

# Uncovering the plot: Investigating Urban Agriculture in Dublin.

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for the award of M.Sc. in Culinary Innovation and Food Product Development

**By**

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### **Declaration**

I hereby certify that the material that is submitted in this thesis towards the award of M.Sc. Culinary Innovation and Food Product Development is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates Urban Agriculture (UA) in Dublin. This concept encompasses those who are engaged in growing their own in an urban environment. The study investigates why there has been a rise in UA over the past 15 years with the focus of the study being on allotments, a historical form of UA.

The objectives of the study include investigating the concept of urban agriculture, to examine the history of allotments in Dublin, to aid an understanding of modern UA in Dublin. The study focuses on the motivations of the allotment holders as well as uncovering the types and varieties of food being produced on their allotments.

The methodology of the study was qualitative, which provided rich data sources to inform the discussion. The methods employed were semi-structured interviews and direct observations. Allotment holders at two allotment sites were the population sample interviewed chosen based on the total population of allotments in Dublin, with the majority of the population being located in south Dublin. Along with interviews on allotment sites, the researcher undertook interviews a representative of Dublin City Council and a Minister of the current Government.

The findings of the researcher indicated a revival in the interest of allotment holding in south Dublin. Allotments were formerly located on sites due for development; presently they have a fixed tenure in regional parks. There is also an association to represent them at local and national level. Motivations for holders included a desire for fresh food and socialisation around a common interest of food growing.

The conclusions of the study illustrate a growth in different forms of UA in Dublin including a revival in allotments, an interest in community gardens and people growing their own in a domestic setting.

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### **Glossary of Acronyms:**

UA	Urban Agriculture
FUA	Family Urban Agriculture
PUA	Peri-urban agriculture
VLCS	Vacant Land Cultivation Society
UIPU	United Irish Plotolders Union
IAHA	Irish Allotment Holders Association
ERP	European Recovery Programme
AFN	Alternative Food Network
SDCC	South Dublin County Council
RDL CC	Rathdown Dun Laoghaire County Council

# Chapter 1

## Introduction



## **1 Introduction:**

This study is focused on Urban Agriculture in Dublin. Urban agriculture is an emerging concept based on those who chose to grow their own food in an urban environment. Recent times have witnessed the emergence of a global food system and a homogenisation of the types of food available to consumers. This system has placed four seasons of foods at the fingertips of consumers in developed countries, however in the background of this exists Urban Agriculture that finds urban residents of developed countries engaged in '*grow your own*' food activities. This study seeks to investigate why there has been a rise in this activity in recent times of economic success in Dublin.

### **1.1 Background to Research Project:**

The purpose of this research is to examine the growing interests in urban agriculture, focusing on allotments in Dublin. Allotments are spaces in an urban landscape used by urban residents as a form of recreation they are provided by city councils and supported by surrounding communities (Domenea and Sauria 2006). Previously allotments have been associated with migrant peasants and as a tool to increase food supplies by developed countries during times of crisis. Allotment holders were able to utilise this space to supplement their diets and occasionally their incomes by producing their own fruits and vegetables. Recent media interest demonstrated that there is been a trend towards '*growing your own*'.

### **1.2 Research Question**

The question addressed in this research is:

Why has there been a rise in Urban Agriculture in Dublin since 1995?

### **1.3 Aims:**

The aim of this research is to investigate Urban Agriculture (hereafter UA) in Dublin. This has been achieved by examining allotments in Dublin, which is a popular and accessible form of UA. The investigation will explore people's motivation in having an allotment and why those engaged in this activity want to '*grow their own*'.

### **1.4 Objectives:**

1. To examine the history of allotments in Dublin.
2. To explore the urban agriculture activities taking place in Dublin.
3. To uncover the motivations for being an allotment holder.
4. To examine what people are growing.

### **1.5 Research Rationale:**

Research is required on this subject, as to date there has been little information available and no academic studies carried out on allotments or UA in Dublin. This study sought to illustrate the history behind allotments in Dublin. There also has been no academic Irish studies on why people want to '*grow their own*' food in a domestic or public setting.

This study will provide an insight into the current UA activities taking place in Dublin and the future role that urban agriculture could play in supporting growing urban communities in Dublin. The research area has links to:

- Urban Food Security (United Nations 2007)
- Urban ecology (Domenea and Sauria 2006)
- Therapeutic and leisure activities for urban residents (Milligan et al 2004)
- Policy making (Martine 2007)

Through a focused study on allotments in Dublin it may be possible to highlight any future trends in urban agriculture in Dublin.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

### **1.6.1 Primary data collection**

The method of primary research that was most frequently used by authors in the literature review was a qualitative methodology. The methodology used semi-structured interviews and direct observations providing such a broad range of data that are illustrated in the findings. Primary research for this study was undertaken between April and July of 2008. Two allotment sites in south Dublin were chosen based on the current population of allotments in Dublin which consists of approximately 500 allotments at 8 sites. These two sites provided a sample of 28 allotment holders of which a total of 12 interviews took place for the primary research. Additional interviews were undertaken with a representative of Dublin City Council and a member of the current Government.

### **1.6.2 Secondary data collection**

The secondary research consisted of conducting an in-depth and exhaustive literature review that informed the author about suitable methods of data collection. No Irish studies were found on this subject area and consequently the literature review encompasses books and research articles from North America and Europe, as well as a multitude of Irish media sources. Achieving the first comprehensive history of allotment in Dublin involved visits to the Dublin City Council Archives; the University College of Dublin national archives. *The Irish Times* digital archive provided invaluable information on allotment activity in Dublin. Data collection also consisted of using the facilities available at the faculties of Tourism and Food and the Faculty of the Built Environment in the Dublin Institute of Technology.

## 1.7 Chapters Outline

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Chapter two reviews and explores the literature that surrounds the subject area.

Research areas that were pertinent to the aims and objectives included;

- investigating UA to establish a working definition of this concept,
- historical aspects to the development of Dublin, and
- motivators to illustrate why people wish to engage in ‘*grow your own*’ activities.

The chapter reviews key texts and explores other sources of data relevant to the research area as UA was noted to affect a number of different research disciplines including;

- sustainability,
- environmental topics,
- urban development and design,
- green marketing, and
- food systems.

### **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

Chapter three describes the research methodology used to achieve the aims and objectives of this research. This chapter discusses sources of secondary research and the techniques employed in the gathering and analysing of the primary data.

The discussion also focuses on the research design particularly in relation to the justification of utilising a qualitative methodology.

### **Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings**

Chapter four presents the results of the primary research. The first section presents the findings from the interview Minister Ciaran Cuffe, a member of the green party. The second section deals with the interviews of the allotment holders and is laid out under themes uncovered in the analysis of the data.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions**

A discussion of the research findings and literature review is undertaken using the research objectives as a framework and the themes uncovered in the findings to provide conclusions to answer the research question.

Conclusions are presented under each research objective with an overall conclusion answering the research question of why has there been a growing interest in allotments and a rise in Urban Agriculture in Dublin.

### **1.8 Chapter Summary**

Chapter one presented a short overview of the study and set out the research aims and objectives of the study. Chapter one presented the research question being explored identifies the research rationale, and a summary of the research methodologies employed in the study.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

## **2 Investigating Urban Agriculture (UA)**

Urban agriculture is historically and intrinsically linked to industrialisation and urbanisation. The most traditional form of UA is the allotment. However, the definition of UA is a difficult one, with opinions on what constitutes UA varying from one commentator to the next. This section will concentrate on defining a working definition for UA, and separately, the allotment, in Ireland.

Viljoen (2005) provides the concept of what UA is:

- Agriculture which occurs within the city.
- In most cases high yield market gardens for fruit and vegetable growing.
- Found on the ground, on roofs, facades, fences and boundaries.
- If economic conditions are difficult, likely to include small animals.
- Developing to include aquaculture.

A further extension of the concept UA is Peri-Urban agriculture (UPA) whose characteristics include:

- Agriculture that is occurring on the urban-rural fringe, or within peripheral low population density suburban areas.
- Similar to UA, although the size of the sites is often larger.
- UPA refers to a mix of urban and peri-urban agriculture.

Boukharaeva and Marloie (2006) in an analysis of UA find that there are two distinct categories these being:

1. Professional Urban Agriculture (PUA) where the production is mainly intended to be sold.
2. Family Urban Agriculture (FUA) includes the concept of 'kitchen gardens', 'collective gardens', 'allotment gardens', 'community gardens' and 'urban family gardening'; people and families working in gardens during the weekend and holidays: families, retired workers, unemployed or underemployed persons. It is mainly a non-market activity, most of the production being intended for self-consumption.

Nugent (1997) supports this description of urban agriculture, describing it as food production occurring within the confines of cities; usually this production takes place in backyards, rooftops, community vegetable and fruit gardens and abandoned public or private spaces.

From the definitions of UA proposed by Boukharaeva and Marloie and Nugent as well as the concepts provided by Viljoen (2005) two descriptive styles can be recognised. The Boukharaeva and Marloie and Nugent texts provide a distinction between allotments and community gardens. Where-as in Nugent's description there is a reference only to community gardens.

Bellows (2004: 250) offers her reader a distinction between allotments and community gardens “very broadly speaking, the terminology of allotment gardening has a European regional reference, where-as community gardening has a broad North American orientation”. The most important thing to remember is that the use of these terms is fluid and evolving.

From this terminology, it is understandable that Bellows in her treatment of 100 years of Polish allotments notes that there is an overlap in the way community gardens, allotments, urban agriculture and industrialisation are discussed.

Lozano (1990), in a discussion of urban development finds that historically towns relied on agricultural surplus; that agricultural land was the most important resource and settlements were planned to preserve it. Yet it was this very factor that lead to the growth and development of towns into cities where people could have other occupations away from agricultural activities.

Arising out of this development, land preservation became less important to those who lived in cities. Flandrin (1996) in *From Industrial Revolution to Industrial Food* describes the nineteenth and twentieth century's under the heading “contemporary period”. Exploring this time period Flandrin finds that the salient features of these two centuries include a never-ending Industrial Revolution, a rural exodus coupled with incredible urban growth (even in non-industrial countries).



For example between 1800 and 1850 70,000 people migrated to Dublin from rural areas of Ireland, although it lacked significant industries to utilise this growth (McManus (2002).

Wooley (2004) discusses the importance of cities, seeing their increased significance over the centuries finding the growth of urban populations and associated industrialisation has resulted in a range of detrimental and often dehumanising outcomes.

From the process of urbanisation arises the development of town planning and social welfare provided to workers by factories and governing bodies. Bellows in her discussion of Polish allotments provides a second example of this historical pattern in the development of allotments in Poland as peasants migrated from the land to work in mines and factories. Allotments were provided by these institutions as a workers benefit.

Allotments can also be characterised by their place in history associated with poverty and hunger. Their place in British history is often found in an urban setting provided by a factory owner or local council to help the migrants from a rural setting, to supplement their diets with fresh fruit and vegetables (Martin and Marsden 1999).

Domenea and Sauria (2006) find in Spain that historically allotments were established to support those on low incomes that would use the produce to feed their families and if they had excess products that could be sold.

In the examples above a pattern emerges which involves the movement of poor people from rural to urban settings. This pattern of the creation of allotments in Europe supports Wooleys' position that their creation was due to detrimental *and often dehumanising* conditions in which migrant rural workers lived.

In the cases of Poland and Spain (Bellows 2004, Domenea and Sauria 2006,) the authors both suggest that allotment holders of the present still engage in allotment holding because it represents a former agricultural world from which they hailed and which is rapidly being lost due to urbanisation.

From this literature allotments can be noted for historically playing their part in two roles, subsistence and survival, helping to overcome hunger in an urban environment. It certainly becomes evident that allotments are a form of Urban Agriculture, perhaps one of the earliest.

Although one can now identify the allotment as a component of UA the character of the allotments has changed, particularly in developed countries. According to Domenea and Sauria (2006) allotments are spaces in an urban landscape used by urban residents as a form of recreation.

They are provided by city councils and supported by surrounding communities. This is an activity that can be engaged in by an individual, a household or a community. Woolley (2004: 57) describes allotment holding activity as taking place in a domestic urban open space: *“those open spaces in the urban context that are physically closest to home”*.

For the purpose of this research “UA” will be an umbrella term focuses on the idea that it is food production taking place within the city and on the suburban fringe, particularly of fruits and vegetables. This food production is for personal interest and consumption particularly that which takes place ‘allotment gardens’ and ‘community gardens’.

## 2.1 Urban Agriculture in Dublin

The investigation of UA practices in Dublin begins with and focuses on the establishment of allotments in the capital at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (figure 1 p46 provides timeline of allotment activity). This section will include historical aspects of Dublin and Ireland as a whole from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From this time one can find that while Ireland was to establish itself as an independent state in 1921, Dublin was to witness accelerated growth as people flocked to the capital.

## 2.2 Plotting the History

Bannon *et al* (1981:42) found that “*despite economic vicissitudes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...the city continued to grow and by 1911 it had a population of 398, 000 (inclusive of adjacent urban districts)*”. The built up area of the city remained small and compact and was largely confined by the area enclosed by the Royal and Grand Canals. According to McDonald (1989), in 1926 the city of Dublin was confined to the 4,000 hectares between the Grand Canal; the Royal Canal; and the North Circular Road; with two-thirds of the total population living in this space. According to Bannon *et al* (1981) in 1926 the inner city population was 268, 851 and when combined with adjacent urban districts, had reached 419, 000.

Accompanying the growth of the city population was the advent of the railway; the development of omnibus services; and the construction of two harbours at Howth and Dun Laoghaire. At this time Dublin also developed an emerging middle class, who began moving out of the inner city into the countryside, seeking the ‘garden city’ ideal (a house and a garden). This changing population in terms of size and social structure expanded the city. According to Bannon (1979) by 1946 the city encompassed a space of 7,000 hectares. By 1973 the population was 778, 000, and its size covered 16, 000 hectares.

The evidence shows that Dublin has expanded both in physical size and population throughout the twentieth century. For allotments in Dublin this expansion of the city and population meant increased competition in land use as this expansion of the city encroached on land previously used for agriculture. The Dublin Corporation, the authority responsible for allotments, needed the allotted land for houses, schools and roads.

The first allotment sites in Dublin City were established in 1910. These sites were provided by a charitable organisation named the Vacant Land Cultivation Society (hereafter VLCS see picture 1, p20). According to a Dublin Corporation report the VLCS was made up of a group of social workers, with the Reverend Joseph McDonnell, S.J. as Chairman, and Miss S.C. Harrison, as Honorary Secretary (Dublin Corporation, 1946).

The allotments were provided to the local families of three areas to help supplement their diets and incomes. The land was lent either by the Dublin Corporation or by private persons who provided land until such time that they would need it returned for their own use. In 1910 the first annual meeting of the VLCS took place, and it was announced that allotments under the control of the society had all been distributed, except for one for which there were two claimants. The locations of the sites were at Clontarf, The Coombe and The Pigeon House. The total number of allotments that the society provided to Dublin city was 23.

Reports from *The Irish Times* at the time of the inception of the VLCS allotments provided invaluable information on the activities of the society. The establishment of allotments at this time reflected the phenomenon of a growing population faced with a stagnating industrial sector. As MacManus (2002) finds, Dublin lacked significant industries, there was no employment base, and therefore the growing population was underemployed, and in time migrants to the city became marginalised. Bannon et al (1981: 62) found that the history of Dublin has largely been one of contrast between the rich and poor. They comment that “*to speak of Dublin as a single entity is to ignore the existence of two separate Dublin’s – that of the rich and the poor – the Dublin of the ascendancy and the Dublin of the poor and the tenements*”.

Following the garden city ideal (a house and a garden), the wealthier classes were abandoning their houses in the centre of the city for houses in the areas adjacent to Dublin. Once the boundaries of the Royal and Grand Canals had been crossed, one was considered to be in the countryside. The modern suburban areas of Dublin City today were once rural villages far from the centre of the city.

Dawson (1913) revealed the plight of Dublin's poor in his report the *Inquiry into the Housing Conditions of the Working Classes in the City of Dublin*. This report presented the local government with an accurate picture of 20<sup>th</sup> century Dublin, wherein evidence showed that the city contained 5,322 tenement houses with 35,227 rooms occupied by 25,822 families consisting of 87,305 persons in total; resulting in an average of 4.8 families or 16.4 persons per house.



Picture 1: Vacant Land Cultivation Society, 1910 outside mansion house Dublin, *The Irish Times* (1910) July 16, p13.

At this time Ireland was involved in a struggle for independence from the United Kingdom and Irish nationalists in the British Parliament were pushing for the Home Rule Bill (Lydon 1998). Ireland was still under the control of the British parliament which was on the verge of entering into global conflict, and required the resources of the island of Ireland, particularly its men, for use in its armies.

Although the housing inquiry report called for greater state involvement in urban housing; greater financial resources for housing; greater power of land acquisition *and* greater control over tenement houses by Dublin Corporation.

Nothing could be done until the middle of the 1920's by which time WW1 had ended and Ireland had become divided into the Free State (26 counties and Northern Ireland (6 counties) (Lydon 1998).

At this point in the investigation it becomes clear that the coming of the war in Europe was one catalyst that fuelled the further development of allotments within the city. In Dublin the figures for allotment activities undertaken by the Vacant Land Cultivation Society slowly increased until 1917, where 487 plots were recorded (Harrison 1934). These allotments were provided for free and helped to alleviate the rampant poverty previously highlighted in the 1913 housing inquiry.

Indeed *The Irish Times* (1916) records the fact that the allotments were very much a tool of social welfare where men, women and children were seen to participate in wholesome activity; with fresh air and fresh food as benefits. These benefits are evident in this article regarding the display of produce from the plots of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society:

“Practical proof of the success of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society was strikingly given on Saturday afternoon, when the first exhibition of produce was opened at the Leo Hall Inchicore, by the Right Hon. T. W. Russell. It was representative of all the plot-holders. Massive cabbages from the allotments at The Pigeon House road, huge onions from the Inchicore plots, burly potatoes from the Society's ground at Broadstone and other magnificent products from fields that were not long ago derelict

in various parts of Dublin. Made up a collection of garden produce which was a revelation to those not familiar with the activities of the Society. It was twofold tribute to their success and to the industry and application of the plot holders, many of them struggling working men.”

(The Irish Times, September 18, 1916:04)

At this time the VLCS was experiencing a greater demand for allotments in Dublin from both employed and underemployed men, Table 1 shows the allotment sites of the VLCS. In 1916 there were three articles in *The Irish Times* that drew attention to the VLCS, their activities and this increased demand for land, one article highlighted that the question of involvement by the local government to help increase land held by the VLCS.

After this time in 1917 The Dublin Corporation, by direction of The Local Government Board for Ireland, set up a Land Cultivation Committee to provide allotments aimed at increasing food supplies as a war measure.

<b>District</b>	<b>Number of Allotments</b>
Jamestown	90
Inchicore, the Ranch	34
Glasnevin, Bullfield	23
Cork St, Sherry's Field	27
Finglas Bridge	26
Sandymount, Beach road	35
Mountain view	20
The rope walk	6
Pigeon House road	26
Broadstone	14
Fairbrothers' Fields	58
Tyrconnell Road	90
Tenter's Field	39

**Table 1: Allotment sites provided by the VLCS in 1917**

*The Irish Times* (1919) when reviewing a book called “*Jottings of an Allotment Gardener*” reveals that in Dublin there were now 3000 plots under cultivation. In 1921, an organisation called the United Irish Plotters Union was mentioned in *The Irish Times*. It recorded 3,000 plot holders’ in 37 areas of the Dublin metropolitan region. The Dublin Corporation reported that in 1920 the Department of Agriculture took over, and itself administered the 626 allotments on land acquired compulsorily by the Corporation under regulation 2L of the Defence of the Realm Act, leaving the Corporation with 2,168 allotments (Resolution of the Council, Dublin Corporation, 1946).

The Plotters’ article in *The Irish Times* marks the advent of allotment holding being perceived as a social activity. Bellows (2004: 249) shows a similar finding in her discourse analysis; she comments that “*the text over time tells much how gardens played a changing role in the changing socio-economic climate*”.

*The Irish Times* article on the UIPU also reveals that the activities of the VLCS were no longer needed as Dublin Corporation now officially administered allotments. Allotment sites around Dublin were under threat, as by the end of the First World War Dublin was growing in both size and population. Dublin Corporation, following the conclusions of the housing enquiry in 1913, began to clear the inner city slums. They also began building houses outside of the boundaries of the canals on both the north and south side of the city. In 1923 there was a major effort by the UIPU to promote an “Allotments Act” due to be passed which would allow the Dublin corporation to purchase land outside of the city boundaries for use as allotments for working men (*The Irish Times* May 18 1923:05).

1. Dublin Corporation (1946) provides a description of the allotment situation in 1923, finding that the number of plots had fallen to 688. They provided the following reasons:
2. Those who cultivated allotments for patriotic reasons ceased to work them when the Emergency has passed.
3. Others ceased cultivation when they learned that the land in question was scheduled for housing or other development.



4. The Corporation terminated allotment schemes either by building, providing parks or returning the land to the owner for private building schemes.
5. The Corporation had no power and very little desire to establish permanent schemes for men willing to work allotments and contented itself with retaining from year to year the few areas which were no required for other development purposes.
6. The Department of Agriculture terminated all its schemes as soon as it could do so.

The UIPU called for allotment holders to be given preference over the building of artisan dwellings on allotment sites. This call to the Government and Dublin Corporation remained unheeded until 1926, and the number of allotments in the city declined, the Corporation's holdings dropping to 334 in 1925.

In 1928 a report from Mr. D. McDonnell (then honorary general secretary of UIPU) given at the union's annual congress, showed the total number of allotments remaining in the city in 1923 was 2,000, although no distinction is made as to the number held by the Corporation and private allotment schemes. This was a significant fall from 1919 when the number in the city stood at 3,500 (*The Irish Times* March 5<sup>th</sup> 1928: 05).

