Inside this issue:

Page 2
Committee News
Bonfires
Workdays
The Vehicle Gate

Pages 3 & 4
The Autumn social, all prizewinners and donations for the raffle

Page 5
More on The Seed Store rebuild

Page 6
Are you missing ‘Tarragon of Virtue’? Don’t worry – Helen Nix’s crime mystery ‘Mrs Maple’ starts in this issue.

Page 7
AGM 2013 and winners of Best Plot awards
Jam Yesterday Jam
How to contact us

We did it!
Nick Baylis explains how.

To arrive home and find you’ve been burgled can be pretty devastating, but to find your home burned down is even worse. To many, the Seed Store building, which was destroyed by fire in 2009, represented the physical home – the core – of the Royal Paddocks Allotments. Replacing its burnt-out remains was never going to be easy.

Before the fire, entering the old Seed Store could feel like going back to a bygone age. In some ways it was charming – with the acid-green painted shop fittings and the heavy wooden counter, where you needed to show your membership card for the Hampton & District Allotment & Gardens (with an annual sub of £1) ‘to be shown when trading’. Bamboo canes, watering cans, twine and seeds were tidily arranged around the walls, and were dispensed along with a receipt in copperplate handwriting by George Harmsworth and others in their immaculate dungarees. But the space was invariably cold and damp and, in particular, dim. Not exactly inviting.

The series of buildings were always somewhat basic in their construction and had been maintained on a make-do-and-mend basis. The fire in 2009 not only brought down the roof but also the solid masonry walls, each being dependent on the other for their stability... Continued on page 5

Send contributions for the next newsletter to jenbourne@btinternet.com
The vehicle gates will be locked on the 24th, 25th and 26th December, the 31st December and 1st January.

Plotholders will still be able to harvest their parsnips and brussels without someone else having to leave their loved ones just to lock and unlock the gates.

Festive Period Gate Closing

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Autumn Social 2013

Sunday 29 September 2013

This year a double celebration – a get together at the end of another growing season plus the completion of the Seed Store rebuild. An efficient team got the gala tents up early, then the judges got down to the difficult job of awarding the prizes in the Produce Show and the Scarecrow competition – hard decisions to be made and a new category of ‘Best in Show’ to add to the head scratching – the ornamental sweetcorn a worthy winner! Thanks to Ruth Walker, judges and all who helped make it run so efficiently. It was a memorable moment when Barry and Nick cut the ribbon to officially ‘open’ the Seed Store rebuild and we could see for ourselves the spacious interior and imagine how it might be used.

The BBQ team – Sue Croft and family, Jenny Trevillion, John Greaves and volunteers – did a brisk trade, as did Home Produce, thanks to Marguerite and Hilary, and the Beer Tent Team – Carol, Mark, David and Alan, not forgetting the barrel! The café volunteers, co-ordinated by Anne Wingrove, worked a two-shift rota to cope with the demand. Andrew Hanson and Michael de Podesta from the NPL provided an entertaining pumpkin weigh-in as the monsters were wrestled onto the scales – Martin has promised not to enter next year! Read Dr Michael de Podesta’s blog about the weigh-in on http://protonsforbreakfast.wordpress.com/2013/09/30/weighing-the-perfect-pumpkin/. Finally the Raffle and quality prizes donated by local businesses – thanks to Joanie Fulton who, with Gaby Armstrong, co-ordinated this popular event. Congratulations to winners and entrants for all the competitions.

Sunshine, competitions, hotdogs, a convivial gathering of plotholders, families and friends – what a terrific day for an Autumn Social! And its success was reflected in the combined Social and café total net profit of £512.87.

Café and volunteers
Throughout the year the café volunteers serve up delicious home-baked cakes and refreshments, making around £30 – £60 a week, funds that are invested in RPA maintenance and improvements. It’s all on a volunteer basis – no contribution too big or small. New volunteers are always welcome to bake and/or take a stint on the weekly rota – meet your fellow plotholders and be a part of the RPA community. Come along to the café on Sunday morning or contact anne.wingrove1@btopenworld.com

Thanks to Alan Buckingham, Jem Negus and Jenny Bourne for taking the stunning photographs of the Autumn Social. More on the RPA website at www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk
And the winners were...

