



## Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association Annual Report March 2015

### Administration

This annual report is sent out by email to all members on our distribution list, along with a copy of the invitation to the AGM and the agenda. Your invoice may have been delivered already with a paper copy of the invite and agenda. If there is more than one member on a plot the invoice goes to the lead member. March 1st is designated on your invoice as the beginning of the new gardening year. **Subscriptions should be paid between March 1<sup>st</sup> and the AGM.**

Last year 48 members attended the AGM evening at St Barnabas. The Draft minutes from this meeting are attached. We aim as usual to have them on screen so only a limited number will be printed.

**March 2014 to March 2015 committee responsibilities were as follows.** Wendy Skinner Smith, Plot 40-41, was Chair and did membership visits, the newsletter, web site, working party job lists and is an audit team member. Tony Clear, Plot 124, was Vice Chair and looks after site structures and manages the new shredder. Alison Campbell, Plot 13, was Treasurer and managed finance, the 2014 National Lottery bid, subscriptions, database and skip renewal. Claire Pike, Plot 48b, was secretary and did minutes, correspondence, keys, structure permissions, organises member delivery requests and posted audit letters.

**Committee member responsibilities were as follows.** Jamie Forbes, Plot 63, looks after machine maintenance, petrol, barbeques, building notice boards, and is an audit team member. Alex Hollingsworth, Plot 81-82, manages the audit, does audit letters and advises the committee on council matters. Jeremy Hyde, Plot 91, looks after the island, orchards and projects. Richard Haigh, Plot 15, helps with plot mowing and site spraying and can be hired by members for temporary plot work. Annalisa Cecchi prepares the paperwork for audits, is an audit team member, helps with deliveries and is a Field Secretary following up audits. Sarah Edwards manages our trading, helps with deliveries, and is an audit team member and a Field secretary following up audits. Sara Jones, Plot 71, was co-opted in 2014 to work with Alison on treasurer responsibilities. All helped with working parties.

**Subscriptions for 2015/2016** At the last AGM members agreed in principle that subscription rates would need to go up in 2016 to take account of any increases in rent charged by the City Council for the site, and the costs of maintenance. The trustees signed the Oxford City Council memoranda in February to agree the new rent with the City Council and there is no increase in costs there; however the cost of maintaining the site has been increasing and is no longer affordable without a change to subscriptions for members.

As reported last year, maintenance costs have been rising year on year as the site gets bigger. While rent to the City Council is only one eighth of our expenditure, more than two thirds goes on site maintenance. In recent years we have been able to use grants from the Lottery to offset some reclamation and development costs, and we also got £1000 worth of extra work to help repair the tracks on site in 2013 because they were used by the University's builders. This year we cannot afford any work on the tracks at all, so they are in a worse state of repair as a result.

For some years now the monthly working parties have worked full time on clearing plots that have been left by departing members, often with huge quantities of rubbish that need expensive skips to remove. This means that there has been almost no time for volunteers to support members who are ill or need temporary help for another reason or to develop the site. This is because we can't afford to hire paid contractors to do work on the site, and are reliant on the working parties. It is important to the committee that members work together and contribute to the site so the working party or donation commitment of membership remains as it is.

The new orchards, and the expanded South Field, are a real boon to Cripsey Meadow. But the bigger and more complex area for mowing means more time is needed for the work, and our contractors are of course looking to increase their day rates each year to cover their own increasing costs.

The budget for 2015 presented at this AGM has the same issue; the costs of site maintenance are by far the largest item, but even so we will not be able to afford necessary maintenance on the tracks, nor hire contractors to do work that would allow some of the monthly working parties to support fellow members.

The Committee are therefore proposing an increase in the subscriptions, to come into effect in 2016, of £1.25 per pole, meaning that the cost of the standard 10-pole plot on Cripsey Meadow will rise to £37.50 a year. This is the first increase since the 2007 rent review, and amounts to less than 25 pence a week. We believe that this increase will be sufficient to last until the next review of the site rent by the City Council, in 2021. Taken across the whole period from 2007 to 2021 this is an average increase of 2.75% a year. For communal and small plots, which do not have a traditional pole unit, we are proposing a similar percentage increase.

