

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association
Minutes of the AGM held on March 16th 2005

1. Welcome

Wendy Skinner Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the Chair and Vice-Chair had left Oxford in the course of the last year. It was agreed that Wendy should chair the meeting till Item 8 on the Agenda (Elections).

2 and 3. Attendance and Apologies

38 members were present. Apologies were received from Diana Parker, Belinda Allan, Steve Carr, Liz Cairncross, Cedhar Ball, Alan Armitage, Mike Gass (Allotment Officer) and Karl Ralph (Area Beat Officer).

4. Presentation of special award for 40 years of membership

Mr and Mrs Abarno were presented with a certificate by Wendy and told that in recognition of their 40 years of membership and their exemplary plots their rent would be frozen at present rate.

5. Minutes of AGM held on 25th February 2004 and Minutes of Special General Meetings held on May 12th and 30th June

The Minutes were taken in turn and approved and there were no matters arising.

6. Main Events of 2004/5

The secretary summarised the meetings which had taken place during the year, namely the AGM and 2 Special General Meetings. She told members that the Committee had met monthly since May 2004. The decisions they had taken were summarised in the report which every member had received with the AGM letter. Finally she noted that the new gates and railings had been financed by the City Council and the University. The work had been carried out due to the development of flats by the University.

Wendy introduced the topic of clearance and referred to the maps which were available and show the work done. This regeneration was a priority for improving the site and making more plots available. The reduction of bramble and tree cover will help to reduce pests. She called for members to help maintain the site. The members' whole heartedly supported having a Working Party -first Sunday of every month at 10.00a.m.

It is hoped that funding will be found for black plastic which will be an urgent job for the working party. Neighbouring plot-holders were urged to check that the plastic is not lifting. A recent Co-op grant was awarded

partly for a scheme called “Plots for Prescription” will help pay for some plastic.

Wendy called for members to manage the piles of rubbish left by the clearance and the following volunteered: Steve Carr (86), Jason (149), Gerry and Stan (49). People were also urged to fill in ruts left by machinery.

Ideas for what to do with plots 57-60 were called for (when it has been reclaimed from bramble.) Miranda Worthen offered to investigate the cost of loos and Carolyn would investigate bulk buying of compost but it was agreed these were low priority. Lucia Nixon offered to help Wendy write funding bids occasionally. Miranda W. is interested in liaising with St Barnabas’ School. Fund-raising ideas included selling plants, car-boot sale and Open Day (when the site is in better shape).

7. Accounts

Carolyn distributed copies of the accounts to Sept. 28th 2004. She commented on the doubling of the Council rent over the past 2 years and on exceptional items of expense like clearance, path and hedge clearance, new keys and an extra skip. She estimated roughly 2/3rds of the site was let but many of these plots were unworked and that 52 plots were unlet/bramble/weed covered. It was agreed that our rents are cheap compared with national average of £30 even though we have few facilities. Alison proposed members make a voluntary donation equal to current rent (see 9).

8. Elections

Susanna Pressel chaired the meeting while the election of the Chair took place. The following officers were elected unanimously:

Chair: Wendy Skinner Smith - proposed Ed Todd, seconded Stan Lodowski

Vice-Chair: Ed Todd - proposed Alison Campbell, seconded Sheila Allen.

Secretary: Sheila Allen - proposed Doke Ostle, seconded Stan Lodowski

Treasurer: Alison Campbell - proposed Sheila Allen, seconded Wendy Skinner Smith

M’ship Secretary: Carolyn Dutton - proposed W. Skinner Smith, seconded Steve Dyer

Committee members elected unanimously were: David Bird, Jeremy Meigh, Toby Buxton, Stan Lodowski, Miranda Worthen, Sally Gillard

9. Future Plans:

Wendy drew member’s attention to her second map of ‘work needed’. Plots 147/8 will require involvement of Parks and Environmental Health Dept as hazardous. The main aim is to get bramble and tree cover reduced and to try to maintain a mowing schedule. (This will cost c£1250 for the clearance and c£1000 for mowing?) Members commented that it seemed the site cannot be maintained on current rent. Miranda W. wondered if

other institutions might be prepared to exchange mowing for space as St John's presently uses plots 75-78 for leaf-dumping and plot-holders get the leaf mould. Wendy had already contacted Lucy's developers (Berkeley Homes) to see if they might be interested in some exchange given we are so close a facility for new residents. It was agreed that when we can afford it contractual mowing is needed to reclaim the paths and erase bramble. After that it might be possible for a working party to take it on if someone will organise that. Members thought the idea of laying unused plots to grass was attractive and that in this way the site will attract more members. Fencing of posts and wire-netting and max 5 feet would also help in this. The Parks Dept. have said they will organise pollarding of willows on western boundary (which should have been done years ago) and with the removal of internal trees. No objections were raised to these plans which were approved by the meeting.

Rent for 2005-6. In view of these plans and the fact that the average rent in the country is now £30 Ed Todd proposed a doubling of rents from March 2006 to £2 a pole in 2006/7. This was seconded by David Bird: 27 people voted for, 5 against and 2 abstained. It was agreed that people on low incomes could apply for a reduction. There was a plea for more half-plots to be made available.

10. Problems on the site:

The committee commented that it had been difficult to communicate with plot-holders because there has been interference with the locks on both the notice board and shed. Notices have also been removed. The committee is working with the City Solicitor to resolve this and other major breaches of rules... An appeal was made to all members to keep the gates locked at all times. It was noted there are inconsistencies between the Constitution and the Rules which should be revised for the next AGM.

11. AOB: The car-park is to be resurfaced at the end of the month. Plot-holders were urged to fill in the survey of members and the record of wells.