



**TOMMY'S FIELD
ALLOTMENTS LTD
PLOT HOLDERS'
HANDBOOK & RULES**

**A Guide
to
Managing
Your
Allotment
Plot**

Revised February
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Welcome

Congratulations on accepting the tenancy of your allotment plot.

Any person who lives within the parish boundaries of Morpeth is eligible to apply for an allotment. Your Council Tax bill will tell you whether you live within these boundaries.

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.

The four acres of land known as Tommy's Field has been used by the people of Morpeth for centuries. The Freeman 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 it remains unclear whether or not this land will be required at some time in the future for a roundabout.

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 our website site tommysfield.org.uk

Seed discounts

We have negotiated a 50% discount on seeds and 20% on other items purchased from www.dobies.co.uk – use our exclusive discount code **SUGD408M** (the 0 is a zero - as in four zero eight – at checkout.

Committee

Tommy's Field Allotments is managed day to day 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 (see Plot Inspection Policy on page 13)
- Are responsible for renegotiating a new lease prior to the current lease expiring.

Anyone interested in taking an active role can 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.**

Your tenancy is 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

Please notify all changes of postal or email address to secretary.tfal@gmail.com

Please note that if you move outside the parish boundaries of Morpeth you will be required to relinquish your allotment immediately. Nearly all communication with allotment holders is by email: please therefore notify us of any changes to your preferred email address.

Reporting Thefts

Unfortunately, thefts of produce from the allotments are reported each year. Theft 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.

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

Permitted Structures

The only solid structures allowed are compost boxes, tool storage boxes no taller than 800mm, and cold frames. Structures such as mesh fruit cages and covers for vegetable beds are also permitted, so long as they don't overshadow neighbouring plots. 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.

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 the 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. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. Sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels and other solid garden structures are not permitted under the terms of our lease from the Town Council.
19. 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.
20. 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.
21. 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

For current plot holders – regarding issues with your plot: secretary.tfal@gmail.com

For General enquiries: enquiries@tommysfield.org.uk

Website

<https://tommysfield.org.uk>