Tommy’s Field Allotments Ltd Plot Holders’ Handbook & Rules

A Guide to Managing Your Allotment Plot. Revised March 2026

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Welcome

Congratulations on accepting the tenancy of your allotment plot.

Tommy's field is set in an attractive location on the banks of the river Wansbeck. A well-used public footpath runs through the centre of the site and alongside the boundary with the river, offering walkers pleasant views of our allotments. A communal garden occupies the eastern end of the allotments adjacent to the riverside path. This is a public area for all to enjoy, and is maintained by volunteer allotment holders – you will get email invitations from time to time to join working parties.

The four acres of land known as Tommy's Field has been used by the people of Morpeth for centuries. The Freemen of Morpeth had the right of "aftermath" (grazing) or pasturage on it from Michaelmas in September to Lady Day in March. The field takes its name from Tommy Longstaff who ran a mill and tannery (later converted to a pub) on Cotting Burn at its junction with the River Wansbeck in the 1820s and used the field to stretch and tan hides.

The site was converted wholly into allotment land in 1940, as part of the 'dig for victory' campaign. The land is owned by Morpeth Town Council but leased to Tommy's Fields Allotments Ltd for a peppercorn rent. A portion of the site near the junction of Dark Lane and the road to the NHS Centre was taken back under Council control to enable future construction of a roundabout, but there are no definite plans as yet for this to be constructed.

The following guide is designed to help you:

- Understand the key aspects of becoming a tenant on Tommy's Field
- Who owns the site
- How it is managed
- What you are not allowed to do on your plot because of restrictions in the lease, to comply with your tenancy agreement and allotment legislation or to make sure that you do not adversely affect the cultivation of neighbouring plots

For more detailed information on contacting us, our policies and constitution, please visit www.tommysfield.org.uk

Seed discounts

We have negotiated a 50% discount on seeds and 20% on other items purchased from www.dobies.co.uk – the discount code will be shared by email in Autumn each year. If you need a reminder, please contact secretary.tfal@gmail.com.

Committee

Tommy's Field Allotments is run by a Management Committee comprising a Secretary, Chairperson, Treasurer, two Assistant Secretaries and up to a maximum of ten additional members. These are voluntary positions which are eligible for re-election each year by current plot holders at the Annual General Meeting.

Tommy's Field Allotments is a limited company. The Management Committee ensure compliance with all legal obligations such as maintaining and filing financial records, taking minutes of meetings and remaining in compliance with the terms of the lease with Morpeth Town Council, which owns the land.

The Management Committee also:

- Set the rules and guidelines for the general running of the allotments
- Set the annual rents (which pay for the water supply to the site, maintenance of the fences around the perimeter and along the public footpath, mowing of the community garden and grass verges and insurances)
- Communicate information to plot holders via email and newsletters
- Update the website.
- Conduct plot inspections
- Take responsibility for maintaining the Community Garden (the part of the site bordering the river)

All members are encouraged to put themselves forward for election onto the committee at the AGM or, in the interim period, be co-opted onto the committee if agreed by a majority of the existing committee members.

Responsibilities

Taking on an allotment does involve a regular commitment and an investment of your time, but your efforts will be handsomely repaid by the enjoyment and produce the plot brings you. **Be sure you read and fully understand the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement; any failure to comply with them may result in the tenancy being withdrawn and the plot being re-let.**

Tenancies starting any time after April 2025 are probationary for the first 6 months. If insufficient work has been done during that time (judged by the Inspection sub-committee, according to our Cultivation Policy), then your tenancy will not be confirmed, and 50% of the fee you paid will be reimbursed.

In future years, your tenancy runs from 1st March to the last day of February. If you do not intend to continue cultivating the allotment, please inform the Secretary by 1st February. Allotment rents for the year will be advertised at the beginning of February (on the noticeboard and by email) and are payable by the end of March or at the AGM, whichever is later.

This handbook is intended to answer many of the questions you might have about your tenancy. If you have any questions concerning the plot or the rules about its use, your initial contact should be the Secretary at secretary.tfal@gmail.com

Allotments legislation dictates how allotments should be used. Our allotment rules (see page 4) apply to all tenants who rent plots on our site and all other users and visitors.

Our aim is to promote the continued enjoyment of our allotments with minimum inconvenience or nuisance to both tenants and residents. Tenants who keep to the rules will be supported to renew the rental of their plot annually. Tenants who fail to keep to the rules

may be given notice to put matters right or will not be allowed to renew their annual agreement.

