

ARDS ALLOTMENTS

ALLOTMENT B 9

HOLDERS - Trevor Rea and Barry Kerr

DIARY FOR 2009

Sunday 15 March. This is our second year on the site and we could hardly wait to get back at it again. Last year it was largely a matter of experimenting with a wide variety of crops to see what grew well for us and to see what actually found its way to the table. This year we hope to concentrate on produce that we know will be used, always paying heed to rotation principles. With this in mind we look forward to an enjoyable year down the Comber Road - here's hoping for plenty of sunny spells with less wind and rain than in 2008.



Trevor enjoys a well earned rest from the pipe

TASKS (this year to date)

- Undecided whether to sow our Home Guard spuds around St Pat's Day as traditional in the area. May wait and see if weather is to hold fair. Seeds are chitting away comfortably in the garage.
- All ground on the site has been prepared so far as is possible, with compost/manure added to beds where required.
- Green netting has been attached to both side fences at ground level to hold back grass etc growing through from adjoining sites. This appears to be a success and it looks good! (No expense here as it was a gift last year.)
- Onion sets (Setton) planted this week and covered with netting - 2 drills each.
- Rhubarb is coming on nicely under pots, in spite of Barry's best efforts to flatten it. The bed has been tidied up and a drop of manure added.
- Raised beds already modified during February.
- Grass cut for first time in March.
- Canes erected in double wigwam effect on Trevor's side of plot, to see how much

ground the French and runner beans will take up. Looks more than we had hoped. Barry needs same for *Which Magazine* trial of runners.

- Compost was turned over in March and spread on beds - looks ok.
- Tested soil in brassica beds - pH 7 - seems to be within acceptable range. Maybe will add a little lime when planting.

LABOUR

	Hours
February	10
March so far	20

EXPENSES (year to date)

	£
Conacre rental of site (January)	220
Seed potatoes, 120 Home Guard	9
Seeds/plants by post*	49
Manure x 12 bags, 12 x 8 ft canes	50

Running total **324**

PRODUCE

Our only produce currently available is purple sprouting broccoli grown from seed planted last year. We both feel this may be too big a commitment of space and time for the volume it produces. However what we have tried has been very tasty and it is supposed to be good for you - plenty of iron.



First cut of purple sprouting broccoli

WEEK COMMENCING (W/C) 16 MARCH

TASKS

- Dug in manure where required.
- Prepared seed beds

- Planted Home Guard potatoes on 20 March, assisted by Finlay - see aside.



LABOUR

12 hours

PRODUCE

Still lifting the purple sprouting broccoli. We have about half a dozen fruitful plants - estimate they produce enough for 10 individual helpings a week. Difficult to say the monetary value of this product as we haven't seen much of it in the shops.

W/C 23 MARCH

TASKS

- Continued to prepare seed beds

LABOUR

8 hours

PRODUCE

P s broccoli still producing well.

W/C 30 MARCH

TASKS

- Prepared bed and planted 12 asparagus crowns - Pacific 2000 - see aside.
- Sowed broad beans - Imperial Long Pod - plus a few donated by our neighbour.
- Sowed peas - Kelvedon Wonder.
- Sowed standard lettuce seeds.
- Sowed carrots - Autumn King 2.
- Sowed Kohl Rabi - Logo.



- Sowed Oregon Sugar Pod (Mangetout).
- Planted 12 iceberg lettuce - purchased from Hillside Garden Centre.

LABOUR

16 hours

EXPENSES

	£
General purpose fertilizer	10
Lettuce plants	3
cf	324
Running total	337

PRODUCE

Still getting good return from p s broccoli.

W/C 6 APRIL

Idle week due to domestic commitments, but most of the sowing and planting that needs to be done, has been done anyway.

W/C 13 APRIL

TASKS

- Sowed leaf salads - Cos Lettuce Mix and French Mix.
- Sowed turnips - Golden Ball, seeds left over from last year.
- Cut grass.
- Sowed more carrots - Autumn King 2.

