

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Annual Report in March 2012

SUMMARY - but read more on the following pages

Page 2

Administration Subscriptions should be paid before **31/3/12** online, by cheque/cash at allotment shed or the AGM. Let us know any new address or emails. Paying the subscription is agreement to the constitution and rules. **2011 to 2012 Officers/Trustees** and **Committee members** are listed together with their responsibilities. **Retiring members** Sheila and John are sadly standing down. **Next year** All the other officers and committee are standing again. If interested get in a nomination. **Revised Constitution and Rules** will require agreement at the AGM. Document Attached **Audit and plot management** 2011 audits were in June and October. 50 members received small reminders and about only 20 plots contained a request for audit action. Next year our Field Secretary will do monthly tours so that work is staggered. See **OCC's new Allotment Charter**

Page 3

Communal plots a great first step into allotment gardening. **Plot Numbers** More plots now have numbers, some very inventive. Please make sure you have one visible from the path. We have a few so see how we handle **complaints**. **Events: OXCLEAN in March; Cripley Island Orchard** was signed off in May with flying colours as a Local Food Lottery project. **Jericho Street Fair 11 June** raised £276.50. **Open Day** attracted 47 visitors. 50 members came on **Sunday September 25th for Lunch on the Green** to celebrate 120 years of Cripley Meadow and our new Lottery award. Great music from 'Horns of Plenty' and prizes were awarded to Hannah, Frederick, Edie and Beattie. **The Big Biochar Experiment** www.bigbiocharexperiment.co.uk. Started and **Working Party** monthly activities are listed.

Page 4

Harvesting, Reusing and Recycling We have had wood chip, leaf mould and Arcadian Living's Green Waste plots are now producing **compost**. Parks are charging £50 this year. **Compost Bins, Native Bean poles** are encouraged. A dry April and May used up the water in the new large **water butt** by the shed. Members can take water from Castle Mill Stream and Fiddlers stream **between plots 6 and 7 and between plots 30 and 31**. **Skips** must be used properly for external waste or barbeque waste. Do not leave rubbish by the shed. **Deliveries** through the Barrier Gate must be organised. Contact the secretary.

Page 5

Animals and pests: Leek Allium Fly, Rats, Badgers, Muntjak have been around. **City Allotment Competition:** John Sivell and Gabi Topliss were awarded prizes. **Government changes to allotment law** Thousands of ploholders across the country responded to this threat. National Waiting lists on www.allotment.org.uk Over 200 on waiting lists in Oxford and 400 have plots due to reclamation and better use of sites. **Walton Well Car Park Charges** Oxford City Council instituted charges in Walton Well Car Park. A concessionary permit will be available for Cripley Meadow (@£20 per year).

Page 6

Second stage of Castle Mill was granted planning permission in 2001 so the rest of the development could have gone ahead. Changes to the plans addressed our concerns about shade; flooding and an offer to improve fencing of the allotment boundary will mitigate badger activity... Roger Dudman Way will be closed during building. The bridge to the towpath is completed. **Walton Well Road Bridge** was closed to traffic for a day for inspection. It is likely to have some work in future relating to electrifying the line. We will keep you informed. **Cripley Island Orchard** no trees lost to dry weather. Weed suppression trials continue and Willow whips and hazel available to make hurdles and stakes for sustainably.

Page 7

Reclamation of the South Field was opened in December 2011 due to Big Lottery Fund award. 29 new plots, moved fencing and Natural England confirm our badger sett protected. **Reminder** Please play radios, make phone calls with consideration for your neighbours. **2008 Environment Testing Results** of the 2008 testing arrived in late 2011. The conclusions were the same as when previously tested in 1996. See advice on bonfires and washing vegetables and hands. **Plans for the future include** working with builders, paths, more recycling, fewer bonfires.

Administration The committee started preparation in January for the **New Membership Year**. If you can do come to the AGM. A democratically elected committee is a necessity for a healthy site. As usual this annual report and invoices are sent out in February. **Subscriptions should be paid before the end of March**. Please make sure you tell us before that of any address or email changes and ensure your payment is prompt. You can pay online and by cheque as well as at the AGM. Your annual payment is your agreement to the current constitution and rules.