This increase will raise up to an extra £2500 a year. This will allow the Association to afford to carry out maintenance work on the tracks, to maintain the current levels of skip hire and mowing costs as prices for those services increase. It also means we can deal with any unexpected problems, and means that by hiring contractors occasionally we will be able free up some time for volunteers to help members across the site when needed. *AGM item 1 A proposal that in order to cover the increasing costs of site maintenance, the AGM agrees to increase the membership fee for plots on Cripsey Meadow by £1.25 per pole per year from 2016*

## Events

- In March we did our usual **OXCLEAN**. 11 Members cleared the car park, Port meadow's willow walk and around boundary and we usually re-organise our skip. Please join us at 10.30 on Saturday 7th March for this year's stint. We credit this as 2015 WP work.
- In May a small group of pupils from the **Dragon Gardening Club** made their annual visit led by Anne Dawes, who runs the club and is a member. They met Wendy and proved knowledgeable about crops and cultivation. One puzzled as to why you would go to all this effort when you could buy a bag of carrots?
- June saw us at our **8th 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 pricking out vegetable seedlings. We raised £242.
- **On July 17**, one of the hottest days of the year, 5 committee members worked with **18 members of Oxford University's Endowment Office** for two hours to clear the path by Fiddlers Drain on the south field. It was their voluntary work for the year and really hard work but, like all working party work, really enjoyable and rewarding exercise. We have sent our thanks to Simon and his colleagues. There is now an access so it must be kept clear. The poles mark the end of the plots. We aim to trim it monthly. We can now get along there with a strimmer so please ensure it is always kept clear. We need to keep a break between us and Fiddlers Bow, which is we call the strip of land between us and Fiddlers Stream. This is not in our lease.
- **In September Lunch on the Green** was our quietest ever. We only had about 20 people so clearly this event has had its day. *AGM item 2 Bring along your ideas for a new annual plotholder event.*
- **In October O&DFAA/OCC Allotment Competition Award Evening** was held in the Town Hall in October. Rob and Louise Bruce from Plot sf19 and 20 won the trophy for the best plot in the city in the 35 to 59 class. Rob and Louise's plots were underwater from December 2013 to March 2014 but they still managed to make outstanding progress with cultivation and crops. Stefan and Tom on Plot 3 were awarded a certificate for outstanding effort in the newcomer's class. CMAA came 4<sup>th</sup> in the site competition.
- **In November members across the city were invited to O&DFAA's Gardeners Question Time** in the Town Hall. We had an excellent talk from Steve Brookes, a BBC gardening presenter and author of "The Greatest Gardening Tips in the World". There was an entertaining question and answer session as well as lots of free seeds!
- At the November working party a group of **6 St Clare's students** attended with their leader Rebekah Pyrah. This is part of their community work for IB and we hope to see them again before too long
- O&DFAA is hosting a recording of **BBC Gardeners' Question Time. Monday 9 March at 5.30 pm Wolfson College, Linton Road, Oxford OX2 6UD. Doors 5.30pm. Recording starts 6.30pm.** For Tickets at £4.50 (including refreshments) contact [treachers@phonecoop.coop](mailto:treachers@phonecoop.coop) or tel. 01865 248577.

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. O&DFAA 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 and Working parties

Most of our present members were not around in early 2000 so here is some background to Cripsey Meadow. In 2003 the site was in danger of being taken back into control by Oxford City Council due to problems with members and the site. An EGM was called in 2003 and a new committee was formed and the 2004 AGM agreed an ambitious plan for reclamation. This started in the winter of 2004/5. Since then the committee has been awarded the following grants for reclamation.

- £500 of Cooperative Society grant money which was spent on ground cover
- In 2007 we had accumulated a huge waste pile of (100mx12mx10m!). Berkeley Homes was building William Lucy Way at the time and Wendy wrote to the managing director asking for help. They agreed to organise and fund this as long as OCC paid half. It cost £6,500 and took 3 days.
- £2,656 of Oxford City Council allotment grant money for keys (347) and South Field clearance.
- £24,980 of National Lottery money. Wendy managed the 2009 bid for 10,000 Local Food money for Cripsey Island Orchard. Alison and Tony managed the 2012 bid for 10,000 for the South Field which included clearance, path making, a new shed and water butt. In 2014 Alison and Tony bid for 2,958.00 for a shredder, water butt and ground cover. This has just been signed off.

In that time we have reclaimed over 160 plots, some more than once! These grant applications always include recognition of the working party work/donations by members as a major factor. We are now eligible to apply again. The 2012-14 Oxford University mitigation work and gift is reported separately.

