

EYNESHAM ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

January 2009

Skip and Working Party weekend

Our annual skip for inorganic waste has been ordered for the weekend of 7th/8th February, and will be placed on Field 2. This is an opportunity for you to get rid of all the non-green waste from your plot and sheds. This means no green waste or wood that could be burned, and no corrugated asbestos. As before, we are intending to combine the weekend with a working party, and we would like to carry on the clearing of the central ditch from last year. Any time you can spare on either the Saturday or Sunday would be greatly appreciated.

Introducing the New Committee

The Allotment Committee for 2009 is the same as last year, with the addition of two new committee members: Rob Wayne-Smith and Mike Dale. Also Marion has handed over the membership duties to Sara, John, and Marilyn.

Name	Position	Address	Telephone
Heather Horner	Chair	Windrush Cottage, Station Road, South Leigh, OX29 6XN	01993 773819
Marion Steggles	Treasurer	54 Acre End Street	881175
Bram Hauer	Secretary	9 Queens Lane	881786
Peter Shrimpton	Vice Chair	16 Old Witney Road	882029
Sara Bannister	Membership Sec.	19 Queen Street	880324
John Bannister	Membership Sec.	19 Queen Street	880324
Marilyn Panting	Membership Sec.	36 Falstaff Close	880177
Peter Ayres		61 Newland Street	882115
Mike Dale		42 Spareacre Lane	464117
Rob Wayne-Smith		112 Dovehouse Close	882095
Leslie Gerrans	PC Representative	19 Acre End Street	880107

Locking of gates to individual plots, waiting list, and seed catalogues

The committee has noted that some members are locking the gates to their individual plots. This is becoming an issue, where prospective plot holders cannot be shown plots because paths leading to these plots are blocked by locked gates. The committee considers this a serious breach of the association rules, which state that any Officer of the Parish Council or members of the Allotment Committee shall be entitled to enter and inspect any allotment (Handbook page 1 Access). This is clearly not possible if the gates are locked. The committee understands that you may be concerned about unauthorised access to your plot. For this very reason we improved security in erecting fences and providing secure locks for the main gates. Obviously, we welcome any suggestions you may have that may further enhance the security of the entire site.

The enthusiasm for growing vegetables is still high, and as a result we have quite a number of people on the waiting list. If anyone is considering giving up, or perhaps would like to give up half a plot, as they find managing a whole plot too much, then please contact the Membership Secretary.

We regularly review seed catalogue offers, as these would be a cheaper way for our members to buy seeds. Unfortunately, we always reject the offers, due to the complexity in administering such schemes. Members are reminded that Fieldfare (Church Hanborough) offers 10% discount to the association.

High Water Rates Riddle solved

At the AGM the accounts for this year showed a larger than usual amount spent on water rates. This was due to the fact that the fourth bill arrived too late to be included in the 2006/2007 accounts. Adjusting for this anomaly, the water rates for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 accounts were respectively £258.22 and £292.82. These numbers are comparable, and thus this year's water rates are not particularly high.

Eynsham Allotment Association Annual Report October 2008

I shall start with a farewell and a welcome. First, we say farewell and good luck to one of our longest-standing members, Marie Evans. Next, a warm welcome to our new members, some of whom have made remarkable progress in their first season of cultivation. We hope you have been bitten by the 'allotment bug', and that you will consider joining the committee – you are often the ones who can most clearly see where changes need to be made. A fair proportion of members now garden with small children, an encouraging sign that the national 'know where your food comes from' and 'grow your own fruit & veg.' campaigns are making headway. In June, we had a visit from members of *Oxford Organic Group*, who showed great interest in our varied styles of horticulture, despite pouring rain throughout their tour. And in September, allotment-

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holders gathered a fair few prizes at The Eynsham Show, where some of our members also contribute to the team of organisers.

Much of the Committee's business concerns site maintenance. The hire of a skip for non-bio waste has become a necessary annual event, and improves our site by avoiding the build-up of unwanted debris. In early February, the members' working weekend to tidy the communal areas was well supported. The general aspect of the site is currently good, apart from the communal parking areas which have suffered in the wet summer, and are due for attention shortly. We had hoped to gain some funding for reclamation of a couple of peripheral plots from the lottery-funded 'Local Food' initiative, but the fund seems to be oversubscribed at present, no response is forthcoming.

