



Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association Annual Report to the AGM March 2017 for the year 2016

Administration

This annual report is sent out by email to all members on our distribution list. When you receive it, your invoice should have already been delivered with a paper copy of an invitation to the AGM and an agenda. If there is more than one member on a plot the invoice and letter goes to the lead member. Copies of these are included in this emailing. Our AGM is designated as the beginning of the gardening year.

Last year 49 members attended the AGM evening at St Barnabas. The Draft AGM minutes from the 2016 meeting are attached. We aim to have all the papers on screen as usual. Please read and print only if you want a paper copy.

March 2016 to March 2017 officer/committee responsibilities were : Wendy Skinner Smith, Plot 40-41 – Chair/Trustee - membership visits, newsletter, web site, working party job lists; Alex Hollingsworth Plot 81-82 - Vice Chair - audit and audit correspondence and was acting chair in Wendy's absence November to Feb; Sara Jones, Plot 71 – Treasurer/Trustee - finance, subscriptions, keys, database and; Claire Pike, Plot 48b - Secretary minutes, correspondence, structure permissions, delivery requests until November 2016. Claire Pike stood down in November as expected. Her work was divided between committee members and the changes noted on the committee jobs list on the web site and noticeboard. We had hoped to find a new secretary in 2016 but this did not work out. We are still looking for a secretary and will allow time for training for a new committee member. Wendy, Claire and Sara are presently Cripsey Meadow's trustees. Claire will stand down as Trustee shortly and if re-elected the committee will appoint Alex in her place.

Committee member responsibilities were as follows: Jamie Forbes, Plot 63 - machine maintenance and petrol provision; Jeremy Hyde, Plot 91 - orchards, recycling and major projects; Richard Haigh, Plot 15 - site spraying; Annalisa Cecchi, Plot 61b - audit paperwork, deliveries, Field Secretary following up audits; Sarah Edwards, Plot 120 - trading, temp agenda/ minutes, deliveries, Field secretary following up audits; Emma Delap, Plot 1a WP machinery information data, temp member delivery booking, AGM arrangements, tree and shed arrangements; Keith Holton, Plot 131 - working party , skip renewal, deliveries. Annalisa and Keith kindly accommodated our monthly committee meetings. All help with working parties and the audit. Rodney Smith was co-opted to the committee in June 2015 to help with the Orchards. He wishes to remain co-opted. Annalisa, and Richard are standing down this year after 4 and 7yrs contribution to the association. Francesco and Killian were co-opted during the year to help with paid plot clearance. Francesco is returning to Italy in May. We shall say thank you to those leaving at the beginning of the AGM.

Subscriptions for 2017/2018 Subscriptions, key deposits and working party commitments remain the same. The Association's policy of helping with any difficulty in paying continues as per our rules.

Events

- In March we did our usual **OXCLEAN**. Members cleared the car park, Port Meadow's willow walk and around our boundary. We also re-organised our skip. This year we are giving it a miss for the first time in 9 years since it started but we hope to be back as usual next year.

- In March and April we started work on installing the new badger fence. We got funding from Oxford University for this and the trustees entered a binding legal agreement about the project which is binding on present and future members. See further report later.
- We got a further grant from the OCC allotment budget to complete building the raised beds on plots 64/65. The beds have been completed with some paid labour. They are intended primarily for members who find mobility difficult. We have also been asked to use them temporarily for members with small children.
- June saw us at our **10th year at Jericho Street Fair**, an important community event. Thanks to members we had a good selection of fruit bushes, garden annuals and perennials, potted cuttings and vegetable seedlings. We raised £352 and intend to do it again this year.
- **In September** the O&DFAA/OCC Allotment Competition Award Evening was held in the Town Hall. Killian and Emilie on Plot 97 came 1st in the Under 35s. Emilie and Killian only started their plot in early 2015. Miranda Carnegie and Anna Benn came 3rd in the 39 -59 category after just two years of rejuvenating plots 144/145. Judy Cook, Margaret Belich and Alison Scott on Plot 51 were awarded Challenge Trophy Highly Commended certificate. CMAA came 1st in the site competition. We won £150. **AGM item 1 As all members contributed to this we are looking for suggestions for a £150 spend on The Green for all to enjoy.**
- In **November** members across the city were invited to O&DFAA's talk in the Old Library at Oxford Town Hall –



Some members also celebrated bonfire night. Thanks to Joely and Luke for the great coordination and photo.

