

## CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE 2017 AGM

We have had another busy and interesting year, with successful Shows, Bonfires, Events and Trips and our weekly Trading Store. Our finances are in good shape and the applications on the waiting list steady. There will be more detail on those matters from my fellow committee members later.

My main concern has been to secure a new and **long term Lease** from Wandsworth Council. This has been going on for many years. The old 7 year Lease expired in **2011** and since then we have been trying to renew it. Be assured that Wandsworth have agreed that the terms of the expired Lease, as still valid as long as we pay our rent.

Since I became Chair in **2012/13** we have been working on securing a new long term Lease with the idea that if we became a Charity we could secure one. I am sorry to say that I have no real news for you at this year's AGM. At the AGM in **2014** we presented the case for becoming a Charity to you and you approved with the proviso we would come back to you to obtain your approval before finalising anything.

Three years on, and with an enormous amount of work behind us, I thought we would be in a better position than we are now. We worked on the Charity application through **2015** (all the time checking that WBC was still OK with our plans) but until we got Justine Greening involved in October that year we just kept going round in circles with the Charities Commission. Finally we got agreement to become a Recreational Charity. But we didn't want to register until we had a Lease agreement with Wandsworth that would be acceptable. Otherwise the Charities Commission would just wind us up.

Throughout **2016** we negotiated with the Wandsworth Borough Valuer, Peter Tiernan, to draft a new Lease and by the AGM last year we told you we had almost reached agreement on a Lease that would be acceptable to the Charities Commission, except for the length of term and the rent.

While we were negotiating the terms we heard (in March **2017**) that the Charities Commission had closed our Application as it had been taking so long. We appealed but they promised that once we had the Lease agreement in place they would look at our renewed application without delay.

So we ploughed on all year (**2017**) and then it was agreed, in principle, that we could have a Lease for 50 years with a peppercorn rent. However Wandsworth then had to take legal advice (from the South London Legal Partnership ) and amendments were made which would give the Council (as landlord) considerable control over our finances. We knew that the Charities Commission would not accept such control from a "State Body". The whole point of becoming a Charity was so that we would be able to have a long Lease!

We responded to the Council and are now waiting for the results of an Internal Officers meeting which is scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> November.

I would like to thank Anthony Fitzsimmons (member and plot holder) for all his help and support through this and also our President the Rt Hon Justine Greening, Ian Lewer (our local councillor) who have supported us throughout and Barnet Allotments Federation whose advice and guidance has been invaluable. I must also thank the officers of Enable and Wandsworth Council who have also spent a lot of time and effort working with us to achieve our aim.

During these years, with Charitable Status in mind, we have worked on becoming a more integrated part of our Community. We now work with local schools, mainly Paddock who have an allotment plot, and making connections and sharing information with Putney Community Gardens, Community Orchards, Growhampton (Roehampton University) and other local community gardens. We support the Putney Society and Dover House Residents and their popular Table Top Sale on the Pleasance in June. Our Bulletin goes to all these organisations and we disseminate their news too.

In May this year we launched our lovely new **website**, designed by plot holder member Jean Crawford, who now keeps it up to date. So special thanks to Jean and to Vicki Bennett for her advice and some of the gorgeous images.

We introduced a **new membership fee** structure in April with the rent collections. Full membership is £5 per year and you can only be a full member if you are a plot holder. All other members are Associate Members (£2.50 per year).

Looking to the future we investigated having a bore hole for our water. A few of us visited Pitshanger Allotments in Ealing earlier this year to look at their borehole. The discussions on this topic have been interesting and sometimes heated. I don't think it would be suitable for us to pursue this any further, but that does not mean I won't support anyone who does want to investigate further. I think the most important thing is to get a new water ring and tanks installed on site 3. We would need this whether we had a bore hole supplying the water or not. Plot holder member Robert Linton is currently getting advice and estimates for this work which I hope can be carried out in 2018.

If we can achieve a 50 year lease with peppercorn rent then we can really move ahead with improvements to both sites and with facilities that the community can enjoy.

Finally I would like to propose that we add 5 new Life Members in recognition of the length of their service. Georgina O'Reilly is standing down after many years as Site 2 Secretary to be replaced by Mariangela Renshaw. And I also propose Raj Patel, Shirley Gillbe and Pip Melotte. The 5<sup>th</sup> person is Helen Sabieri who is not a plot holder but is a local cookery writer who comes along and judges our cookery for us at the Shows.

May I have a show of hands please for those 5?

**Note:**

*Currently we have 5 Life Members:*

*Pat Burke*

*Janet Long*

*Pat Davis*

*David Rossiter*

*John Horrocks*

*And we have 6 Vice Presidents:*

*Judith Glaysher*

*Paula Alderson*

*Derrick Ratcliffe*

*Sheila Konig*

*Alan Rake*

*George Scandrett*

Jackie Savage

November 2017