**Doing your Working Party Work or making a donation** remains a condition of membership. The number participating in 2014 varied from 5 to 31. From Jan to Jan 2015 we used **298 working party hours** on the site. The committee work on site outside working party hours with membership tours, reclamation work, deliveries and trading. Some members take on projects outside working party hours. Rodney, Plot 41, put a prototype well cover in the new orchard. Richard, Plot 34, released the 'scaffold tree' in the orchard from its torture. Ian, Plot 50a hired a small digger for his plot well digging and contributed some hours to removing fencing. Timothy, Plot 79, did some plot mowing. Christina and Tom Plot 60, have dismantled the greenhouse from Plot 9. It was unused and unmaintained and it was great to find two happy recyclers who were willing to give it a new lease of life. It will be smaller and have polycarbonate glazing. We called in some favours from OU and OCC and teams worked the committee over 5 days clearing plots 137 to 139. This was worth c. £1000. These plots consumed some 90 WP hours.

**Metal clearance.** We started a metal pile to try to recover some costs. Alessandra on Plot 143 helped us find the contact for removal when our original plans fell through. We raised £260 for the 4.3 tons.

**Continuing improvement of the paths.** Over the past 4 years we have spent £4,500 on maintaining our site paths and maintenance is an ongoing commitment. We still have some areas needing gravel and some 'paths' have no hard core at all but this work will no longer happen if we don't get some more income from the fees. Please remember these are paths not roads so do use them judiciously. Keep to 5mph and do not use when wet and frosty. We encourage all to use cars as little as possible.

**Pollarding and pruning** Sylva trees finished the 2013 tree work on April 1<sup>st</sup> having started in November 2013. The flooding intervened. We have some minor pollarding, pruning and removal of trees on site this year which we anticipate will be managed internally. Our Castle Mill Stream willows, which were planned for pollarding in 2012 remain unpollarded, thus are 'saving' Port Meadow!

**Reclamation of plots 64, 65,66,67,68 and 147.** This includes a small orchard area which will be brought within our rules and rationalised ASAP. We have been keeping these plots clear as members leave so that we can reorganise them. They are some of our lowest lying areas. The plan is to reorganise into 15 small plots with some shed rights ASAP and try to provide some raised areas along with a better path provision. This will take digger worker and some resources for raising so awaits further planning and funds.

**Fiddler's stream** Since September we have been working on trying to get this cleared. You could practically walk across it in the summer as it has had fallen trees since 2013 and was full of reeds. We involved OCC Parks and Corporate Property as it is a waterway and The Probation service. If we use the latter we will need a welfare unit on site temporarily. Our bank was strimmed ready for the work in October. OCC Parks Tree team made a start on the tree removal in late January. We await a date for the further work clearing reeds etc. We hope to be able to store and compost the material on site.

**Audit** The two annual site audits were carried out in July and October this year. At the summer audit about a third of plots had no concerns at all, and the vast majority of the rest had only minor problems. There were however 12 plots with more serious problems, and the Committee had to issue one notice to

quit. At the autumn audit there was a similar picture, with about a third of plots with no problems, the majority of the rest with minor concerns, and a small number with more serious problems. Following the audit a couple of members who were struggling with their plots decided to resign, and the Committee has cleared and covered the plots.

The purpose of the audit process is to identify problems that might cause issues for neighbours or the site as a whole, and ask members to deal with them before they get out of hand. In the vast majority of cases this is what happens, but there are a few instances where the same issues are raised over and over again. 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.

A 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 the last eight audit letters over four years, but in October 22 plots still did not have one!

This year we have been working to ensure all plots have a pathway between them of minimum, of 2 to 2.5ft along with managed headlands and adjacent fences. Some of the paths got lost in clearing and fencing. They are a necessary buffer between plots and should be re-established if missing. We understand paths can be confusing. Traditionally each plot-holder managed the path to the left when standing on the plot's (old) shed line looking out. However to add to this confusion in 2012 we made it possible for members on plots 128 to 159 to change their shed line! On these plots if your shed faces away from the flats you need to read the rule in reverse. The main thing is that members co-operate and keep the paths between them cut and weed free. The headland is the bit outside your fence and up to the mowed path and should be kept clear of weeds and rubbish. We have a 5 ft. fence / hedging limit on most headlands, except if there is a visual hazard. Adjacent fences (any fence between plots) must be kept clear of blackberry and no adjacent fences / plants can shade more than the path width i.e. a height of 2-3ft.

We try not to pass on plots with problems more than weeds but sometimes members agree to a membership offer which contains conditions that a specific bit of work is undertaken in a given time. This is followed up by the field assistants and may result in the committee pressing for action if this is not done.

