush green garden. In the foreground, there is a wooden fence with a gate. The garden is filled with various plants and trees, creating a dense and vibrant scene. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

NOT LOST THE PLOT

The story of
**Queens Road
Allotments**



Welcome

We all love the idea of a secret garden... the special moment when you go through a gate into a totally unexpected, magical green space.

Hidden from view by the houses that surround it, these private allotment gardens are a special hideaway where people grow vegetables, fruit and flowers, but also keep chickens



and bees, sketch, make wine, mix socially and relax – in other words, a community – different people with a common interest. Due to the particular heritage of the land, they look and feel different from other allotments, and are a haven for wildlife.

Although privately owned, many local people with small gardens rent plots, and there is a healthy waiting list.



Friends of Queens Road Allotments won a small Heritage Lottery Fund

Grant to dig deeper into our past. Some of the stories will unfold in this small booklet, and hopefully give you a flavour of the people and the place – a picture of the past as well as of the present.

We hope to show the value in keeping the allotments for our children to enjoy.

Our project is called 'Not Lost the Plot'.



Visit our website to discover more about Queens Road Allotments

<http://queensroadallotments.wordpress.com>

Our website is a 'work in progress' that we add to as new discoveries are made.

You will find links to the following, and more:

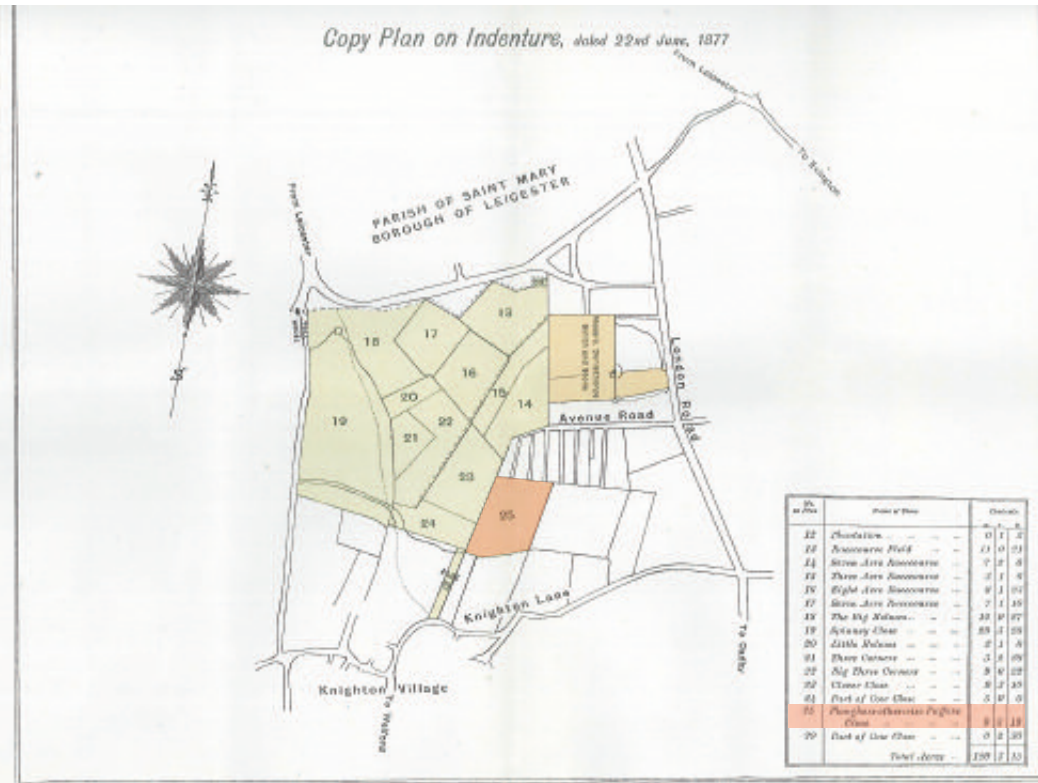
Bill Newsinger's videos of the allotments through the seasons, a downloadable pdf version of this booklet,

project updates, our Oral Recordings Archive, photographs, gardening,

Friends of Queens Road Allotments contact details.



A history of Queens Road Allotments



The 1877 indenture plan showing 'Ploughers otherwise Puffers Close' on the sale of land by the Cradock family to Stone, Smith and Donisthorpe.

Puffers Close

Queens Road Allotments is the area marked as number 25 'Ploughers otherwise Puffers Close' on the indenture map (shown above) that accompanied the sale of land in 1877. By 1902 Puffers Close was divided into garden allotments and shown on the Ordnance Survey map. These garden allotments were larger areas than the individual plots of today.

The Cradock family

Until the end of the nineteenth century the land in Clarendon Park was part of Knighton village. There were a few houses around the intersection of Avenue Road and Queens Road, but the Queens Road we know today was no more than a cart track from the village to Avenue Road.

The Cradock family was the biggest landholder in Knighton. In the past they had been influential in both business and politics in Leicester and Leicestershire, but as time went on they became more removed from their Knighton roots, and lived elsewhere.

In 1877 Edward Hartopp Cradock sold 120 acres of his estate to three Leicester businessmen, Samuel Francis Stone (a solicitor), Charles Smith (a manufacturer) and Alfred Donisthorpe (a spinner). They combined the land they bought from Cradock with another 15 acres bought from another old Leicester family called Freer.

The new owners' approach to estate development was different from the methods of local developers Jelson or Wilson. They had a master plan of roads and house plots, but then sold the plots (individually or in groups) to individual private buyers, to builders, to architects and to Freehold Land Societies. Houses built in Clarendon Park in its early development are

THE CLARENDON PARK ESTATE,
London-road, Welford-road, Victoria Park-road, and
Knighton-lane, near Leicester.

