

Cripley Meadow

April Newsletter 2013

www.cripleymeadow.org.uk

Working party

Next working party on **14 April** 10.30 to 12.30 meet at the shed. There is more to do than usual thanks to the enduring wet and cold weather. Please bring rakes and wheelbarrows if you have them. Jobs to do include: burning (if the easterly keeps up), clearing plots, clearing the South Field path by Fiddlers Drain Members on SF please make sure it is clear of any obstruction past the plot markers. sorting out the communal plot sheds. Members please make anything you have in is clearly marked with your name or it will be removed. There is also work to do on the island with ditch clearing, lopping and making sure mulch mats are pegged down

The AGM was very productive and pleasant. **Many thanks** to the 53 members who braved the bitter cold for all or part of the evening. Susanna Pressell, our local and county councillor, came along. We do appreciate her sustained support. The informal session at the beginning had slides of plots from across the city sites... with evidence of some sun.

The AGM elected the following unanimously and unopposed Chair Wendy Skinner Smith Plot 40 Vice Chair Tony Clear Plot 124 Secretary Claire Pike Plot 48b Treasurer Alison Campbell Plot 13 Field Secretary Richard Plot 15 Committee members Jamie Forbes Plot 63 Alex Hollingsworth Plot 81 Jeremy Hyde Plot 91 Mark

Doran Plot 141a.. Annalisa Cecchi Plot 61b and Carolyn Jarvis Plot SF9.

Reporting back on AGM items

1. Flooding. Alex and Jeremy spoke about their approach which involves raising the level of land in marked out beds. Members were advised to try to raise the areas which flood readily first. This can be done with soil, leaf mould, compost, manure etc. and paths between beds can be dug out to raise beds. Members were encouraged to resist taking any earth/weeds off their plots as almost everything can be used to raise beds. Perennial weeds must be rotted first. Jeremy has been building up an area of land with rough green waste. Talk to him if you want to join in.

2. Shredder The overall agreed message was: burn as little and compost as much as possible and the meeting agreed that we acquire use of a shredder. We have a good reputation for bringing Lottery projects in on time and as we have been asked to apply for further funds, this is a possible project. As usual we would go for a combination of a Lottery grant and our own funds. Tony reported on shredders which could be acquired for ~£2,000. Some members thought it would be worth going for a bigger model. Initially at least one committee member will be trained to use it and it would be kept in a secure place. Working party time would be used (so our insurance in the case of an accident was valid) and members would bring their material for chipping and take away their waste. We would develop this scheme / timing according to need.

3. A trading shop Vbeke Mannion spoke about her experience of the shop at Trap Grounds Allotments. A container was acquired for this

purpose in 2007 for £1,200 and the shop has run successfully since then selling a variety of items (farm manure, mulch, fleece, canes, ground cover etc.) sourced from low cost suppliers. A list of products is attached. The shop is open for 2 hrs on Saturday and 1 hr. on Sunday and mostly Vbeke is there working her plot and she has a small group (2 to 3) of volunteers. It is much welcomed by Trap Ground plot holders and has proved to encourage social interaction. It is open to Cripley members. A price list is attached. Members showed their interest in Cripley Meadow having a trading shop **if a person** could be found to join the committee to take responsibility for overall management and committee liaison. 16 members indicated an interest in **helping** to run a trading shop on Cripley Meadow.

4. Plot Fences Some members noted the benefit of fences for safety, with children on site, and for confining dogs to a plot. It was commented this did not need to be a sunk rabbit fence. Some members reported their frustration with theirs or neighbours fence weeds and would be glad to remove them. One member asked how boundaries would be recognised. As all plots must have maintained path between them so this would not be a problem. 3 members noted they would object to their removal. It was agreed this would remain a decision for individual members (except on the south field) but that members must keep them and paths clear of perennial weed.