2011 to 2012 Officers/Trustees Wendy Skinner Smith - Plot 40-41 is Chair- membership visits, newsletter, web site, audits John Sivell - Plot 46 is Vice Chair –Cripley Island Advisor, audits Sheila Allen - Plot 12 is Secretary -minutes, keys, permissions, audits Alison Campbell - Plot 13 is Treasurer –finance, subscriptions, database, deliveries.

Committee members are: Tony Clear - Plot 124 association structures, audits; Jamie Forbes - Plot 63 transport, barbeques, makes notice boards, audits; Alex Hollingsworth - Plot 81-82 advises on council affairs, audits; Jeremy Hyde –Plot 91 island management; Claire Pike (Plot 48b) minutes, audits; Richard Haigh (Plot 15) field secretary, audits, machinery. All help with working parties.

Retiring members Sheila and John are standing down. Sheila has been the association secretary since May 2004 and a vital part of the reclamation team. She is leaving the committee to have more freedom to see her grandchildren in Spain. Her quiet, calm presence and ever helpful nature will be sorely missed. She and Nick will stay as members. John has not been well this year and is having to stand down to conserve his energies. He has been a member since April 2005 and on the committee since 2006. The development of Cripley Island Orchard owes so much to his experience and hard work. His good nature and wealth of information has been an inspiration to us all. Both will be at the AGM.

Next year The other officers and committee are willing to stand. All members are eligible for nomination and must be seconded by another member. Managing the site is a rewarding and positively 'green' activity. We are always looking for more helpers as Cripley Meadow is very large so if members have the time and energy do be in touch. Our primary concern is to use the land sustainably for people to grow their own.

Revised Constitution and Rules With so much demand and change in allotments it was time we renewed restructured and reordered this to ensure we meet all the terms of our lease and allotment law. Godfrey Cole has been an enormous help in ordering the committee's experience of 7 years of working with members and audits. We have also used the most up to date LGA advice from 'A Place to Grow' which was issued as a response to allotment waiting lists. The revised Constitution and Rules is attached as a separate document. **AGM item 1 To adopt the new constitution and rules.**

Audits Locally grown food is clearly an important part of the future and we all benefit from well tended, productive plots growing flowers, fruit and vegetables. Our rules allow us to work together confidently.

Oxford City Council recently reported the following with regard to the provision of allotments. *An Allotment standard needs to be set because there is an increasing interest in community food growing. It provides big returns on health and nutrition, learning about where food comes from, improved community resources and reduced food miles. The National Society Association of Allotments recommend one plot per 125 head of population (assuming 2.5 occupants per household) Oxford currently provides 1plot per 61 head of population. In accordance with national guidance on effectively managing allotments "A Place to Grow" We need to ensure that we are maximising the use of the current sites before any costly changes, such as bringing back disuse .allotments, are considered.* Oxford City Council has worked with the Oxford and district Federation of allotment Associations to produce an Allotment Charter which is attached. **AGM item 2 Members comments on OCC Allotment Charter**

Our lease requires us to make every effort to ensure the allotments are kept clean, free from weeds, well manured and maintained in a good state of cultivation and fertility as well as ensure that members keep their plot boundaries managed and structures are in safe and in good repair. The new constitution and rules tries to answer the questions we are frequently asked. If there are breaches plotholders are sent a friendly reminder or query to see if there is a temporary problem. We ask that these are addressed before the next audit, or if this is a repeated concern we send a notice with a time for action. If members have had 3 audits with the same problem unresolved they do risk losing their membership. We think we now have a model that has worked well to make a thriving and productive site.

2011 Audits took place in June and October. All members received their spring audit notice, by email or post. We quickly had thank you comments back with some responses about how a problem would be resolved or a request for advice and or help. We have supported about half dozen members who had temporary hitches but 3 members have had their membership terminated after long standing failure to use their plots in accordance with expectations. These plots have cost the association over £350 and more 150 hours of clearingquite apart from the time on correspondence.

