

Merrylee  
Plotholders  
Association,  
Centenary  
Celebrations.  
1917 - 2017

The 2011 project on 'The Heritage of Community Growing in Glasgow' was initiated by the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS), [sags.org.uk](http://sags.org.uk), and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The website Glasgow Allotment Heritage ([gah.org.uk](http://gah.org.uk)) gives ready access to the material gathered during the project, including that from Merrylee Plotolders Association. In 2016 our Association archive was lodged in the Mitchell Library and includes material developed for the Glasgow project.

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# Merrylee Plotolders Association, Centenary Celebrations. 1917 - 2017.

This Booklet has been produced by Merrylee Plotolders Association as part of its Centenary Celebrations. It gives a glimpse into the history of our allotments, and provides an opportunity to celebrate and share what we do both with the wider Merrylee community, and with other Allotment Associations in Glasgow and beyond.

INSIDE COVER

# The President of Merrylee Plotholders Association, Donald Thomas



The allotment gardens, or plots, were established during the First World War when submarine activity was having a major impact on food deliveries to the United Kingdom. Today we also live in a period of uncertainty due to climate and political change. Adverse weather in Europe has almost wiped out the supply of many vegetables during the early months of 2017. Perhaps as a nation we have to revert to eating home grown seasonable vegetables should the current experience become the norm, just as we did 100 years ago.

Demand for plots has gone up and down over the last 100 years, affected by conflict and by attitudes to 'grow your own food'. Much is made today of knowing the source of our food and minimising food miles. Merrylee Allotments provide the answer to these issues – you can grow your own vegetables from seed and carry them home to eat, knowing exactly what has happened to the plants over the whole of the growing period. Merrylee Primary School pupils recently featured in a BBC programme showing the pupils preparing the soil in their plot, planting seeds, caring for the plants, harvesting the crop, then cooking and eating the meal – all within a distance of 100m between their plot and the school.



As part of the celebrations, this Booklet tells the story of our plots over the last 100 years and paints a picture of what we do now and for the future. The Association must thank the four plotholders Joan Menmuir (plot 8), David Carver (plot 12A) John MacGregor (plot 13), and Ray Cartner (plot 64), who have worked together to gather the material for the Booklet. Thanks are also due to our plotholders and former plotholders whose conversations have contributed much to the content. It has been a truly collaborative effort.

We are grateful to Glasgow City Council for their financial support to assist with the publication of this Booklet.

We hope you enjoy reading about our plots here in Merrylee.



## Uncovering Our Roots, Running the Show, Growing the Crop, All Together Better...

# Uncovering our Roots...

**Our story begins in 1917** - The Minutes of the meetings of Glasgow Corporation, November 1917 - April 1918, confirm that allotments were laid out at Merrylee Road in the year 1917. A report by the Superintendent of Parks to the meeting of the Special Committee on Raising and Rearing of Live Stock and Production of Agricultural Produce, 15th January 1918, sets the context:

“There arose a demand for plots throughout the city consequent upon the success of the 273 garden plots laid out in Tollcross Park in 1916. The demand was later intensified by the scarcity of potatoes, caused by the partial failure of the crop of that important vegetable throughout Scotland in 1916.”

Under the Defence of the Realm Act of 1914, the Corporation was given powers to seek further suitable land for plots and, by the end of May 1917, over 4000 additional plots were laid out in 32 different parts of the city.



1930 'Allotment Gardens' and a 'Football Ground' occupy site of the present allotments

**“It is but right to acknowledge here the courtesy of many holders of vacant or uncultivated land in regard to the formation of garden plots thereon. While it was necessary to commandeer the land in some cases, the agents in all cases, recognising the National necessity, frankly gave possession without raising objections or making unreasonable conditions. In only a few cases was any claim or suggestion made regarding rent”**



Table 1 of the Superintendent's report in 1918 lists Merrylee Road among a total of 32 locations of plots set up in the previous year. The site contained 80 plots, each of 200 square yards and with a rent of 4s 3d per year. All the plots were let in that first year and everyone grew potatoes. It was estimated that the new plots set up at Merrylee produced 35 tons of potatoes in 1917, and a total of 1,766 tons of potatoes were produced by the 32 allotment sites.

1941 Cashbook record starts



**Cultivation in 1917** - The Superintendent's report for that first year is very comprehensive and includes some fascinating details of that time. He comments that "some expected the plots would be free to ratepayers and some expected the ground would be manured and prepared for them. Nevertheless, there was a rush for the plots. Although fencing of allotment areas was limited because of cost, there were few cases of theft".

The report contains some pointed comments on the methods of cultivation employed and the standards of maintenance. Reference is made to an "obsession" with artificial watering which is said to be unnecessary or only rarely required "where the soil is mostly of a heavy nature and the atmosphere usually moist". "No doubt water at the plots is handy at times, but to see men watering potatoes when rain was falling, as was observed on several occasions, makes one question their sanity and right to hold a plot".

Most plots were well maintained but the "lazy bed" system of growing potatoes used by some plot holders was criticised as "anything but high class cultivation and only permissible where the land is wet or boggy". Notice was taken of a few plot holders who "are neither cultivating their allotments fully nor to best advantage".

The full report is available through Glasgow City Archives at the Mitchell Library.

1946 Annual Show made profit of £49

**The Site Changed Shape** - After World War One, the overall number of plots in the city declined as land was reclaimed for housing or recreation and although efforts were made during the 1930s and during World War Two to provide new plots, the number never reached that in 1917.

Research of old maps of our area suggests that the Merrylee Allotments, which were established in 1917 and located in part on our present site, remained in the same position from 1917 until the early 1950s.

In the early 1950s new houses were built on most of the site previously occupied by the adjacent Cathcart Nurseries. 1956 saw the opening of Friarton Road Catholic Primary School, now called Our Lady of the Annunciation Primary School.