CMAA is a member of The Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations.

34 of the 35 open sites in the city are members and work together with Oxford City Council for the benefit of Oxford Allotments. This year O&DFAA offered all associations a new site sign. This was designed by Wendy for free, printed by OCC and paid for with ODFAA funds. It should be on the gate before the AGM. ODFAA has a web site which is open to all plot holders. It has lots of photos of plots from around the city so do have a look. <http://www.odfaa.com/>

Site Maintenance, Development and Working parties

Doing your Working Party Work commitment or donating remains an important part of our membership. The number participating in 2016 varied from 6 to 21. From January 2016, we have used c.300 **working party hours** on site work. Most find it enjoyable extra exercise with the good company of other members. 152, i.e. half of these working party hours were contributed by members of the committee. We use Arcadian Living for some additional paid maintenance using working party 'donations' and this year we also co-opted two members, Francesco and Killian to do some paid clearance work. Thanks are due to all. We are one of the biggest sites in Oxford city and without this time and money we could not manage the site. The committee do lots of work on site outside working party hours with member tours, finance, audit work, reclamation, deliveries and trading operating throughout the year. As reported this year Jeremy Hyde has been paid for the **badger fence project**. (see later)

The SITE paths. In 2015 we could not afford any work on the paths but in 2016 we bought in a load of aggregate ready for use this year. Please do not use for personal projects. The additional work on site meant the paths came in for some stick so we built this into our costings for the project. The bags are distributed around the site but we do not have a plan for use. We will let you know asap. Please remember these are paths not roads so do use them judiciously. Keep to 5mph and **never use when wet and frosty. We ask all members to use cars minimally.**

Plot paths More and more fences around plots have been and are being removed as they were mostly put in to keep out rabbits, and there aren't any now. We are now in a better position to try to regularise the situation about paths between plots, as required in our rules. The rules say that each member is responsible for a path running between their plot and their neighbour's plot, which should be kept clear. We all know that when fences were put in originally, a lot of plots were islands in a sea of bramble, and so a few paths ended up inside fences, or disappeared altogether. The important thing is to have a managed path between each plot. The South Field and new plots have been marked out with paths in place, and it that will help to show what we'd like to aim at. We have already made a start on reclaiming paths and it is a gradual and careful process, achieved one path at a time. Long-standing members might remember that when the site was originally laid out there were hard-core paths running right the way through between the tracks - you can see the remains of one of these under the grass on the picnic area if you look closely. ***AGM Item 2 Note about plot paths (Alex)***

Pollarding and pruning The annual willow pruning on Cripsey Island was done in October. We try to do one side of the triangle every year so these trees are kept on a 3-year cycle to keep the island light. Our Castle Mill Stream willows behind plots 1 to 9, which were planned for pollarding in 2012 remained unpollarded until some work was finally started on two of them in November. These willows were 'saving' Port Meadow by providing a green screen' at the expense of Cripsey Meadow. They are crack willow so cannot remain un-pollarded. We have continued to have meetings with Nicholas Pearson Associates working for Oxford University, Oxford City Council, OCC Parks department, Planning officers and the Tree Officer for OCC to try to arrive at an agreed management plan for our willows so that this situation does not arise again. We now have a proposed tree management plan to agree with Oxford City Council. **The plan** takes screening the flats into account but not at an unacceptable cost to the allotments. There are 3 sets of trees involved in screening here and if sensibly managed in rotation they will provide a degree of cover as has been shown in the last few years. Ours were in desperate need of work as they were last done in 2007 but some were missed. OU did some work on them in the spring to make way for the fence but some were cracking last year and have continued to do so. Some work has been done but there is more to do and the work will stretch into the autumn. Storm Doris brought down another tree by plot 6! ***AGM Item 3 The Tree Management Plan (Alex)***

Plot reclamation We have completed **reclamation of plots 68 and 69** and these are now all small plots with small shed rights. These were all in use in 2016.

