



The weather is still playing tricks on us. We have had the wettest winter followed by the third warmest spring on record. The fruit and vegetables are growing well but so are the weeds, the slugs and the snails! This edition of the newsletter contains updates on a number of issues that relate to what is happening in terms of allotments both on the local Ealing and the wider national scene. There are also a number of reviews of recent events including “The Edible Garden Show”, the “Froglife Wildlife Workshop” held at Framfield, a visit to “Imperial College’s Secret Garden” (all thumbs up) and “The Big Allotment Challenge” (thumbs down). Add in a site profile of Haslemere and our usual collection of news from around the borough’s local associations. Hopefully, something for everybody!

Starting off, two items - one relating to the national scene and the other centred very much in Ealing:

It’s an ill wind

As many of you are probably aware, an e-petition was lodged on the UK government website expressing fears that Eric Pickles is examining plans to modify existing regulations on safeguards to allotment land. If, as this one did, petitions of this type receive more than 10,000 signatures – an extremely rare occurrence - the relevant government department is required to make a response. Click on [response](#) to access a copy of the original petition and the response or check out the links below.

In this case, the Department for Communities and Local Government claims that the original suggestion is false and that there are no such plans at the moment, The National Allotment Society (NSALG) have issued a statement of clarification of the situation which can be accessed by clicking on [clarification](#) It appears that the original petitioner was referring to earlier plans which had been dropped in 2011. However, as NSALG point out:



“allotments are vulnerable to threats from developers looking for green land to build on – signing this petition can only serve to reinforce to government the importance many people place on allotments and the passion that they feel about them”.

Even if there are no current plans for changes, it does no harm for the politicians of all parties to be reminded that the allotment community is ready and willing to challenge any attempts to water-down current legislation. As the proverb says, it’s an ill wind that blows no good!

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/61225>

<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/allotments-e-petition/>

Ward Forum Funding

Most plot holders, and probably many members of local allotment associations, may be unaware of Ealing’s system of Ward Forums. The twenty three electoral wards in Ealing each have their own Forum where ward councillors and local residents can come together to discuss issues such as community safety, traffic and transport schemes, parks and street improvements. Each of these wards has an annual budget of £37,500 that can be used to fund projects of concern to local residents. Two of our local associations, Horsenden Allotment Association (HAA) and Ealing Dean Allotment Society (EDAS) have recently made applications to, and received funding from, their local Ward Forum and have kindly agreed to give a brief account of their experiences.

Joseph Mangar of HAA reports:

My first outing to the Ward Forum was interesting. I did not know what to expect. I take part in the Residents Association and know quite a few folk where we live. I am also Governor of a local school and have dealings with councillors. To my surprise, I already knew many of the local residents, representatives of local Associations and councillors that were present - which was an extremely good start. We specifically wanted funding for replacing our main gates because of the break-ins and stealing that were occurring. To go about this, I asked our former Allotment Manager Eddie Weston to ask for police help regarding site security. Knowing this was not going to happen, I had an alternative plan ready involving funding for gate repairs which I was able to present to the Forum. This was immediately seconded and approved by the Ward Forum. To summarise our approach:

- 1) One person broached the general problem to the Forum*
- 2). I then proposed a solution to the problem and provided quotes for the material we wanted and gave a time scale for completion.*
- 3). I informed the Forum of our contribution – always an important point – and emphasized the fact that the vast majority of our tenants were part of the ward.*
- 4) I explained that this was all part of our future plans to involve a larger part of the community including schools and special needs in allotment activities and a greener approach to education; thus giving the Forum an idea of what we are trying to achieve in the area.*

I also invited all the participants to the Allotments to see what was happening and at the next Ward Forum meeting I thanked them all on behalf of the allotment holders. One point that I would stress – be sure to tackle all the above areas if you really want to get funding!

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Christina Fox of EDAS now takes up the story with an account of her experiences of Ward Forum funding:

A year ago if you had asked me about Ward Forum meetings I wouldn't have known what you were talking about. But I was assured by David Highton of West Ealing Neighbours (and a Northfields plot holder) that this was a good place to let people know what we were up to on the Radbourne Walk which runs along one side of the Northfields allotments. The Walk is a path used by dog walkers and drinkers of strong beer. I had unearthed from the Land Registry that the path was actually part of the allotments and we had decided to formally adopt it, clear it up and enhance it as a wildlife area.

Simon Coleman (one of our committee members and a wildflower expert) and I contacted Tan Afzal, the Neighbourhood Governance Coordinator, and asked for the matter to be put on the Ward Forum agenda. We were the last item on the agenda and when our turn came we simply outlined the problem of the overgrown walk and told them about our plans. I think we were a bit of a surprise to them, as we didn't actually ask for anything. We knew the problem and we had a solution. However, David Highton came to our rescue (again). He reminded the Forum that they had some money left to allocate to local projects. To our surprise everyone in the room seemed to think this was a good idea and the three councillors present agreed to give us money for tools and plants. Even more surprisingly, a local resident also offered to donate £250 to the project too, because he liked what we were proposing.



