

# Cripley Meadow Newsletter Sept 2020

## Working Parties

Our second socially distanced Working Party (16<sup>th</sup> Aug) made a further welcome contribution to the wellbeing of our communal orchards. Thanks to all who took part. Our new Orchard Lead, Ilias Kounatidis, has carried on with pruning and caring for more of our fruit trees around the site; he will continue over the coming months. They are already looking in much better shape.

We have no tasks suitable for socially-distanced working parties at the moment so none is scheduled. We will let you know if this changes.

## Communal Fruit Picking

Our usual communal fruit picking day is off this year. In fact, there is little to harvest, the main exception being the wonderful apple tree behind the skip.



There are also a few apples and pears in Castle Mill orchard and on the trees by the track at the South end of the Green. **Members are invited to help themselves but please socially distance and share nicely – only take a few fruits for you and your family** - so that everyone can partake. Please don't climb the big tree.

## Committee news

Since Wendy announced her intention to stand down as Chair,

work has been going on to find a potential successor. The Committee is delighted that Alex Hollingsworth (plots 81 and 82) has agreed to stand. Alex previously served on the Committee for many years, including a stint as vice-chair. He understands the site well, and is committed to the local community (Alex is an Oxford City councillor and involved in a number of local community organisations). Wendy will continue as Chair until the AGM (March 2021, date and arrangements tbc), with Alex being co-opted to the Committee in the New Year to aid transition. As ever, all continuing and new members of the Committee will put themselves forward for members' election at the AGM.

## New OCC Lease and CMAA Constitutional Changes – Proposal for CMAA to become a co-operative

Regular readers will be aware that a new 21-year lease with our landlord, Oxford City Council, is in the wings. As with so many other things, Covid has delayed progress, but Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA, Oxford allotments' umbrella group negotiating the new lease on behalf of all Oxford allotments) tell us they hope the new lease will be ready for signing soon after Christmas. The lease brings more responsibilities to allotment associations. Some of OCC's rules (and, in consequence, our rules) will be changing. We will keep you posted.

At our AGM in March, we also alerted members to the likely need for us to change our constitutional arrangements. The Association is currently 'unincorporated' - effectively a private club with no 'legal personality'. That means that the Association's trustees are

personally liable to be sued. As we said at the AGM, we thought we needed to become 'incorporated', which means that the Association would become a legal entity in its own right, avoiding personal liability for the trustees.

Two committee members recently attended an ODFAA briefing on the subject of incorporation, and **the Committee is now resolved that the co-operative form of incorporation would best suit our association's culture and mission and that we should aim to become a co-op in time for the new lease.**

Although some terminology would change, the intention is that we continue to run much as we do now, i.e. a 'one member one vote' membership electing a group to manage the association on their behalf.

A small group of Committee members is going to work on this over the coming weeks and provide more details, including how and when members will be involved in decision-making.

Lots of other allotment associations around the country have moved in this direction, which is supported by the National Allotment Society (NSALG) to which CMAA belongs. So do Google if you are interested, and, if you already have comments or questions, we would be pleased to receive them.

## Autumn Audit set for Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October

Our Spring 2020 audit was heavily modified in response to Covid. We only contacted those members whose plots were causing problems to neighbours and managed to work out a mutually-acceptable approach to resolving in most cases. We are aware of a few members who are still having problems; we are grateful to them for keeping us in the picture.

Looking across the Site, most plots are in fine fettle but we don't want to

let things slide, and there are a few plots where action will definitely be needed. So the Committee will be carrying out a full audit on the morning of Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October.

An [Audit Quick Guide](#) for members can be found [here](#).

As usual, we will take into account how long you have had your plot (so, new members, we just want to see that you are making progress). It is very helpful for us to know of any extenuating circumstances that we don't already know about, so if that's you, please get in touch.

### Bonfires, BBQs etc

Oxford City Council have lifted the blanket ban on bonfires on allotment sites but neighbours can still be adversely affected by smoke and **if there are complaints the ban may be re-imposed**. We will therefore, initially, dispose of the backlog of material already at the communal bonfire area then open it up for members to bring suitable material for burning there. **Please don't take anything to the communal bonfire area yet – we will let you know when we are ready for you**. And sorry, **no fires, BBQs, incinerators, chimineas etc on plots yet**.

### Site maintenance

Spraying of weeds coming across the boundary from Castle Mill took place, rather late in the Season, by the Oxford University Parks team. Regular maintenance is now in their work plan, so it should be more timely next year. In the Winter, they intend to clear the bramble etc in the 'Badger Hotel' (the area to the left as you enter the gate) as it has become very overgrown. It is intended to be a habitat for glow worms and lizards! Storm winds brought down a bough from the ash tree by the Gate. Until we could get the tree checked, we had to close the site (thankfully, it only took Oxford City Council tree team a couple of hours to come). Many thanks to the members who evacuated the site so efficiently.



The OCC Tree Team will be back soon to give the tree (and some others on site that need attention) a good 'haircut'. We also want to get the growth in the fence along 'Badger land' (the fenced off, wooded section behind the Shop) cut back soon.

We carried out the scheduled track repairs last month too. A section from the Gate all along



the Castle Mill boundary was done, and the far end of the central track.

This is expensive work and doesn't address the fundamental structure of the tracks, so please **do your bit to preserve what we have by minimising driving, and not driving on when the tracks are wet or frosty**.

### Crop theft

Sadly, we have had report of crop theft. Pumpkins and melons were taken from a poly tunnel over a weekend late in August. Thankfully, this is very rare. I would like to think that it's not "one of our own" responsible, in which case we might have had a security breach; if anyone can cast any light, please let a Committee member know. If it

was one of our own, then let the culprit be clear that this is **stealing** and **will not be tolerated**. Sorry to strike such a note, but we must be able to trust each other. It is timely to remind everyone that blackberries etc. growing on plot headlands belong to the plot-holder and you mustn't pick it, or go onto others' plots or plot paths without permission.

We welcome more **new members and the site is now full**, but our waiting list continues to grow (currently standing at 23). It seems likely that the 'Covid-boost' to growing-your-own will not quickly dissipate. We hope many of our new gardeners are here to stay, and will perhaps grow into larger plots. The Committee is considering how we can bring more of Cripsey Meadow's land into use as plots.

**The Trading shop** will continue to open by appointment Contact Sarah on [sarahjehome@aol.com](mailto:sarahjehome@aol.com) or text 07960 352787.

Remember that the website contains [month-by-month advice](#). Wendy's tip this month is – if you are growing beans for drying, harvest them soon, as high winds are forecast. As the leaves drop, harvest and put to dry. Best picked on a dry day, left to dry then and podded. Spread on a tray to dry further. Do not put in a sealed jar, best in a bowl. It has been a great year; butter, cannellini, black and borlotti have all grown well.



Best wishes,  
Manda