



GCAA NEWS

Newsletter of the Golf Course Allotments Association

Spring 2014

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Association will be held in the Community Hut on Saturday 24th May starting at 11am. All ploholders are invited. The main business will be to elect the Committee for the next year. If you wish to stand for the Committee, please let Debby Rossiter know by 5 May. New members are encouraged to come forward.

The Committee decides what has to be done to maintain our site in good order, arranging repairs and staging events such as our Annual Show.

The costs of maintenance and site improvements are met from our fundraising activities, a grant from Haringey Council and the efforts of the Committee members and other helpers.

The Annual Show is our big event. In recent years, hundreds of garden enthusiasts have come along, attracted by coverage in the National Gardens Scheme directory and on television. The Committee also arranges other events like the Christmas Party.

Many improvements have been made to our site over the years, the latest of which was installing lights in the Community Hut powered exclusively by solar panels. But there is still much work to do, for example, to improve the state of the road surface.

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At the AGM, you can hear what plans there are for the coming year and say what you think of them. You can raise any other relevant issue but please inform the Chair beforehand. You can put yourself forward for election to the Committee: if you would like to work on the Committee, the AGM papers will tell you how to go about doing this. Coming to the meeting gives you a chance to have your say and to influence how things are run. The meeting papers have been sent to all members by e-mail or by post. They are also on the site notice board.

After the meeting, there will be

refreshments and a plant sale. Please contribute any plants you don't need and let someone else enjoy them!

Annual Show

This year's Show will be held on Sunday 7 September. The horticultural entries will be judged once again by Stella Winskell-Moore; May Grace will judge the domestic entries. There is still time to grow those prize-winning flowers, vegetables etc. The schedule of competitions will be available soon on the website: looking at last year's schedule will give you a good idea of what items you can show.

Full up?

The waiting list for plots on our site is longer than it's ever been but letting plots has never been more difficult! The next eligible person on the waiting list may have put their name down several years ago and are no longer interested or may have changed address. This delay in finding tenants is often the reason why plots are sometimes vacant and overgrown.

Tullio has now agreed a plan

with Haringey's Head of Parks for managing our long waiting list. Those on the list are being asked to confirm their interest every quarter. This will ensure that the waiting list contains genuine applicants with their up to date addresses.

To manage this process, Golf Course Allotments has installed a post box on the railings near our main gate (see photo below). Mail deliveries should start soon! The postal address is N11 2AS.



Spot our new postbox!

Young Gardeners

It has been a busy Spring so far for the Yg's:

- There are now 17 members, six of whom are new recruits. The children have worked very hard and every session has been very productive.
- A number of the parents are skilled gardeners: they have participated actively in the activities and made voluntary donations to the club.

- There is a strong team of GCAA members who provide expert help regularly. Thanks to their input, the children's gardening skills are coming on in leaps and bounds.
- There has been strong support from outside: in the past month, very generous donations of equipment and materials have been received from both Thompsons of Crews Hill and Sunshine Garden Centre. We are immensely grateful to both these organisations.
- Plot 85b is in very good order. We now have soil of the highest quality in every bed and in the polytunnel border. Happily, the waterlogging problems we experienced during 2012/13 have not recurred.
- The plants on plot 85b are thriving as are those the children have planted out on their parents' plots. But there was a small setback recently: with frost predicted for the night of 14th April, most of the tender plants (peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers) were moved to Nick and Clare's greenhouse on 88b. The intention was that the paraffin heater would protect them from the cold. Unfortunately, the heater blew up during the night, covered every plant and the greenhouse itself in soot and black cobwebs and then

went out. No plants were saved and thus the fund-raising plant sale planned for 27th April had to be cancelled. This was disappointing, but the YG's will quickly pick themselves up!

Any children wishing to join the group should contact Nick Winstanley (plot 18b).

Bonfire news

Haringey Council has decided to ban fires on its allotment sites during the period April to September. The next date it will be possible for us to have a fire will be in October.

On the days when fires are allowed, the Council would like us to burn only diseased plants, perennial weeds, stalks and prunings. You should keep these until they are dry so that they will burn more quickly and with less smoke.

