

Reports from The Committee 2019

Buildings and Facilities:

Site 2 Store Roof

The previous Store roof was in a very poor state of repair. Covered in asbestos, it was badly leaking. A decision was taken to replace the roof with a new metal, insulated roof. In addition, 2 opening rooflights would be placed in the North slope of the roof.

After some discussions, Wandsworth Council agreed with the RGS to both fund and undertake this much needed work. Tenders were received and the reroofing work was undertaken in July, 2019.

Contributed by: Patrick Crawford

Site 3 Water Supply

The present water supply to Site 3 is of some considerable age and is also in a poor state of repair. A considerable number of leaks to the supply have occurred over the past few years. In addition, the water supply would appear to come from a number of sources; the origin of some being uncertain. As a result, it was decided that a completely new water supply which would run beneath the circular path around Site 3 was required. New stopcocks, taps and water troughs would also be included within the works.

Discussions have been held with Wandsworth Council about undertaking this work. The Council has arranged for a survey of the existing water supply to be undertaken. They have also sought competitive tenders for the work and these tenders were returned in mid-October, 2019. The RGS is now waiting to hear further from Wandsworth Council.

Contributed by: Patrick Crawford

Renewal of Lease:

The present lease between the RGS and Wandsworth Council has expired and negotiations are ongoing to renew the lease. In order for the RGS to remain viable and thrive for the foreseeable future, it is seeking a new 35 year lease with a peppercorn rent.

The RGS is working closely with Cllr. Steffi Sutters of Wandsworth Council to resolve outstanding matters and she has been both supportive and helpful. It is hoped that further meetings with Council representatives will be able to resolve outstanding matters by the end of this year.

Contributed by: Patrick Crawford

Waiting list:

As at early Nov there are 256 people on the Primary Waiting List, of whom 17 are existing plot holders waiting for more land. The current waiting time is about 4 years. New plot holders are offered plots of 3.5 rods or less.

Existing plot holders are reminded that, after at least a year of successful cultivation, they may put their name back on the waiting list for more land and be eligible for plots that

become vacant which are over 3.5 rods up to 5 rods per household in total. Or, once at the top of the list, may be offered additional land (up to 5 rods in total) if they don't want to move.

However existing plot holders are also reminded that they may down size at any time. Also, if they have been a satisfactory plot holder but wish to quit on a temporary basis then we can put their name on the Secondary Waiting list. This means that when they are ready to return they will not have to wait another 4 years for a plot, but will be placed near the top.

Thank you to Jackie for all the meticulous work involved in keeping the waiting list.

Contributed by: Jackie Savage

Allotment Site Secretaries:

Site 2 Report

So far this year, one plot has changed hands twice. And there have also been 5 new lettings. This is not a huge turnover but the Society is grateful to those who are prepared to relinquish their plot for personal reasons, or to go on the Secondary Waiting List, rather than struggling to maintain their plot in difficult circumstances.

Coming up to the plot inspection, there are 2 badly neglected plots due to plot holders not being able to manage their plots. It is hoped that common sense will prevail, and they will give up so that people who have been on the waiting list for years will finally get a chance to work an allotment plot.

Overall, Site 2 can boast a large number of well-maintained and very productive plots.

Contributed by: Liz Smart

Site 3 Report, Outer Area Plots 50 – 100

It has been a good year for most plots, with lots of produce in evidence and very few problems. Helen Finch, Jackie Savage, Ali Linton and Raj Patel have been great support for advice and for sharing issues arising on a day to day basis.

Lettings: Over the year 13 plots have been let and one 5 rod plot has been split in half.

Improvement and repairs: Having our water tanks fitted with better taps and connections made a huge difference to watering last summer.

New plot labels will be installed on all plots over the coming winter.

The Council repaired two fences backing onto Site 3 that were in a dilapidated condition.

Hopefully wood chip and manure supplies will be more regular in the future to both sites.

Security: There have been minor reports of stolen produce and of rubbish thrown over from neighbouring houses. Householder gates continue to be a problem with one plot extensively damaged by a contractor illegally accessing a house through the allotment site.

Plot inspections: Three plots inspections have taken place this year. Generally, all plot holders who received emails or letters regarding problems with their plots did respond positively. Two Stage 1 letters and one Stage 3 letter were sent out after the July inspection. All three plots are now much improved.

Thank you to fellow Committee members and fellow plot holders who make the task of being Site Secretary enjoyable, and who help make the allotments a pleasant and productive place to be in. And thank you to the team who maintain and clean our toilet.

Contributed by: Vivien Fowler

Site 3 Report, Inner Area Plots 100 - 127

This has been my first year as site secretary, I am beginning to find my way around the inner area of Site 3 and get to know our plot holders. It has been great fun working with my fellow site secretary Vivien Fowler and I am indebted to Helen Finch for her constant support and encouragement.

Lettings: During the year 14 plots have changed hands, a similar number to last year. Where possible plots of 4 rods or more have been divided. Three plot holders have had their contracts terminated this year.

Improvements and repairs: Vivien Fowler has designed and sourced environmentally friendly new labels and we will be re labelling all plots throughout the winter.

Security: We have had no major breaches of security reported. The number of keys 'at large' grows and we always request that keys are returned when a plot holder no longer requires them.

Plot inspections: These take place 3 times a year. Spring when we look to see if a plot is ready for cultivation, summer when we hope to see lots of produce and weeds well controlled and autumn when the plot should be tidied ready for the winter. We have implemented a system, based on the one used by Enable, whereby plot holders who do not cultivate their plot after several gentle email requests receive 3 staged letters and after the third, their contract with RGS is terminated.

Thank you: A huge thank you to everyone who helps to keep Site 3 a pleasant and safe environment. The allotments keep going due to the generosity of many plot holders who give their time, knowledge and skill to the allotment community. In particular Greg Wilcox who takes deliveries and does lots of DIY. Raj Patel is always incredibly helpful especially with new plot holders giving advice and encouragement, and the team led by Vivien Fowler who keep the toilet clean.

Contributed by: Alison Linton

Trading Secretary's Report

The Store on Site 2 provides a place for members to meet and share their horticultural stories and expertise.

We are always on the lookout for new products to sell at the Store and would welcome ideas from our members. The Spring bulbs, garlic, onions, shallots and potatoes have, again, sold well this year as have the seeds and continue to be a great addition to the Store.

One of the biggest benefits to shopping at the Store is that fertilisers, soil improvers and other horticulture products are sold loose and are thus much cheaper than those available in packets at garden centres. I would ask members to remember to bring their own containers for these as we try to reduce single use plastic.

The roof on the Store was replaced this year. This meant that we had to close the Store for a couple of weeks, but it does mean that we no longer have to deal with drops of rainwater landing on our heads.

We opened on Saturdays for an hour in March/April this year as well as our regular Sunday openings. This seems to have been well received by our members, but feedback would be welcome.

The running of the Store is a team effort. Jackie Savage and Carol Martinez source the bulbs, seeds, garlic, onions, shallots and potatoes. Greg Willcox handles deliveries and the general maintenance and improvements at the Store. Georgina O'Reilly looks after the tea/coffee station. A big thank you to all of them. Also, I would like to thank all the volunteers who come on Sundays to help at the Store and provide such fabulous cakes.

Contributed by: Gill Tamsett

Shows report for AGM 2019

We tried something different for the summer show this year and held a smaller event outside on site 2. We were lucky with the weather and had a very enjoyable social afternoon with a selection of seasonal exhibits on the side. Being the first show of this type, we have learnt that we need to change a few things, notably the timing.

Our autumn show was as usual held in the church hall and was a successful event with lots of fabulous exhibits, a groaning produce table, a spread of delicious home-made cakes for tea and a lively auction at the end.

However, moving the tables to the church hall twice a year on a Friday evening and back again on Saturday is becoming increasingly onerous and we had mixed reactions to holding a different summer show.

To find out a bit more about what our members think, a short survey was sent out asking questions about both shows. We received 102 replies (approx. 30% response) so thanks to Elaine Barnwell for compiling the survey and to everyone who shared their thoughts with us. We will be analyzing the responses and deciding how we will go forward next year, but we won't be able to please everyone and there will more than likely be some changes.

Thank you to everyone who helps to keep these fantastic community events possible, whether involved in the set up or simply as a visitor.

Contributed by: Carol Martinez