

Minutes of the TGAA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at 8.00pm on 5 April 2012 at the St Margaret's Institute.

Present Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil McLennan (vice-chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis, (secretary and lettings secretary); Carol Jarvis (lettings secretary); Vibeke Mannion (shop); Peter Jarvis (pest control and plant sale); Jonathan Clark (website, machinery and skips) and 14 TGAA members.

Apologies from: Julia Aston-Smith; Nick Caldwell; Genefer Clark; Mark Foster; Mike and Judy Godley; Liz Greenhalgh; Mary Gurr; Bee Hillier; Clare Hollander; Rupery Jones-Parry; Derek Lamb; Sue Ledwith; Rebecca and Robert Mather; Brian Pratt; Stuart and Gillian Skyte; Liz Storrar.

Minutes of the 2011 AGM

These had been distributed by email and were approved at the meeting.

Matters arising

Soil analysis The City Council have finally provided the results of the soil analysis. The bottom line is that they didn't find dangerous levels of anything and the three original 'hotspots' could not be found after repeated tests. So there is no danger from eating produce grown on plots and we should continue to follow advice to avoid ingesting soil, to wash all above-ground produce and to wash and peel root vegetables. The analysis did identify a theoretical risk of bonfires producing bad chemicals so the council would like to encourage communal bonfires rather than bonfires on individual plots although the overall message is: burn as little and compost as much as possible.

Bees There is now an apiary situated in a chained-off area in the north eastern corner of the allotment site by the new pond and there are four bee-keeping members. There is currently one hive, the bees in which have survived the winter and have good stores. A second hive should appear in May and there will be three hives in the apiary by the end of the season. The beekeepers have a spare veil for anyone who would like to view the bees at close quarters and visitors are welcome. To help bees pollinate our crops, members are encouraged to grow bee-friendly plants.

Chairman's Report

There had been two meetings of the committee since the last AGM.

School visit Sixth formers from Oxford High School came to the allotment site as part of their citizenship studies and were very appreciative of their visit.

New communal planting Ian Salisbury has planted a new orchard of old fruit tree varieties around the old pond which are mostly for appearance and blossom. The new pond has been planted with daffodils, irises and asphodels. The trellis by the shop has been planted with honeysuckle, ivy, hops and clematis.

New bench The family of John Bullock wants to commemorate his life with a new bench on the allotment site, the offer of which is much appreciated.

Rubble bank A working party has used the rubble to fill ruts in the paths. Members are encouraged to donate turf dug out of their plots to general path improvement works.

Communal compost and bonfire Huge thanks to John Ashby for the communal compost and bonfire areas which are a real boon to the allotment site. Compost and soil has been used to build up low-lying plots. The compost area has been rearranged and now has two reception bays – one for bonfire material and one for compostable material which should give more control over what goes into the compost bin.

Railway crossing Since the last AGM, the inspector heading the public enquiry found in favour of keeping the crossing open. Ian Salisbury's proposed car park plan is supported and approved by the school, city and county councils but some land needs to be acquired from Network Rail. Chiltern Railways are negotiating for this but work on the new line has been held up by a new public enquiry opening on 29th May 2012.

Treasurer's report

The accounts for 2011 were circulated. Genefer Clark had looked at the accounts and although it seemed that all monies were accounted for, she was concerned that all of it did not go through the bank account for the record and has recommended that a cash account is opened and that all amounts over a suggested limit of £30, be paid by cheque. The Treasurer thanked Genefer for her meticulous work examining the accounts over the years. As she is now standing down, a replacement is needed. There are two possible candidates, both of whom are accountants.

TGAA's main sources of income are fees of £4568, the plant sale (£1,000) and profit from the shop (£500). Maintenance of the site and machinery – including skips – takes nearly half our income. Fees were increased last year in order to build up a reserve so that we are in a position to replace the sit-on mower.

Secretary's report

Seeds Three discount seed schemes with Dobies, Marshalls and Thompson & Morgan are now available to TGAA members throughout the year. We may drop Thompson & Morgan as some members have been unhappy with them.

Membership cards are not compulsory but are needed to benefit from discounts at Yarnton Nurseries and Burford Garden Company. Current membership cards expire on 1 May 2012. New cards will be available at the allotment shop and will be free if swapped for an old card but will cost £1 otherwise.

Lettings Secretaries report

It has been a very smooth year with no major problems and the allotments are looking really good. There are 54 whole plots, 130 half plots and 4 quarter plots all of which are let. There is a waiting list of about 25. The plot inspection – which took place on 3 April 2012 - found only a handful of plots where work had yet to begin which is a very healthy picture.

Website, machinery, locks and skips

Locks The codes will be changing in early May (as agreed at the 2011 AGM).

Machinery Members were reminded that, after being shown how to use it - they can borrow any of the shared equipment which includes a rotivator, tiller, two strimmers and two mowers.

Mowing Thanks to the team of 12 people who mow the main paths (and some small paths) every week. The Toro has a couple more years' life in it and it will be replaced only when it has been run into the ground. One of the biggest problems is having to disentangle foreign matter left on paths such as unravelled plastic ground cover which can seriously clog the mower's bearings.

Website This has lots of useful information – the rules, minutes of meetings, useful contacts etc – and other websites ask to link to the gardening calendar.

Skips These cost around £200 each so we are aiming to spend no more than £1,000 on them each year.

Social and media

The next Harvest Supper will take place on Saturday 3 November 2012. The theme of the 2012 photo competition is 'size matters'.

Stuart now has a regular slot on BBC Radio Oxford's Sunday morning gardening programme on which he will be able to advertise the TGAA plant sale.

Trap Trading

The shop has again enjoyed a good year's trading and made a profit of £573 – down just £24 on last year. Thanks to those who help out at the shop and to everyone who donates things to sell. The shop now has a blue plastic vegetable trays which can be used for taking plants to the plant sale, protecting seedlings and storing produce etc and they are free.

Pest Control

The rabbit population is almost non-existent thanks largely to the foxes. Badgers are a problem but we just have to live with them. We have good relations with the council pest control people who have provided us with 20 bait boxes and rat poison for use by members with rats on their plots.

Plant Sale

Last year's sale made another record £1,000. This year's will be held on Sunday 13 May 2012 which is quite early. Please set aside spare plants – such as herbs, cuttings divisions, surplus vegetable seedlings - for the sale. There are plenty of pots by both allotment gates if you need them. The biggest problem is publicity as there have been complaints about too many posters on trees and telegraph poles. Members will be emailed a poster to put up in their windows or on gates. Stuart will advertise the plant sale on his regular radio slot.

Election of the Committee The committee of nine was re-elected with thanks from the floor for the committee's work.

The date of next year's AGM

The St Margaret's Institute has been booked for Tuesday 2 April 2013. However, as this is the day after the Easter bank holiday, it may change. It was agreed to find a date in late March but avoiding the week before Easter so that more people could attend. If the St Margaret's Institute isn't available, we could approach Phil & Jim school.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm