



It may be winter-time and a quiet time on the gardening front but there is a lot going on behind the scenes. Top of the list is the battle to prevent building development on the Northfields allotment site. The resistance is being co-ordinated by Christina Fox, chair of the Ealing Dean Allotment Society pictured above next to local MP Rupa Huq flanked from left to right by local Councillors Theresa Mullins, Fabio Conti, David Millican, Paul Conton and Gareth Shaw and plottolders Christine Charles and Jon Wilkins. An update by Christina and information about how you can help is given below. Other newsletter items include information about a joint initiative by EAP and the Council to seek lottery funding for the provision of composting toilets on Ealing allotments, information on Ealing-in-Bloom plus the usual profile of one of Ealing's allotment sites and a summary of recent local association activities in our "Around the Associations" feature.

Northfields Update

The first I knew about the proposed development on the site was an email from one of our local councillors saying "I hope I'm not the first to tell you..." In fact Gareth was the first – our landlord Pathways came in second. One piece of good news is that the amount of site proposed for development has now been reduced from the original 10% to 5%. This was

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apparently decided after advice to Pathways from Ealing council's planning department that if they ditch the associated parking spaces they are more likely to get planning approval. But they still want to go ahead with a five to six storey building for social housing and four town houses for sale (within easy reach of a Crossrail station). We already lost about 60% of our site to development in the 1970s. Next to this a further 5% may not seem large but the loss of their beloved plots to their owners, the fact that we already have a waiting list of over seventy applicants and the knowledge that if this proposal does go ahead, Pathways will almost certainly want to develop more in future means that this is a battle we cannot afford to lose.

I know lots of people, especially fellow allotment plot holders in Ealing, have wondered how they can help us fight the development. Please sign our petition. There's a link on our website: www.ealingdean.co.uk. We launched a new petition for the New Year and it already has over 1,000 signatures. The more local signatures we have the better. If you think you can give a home to a paper version (in a trading hut perhaps) for plottolders who are not online then do contact me and I can send you a paper version. (chair@ealingdean.co.uk)

Please write letters or emails to your local councillors, MP and newspaper. Tell them why you believe allotments are important and should be protected. Writing really does help. And if your councillor is on the planning committee it might make all the difference when they come to vote on approving or rejecting Pathways' proposal. To find out who your ward councillors are go to: <http://ealing.cmis.uk.com/ealing/Councillors.aspx> To find your MP and their contact info try: www.theyworkforyou.com Also, please also sign up to our newsletter. There's a link on our website www.ealingdean.co.uk. Once the plans are submitted in May/June, we will need people to write letters of objection (again). Don't worry if you are not sure what to write. We'll be offering templates and suggestions to help you write the perfect letter. A big difficulty is keeping the momentum going and making sure everyone is aware of what is happening. Please tell everyone you know about how the allotments, wildlife and their heritage (we are the oldest allotment site in London) are under threat. Please point people in the direction of our website. Post on social media - Facebook is a great way to spread the word.

Before Pathways can submit their plans for planning approval they must do an environmental study. This has to take place in Spring when all the hibernating critters wake up. This has been good news for us – giving us some time to do more fundraising and research. But I know that these next few months will fly by, so we have to make the most of our time. We are looking at various planning and legal issues.

Finally, I'm in desperate need of a good fundraiser. If you have any expertise in this area I'd welcome the advice and help. The legal route is bound to be expensive. We are doing everything we can to raise funds for this (see the account of Northfields brilliant Halloween event in the "Around the Associations" section). If you can spare it – please make a donation via the website www.ealingdean.co.uk. We need to raise at least another £2,000 to pay for the legal advice we need.

*Christina Fox,
Chair EDAS*



EAP-AGM

**7.30 p.m. Wednesday, March 8th
in the Polygon, St Mary's Church, South
Ealing Road, W5 5RH**

Followed by Guest Speaker

Paul Olding – Urban Vineyard

and

a presentation by the

National Citizen Service (NCS)

On its youth volunteer programme

Refreshments will be available

Dates for your Diary

**Thursday March 8th
EAP-AGM**

**Mid- April
Entry form for Ealing-in-Bloom
Available on EAP website**

**Sunday May 14th
Brentham Plant Sale Day**

More details regarding the times and venues of these and other events will be posted when available in the “Latest News” section of the EAP-website:

www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk

Composting Toilets



Most allotments now recognise the value of working with their local community for safeguarding their future and toilets are pretty much essential if sites are to welcome in the local community, e.g. by hosting school visits, running plant sales days and other social events. Whilst some sites in Ealing already have toilets, not all do, particularly some of the smaller sites. The EAP and the Council have been looking at ways of improving this situation and are introducing a scheme whereby those sites that have the funds can purchase composting toilet units at a heavily discounted rate. We are also making grant applications to help provide toilets for the smaller sites that do not have sufficient resources to purchase their own.

What is a composting toilet?

Composting toilets are not connected to mains water, sewage or electricity so are ideal for use on



allotment sites. They can work in various ways, but they all aim to break down human waste so that it decomposes into harmless, useable, organic matter. This is done via an enclosed environment that allows for aerobic decomposition. By ensuring the right conditions, i.e. not too wet, microorganisms such as bacteria break down the waste material. The toilets are designed to separate urine and solid waste. After each use, a couple of handfuls of absorbent material such as sawdust, shredded paper and/or dry compost is added to the solid waste to 'soak up' excess liquid and prevent anaerobic - and smelly - decomposition. Urine is fed to an external soak-away where it rapidly and harmlessly degrades.

There are a number of commercially available designs. The ones shown above – installed about a year ago at the Whitton Place site in Greenford - come in an easily erected kit form from Dunster House.

Pros and Cons:

Pros: Require no mains water or sewerage connection.

No planning permission needed for composting toilets - they're not classed as 'permanent'.

Increases allotments green credentials.

Low maintenance – no frozen pipes to worry about and thus available year-round.

Improved access to toilet facilities helps less able plot holders, and encourages a diverse, inclusive range of community visitors.

Cons: Misuse, i.e. litter or using chemicals such as bleach may adversely affect composting process. Plot holders will need clear guidelines on how to use them.

The solid waste tank will need emptying at some point. This simply involves sliding out a closed composting bin and setting it aside for completion of the composting cycle. The resulting material is suitable for use in for example, a flower bed. Whitton Place allotments have had a composting toilet for a year and haven't had to empty it yet.

The Way Forward

The plan is to purchase toilets from Dunster House. The Council, working through EAP, have negotiated a very good bulk purchase discount and purchase via the Council avoids VAT liability. The precise cost depends on such factors as whether or not the toilets need extra construction such as a concrete base and/or accessibility aids but is likely to be of the order of £1000 - £1300. They are designed to require minimal maintenance (no painting needed), do not smell, have a solar powered light and pump for water for hand-washing, and can readily be made wheelchair accessible. For more details please refer to: <https://dunsterhouse.co.uk/eco-composting-toilet> A number of sites have installed these already and the feedback has been very positive. The units have proved to be easy to install - they do not need to have a large tank underneath as some other ones do.

Ealing allotment sites fall into three main categories. Sites, particularly the larger sites under Local Management, which have access to their own funds and are able to finance



their own toilets – who we advise to contact EAP in the first instance. Sites, that have a constituted Allotment Association with its own bank account but limited funds, who we highly recommend apply to their local Ward Forum for funding – more details on this in the next edition. Sites that have Council appointed site Managers but no Local Association. The EAP and Ealing Council Parks Department are making grant applications over the next few months to help fund toilets on such sites. If successful, the Council will match fund the project, i.e. they will match any funds raised through this grant application in effect doubling the amount raised.

Hilary Jayne (EAP committee member)

Are you Bloomin' Proud of your Allotment/Allotment Site?



Then why not enter this year's Ealing in Bloom competition?

Allotments and allotment sites are judged twice, usually in the first week in June and again in the middle of July so there's plenty of time to start planning and sprucing things up and it might be just the incentive you need to get 2017 off to a great start!

An award winning plot will contain a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers, all in good condition and free from pests, disease and weeds. Evidence of planning for a succession of crops, active composting and water conservation will attract additional points as will well maintained paths.