Work in progress: just for the record the guy in the green wellies is a local Councillor – not part of the Community Payback scheme!

Tan Afzal suggested we write a business plan and outline what we intended to do and how much we would need. I spent some time doing this, but it was worth the effort in helping to clarify our ideas and a budget. Up to that point we had no financial plan because we had no money to spend. After the Ward Forum meeting I met with Tan at Perceval house with our business plan. She also suggested we apply to the Mayor of London's Capital Clean-up fund and arranged for a meet-up with the Council's tree guy, Craig McCrindle, who gave us invaluable advice - which probably saved us a lot of money. She further suggested making use of Community Payback volunteers. This free labour has allowed us to get so much more done than we thought possible - all for the price of tea and biscuits. We also have a champion – Susan Wyatt (the council's Neighbourhood Champions Coordinator) - who is keeping an eye on what we are up to. She has been to visit us on site and is keen to support us in the long term. We are a success story!

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In the end we received £1,000 from the Ward Forum meeting. The business plan was repurposed and became the basis for our proposal to the Capital Clean-up fund from which we succeeded in getting a further £1,500. Simon and I have been asked to make another presentation at the next Ward Forum meeting in July. This is to give an update on our progress and, importantly, give us an opportunity for us to thank everyone for their advice and support. For us the Ward Forum was a revelation. It has ensured we got funds we could only dream of and the free manpower to make it a reality.

For details of your local Ward Forum go to:

http://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/200916/ward_forums

Changing direction a little – some reviews of allotment events you may have attended, seen, or heard about.

The Edible Garden Show

Whilst not an ardent royalist, on hearing that some Brentham plot holders had not only visited the show but while there had chatted with Charles and Camilla – a request for a review quickly followed. Kate Human from Brentham kindly agreed and writes:

Tony Donegan, my husband John and I, spent a very enjoyable and interesting day at The Edible Garden Show at Alexandra Palace. It was in its first year at this iconic venue; on a smaller scale than some shows but we were happily occupied for several hours.



No sign of Tony and John but that is definitely Charles!

talked to Prince Charles about Brentham Allotments and I also came across him in when choosing seeds in the Suttons display area.

We listened to Christine Walkden and Pippa Greenwood enthusing visitors about ‘growing your own’ and James Wong, TV presenter and author who was passionate about edible exotics. Though not members of the Chicken Co-operative at Brentham Allotments (see under “Around the Associations” for more on this), we learnt about handling and caring for hens and were amazed at the wide selection of hens on show, from the tiny bantams to large Rhode Island Reds and soft feathered Silkies. Small groups of primary age children were having a wonderful time holding hens and potting up plants. They were from some of the 100 schools across London that entered the contest to design an edible garden. Tony and John

There were plenty of new ideas for keen fruit and veg growers, the Cookery Theatre to help you make the most of your produce, conservation groups such as the Brogdale National Fruit Collection and the National Allotment Society for information. There were gadgets galore and John and Tony investigated the apple presses on show. It was a great day out and well worth crossing London for.

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Froglife Wildlife Workshop



At the end of May, Framfield hosted a Wildlife Workshop organised by the charity Froglife and run by Vanessa Barber their “London Dragon Finder Project” co-ordinator. The project is aimed at encouraging people to create wildlife habitats particularly for amphibians and reptiles. The weather was perfect and Framfield, with its prize-winning wildlife pond, numerous small ponds and tenants happy to show where the resident slow worms lived, an ideal venue.



Wildlife habitats – combining theory....

Best of all, it was not simply the case of an expert preaching to the already converted. Framfield is probably already the most environmentally aware site in the borough, however, most of the participants were actually from other sites in the borough who were keen to learn and, hopefully, will soon be trying to apply the knowledge they gained on their home sites.

...and practice!

The Big Allotment Challenge

It would seem to be an obvious easy option for the EAP newsletter editor – a review of a mainstream TV programme on allotments. Don’t believe it! Obviously, you need to ask someone well-qualified to offer an opinion. Better still ask two: just in case one absolutely loves it and the other hates it. What to do when one hates and one loves it? Worse still what to do when it’s a BBC hit programme and they both don’t think much of it! So let’s start with a review kindly offered by Lynne Casey, the Ealing and Hanwell Allotment Show Secretary, and strongly supported by Eddie Weston one of the show judges

The idea of an allotment challenge was an interesting thought but it was presented in a Masterchef/Great Bake-off format - all shrink-wrapped and easily palatable instead of showing how someone grows and nurtures their plants. I would have liked to have seen all the competitors own home allotments as well. No finger nails where the mud never really scrubs off were shown! As an allotmenteer for over ten years now, I felt the Big Allotment Challenge did not really tell the story of how you look after an allotment and grow vegetables, fruit and

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flowers. It was really about the show bench and cookery a 'competition' rather than a 'challenge'- they are not the same to me. I am not sure many allotment holders would make the large flower displays (unless they were doing them for their church or a daughter's wedding perhaps). Jams and chutneys seemed to be high on the programme's list - but are they for the rest of us? And they had to be made against the clock, with the false eye-lashed Thane testing their taste. Somehow heavy make-up and allotments don't go together in my mind - even if you are on the telly.