The report expressed its surprise at the omission of reference to plotholding in the published reports of the agricultural commission:

“Taking the annual yield of potatoes as one ton to one-eighth of an acre, the output of potatoes since inception of the allotments was 25,000 tons. Add to this cabbages, onions and other vegetables and it would be seen that the food value of the plots tilled by the workers of Dublin since 1917 was in the neighbourhood of £300,000 and this without taking into account the value of the plots measured in terms of the healthy recreation for the plotholder and members of his family.”

(*The Irish Times* March 5<sup>th</sup> 1928: 06).

From the articles during this period of time a change in the importance of allotment can be identified as moving from the idea of a tool of social welfare to that of an asset of Dublin City.

In 1926 the United Irish Plotters Union prevailed upon the government who introduced the Local Authorities (Allotment) Act 1926, that identified an allotment as a piece of land intended to be let for cultivation by an individual for the production of vegetables mainly for consumption by himself and his family.

This act embodied a clause which allowed local authorities to lease land to voluntary associations interested in the allotment movement. From this point onwards the allotment movement is continued through the voluntary work of the United Irish Plotters Union, who form different branches throughout the city and suburbs. The union is lead by Mr. T. Shaw, F.R.H.A, who came from a family associated with nurseries and seed distribution for generations. Shaw, as well as being a founding member of the UIPU, also founded the Irish Gardeners Association and the North Dublin Horticultural Society (*The Irish Times* June 15<sup>th</sup> 1940: 04).

In the late twenties Ireland was establishing its independence from Britain, yet the majority of external trade and export took place with Britain. Foster (1971) finds that the two economies were complementary, exchanging Irish agricultural products for British industrial products. The 1930's brought with them the Great Depression, which in turn lead to Britain protecting their farmers and thus imposing tariffs upon agricultural products entering their market. Foster (1971: 78) states that "*the economic dispute between Ireland and Britain in the 1930's led to the imposition by the British Government of penal duties on all imports from Ireland*". Meenan (1971: 44) evidences this stating "*there was a discrimination against Irish cattle by price and by quantitative restriction*". A trade agreement reached in 1938 depressed livestock production and lead to an increase in cash-crop cultivation at the expense of grassland cultivation. Meenan (1971: 45) describes the Irish experience of that era: "*there is an impressive contrast between the buoyant prosperity of the country in WW1 and its comparative stagnation during WW2*".

The UIPU's annual congress in 1930 describes a discussion on a submission made to the Minister for Local Government on making allotments available to unemployed men in connection with the Relief Act (1930). In this meeting it can be seen that the UIPU fully recognises the role of the allotment in the urban environment stating that "*the moral, social, physical, material and educational advantages deriving from the allotment system by that large and respectable section of the community, the people of no property could not be too fully or too often stressed and more attention should consequently be devoted to its promotion and encouragement by the powers that be*". Also in this forum the UIPU put forward the idea of obtaining a discount from the bus and tram companies for men carrying tools to their allotments using the Plotolders of England as an example. (*The Irish Times* 1930:05)

In the early 1930's, Dublin continued to change in size, now incorporating the townships of Rathmines, Pembroke and Rathgar who had previously been under the control of Urban District Councils (MacManus, 2002).

This benefited the UIPU, as they found that Dublin Corporation was easier to negotiate with than the Urban District Councils in terms of obtaining lands for allotments. In 1930, for example, 44 Plotolders lost their allotments as the Urban District Council allowed the owner to sell the site and have a hockey club built on the site. However in 1931 with the change in local authority, a new area of land was given over to allotments, this time provided by the Dublin Corporation under the 1926 Allotment Act (*The Irish Times* 1931).

The allotment movement was very much driven by the UIPU. During this time their main work focused on finding suitable land convenient to allotment holders for example it negotiated a five-year lease with a landowner in Ballymun for 25 acres, enough for 200 allotments. The plot was brought to Dublin Corporation, who acquired it under the 1926 Allotment Act.

In 1933 the UIPU and the Government unveiled their allotment scheme for the unemployed whereby the Union was given control of the plots at Ballymun. 70 of the 200 plots were to go to unemployed men and the government was to pay £1 towards each allotment holders' seeds and tools (*The Irish Times* 1933).

Although an Allotment Act had been passed in 1926 and was a nation-wide policy, in practice it was implemented in Dublin only. That the act was proved to be faulty in its omission that the local authority when retaking land for the purposes of housing should find replacement land for allotment sites.

The UIPU called upon the government to amend the act to help promote allotment holding particularly, as it would benefit the governments' scheme of providing allotments to unemployed men. In 1934 out of 1000 plots in the Dublin area, 250 were available to the governments' scheme.

The Allotment Act of 1926 was replaced by the Acquisition of Land (Allotments) Amendment 1934 whereby the amendment made provisions to accommodate approved unemployed persons at new or existing sites (*The Irish Times* February 7 1934: 05).

1934 was the last year that Mr. T. Shaw F.R.H.A was president of the UIPU. His last address as president suggested that the UIPU form a subcommittee to work with the city manager to help plan new allotment areas in the city. In his address he pointed out that allotments would in the future need to be located in districts unlikely to be required for building for at least 5-10 years. That land would need to be acquired at a reasonable price, convenient to the city, unless cheap transport facilities could be made, e.g. to the unemployed, to allow access to the remote allotments (*The Irish Times* April 13 1934: 08).

In 1935 the UIPU changed its title to the Irish Allotment Holders Association (IAHI) and at this time a report from the organisation found that 900-unemployed workers were granted allotments at nominal rents. Seeds, manure's, spraying materials, and tools were provided free of charge (*The Irish Times* February 9 1935: 05). The Town and Planning Act was adopted by Dublin Corporation in 1936, regarding this act the IAHI requested that a clause securing fixity of tenure of land for allotments in Dublin be added before the act was passed (*The Irish Times* January 22 1936: 04).

Also at this time the IAHI approved the appointment of a solicitor to represent the Association at the Local Government inquiry to be held in connection with the acquisition of lands at Willowmount and Ashdale road in Terenure, which had been allotments since 1918. This inquiry was held to establish what Dublin Corporation should do to control town planning and manage a growing urban area (Brady 2002). The inquiry highlighted that allotments were beginning to be lost in the County Borough, e.g. at Terenure, 98 allotments were lost to make way for housing.

The IAHI again appealed to the Dublin Corporation for more land, convenient to allotment holders' homes, as the cost of getting to the allotment was prohibitive for some holders.

Brady (2002) finds that in the 1930's as Dublin expanded not only were the townships of Rathmines, Rathgar and Pembroke absorbed into the city in the south the city also grew in the north encompassing Cabra, Killester and Clontarf. By 1936 the population of the County Borough was 472,912 with a further 7724 being described as living in the north city suburbs and 11,017 in the south city suburbs. During this time period there is an increase in the number of vehicles in the city, even though there was still horse drawn traffic evident in the city

Mr. T. Shaw F.R.H.A in his final address to the UIPU, described what he thought was to occurring Dublin regarding the future of allotments. While new allotment areas were to open they were moving further from the growing city. In fact although numbers of allotments grew slightly to 1500 plots across the city and that 618 Plotholders were holders under the Government's unemployed workers scheme.

The allotment movement at the end of the 1930's consisted of employed, unemployed and retired men as well as their families working on their allotments. The movement was to find itself again the centre of attention with the advent of the Second World War. Once again the movement was provided with a catalyst to boost its numbers and in 1939 the local government and the Department of agriculture began allocating new allotment areas to deal with the looming crisis of the new war.

Allotment Area	Number of Allotments
Crumlin, Kimmage and Terenure	1,426
Glasnevin and Drumcondra	734
Inchicore and Kilmainham	550
Ringsend	89
Rathfarnham	95
Ballsbridge	117
Clontarf	485
Total	3496

**Table 2: *The Irish Times* (September 22 1941: 05) provides figures of allotments in Dublin 1939-40**

The advent of more allotments in the city was highly publicised with the estimated value of the produce being upwards of £80,000 this figure arising from each plot being worth £10-13 worth of produce. Further efforts by the government, the IAHA and the Corporation found that by the end of 1941 there was a further growth in allotments with the figure reaching over 6000. With a further 2000 being outside of the control of the authority of parish councils were noted to be responsible for this work (*The Irish Times* September 22 1941: 05).

While allotments were deemed to be a necessity by some such as the IAHA or the Irish National Gardening Guild the Second World War was the allotments highest watermark for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. After the war the land used for purposes of allotments was reclaimed for the seemingly relentless expansion of the city and its suburbs.

The growth of Dublin during this time can be evidenced in a report made by an Allotment Department of Dublin Corporation (1946: 03) where a list of allotment areas that were surrendered from 1945-46 see table 3. The report states “*It can be assumed that at least 15 allotment areas will be surrendered within 12 months – 2 years for use for parks and housing (corporation and private schemes)*”.

<b>Surrendered Allotment Areas</b>	<b>Number of Allotments</b>
Ballyfermot upper	124
Broombridge	126
Bushy park	41
Crumlin South	125
Donnycaryney	471
Drimnagh	115
Greenmount	48
Merrion Road	16
Perrystown	124
Sion Hill	13
Ballyown	66
Herbert Avenue	10
Blarney Park	16
Rutland Avenue	78
Quarryfield	30

**Table 3: list of allotment areas that were surrendered from 1945-46, Source Resolution of the Council, Dublin Corporation, (1946).**

Although there was renewed growth of Dublin in these post war years one should also consider the implications the European Recovery Programme (ERP) and the manner in which Ireland could best contribute. The ERP (1948: 8792) states “*Ireland’s principal problem is the restoration of agricultural production and Ireland’s main contribution to European recovery will take place through the production of more food for export. Since the economy of Ireland is closely related to that of the United Kingdom the major part of increased food exports will probably go there. To expand its exports of agricultural products, Ireland needs to mechanise its agriculture, obtain more fertilisers and animal feedstuffs, increase its imports of fuel and overhaul its transportation system*”. Meenan (1971) finds that participation in the ERP removed many pre-war issues such as depressed livestock prices, and prepared the way for a notable increase in agricultural production for export.

In the post-war years *The Irish Times* stopped reporting on the IAHA and their annual congress. The next mention of allotment activities in the city is the inevitable fall in the number of allotment “*at the rate at which land under allotments is being handed back in the Dublin area. The number of allotment that will be available in 1950 is not expected to exceed 1,400 against 2,109 for the 1949 season*” (*The Irish Times* November 22 1949: 04).

An article in 1952 of the *Irish Times* finds the levels of allotments at 1,200. Areas under allotments were reclaimed for the initial uses others continued to cultivate them the article states “*In some places, however, enthusiasts continued the work; in others new plots opened up*” (*The Irish Times* May 23 1952: 04).

In 1955 *The Irish Times* returns to the subject but this time a change can be seen there are less unemployed taking up allotments, the allotment figure stands at 1,162. The article suggests that further demand for allotments would be required due to rising food prices (*The Irish Times* September 29 1955: 04).



From 1955 references to allotments in the city become less frequent in *The Irish Times* newspaper, between 1959 and 1971 virtually nothing is reported about allotments. In 1963 the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act was passed to encourage economic growth.

This act repealed the earlier Town Planning Act which formed the basis for modern urban planning in Ireland (MacLaran 1993). By 1971 the supermarket had arrived to meet the needs of those in new housing developments “*the large self service store with abundant parking space is typical. These are usually situated close to major road junctions and draw their motor borne clientele from far distances, so there is intense competition among them*” (Haughton 1970: 135).

Quinn (*The Irish Times* June 11 1971: 10) states “*One of the unprotected victims of the prosperous urbanisation is ‘The Plots’... their use was dying off, it was reported last week with increasing prosperity*”. This is the first article with renewed commentary on the changing socio-economic environment in which the allotments now existed. Quinn continues his commentary showing what the Bannon, Eustace and O’Neill (1981) would say 10 years later that there existed two Dublin’s economically and cultural terms “*I feel about the plots as more refined people feel about Georgian houses*” (*The Irish Times* June 11 1971: 10).

Once more this *Irish Times* article reflects their article of 1955, where there is an awareness of the impact supermarkets and inflation were having on the Dublin households budgets. Certainly the 1970’s appeared to be a period of prosperity in Dublin. In fact Quinn suggested that the idea of leisure time was making an impact in the ordinary working man’s week and that allotment holding was an amenity needed in an expanding Dublin. It is interesting that he provides the reader with an idea on what being an allotment holder was like, what having one meant to the family, and the types of the people that had them.

He mentions a former site located in an area considered middle class:

“With the plots one could use one’s garden to become a Sam McCredy and still have the plot to feed the family. In Orwell there about twenty plots, approximately one sixth of an acre each. The atmosphere was communal. The men who lived side by side in Corporation houses worked side by side in their pots. They swapped their produce and their labour. We kids did the weeding, a job we loathed because there was no financial return. A lot of the time was spent staging jam jar fights between butterflies and wasps. If we had to work we preferred the profitability of picking cinders. There seemed to be little class distinction in the group that worked there after their normal day’s toil. I can remember an insurance official, a drapery shop manager, a cooper (my father), a C.I.E. inspector and a road sweeper. Actually my most vivid memory of them is leaning on their spades gossiping”

*(The Irish Times June 11 1971: 11).*

The next time a reference to the allotments in Dublin can be found in the media is in *the Irish Independent* (1984: 08) “*Making ends meet with an allotment*” discusses a renewed demand for allotments in a time of economic hardship. Allotments have been moved out of the city and into the suburbs in both north and south Dublin. These sites were under control of Dublin County Council and Corporation their location as follows:

- Dunsink
- Blanchardstown
- Esker, Lucan
- Shankill
- Clondalkin
- Balbriggan
- Ballyowen

The history of allotments provides an aid to understanding modern UA in Dublin. It has shown a historical perspective on why there was a demand in the in Dublin for allotments. The history provided a rich account of the change that the allotment has experienced since its introduction to the Dublin in 1910. It also described the demise of the allotment movement in Dublin since the 1950's. Uncovering this history of allotments provides this study with firm a foundation in answering the research question.

Understanding why there has been a rise UA in Dublin requires an examination into the contemporary situation surrounding food growing. The next part of the literature review examines conventional agriculture, food manufacturing and the consumption of food.

### **2.3 Why do people want to grow their own food?**

“25% of Dublin's land is garden but in the late 1980's, growing your own was stigmatised as a poor persons' game and with the ubiquity of supermarkets and their tantalising array of cheap food, it became largely unnecessary, too”.

Kelly (2008: 14)

Marten and Marsden (1999), in a discussion on urban food production and the re-emergence of people growing their own, remarked that growing food in urban areas is hardly a new phenomenon. Kelly provides a useful list of what motivates people to start:

- Food security
- Prices
- Food additives
- Food quality
- Food miles
- Food ethics

Uusitalo (1996: 101) discussing consumption and the environment found that in a market economy, consumers play a dual role: *“On the one hand consumers are objects of marketing and promotional efforts. On the other hand they are active agents who engage in consumption work. Through their activity, consumers have capabilities and possibilities to influence decisions regarding environmental conditions made by firms and the state”*.

Hughes (1994) found that the European consumer is increasingly subjected to large amounts of information regarding health, environmental and ethical food issues from a variety of sources. Harper and Makatouni (2002) believe that the level of information being presented to consumers is a key driver in the growth of alternative food groups such as the organic food market.

Jarosz (2007: 231) provides common definitions used in describing alternative food groups, E.G. *“Alternative food networks (AFNs) are defined by attributes such as the spatial proximity between farmers and consumers; the existence of retail venues such as farmers markets; community supported agriculture (CSA) and a commitment to sustainable production and consumption”*.

Kelly (2008:14) looked at those (urban farmers) who have undertaken different forms of food production positing: *“Organic farmers’ markets are all the rage but anyone can easily produce a lot of their own organic food in their own backyard”*. His urban farmers include politicians and urban food security activists, which supports the position of Crouch and Ward (1988) that there is no typical allotment holder.

No evidence is available on whether environmental issues are motivating factors for allotment holders in Dublin. The idea of environmental concern can perhaps be seen in what Bellows (2004) previously described as a North American form of urban agriculture, a community garden in Dublin. TMck (2008) explores this community garden in Dublin. Wherein the spokesperson admits *“the community garden is about becoming aware of how our food is produced – reconnecting with actual growth, taking out the chemicals, the air miles, and the extortionate mark-ups”*.

Von Hassell (2002) demonstrates similar examples in her research on community gardens in New York where these gardens represent a departure from a market economy. Stating that *“gardeners, by engaging in a praxis that emphasises democratic organizational forms, urban food production, co-operative entrepreneurship, education and an awareness of the fragility of the environment, struggle toward a notion of stewardship of the environment and individual possibilities and choices within that context”* (Von Hassell 2002: 10).

Crouch and Ward (1988) in a discussion on the changing conditions in which allotments exist found that in the 1970’s the allotment movement was widened from food production into recreation and environmental interests. Straughan and Roberts (1999: 558) emphasised this, pointing to *“an evolution has resulted in an expanded list of issues that fall within the domain of environmental responsibility”*.

The Food Safety Authority Ireland (2008) in a leaflet about organic food informs Irish consumers that approximately 70% of the organic food on the Irish market is imported. With food price increases being constantly in the news, more so in Dublin than in the rest of Ireland, economical reasons for growing one’s own food could be sighted as a key motivator.

The researcher noted the increased frequency media articles relating to the link between food and energy production. For example Gillespie (2007: 15) found that *“the era of cheap and stable world food prices typical of the last generation is coming an end. The end is all around us, but has not yet penetrated public consciousness in developed countries like Ireland. This will change as the effects are more widely felt”*. Following this article in September 2007 another appeared in December where the reporter stated: *“with supply constrained due to poor harvests, and stockpiles low another wave of food price inflation is virtually assured for 2008”* (Irish Times 2007: 07). These indicators of a future of raised food prices are now coupled with rising fuel prices, which has thrust these issues into the public and governmental consciousness.

With increasing awareness of these issues Powers (2008) produced an article entitled ‘50 ways to save the planet (its not to late)’: “Climate change is knocking loudly on the door and peak oil is rattling at the gate” (Powers 2008: 10). The researcher notes that Powers in her article addresses both those with gardens and not and offers those without an alternative clearly aware of the large population living in apartment buildings.

Of the 50 ways to save the planet 11 are related to food consumption and being a green consumer. For example:

“Number 46: Grow your own food; watch your food miles shrink to food metres. Even if you don’t have a garden, grow herbs and salads in pots on a windowsill or balcony. And if you don’t have either of those you can still raise bean sprouts”  
(Powers 2008: 13).

Increased awareness of the environment and a growing consciousness of rising food prices provides this investigation on urban agriculture activities in Dublin with indicators of the reasons of why there seems to be an increase in growing one’s own food.

#### **2.4 Benefiting from allotments:**

Through examination the historical aspects of allotments it became clear that their role has changed from supporting men and their families as a form of social welfare in times of crisis, into a form of recreation for those in an urban environment.

Crouch and Ward (1988: 267) in a description of the history of allotment holding in England found that “at one time the struggle for allotments was the focus of a necessarily collective approach to political rights, including the most basic of all human rights: that of a household to feed itself from its own small share of the earth”.

The literature portrays a wide variety of individuals who are participating in allotment activities. For example Wooley (2004) presented the viewpoint that it was those who lived close to allotments that were engaged in the activity.

Whereas Boukharaeva and Marloie (2006) in their analysis of UA presented the idea that those that participated in UA included families, retired workers, unemployed or underemployed persons.

Wirzba (2003) holds a similar view finding that community gardening plots can become gathering places both for the growth of nutritious food and an encouragement for revitalised communities to support and help each other. Perez-Vazquez (2002: 14) in his study of the future of allotments as a strategy for sustainable development notes UA plays a strategic role in developing and developed countries to meet material (food, fibre and energy) and non-material human needs (relaxation, fresh air, social activity and health).

Von Hassell (2002:123) in a discussion of community gardens states *“Despite the paucity of comprehensive quantitative data, a picture of remarkably prolific production activities in community gardens emerges. These activities range around certain themes that serve as inspirational goals or goads to action”*. What the allotment offers the user can be grouped into themes in particular:

- Health both physiological in terms of food grown and the wider psychological benefits.
- Allotment holders engage in a social interaction that individuals and the group can achieve whilst engaging in the tasks associated with taking care of an allotment.
- Rejection of the modern food system and achieving local control over ones food supply returning to ideas of local food.

Arising from this analysis these benefits supply the framework for the continued discussion in the investigation of why there has been a rise in UA in Dublin.

## 2.5 Growing Interests in Food:

Perez-Vazquez (2002) in a study of allotments in England presented the role they could play in the future of urban food security and urban agriculture. He stressed the importance of allotments and contended that building a strategy based on UA could address social, economic and environmental issues. While his study is quite comprehensive it overlooks the changing trends in consumer society such as the emergence of the green consumer (Straughan and Roberts 1999) or the foodie (O'Mahony and Freyne 2008). His concentration on food production and agricultural economics pays little attention to human nutrition or the types of food that is produced through UA activities.

There are a multitude of economical aspects encompassed in the Perez-Vazquez study of UA this lead to a disregard for a more human element such as growing, eating or cooking for pleasure. His study contrasted the more popular media surrounding growing your own. The researcher found that the word pleasure occurred infrequently, 21 times in a 259-page document.

Other aspects to growing interests in food relate to cooking (3 times), taste (17 times) enjoyment (24 times but not necessarily enjoying eating food). Although his document does mention food (695 times) it like the word apple appears but only as quantifiable terminology.

Warde and Martens (2000: 08) describe the situation in the UK surrounding the attention that food has received stating "*that there has been an explosion of social scientific interest in food in the last decade*". In Ireland the same phenomenon can be identified in publications such as Irish University Nutrition Alliance (IUNA) North\South food Consumption Survey (2001). This reveals an insight into the diet of the nation and how it has begun to socialise with food through activities such as eating out.