Part of the original Merrylee Allotment site occupied the area designated for the new school and so these allotments were moved. The allotment site changed shape and expanded northwards to incorporate a former football ground. This change in shape and size, to what is now our current boundary, coincided with a change of ownership of the allotments in 1951.



1947 Plots judged for St Mungo Competition as 3/9 was spent 'refreshing' the judges

**A Change of Ownership** - We believe that our site was set up on land owned by Pollok Estates. Our first reference to ownership is by Nether Pollok Estates (NPE) in 1941 when the Merrylee Plottolders Association (MPA) cashbook starts. In that year just over £26 was paid in rent to NPE. Adjusting for the relative cost of living makes that equivalent to £1,200 today. By way of comparison, in 2016 we paid £1,961 in rent to Glasgow City Council.

Our last reference to NPE is in 1948/9 and the legal documents related to the lease show that in 1951 Glasgow District Council became our landlord.



On 11th November 1986 a 25 year lease was entered into with Glasgow District Council (Parks) and a rent of £300 per annum for the whole site was paid, to be reviewed every 5 years. In 2008 the legal contract with the City Council was renegotiated to bring Merrylee plots onto the same legal footing as other Council owned allotment sites, thus securing its future as green space. The Council's responsibilities as landlord since then have been administered through 'Land and Environmental Services' and each plottholder has become a 'tenant' of the Council.

1949 Number of active plottholders drops to 74-rents still differentiated



**Position & Layout** - The site lies on the south side of Glasgow near the corner of Langside Drive and Merrylee Road. It forms a long thin ribbon of cultivated land between the Victorian houses on Langside Drive and the two local primary schools on Friarton Road. The number and size of plots has changed over the years. In 1942 there were 109 plots with 4 different rent rates. By the middle of the 1950s there were 65 plots and in 2016 there was still the equivalent of 65 plots, in a mixture of larger plots, each of around 225 square metres, and smaller 'half size' plots. An additional large plot was set aside for the Association hut, toilet and car park and one of the smaller plots was recently set aside as a raised bed project.

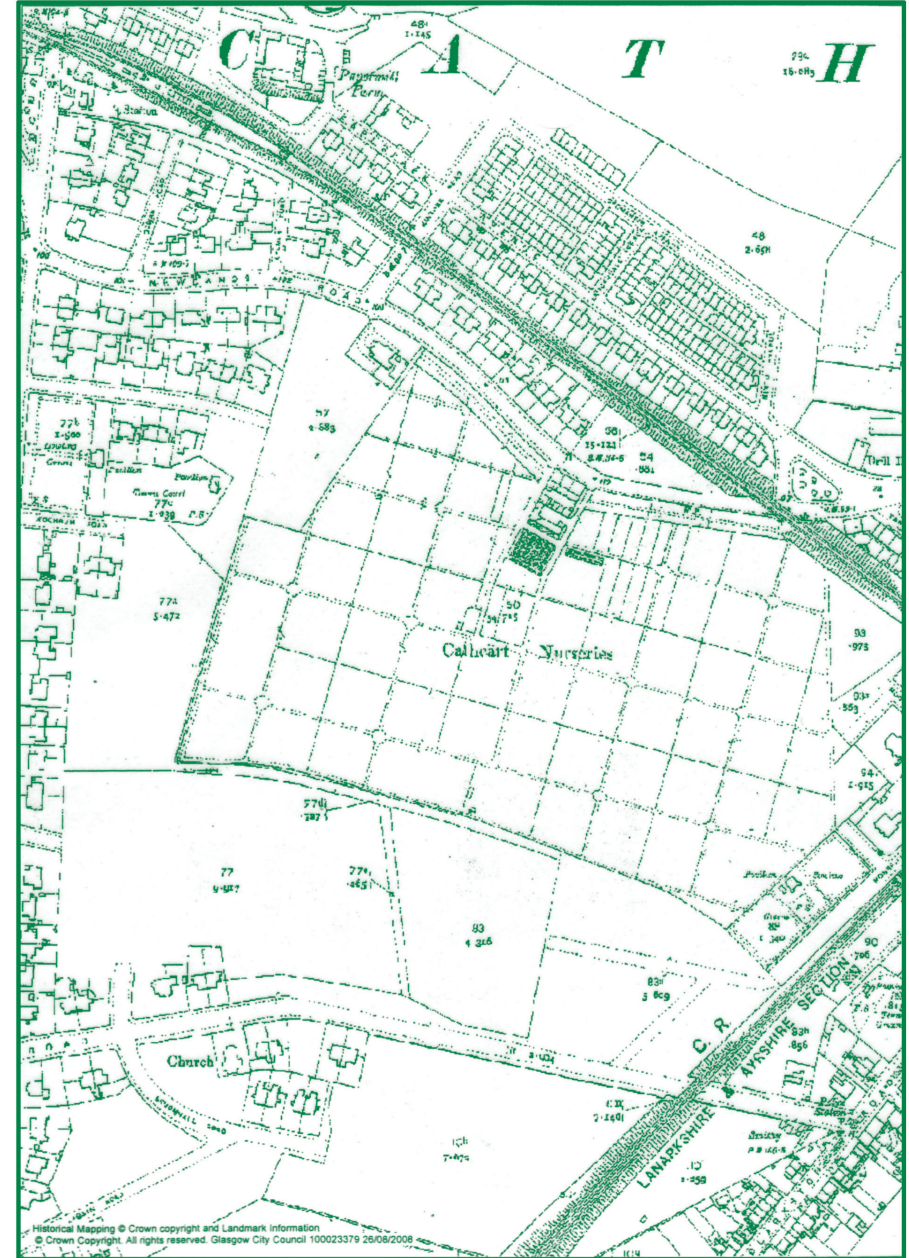
Although there have been some half plots on the site for a long time, these were more positively developed from 2007, and are now very popular. New members of the Association often benefit from starting small, particularly if they don't have a lot of experience of gardening. Smaller plots are also useful for those with full working lives or those who want to downsize their commitment for one reason or another.