**Flowers**
1 Boula Rice (47)
2 Denise Warren (142)
3 Julia Laichbury (131)

**Veg**
1 Annemarie Lochar (60)
2 Phil Alexander (18)
3 Jackie Petherbridge (190)

**Alliums**
1 Boula Rice (37)
2 Steve Todd (80)
3 Isabel King (57)

**Brassicas**
1 Liz Rigge (83)
2 Martin Croft (76)
3 Denise Warren (142)

**Legumes**
1 Isabel King (57)
2 M Ike M CIinn (145)
3 Boula Rice (44) and Ashley Catto (A) – joint winners

**Squash**
1 Liz Rigge (83)
2 Denise Warren (142)
3 Julia Laichbury (131)

**Fruit**
Apples
1 Hilary Griffiths (84/85)
2 Ruth Lewis (22)
3 Boula Rice (34)

Pears (in fact was quince)
1 Amy Sims (51)

**Stone Fruit**
1 Denise Warren (142)
2 Phil Alexander (18)
3 Jenny M itchell (144)

**Veggies**
**Monsters**
Age up to 8
1 Patrick Neilan, age 6 (190)
2 Florrie and Ernie Lewis, age 33/4 and 22 months
3 Freya, age 8 (155)

Age 9 – 13
1 Bethan Griffiths, age 12 (84/85)
2 Robert Griffiths, age 10 (84)
3 Lily, age 10 and Lauren, 11 (102)

**Cake**
1 Jo Box (160)
2 Gaby Armstrong (33b)
3 Bethan Griffiths (84)

**Scarecrows**
Age – up to 9
1 Rowan, age 4,
2 Steve Todd (80) – 24.1kg
3 Rufus Storey, age 4 (95f) – 5.6kg

**Biggest Pumpkin**
1 Robert Griffiths, age 10 (84/85) – 105.4kg
2 Bethan Griffiths, age 12 (84/85) – 84.3kg
3 Rufus Storey, age 4 (95f) – 5.6kg

**Football Medals**
‘Gareth Bale’ – 1 Robert Griffiths, age 10 (84/85) – ‘Gareth Bale’ – Young Plotholders
2 Patrick Jake Neilan, age 6 (190) – ‘Army Man’ – Adult Plotholders
3 Bellas, age 10 – 16

**Other Veg**
1 Martin Scotton (59) – 124kg
2 Patrick Neilan, age 6 (190) – 92cm
3 Lily, age 4 (84/85) – 1m.40

**Other**
1 Ruth Walker (21f) – ‘Captain Gardener’ – pirate scarecrow
2 Patrick Neilan, age 6 (190) – ‘Army Man’
3 Bethan Griffiths (84) – ‘Boris Johnson’

**Canning**
**Chutney**
1 Jenny Bourne (27f)
2 M artin Croft (76)
3 Amy Sims (51)

Tomato and apple – absolutely gorgeous, lovely clean flavour
Plum – a nice versatile chutney.
Rhubarb and orange – nice bright flavours. Beetroot – tasty chunks

**Jam**
1 Ruth Walker (21f)
2 Hilary Griffiths (84/85)
3 Dan Reed 155

**Best in Show**
1 Liz Rigge (83)
2 Paul Smoothy (199)

1 David and Jenny Gilbert (30) (also BEST IN SHOW)
2 Jessica Williams (28f)
3 Ashley Catto (A)

**Other**
£50 voucher for La Cloche at The Lion, Wick Road, Twickenham
£10 voucher from Squire’s Garden centre
£10 voucher from A Pizza and Peroni at The Railway, Victoria Road, Tweddington
£10 voucher for AG Miller’s Quality Butchers, Waldegrave Road, Tweddington x 3
£20 voucher for Nordic Walking taster session + 1st group session x 2
£40 voucher from Bar Estilo, Tweddington
£1 load of finest manure from Old Farm Stables, Hampton, delivered to your plot!
£30 voucher from Laverstoke Park Farm
£30 voucher from Laverstoke Park Farm
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£30 voucher from Laverstoke Park Farm
We Did It! continued from front page

...Ideas for a replacement building had been churned around ever since the fire, most particularly a prefabricated Alpine-style timber log chalet. That wasn’t well received.

