

Cripley Meadow Allotments Association

Wendy Skinner Smith Chair Ed Todd Vice Chair Sheila Allen Secretary Alison Campbell Treasurer, Carolyn Dutton Membership Secretary. Committee members: Toby Buxton, Jeremy Meigh, Miranda Worthen, Sally Gilliard, David Bird. Co-opted (non voting) member Ray Dennehey

Newsletter August 2005

Jericho Street Fair

We had a very successful stall at Jericho Street Fair in June and raised £356. Carolyn made salads which went down at an amazing rate and Wendy, Alison, Ed, Sheila and Sally potted up cuttings and seedlings. We sold out. We are paying for the black plastic to cover neglected areas and this will help with that bill. So far we have no further funds for more winter clearance.

Paths

Working party days are used to manage the mowing of paths and plots but we need more help. Some Committee members have been present on every working party day since we agreed this at the AGM in March. They have contributed over 90 hours cutting and clearing on top of many hours over the winter. We have over 70 members and so far 9 members have contributed another 25 hours to this. On July 3rd five committee members spent 18 hours cutting paths, brambles and cleared areas! You will notice there is still much more to do. We are all busy but working together to manage the site will make it easier for everyone to grow and eat their own food. Please **play your part to reclaim Cripley Meadow**. Thistles and brambles make problems for everyone and we have had to choose between keeping paths open and cutting cleared areas as we have just not had enough bodies, time or machinery. If you have weeds thistles/brambles on your plot - cut them. You are responsible for keeping your plot and 2ft around your headland free from weeds **and brambles**. If everyone contributed a few hours to a Working Party we could double the work time available without anyone having to feel resentful or guilty! The dates for first Sundays in each month are on the board. 10am at the shed. Bring any cutting tools and or machinery you can to use on the paths, plots, brambles. The priority cutting time is May- October when there is so much growth. Other dates will mainly be metal/glass rubbish and plot clearance.

Rent

As you know our rent this year does not allow for any help / hire of machinery. We have been told by the council to expect a rent increase next year so already our planned increase to £2 a pole will not all be available for maintenance. However it will help a lot.

Trees and clearance

The **only trees** allowed on the site are fruit trees on dwarf stock and you must write to the committee to obtain permission for these. **All** the other trees which have grown due to neglect/mistakes will be removed. We have been told that this tree removal and the pollarding of the willows along the perimeter will be done by the council this year. Fingers crossed! They also hope to clear plots 147 and 148. Thanks are due to Mike Gass and Tony Wade of City Council Parks Department for this. Please note that we have noticed some young trees that are not dwarf or fruit on some plots and members should remove these if they want to keep them. Food cultivation cannot compete with wood growing and we need to ensure the site is maintained for future use and that our present problems are not passed on to future generations.

Sheds and fences and wells

All new sheds need permission from the committee. Please write to the secretary with dimension, materials and placement. Please stick to the shed line on each section. As we get in requests we are trying to work out some future advice now we have seen the demands. Remember sheds and other buildings should be related to cultivation needs - not leisure houses. You should also note fences can be no higher than 5ft. Please be sensible and do not cut off areas that cannot be managed. Please be aware of the rules about wells and COVER.

Unworked plots

We have now let all the plots that are available and more will be reclaimed when we can. However not all the plots which are let are being worked or managed? The lease on these will be reviewed in October. If you cannot work your plot(s) please give it up or talk to a committee member about your plans/problems. We will try to help and suggest that if you cannot use it all you make sure it is cut or covered. In the interests of the site we will have to rationalise the lease of uncultivated plots as demand increases. We also hope to create more small plots for letting in the future as many people clearly over estimate what they can do. Overall the bramble ground cover is very much less and members report they are growing stuff for the first time for years which is great news. Good news is we have a waiting list.

Problems

We are still heavily involved in procedures to enforce our rules where they have been persistently ignored. Members should recognise that an important part of the regeneration of Cripsey Meadow is to ensure the site is used in a way which promotes the aims in our constitution. Anyone refusing to recognise and respect the association rules and members will be asked to amend their behaviour/practice and if they do not respond their membership will be removed as agreed in our constitution and tenancy agreement. We ask that all members recognise the need to act within the rules and always respect them, other members and the site so that this situation does not arise again.

Gates

The locks have caused a lot of problems and the council has consulted with the manufacturers and installers. This should be resolved soon and hopefully without a change of key. Sorry for the inconvenience but we have done all we can and will keep you posted.

The future

We are still hoping to raise more funds for clearance and path recovery in the winter. The Allotment Associations are meeting with the Federation and City Council regularly and this communication should help a lot. The City Council staff is putting in a bid for funds for allotment regeneration across the city to go into next year's budget. If this comes about your help will be needed to canvas councillors and attend area meetings to show support. Many sites have suffered decades of neglect and need major expenditure to bring them into good working order. We also have contacted the Oxford Nature Conservation Forum in order to develop plans for the unused site and to advise members about using wildlife friendly practice to grow fruit and vegetables. We are working hard to regenerate the site and feel we are all making progress. The committee meet every month so if you want to make your views known or have a problem then write to the secretary or talk to one of us.

Sadly Jeremy Meigh has been unable to attend meetings due to serious illness. We wish him a speedy recovery. Miranda Worthen is unexpectedly in the USA 'til October. Stan Lodowski continues to fill his role on the committee by 'being there' looking out on what happens on site. Thanks Stan.