The Owners of this very Valuable ESTATE, comprising upwards of

135 ACRES of LAND

Beautifully situated between the London-road and the Welford-road, and approached from and with frontages to those Roads, the Victoria Park-road, Knighton-lane, and other new roads, are prepared to receive applications for the

SALE THEREOF BY PRIVATE TREATY,
In large or small lots.

THE CLARENDON PARK ESTATE comprises an Estate of about 15 Acres, on the London-road, formerly belonging to the late William Freer, Esquire, and upon which several newly-formed Streets have been already formed, and several lots of which have been sold and another most eligible ESTATE of about 120 Acres, recently belonging to Dr. Cradock, and now thrown together, and called

THE CLARENDON PARK ESTATE.

The new road, called Clarendon Park Road, by the Shrubbery, London-road, will be at once continued through to the Welford-road.

A Plan of the Estate may be seen, at the Offices of the Solicitors.

The portion originally belonging to Mr. Freer is lotted out with contents varying from about 600 Square Yards to one Acre. The other Land will be sold in Lots to meet purchasers.

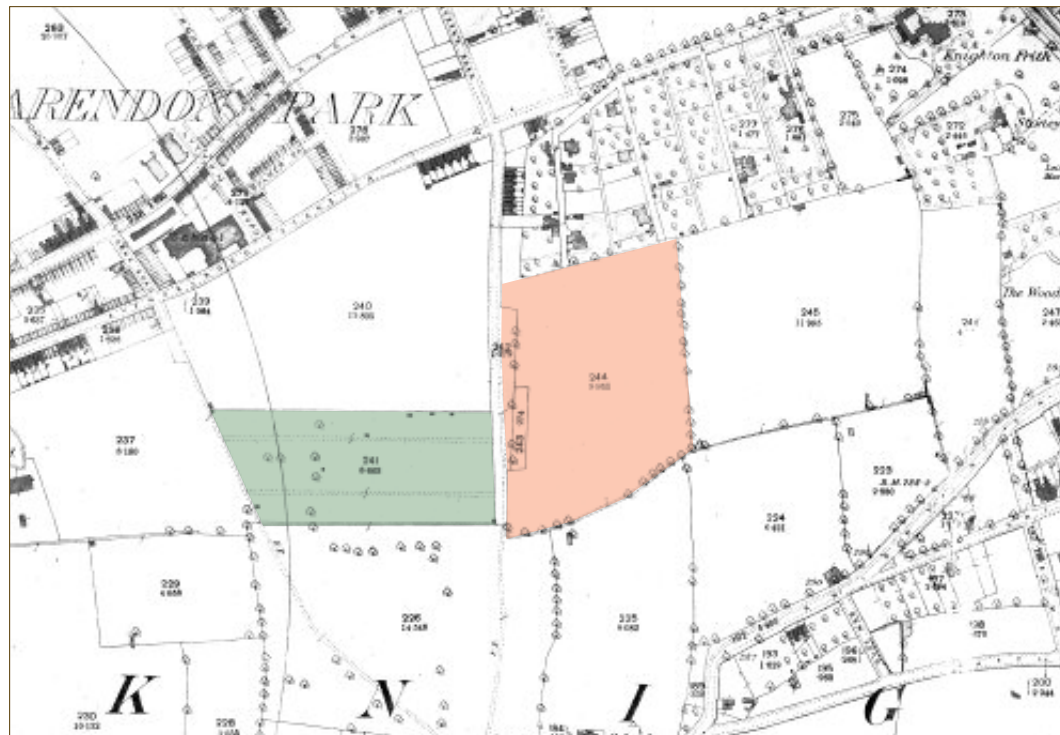
The Timber gives the Estate a Park-like appearance, and its proximity to Victoria Park and to the Town, and the constant communication by Tram Cars running to the Estate, renders it a most convenient one for those desirous to acquire Land within a few minutes' walk of the Railway Station.

The price will be found to be lower than that of any other Land of a similar character in the neighbourhood of Leicester.

To treat, apply to Mr Charles Smith, Charles-street, or to

Messrs. STONE and BILLSON
w2670

'The Timber gives the Estate a Park-like appearance' says this land sale advertisement in *Leicester Chronicle* of August 1877.



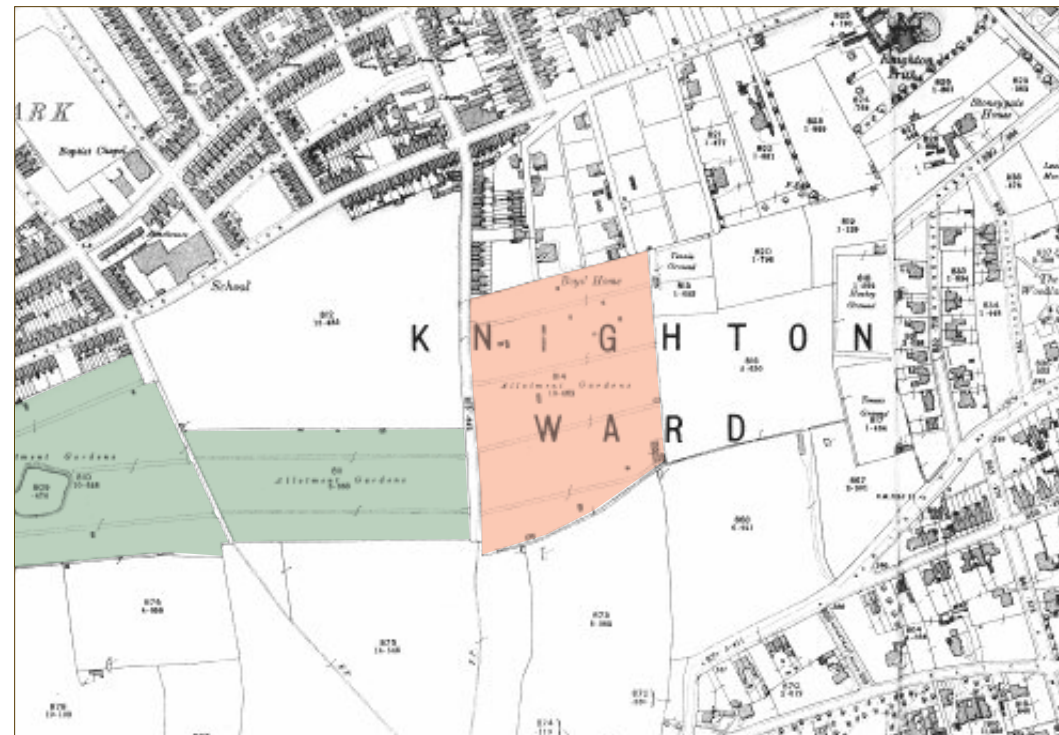
The Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map of 1885 shows the southern part of Queens Road as a cart track leading to Knighton Village. Allotment gardens are marked on the west side of Queens Road.

