

December 2020

MAGA

MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS



Christmas Message



Best wishes to everybody from your Committee. It has been a strange year with many of us able to spend far more time than normal on our plots and others not being able to come at all.

It's a shame that we have not been able to hold any social events this year. Also we have not been able to hold an AGM to report back to you but we have continued to try and go forward with improvements, as had been requested at the last AGM in 2019. We have consulted with you as best we could in the circumstances and actually more people were

able to give feedback on our suggestions than would have done at an AGM, where typically about 30 people attend and time is limited.

We have lost 4 people from the Committee this year mostly because of work and family commitments. We thank them for their contribution and hope that we can have an AGM soon so we can recruit more people to the Committee. I would also like to thank the remaining members of the Committee who continue to put in so much effort into keeping the allotments running, much of which goes unnoticed by the membership.

Our thanks extend to Margaret Rixon for continuing to run the shop this year. Thanks too to Philippa Tribler who continues to keep the notice boards up to date with the minutes for us all. Peter Slater has done a great job again this year keeping the grass cut around the allotment roads and west side main path.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and New Year, and look forward to seeing many of you in 2021.

Jadzia (MAGA Chair)



MAGA Martin Way Allotment News is produced 2-3 times per year by Committee members and volunteers.

The MAGA committee accept no liability for any errors or views expressed in this publication.

The views of contributors do not necessarily match the views or policies of the MAGA committee.

To provide a submission for the next issue, please email ivorstocker@sky.com

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MARTIN WAY APIARY



As we all have experienced, the prolonged mild weather has kept several plants flowering much longer than they normally would, so our bees are quite often still out foraging (this means collecting pollen or nectar) and I can stand besides my hives and watch lots of bees flying back to their hives covered in yellow pollen. I think this pollen comes from late Ivy so represents virtually the last source of pollen for them this season. Mild late weather is both a blessing and a potential problem for honeybees as although it means they can fly, it also means they need



to eat more in order to power up their wing muscles for flight and the energy involved in foraging. This in turn means that they will eat more of their stores (honey) which they have collected for use during the winter. As the beekeeper, I now need to monitor the amount of stores they have over the winter months so that in case of emergency I can feed them if needed. How can I know what is inside the hive during winter without opening the hive? By “hefting” each hive at regular intervals so that I can compare the weight of each hive over the coming weeks and if any feel too light I can pop on some fondant as an emergency feed until the weather is again warm enough for them to forage again. I hasten to add that I rarely need to do this as all of us beekeepers in the Apiary try to ensure our bees have plenty of stores to eat over winter!

This past summer has been very good for most of our bees, and they have been able to gather lots of pollen and bring back good amounts of nectar to process into honey. The taste and colour of the honey from each individual hive is dictated by the type of plant the bees have got the nectar from and it varies every year and varies between hives and even within hives throughout the season. I love watching returning bees at the hive entrance and trying to work out which plants they have gathered pollen from, although to work out where any particular honey comes from is complicated as one needs to spin the honey in a centrifuge, extracting the pollen from the honey in so doing, then analyse it under a microscope. There are at least 7 different factors to look at on each pollen grain and they can be tiny!

The last autumn tasks for us beekeepers has been to put wire netting around our hives to protect from possible Green Woodpecker damage (they can peck through hives to eat the larvae and stores inside) and to put on mouse guards to prevent mice gaining access to hives for a warm and comfortable place to spend the winter!



Lastly, I (hopefully with help from fellow beekeepers!) use the time over winter to renew wood chip along the path and in the Apiary and do a good cut back of brambles and other greenery around the pond.

Thanks as ever to all those who support the Apiary and plant pollinator friendly plants. Have a good winter and stay healthy.

Alison Pelikan

Security Improvements – GATES & FENCES



Following the consultation about erecting security fencing around the allotments in August, we sent out a response to you all on the 16th September 2020. In that we summarised what we would look at before coming back to you the members:-

- 1 Identifying the sections of the boundary that need to be made secure
- 2 Investigating the costs of patching these sections of the boundary with security fencing
- 3 Investigating upgrading/changing the gates with a better lock system, such as alley gates
- 4 Investigating the costs of clearing vacant plots by a contractor

We have spent a lot of time to find options to fit the criteria suggested by the feedback. Please could you take the time to read the following and consider how you would like the Committee to proceed. See later for ways to give us your response.

