



THE PLOTHHOLDER

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk

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Autumn Social

Sunday 29
September
12pm – 2pm

Grand Raffle;
BBQ; Produce
Show for all ages
(fruit, veg,
flowers, jams,
chutneys, cakes);
Pumpkin
Competition;
Scarecrow
Competition;
Home Produce
stall; Beer Tent;
Children's Tent;
Café –
full details on p.2

Regeneration of the Seed Store starts!

by Barry Houlston, from the Seed Store rebuild team

'Well (as used to be said in *Hi-de-Hi!* – for those of you who remember)... Hello campers!' Yes the day has finally arrived and works are now underway to reinstate the old Stable/Seed Store building as per the agreed option overwhelmingly voted for at the last AGM. The work began on the 22nd July and is expected to be completed by around the end of August. This activity is planned to leave the present building with overhauled walls,



repaired as necessary, and a completely new roof. All doors and windows are to be renewed and the internal arrangement worked up to deliver a functional layout. The contractor is having to take great care during the contract to maintain the integrity of the existing 'listed' Bushy Park boundary wall which forms the back of the building. This is, as we have discovered on close scrutiny, not in ideal condition.

Please bear with the contractors TC&D Construction during the course of the works and help them to help us by being as accommodating as possible.

The contractors are instructed not take 'orders' from any well meaning allotment holders, but only from those officially managing the contract on the 'collective' behalf. However, if there are any issues requiring action please do not hesitate to draw these to the attention of any Committee member.

Finally to use an expression well used in *Blackadder*... 'I say Hurrah!!!'

The team: Dima Cernakof, Ray Sakalys (boss) and Jedemanas; and below, Nick Baylis, left, (plot 110f), our architect, with Mindaugas Bernatavicius ('Mindo'), Lead Surveyor from TC&D Construction.



Send contributions for the next newsletter to jenbourne@btinternet.com

News from your Committee

WELCOME TO NEW TENANTS

Annie Green (plot 196b); Rajka Lintl-Vlahovic (plot 6b); James & Alex McCann (plot 106); Penny Cave (plot 170f); Kevin & Beverly Hayes (plot 69); Gerry McNally (plot 101b); John Woods & Alison Richards (plot 37b); Sarah Page (plot 54); Oliver & Kathryn Hanff (plot 20b); Dipak & Claudine Jones (plot 20f); Rilla Darling (Plot 107); Kay Fiona Cook (plot 118); Linda & Brian Ham (plot 99); Matt & Seema Jones (plot 123); Lorna Thornton (plot 86f); Rhiannon Jones & Athene Jones (plot 197b).

THE OFFICE Open every Sunday, 11am – 12 noon.

THE PLOTHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Bob Trevillion, Chair (plots 136b, 137)
David Harnden, Deputy Chair (plot 152)
Chris Nix, Secretary (plot 12f, 146f)
Carol Dukes, Treasurer (plot 77)
Jenny Bourne, Social Secretary (plots 27f, 28b)
Alan Buckingham, Website (plot 185f)
Ashley Catto, Sheds (plots A,H)
Gill Hiley (plot 50)
Barry Houlston (plot 133b)
Tricia McLellan (plot 105)
Martin Scotton (plot 59)
Nick Baylis (plot 110f)

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Council appointees: Tania Mathias (Chair), Jonathan Cardy, Jerry Elloy, Gareth Evans

Tenants: David Harnden (Deputy Chair), Susan Saunders (Secretary), Bob Trevillion, Carol Dukes, Barry Houlston

JOIN IN THE RUNNING OF THE SITE

By putting yourself forward for the committee at the AGM in November. Nomination forms will be available during October.

Get Ready for the Autumn Social

Sunday 29 September, 12.00 – 2.00pm

Time to boost up the feed on your monster pumpkins and towering sunflowers, to start planning the Produce Show entries, to dream up your amazing scarecrow designs – this year's theme to be celebrity based – maybe a tennis racquet or two will feature!



Scary Scarecrow from 2012

Yes, it's time to start thinking **Autumn Social** once again! And the great news is that, builders willing, the event will take place around the new rebuild and café volunteers will be serving from the cool new office and café premises.

Meanwhile, the usual shout for volunteers to help with the events on the day:

BBQ; Raffle; Produce Show;
Scarecrow Competition; Home Produce stall;
Children's Tent; Beer Tent;
The Café (always!)
and help with setting up and clearing away.

If you may be able to lend a hand please contact me or Anne Wingrove for the café:

anne.wingrove1@btopenworld.com

Looking forward to seeing you all on the day for our bigger, better Autumn Social! Watch the notice board and website for latest info.

