

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association 2018 Annual Report (for 2019 AGM)

The Committee

From March 2018 to March 2019 officer/committee responsibilities were as follows:

- Wendy Skinner Smith, Plot 40-41 – Chair/Trustee – new member tours, newsletter, web site, working party jobs, management of site grass cutting and tree work, Castle Mill development project, lease re-negotiation
- Alex Hollingsworth Plot 81-82 - Vice Chair/Trustee - audit management and correspondence
- Sara Jones, Plot 71 – Treasurer/Trustee - finance, bills, subscriptions, key deposits
- Manda Joyce, Plot 72 – Secretary/Trustee - minutes, new member administration, membership records, Castle Mill development project
- Emilie Clauzier, Plot 97 - Castle Mill residents' liaison and working parties
- Jamie Forbes, Plot 63 - machine maintenance and petrol, social events
- Jeremy Hyde, Plot 91 – recycling, major projects, monthly paid site work
- Sarah Edwards, Plot 120 - trading, deliveries
- Emma Delap, Plot 1a - machinery information data, tree and shed permissions
- Keith Holton, Plot 131 - working party, skip renewal, deliveries. Keith also hosts our monthly committee meetings.

All committee members help with working parties and/or audits.

Rodney was co-opted to the Committee to help with the orchards, and Kilian to do paid plot clearance.

The coming year sees Emilie and Kilian leave Oxford, so resign their roles. All other members of the current Committee are standing for re-election. Plus we have Tia Sedley and Phyllis Starkey standing for election for the first time.

We shall be reviewing and re-distributing roles/responsibilities across the Committee for the coming year, partly due to personnel changes, and partly as Sara and Alex are both looking for a change of role. New Committee members are always welcome. If you think you could be our new Treasurer, we would particularly like to hear from you. And if you decide later in the year you'd like to join the Committee, it's not too late – talk to Wendy.

Finance and Subscriptions

The Annual Accounts and Budget are circulated separately.

Subscriptions, key deposits and working party commitments remain the same this year. The Association's policy of helping with any difficulty in paying continues. We ask all members to contribute to the site through working parties or monetary donation in lieu. As agreed at last year's AGM, the default for sending invoices is now via email (paper by request) and the late payment surcharge applies immediately after the AGM.

Cripley Meadow through the year

- 11th March 2018, members joined in Oxclean, collecting much rubbish from the Walton Well Car Park area.
- Our April newsletter refers to the very cold Spring, and planting being a month behind. Little did we know what was coming!
- In May, we launched our new privacy policy, as GDPR came into force on the 25th.
- Cripley Meadow ran a stall at Jericho Street Fair on 9th June, raising almost £300 for Association funds. The June newsletter welcomes 'sunshine, warmth and rain' and decent growth at last.

- By July, draught was becoming a problem and the newsletter included advice about how to harvest rainwater. Free ex-Council wheelie bins were on offer for the purpose.
- In August, summer pruning of our orchards took place as record temperatures continued. It was so dangerously dry, we had to impose a temporary ban on bonfires.
- September's update from Beard, Castle Mill Contractors, reported that excavation and concreting of bases along our boundary had started. Harvesting of the communal orchard fruit began...
- and continued into October with barrow-loads of beautiful apples for sharing after harvest working parties. Tomatoes and grapes had particularly enjoyed the sunny growing season. Pouring rain meant we deferred our members' Harvest BBQ by a week, and we were rewarded with warmth and sunshine.
- Early November, and a good number of Cripsey Meadow members attended ODFAA's Charles Dowding talk on 'no-dig' gardening.
- Tree work continued on site during December, January and February. Members enjoyed generous deliveries of shreddings, and glistening, renewed paths began to appear on plots all round the site.

Cripsey Meadow shop/trading report for 2018

After the winter closure, we re-opened the shop in early March 2018 for our regular Sunday morning sessions, but had to close again the following week due to snow! After that the shop was open throughout the year, apart from our usual break in August and a couple of very wet days. As before, members were able to make an appointment if they could not attend during normal hours.