Plots 64 and 65 now have 6 completed raised beds. We advertised in the Oxford Times last October but had no takers until last week. Now 3 have gone. They are intended for people with some mobility restrictions and small children. There is a communal shed with a ramp. The orchard area on these plots has been pruned and will provide pleasant shade. The beds have raised uprights to accommodate environmesh or netting. These plots will use 66 for green waste.

Plot 66 is a green waste pit for Arcadian Living/Members for shrubby/un diseased waste.

Plot 67 will have small plots with small shed rights when the soil pile has been used. **This soil is available to all members.** We suggest 10 wheelbarrows per member will allow for sharing.

The reorganisation of this area was made possible by CMAA funds and a grant from OCC.

This year Plots 24, 52, 53, 70, 96, 130, were left with large amounts of work in clearing and reclaiming. This plot clearance is still consuming vast amounts of our working party time, leaving little time for other site work. It remains very frustrating!

The fallen willow from Fiddler's Island which crashed into our weeping willow on the island and blocked Fiddlers stream was cleared... some 18 months after it was reported.

Audit Report from Alex As usual the Committee carried out two audit inspections during the year, in May and October. In the summer about a third of the plots had no issues at all and only fourteen had serious problems. Of these we could work with members to get things sorted out in

most cases, but unfortunately in two cases we had to issue notices to quit. Both were after several years of work by the Committee to help the members, but eventually to no avail.

In October half, the plots had no problems at all, and only nine had serious issues. This time in most cases members who had been struggling to keep up with their plots for some time decided to resign (or had already left and forgotten to tell us), and we only needed to issue one notice to quit to someone who had probably moved abroad and didn't respond to our efforts to contact them over several months. Whenever a member resigns or has their membership ended, the Committee and helpers at the working parties try to quickly clear, cover or relet the vacant plots.

The purpose of the audit process is to identify problems that might cause issues for neighbours or the site and ask members to deal with them before they get out of hand. In most cases this is what happens, but there are a few instances where the same issues are raised repeatedly. It is very important to read the audit letters, and address any problems raised. If you think the audit group have got it wrong, please say so - we'd much rather discuss a potential problem than have it get worse because it's been ignored.

One simple thing that would reduce the number of audit issues is to make sure that your plot has a visible number on it. We've included this in at least the last ten audit letters over more than five years, but there are 18 plots as of October that still don't have one!

Fences/Dangerous structures. We continue to remove fences and structures on plots that come back to the association if they are weed infested or dangerous. We no longer recommend fences as they do not keep pests out and they have increased the transfer of perennial weed. The south field has no plot fences and no more damage

Mowing and Arcadian Green Waste Plots 84 and 109. This year we have had some additional strimmer work the monthly summer mowing. Arcadian Living cuts and collects our communal areas and paths and strims communal plot paths and brings on the green waste that eventually provides free compost rough for members. We turned both 109 and 84 this year and the rough compost is now being used. Members are asked to remove any woody bits and rubbish and put these tidily aside. Please only use wheelbarrows, no cars please. Please do not use these plots for your green/brown waste nor bring any green waste from home to them. Please keep all headlands and site areas free of equipment, compost bins etc. and all rubbish like stones and glass which damage the cutters.