The site extends to an area of 1.73 hectares (around 4.4 acres).

1951 £3 spent on prizes for 'Alison Trophy' and gratuities for the judges



## What the area looked like in 1910



**Who are the Plotolders?** - We know little about our plotolders in the very early years, but more general information from Glasgow archives tends to suggest that plotolders were nearly all men. During the 1940s this was still the case, reflecting the national image at the time that working an allotment provided a recreational opportunity for men outside their daily work. Our longest serving members from the late 1970s and early 1980s understand and talk about that tradition. The picture has changed, particularly since the 1970s, and membership has become more diverse. Plotolders now vary widely in age and join from all walks of life. Some want to maintain continuity with their own more rural roots and some are attracted by the space available for growing in an urban setting. Women and children have increasingly involved themselves in allotment life. In 2016, many women as well as men are plotolders in their own right and whole families often take on a plot as a shared hobby.

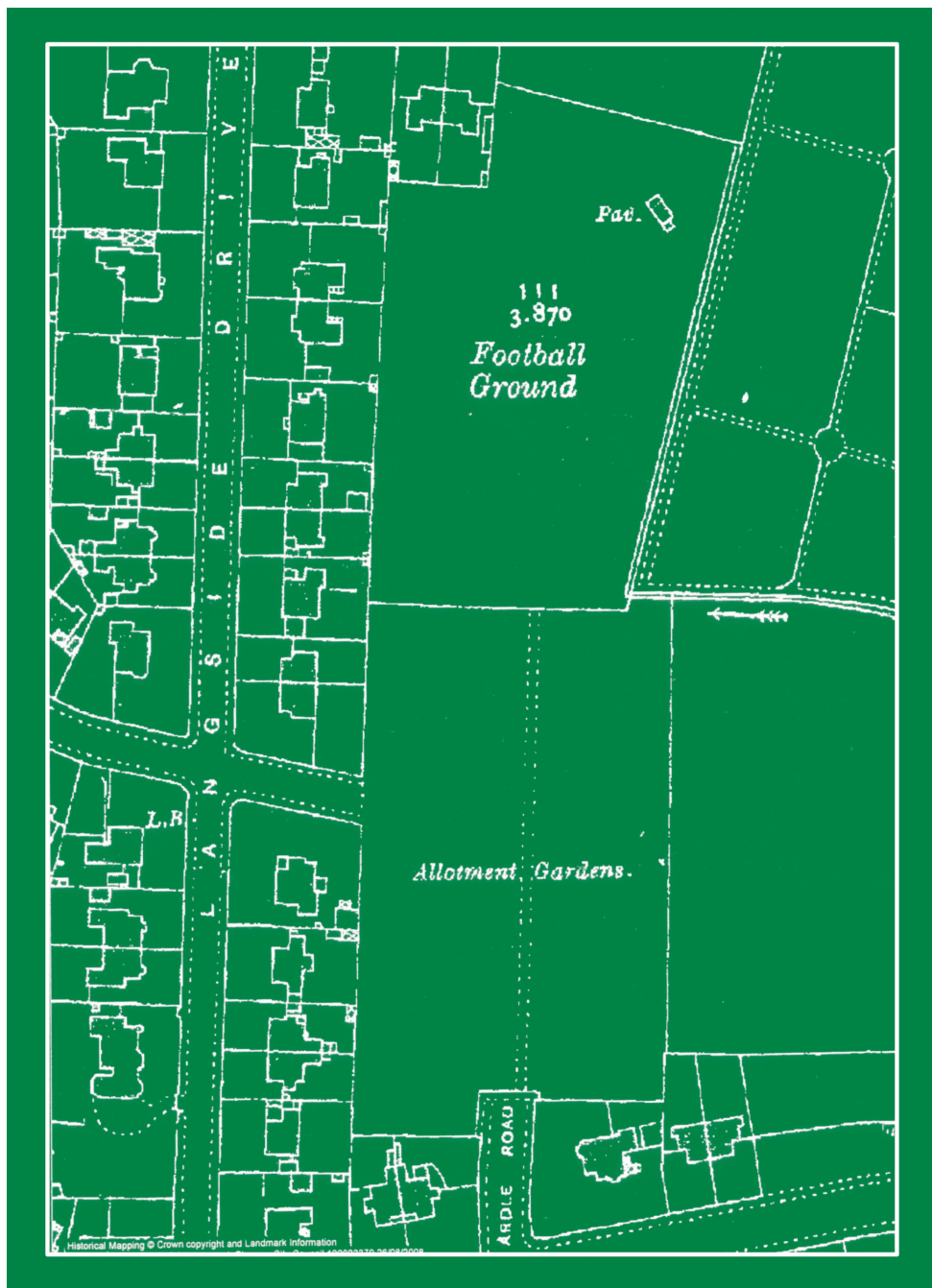
These changes reflect the changing purpose of allotments. The need to provide food for a family, in an urban environment such as ours, has largely been replaced by the challenge and curiosity of growing food as a hobby, often fuelled by gardening programmes on TV. Members now also join because they have an interest in learning about and looking after our environment for future generations. The diversity of membership and motives provides a richness of community that we all value and celebrate today.



1954 Portable typewriter bought for £21, Annual Show profit - a mere £2

1957 Installation of new water supply cost £31

What the area looked like in 1930



What the area looked like in 1950



By the 1950s the allotment site had taken over the football ground and formed the shape it occupies today. Friarton Road Catholic Primary School lay alongside the allotment site and later a blaze sports ground was created next to the school. By 2009 the blaze pitch had been replaced by an all weather football pitch in the grounds of the new Merrylee Primary School.