5. University accommodation buildings A member reported a rumour that acquisition of the South Field site had contributed to CMAA being more sympathetic to the building. This was

strenuously refuted. The South Field site has always belonged to the Association. CMAA was one of the few to participate in the planning process and to make any critical comment. The committee will continue to work positively with the University and Longcross regarding work on badger proofing and access to water tanks as agreed. The plan to put some fruit trees by the fence adjacent to the buildings was approved.

Seed saving and plant sharing From Ada

The AGM saw some promising interest in my new initiative for Cripsey Meadow: Plant swap and Seed saving circle. The first part involves swapping plants within our allotment site for free. It is especially relevant for spring and autumn plants that would cost you a lot to buy and ship: seed potatoes or raspberry canes in the spring, garlic and shallot sets in the autumn, or herb offsets all year round. Free plants, no overcrowded raspberry patches, no carbon miles for shipping!

The second part involves growing vegetables specifically for seeds and swapping them around in a seed 'circle'. Saving your own seeds produces stronger plants that are adapted to our local conditions, and since you're doing it together, you only need to grow one or two varieties every year but you'll receive plenty more from your circle-mates. And again, it gives you free seed and no carbon miles. I will be maintaining two mailing lists for plant swappers and seedsavers, so if you're interested, please send me an email (ada.grabowska@gmail.com) and I'll add you to the list.

Saturday June 8 Jericho St. Fair do put in your seeds and pot up plants to bring to the Jericho Street Fair. Last year we had a tremendous range of

plants and seedlings and we hope you will be able to bring more along this year. We do not expect seed sharing will replace members donating plants where a lot of members already pick up new plants/varieties very cheaply as sold for £1 to £2 and this benefits the association

Membership fees

If you have not paid your subscription by now you should have had a reminder and you will now incur a £10 additional charge. Plots will be taken back if not paid before April 31.

Report on late March/April Site work

The paths Ady Podbery, our contract mower has been working on the paths. We will to wait for the central path to dry out as it was so badly damaged. Over the previous 2 years we have spent £3,000 on paths and this year another £2,000 will be used mending them. More than we expected. Sadly some members just did not stop using cars in the wet and cold and caused a lot more damage! Please

- Leave your car at home whenever you can.
- Use the car park. Members can apply for a special parking permit (£20 per year) for allotment visiting only.
- Speed Limit is 5mph so stones are not thrown up (and all on the site are safe)
- **Never** bring cars on site in very wet or particularly frosty weather. The latter is the worst as it just peels up the path surface.

Remember these are essentially site paths for occasional use, maintenance vehicles and deliveries. They are not roads.

• **The fence** We are still are working with Oxford University and the Longcross team on badger proofing.

• **The Skip** The skip can now **only be used for plastic, metal and glass. No rubble, organic matter or wood.** Recently someone has dumped

cement waste and plastic sheeting in the rubble pile (dreadful stuff for soil) and torn builders bags, rubble and organic matter in the skip. Please keep an eye out and report any illegal dumping or we shall all be paying for individuals to dump their builders waste



This is dumping for which members could lose their membership as it is an illegal activity. Please do not dump and challenge anyone you see using the skips and site for this. When skips are used appropriately we will have 3 through the year but we would appreciate whoever dumped this material taking it away. The cement stuff is **really** bad for the soil. When the skip is not there do not leave any rubbish or 'recycling' by the shed.

The 2013 Competition material is attached - do enter and share celebrating plots across the city

There is more advice on what to do on the web site in The Gardener's Year. I often comment on the weather but I'm almost lost for words as this was the coldest March since 1962 and the coldest Easter on record, AND colder than the preceding months. We have had snow at the April WP a number of times and 2012 Jan/Feb was at times warm enough for a t-shirt! All we can do is to bend with the times. Just add about 6 weeks to planting and sowing times! If your potatoes go in the ground in mid-April you'll still get a crop.

Good growing to all Wendy

This last weekend saw some very welcome sun which brought out activity on Cripsey Meadow.