



Winter is always a quiet time on allotments particularly so this year with the round of winter storms that we have been getting. The winter edition of the EAP newsletter does, however, give a good opportunity both to look back over the year past and forward to the coming year.

Looking back, the main issues and events of 2013 were probably the coming to terms with the direct and indirect effects of the removal of the Ealing Council subsidy of allotment rents. The direct effects of the large rent increases following the removal of the Council subsidy are hard to gauge. The financial effect, as far as many tenants were concerned, was probably obscured by the welter of price increases in other areas. Reliable statistics are not available but the general impression is that most tenants put a very high value on their enjoyment of allotment gardening and that the number giving up their plots for purely financial reasons has been relatively low. Turnover numbers have increased but not dramatically so. The situation as regards waiting lists varies throughout the borough but the general impression is that the numbers have also not greatly changed.

The indirect effect of the rent increases is much more apparent. There has been a marked increase in tenants questioning the value for money of their tenancies and the extent of Council support that they can reasonably expect in the light of the higher rents. The situation, as Chris Bunting (Ealing Council's Assistant Director for Leisure) highlighted in his presentation on self-management at the 2013 EAP-AGM), is that with rent income balancing expenditure, provision of extra services can only be funded by increased managerial efficiency. This, he argued, could best be achieved by encouragement of self-management. Possibly as a consequence, a marked feature of 2013 has been the formation of new local allotment associations and tenant groups. Some of these are currently looking into, or already actively pursuing, different approaches to self-management. Others are

concentrating on seeking funds for improvements under their current management arrangements. Yet others are working on community gardening projects involving local residents interested in growing flowers, fruit and vegetables but not wishing to take on a plot of their own. Alongside this activity, the longer established local allotment associations are running, and often expanding, their activities.

What can we expect looking forward for 2014? Hopefully, a further expansion of this activity as tenants of allotment sites increasingly realise that the future development of their sites is very much in their own hands. As for EAP itself, the intention is to focus much more on the exchange of information between different sites and associations, and helping to spread “good practice”. The big up-coming event as far as EAP is concerned is our AGM – details below. Try to come along! The AGM itself will provide a chance to air your views on what is right and what is wrong with our allotments. John Bradley will be talking on Blondin’s approach to self-management; the advantages and disadvantages, the benefits that can accrue and the pit-falls to avoid. Igor Vaintraub – who runs a start-up bio-tech business associated with Imperial College, University of London – will be giving a crash course on soil structure, composition and ways to improve the fertility of your plot. Add in an opportunity to catch up with old friends, and make new ones, in a convivial atmosphere and you have an event not to be missed.

EAP-AGM

EAP will be holding its AGM at 7.30 p.m. Wednesday, March 5th in the Polygon, St Mary’s Church, South Ealing Road

Followed by Guest Speakers

John Bradley

“Self-Management - the Blondin Approach”

and

Igor Vaintraub

“Soil Structure and Fertility – how to improve it”

Refreshments will be available

Keep up to date by checking out “Latest News” on the EAP website www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk and signing up for the EAP newsletter using the “Contact Us” link

Site Profile

Horsenden Allotments

The three Ealing Council allotment sites located on the south side of Horsenden Hill, Whitton Place, Whitton Drive and the Horsenden site have a long history of close collaboration and are usually referred to collectively as the Horsenden Allotments. Whitton Place, which is the administrative site and the location of the trading hut, has twenty eight plots. Whitton Drive has forty five plots and Horsenden currently has twenty plots but has the capacity for a further twenty (or more) five pole plots which will hopefully be cleared and “fit for use” by 2015. Whitton Place and Whitton Drive are accessed directly from Whitton Road East. The Horsenden site also has an access off Whitton Road East but is currently accessed from Melville Avenue.

Following a self-management initiative, the recently formed Horsenden Allotments Association (HAA) has taken over responsibility for the day-to-day management of the three sites. Responsibility for fences, gates and water services remains with Ealing Council. HAA, through its Committee, will offer support to its plot holders. Its key priority will be to maximise all of the three sites’ resources by engaging HAA members in helping support the well-being of our allotments and their future use for generations to come. It will also be looking to engage the wider community and support the use of allotments to further build on the community feel we hope to achieve.

