

# Cripley Meadow Allotment Association

[www.cripleymeadow.org.uk](http://www.cripleymeadow.org.uk)

## Annual Report 2008

### Committee

During the year committee members have taken more responsibility for particular areas, thus sharing the work load of officers. John books and organises the mower, tools, machinery and spraying, Tony looks after gate and fence problems, Alex supports Sheila with minutes and letters, and Melissa has written our revised Complaints procedure. Ed Todd has moved house/allotment sites and Andrew Honey is standing down. Thanks are due for their service.

### Reclamation

We completed the planned work for this year rather late due to the spring flooding. We cleared green waste areas and plots, the entrance area and the area adjacent to the new fence. Some of this has had more work with planting, seeding, mowing and spraying. In total we used 6 days of digger work and were allocated 2 further days from the City Parks Dept. Parks cleared even more rubbish (£1,500 worth) and did some grading of the paths and plots. The grading has been very successful in reclaiming the railway path and improving the entrance and first corner as well as levelling plots. We find if we can clear top growth and rubbish, mowing is now our cheapest and most efficient reclamation method. Finally **the planned internal tree removal was completed** only 3 years after it was agreed! **Castle Mill Stream willows** were finally pollarded in October and **Cripley Island willows** shortly after. We had to work hard to secure funding for this and work was then delayed as machinery could not get through car park! We had to close it for 4 days and used this opportunity for Parks to deliver composted green waste and wood chip. The compost was used very quickly but there is still wood chip on 109. The skips are located by the shed as it is one of the few places the lorry can safely load/unload and turn. The removal of the island willows has made a tremendous difference and the improved light and safety for adjacent plots.

***AGM ITEM PROPOSED RECLAMATION FOR 2008-9: PLOTS 21, 97, 126 + ADJACENT CORNER, AREA BY THE SHED. WE HAVE BEGUN TO DEVELOP STORAGE AREAS FOR RECYCLING STONES/BRICKS AND USABLE METAL POLES AND HOPE TO DEVELOP THIS FURTHER WITH WATER STORAGE. THE DISUSED GROUND IS THE MAJOR OUTSTANDING WORK FOR 2008/9.***

### Draft Complaints Procedure

Membership of Cripley Meadow Allotment Association requires everyone to comply with the constitution and rules which are agreed at AGMs to give everyone the security of common purpose. From time to time members may have issues with one another and we recommend that, if you feel comfortable, you try to talk first to resolve minor issues. If this does not work or you do not feel comfortable in doing this the committee is there to help members with problems or queries. You can always have an informal chat with a committee member but please be aware this cannot result in any action taking place. All complaints about allotment policy, procedures or other plot holders must go before the Allotment Committee as do standard enquiries/proposals about sheds, fruit trees, greenhouses etc.

Written proposals re Rules 10, 12 and all complaints must be made in writing and mailed/handed/mailed to a committee member. This will be raised on the agenda for the next committee meeting. We meet almost every month and dates are on the notice board. This procedure applies to all but the most serious of issues which may need to be handled at an emergency committee meeting. This is the only method accepted for complaints and problems.

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) in writing giving a time frame for action. Any member against whom a complaint has been made will be made aware of the problem and will have the right to respond in writing.

***AGM ITEM THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS PUBLISHING THIS ADDITIONAL ADVICE ON THE WEB SITE AND MAKING THE FOLLOWING CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION. IN ORDER TO MAKE EXPLICIT WHAT IS IMPLICIT INCLUDE A) THE COMMITTEE ARE CHARGED WITH PURSUING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION AND ADMINISTERING THE SITE. REMOVE PART OF L) 'OR PUT HIS CASE TO THE COMMITTEE IN PERSON'***

### **Skips**

We have had 3 skips this year and hope we are getting to the end of the rubbish! So far rubbish removal has cost some £8500 since we started the reclamation in 2005. If you can take rubbish from your plots directly to Redbridge you can do this for free as a private citizen. We ask that members exercise restraint in bringing materials on site for 'possible use' and broken glass has been a particular problem! We commend recycling but please do not allow waste to accumulate.

### **Jericho Street Fair**

Some committee members were away this year so we had far fewer plants and no food for sale. We still made a small profit and represented the site at this important community event.

### **July Flooding and Ditches**

The Committee repeat their commiserations for all affected by the floods. Almost everyone lost crops. Notices were posted as soon as possible with the latest advice. Wendy attended Environment Agency meetings and Council meetings to pursue ditch and stream clearing. This would not have stopped flooding but we believe drainage could be better. Clearing Fiddlers Ditch on the west boundary is still proposed as our security on this boundary but the Environment Agency will not allow spoil to remain on site and the council will not pay for its removal and this and Castle Mill stream are badly blocked.

