

In January 2004, I cut down a 15 foot long stretch of the internal hedge on plot 53 Hagg Lane. I had been responsible for cutting it for the past 12 years because the neighbouring plot had not had a tenant for that period. I cut the hedge using loppers down to about 4 foot, so that future maintenance, when the hedge regrew, would be easier for myself and/or my neighbour.

I was shocked to receive a letter from the Allotments Department instructing me that I had cut the hedge too low and should erect a fence. I fully accept and abide by the rule that external hedges should be cut down to 5 foot to allow inspection (e.g.by police), but had never heard of a case where hedges had to be kept up to 5 foot. Many hedges on surrounding plots have been 8-10 foot high for years. I complied with this request within 2 days to the best of my abilities to avoid further action by the Allotments Dep't.

On the 19th January, I was on this plot when the Allotments Officer entered the plot and began haranguing me for having cut the hedge too low. I explained that the hedge would re-grow and I had responded swiftly to the instruction to erect a fence. The Allotments officer told me I had 'gone too far and would not get away with this'. I asked him to leave my plot as he had entered without my consent. He said he had a 'right to enter any plot at any time' and raised his fists in an aggressive manner, which I backed away from. He then said that he could 'evict me from these plots whenever he liked because I had planted fruit trees'. I explained that there was no prohibition on planting fruit in allotments law and left the site.

To me this illustrates the Allotments Officer intervening to create a dispute between neighbours where none existed before. Shortly after this, an 8 foot high wooden fence was erected on my neighbour's side of the fence, paid for and erected by the Council, which is still there and makes it hard to cut the hedge at this point. The whole of this internal hedge is now at 5 foot.

I hoped that this was the last I would hear about this – the hedge would obviously regrow and surely the Officer had better things to do. But two years later, he has now carried out his threat to evict and used tax-payers money and valuable allotment resources to destroy part of this once beautiful orchard allotment.

19th January 2004

