

Royal Paddocks Allotments Annual General Meeting minutes

12 November 2021, 8 pm

The Landmark Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington.

Present: 74 plotholders plus Councillor Jim Millard, Councillor for Hampton Wick and member of the Management Committee.

Apologies were received from Carol Ager, Nick and Janet Baylis, John Dilley, Steve Kremer and Alison and Lorenz Williams.

1.	Welcome from the chair and apologies – David Harnden, in the Chair, welcomed those attending and thanked the Landmark Centre for making available the venue, which allowed for good social distancing.
2.	Minutes of the 2020 Virtual AGM – the circulated summary of the business transacted through the virtual AGM, organised to keep business going during the Covid restrictions, was approved.
3.	Matters arising from the minutes – there were no matters arising
4.	Chairman's annual report – David Harnden David Harnden presented his annual report, which will be available in full on the RPA website. He noted that it had been a strange and challenging couple of years with a lot of disruption, such as not being able to hold a face-to-face AGM in 2020. But he was pleased to note that, with the help of many plotholders, the organisation had coped well with the challenges. The value of the site and its community had been clear as it provided a sanctuary and place of friendship as well a source of fresh fruit and vegetables. David went on to pay tribute to all those who had continued to contribute to the thriving life of the allotments. He could not mention everyone but wanted to highlight those who worked behind the scenes to keep essential activities going. These included: • the gate team led by Ashley Catto who lock and unlock the vehicle gates each night and morning • The plot inspections team led by Karen Saywell who inspected plots 3 times a year to keep up standards of cultivation • Ray Hulm and his team for maintenance of the pumps • Ben Wilkins, John Hourigan and Chris Pocock for their work on the compost toilet • Andrew and Susan Saunders, who maintain the hedge on the southern border of the site • Martin Scotton for his indefatigable work on collection of rent payments • Gill Hiley for her tireless and essential work on the site information pack, lettings and keeping the waiting list for plots - now 69 strong but with 24 plots let over the past 12 months • Mark Buckley and Carol Dukes for creation and maintenance of the website. • Stuart Wisdom for providing pallets • and Ruth Walker for work on the orchard in the SW corner of the site. He also drew attention to the helpful deliveries of compost from the Park Lane Stables in Teddington which had been threatened with closure. The RPA had contributed £750

	to their appeal to help them buy their site which looked as if it would soon be achieved. But even in exile in Ham they had continued to deliver to our site. David went on to explain that some activities by their nature had to be curtailed including the operation of the Seed Store café, which did not provide for social distancing. However, that had enabled some redecoration to be completed. Anne Wingrove and her team had then shown ingenuity in managing to re-open in a safe way with outside service once the regulations allowed. The cafe would remain open until the Christmas café on Sunday 19 December and volunteers to help were always welcome. David also drew attention to the fact that, although social activities had necessarily been curtailed for a time, innovative responses from plotholders had led to: • a non-social social organised by Hilary Griffiths which had raised £400 for good causes • a socially distanced seedling sale and pots for plots service organised by Rose Moss. More recently, a very successful Centenary Autumn show had been held thanks to the good planning and hard work of the Social Committee led by Jenny Bourne. He wanted to record special thanks to Jenny, who was stepping down as Social Secretary after 15 years. She had done so much to enhance the social side of the allotments. David also wanted to highlight other important contributions during the year: • the work done to refurbish the café tables by John Hourigan when the tables were idle and he was not • the work done by the team led by Yasmin Allen to exhibit an allotment bed at the RHS show at Hampton Court. This had involved a huge amount of work but had been a triumph • the creation of the fantastic weathervane now on the Seed Store, which was designed and crafted by Jem Negus, with material kindly paid for by Gill Hiley • the creation by Jenny Bourne, Gill Hiley, Ruth Walker and Bob McIntyre of Crab Apple Corner, a new public welcoming space by the site entrance • the project led by Susan Saunders and Janet Baylis to create the RPA History Book to mark of the Centenary. Great credit must go to all who worked on the project and especially to Katie Downham, James Bell and Ray Elmitt, a local historian who gave his time and expertise • the St John's Church community in Hampton Wick who set up both a celebratory service for the centenary and arranged in their Love Hampton Wick programme for volunteer help for six plotholders enduring tough circumstances • the Plotholders' Committee members for their hard work during the year. David concluded by saying that, while it was difficult to know what the next year would bring, experience suggested that the RPA would continue to flourish and provide not only a refuge but a way of connecting to the things that really matter.
5.	Accounts and financial report In his unavoidable absence, Karen Saywell introduced Andrew Stanley's report as Treasurer. The overall picture showed that a valuable set of investments had been made in the RPA site covering: the purchase and installation of the new incinerator, work on improving the tracks round the site, work on hedges and other refurbishments.