**Fences/Dangerous structures/dogs.** We continue to remove fences on plots that come back to the association if they are weed infested or buildings that are dangerous before passing the plot on. We can no longer recommend fences as they do not keep pests out and they have increased the transfer of perennial weed. If you have a fence it must be managed in accordance with the rules. We have a number of dogs on site and whilst our lease states dogs must always be kept on a leash, we have tried to be accommodating and state that members' dogs are permitted on site and they must **always be on a leash** when not contained on the member's own plot. Some dog owners clearly feel this rule only applies if someone else is on site to tell them. They should not enter any other plot and there should be no dog litter on site. Sadly there is! Our present rule will work as long as everyone sticks to it.

**Handling Complaints.** We try to talk to members where there is a problem. If you think we or other members are acting outside the constitution and rules do write to us. The 2011 AGM voted that our complaint procedure was appropriate. Oxford City Council and Parks do not accept complaints unless our procedure has been used.

## **Harvesting, Re-using, Recycling and Trading**

We are committed to managing the site sustainably and we try to bring useful material on site.

**Mowing and Arcadian Plots 84 and 109.** Our new site mowing contract with Barnaby and Arcadian Living worked well through 2014. We had to bring in some strimmer work alongside the mower for some months and need this additional work more often. They also bring on the green waste that eventually provides free compost rough for members. We turned Waste Pile 109 this year and this has been used. . When the site is drier we aim to do plot 84. Barnaby cuts and collects our communal areas and paths strims communal plot paths. Please keep all areas free of equipment, compost bins etc. and all rubbish like stones and glass which can damage the cutters. When the growth rate is reduced and the bramble firmly at bay we plan to develop some meadow stretches.

**Leaf mould** arrived on plot 57 on March 17<sup>th</sup> last year as we had to wait for the water to subside. It usually lands sometime during Feb/March. Remember fresh leaf mould will rob nitrogen if used directly as compost so best used as a mulch, path filler, or let it rot down and sieve for seed compost.

**Woodchip** We have had lots of deliveries of woodchip this year. It is used by many for their main paths ...but beware it attracts badgers. Some plots are organised in raised beds and the paths in between can be dug out and then filled with wood chip. As it rots down this can be done again.. and again! If you have had lots of woodchip/compost please leave it for others to share.

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 growing is not allowed on plots.

**Compost** Rough compost is available periodically from Plots 84 and 109. Members taking compost are asked to remove any woody bits and rubbish and put these tidily aside and only to use wheelbarrows to collect it. No cars please. Please do not use these plots for your green/brown waste nor bring any green waste for home to them. We are keen to encourage everyone to make as much use of composting their own weeds and green waste as possible. Amazingly many plots do not have working compost bins. A compost bin growing weeds or a pile of growing weeds is not composting! We hope you will store your material for shredding and bring it to a working party and take back your shreds to heat up your compost. Please use your OCC green waste buckets at home to collect any cooked food, meat, fish or dairy stuff as this will be properly heat treated. If you bring cooked food on site it just increases our already over prevalent rat population. We think we need to revisit the rat problem. It is members most reported concern. They now are regularly reported openly eating summer crops. *AGM item 3 Discussion on how to manage rats on site.*

**Our Shredder arrived in September.** We had a training day on Saturday 26 September which Tony Clear, Jeremy Hyde, Tony Coombs, Nigel Earl, Wendy Skinner Smith and Rodney Smith, attended. It is a potentially dangerous bit of kit so we are progressing with caution and working on gaining experience and operational details so that we are confident in managing it safely. Tony is logging its operation and Rodney has developed an instruction sheet which will be kept with the shredder. To date Wendy, Rodney and Tony have had some hours using it. We are working to the principle that for anyone to manage it with a working party they must have been trained and had experience using it beforehand. We made a start on reorganising the recycling bays by the green shed in January and we aim to make another collection point on the South Field. This will probably be on Plot 5 which is not suitable for cultivation. We now realise the shredder bays need to be covered so we will be working on this. The shredder needs a good mix of green and brown material i.e. the same as for good compost making. Experience shows it does not like wet stuff or soil so knock off any soil and store your material for shredding somewhere dry. Please do not bring any diseased material like rusted broad beans. These must be dried and burned when the weather and wind are ok. *AGM Item Tony will report on shredder progress and plans for use next year*

Jeremy continues to organise some members in **reclaiming low communal areas by using green waste**. See him if you wish to join one of his groups.