### **Lunch on The Green September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Committee members organised tables, beers and cups but otherwise the event was made by members who brought a wonderful selection of food and drink to share. The Green is now an easy, pleasant place to use and next year should have further planting and seating.

### **Graffiti on Shed**

We have not had time to paint out this mess. An industrial sprayer, exterior paint, time and workers are needed as they are for putting back drain pipes and making some water storage.

***AGM ITEM DOES ANYONE HAVE EXPERTISE/EQUIPMENT TO HELP WITH THIS?***

### **Cancelled Open day**

We hoped to have our first Open Day on Sunday 19th Aug during National Allotment Week (Aug. 13-19) but the event had to be cancelled due to flooding. We will try again next year.

### **Sheds**

Several shed requests have pointed out that the current 6'x6'x6' mean some members would be bending! ***AGM ITEM THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND AMENDING THE RULE TO 8'X6'X6'MAX.***

### **Mowing**

The new mowing contract has been a great success. It is cheaper and better value for money. Ady Podberry, our new mower man, has done headlands where they are clear and accessible and the green and greened reclaimed plots have transformed the site. It remains vital that glass/metal/weed piles are kept off headlands and vacant plots.

### **Fence**

We have asked the university agents to clear their side of the new fence as unfortunately bramble will eventually destroy the rabbit fencing and the dead trees are a danger.

## Disused Ground

There is a planning application for another development at southern end of the site (Vennet Close) for more flats and a bridge is planned further down to link to tow path. Recent advice from the council states *'At the moment your Association are in charge of your security & the council has stressed the need for all ploholders to lock the gates properly. Failure to do so could have disastrous consequences if travellers or other such trespassers decide to enter & remain on the land. If a legal eviction were needed to get trespassers to leave, this could cost anything from £500 to £1500 in legal work for which the City as owner has made no financial provision as it is anticipated that the individual Associations will want to remove the squatters & will do so at their expense albeit with technical help from the City.* This is a worry. We hope when a fence or ditch is agreed for this area we will at the same time be able to clear the ground ready for use as plots again so we can return to a fully working site. We have installed a padlocked gate in the fence through to this area ready for access. Badgers had made tunnels under the fence here and elsewhere and John and Tony have built two badger gates to avoid damage to the fence. This required training the badgers to use it, then attaching a heavy swing structure that rabbits cannot use. It has worked beautifully thanks to John and Tony.

## Gates

The right hand gate hinge was cracked due to the strain of over opening and Tony and John tried on several occasions to put a block in place to stop this as the hinge had already been re welded. However the block was removed more than once (one must presume by members!) so the gate was damaged more. The council re-set the gates from scratch in January and a stop post was installed. If the locks go again we will probably have to replace with a bar and padlock (with same key). Also we would ask members **to return their keys when they leave.**

***AGM ITEM THERE HAVE BEEN TWO OCCASIONS THIS YEAR WHEN THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN INTERFERED WITH BY MEMBERS. THIS IS OBVIOUSLY UNACCEPTABLE AND WE THINK THAT WHERE THIS INCURS ADDITIONAL COSTS THEY SHOULD BE PAID BY THE MEMBER (WHERE KNOWN) AND A WARNING LETTER ISSUED THAT ANY REPEAT WILL RESULT IN LOSS OF MEMBERSHIP.***

## Cripley Island

At the last AGM in March you will recall Mr Bruce talked to the association and we agreed that an interim solution to problems would be for the islanders to become temporary members and pay a key deposit. After the last meeting the association contacted Parks and Estates requesting involvement in any lease renewal and or negotiation to resolve these problems. We wished to exercise our role as an interested party with responsibility for the access land. The Islanders agreed to contact us about their plans. In November we received a copy of a proposal drawn up for a renewal of the lease but this did not arrive in time for us to circulate it for proper consideration at our only meeting before the lease ended on Dec 31. We sent in a response asking for more time and stating our immediate concerns about the proposed change of use, the management of the island and access and security issues. We feel the proximity and access of the two sites means it is vital that they have the same cultivation requirements to avoid further conflict of interest. Horticultural use was the main requirement in the previous lease and we had already stated that we wished these terms to be renewed and upheld. Unfortunately their submitted proposal did not address our concerns and a series of communications followed between the association, estates and the islanders which are as yet unresolved. We would not be drawn into making hasty decisions and asked for time to consider further at our next committee meeting. At our meeting on January 14 we agreed on the necessity of upholding horticultural use and consideration of security and public liability. We offered a date for meeting the Islanders at the beginning of February. Unfortunately they could not make this and we have not heard from them at the time of writing. We have since

submitted a proposal which we hope will meet the needs of all and support greater use of this valuable green space by all our members. This proposal is attached for consideration.