This year we sent 50 members small **reminders** (we all need them sometimes!) in amongst their thanks. Only 20 plots contained a request for audit **action** in one or more areas. Reminders included: 10 plots with ongoing concerns/9 with wells that needed to be made safe/4 tree reminders/9 number reminders/6 members needing support/2 building/rubbish reminders/10 path reminders/13 headland reminders/10 adjacent boundaries. As required by the AGM we sent a note to the 5 members who had bamboo and this is being removed. More plots now have numbers and some are very inventive. Please make sure you have one which can be seen from the headland. In October we do another tour. Next year our Field Secretary will tour the site monthly and report to the committee so that work is staged though the year.

Communal plots have proved a great first step into allotment gardening for many who have little or no garden. The plots can be the most productive on the site! Their paths and headlands can be a problem and we have put a pair of shears into each communal shed to help with communal co-cooperation.

Handling Complaints We always try to talk to members where we can but this is not always practicable nor 100% successful. If you think we or other members are acting outside of our constitution and rules do write and explain how. The 2011 AGM voted that our complaint procedure was adequate to the needs. Please note that OCC/Parks will not accept complaints unless our procedure has been used.

Events We contributed again to the excellent **OXCLEAN in March** and cleared the car park and the area around our boundaries. 15 contributing members used the last hour to re organise the skip.

Cripley Island Orchard was signed off in May with flying colours as a Local Food Lottery project.

Alison, Alex, John, Tony, Richard and Claire managed our stall at **Jericho Street Fair 11 June** and raised £276.50. Wendy and John supplied most of the plants with other committee members contributing.

Thanks were sent to James, Gaby and David and Sedhar for plants, Aja who helped on the stall and Izzy and Martha Hollingsworth who helped with putting out the plants. We were repeatedly asked for squash plants so think of this as you sow seeds. Sedhar's plants in flower were an attraction.

Our **Open Day** was during National Allotment Week on Sunday 14 August. We had good weather and 47 visitors. Most commented how lucky we were to be on such a beautiful site. We raised £30 from contributions for produce provided by members. Thanks went to Liam for making us new signpost stands and to various members of the committee for drinks, gate duty, signs, tours, gazebo erection and the members who opened their plots. Do try joining us next year.

On **Sunday September 25 our Lunch on the Green** saw 50 members celebrate 120 years of Cripley Meadow, our new Lottery award and the allotment season. Susanna Pressel came along to share the vegeburgers, burgers, chicken and sausages which all disappeared rapidly. Mixed green salads, warm and cold potato salads, spicy apple cake, local cheeses, crackers with pear and rocket, cooked quince and gooseberry crumble with fresh allotment pears and apples meant we and the band were all very well fed. Thanks to Jamie and Michelle for supplying the BBQ and doing the shopping and cooking and to Jeremy, Rodney, Wendy and John for erecting the pergolas and bunting. There was music from 'Horns of Plenty. We hope they will join us again next year. We awarded the prizes for new numbers to Hannah for plot 90 plot Frederick, Edie and Beat for Plot 43/44a.

Members were invited to take part in **The Big Biochar Experiment** which is the first study on the use of biochar on British allotments. It aims to gather data to assess the effects of this organic soil improver on plant productivity and soil health of widely used fruit and vegetable varieties in the UK. The experiment, run by Oxford Biochar and Earthwatch and now supported by Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall and was launched in the autumn of 2011. Participants were asked to establish biochar and control plots, measure crop production by weight at harvest, and record information by answering a questionnaire. The project relies heavily on public participation. For more information go to www.bigbiocharexperiment.co.uk