Harvesting, Re-using, Recycling and Trading We continue our commitment to managing the site sustainably. We try to bring useful material on site wherever we can and recycle. ***AGM Item 4. Note about what waste goes where on site (Jeremy)***

Compost We are keen to encourage everyone to make as much use of composting as possible. Some plots still do not have working compost bins. A compost bin growing weeds or a pile of growing weeds is not composting! Compost bins can be readily made and you can use almost everything that comes off the plot. Your OCC green waste buckets are much the best way of managing any cooked food, meat, fish or dairy stuff from home as this will be properly heat treated. Any cooked food on site increases our rat population. We have had fewer reports of these this year and we hope it is because we have cleared some VERY long standing rubbish piles.

The OCC Pest Control Officer, Mike Humble, came to the January ODFAA meeting and gave us the following advice about rats – Infection with Weil's Disease on allotments is most unlikely. Rats need a source of food, need to drink every day and are neophobes (don't like change). The key to their control is to be careful with food in compost bins. Tops and peelings OK but not whole or fleshy part of fruit or veg. You need to cover water to prevent them from drinking on the site. Frequent turning of compost helps to reduce their activity, as they don't like change. They are attracted by bonemeal as it contains animal fat. They eat hard plastic – need to gnaw. Live trapping needs humane disposal. If a site has a major problem the OCC Pest Service will do a free

survey. If it is necessary following that survey, they have a service to kill rats using poison bait in bait boxes, which involves 3 visits in a 3-6-week cycle and costs £120 plus VAT. They can provide a continuing contracted service, making 8 visits per year at a cost of £70 per hour plus VAT.

No leaf mould this year as St Johns is having work done and cannot store it

Woodchip: We have had lots of woodchip this year and it has all gone. The damage to the path near plot 74 by a woodchip lorry was well mended by Sylva trees.

Do try to use **indigenous hazel and stripped willow for bean/pea poles when available**. See Jeremy before the sap rises, and he will identify sources you can use to cut. Always strip willow as it will root if the bark is in contact with soil. Willow/Bamboo and other invasive plants are not allowed on plots.

Shredder It has been out at 3WPs but it must be away from members. Most Committee members are not yet confident to use it and Rodney and Wendy still tend to use it on separate days to clear bags of shredding pulled off at WPs. The material for shredding needs to be dry. Whilst we have had some 7 shredder days we still need to establish a better routine. We hoped to make progress with this in 2016 but the badger fence has taken most of our time. It is a potentially dangerous bit of kit so we are progressing with caution. We are logging its operation as Emma has reorganised all our safety information. We are working to the principle that for anyone to manage it at a working party they must have been trained and had enough experience using it beforehand to be confident.

Recycling and Upcycling. We have had to move all this area and are still processing the mammoth amount of stuff cleared in the badger fence project. Jeremy manages the recycling bays and you should talk to him before putting or removing anything from here. Tools and equipment left on site continue to be recycled to our trading shed.

Skips and Plot Clearance We have had 11 Skips this year! There was less inappropriate use of skips for external or barbeque waste this year so thanks to all. There was more for processing the vast amount of stuff that came from the fence clearance. Most of this was not historical! It makes us very determined to not let more rubbish piles grow on plots. We must all try harder to limit storage. Our rules are clear that stuff must be brought on for use within a limited time and for a specific purpose. Please remember NO glass panes are allowed on site. This year there were two plots which cost us about £700 in skip and equivalent labour costs to clear!



Bonfires. Members can have bonfires but **must always** follow Oxford City Council's bonfire code. **Bonfires must not cause any 'nuisance'**. Most plots now find it practically impossible to adhere to this 'no nuisance' clause as when the wind is blowing away from the buildings it is blowing across other plots. We have again noted far fewer bonfires and had fewer complaints this year so **many thanks to all**. Please make sure you compost (and shred) as much as possible and only burn diseased dry material when you are confident this will not disturb residents or other plot holders. We maintain a burning space in the far corner of the site by the green association shed. This became almost impossibly large again in 2016 as the wind and weather were against us burning it. Jeremy finally managed it with the judicious use of fire breaks but a later very small fire set alight a hollowed-out willow and we had to call the fire brigade! The tree has been pollarded but not low enough down to remove the wind tunnels. Jeremy is building a fire bin when he has time.

