

Chair's Report given at the AGM 2023

In my report I will review what has happened during this RGS year that is from November 2022 to now, sketch out plans for next year and touch on who makes all these things happen.

November 2022 onwards

Hand washing facilities: The main improvement in the allotment facilities is the installation of warm water for hand washing in the toilets on each site. This is now compliant with building regulations and a lot more pleasant than the freezing cold water we used to have from taps that kept cutting out.

Store maintenance: The store and hard standing next to the store have been repaired. Patrick Crawford negotiated with the Council as our landlords to get these repairs done. Many thanks, Patrick for making this happen.

Possible name change: An issue that was raised at the 2022 AGM was that of a possible change of name to incorporate Putney in our title rather than just Roehampton. This idea was met with a very positive response from the attendees at the 2022 AGM. To change the name of the Society our Constitution indicated that an EGM was necessary so one was held on 24th May. The proposed new name was to be Roehampton and Putney Garden Society. This proposition was put to the full membership in the form of a debate and the membership were invited to cast a vote. A clear majority chose to remain as Roehampton Garden Society.

SylvaGrow talk: On 14th May Catherine Dawson, a soil scientist from Melcourt who make SylvaGrow, gave a talk to our members about the challenges of producing peat free compost. I think everyone thoroughly enjoyed her talk, felt they had learned a lot and came away with a better appreciation of all the work and research that goes into making a product like SylvaGrow.

Plans for next year:

National Garden Scheme (NGS): Vivien Fowler came up with the idea that since we do have allotments to be proud of we should see if we could have an entry into the Nation Garden Scheme. It was founded in 1927 with the aim of "opening gardens of quality, character and interest to the public for charity". A representative from NGS, Joey Clover, visited site 3 and judged it to be suitable for the NGS. The date site 3 will be open for the scheme is Sunday 21st July 2024 so we will need to ensure our plots are looking super smart that day!

Possible talk: There are plans to have a talk in February from Sarah Foss who works for Ecolocal. She has a M.Hort qualification and has an enormous allotment so the expectation is she will have sound theoretical and practical horticultural advice to offer.

Maybe?: There are a few things that may happen during next year.

- Patrick Crawford is negotiating with the Council for solar panels to be installed on the south facing aspect of the store roof. This is in line with current policy of sustainable power so it might happen.
- Patrick is also assiduously continuing to pursue a new lease with the Council giving us independence at a peppercorn rent. These negotiations have been going on for many years.
- On site 3 some of the new water tanks have slipped so are no longer truly horizontal - another

problem that Patrick is chasing. Patrick has been very successful in the past getting the Council to maintain the allotment infrastructure properly so I have every confidence these projects will happen eventually - many thanks to Patrick.

Succession planning: Several of the members serving on the Committee in very active roles have been doing so for many years. Whilst we are standing again this year there is a need to hand over to other members next year, therefore we will need new recruits on the Committee who are able to take over key roles. It would be a great pity if RGS management of the allotments was no longer viable and so would have to be handed over to Enable to manage on behalf of the Council.

Thank You:

We are very fortunate to have so many able people as members of RGS who are willing to contribute to the running of the Society particularly those serving on the Committee who give so much time and commitment to RGS. Jackie Savage as Vice-Chair continues to be an amazing support and sounding board for me. She also manages the ever growing waiting list. Vivien Fowler not only looks after the outer plots on site 3 as their site secretary but also keeps the Potting Shed and all the area around it looking wonderful - it is much admired and appreciated. Alison Linton was site secretary on site 3 for the inner area plots and handed over this responsibility to Richard Standen. Many thanks to both of you for doing all the site secretary work. Carol Martinez's energy seems to be boundless. Not only does she take on chairing the show committee and doing a lot of the tasks herself - there are a lot of them - but she is Treasurer for RGS as well. The store keeps on running so beautifully thanks to all the input from Gill Tamsett and Greg Willcox who ensure stock is there to sell. Annie Hardinge looks after the seeds making sure the seed stands are well stocked with seeds that we like to buy. Then there are the IT experts: Jean Crawford keeps our wonderful website running and up to date and puts together the very informative and interesting monthly Updates. Robert Linton meticulously keeps the RGS database and ensures the annual invoices are accurately put together using the database then, miraculously, they morph into emails and are sent out to the members. Talking of emails, that is another job Jackie does. The RGS email account is kept bang up to date with accurate email addresses and emails are filed in an orderly manner. It is an example of how it should always be done. Other members of the committee who don't have a specific role have been fantastic at doing things as and when needed. So the RGS owes a huge thank you to all serving members of the Committee.

Keeping the allotments well managed, the shows happening and the stores staffed is not just down to the Committee. We have a lot of members who volunteer to make cakes, to help get the shows going, that tea is served, bars are manned, there is tea and coffee in the store, ensure equipment is maintained, the toilets are cleaned, the social areas are looked after, shredders are used properly, wheelbarrows work, wood chip is delivered and so on. It all takes the goodwill of members. These are the names of non-Committee members who make these contributions: Raj Patel, Danuta Grabda-Ferreira, Mariangela Renshaw, George Casley, Dorcas Johnson, Sue Hodgson, Marianna Pencharz, Sue MacDonald, Jo Eskdale, Maria Sforza, Jane Quayle, Lindley Maitland, Georgina O'Reilly, Sue Illingworth, Harriet Hobson, Kate Shaw, John Ireland, Artan Deliallisi, Mark Sutcliffe. Many, many thanks to you all too.

We just have one Committee member who has decided not to stand for next year. Charles Gillbe served on the Committee in the past as Treasurer and has been on the Committee again since November 2019 - another 4 years service. During this time he has had the role of Site Manager.

This role includes evictions of some plot holders - never a pleasant task and needs to be done with conscientious care which he has performed diligently. Thank you Charles for your very valued contribution. Fortunately, Alison Linton has agreed to take over the role of Site Manager.

And Finally: The important message I hope my report has managed to impart is we have a wonderful Society with excellent members who share a passion for gardening and the natural world who make our community work so very well. Thank you all.

Helen Finch