



The winter edition of the newsletter provides an obvious opportunity for both looking back at the past year and looking forwards towards the coming year. From the viewpoint of EAP, the most significant change in 2014 was that an increasing number of sites have opted to take on some form of self management. The two Pathways sites, Northfields and Haslemere are now largely self-managed. Ascott, and most recently High Lane, have followed the lead of the three Horsenden sites in coming to local management agreements with Ealing Council, It is too soon to judge the longer term effect of such changes but early signs suggest an encouraging upsurge of interest and enthusiasm of tenants in the upkeep and the development of their sites.

Looking forward towards 2015, continuing cuts in government grants to local councils suggest more difficult times ahead. In the case of Ealing, the recent move to a balanced allotment services budget in which rental income matches council expenditure will hopefully help protect the allotment service. The difficulties experienced in Ealing are nationwide. Most of us have little knowledge of what happens on other Ealing allotment sites let alone what happens outside Ealing making forward planning extremely difficult. With this in mind, we have asked Richard Wiltshire, a national expert on the subject of allotments, their organisation and management, to be our guest speaker at the EAP-AGM in February.

One of our best protections if difficulties do arise lies in support from the local community. Many sites already have interactions with local residents associations, local schools and other organisations. EAP feels that this is something to be strongly encouraged and is planning a question and answer session at the AGM calling on local experience and expertise on such subjects as site development, community interactions and sources of funding.



AGM 2015

EAP-AGM

***EAP will be holding its AGM at 7.30 p.m. Wednesday, February 18th in
the Polygon, St Mary's Church, South Ealing Road***

Followed by Guest Speaker

Richard Wiltshire

“Allotments – a Broader View”

and

***A Question and Answer Session on Site Development and
Sources of Funding***

Refreshments will be available

The AGM evening is a chance to get together with new and old friends to discuss things of common interest. As usual, we shall try to keep the formal aspects of the AGM as brief as possible. As agreed at the 2014 AGM, there are two proposed changes to the EAP constitution that will be up for discussion. Details of these changes can be accessed via the EAP website at: <http://www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk/the-partnership/agm/2015-agm>

A New Approach to Composting – you read it here first!

We all want better compost, faster and for less effort, and Ealing's Allotments Service is trialling a novel process combining two fairly traditional composting processes which may offer just that. The process was developed at Imperial College by Igor Vaintraub, an ecologist and plothead at Brentham Allotments. At the heart is the use of strains of yeasts and bacteria which support one another's life cycles and in so doing aid the breakdown of green and kitchen waste.

The first step is to make a fairly traditional compost pile from allotment and garden waste, spraying each layer of material with a solution of yeast and bacteria, then covering the pile to prevent leaching. Any allotment or garden waste may be added, but larger items should be cut up to speed the process and make the material easier to handle. The pile is left to simmer for a few weeks, until everything has turned brown (but the material will otherwise still be recognisable as what you put in – leaves, stems, fruit, etc.)

The second, parallel step, is the fermenting of kitchen waste in the Japanese (bokashi) style. This requires that kitchen waste – including meat, fish, dairy and processed foods – is

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sprinkled with an inoculated bran (containing basically the same yeasts and bacteria as before) and put into an airtight container to ferment for 2-3 weeks. Again this doesn't visibly change what's in the bin, but there will be a mildly vinegary odour that deters rodents and foxes and makes the material pleasant to handle.



So far, so much like two traditional composting techniques. The magic comes when the two – the green waste pile and the inoculated kitchen waste – are brought together in a new, aerobic pile as shown opposite. The sugars in the kitchen waste, and the oxygen in the air, feed the yeasts and bacteria which rapidly generate high temperatures and reduce the pile quickly to useable compost. Using this technique it is not unusual to achieve temperatures in excess of 60C and compost can be made in just a few weeks, and the bacteria continue to enhance food uptake and protection for the plants grown in the compost produced.

Contrast this with the more traditional method of composting on allotments: a year or more to produce something usable; the need to turn the pile regularly to reintroduce air; having to exclude processed food and most kitchen waste because it attracts rats - resulting in a small amount of material after a long wait.

