Upper Norwood District Plotholders’ Society Ltd

Biggin Wood Allotments, Biggin Hill, Upper Norwood, London, SE19 3HP

Upper Norwood District Plotholders’ Society (UNDPS) was originally registered as an Industrial and Providential Society on 14 April 1921 (ref No 8738R) and we had sites on Hermitage Road and Chevening Road. We moved to the current site at Biggin Wood on a five-year lease starting 25 December 1939. While UNDPS Limited is the official registered name of our society, we more usually go by the name of our site, Biggin Wood Allotments or “BWAS” for short.

Biggin Wood Allotments is the most northerly of the 18 or so allotment sites within the London Borough of Croydon. It is a small site of just under four acres (3.83 acres or thereabouts) with an entrance from Biggin Hill off Beulah Hill, one of the highest parts of London, an area landmarked by the television masts on its skyline. We are self-managed with our own committee to run the site.

Situated on a steep hill, facing south, the topmost of its over one hundred plots afford panoramic views to the Surrey hills with the towers of commercial Croydon in the middle ground.

This peaceful place attracts a representative and diverse cross-section of the community from a wide area, some escaping from high-rise buildings or flats on busy main roads. A large number of plots are sub-divided to suit the needs of the fit and dedicated with little spare time, and those perhaps seeking mainly physical or spiritual recreation through the environment and creative horticulture.

When allotments started, a normal ten-rod plot (the equivalent of 250 square metres or about the size of a doubles tennis court) would have fed a family over the course of a year. Nowadays, few people have the time to cultivate such a large area. There are now currently only 15 full plots on our site, with many more half (41) and quarter (38) plots. A full plot currently has an annual rent of only £56, with pro-rata reductions for smaller areas and reduced rates for retired or disabled members.

There is a trading hut for the purchase, at competitive prices, of composts, plant foods and the like, together with other sundries, such as bamboo canes and general gardening necessities.

The Society owns larger mechanical equipment for site maintenance, including mowers and strimmers, and water points are strategically placed within the site. There is on-site parking for a small number of vehicles, and we do have a flush toilet (not all sites do!).

Our annual Open Day with sale of produce, cakes and plants has proved a success within the local community and members, cementing local relationships.

Next to the Biggin Wood allotments is Biggin Wood, deciduous woodlands being restored by the Friends of Biggin Wood and the London Borough of Croydon and which are the remnants of the extensive woods (“Norwoods”) which at one time covered the whole area from Croydon to the Thames and most of southern England. There is a range of resident birds, together with much other wildlife. Biggin Wood Allotments demonstrate that wildlife and agriculture can exist harmoniously to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

The Society celebrated its centenary in 2021. For that we are indebted to some long-standing and pioneering members who did the back-breaking labour of clearing brambles and other undergrowth from the site, who set up our self-managing systems and served on our Committee. We look forward to the next period in the life of our allotments.