Fencing

- 1 We have identified the sections of the boundary that need to be made secure as follows:
 - There are 3 corners on the east side where there is either no fence or broken fences.
 - On the west side along the boundary to Martin Way there are 9 gates and 2 household sections of 1m (3 ft) high fences through which people can come into the allotments.
 - From the summer car park to the large tree on the boundary there are a number of what were supposed to be temporary arras panels covering sections where there are no householder fences and also a household missing fence.

We have had householders in this area coming in and dumping their rubbish on the paths recently.
- 2 The total cost to make the most vulnerable sections of the allotment boundary, as identified above, secure with V-mesh security fencing would be £11,366 inc VAT.

Gates

- 3 Investigating upgrading/changing the gates with an improved locking system, such as alley gates.

The investigation into upgrading the gate locks was centred around using a key lock system which is commonly used on alley and allotment gates and which was suggested in the feedback from members. The one shown opposite is from George Hill allotments in Merton.



The keylock system is ideal for a single gate and uses a key to enter and the same key to exit. After using your key to enter the gate, you must then close and lock the gate with a key. The problem we have at Martin Way is that we have double gates on both east and west side entrances for vehicle access. This would mean that someone could lift the drop bolt on the larger gate and push or pull the gates open. At present the large thick steel slider latches prevents this from happening. Some thought was put into how we could use a lock system like this without having to also lock the drop bolt on the larger gate with another padlock.

A solution to secure the gates with a single lock is to have one gate opening outwards and the other gate opening inwards, similar to the east side gates now. We could achieve this by welding a steel plate to the top of each gate to meet the height barrier, only allowing the gate to open in the direction given above. This prevents the drop bolt on the main gate requiring an additional padlock because even if the drop bolt is lifted the gates cannot be forced open inwards or outwards when locked. It is intended to remove any drop bolt on the smaller pedestrian entry gates and have an additional pole with a latching mechanism to hold the gate open for vehicles to drive through. This latching system is needed so that the gate does not start closing because of wind as the vehicle drives through!

A standard key open/exit lock is shown opposite. These are used on communal gates where the gate needs securing every time it is shut. A key would be needed to open the gate when you come in and again when you go out. To close the gate you would just pull or push it shut. When the gate is closed the lock latches shut and can only be opened with a key.

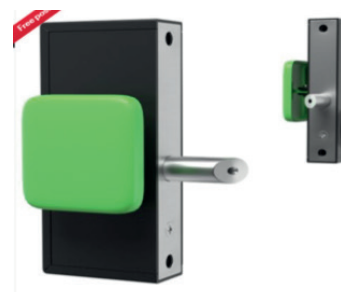


What will be critical to the success of either lock system is that the larger gate MUST have the drop bolt correctly positioned into the ground steel tube to align the gates.

It was also felt that needing to use a key to come in and go out was not ideal so we researched some more and came across a key entry lock but with a push to exit mechanism, two examples shown below.



Key access on one side



These locks are for use on communal gates where the gate needs securing every time it is shut. A key would only be needed to open the gate when you come in. To close the gate you would just pull or push it shut. When the gate is closed the lock latches shut and can only be opened with a key.

As before, critical to the success of either lock system is that the larger gate MUST have the drop bolt correctly positioned into the ground steel tube to align the gates.

It is not as secure as a key to entry and exit because someone may be able to operate the push button from outside, although there is a bolt on quick exit shroud available, shown opposite. Unfortunately we couldn't find a photo with the green lever shown inside the shroud.



A security issue with a push to exit lock is that if someone comes into the allotments from a neighbouring property they will find they can still easily get out through the gate. This may encourage some to still access the allotments when they shouldn't. It's a balance of risk here.

There are 2 components to the gate locks, one is the latch mechanism itself and the other is the key barrel, both of which can be replaced separately. The gate locks on both sides would be keyed the same.

