

2007 annual report

Jericho Street Fair Saturday June 9th

This year this was a smaller affair as some committee members were absent and there was no food and fewer plants for sale. It was mainly used for advertising.

National Allotment Week (Aug. 13-19)

Sadly our plans for our first Open Day were cancelled due to the effects of flooding

July Flooding

We have already spent a number of years contacting the Council about the blocked and overgrown ditch on the western boundary and made strong representations to the Environment Agency but were bounced between the two with no action. It would not have made any difference to the floods but we feel would help with drainage during a future less severe episode. We have had further meetings with Environment Agency and OCC officers who are considering clearing the ditch but there is a problem of what to do with the spoil if it were to be dug out as the Environment Agency has stated it would not allow it to be left on site and council would not pay for it to be removed. We hope we can still do this as the security measure on that boundary and hope the Agency will accept we have removed tons of waste during the past 4 years and so need to rebuild our levels.

Walton Well Bridge

is due to be closed at some time in the future to traffic over 7.5 tonnes due to failure of the structure to support heavier weights. Notice has not yet been formally issued but this may be problematical if the ditch and disused ground are not cleared before then.

Cripley Island

This was an item on our last agenda and unfortunately we were not contacted again with plans until it was too late for us to respond as a committee within the time of the present lease. An alternative proposal was offered and withdrawn and the matter is still to be resolved so that difficulties with access, rights and responsibilities are resolved. Initial response of the committee to the first proposal was that

' we think that horticultural use is still viable we would like the lease to state the same usage as ours as that way the boundary and pests will be a common concern and controlled. In view of the problems we have had and the lack of recognition of these shown in this proposal we would like the lease to be an annual one so that management can be monitored. We would like the lease to continue to state clearly that cars should not normally be brought into the site except for occasional deliveries and in any case should not be parked. We think that leaseholders should be members of the association (in a special category?) so that as they cross the site they follow our rules. We are concerned to know who the leaseholders are and what happens if one of them changes. Finally we would like assurance that there would be no parties. Since then we have been alerted to further problems about access and public liability that we will need to pursue.

Plot audits

We now positively apply the rule of writing to non-payers after one month and only offering plots for a limited amount of time. We now have a spring and autumn review and again a mixture of reminders and warnings were issued and proved generally very effective. Most respond very positively and this does stop plots simply being left untended but we have a few outstanding issues which do take up far too much time. Our October Audit was limited due to the flooding. Although the audits are a lot of work for the committee we feel it is essential to ensure all members are protected by the application of our rules and that it has resulted in a significant improvement in plot maintenance.

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Reclamation

Internal Trees in April

This work was later than usual due to spring flooding we had 5 days of digger work clearing the remaining internal trees and stump grinding. Unfortunately the association incurred costs of £100 to complete this work as OCC workers were stopped by the action of 2 members. Letters were sent to the members involved ensuring they were aware that *by joining the Association and paying their membership dues they were bound by the Rules of the Association and should not interfere with work agreed at the AGM and being executed by an officer of the association.*

Paths

We then had help from the council levelling the railway path and the land and path by the gate. removal of the shed. It was then too late to do Castle Mill willows.

Pollarding Willows **In September**

We were still waiting for this remaining work and a response to our complaints about the island willows which went back 4 years. Eventually this was resolved after much work with estates and the pollarding took place in October. Due to initial problems getting through the car park this work was delayed as the land is managed by different departments. The work was delayed initially as machines could not get access through the car park which we had to close for 4 days. We took this opportunity to have green manure and wood chips delivered for member use. Access through the car park meant work was delayed until the car park closed as we could not get through. There is presently another planning application for another development at the southern end (Vennet Close) therefore a new fence will be required there; it is hoped that if the ditch and willows are done then trees could be cleared from disused ground at the same time.

Plots

The removal of internal trees meant a huge amount of rubbish was removed from central plots and a huge area brought back into circulation. This needed some 2 weeks of almost full daily work by committee members in collecting, organising and burning rubbish. April Let:

This work meant we cleared ready to let: plots 48, 49, 50, 85, 86, 90, 91, 95, 96, 109, 110, 111, 129, 130, 141, 142, 147, 148, part of 149 and 150. (These are **not to be let as too much rubbish stored and need to be mowed off.**) Awaiting further clearance/levelling: 21, 27, 66, 97, 126, and space by allotment shed.

Mowing

I think everyone will have seen the beneficial effects of our new mowing contract. We have got a cheaper contract and aimed to use once a month to get rid of weeds. We are using this also on clerade plots as long as they have no rubbish, glass. Still a problem that members dump rubbish by headlands and on waste plots but now much less as more obvious now grassed. Thanks to Ady Podbury who does us proud with his diligent work. If your headland parks member and has retired to

Federation

Wendy elected to committee after some difficulties. We discovered the constitution was moribund and in need of revitalisation and have worked throughout the year with 36 allotment associations to bring back as a support to associations in working with the council. The federation holds responsibility for insurance and cooperation. Wendy was asked to appear live on Radio Oxford and hopefully the broadcast will be available on web site for those interested. We had some major issues to deal with immediately such as flooding, ensuring that due to City Council budget deficit that the allotment budget was not re-allocated and provision for future allotment officer role when Mike. Also 4 allotment sites were included in plans for development which were withdrawn after action by the Federation

The Green

Now firmly grassed and hopefully we will raise funds/workers this year for seating and some shade and planting.

Tools

We now have association Spades and hand scythes for working party days, a sprayer and hand fencing tools. We will not replace any machinery but will use the mower while it still can be maintained. Due to insurance difficulties we hire machinery and workers where needed.