more diverse than those found on a more modern estate where the number of builders and building plans involved is much smaller.

A slow start

Progress was slow on this large undertaking. One report from 1880 indicated that only 'a half-dozen houses' had yet been built. The developers were building houses in the parish of Knighton that were clearly going to be lived in by people who worked and used Leicester facilities, and so there were constant negotiations with the Leicester Corporation over roads, kerbs and sewerage. Leicester Councillors claimed that residents from Clarendon Park Estate were ruining Victoria Park and proposed erecting an unclimbable fence to keep them out.

Along with the constant adverts for plots on Clarendon Park Estate for sale either by auction or private treaty, there was an annual advertisement for 'grass-keeping' – which one assumes represents the acres of unsold

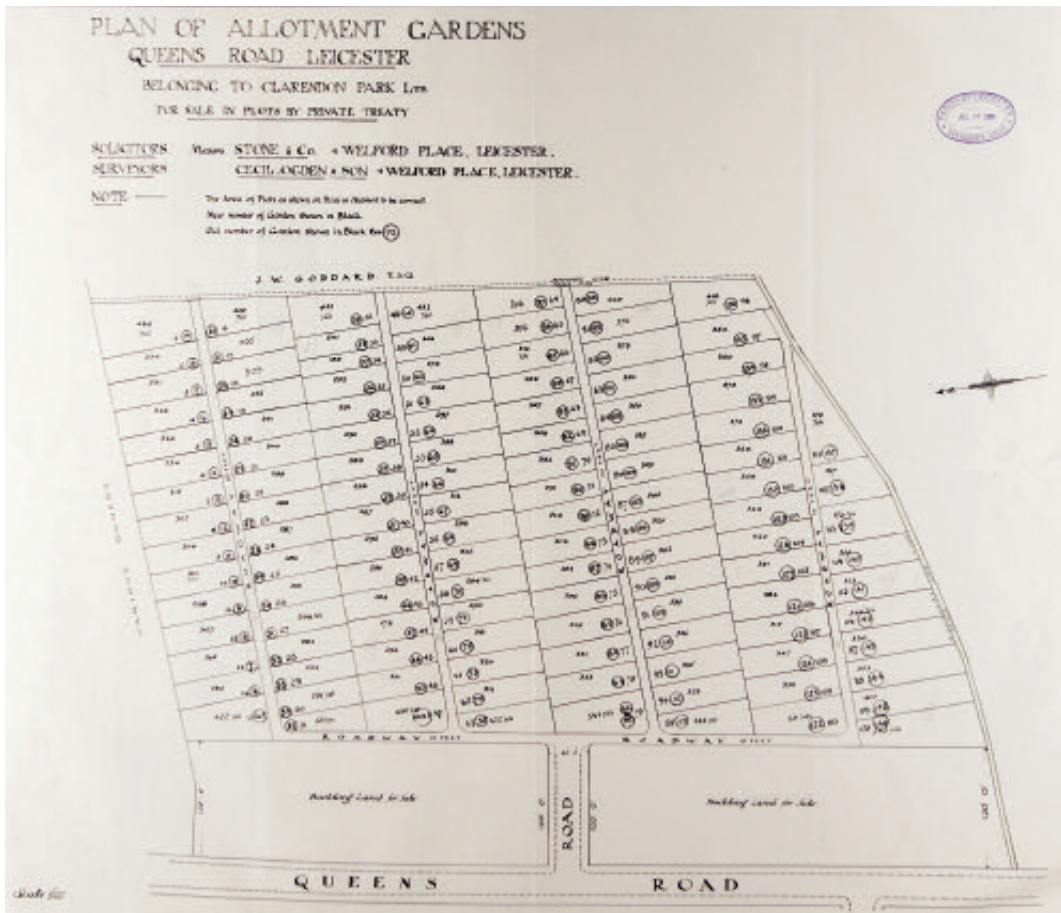


Puffers Close was marked out as allotment gardens by 1902. Clarendon Park has many more houses and allotment gardens extend to Welford Road.

'accommodation land'. Nineteen years after the first advert for plots on Clarendon Park Estate there were still 34 acres of grass-keeping being offered on an annual basis (25% of the original estate).

In 1881 Stone, Smith and Donisthorpe mortgaged 54 acres of Clarendon Park Estate (including the present Queens Road allotment site) to the Leicester Permanent Building Society, in order to raise £20,000. It is not clear why this mortgage was arranged, but one historian suggested that it might have been necessary to raise money for roads and sewerage to facilitate ongoing development. It may also explain why the allotment site remained unsold as building land while the mortgage was unredeemed.