Warde and Martens (2000) explain that the concept of eating out seems to be expanding as a form of entertainment, part of a leisure activity. Eating out has become one of the many aspects relating to the study of food, the study noted how eating out throws into sharp relief narrow concerns with food as merely a means of subsistence.

Food is now regarded as a multifaceted subject for the academic world and the study of food is no longer confined to teaching its vocational aspects to professionals.

## **2.6 Getting your hands dirty:**

“Gardening, in case it has escaped your attention, has almost become as sexy as cooking. The qualifier ‘almost’ is necessary because it would be premature to suggest we have become a nation of passionate gardeners in the same way we have evolved into an island of foodies”

O’Mahony and Freyne (2008: 10)

Food production in an allotment is to produce the ingredients of a meal, and cooking is the method through which it is prepared. Yet when one considers the recipes in a typical cookery book they generally do not begin with harvesting your own ingredients from your allotment or community garden.

Most cookery books tend to rely on the global food system to supply the ingredients required to prepare the selected recipe rather than the local food system.

Published in 2007 ‘*Jamie at home Cook your way to the good life*’ finds Jamie Olivier, a British chef, getting his hands dirty. His book on growing one’s own food and encouraging others to do so, is the first book to address the issue of ‘*growing your own*’ in a market driven consumer society and evolving global food system. This book accompanies a television series in which a year of his activities are detailed with tips on growing food and recipes on how to cook one’s produce.

Focusing on food is the principal reason for carrying out this dissertation on UA in Dublin. Historically the study of food has been the domain of those who are deemed to be the experts in the field; certainly the food connoisseur is a well regarded individual. In UA there is a similar figure: that of the gardening expert.

For example John Seymour author of the (1975) '*Complete guide to self-sufficiency*'. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the allotment and growing one's own food has received considerable attention from such as Andi Clevely (2008) '*The Allotment Seasonal Planner Cookbook*' with the phrase from 'welly to belly or *The Gourmet Gardener* by Bob Flowerdew (2007).

Each author offering advice on keeping the allotment and larder full throughout the year. Pickling and preserving techniques are found here which Waddington (2006) describes as being in line with participating in a self-sufficient lifestyle that seems appealing today.

## **2.7 Healthy Fresh Food:**

In section 2.2 (p18) the uncovering of allotment history in Dublin reveals that allotment holders grew traditional Irish vegetables such as cabbages, onions and potatoes. In cases where allotment holders were unemployed they were restricted in crop variety as their seed was provided free. Gourlay (2008: 08) indicates the current situation for deciding to 'grow your own' "*A desire for organic food, fuelled by health concerns over factory farming and soaring food prices, means many people now see growing their food as a viable alternative*".

Alaimo et al (2008: 98) carried out an investigation to determine the association between household participation in a community garden and fruit and vegetable consumption among urban adults. They posit that "*higher intakes of fruit and vegetables have been associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer and ischemic stroke*" *the three leading causes of death in the United States*".

Cottee (1999: 173) takes a similar position on this issue stating “that fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet, and that we do not eat enough are not in dispute. Eating more could help us protect against coronary heart disease and cancer, the two biggest killers in the UK”. Alaimo et al findings reveal that household participation in a community garden may improve fruit and vegetable intake among urban adults.

Morris and Zidenberg-Cherr (2002: 93) hypothesised that children that were involved in growing their own food were more likely to taste more vegetables and consume more fruit and vegetables. In their conclusion they stated “*this report should encourage educators to include vegetable gardens as part of their students’ learning experience*”.

McAleese et al (2007) present similar findings this time in relation to children and their participation in garden based nutrition education. Those children who were involved in the planting and harvesting of vegetables as well as receiving nutritional lessons in the classroom were more likely to continue to consume more fruit and vegetables into adulthood.

Blair et al (1991) found in their study that those involved in community gardening had greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables compared with non-gardeners and also lower consumption of sweet foods and drinks.

These studies presented links that exist between those involved in growing one’s own food and increased intakes of fruits and vegetables and that these links are a positive outcome for both individuals and groups.

## 2.8 Allotment Holders

As previously mentioned by Von Hassell (2002) allotment holders engage in a social interaction that individuals and the group can achieve whilst engaging in the tasks associated with taking care of an allotment. Milligan et al (2003) examined how communal gardening activity on allotment contributed to the maintaining of health and wellbeing among older people. They found that allotments act as space that supports social contact and active participation.

The historical evidence presented in section 2.2 (p18-35) identified former allotment holders in the Vacant Land Cultivation Society's scheme as being mainly men. Previously cultivating an allotment allowed a man to take care of his family, was at the forefront of the initial allotment schemes in Dublin City.

Crouch and Ward (1988: 266) found in the United Kingdom "*there is no typical allotment holder or allotment site*". O'Conoghaile (2008) identifies this in his article on allotments in Dublin, pointing out budding families or female professionals are a more likely to be today's allotment holders.

The Office International du Coin de Terre et Des Jardins Familiaux A.S.B.L. (2004) illustrate in their report '*allotments as areas of discovery for children*' many examples from across Europe of the different functions that an allotment can offer children and adolescents. The main focus of the report is that allotments are healthy areas of discovery for children and young people, that they develop their knowledge of nature and the environment and protect them from many urban dangers. They state:

“children are our future...Therefore we should do our all to create areas for them in which they can evolve and develop in a positive way. Our allotment gardens are such areas of experience...contact with nature is a primary condition for the good psychological development of a child”.

(2004:09)

## 2.9 Chapter Conclusion

This section has looked at the area of Urban Agriculture (UA), a review of the literature present an overview of the concept and the different forms of UA that are taking place in both North American and Europe.

The literature illustrated that there is no one definition of the concept but that it has emerged only within the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The researcher has attempted to provide a working definition of UA for the purposes of this study, proposing that UA is food production taking place within the city and on the suburban fringe, particularly of fruits and vegetables.

The investigation into the history of UA in Dublin revealed that allotment holding has been taking place since 1910, when the allotment was introduced to Dublin by a charitable society as a form of social welfare. Figure 1 (p47) provides a historical timeline of significant events that took place in Dublin relating to this allotment history.

From the timeline the reader can identify that the allotment has been used as a tool to help provide additional food supplies during times of crises. The timeline shows that allotment holding in Dublin rises and falls, with a significant decrease in allotments occurring since 1946.

The history of allotments provided evidence that the allotment changed from a form of social welfare into a recreational activity, during times of prosperity. The literature sought motivations as to why people want to grow their own food, showing that in recent times there has been significant interest in food, it's cooking and where it comes from being under scrutiny in popular media. The literature showed the types of people involved in this activity and the benefits of this activity. Healthy fresh food was put forward as a motivation for those involved in allotment holding.

The next chapter examines the methodology that was used to achieve the research aims and objectives. The methodology considers that methodologies that were encountered in the literature review and presents an agreement as to why a qualitative methodology was chosen for this study.

**Figure 1: Timeline of allotment activity in Dublin**

<b>1910</b>	Vacant Land Cultivation Society inaugural meeting at the mansion house. 23 allotments are provided to unemployed men and their families.
<b>1917</b>	Dublin Corporation sets up a Land Cultivation Committee to provide allotments aimed at increasing food supplies as a ware measure.
<b>1921</b>	Vacant Land Cultivation Society, no longer administering allotments, new representative organisation the United Irish Plottolders Union (UIPU) emerges to represent allotment holders to Dublin Corporation.
<b>1926</b>	Local Authorities (Allotment) Act 1926 passed placing power of land acquisition for allotments into the hands of the local authorities.
<b>1930</b>	The Local Government (Dublin) Act, embodies the Relief Act, making allotments available to unemployed men.
<b>1934</b>	Acquisition of land (allotments) (amendment) Act, an amendment made provisions to accommodate unemployed persons at new or existing allotment sites.
<b>1935</b>	UIPU changes their title to the Irish Allotments Holders Association
<b>1941</b>	Total number of allotments in Dublin 3,496, more areas of land assigned to provide allotments with the total number of allotments reaching 8000 by the close of the 'Emergency'.
<b>1946</b>	15 allotment areas handed back to Dublin Corporation for development.
<b>1952</b>	Number of allotments in Dublin 1,200, falling due to growth of Dublin.
<b>1984</b>	Renewed demand for allotments during economic hardship 7 allotment sites exist on the fringe of suburban areas in north and south Dublin.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### **3 Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to investigate why there has been a rise in UA activities in Dublin. The objective of this chapter is to discuss the methodologies employed in this dissertation. The discussion focuses on the research approach used to examine the research question and includes topics such as: the primary and secondary research methods undertaken, the design of the research, data collection and research limitations.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

According to Chisnall (2005: 10) a central part of research activity is to develop an effective research strategy or design. Green (1988: 6) states, *“if it is a good design, it will ensure that the information obtained is relevant to the research problem and that it was collected by objective and economic measures”*.

The methodologies employed throughout the literature that surround UA are predominantly qualitative in nature examples includes Domenea and Sauria (2006), Von Hassell (2002), Crouch and Ward (1988). Although the examination of a broad body of sources including academic texts, journal articles, newspaper articles, and multimedia resources such as television, radio and the Internet. Demonstrated that there is considerable debate as to whether or not qualitative or quantitative methodologies are more effective when dealing with issues surrounding modern UA. These issues have been considered during the process of designing the methodology for this thesis.

Qualitative and quantitative methodologies have different aims, and produce different results. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) find that quantitative research concentrates on the measurement of the relationship between variables, using numbers to explain how phenomena relate; while in contrast qualitative research seeks to answer questions that stress how sociological experience is created and given meaning. In this instance



Darlington and Scott (2002: 06) support this view stating “*some questions are readily transformed into testable propositions and can be investigated using quantitative methods.*”

Chisnall (2005) observes that quantitative methods frequently attempt to give insights into behaviour as well as measuring particular attributes and habits. In this way, a correctly designed questionnaire can give emotive and unverifiable information, such as beliefs and attitudes.

Sarantakos (2005: 33) provides the central criteria of quantitative research:

- Use of empirical methods
- Objectivity
- Value of neutrality
- Distance between researcher and subjects of research
- Measurement and quantification
- Accuracy and precision
- Validity and reliability
- Representativeness and generalisation
- Strict reliance on methods and their results
- Strict research design constructed before research begins

The criteria that Sarantakos provides for using quantitative research when compared against methodologies found in the literature (such as Domenea and Sauria 2006) are very strict relying on ‘fact’ and accuracy to lead to a situation where the result is an immutable truth. For, given a survey, with five possible answers, the respondent will chose the one closest to his or her opinion. This is useful in unearthing general trends with in a topic or a research area. However a ‘fact’ forgoes the richness of an individual’s thought process or motivation. Consequently quantitative research may be able to provide an overview of general trends but lack an understanding behind them.

Darlington and Scott (2002: 02) state “*Qualitative research has an important role to play in understanding this world and in complementing other forms of knowledge*”.

Indeed, Carson et al (2001: 66) find that “*qualitative research methods are suitable for addressing questions of how and why things occur, whereas quantitative methods are more appropriate for answering what and how many questions*”.

For Patton (1980), the aim of qualitative studies is to gain an in-depth understanding of a situation. In-depth understanding is based on researcher immersion in the phenomenon to be studied, gathering data between people and things providing depth and detail.

Supporting this description of qualitative research Marshall and Rossman (2006: 02) “*qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretative and grounded in the lived experiences of people*”.

From the comparison of quantitative and qualitative research approaches along with the methodologies of the reviewed literature the researcher finds that a qualitative research methodology is the best option to choose for this research question.

### **3.2 Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to examine allotments in Dublin, to investigate people’s motivation in having an allotment attempting to uncover the answer to the research question of why there has been a rise in urban agriculture in Dublin since 1995.

#### **3.2.1 Research Objectives**

The following objectives were identified in order to answer the research problem

- To examine the history of allotments in Dublin.
- To explore the urban agriculture activities taking place in Dublin.
- To uncover the motivations for having an allotment can offer the urban resident.
- To examine what people are growing

### **3.3 Research Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Secondary Research:**

Malthora (1999: 110) in discussion of secondary data particularly its uses and advantages provides a general rule “*Examination of available secondary data is a prerequisite to the collection of primary data. Start with secondary data. Proceed to primary data only when the secondary sources have been exhausted or yield marginal returns*”.

#### **3.3.2 Literature Review**

In researching this dissertation a comprehensive literature review was conducted. The researcher noted during the course of the study a growing presence in the media around the theme of ‘growing your own’, and the very topicality of the subject was a key consideration when assessing relevant literature. Sources included academic texts; historical documents; city maps; newspaper articles; cook books; the internet; and television and radio programs.

The literature review provided the author with an insight into the body of existing knowledge on urban agriculture. This knowledge formed the basis for the development of interview questions as well as the design and analysis of primary research.

#### **3.3.3 Primary research:**

The primary research process involved fieldwork by the researcher. The primary research for this study was principally qualitative, noted in other studies (Domenea and Sauria 2006, Von Hassell 2002, Crouch and Ward 1988) employing this form of research methodology.

The qualitative research methods used involved direct observation and semi-structured interviews. These methods are appropriate in that they support the framework of an interpretive case study research method which gathers and analyses thick data sources. Merriam (1988: 28) finds interpretive case studies go further than descriptive studies in that “*they use the descriptive data to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering*”.

Marshall and Rossman (2006: 53) state “*the strength of this type of research methodology allows the researcher to elicit tacit knowledge and subjective understandings and interpretations*”.

### **3.4 Semi-Structured Interviewing:**

“*the semi-structured interview takes seriously the notion that people are experts on their own experience and so best able to report how they experienced a particular event or phenomenon*” (Darlington and Scott, 2002: 48).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that qualitative, semi-structured interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses.

Darlington and Scott (2002) argue that like any method of data collection, in-depth interviews have their relative strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include their immediacy and relational quality which affords flexibility to the data collection process. Semi-structured interviews are also particularly useful when the phenomena under investigation cannot be observed directly. A weakness is that interviews allow access to what people say but not what they do. The only way to find out what ‘*actually happens*’ in a given situation is through observation. The researcher in this case needs to admit that his observation is just the researchers observations, with preconceptions and beliefs attached to it.

### **3.5 Participant Observation:**

Observation is a very effective way of finding out what people do in particular contexts, the routines and interactional patterns of their everyday lives, according to Darlington and Scott (2002). Willis (2007: 233) highlights that “*many of the methods that fall under the general term observation are at the core of what qualitative research is*”.

Willis provides three perspectives of observation:

1. Puts the researcher in the context that is of interest
2. Requires the researcher to collect data or participate with others in data collection
3. Involves the researcher in the analysis and interpretation of those data

Marshall and Rossman (2006) find that participant observation is both an overall approach of inquiry and a data gathering method. Ideally the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life there. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from his or her own experience. Personal reflections are integral to the emerging analysis of a cultural group, because they provide the researcher with new vantage points and with opportunities to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Glesne, 1999).

Interviewing is an established methodology for the investigation of socio-economic and psycho-social trends in allotment-holding. Domenia and Sauria (2006) in their study on urbanisation and class-produced natures in allotments conducted their interviews by visiting different allotment sites and carrying out interviews with people who were actively cultivating their allotments at the time of their visit. Similarly, Perez Vazquez's (2002) study relied on conducting interviews at allotment sites provided by the council in Southwest England.

### **3.6 Study area:**

The area chosen to conduct this investigation is in the southern part of Dublin. Information resources for allotments in Dublin were found on the website of South Dublin County Council; Rathdown-Dun Laoghaire County Council; Fingal County Council; and Dublin City Council.

The area with highest amount of allotment activity falls within the jurisdiction of the South Dublin County Council (SDCC). There are four allotment sites for which the council has responsibility. Table 4 (p55) identifies these areas; the total number of allotments is 241. Also in this area is the most recent addition to allotments in Dublin, a site organised by a local residents association.

**Table 4: Allotments under jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council, reproduced with permission of South Dublin County Council**

<b>Location</b>	<b>No of Plots</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Tymon Park, Tallaght	13	100 Sq Mtrs	€40.00 €25.00 OAP
Friarstown	96	120 Sq Mtrs	€48.00 €30.00 OAP
Friarstown	12	250 Sq Mtrs	€100.00 €62.50 OAP
Friarstown	20	100 Sq Mtrs	€40.00 €25.00
Mill Lane, Palmerstown	73	120 Sq Mtrs	€48.00 €30.00 OAP
Corkagh Park, Clondalkin	27	100 Sq Mtrs	€40.00 €25.00 OAP
<b>Total:</b>	<b>241</b>		

Tymon Park allotments and Greenhills Allotment Gardens were chosen as the sites most appropriate to carry out this investigation. These sites offered the researcher convenience and accessibility, as well as it being relatively large sites. The sites selected allowed the researcher access to them frequently, as visits could take place without prior arrangement with individuals at that location. This added the element of random sampling to the study as participants were not pre-screened. A favorable response was received to the interviewer's presence on-site, and once the study was explained most allotment-holders were very enthusiastic in doing an interview (see appendix 2 for interview questions). Willis (2007: 241) states that "*establishing and maintaining rapport calls for a friendly, flexible attitude and an ability to understand and empathize with participants and hear what they are telling you*".

### **3.7 Triangulation:**

In addition to on site interviews and observations with allotment holders, the researcher triangulated the body of research by conducting interviews with representatives of both local and national government. It was intended that these interviews would give another perspective of modern Urban Agriculture in South County Dublin.

An interview took place on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 with Mr. William Morrogh, a senior community officer in Dublin City Council. An interview was also carried out with Minister Ciaran Cuffe of the Green Party on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

### **3.8 Ethics in Qualitative Research:**

*"Both qualitative and quantitative researchers studying human subjects ponder over the dilemma of wanting to give full information to subjects but not wanting to contaminate their research by informing subjects too specifically about the research question to be studied"* Silverman (2005: 257).

The ethics of this study involved ensuring that participant's confidentiality was respected and all those participating in the study completed the informed consent form. The researcher followed the code of ethics provided by the Dublin Institute of Technology.

### **3.9 Data Collection:**

The interviews and direct observations were undertaken during April, May June and July 2008, the months when those with allotments are most active at their sites. One interview of an allotment holder at the Tymon park allotment site took place in a coffee shop. For the remaining interviews the researcher went to each site at various times throughout the week both during the day and in the evenings. Upon reaching the site the researcher began by recording the time of day the visit took place, the weather, the area where the allotment site was located and the number of people on the site. See appendix 4 for direct observation notes.

Following this when there were subjects on site, a description of the individual and their activity was recorded before any attempt to communicate with them took place. Allotment sites are generally locked and require entry through permission of the allotment holder themselves. Upon entry the consent form was presented and signed before any conversation took place. The researcher undertook most of the interviews in the evening times, as the weather during those days was poor and raining the evenings were generally bright and sunny.

The researcher had a list of questions memorized under general themes found in the literature. This felt more comfortable for the researcher as it allowed the interview to run smoothly in a very conversational manner this approach was decided upon as it allowed the interview to flow in a conversational manner, and without a clipboard or paper, an informal atmosphere was encourage. It was felt that it was important to put respondents at ease. During the interview the subject would generally continue their activities on their plot, and answer questions as they worked. For the formal and official interviews the questions were drafted in order of priority, in accordance with the formal nature of the interviews, along with considerations of clarity and time restraint. The researcher used a digital Dictaphone to record the observations and interviews.



### **3.10 Data analysis:**

After the interviews and observations the recordings were transferred onto a computer and then transcribed. This process of interviewing, transcribing and analysis took place at the same time due to the qualitative methodology being employed. This helped in providing the researcher with a better feel for the environment in which the allotments were situated and the times when most people were there. Interviews with allotment lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The research findings have been presented in two ways, the first section presents Ciaran Cuffe's interview. The second section presents the findings from the interviews with the allotment holders.

### **3.11 Limitations of the Study:**

This study was subject to two major limitations, time and literature. The primary research for the study took place between April and July 2008. As this is the time of year when allotments are busiest. Planting and harvesting takes place and the allotment needs constant attention due to weather conditions.

The study area chosen provided greater flexibility to the research schedule as it allowed a large relatively large sample of the allotment population to be sampled. But each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes required at three hours to complete the transcription (see appendix 3).

8 visits to both allotment sites on weekends and weekday evenings yielded 12 interviews in all.

The second major limitation encountered was literature on the topic is predominantly found relating to Urban agriculture taking place in North America, the United Kingdom or in relation to developing country. No studies on UA activities in Ireland or Dublin could be found even though the researcher went to Trinity Library,

University College Dublin library and the Dublin City Council archives, as well as other DIT faculties.

### **3.12 Conclusion:**

This chapter has justified the methodology chosen to carry out the primary research for this study. A qualitative methodology was chosen consisting of semi-structured interviews and direct observations. These are deemed most appropriate based on previous studies on allotments in the United Kingdom, the United States and Spain. These methods are understood to provide rich data sources.

The next section details the findings of the primary research; the chapter consists of findings from the official interview and then the findings from the allotment holders.

# Chapter Four

## Presentation of Findings

## **4 Presentation of Findings:**

This chapter presents the findings from the primary research using the framework of the research objectives as its guide to the exploration of the research question. The findings of the primary research are also guided by the qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews and direct observations. This methodology generated rich data sources, numerous answers and personal stories. Common themes emerged from the transcripts of government officials and allotment holders. The results of the opinions of one official interview will be summarised separately from the opinions and experiences of the allotment holders and will be considered under the same research objectives.

