

Advice about contaminated soil

The allotments are known to have been the site of an old Victorian rubbish tip but no reference to this has been found in the cartographic history. In 1980 the then Chief Environmental Health Officer wrote a letter to a Councillor detailing the history of the site that he had gleaned from the City archives. In it he states that he does not think there is anything harmful to plants in the ground and that there is no evidence of phyto-toxicity in the plants growing on the allotments and the adjoining uncultivated plots and verges support a luxuriant growth of plants of many kinds. He also noted there was no evidence of difficulty of cultivation. He did not think it was necessary to sample the site at that time.

In 1996 Trap Ground St John which had historically received waste and drainage from a metallurgical manufacturing site to its north was investigated for heavy metal contamination. It also had a landfill site from 1937 to 1980 immediately to its north which was monitored by the Environment Agency. Because of changes to Statutory Guidance on Contaminated land issued in 1996, Cripsey meadow was also tested as were others with similar backgrounds.

AEA technology did a site test in 1996 and members were notified of the results. Early on in the testing some plots were withdrawn but these were subsequently released. In an article in the Oxford mail Mr Atherton said the lead concentrations found were regarded as tolerable and the recommendations to withdraw plots was no longer justified. The Advice is wash their hands after working on allotments;
take care not to accidentally ingest soil;
thoroughly wash and peel any produce;
do not take young children to play there where they might eat the soil.

As legislation changes the Environmental Health Department is responsible for keeping us advised about any necessary changes to our practice and the data was re submitted in 2007 for further scrutiny. We have not yet received any change in the advice but an officer of the council addressed the AGM in 2007 and answered members questions on this matter. We shall keep members advised.

<http://archive.oxfordmail.net/1998/7/20/85014.html>