



Cripley Meadow Allotment Association

www.cripleymeadow.org.uk

Chair Wendy Skinner Smith **Vice Chair** Ed Todd **Secretary** Sheila Allen **Treasurer** Alison Campbell
Committee members John Sivell Andrew Honey Tony Clear Jamie Forbes Alex Hollingsworth Melissa Gemmer-Johnson Bernie Fry

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Newsletter July 2007

AGM held on March 15th at St Barnabas School

This was your opportunity to have your views heard and influence the future of Cripely Meadow. We had another excellent turn out and the header shows the officers and committee members. Bernie Fry has since been co-opted. The minutes of the meeting have been posted on the notice board. As we get larger (we now have over 130 members) it is important that members stay in touch with the constitution and rules. A current set is always on the notice board. Please remember all officers and committee members are volunteers and are elected to manage the site in accordance with the constitution and rules. In paying your subscription you agree to abide by this. If you have a complaint you can make it by writing to the Secretary. Our lease with Oxford City Council is due a rent review in 2007 and the AGM agreed any increase will be passed directly onto members for March 2008.

Celebrations

We are planning an Open Day on Sunday August 19th during National Allotment Week which is Aug 13 -19. We hope everyone can be around and can work towards having their plot ready for show on this date. We will advertise this. We also plan to have our September Annual Lunch on The Green as the activity for the September 2 working Party. Just bring food and drink you can share with others. That working party will be devoted to work on The Green. It needs another year of cutting but already there is more grass and it has some communal fruit trees. It needs some seats and shade. We would like to try An Allotment Basket Celebration on that day. Bring a basket laid out with your produce that week so we can celebrate the site and share experiences. There will be a prize for the best basket. This year we also hope to combine our September audit with some recognition of the gardening skills of our members and would like your suggestions of the areas we might include. We thought certificates for best plot, most improved plot, prettiest plot, most environmentally friendly plot, best newcomer, and best variety? Please note our new site www.cripleymeadow.org.uk which is being developed by Ed Todd. Newsletters will now only be available on the web site, by email and on the Notice Board.

Site survey

This site has been allotments since 1891 and was once used as a dump, like Trap Grounds and many others. Karen Seal, OCC Environmental health Officer kindly came to our AGM to answer questions on the resubmission of the 1997 site survey. The recommendation for the site is that soil from these allotments was shown to contain elevated levels of heavy metals but that there was no recommendation for any plots to be withdrawn from use. It is considered that we can continue to use the site given basic precautionary hygiene measures. These are that you wash your hands after working on allotments; take care not to accidentally ingest soil; thoroughly wash and peel any produce; and do not take young children to play there where they might eat the soil.

Working party (first Sunday in the month)

August 5/September 2/October 7/November 4 /January 6/February 3 /March 2

These monthly working parties are an excellent way to stay in touch, learn more about the site and make new friends. Everyone is expected to help with at least one working party of two hours or pay a contribution of £10. We keep a record of attendance at working parties but rely on members to make the additional contribution to their subscription. We do need lots of help to keep up with reclaiming plots and the site.

City News

There are 4 categories in The City Allotment competition: Challenge Trophy (best kept plot), Senior Citizens 60-69 years, Senior Citizens 70+ and Standingford Shield for individuals who have never been placed in the competition before. Judging was done on 15th June and will be again on either August 9th or 10th. Cripely Meadow members entered for the first time last year and 4 members received awards of merit and one member achieved second prize in the Senior Citizens (60-69) category. This year we have 6 member entries and in all 21 of the 32 City sites have made entries. The City Allotment Associations now meet regularly with Council officers and work more closely together. The Federation of Oxford City Allotments Association is presently undergoing some renewal and Wendy is now a member of The Executive Committee.

Regeneration 2006/7

We completed the planned work for this year rather late due to the floods. There was continued clearance on green waste areas and plots, the entrance area and the area adjacent to the new fence. Some of this needs continued

management with a mixture of planting, seeding, mowing and spraying. We had 6 days of digger work and 2 further days from the City Parks Dept for yet more rubbish clearance (another £1,500 worth) and some grading of the paths and plots. We are grateful to Mike Gass, Allotments Coordinator, Ian Sheppard, Senior Park Officer and Shaun Gibson, Senior Arboriculturalist. The planned internal tree removal was eventually completed but the willow pollarding by Castle Mill Stream has had to go into next year. The rest of the willows are not on our boundaries. Meanwhile if you have a dangerous or fallen branch please report it immediately to sgibson@oxford.gov.uk. As you know our rules state that only fruit trees at max height of 10' are allowed on plots with permission from the committee and you must not plant or allow other trees to grow on your plot. No funds for maintenance and structural renewal meant that we have had decades of neglect to remedy and the site inevitably shows the impact. However it is now suited to purpose and supports over 130 members and will serve many more years and members.

Waste

We have already had 3 skips this year and hope we are getting to the end of the waste mountain! So far it has cost some £8500 to remove so if you can take any rubbish from your plot to Redbridge directly that would be good as you can do so freely as a private citizen. Also members must exercise restraint in bringing materials on site for 'possible use'. A lot of what we have cleared has been of the 'maybe useful' variety. We commend recycling but please do not allow waste materials or broken glass to accumulate on your plot.

The Ditch and the West Fence

There is still a chance we can clear the ditch on the west boundary but this involves Parks and the Environment Agency! If all else fails the fence will be completed at a later stage. Members with plots up to this boundary must keep access along the ditch edge clear and must not build or block within 2m of the boundary to allow for maintenance machinery.

Water, Wells and Path to Castle Mill Stream

There is a communal path to the river which is marked on the site plan between Plots 6 and 7 for members to access water from Castle Mill Stream. We need to enlarge this path some time this year as this is also the only access for maintenance machinery to the river for willow pollarding. Meanwhile do try to have your existing buildings and structures fitted with water collecting pipes and butts so that water is used effectively. Please contact John Sivell on Plot 46 if you want advice about wells. You should contact the secretary to register for a new well which must be safe with raised sides and secure covers during and after construction.

The Car Parks

If you have problems please tell 01865 715830 or 07850 792615. The scheme to have limited time tickets for Port meadow/Cripley Meadow Car Parks is being processed and meanwhile we are still at the mercy of bad parking/blocked access. We now have a barrier which means the car park can be closed with 24 hrs notices for access for machinery for mowing and skips.

Mowing

Our new mowing contract is excellent but we still have problems with piles of stone, glass, metal on headlands and other communal areas. Members are still leaving rubbish on 'vacant areas' and this can wreck expensive machinery and put our contract at risk. The mower will mow 2ft of your headland if it is visibly clear and members must not let bramble or other invasive plants become a problem to other plot holders.

Spring Plot Audit

We have sent out some letters of concern and reminders to members. Remember you have a responsibility to keep your plot managed and cultivated so that weeds are not allowed to seed and brambles and other invasive plants do not interfere with the work of neighbours and access. If you cannot manage a plot or have a problem please let us know sooner rather than later. We are making more small plots from reclaimed areas.

Sheds and fences

We have amended the shed maximum to 6'x8'x6' per plot which should meet most needs and remind you must submit plans and placement to the committee before starting work on any building or construction. We know there are bigger sheds, old and new but we are still in the process of implementing rules. Environmentally it would be good if everyone could use their sheds to collect rainwater to recycle. The clearing has dislodged more rabbits that now tend to head under unfenced sheds. We think the best option is to have a 4' fence with a 5' ft deer wire above. Fences must be no more than 5ft high.