	This led to a small excess of expenditure over income of some £4,500 over the year as inevitably income had been reduced because of the restriction of the operation of the café and some aspects of social events. This sum had been deducted from the organisation's reserves Despite the expenditure, there was still a healthy cushion in the reserves of over £24,500. The long-term plan showed that there was always likely to be at least a £10k reserve cushion to meet unforeseen contingencies, even if major future projects went ahead. Ideas for possible projects were therefore always welcome. Karen noted that Andrew wished to thank Martin Scotton for his indispensable work on collecting the rents, and Len Cowking for carrying out his independent review of the accounts. The meeting endorsed the accounts unanimously with thanks to Andrew and Karen.
6.	Social Activities Jenny Bourne introduced her farewell Report as Social Secretary, as she was retiring from the post after 15 years. She expressed thanks to those who had stepped in to keep the RPA community alive and well when the more formal events were not possible, as described by David Harnden, and said that the Social Committee had been focused on five key activities to celebrate the Centenary year. These were the new welcome feature by the site entrance, the specially commissioned weather vane and plaque, limited edition centenary merchandise, the RPA History book and the Centenary Autumn Show. The Crab Apple corner work had involved a small team – Jenny, Gill Hiley, Bob McIntyre and Ruth Walker - using their skills to dig and plant a suitable flowerbed, build a bench and bird bath from recycled materials, and plant a suitable crab apple tree. This culminated in a touching ceremony on 30 June when the winner of the children's competition to design a sign for the area, Mollie Baxendale, was present to see her sign unveiled The crowning glory of the year had to be the Centenary Autumn show which was able to go ahead as Covid restrictions were lifted. Jenny ran through a wide range of highlights including: • the successful Produce show organised by Ruth Walker which despite a difficult growing year had impressive entries topped by the best in show award for Dan Read's humungous onions • the memorable speech by Susan Saunders launching the RPA history book summarising what makes the community strong and the need to cherish the people and wildlife there • the unveiling of the creative commemorative weathervane • the raffle organised by Joanie Fulton featuring "in house" prizes generously contributed by ploholders • the traditional children's competitions for biggest pumpkin, tallest sunflower and best scarecrow • the centenary products commissioned and sold by Anne Wingrove and the Café team • Katie Downham's portfolio of photos capturing the essence of the day • the Home Produce stall run by Marguerite and Chris Pocock • A virtual time capsule featuring items that would forever be linked to 2021: a face mask, bindweed and "the last bit of fuel".

	Jenny ended by thanking all those who contributed to the day from mowing the grass to setting up tents and stalls and helping with clearing up at the end. She felt the event showcased a thriving, co-operative collaborative community. She was pleased to report that Yasmin Allen had agreed to succeed her as Social Secretary. Jenny's full report is available on the RPA Website. At the end of her report, Jenny was warmly thanked for her huge contribution to the social life of the Plotolders' community over her remarkable tenure of the post
7.	Presentation of Awards The awards were presented entertainingly by Councillor Jim Millard. The awards were as follows: <i>Best Newcomer:</i> 1st Plot 12f Angela Kilenyi and Fiona Orsini (Derek Mason Cup) 2nd Plot 196f Vladimir Valionkin and Gintare Janaviciute 3rd Plot 39b Alison and Lorenz Williams <i>Best half plot:</i> 1st Plot 153f Pamela and David Boyd 2nd Plot 132b David and Julie Lainchbury 3rd Plot 132f James and Claire Sleigh <i>Best full plot:</i> 1st Plot 4 Carol Ager (RPA Cup) 2nd Plot 67 Mary Downham 3rd Plot 106 Alex and James McCann
8.	Election of Plotholder Committee Members for 2021/2022 Plotholders standing for election were: Yasmin Allen, 35; Jenny Bourne, 27f, 28b; Theo Christophers, 148; David Harnden, 152; Gill Hiley, 50; Angela Kilenyi, 12 f; Christine Knight, 82; Karen Saywell, 81; Martin Scotton, 59; Julia Mancell Smith, 34; Andrew Stanley, 120; Vladimir Valionkin, 196f; Anne Wingrove, 127b. All the above were unanimously elected.
9.	Other Business There being no other business, after a warm vote of thanks to the Chairman, the meeting was closed at 8.50 pm.