



## *West Ham Allotment Society Limited*

West Ham Allotment Society Limited was registered in 1942. The site is located on Millmeads, which lies in the Three Mills Conservation Area between the Abbey Mills pumping stations and the Prescott Channel, near Stratford in East London. Ordnance Survey maps show that allotments existed on Millmeads, and on the land that is now known as Three Mills Green from at least 1896. The site was closed for a period when the Prescott Channel was constructed in 1931. Although the society is located within the London Borough of Newham we are an independent organisation and lease our land from two landlords, British Waterways and Thames Water. Our allotments provide a haven for wildlife, with woodpeckers, wrens, sparrows, finches, kingfishers, and foxes, sharing their environment with us.

### ***The growth of allotments in the Second World War***

It appears likely that the Second World War was a catalyst for the establishment of the organisation West Ham Allotment Society Limited. Given the need to *Dig for Victory* allotments were both popular and a necessity, and we have found remnants of *Dig for Britain* leaflets in one of our old sheds. In 1942 the Society managed allotments on at least seven sites: Millmeads (120 plots), Wanstead Flats (430 plots), West Ham Park (240 plots), Temple Mills (46 plots), St Mary's Road (28 plots), Union Cottage (11 plots) and Clare Road (2 plots). This provided an impressive 877 plots, all managed by one Society on 54 acres of land.

### ***Post war reduction of allotments***

By 1951 our land was reduced by over half, following the return of land to West Ham Council. In 1957 the Society received a notice to quit from the Forest Commission, related to land at Wanstead Flats. It was decided that the best course of action was to request the Duke of Edinburgh to intervene, as he was head of the playing fields association. However, this appears to have had no effect. In 1967 the Society was given notice to quit further land on Millmeads by the Greater London Council due to the construction of the new Abbey Mills Pumping Station. Our records show that 20 members gave up their plots, despite impassioned attempts by the Secretary to prevent the loss, and by 1969 the Society was reduced to managing 34 allotments.



### ***Change and Renewal in 2007***

This year brings the most significant change to the Society for thirty years. The lock and water control system about to be constructed in the Prescott Channel has resulted in the land on which 10 of our 34 plots are located being reclaimed by British Waterways. This has obviously been a sad time for several members, some of whom have been gardening here for over 20 years. However, we have also been very fortunate. British Waterways has negotiated on our behalf to obtain replacement land adjacent to our remaining land from Thames Water. Land, which as records show was in use as allotments in the 1940s. British Waterways are funding and supporting the Society to prepare the new land to a state of readiness as soon as possible, and are also supporting us in our own mission to improve and regenerate the whole site. They have shown that they are as passionate as us to continue the long history of allotments on Millmeads.

To manage this change, several members have been working intensively since last summer to ensure the success of the Societies negotiations with British Waterways, and to ensure our members are kept up to date with progress. We have received advice from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, and much moral support from our members, families and friends, who all know how vital it is to have a space to grow vegetables in East London.

The Society continues to provide allotments to people of all ages from Newham and neighbouring London Boroughs, in particular Tower Hamlets. We hope to remain here for a very long time to come.

February 28<sup>th</sup> 2007