

"Nature lifts the spirits."

Yvonne Smart, Allotment holder



Clematis in Yvonne's Garden

In November 1807 the Enclosure Act for Trimley St. Martin made provision for the needy of Trimley by establishing the Poor's Allotments, which were for the use of such people in our Parish. For 211 years these Allotments have provided pleasure and a mainstay support to many. Six or seven generations of people have come and gone since they were originally established and the plants and crops occupying the plots have changed considerably as have the intentions of the holders. Nineteenth century plantings probably focused on root crops such as potatoes, onions and leafy cabbages. Today it is possible to still these plants but slightly more exotic offerings include courgettes and peppers, food unimaginable to earlier gardeners. Nevertheless, over the years there has been no loss of purpose amongst many of the holders. The majority of the plots continue flourish abundantly and are clearly the product of prudent planting and nurturing. They are sited behind Mill Close and next to the field where the proposed Pigeon Development will take place. From the High Road, they are just about visible as a series of low lying collection of sheds, greenhouses and miscellaneous buildings. Upon closer inspection they surprise the eye with their chequer board appearance, made up of flowers, trees, shrubs, fruit bushes, salad ingredients and vegetables. Their lush and verdant appearance is almost invisible to the majority of passers-by but they are worthy of much closer inspection.

One warm summer's day last week, I took the opportunity to visit and talk to one of the holders about her plot. Yvonne Smart welcomed me to her house and as we moved into her back garden, I could immediately understand why she had wanted a holding. The view ahead of me was full of blooms, fragrance and peace. Small sections of the garden were semi-concealed, offering enticing promises of half seen pleasures. Full of early summer flowers, some planned, some sown by birds, the garden presented an agreeable face to the world. Everything was thriving in harmony with each other but in an informal manner.

*"I like ordered chaos," said Yvonne, "and I love seeing which insects are attracted to the garden."*

Her garden is the result of five years' work following Yvonne's move to the village. It required dedicated time on Yvonne's part and the layout and choice of plants has been the subject of much thought. As Yvonne talked and walked me through her skilled planting, butterflies seemed to follow us around the garden. There are small surprises hidden throughout the borders and each plant has its own space to grow and be seen. Once the garden was well established, Yvonne set her sights on acquiring an allotment and for the last three years she has been a vigorous and dedicated plot holder.

*"I had to wait about 18 months for a plot to come up", Yvonne told me, "and when it did. I discovered some flourishing rhubarb, which I've kept. But I've cleared and tidied the rest and now grow many different crops. The rhubarb continues to produce for four or five months a year."*

Like other holders, Yvonne's plot is about 10 rods, poles or perches in size. Or if you prefer, 250 square metres, which is approximately the size of a double tennis court. This seems a daunting area but Yvonne, like other horticulturalists has taken it all in her stride. For the last three years she has laboured to produce abundant crops from the land, whilst at the same time managing to make the whole area look attractive and well-balanced.



Yvonne's Allotment

After re-organising the plot, Yvonne planted a wide array of edible plants. Strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, courgettes, Runner beans, French beans, potatoes, leeks and onions are just a few of the delights which are harvested annually. Sweet Williams and decorative alliums are interspersed amongst the crops. Two Greenhouses placed within small grass islands, provide shelter for young and tender seeds and seedlings. The one absence in the planting scheme are carrots: the soil is too stony, according to Yvonne. But not too stony for herbs, which Yvonne loves to grow.

*"Herbs are very forgiving of the ground," Yvonne informed me, "and I love the fragrances they create and the insects they draw to the area."*

The whole area is more like a second garden and it is apparent Yvonne is an inspirational and dedicated gardener, spending between 15 to 20 hours a week on the allotment. This is not a hardship to Yvonne. Both she and her sister had their own gardens as children and were encouraged to care for them from an early age, resulting in a lifelong passion.

Yvonne explained there was a forthcoming inspection concerning the upkeep of the allotments. Anyone who fails to cut the mustard will be given a verbal warning, followed by a letter. If matters do not improve, then sadly, the holding is taken away from the occupier. There are strict rules and regulations concerning the governance of the Allotments. I asked if the plots are reserved for St. Martin's residents only and Yvonne explained if there wasn't a waiting list then they might be open to others.

When I had finished speaking to Yvonne, I visited the Allotments and observed for myself how the Pigeon development will lap its sides. The forthcoming residents with views across the plots will have green vistas which may encourage them to break the soil in their own gardens. Perhaps in the fullness of time, they too will produce small scenes of satisfaction and contentment to embellish their new homes and maybe even grow a few vegetables to feed themselves and their families.



Alliums growing near herbs and trees



Sweet Williams growing amidst the vegetable on Yvonne's plot.



Rhubarb flourishes for 4 or 5 months a year.



Bees enjoy the sweet nectar of Yvonne's herbs.