Cripley Meadow Shop/Trading 2016 Sarah Edwards manages our trading project, which started in 2013. The shop is based in 2 sheds on the South Field. The project aims to supply things that are difficult to buy without a car or cheaper bought in bulk. The profit goes towards maintaining the site. In addition to the price list items, we sell second hand tools and equipment -

things left or donated by members or surplus Association equipment. We also operate a seed sharing arrangement, where members give spare seeds to the shop for other members to take for free.

The shop re-opened on March 12th for regular Sunday morning sessions and as before it was closed for the quiet months of August and December. Throughout the year, members were also able to buy by making an appointment. There was a total of 118 visits to the shop. In addition, Jeremy Hyde sold items from the recycling area. These included things like wood, pallets and slabs and the money raised is included in the shop's income.

Sales were lower than in 2015 but higher than in 2014. This is partly due to the fluctuation in the number of 2nd hand tools and equipment available. In the last two years, these contributed roughly a third of our income. Total income, including a few donations, was £1,724. Taking account of purchases and the value of stock, our 'net income' (or estimate of profit) for the year was £584. (Net income was £756 in 2015 and £456 in 2014).

A big 'thank you' is due to everyone involved. Alessandra Nolasco assisted with deliveries. A small team helped Sarah to staff the shop: Sara Jones, Annalisa Cecchi and Claire Pike. Jeremy Hyde helped by sorting and mending some 2nd hand items and transporting them to the shop, as well as selling things from the recycling area. Finally, we would like to thank members who donated tools and seeds, used the shop and made the venture worthwhile.

2016/7/8 Developments

Proposed Flood Channel Cripsey, like Trap Grounds, Osney St Thomas, Upper Wolvercote, Cowmead and Spragglesea Mead allotments are all in the Thames 'Flood Plain'. Any rise in the groundwater level eventually effects most plots. Cripsey Island was only under partially for a few days in January this year. The Environment Agency continue to do presentations of The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. You can stay updated by following <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reducing-flood-risk-in-oxford-and-abingdon> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-flood-alleviation-scheme-community>

There was a meeting last week in West Oxford and there will be more in May at Lake St community centre. This is a major project and it seems to have secured its funding? EA are aiming for final approval in 2018 and for construction to begin later that year.



Badger fencing Project We have worked hard to live **alongside** setts and it has been hard work to keep resolving this issue on the agenda...5 years in fact! In 2015 we benefitted from the help of Nigel Fisher, the conservator of Wytham Woods. His supported for our view that we cannot allow badgers to have unrestricted access to Cripsey Meadow. OU has remained committed to helping find and finance a solution and the parameters of this were agreed by the AGM in 2015. The chair of OU

