

Page 1 *Membership for 2012 starts in March. Have you moved or changed email? Let us know. *More Committee members needed for 2012 *Working Party commitment done or donation? *No-Go to cars on the site's paths in winter! *Skips

Page 2 *Recycling and compost*Look at the plans for the second phase of the Castle Mill flats development before 12/12/11*South Field's new gardeners get started

Page 3 *More on the South Field developments.

Cripley Meadow Newsletter December 2011



LOTTERY FUNDED

Thanks to our latest Big Lottery Fund award of £10,000

"This is a project by a voluntary and community organisation in Oxford. The group will use the funding to extend the allotment sit, purchase a shed, rainwater tank and lay site access tracks. This will provide an extra 25 plots and enhanced facilities for the local community"

Next working party is Sunday Jan 8 Next committee meeting is Jan 16

The Committee have a holiday in December so any building and tree requests will not be acted on until we meet again in January. This will give us all some time to put our feet up with catalogues and plan for next year.

Have you done your Working Party Work for this year?

This and donations is the way most members contribute to the site. The working party in November was a fantastic dry and sunny day in what has generally been an amazingly mild month. We had a group of about 20 members working on the



main site and the south field.



Remember you only have 2 more months to get in your annual commitment of 3 hours working party work before it appears on your next invoices as a donation! This applies to all members rather than plots. Whilst the vast majority of our members do working party work or donate and the committeeand quite a few do a lion's share.... we can manage the site. Without these contributions we would have to build these costs into our subscriptions.

New Membership Year In January the committee will start the administration for **membership next year starting from March 2012.** This is now a huge commitment with so many members. We now make much better use of computer technology in managing our paperwork but it is still a lot of work. The best thank you for the committee's work is for all members to participate in working parties and come to the AGM to show your support and interest. Our new membership year begins at the AGM on March 11. As usual the annual report and invoices will be sent out in February and payment should be received by the start of the new gardening year which is the end of March after the AGM, which is provisionally booked for March 20th. Please make sure you tell us before that of any address or email changes. It is much easier for everyone if payment is prompt. You can now pay online

and by cheque as well as at the AGM. Do remember payment of your annual membership is your agreement to the current expectations as advised in rules, newsletters and on the web site. We will be proposing some revisions to the rules to accommodate changing times at the AGM this year. These will be circulated in the annual report. Please let us know if there are issues you wish to discuss.

Call for more committee members. Our association is now amongst the largest in the city. It has been an extremely demanding year. If you think you could help with managing the site do talk to a committee member to find out more.

Winter weather

Our paths are only suitable for car use in dry weather and members should not use the paths when it makes ruts or at all when frosty as this tears up the surface. Also you risk getting stuck! These paths were never intended for frequent car use. There is some parking by the association shed and by Plot 54 if access by car is necessary but do try to avoid it if possible.

Skips

The general skip was removed at the end of November. All skip rubbish must now be stored in bags on your plot until the next one arrives. **DO NOT LEAVE IT BY THE SHED.** We have had 5 skips this year to cope with removing excess rubbish from an evicted member's plot and others plots left with rubbish rather than unearthed old stuff. Please use the maxim of **"bring on take off"** as much off as possible. If you can please take it to Redbridge.

Recycling

The Arcadian Living **Green**

waste sites are now producing some **compost**. Please do not use their plots for your weeds and green waste which must be managed on your plot. Some members even put their weeds on top of available compost? Are they blind? In the New Year we shall try find a compost seam on Plot 84 as that is the more established site. Meanwhile members have been making use of the woodchip from the south field pollarding. Barnaby of Arcadian living will do housekeeping over the winter to aid the composting and manage the plot boundaries. The green paths must be kept clear and **not used** for vehicles when wet. This mutually supportive green arrangement seems to have been successful and benefitted both parties. We shall be discussing continuation of our eco friendly arrangements with Arcadian Living, St John's College and Parks at the AGM. This year Parks are making a small charge (£50 per load) to the association for their rough compost this year. Like all council departments they need to find revenue streams!

Castle Mill Second Phase.

If you could not come to Castle Mill on October 25th to preview and comment on the new plans before they were submitted to planning... they are now out for consultation. They contain information on our concerns with regard to shade, flooding and badger management. The deadline for comments is December 12. The committee has worked hard with the university to mitigate the considerable impact on Cripsey Meadow and we believe we have made good progress. The planning reference is 11/02881/FUL | Extension to existing student accommodation at **Castle Mill** Roger Dudman Way Oxford

The South Field is now open

We have reported extensively to members on reclaiming the south

field and the committee has received many positive comments from members about these plans. We have just completed the relocation of the south fence. Oxford University has taken responsibility for the necessary badger proofing.

Natural England visited on Monday 21st to confirm that there has been no interference with the badger sett on the boundary of our allotment land and there are no breaches of the badger protection act. The University has successfully relocated the Castle Mill setts to the badger hotel and the old setts have been dug out. As expected this has resulted in more activity on Cripsey Meadow which we trust will be short lived. We all hoped the east fence OU badger run would be completed soon after closing the Castle Mill but this has been held up by machinery access problems. We are confident it will go ahead and protect the badgers and our land before any building is started. We have already had brief talks with Paul Finch of Longcross, the construction site manager, about dust protection during building. They are keen to be 'a considerate neighbour'.