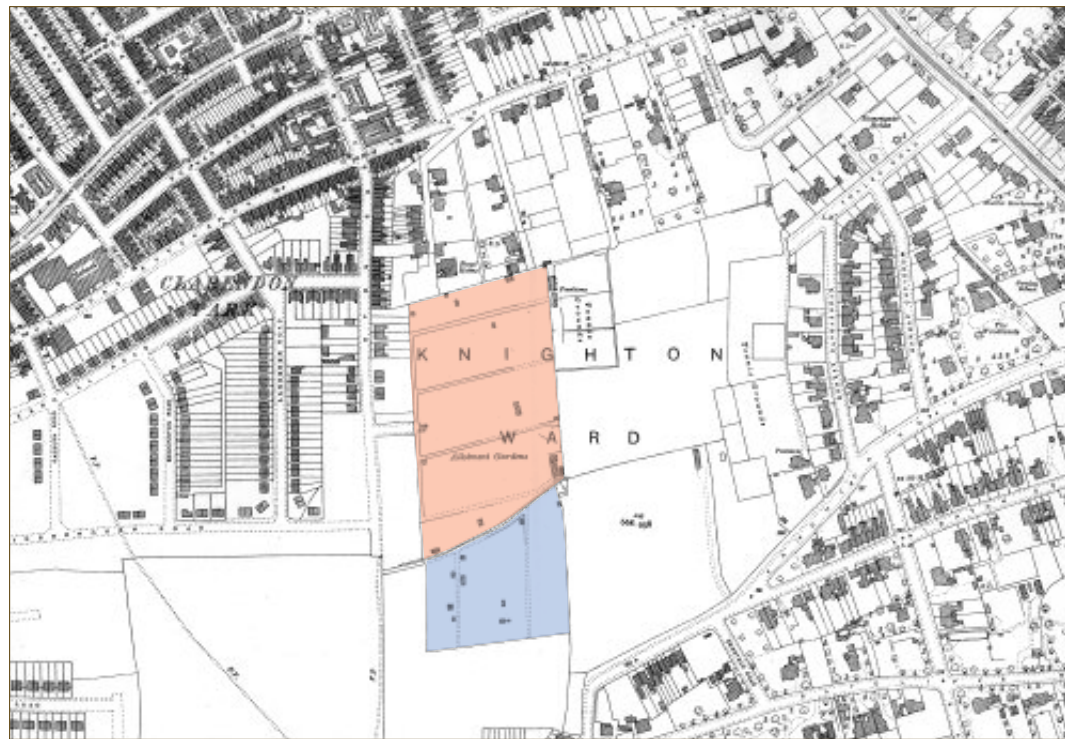
After the deaths of two of the original three owners of the Clarendon Park Estate, the remaining portion was sold on to a new company called Clarendon Park Limited. The individual plots were offered for private sale by Clarendon Park Limited in 1926.



In 1926 part of the allotment gardens was offered as 'Building Land for Sale' where semi-detached houses now stand. 150 plots had originally extended to Queens Road. The remaining 120 were re-numbered.

An improving activity

We do not yet have any clear evidence as to why the allotments were included in the Clarendon Park Estate. One possibility is that one of the land developers shared what might be called a Victorian paternalistic view that working on the allotments was an improving activity, and therefore should be provided for by setting aside some land. We know, for example, that S F Stone, one of the original investors in the Clarendon Park Estate, was the President of the Knighton Floral and Horticultural Society and gave the prize for the best kept garden allotment by a Knighton resident at the 1884 Knighton Show. Another possibility is that the market for



Few of the Puffers Close building plots had been built on by 1930, and more land was marked as allotment gardens (highlighted in blue). Cradock No 1 Allotment Society Ltd managed these plots.



Mr S F Stone – one of the original investors in the Clarendon Park Estate.

building land became so weak that the developers decided to cut their losses and sell off smaller plots for garden allotments.

It is not clear when Puffers Close was divided into individual plots but garden allotments are indicated for the first time on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1902. The plots were offered for private sale by Clarendon Park Limited in 1926. However there is local evidence that these individual plots had existed prior to 1926 and were let out. Dennis Lewis tells us that his grandfather, Arthur Lewis, worked his plot since 1906.

Annie's story of plot 88

When I bought my allotment plot a few years ago, I thought I would get a letter from the solicitor. What arrived was a very large envelope full of legal documents. The envelope contained the deeds to the plot and all of the land transfers since the land was first sold.

Plot number 88 was one of 120 allotment plots created in 1926 on much of which had been called 'Ploughers otherwise Puffers Close'.

The land was originally part of the Manor of Knighton and was sold in 1877 to A. R. Donisthorpe, C. Smith and S. F. Stone for the sum of £63,343 15s 0d. Ploughers otherwise Puffers Close was one of 15 parcels or 'closes' of land, known as 'The Clarendon Park Estate', amounting to 120 acres, 3 roods and 15 poles or perches. This was the equivalent of over £6.8 million in today's money.

In 1907, part of this land, including Ploughers or Puffers Close, was sold to 'Clarendon Park Limited' for £37,708 7s 11d, (around £3.8million).

The schedule also contains detailed stipulations about how the land can be used and what a purchaser may, and may not, do on the plot. Amongst other things, 'he or she shall not plant peas or beans horizontally on the boundaries so as to obstruct the sun, keep fowls (except in pens) or pigs or other offensive animals, carry or use a gun, sell wine beer, ale or spirituous liquors, nor permit the same to be used as a place of public amusement or resort.'

On the 18th May 1926, plot number 88 was sold to its first owner, Mr George Nixon of Lytton Road. The price paid was £13 11s 3d. On the 5th September 1956, the plot was sold by his son, also called Mr George Nixon, of Northcote Road, to Anne Nixon, (wife of Mr William Henry Nixon, another son?), of Clarendon Park Road, following the death of Mr George Nixon of Lorne Road, for £40.