A Seed Store Rebuild Subcommittee was set up in January 2012, holding regular meetings at The Lion in Wick Road. Whatever the outcome of the discussions, the consensus of a majority of plotholders would be needed to take any project forward. Members of the subcommittee held a broad range of views as to what should be done – from a basic timber shed to a full rebuild of the old buildings, plus bells and whistles. The Royal Paddocks are lucky in that amongst the plotholders there are people with a wide range of skills and expertise. For this project, Nick Baylis, an architect, and Barry Houlston, a chartered surveyor, were ‘volunteered’ to take the lead. Whatever solutions were proposed had to have a robust case behind them. Through a lengthy decision-making process, involving flow charts and reality checks, the subcommittee was able to narrow down the options to just three on which plotholders were able to vote. Doing nothing was not an option, as the remaining walls were deteriorating and becoming increasingly hazardous, and the lock-ups were coming to the end of their useful life. At least the pigeons were happy.

The biggest driver was, of course, cost. It was felt that we should try to complete the project using existing funds, without the need to raise rents or to issue ‘bonds’ to plotholders as a way of borrowing money. A set of realistic options evolved, from a new bespoke timber shed (non-Alpine, and with a slate roof) to a full four-bay rebuild (too expensive). Some of the team wanted to see solar panels, electrical supplies, and so on, but these were neither practical nor within budget.

Realistically, we could only afford a fairly basic ‘shed’, be it timber or brick-built. The option selected at the AGM in autumn 2012 was for a three-bay brick building with a pitched slate roof. With its sympathetic appearance and longer life span, this was an easy decision. In the event, we were able to re-use a proportion of salvaged bricks from the fire, and surprisingly the use of natural slates was not that much more expensive than the flat-roof option. The design also sought to overcome some of the drawbacks of the old stable building: two of the bays were opened up as one, and additional natural light was allowed into the building by fitting a roof light and adding large, glazed opening doors to the end wall, facing south. Furthermore, by using white roofing felt (rather than black) and by not installing a ceiling, a lighter, airier feel was achieved.

We went through a lengthy process of shortlisting contractors, trawling plotholders for recommendations, and then following up by talking to builders to gauge their interest and whether or not they were appropriate for the work. By these means we narrowed down the list to five preferred contractors. After tendering, we were left with just two, both of whom were very similar in price – one local and one from North Kent. The final choice boiled down to who was available to do the work at the right time, and so the contract was given to TC&D Construction.

The construction phase was relatively straightforward. However, despite being a small project, the administration proved complex and time-consuming. We needed a licence from the Royal Parks (for which we had to pay a fee), and we had to submit a formal planning application to Richmond Council (after unsuccessfully disputing the need for it and therefore, again, having to pay a fee). At one point, the Royal Parks insisted on a party wall agreement to cover the Grade 1 listed boundary wall with Bushy Park (which would have meant paying a very big fee to a specialist surveyor, as well as paying for the Royal Parks’ surveyor). Fortunately, a colleague and friend of Barry’s who is a specialist in ‘neighbourly matters’ was able to argue successfully that the boundary is not a party wall and that our building is merely ‘trespassing’ on it. And let’s not forget building regulations and the need to employ a structural engineer to prove that the building can stand up (so, two more lots of fees there).

Finally, work started on site on 22nd July, supposedly for six weeks. TC&D’s contractors and subcontractors are mostly Lithuanian, with Latin-sounding names that would not have been out of place in the prologue of Up Pompeii (fortunately they didn’t mind their names being abbreviated), and they were good to work with. As with most construction projects, ours had its moments, but they were all overcome through the contractor’s good-natured pragmatism, long hours and willingness to please. Money-wise we came in on budget, with the only big extra being those red-oxide steel purlins you can see in the roof. They were a surprise requirement, since the old building never had any. But at least they’ve given us a seriously robust roof and some added stability for the Royal Parks’ listed wall – which you might have noticed elsewhere is prone to collapsing. Eight weeks after work began, we had the completed shell of our new Seed Store.