The whole concept did not seem real enough to me. The majority of allotment holders don't actually go in for shows. They can be fun but even those who enjoy them don't take them, or themselves, too seriously "It's the harvest time, so look and see what I've grown" is the common attitude. Most people grow for their family and the relaxation and fulfillment one finds on one's plot. It's a very personal thing - no two plots are ever the same with varying produce. Allotment holders always have lots of tips - something which did not seem to come over at all in this programme. Growing produce and flowers on the allotment is not done against the clock as suggested here and having Fern Briton saying you have twenty minutes to make a giant floral display, your time starts now...!

But this was the fourth or fifth most watched programme of the week on BBC 2 and they have already commissioned a follow-up! What's going on? First a quick check – ask the first ten plot holders that I (as editor) come across what they thought of the programme. A resounding majority gave it the thumbs down. As Lynne suggests, the “Challenge” is not a programme of much interest to allotmenters. Just another show in the format that appeals to those who like to choose a favourite character and see if they win or lose in a contest of skill (dancing, cooking, slalom canoeing ...) Harmless entertainment but of little relevance to why so many of us enjoy our time down at the allotment site.

Visit to the Secret Garden



Igor in full flow....

Igor Vaintraub, a soil scientist at the Imperial College and one of the speakers at this year's EAP-AGM, organised not just one, as promised at the AGM, but three trips to his homebase at the College's garden site/nature reserve. Ann Salaun of Brentham allotments writes of her visit:

Around thirty allotment/garden fanatics, mainly from Brentham and the Russells Garden Centre on the Earls Court Road, met on a hot and sunny afternoon at a very friendly coffee house close to South Kensington Station where Igor had reserved a room and kindly supplied refreshments. After a short talk about the joys and merits of the probiotic composting system which he has developed, he and his assistant Eddie led us on a brisk ten minute walk up Exhibition Road to the Imperial College Garden – the Secret Garden

The Garden is well hidden from the public and access is gained through coded gates and a discreet mews. All of a sudden, a substantial green space opens up with large grass areas, established trees and bushes, surrounded by office

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and apartment buildings. The children in the group - it had an age span from 2 ½ to over 80 - had a great time exploring and playing while the adults were given further information by Igor on his probiotic compost and related soil improvement materials that he is currently developing at Imperial. He then took us round the gardens pointing out interesting features. This included time spent round an impressive mound of decomposing vegetable matter which, when mixed together with unwanted foodstuffs, provides the raw material that is anaerobically digested to form the magic final mix. All in all a most successful afternoon made all the more enjoyable by Igor's enthusiasm, knowledge for his subject matter and his confidence in the efficiency of his products.

And finally a site profile of Haslemere allotments and our usual "Around the Associations" item.

Haslemere Allotments

Haslemere allotments are situated behind the houses in Haslemere Avenue near Boston Manor station. We have 72 plots most of which are now split into half plots and 120 plot holders working them. There is a wide range of ages and experience and so there is always someone on hand to offer advice and help to fellow plot holders. We have a lengthy waiting list and are just starting to place people that have been waiting since 2010; hopefully they will think it's worth the wait

Our site is owned by the charity Pathways and last year, following the departure of the Plot Manager, a group of plot holders from Haslemere and our sister site at Northfields decided to approach Pathways regarding the possibility of becoming partially self-managed. It was agreed that the two sites would best be managed separately and at the beginning of the year we were in a position to take this forward and arranged our first AGM to elect our Committee to run Haslemere. We had a great turnout of plot holders willing to support us in this endeavour. Meetings have continued with Pathways and we are hopeful that a formal agreement for partial self-management will be in place soon.



Although the main purpose of setting up a Committee was to organise the self-management of the site, we also arranged our first Community day to start to clear one of our overgrown plots. It's amazing how much work can be done in a couple of hours by a willing group of volunteers and several new beds were dug and a shed painted for the new tenant.

We have organised a couple of plant/seed swap events since. Both went well with

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plenty of people bringing their plants to swap for something different or for plants they hadn't managed to grow themselves - we plan to do this again next year. The Committee has also arranged for deliveries of bark chips which are being used as quickly as they can be delivered, pathways have never looked so neat and tidy (that's the paths and not our landlords!!). We also benefit from having a trading hut next to the allotments where we can buy compost and canes and only have to get the wheelbarrow out rather than the car to deliver.