Mrs Anne Nixon then sold plot number 88 to Mrs Olive Hunt of Cecilia Road for £60 on the 4th June 1957.

On the 20th December 1967, Mrs Olive Hunt sold plot number 88 to Mr Horace Bernard Cartwright, (Bernard), of Cavendish Road for £200, 'together with the wood and asbestos garage and toolshed erected upon some part thereof'.



The best shed in the world. Robert Carter built this shed entirely from recycled materials. According to Robert, it can be seen from space.

Bernard owned plot number 88 until I bought it in 2009, for £1250.

A friend of mine, Kerry, took on the plot around 1998/1999 and cultivated a small part of it for several years. I took over the plot in 2003. Every year I sent the £10 rent to Bernard and every year, he sent it back again, each time with a lovely letter, all of which I still have.

The ever encroaching couch grass and bindweed got the better of me and in 2004/5, Robert Carter took on the plot, brought it back into good condition, and built the best shed in the world, (well I think so anyway). It is made almost entirely of old doors, each of which still has its original door furniture and signs. As Rob said, 'It's the only shed you can see from space'.

Occasionally, Bernard would come to my house or to the allotment for a chat. He owned a barber's shop on Tudor Road and was a lovely man, always well turned out and a true gentleman. In one of his letters, he wrote 'I am delighted you now have a shed on the allotment – what a comfort when it rains!' and 'should you grow any strong onions that make your eyes run, I'll buy some'.

Sadly, Bernard died on the 12th February 2009, after a long illness. I never did get to grow any strong onions that make your eyes run but I am really glad to have known him and whenever I'm there, I think of him.

Passing on family traditions: Dennis Lewis



'I am very proud of our family allotment. I love the fresh air and the vegetables have kept me and my family healthy over the years. My great granddad Edward Lewis was first to garden the allotment in 1906. Being head gardener for the Norman Underwood Nurseries he set the standard that the next three generations of men in the family, my granddad Arthur, my dad John and myself – following the principle of keeping weeds down on your own site to stop them spreading, maintaining and forming jointly owned paths by bringing ash from your home fires was part of what everyone did. It was expected that you all did your bit.

You would keep your tools in good condition by oiling them. Sheds were very important and used for social areas as well as storage, in fact my granddad had pictures of the king and queen on the wall in his shed. All the men in our family would maintain gardens for several people as well as the allotment. My dad still helped into his nineties and took my son and nephew down and gave them a small plot on their own. On my dad's last working day he fell and hit his head on the allotment. He was found by my brother and taken to hospital but never really recovered.

Unfortunately as people died, their families did not always take on the role. Sheds deteriorated, the land became overgrown and harder to work for the few still coping. I have this worry about my own allotment. My sister will not take it over and my brother has an allotment of his own over the other side of the city. I could not bear to see it go downhill but it's harder as I get older. My son may take it over but he works in London. I am hoping that he will retire and take it over.



Running in the family
Four generations of allotmenters have lovingly cared for plot 98.



Edward Lewis
Great Grandfather



Arthur Lewis
Grandfather



John William Lewis
Father

I would like to give it up but because of the family history I don't think I can. Granddad was very strict. I wonder if he looks down on me checking I do it right.

There was no such thing as organic gardening just plain gardening. We didn't have chemicals but later I used slug pellets.'

Water has never been a problem on his site as the brook used to be about two feet deep and when the water level fell he then started to use a water pump in the deep well on the site next door, run from a car battery.

Dennis' father had a compost heap that was huge from the vegetable waste collected from local shops. He had a car and got elephant waste when the circus stayed over winter. In the period of the horse and cart the council gave people manure for their garden, and as there were local paddocks, many got manure from those, too.

Gardens of delight



Steve makes coracles that he sails on the local canal, and down the allotment path.

Our allotmenters are free to follow their interests, which are diverse and sometimes unexpected. You might find someone restoring a vintage car, or another making wine. We have a bee-keeper, a coracle-maker, and a film-maker.

People can do as they wish, within the limits of local by-laws, and no one is required to work their plot to a standard set by others.

The tallest crop on our plots, Jim's hop pole.



Peppe makes wine on his plot. Gardening is child's play.



Plot 22 – Marvellous Mr Marvell to Amazing Amelia

William Marvell became the owner of plot 22 on the 10th April 1926. He was born in 1856 and died in 1928, so owned the allotment for only two years. His occupation on the deeds is given as 'Gardener'

Could this be the same William Marvell who was a prize-winning gardener in several categories at the second annual Knighton Flower Show, held in the Knighton Public Hall on Clarendon Park Road?

From *Leicester Chronicle*, Sat August 03, 1895. 'One feature of the show was a portrait of an allotment, for which Mr Marvel was awarded first prize for the best cultivated allotment in the parish of Knighton...' W Marvell also won prizes in other categories – six Pomponne dahlias, six Asters, and a collection of vegetables.

Amelia bought half of plot 22 in 2002 and has since taken on two more plots. She retired this year, so perhaps her occupation now is 'Gardener', too. 'I just went down to the plot – well, it was like I was going to heaven – the

place was completely overgrown with brambles but it was mine...'

'It just gives me so much – it's not even enjoyment – enjoyment doesn't even begin to describe what it gives me – I think – satisfaction, I think – relaxation you know and it's actually better being on the allotment than being in your garden because there'll always be somebody there that will talk to you about something – it's a community – it's not that I go down for a social life, but I do think it's nice, when you're on the allotments you meet people and you swap things and you give things and you get things and you know, all that sort of thing...'



Pumpkin soup? Amelia chooses a juicy one.

Heather does 'No Dig'

'I've been lucky enough to rent an allotment here for the last eight years and it's completely changed my life. I'm not self-sufficient in vegetables but I love every second I spend down the plots and I've made some very good friends.