The main aim of the shop has been to supply things that are hard to buy without a car or cheaper in bulk. In addition to the items on the price list, we sell second hand tools and equipment. Members also donate spare seeds, which we give away. In addition to the usual bamboo canes, last year we started selling hazel sticks as bean poles. These were popular and we'll be able to offer the same again this year.

Sarah Edwards manages the project, assisted by a small team. Our thanks are due to everyone involved, including Sara Jones, Manda Joyce and Sheryn Simpson, who provided cover when Sarah was unavailable, and Keith Holton who repaired a barrow to make it fit for sale. Others helped by delivering second hand items to the shop.

There were 82 visits during the year. Including a few donations, our total income was £1,117, which is lower than in recent years. There are probably several reasons for this. Our sales of plastic sheeting at the shop are low since we started selling plastic on vacant plots directly to new members. Also, some members are trying to move away from plastic. We had fewer 2nd hand tools available to sell. Trade in the autumn may have been dampened by the weather. We still need to invest in a trolley or large barrow, following the demise of the previous trolley, to enable people to take goods away more easily.

We are grateful to those who donated tools, equipment and seeds. Some members are on very low budgets and these things are much appreciated. Finally, we would like to thank everyone who used the shop, making the project worthwhile.

Sarah

Audit report for 2018

This year was the first time we'd experimented with a new audit system. Cripsey is a very fertile place, which is good for crops but also good for weeds. This means that a plot that's acceptable in May can be covered with weeds several feet high by August, for example if the member has left

but not told us. Our rules require a set process that the Committee has to follow before we can issue a notice to quit and reclaim a plot, and in that time neighbours of the plot will have had to put up with a whole growing season of weeds seeding.

As agreed at last year's AGM, 2018 saw the introduction of an additional 'spot-check' audit in August, to help identify plots that appeared to have been abandoned. This helped us to pick up two plots where exactly this had happened, and a couple of others where we were able to anticipate further problems and help to sort them out.

The two full audits happened as usual in May and October. In the summer more than half of the plots had no issues at all and only a few had serious problems. We were able to work with members to get things sorted out in all but a couple of cases where plots had been abandoned. By the autumn two thirds of plots were without problems, with about half a dozen plots with serious problems.

The purpose of the audit process is to identify problems that might cause issues for neighbours or the site as a whole, and ask members to deal with them before they get out of hand. In the vast majority of cases this is what happens, but there are a few instances where the same issues are raised over and over again. It is very important to read your audit letters, and address any problems raised. If you think the audit group have got it wrong, please say so - we'd much rather discuss a potential problem than have it get worse because it's been ignored.

Alex

Castle Mill update

At our last AGM, we reported that plans for changes to Castle Mill (the University's blocks of flats on our eastern boundary) were agreed and we awaited further details.

Manda and I have been to regular meetings with the University and contractors (Beard) over the last year. There was a major change in the way the University manage large projects with a new role of 'Senior Responsible Owner' and the new person needed time to get up to speed. I'm sure you can imagine how irritating it was for us given the huge amount of time spent on it over the past 4 years. But we *have* made progress and by the time of our AGM, everything affecting our site should be agreed.

- We shall be entering into a legal agreement with the University, as we did for the badger fence. Basically we shall grant some right of access for specific jobs - to replace the fence, amend the badger run and complete the security on that side, and for university to maintain the trees and other planting. The University will pay Cripsey Meadow £20,000 as compensation for the inconvenience.
- The University is also rectifying the errors made in contractor Longcross's installation of the large water butts that were designed to collect rainwater from the Castle Mill roofs. This was meant to be part of the mitigation for the original build, but never worked. Finally, Beard have explored the problem properly and discovered the system was broken from the outset. They are having a pipe made which will do the job and enable the butts to fill as much as possible (and any overflow will go back to their water storage and dispersal). The University is funding this investigation and rectification (£5,000).