David Hamden promptly led a gang of volunteers in the preparation and decorating of the building’s interior. The rough finish, residual dampness and stained walls meant that the job was never going to be easy. Old buildings need to breathe and a burnt-out, waterlogged one needs plenty of TLC. We are therefore giving it time to settle before finishing off the painting of the walls and the floor, though the café furniture will move in in the near future and the office will be put to good use. At the recent Autumn Social and Produce Show, it was nice to see kids playing inside and to hear someone describing the space as ‘like the inside of an art gallery’. Shortly, we’ll be tucking into coffee and cakes there, and the new, rebuilt Seed Store will once again be a true centre for the Royal Paddocks Allotments.
Chapter One: the curious story of the clog in the night time.

As Mrs Maple’s eyes accustomed to the gloom, she unlocked and pushed open the heavy allotment gate. A sleek fox shot past her into the night. She raised an eyebrow as she turned to her husband.

“Do you think its a sign?”

“Yes, my love. It’s a sign that coming straight here from our honeymoon at 10 o’clock at night is a very odd thing to do. The wildlife agrees.”

She smiled, acknowledging the point. “Perhaps. But I wanted to see the new plot. I mean, it was our last plots that brought us together... Now look at us.” She flashed her ring at him.

“Yes, Mrs Maple. Look at us.” He flashed his ring back at her, before drawing his arm around her waist.

“Mrs Maple...” she breathed. “I don’t think I ever want to be called anything else.”

“Ah, I don’t know Mrs M, I thought you liked being called...”

At that moment, a terrible cry rent the air.

“What the...” shouted Mr Maple, as his wife grabbed a torch from her bag and ran at speed towards the shouts across the allotment.

“Come on!” she shouted, as she dashed towards the scene of the crime, and rolling his eyes, he followed her, muttering all the while.

As they approached a striking blonde woman emerged from the darkness into the harsh glare of their torch. “Help me, please!” she said, her periwinkle blue eyes blinking pleadingly in the spotlight.

“What’s wrong?” asked Mrs Maple.

“My Croc!”

“Yes, your Croc?”

“My Croc! Someone has stolen my Croc!” She pointed to her feet, one of which was covered by a bright yellow plastic clog, one was... not.

“Someone’s stolen one of your shoes?” asked Mr Maple.

“Yes, the scumbag. Even after all these robberies, I never thought it would happen to me. How am I supposed to get home now?”

Mrs Maple took a step forward, intrigued. “What do you mean, all these robberies?”

The blonde rubbed her cold foot crossly. “The robberies! There’s been a spate of them for months now. It’s never anything big, and never anything of any value to anyone else, but always something you rely on. How come you don’t know?”

“It’s our first time to the allotment as plotholders,” replied Mrs Maple. “We put our names down on the waiting list when we got engaged, and by coincidence two adjoining plots came up, just as we’ve come back from honeymoon. We wanted to see them together as just-marrieds.”

“Sweet,” said the blonde acidly. “Now, how am I supposed to get home shoeless?”

Mr and Mrs Maple exchanged a look. “Do you live far from here?” he asked.

“Just across the road,” the blonde said pointing. “Right,” he said, and lifted her over his shoulder in a fireman’s lift. She screeched again, but then settled, realising there was little else to be done. “So tell me more about what’s been happening with all these robberies,” said Mrs Maple.

“Well, there’s not a lot else to say. All of us have been affected by it in one form or another. You can’t leave anything out any more. Things go whether you are there or not. Look at me – I’d slipped my shoes off as I was kneeling down to pick snails off my plants. The thief can only have been inches away from me when he took my shoe. He’s getting bolder and bolder – but why would he choose to steal it in the first place? What use is a shoe by itself for goodness sake?”

“Quite,” said Mrs Maple, as she unlocked the gate. She paused. “Curious,” she said, touching the cold metal of the padlock.

“What, my love?” said her husband.

“Well, this padlock has been locked again. If I was a thief running at speed from the scene of a crime, even a petty one like this, I’m not sure I’d lock up again after myself.”

“But we locked it,” Mr Maple said.

Mrs Maple’s brow furrowed. “So he’s still in there?” He nodded. “Or at the very least, he’s got a key too.”

The blonde shrieked again. “Get me home! Get me home!”

