

Chairman's Report 2024

This is the opportunity to reflect on the events and achievements at the RPA during the past year and thank the many volunteers who give their time willingly to make the site such a pleasant place to be.

First up, our regular annual events.

We start the RPA year post-AGM with the Christmas café in December. A very jolly time with mulled wine and mince pies and the last café opening of winter.

All was quiet on the events front until March when Super Sunday heralded the re-opening of the café and the annual Seed Sale.

Next up was the Plant Sale – another great success in 2024, but with so many donations, a following pop-up sale was held and still there were tomato plants left for the Teddington Fair.

In June, we held the annual Volunteer session jointly with St John's Church. Two plots were identified for help as ploholders were struggling due to unfortunate events.

Then in September it was the big event of the year– the Autumn Show. We beat the odds and avoided the threatened rain. A great time was had by all.

Other events that were held, thanks to the Events team, were a Ploholders Forum and a bee-keeping demo and, of course, the café team were there every Sunday throughout to ensure the opportunity to sit and chat over cake and drinks.

Throughout the year, we have been extremely lucky to benefit from the efforts of many generous ploholders who turned out to work on maintenance in various areas of the site. Some simply quietly fixed stuff when they saw the need.

Work carried out has included:

- Paving outside the Compost loo and the café entrance;
- Completion of a new café terrace area, revealing the old brick paving and establishing a flower bed alongside the new seating area;
- Repair and re-lagging of the Café water supply pipework;
- Tidying up the old Dead Hedge and creating a new one with a clear access path;
- Track maintenance and repair;
- Replacing of a window in the back of the Seed Store and painting of the frame;
- Pruning of overhanging brambles and vines along Church Grove;
- Repair and reroofing of the storage space alongside the Seed Store;
- Renovation of café doors;
- Pedestrian gate lock barrel replaced and gate repainted

And the Pump team have done their usual great job of keeping the water flowing and will continue winter maintenance, looking to improve a couple of less well-performing pumps.

Other events of note during the year were the re-opening of the Waiting List; the addition of 2 more social memberships established for long-serving ploholders who could no longer manage their plots;

and the successful breeding on site of 4 kestrels - providing helpful assistance in keeping the pigeons and parakeets at bay.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the volunteers – too many to mention- who keep things going on the site. In addition to those already mentioned, thanks go to:

the gate team; the inspections team; everyone who volunteers at events; the web masters; our professional photographers; our graphic designers who prepare notices; those who clean the compost loo and the men's urinal; those who cut the grass, look after the bees, maintain the flower beds, the heritage orchard, the dead hedge, the living hedge and willow fedge; all those who volunteer for the work parties, pick up rubbish and everyone else who does their bit, from helping their plot neighbours to supporting our café and events.

Thanks also to the committee for their support throughout the year.

Karen Saywell

November 2024