## What the site looks like now



1961 £48 collected in rents and £14 paid out as annual ground rental

# Running the Show...

YEAR	SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION	SOURCE
1910	Houses in Langside Drive but no sign of an allotment site or school on adjacent field	Local Map
1917	First reference to allotments at Merrylee; 80 plots fully let according to Council minutes of Glasgow Corporation	Mitchell Library Archive
1922	'Allotment Gardens' and a 'Football Ground' occupy site of the present allotments	Mitchell Library Archive
1941-42	Cashbook record starts £5 honorarium paid to Secretary J. Ferguson.	MPA Cashbook
1942-43	Show Dance & Concert made profit of £105	MPA Cashbook
1943-44	Rents collected from 97 plots amounted to £36-5/- £105 given to Scottish Red Cross	MPA Cashbook
1944-45	Number of active plots falls to 92 with one plot rated worth 8/6 p.a. and others at 7/6	MPA Cashbook
1946	Annual Show made profit of £49	MPA Cashbook
1947	87 rents collected – threefold rating 6 at 11/-, 80 at 10/- and 1 (booby plot?) at 7/6	MPA Cashbook
1948	Annual show generated profit of £32 [£68 - £36]	MPA Cashbook

**Meeting Costs** - In addition to the rent paid to the landlord, Merrylee always had to levy a supplement on plottolders to fund site management outlays. For example in 1946, £33 was collected in total, £23 of which was going directly to Nether Pollok Estates and the remainder presumably used for maintaining site operation.

1964 Secretary now paid £15 per annum

1951 first reference to a Glasgow Corporation 'occupier's rate'. 1957 a new water supply installed at a cost of £31. 1960 fertilizer, ash, sand and 2000 leeks bought in bulk to sell on to ploholders. 1961 a paraffin powered flame gun was acquired, to be hired out at 6d per hour. There's no record of anyone being accidentally set on fire! 1972 £15 paid to the Secretary and £5 to the 'Ground Convener'. 1978 £10 paid out as prizes for best 3 allotments.



## Helping Out...

**Prydd Jones** (plot 58b) joined MPA in 1978 and when he arrived there was no waiting list and several people had multiple plots. He recalls an Irishman called Con who cultivated 4, including plot 7. The demographic was almost entirely male and predominately senior. When he arrived there was no Association Hut, no organised social events, no gravel paths and only two water points on the site. The toilet was a shack with a French style hole in the ground and predictable bouquet. Greenhouses were few and far between. Prydd welcomed the improvement when the site was transferred to GCC Land and Environmental Services in 2008. They took a more active interest in the site leading to better service and security than had formerly been the case.

**John Shannon** (formerly plot 2) joined the association in 1971. He was a member for around 40 years and on the committee for some of that time. He was 'gardening mad' and the soil at his own house was 'pure clay' so he was delighted to get a plot. When John joined he paid 50p a year and remembered when the wet plots were half price. Members often did not have much money so they built their own huts, helped each other out, and when workparties occurred on a Saturday or Sunday a crowd of guys would turn up to help.

To listen to John's story go to: [gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history](http://gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history)

**"Prydd's redcurrant bushes were on the plot when he arrived in 1978 and they are still there in 2017."**

1969 Bulk buying of fertilisers and manure remains a major transaction

## 'People come new to Merrylee... it's not what they expect... so friendly...so relaxing'

And on into the 90s

**Heather Thomas** (formerly plot 27) joined the Association in 1992 and before that she belonged to Springburn Workmen's Gardens Association from the early 1970s. She has been active in developing our Association and since 2005 has organised the communal seed order, taking over from Alex Reid (formerly plot 31) who did the job for many years.

If you'd like to hear more about Heather's memories of Springburn and Merrylee go to [gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history](http://gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history)



Looking North

**Cliff Anderson** (formerly plot 60) joined the Association in 1988 and retired some 20 years later. When he arrived these were the views from his plot looking north and looking west. Cliff was always willing to get involved in the Association and particularly enjoyed having children from Merrylee School on one half of the plot when he downsized to 60B. He brought old maps to us and encouraged us to start 'uncovering our roots'.



Looking West

'The objects of the Association shall be to cultivate the plots for the purpose of leisure gardening, and to manage the allotment site in an effective manner in accordance with the Glasgow City Council Rules and Regulations and the Association's Constitution and Rules'.

1970 £18 spent on fencing material to improve security

**And the Noughties** - Throughout the year communal areas and equipment are looked after by ploholders and work parties are arranged for activities such as clearing up plots for re-letting, painting, repairing fences and upgrading paths. Area Partnership and Lottery funding have been given to repair storm damaged fencing, to provide a pergola adjoining our members' hut and to provide raised beds for our 'less mobile' members. While contractors have been needed for these projects the help of volunteers is immeasurable and there is always coffee, home baking and lots of chat on these occasions too. The replacement fence at the main entrance to our site is the most recent of these projects and this was complemented by a new border of shrubs.



**2006** paths upgraded and new water system installed with many standpipes

**2007** Association Hut extended to include a store and in 2013 Pergola added

**2009** car park upgraded

**2010** new toilet installed

**2012** fence at the Quadrant Road side entrance replaced

**2014** half plot developed to create an equipment store and the raised beds project

**2016** new fence erected at the Ardle Road entrance, and a new border of shrubs



## The Presidents from 1991

At our last coffee morning of 2011 we arranged to take a photo of past presidents from 1991 along with Myra McBride who was the Secretary/Treasurer through most of those years. We were unable to trace Robert McKinlay who was the president in 1999 and 2000.



Roger Thomas  
1991-1994



Eric Dyburgh  
1995-98, 2004-06



Max Hartman  
2001-2003



John Fearn  
2007-2009



Ronnie Bain  
2010-2014



Myra McBride  
1987-2008



**Looking to the Future** - Annual General Meetings were held in the Couper Institute for many years, but since 2006 they have taken place in Merrylea Church Hall.