South Field pioneers



The first sod was turned on the reclaimed allotment south field on Sunday 27, the first day of opening for members. Ben and Chris and Nicole had some planting, a shed and a compost bin by sunset. At least half of the field is already allocated. We hope this will give additional provision to accommodate further new members

South Field development

This has not been without its problems. You may have seen/heard of what The Oxford Mail refers to as an

'Environmental campaigner'. This is the same person who interrupted tree work on the south field in 2010 and work on Cripsey Island in 2009. On that occasion he was charged and convicted of assault on a member of the tree team. We remain puzzled by the concept of an environmental campaigner against the establishment of a heritage orchard and the reclamation of allotment land. Whilst we respect the right to peaceful protest we do not accept that trespass, witnessed damage, harassment, alarmist newspaper reports and criminal damage are acceptable tools. They issued him with a first warning harassment letter requiring him to stay away from the chair, the site and its surroundings at the beginning of November.

The photos show some of the bending and uprooting of fencing in progress which took place on Saturday 26th 4.30pm to 10am.



This has led to considerable additional work, cost and anxiety. The police are being very supportive and make frequent tours of the site. There are ongoing investigations into this unwitnessed criminal damage.

We feel that members are blithely unaware of such activity and generally we would keep it that way. However this has been a disturbingly personalised attack with the protester attributing all responsibility for these actions to one person and threatening to 'target her'. This has been extremely unpleasant. He has been witnessed accessing the site by canoe across Fiddler's stream as well as interfering with our electric fence. This and other incidents have been reported to the police. We

posted a notice on the member's notice board some weeks ago asking member's to report any suspicious behaviour on or around the site to the police neighbourhood team.

Since it became apparent in June that Phase two of Castle Mill was imminent reality we have worked closely with the University, the council, the parks department and Natural England, with regard to fencing and badgers. If you need 'a reminder of past info' here it is.

The needs of people, buildings and wildlife **are** complex and deserve debate but we feel that the association is being unfairly targeted. We know that it was numerous previous planning decisions and building that have, unwittingly, caused the present problem with badgers. These cannot be reversed so we have to move forward. Reportedly the city has a large population of badgers and we know there are other allotment sites and gardens are suffering similar problems from their foraging.

As an allotment association Cripsey Meadow's lease with Oxford City Council requires us to manage the land to allow people to grow local food. Allotments have always been part of the



green movement in allowing members to eat fresh produce and work with the land and seasons. Nowadays they are also significant to many in reducing food bills and carbon footprints. Cripsey Meadow has been allotments for over a hundred years. It is flood plain (as we were dramatically reminded in 2007) so has never been a badger habitat as without being raised it could not support setts. Badgers are the interlopers here and have only been a problem since 2004 as when the



embankment building before that we know the site grew sweet corn behind rabbit fencing.

In 2008 whilst seeking to reclaim more of our designated land for allotments to cope with growing waiting lists we found we had had a small area of land, adjacent to our boundary, raised by adjacent building work and a sett had established there. Since then we have worked closely first with the local badger group and then Natural England to ensure that we comply with the law and do not interfere with the sett whilst reclaiming the south field. We have left about an acre of designated allotment land around this sett and this is **not** all enclosed. This is more than the immediate 350 sq yds required by Natural England of OU around the relocated badger hotel. As the rest of the adjacent embankment is to be built on,



Oxford University is badger proofing our existing and relocated fence as mitigation. Without this work we believe our allotments would eventually cease to be usable to grow food?

Our site, like many others was palisade fenced by an Oxford City Council programme of available to all of the 30 council sites. We have relocated the fence on the southern boundary to include the reclaimed south field. Since the badgers undermined our new fence shortly after it was installed, as advised, badger gates. Unfortunately we were not aware of the consequences of this. Badger dumps now clearly show their diet of earthworms

and slugs is supplemented by an increasing range of our produce, quite apart from the damage to sheds and fences caused by these mini bulldozers moving around the site. Sadly badgers know no moderation and will keep expanding to use the food source available. Now their embankment territory is reduced by building the allotment associations cannot be left to be their foraging land. In proposing to build on the last of the embankment around us Oxford University have recognised this and it is they who are badger proofing our fences so that we can remain as viable allotment land. Their recognised expertise in badger management has been very reassuring.

Good gardeners have always grown food with a regard for their environmental responsibility. Having had this problem pushed upon us we feel we have more than recognised our legal responsibility and left a significant section of allotment



land around the sett. We trust that the badger fencing and runs will protect them and us. There is known and used access out of this area to the south as well as to the north through badger runs to the related sett relocated by the University on Castle Mill and beyond.

Alex, Alison, Claire, John, Jamie, Jeremy, Richard, Sheila Tony, Wendy of the Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association Committee wish you the all the best for Christmas and the New Year. There are lots of great brassicas on site which bode well for a good Christmas feast! Enjoy your Brussels!