### **4.1 Interview with Minister Ciaran Cuffe**

#### **Research Objective 1**

##### **To examine the history of allotments in Dublin.**

As a Green Party Minister, Ciaran Cuffe, by definition has an interest in green issues. His constituency incorporates the Goatstown site, and a number of his colleagues own allotments. Cuffe was personally interested in the history of allotments. When asked if he felt there was a growing awareness of allotments at government level, Cuffe seemed to suggest that interest in allotments had historically been a ‘Green’ issue, and remained so:

*‘I think within my own party there is...but I suspect elsewhere in government there isn’t really that awareness...’*

Cuffe suggested that there was a degree of reluctance in providing for allotments in urban planning, and that it was necessary to invoke legislation from the 1920’s for

anything to happen. There was a sense that Cuffe felt it was the Green Party who had shown the most interest in promoting allotments in the recent past, and that they had encountered resistance:

*'It's difficult enough to promote that or remind local authority and at a senior management level to remind them of the legislation from the 1920's that put allotments into the public eye and under their obligation to provide them' [sic]*

When discussing the history of allotments in Dublin, Cuffe raised a number of issues. His understanding of the modern allotment was based on an understanding of the development of allotment holding in the capital. For example, he felt that allotments in Dublin were traditionally used for very pragmatic ends, to supplement the diet, whereas the modern allotment is based on different grounds:

*'traditionally people grew their entire year's supply of potatoes or other types of food on their allotment...they're now seen as maybe not providing all of one's fruits and vegetables, but providing an interest in a relationship to the land and providing an awareness of local food rather than simple providing an entire food supply that can be grown.'*

In terms of planning for allotments, Cuffe highlighted that in the past allotments were provided on lands that were due for development, and that the allotment moved as development took place. He suggested that this kind of provision of land had fallen by the wayside, and that current local authority land could be more efficiently utilised:

*'traditionally allotments were provided on land that was due for development so you had rolling systems of allotments using land that might be developed in a three to five year cycle, and there's no reason why we couldn't do that again, there's a lot of local authority land that is scheduled for development [that] could simply be ploughed, staked and fenced and used a relatively low cost.'*

Cuffe felt that the recent history of Dublin allotments had been shaped by developments in the UK. For him, allotment holding in the UK has remained a steady

part of urban life for the past 100 years, while in Ireland, the allotment's history was not as steady:

*'the allotment movement in the UK has been there steadily for perhaps a hundred years, whereas in Ireland we had a spike during the emergency where large parts of the Phoenix park and elsewhere were converted to allotments. I think that certainly faded away in the 1950s...'*

## **Research Objective 2**

### **To explore the urban agriculture activities taking place in Dublin.**

Minister Cuffe expressed interest in UA activities in Dublin. While he was not familiar with the phrase, he commented *'I like the idea of it'*. He mentioned a number of initiatives that he was aware of in the city, including allotments, community gardens, and food security city gardens. Interestingly, he knew Bruce Darrell, one of the driving forces in promoting food security issues in the Dublin.

For Cuffe, these initiatives, while interesting, are not indicative of widespread activity:

*'There's a few shoots of interest in the area, but I haven't seen a groundswell coming across of a renaissance of allotments which I see across the water in the UK, but that doesn't seem to me to have gained traction in Ireland or Dublin.'*

Part of the reason for this, he feels is a lack of encouragement from institutions such as local government. He cited an allotment site in his constituency which has a waiting list for allotments, but commented that *'there's not much info available on how to get an allotment on the web'*. Cuffe felt that reforming the existing system of allotment distribution would improve matters.

He cited the fact that Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (RDL CC) are using a licensing system that will mean that fallow and unused allotments will be re-assigned: *'that's hugely important because at Goatstown there were some allotments*

*that were left fallow and not used*'. Another reform that Cuffe suggested was a better use of allotment space – particularly by making each plot smaller.

For Cuffe, good urban planning is central to UA of all kinds:

*'I think it's important that we educate those in charge of our parks and those in charge of taking care of development land that underused land could be used for allotments and I think it's a great way to bring families back into the parks.'*

He felt that there was an improvement in attitude from planners: *'there's a renewed interest in looking quite carefully at public open spaces and what it's used for'*. He felt that this was in contrast to planning in the 1970's and 1980's where *'there was a rough rule of thumb that 10% of space had to be open space and that often resulted in...rather non-descript grassed areas'*. Indeed, for Cuffe, good planning is leading to a renewed interest in using outdoor space well:

*'Whether it be children play space, allotments, small pocket parks might be used by older people, we're thinking much more carefully about what outdoor space is used for today and I think part of that thinking is resulting in an interest in fruit and vegetable growing...'*

In terms of *who* the 21<sup>st</sup> century allotment holder is, Cuffe painted a picture full of variety. He felt that the changing development of the city produced changing needs: *'I see a new generation of apartment dwellers who have very limited outdoor space in terms of balconies or roof gardens and I think they would be quite enthusiastic towards using an allotment if they were made available and if they were better publicised'*.

Cuffe also mentioned that allotments were of particular use to families, and to retired people. Of the site in Goatstown Cuffe commented: *'you meet quite often people who are retired who have been given a new lease of life through their allotment...they're very enthusiastic, full of stories, I think it's a fantastic hobby for them, and gardening I suppose in itself is fantastic for all ages'*

## Research Objective

### **To uncover the motivations for being an allotment holder.**

For Ciaran Cuffe, the most important motivations for allotment holders were the benefits of the activity that are focused on community, fresh food, and an awareness of the environment around us. He commented that: *'I would certainly be hugely enthusiastic for any movement providing community gardens or allotments. They provide good fresh food number one, and they act as a glue for the local community, and they create an awareness of food security issues and what can be done on a small area of land'*.

He felt that the establishment of allotments could reclaim disused and misused lands from anti-social behaviour. He also felt that allotment holding had varied benefits for the individual, including health and well-being:

*'There is considerable scope for joined up thinking in the positive aspects of allotment keeping that feed into overall food security to health and mental well-being, providing social instead of anti-social activity in under utilised land'*

## Research objective 4

### **To examine what are people growing**

<b><u>Types of food</u></b>	<i>'fruits and vegetables'</i>
	<i>'potatoes'</i>

The interview with Minister Ciaran Cuffe cannot provide an in-depth response to this research objective as he is not an allotment holder or participating in a UA activity but he attempts to identify the categories of food grown and one traditional vegetable.





## **4.2 Allotment Holders**

The section uses the research objectives as a framework and identifies common themes from the interviews under which the findings are grouped.

The names of the allotment holders have been used in the text to aid in the analysis of that data.

### **4.2.1 Research Objective 1**

**To examine the history of allotments in Dublin.**

#### **Findings:**

Figure 2 demonstrates the themes that emerged from interviews with allotment holders attempting to identify historical aspects of allotments in Dublin.

**Figure 2 Themes relating to the history of Allotments**

<b><u>Childhood experiences of allotments</u></b>	<p><i>'I started off in my youth; actually my Father had ten allotments'</i></p> <p><i>'I spent my youth down there instead of out playing football we'd do a lot of market gardening'</i></p> <p><i>'me mother would send us over to buy the cabbage off the man off the South Circular Road'</i></p>
<b><u>Who were the allotment holders</u></b>	<p><i>'My dad was a bus driver, a lot of bus and Guinness's men there as well'</i></p> <p><i>'I think he was retired'</i></p>
<b><u>Movement of allotment sites</u></b>	<p><i>'we were in Lucan and we were in Griffin before that'</i></p> <p><i>'my father had one in Ballyfermot'</i></p> <p><i>'allotments down at the Memorial Park there at Island bridge'</i></p> <p><i>'I had an allotment in Lynches Lane and in Cappogue in Finglas'</i></p>
<b><u>Modern history of allotments</u></b>	<p><i>'they closed the site and redeveloped it for the national stadium'</i></p> <p><i>'with the relocating of the allotments it was felt that there was a need for some sort of association to represent allotments'</i></p> <p><i>'we needed to be relocated and they came up with the ideas of the parks'</i></p>

#### 4.2.2 Childhood experiences of allotments:

There are allotment holders who have previous experience of being on allotment sites as children, mainly males with their fathers. Other holders had the experience of buying vegetables from allotment holders. Former allotment sites were in or beside developing residential areas; a respondent, Sean, aged 75 recollected that his father had an allotment in Ballyfermot. This particular allotment holder understood that the role of the allotment was *'to feed a man and his family'*.

One respondent Phyllis recalled purchasing vegetables from an allotment. At the Grand Canal, near South Circular Road *'me mother would send us down to get cabbage and potatoes; he was only there at certain times on a Friday'*.

Sean who had been on an allotment with his father in Ballyfermot had no recollection of any allotment "association" when he was involved which would have been in the 1950's.

Ballyfermot and Inchicore were the area's spoken of in the interviews, although one older respondent Cora, who had lived in Irishtown remembered allotments in Ringsend Park but these were handed back after the war.

Recollections of allotment holders childhood experiences provided an insight into those who held allotments, mainly men, working class i.e. bus drivers, Guinness men, also men who were retired.

One allotment holder Rory recollected that his father had multiple allotments at one site, which seems to indicate that there was a lack of demand for allotments at the time. Another respondent, Tony, stated *'Miriams parents, her father had an allotment down on Cronerstown (difficult to hear the name) Road way back just after the war; they used to cycle up and do the digging in the evening and they were from Crumlin'*.

#### 4.2.3 Movement of Allotment Sites:

The childhood experiences evidenced the decline of allotments in Dublin since the 1950's along with their relocation.

Allotment holders who had experienced this movement in more recent times explained the allotment situation from approximately 1994 onwards. One particular allotment holder, David, remarked *'I didn't know that there were such things as allotments in Dublin'*.

David explained how he would travel from the city centre (Stoney Batter) out to Finglas to attend his allotment, having to take three buses to reach it. A married couple who are allotment holders for 30 years recall that they were at two other places before being relocated to Tymon Park.

David revealed that he has moved homes as well as with allotment sites from the north in Cappogue in Finglas where the allotment site was closed down, to the south of Dublin where the site in Lynch's Lane in Lucan was rezoned for residential development. David stated that he had been living in Stoney Batter and than moved to Kilnamana.

Beginning in 1994 South Dublin County Council (SDCC), provided allotments in Lynch's Lane Lucan. This more recent allotment site was a considerable distance from the city, lying on the very edge of a city right beginning to experience Ireland's economic success.

In 2000 Dublin had five existing allotment sites including: Donabate, DeCoursey Square Glasnevin, Grand Canal, Goatstown and Lynch's Lane Lucan.

One respondent, Dennis, described the site at Lynch's Lane as being in the countryside, the site itself was explained as very basic, stating *'it was basically two big fields'*.

Dessy who was formerly at the Lynch's Lane site described how a local farmer would come in and *'plough up your allotment for about €30 and leave it in drills for you to do whatever'*. David and Dessy who were at Lynch's Lane remarked that market gardening activities had been taking place *'an older group, old timers, retired some had four or five allotments and were doing market gardening, but you turned a blind eye to it'*.

#### **4.2.4 Modern History of Allotments:**

The primary research for this study took place in South Dublin and therefore the accounts of allotment holders directly relate only to the recent history of allotments in this area, primarily under the control of the South Dublin County Council.

According to David, the situation in south Dublin by 2004 was that the site at Lynch's Lane needed to be relocated to allow for housing developments to accommodate its growing population. David described how a new allotment group was set up specifically to lobby the SDCC for relocation of allotments.

The group was founded in 2004 and named the South Dublin Allotment Association (SDAA), and comprised of allotment holders located at Lynch's Lane. Those involved expressed emotion when discussing the organisation of this group; they were fighting to protect their allotments

A viable and practical solution for the allotment holders was found by using public parks to accommodate allotments. In 2006 SDCC provided 4 allotment sites in Tymon Park, Corkagh Park, Palmerstown and Friarstown. The total number of allotments now stood at about 140, spread over four sites. Since 2006 the number has risen to over 246 due to greater demand. The SDCC currently has an active waiting list of 135 people.

The Tymon Park allotment site is located in a large regional park close to Tallaght; the location is on the north side of the park adjacent to the M50 motorway and the Park ranger's apartment building.

According to David who is now located at this site it is considered to be a pilot for future allotment sites under the control of the SDCC. The total number of allotments at the site is 13 with 1 being used by a local school and the site is looked after by the environmental awareness officer of SDCC.

A recent addition to allotments in South Dublin is the Greenhills site set up in 2008. This site is not under the management of the SDCC but has been established under the control of the Greenhills Residents Association.

Initially there were 14 allotments but some of these have been split in two or made smaller to accommodate demand. The history of this site is quite short only having been opened in March 2008. The site was part of a community initiative to reclaim land that had formally been derelict and used as a dumping ground. Allotment holders here provided several descriptive accounts. The situation was that a builder had previously attempted to build houses on the land but did not own the land and was legally prevented from continuing with this course of action. The land was then turned over by SDCC to the Greenhills Residents Association to do with it as it wished but insisted that they must use it and so a committee was formed to set up a community garden and allotments on the ground.

The founding of the South Dublin Allotments Association showed a growing community of interest among the various sites across south Dublin. Holders spoke of links to other sites e.g. David: *'I know people over there in Goatstown from being in the association but not from Lynch's Lane directly'*. He remarked that through a collaborative effort between the association and the SDCC *'a relationship has been built over the last year and a half; the SDCC have taken an interest and been very supportive'*.

There is evidence of a growing demand for allotments in that the SDCC acknowledges that they have 135 people on a waiting list for allotments. In response to this demand they have opened more allotments at Friarstown near Bohernabreena. The modern history of allotment provides support for the research question in that there appears more interest in allotments in Dublin. Tony suggests that *'it's a new trend or an old one catching on again'*.

#### 4.2.5 Research Objective 2

##### **To explore the urban agriculture (UA) activities taking place in Dublin.**

The primary research provides findings to help document what UA activities can be found in Dublin.

Figure 3 reveal the concepts of UA and common themes associated with this activity.

<b><u>What is UA?</u></b>	<i>'it's not a cheap hobby'</i> <i>'Allotments'</i> <i>'Community Gardens'</i> <i>'the back garden'</i>
<b><u>Where is it occurring?</u></b>	<i>'Goatstown'</i> <i>'Tymon Park, Corkagh Park,</i> <i>Palmerstown, Friarstown</i> <i>'Donabate'</i> <i>'Greenhills Allotments'</i> <i>'Dolphins Barn'</i> <i>'Great to see this in the middle of</i> <i>Dublin'</i>
<b><u>Driving Forces</u></b>	<i>'Dublin Food Growing'</i> <i>'the media became interested in it last</i> <i>year'</i> <i>'Urban Food Security'</i> <i>'Dermot Gavin on Channel 4'</i> <i>'I initially read about it in the Irish</i> <i>Times'</i>



#### 4.2.6 What is Urban Agriculture (UA)?

With the definitions of UA being fluid and evolving the findings of this primary research revealed three possibilities:

1. Community Gardens
2. Allotments
3. Growing your own at home

One respondent in particular mentioned Community gardens. She had not been personally involved but was aware of them from reading a recent article in *The Sunday Tribune*. This allotment holder was impressed but had not previously realised that this activity was being undertaken in Dublin.

Allotment holding to allotment holders appears to be a hobby and a productive one. Dennis stated '*this is our retirement allotment*' that the allotment is just for personal interests. An older married couple said '*well he works and he's only off Saturday and Sunday and that's the nicest way to spend it, instead of at home watching television*'. While David, a younger middle aged man spoke of himself and his partner Jenny '*I have always been involved in environmental activities, and we have always been interested in organics and vegetables*'.

To become an allotment holder it appears there is a process that one goes through before taking the *plunge*. It starts with a private interest of '*growing your own*' and *moves on* to a very public shared common interest with other enthusiasts.

Three allotment holders had grown up on farms and had been exposed to food growing at a young age. '*My father grew vegetables at home*' stated William, a recent recruit, originally from North Cork moving to Dublin five years ago.

William continued:

*'the way it started for me is that I was renting in Rathmines, I grew some herbs in the back, and this girl got me a mini greenhouse and that helped me to grow a few more different varieties, lemongrass etc and then I moved and bought the house over in Balinteer, had more space then and last year grew some aubergines and peppers in the pots, but then the allotment came up'*

These efforts to identify what is urban agriculture show that the concept of UA put forward in the literature are found in practice in Dublin in both the public and private spheres.

#### **4.2.7 Where is UA occurring?**

UA activities can be identified as taking place in both the north and south of Dublin, in urban and suburban areas. The findings reveal community gardening activities in central urban areas of Dublin. David who was very active in the South Dublin Allotments Association spoke of a community garden in Stoney Batter and a community garden in Dolphins Barn.

Community gardens have been received some small financial support from Dublin City Council. Mr. William Morrogh, a senior community officer in Dublin City Council, in an interview revealed that Dublin City Council was actively interested in encouraging these types of initiative.

UA activities in the suburbs comprise mainly of allotment holdings and as more living space is available in these area's people are also able to grow in their back gardens.

The researcher found from the recording of his direct observations that one needs to know of the existence of the allotments to actually find them. At Tymon Park Tallaght, the allotments are obscured behind a large wooden gate, with one side of the rectangular shaped site a large concrete wall and the other a metal fence covered in Hawthorn trees and Elderberry bushes.

When the allotment site at Tymon Park was mentioned to the Greenhills allotment holders they didn't know exactly where they were in the park and had never seen them even though they are only a 30 minutes walk away.

#### **4.2.8 Driving Forces:**

Most allotment holders recognised the role UK television played in stimulating their interest in growing their own. The *River Cottage* was discussed quite often as a program that people enjoyed watching.

While the researcher identified a popular celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, as having started promoting home grown food through a television series and later a book. None of the allotment holders said that they were familiar with the series.

*'People have been becoming more aware now of chemicals in their food'* was a reason given by Dennis to explain the developing interest in allotments. Rory explained it as *'with food and fuel prices now I'm telling everyone to get back into gardening'*. Most of the allotment holders interviewed who lived in houses didn't seem to support the idea that allotments were for those people living in apart and without access to a garden.

*"there are other movements driving different forms of urban agriculture"*

The South Dublin Allotment Association represents the interests of allotment holders in dealing with local authorities, and also aims to build relationships with other organisations around the country. David describes it as *'with our association we wanted to reach other groups and build links'*.

An organisation that was mentioned in David's interview is a group called Dublin Food Growing, whose slogan is to promote food security from the ground up. This group is a recent addition to UA activities taking place in the city and was founded on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008.

Mr. William Morrogh described their attempts at obtaining new land in the Phoenix Park for demonstration gardens, community gardens and allotments. *‘they have negotiated for some land near Farmleigh there will be demonstration gardens and allotments.*

### 4.3 Research Objective 3

#### **To uncover the motivations for being an allotment holder**

The motivations of the allotment holders can be identified in all the interviews carried out by the researcher. These motivations are interrelated to driving forces and reasons for becoming an allotment and in most cases reveal the benefits of being an allotment holder.

**Figure 4 presents the common themes relating to motivations for allotment holders.**

<b><u>Fresh Tasty Food</u></b>	<p><i>‘the taste is completely different’</i></p> <p><i>‘these are courgettes and they are scrumptious’</i></p> <p><i>‘organic food, this plot is organic’</i></p> <p><i>‘no chemicals on that cabbage’</i></p> <p><i>‘when they’re just out of they’re ground their lovely’</i></p>
<b><u>Relaxing activity</u></b>	<p><i>‘one of the reasons for me is the weather coming out on a beautiful evening like this’</i></p> <p><i>‘I don’t think of it like a chore, I enjoy coming out’</i></p> <p><i>‘I come in here and I just switch off’</i></p> <p><i>‘this is just escape from the whole lot’</i></p>

### **Socialisation**

*'because its an allotment everyone talks to everyone'*

*'this was kind of the next step for the social end of things'*

*'there might be other people dotted around you just say hello to and other times you could sit and chat'*

### **Emotion**

*'our heart was broke'*

*'it's our ground'*

*'it's brought life back into the community'*

*'we'd hate to be going out now and buying all these vegetables'*

### **A Growing Experience**

*growing from seeds we were fascinated'*

*'we're still learning, still looking in the book'*

*'we've never wanted worms so much'*

*'we'll grow anything, try anything'*

*'well we all had a little bit of knowledge'*

#### **4.3.1 Fresh Tasty Food:**

The taste of fresh food is one of the key attributes that could be continuously found in the transcripts. Dessy posits *'by the taste you'd just know that you grew it'*, that taking part in growing your own food produces a different vegetable from one you could buy. Most Allotment holders grow only food they are interested in. Dessy a long-term allotment holder stated *'vegetables that's all I'm interested in'*.

Different reasons were given to explain the interest in organic produce, for example it was very expensive in supermarkets; the majority of the produce was known to be imported and was therefore suspect *'this organic produce that people pay big money for I don't think their organic at all'*.

Cooking with fresh vegetables and having an interest in cooking was also explained to be one of the motivators in having the allotment. *'Nip out to grab some herbs'; 'run down to grab some spuds'; 'come in the morning to get fresh vegetables for the evening meal'*.

More experienced allotment holders spoke of the routine they had established, explaining how they were now freezing their cabbages and getting ready to plant their winter vegetables.

The food grown on the allotment particularly the freshness was considered to be more healthy, Dennis recalled that allotment produce was recommended by doctors in the past for *'arthritis or if someone in the family had an allergy to chemicals in food'*.

#### **4.3.2 Relaxing activity**

One respondent Paula brought her four-year-old daughter out for the fresh air and a run around while she was doing some weeding. For her the work wasn't a chore *'it is enjoyable, better than watching telly'*.

One interview was with a couple who out were out for a walk had stopped in to check on their allotment. Other allotment holders, Bernie and Phyllis, share their allotment and *'come down in the evening time after the kids are fed'*.

Holders were living quite close to their allotment sites, *'where would you get it, right on your door step'*, within ten minutes walk, although most would drive over to bring tools or water.

Sean explained that his wife had died the year before but since he had received his allotment it had given him a new lease of life and more focus. In fact at the site where he was, others considered him to be an allotment expert seeing as he had previous experience when he was younger. More interestingly others at the site had also noticed his enthusiasm and the benefits that this activity had provided him. Bernie and Phyllis noted *'he loves it over here'*.

### **4.3.3 Socialisation:**

Interviews at the Greenhills allotments revealed that there was quite a lot of socialisation occurring on site, this ranged anywhere from a *'passing chat'* for Bernie and Phyllis to Miriam and Paula *'sitting down with a cup of tea and cake'*. Tony and Sean spoke of having some beers on the site after a hard day's work on the site.

