

# Cripley Meadow Allotments November Newsletter 2010

**The Allotment Competition Awards** evening in the Town Hall was a great celebration of allotment gardening. Mike Kent, one of the judges, gave an inspiring speech about how the new rules had led to a celebration of good practice in growing food and what a joy it was to see the variety and splendour of plots across the city. Here are the allotment winners.



**Cripley Meadow came fourth in the site competition this year .. just 6 marks separated 1 and 4!** Well done to everyone for their contribution.

**Cripley Meadow members took 4 awards.**

**Jeremy won the Challenge Trophy** which is the highest award for the best plot in the city. **Jeremy writes** *As this*



*year's winner of the Challenge Trophy I would like to thank all those well wishers who have congratulated me on my success. The result came as a surprise. I started on a bare patch of Cripple Meadow soil three years ago without much to go on it. What has filled up the space has been the Gift Economy of the Allotment site that which has provided me with words of advice, herbs, onion sets,*

*seeds, cabbage plants, leaf mould, manure, wood chip, wood, tin, a shed, a lawnmower... and so much more. How about that?*

*In return I hope I do the same. How many times have I come home with a load of veg that were given away at somebody's gate or similarly some flowers or an exotic plant or an herb or the solution to a pest problem?*

*In return and to pay back the debt I do the same. I turn out for a working party on a Sunday as part of this gift economy. It does work and it can be an award winning formula and a powerful one too. I'm sure this is all part and parcel of what regular people do but none the less one I had to discover myself.*

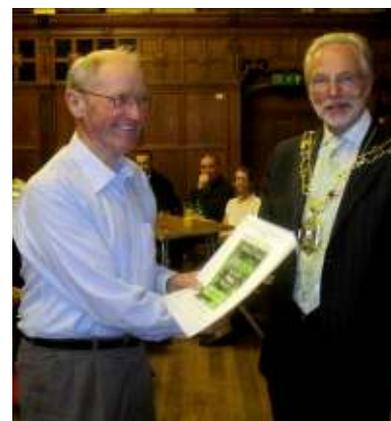
*So much emphasis is placed on recycling these days but if we are not part of the process it disappears and becomes someone else's problem. An allotment seems to be the perfect place to recycle something to use for growing. Perhaps a planter from an old barrow, some pipe used for a cage, a sculpture from found objects. The tradition of compost heaps gives us the paradigm. New vegetables come from old.*

*What seems to be a by product or waste product of our living style are all of use in the correct context. I've seen the new green waste pile put to good use recently, firstly in*

*a compost heap and second just to cover bare soil. It raises the level of the site and provides funding for projects on site. Putting these bits together as a catalyst I hope my winning plot can be an example of what can be done from bits from our environment. The other by product of this combination is a site with a buzz of activity and showing the way to go with award winning plots year on year. Best wishes to all veg growers and a good growing season next year. **Jeremy Plot 91***

**John took the third best plot** in the

Challenge Trophy .So many of us have learnt so much from John as he has great generosity of spirit in sharing his knowledge. We are also in awe of his expertise in establishing our Orchard. The judges were very impressed at how much was



packed into his 12 pole plot. John will retire from managing the orchard and working parties next year but will stand for the committee as an advisory vice chair.

**Jo Davies won the Under 35s Best Plot. Jo has just come back from a Permaculture Design course. She sent us this report**

*Permaculture isn't just about gardening! I was amazed at how much I learnt on a two week design course which applied to all aspects of life. The main focus was on growing food but the principles apply to health and work too. It includes*

- 1) An ethical framework - Caring for people, the earth and ensuring that resources are distributed fairly.*
- 2) An understanding of how nature works - when we have this we can work with it and turn our problems into solutions!*
- 3) A design approach - A careful process to design to utilise your space (this might be your plot, your daily routine/life style, garden, kitchen, back yard or even your office)*



*What struck me most about the course was how much of the work involved in applying permaculture principles is observation. I often find myself wanting to rush straight in and do things but over the two weeks I really learnt the value of observation. On your plot you might observe the direction of the prevailing winds/ north cold winds, where the sunny spots are and how this changes throughout the year. Are there frost pockets? Where are the natural water sources? What is the soil type? What wildlife and species are already present? What natural and local resources are available? What skills do I have? How much time do I have to invest? What are my objectives?*

*After making such observations the design process seems like common sense. Put things which need watering close your water source, growing plants together which help each other, creating and using microclimates effectively, using your local resources. And as a way to start implementing*