Jenny Bourne **jenbourne@btinternet.com**

Your Allotments Need You...

Our allotments are kept running by a band of volunteer plotholders who:

- Maintain the pumps
- Maintain the roads, communal areas and facilities
- Bake cakes and staff the café every week
- Help with social events and plant sales

Please think about how you could contribute. We always need more helpers, and it's also a good way to get to know more of your fellow plotholders.



If you could spare a bit of time, either occasionally or on a regular basis, please get in touch with Jenny Bourne (see above) who can put you in touch with the various team leaders.



The views expressed elsewhere in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the committee.

Plant Sale 2013

19 May 2013

After a rearranged later date due to the extremely cold spring start, this year's Plant and Seedling Sale was our best yet, thanks to everyone who brought plants to sell, who came to buy and, most importantly, helped to organise and run the event on the day.

Thanks to Ruth Walker whose efficient 'project managing' meant that the plant offerings were arranged in categories – this year there were tomatoes and peppers galore but squash and beans were in demand, reflecting the difficult early growing season. The café volunteers worked their socks off to meet the non-stop demand for cakes and drinks.

As always with our social events, there is a continuous need for more volunteers to go on the cake making and café rota so a big shout please, to any plotholder who would be willing to do the occasional Sunday – it's a good sociable morning, you get to show off your baking skills and it keeps our RPA community life going!

Please contact Anne Wingrove, café co-ordinator at anne.wingrove1@btopenworld.com

We made an impressive total of £445.44 net – £267.30 from plant sales and £178.14 from the café.

Thanks again to everyone who helped, brought and bought plants and who turned up on the day to make this such a well-run and enjoyable social event!

Jenny Bourne, Social Secretary



Gurgle, gurgle, blup...

By Carol Dukes, RPA Treasurer, Plot 77

This was the year that the rhubarb went mad. We don't really eat jam or puddings so there was only one thing for it: 'Dad, can I have your old wine-making kit?'

Dad came up trumps with demijohns and airlocks and all sorts of faintly surgical looking bits of tubing, plus a very battered paperback called "First Steps in Winemaking" by the redoubtable Mr C.J.J. Berry of Andover, Hampshire. The book is undated (printed by Holmes & Sons, also of Andover, Hampshire) and hints of a bygone era with advice such as asking your chemist to mix up a formula of ammonium sulphate, magnesium sulphate, citric acid and potassium phosphate (measured in grains) to use as a yeast nutrient. Sadly, Superdrug didn't want to know...

In my Dad's winemaking heyday you could buy everything you needed at Boots. They've since exited the home booze market but I found everything I needed online (www.brewingathome.co.uk but there are others).

Inspired by the photo of Mr C.J.J. Berry wearing a tweed jacket and smoking a pipe, doing something with a demijohn in his kitchen (lovely gingham curtains) I set to work on the rhubarb mountain. The instructions were to cut 6lbs of rhubarb into short lengths and 'crush it in a crock with a piece of hardwood.' Hmm, yes, well, I have a food processor... a piece of equipment unknown to the Berrys of Andover to judge by another photo in the book of the good Mrs C.J.J. crushing apples by hand with a sort of wooden barrel affair clamped to her kitchen sink (beneath the gingham curtain).

You add water to the crushed rhubarb and a Campden tablet (for sterilisation) and leave it for three days before adding precipitated chalk to reduce the acid (I think) – it was meant to make it fizz but mine didn't really do much. Then you strain off the pulp and add yeast, nutrient, sugar and lemon juice and put it in a demijohn with an airlock. Top tip: use caster sugar as granulated takes for ever to dissolve, even with vigorous shaking.

There's a thing called a hydrometer which looks a bit like a thermometer. You put a bit of your solution in a jar and then float the hydrometer in it. The more sugar there is in the solution, the 'thicker' it is compared with water so the hydrometer will sit higher in it. You need to make sure you have enough sugar to start with to

enable enough alcohol to be produced. If your finished wine is too low in alcohol it won't keep. Mr C.J.J. Berry provides charts to help with the calculations, although it looks like it can get complicated if you want to keep a very accurate track through the whole process of adding extra water/sugar etc – I'm not sure I'll bother.

The fermentation took off with such force that the 'proto-wine' was coming out the top of the airlock, so I emptied a bit out and that seemed to sort that. Four weeks later and the fermentation has slowed right down to an occasional 'blup' so I'll now have to read the next bit in the book about racking and finings and all sorts.

In the meantime, I've just mashed 2kgs of strawberries with some sugar and water (full recipe on Guardian website). I'll leave that a day and then strain it through muslin (John Lewis haberdashery here I come) and do the yeast-and-demijohn stuff.

And next? Courgette glut – you may have met your match!