Cora and Miriam described the joy that older residents in the area had displayed at the fact that the derelict site had become productive: *'this was such a waste ground, but look at it now'*.

Two married couples, Tony and Miriam, Paula and her husband share the allotment and are all very enthusiastic, each having different reasons for participating. This interview illustrated the social aspects of the allotment site, gave some of its history and pointed up the enthusiasm of the participants: *'once we got the go ahead and the council backed us we just went at it hell for leather'*.

Tony and Miriam and Paula were able to talk about who they knew on the site, the role that different people had played in organising it and setting it up; about who had the allotments, pointing out that the mix of age groups (including young married couples was *'great'*. Ages ranged from 4-75 years old.

Tony and Miriam related how the allotment itself had added more family interaction between themselves and their children that, Tony's son *'Steve had come out and rotovated with him'*, and that their children had brought their friends along to see the allotment.

#### 4.3.4 Emotion:

Attached to an experience are the emotions one feels when participating, for the allotment holders the interviews revealed two avenues of emotions. The first avenue is from the growing experience, the researcher witnessed emotional highs and lows when visits to allotment sites took place.

*'Great to see this in the Middle of Dublin'* stated Phillis who was very sincere in her assertion that the Greenhills allotment site had achieved something new and different in their community. Another interview with Greenhills allotment holders Miriam and Tony showed their commitment: *'it's our ground'*. They felt very strongly that they were taking care of the site and being respectful to the local environment.

The secluded nature of the allotment sites, whether tucked away in a park or off a lane way, made allotment holders feel safe. They had the power to lock the gate and could control their situation; *'knowing you were safe'* (Paula).

In every interview the researcher carried out the allotment holders were very happy and proud of their allotments, particularly in what they were growing, what they knew or had learned along the way there was friendly rivalry *'ours is the best plot'* was followed by great laughter. *'We've done really well since March'*. The holders seemed to exude satisfaction and the researcher became just as enthusiastic as the holders upon visiting and revisiting the allotment sites.

At one site the researcher was presented with a gift of a cabbage, freshly pulled from the ground during the course of the interview, and the allotment holder was happy to share it with a stranger.

The second avenue of emotions that allotment holders showed was in relation to buying food from the supermarket as well as their resentment at other allotment holders on their site who weren't taking care of their allotment.

Dennis, a long-term allotment holder felt *'some people would just prefer to get something out of a shop'*. This seemed to upset him; while others said *'we'd hate'* or *'its terrible'* when speaking of food in the supermarket.



Dessy in particular stood out for his opinion that *'what your buying in the shops is just rubbish'* and was disgusted with the idea of conventional agricultural products. He was worried about the effects of chemicals and wax on food going into your body.

*'My policy with plots would be use it or lose it'*; not using your allotment would firstly deny someone else who wanted one, and secondly that not taking care of an allotment would let weeds grow and spread across the site.

#### **4.3.5 A Growing Experience:**

From interviewing allotment holders, it was demonstrated that to have an allotment is a very satisfying experience.

Seeing cabbages growing from seeds was described as by Bernie and Phyllis as fascinating; that they had never done it before; *'never grown vegetables from seeds nor even plants from seeds'* relating their fascination to that of a child's fascination.

*'We have our first strawberry'* was the delighted cry at another allotment. Different allotment holders were agreed that having an allotment was a big challenge and required a deep commitment. They had not realised in the beginning the tasks necessary to create a productive plot *'we're very amateurish'*. *'They don't realise what's involved'* was the opinion of Dennis of people who had seen allotments on the television and decided to get one.

*'I just sleep less now I have to balance painting with planting'* joked William who was redecorating his house. In terms of occupation most of the allotment holders were employed and had family commitments as well as their allotment.

The allotment can have a strange effect on its holders *'I didn't even cut the grass up until this'* demonstrated a huge jump for Miriam. The number of times each week they went to their allotments and the amount of time that they gave was a common talking point. *'Maybe 12 hours a week'* was not seen as too much time to give to their allotment. Some came only to the allotment in the evening and not the weekend because that was when they spent time with their children. *'I'll stay and weed for an*

*hour; Sophie will run around' or 'if I had a day off I'd come maybe eleven in the morning and plan to finish around two but you don't finish till 3.30pm'. This interview took place on a Friday evening at around 7.45pm.*

Developing and learning food-growing skills, were discussed in the interviews. Those who had no experience relied on books, looked on the internet and learned from each other. Phyllis and Bernie provided a good example *'We'd shout over have you found any worms'* learning for example that white butterflies were a threat to one's cabbage was an eye opener for novice holders.

*'Well, after a day it might be a bit tough'*; after receiving the cabbage the researcher was advised to cook it as soon as possible, demonstrating that the allotment holder had learned how to get the best quality out of their crops.

*'Morning might be the best time'* to harvest from the allotment before the plant had been exposed to the elements of the day. For example the researcher learned that cabbage leaves could be sun burned and this would ultimately affect its length of cooking and tenderness. Allotment holders understood their allotments' size and capabilities; what they could do with it and what it wouldn't do; *'our one is quite a smallish plot so it's a manageable size'*. They could make their allotment work for them as well as them working on their allotment; *'certain crops are very easily managed and need only low maintenance'*.

#### 4.4 Research Objective 4

##### To examine what are people growing

Each allotment holder described their crops with pride and ease, Table ? presents the different foods that were grown on the allotments while figure ? presents common themes revealed in the interviews.

**Table 5 Types of Foods Grown and Varieties**

Type of food	Variety
Asparagus	
Aubergine	
Beetroot	
Broad Beans	Fire tongue
Broccoli	Purple sprouting
Brussel Sprouts	
Cabbage	Chinese Hybrid Savoy Winter cabbages
Carrot	
Cauliflower	
Celery	
Celeriac	
Courgettes	
Cucumbers	
Garlic	
Herbs	Chives Parsley Rosemary Sage
Lettuce	Lolla Rossa Oak leaf

Leeks	
Onions	Scallions Shallots
Peppers	Sun Burst Sweet Paprika
Radishes	
Rhubarb	
Soft Fruits	Blackcurrants Blueberries Gooseberries Raspberries Strawberries
Spinach	
Squash	
Tomato	Italian variety

**Figure 5 themes relating to what people grow**

**Decision making**

*'we said we'd only grow what we eat'  
'try to do things organically'  
'with a small plot you can only grow so much'  
'we've put in a path so there's very little weeding to be done'*

**Self Sufficiency**

*'we freeze what we don't eat'  
'we blanched them you know and put them in the freezer'  
'back to basics, back to seasonal products'  
'he's at the wines now for years'  
'I like to make jams I've tried some chutneys'  
'I have been saving my own seeds'*

**Seeds and Tools**

*'yeah Lidl we got gardening equipment'  
'I keep an eye on their website for their gardening themes'  
'Newlands Cross is probably the best bet'  
'Hacketts on Capel Street'  
'got seeds sent from organic places'  
'a packet of seeds is €2.50 –3.00'  
'I spent €150 on fencing'  
'if it was a purely financial transaction I'd just walk out the gates'*

#### **4.4.1 Types of Foods Grown and Varieties:**

Table 5 displays the types of food grown on the Tymon Park and Greenhills allotments sites, with some allotment holders knowing more and growing more. Allotment holders stick to a growing schedule that determines when and what to grow. Further experience was shown in their ability to structure their allotment such as planting spinach in between late growing vegetables, so that they could start eating those vegetables within a week while waiting for the rest of the harvest.

In the period that interviews took place, April until July in allotment holders spoke of harvesting vegetables already and getting the ground ready again for winter vegetables. On one evening two allotment holders had come out to pick cabbages and potatoes as well as carry out some watering. These allotment holders described how the allotment operated on rotation e.g. once the scallions were finished, the bed was being prepared again for use.

Some allotment holders spoke of already of having eaten some soft fruits such as strawberries; this was probably due to the hot weather that was experienced in April and May.

The food being grown on allotments ranges from traditional Irish foods to non-native contemporary foods. One lady commented *'I only knew these things a few years now we knew celery but not Celeriac; it came as a new one'*. This lady was excited at having a new food to grow and enjoyed cooking the produce from the allotment.

#### **Self Sufficiency:**

This theme in the research demonstrates that making the allotment work for the holder provides greater self sufficiency and that the allotment holder can make use of seasonal products through traditional methods of preserving, such as jam making or chutney making.

Dennis and his wife displayed knowledge of wild foods such as Elder flower trees growing along the side of the allotment *'Elderberry wine'*; *'Elder flower tea'*; *'Elder berry jam'* were cited as products they had made in previous years.

Freezing of food grown presented a determination on the part of the allotment holders to obtain extended benefits outside of the annual growing season. Tony and Miriam: *'we freeze what we don't eat'* is an example of making the allotment produce last across the year.

Dennis became a little more self-sufficient by learning to save his own seed, so reducing his dependence on the commercial seed providers.

#### **4.4.2 Decision making:**

The investment in an allotment allows the holder to control the activity happening in his own space. *'Everyone does their own thing do what they want'* was the opinion of Dessy. What other allotment holders do on the site does get noticed, David stated his *'is very easily managed'* but another woman's allotment *'is ad hoc, kind of pockets of areas where she throws things'*.

Each holder was definitely doing their own thing, Miriam and Tony had at first grown a vegetable just to grow a vegetable, but at the end they didn't even like the vegetable they grew.

Other allotment holders were starting the plant off from seed in their back gardens before bringing it over to the allotment, and these holders couldn't understand *'spending €7 on six cabbage plants when you can buy a packet of seeds for €2'*.

Allotments can be worked on in different ways to suit the allotment holder David remarks, *'We've raised beds'* giving an idea of one of the methods used in the management of an allotment.

Doing things '*organically*' was very popular, when deciding how to grow vegetables Robert an allotment holder in Tymon Park stated proudly '*there's no fertilisers no 90:10:05*'. Compost and manure are used to enrich the soil. Some have even introduced special varieties of worm (acquired by mail-order!) into their plots to improve soil fertility.

#### **4.4.3 Seeds and Tools:**

The Greenhills and Tymon Park allotments are located within a 30 minute walk of each other. They are close to a Lidl supermarket. In Greenhills, the role that Lidl had played in helping them get going appeared to be very significant.

Gardening offers in the Lidl supermarket allowed the allotment holders access to equipment '*that was considerably less expensive than elsewhere*' and seeds from Lidl were also used. '*I have no idea what they taste like, yet it was something we got in Lidl's*'. Being able to get basic gardening equipment for a modest outlay was acceptable and comfortable for allotment holders.

Further differences between the sites became evident. For example holders in Tymon Park needed to make an investment into fencing and netting to help protect their crops from pest such as pigeons and rabbits.

Rory stated '*Our biggest problem here is rabbits*' while Dennis remarked that '*pigeons love broccoli they seem to be able to smell it*'. This was very disheartening. Speaking of former times in Lynch's Lane: '*people would come and steal a few heads of cabbage but rabbits are less discerning. They just eat everything*' although Dennis reflected that despite these drawbacks the allotment was still a good investment. His wife concurred '*we're doing this so long now we'd be lost without it*'. Evidently their allotment was an important part of their lifestyle.

Seeds can be found almost anywhere and at a relatively low cost in fact in some cases people were bringing home seeds from their holidays to try on their allotment '*those tomatoes we got on holiday*'..



Dennis told how he gets new crops: *'we have some interesting spuds here now'*

*'There is a guy in England called Alan Rowmans and he's a spud expert for the British government. He breeds rare potato varieties. I have two here; one is called scary blue and the other aura. We got one seed potato each off a man in Donegal two years ago. They take cells off them put them in an agar solution and breed them, he sent them to me for nothing because of a mix up previously. Compensation (laughs)[sic].*

# Chapter Five

## Discussion and Conclusions

## **5 Discussion**

This discussion section deals with the themes uncovered in the findings using the research objectives as a framework. The researcher considers the secondary research from the literature review within these themes.

### **5.1 Research Objective 1**

#### **To examine the history of allotments in Dublin.**

The primary research presented personal accounts of the allotment holders who had childhood experiences of allotments. Minister Ciaran Cuffe outlined the history of legislation in this area. Section 2.2 (p18) provided an aid to understanding modern urban agriculture (UA) in Dublin along with historical knowledge of the capital city's change and growth. The allotment holder's recollections provide this research with a unique insight into the workings of the allotment sites and the system that provided them.

#### **Childhood experiences:**

From the recollections of Sean and Rory it seems that some sites were more formalised than others. Sean, the oldest allotment holder interviewed recalled that the large allotment site in Ballyfermot had a nissin hut (a type of hut with a circular roof), which contained instructions about how to keep an allotment. While the researcher found no reference to similar schemes in the Dublin City Council archives, Sean's recollection is particularly interesting, as it shows that not everyone who had an allotment would have been able to or necessarily had prior knowledge of how to grow vegetables such as potatoes and cabbages.

This research has shown that the Vacant Land Cultivation Society (VLCS) took a more active role in administering allotment sites than the Dublin Corporation, whose involvement only stretched to a passive display of instructions on growing vegetables.

In contrast to this the VLCS had instructors from the Department of Agriculture come out to the allotment sites to provide demonstrations on how to cultivate an allotment. The research revealed that there were historically two types of allotment holders - firstly those who were using it to feed their families, and secondly those who held allotments for commercial reasons. Rory, for example, recalled that his father had had 10 allotments and was engaged in market gardening activities. It emerged that this allotment was a source of income rather than a primary source of food. This second type of allotment holder appeared to have been a common occurrence, as Phyllis recalled being sent by her mother to purchase vegetables from an allotment site. Phyllis also gave insight into the types of food being grown at the time, mentioning traditional Irish vegetables such as cabbage and potatoes.

These recollections illustrate that there were those who held allotments for more commercial reasons than for personal values or for domestic use. The use of allotments in this way suggests that plots were not tightly regulated by the local authority, and is possibly also indicative of a lack of allotment groups or associations on site to regulate members.

These findings are in contrast to research cited in the literature review. Miss S.C. Harrison of the VLCS disapproved of the use of allotments for market gardening, stating that "*it may have been that a man or two may have had two plots though we discouraged this*". Similarly, during the time of the Irish Allotment Holders Association (IAHA) there was never any specific mention of men holding multiple allotments.

While organisations such as the VLCS and the IAHA existed, the research did not uncover evidence of allotment associations on specific sites. This lack of representation in the corporation in post war years suggests that allotment sites were generally unplanned, and not built in to city planning.

That this lack of representation while in fact being detrimental to the continuing survival of allotments in Dublin also allowed the activities on the allotment sites go unchecked.

Without on-site allotment associations, activities on allotment sites could go unchecked – respondents reported a situation where it appears it became *‘every-man for himself’* in terms of allotment usage, whether one used it just for domestic purposes or for market gardening.

A significant element of the recollections of respondents is the decline of allotments, that those who had childhood experiences only had childhood experiences, rather than using allotments throughout their lives - Sean identified that a school now sits on that allotment site in Ballyfermot, and for Rory the site in Inchicore is now a residential development.

### **Movement of allotment sites:**

The rolling system of allotment sites appears to have been unfair to those allotment holders who depended on their allotments to feed their families. The decline of allotments can be illustrated by their removal from the city centre itself to the edge of the city, and their establishment on land that was due for development. This constant movement of allotment sites shows a competition for land existed, particularly in areas that were rezoned. Allotments found themselves part of an emerging suburban area during times of economic success and they were then moved to less commercially valuable land.

The constant movement contributed to a loss of interest in allotment holding. Dublin Corporation noted in 1946 that without a permanent or fixed tenure at one location, allotment holding declined.

Primary research revealed that this is still the case. Ciaran Cuffe’s opinion was that *‘It’s difficult enough to promote that or remind local authority [...] of the legislation from the 1920’s [...] and [...] their obligation to provide them’*. The minister seemed to suggest that local councils saw allotments, as something impermanent that can be moved at will. Cuffe also suggested that the Corporation did not take the need for allotments seriously.

### **Modern history of allotment sites:**

Dublin has seen a small revival in allotment holding. The findings of this study suggest that there is an emerging demand for allotments. The system for the provision of allotments has also changed – in south Dublin, allotment sites are no longer provided on derelict sites or development land, rather they are provided to the public in parks and private grounds, as well as in regenerated residential areas.

Allotment holders have grouped together to work with and lobby the South Dublin County Council (SDCC) for more allotments and proper infrastructure at allotment sites. The SDCC had actually increased its numbers of allotments since 2006 and opened 80 more allotments on an existing site, increasing the numbers there to 140 allotments.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLR CC) seems to be responding to increased demand for allotments - the allotment site at Goatstown, located on land due for development, will remain at that site for at least ten years. DLR CC is also introducing a tighter system of allotment licensing to try and reduce waiting lists for allotments in this area.

David, an active member in the South Dublin Allotment Association (SDAA) stated that: *‘with the relocating of allotments it was felt that there was a need for some sort of association to represent allotments’*. This is presently the case with SDAA members located at all allotment sites in south Dublin. They are making connections with groups across the country, leading to a greater allotment movement in Dublin, and indeed other forms of UA.

Ciaran Cuffe knew of Bruce Darrell, a name mentioned in relation to food security issues in Dublin, and a founding member of *Dublin Food Growing* a food security initiative. This group appears to parallel the organisation the IAHA in the 1930’s, in that it actively promotes obtaining land for allotments.

## 5.2 Research Objective 2

### **To explore the urban agriculture (UA) activities taking place in Dublin.**

The investigation of UA in the literature review highlighted that this term is fluid and evolving. The literature review acknowledged that UA is historically and intrinsically linked to industrialisation and urbanisation. The findings of this research illustrate that the activities that are taking place in Dublin are not necessarily related to the concepts and forms of UA found in other countries.

#### **What is UA?**

Boukharaeva and Marloie (2006) in their analysis of UA, identify that Family Urban Agriculture (FUA) is the commonest form of UA found in developed countries. It is within this category that the Dublin UA activities can be found, these are:

- Community Gardens
- Allotments

In this study “UA” was understood to be an umbrella term that focused on the idea of food production taking place within an urban environment, particularly of fruits and vegetables.

Neither respondents nor Ciaran Cuffe were familiar with the terminology of ‘*Urban Agriculture*’. However there was a general awareness of UA *activities* that were taking place in Dublin. Their awareness of these activities had come from media sources rather than from other allotment holders or from personal experience. Cuffe pointed out ‘*there’s not much info available on how to get an allotment on the web*’. For some their interest was aroused by knowing a friend or relative who already had an allotment.

Boukharaeva and Marloie (2006: 4) in their analysis of UA state “*people and families working in gardens during the weekend and holidays: families, retired workers, unemployed or underemployed persons. It is mainly a non-market activity, most of the production being intended for self-consumption*”.

This supports the findings of the primary research in this study. The family aspects of the allotment were witnessed on the Greenhills Allotment site, where allotments holders are predominantly families – husbands and wives, fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, neighbours sharing their allotment, and friends sharing their allotments.

For older allotment holders, there has been a long-term commitment to growing food, with some respondents holding allotments for up to 30 years. Some who became involved more recently have taken their interest in growing herbs and vegetables in their back garden to a more ambitious level out on their allotment. So the scale of urban agriculture that takes place quietly and unnoticed in domestic gardens is huge and probably unquantifiable.

According to Nugent (1997) UA takes place in backyards, rooftops, community fruit and vegetable gardens and abandoned public or private spaces. The research suggests that UA does indeed take place in the private sphere, with food growing taking place in people's back gardens.

The multimedia sources used in the literature review reflect a growth in interest in the idea of producing one's own food. In 2007 RTE's 'Nation Wide' focused on the allotments in Tymon Park, interviewing plot-holders. Similarly, in July 2008, the community garden in Dolphins Barn was featured on RTE's 'Six-one'. The presence of such features in the visual media is indicative of a growth in penetration of allotment initiatives.

During the course of the research, it became clear that the idea of 'growing your own' was topical. The researcher suggests this is due to an increased consciousness of higher global food prices and unstable oil prices.



### 5.3 Research Objective 3

#### **To uncover the motivations for being an allotment holder**

Bellows (2004) and Domenea and Sauria (2006) indicated that the historical role of the allotment was for subsistence and survival in an urban environment. “*Plotting the history*” a section in the literature also indicated that the objective of the allotment was to feed a family. The investigation into allotment holding has shown that the allotment has changed from this usage into a form of recreation. In this form of recreation the user receives productive outputs for their inputs.

The findings revealed four themes that clarified the motivations for holding an allotment. These were:

1. Fresh tasty food
2. Relaxing activity
3. Socialisation
4. A growing experience

#### **1. Fresh Tasty Food:**

“25% of Dublin’s land is garden but in the late 1980’s, growing your own was stigmatised as a poor persons’ game and with the ubiquity of supermarkets and their tantalising array of cheap food, it became largely unnecessary, too”.

Kelly (2008: 14)

The stigma of the 1980’s in relation to ‘*growing your own*’ had passed for the respondents of this research. Respondents had made a conscious decision to produce their own food rather than shop in a supermarket. Respondents were well-informed, and felt that their food tasted better than supermarket offerings. Genetically modified foods, waxes on fruits and pesticides on vegetables were cited as negative factors that could be avoided by growing one’s own.

This motivator was a very important feature of the food grown on the allotment. As Robert, an allotment holder in Tymon Park stated, *'there's no fertilisers no 90:10:05'*. He was proud that only compost and manure were used to enrich his soil. Robert commented that by having an allotment he can take control of the food he consumed, and was not dependent on the supermarkets.

This finding supports Hughes's (1994) suggestion that the European consumer is increasingly subjected to large amounts of information regarding health, environmental, and ethical food issues from a variety of sources. Crouch (1988) similarly found that UK allotment holding, from the 1970's onwards, began to encapsulate ideas surrounding food production, recreation, and environmental issues. As noted in the literature review, there are currently no Irish studies focusing on environmental issues as a motivation for UA. The findings for this study do indeed indicate that this is a motivating factor for respondents. As David describes *'I have always been involved in environmental activities, but we have always been interested in organics and vegetables'*.

