

## Cripley Meadow July Newsletter 2008



### From Kings Park Perth

Today I have been looking at Grevillea as I am in Australia. Important family matters mean that I cannot be around for a while but Rodney, my husband, will be looking after my plot. Cripley Meadow has a very able committee to manage the site and John Sivell, Vice Chair, will be acting in my stead whilst I am away. We have been very busy since the AGM when the following officers and committee were elected unopposed. Chair: Wendy Skinner Smith, Vice Chair: John Sivell, Secretary: Sheila Allen, Treasurer: Alison Campbell. Tony Clear, Jamie Forbes, Alex Hollingsworth and Bernie Fry – were re-elected as Committee members with James Allen and Donna Mann as new committee members. Our news is...

### **AGM Changes to Constitution and Rules**

The AGM agreed that "The committee is charged with pursuing the objectives of the association and administering the site" and that the rule on shed size changes to 8'x6'x6'

### **The Association Shed**

Dave Simms and John Langsbury volunteered to remove the graffiti, decorate and replace the guttering. The association will provide the materials. We appreciate the offer greatly.

### **Cripley Island**

Oxford City Council offered us the tenancy of the Island on March 26<sup>th</sup> but progress since then has been very slow. We have been greatly supported by Suzanna Pressel in this and last week we finally received and returned Heads of Terms. These set out the broad terms of the offer for us to take Cripley Island into our present lease as part of the Allotment Association. We have accepted this offer in accordance with the 3:1 majority vote of the AGM. The Heads of Terms require us to develop it as an orchard with supportive native planting and further detail on this is contained on the notice board and on our web site. We now have permission for work on managing the immediate problem of the willow and also we can submit a grant application to the National Lottery for their Local Food programme. We have already used 2 working parties to clear much of the drain between Cripley Island and Cripley Meadow and the rubbish accumulated in Fiddlers Stream has been removed by the Environment Agency. Given the need to take down our present lease it seems unlikely we shall have a new lease to discuss before the next AGM. However this opportunity will also enable us to reclaim the 6 plots we had to release some years ago to permit a prosecution. This will not affect the remaining life of the lease (14 yrs) which will be honoured in the new one. Do look at the information and let the committee know if you have any suggestions /queries.

### **Dead Cow**

The Country Warden had to access the island last week due to a dead and rotting calf which had fallen in the river at Cassington and been caught by the blockage in Fiddlers

Stream and landed on Cripsey Island. Unfortunately he reported the Island was difficult to access due to the willow growth and we had to remove the calf over the drain and Plot 18! Another necessary first to remove a very smelly problem.

### **OCC Rent increase**

It was agreed at the AGM of 2006 that this should be passed on in full to members. Although this is not yet formally agreed the proposed annual increase is 24%. This is the first increase in site rent for 7yrs.

### **Trustees**

At the AGM we ran out of time to discuss this matter and it was agreed to defer a decision in view of the fact that it was to be discussed by the Federation. This has now been discussed by the Associations that belong to the Federation (which represents the majority of sites in Oxford) and the following advice was contained in the minutes of their meeting of April 10. *'Allotment Associations discussed the need for ensuring trustees were representative and regularly elected. Associations agreed to move towards this position.'*

### **Oxclean March 16**

Members of Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association collected 26 bags of rubbish from Port Meadow/Cripsey Meadow Car Parks and waste ground by the railway. Cripsey Meadow Allotments suffered greatly from dumped rubbish in the past which Oxford City Council helped us clear. As we are nearing the end of 3 years of removing rubbish so that members can grow fresh produce and work with the land and seasons we were pleased to join Oxclean and help clean up the land around us.

### **Jericho Street Fair**

The committee provided lots of plants and a few members contributed plants, cakes, cordial and help. We raised £170 and were present at this important community event. Next year more member participation?

### **Open Day**

This is Sunday August 17<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 4pm. We were advertising our Open Day at the Fair and still have queries from new members. We have now filled all the available plots .but are working on more.

### **Flood of 2007**

When the floods occurred in 2007 we applied to Oxford City Council for some recognition of the problem. After many OCC committee discussions and some changes of mind a rebate has now been agreed for some of the flooded sites (including ours) and the Council are trying to make some sense of the comparable charging and facilities across the city. (We have one of the lowest OCC rents per hectare in the city) The committee has discussed this and concluded that as the rebate of £440 amounts to a small sum if divided between the members affected (ie everyone) we could get better benefit for all by using the sum to purchase a larger quantity of manure. We would aim to put this on plots 76, 57 and 109 and ask all to ensure it is shared appropriately. We would aim to do this around October so we will not sort this out until our August committee meeting. Please let us know in writing if this is a problem?

### **Headlands and numbers**

Please remember headlands must be kept cut and managed by plot holders. You are responsible for 2ft around your plot up to where the path is cut and this must be kept maintained weed free. Weeds, brambles and other vegetation must not be allowed to

grow across the path or seed onto others plots or exceed c5 ft. Members are also required to ensure their plot is clearly numbered.

### **Skips and Recycling**

We have had 2 skips this year and very regrettably have had to report on their misuse. Member(s) are using these skips for the removal of **domestic building waste** and this is not acceptable. Should this happen with any new skip we will have to make all members responsible for removing their own waste. Please report any misuse seen to a committee member. We have already benefitted from a deal with MandM skips whereby they give us free metal only skips. We hope we can make this recycling initiative work as it is in the interests of all but this may be scuppered by the selfish behaviour of a few? We are also trying to negotiate for soil to come on site from MandM from their green waste recycling site. This could help with raising levels and be gradually be improved with compost. We will let you know how this negotiation progresses.

### **The Bridge**

As we reported last year the proposal to limit the bridge to 7.5 tons has now been put up for consultation and comments must be received before July 18. We are objecting on behalf of the association but need individual members to write to Oxfordshire County Council to express their views on this. The association letter will be on the web site/noticeboard with the address for letters/emails. If this limit is applied to us we will not be able to bring skips, mowers, woodchip, tractors, soils, manure...etc. onto the site and we feel our ability to operate as an allotment association will be seriously compromised.

### **Reclamation**

Recently I did a short summary of our reclamation of Cripsey Meadow for a research student. Here it is. We presently have 151 members which is the highest known, recorded membership on Cripsey Meadow. Our 2004/5 reclamation sheet (Dec 2004 was the first time we put a digger on) shows we had 44 members 'working' plots to 'some degree' of which only 12 were fully cultivated. There were a further 17 paying members with no evidence of any work on their plots...a few holding 5 and 6 plots! We now have over 100 plots worked with a further 40 underway and making progress. This means we have brought 100 plots back into cultivation.

### **Working Parties**

The committee contribute the vast amount of working party work with regular help from a few but increasing number of members. Importantly most members have now either contributed through a donated £10 where they did not attend a working party in 2007 or have done their allotted 2 hours contribution in person. Most importantly everyone must contribute care of their plot so that together we give the site the respect it deserves. We have just done the June audit and letters have been sent out with reminders and required action. We do twice yearly plot checks to ensure progress is built on and use working parties/donations to help to develop the site and ensure we hand on this most necessary and now very popular resource in good working condition.

The Committee of Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association

Wendy Skinner Smith

Chair Cripsey Meadow

[www.cripseymeadow.org.uk](http://www.cripseymeadow.org.uk)