Changing the gate locks to any of these shown above means some alterations to the gates are needed. The east side gates are more straightforward as they are robust and were manufactured from 60mm square steel. The west side gates and height barrier are not so robust and were manufactured from 40mm square steel. You might think that this should be adequate but we have found that the west side height barrier has been bent on a number of occasions, probably by a high vehicle being driven into it. We were unsure of this until Peter Slater used the mini digger to push against the height barrier from behind and managed to straighten it a bit. The material has been damaged over a number of years. As we need the height barrier to be straight and secure for the gates to be closed against, the height barrier will need to be replaced in 60mm square steel.

The west side vertical posts have also been pulled out of alignment when the height barrier was bent and we have struggled with being able to lock the height barrier in place. One solution is to dig a trench about 30cm (1 ft) down and weld a steel square to the base of the uprights and add some steel fillets for additional strength. Hopefully replacing the height barrier and strengthening the upright post will allow for the height barrier to be open and closed much more easily than now.

Another suggestion was made for another padlock with a combination which would be changed annually. This would be difficult to implement as we cannot communicate quickly if we need to change the code as there are a number of people who do not use email. It would also be difficult for some members who may be unable to remember the combination. It is likely that exchanging the old worn out padlock for another would mean that the gates would continue to be left unlocked during the day.

The overall costs for getting the gates modified, including the additional work listed above, obtaining the special locks mentioned and getting 250 keys cut for distribution is around £3,700 inc VAT.

4 Investigating the costs of clearing vacant plots by a contractor.



We have partially covered this as we are arranging for a tree surgeon to clear some trees from plot 12A in the far corner of the east side. We have tried to get in touch with IdVerde about using one of their large diggers to clear some wild plots but they have been unable to respond to any requests of help since the beginning of October as all their admin staff, have been working on sending out invoices for the allotments that they run on behalf of London Borough of Merton. We will continue to follow this up but we felt it was important to sort out the site security first.

Summary

By carrying out the modification to the entrance gates and erecting some security fencing where most needed it is hoped that we may be able to lessen the amount of people coming onto the allotments who have no right to be here. It should also increase our personal safety and the security of our plots, sheds and crops.

The total costs of improving the allotments security by securing the perimeter with 'V'mesh security fencing where it is most needed and to strengthen the security of the entrance gates with new locks is around £15,066 inc VAT. These costs can be covered by our current funds and need no additional contributions from plot holders.

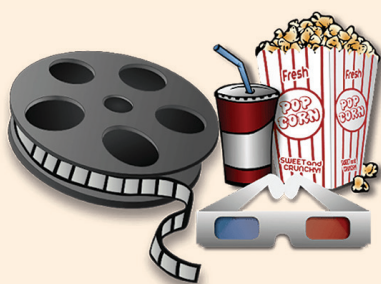
Security Improvements - Gates and Fences – Plot holders response

If you are reading this newsletter via a Mail Chimp email then you will receive another email shortly which will have some questions for you to answer. Please don't reply to this newsletter as we would like to receive your feedback separately, addressed to the email that follows.

If you are reading this newsletter as a paper copy posted to you as you don't have an email address, the questions will be on a separate sheet included with the newsletter. Please complete and put in the shop post box or post back to MAGA.

Even if you replied before to the August newsletter could you make sure you reply now as well!
All responses need to be received by the 31st December 2020.

FAMOUS FILM TITLES : MISSING VOWELS



- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. SPCTR | 8. NNHLL | 15. BLCKPNTHR |
| 2. CC | 9. CHRTSFFR | 16. GRNBK |
| 3. SPRMN | 10. GRS | 17. GNWTHTHWND |
| 4. THKNGND | 11. DNKRK | 18. DMB |
| 5. RNMN | 12. LN | 19. PRST |
| 6. THGRTSTSHWMN | 13. STRSBRN | 20. T |
| 7. THFVRT | 14. RM | |

(Answers on page 12)

MAGA Financial Statement 2020

MAGA's financial year ended on 31 March 2020 and normally we would have presented the figures at our Annual General Meeting. As with many things this year we had to adapt to what is been termed the "new normal".

The following is therefore a snapshot of our financial year and where we are to date.

Income was broadly the same at £23,772 (previous period £22,565) of which rent was £12,763 up from £12,478 previously. Other income was made up of water levy £6,024 and maintenance levy £1,288 and finally shop sales of £3,698 which due to the hard work of the shop helpers had increased from £2,800.