**Tools and equipment left on site are recycled to our trading shed.** As working parties clear plots we are recycling as much equipment and tools and selling at the trading shop.

**Skips and Plot Clearance** We have 7 **Skips** this year. This is far more than any other site we know? There was less inappropriate use of skips for external or barbeque waste this year so we are making progress. However it seems we Cripsey Members bring far too much stuff onto the site! We must all make more progress in limiting the storage of 'things that might come in useful' but actually end up being left for someone else to clear. Please do not bring any panes of glass on site. Food waste attracts vermin so please take it home or put in Walton Well Car Park bins which are emptied daily. New landfill rules means skips can only be used for glass, plastic and metal. Wood, rubber, paint, is not allowed and incur additional charges. This year we estimate at least 3 skips have had to be used to clear plots that have been left with rubbish. This is a very high cost.

**Water, Wells and testing** Since the diesel spill at Castle Mill in April 2013 OCC has had a legal agreement with Oxford University to secure a long-term (18 month) groundwater monitoring programme to ensure that the diesel spill incident has not caused unacceptable groundwater contamination at our site. This programme is almost at an end. The same plots are always tested and the tester is always accompanied by a committee member. Regular groundwater samples are taken at specified intervals and

analysed for hydrocarbon contamination. The results are relayed to OCC environment dept. for assessment. In the unlikely event that contamination is detected above agreed target levels, (WHO 2008 drinking water values) then we will be informed and a contingency plan will be brought into effect. No exceedances above the trigger level have been recorded in any of the allotment wells since testing started. The results to date indicate that there has been no significant impact from the diesel spill on allotment water quality. The wells were tested in January so we should have the latest Groundwater Monitoring Interim Report before our AGM.

We continue to recommend that members follow the usual precautions of washing their produce and hands etc. Cripsey, like Trap Grounds, Osney St Thomas and Upper Wolvercote allotments are all in the Thames 'Flood Plain'. Any rise in the groundwater level eventually effects most plots, although these change from year to year! Some of Cripsey Island was under water for a couple of days in January. When we do flood we recommend members mark the flood level so that they know where to aim if raising. This is a long task but many have made progress using material on site and bought in additional manure and bagged compost. It takes a lot of effort to raise a plot by a small amount.

**Bonfires** Members can have bonfires but must always follow Oxford City Council's bonfire code which is on the notice board and web site. Bonfires must not cause any 'nuisance'. We consider most plots close to buildings will 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 had two complaints and Parks have had a few more. We always reply with an explanation and apology. It is not pleasant nor healthy to have a room or plot full of smoke but we do have to burn diseased material. OCC recognises we are having to make changes and that this will take time. Please make sure you compost and shred as much as possible and only burn diseased dry material when necessary. Please only have bonfires when you are confident they will not disturb residents or other plot holders. We have a burning space in the far corner by the green association shed. Most perennial weeds can be managed by drowning in a water tub or keeping them in a sealed plastic bags. The sludge can be added to compost.

### **Trading**

Sarah Edwards manages our trading project, which started in October 2013 with sales of composted manure from the association's shed on South Field. During 2014 we extended the range of stock and made use of the additional shed donated by Jamie Forbes. Our main focus has been on supplying things that are difficult to buy without a car or which are much cheaper bought in bulk. We aim to make a small profit to contribute to site maintenance.

The new trading year started in February, after the floods. The committee is extremely grateful to the volunteers who so reliably helped Sarah by staffing the shop during the year: Emma Delap, Sara Jones and Sarah Garding. After experimenting with a mix of Saturday and Sunday sales, we settled into a routine of opening on Sunday mornings. Members could also arrange one-off sales. Anticipating quiet periods, we closed for August and December, but continued one-off sales. There were a total of 105 visits to the shop by members. Products available this year were: bags of compost, Enviromesh, canes, plastic ground cover, ground pegs and twine. We had a disappointing experience with some ground cover fabric, but the supplier gave us a full refund, which in turn we offered to members who had bought the material. We also sold a lot of second hand tools and equipment - things left or donated by members and surplus tools owned by CMAA. In addition we did some seed sharing, which we hope to extend in future. Many thanks are due to Jeremy Hyde for sorting the second hand tools and to Alessandra Nolasco for help with deliveries. Finally, we appreciated the support of members who chose to use the shop and make the project worthwhile! **AGM item 4. Our first year of trading.**

### **Oxford University site work and the EIA**

We have made this a separate section as it remains complex and the controversy continues to be an incredibly time consuming and problematic part of trying to steer a proper course for the association. At least it seems clear the contamination scares were just that and it seems the remediation work has improved the land. We are weary of the amount of time and lack of progress with badger protection and pollarding.