2011 - Members attending the AGM



2016 - Newly elected Committee, plus retiring members at the AGM

1983 £385 collected in rents from 64.5 plots

# Growing the Crops...



**Plot Sizes Differ** - Nowadays plots are either 'full' or 'half' size and rents are fixed accordingly but in earlier times rents were sometimes set at more than two levels. In 1941-42 for example there were 4 different rents associated with the plots. We have no information about why there were differences and can only speculate on whether the rental was based entirely on area or whether other factors, such as wet ground, contributed to the variation observed.

**Time Spent Working the Plot** - It is always difficult to know how much time is needed to work a plot. Watching gardening programmes on TV often doesn't help as gardens appear to be weed free, easy to work and planting seems effortless. We have no information about how long Merrylee ploholders took to maintain their plots in the past, but nowadays new ploholders are advised to anticipate spending a minimum of five hours a week working a half plot and even more for a full plot. This does not take account of the very substantial extra time and effort needed to get an overgrown plot into shape.

Ploholders at Merrylee are very patient and supportive of each other. They acknowledge the challenges that working a plot can bring, especially if someone is new or unable to work the plot for a time. They are always ready to help.

**Robert and Isobel Love** (plot 4) who joined the plots in 2005 have fond memories of Katie MacDonald, John Shannon, Bob Rae and Max Hartman as plot neighbours and of the friendship and support they have given each other over the years.

1987 First entry of AGM minutes in a record book, President; Mr I. Hay elected

**Feeding the Ground - Lesley Swift (plot 51)** has been in the Association since 1998. Her first few years were spent building up the quality of the soil on her plot and she has been rewarded with an ‘explosion’ in the earthworm population. She gardens organically, uses a four year rotation system, and grows a wide variety of produce. If you’d like to listen to Lesley telling her own story about her plot go to [gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history](http://gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history)

**Manure and fertilizer** - Bulk buying supplies of farmyard manure and artificial fertilizer and recovering the cost by internal sale to ploholders has been a feature of allotment support since our records began in 1941. In 1961 £63 (equivalent to £1265 today) was paid out for manure and sold on to ploholders thus recovering £57. In 1975 no less than 26 loads of manure were delivered for the sum of £105. Sometimes we get a supply of farm manure (not just any manure, but Pollok Estate Highland Cattle manure) given to us free, for anyone to use. It always disappears quickly like snow off a dyke!



**‘A vivid memory from Fiona Bonellie (plot 62a) is of wrapping up well to come to the plot on a cold March weekend and shovelling manure as the snow fell.’**

**Huts & Greenhouses** - Building your own hut was more common in the past than it is today and before the 1980s there were very few greenhouses. Today ploholders often inherit a hut or greenhouse left to the Association by a previous tenant. Sometimes they buy or build their own.



A 1930s wooden greenhouse on plot 8 was built by the Woika family and only taken down for safety reasons in 2016.



An Anderson Shelter was still being used as a hut in 2003. It has now been removed.



**Ian McCracken (plot 9)** built a new hut to his own design, added a veranda, and has customised the inside using a range of recycled materials.



**Derek and Emma Livesey (plot 65)** inherited their hut from the Association.



**Rolf Roscher’s self build greenhouse on plot 50**



**Paul Drury’s self build hut with roof garden on plot 63**



Dovetailing his passion for wildlife photography with his interest in plants is of particular satisfaction to **Vince Kilpatrick (plot 42)**. Walking around the site in the early morning allows him to birdwatch and see flocks of willow warblers and other birds that most of us unfortunately miss. He has also built his own hut.

**A View from the 1980s - Octogenarian Peter Duffy (plot 17)** joined MPA in 1981 taking over plot 63. Plotolders were mainly men in those days. He later succeeded his brother Danny on plot 17. Peter was employed in construction and attended to his plot in the evenings. The pleasure he derives from operating the plot is the satisfaction of growing vegetables for the table and simply working the soil, an exercise which comes naturally to a son of a Donegal crofter. Peter grows potatoes, onions, leeks, carrots, turnips and brassicas. He has four daughters who are the main recipients of his produce.

The prodigious productivity, which is the envy of other plotholders, can be attributed in no small measure to the seaweed compost (collected from the coast) that he applies to the earth. He supplements the seaweed with bags of 10-10-20 fertiliser, acquired in Donegal of course. One of his tips is with regard to leeks. He puts two or three chicken manure pellets in the bottom of the dibber hole, covers them with a little soil and then pops in his leek seedling. Potatoes are Peter's first love. He sprays against blight and does not deviate from his choice of variety using Red Duke of York for First Early, British Queens for Second Early and both Desiree and Pentland Dell for Maincrop.

As a matter of principle, Peter does not grow flowers as they are purely decorative rather than edible.



1990 £517 collected in rents, Felt for New Hut cost £74

**Views from the 1990's - Max Hartman (plot 3)** has been in the Association since 1994. He is a past president and has been our 'best plotholder' in the annual competitions many times, also representing us at regional events. He is especially fond of growing chrysanthemums and he likes the way plotholders are getting together more now and sharing their gardening ideas. If you'd like to listen to Max telling his own story, go to [gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history](http://gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history)

**Eric Dryburgh (formerly plot 48)** and a past president of the Association, has recently retired. He started out as a helper and supporter of Roger Thomas, another past president. He then took on his own plot in the early 1990s. Everything in the beginning was about hand digging to remove weeds. He, like many others, grew potatoes, peas and onions. He was not always successful with onions, but one old plotholder always told him that a good crop of onions lifted and dried would pay the rent for the year. His allotment experience was all about growing food to eat. In his early days one plotholder used to grow tobacco to cure and smoke in his pipe, while another had a hut with a sofa and a bed in it. Bonfires were the usual way of getting rid of rubbish and potato shaws. This came to a stop when a Community Council meeting in the neighbouring OLA primary school was just about 'kippered'. Today fires are not allowed on site.