Current literature suggests that people engage in UA for reasons of economy. The findings show, however, that this was not a key motivating factor. In fact, allotments require a significant investment. Tony stated that *'it's not a cheap hobby'*, and Dennis commented that *'if it was a purely financial transaction I'd walk out the gates'*. Both of them they had spent over €250 on tools, materials, and seeds to work on their allotment, even though the allotment was productive mainly in the summer-time.

## **2. Relaxing activity**

Direct observation indicated that working on an allotment is an absorbing activity. Indeed the researcher encountered difficulty in making contact with some respondents and drawing their attention away from their plots in order to interview them.

The primary research reveals that working allotments is considered to be therapeutic. Sean described the therapeutic aspects of allotment holding. Interviews took place mid-week in the afternoons and evenings, as well as at weekends on Saturday and Sunday. People were clearly relaxed and enjoying themselves; and the author observed a convivial spirit.

Perez-Vazquez (2002: 14), in his UK study on allotments and UA, highlighted that in developed countries the allotment met '*non-material human needs*' (relaxation, fresh air, social activity and health). This is supported in these findings, in that all those allotment holders interviewed were either employed or in receipt of a pension, and that allotment holding was a way to spend their free time. For example, for those who were new to allotment holding, digging their plot was not seen as a chore, as, say mowing the lawn would have been, rather it was seen as an enjoyable pastime.

Respondents tended to go to their allotments after work, and this was regarded as a space 'away from everything and everyone'. Dessy commented that 'this is just escape from the whole lot'.

### **3. Socialisation:**

*"Allotment holders engage in a social interaction that individuals and the group can achieve whilst engaging in the tasks associated with taking care of an allotment"*

Von Hassell (2002:123)

The difference between the two sites where interviews took place is that one is right in a community, while the other is in a public park. So while allotment holders share similar experiences and motivators for having an allotment there is arguably a greater sense of community in the Greenhills allotments than at Tymon Park.

In Tymon park people know each other from other allotment sites, such as Lynch's Lane, indicating that the allotment holding community is not always linked to the allotment site itself.

However, on the occasions that the researcher visited Tymon park there were rarely more than two holders working their plots, possibly indicating that people do not arrange to tend to their plots at the same time.

At the Greenhills allotment site, there were always more than three people on the site at any one time. That water is not available on-site meant that allotment holders had to make a regular commitment to watering their crops in order for them to survive. The location of the site itself meant that it was visible to the local community. Respondents spoke of the interest shown by passers-by, and of getting to know their neighbours. The Greenhills site was, then, firmly rooted to the local community, whereas the Tymon park site was more individualistic.

This socialisation at the allotment sites supports the viewpoint of Von Hassell (2002) Miriam and Paula stated ‘ *there might be other people dotted around you just say hello and other times you could sit and chat*’. The findings also showed people at the Greenhills allotment site had sat down for tea. Both allotment sites had open days over the course of the summer, where the allotment holders invited those in the surrounding community to come in and have a look around at their activities.

#### **4. A growing experience:**

Having a successful allotment site requires commitment, energy, time, knowledge and skill. This skill can be learnt through research and experience. Respondents spoke of learning how to grow successfully. This is something that has been missing from the current literature. Respondents showed pride at learning their skills, and were keen to point out that they did not watch Jamie Oliver, nor rely on Andi Clevely or Bob Flowerdew for growing tips.

They obtain growing experience on a daily basis clearly, highlighting that they learn and understand their limitations and what they can do on a small space. Most allotment holders used books (Alan Tischmarsh was mentioned) or referred to their use of the Internet to obtain and improve their knowledge on how to grow produce. On the sites though, a great amount of knowledge was learnt from each other.

It became clear that through sharing a common interest a new sense of community had been established.

The example in the findings of how allotment holders at the Greenhills site turned to Sean for advice, drawing on childhood experience demonstrates this transfer of information. Bernie and Phyllis acknowledged that they had learned from him for example how to trim tomato plants and then in turn were able to show others what they learned; they shared their knowledge. Sean unfortunately became ill during the course of this research and it was clear that the allotment folk as a community were very concerned for his welfare.

#### 5.4 Research Objective 4

##### **To examine what are people growing**

*“The first exhibition of produce was opened at the Leo Hall Inchicore, by the Right Hon. T. W. Russell. It was representative of all the plot-holders. Massive cabbages from the allotments at The Pigeon House road, huge onions from the Inchicore plots, burly potatoes from the Society’s ground at Broadstone”*

(The Irish Times, September 18, 1916:04)

This quote from the section “*Plotting the History*” in the literature review of the history of allotments in Dublin identifies the types of food that were being produced on allotments at the time. Allotment holders childhood experiences also provided the researcher with an insight into the types of food being grown in the 1960’s. As Phyllis recalled ‘*me mother would send us down to get cabbage and potatoes, he was only there at certain times on a Friday*’.

Cabbage, Onion and Potato are a central feature of the traditional Irish diet. They can be called hardy vegetables as they do not require refrigeration and can be stored for long periods of time. However they contrast with what Kelly (2008: 14) calls “*the supermarkets tantalising array of cheap food*”. Dennis’ remark that ‘*you wouldn’t have tomatoes at this time of year when I was young*’ demonstrates the changing pattern of food availability over time.

Table 5 shows the types and varieties of food being grown on today's allotments. There are at least 30 different varieties of food being grown on allotments; in the case of cabbages there are three varieties, potatoes have over three varieties and onions now compete with shallots on the 21<sup>st</sup> century allotment.

In Section 2.7 (p42) Gourlay (2008: 08) indicates reasons for the renewed interest in deciding to 'grow your own' citing "*A desire for organic food, fuelled by health concerns over factory farming and soaring food prices, means many people now see growing their food as a viable alternative*".

The personal opinion of Minister Ciaran Cuffe supports this reason he cited '*They provide good fresh food number one, and they act as a glue for the local community, and they create an awareness of food security issues and what can be done on a small area of land*'.

That allotment holder want to make use of their space as efficiently as possible leads to some allotments being densely cultivated with vegetables and fruits. One allotment at the Tymon Park allotment site was noted to have a peach tree! One of the benefits having allotments securely placed in public parks.

O'Mahony and Freyne (2008: 10) noted that Ireland was becoming an island of 'foodies' indicating that people were beginning to enjoy and be more interested in cooking and eating different types of foods. The findings of this research showed that allotment holders do enjoy cooking their own produce, and enjoy experimenting with new crops. '*We'll grow anything, try anything*' asserted Dennis, his wife stating '*I knew celery from growing up but celeriac was a new one*' which is particularly interesting as they are long term allotment holders for over 30 years.

## **5.5 Conclusions:**

This section presents the conclusions of the study in relation to answering the research question.

### **Research Objective 1:**

#### **To examine the history of allotments in Dublin.**

This study is the first to be carried out detailing the history of allotments in Dublin. The story spans almost one hundred years from 1909 to 2008. The research showed that allotments in Dublin have changed in their role in society during that time. From their inception by the Vacant Land Cultivation Society, allotments were allocated as a practical way of enabling poor working families. The role of the allotment then changed from a form of social welfare into a tool to feed an urban population in times of crisis and in the “Emergency” of World War II. Allotment holding was popularised by the advent of two world wars and following these was continued by those in need such as unemployed or underemployed men, and enthusiasts who enjoyed the work and made it their hobby.

The allotment of has evolved from being a practical way of feeding needy families to fulfilling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century recreational needs of a class of people, mainly in sedentary jobs with much more leisure time. Allotments are in demand by those who have the means and education to make their hobby a productive one. Present-day allotments are providing its users with in most cases organic fruits and vegetables, which are deemed to be healthier than modern mass-produced food. Allotment holders are aware of the factory-style methods of conventional agriculture and of the huge volumes of food of perhaps unknown quality retailed by the chain-stores. In their allotment activities, they are choosing to opt-out of the system.

## **Research Objective 2**

### **To explore the urban agriculture (UA) activities taking place in Dublin.**

The research revealed the Urban Agriculture that is taking place in Dublin. UA is happening in community gardens, allotments and back gardens. The literature shows that the UA being carried out in Ireland relates closely to that found in community gardens and allotments in the North American and European context.

Community gardens are located in central areas of the Dublin where there is greater density of population and the existing community has become fragmented, with older residents dying off and being replaced by young families. A community garden encourages more community interaction among the young and old of the area. The development of these spaces act as mechanism to help regenerate their areas and have been created to be shared by everyone.

Allotment sites across Dublin sit in parks, in the middle of housing estates, beside major intersections, in hospital grounds and on former refuse dumps. The sites themselves have a low profile but the media have gradually drawn attention to their existence. As rising fuel and food prices begin to bite it was noted from speaking to a cross section of allotment holders that their interest in growing food began with their experimenting with various products in their back garden and in time extended to their getting a full-scale allotment.

By the end of the study, even the researcher was engaged in growing food and will continue with this activity. There is a significant amount of Urban Agriculture taking place in Dublin.



### **Research Objective 3**

#### **To uncover the motivations for being an allotment holder**

Four themes were uncovered in the findings:

1. Healthy fresh tasty food was identified both in the literature as a motivator; that food grown by themselves was tastier and superior to supermarket food.
2. Allotment activity was an escape for the allotment holders and the work enjoyable; certainly not a chore.
3. Sharing a common interest and socialising was highlighted in the findings, the notion of sharing was not clearly found in the literature but the social aspects were mentioned in most studies. That allotment activity is better than watching television is a given and indicates that holders want to spend their time actively instead of passively. Among allotment holders there is a large demographic mix: males, females, old, young, married and single. Most were employed and middle aged, with some retired men being involved. The findings demonstrated how allotment holders had made it part of their lifestyle, established a routine around it and thought about it when engaged in other activities.
4. The study shows that being an allotment holder is something new and different for those involved; that it is a multifaceted activity a high recreational content combined with a fascination for learning food-growing skills and producing tangible results.

## **Research Objective 4**

### **To examine what do people grow**

The produce of allotments has changed from being basic components of a traditional Irish diet such as potatoes, onions and cabbage into a multitude of food types and varieties that match contemporary Irish tastes.

The role that garden centres and discount supermarkets played in providing tools and seeds was particularly interesting. The cost of a seed packet is small compared to the purchasing of a plant from a nursery and therefore greatly expands the varieties that can be grown on the same budget.

The principal growing period is from April to September and this encourages a great variety in the types of food grown as allotment holders can take advantage of the temperate Irish climate as well as microclimates of the areas in which they are located.

Most seed is imported from the UK and there is little evidence to suggest that allotment holders use any native Irish varieties of crops on their allotments. The findings do provide further evidence of allotment holders participating in a partly self-sufficient lifestyle trying to distance themselves as far as possible from dependence on commercial food systems.

## **5.6 Conclusions of the study**

Why has there been a rise in Urban Agriculture activities in Dublin since 1995. The literature provided a detailed history of allotments in Dublin and the primary research provided rich data sources supporting the history. Records show that allotment holding has been occurring in Dublin for almost one hundred years. The more recent history of allotments in Dublin focused on the development in South Dublin. It shows a revival of interest and of more people wanting allotments. The study showed that there are new groups in Dublin interested in promoting allotments and other forms of urban agriculture, that urban agriculture while a hobby for some is also a measure to ensure urban food security.

The main forms of urban agriculture occurring in Dublin are family orientated. The activities encompass community garden initiatives, allotment sites provided by various county councils and through residents associations, as well as private forms of urban agriculture taking place in people's back gardens. The study shows that the initial interest in growing food in one's own garden often evolves into a desire to have an allotment. This is often accompanied by an interest in environmental concerns. Holders have an awareness of their health; they know that food grown conventionally is subjected to artificial fertilisers and pesticides that can be harmful. They take control of the food they will allow into their bodies. Once on an allotment, the participant becomes part of a community with like-minded people that allows them to socialise and share their growing experience.

Fresh tasty food appears as a major motivation for those involved in Urban Agriculture activities in Dublin. The primary research shows that there is an interest in organic foods and a conviction by participants that their food is superior in quality and taste to food that can be purchased in a supermarket. The increase in Urban Agriculture could be attributed to this factor alone. However the increased leisure time available must also be a factor. Urban Agriculture is also seen as being active and healthy in a society that is bombarded with messages about diet and exercise. In Dublin most people are involved in service occupations or sedentary office jobs and perhaps the thoughts of going out in the evening and week-ends and getting ones hands dirty is appealing to those who want to enjoy an active lifestyle.

## **5.7 Areas for Further Research**

The findings of this study open a further research area. The methodology was qualitative in nature and provided rich data sources that provided a broad spectrum of findings each of which could in turn be examined further.

An outcome of this research is the role that Urban Agriculture can play in Dublin's Urban Food Security for the future.

This research also provided a further insight into a changing Dublin diet over a century; a study mapping the genesis of this change could provide invaluable information for further Irish gastronomy studies.

A further study on urban agriculture in Dublin could take place on a bigger scale possibly encompassing North and South Dublin. The emphasis of the study could focus on the impact of allotments and community gardens in the surrounding communities and the future role of allotments and community gardens in Dublin.

## **5.8 Contribution of the Study:**

This study is the first to take place in Dublin on the topic of Urban Agriculture. There are no previous studies available on this activity and there is no comprehensive history available on the history of allotments in Dublin.

The literature review and the findings of the primary research provide invaluable information for future studies in this area opening up a new area in Irish food and gastronomy research. This study contributes significantly to the current body of knowledge it illustrates an emerging phenomenon in Dublin and provides a firm foundation for further studies in this research area.

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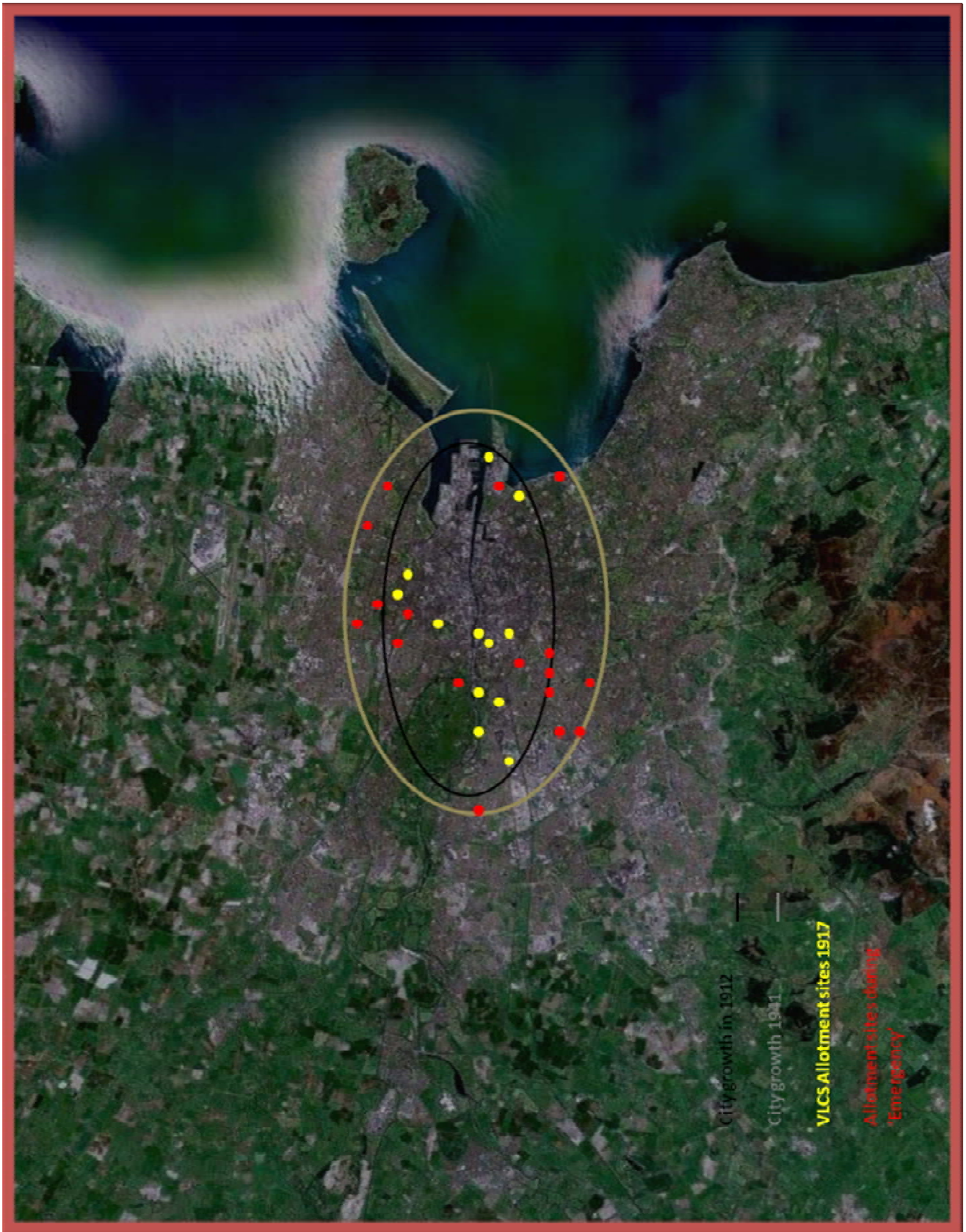
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## **7 Appendices**

Appendix 1	Charting Dublins Growth 1912 - 2008
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Appendix 1      Charting Dublin's  
Growth 1912 - 2008





Appendix 2    Interview  
with Minister Ciaran Cuffe



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Would there be awareness at government level of a growing interest in allotments?  
i.e. allotment associations or food security initiatives

CC: I think within my own party there is and certainly my colleague Trevor Sergeant a junior minister in the dept of agriculture has talked at great length about allotments. But I suspect elsewhere in government there isn't really that awareness. Again within my own party within some of our elected representatives I see an interest in allotments. But it's difficult enough to promote that or remind local authority and at a senior management level to remind them of the legislation from the 1920's that put allotments into the public eye and under their obligation to provide them.

Have you heard of any allotment associations or food security initiatives being started within the city?

CC: I am aware of one of my colleagues councillor ciaran fallon in RDDDL CC is involved in the setting up of an allotment umbrella org within the city and that there are allotment growers groups focused on specific allotment sites. Goatstown has a group I think and I think that there might be a similar initiative in south Dublin and there is then a growing interest in city gardens there is a small one in Stoney Batter and there is a larger one in Dolphins Barn. I have no doubt that there are other groups in the city. I know Bruce Darrell?? Is it has an interest in food food security and the role city gardens can play in providing food. There's a few shoots of interest in the area but I haven't seen a groundswell coming across of a renaissance of allotments which I see across the water in the UK but that doesn't seem to me to of gained traction in Ireland or in Dublin.

To get more allotments would there be a need for this demand to come from the bottom up?

I think it has to be a bit of both, there needs to be encouragement from institutions such a local government and there needs to be the interest there at local level certainly what I know of my own area in DL there is a waiting list to get an allotment but there's not much info available on how to get an allotment on the web or on the web page of DLRD CC and manage their own allotments better and they appear to be doing that. Their introducing a new licensing system that if ppl don't use there allotment that they will lose it more quickly then before. That's hugely important because at goats town there were some allotments that were left fallow and not used. So better use of the existing allotments and I understand that in the UK there has been a move toward smaller allotments. Because maybe traditionally ppl grew their entire years supply of potatoes or other types of food on their allotment their now seen as maybe not providing all of ones fruits and vegetables but providing an interest in a relationship to the land and providing an awareness of local food rather then simply providing an entire food supply that can be grown.

Should those who have an allotment at Goatstown worry that the road will go through their site?

CC: that land is there because the eastern by-pass hasn't gone ahead personally I'm no fan of the eastern by pass and I don't think it will happen certainly for the next decade so I'd say that the allotment holders there could rest assured for a while. But traditionally allotments were provided on land that was due for development so you had rolling system of allotments using land that might be developed in a three to five year cycle and there's no reason why we couldn't do that again there's a lot of local authority land that is scheduled for development could be simply ploughed staked fenced and used at relatively low cost and I also think there's park land we've quite a few parks in my own county of DL we've black rock park, shenganon park, that have large areas of grass land that are simply mowed a few times a season and again I think we should use some of that land for allotments.

I suggested that when I put in a submission for the master plan processes for black rock park but there wasn't too much interest in it then. So I think it's important that we educate those in charge of our parks and those in charge of taking care of development land that underused land could be used for allotments and I think it's a great way to bring families back into the parks.

Do you think there should be wider government support of initiatives that focus on local food and community food access? – particularly with the growing concern with food prices and carbon foot prints

Do you think that with waiting lists for allotments in the various councils there could be more land given over to allotments in the future? – for example at goatstown there is a waiting list but there is also worry that the land (as it is set aside for a road) will be used for a proposed road or possibly affordably housing

Would allotments be seen more as an amenity at government? – or as in the past a tool to help alleviate problems such as unemployment or anti-social behaviour in the community

CC: yeah I think that it's seen as a more of an add on rather than a primary source of food so unlike what's happening in Cuba with a lack of oil or what's happening in developing countries or historically on these island when allotments helped to supplement the diet. I think the 21<sup>st</sup> century version is an enthusiasm for things organic and an enthusiasm for growing your own as a tool to spice up a diet that is dependent on supermarket food that it's a different kind of interest that is manifesting itself in an enthusiasm for allotments today.

What do you think that communities that do initiate their own allotment scheme or community garden scheme?

CC: I would certainly be hugely enthusiastic for any movement providing community gardens or allotments. They provide good fresh food number one and they act as a glue for the local community and they create an awareness of food security issues and what can be done on a small area of land. As well as that I see a new generation of apartment dwellers who have very limited outdoor space in terms of balconies or roof gardens and I think they would be quite enthusiastic towards using allotment if they were made available and if they were better publicised.

Would you of heard of any coimmunity garden or allotment site opening up outside of the official County Council ones?