Obviously shop sales this year will be significantly down.

Overall expenditure was £18,404 up from £16,347 of which the major items were Rent to Idverde £1,893, Premises repairs and renewals £8,522 (principally repairing the water tanks), accountancy fees £960, fees to NSALG £717 and water rates £1,866.

From our own water readings we believe Castle Water who manage the water supply to our site and who only bill us once a year have underestimated our fees for the current year.

Corporation tax was £361 down from £659.

Overall we therefore had a surplus after tax of £2,424 down from £2,973
Moving on to this year we currently have in reserve some £18,000 and have to date collected rents totalling £17,000 with nearly 90% paid electronically which is a fantastic achievement for which we would like to thank all the membership.

Discussions continue to take place on how best to utilize these funds, from fencing, repairs to the roads and gates so any viable suggestions are welcome.

POTHoles IN ROADS

A Committee member recently found that a depression in the road by the west side pedestrian gate had been covered over with a 2" thick paving slab. As this was a serious trip hazard it was removed and the hole filled with 20mm stone.

Please do not fill depressions in the roads with bricks, paving slabs, broken ceramic pieces (as shown in photo) or anything else you have. The ceramic pieces were particularly sharp and could have shredded a tyre or injured someone if they had fallen on them.

Please inform the Committee of any problems that you feel need dealing with and we will endeavour to sort them out as quickly as we can. Thank you!



HELPING AROUND THE ALLOTMENTS

Due to Coronavirus we have been unable to run a program of working parties this year. There are however tasks which need to be done and if you are able to work alone or with a household member we would be grateful for offers of help. Suggested tasks include trimming back the laurel hedge on the west side and painting the new plot boundary posts which have been put in to help new plot holders (and old) to know where they can cultivate to. This is to ensure that the paths remain as clear as possible for the benefit of all.

If you feel you could help please email the Committee.



PATHS

Thank you to everyone who has kept their boundary paths clear in what has been a difficult year. We are trying to ensure that everyone can move safely around the allotments and the maintenance of clear unobstructed paths is crucial to this.

We have identified 12 blocked paths recently and emailed the plot holders who have cleared the obstructions rapidly. Many thanks go to those plot holders who have cleared the obstructions without grumbling!

Just a reminder that you are jointly responsible with your neighbour for the paths around your plots and these should be 1m (40") wide, level and clear of obstructions. If you use carpet or weed suppressant material please cover it with woodchip so that it doesn't become slippery. We have found one path which had solid plastic sheeting on it recently and this when wet is like walking on ice. A lot of our plot holders are of mature years and find it difficult to bounce!

Please don't leave hose pipes laying on the paths between plots as they are a trip hazard for others.

REPAIRS TO WASTE BAY – NON-GREEN WASTE WEST SIDE

At the beginning of October we managed to get the waste bays cleared but the digger driver found that one of the bottom wooden sleepers had rotted and the digger bucket front edge was digging into the wood and pushing the other sleepers up. We cleared the wood away from both sides of the sleeper to see if we could take out the rotten remnants and let the good ones slide down but unfortunately the weight of the sleepers above was too great to allow us to do this safely. We have requested a minor repair through IdVerde. This hasn't been done yet as all their staff were apparently working on sending out the allotment invoices.

GAS LEAK? WEDNESDAY 25th NOVEMBER

Some of you might have noticed some yellow marks on the road on the west side entrance and wondered what they are for. These are as a result of Alan Lee reporting a smell of gas between the gates and Ken's shop on Wednesday. This smell has been noted before and previously reported a few years ago. Engineers came out then but couldn't smell anything and left.

This time two engineers from SGN came and did some extensive testing as they could both smell gas. They think that it may be a leak from an unregistered gas pipe as according to their records there are no gas pipes across or down the allotment entrance road.

The entrance road was drilled and sniffed, which is why there are yellow marks on it but no gas leak was found. They then checked 358 Martin Way and it wasn't from there either.



The engineers got a reading of gas from the open brick wall on a garage in Merton Mansions. The garage, number 17, has 5 industrial size overflowing paladin dustbins stored inside it and also has an open drain. The engineers said that there were also some gas pipes nearby.