An award winning site will be judged on the general condition and maintenance of plots, paths and entrances which should be well maintained. Additional points will be awarded for Community & Wildlife Areas, hedges, flower beds, etc

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There are 4 classes that can be entered:

Small Allotment Plot – An allotment plot up to 190 sq m/7.5 poles (entries only accepted direct from plot holder)

Large Allotment Plot – An allotment plot over 190 sq m/7.5 poles (entries only accepted direct from plot holder)

Small Allotment Site – A small allotment site (council or private) judged on the standard of cultivated plots (entries from Site Manager)

Large Allotment Site - A large allotment site (council or private) judged on the standard of cultivated plots (entries from Site Manager)

Why not give it a try? First prize will receive an engraved trophy (yours to keep for a year) plus a gardening voucher; Second and Third prizes receive a gardening voucher.

If you would like to receive an entry form when they become available in April please email: ealinginbloom@gmail.com Site managers if you would like a poster to display on your gate/notice board please let us know.

Finally, once you've grown all your wonderful crops and made your preserves don't forget the Ealing & Hanwell Allotment Association Annual Show on the second Saturday of September, at the Polygon, St Mary's Church, St Mary's Road, Ealing W5. Open to all allotment holders and residents of Ealing, Hanwell & Acton. For a copy of the Show Schedule and Entry Form when it becomes available please email allotmentshow@gmail.com

*Debbie Fogarty,
Ealing-in-Bloom*

Site Profile

Cleveley Crescent



Cleveley Crescent allotments are situated just north of the Hangar Lane Gyratory system in the north-western corner of Ealing. It is a small site, nestling around a curve of the Brent, tucked away behind houses facing on to the northern extension of Hangar Lane towards Alperton to the west and Cleveley Crescent to the south. There are 23 plots, mostly around 5 to 7 poles in size, currently shared between 14 tenants.

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For many years, Cleveley Crescent has been managed by the site manager of the much larger, nearby Brentham allotments located on the south side of the A40 just to the west of the Gyrotory system. The two sites are as different as chalk and cheese. At Brentham with over 190 plots and 135 tenants, there is rarely a quiet moment as I, as site manager for the last six years, know only too well. So a visit to Cleveley Crescent offers, to me at least, a period of quiet tranquillity. Several of the tenants have had plots at Cleveley Crescent for many years and the turnover of tenants is relatively slow. Everybody knows each other and seems to get on very well together and on a tea-time visit on a fine day, there is a good chance of being invited to join in for coffee and cake with a group of local friends and tenants.

Although one of the smaller of Ealing's allotments, it boasts a number of excellent gardeners who do well in the annual Ealing-in-Bloom competition. The site itself came third in the "Small Allotment" category in 2015. We missed out on this last year's competition but plan to be back in 2017.



In addition to the tenants caring for their own plots, three of the plots at Cleveley Crescent are rented out to "MindFood" a local social enterprise aiming to help people recover from mental health problems through growing and selling food. Set-up by local Acton resident Ciaran Biggins, MindFood runs "Growing Wellbeing" courses intended for people who might be experiencing common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. The courses are designed to be a fun balance of learning how to

grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables whilst becoming more mindful of ways to improve our wellbeing. Their produce is sold throughout the local area; at Acton market in the summer and through the Edible Ealing vegetable box scheme. For more information about MindFood visit www.mindfood.org.uk

The links between Brentham and Cleveley Crescent over the years has been fairly tenuous. Cleveley Crescent residents coming over to the Brentham site to pay their rent, and the occasional visit to the trading hut or to collect wood-chip or manure but not much two-way social interaction. With the new move towards strengthening collaboration between nearby sites, the hopes are that these links can be strengthened. Hopefully, Cleveley Crescent will both benefit from, and contribute to, the social events at Brentham and some of Cleveley Crescent's success in the Ealing-in-Bloom competition will rub off on Brentham.

Patrick Williams



“Around the Associations”

Billets Hart Allotments



Last October we held the first of, hopefully, a regular series of talks on seeds, plants and other subjects relating in some way to allotments. It was titled “Adventures of The Seed Detective” given by Adam Alexander, a passionate gardener and trustee of Garden Organic, at the William Hobbayne Centre on the Lower Boston Road. The William Hobbayne charity are our landlords and were very supportive of the idea.