LABOUR

6 hours

PRODUCE

Again harvested good crop of ps broccoli.

W/C 20 APRIL

TASKS

- Cut grass.
- Sowed beetroot - Crimson King.
- Sowed carrots - F1 Nelson.
- Prepared flower bed near shed.

LABOUR

10 hours

PRODUCE

Rhubarb estimate £2
Ps broccoli estimate £15 all told.

W/C 27 APRIL

TASKS

- Finished off flower bed with 2 x 75ltr bags of compost.
- Some damage evident on young pea sprouts, so protected them with netting and slug pellets - double indemnity against birds and slugs.
- Sowed some spring onions - White Lisbon.
- Sowed dwarf French beans - Ferrari.
- Sowed climbing French beans - Blue Lake, and beetroot - Boltardy.
- At home sowed runner beans in pots - 10 Enorma seeds left over from last year, plus 10 experimental new variety for *Which* magazine to which Trevor subscribes. Also 3 squash seeds for *Which* trial.
- Planted out young brassicas received from Dobies by post - Summer Cabbage (Guardian), Winter Cabbage (Tundra), and Brussels Sprouts (Maximus).
- Cut grass.

LABOUR

12 hours

EXPENSES

Compost, lime, French Climbing Beans,
Spring onions, Turnip seed, Bug spray,
Slug pellets, Carrot seed £24

cf £337

Running total £361

W/C 4 MAY

TASKS

- Cut grass.
- General weeding.
- Transplanted lettuce.

LABOUR

10 hours

W/C 11 MAY

TASKS

- Cut grass.
- Transplanted lettuce.
- General weeding.
- Used tree cuttings from home as pea supports - see aside.

LABOUR

6 hours



PROGRESS REPORT MID-MAY

- Although there has been a fair amount of sunshine the temperatures have been disappointing so that those crops which have ventured to peak out at the weather have felt the east wind and decided to mark time.

- Germination has been slow - Trevor's dwarf beans he got from Dobies have literally disappeared, no amount of searching with the trowel could unearth them. We assume they rotted away with the cold and damp weather in early May.
- On the plus side, after a shaky start the peas are coming on great as can be seen on the previous page.
- The onions seem to be doing ok and Barry has tried some leachate from his wormery on a portion of the crop and to a few brassicas. This will be applied fortnightly until about the end of June so that we can monitor growth against the rest of the crop.
- The early potatoes, as on most sites, are coming on well - it looks like another bumper crop of Comber spuds.
- The carrots, beetroot, turnips, leaf salad, bean plants, asparagus, and rhubarb seem to be holding their own in spite of the lack of heat.
- The iceberg lettuce plants have come on particularly well - see below.



W/C 18 MAY

TASKS

- General weeding, cut grass and edged beds.
- Sowed turnips - Milan Purple Top.
- Planted out dwarf winter squash for Which magazine trial. Only 2 of the three germinated.
- Planted out runner beans for Which magazine trial - 9 of the 10 seeds were successful. Also planted enormous beans from last year's seeds, and a few plants from Walker's.

LABOUR

10 hours

NB

1. **Dwarf French beans did not germinate.**
2. **Tried leachate from wormery to some of brassicas and onions - little noticeable difference. Decided to keep this for flowers and squashes/ courgettes.**

W/C 25 MAY

TASKS

- Applied fleece to protect runner beans from wind. Seems to be a great success - see aside.
- Sowed Spring Onions - White Lisbon.
- Planted out dwarf French Beans.
- Planted out courgettes.

LABOUR

16 hours



W/C 1 JUNE

TASKS

- General weeding and watering.
- Planted more dwarf French Beans.
- Replaced about a dozen or more brassica plants lost to the cabbage root fly.

LABOUR

10 hours.

PRODUCE

Began lifting iceberg lettuce - 11 good size plants lifted over 3 weeks.