**Bert Wallace (recently retired from plot 11A)** joined MPA in 1997 and has an album of photos to prove it! He latterly worked a half plot at the Quadrant Road side gate, and said that a plot will take as much attention as you are willing to give it. He liked the plot because it got him into the open air and to meet people, which he did every day. He loves colour, including all shades of green, and enjoyed the flowers that he grew. As well as working the plot, Bert's mechanical aptitude was constructively utilised in the servicing and repair of MPAs petrol driven machines such as mowers, strimmers and cultivators. Casual users inserting an inappropriate oil/petrol mix have caused problems and resulted in Bert spending more time on carburettors than cabbages. Fortunately Bert's sunny disposition meant that he was always less upset than the engine. He maintained the upkeep of the Quadrant Road entrance until he retired.

1994 Plot occupancy now almost 100%, New secondhand hut installed

**All Plots are Different** - We have very little information about the vegetables, fruit and flowers that plotholders grew in the past in Merrylee plots. Conversations with plotholders reflect the diversity of what is happening now.

Dahlias can be chosen as annual or perennial. Taking the latter option to extremes is **Fred Diver (plot 15)** who inherited a large family of purple dahlias from his late father; they occupy a full border of his plot and are now no less than forty years old! Some people leave their dahlias to survive the winter in the ground but Fred plays safe by transferring them for safekeeping to his garage until replanting the following year when risk of frost has passed.

**Frances Robertson (plot 54A)** uses a mixed cottage garden style where flowers, fruit and vegetables are planted close together to make a rich decorative effect. She belonged to New Victoria Gardens for 15 years before moving to Merrylee around 2006. Certain plants have always been star players in the plots and in the Shows at her previous allotment, notably potatoes, onions, beans, and brassicas; also sweet peas and dahlias. She likes to plant and encourage annual flowers, salad plants and herbs that are at home in this climate and will seed themselves from one year to another such as aquilegia, Dame's violet, lamb's lettuce, rocket, dill, coriander and marigold. If you'd like to know more about Frances and her allotment then go to [gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history](http://gah.org.uk/Merrylee/history) and read all about it.



**Sheila Hawthorn (plot 49)** started by growing the fruit and vegetables that she knew well and liked to eat but with the benefit of experience she now has the confidence to relish the challenge presented by cultivating artichokes, celeriac, and celery.

## Everyone to their Own

**Ian McCracken (plot 9)** decided to lay out his plot with raised beds when he arrived, after reading Joy Larkcom's book on How to Grow your Own Vegetables. He grows traditional vegetables and for next year he is planning more netted space to stop the pigeons eating his crops. Incidentally, Ian enjoys a slice of pigeon pie.

**Mavis Craig (plot 35)** enjoys having her own vegetables on the dinner table and the fact that, due to her faithful fruit bushes, she never needs to stop at a supermarket shelf to buy a pot of jam.

On his former plot **Roddy Macleod** experienced terrible flooding during the winter months; he was aware of the stories that there had been a burn at the bottom of the site which he thought must have been built over. For the past four seasons Roddy has worked **plot 37** and is delighted because it is further up the site and has excellent drainage. Roddy is known for his quiet background contributions to allotment community life. He does a lot of grass cutting in the communal areas and, with Bert, has kept an eye on the mechanical upkeep of MPA's machines.



Plotholders are not the only sentient beings to enjoy spending time on their respective plots. **Margaret Potts (plot 61A)** takes along her blonde cocker spaniel, Sandy, as part of his regular walks. He can sit in the shade, get a drink of water, chew the grass and socialise with visitors to the plots. What's not to like!?

**Internal Competitions** - From 1946 to 1960 an Annual Show was held, with competitions in flowers, fruit and vegetables. Nowadays all plots are judged once a year and awarded a platinum, gold, silver or bronze award. In addition three trophies are awarded.

Merrylee Plottolders Association

### Mochrum Cup

for Best Plot Holder

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Winners: 1961 - 2016

1961 Thos. McLure	1999 D. Thomas
1962 Geo. Chisholm	2000 M. Hartman
1963 J. Somerville	2001 D. Thomas
1964 G. Chisholm	2002 D. Thomas
1965 G. Chisholm	2003 C. Kelly
1967 J. Mathewson	2006 M. Hartman
1968 J. Thomson	2007 M. Hartman
1989 C. Anderson	2008 M. Hartman
1990 J. Meldrum	2009 M. Hartman
1991 J. Meldrum	2010 M. Hartman
1992 C. Kelly	2011 M. Hartman/J. Menmuir
1993 I. Inglis	2012 M. Hartman/D. Thomas
1994 D. Thomas	2013 A. Hartman
1995 J. Meldrum	2014 M. Hartman
1996 R. Hadwin	2015 R. Windows
1997 I. Inglis	2016 R. Windows

Merrylee Plottolders Association

### Merrylee Shield

for Best Newcomer

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Winners: 1992 - 2016

1992 R. Hadwin	2005 T. Leckie
1993 D. Thomas	2006 A. Kenny
1994 W. Murray	2007 A. Kenny/Kilpatrick
1995 A. Laing	2008 F. Robertson
1996 D. Graham	2009 I. McCracken
1997 A. Sharp	2010 R. Smyth
1998 MISSING	2011 H. Mowat/M. McNamara
1999 R. Wallace	2012 R. Windows
2000 J. O'Connor	2013 R. Smith
2001 R. Love	2014 J. Bremmer
2002 R. McKenzie	2015 G. Haugh
2003 J. Fearn/D. Patrick	2016 F. Driver
2004 T. Ewing	

Merrylee Plottolders Association

### President's Trophy

for Holder of Best Half-Size Plot

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Winners: 2008 - 2016

2008 Anna Grady/Jane Martin
2009 Jane Martin
2010 No award
2011 David Carver/Scott Thiel
2012 Richard Windows
2013 Bert Wallace
2014 Ross Smith
2015 Graham Haugh
2016 Graham Haugh

**External Competitions** - The external judging of our plots dates back to 1946 when Merrylee was invited to enter a Scottish Gardens and Allotments competition. In 1947 the plots were judged for the St Mungo Cup, a Glasgow wide competition to find the best allotment in the city. The Cup was won by Merrylee's John Meldrum in 1993 and Max Hartman has been in the final stages of the competition on many occasions. In 2015 Richard Windows (plot 19) was a runner-up in the competition.