Every tenant is required to sign a Tenancy Agreement which confirms that they will adhere to the rules and policies of the Allotment Company.

Change of postal and email address

By the terms of our lease, you can only be a tenant of an allotment if you live within the parish boundaries of Morpeth; your Council Tax bill will tell you whether you live within these boundaries. **Please note that if you move outside the parish boundaries of Morpeth you will be required to relinquish your allotment immediately**. Please notify secretary.tfal@gmail.com if you plan to move.

Nearly all communication with allotment holders is by email: **so please notify all changes of email address to** secretary.tfal@gmail.com

Reporting Thefts

Unfortunately, thefts of produce from the allotments are reported each year. Thefts of tools and equipment are occasionally reported, and locked tool containers are often broken into: it is highly advisable not to leave any valuable tools on the allotment. Please report **any** thefts online at: https://www.northumbria.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime in the first instance, and also inform the secretary at secretary.tfal@gmail.com

Maintaining Paths

It is your responsibility to maintain paths on two sides of your allotment, keeping them straight and tidy where these exist: These are the path closest to the river, and the path closest to Morrison's. Please refer to the Paths Policy on Page 12 for more details.

Displaying Your Allotment Number

Please display your allotment number on your plot – for instance, by painting it on your water butt or compost bin.

Guidelines on Bonfires

Bonfires are not prohibited and there is no legal requirement about the time they may be lit; however, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, it is an offence to emit smoke, fumes or gases which are a nuisance. Allowing smoke to drift over nearby roads may also lead to prosecution under the Highways Act 1980 if it endangers traffic. Smoke from bonfires can be annoying to neighbours, ruining their enjoyment of their garden. Bonfires can damage the health of children, the elderly and those with asthma and other breathing problems. Causing a nuisance in this way could lead to Northumberland County Council taking action by serving an Abatement Notice to prohibit the nuisance under section 80 of the above Act. The Rules relating to bonfires can be found on page 6, rule 19. Contravention of these rules could also lead to the termination of tenancy at the discretion of the Committee.

If you can take waste that cannot be composted to the Council Amenity Tip at Whorral Bank, then please do so.

Guidelines on weedkiller/herbicide use

Although use of weedkillers is not banned, it is discouraged: if you do decide to use these agents it is your responsibility to ensure that they do not affect your neighbour's plot.

Rats

Unfortunately, rats are often seen on site, and often make their nests in compost pits, particularly those which include vegetable peelings etc. Please do your best to prevent rats getting into your compost pits. We do have the option of putting down poison: please contact secretary.tfal@gmail.com in the first instance if you wish to pursue this option.

Respect For Other Plot Holders

- You, your children or visitors are not allowed to go onto other people's plots without their permission
- You must not cause a nuisance to other plot holders or neighbouring householders – this could include bad or racist language, threats, getting drunk, playing loud music, smoking illegal substances
- You are not permitted to use any form of harassment or violence on-site, be it physical or verbal; this also applies to social media and emails
- You must not let your dog stray or foul paths or plots
- If you wish to contact your neighbour but have not been able to meet them while you are both on the site, please contact secretary.tfal@gmail.com: if your neighbour agrees, you and your neighbour will then be given contact details. If your neighbour does not agree to the sharing of contact details, the secretary will pass any messages between you.

Permitted Structures

The only solid structures allowed are compost boxes, tool storage boxes no taller than 800mm, cold frames, and fruit cages – subject to rule 19. If in doubt, please contact us (secretary.tfal@gmail.com) before erecting any type of structure.

Use of Water

Water from standpipes may only be used to fill water butts: If you come across a leaking pipe, dripping tap, or wet spot, **please** report it straightaway. Water is not only a precious commodity, but also expensive! The water supplies are turned off each winter (November to March) at the time that the clocks change. In the event of water restrictions being imposed the committee may impose a hosepipe ban or turn off the water supply.

Cultivation

Plot holders are duty bound by their tenancy agreement to always maintain their plot in a good condition, as defined by the Cultivation Policy, (see page 10)

All plots are inspected regularly by the Inspection Sub-committee (see plot inspection policy on page 13). If a plot falls below the standards set out in the Cultivation Policy, a warning letter will be issued. Repeated failure to meet the standard required, without explanation, will result in eviction, without reimbursement of rent. However, the Committee is very keen not to apply this to people who have a temporary problem, for instance caused by illness or altered home circumstances.