Mr Maple rolled his eyes, before readjusting the blonde’s slight weight and trudging forth. At her direction, he deposited her in front of a smart 30s art deco house, complete with sunset over the door.

“Thank you,” she said tersely.

The newlyweds nodded, and turned quietly away.

“Sorry, excuse me?” she called. They turned back to her. “If you’re really interested in the plot burglaries, you should go to the Barley Mow pub tomorrow night at 8. We’re setting up a plotwatch, and you might want to get involved. I wasn’t going to bother, but now...” She shook her head. “I’m sorry, I didn’t even introduce myself. I’m Miss Toni. And you are?”

“I’m Tarragon Maple, and this is my husband Monty.”
Bob Trevillion gave an overview of the RPA year’s main events – the unseasonally cold start, the Seed Store Rebuild project, the socials and the number of new plot lettings. Nick Baylis reported on the work of the Seed Store Rebuild project and its outcome. Gill Hiley presented a plaque to Nick and Barry Houlston to acknowledge the work that they had contributed to the successful outcome of this project. Carol Dukes, Treasurer, reported on the funding for the Seed Store rebuild and RPA finances. Jenny Bourne, Social Secretary reported on the year’s socials that have raised a total of £888, excluding the café income, which brings in a weekly average profit of £30 – £60.

Thanks were extended to the Social Committee, the café volunteers and all who help to make these social events so enjoyable and successful. Several plotholders agreed to work out a rota system for locking the vehicle gate at night. Jon Anderson gave an informative account of the apiary and the work of the RPA beekeepers. Present committee members were re-elected with the addition of Helen Nix. Then it was time for the evening’s highlight, the awarding of prizes for best kept plots, presented by past Chair and clerk to the Management Committee, Susan Saunders. This year featured the awarding of a new category prize – Merit for outstanding effort to turn around a neglected plot.

Attendees were able to enjoy the hospitality of the Cricket Club bar and a slide show presentation of this year’s Autumn Social. The formal minutes of the AGM will be available on the website and in the pedestrian gate shed.

**PRIZE WINNERS**

**Best Full Plot - 1st Prize**
Plot 4, Carol Ager
*Comments: A very well maintained plot with a great variety of healthy produce. High density planting with a nice mixture of veg, fruit and flowers.*

**Best Full Plot - 2nd Prize**
Plot 160, Jo and David Box
*Comments: A very neat plot. Good use of space with a good selection of veg.*

**Best Full Plot - 3rd Prize**
Plot 93, Ray and Barbara Hulm
*Comments: A very nicely maintained traditional plot – neat, clean and productive – impressive brassicas.*

**Best Half Plot - 1st Prize**
Plot 132b, Julie and David Lainchbury
*Comments: A well thought out design - pleasing to look at with good quality fruit and veg. A nice balance of produce.*

**Best Half Plot - 2nd Prize**
Plot 101f, Helen Sparrow and Joseph Asghar
*Comments: A very nicely kept plot with a good assortment of produce - great beans and cabbages!*

**Best Half Plot - 3rd Prize**
Plot 187b, Elaine Sturman & Vladimir Gorbatch
*Comments: A good plot – well used with a good variety of produce – nice arrangements.*

**Best Newcomer**
Plot 118, Kay Fiona Cook
*Comments: An excellent start. This plot was very overgrown and is now looking neat and tidy. Great potential.*

**Certificate of Merit** *(special award given this year)*
Plot 68, David Gaffney

### Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow Project

Plotholders are invited to participate with this fascinating new initiative:

The **Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow** project is currently pursuing the oral history of market gardens in the area, recording the memories of people who have worked on or know about nurseries and market gardens – eg what they grew, what growing methods they used, who they employed, what the employers were like, working conditions, etc. They are also interested in hearing about any plant/vegetable varieties which were local to the area and may be lost or which are still being grown, as well as memories of the ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign and what happened locally. In addition they would like to know of any foreign permanent or seasonal workers or employers – who they were, where they came from and why, what they grew, did they stay etc.

If you would like to find out more or can help with any information please contact [http://jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com/blog/](http://jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com/blog/)  
**JYJT leaflets are available at the Sunday Café.**