

Heritage Open Days in conjunction with The National Trust.

Victory Garden Allotments – Heritage Open Days 21st & 22nd September 2019

Heritage Open Days is an annual national event whereby older and public buildings and places not normally open to the public, open their doors to the public to see inside.

This year is Victory Garden Allotments centenary year. The allotments were donated in perpetuity by Sir Arthur Godwin the then Lord Mayor of Bradford on the 20th September 1919 for use as allotments by the peoples of Rawdon. Rawdon is a village to the North West of Leeds in West Yorkshire, UK. Our Allotment Site is not normally open to the public.

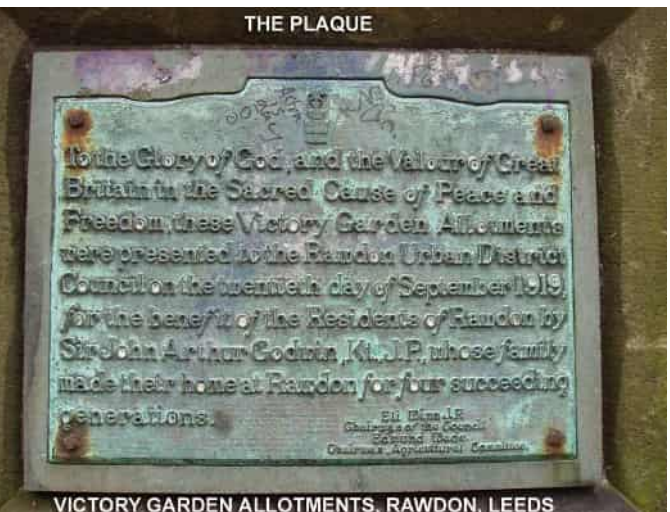
History

During the decline of allotment use in the 1950's half the site was changed into a sports field for the local school after seeking permission from a distant relative of Sir Arthur and remained as such until the school closed in 2002.

There then ensued a five year campaign to reinstate the field back to allotments to cater for the then 65 people on the waiting list. It was a long and arduous battle as a government funded charity opposed our proposals strongly. However our determination and recruitment of support from high places managed to acquire half the field back again. Unfortunately the sports charity retained the other half of the field claiming it was to be an all-weather football pitch however it still remains a field as the incline of the land is totally unsuitable.

The grass was cut short and the Council erected a fence around the new area and the new plots were marked out and plot-holders signed up.

We issued an advisory start up sheet for the newcomers to start up small beds and expand them later. A number of plot-holders hired a turf cutter cleared four small beds and made a turf stack with the turf.



This proved an excellent way forward as it gave instant beds to dig and cultivate almost immediately. The whole extension was up and running within 12 months.

The whole site is developing into an extremely well run site with a really friendly community Spirit.

There are many young families occupying plots on site now and smaller more manageable plots are being offered to fit in with their busy lifestyles, with the young children about it is making for a much livelier site.

The site has two 2 hour work parties a month, one during the week and the other at a weekend, to make it accessible for all. We have made great improvements to the buildings and site over the last few years utilising the skills of plot-holders.

We have Easter Egg Hunts for the children; BBQ's for the adults, allotment competitions, scarecrow competitions and are planning an apple press day for next year.

Heritage Open Days

This year however with it being our centenary we opened up the site as part of the Heritage Week to the general public. We offered conducted tours around the site explaining about the running of the site and various interesting features. We had display boards with documents and photographs explaining the history of the site. There were some humorous short stories from and about previous plot-holders.



Tea, coffee, cakes and cold drinks were offered, with cakes, jam and surplus fruit and vegetables for sale.

We had many guests over the two open days and many spent the whole afternoon with us and said they had really enjoyed the comradery of plot-holders and the joviality at the whole event. In addition we had two of the visitors asked to be added to the waiting list.



What was even more beneficial, it offered our existing members the opportunity to get to know other plot-holder that they wouldn't normally see.

We rounded off the day by cutting the special centenary cake we had made to celebrate the centenary, it was delicious.

The Heritage Open Days were a huge success and will be repeated next year.

Phil Gomersall, Secretary.