The Stevenson Shield is awarded annually to the Scottish Allotment Site that 'encourages and promotes a high standard of cultivation and general tidiness and appearance' thus creating an amenity for the area in which it is situated. The competition rotates through a number of areas in Scotland and was won by Merrylee in 2003, and again in 2008.



From the left Max Hartman, Charlie Kelly, Heather Thomas and Ron McKenzie accepting the Stevenson Shield on behalf of the Association in 2003.



Neil O'Donnell and Joan Menmuir accepting the Stevenson Shield on behalf of the Association in 2008.

The Miller cup was also awarded to MPA in 2008 for the best children's plot in Glasgow, won jointly by Merrylee Primary School and Our Lady of the Annunciation Primary School.

More recently:

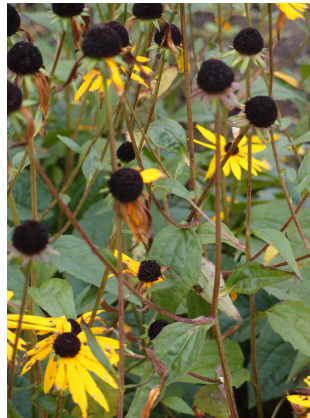
- 2012 - Richard Windows, Best Newcomer in Glasgow
- 2013 - Ross Smith, Highly Commended Certificate in a GAF Competition
- 2015 - Carr Gomm, Best Community Plot in Glasgow
- 2015 - Graham Haugh, Best Half Plot in Glasgow



# All Together Better...

**Dances & Shows** - We have little evidence about life on the plots in the early years at Merrylee. Did plotholders in the past just 'come in, do their plots and go home again?'

**1940s: Annual Shows** - It is only when our cashbook starts in 1941 that we begin to get any real insight into the development of community within the Merrylee Association. From 1946 there was an Annual Show, a competitive event allowing plotholders to exhibit their produce and be judged alongside others in the allotment community. The Shows were opened to the wider local community to let people see what plotholders had grown. Dances and Concerts took place too, but were not regularly mentioned in the cashbook.



**1950s: The Social Convener had lots of work to do** - Nancy Bomphray made a sentimental visit to our allotment site in 2016. Her late father Alex McLean had 2 plots here 60 years ago. Alex had been the Social Convener. Semi-formal dances took place every 2 months in the Couper Institute and competitive Flower Shows were held in New Cathcart Church Hall. One of the Show competitions, presumably for children, was identifying the trees associated with each leaf on a display board. As a child at that time, Nancy remembers a 'wee burn' where the schools' high wire fence is today and the space on the eastern border of the plots being referred to as 'The Wood'. Her father had a big water butt on his plot and Nancy recalls that she and her friend used it as a bathing pool during hot weather, unbeknown to Mr McLean of course!

**1960:** Last recorded Annual Show.

2003 MPA joint winners of Stevenson Shield for best allotment association in Glasgow

**Increasingly Diverse** - As the purpose of allotments has changed through time so has the membership. The old tradition of one person working a plot with occasional help from others is less common than it was 100 years ago. Today more families and community groups are involved in our Association.

Two schools and a community group have been attracted into our community in the last 10 years. Merrylee Allotments made initial contact with Our Lady of the Annunciation Primary School (OLA) [www.ourladyoftheannunciation-pri.glasgow.sch.uk](http://www.ourladyoftheannunciation-pri.glasgow.sch.uk) in 2000. This first link was developed more fully in 2008 when the school began to work a half plot of its own ([plot 10A](#)) on the site. In the same year Merrylee Primary school also joined the allotment community with its own half plot ([plot 60A](#)). [www.Merrylee-pri.glasgow.sch.uk](http://www.Merrylee-pri.glasgow.sch.uk).

Both schools have enjoyed using their plots to broaden children's understanding of growing and have been enthusiastic partners in events such as the Open Day. The schools have their own personal gate into the plots which saves a long walk round to the site by road. In addition a community group, Carr Gomm, [www.carrgomm.org](http://www.carrgomm.org) has taken a half plot ([plot 56B](#)) so that it can bring the pleasure of leisure gardening to its own members.



The recent development of a raised bed project ([plot 61B](#)) at Merrylee allows older plotholders and those with movement difficulties to participate in allotment life and grow on a smaller scale.

2004 Constitution amended - MPA now classed as a charitable organisation

**Coffee Mornings, Plant Sales & Parties** - The Association has been aware of the value of sustaining community as one of its key purposes at least since our records began, but the types of events that are held continue to change, reflecting the changing membership and its needs. Plotolders on the Committee continue to arrange social events for the allotment community and other plotolders willingly volunteer to help.



For the last 20 years or so there has been an evening midsummer social event where plotolders, families and friends meet up. This was traditionally held on a Friday evening with food and wine brought along by plotolders themselves. A June plant sale became a popular event too. In 2016 these two events were very successfully combined and moved to early evening on a Saturday, so that families and children could more easily participate. Look in our website to see for yourself who was there. In the last 10 years or so, monthly Saturday coffee mornings have been held during the growing season. These allow plotolders to meet each other and exchange growing tips, ideas, and seeds.