A charge of £7 was made, which included a glass of wine, and over 50 people turned up to hear Adam who has been involved with gardening his whole life and is a passionate advocate of saving, growing and sharing rare, often endangered and delicious heritage vegetables. He told about his exploits travelling the world and seeing, first hand, various methods of cultivation and how he obtained unusual seeds to bring home, introduce and share with other interested parties. He had been to Aleppo and brought back Syrian cucumber seeds just before the troubles started. As well as growing them himself, he has been sharing these with Syrian Refugees. He showed us “Sour tomatoes” he had discovered in Burma and then grown at home. They were called sour not because of their taste but because they are used in oriental sour cuisine.

A Q&A session was held at the end of the evening and more wine was consumed and a raffle held with prizes donated by the plot holders. In order to promote the event a short video was made with Adam which is available to view on You Tube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJISlijEPPI Alternatively, search for Adventures of The Seed Detective. Or access Adam’s website at www.vegginoutwithadam.com

Adam also brought packets of seed which were available for a donation and 160 packets were snapped up. It is hoped that this year will be the year of the heritage plants on our site

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and that we will also have some of these for sale at this year's Hanwell Carnival on our regular stand so please pop by in June to Elthorne Park and check it out.

The evening was considered a great success and now I'm searching for another talker for this Spring so I'd welcome any suggestions or contacts that people might have and will happily open the talk to the general Ealing allotment community.

Stepheh Haskell

allotmentstephen@gmail.com

Jubilee Road Allotments, Perivale



Our collective effort to improve plots, remove rubbish and clean up unused plots was rewarded with a 'Commended' Award from Ealing in Bloom, 2016. This is a wonderful encouragement to all our members who, in addition to working their own plots, have contributed to the overall improvement. My personal thanks to everyone who helped. The 'challenge' will continue through 2017.

A special thanks to Ealing Council Parks team and Rangers who responded wherever, and whenever, they were able. The Council provided new fencing, removal of rubbish, and, perhaps most of all, prompt and practical guidance.

The bee keepers reaped a good crop of honey this year. Tom Bickerdike was further rewarded by achieving a first place award and the Middlesex Cup for best in show in light or medium honey at the national honey competition, presenting a sample of honey from hives on the allotment. Tom also gained three firsts and two second places in other categories and two other Middlesex Cups.

Despite unusual weather conditions, the majority of crops returned good results. It was good to see new members also reaping the benefits. We can see that they have aptitude for allotment gardening. One new member, Yanging Cui, delivered the best plot, crammed with a fine selection of produce.

At the end of 2016, we have 15 vacant plots, 10 of which have been brought into fair condition by volunteers weeding and general cleaning up throughout the year. Once a plot had been tidied, each was sown with green manure, primarily Phacelia, with some experiments using rye grass, alfalfa, field bean or mustard. The rye grass and alfalfa did not grow well which may be due to general weather conditions the old weeds came back to fill the gaps. Nevertheless, having the plots under control made it easier, and quicker, to clean up at end of year and plough in the green manure that did well. For our ground, which has significant clay body, Phacelia has proven best choice. It germinated fast and covered ground quickly enough to discourage returning perennials and annuals. After



strimming, the green manure rotavated or dug in easily. When left to flower the increased insect population was apparent. On one plot we allowed the plant go to seed, gathering in a seed harvest for sowing in 2017. Our remaining 5 plots are still in a poor state despite attempts to remediate; time and resource were not on our side.

We are planning a fruit and vegetable competition for members, the first for many years, to be staged during September. Depending on demand, an earlier competition may be arranged. Last year we had 16 new plot members, many of whom cultivated excellent produce. We hope a competition will inspire other budding gardeners and get them to enter, at the very least, for the fun of it.

Our continuing challenge is attracting new members. We coped with a large new cohort this year. A few more keen individuals will be welcome. It seems the large plots (5 pole) are intimidating for potential new members, we will be looking at how best to create smaller plots and where they can store tools.

