

Many of you know Bill Masser and have probably had help, advice and assistance from him. Sadly, this year he has now decided to give up his last plot on the site and we will all miss him enormously.

MAA would like to organise a farewell card for him, along with any special messages from those that cared and appreciated him, however, the logistics of getting a card to everyone so they add a message is challenging, therefore, we suggest a card with the messages on an attached typed sheet, which will also make it easier to read – this could be more than one sheet!!

**Please let Sylvia have any message or anecdote to send to Bill & Elizabeth, which will be compiled and passed on to them.**

There are so many stories and anecdotes of him that many can recall, below are a few.

Bill came to Marlow from Eton where he was a schoolmaster at Eton College, while there he had experimented with the use of **beds separated by permanent paths** and he introduced the system on his plot at Hanging Hill. Variations on this system are now common on both of the sites.

Bill has always been an avid and energetic **supporter of the Association** and has been a member for many years. He first had a plot at Foxes Piece Site, some of the long-standing tenants will remember his arrival. He then moved to Hanging Hill, possibly this was due to so many vacant plots there at that time – hopefully someone can clarify this?

When Bill arrived at Hanging Hill the initial threat to sell off the site, which had led to the establishment of the Association, had cooled, but Bill was acutely aware of the ongoing threat should either site be seen to be poorly cultivated. He was one of those that initiated the move for tenants to take on **Additional Plots** to ensure there were no vacant plots that contractors could use as a reason to apply to build in these areas. This is why some of the long-standing tenants on both sites have more than one ten pole plot, to support this action and help protect both the Allotment Sites. Since then, the Association has been committed to ensure a healthy waiting list and carry out the viewings of vacant plots, thankfully there is increasing interest from residents to apply for an allotment plot.

The large polytunnel was where he prepared, painted and stored all the **White Marker Posts** for many years, which were used on every plot on both sites, one in each corner. They always needed replacing because so many seemed to disappear, it was a never-ending task each time a plot was vacated!!

The areas at the top of Hanging Hill along the back and down towards the Berwick Road entrance, were uncultivated and abandoned, having previously been used for horses and before that, pigsties – during the war these were used as air raid shelters. Again, under the ever-present threat of loss to construction, over 25 years ago Bill and Peter England started up the **Winter Work Party**, clearing this area, to eventually create 9 x 10 pole plots and 32 x 5 pole plots over several winter periods and ensured the whole site was in a state of adequate cultivation.

As a result of constant invasion at Hanging Hill from deer, Bill planned and organised the construction of a **Deer Barrier**, carefully designing this with strength in the lower section to prevent them pushing it and above several lines of thin wire cabling up to 8 or 9 feet in height, which he felt would be an adequate height to prevent them from jumping over it. This worked very effectively for many years. Sadly, some tenants have felt the need to break some of the fence line for the purpose of dumping their rubbish, creating gaps which the deer have soon found - it is now in need of repair.

Bill's idea for re-using old plant pots has proved very popular, we now have **Pot-swap Areas** on both sites where tenants can drop off any surplus pots and others can collect and re-use these.

*When I first took on my plot, which was a complete jungle, it was his **Support** and help that kept me going in that first challenging year, later it was he that convinced me to become a Committee Member.*

*A BIG Thank You to Bill & Elizabeth, best wishes from Sylvia*

*Bill Masser:- I remember helping with the Deer Fence and how successful it was, I believe that he was head of Maths at Eton, his experience as a teacher shone through as he constantly successfully encouraged people...all the best Bill from John Stilliard*

*Bill...having had great success with early crop potatoes at Foxes Piece - and having transferred to Hanging Hill - I was dismayed when my first crop failed due to blight. On relaying this story to you one Sunday morning you went to the back of your sheds and returned with a large pail of new potatoes that we ate for Sunday lunch. A small, memorable and generous kindness...thank you and good luck for the future. Nic Ricketts – Plot 47*

*Thanks for all of the micro farming tips & interesting conversations of your past adventures!*

*Best wishes Bill, from plot neighbour Dave (Pratt & Whitney).*

*Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Whilst I did not know Bill personally, he was always very friendly and also an inspiration to us new “allotmenters.” I found his hard work and attention to detail in his plots very inspiring and showed a true dedication to the craft. His energy, enthusiasm and skill were a bright light to us all in the allotment, and I wish him well as he steps back. Regards Phil Sharp*

*Please convey my best wishes to Bill. I have every sympathy about giving up a plot. I am in a similar situation but have not yet taken the decisive step, Regards John Nixon*

*Bill is my hero! Welcomed me to the Lottie with a “crock”( think that’s the name for a bent fork?) “ take out some of the hard work”. Then those immortal words of wisdom “start with the paths “in your Lottie design. He Inspired me to grow blackcurrants but I could never replicate those raspberries! A great team with Elizabeth !*

*The best parts of a chat with Bill were not about the Lottie (although he did once say that if he had his life again, he would have been a grower from the start!) but about life , mostly captured in his innumerable maxims!*

*Lucky person that inherits his plot! Best wishes, Shaun*

*Dear Bill, Thank you very much for your generosity with your produce and knowledge over the years. They are both very much appreciated. We think that our compost is now nearly as good as yours. We have appreciated the exchange of mathematical jokes, bumping into you on the tow path at Henley Royal Regatta and in Marlow. You are greatly missed on the allotment and it is a privilege to know you both. With best wishes to you and Elizabeth, from Beate and Mark*