Skips

We have had a further 3 skips this year in March and May.
5th May

Contamination

We have heard no more since Karen Seal attended our last

Sheds

Request to change rules to Committee decided to recommend to the next AGM an amendment to the Rule on shed size, to a maximum of 8'x6' or equivalent area, and measuring 6' in height to the eaves.

Committee

We have tried to share jobs more this year and co-opted Bernie Fry at the beginning of the year. Apart from Officers responsibilities have been taken as follows by committee members
Tony Clear - Fence and Gates. John Sivell - Spraying, Mowing, machinery and tool requisition and maintenance. (John and Tony made our splendid badger gates) Ed Todd - Web Site, Alex Hollingsworth support with Minutes, Melissa gemmer_Johnson clarified our complaints procedure. All committee members are, sadly, still the main contributors to working party days Unfortunately Ed Todd has been ill for some of the year and since he moved to Headingtioon has not been able to play much part in committee work. He has now moved to another allotment site and resigned as Vice Chair. We are very grateful for his start to the web site and his years of help with reclamation.

allotment competition

We had a number of entrieas again and in spite of the floodibng the compettiton went ahead. John Sivell, John Langsbury, Wendy and Christina Fries received awards. On November 4th when the town hall was full of association members.

Gates

The new keys ahve worked a treat but he handle still comes loose and we have needed a replacement lock for cylinder to go into. There is still the problem of the right hand gate opening too widely. Tony and John have tried on several occasions to put a block in place to stop the right-hand gate from being opened too far, which is casing the hinge to crack. However despite several attempts and polite notices every block has been removed by members, meaning that the gate is increasingly liable to damage. The council has now agreed to redo left hand post and put in stop. If cylinder and handle go again they will be replaced by a bar and padlock.... but with same key.

Lunch on the green

A lovely occasion after the hard knocks of the flood and we all had a great toime. Do come along next year and share your stries and food and drink. We had some 30 members able to come and the association provided some drinks. Next year we hope to develop this buy members bringing veg baskets of current produce so we can share successes and failures.

Complaints procedure.

Presently our rules contain the following

- H The Committee (minimum 3 members) has the power to inspect allotments to investigate a complaint at any time upon reasonable notice, or for audit purposes on any working party day. The Committee will annually inspect the site and record any problems. Where plots are persistently unworked or show breaches of the rules members may receive a warning notice.
- I If there is a serious or persistent minor breaches of the Member's Agreement then the Committee can give eight weeks' warning notice to remedy the breach. If the breach is not remedied in this period then the Committee can terminate the Agreement on one month's final notice if this is the view of the majority of the Committee.
- j) The Committee may terminate a membership with 14 days' notice for stealing, wildlife or poison offences.
- k) In the event of a Member's death, or inability through ill-health to work the allotment, the Committee will exercise its discretion.
- l) The Committee has the power to deal with complaints. It will only investigate complaints made in writing to the Secretary. Any member against whom a complaint has been made will be made aware of the problem and has the right to respond in writing or put his case to the Committee in person.

We also recommend we need to include at the top.

a) The Committee are charged with pursuing the objectives of the association and administering the site.

And the following advice be made available on the web site for guidance.

All complaints about allotment policy, procedures or other plot holders (beyond minor grievances settled between plot holders) must go before the Allotment Committee. This includes standard enquiries (sheds, greenhouses, payment queries) and non standard queries.

Written proposals and/or complaints may be mailed/handed/emailed to a committee member who will then raise the issue and place it on that month's meeting agenda. This applies to all but the most serious of issues, which may be handled at an emergency meeting. This is the only method accepted for complaints and problems. Feel free to have an informal chat with a committee member, but this will not result in any action taking place.

No abusive language or written attacks on any committee or plot holder will be accepted and may cause your complaint to be disregarded. The committee will attempt to settle the issue as quickly as possible and will inform the

plot holder(s) via a written reply outlining steps taken with a basic timeline. Membership at Cripsey Meadows Allotments is reliant on compliance with rules and the proper complaints procedure may result in a revocation of membership. The committee is there to help all members with any problems or queries they may have about the allotments. This includes relevant issues with other plot holders. However, should you feel comfortable, it may be an idea to have a chat with the other plot holders first to resolve minor issues.

Plot Upkeep

Members must keep a large portion of their allotment plot under cultivation for vegetables, flowers and/or agreed fruit trees. Failure to do so will result in reminders and at most two written warnings. Plot holders will have a chance to respond to these reminders /warnings and explain any extenuating circumstances. If these two written warnings are not heeded, the committee will decide an appropriate action which is likely to mean the association will not renew membership.

Working parties

Unfortunately far fewer members have supported the working parties this year and only about 10 have donated £10 instead. The committee does most of the working party work and most committee members attend every working party thereby contributing an extra £1,000 worth of work on behalf of the association on top of their committee and other responsibilities. We have a few members who contributed but less the trend this year was much less than last. We have therefore implemented the AGM recommendation of 2006 that members can either donate 2 hours of working party work or donate £10 on top of membership. This year this was included on the invoice. There will always be work that needs to be shared and while we hope more will join the working parties as it is an excellent community building activity where their donations will help share the load of work more equally.

Fence

It was noted that badgers were disturbed by the floods and cleared if castle Mill area and had started making many holes in the fence by digging under. We decided to explore a badger gate to resolve this and John and Tony have blocked other holes trained them to use the gates and they are now doing so. Wonderful. will be required to Unfortunately the University did agree to clear their side of the new fence but have not yet done so. We have to spray this annually to keep fencing clear and intact.

We seeded the cleared area by fence which is now kept mowed and we hope we can use it for members for fruit tree planting.

Car park

Wendy reported that the Area Committee had agreed that the car park controls should go ahead. Wendy has contacted Graham Smith (252648) who will consult us when all permissions received. We still need to protect our access.