My interest has always been in self-sufficiency and I was lucky enough to have worked for a short period for John Seymour at Fachongle Isaf – in the late 1960's, so my plot is organized, maintained and worked organically. Eight years ago I completed an organic gardening course run by Rob Carter at the now sadly closed Eco House, so try to work my plot by the No Dig method.



I do everything I can to encourage a rich variety of wildlife on my plot. By developing a balance of wildlife I can encourage an ecology that looks after itself and provide a beautiful healthy growing space.

I grow perennials to try to ensure there are always plants in flower. Flower

borders provide areas for pollinating insects and the leaves and foliage provide protection for wildlife species that creep around protected from predators.

My pond of standing water helps to encourage a wider range of wildlife by providing a resting place for insects and mini beasts. Damsels and dragonflies lay their eggs in the small pond, an old bath, which also attracts frogs, toads, newts and birds.



This year I saw a swarm of tree bees taking temporary residence in a bird box on a neighbouring plot. There's no need to use poisonous sprays when nature's way effectively does the job for you.

The variety of birds is endless, many nesting in the hedgerows as well as the bird boxes. This year I have witnessed nesting by wrens, sparrows, collared doves and long-tailed tits on my plot. I've also seen the woodpecker on his travels. When I lock up my hens for the night, bats display their incredible flying skills.

It's heartening to see other plot holders 'harvesting' water with their often 'Heath Robinson' collections of water butts and containers, but both disappointing and depressing to note so few allotmenters actively composting.

I believe that as allotmenters we are stewards of the land and should be proactive in doing everything we can to help the health of the natural land. So my advice to others would be to encourage more wildlife onto their plots by making a compost heap, a pond, a perennial flower border, a small log pile, leaving wildlife corridors, being responsible with water usage, their use of netting used to protect vulnerable plants to prevent animals being trapped, and if they really must use slug pellets to use animal-friendly ones that do not contain metaldehyde especially as we now have a small colony of hedgehogs living on the site.'



'No dig' allotmenting? How does that work? We follow nature's way by not damaging the soil structure. We enrich the soil to create its own ecology system. The idea is to feed the soil not the plant. A 'no dig' allotmenter has very good soil.

Wendy Carter organic gardener

'The allotment grounds were open to everyone 30 years ago, you could wander around and nobody would say a word to you. I saw a notice up about the sale of an allotment one day when I was walking past; I went straight home and rang up. It cost £1,000 and was very overgrown.

I garden organically because I don't like using chemicals and it harms the wildlife. I compost and use green manure. Robert Carter calls it the cottage organic garden because of the mixture of plants and the easy-going style. The wobbly path through flowers and vegetables is very beautiful.

I grow the things that I know will work and leave the rest although I have tried many things over the 30 years. I never had any luck with carrots or cauliflower

I love the range of sheds on the site. Mohammed the taxi driver on the plot next door built his shed by bringing the bricks gradually each time he came. It's still there. I never thought it would last.'

Allotment sketching



Lynne visits Ted on his plot and finds him sketching. 'It's the perfect environment for a spot of drawing. I can beaver away for hours, soaking up the tranquillity. Sometimes I get a decent picture out of it, too.'

One of our allotmenters is a keen sketcher and spends much of his time on his plot with a beer, a book and a sketchpad.



A sketch of Ted's and Dianne's plot, and a view from the plot of a nearby hedge.



The Joyce family

Steve

'When I first moved here some men had four or five allotments now some people have half or quarter plots. I have chickens, two garages, a child play area with a trampoline and swing, which is great as there are no cars so very safe.

I am obsessive about cutting all the grass paths. I've got several



ride-on mowers in different states of repair that I use and really enjoy doing that. I use the Land Rover to smash down the really overgrown plots.

Some of the old boys used to tell you what you could and could not do but once you got to know them they were great. People used to make do and build structures out of materials that they found. Now people tend to buy a complete shed rather than make do. You would see people arrive with all sorts of things like old window frames.

There were no gates when I first came and if you did wander in, some old man would challenge you. The plots that were used were immaculate, the unused ones had things like old cars between the trees. I found a huge pile of brown bakelite switches on my plot and there were lots of enamel signs used for fences. There was a caravan at one point and someone lived in it. Someone also lived in one of the sheds in the far corner.

Coming down first thing in the morning to feed the chickens when it's very quiet and no one is around is the thing I love the most. Every morning a couple of robins come in to get a bit of the chicken food and they have done this for years.'



Eve

'I am ten and I enjoy the competitions. In the sunflower competition I came third, in the scarecrow I won a prize.

One Open Day me and my friend made ice pops that we sold for 10p. I have shown people around. I would like to hide things for the next Open Day and get people to find them.

Molly used to be the top dog on the allotment. She used to warn me if people were coming and she would help to round up the chickens. When the cat Clarice and dog died we buried them on the allotment. Now Diesel is the official allotment dog.'



'My dad sometimes lets me drive his Austin Seven down the path.'

Ewan

'The allotment is a great recreational space.'

Cathy

'I loved the site when it had lots of disused plots and the rambling nature made it very beautiful. It's like that book The Secret Garden, when children go into the garden and what makes it special is that it's not all cultivated.

I like the fact there are no

rules. People come down to read a book or grow one pumpkin. There should be space for this. It's important that people who need a bit of green space can have one and that it does not have to be a perfect allotment. Whether people grow vegetables or just come to use it as their bit of green space it's great. Not everybody's joys are the same.'



A robin and a Robin

Rex Herbert and his 1960s allotment garden

Carol and Nigel have fond childhood memories of uncle Rex and his allotment garden on plots 41 and 42.