W/C 8 JUNE

TASKS

- Cut grass and watered as needed.
- Thinned turnips, swedes, beetroot and carrots.
- General weeding.
- Erected wooden fence at entrance to plot - see below.



LABOUR

16 hours.

EXPENSES

Wooden fence £56

cf £361

Running total £417

PRODUCE

Began lifting first of some 50+ round lettuce. Will be giving away a good few over the next few weeks as we have far more than we need for ourselves.

Began picking Trevor's strawberries - unsure of the variety but they are a good size and very tasty - see aside.



W/C 15, 22 & 29 JUNE

TASKS

- Watering and weeding as needed.
- Cutting grass.
- Strengthening supports for peas and beans.
- Harvesting crops as below.
- Transplanted Cos Little Gem lettuce.
- Succession sowing of turnips.

LABOUR

30 hours

PRODUCE

Began lifting Home Guard potatoes. In general these have done very well although yields are variable. A few stalks and potatoes were damaged, probably by eelworm and there was some slight sign of blight. At current prices in local shops - 65p per lb - we calculate a total value of approximately £100 for this crop. We will need to be careful with crop rotation because of the eelworm threat (according to the Internet) . In the meantime we, and family and friends, are enjoying our traditional Comber spuds.

Trevor's round lettuce continue to delight, but we have struggled to find a home for many of them - some prudent succession planting is indicated here.

Finished lifting Trevor's strawberries.

Began lifting turnips and beetroot which have grown well for us again this year.

Lifted some of the summer cabbage from Dobies which grew particularly well on Barry's side of the plot - see photo. These proved to be very large, tasty and of a good texture. However they need so much ground, are very susceptible to the root fly, and cost so little in the shops that we may cut back on this crop.



Excellent crop of Mangetout (Oregon Sugar Pod) - can hardly keep up with the harvesting which is needed every 2 days. Still lifting, using and freezing this crop.

Trevor has lifted most of his Kohl Rabi and both of us have some in the fridge at home, wondering whether to use it. Not exactly what either of us was reared on, but it looks good.

Began lifting the Kelvedon Wonder peas which have produced a bumper crop - see photo. These are very tasty and are very clean and well formed in the pods, a definite improvement on last year's locally bought peas. Dobies may get more business from us next year. One thing about the peas and mangetout is that we planted the rows far too close together, impeding growth of the crop between rows, and hampering the picking. We will improve on this next year - although the plot is small and our aspirations are large, we are learning that it pays to give the crops room.



PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2009

- As we had hoped the weather has been somewhat kinder than last year and as a result most crops have grown really well, especially since temperatures eventually began to pick up in June.
- Although the root fly took a good lot of the cabbage, those that survived grew on particularly well on Barry's side of the plot. Conversely the beetroot and courgettes grew better on Trevor's side.
- The onions are doing extremely well and look set for a good crop.
- Trevor's winter squash and Barry's runner beans, all on trial for Which Magazine, are doing particularly well. Let's hope it continues.
- The carrots, Autumn King 2, are a bit slow but still growing away.
- For some reason the spring onions, White Lisbon, are struggling to get going.
- The asparagus bed is a bit of a mystery as only a few of the plants have produced ferns. But *fingers crossed*.

Here are a few photos -



W/C 6, 13, 20 & 27 JULY

TASKS

- Watering, weeding, cutting grass as needed.
- Thinning carrots.
- Digging over old potato, mangetout, and pea beds in readiness for new crops.
- Edging beds.
- Harvesting produce as below.
- Sowing spinach (Giant Winter), and swedes (Helenor).
- Planting broccoli (unknown - donated by Comber friend).
- Transplanting round and cos (Little Gem) lettuce.

LABOUR

50 hours.

PRODUCE

Finished lifting potatoes, peas, mangetout, broad beans, and summer cabbage.

Taking parsley and celery as and when needed.