The bins were going to be emptied the next day and if it is just rotting rubbish or a dumped leaking gas bottle in the rubbish, the gas smell should be gone shortly after. If the smell of gas was not gone by Friday, SGN said they would come back and recheck it.

We will let you know if we have more news!

EAST SIDE PADLOCK



After the east side padlock disappeared recently a Committee member managed to make some new parts for an old broken lock we still had and successfully repaired it. The metal sleeve and the C shaped item were machined from silver steel.

A hole was drilled into the padlock body and threaded so that a metal P clip could be screwed to the underside of the lock to retain it. Please remember to always close the lock to avoid further damage to it. Hopefully it will last long enough before any security improvements are carried out!

PLOT NUMBERS

As part of your tenancy you are required to display your plot number in a prominent position. An enterprising plot holder recently came up with the technique shown below!





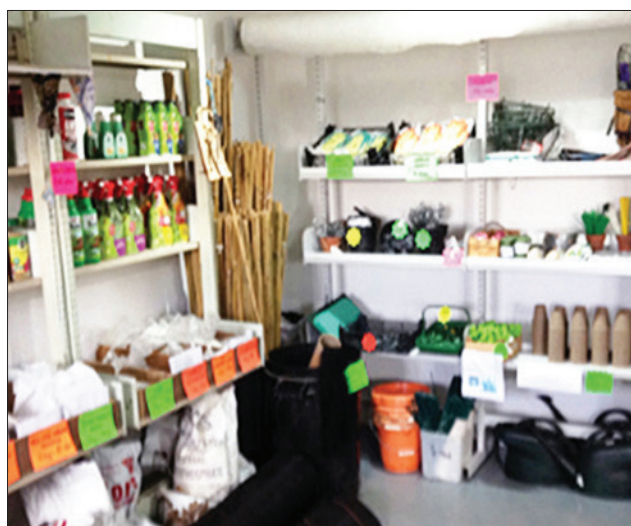
RE-OPENING OF MAGA SHOP

After all the difficulties of 2020, I am pleased to announce that we will be re-opening the MAGA Shop on Saturday 6th March 2021, from 10.30am to 12.30pm, and on each Saturday thereafter. In order to observe COVID safety regulations (which may be subject to change), customers will not be allowed to enter the shop but will be served by the shop helper from a table inside the doorway of the shop.

A list of available goods (and prices) will be displayed on the noticeboard outside the shop, together with a list of seeds currently in stock. We will have seed potatoes in stock (Charlotte, Maris Piper, Desiree and King Edward), along with onion and shallot sets and, of course compost!

So do come and support your shop.

Margaret (*Shop Manager*)



CHRISTMAS TREE DAMAGE

A plot holder on the west side recently reported that a Christmas tree growing on their plot was vandalised by someone cutting a large section off the top of the tree. The photo below show the tree with the section cut off. It's probable that someone wanted it for their Christmas decorations but they decided not to keep all of it and dumped part of it on an adjacent plot.

If you see anything like this happening please report it straight away to the Committee. The plot is along the Martin Way boundary which is currently very insecure with multiple gates from gardens into the allotments as well as 2 houses with 3' high fences.

Another reason for improving the security on the allotments.



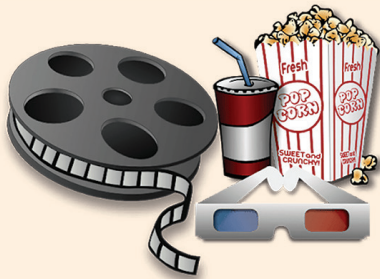
PROMISES...

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FAMOUS FILM TITLES : MISSING VOWELS



- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Spectre | 8. Annie Hill | 15. Black Panther |
| 2. Coco | 9. Chariots of Fire | 16. Green Book |
| 3. Superman | 10. Grease | 17. Gone with the Wind |
| 4. The King and I | 11. Dunkirk | 18. Dumbo |
| 5. Rainman | 12. Lion | 19. Parasite |
| 6. The Greatest Showman | 13. A Star is Born | 20. ET |
| 7. The Favourite | 14. Room | |