We have been seeking funding from Perivale Ward forum for a composting toilet and expect to get confirmation on or before the next forum meeting in March.

Michael Bunyan

Site Manager

Email: jubilee.allotments.perivale@gmail.com

Northfields Allotments



Back in September my husband suggested we have an open day to raise some money. Halloween was coming up and a dark, spooky site could be a great way to get the message out to the people of Ealing and raise some much needed cash in support of our campaign against the threat of building on our site. We didn't have much time to prepare but, luckily we had had organised summer open days with around 400 visitors - so we knew what to expect. Well we thought we knew...

In the first ten minutes of opening the gates I had counted 280 people on the clicker. In the end I gave up counting. I'd estimate that around 2,000 people turned up, most of them in costume. Who knew there were so many children in Ealing? I gather quite a few people came early with small children – when it wasn't so scary. And then came again later once it had got dark.

Our ploholders came up trumps yet again. Manning stalls, making chutney and decorating

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their plots with Halloween spookiness. Yazmin,

Elise and Jessica were our witches - they did a fabulous job. But a huge amount of credit goes to plotholder Dominique who was our set designer and main organiser. The whole site had the right amount of magic, fun and spookiness.

Tesco generously gave us 50 pumpkins and we bought another 100. We spent three nights carving them. It was hard work but they looked fabulous all lit up and lining the paths. The day after the open day some of the children set up a stall and sold them to passers by. Which helped to add to the day's takings. The pumpkin seeds we scooped out didn't go to waste - they were used for a yukky dip - which was great fun. Although we also had a lucky dip for those that didn't want to get messy.

Rupa Huq MP came along to give medals to our sunflower competition winners. Our local councillors from Walpole and Northfields wards also came along to show their support. It was great to see them - but also for them to see the support we have from Ealing residents. We made a lot of friends that day and we managed to raise funds to pay for a planning consultant.

It is sad that once again an allotment site is under threat. Hopefully we can all help the decision makers on the planning committee see allotments through our eyes for the wonderful places they are.

Finally, I want to say a big thanks to all of you who have given your support - it means a lot to us.

Christina Fox
Chair@ealingdean.co.uk



Friends of Ascott

Ascott have recently received funding from Ealing Common Ward Forum for 14 concrete raised beds for use by gardeners finding it more difficult to garden standard beds as they need to bend down so much. As shown opposite, work on erecting of these beds is already under way. Other items covered by the grant which are being worked on are restoring wildlife and wetland/pond areas with new planting, bird boxes and a new perimeter fence.

Safi Ferrah



The Horsenden Group



Not too much activity over the last few months but luckily as the weather was pretty mild we were able to continue our monthly volunteer mornings right up into November. As we have three sites under our association we have to spread the volunteer dates between them - which means sometimes progress at each of the sites feels slow. Our last couple of the year were focused on our smaller site Horsenden - we first helped to start digging trenches to lay more water pipes - not an easy task as the ground was solid. Better water access to the plots will hopefully help encourage new allotmenters to that site as plots there seem to be the slowest to go. We also cleared a wide access way from the main road down through the forest wall of brambles to the plots area - which would have been an impossible task without the help from Ealing Rangers and their equipment.

Something that has badly needed doing - but which has been put off as we knew it would take up a huge amount of time, effort and man power - was suddenly done in a couple of days - thank you Jon and the team. It is a great start towards enabling plot holders to get a car in to nearer their plots and hopefully allow future deliveries of things such as manure and bark. This will eventually be a big improvement (once it's finished) on the narrow side alleyway access they currently have.

December was even quieter on the sites except for our annual Christmas Drinks which had a great turnout. Many HAAGA friends came along for a bite to eat and a glass or two of cheer. It's great that these events are popular and reminds us what a lovely bunch of people we are lucky enough to have as members. Hopefully 2017 will continue in the same spirit!



*Milly Mills,
Chair, HAA*

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Finally, many thanks to Diana Crawshaw for the photo of the crows at Carbery enjoying their Christmas lunch on the carcass of the family turkey and to Hilary Jayne for the Christmas get-together of the cat and a resident fox at Framfield.