Working parties -In **January** 2011 we planted 60+ trees. **February** saw willows pollarded along Fiddlers Drain and the wood chip was used to fill the tump ditches. The tumps were mulched with Park's compost. Wire was applied to help with the slippery bridge surface. **March** saw us clearing a stretch of Fiddler's Stream and a plot of accumulated rubbish. The latter took 50 hours of work and 2 skips to clear! In **April** we still had released plots to clear and did some staking, mulching and weeding on the island. **May, June and July**, saw more work reclaiming 17, 19 and 93, and weeding and mulching. In **August** we were picking rubbish of the new field and building shelves in the association shed. **September** was the annual willow whip harvest on the island followed by stripping the willow. A large group from St Clare's joined us in **October** from 10 til 2 and we cleared the old fence line of Plot 93 taking out metal poles, bent corrugated iron and lots of ground elder. There was some very inventive cooperative lever work involved in removing long poles and buried fences. We cleared the fence by the central car park area, strimmed communal areas and did more rubbish clearance on the south field. **Castle Mill Stream** has finally had

some clearance of cracked willow and debris and thought much narrower but it is vastly improved. In **November** we moved tarps, raked willow and moved logs as well as continuing work marking out the south field and helping a member with a boundary.

This year the committee and working parties have had to spend time **re-clearing 3 plots**. All have needed extensive work to remove rubbish, pernicious weeds and brambled boundaries. Re doing work is always disappointing! **Working Party Work and donations** is the way most members contribute directly to the site and many hands do make for lighter, livelier working conditions. Members clearly enjoy working together. There now only 1 month left to get in your annual commitment of 3 hours before subscriptions are due for next year. This commitment is asked of all members rather than plots. The vast majority of our members honour this commitment and quite a few do a lion's share. Subsequently we have been able to reclaim and manage the site. Without them we would have increase subscriptions.

Harvesting, Re-using and Recycling We do our best to bring useful material on site. In February we had wood chip on plot 56 from Cripsey Island pollarding and then again from Port Meadow work. In April Phil Shefford delivered the annual St John's College **leaf mould**. There was wood chip again on Plot 109 from the South Field pollarding in October and on plot 56 in December from Oxford University's work on the Castle Mill site. It all went quite very quickly. We can see lots of plots with renewed paths. All winter members have been **harvesting compost** from The Arcadian Living Green Waste plots. Plot 84 is not as easily usable as it has bindweed and nettle roots as some members persistently use this for their own weeds! These are readily identified and should be put to one side for drying, drowning or burning! Barnaby has done some housekeeping already and these green arrangements benefit us all. This year Parks are charging (£50 per load) for their rough compost.

Compost Bins We encourage all members to have a compost bin and another delivery of pallets this year has all been used. Please remember compost bins must be managed and turned regularly to avoid rat's nests. Perennial weeds can be dried or drowned before composting.

Native Bean poles We are encouraging everyone to use native indigenous species, like hazel and willow which are available on the site and are coppiced on a regular cycle to provide bean poles. There is an example of stripped willow hurdle on the island if you fancy making a strong, sturdy, locally sourced fence for your headland. Hazel and willow wands are available by contacting Jeremy on Plot 91.

Water It was a really dry April and March and our new large water butt by the shed came into its own. Members can take water from Castle Mill Stream and Fiddlers stream and the access points **are between plots 6 and 7 and between plots 30 and 31**. All other paths belong to individual members and must not be used for access. The dry weather reminded us all to install guttering and water butts, to use compost to build up soil humus and to try not to water other than to sow or transplant. The access path between 6/7 was cleared by the January WP.

We had 5 Skips this year, a great increase mainly due to having to clear an evicted member's plot. We constantly remind members not to use these for external or barbeque waste. If you cannot take it home (?) put it food in Walton Well Car Park bins which are emptied daily. Rubbish and waste disposal remains a sensitive and expensive issue and this summer we had to issue a notice to say we would not be replacing the skip 'til late autumn as it was being misused with lots of domestic food/bottles and waste brought in from outside, including bags of toys which went to Oxfam. This skip is for old allotment waste. Any food is just pulled straight out by animals and some members are still leaving rubbish and asbestos by the shed! The fairies, better known as the committee, then have to clear it up and wrap and take to Redbridge! If the skip continues to be misused we will not have them. Please use TAKE ON TAKE OFF policy for your own waste and store any that cannot be managed thus on your plot until a skip arrives.