In recent years, we have come under increasing pressure to avoid having bonfires. Those who live in the neighbouring streets don't like our smoke blowing over their gardens at weekends, especially in the summer. Most of the weeds we dig up on our site can be composted without any danger and many

plottolders do this. Others take weeds home to add to Haringey's garden waste collection or direct to their nearest recycling centre. Our neighbours on both sides of the fence appreciate that. Also, see *The Burning Question* below.

Visitors to our site

Recent visitors to Karen Sellars' plot include her triplet siblings Janet and Nancy from the USA. They came to London to celebrate their 70th birthday.



Guest gardeners: Norman and Elin

Norman grew up in wartime Croydon where his father was a doctor. Soon after the war ended, he entered the army and served in Aden, Egypt, Cyprus, Northern Ireland and at the Ministry of Defence headquarters in Whitehall.

After retirement, his home base was a large house in Cumbria with an acre of gardens, much of it growing vegetables.

In 1994, he moved back south and settled down a few yards away from the Golf Course Allotments. He and his late wife Charlotte had no difficulty getting a plot on our site to carry on gardening. Now that he was living in London, Norman was able to put to use his knowledge of PG Wodehouse's books. He ended up guiding visitors around the West End haunts of Bertie Wooster and was also a popular speaker at Wodehouse Society conventions.

Norman points out that despite their association with the West End, some Wodehouse books have plenty of gardening references: Lord Emsworth won prizes for large pumpkins and for growing hollyhocks; he even kept pigs. Also, Aunt Dahlia makes an appearance from time to time.

Norman and Charlotte took on plot 97B in 1994 and spent a long time turning around its dreadful state. Sadly, Charlotte died in 1999. Norman is now married to Elin, whom he met in 1993. Elin is originally from Port Chester, just outside New York City. Her father grew up during the Depression, but his family always benefitted from

a plentiful supply of fresh vegetables on the estate where they lived.



Norman and Elin dig up leeks

This year, Norman and Elin are growing peas, onions, spinach, carrots, parsnips, leeks, beetroot and sweetcorn. Elin claims she has never had luck with peppers and wonders if our climate is too cold for them.

Bees on site

Bees will soon arrive on plot 119, near the pond. Building work is almost complete on the compound which will hold plottolders' hives.



Bernita and Shane at work

The Burning Question

by Andrew, plot 45

The matter of bonfires has always been a contentious issue with members of the GCAA and until recently I have always enjoyed the occasional pyre. But having recently started to study environmental sciences with the Open University, I have come to realise just how disastrous bonfires are for the environment. As a consequence, I have decided not to carry on the practice. The rest of this note might make you think about the issue.

Climate change is happening right now. There can be no doubt that this is due to the rising level of carbon dioxide and other gases - such as methane and nitrous dioxide - in the atmosphere. The increased level of the "greenhouse gases" is altering the environment to such an extent that many species are struggling to survive.

The main point of difference between scientists is about how much the increased levels of greenhouse gases will affect our environment. Most agree that it leads to climate change: extremes of weather such as we have

seen in the past twenty years. Meteorological records are being set every year; this winter's rainfall level is just one example. If the present extinction rates of our planet's species are allowed to continue then we are due for another great mass extinction and we will be as historic as the dinosaurs are now! Bonfires are a small contributor to this effect.

An outdoor bonfire is an easy way to get rid of our weeds, wood etc. But in doing so, it produces a nasty cocktail of nasty, lung busting chemicals, particulates and carbon dioxide. This is not the only way! Eastbound from our allotments is the Edmonton recycling plant which employs the latest technology to dispose of our waste by using oxygen injection techniques to raise the temperature within the furnaces so that it burns with fewer emissions while generating electricity for the community at the same time.

In my mind, it is better to let the Council collect any waste we have and dispose of it in a way which respects our environment. This would be easier if we had

collecting bins and regular collections. Some ploholders take green waste home to be collected by the Council or drop it off at their local recycling centre;. Haringey Council are one of the last London boroughs to still allow bonfires, but at the moment the question of whether to burn or not to burn is still yours!

Looking back



The Christmas Party was well attended. Photo: Jenny Kruss talks to *Your Allotment* editor Marcia MacLeod

Dates for your diary ...

24 May: Annual General Meeting
29 June: George and Serge's plot open to the public;
7 September: Annual Show

Contributions and comments to

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