Tarragon of Virtue episode 4

A wry romantic look at allotment life by Helen Nix

In our last episode Rowan and Tarragon had become an item, and Rowan had unexpectedly given away the secret to his prize enormous pumpkins: his special blend of green manure, which he had shared with his fellow ploholders at the seedy swap. That's not all he shared with them: in our last episode he had proposed to our heroine, Tarragon, right then and there at the swap. This episode finds us at the autumn social.

Monty wandered up and down the assembled entrants of the annual pumpkin competition, deep in thought.

"Penny for them?" said a quiet, soulful voice behind him. He turned to her. "Oh hello Tarragon," he said, his heart beating quickly. "How are the wedding plans going?"

She shrugged, her hair shimmering red in the golden light. "Oh you know how it is: it's a lot of hassle planning the happiest day of your life, and I've got so much on anyway, what with one thing and another. I keep quietly pushing the date back, Rowan keeps trying to pull it forward. It's like a game of chess more than a marriage ceremony. He'd marry me in a field, I think, but I think if you're only doing it once, you should do it properly." She shook her head. "But I was asking you for your thoughts, not mine."

He looked at her, his dark eyes locking with her green ones. "I don't blame him for wanting to marry you fast, I would myself. If I were in his shoes."

She reached a hand out to him, her brow furrowed. "Monty, I..."

He continued quickly, "but you should marry him when you're good and ready, and not before. In a field or in a church, it doesn't matter. It just has to be right, doesn't it?"

"Yes," she said, looking away. "It just has to be right." They walked on for a moment, looking at the various pumpkins, and paused at Tarragon's pumpkin. Monty furrowed again. "It's the damndest thing," he said. "In theory this should have been a classic year for pumpkins. Good periods of sunshine, regular deluges of rain... I mean, yours is a beauty, but most of the others..." They looked down the row of small, blemished, irregularly shaped pumpkins, some festooned with mould.

Monty shook his head. "I can't abide a runty pumpkin, but honestly, there's only yours, mine and Rowan's that have reached any kind of size at all..." Tarragon turned to Monty in surprise. "Actually, that is odd, this year of all years, when Rowan had shared all his growing secrets, even giving people his patented green manure..."

"Yes, I remember. I wonder..." His voice tailed off, before he gave her hand a quick squeeze. He grinned cheerfully. "I'll be back in an hour, in time for the judging." As he dashed toward the gates of the site, Tarragon looked after him, her hand still tingling from his touch.

She jumped as Rowan flung his arms around her from behind. "For goodness sake Rowan, you nearly gave me a heart attack!" she shouted, and biffed him on the arm.

He grinned, "I love it when you get all feisty. Look, I'll get you some hot sausage to make you feel better." As he dragged her to the barbecue for a hot dog, Tarragon looked back towards the gate which Monty was dashing towards. What was he up to?

An hour or so later, the pumpkin weighing had begun.

Normally this was a real highlight of the autumn social, but this year, there was a slightly maudlin air to the proceedings as one after another, the little mis-shapen pumpkins were weighed. The judges had left the three largest ones until last. As two brawny men struggled to load up Rowan's epic pumpkin into the Ikea bag scales, a gravelly voice rang out loud and clear: "Stop weighing that pumpkin – there has been foul play!"

There was a sharp intake of breath from all the ploholders, and a terrible silence descended. "What foul play?" demanded Basil, the judge.

Monty strode forward, waving a notepad and a sheet of A4 paper. "Convulvulus, that's what. Back at the seedy swap, I wrote down that Rowan here gave away several packets of his green manure – sweet clover and hairy vetch. But I've consulted the register and checked the plots: every ploholder who got Rowan's green manure has got convulvulus! And look – here's the packet." He tapped some of the seeds out into his horny fingered palm, the evil, dark convulvulus seed among the rest of the green manure, perfectly concealed. He shook his head in disgust. "All those ploholders planting a pernicious weed like that, in good faith, guaranteeing themselves runty pumpkins. It makes my blood boil."

Tarragon turned to Rowan in horror. "Is this true?"

Rowan bellowed, his face purple with rage. "Of course it's not true! I've been winning that pumpkin competition for years. I don't need to cheat to win!"

The colour drained out of Tarragon's face. She knew the truth at once. "You're right. You didn't need to cheat, but you did. Winning that pumpkin competition had become an obsession with you, and you couldn't leave anything to chance. It's the same thing with you and me. You keep putting me under pressure to marry you quickly, before I change my mind. That's not the basis for a life together. I'm sorry, Rowan. It's over between us."