Deliveries through the Barrier Gate need to be organised if they will not fit through the car park's 2.1m height. Members must arrange for the locked barrier to be open by a committee member at Working Party times or on the morning after committee meetings between 9am and 12noon. All dates are on the notice board and web site. Please remember to get permission **before** any delivery.

Animals Many members chat and report their enjoyment of the amazing biodiversity on Cripsey Meadow and Cripsey island Orchard. The allotments support a rich mixture of flowers, fruit and vegetables throughout the year as does our boundaries of water and pollarded trees. The latest reporting was a family of mink. However not all wildlife is compatible with allotments and we have our problems.

Leek Allium Fly first landed on Cripsey Meadow in the summer of 2010. They fly in May and October and this and onion fly make the growing of leeks and onions more difficult. There is more info. on our web site.

Rats They will always be on a site like ours but working together will limit them. Remember unturned compost bins, constructions and/or disused ground does provide shelter. If you use rat poison do follow the instructions carefully. The committee considered a request for poison boxes but we did not want these round the site. Richard Haigh on Plot 15 is an experienced rat catcher, (as an ex- farmer and market gardener) so we have bought some rat traps to loan to members. Richard will advise you how to use them and pass on his peanut butter tip! Members must take responsibility for using them safely.

Badgers In 2010 we left over an acre of allotment land at the back of the reclaimed field for badger foraging around the sett. The badgers now have few friends on site as many crops suffer the same fate as sweet corn and fences and fruit are reportedly regularly trashed. Contrary to the initial advice we were given a few years ago we now know we can no longer accommodate their foraging. They know no moderation! Building on Castle Mill will exacerbate the problem and after a short period of disagreement we have worked closely together with Oxford University and Natural England to try to resolve complex needs whilst ensuring the problems caused to badgers by building on the embankment do not all fall on us. Consequently our fence is to be badger proofed by the University from Castle Mill Stream Bridge and extending on the east and south boundary to Fiddlers Stream, including our new allotment field. The latter was done in November. The university plan to leave 350sqm (which is about one and a half allotment plots) for foraging at their north end. We think this land is probably no longer fit for purpose as it is so shaded by new building. We trust Cripsey Meadow badgers will remain protected with access out south along Fiddler's Stream bank and north along a secure corridor on Castle Mill into the car park and beyond. This was difficult and expensive work but we are pleased to have found a way forward that meets the legal requirements for badgers and allows for student accommodation and allotments

Muntjak has been less of a problem this year but maybe that is just in comparison with badger damage?

City Allotment Competition The competition is run by ODFAA and OCC to support, promote and reward good practice in growing a variety of fruit and vegetables. The first Judging was in June and the second in September. We entered the site and had 4 individual entrants. The judges were impressed at the increasing number of productive plots. Sadly in June our skip was overflowing and food rubbish was all about! The Celebration of Awards and Certificates took place in the Town Hall in October. The judges, John Alcock and Mike Kent, attended and Councillor Mark Lygo, the councillor with responsibility for allotments, presented the prizes and certificates. It was a good evening with about 100 allotment members present from across the city. **John Sivell came third in the Over 70s category and Gabi Topliss came second in the Challenge Trophy for the best plot.** Gabi did not special preparation.... it was just her normal good gardening practice. Congratulations to them both.

Member's Sad News We were sorry to report that Paul Cullen Paul died suddenly at the beginning of May. Paul has worked Plot 3 with Ros since 2004. He worked hard for cyclists and pedestrian organisations across the city and will be sorely missed. Ros continues as a member.

Government changes to allotment law Thousands of plotters across the country responded to this threat. On 4th May 2011 in "Prime Minister's Question Time": he said "I was as concerned as the hon. Gentleman when I read that report. I immediately checked, and found that that is not the case. It is extremely important that allotments are made available. Many Members will find that when they ask about that in their constituencies there are massive queues for allotments, as many people want to grow their own vegetables and food and understand more about where food comes from. It is a great movement, and it has my full support." There is more information on waiting lists nationally on www.allotment.org.uk. It is always hard to compare but ODFAA statistics show that at least 400 people have got plots over the past 4 years. This is mainly because of site clearance by committees with the help of other members lucky enough to have a plot. Oxford City Council Allotment Grant has been focussed on reclamation for 3 years. The last ODFAA summary recorded over 200 on waiting lists in Oxford.