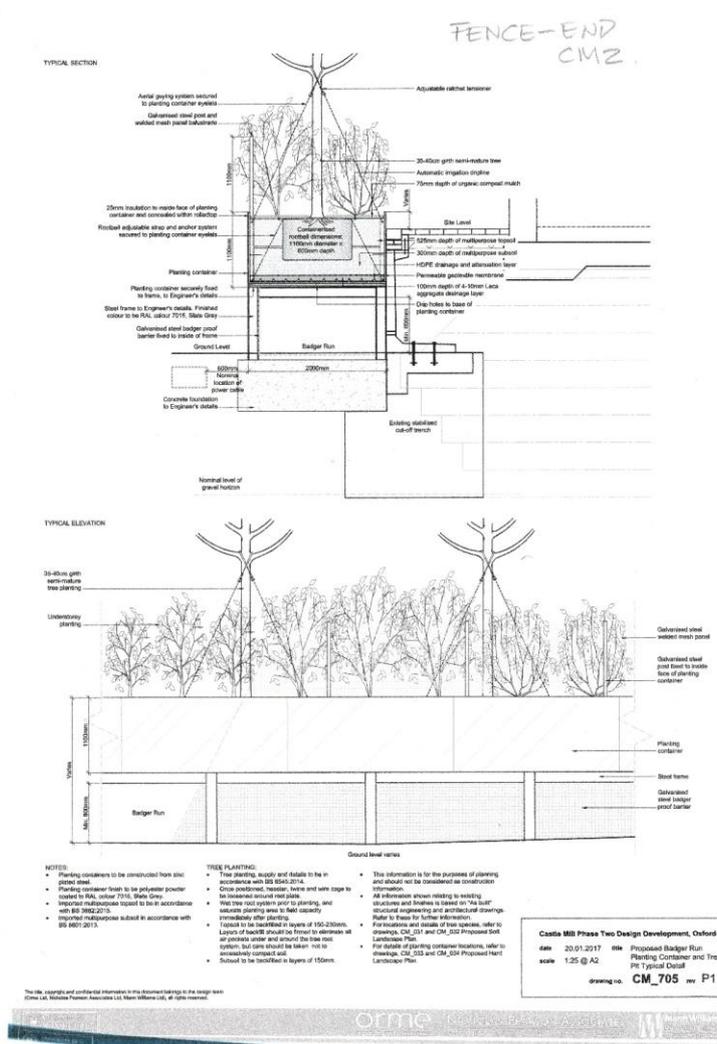
estates committee, Nick Brown, Principal of Linacre and chair of the estates committee was also a tremendous help in moving this forward. On February 9th 2016 West Area Planning Committee accepted the EA, signed off the remaining planning conditions, accepted Option 1 mitigation and voted down discontinuance. This meant some mitigation was now possible and in March 2016, after 4 long years we arrived at a solution with OU that the Environment Agency accepted. We signed an agreement with OU for funding for our badger proof fencing as agreed at the last AGM. This was our only remaining solution.

As soon as the water receded we started work on the shrub and tree clearance in the fence area before April nesting. Walter Sawyer and the OU Parks team did the tree clearance which consisted of removing branches and shrubs that crossed the fence area (they did the clearance and planted our second orchard). We contacted every member involved by email and letter to inform them of the process and talked with lots of them. Members were almost without exception very cooperative. For some it was a huge upheaval so many thanks are due for their contributions. Jeremy worked with them and managed a mammoth rubbish/fence clearance operation which had to be seen to be believed. He also removed, moved and built the replacement sheds. Archer and Bishop did the badger proof fencing then Jeremy started later installing the water butts and pumps. It was a mammoth operation from March through to October. We were very fortunate to have Jeremy available to do the work as no contractor could have understood the problems, resolved them and worked with members as he did.

We are still working on badger incursions using badger cams. We know at least one badger can climb the old badger fence, hence you will see some metal sheets against the fencing. This tends to be where they have had access before by bins being against the fence but in some cases, they have found new ways of entering. We are gradually closing these off.

Castle Mill Mitigation

The plans for this are out for consultation. The comment deadline is March 15th. The work will affect members directly as we will have a construction site alongside from August 2017 to April 2019. Most directly this will involve early work on changing the badger run to accommodate moved bicycle stands and planters on top of the badger run so the site will effectively move a bit closer but will be greener. The badgers will hopefully be better protected as underneath planters but the interim work may make for interesting times.



The plans can be found at

<http://public.oxford.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=OKOVRWMFJHD00>

I suggest you look at Badger run plan, bike shelter plan, planting plans for the badger run and the courtyard photomontages for some idea of what it might look like.

AGM item 4 Wendy has a set of large scale plans from OU which will be out at the beginning of the meetings We will have some time for questions relating to these. Our focus will be the badger run stuff.