Sonia Pearce.
Haslemere Allotments

Around the Associations

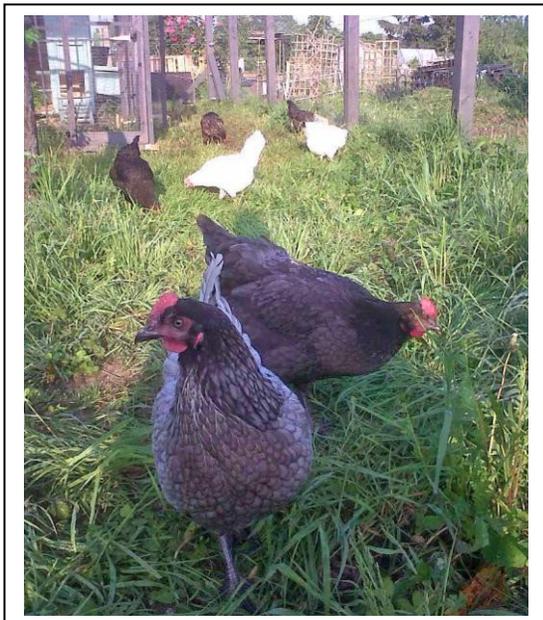
Acton Gardening Association

A short note received from their Secretary

Acton's increasingly popular Open Day, which this year is on Sunday August 31st, already has a guest of honour, proving that Secretary Michael Wale is on duty wherever he finds himself. Unexpectedly having to have an emergency heart operation in Hammersmith Hospital in May where he was afterwards in intensive care, he met top surgeon consultant surgeon Prakash Punjabi and asked him if he would be guest of honour at Acton's Open Day. He explained allotments to his surgeon who said because they were obviously healthy he would come along! He lives in Ealing. Michael would particularly like to thank Les and Paola for keeping his plot in order during his three weeks in hospital and during rehab when Mr Punjabi ordered "No gardening"!

We are sure that all Michael's many friends in the Ealing allotment community join EAP in wishing him a speedy recovery. One thing that he would certainly appreciate is seeing a good turnout to the Open Day at Bromyard Allotments located in Bromyard Avenue, Acton W3, - opposite the King Fahad Academy – don't forget it's on August 31st!

Brentham Allotments and Gardens Society



The Brentham chicken co-operative jointly organised by six plot holders is finally up and running. Brentham tenants had been watching construction of what is locally referred to as the "Chicken Hilton" with great interest for most of the early spring. A few weeks back, the great day arrived and the chickens; six pairs of hens of different varieties finally arrived and have been happily laying eggs ever since. We had hoped to be able to show you a picture of the whole establishment but being a "Hilton" (albeit a horizontal, rather than a vertical one) it is so extensive that the birds are practically invisible in any such photograph. So, we have compromised by just showing you the inner sanctum complete with birds.

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Horsenden Allotments and Gardens Association (HAAGA)

HAAGA is holding its summer show, at All Hallows Church Hall, Elton Avenue, Greenford, on Saturday 12th July. Flowers and vegetable exhibition, domestic, handicraft, craft stalls, refreshments and raffle. Open to the public at 3.00 p.m. Admission free.

Ealing and Hanwell Allotments Association



Ealing & Hanwell Allotment Association

Annual Show

Saturday 13th September 2014
at the Polygon St Mary's Church

open to all

allotment holders and local residents
in Ealing, Hanwell and Acton

bring your friends and family to look around
enjoy high tea and a raffle from 4pm



Pick up a show schedule for the rules at the
Ascott or Searchlight trading huts or for an online version
go to: www.ealingallotmentpartnerships.co.uk
or allotmentshow@gmail.com and we'll email a copy to you.

*The show is affiliated to the RHS, the National Dahlia and Chrysanthemum Societies

This year's show is booked for the 13th of September please put it on your calendar. The rules and schedules are not yet quite ready - so could everyone who would like to enter give it a week or so after which they will be available for downloading from the Ealing Allotments Partnership website. The wonderful picture on the poster is Debbie Fogarty's last year's 'Best in Show' novices basket of veg. This year Debbie is also helping to make the office run more smoothly and bringing us into the 21st century by putting the results on the computer! We have a large band of volunteers, without whose help the show could not go on, but if anyone else would like to offer some of their time to help on the day we would greatly appreciate it. We would also be very thankful if you have any new, or nearly new, unwanted items that you can donate to the raffle. We already have a large hamper, some lovely bird boxes and a white van full of horse manure (delivered to your plot to compost down), all very kindly donated by Mary Reidy.

Allotment Show Secretaries
Elaine Hagan and Lynne Casey
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