In the initial pilot, now running for a couple of months, we've processed around 200kg of kitchen waste and as much green waste as a large allotment plot and a small garden can produce, and the resulting compost is already in use in a controlled trial. We'll report back on the results of this and several other trials due to be established around the borough. The only downside so far? Getting enough kitchen waste from neighbours to fuel the pile!

*Stephen Cole,
Ealing Allotments Manager*

Planting to the Beat

Environmental groups so often have to chase money to improve their space, so it came as a surprise to receive an email asking for views on a fully-funded project to plant trees in Blondin Park close to Blondin allotments. Ealing Council had been working behind the scenes with Trees for Cities for a new woodland of 10,000 saplings. A few key people were asked to a site meeting to meet the principals and view the proposed designs and species at which time a little tweaking was done. It then became an army manoeuvre to get everything in place. This included the delivery of tracking to protect the ground from the many vehicles delivering such things as storage container, mulch (tons of it) and of course the trees themselves.

Registration for volunteers was carried out on-line – 450 registered several weeks before the project date at which time registration closed. In hindsight this was a mistake because

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people did back out last minute and one company who offered 100 personnel only managed to send 35. Volunteers from the local area did turn up with a jaunty step with some registering on the day and in all 240 people joined the day. There were some amazing people who wanted to do something for the community. Some because they remember the park as a child and wanted to keep the link. One gentleman travelled up from Essex – or was it Kent? who never misses a tree planting session no matter where it is!

Once we had got all the marquees up, caterers swiftly moved in to provide hot drinks – never believed I could order a freshly ground coffee in the park – and for it to be free was a bonus. At lunch time 100's of plates of curries were provided for the helpers – again at no cost to the volunteers.



My PlantingTeam!

The planting went very well. There were a group of us described as the “super volunteers” who had an early morning demonstration on how to plant a tree, what to plant and were assigned groups of people to make it work. Yes it was my watch where a certain member of the press was seen to be planting a tree upside down! Well she did arrive after everyone else and also missed the zumba style warm up - oh how mad we must have all looked. Musical delights were offered throughout the day - even spotted a Blondin plot holder who was part of the choir offering Christmas carols.

Seven hours later, most of the trees were planted and volunteers went home with a satisfied feeling - no doubt the aches and pains followed. We took the Sunday off but then re-appeared on the Monday with a few volunteers who could not make the Saturday session and also a team of Community Payback “volunteers”. Mulching was the order the day and again on Tuesday when the rangers and Trees for Cities staff turned out. On Wednesday a smaller team of Community Payback people came and to our relief the woodchip ran out early afternoon.

We need to revisit again in the new year so that the remaining trees can be wood chipped once a delivery has been organised.

Planting to the Beat on 6th December was a great community experience, a great day. Visit the website www.friendsofblondin.org.uk for the species list and a few photos.

*Linda Massey
Blondin Allotments Association*

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Around The Associations

High Lane (Hanwell) Allotment Association

High Lane Allotments are tucked away behind Mayfield Primary School within the Brent River Park. It is a small site consisting of 41 plots but with a real country feel to it. As a result of a chance question posed at the Hobbayne Ward Forum by one of the plot holders, we were advised that the council were encouraging sites to move to locally managed status. I met with Steve Cole and he explained what this entailed - all relatively straight forward, provided that there are enough tenants willing to be a little more active. On our site this proved happily to be the case. We held an initial meeting at The Fox Inn to discuss what needed doing, which in essence turned out to be:



High Lane – a wintry view!

- Write a Constitution to form an Association
- Decide what Officers we needed and ensure that there were enough people willing to stand
- Determine with whom we could open a bank account
- Hold an AGM open to all tenants.

There are numerous examples of Allotment Association constitutions on the internet and Steve Cole also forwarded some from other sites in the borough. We cherry-picked the clauses that suited us, or were repeated in most if not all others. That done, we decided the officers needed and size of committee and checked that we had enough volunteers to fill the posts. We discovered that the Metro Bank in Ealing offers a Community Current Account specifically for clubs and societies. On 9th December we held an AGM to approve the constitution, choice of bank, and appoint the officers. So the High Lane (Hanwell) Allotment Association was born - not to be confused with the High Lane Allotments Association in Stockport!

