



Cripley Meadow Allotment Association

Chair Wendy Skinner Smith **Vice Chair** Ed Todd **Secretary** Sheila Allen **Treasurer** Alison Campbell **Committee members** Carolyn Dutton Sally Gillard John Sivell Gina Cowen Andrew Honey **Contacts:** The Secretary 19 Southmoor Road OX2 6RF
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Newsletter August 2006

Well done if you have managed the extreme weather. If you are new to allotment gardening it is normal to feel overwhelmed by the rate of weed growth and it does get better. Just keep pulling up and hoeing. There is now fruit, flowers and vegetables where trees, bramble and rabbits reigned!

Waste pile

Thanks to everyone who cooperated with the waste pile removal. It took longer than expected but we hope everyone shared the huge sigh of relief. The guys from Woodbridge were very helpful and we have sent our thanks to Berkeley Homes and Oxford City Council for their financial contributions. Most members made use of the opportunity to clear inherited rubbish from their plots and all the accessible accumulated waste from cleared plots is gone. Hopefully we will not inflict such a burden on future members. From now on members should manage any waste from their plots that is not compostable by taking it to Redbridge. As an individual domestic user you will not be charged. Under no circumstances should any rubbish or weeds be put anywhere outside your plot boundary.

Gates

The locks on the new gates continue to be a nightmare. The small gate barrel had to be removed yet again at the end of July as some keys which had worked ceased to and vice versa! The council officer involved with installing them has agreed to provide new locks and a new set of keys. These will probably be of the padlock variety as these were less problematical even if more of a pain to use. We think we have given the integral lock a fair trial and found it wanting! August /September is no good as so many are away so we have decided

Key Changeover will be October 1st at The Shed 10.30am to 12.30am

This is a working party day as well so you might want to kill 2 birds with one stone and do both! You will need to hand in your old key and be a registered member with a paid up key deposit to receive a new one. Members must not have any further keys cut from this key and if you have co workers they should pay key deposits. We hope then that everyone will keep both gates locked at all times. If you cannot make this date please contact Sheila Allen (see above) to arrange another time.

Car park

If you have difficulty in the future getting through the car park please let Anthony ROBERTS know at aroberts@oxford.gov.uk. Oxford City Council Countryside Service manages the car park. Tel 01865 715830 or Mobile 07850 792 615. So far there seem to be no plans to deal with our request for limits on parking, signs to protect our access and make cyclists aware of the dual use of the bridge.

Willows

We are still waiting for dates for the completion of internal tree removal /willow pollarding. We will post this on the notice board as soon we hear. Meanwhile if you have concerns re dangerous branches contact Shaun Gibson (sgibson@oxford.gov.uk).

Moreton in Marsh Councillors visit and The Allotment Regeneration Initiative

In July we were visited by a group of councillors from Moreton in Marsh accompanied by a mentor from the National Society of Allotment Gardeners. Apparently we are an example of a reclaimed allotment site which has overcome almost insurmountable problems! Well done everyone. They were most impressed and incredulous about old photos of the site. Wendy has also just agreed to a request from The Allotment Regeneration Initiative to talk at two seminars due to be held in Oct and Dec in Oxford.

New Outer fence/ Ditch clearance

This is still planned for later this year, maybe as soon as October/ November? We have accepted advice from the city to have a fence (1.8m) on the south, east and west boundary where there is no water or a viable ditch to act as security and pest control. This necessitates **some** fencing on the ditch side. The

new fence will require 3m access to clear the old fence and/or put in a new one and if your plot is on a boundary and you have not contacted us please do so by talking directly to the Chair on Plot 40/41 or write to Sheila. Deadline is the end of August. You will be responsible for clearing anything you wish to keep if it is blocking the 3m access and we will post dates on notice board when confirmed. The association will not take responsibility if you do not contact us to resolve any problems.

Weeds and brambles and neighbours

Please consider your neighbours. Every member is responsible for keeping bramble and weeds on their plot managed so that they do not invade paths or others' plots. We hope to complete the removal of bramble from common areas around the site this year. We trialled the use of the herbicide (glyphosate) in August! This was done reluctantly but we simply cannot manage the amount of work. With hindsight we should have warned members about this beforehand but, as is often the case, an opportunity presented itself and we took it. It is often difficult to be specific about dates due to the weather and people's commitments. Mark Probitts, our mower, is registered to apply glyphosate and recommended it for some areas where we cannot mow due to stumps/uneven ground. We did post a map immediately showing the areas where it was used. You will see it was also used on the 'rubbish' plots as we do not have money for polythene cover or the time to put and keep it down. If you are next to an unused plot and the polythene blows off please help by putting it back down. If we use herbicide again we will post a notice on the board beforehand.

September Survey

It is in everyone's interests to have as many managed/cultivated plots as possible and to promote this (a minimum of 3) committee members will do their second annual survey on September 24, weather permitting. The survey logs any concerns so that all members have the assurance that unmanaged plots/problems will not go on forever. All plots must show effective management and progress. Our main problems continue to be the management of weeds, brambles, headlands, unsafe/ illegitimate trees, buildings, fences, and wells. Any concerns will be communicated to members. If anyone knows they want to relinquish a plot now please let the secretary know rather than wait for it to be more overgrown. We have reclaimed 18 more plots this year and are close to being full. In the last 3 years we have gone from 35 members and a smattering of worked plots to 113 members and a majority of cultivated and managed plots. Many of the original plots are too large for present day needs so we will continue to make smaller plots wherever we can and encourage all members to be realistic.

Working Party Days

Thanks to everyone who has contributed. So far 36 members have helped. There is a core of about 8 regulars and an average turn out of 10. Many of the helpers have been more than once. Working parties are hard work but more rewarding with 100% increase in participation on last year and we now keep to the 10.30 to 12.30 slot. However we are still a very long way from the expectation that all members contribute and your committee is definitely feeling tired. The next working party is October 1. There is no September one. All future dates are on the notice board. If you already know you will not be able to help and would rather make a £10 contribution please send it with your name and plot number to The Treasurer at 53 Southmoor Road. I know we are all too busy but please remember we are also all members of an association and your elected committee are there to manage the site for you, not to act as unpaid labour! On a brighter note our first **Members' Summer Lunch** was held after the July Working party to christen 'The Green' which is the mowed central area. The cold lager (chilled in a well) and contributed food was very welcome on an exceptionally hot day. The following ideas were suggested for the future use of the communal area. Members' pavilion with some dedicated room for small plot sharers who cannot have a shed, fruit trees, pergola and climbers, movable seats and benches. This will be discussed at next AGM as will working party participation and membership fees.

Newsletter by email

We want to reduce the time and cost of this so if you have an email address please send it, with your name and plot number to eva.reinhardt@classics.ox.ac.uk. Eva (Plot 44) has kindly agreed to compile an email circulation list. We will continue to post to the few who do not have email.

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Committee August 2006