CC: em of particular developments? Or greater enthusiasm from local authorities

What do you think are the sources for stimulating an interest growing your own food or having an allotment?

CC: I'd imagine UK television would be a huge part of that ppl see entuhsiam and interesting developments in the UK in fact there has been, the allotment movement in the UK I think has been there steadily for perhaps a hundred years whereas in Ireland we had a spike during the emergency where large parts of the phoenix park and elsewhere were converted to allotments. That I think that certainly faded away in the 50's while perhaps in the 1970's ppl had often veg gardens in their houses I see a lot less of them now and it seems to be the exception rather than the rule ppl would grow veg themselves but I think certainly the UK media has brought about an interest in the area. And the risign global issue of food security has maybe started ppl thinking again about growing their own. So rather than being couch potatoes ppl are growing their own potatoes.

Allotments in the urban environment of Dublin – do you think that allotments are part of the green issues that surround building in the capital – such as sustainable communities, climate change – possibly allotments as greening rooftops?

CC: yeah there's a few different factors there's an interest in green roof's the role of planting on roof's to diminish rain water run off there also an interest in making something of these shared outdoor spaces and indeed private outdoor spaces that are relatively limited and there is an renewed interest in looking quite carefully at public open spaces and what it's used for. Where in the 1970's and 80's there was a rough rule of thumb that 10% of space had to be open space and that often resulted in playing fields or rather non-descript grassed areas I think there's a much more keen interest in clarifying exactly the role and use of that open space. Whether it be children play space, allotments small pocket parks might be used by older ppl we're thinking much more carefully about what outdoor space is used for today and I think part of that thinking is resulting in an interest in fruit and vegetable growing and that's part of where the current thinking is at. Edible landscapes the role of irish seed savers, ICWA, home produced produce.

What can you tell me about the provisions under the Local Government Act in relation to allotments? – why is there a provision?

CC: I'm not that doesn't ring a bell, there maybe a general provisions but allotments weren't name checked specifically.

The residential planning guidelines call for local area plans to have a public area design which is guided by the best principles of passive surveillance to encourage a safe sense of place and discourage anti-social behaviour – do you think allotments could be s a solution to this when you look at examples in other countries?

CC: I would think so and part of what motivated me to propose allotments in Black rock park which is a long linear park. Between the sea the railway and the housing and a major road. There's a Martello tower and a lot of grass land very under used and a lot of graffiti against the walls.

To my mind that struck me a perfect place to put in 20/30 allotments that would bring more ppl into the park and provide an interesting activity there as well.

(Do you think that space left over after planning could be utilised more effectively as community gardens?)

Do you know anyone with an allotment?

CC: my Colleague the Minister for energy and communications Eamonn Ryan has a n allotment up in Goatstown. He's very enthusiastic about it

Would you be aware of the history of allotment in the city?

Would you agree with this statement: " that there are wider psychological and social factors that allotment activity can have a major impact on peoples health status?

CC: oh I think so I mean its very complex if you go up to the Goatstown allotments you meet quite often ppl who are retired who have been given a new lease of life through their allotment their very enthusiastic full of stories I think it's a fantastic hobby for them and gardening I suppose in its self is fantastic for all ages. There is considerable scope for joined up thinking in the positive aspects of allotment keeping that feed into overall food security to health and mental well-being providing social instead of anti-social activity in under utilised

Why do you think people want allotments?

Have you heard of the term urban agriculture?

CC: no I wouldn't be that familiar with the phrase but I assume that it has something to do with food growing in an urban environment I like the idea of it, looking abroad there is a more of a tradition of communal gardening.



Appendix 3

Transcriptions of

Interviews with allotment

holders

**June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008 Tymon park allotments, Rory,**

Not the actual allotment holder of the site, the allotment is Hester's but she is either sharing or he is helping her with it, the relationship is unclear!?

After an introduction at the gate, the allotment holder allowed the researcher access to the allotment site.

R: there's a little vegetables growing there, pointing to school allotment at entrance to the site

I: introduction, is it okay to record this?

R: yes, its not on eh radio or anything like that?

I: no, I will transcribe it and then analyse the information

R: our biggest problem here is rabbits anyway, the bore a holes in under the fence, now I'm actually helping out a lady, one of the few ladies that actually has an allotment here. I had or have my name down for one but it looks like a few years so I am on the waiting list at vicarstown no priorstown no friarswood. Up there at bornabrehna

I actually only here about two months, so I'm trying to sort myself out with the site

I: you are very lucky with the weather now

R: yeah the weathers just beautiful now I just took the doggy out for a walk

I: are you coming in every evening?

R: well I was here yesterday for a little while. The site hasn't been used for a while so this was all weeds, this is virgin soil, so I'm getting it ready for her to plant a few things in. so there's some beetroot growing there, onions, rhubarb, lettuce, a few raspberries. Getting ready to put in some broccoli.

I: is she getting those from the gardening centre or is she growing them from seed?

R: well she would be growing them in her back garden from seeds. See she has that pot there and she grows some in there, it's a rain butt that's rain water in there, that's a big factor.

I'm actually afraid to touch anything, she has asparagus and things like that growing, dare I kill a little insect there'd be war in that you know

I: how do you know the lady?

R: I was chatting to some of the lads and he was saying that she was having difficulty getting the weeds out and that cause of the digging its pretty energetic.

And I started off my youth actually my father had ten allotments down at the memorial park there at island bridge. That goes back to the 60's, I spent my youth down there instead of out playing football we'd do a lot of market gardening and that, my dad was a bus driver, a lot of bus men and guinnesses men there as well. They lived around the area at kilmanham and inchicore. We lived just at the start of ballyfermot spent most of my life there.

I: are you living locally now?

R: just in kilnamana, bring the dog out, he's fourteen years old he's pretty active for his age. She's getting some wall flowers in here they should have been out but you know, but this lady is from rathfarnam and she travels a bit over.

I: its very weedy

R: yeah that weeds were a foot high, you should of seen those two allotments, they came in and cleared them they were in an awful state, but there getting at them again now. Its wonderful that there's water coming in now.

Researcher explains about the other allotment site near by that is without water access.

R: well this is grand for me, its too handy, petrol's getting dear now, friarswood and that is a bit of a haul now but we'll have to make use of it. Yeah with fuel and food prices now I'm telling everyone to get back into the gardening

I: have you hear about the cultivate centre in templebar?

R. yeah I know it but I have never been, the bloom festival was on, but I didn't go you couldn't bring a dog and there was no parking, I would have liked to go but I heard that it's a bit expensive €35 euro to get in

I: are you growing stuff in your back garden?

R: I have a back garden but once you have a dog you can't get about growing stuff, I used to have a green house, and my sister in law, my brother he has a green house so I grow some plants

I: what's your occupation?

R: I'm actually a flooring contractor you know. So I'd be used to a bit of hard work, lifting and that so the digging is no problem it wouldn't be worth your while to bring a rotovator in here it's too small.

R: and do you hope to grow something yourself?

I: well on permission with my mother

I: why are people growing their own food?

R: well one of the reasons for me is the weather coming out on an evening like this and anything would be better than sitting and watching coronation street

I: how long do you think you'll be here tonight?

R: well when they close the main gate at around 8.30, I could drive in but you know it's so close, well feel free to chat with the others while there down there

You needn't give them any information about me, just that I'm helping hester out.

**June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008, Tymon Park allotment site, Dennis and wife**

Interview began after introduction of researcher and project

W: describing an article in the Sunday Tribune, of community garden in dolphins barn

D: People have been becoming more aware now of chemicals in their food now etc and their becoming more aware of their own health. We have an allotment for thirty years

I: Were you out at lucan?

D: we were in lucan and we were in griffin before that and eh we also grow in our garden

I: do you live locally?

D: we live in kilnamana 10 minute walk away

I: so you start in the back garden and bring it here?

D: a bit of both, start it there and then bring it here courgettes and things there started off at home and then they come here, runner beans are started of at home as well. No theres a lot of people here who see the programmes on the tv and decided they want an allotment. They don't realise whats involved

I: are you both working on the allotment at the same time?

D: I work on the allotment she tells me what to do (laughing) she does a bit of weeding!!!

I: interjection with personal story of family life and gardening

W: dennis grew up working around on a farm but

no I grew up anyway on a farm, three girls on a farm, my father was demented no son to work the land but I would know whats going on. Even though it was very limited we would of only seen a cabbage, turnip or potatoes growing, very traditional you know, this was ireland down the country, now there such a variety of foods that you can grow squashes

D: we'll grow anything, try anything,

I: do you go to the garden centres or supermarkets for plants?

D: we have a look around yeah

W: garden centres yes, you (dennis) also get seeds sent to you organic places you know

D: oh yeah a lot of organic magazines,

W: theres a place in leitrim, the organic centre

D: yeah the organic centre

I: do you do anything with seed savers?

D: seed savers we haven't got around to yet I keep thinking about them but I have a lot of other things on my mind. But the beans I have been saving my own beans now for I dunno how long maybe 15 years or so. Those other beans are a new one I'm trying this year what are they called fire tongue

I: are you putting manure down or compost as fertiliser?

D: I have compost under them I dug two trenches there

W: we had some manure from the council

D: we got manure last year but this year I'm only using my own compost, try to fo things organically, manure we put on last year will do us for this year.

I: do you do anything like saved rain water?

D: there's no where to save it here

W: there was someone talking about that on the radio the other day

I: would that be something your interested in?

D: yeah I would be interested,

I: and how many hours would you give to the allotment?

W: well from now on we'll be here watering

D: maybe 12 hours a week

I: is that a heavy investment?

D: its not, what would you be doing if you weren't doing that?

W: well he works and he's only off Saturday and Sunday and that's the nicest way to spend it, instead of at home watching tv or reading the paper that another fine thing about it your getting out into the summer its great therapy you know.

D: getting out in the air listening to the birds listening to the traffic where else could you get it?

W: where are you going to college?

I: interjection about researchers back ground

D: are you an expert in gm food now are you?

I: no, I do trust the fsai at this point

D: I wouldn't politicians, they go with the flow, when you can see all the bribes and things their getting. This plots organic

W: this organic produce that ppl pay big money for I don't think their organic at all, their full of fat, its softer

I: comment about imported organic food

D: there is a lot of stuff imported

W: you know I don't think butchers that sell it are telling you its organic are telling you (mumbled last words)

I: do you go to the farmers markets?

W+D: we'd try to if there was one near, there was one open in tallaght it was very good, had a good butchers, a fish fella

D: now this allotment here is our retirement allotment,

I: how big is it btw?

There was a discussion and no definitive size could be established for the allotment, a reminisce began about previous site and administration by sdcc.

D: our back then was two thirds the size of this whole allotment site, in fact some people complained to me that I got the bigger one here

I: how much do you pay for this allotment?

D: 35€

W: I don't know here maybe €40 but out in lucan it was £15

D: but we didn't pick the size we were just given it

D: but they've no reason to complain there not even using the bloody thing  
If I was to give you a cabbage now would you put it in your bag and take it with you?

W: there runner beans there, there potatoes, there broad beans, and peas behind them, 3 rows, and celery. And spinach comes up very quickly, we'll be eating that in a week now hopefully, thinning as you keep growing. In between is cabbage, bits of courgettes cucumber, peppers

D: no chemicals on that

Researcher is handed a massive cabbage!!!!

While removing objects from bag to make room for cabbage, Dennis comments on J.Seymour book that was in there – a funny character

D: they cook very easily when their just out of the ground, their lovely

W: well after the day they might be a bit tough in the evening in the morning might be the best time, it'll cook in about twenty minutes the old fashioned way

D: full of iron no chemicals

D: we have some interesting spuds here now

W: oh yeah ( very excited)

D: there is a guy in england called alan rowmans and he's a spud expert for the british government, he breeds rare potato varieties I have two here one is called scary blue and the other aura. We got one potato each off a man in donegal two years ago

They take cells off them put them in an agar solution and breed them, he sent them to me for nothing because of a mix up previously. Compensation (laughs). Couldn't send the others through the post.

These are orla, their earlies, nice white flowers, but their lovely. And those are pamplone or fintin researcher cant really make out the words. Three types of peas there provident london and the other two I cant remember their names. Iahve to actually check when I go home. Their two heritage types I'm trying this year, I try different types every year. Last year our peas were destroyes and I only got a couple of dinners out of them. I have four packets at home and they never got used.



I: how much is a packet of seeds?

D: 2.50 – 3.00 euro it depends on the type

I: are you able to get stuff out of the allotment all year round?

W: yeah we only get the summer time really we freeze what we don't eat

D: we freeze now, them cabbages are being frozen at the moment

I: do you have a chest freezer?

W: we have a freezer in the shed, fairly average size.

D: I'm digging up that place where the cabbages are, for winter cabbages and brussel sprouts are going in there next week

I: so you have to redig the soil?

D: yeah I have to redig the soil there because its gone like concrete, they were planted last September October

I: are you going to put manure or compost underneath it?

D: put nothing in it because I put manure in it last year

W: you see there that's all garlic there, but there fairly withered looking leaves from the start

D: there is a thing in the ground here, the onions got it last year and I think the garlic has it this year, white rot,

W: white rot? I dunno

D: basically it means that you cant grow any alium or any member of the onion family. We had our onions here last year and our garlic and we lost them they were all rotted.

W: they don't store then. Onions are great when you get the good they store all the year round you'd have them up to next march or that again you know. The same with garlic.

D: we have strawberries there, you can see we have fences there that's for the rabbits getting in here

W: yeah the rabbits are just terrible, and there's carrots very low there, but the rabbits get in and eat the roots

D: we've broccoli there pigeons love broccoli they seem to be able to smell the leaves.

D: They do they'll fly over, ignore the cabbage and go for the broccoli and cauliflower. Might be the colour or it might be the smell. Two rows of spinach with four different types of spinach there I just had some packets at home which I threw in. On this side I got them in Italy last summer. And we have celariac

W: you know celariac?

I: I do yeah, that's quite a range you have

W: yeah, that takes a long time to grow, we have a lot of vegetables

D: yeah the takes a long time to grow, that the first lot of this year because the rabbits ate the first lot

W: I only know these things a few years now we knew celery but not celariac came as a new one.

Your lucky you caught us we were just out for a walk

I: yeah I'm delighted

W: yeah that's good that someone wants to talk to us

D: two types of raspberry, the rabbits got in here at the soft fruit. And blueberries there for the first time and gooseberries

I: how much sun does your allotment get?

D: this particular allotment get the sun till about 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening, there were popular trees there but they cut them down

W: that's sage with the flower down there. Sage! Rosemary

I: is it a fairly good investment then the allotment?

W: well you do complain about that (fencing) but I still think it's a good investment, best way to

D: I complain when I'm fine last weekend I spent em €140-150 on fencing

W: did ya I didn't hear any of this

D: fencing and posts, but that doesn't bother me. If it was a purely financial transaction I'd just walk out the gates, we never had this trouble in Lucan with rabbits. Ppl wuld come and steal a few heads of cabbage but rabbits are less discerning. They just eat everything

W: but we're so long doing this now that we'd be lost without it, I'd hate to be going out now and buying all that stuff in the shop.

D: it's terrible to go and buy that stuff

W: it's not the money we're not people that don't spend money. The taste you'd just know that you grew it

I: do you enjoy cooking as well?

W: I do enjoy cooking it

D: her self makes all sorts of exotic things like jams and chutneys and things

W: I do not, well I like to make jams I've tried some chutneys I suppose as well and he's at the wines now for years

D: so when George Bush destroys the planet we'll be able to live off the hedges.

Food scares? I've talked to a lot of people who have taken up allotments and a lot of them were recommended by doctors they were suffering from arthritis or someone in the family had an allergy to chemicals in food

A prescription for exercise – allotments

W: wax on food, washing it under the tap probably doesn't even eliminate it wouldn't make it safe.

I: climate change good for allotments?

D: a disaster, no heavy frosts doesn't kill the parasites or m.o's in the ground aphids and slugs it's a major problem the last couple of years. At home now our garden the mild winters the slugs are breeding away. And mildew this year it's very unusual you don't get that till the autumn.

Plants coming under stress get mildew on them. At the bloom festival there was mildew on everything.

I: do you go to the Chelsea festival?

D: yeah we went a few years ago

W: it was a lovely relaxing place to go

I: would you give any of your product out to your friends and family?

D: we do yeah, we just give it away

I: are you happy with you plot?

D: if there were less rabbits and if it was bigger you know more space for spuds, cabbages and peas. But with a small plot you can only grow so much.

W: but it would be better if more people were more aware of growing there own because you'd give a cabbage to someone and they'd never say anything about it we don't know if ppl appreciate it. Some ppl would just prefer to get something out of a shop and clean then eat something grown naturally.

I: would you have an interest in programmes like Jamie Olivier?

D: not jamie, but the older guys, maybe river cottage fella or ainsley harriet or anthony worrell thompson – doesn't use sugar – the others are all sponsored by sugar.

D: back to basic, back to seasonal products, at this time of year you'd never have tomatoes when we were young.

Those tomatoes we got on holiday, in italy, we just picked up a few things

I: do you know most people on the site?

D: yeah a few guys from lucan dessy, danial, and I know hester, but your man down there I have no idea and michael fox, he does a lot of talking and not a lot of growing.

## **Interview David Cotter, June 24<sup>th</sup>, Coffee shop**

I: How long have you had your allotment?

D: the current one I tymon I've only had it for three or four years now but I had an allotment out in lynchs lane a years before that. and then before that out in cappogue in finglas at the time I was living in dublin city and it was actually a friend of mine that had one out there. Who opened my door to allotments I didn't know that there were such things as allotments in Dublin city. He said do you want to come out, so I got my name on it and then I was offered it. But we were only there about two years myself and my partner, before they decided to close it and redevelop it for the national sports stadium. The car park for it would have been actually where the allotments are so we were given eviction notices. So I started looking around and I applied to sdcc and the only place they had was lynchs lane so I went there. But the site never got developed and it has only recently finished.

I: where do you live at the moment?

D: living in kilnamana, dennis is on one end I'm on the other end, so handy yeah. But at that time though me and jenny my partner we travelled out to cappogue on the bus. Get the tools hope on the bus two buses actually into town then out to finglas three actually then another one across finglas out to ballycullen, which is where it was. We had no car at the time. So we had great fun bringing vegetables used to have great fun with the drivers admiring the crops and that.

I: so is it mainly during the weekend that you go to your allotment?

D: mostly, or if I have a day off then I'll go down our one is quite a smallish plot so it's a managable size compared to say dennis he has the biggest. But there is only 13 at our site. He has strage hours so he could spend a whole days down there. But I do go down on my days off but jenny now she works in the library service so she has shifts so for example she was going to go down this morning to spray for blight.

Also the fact that we've done it in a way that it very easily managed certain crops there and that's it low maintenance, potatoes, onions leeks. we've raised beds and we have added a lot to the soil and we've put in paths so theres very little weeding to be done.

Compared to say hesters which is one of these ad hoc kinda things pockets of areas where she throws things in.

I: how far down are you?

D: do you know where michael is, we're next to him then donal is just opposite us and then dessy, we're number 10.

I: so you close to water?

D: no and that the great thing about tymon it really is a pilot one because they weren't sure how this was going to work we were all called to a meeting. Has anyone told you the story?

I: no?

D: we were lobbying that lynchs lane was going to be developed soon we needed to be relocated somewhere and they came up with the ideas of the parks and they had a meeting. On evening out in lucan and we heard this idea that they were going to kick off with tymon and lucky enough we put our name down because we live nearby. So we got our first choice second being corkagh park. Its very handy for us on ten minutes away. We walk or cycle or drive over but compared to all the other facilities its better in some ways its luxury we have water, toilets, rooms in the rangers office, tool shed, which is compartmentalised for individuals. There's no light but its fine, secure car parking so we're lucky in that sense. You can stay till 10 or so the park closes but you can get in through pedestrian entrances. It helps as well that there is staff living there a presence to keep an eye on the park depot buildings and allotments. I know there is some anti-social behaviour that goes on in the park but its better to have one or two ppl there for example I know jenny wouldn't feel comfortable to be there at night by her self. But we have been there early in the morning and doing a bit.

I: are you involved with michael in the allotment association?

D: yeah, theres a few of us, I meet him out at lynchs lane we were on one side it was basically two big fields and we had heard that there were ppl that were into the environment and organics and that's how we meet him initially. And then with the relocating of the allotments it was felt that there was a need for some sort of association to represent allotments. There was another group there an older group, old timers retired some had four or five allotments and were doing market gardening.

But you turn a blind eye to it and fair enough, they came together and were very vocal that they didn't want to lose what they had. I think they were compromised in the end they were offered palmerstown except some of them went out towards maynooth they made a deal with a farmer.

I: do you know if any of them went to goatstown?

D: I know ppl over there from being in the association but not from lynchs lane directly. Goatstown would be one of the longest in dublin, its had its peaks and troughs helen dillion.

But the association is myself, michael, hester, anne-marie and jenny.

I can put you in touch with others if you want them.

D: do you know how the association was formed?

I have always been involved in environmental activities community organisation, with jenny and we work in the public service, I'm a lowly public servant. But we have always been interested in organics and vegetables.

When we lived in stoney batter we grew things in our small garden.

I: would you have noticed in the newspaper more articles about growing your own?

D: yeah I have, but while we were getting ourselves together with south sdcc convincing them that this would work. We needed a spokesperson and michael fox was agreeable to that, he's actually a very natural speaker when it comes to doing interviews and that. So we developed the association and helped develop the allotments at the same time.

We helped turn the local authorities mind in how this can actually work and they were very weary at first they try to stay away from anything negative they don't like being challenged or criticised but we wanted to work with sdcc and built up a relationship there. And over the last year and a half they have taken an interest and supportive. Actually tomorrow we have a meeting with them, about friarstown.

But there are other movements driving different forms of urban agriculture, seed bombing.

But with our association we wanted to reach other groups and build links,

I: did you go to any dublin food growing meetings?

D: yeah, we wanted document what was out there and we wanted reach groups around the country, with county councils, politicians (dan boyle?), a big movement in cork, individuals making queries.