Why did we decide to take on Local Management? We feel that having an Association responsible for managing our site will instil a greater sense of community. The fact that we can keep 15% of the rent collected to spend as the Association chooses is another attraction. Being a managing association also opens up the possibility of applying for grants to improve the site. The fact that tenants remain contracted to the council and that the council still has responsibility for fences and water supply also helps.

Simon Higginson

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Ealing and Hanwell Allotment Association – a potted history

Ealing and Hanwell (Boston Road) Allotment Association will celebrate their Centenary in 2017 – that is correct - 100 years of service. In 1917 during World War I, the demand for allotments began to increase across the country and Ealing Council decided to take over a piece of land in Boston Road, Hanwell. The allotments were let on Good Friday 1917; until this time most of the allotmenters were strangers to one another, but they soon began to get friendly and as time went on began to take an interest in the site as a whole. This led to discussions between the plot holders and there was a general feeling that an Association should be formed to look after the interests of the plot holders and also with the object of obtaining supplies at a cheap rate and the Association was duly formed in June 1917.

In 1939 when the Second World War started, the Association urged the Council to provide land for war-time allotments and it was through its efforts that allotments were allocated in Walpole, Lammas and Elthorne Parks, Northfields Recreation, Northfield Playing Field, Almond Avenue and Chartered Banks. This brought the number of plots under the jurisdiction of the Association to around 2,000 including permanent and war-time plots. At the end of the war, with the return of wartime emergency sites to their peacetime uses, the number of Association members reduced substantially – but for a number of years continued to remain steady at around 600-700. Following the sad and untimely death in 2012 of Kim Matthews, the site manager for Ascott and Membership Secretary of the Association, membership fell to around 200 with plots on a range of sites around Ealing and Hanwell but particularly on the Haslemere and Ascott sites. With the start of 2015, we are keen to attract new members. Membership of the Association is open to any gardener or allotment holder in Ealing and a membership fee of just £1.50 a year allows access to garden and allotment essentials at discounted prices. If you are interested in joining the Association, you can do so at one of the Associations trading huts.

The Association's main activities currently centre round its two trading huts – see the flyer overleaf for details of their location and opening hours – and the running of its Annual Show. The Annual Show, which dates from 1919 and is registered with the RHS, is held every September, in St Mary's Church Hall, St Mary's Road, W5. It is always a great end of season event for plot holders and local residents providing a chance to catch up with friends from the various allotment sites and enjoy tea and cakes whilst wandering amongst the many impressive entries. The show includes classes for Vegetables, Fruit, Flowers and Plants and "Domestic" which includes chutneys, pickles, cakes, wine and beer! There is also a Junior section which will be expanded this coming year.



Debbie Fogarty & Nigel Sumner

The "Veg" section of this year's Show



Ealing and Hanwell Allotments Association Trading Huts

Join the Ealing & Hanwell Allotments Association for just £1.50 per year and get cut-price garden and allotment essentials

We buy in bulk and pass the savings on to you...

Reopening After Winter Break Saturday 14 February 2015

- **Multi-Purpose Compost**
- **Seeds**
- **Composted Horse Manure**
- **Plant support canes**
- **Accessories such as gloves and watering cans**
- **Spring bedding plants (at Searchlight)**
- **Seed potatoes, garlic and shallots (to order)**
- **Second-hand tools and books (subject to availability)**
- **Incinerators (subject to availability)**
- **And much, much more...**



To join the Association simply pop down to one of the Trading Huts during the opening times below

Trading Huts:

- **Searchlight: adjacent to Haslemere Allotments, Haslemere Avenue, W7 2AU**
Opening Hours: Saturdays 12-3pm
Sundays 10-12pm
- **Ascott: inside the Ascott Allotments gates at the end of Queen Anne's Gardens, W5 5QD**
Opening Hours: Saturdays 2-4pm
Sundays 10-12pm