'We were visitors because my uncle, Rex Herbert, bought the allotments back in 1961. He lived just off Evington Road. They had nowhere as a garden to enjoy life in the afternoons so he bought the allotments as a garden.

We used to visit there regularly to enjoy sitting out and about. He had chickens and ducks, and geese, a fishpond and garden gnomes. We enjoyed spending an afternoon like a family would in a garden, but the garden was a long way from where they lived.

It was Sunday afternoons when we went down to the allotment, played with the chickens and ducks, and ate the apples on the quiet, and blackberries and plums.



He had a little garden summerhouse, it was like a shed, on plot 42, which he used not to keep stuff in, it was like a summerhouse, which he used for his Mum, my Grandmother to sit in the shade. They had facilities for making cups of tea, and a table and we'd have some sandwiches, cakes and things.



He grew vegetables on plot 41 and latterly he put this very large chicken house on it. He had a walnut tree on plot 42, near the bottom.

When he built his all-singing all-dancing, four foot off the ground chicken house I think he had about 20 [chickens]. He had doves, white doves, too. He's always been an animal lover since he was a child. He had found an injured fox cub when he was a teenager and he nursed it back to health and it followed him round like a dog.



We could go and disappear for hours on end and only come back for tea, because there was that freedom in those days.

He was quite friendly with a guy, I think it was Pete, on plot 43, who kept rabbits, and we used to go and see the rabbits when he let us. When he mucked out the rabbits he put all the straw and manure down by the blackberries. He had fabulous blackberries. They were well-fed, enormous blackberries, and that's possibly the reason why the blackberries took over the rest of the allotment in latter years.'

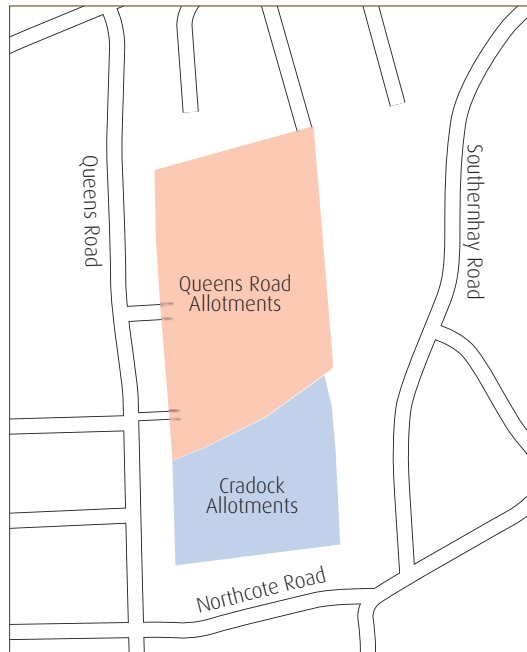


Keeping the plots

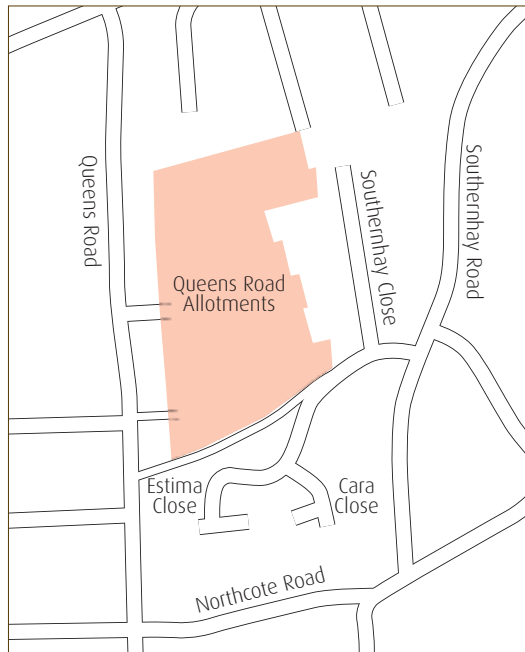
The Cradock allotments

When you look at the houses on Southernhay Estate, the only evidence that they are built on allotment land is the roads named after varieties of potato – Cara Close and Estima Close.

Pat's Nursery, as it was known nearby, had glasshouses on three or four of the plots where local people went for their hanging baskets and herbaceous plants. Pat's quiet enthusiasm, her good information about growing, and her quality produce made it a thriving accessible centre. She was a good friend to many of the plot-holders who visited her regularly for coffee and a chat.



Allotment plots in the early 1970s



By 2013 thirteen plots have been lost to housing and their gardens on Southernhay Close. The whole of Cradock Allotments has gone.



Charlie Warner
Leicester Mercury 12 June 2001

I have mixed memories of my time at the Cradock allotments on Queens Road. A committee that came to favour selling the land to a developer had managed the plots, but it was not in their interest to actively encourage gardening. They did the opposite, and many of the plots became overgrown.

Leicester City Council turned down planning applications in 1989 and 2000 amidst great local opposition to the housing development, but the developers appealed and a Public Enquiry was held in February 2001. Planning permission was granted – there was no proper waiting list, and Queens Road Allotments were nearby.

We were devastated at losing our plots. The decision was very hard for people like Charlie Warner – a wonderful old gardener who always opposed development. Luckily, Peppe Greco offered Charlie a plot on Queens Road Allotments, and we helped to dismantle Charlie's greenhouse, carrying it in pieces to his new plot. Six of us bought three Queens Road allotments between us, and we left the Cradock Allotments in 2002.

Queens Road allotments

Queens Road Allotments are all privately owned, and in 2002 there was no committee. If you wanted a plot you would wander in and hopefully bump into an old chap called Taff (Aidan Thomas). Taff was the go-between for owners and people wanting to rent a plot. A few enthusiastic allotmenters were helping people to get started on their plots, but Taff became more infirm and found it harder to get about. I took the opportunity to do something positive and kept a formal waiting list.