### ***AGM ITEM REPORT ON PROGRESS AND DISCUSSION***

#### **Plot audits**

We have continued our practice of site reviews and plot audits and this has shown very positive results in improving plot cultivation and reducing problems. We have a few outstanding issues but generally everyone is working with the rules. We rarely have to decide not to renew membership but the committee feel it is important to do so where there is persistent refusal to abide by agreed rules and fair notice has been given. Sometimes events overtake us all and we do our best to be helpful when informed of difficulties.

#### **Tools**

John Sivell has increased our stock of equipment and tools for working party days and we decided to purchase fencing tools for members to borrow.

#### **ODFAA Oxford District Federation of Allotment Associations**

Wendy was elected to the committee of the ODFAA in April 2007 and since has taken on the role of Acting Chair. A new Constitution has been agreed by the 36 allotment sites in Oxford City and our aim is to increase cooperation, support and negotiation on behalf of the 2,000+ allotment members across the city. It is the Federation that holds the 3rd party insurance for all Oxford City sites. We immediately had to deal with flooding on 6 sites, plans for developing 4 sites for housing and questions over the future of the allotment officer role ....so it was a baptism of fire!

#### **Working Parties**

'First Sunday of the month working parties' are an excellent way to learn more about the site and meet other members. Everyone is expected to help with at least one working party of two hours or pay a contribution of £10. John keeps a record of attendance at working parties. This year the major work has been done by committee members with a few notable and consistent exceptions and the work hours available have dropped considerably compared with the previous 2 years. Many committee members are subsidising the association with £110 worth of work each.....whereas some members have yet to attend one! We think this work must be more fairly distributed so we have specified this item on your invoice.

#### **The Car Parks**

The scheme to have a timed ticket system for Port Meadow/Cripley Meadow Car Parks has been ongoing all year. Meanwhile we have all been at the mercy of bad parking. The barrier has meant the car park could be closed with 24 hrs notice for access for machinery. This has helped. The display ticket system is now imminent with 4 hrs maximum stay and no return within 24 hrs. Graham Smith (Car Parks) and Ian Sheppard (Parks) are our contacts.

#### **Walton Well Road Railway Bridge**

is to be closed to heavy traffic over 7.5 tonnes sometime in the future due to a structural weakness. This could prove difficult for our heavy machinery and skips but we are in contact with Stephen Axtell from Oxfordshire County Council.

#### **Oxford City Allotment Competition**

6 members entered plots but due to flooding there was one judging instead of the usual two. John Sivell, John Langsbury, Christine Fries and Wendy attended at the Town Hall on Nov.7th to collect their awards and the evening was packed as members from 20 sites entered this year. The competition is funded by OCC and the Oxford District Federation of Allotment Associations as way of celebrating and advertising the benefits of allotments.

## **Trustees**

Our constitution states 'The Association has four Trustees and all land occupied by the members is held under licence from the Trustees. On death or retirement of a Trustee, the vacancy shall be filled at the next Annual General Meeting. Committee Members may serve as Trustees of the Association.' Our lease states we can change our trustees at any time provided we inform the landlord immediately. Our 'trustees' were made as they were the officers who signed the lease and have consequently not been subject to election or renewal. Our constitution, like many others has not addressed this directly but it has now arisen as an issue with the Federation as rent reviews are due and Estates and Parks have very different contacts! Most associations that have addressed this operate so that the officers immediately become the trustees. Because the lease lasts 20 years this seems the best way of ensuring the trustees are elected, current, active members of the association and can act on its behalf.

***AGM ITEM THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE THAT THE ASSOCIATION AGREES A CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION AS FOLLOWS ... 'THE CURRENT OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION WILL SERVE AS TRUSTEES WHILST THEY HOLD OFFICE'.***

## **OXCLEAN**

We have volunteered the association to contribute to OXCLEAN from 10-12 am Sunday 16th March. We hope to clean up the car park and vacant land outside the gate. If you would like to help please contact Sheila Allen who is coordinating this or be prepared to volunteer at the AGM. OXCLEAN will provide bags and OCC will remove the rubbish.

## **Contaminated land**

Karen Seal, a City Environmental Health Officer, has informed us that there is nothing further to report from last year except they have applied for funding for further work on remediation.

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**Late news items** SEB work/Vodafone mast/Rent reviews/Member's concern re Bamboo

## **Agenda for Tuesday 11 March 2007 at 7pm**

1. Welcome by Chair, Wendy Skinner Smith
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2007 and matters arising
4. Annual Accounts for the year 2007. Report from the Treasurer
5. Annual Report for 2007.
6. Election of Officers and Committee: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and 4 members

### ***7.AGM ITEMS***

- a) PROPOSED RECLAMATION FOR 2008-9***
- b) CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION***
- c) THE SHED***
- d) AMENDMENT TO RULE ON SHED SIZE***
- e) RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS***
- f) CRIPLEY ISLAND***
- g) TRUSTEES***
- h) MEMBER'S SUBMITTED CONCERN: BAMBOO***

**Refreshments**