Of increasing concern to the Association is the state of the field adjacent to Field 2, the one beyond the Thames Water Sewage Pumping Station, through to Mead Lane. We have formally written to the Planning Service of West Oxfordshire District Council outlining our main areas of concern. These include the banking of earth against our eastern boundary, blocking the drainage ditch and contributing to the flooding of allotments experienced on several occasions recently. Also the dumping of builders waste, coupled with an apparent increase in vermin, the use of the site for motor cycle racing, and the inadequate provision of fresh water and drainage for the Travellers' caravans. We have had acknowledgment of our concerns, and await results of investigations, which we are warned may take some time.

Over the last two or three years, we have seen an increase in the total number of members that we service. The reason for this is our popularity, and the fact that newcomers often request to start with a half plot. All plots are currently let, with a waiting list, though Eynsham residents always take precedence over applicants from elsewhere. Although everyone starts with the best of intentions, not everyone finds that an allotment fits into their lifestyle, and some plots rejoin the 'vacant' list again after a season or two. Because we have a waiting list, it is necessary to monitor plots to ensure that some cultivation and cropping is taking place, or at the very least, evidence of weed control. If there are no signs of activity for several weeks, tenants are invited by letter to outline their intentions, or whether there are any extenuating circumstances that the committee should take into consideration. If there are still no signs of progress in a set timescale, tenancies may be terminated, though sadly by this time the plot can be in a very overgrown state, a hard task for the next tenant. A consequence of this is that we now generally offer new tenants a half plot to start with.

The post of honorary treasurer has been ably filled for a number of years by Marion Steggles. For administrative considerations, this has included the duties of letting out plots, but with the increase in the number of plot-holders and turnover of tenants, the time has come to revert to two separate jobs. We thank Marion for sterling service as plot co-ordinator, and she has kindly volunteered to continue as treasurer. However, we will be seeking a committee member to take on the task of liaising with potential new members and showing them what is available.

In comparison to last year's traumatic floods, 2008 has been a steadier year, weather-wise. A relatively mild but long winter was followed by a late spring. All was going well until more heavy rain in early June put some of the allotments under water again. This time it was earlier in the year; with less top growth; some plants like potatoes lost their roots but hung on to grow away well later, and there was still time to re-sow other crops. A summer with little sun meant that some crops from Mediterranean climates struggled to ripen before first frosts struck in early October, but winter greens and roots look more promising. I close with the hope that all of you find that the satisfaction and enjoyment you get from your plot outweighs the few inevitable disappointments in the coming year.

Heather Horner, Chair, 15 October 2008

Note on Field 3

The Committee feels that members should be aware of an informal offer from the Trustees of Eynsham Consolidated Charities. They own and manage the field further along Mead Lane/Wharf Road. For some years it has been tenanted by a smallholder raising cattle. Longer-term plotters may recall that before then it had been rented by this Association and set out as allotments. Some of the field has always been liable to flooding, not all the plots could be let, and eventually the Association gave up the tenancy.

Having heard that recently we have had a waiting list for plots, the Trustees have enquired if we would like to resume tenancy. Your committee has discussed the pros and cons of this, and reluctantly come to the conclusion that the original reasons for abandonment still apply, and in addition we would need considerable funding to lay out the plots and fence the field to modern security standards. No such funding is within sight. However, if any members feel strongly about this, or consider that we are passing up a unique opportunity, please come and join us on the committee!

Classified

Anne Cherry (plot 31, Field 2) has acquired some old garden tools that she is happy to donate to any allotment holders, particularly if they are new to gardening and do not have many tools: 1) old Qualcast cylinder "push along" mower may need a bit of attention but looks basically okay., 2) A pair of shears 3) A garden fork and trowel. If your interested than please contact her on 01993 705169. She lives in South Leigh but can arrange to bring items to the allotments if necessary.

Dates for your Diary

- Skip and Clearing weekend 7th and 8th February
- The AGM will be on Monday 12th October