We are currently creating an area for community gardening at Whitton Place. The idea is to give local residents, who do not wish to take on the responsibility of a plot but would still like to grow flowers and some vegetables, the opportunity to join us at the allotments. We have had one successful working party at Whitton Place and intend to hold a few more at all our sites. The plan is to organise a working party on the first Saturday of the month from March onwards. This not only gets the sites into good repair but hopefully, with a social event afterwards, brings the community of all three sites together.

Our trading hut at Whitton Place is run by Horsenden Allotments and Gardens Association (HAAGA) which has been part of our allotment community since 1932/33. It offers a wide range of gardening supplies at discounted prices. At the start of the season, we also have a bedding plant sale. Everyone is urged to join HAAGA to get the benefit of these discounts. Each year, under the aegis of HAAGA, we also have several successful shows (spring, summer and autumn) held at the local church hall. All members of the local community are welcomed to these shows.

We did have some recent problems on one of our sites but hopefully these will soon be resolved by the fitting of new gates. The funding for this work is via the Ward Forum - a full grant was obtained. In the coming year, we aim to improve the infrastructure of our sites. This will mainly involve work on the main paths, maintaining their size and keeping them level. One of our longer term aims is to obtain funding for composting toilets. If we are to encourage the children and our more elderly residents we definitely need to have these services on site.

Joseph Mangor,
HAA Communications Officer

Around the Associations

Friends of Ascott

The Friends of Ascott Allotments was set up on a freezing cold day in March 2013, to address the void left by the sad loss of volunteer site manager Kim Matthews. The Friends is an entirely independent group concerned solely with the management and enjoyment of Ascott Allotments, with membership restricted to Ascott plot-holders.

Any Ascott plot-holder can join in and everyone on the site is encouraged to participate, as much as or as little as you can. There is much that we can do, and need to do, and although there has been a lot of participation, we still need more people to step forward.

In a few short months we have:

- Maintained hedges
- Cleared plots
- Removed mountains of rubbish
- Improved wildlife habitats
- Held a master class on fruit tree pruning
- Built a shelter in the orchard for social activities
- Hosted three barbeques attended by around 100 people
- Helped collect rents
- Assisted letting most of the vacant plots



The Friends Inaugural Meeting

We are looking at taking on more responsibility for the site, such as collecting the rent, and we encourage everyone to help as much as they can. We have a responsibility to this wonderful site.

If any Ascott plot-holders think that they are not on our email database and would like to receive news and notifications, please give your email address to one of the Coordinators: John Kenton & David Johnson (meetings); Jack Lalor & Tom Alley (finance); Safi Ferrah & Maggie Mizzi (communication).

Ealing Dean Allotment Society

The Ealing Dean Allotments Society (EDAS), based at the Northfield Allotments, held its inaugural meeting on January 14th at the Northfield Community Centre. Thirty plot holders were present. The society's name, as explained by Christina Fox - the meeting chair, was chosen to commemorate the fact that the Northfield site, is located on what was originally Ealing Dean Common; on land left for the purposes of allotment gardening by the then Bishop of London in 1832. In fact, records indicate that an earlier incarnation of EDAS dates back to this time presumably meaning that EDAS can legitimately claim to have oldest established allotment committee in Ealing!

The driving force behind setting up of EDAS is the desire of ploholders to introduce a self management system. This had been with the full endorsement of Pathways, the trustees that own and currently manage the Northfield Allotment sites.

The purpose of the inaugural meeting was to formally set up the present day society, to agree on a Constitution and to elect a Management Committee that could both negotiate the terms of a lease of the site and take over day-to-day management of the site. All three aims were successfully achieved. The new Management Committee is pictured on the left and the formation of the Society enthusiastically endorsed by the ploholders on the right.



Even before its formal formation EDAS has been active on the Northfields site organising working parties to clear vacant plots. A website detailing its current activities and future plans has been set up <http://ealingdean.blogspot.co.uk> - well worth adding to your list of allotment favourites!

Brentham Allotments and Garden Society



It may not be much to look at but we are very pleased with it. The large manure-leaf storage area that the Council kindly constructed for us many years ago had in practice been unusable for about the last five years because it was reduced to a quagmire every time it rained. Result – deliveries of manure and leaves were simply dumped in the site car park. The big step forward is that BAGS has now financed the installation of a hard-core base and the deliveries end up where they were always supposed to be – in the

manure pit - and not piling up in the car park in front of an empty storage area!

Next job, is trying to sort out some of our main paths – which are also reduced to a quagmire by the winter rains. Any useful advice from sites that have already successfully solved this problem would be very welcome!