*your design ideas - start small and work outwards and try to use the simplest solution with your available resources.*

*By making small changes you can then observe the consequences and continue tweaking things according to what you find works. There are no hard and fast rules - no two permaculture designs will ever be the same. For more info on permaculture and up and coming design courses go to <http://www.permaculture.org.uk/>. **Jo Davies Plot 104***



**Amanda Morley was one of only 4 newcomers in the city to win a highly commended certificate.**

Earlier in the year Amanda wrote "Having lost all my carrots and sweetcorn and had my tomatoes trampled on by what I think are badgers, I was wondering what you would suggest as the best way of protecting my crops in the future. ...with my little space I have probably lost about quarter of my crops to

animals, very frustrating when they have all been grown from seed, and disappointing for the kids too! Do you think just protecting the beds with netting and a frame is enough - or do you think a fence surrounding the entire plot is the only option? ..... I imagine that hungry badgers are quite determined creatures - and maybe I just need to avoid growing food that they like. Perhaps I am blaming it all on an innocent badger when in fact it was a sneaky deer! Amanda like others on small plots was also "wondering what the situation is regarding extra space, (as) I have realised how much more space I need to make a real impact to our dining table! It is amazing how much enthusiasm is shown towards a precious home-grown pea in our household at mealtimes" **Amanda Morley Plot A** Amanda is indomitable. She is now building a new bed ready for another year. This award recognises her outstanding effort and enthusiasm.

**Friday November 5<sup>th</sup> Bonfire on the Green.**



In spite of the awful weather there was a gap in the rain about 4 so we decided to go ahead and put up a pergola. Jeremy quickly got a wonderful blaze. A small but hardy dozen or so kept warm and celebrated Jeremy and John's competition success with fireworks and sparklers.



**Next working party is.  
Sunday 14 November 10.30 to 12.30**

We meet at the shed as usual. Please bring spades, forks, rakes and wheelbarrows... and loppers if you have them. We have 60 new trees to plant so shall be tumping and clearing some metal into the skip. St Clare's is joining us that day (thanks again to Caroline) and a group from the Said and OX university Green Project so do come along and work with them. We still have lots of work to do on the island hopefully before it gets too wet.

**The September Audit**

We have had a little changeover as the audit revealed a couple of members who had left Oxford! The vast majority of reminder audit notices have had positive responses and we are working with the very few members where there are problems. Thanks to all for contributing to the long term sustainability of Cripsey Meadow.

**Reclamation**

We plan eventually to move the fence to include our reclaimed area but as the estimate for moving the fence is c£7,500 we are looking at doing a new Lottery application. The Lottery Local food funding for the Orchard ends in March 2011 and as expected we have used all the funds available. Of course we have to supply the lottery with reports of progress, accounts and receipts for all the work done. We do now have a successful lottery application and project under our belt and Alison and Tony have agreed to lead another bid. In the present climate we are unlikely to get any further fencing from OCC funds. Tony has extended a bit of the electric fencing by the fence to keep the new area clear while we continue clearance and the badgers seem to have adapted to their re-allocated badger gate. They are much less active now. If we have any expert fence movers who could organise a chain gang (remember 30 of us mended the path) let me know!

**Green Waste sites**

The two green waste sites on 84 and 109 have been turned and mounded so that they continue to compost. Members should not use this space for their weeds etc which should be managed on their plots and they should not dump woody material. The contract works well for us and Arcadian Living and members should be able soon to benefit from more compost. We still have a few plots that are too low to use so this will help with them.

**Ellen Burnett writes**

*"Many of you may recall that I spent the summer on the allotments asking people what they grow. Because of this research, and research done by two other MSc students on similar topics, the School of Geography and Landshare are organising a Saturday evening event to explore whether allotment associations can actively promote seed saving to breed local distinctiveness. The event will be held in **Grey Friars Hall on Iffley Road on Saturday 20th November, 7pm.** As well as making for an interesting topic and discussion, the meeting will provide a nice opportunity for people from different allotment associations to meet and chat."*

**The Committee have a holiday in December** so no working party after this November until January. Any requests or queries to Sheila before our next meeting on November 22. After Christmas we shall be doing the paperwork and invoices for the next year. **We are looking for new members to join the Committee in 2011. Interested? Contact Wendy, Alison, Sheila, John, Tony, Cathy, Jamie or Aja for more information.**