The retrospective EIA on castle Mill was published in October with some surprises. The previous 2 year's work on tree screening was ditched and a new plan to use the badger run for tree planting replaced it? We had many more meetings and plans for badger proofing the south of the site during 2014 but still no

action. In spite of working for 4 years with OU and OCC on this problem remains barely recognised in the EIA. Our understanding is that we cannot allow badgers to have unrestricted access to Cripsey Meadow and that as this was recognised to be an outcome of the building it must be addressed. We think we have to persevere to find a way to take this forward. OU has committed itself to helping if we can find a reasonable solution. In this particular situation they threaten the future of the site as numbers will inevitably increase to meet the food supply. We are due to have another meeting with OU about badger entry around the south field possibly before this meeting so we will report back. The Environment Agency seem to have suggested the only option is to fence the other two sides (i.e. along Fiddlers Drain and Castle Mill Stream with either palisade fencing or revert to some strategic electric wiring).

After the publication of the EIA (a big read!) we met with Nicholas Pearson, Adam Boyden and Edd Medicott on December 3. We sent all members a [copy of our response to OCC on the EIA](#) and reminded them about the information meetings at The Said Business School. We advised members they could submit individual comments. We understand 11 of our 225 members did so. Some of the paper copy of the EIA will be available at the AGM in March as will copies of the previous LDA planting proposals which we are aware are not part of the ES but which contain other planting proposals. We are aware the council has details of these. We were assured by Nicholas Pearson that the following concerns i.e. -a) The use of the badger run for tree planting; b) The lack of pollarding of the Castle Mill Stream willows; c) The lack of progress with stopping badger access around the South Field -would be addressed in any planning application that resulted from decisions of the council's planning committee.

During 2014 OU's maintenance firm have been working on site on and off all year re doing and completing the agreed mitigation work initially done (or more accurately not done) by Longcross. They have

- built a wall at the south end of the badger run (on our land) to stabilise the base of the OU fence.
- the badger run was re dug and the wire now covers all of the base as was originally agreed
- re done the emergency water supply so it is now technically stable and safe if there is a testing alert
- they attached the metal section to the top of the gates as badger proofing
- they re- hung and re painted our gate
- they put a new base into the water butts and extended the storage space in April. They were back in September as the seals were not working and the butts not filling properly. One blew over (as empty). We are still not confident these are working so this is ongoing.
- they also did some repairs to the path by the fence and by plot 109 as they damaged these
- In April OU Gardeners started work on their gift of an orchard. Plans for this orchard arose from screening discussions first with OCC in February 2013, then at the 2013 AGM and again with OU officers. As this would be of small, if any significance for screening Port Meadow OU and OCC released us from having to await the EIA outcome to progress planting the orchard. Carl and Richard, OU gardeners planted and staked 107 fruit trees. There are cooking and eating apples as well as pear, quince, plum, and cherry. These are large trees which went in relatively late so we had to remove the fruit for this year but many members enjoyed the blossom. Jeremy worked out a rota to water during the dry summer spells. Please remember communal fruit will be on organised fruit picking and sharing days.
- Carl and Richard and a machine operator did 2 days work (£300 per day) on plots to remove fencing, bramble and bamboo on the boundary of plots. 137 to 139. This was originally booked with them as we had seen how well they removed fencing to do the orchard. In the event this work was donated by OU.

It has been a huge amount of work to keep this work on track but members clearly appreciate the improvements to the site. It remains an ongoing slog to ensure our agreements are kept but now we must await decisions about the EIA, specifically about planting in the badger run and our Castle Mill willows which still need pollarding. This pollarding was agreed and planned to be done by OCC in 2012. This time last year we reported on LDAs plans to replace some willow on our boundary with other trees which do not have dramatic changes of height due to pollarding. We think this is a better option for screening but these plans are presently discarded. Our priority has been to ensure any plans for Castle Mill do not further compromise allotment land. All three Castle Mill options will inevitably impact on Cripsey Meadow, some more than others.

*AGM item 5 (ref pages 6 and 7) Update re Castle Mill EIA and discussion on badger proofing ideas and options.*