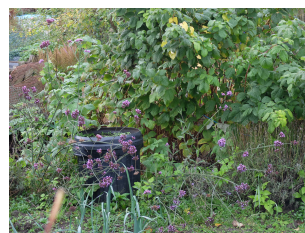
**‘There is a friendly feeling on the plots and we have been given some sunflowers, tomato plants and strawberries to help us get started’.**

2006 New portable toilet bought for £694 but cost offset by GCC grant of £586

**‘Bert says that the future lies with the young people who are arriving’.**

**The Open Day** - The first Open Day was officially recorded in the cashbook in 1992 and according to the minutes took place on a Sunday in early September. From then on it became a firm favourite both with plotolders and the local community. It also provided the allotments with an additional source of income to develop aspects of the site.

Plotolders get together to sell vegetables, jams and baking, fruit and flowers and to provide soup, coffee and a tombola for all who attend. The sale of produce continues to be popular but recently publicity has improved and the range of attractions has been extended to appeal to a wider audience who are interested in learning what allotments have to offer. The Open Day is now held on a Saturday.



We value the participation of the children from the two local primary schools in the Open Day when they are able to take part. They run their own stall and sell the produce to help buy seeds for the following year. Together with the increasing number of new members bringing children to the plots, the Open Day is helping to foster stronger links between the Association and the local community.

2007 Open day revenue topped £1000 for first time, Waiting list reached 40



**Communication is Changing** - In the past plotholders heard what was happening in the Association by word of mouth, through notice boards, or at the annual AGM. An old Minute Book entry from 1990 refers to the President writing newsletters several times a year, although none have been retained in Association records.

Our archive of newsletters from 2007 includes a wide range of specialised articles on various topics including plant food for beginners, club root controversies, composting, the shelf life of seeds, saving the planet and many more. In addition they include advice about what to do on your plot, information about social events, competitions and prize winners, and how to volunteer to help our community. Newsletters are now written by the Secretary and put up on our website.

Newer plotholders are accustomed to using the internet, and Facebook, blogs and Twitter to help them communicate and share ideas. They are beginning to ask for more use of social media in the Association to help support communication among plotholders.



## Enjoying Our Community

2008 £2768 collected in rents and £1933.20 passed on to GCC as ground rental

2009 Myra Mc Bride retired and awarded Honorary Membership of MPA



It's not just communication that is changing but also our attitude to the environment, echoed by some of our members.

**John Copland (plot 45B)** would like to see a wind turbine on the site, and greater use of solar power. He'd like to see the provision of a composting toilet like other sites in the city.

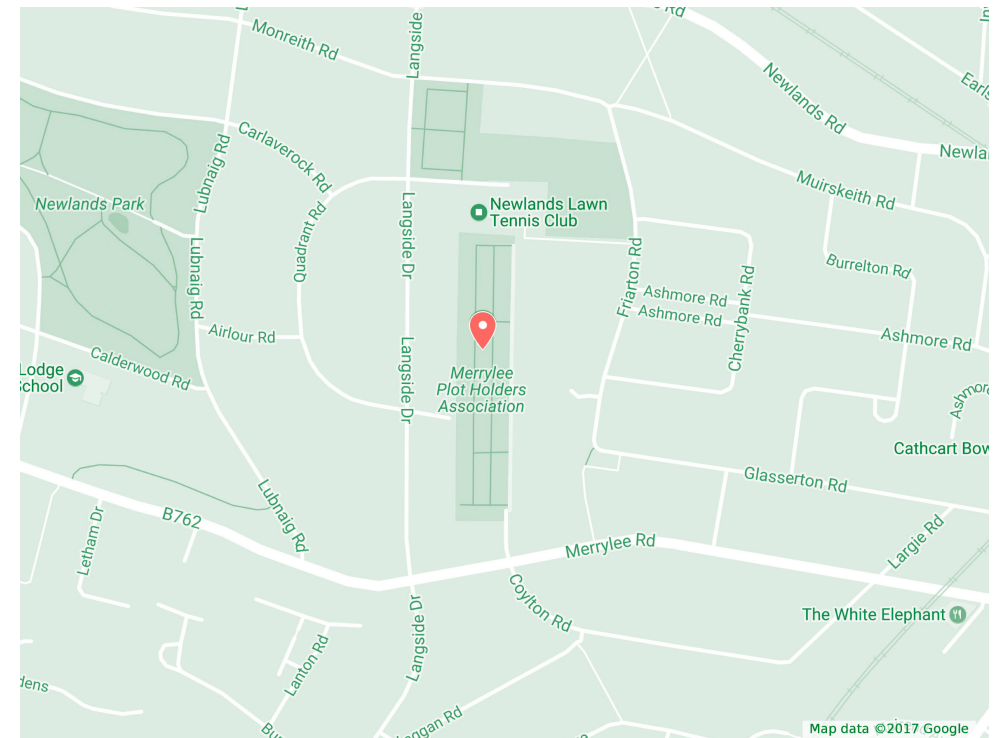
**John Thomson (plot 44)** asks what will we be growing in the future? He remembers 'Dandelion and Burdock' from his youth and suggests that weeds might become an even more fashionable food. He also suggests rain control might be helpful!

**John Bremner (plot 27)** is aware of the need for more protection against damage from birds. He asks if there are more birds now, or are we growing more bird food?

We have a site of more than 4 acres and a rich habitat for wildlife. We have a visiting fox, and parakeets that come occasionally. We have many different birds, bees, slugs, snails, frogs, insects and butterflies to name but a few. Should we be doing more to understand and develop the urban habitat that we and they enjoy so much?

2010 MPA site now comprises 46 full plots, 28 half plots and 2 school plots

### Where we are...





Merrylee Plottolders Association,  
Centenary Celebrations.  
1917 - 2017