Bees. There were bees on the Oak Tree Road site in 2010, but not any more. Some of the tenants at Oak Tree Road allotments and neighbouring properties did not appreciate the buzzing residents and the Reading Post reported that the owner, Martin Moore was asked to remove them (1). Reading Borough Council has a policy to be followed for the introduction of bees on allotments. This includes consultation of allotment holders and other local residents who might be affected by proximity to the hives before they are allowed on a site. A risk assessment is also carried out. Precautions are taken such as surrounding the hives with a netting barrier which forces the bees flight path above that which may cause contact with people and consequent alarm. Signs are erected with a contact phone number in case any issues arise. Before Oak Tree Road, bees were established on the Polstead Road site in Tilehurst (not a council site) without problems. Bees are also resident on other council sites for example my own site at Waterloo Meadows, where they are hidden away in a quiet part of the site, away from human interference. Bees should benefit allotment crops by assisting with pollination and generally enriching the environment. The benefit for the bees is a more diverse habitat and variety of food sources (2).

In 1912 the area between Tilehurst Triangle on the hill north-east to Tilehurst station in the valley of the Thames below was farms, fields, chalk pits and gravel pits. At this time large allotment sites existed elsewhere in Tilehurst, such as Tilehurst Poors Allotments (which still exist) and the allotments in the photograph along a footpath from Church End Lane to Grovelands, are probably those on Reading Golf Course Land. In 1923 these covered 8 acres and had 501 plots (3).

In the centre of the area then and now encircled by the road pattern of Kentwood Hill, Armour Hill (then Lower Armour Road) was what became Arthur Newbery Park. Arthur Newbery donated the land to Reading in 1932 (4). The photograph shows the official opening on 14 September 1932 and originally appeared in the Reading Standard. Arthur Newbery is on the left of the Mayor who stands in the centre of the picture.

On the north west edge of the park and the housing which sprung up along the roads and the tributary drives and closes that developed are Oak Tree Road allotments. Allotments are not marked here on the 1936 OS map.

During WWII there is mention of a notice of entry for one acre of land at Oak Tree Road (5). Certainly an area was in use at this time as damage was caused to the gate of 11 Oak Tree Road by a delivery of sludge in 1944 (6). Post war the committee turned itself to planning the future of Reading’s allotment provision and recommended seven areas to be zoned for permanent allotments including the area between 46 and 79 Oak Tree Road (7). In 1948
part of 79 Oak Tree Road (The Dell) was purchased from Mrs Nancy R. Ryan for £1,275 (8).

Some of the allotment land was sold in 1973 (9). This was a period when there were vacant plots at some allotments in Reading (10). At a full plot equivalent of 62.1, this is one of Reading’s larger sites.
FACT PANEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of plots: (11)</th>
<th>107</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full plot equivalent: (11)</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date allotments established:</td>
<td>1930s/1940s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date taken on by Council:</td>
<td>1930s/1940s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous use:</td>
<td>Allotments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: (12)</td>
<td>Statutory</td>
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</table>

REFERENCES


(2) I am grateful to Martin Moore and John Gate of Reading and District Beekeeper’s Association (www.rbka.org.uk) for their assistance in researching the life of bees on allotments.

(3) Allotments and Small Holdings Committee 15 January 1923. R/AC1/3/30. (BRO). This shows a statement of all allotments on land owned or leased by the council, their size, rent per pole and notes those managed by Reading Allotment Society Ltd, such as these in Tilehurst.


(5) Allotments and Small Holdings Committee 7 April 1941. R/AC1/3/77. (BRO)

(6) Dried Activated Sludge was delivered to allotments from sewage works for use as fertiliser. Delivery statistics and costs are reported in Committee minutes. On this occasion the Corporation paid 4s 6d (22½p) to defray the cost of the damage. Allotments and Small Holdings Committee 10 January 1944. R/AC1/3/86. (BRO)

(7) Allotments and Small Holdings Committee 16 December 1946. R/AC1/3/95. (BRO)

(8) Allotments and Small Holdings Committee 18 October 1948. R/AC1/3/98. (BRO)


(12) Reading Borough Council 2005 Allotment Plan.

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