Began harvesting "Which" runner beans on 21 July. These are about 2 weeks ahead of the Enorma variety planted beside them. They are producing good quality crop quickly during the better weather. However both the pods and foliage have suffered badly with marking and drying/curling of leaves during spells of wind and rain. We tried protecting them with fleece at lower levels with some success, so for next year we may try to devise a taller protection. The position of our site does not afford any sheltered spots which would be more suited to this crop. Nevertheless the beans have been excellent eating with good flavour and texture.



Continued harvesting courgettes, baby carrot thinnings, lettuce, and beetroot.

W/C 3 & 10 AUGUST

TASKS

- Weeding, watering and cutting grass.
- Harvesting crops as below.
- Preparing plot for Open Day on 15 August. Gave vegetable plots, flower bed/boxes and shed a bit of a spruce up.

LABOUR

24 hours.

PRODUCE

Continued harvesting runner beans. The Enorma are now producing a good crop alongside the Which trials and seem to be almost as good to eat although not as big.

Began lifting some of the sprouts although they do not appear to be hardening off very well, and Trevor's are being eaten by caterpillars or slugs. Discovered from the internet that these should be pinched out at the top leaves, which may encourage better formation of the fruit.

Still harvesting courgettes, celery and parsley.

Began harvesting French beans which are a little slow to develop, and onions which have supplied a terrific crop - see photo.



W/C 17 AUGUST - W/C 7 SEPTEMBER

TASKS

- Weeding, watering and cutting grass.
- Harvesting as below.
- Transplanting Spring cabbage, planting and thinning swedes.

LABOUR

30 hours

PRODUCE

We continued to harvest all the crops and the highlights were as follows.

Runner beans - finished lifting these early September. Both the Which trials and the Enorma were prolific producers but the climate here is not great for this crop.

Sprouts - hardened off well and gave us a reasonable supply, although, like the other brassicas, they take up a lot of room. Photo below.

Carrots - did not do well at all. Suspect the soil not right, possibly too richly fertilised.

Swedes - started lifting the bigger ones and they are excellently tasted.

Onions - the setton variety have been terrific - now drying off in our garages.

Cabbage - the Tundra have grown enormously and we have begun to harvest the few which have survived - see below.

French beans - have suffered somewhat from over-crowding but still providing a reasonable supply.

Cerlery, parsley and spinach - although these have grown well enough, they have not been used. A much smaller amount would suffice for our needs.



FINAL PROGRESS REPORT AND SUMMARY - OCTOBER 2009

- We continued to harvest various crops including sprouts, lettuce, cabbage, French beans, swedes, broccoli, leeks, and winter squash into October.
- We now have 2 drills of swedes, about 4 drills of spring cabbages and a few winter cabbages still growing; plus 6 drills of onion sets and one of garlic planted at the beginning of October for harvesting next year.
- The flower bed continues in full bloom and the winter squash have been cured on the shed windowsills - see below.



- The pick of the crops for this year have been the potatoes (again), onions, runner beans, peas, mangetout, winter squash, those cabbages that survived and swedes.
- We have been impressed with the sweetcorn grown on some of the neighbouring plots and intend having a go next year.
- It is very difficult to put an accurate value on the produce grown because of the fluctuation in supermarket prices from week to week. It is also difficult to estimate the profit to ourselves because we tend to give so much produce away to family and friends. However we would roughly **estimate the value at £360 overall** - see Appendix on next page. This stands against **costs of roughly £400** - see the running totals up to June above, after which there would have been little expense. Allowing for the non-recurring outlay on the wooden fence, **it is fair to say that the plot more or less pays for itself.**

APPENDIX

Estimated value of crops -

Potatoes	£100
Lettuce	20
Strawberries	10
Peas	20
Broad beans	10
Mangetout	20
Rhubarb	10
Beetroot	20
Courgettes	5
French beans	15
Turnips/swedes	25
Cabbage	15
Broccoli	20
Squash	10
Sprouts	10
Parsley/celery	5
Leeks	15
Runner beans	20
<u>Onions</u>	<u>10</u>
Total	<u>£360</u>