

# The Allotment



## It's AGM time

*Put the date in your diary now!*

**Tuesday 22nd January 2008 at Thames Ditton Tennis Club.**

**(The Club is just opposite the entrance to Thames Ditton railway station. There's plenty of off-road car parking, so there's no need to park in the street)**

The meeting will start at ???, so please come in good time. The bar will be open (a good reason for coming early!) and there will be a buffet meal afterwards (at no charge to members).

The AGM is your chance to have your say and to put forward any suggestions/questions you may have. We're hoping to have our local community police present – so it's also your opportunity to get their views on our recent spate of vandalism.

To round up the evening, there will be a talk by Xxxxxxxx on the subject of xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. So, all in all, there's lots worth coming for!

## View from the Shed

### East meets West Molesey

I first met Mr Xiou and Mrs Chen in late October as they crossed the site to Thames Ditton Station. They were showing a keen interest in my Dahlias and we soon got chatting. Mr Xiou said that every weekend they travel from their flat in central London to visit a house in West Molesey where they tend a garden or as he put it – 'farm'.

It soon became apparent that the couple were new to growing and I asked where their interest came from. They explained that on their farming co-operative in rural China each person had a designated job. Theirs was to cultivate – neither were allowed to plant anything themselves. When they came to England they were able for the first time to sow a seed and watch it grow. It made me think

how much we take for granted in our society.

After an hour or so and clutching some of the Dahlias they made for home.

On opening my shed some two weeks later I was surprised to find a beautiful Chinese vase on my bench, with a note explaining it's provenance and thanking me for the flowers. I felt very humble.

Mr Xiou and Mrs Chen are now on the waiting list for a plot and hopefully they will be 'farming' with us soon.

### Shed break-ins – the battle goes on

The two sets of warning signs are now in position at each entrance and, hopefully, acting as a deterrent to opportunists and vandals. There have been no reported incidents since they were put up – but

that may have something to do with the season.

The latest advice from WPC Jane Eames of the East Molesey Safer Neighbourhood Team relates more to property theft than property damage. However, it does include the following tips, which we should take on board.

■ Sheds are not designed for safe storage, consider installing a strong lockable box or cage inside, preferably anchored to the floor.

■ Cut foliage away from the shed so that you are not providing cover for the thief.

■ Do not leave things outside (ornaments, furniture, tools) which could be easily removed or used to break into your property.

*Continued over*

■ Cut back any overgrown areas around the allotment where people can hide.

She goes on to say: "You will never totally stop this type of crime from happening, but at least you can make it less attractive for the would-be thief.

"One of the difficulties we face is that of identifying the owner of property that comes into Police possession. I have pens available that show up under ultra violet light. It is a simple matter of writing your home postcode and the house number on the item. If it is stolen, then we can at the very least trace the owner and give it back".

Should anyone want a marker pen, then please feel free to email Jane at: [Eames3106@surrey.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Eames3106@surrey.pnn.police.uk)

### **A good dusting for Eric**

After the last shed break-ins, and following his report to the police, site manager Eric received a late evening visit to his shed by a young lady whom he swears was a forensic officer. By flickering torchlight and rubber gloved she proceeded to give all his displaced objects a good dusting for prints he says...well that explains that then!

## **From the site manager**

This should be my last contribution as site manager as I retire at the AGM on the 22nd of this month after ten years. I have made so many friends and had so much support from all and sundry and am grateful to have had the experience. I've even learnt a bit about plumbing!

Once again we have been visited by the local vandals and as many as 28 sheds were broken into using forks taken from the first shed by breaking a window. Nothing as far as I can tell was taken – apart from the contents of the beekeepers' first aid kit. A tea caddy in my shed might have been handled and I spent a happy half hour in my shed in the dark with a charming young forensics lady attempting to find fingerprints by torchlight! Alas they must have used gloves so once more police time was wasted. It is hoped that we shall have advice at the AGM from our neighbourhood police officer who tells me that they tracked down a hoard of 'stolen' tools only to find that none had been marked with post codes or other identification marks and therefore no charges could be brought. It is up to us to mark everything and we are being offered the opportunity to mark tools with ultra violet sensitive markings

### **Anyone seen a greenhouse?**

After the November squalls I went to the plot and found a big hole where my two plastic greenhouses used to be. Vandals had slashed both the covers during the previous week and I presume a hearty gust had entered and carried them away.

I eventually found one lodged in a tree some 50 yards away, completely intact but a little bent. The other has completely disappeared, cover and all.

Over the last couple of years I have often questioned their viability. In periods of hot weather, even with the doors open they overheat. This means I am tied to a daily watering routine that sometimes can't be maintained, plants suffer and the only thing that grows is my guilt.

I have however always produced a good crop of chillies, and once, myself and the resident rat enjoyed two fine melons. Maybe I will persevere with the one remaining if only to swap some peppers for a bottle of Jane Macmillan's wonderful chilli sauce.

### **Exciting times ahead**

Now that the new year has arrived and the days lengthen I start to feel a tingle of

enthusiasm and excitement for the coming growing season. Dull wet days are brightened by the colour of new seed catalogues. Planting plans and projects take over from the latest best-seller and Garderners World starts to seem interesting again.

As I look now at the sodden brown patch that is plot 13 I know that in a couple of months the green shoots of spring will herald another wonderful season on the plot.

*Wishing you all a happy and fruitful new year.*

*Paul*

## **Who to contact**

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and I hope this will be available at the next Activity Day.

There is still a large waiting list for plots and there are one or two plots that have not been worked for far too long. The Committee feel they have been too lenient in the past. We work on the basis that, plots not having worked for six months, will be refused renewal but there is so often a legitimate reason for the plot holder's absence that we softies allow renewal. Our new Lettings Manager may prove the exception!

Manure in various stages of decomposition is available at the end of plot 14 and woodchips and soot at both ends of the site.

Thank you all who turned out for the October activity day under the guidance of Tom Appleton. Numbers were low this time but much was achieved. Well done! I look forward to welcoming the new Site Manager at the AGM on the 22nd January at the Thames Ditton Tennis Club hall. Thank you all for putting up with me for so long and "Keeeeeep Digggggging"

Happy New Year  
*Eric*