I: awareness of a movement?

D: ppl contact us thinking we can give allotments, but we see ourselves as a national body, the media became interested in it last year. (nationwide).

We have interviews in newspapers, local radio stations, mark keenan in the Sunday times success and failures, like a social study.

But aside from growing vegetables your meeting new people, building friendships, like minded individuals, building up your knowledge, learning new skills like how to deal with the media, how to organise events. You reach a balance between your association and doing what your supposed to be doing which is looking after your vegetables and its getting bigger!!!

But you should consider he types of people that are querying us you have a lot of women, young people early twenties late thirties, families, and theres a huge interest in organic growing, growing your own, quality of food and taste, healthy eating leisure,



Greenhill's Allotments:

06.06.2008 – Interview with allotment holders: 1 married couple, 1 married spouse not present

Tony Cullen	T
Miriam Cullen	M
Pauline	P

Time: 7.45pm

Why people are going back to allotments?

T: Hunger!!!

M: the soaps on the telly

P: the recession

M: we grew vegetables outside in the back garden the last three or four years, so this was kinda just the next step for the social end of things as well. And that this was such a waste ground.

P: Dump

T: see the way it was? (Interviewer handed sheets with photos of the site in its previous state and its evolution to its current condition)

M: Did you see this before?

I: ah I came down a couple of weeks ago in April when it was brown,

M: but you didn't see it before?

I: No not like this reference photos of waste and derelict site, no I actually found out about from a man P.E. who lives (pointing to local house)

P: he lives next door to me

I: Well he's my old scout leader

P: Aw scouts!

M: Ah

I: And I was telling him what I was up to and doing and he told me about these allotments

M: Excellent

I: I was telling him and that how I found out about them, because people very much keep it to themselves what their doing and what their interested in, iwas talking to my libraruian in college and she ssaid aw yeah I have an allotment

M: You serious!?

I: Nobody talks about them

M: Yeah

I: like it's a hidden thing? So this is your allotment?

M: Yeah theres four of us on it

I: So you all come down to it most evenings?

M: yeah pretty much yeah

I: and are you all living local?

M: yeah (points off in direction of st.peters road

P: lives nexts door to padriag, around the corner from the site)

I: So this was a derelict site? And were you involved in the committee?

M: Yeah well they were trying to build on this and tonys' mam lives in there houses to the south off the site, reared the kids over there, and we were just saying that there is just so much building going on around the place that theres no way that we wanted to build on this, so we heard that people were kind of thinking of allotments and we said absolutely that would be a great idea you know so we went forward to the residents association was the first step and then we (formed) came on to this committee then and that's the way it worked.

T: yeah it's a step on from the gardening

P: its our ground

T: Eileen it was her idea

Each participant joins in with yeahs at this point

M: Also theres a gardening committee, gardening project committee, it a community gardening committee and theres an allotment committee?

T: uh huh

M: so the allotment committee looks after everything that's going on with the allotment amd the gardening committee looks after the bigger picture as such em and then theres the residents association theres a whole criss cross of people you know on the various ones

I: An how how many hours would you say that you give to the allotment?

P: we were here on Monday for two hours on Monday night

M: Yeah I was here..

T: well when were fiorst digging it we were here two full days

P: and then every evening you'se came out and dug it

T: and then in the beginning then we had to mark out each plot so that took a whole Saturday then cause we had to mark out each plot, cause people were very anxious then to get in

M: two Saturdays a month would be more or less full days, and then if I had a day off I'd come maybe eleven in the morning and then plan to finish at two but you don't finish until 3.30pm and then Pauline's out most evenings

P: I'd be out most evenings, do a bit of weeding

I: and do you always have a chat with people on the site?

M: yeah sometimes but other times

P: sometimes you might be the only one out here that why you can lock the gate knowing your safe like

M: and it's nice actually bring a flask have a cup of tea but even though there might be other people dotted around you just say hello to them and other times then you could sit and chat

I: would you of known them before?

M: eh no

P: eh no

M: wouldn't know many of them anyway and the different age groups is great and this lady here (refer to four year old Sophie present with mother Pauline)

T: what age are you?

M: what age are you?

S: gestures four

M: yeah so it's great to see these out and then there's another couple who live next door they just took over that plot there and there teenagers are out with them as well and then you have the older people too

P: the entire mix

M: it really is

I: and is it mainly food you're growing on your allotment?

T: well we have a few plants here (points to flower beds)

M: yeah we have some blackcurrants and flowers at the back, flowers the sweet pea and tomatoes and sunflower and then the rest is different types of veg

T: we're very amateurish

M+P laugh out loud

M: we have our first strawberry though did you see it? Q directed to t and p

P: ours is the best plot laughing

T: ah yeah

M: yeah its really red

T: you want to try it

P: we'll call it radishes

I: I got given a cabbage from a couple in tymon park it was a beast it took up my whole bag, well I brought it home and cooked it and it was absolutely beautiful

M: yeah

I: so tasty and nothing added

M yeah it's a big difference

P: waiting another week and our (cabbage) will be ready

M: Our courgettes are just starting to I don't know if there is anybody else has courgettes because loads of people are sayin what are they?! There courgettes and they say jesus I have never seen them growing before, and we have grown them in our back, backgarden for the last couple of years and they are scrumptious

I: are you buying from garden centres our where are you getting the materials from?

M: yeah

T: grown from seed

M: yeah we got a few from seed but eh when you go to B&Q and Atlantic homecare they don't have a huge variety so newlands cross is probably the best bet you know

T: it's a bit expensive but their worth it

M: but we do a lot from seed as well

I: would you go to a tescos or a lidl to buy anything?

M; To buy vegetables?

I: no to buy equipment?

M: Lidl, yeah we bought mushroom, yeah lidl we got gardening equipment there as well didn't we?

P: Yeah

M: for bits a lot of people actually did

P: and aldi we got the slug thing to keep the slugs away and organic slug thing

M: yeah but that's actually what happens someone says I got this in such a place and everyone runs up so its great and its great that everyone started from scratch you know?! So you just give advice to each other

P: and then some one came along with one of those green bins and they were sent back for more and

M: everyone got one then

P: ah jesus there great for water

M: yeah

I: an are you bringing the water in from your house?

All agree yes

I: your not doing water butts our anything?

M: no we haven't got around to that yet

T: we're really only what three months isn't it? Yeah march yeah

M: so we've done really well since march jesus its brilliant someone from south circular road was up and they couldn't believe we'd only just started you know?

T: started the 21<sup>st</sup> we're having an open day

*Transcription stopped 9 minutes 47secs*

I: Do you know anything of the history of allotments in Dublin?

All say no

M: Apparently we're in the allotment association

T: Miriams parents, her father apparently had an allotment down on cronerstown rd? (difficult to hear exactly the name) way back, that was just after the war so they used to cycle up and do the digging in the evening and they were from crumlin

M: so its in my blood is it?

T; going back to the soil

M: its hereditary

T: I think after the war they really took off didn't they? Or was it pre before that?

Researcher discusses brief history with the group for approx

M: to feed ppl

T: the coombe was the first was it?

M : I think now a lot of ppl are interested in organic food and that sort of thing aren't they and its so expensive you know?

I and are you a good cook?

M: tonys a good cook

T: I have to do all the cooking

M: I used to be good but im not anymore but that's okay it doesn't bother me

P: I'm a great cook, but my husband does most of the cooking, but he can come get the fresh veg in the morning

M: yeah it is brilliant what we did the last three years what we grew at home we blanched them you know and then put them in freezer we got loads of cabbages coming up I mean how many can you eat you know? And it just lasted it then so its brilliant

I: and do you keep with gardening magazines or things to do with allotments?

M: yeah recently yeah I think it's a trend that coming back big time

I: do you think so?

M: yeah I do I see a lot of articles around now

T: on UTV the other morning 7 or 7.30am there was a report on the news on allotments and they had two reporters out somewhere in derry and they went and interviewed guys on allotments what they were saying was it was the trendy thing to be on now was allotments

M: so we're fashionable?!!! I think its growing

T: so it is coming back big time

M: its brought a great bit of life back into the community

P: the old ppl are walking up and down looking into it delighted

M: yeah some of them got very emotional you know because they've been looking at this site like a rat whole, so their very emotional

I: and have you heard anything about allotment things or growing your own food movements in Dublin?

M: no, not really

I: you mentioned the allotment association

M: well apparently now we joined that, I was in touch with hester and I went up to the ones in tymon last year before these ones started, yeah I emailed hester and she emailed me a few times about their open day but we were away but yeah we didn't really do anything more about it

T: we've been quite busy for the last three or four moths trying to get this up and running

M: because there was opposition to it

T: there was

P: ppl didn't want it

M: so we needed to get in and get it going

I; and what would others have preferred to put here instead?

P: they didn't give any suggestions they just were, they thought we had ulterior motives

M: we think some ppl just had there own agenda you know and that all right when your not living adjacent to this when your living away up the road so once we got the go ahead and the council backed us we just went at it hell for leather you know and that's why we're really pushing for the open day and have it as good as we can

T: I'd say next year we'll get out and meet more ppl

M: ah we will yeah once we're more established, I'd love to see what that open day in goatstown would be like where abouts in goatstown is it?

Researcher explains directions

M: jesus ( upon hearing there were more then a hundred with 20 new ones added )

I: do you think you could do like a community food thing?

M: in what way now do you mean?

I: explain about stoney batter sitric c.g.

M: yeah absolutely not this year mind ya (everyone laughs)

I; do you think you'd share what you've grown on the allotment with family and friends?

M: ah yeah

P: sure we grew some there radishes and then we realised that we didn't like it and we were asking everyone do you eat radishes? Cause we would of given them to them

M; we said we'd only grow what we eat and we did the same in the garden, we wouldn't eat that many cauliflowers so we wouldn't grow many of them but yeah definitely

P: cabbages

M: yeah so as tony was saying we're more established here we will get more involved with the a.a. and its great

I: and did you compost or manure your ground?

T: not yet, we didn't put anything so seeing how good the soil is

Researcher points out red weeds

Chorus of agreement to the problem

P: weeds seem to of gotten worse since we roto-vated

M: yeah so we roto-vated so we chopped them up

T; and they multiply then

M; yeah that was our mistake

P; and we're the worst us and the plot beside us we're the only ones that rotovated

T: since being involved in the beginning and the marking out etc we were behind everyone else and trying to catch up. Paul the architect beside us he got one one Saturday and I had one the next Saturday

M: seemed like a good idea at the time:

T: well now we're paying for it

P: well now we know

I: what do you do for a living?

T: electrical contractor

P: receptionist and my husband is a manager in frozen food

M: and I own a crèche in tallaght

P: so none of use have anything to do with greenery, you know I wouldn't even cut the grass up till this

I: do you think its hard work to keep it going?

P: I don't think of it like a chore, I enjoy coming out and I mean I don't even mind weeding, I come out here even if theres know ppl I'll stay and weed for an hour, sophie will run around, and it gets here away from the telly while its bright

I: would you notice the time going by?

P: no I say I'll only be a minute and then I potter down and see another weed and I'll start again in another section so its nothing to spend two hours a night out here on my own

M: no its brilliant, really brilliant, good craic as well

T: it is yeah

P: of course the when the potato came up we were like "We have a potato!!!!"

M: and now look at them, imagine when we're cooking them, we'll be standing over the pot looking at them, one of the the nights we had a cup of tea and Pauline got an apple cake and we sat here havin tea (laughing)

I: yeah its great, did you go away for the bank holiday weekend?

P; no we were here on the Monday

M: and actually one of the lads, dave and Yvonne, they have a house in wexford and they could believe that they came back early to the allotment

P: and they used to go down every weekend now half the time they go down



M: and he decided at the start that he wouldn't take a plot cause he was growing his own bit of veg down in wexford and then he say us all out here, and then he changed his mind, and then someone split theirs in half and he's delighted now

P: and then that chap got one

M: and he only moved into the area so its great for them

I: and are you reading any books on allotments?

M: well we had a little bit of knowledge, from growing out the back, but certainlyt three years ago when we started out the back I was on the internet every night and sitting with different book and marking different pages

T: but it didn't teach you how to weed properly

P; excuse me I weed it properly

T: laughed

M: giving out to us

I: would you be interested in foreign seeds?

T: yeah well we will

M: we have these sun burst things they look like squashed yellow peppers, I have no idea what they taste like, it was something we got in lidl's and we put them down so we'll see what there like any way. Andf in our own back garden we have a aubergine and sweet paprika and that we got in lidl as well

I: and your not worried about the weather for the summer?

T: no not really we'll chance our arm, learn from it anyway

I: are you planning on staying on the site for a good while?

All agree yes

P: for the foreseeable future

M: well you know are kids are grown up and its amazing you know if you said to them will you come down and give us a hand they say "yeah right" and we didn't say anything and we're only here about ten minutes and they ramble up the road the two of them and their friends and there like come and we'll show you the allotments jesus and we could believe it

T; yeah they were very interested

M: they were here helping us weed and what ever

P: sure steve rotovated with you? (addressed to t)

M: yeah its unbelievable really

I; do you think that they might be more aware these days of issues like peak oil, sustainability these buzz words?

M+T: yeah probably yeah, more fashionable and a trend

T: I think that if there had of been ten more allotments that ppl would of taken them and growing your own food and doing things locally and I'd thought we'd have more old ppl but we have a lot of young people young couples that are only together ah you know ppl saying that I'd love a plot or an allotment I'd say it's a new trend or old one catching on again

M: well I'd say our kids would be talking about it in their work, I think they like the social end of it as well they'd come up here and sit and have a chat

I: spending money?

M: spent about €250, its not a cheap hobby

### **Interview with William June 7<sup>th</sup> 2008**

W: whets you name?

I: Michael

W: one thing I find a bit weird is that there sites here, like myself or dave over here or families are doing it but you could move all these ppl into the same housing estate and they'd never talk to each other you know they'd be totally strangers even though they'd be right next to each other. But because its an allotment everyone talk to every one because it's a common interest

I: an would you know most people on the site?

W: well I know one or two that's dave I've spoken to all my close neighbours, the taps over there and its like a watering hole and you have might in Africa because everyone congregates there and more chat. And eamonn ryan has his allotment down nice to see that he practices what he preaches.

I: how long have you been living here?

W: 5 years, I'm from north cork originally

I: have you heard of any allotment scheme in cork?

W: no

I; info on scheme in cork

W; well I wasn't aware of that but I'd say they'll become more popular in the coming years. I mean I have friends and friends of friends who want an allotment they live in inchicore and theres no allotment there so they are on a secondary waiting list for sdcc, so when they heard I got an allotment they were like oh you lucky bastard. So yeah that ppl that want them really want them.

I: would ppl be interested in hearing you have an allotment?

W: right em yeah I suppose but I'm the first person I know to get one,

I: where are you going to get your equipment from?

W: home base or argos, last year I got stuff in lidl I was growing some veg in the back garden, I keep an eye on their websites for their gardening themes cause things like that are considerably less in lidl,

W: the way it started for me is that I was renting in rathmines, I grew some herbs in the back, and this girl got me a mini greenhouse and that helped me to grow a little more diff variety, lemongrass etc and then I moved and bought the house over in balinteer had more space then and last year grew some aubergines and pepprs in the pots, but than the allotment came up, I initially read about it in the Irish times, and I put my name on the waiting list, I assumed it would be three or four years. I could of waited that time I have a lot on my plate the house I'm in I'm kinda redecorating so I just sleep less so now I have to balance painting with planting.

Some ppl said why didn't I just do it in my back garden but for one you get out and meet ppl with common interests the allotment side anyway, and the back garden has bits of shade, infrastructure under the ground pipes etc.

Like I planed at home to turn it the garden into a herb garden and now that I have this just grow the vegetables here, you know at home you nip out and grab a few herbs but you don't go out and grab a few potatoes that's something you plan your dinner for the day around it stop in and dig up the spuds.

Freshness

You my father grew veg at home, so its in the family so to speak and then been into the cooking as well, theres a lot programs on I like the river cottage not really Jamie oliver.

You can see some wildlife in the area like a fox or a pigeon

### **July 5<sup>th</sup> Robert Gilmore, Tymon Park allotments**

R: they have allotments in other areas friarstown, but this is the nearest one to me,

I: where do you live?

R: up in tymonville

I grow potatoes three types 1<sup>st</sup> earliers, main crop and (word unclear) a few carrots, parsnips, onions, sweet beans.

Saturday is a good day to come up, a lot of them are working sats and suns there usually somebody around. But this time of the year now you have to keep an eye on everything you have to try and come as often as you can or else the weeds take over. We've rabbits in their as well getting in underneath the container. And then you have pigeons overhead so you have everything growing in a cage.

I: and which one is your one?

R: number 8

I: do you give your allotment much time?

R: well I work in the afternoon from 3.30 in a hospital and in the morning time the wife wants you to go to liffey valley, so I come up when I can. But its not too bad if I got two hours straight at it I could get rid of all the weeds.

I: what are you taking home with you today?

R: long beans, a head of cabbage, and shallots, I'm at home alone today so I only need a few things, you see the shallots you put one down and its like a potato you get about 12 back.

I like what I cook and I like what I grow

We don't use any chemicals or anything just compost that you use yourself, seldom get manure, but theres no fertilisers no 90:10:05

I: do you rotovate?

R: no I dig I've a smallish plot so I do one section at a time and keep up with it that way. Any way I have to go and do some shopping.

# Appendix 4    Timeline of Direct Observations

**Description of the Allotment Sites:*****Tymon park:***

This site is located in a public park part of the relocation of allotment sites by South Dublin County Council (SDCC). This site opened in 2006 is considered a pilot for future allotment sites under the power of the council, the total number of allotments at the site is 13 with 1 being used by a local school and looked after by the environmental awareness officer of SDCC.

**Demographics of the allotment holders include:**

- A married older couple
- An unmarried middle aged couple
- 3 males
- 1 female

**Occupations include:**

- Power station worker
- Self employed mechanic
- Psychotherapist
- A flooring contractor
- A cleaner in a hospital
- A civil servant

**Proximity of holders to the Allotment Site:**

- Kilnamanagh – 4.2km
- Tymonville – 3.4km
- Rathfarnham – 7.2km
- Terenure – 7.9km

**Size of Allotment:**

- 100 square metres

**Cost of Allotment:**

- €40
- €25 OAP

**Greenhills allotments:**

This site is not under the management of the SDCC but have been established under the control of the Greenhills Community Garden. They are legal and the site on which they are located is under the control of the Greenhills Residents Association. Initially there were 14 allotments but some of these have been split in two or made smaller to accommodate demand. The history of this site is quite short only being opened in March 2008. The site has been opened as part of a community initiative to reclaim land that had formally been derelict. A builder had previously attempted to build houses on the land but did not own the land and was prevented by legal proceedings to continue with this course of action. The land was then turned over by SDCC to the Greenhills Residents Association to do with it as it wished but insisted that they must use it and thus a committee was formed to set up a community garden and allotments on the ground.

**Demographics of the allotment holders include:**

- Families – husbands and wives, fathers and sons, fathers and daughters.
- Neighbours
- Friends - mainly females
- Single older females
- Single middle aged males

**Occupations include:**

- Retired
- Self employed crèche owner
- Receptionist
- An electrical contractor
- A manager in retail frozen foods
- A civil servant
- Soldier
- Physically disabled
- Housewife

**Proximity of holders to the Allotment Site:**

- St. Peters Road - 200 metres
- St. James Park - 1km
- Mostly in estates bordering Greenhills

**Cost of Allotment:**

- €1 per square metre of allotment

### **Time line of Interviews and Direct observations:**

Following contact with the South Dublin Allotment Associations chairman Mr. Michael Fox the researcher established that from April onwards was the best time period to conduct interviews. This would ensure that sufficient interviews could be carried out. As this is a time period when the allotment holders would need to be most active in ensuring that their crops are planted and protected from pests and weeds.

As part of the methodology for this research direct observations were recorded for every visit to the allotment sites. This section will present the times and dates of the visits, along with some description of the activities at the site before an interview took place.

#### **April 27<sup>th</sup> 12.30pm Tymon Park Allotments:**

A Sunday afternoon the weather was good the sky was overcast threatening rain, one allotment holder present at the site. A middle-aged man wearing a watch, glasses, T-shirt, jeans and work boots. Sowing seeds from a packet that he keeps in his back pocket. The area he is working in is to the rear of the site close to the container where tools are kept. The work is being carried out on a prepared bed, which is marked out with two sticks and a piece of string approximately a metre apart. He is working quite meticulously and concentrating on his work oblivious to the world going on around him. The allotment site is quite hidden from those passing but you can hear the sound of the M50 motorway humming in the background of the recording.

#### **May 29<sup>th</sup> 2.15pm Greenhills Allotments:**

Weekday afternoon overcast threatening rain this was the first visit to the site after a month from initial contact with the allotment site co-ordinator. Four allotment holders present at the site 1 elderly man, 1 elderly woman and 2 middle-aged women. There is a conversation between the older lady and a man who is just walking down the lane-way. The site has changed from a dusty brown colour in March to a luscious green in May. Everything looks healthy and growing steadily, the site looks a lot more organised and clean since my previous visit. The lane way beside the allotment site is very clean compared to the lane way leading up to the site which has a lot of rubbish and broken glass on the ground. The people are all busily working the 2 women are at the back of the site near the wall they appear to be weeding. The older lady is working in the community garden at the front of the site and the older man is working on his allotment at the front of the site nearest the gate.

#### **June 1<sup>st</sup> 11.30am Greenhills Allotments:**

It is a bright Sunday morning and there is one middle-aged man at the site. He is working on his allotment, which is located beside the western fence on the far left on the allotment site. His allotment appears to be a long rectangle possibly one that has been cut in half or he may share with someone. He is working on a raised bed in fact all his beds are raised. It looks like he transplanting young cabbage plants into the bed. He also has some water bottles beside, that were previously 2 litre milk bottles, the water is a green grey colour it looks like harvested rainwater. After each planting