So, if for any reason, you are struggling to maintain your plot, please contact us at secretary.tfal@gmail.com to explain your situation.

Health and Safety

Allotments are to be enjoyed but as with everything there are inherent risks linked to gardening especially with a shared facility such as allotments. Everyone has a responsibility to take care and minimise the potential dangers for all users of the allotment site. Please visit our website for details of how we deal with this important aspect.

Restrictions on Trees

Plot holders must not plant trees that will ultimately exceed 2m in height on their plots as this almost invariably leads to problems. It is recommended any trees planted are cordon or step-over trees which can be controlled for height and spread.

Maintenance of Boundaries

If your plot borders a boundary hedge, then it's your responsibility to keep your side of the hedge in trim. No hedges are to be trimmed or cut between the end of March and the end of August: this is to protect nesting birds and other wildlife. Fencing around the site perimeter is maintained by Tommy's Field Allotments; **internal fences between plots are the shared responsibility of the plot holders**. You should not allow plants on your plot to overhang paths or neighbouring plots

If You No Longer Want Your Plot or Are Struggling to Manage It

If you decide that you no longer wish to have an allotment, please contact us as soon as possible. If you have a half plot and you are struggling to maintain it, you have the option of asking us to divide the allotment into two quarters, and to retain one of these quarters.

Additional space

If you are managing well with your existing plot and want more space, please contact us on secretary.tfal@gmail.com; your application will have priority over those on the external waiting list.

Rules

These rules relate to each individual plot holder and how to manage and maintain your allocated plot. They seek to ensure that plots are kept to a consistent standard of cultivation across the site and that the terms of the site's lease are complied with. **Failure to adhere to these rules may lead to eviction, so it's important to familiarise yourself with them**.

1. Only holders of allotments are entitled to vote at Annual General Meetings.
2. Applications for allotments are to be made to the Secretary. The rent is fixed by the Committee and is payable on allocation of the allotment.
3. Cultivation of the allotments should meet the reasonable standard as set out in the cultivation policy as set by the committee (see page 10). Where this standard is not maintained after a written warning has been given, the Committee has the authority to take possession of the allotment and the rent or part of the rent will be returned to the defaulting plot holder.
4. Allotment tenancies run from March 1st to the last day of February but plot holders intending to vacate their allotment on March 1st should notify the Secretary by the first day of February.
5. Allotment rents will be notified to plot holders by newsletter and/or notice boards at the beginning of February. Rents are due on the 1st of March and should be paid to the Treasurer prior to March 31st or at the AGM, whichever is later.
6. Any rent still not paid by April 30th will be considered by the Committee and may result in loss of tenancy.
7. You must not use your plot for any trade or business (includes selling produce)
8. You are not allowed to keep livestock of any kind (including bees) on allotment plots.
9. You are not allowed to stay overnight on your allotment plot.
10. You may not sublet your plot or transfer your tenancy to anyone (including to your family)
11. You are not allowed to bring rubbish or general refuse onto the site or store them on your plot.
12. You must not bring any harmful objects onto the site, such as chemicals, asbestos, broken glass, scrap metal, tyres.
13. The use of artificial grass as ground cover or to cover paths is not permitted.
14. No barbed wire or razor wire is permitted anywhere on the allotments.
15. You may not display or permit to be displayed on any part of the allotment any sign, notice, placard, advertisement or writing of any kind whatsoever excepting those placed on a designated notice board and agreed by the management committee
16. The use of hoses on the taps may only be used to fill water barrels. The use of sprinkler systems and hosepipes for direct watering are not permitted.
17. No allotment holder shall have more than one full-sized allotment or equivalent if there is a waiting list of suitable applicants and all allotments are under cultivation.
18. Providing the standard of cultivation meets the approval of the Committee, existing plot holders shall have first option on any allotment becoming vacant. Priority will be given to plot holders working shaded plots along the southern boundary. Where there is more than one approved applicant, allocation shall be by lots. The committee will only consider those existing plot holders who have previously informed the Secretary, in writing, of their wish to exchange/extend plots.
19. All trees and bushes must be pruned so as not to exceed a height of 2 metres.
20. All allotments must be cultivated according to the Cultivation Policy.
21. You are responsible for maintenance of the paths next to your allotment, where these exist, that are closest to the river and to the fuel station.

22. Sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels and other solid garden structures are not permitted under the terms of our lease from the Town Council.
23. Fruit cages. The definition of a fruit cage is a protective, enclosed structure—typically made of steel, aluminium, or timber and covered with netting—designed to shield fruit bushes, and vegetables from birds, animals (deer, rabbits), and pests. The main structure of the cage is likely to comprise of a rigid frame—typically from small metal tubes (steel/aluminium) or timber—anchored 30–50 cm into the ground. Durable netting would cover the structure and be secured using cable ties, or nails. It will not have a solid roof of any description, and its maximum height must be 1.5m (5ft).

- The frame must be of lightweight metal, aluminium, plastic or timber and have minimal but sufficient cross section dimensions so as to **not be visually intrusive**
- The frame is to be covered in lightweight durable netting, likely to be synthetic in type
- Any doorway/entrance must be constructed of the same material as the remainder of the cage. Solid doors are not permitted.
- The maximum height of the cage must be no more than 1.5m.
- The floor area would be dependent on plot size and agreed with the Committee prior to construction
- **All proposals for a structure of this type must be provided to the Secretary prior to the commencement of construction. This will then be put to the Committee for approval: their decision will be notified to the member in writing.**

24. Bonfires are allowed subject to the following conditions:
    - Burn only material that is dry and quick to burn.
    - Do NOT burn plastic or any other man-made materials.
    - ONLY burn materials that have been generated on the allotment: Do NOT burn commercial waste.
    - Bonfires should only be lit when the wind is from the West or South West, so that smoke does not blow towards residential neighbours or over Morrison's petrol station (not least because smoke could trigger their fire alarm system, which would close the station).
    - Do NOT leave a fire unattended or smouldering: the plot holder MUST be present until the fire has been fully extinguished.
25. Plot holders must not cause or permit any nuisance or annoyance to the occupier of any other allotment or to the owners or occupiers of any adjoining or neighbouring land nor obstruct or encroach on any path or roadway used by the Landlords or by the owners or occupiers or any adjoining or neighbouring property. Plot holders may not access any other allotment unless given permission by the tenant of that allotment.
26. All plot holders shall treat other plot holders and their allotment plots with respect, and they should not interfere with or otherwise impinge on the cultivation of other plot holders' crops.
27. You must take proper precautions when using sprays or fertilisers to avoid or minimise any adverse effects on the environment or neighbouring allotments and to comply with current legislation. Use of weedkillers/herbicides must not be allowed to affect any plants, even weeds, on neighbouring plots.
28. You may not bring or place any vehicle, caravan, trailer or vehicle parts on to the allotment site
29. You may not, without the written consent of the Landlord, cut or prune any trees or other timber or to take, sell or carry away any mineral, sand, earth or clay.
30. You may not, without the written consent of the Committee, plant any woodland trees or bushes or any crops which require more than two years to mature. Small fruit trees and bushes will be permitted, along with asparagus beds, rhubarb and similar long-term edible crops.
31. You may not deposit or allow other persons to deposit on the allotment any refuse or decaying matter (except manure and compost in such quantities as may be

reasonably required for use in cultivation) or place any refuse or decaying matter in the hedges or ditches adjoining the allotment.

32. You may bring your dogs with you when they come to work on their allotment but they must be under control at all times. You must clean up after your dogs and all waste must be bagged and disposed of away from their allotment. It must not be composted.
33. If individual plot holders wish to arrange their own delivery of compost or manure, the only places that it should be delivered are either: On the left-hand side, inside the main gate where the horse manure used to be delivered,
    OR: For the eastern end of our site:
    Deliveries should be placed on the hard standing where the horse manure is currently delivered.
    Any proposed delivery of manure, or any other bulky substance, must be cleared by the Committee Secretary in the first instance.

Constitution

The Constitution is a legal document which sets out how the allotments are run and by whom. A copy of the Constitution can be found on our website.

Policies

The following policies governing the allotment site can be viewed on our website.

- Cultivation
- Paths
- Plot Inspection
- Prevention of Bullying and Harassment
- Equality and Diversity
- Access
- Data Protection
- Privacy Notice
- Health and Safety

Contact Details

secretary.tfal@gmail.com

Website

https://tommysfield.org.uk