You may have read in the Jericho News and Oxford Times letter page, concern with regard to the delay in work. The major change for us is in timing, use of our site and some modifications to the badger run and environs which basically mean there will be trees all along the boundary rather than the bicycle sheds and walk areas originally proposed. You will have read Beard's monthly updates in our newsletters and this information will continue.

Since September they have been mainly working on the badger run bases for the tree containers. There is a moratorium on badger disturbance between end of November and April so this work has now ceased and instead they are doing external work on the blocks with scaffolding. They will return to completing the badger run work after April. The last thing will be a new fence,

removing the old one and completing the badger run security, probably next autumn. The badgers will have access to all their territory throughout, monitored by camera.

Wendy

Water management update

As well as a big push to get the Castle Mill rainwater harvesting scheme working, we have been promoting water self-sufficiency in our newsletters: some members are experimenting with using unwanted Council rubbish bins for water storage (thanks to CMAA member Konstantina for the idea, Oxford City's recycling team, and to Sarah for organising); we were successful in obtaining grant funding from Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA) to pilot a solar-panel powered pump system for filling our streamside water tanks (thanks to Rodney). Last summer gave us a taste of what might, given global warming, become the new normal. So we think it essential to continue our push on water security. We therefore propose to spend some of our Castle Mill windfall on the possibility of drilling a borehole with pump and water butt on the Green.

Manda

Waste management update

At last year's AGM, we launched the Good Waste Guide to help existing members use the available facilities appropriately, and to provide an introduction for new members. It was well received and we have needed fewer skips over the last year. And thankfully, we've had no complaints about bonfire smoke; please keep up the good work so that we can avoid the Council-imposed prohibition that could result from complaints.

We have moved the Skip to its new location by the gate (to try to preserve the site tracks), and that seems to have worked OK. It does throw into highlight the occasional egregious use – such as pouffe-gate – and we now have the CCTV monitor in place (as agreed at last year's AGM). More insidious is the amount of recyclable plastic, cans and glass that a few members still discard in the skip. Not only is this adding to one of our major discretionary running costs, but it is sending recyclables to landfill. Please recycle as much on site as you would at home.

Manda

Looking forward

As mentioned above, new Committee members will be coming onboard this year, so changes in roles and responsibilities are in the offing. Once the new Committee is elected and settled in, we'll re-organise ourselves and let you know about the changes.

In terms of development work, as well as the continued focus on Castle Mill, waste and water management, and a review of our audit processes and communication, we intend to **revamp the website** during 2019 (the expiration of our current website hosting arrangement seemed like a good time to do this).

We shall also be feeding into the process of **re-negotiating our agreement with our landowner, Oxford City Council**, as the current agreement comes up for renewal. Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA) is co-ordinating these negotiations on behalf of all Associations affected. One of the main points at issue is how to manage such a large stock of trees when public sector funding is so tight, when the proportion of trees across sites is so variable, and when many 'problem' trees are not even on allotment land.

Next year is Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Association's 100th birthday. As members of the Federation, we shall be invited to join in the **ODFAA Centenary Allotment Competition**. More news via our newsletter soon...

Cars and parking on site – we remain concerned about the state of site 'roads' – these tracks were never designed for today's more frequent, weightier traffic. It would be prohibitively expensive to upgrade them and even maintaining them in their current state is a challenge. We feel that the best approach is to conserve what we have by reducing the number of vehicles driving around site. The Committee does understand that vehicular access as near as possible to plots is needed for deliveries, and also for members with mobility problems. We also understand that some members live far enough away to make arrival by car a necessity. To reduce vehicles coming on site, we have publicised the permit scheme for neighbouring Walton Well Road council car park - and a few members have taken this up. But sometimes Walton Well Road car park is full. So we are considering developing a car park on site, as near as possible to the main gate, for members who need to arrive by car. We appeal to our more local and mobile members to walk or bike, to preserve the site tracks and maintain vehicular access for when it's really needed.

While on the subject of cars - the Committee has had reports of, and witnessed, **dangerously fast driving** and near misses. Please **respect the 5mph site speed limit** and feel free to remind others who do not.

Manda