There are at least 110 sheds on Queens Road Allotments, 32 apple trees on a single path, eight enamel signs used as fences, six baths, and a washing machine's innards kept for handy storage.

Robert Carter takes the initiative

Robert had earlier persuaded two allotment owners to let him bring their overgrown Queens Road plots back into cultivation. As Robert says in his interview for our project 'I had this theory that if a bit of work was put into restoring allotments and people weren't expected to cultivate a whole plot there would be demand for allotments – I was looking for a project where I could prove that I was right.' In May 2000 Robert started clearing plots. One was covered in six-foot high brambles, but he dug them up, sprinkled grass seed, mowed his grass to prevent weed growth, and kept mowing.

'If I can claim anything, I can claim that I introduced mowing on the allotments.' In 2001 Robert offered an organic gardening course that included practical work on the plots, following nature's way. People signed up and the allotments became productive again. When one of the owners died eight years later, a few of those enthusiastic gardeners were able to buy his plots and are still working them today.

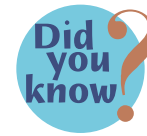


Every cloud has a silver lining

There are 120 plots on the Queens Road plan – Puffers Close site. We have seen attempts to gain permission to build on individual plots, but these have been fiercely opposed and rejected. Thirteen plots had been incorporated into gardens and a few can't be cultivated since their owners will not let us, or cannot be traced. The silver lining is a marvelous wildlife resource created by overgrown plots.

Developers can play a positive role, too

David Wilson Homes bought two of our plots in 2000, and their planning consultant, Ian Althorpe, is helping us to develop them into community allotments. We are working with Growing Together, a local initiative developing three plots so that the virtues of gardening can be shared with people who have varying abilities and health problems.



Ingenious contraptions for harvesting rainwater are dotted around our plots, and we have found old brick-lined wells in the undergrowth.



Plot development before and after. 'Our plot was completely overgrown with bindweed, couch grass and brambles when we took it on in 2006. By 2007 we had cleared most of the weeds and put down green manure (mustard) to trap nitrogen in the soil. Our vegetables were thriving in 2008.'



A great future in the community

Local demand for allotments is high and we commonly have between 25 and 30 people on our waiting list. Friends of Queens Road Allotments was formed in 2008, as a recognisable group and the public face of the allotments. We have a simple aim – to protect and promote Queens Road Allotments.

Our social events help to develop a sense of community on the plots and our Open Days are accessible to local people. We have volunteer working parties who help to clear overgrown allotments, which we divide to make them manageable for newcomers.

We won't lose the plots

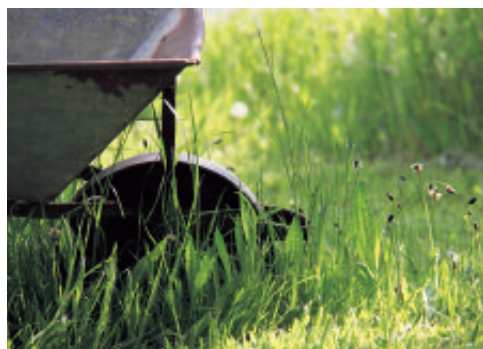
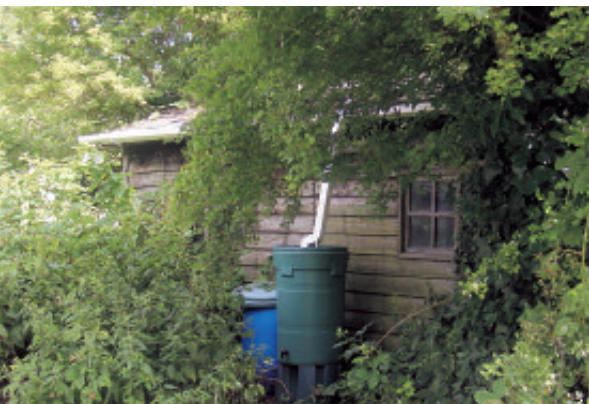
We are enthusiastic people who encourage awareness of sustainable growing, and the value of protecting our local environment. Children are made welcome. Our project involved five young people learning recorded interviewing skills and presenting a puppet show.

Queens Road Allotments is a hidden magical space that gives lots of people peace, tranquillity and companionship. It is also wildlife haven in the heart of the city.

Sally Williams – a photographer's eye

Most of the photographs in this booklet were taken by Sally. She has chronicled the sheds, wildlife, personalities and atmosphere of Queens Road Allotments over the years in fair weather and foul.

‘Taking my camera down to the allotment makes me look more closely at what is there. It is an amazingly varied and changing environment and I take photos of many things. However they are also a picture of how I see and feel about the place – my allotment world.’



Robert Carter's rickshaw for carrying his tools. It was used in Oxford and in the Isle of Arran before becoming an essential transportable shed. A very desirable object for the gardening man or woman.



Robert's shed and his wildflower area. Here among the confusion of undergrowth, wrens, great tits, blackbirds and robins have nested. Sparrows forage, and bees and butterflies gather pollen and nectar not only from the flowers of the food crops but also from the beds of annuals sown for their benefit. Clarkia for bumble bees, alyssum for butterflies, cornflowers and godetia for honeybees, marigolds for hoverflies.



Our allotment community



Everyone can meet and make new friends at our annual BBQ. The 2013 children's puppet show was part of this All Our Stories project.



Our allotment Open Days attract lots of local people. 'I never knew this beautiful spot was so near my doorstep. It's a delight.'

Our 2011 annual competition was a scarecrow extravaganza. In 2012 we asked allotmenters for inventive decoration of their plot numbers.



We help newcomers to clear the often weed-infested plots they take on. Here a working party gets down to business in the depth of winter.



NOT LOST THE PLOT

Friends of Queens Road Allotments

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