

## Cripley Meadow Allotments Newsletter November 2019

Our October WP was cancelled due to heavy rain. **Next Working Party is Sunday November 10th 10.30 to 12.30. Meet at the shed as usual.** Please wear clothing and footwear suitable for heavy work. Note this WP and the January one are the last before invoices go out, so if you haven't yet volunteered your WP hours, now is the time!

There is no Working Party in December as the Committee have a 'holiday'. Any shed/tree etc requests that were not already in for our Nov meeting will be dealt with in January.

For some time, we have been without a **Committee rep for Castle Mill** – we are grateful to Julia Popescu for stepping up to the plate. Welcome to the Committee, Julia.

[Dates to the end of our membership year](#) are on the web.

**Val Bourne's ODFAA talk has been cancelled. ODFAA Treasurer John Lardner will refund ticket monies.**



You may have noticed the first of three green walls has been installed on the railway side of the **Castle Mill flats**. On our side, large containers are being put in place for trees. The palisade fencing will be removed soon. We

shall be selling the scrap to benefit our funds.

### Oxford Direct Services

We used Oxford Direct Services for our recent track repair work, and our ongoing site grass mowing. They operate like a social enterprise, providing services on behalf of the Council. Since 2012, they've used savings generated from commercial services to reinvest into public services.

Their last mow of the year has just been completed. From next year on, site mowing will more frequent - every two weeks – but, as clippings won't be collected, the cost will be similar to previous years. As ever, grass areas/paths adjacent to your plot must not be used to store compost, collect waste etc as this makes mowing more difficult.



We spent £7,000 on site work with track repair work accounting for the vast majority. We managed to stabilise two areas of track where the sides

were collapsing. There are other unstable areas: we shall never afford to do them all but shall budget for more repairs in future years. **Remember, our tracks are not roads and we have to use them conservatively.**

### Travel survey coming soon

You will shortly receive, by email, a survey to gather data and members' views about travel to/on the site. As tasked at our AGM earlier this year, the Committee seeks a balance between protecting our tracks and growing environment, and enabling access for those with mobility issues, and for collection/delivery of heavy materials etc.

More on this when we have processed all your responses, but thanks to those who have already begun to limit their car use.

### New Plots

We took the opportunity of having Oxford Direct Services' heavy machinery on site to turn and reclaim the three plots formerly used by Arcadian Living for green waste. The green waste was dug into plots 109, 85, 66 and 67 and used to raise the previous pit. We also had to decommission and use the soil from half of the raised beds (they had not been as successful as we'd hoped).

### Audit report

Field Secretary Tia Sedley and team carried out the second main audit of the year on October 6<sup>th</sup>. If you didn't receive any follow-up, then - thank-you - there were no issues with your plot. A few members will have been asked to sort something out; Tia thanks the who have responded with action or plans. If yours is still outstanding, please get in touch with her.

**If you have no plot number, please fix!** No plot number makes it harder for audit team and grass cutters.

In January, Tia's focus will be on trees and in February it will be paths between plots.

## Trading Shop

The Shop is open as usual in November, on Sundays 11 – 12 noon, weather permitting. Then we'll close from December until early Spring. Remember you can contact Sarah for a different time if you can't get to the shop when open. After a new delivery from Wilgrow, we have plenty of bags of composted horse manure. Tom from Wilgrow says he sometimes gets calls from our members for private delivery. He can do home (not site) delivery, but at his usual much higher price! We get a very good bulk discount.

## OCC/ODFAA Allotment Competition Award Evening

was held at West Oxford Community Centre on 28<sup>th</sup> October and attended by about 70 members from the contributing sites, including two Cripsey Meadow Category winners – congratulations to them!



75+ winner - Richard Haigh, Cripsey Meadow



35-64 winner - Louise and Rob Bruce, Cripsey Meadow

Our site overall was runner up to Cutteslowe and Fairacres. Full results [here](#).



**Willow tree work is being organised for the winter as and when Sylva Trees and Oxford City Council Ranger team can**

**access the site.** If you have any willow-related queries, contact Wendy. There will be some work on those in the corner on the Castle Mill Stream bank by the green association shed, and some pollarding on Cripsey Island. We need major work on our huge weeping willow which has been dropping large branches all year. **Please keep clear of the work.**

ODFAA is again hosting **Pennards Plant and Seed Potato day on Sunday January 5th at West Oxford Community Centre from 10.30 to 1.30.** You can buy on the day, or order beforehand and pick up your orders without postage. This will be our 3<sup>rd</sup> Pennard event and it has grown in popularity every year. They have a tremendous range of seed potatoes and you can buy just a tuber and experiment with what suits you and your soil best. [A poster is attached with more information.](#) Please print and display if you can.

You may have noticed eye-catching copies of the **National Allotment Society's** quarterly magazine in the dispenser by the gate... Cripsey Meadow is now a member – do take a look at their website – [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk).

Help yourself to future copies of the magazine, but please always leave the last one for reference.

## On the Plot...



**I have picked, shelled and am drying my beans. My celeriac, beetroot and carrots are earthed up** with homemade compost and two sheets of environmesh. I only just finished the day before that early frost! The variable spring weather meant it took some sowings to get borlotti, cannellini and butter beans going but they have proved well worth the effort. Indeed because they were sown at different times they were more staggered in developing. Two half rows of Dwarf French beans serve us well for fresh green beans through the summer. I run the mower over my bean plant stalks which chops them up nicely for the compost bin.

Do **oil tools** you will not be using. If you are storing produce like potatoes/onions/apples in store in a frost free place do **check stores regularly.** Collect fallen leaves to **make leaf mould.** **If leaves are on grass a last mow means they can be composted with grass cuttings.** And, if you have a shed and it does not have gutters and water butts do **get your water harvesting arrangements in place** and protect yourself against those increasingly hot summers!

Check the web site for more of [what to do over the next few months](#), weather permitting!

Good Gardening,

Wendy



