

Cripley Meadow Newsletter

August 2014

- **Working party is Sun 10th August 10 30 to 12.30.**
- **Open day cancelled due to thunderstorms and a shortage of committee members.**
- **Weds eve WP 5 til 7 is on the calendar as requested at the AGM.**

Our Shredder has arrived. It will be having its **first outing on Sunday Working party, IF it is not too wet.**



Please come along to the working party and if you can bring material for shredding. We will, as ever it seems, be clearing another plot so there will be some material to collect. The machine needs a mix of green and brown material i.e. the same as for good compost making. Please do not bring any diseased material like rusted broad beans. These must be dried and burned when the weather and wind are ok. Bring a bag/box so you can take back your shredding.

We had our training day on Saturday 26th. We will work out operation details when we have more experience. Presently only members who came to the training day can operate the shredder. We have had a shredder bay, by the green association shed, to collect material since 2012. This area will be reorganised in the

autumn when we are not all so busy harvesting. There will be other training days later on in the year.

Bonfires

The arrival of the shredder means we are making progress with our intention to reduce the number of bonfires. Unfortunately we have had another complaint about smelly bonfires from Castle Mill. As always I 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. Please make sure you dry weeds and use a hot fire with the wind in the right direction.** 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.



OU Voluntary work session 18 members of Oxford University's Endowment Office and 5 committee members worked for two hours on July 17th (the hottest day of the year so far) to clear the path by Fiddlers Drain on the south field. It was hard work but, like all working party work, made much lighter by many hands. We cleared along the length of the plots here. We can now get along there with a strimmer so please ensure it is always kept clear. The poles mark the end of the plots. We have sent our thanks to Simon and his colleagues. They were a pleasure to work with.



Weather

I hope you all enjoyed the wonderful June and July weather. It was great for growing and members report many crops are early. The wells were obviously under some pressure but there is rain forecast! **The committee are watering the new orchard when needed. Do email Jeremy Jeremy.Hyde@earth.ox.ac.uk if you can help us. We need watering teams of two who can be called on if we do not have rain for a week.** It takes 2 people about 2 hours to water them all. Do remember to put in another water butt if you can to harvest water. **We have had another large water butt delivered. This will be installed on the south field on Plot 19.** I visited 11 other ODFAA sites in June and Cripley is green compared with sites that are not so close to the water table. Most mature plants, not in polytunnels, should now survive if your soil is in good heart.

Lime fest

Our annual treat from the lime tree in flower in the car park is upon us. **Do stop and smell.**



Trading news from Sarah

There will be **no regular trading sessions during August**, because we expect very few sales and several volunteers will be on holiday. But we can still arrange one-off sales. **Feel free to email**

Sarah (sarahjehome@aol.com) and Sara (allotment@qtq.org) to see if one of them is available to help. The price list is on the Trading page of the website and the members' noticeboard. At the moment we have 2 second hand plastic compost bins for sale. We currently have no canes in stock.

Audit

Summary will be in the next newsletter. Many thanks to those who have replied with action/words. Some of you will find your audit letter had a reminder about paths and boundaries. In December it will be 10

years since we started the reclamation of Cripsey Meadow. We do not have many photos of the site before 2004 but by then it was mostly under a lot of self-seeded trees, rubbish and bramble. Here is Rodney and me on the plot in 1986 with Edmund in the pram! Mr Clifford then had the plot next door. We were then surrounded by bramble on 3 sides and of course there was not a building in site! By the 90s it was impossible

to grow anything due to the bramble cover and rabbit population and shortly after this we installed our fence. I have posted some photos from February 2006 on the web site. This was the worst of the 'scorched earth' period.

All plots should have a pathway between them of minimum, of 2 to



2.5ft, managed headlands and adjacent fences. Some of the paths got lost in clearing and

fencing but 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 plots (old) shed line looking out. 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 cooperate and keep paths between them managed. 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 headlands. Adjacent fences (any fence between plots) must be kept clear of blackberry and no plants can shade

more than the path width i.e. a height of 2-3ft.

Sometimes you will be able to tell if you have a path taken into cultivation by looking at the width of plots around you. But beware this is not fool proof! Plots do vary and some members have put in additional paths to protect them from all eventualities. Do ask if you cannot work it out. The important thing is that all plots have paths between and managed fences. This is a long standing, traditional characteristic of allotments because it works.



When we reclaimed the site a major problem was that the bramble had simply joined up! We were also inundated with rabbits. They just hopped lazily into the bramble if you came by. Members erected fences, as the only form of defence, on the inside of the path (as the other side was another plot) so it could be the path you look after is now outside a fence! Like the weather things change. Now the rabbits have gone and the fences do not deter the muntjak or badgers!

Unfortunately they harbour and transfer persistent and problematic weed/plants across the site if not maintained. Ground elder and horsetail are presently romping through boundaries and perennial planting where this is not maintained. Also unfortunately the bramble rootstock is never that far away! This is presently a minor problem compared to the task of 2004 but we need to keep it minor as we all know how fast bramble, ground elder and horsetail can spread and they are very difficult to remove. Hence our agreed rules about adjacent boundaries. Unlike in 2004 we now have lots of members who can all do their bit in ensuring the buffer paths and boundaries are, found, re-established and then maintained.

All of us sign up annually in renewing our membership to keep the present rules. This means the site can support such a diversity of growing styles within the rules.

Please help us ensure the reclamation of the site is maintained and sustained by doing your bit and working towards putting in a path, clearing or maintaining a fence or taking it out if you cannot manage it without perennial weed. Wherever we can we are working on removing overgrown fences from plots where they become vacant. They are no longer helpful horticulturally unless well managed.



With your help over 160 plots have been brought back into cultivation in the last 10 years. It is important that we all act as guardians of the land and ensure it is in good condition for those who come after us. What we need is for all to be working towards managing 'the buffers'. This can mean that as you clear a crop you leave room for the 2ft buffer and this is kept clear and accessible. There is a good article in the August version of Kitchen Garden Magazine on how to establish and manage paths. I love my grass paths but others prefer wood chip. With a shared petrol mower my compost is kept cooking by the mix of green and brown.

It is human nature for us all to excuse our own foibles by drawing attention to others so we try our VERY best to be fair. Because of this we have come a long way since 2004. The audit is a time consuming but necessary part of managing Cripsey Meadow and members are now very understanding about the need for it. However if you had a surprise or upset at the letter because somehow things had crept up on you and you had not noticed the previous requests for action. **Don't despair... talk to us! We would always prefer to find a way**

forward. It could be that you really no longer have time to manage your plot and maybe a smaller one would be the way to keep gardening without it being a constant worry and battle? Or maybe this is a temporary problem you can see your way through. We hope so.

Willow and water damage

Our beautiful Cripsey Island weeping willow is presently suffering from being used as a swing! Please do not use it this as it is not safe. There are also 3 pallets in Fiddlers Stream which we will have to get out to avoid blocking it. We welcome children on site but they must be supervised as required. We are delighted to have more children on site to enjoy family time gardening and the wildlife ...but we cannot be a playground. We do not want them or the site to be hurt.

*Good gardening
Wendy*