Walton Well Car Park Charges This year Oxford City Council proposed and instituted charges in Walton Well Car Park. The committee made representations about this available to members and 2 members objected. After discussion with our local councillors and OCC Car Parks, Alison Campbell and Richard Haigh attended the open meeting for the single member decision by Colin Cook. The charges commenced 'on Monday 5th September. The following assurances were made: OCC Car parks will do their best to protect Cripsey Meadow's only vehicular access and will replace the missing bollard, likewise the missing "No Parking" sign on the barrier gate. Any concerns about limited access will be addressed and the blind corner by Castle Mill Stream Bridge will be addressed by improving the vision splays and cutting the foliage. The concessionary permit will be available for current Cripsey Meadow Allotment members (@£20

per year) for use when members are using the allotments. OCC contacts the treasurer for proof of current membership but if there is any evidence that a car is being left in the car park for long periods of time, or everyday for the same kind of times, then this may be withdrawn.. It is up to the enforcement staff to monitor use. As yet some but not all of these assurances have been honoured.

Second stage of Castle Mill This issue has been extensively documented in newsletters and has taken up a lot of committee time and effort. The site is adjacent to our Allotments. It was granted planning permission in 2001 for 517 bedspaces. This was 4 years before we started the reclamation of Cripsey Meadow. Only the most southerly block has been built to date. As the planning permission has been implemented, the rest of the development could be developed at any time without an allocation or further planning application. We made representations to the council early in the year and after some considerable confusion and much effort, our concerns were recognised. These were about overshadowing, flooding and more problems with badgers. These were recognised by OCC. The previous planning permission and local plan allocation meant we could not reverse this decision so we spent our time on ensuring these issues were addressed. OCC recognised that sunshine is vital to the productivity of allotments and the architects have since made changes to the orientation so as to limit overshadowing.. OCC also determined that an allocation for development would be subject to a biodiversity survey and, in order to minimise the chances of badgers moving onto the allotments, a contribution should be made by OU to improve fencing of the allotment boundary. A Flood Risk Assessment was required to assess and minimise flooding on the allotments. Early consultation with OU was seriously undermined when a new badger hotel was started in June with no notice but we have since worked closely with the University and Natural England to agree a way forward that we trust allows badgers, students and allotments a future. In October Oxford University invited members to Castle Mill to see an exhibition of new plans before submitting them to the council. These contained information and plans for mitigating our concerns. A week after this meeting OU plan put in a formal planning application. The planning reference is 11/02881/FUL and it awaits permission. Meanwhile SEB arrived to locate all the cables that run by our fence and the site has been cleared of trees. Roger Dudman Way was closed on January 23 for the duration of the building. A new bridge now links RDW to the towpath.

Walton Well Road Bridge was closed to traffic for a day for inspection. It is likely to have some work in future relating to electrifying the line. We will keep you informed.

Cripsey Island Orchard The new planting had poor start with the drought of April and May but we have not lost any trees to date. We took the blossom off the new trees but they have struggled a bit. Jeremy is trialling suppressing weeds with cardboard and leaf mould and more hurdles. We have now got all the willows into a cycle we can manage. If you want to learn to make hurdles come along to an August and September Island WP when you can cut and strip your own willow whips for hurdles, stakes or, as we have this year, Morris dancing sticks. A number of rustic sweet pea tunnels from **stripped** willow appeared this year and we hope next year more members will use sustainable harvested wood from the island. Do remember all willow must be stripped or it will grow! The new MSOG catalogue was circulated to all in September and Andy will be selling and advising as usual at our AGM. Many of our members are fruit growers and the island has allowed many to experience their first planting, managing and pruning along with other skills like coppicing and pollarding. One day it will be harvesting, sharing and eating! The Orchard was chosen as one of the exemplar local food projects to be used by future Lottery projects. One of the really important parts of this was the projects sustainability through its maintenance being built into membership. Well done to all those members who have made such a difference.