Monty stepped forward again. "And it's over for you on this allotment too Rowan. Deliberately introducing weeds onto the site is grounds for immediate expulsion from the plot." He held out his hand. "Give me your gate keys, please, and I'll escort you from the allotment. We'll drop off any tools you are storing here within the week."

A terrible cry rent from Rowan's throat, as he ran towards Monty and punched him, hard in the jaw, knocking him to the ground. There was a moment, as Monty stood up, wiping the blood from his mouth, his dark eyes brimming with fury. "I said, can I have your keys please? Now, Rowan." Rowan's eyes locked with Monty's, before he threw his keys at Monty's wellies. As Monty reached down to pick the keys up, Rowan ran into him from behind, but at the last minute Monty stepped to one side, and as he did so, Rowan fell headlong into his own giant pumpkin, to a massive round of applause.

Tarragon ran to Monty, tears in her eyes, and reached in her pocket for a handkerchief to mop up the blood that was beginning to clot on his lower lip. "Monty, I'm so sorry. I can't bear to think about what that man's done."

He smiled and shook his head, touching her hand lightly, as it rested on his face. "It's alright Tarragon, you've nothing to apologise for. It's all going to be fine now."

And as she stood there, their fingers entwined for the first time, she realised that it wasn't just going to be fine, it was going to be really great.

Buried Treasure

I dug the bullet up at the beginning of June. My guess is that it is a bullet from the First World War era. I suspect a soldier dropped it when the allotments were occupied by the Military and they used the stables here at the RPA.

When I went to Twickenham police station the police confirmed it was a live 303 round.



These bullets, if fired, can kill at well over a mile. There was quite a bit of form filling and the officer carefully put it into a plastic barrel-shaped container with paper padding for 'ordnance disposal'. He apologised for the paperwork but thought I clearly did not look like a terrorist having taken all of my details. I was in the police station for about 40 minutes!

If I had hit the bullet's percussion cap hard then I suppose there was potential for detonation. However, me being a baby boomer and my father a Commando during the second world war (he witnessed the German surrender in the Eastern Mediterranean) I do have a bit of insight into the military – especially as my dad was the machine gun/sten gun expert in his team!

Barry Houlston, plot 133b

■ If you have any curious 'finds' from your plot please contact jenbourne@btinternet.com

Not So Secret Sheds...

No Mystery Shed Competition this time, but here's a cartoon someone sent to Jenny Bourne knowing she would see the funny side!



"The allotment committee does not tolerate perfect sheds."



An image to cool you down, and a reminder of the long, hard Winter we had – until recently!
Photo: Jenny Bourne

Amazing Maize – a History *by Graham King*

Maize (sweetcorn) is a popular crop on the allotments, but to one group of people in Mexico and Guatemala it is more than just a staple food. Indeed, it could be said that it helped them survive an invasion.

To the Maya, the largest surviving indigenous population of central America, the cycle of planting, growing and harvesting maize is central to their religion. Their religious iconography includes a 'world-tree', strikingly similar in appearance to the Christian cross and possibly raised by their Tonsured Maize God, whilst the life-cycle of the maize crop itself is identified with the self-sacrifice, journey into the underworld, and ultimate resurrection of the hero twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque.

When the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, the Maya were thus able to avoid cultural annihilation – by interpreting and assimilating the new religion with its crucified and resurrected central figure. It is still possible to visit sites such as the church of San Juan Chamula built by the Conquistadors, complete with images of Catholic saints that are identified by the locals with pre-Columbian deities, and in which the syncretic religion encompasses shamanism, ritual intoxication and chicken sacrifice!

The Mayan civilisation boasts great achievements in architecture, literature and astronomy – including the Long Count calendar, which on 21st December 2012 marked the start of a new b'ak'tun of nearly 400 solar years and a new world cycle of 13 b'ak'tuns.

So this winter, as you reach into the freezer for another corn-cob, spare a thought for the remarkable culture from whence this plant came.

Ashley Directs Traffic for Mallard Family!

Opening the allotment gates last week I noticed a Mallard followed by 6 chicks in a line hugging the opposite pavement heading down Park Road. The mother waddling away and the chicks scuttling along as fast as they could go.

I followed at a discreet distance to see how they got on.

After crossing the road they headed into a cul de sac off the main road, turned back and crossed over the main road escorted by yours truly.



After skirting the 'Swan' pub (appropriately enough) they crossed the Lower Teddington Road where I stopped some more cars and they trooped off hanging a right through some buildings and eventually hopped off a low wall and jumped into the river with no harm done.

By the time I had got home the beetroot I had on the boil was well and truly cooked.

Ashley Catto, plots A, H

How to contact us:

You can leave mail for the Committee in the letterbox in the shed by the gate, or email us via our website

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk