DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**On Site**

- Spring Social: Sunday 23rd April
- Seedling Swap: Towards the end of May
- Autumn Social & Pumpkin bonanza: Sunday 8th October

**At the Lion, Wick Road**

- Plotholders AGM: Thursday 9th November 7.30 for 8.00pm
WELCOME TO NEW TENANTS

Nicki Burridge and friends (2), Alison and Oliver White (9), Ben and Elisa Peterson (32f), Peter Caughey (39b), Simon Tuckey and Christina McComb (41f), Kay and Stephen Gillespie (86f), Lorraine Monk (89), Lilian Ateke (93), Nicholas Martland (99), Paul Depledge and Rochelle Brugh (101b), Julian Fullalove and Vanessa Hodder (128b), Leigh Clare (136b), Steve Kramer (166b), Elaine Sturman (186b), Margaret Pikes (187b), Martin Johnson (198b), Eian and Sarah Mantle (199), Karen and Graham Pott (C), and Corinne Ransom (D).

Demographic note: over half of our present tenants have joined us during the last five years. Fifteen people are waiting for plots at the time of writing.

We are very sad to report the deaths of two tenants. Neil Grant (plots 32b, 33b) died suddenly last November. Harold Chapman, who had given up his plot the year before, because of continuing ill-health, died in the late autumn. Both Harold and Neil were keen and dedicated gardeners, and supportive members of the Paddocks community. Harold had also been Management Committee Clerk in his younger days. We miss them both.

PRIZEWINNERS 2005

The Plotholder’s AGM last November was once more held in the welcoming function room at Don Witt’s pub, The Lion, Wick Road. We had a cheering display of photographs of the Paddocks during the year, including Giles Moberley hefting aloft his giant pumpkin – almost big enough to take him to the ball!

Cllr James Mumford, Chairman of our Management Committee, presented certificates and garden tokens to the year’s prize winners. Best Newcomers, in reverse order, were Andrew Antoniades (125), Patrick Boyle (200), James and Caroline Greville (26), and Ian Hopkins (30). Best new half-plot awards went to Rebecca Pang (100f), Caroline Hodges (100b), and Sharon Prude (21f). Winners in this category, where marks are awarded for ‘value added’, had all made very attractive and productive plots in the previous 12 months on ground which had been virtually uncultivated.

Best Kept Half-Plot winners were, in reverse order, Nick Baylis (110), Boula Rice (66), and the Gromyko family (76f) - they won a newcomers’ prize last year. Full plot winners were, third, Vicki Glyasher and Alison Hughes (71), second, Jo Box (161) also a Best Newcomer last year, and first, Barbara Wood, who once again took the Cup for plot 201, a very worthy winner. Barbara’s plots, with their range of produce and immaculate presentation, really lift the spirits as you come into the site, and she’s a mine of helpful information too.

LONG DISTANCE GARDENING

Occasionally we get cries for help from tenants who want to keep their plots, but find work temporarily makes it difficult to get to them. We’re always sympathetic when this is a short-term problem, and it is actually possible to keep going surprisingly well if you Have A Plan. Mary Newing, who runs our website, recently had several months working in Edinburgh during the week, but still managed to score As for cultivation during the summer inspections. How did she do it? Mary writes:

Plot 53 has been in my care for about 7 years, and over that time with the help of various friends it has fed us with a variety of delicious fruits and veggies, as well as decorating my house with flowers.

I took on the plot when I moved into a house with no garden, and was keen to get some dirt between my toes. I worked locally then, and had time in the evenings to tend the plot. But in January last year I started a new job in Docklands, and within 3 weeks found myself based in Edinburgh Monday to Friday. Great fun, but not much gardening time.

Now I’m back, but still working in Central London, with little time to tend the plot during the week. Here is my philosophy for managing a plot and living a busy life:

- Use quiet times of the year to make sure all beds are ready to be planted. Planting time is so busy there won’t be clearing time.
- Weed beds regularly so weeds don’t get established – they’re much quicker to remove when they’re tiny.
- Edge paths regularly so that weeds don’t invade the beds.
- Plant where possible into troughs/squares where the bottom has been filled with well-rotted horse manure then back-filled with soil. It feeds the plants and holds moisture, which is invaluable when you can’t get down to water.
- Choose crops that cope well with ‘neglect’ – runner beans, squashes, potatoes, onions, leeks, strawberries, raspberries all do well for me.
- Buy plants rather than raise seeds where possible.
- Find a friend who can do some watering in desperate times of drought.
- Remember, it’s a hobby which should be a pleasure. There will always be shops!

During my time in Edinburgh my hand luggage was interesting. I was always transporting some fruit or veggies that I wanted during the week. It was so nice to be far from home and still have my own produce, even if it did end up doing more ‘food miles’ than I would like! Mary Newing, plot 53.
FROGLIFE SURVEY AT THE PADDOCKS
Amphibians and reptiles (frogs, toads, slow worms etc.) are our friends, as they eat slugs, so it's in our interest, as well as theirs, to improve their chances of survival in the Paddocks, and make the habitat attractive to them. Last autumn we had a request from the wildlife charity Froglife, wanting to make a survey on site to get some idea of the numbers of frogs, toads and reptiles living on the plots. Project Manager Robin Frampton writes about their work in London:
Froglife is a national charity concerned with conservation of amphibians and reptiles, and is keen to involve local people as much as possible in its work, both surveying and recording animal numbers, and giving advice on creating attractive habitat for them.

An Allotment Survey conducted on the 750 sites in Greater London in 2002-3 showed that while allotments are roughly the same as gardens in terms of their support of amphibians, they provide a much safer habitat for our endangered reptiles - lizards, slow worms, and grass snakes. That allotment survey showed frogs reported on 87% of plots, toads on 60%, common newts on 38%, slow worms on 33%, grass snakes on 19% and common lizards on 14%.
Froglife are now following up their '03 survey with in-depth surveys in certain London boroughs, starting with Ealing, Greenwich, Bromley, Hounslow, Richmond and Kingston. Volunteers are being trained in species identification and survey techniques. We want to discover and record what species are living on these sites, and to give advice to allotment holders on improving habitats: leaving undisturbed areas for wildlife, creating open compost bins, laying down refuges, making areas for animals to bask in the sun, rockeries for safety, ponds for breeding, and so on.
In spring 2006 Froglife will be encouraging volunteers to survey allotments in the Kingston area and report back on their findings. In addition to listing the animals found, they will be asked to record whether they were on land or in water, adult or immature, dead or alive, and the search method: visual count, netting, egg search, torching or refuge search (where metal sheets are put down to attract the animals).

Reptiles and amphibians are active from March to October, and the best months for surveying are April, May and September. Best times of day in these months are between 8.30 and 11 a.m., and 4 to 6 p.m. When the weather is cool, they will be found closer to mid-day, but in hot weather they will come out early or late when it is cooler. Froglife provide training in identification and how to record what has been found. We are always looking for volunteers who will help by visiting allotment sites to conduct surveys, or by making their own plot available for a survey.

More information about Froglife can be found on their website www.froglife.hostwith.me.uk. Meanwhile, if you want to become more involved in the survey, get in touch (contact details at the foot of page 4). Robin and team would like to survey from the end of February, when the animals come out of hibernation, looking in ponds, lifting and replacing carpet, and checking compost heaps. If you prefer not to be involved, please also let us know. We only want to look on plots with tenants' permission.

SLATTERS, PILLBUGS, SOWPICS, HORACES aka woodlice - these little crustaceans have more than 100 vernacular names. I was brought up calling them cheeselegs (my grandmother's name for them), but never met anyone else who knew what that meant. Now I read in British Wildlife magazine that between 16th and 18th centuries woodlice featured extensively in medical dictionaries, under the name chiselip. This seems to be derived from 'celyl', meaning rennet or an agent for turning milk into cheese, so it's just possible that woodlice (cheeselegs) were once used for this purpose. Their place in the medical armoury was in the treatment of kidney stones - the patient was advised to drink a mixture of pigeon dung, woodlice and wine, as a result of which he would 'void either the stone or much small sand.' The Good Old Days? SS

On your marks, get set, sow...
Are you chomping at the bit to start producing home grown, healthy produce and can't wait for Spring? Why not try some of the following this month and get ahead?

- Aubergines, tomatoes, cucumbers and chillies all need a long warm growing season, if you have the space, plant them now in a propagator and see what a difference it makes.

- Use a length of guttering with both ends taped up, (I use a semi circle of hardboard and gaffa tape, but cardboard works equally well) and sow salad leaves, herbs and my personal favourite, peas, then just transplant when a couple of inches high. Hey presto! A perfect row of healthy seedlings with no losses to rodents or birds!

- Now's the time to chit your potatoes to give them a really strong start, anywhere frost free will do so the shed is a perfect place.

- Plant fruit bushes and trees if the soil is not frozen or waterlogged.

JB
GARDENERS OF THE FUTURE? Last September we were visited by a group of seven members of the cookery club at St John the Baptist Junior School, Hampton Wick. They came with their teachers, Hilary Griffiths, (tenant of plots 84 and 85) and Angela Kenneally, to see where fruit and veg come from. Hilary reports:

Susan met us at the gate and showed us round. The children were interested in all the different fruit and vegetables grown, and were, of course, fascinated by the pumps. Susan picked one of her cucumbers for their lunch, and the children had some of their sandwiches which they ate sitting on carpet at the back of my plot.

I had cooked some of my Charlotte potatoes, which disappeared at top speed with mayonnaise on the side, and we finished off with a mystery chocolate cake. I gave each one a piece, and asked them to guess the mystery ingredient that had come from my plot. After several guesses – apple, pumpkin, carrot – one child spotted tiny green flecks, and guessed at courgettes. They all said that the cake was delicious (not a crumb remained) but that they wouldn’t have tried it if they had known! (My children, aged 2 and 4, were on the visit too, and scoffed the lot without caring what was in it. But they have grown up with allotmenting.)

All in all, a very successful visit which the children are still talking about. We hope it can become a termly event for new members of the cookery club.

Yasmin’s report: The trip to the allotment.

On the 26th of September the cookery club went to the allotment in Hampton Wick and we met Hillary and she had an allotment herself. She also had a cucumber plant and one was all curvey and the other was straight as a stick, she let us pick her curvey cucumber and we ate it for our lunch! yum! yum! Hillary baked us a surprise she said we wouldn’t like it. We all said it was delicious and sweet and when we knew it was courgettes cake we said “we wouldn’t have eaten it if we knew that it was courgettes cake.”

By Yasmin Sung

Cookery club, it was a delight to share the allotments with you – and would have made Jamie Oliver very happy too. Please come again.

Here’s the recipe for the mystery

**Chocolate and Courgette cake:**

Melt 3oz chocolate and 2 tablespoons runny honey in microwave on low heat. Leave to cool. In a separate bowl cream together 4oz butter and 6 tablespoons sugar, and beat in 2 eggs. Add the cooled chocolate mixture and mix well.

Sift together in another bowl 5oz SR flour and 2 tablespoons cocoa. Add these to the first bowl a little at a time, alternating with 4 fluid oz milk. Stir in vanilla essence to taste. Stir in 1 medium courgette, grated, half fine and half coarse.

Pour the mixture into two greased 7 ½ inch cake tins, and bake at 350F/180C for 30 to 35 minutes.

Sandwich together, and top with this frosting:

Melt 2oz chocolate with 3 tablespoons water, and stir in 2 tablespoons of butter till well combined. Add 8 – 10 oz sifted icing sugar, to make a firm butter icing.

(Yum! Yum!)

WATER SUPPLY

Our pumps will be going back on when the weather is right.

George Harmsworth, who has looked after them for so many years, and dug the wells for most of them (see Plotholder issue 16), is taking a well-earned rest, and he’s being replaced by a team of tenants, so that this essential resource doesn’t run dry. We’ve had some volunteers, but if you are interested in joining the team, we’ll be very glad to hear from you.

Training will be given.

FOR SALE

**Mantis rotovator/Cultivator,** 2 stroke petrol, as new
- Reliable, Easy-To-Start Engine
- Throttle-Activated Centrifugal Clutch
- 10” Tilling Depth
- High-Speed operation 240 rpm
- Cost £328.00

For sale for £235.00

Further information contact Ying on 07950 289299 Plot 143