Reclamation of the South Field Thanks to the **Big Lottery Fund award of £10,000** we could complete this project started in 2009. The money was to "*extend the allotment site, purchase a shed, rainwater tank and lay site access tracks. This will provide an extra 25 plots and enhanced facilities for the local community*" Many thanks to Alison and Tony for writing the bid and to Tony for project managing. We have reported extensively to members and had many positive comments.

A large digger was hired in September to move an inherited rubbish pile and put in a new path. Later that month there was an inaccurate letter in the Oxford Times about our activities but we did not reply. It was written by a long standing complainer about Cripsey meadow(?) and it attracted neither support nor comment. We were **not** evicting a sett nor using one way gates. We have as always worked with Natural England to protect the sett that was pushed onto our raised ground by previous building. As we informed members at the time we have had fencing of the site since 1991, this new palisade fencing since 2007 and

a temporary electric fence on the south field since 2010. The latter was removed as our existing fence was reallocated but we may use it again if needed. Our reused palisade will give the badger sett on the south field access south and north and will allow travel between related setts but **not through our allotments**. As members know we left about an acre of trees and scrub (of designated allotment land) for the badgers. We have learnt that we cannot accommodate badgers on site and it was a hard lesson for all!

The OCC Tree team pollarded the willows to the west of the South field in the last week of October. As usual these were pollarded low so we can help manage them. We do not have to avoid cows eating them, which is the main reason for their traditional height. A few self seeded ash and a sycamore were cut and will be managed by coppicing. The whole of the south end of the site now has better light. The construction team took almost a month to move the palisade fence as there were a number of incidents of disruption and criminal damage. Oxford University paid for the badger proofing around the east and south of the field. The south field plots were marked out by Rodney, Jeremy and Phillipa.

Natural England visited on Monday 21 November to confirm that there has been no interference with the badger sett on the boundary of our allotment land and there are no breaches of the badger protection act. The University has successfully relocated the Castle Mill setts to the badger hotel and the old setts have been dug out. As expected this has resulted in more activity on Cripsey Meadow which we trust will be short lived. We hoped the east fence/OU badger run would be completed soon after closing the Castle Mill setts but this has been held up by access problems. We are confident it will go ahead and protect the badgers and our land before any building is started. We have already had brief talks with Paul Finch of Longcross, the construction site manager, about dust protection and being good neighbours.

The South Field was opened on Sunday 27 November. The first sod was turned by Ben, Chris and Nicole and the plot had some planting, a shed and a compost bin by sunset. 25 of the 30 plots are already taken. **This** project has had its problems which have meant much additional work and some anxiety which was reported to members. We are very proud of having managed to bring 30 plots back into use. **Reminder** A member asks that we remind everyone not to play radios/stereos and not to have endless mobile phone chats when on plots. We have a rule about no radios and not disturbing neighbours so please be considerate.

2008 Environment Testing We were finally advised of the results of this 2008 testing in late 2011. The conclusions were the same as when previously tested in 1996. i.e. The Council has completed its investigations and concluded that the site is not presenting a significant risk of significant harm and will not be determining the site or any part of the site as Contaminated Land as defined under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The only new information was that polyaromatic hydrocarbons are present on site, probably due to Victorian ash and/or more recently, bonfires. Advice from the Health Protection Agency is that further study was not necessary, but bonfires should cease/continue to be discouraged on the allotment site. The Health Protection Agency also advised that the current good practices with respect to washing or peeling vegetables before consumption, changing shoes after visiting the allotment site, so as to limit the amount of soil tracked into homes and washing hands before eating should continue to be followed by allotment holders.

Our plans for the future include

Working with the University as they badger proof east fence and protect the site during building.

Improving waste management with a chipper to be used on working party days

Continuing improvement of the paths

New association shed on the south field for working party stuff

If you have any other thoughts please come to the AGM and share them.