

# Cripley Meadow Newsletter August 2019



The next Working Party is 10.30 to 12.30 on Sunday August 11th when we shall be clearing and covering plots, and installing gutters on communal association sheds to improve water harvesting. Meet at the green association shed as usual.

**August 4<sup>th</sup> is our summer mini audit.** Priority is to ensure members are not suffering from others' overgrown seeding weeds, and to follow up actions from the spring audit.

**Save the date: Weds August 21<sup>st</sup>, CMAA 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on the Chair's (i.e. my) plot See [attached invite](#).**

**We await a date for 3 days' track maintenance which we hope will take place during August. The work will be done by Oxford Direct Services. For £4,182 for mending 'Hot Spots' and filling isolated holes. They will**

- Grade off existing access road surface at identified key points on site
- Dispose of material generated by the grading process on Plot 159 which was scraped some years ago to make raised beds.

- Compact formation level
- Supply, lay and compact MOT type 1 sub-base to make up levels

## Isolated Holes

- Fill identified holes/low spots using free issue material on site.

This will not address the long-term structural deterioration of the raised tracks but will help, and inform decisions on future vehicular access. The proposed member survey on vehicles on site is being compiled, and we plan to put cameras by the gates to gather data on the number of vehicle visits. By the way, you may have noticed we have had no green waste visits recently. The company concerned have another, it seems preferred place, to recycle their green waste.

Please continue to work on improving the number of water butts on your plots. A large plot needs at least 4 to act as a security buffer, even if you have a well, as wells can run dry. Rodney and I have a 12 pole plot each and have 10 water butts in addition to our well. We have never had to use the stream nor communal water. We generally only water our polytunnel and try very hard to avoid sprinkling large beds. In hot weather capillary action means plants can pull water out of deeper levels so better to water deep down into a plant pot or pipe.

## Weather

Wow. Some scorching JULY again! We managed to fill some of the communal water butts; and the Castle Mill ones now work properly but of course depend on rainwater falling and

not being used by too many. The present site map on the [Site & Facilities/Maps page of the website](#) identifies the communal water butts with a **W**. No hosepipes to be used in drawing water from them please. Many thanks are due to our petrol pump teams who fill them. Recently a walker on the towpath stopped and asked a member why we were draining the stream! The member explained our entitlement and the walker later phoned me as chair to ask if this was so. I assured her it was, and pointed out that for 125 years Cripley Meadow had managed with no piped water but harvested rainwater, augmented by stream water only in emergencies. The walker wanted to know how the ducks and weeds would manage if we took the water...You win some and lose some!

We have now got one set of communal tanks filled from the stream by a solar-powered pump. Thanks to ODFAA for the grant funding, Rodney for installing this, and to Nick Jackson, a hydrologist and ODFAA secretary for advising us. We have written up the project so that other associations can learn from our experiences. Environmentally-friendly water harvesting, particularly rain water, is clearly the best energy-wise so do look to increase your rainwater harvesting on your plot as much as possible.



**Summer Pruning** The Committee aim to start summer pruning in August. Anna Benn will do the espaliers and Sarah Drake is hoping to join the team as an Orchard helper. The orchards

take about 40 person hours to summer prune. If you are used to summer pruning or want to learn how to do it, please be in touch and we will let you know dates. The trees are being kept small to facilitate picking.

**Working party fruit picking days will be notified. Apart from the odd apple as you go by, please do not pick fruit from the communal trees or communal headlands.**



Manda and Rodney summer pruning in August 2017,

### **Fruit Thefts**

Last year we had reports of pear thefts. None so far this year and hopefully it will remain so. Members must never be on others plots (whether fenced or not) and should never use anyone else's plots paths unless given permission.

Some member's fruit is on headlands next to site paths, but this does not make the fruit available for others to pick.

Please remember there are badger cams around the site and that Members stealing fruit **will lose their membership**. Our community must rely on trust between members. Please make sure children and co-workers are made aware and supervised on site.

### **Lease update**

Our new allotment leases are still in negotiation, but managing the safety of trees and ditches is planned to be a landlord (Oxford City Council) responsibility. Cripsey Meadow also has a tree management plan to mitigate the views of Castle Mill.

### **Badger Fencing**

Our badger cams have shown little activity on site recently. The badger run, and badger hotel still show signs of use despite the building works.

Please make sure you keep our boundary fence totally clear a metre either side. This is a maintenance metre and goes along the back of members' plots. **It is not a site path.**

### **Trading shop update**

Our allotment 'shop' will be closed during August, as so few people need things and many members and volunteers are away. But you can still ask for a one-off sale if you need something. Contact Sarah on [sarahjehome@aol.com](mailto:sarahjehome@aol.com) or text 07960 352787. You may get a delayed reply if Sarah is away.

### **More wood chip has been delivered during July.**

### **Green waste plots**

In accordance with our rules members must manage all their weeds and green waste on their own plots. Please do not put any of your plot waste on the site green waste plots. 84, 109 have been turned and will be released in the autumn. Meanwhile the compost should be left to cook.

### **The bonfire area is not a place for weeds or soil!**

**Some members are putting them on - please desist. All perennial weeds can be bagged and composted when rotted to black mush.**

Plants with transferable diseases (almost none can overcome the black sludge treatment) should be kept

separately and dried then burned. You can use the small incinerator by the green shed **when** weather conditions allow.

If you have things to burn on the communal bonfire and it's full, please store material on your plot until it's been burned. We try to burn the bonfire every Working Party (only IF the wind is in the right direction and we have enough people – it takes two people a whole working party to manage it safely).

Please do re-read our rules about managing waste – [Your plot/Waste management on the website](#).

Meanwhile it is another challenging gardening year. The tomatoes have started to ripen and, this year, I have mulched the ground around the watering pots.

**DO remember you** can communicate with other members via Friends of Cripsey Meadow Facebook page, and via the Members' Notice Board (AND leave excess crops there).

Good gardening to all  
Wendy