

TGAA News

Newsletter of the Trap Ground Allotment Association

Autumn 2010

The Autumn newsletter, which has had a bit of a re-design, includes contributions from a number of committee members. We hope you like the “new look”.

Chiltern Railways project and threatened crossing closure

The Public Inquiry into the proposed line from Oxford to Bicester opens on 2nd November. Our objection to the closure of the level crossing will be heard early in the proceedings as the plan is to consider matters in geographical sequence from Oxford station onwards. I will put evidence on behalf of the TGAA membership, and plot-holders Stella Boswell and Joe Lee have kindly agreed to put evidence as witnesses.

Ian Salisbury and Jonathan Clark are submitting their own objections to the proposed closure, and Oxford City Council will present a written objection in our support.

The inspector hopes to conclude hearings by Christmas and submit findings to the Secretary of State for Transport soon afterwards. We should know the outcome by next year's TGAA AGM in March.

It appears that the only approved alternative access route, should the crossing be closed, is via the path from the bridge to the concrete road to Burgess Field. This would be raised to above flood level, giving us access to our site by the Port Meadow gate. Car parking arrangements are still to be clarified but the land transfer to Phil & Jim school allows for our access and parking for about 10 cars. The school intends to erect the acoustic fence in the near future so we are keeping an eye on plans as they develop. Details of mitigating measures are still not available, but they should be completed before any closure of existing facilities occurs.

Fencing and willows

The perimeter fence has been improved but so far our efforts to exclude the badgers have not been successful; they bite through and force down the chicken wire. Deer seem to have been kept out but rabbits roam fairly freely and we should all clear jungles to remove their more obvious shelters. Unwanted human incursions seem to have diminished but not entirely ceased, unfortunately, so please ensure you always shut the gate. The city council has begun to pollard the willows to prevent branches falling onto the fence and damaging it.

Wells

The dry weeks in June and July dropped the water table to a suitably low level to encourage three members to dig a new well. These are lined with plastic barrels and capped with securely hinged wooden lids. **As with all wells on the site, the water is available to any plot-holder.** Please use them with due consideration to the time and effort needed in their construction. The methodology is on the website in case you feel inspired to dig your own next summer.

Grand plant sale success

Peter and Carol steered us through another enjoyable and highly successful sale this year. Plants yielded £975 and a generous TGAA member wrote a cheque for £25 to round off the record £1000 raised. A mini-sale at the shop later raised another £70, so our funds are back in good shape for the next crop of expenses. Many thanks to all those who cultivated and provided the excellent selection of flowering plants, ferns, and vegetable seedlings. And of course to those who helped on the day.

Discounts at local garden centres

Yarnton nurseries would give members a 10% discount if we had a way of demonstrating membership. We are thinking of introducing an optional annual membership card available to members on request at a nominal cost of (say) £2 to cover costs. If we went ahead we would ask other local suppliers if they would also give us a discount. If you have any views on this please send them to Ginny at virginia.wallis@whatho.net.

Compost

John Ashby's labours on our behalf have provided a welcome local recycling facility and some excellent compost. I am sure everyone who has dumped their weeds is grateful to him. Please follow his requests for order in the separation of stuff as explained in periodic e-mails and notices.

Machinery

Jonathan Clark would like to remind members about the shared equipment, which includes mowers, strimmers and cultivators. Since we have them, it would be good to see them used. Full details are on the TGAA website at <http://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/sharedequipment.html>, but all you have to do to get access to the equipment is contact

Jonathan Clark on 07725 121128) or at jonathan.clark@whatho.net.

For insurance purposes we ask that you sign a form stating that you understand how to use the equipment safely before you use it; instruction is available. If you break something, or find it broken, please let Jonathan know so he can get it repaired. The people at Aladdin help us maintain the equipment, sometimes for no charge, so if you have a surplus of any produce, they are worthy (and appreciative) recipients.

Mowing

I would like to thank the mowing team - Chris Goodall, Dick Dendy, Dave Taylor, Gerald Sacks, Jim Moore, Kate Lack, Peter Jarvis, Bob Crabtree and Tony Hollander - for keeping the major public paths well mown and tidy. The mowing team mow all the major public paths, and many of the private paths between individual allotment plots. If you want your path included in the general duty, the trick is to make sure it is at least three feet wide, free from all obstacles including netting, bricks and overhanging trees, and preferably forms part of a circuit so the mower doesn't have to back out or perform three point turns in confined spaces.

I would also like to give special thanks to John Porter. John doesn't mow the major public paths, but he does mow many of the private paths all over the allotment site. He does it a remarkable number of times during the growing season, helping many of us who would otherwise have more to mow ourselves. (Not least to be thanked, is Jonathan himself, who mows and organises the team.) Tony.

Photo comp 2010

A reminder that this year's photographic competition theme is "harvest" and that entries – a maximum of three per person – should be submitted by 31 October. Details on the TGAA web site. All entries will be displayed electronically at the Harvest Supper....

....Harvest Supper 2010.

This year's Harvest Supper is on **Saturday 20 November** at St Margaret's Institute. As well as good food and wine [bring your own], there will be a gardening quiz, the announcement of the photo competition winners, and possibly some surprises. Booking will be open from 1st October. If you have any suggestions about what entertainment we might provide (at no cost), do contact Stuart or Gillian Skyte on 01865 559618 or at skytes@tiscali.co.uk.

New mosaic on site

The new allotment mosaic
Could not be described as prosaic.
Unique to our site,
Made by Kate Lack and Gill Skyte.
On the picnic table next to the laik*.

* Look it up in the dictionary if you don't believe me.

Gill and Kate hope you like it and that the picnic table will be used in the summer. It will almost certainly be covered up during the winter to protect the mosaic.

A verse to allotments?

Following the success of the recipe book *Dig and Dine* – a handful of copies available still in Trap Trading – it's time to bring out the creativity of plot-holders once again. We are seeking original poetry and prose about the allotments and allotment-growing. These can be funny or serious but must be reasonably short. In the first instance, they will be considered for use on our web site but, should we receive sufficient numbers, we may think about turning them into another best-seller. Send your prose or poetry to Stuart Skyte at skytes@tiscali.co.uk hopefully they'll be better than the limerick!

Should volunteering be voluntary?

A very small number of plot-holders tend to volunteer for all the jobs on site. This is unfair, says Stuart Skyte, who believes an alternative approach is to make every plot-holder undertake a couple of hours communal activity a year as part of their rental. This would not involve jobs using heavy machinery, nor would it include seriously strenuous jobs such as digging out a lake. It could be weeding and de-brambling along the perimeter fence, wood-staining the notice-boards, strimming the grass around the two ponds and weeding the communal fruit trees. A walk around the site reveals several scruffy areas that need tidying up on a regular basis. What do you think? Should this be an actual or a moral obligation? Are you prepared to be allocated a small task once or twice a year? Views to Stuart please at the above e-mail address.

Your committee

Tony Hollander – chair

Virginia Wallis – secretary

Bob Crabtree – treasurer

Jonathan Clark – machinery/web site

Stuart Skyte – social events/web site

Carol Jarvis – lettings/plant sale

Vibeke Mannion – lettings

Neil MacLennan – vice chair

Peter Jarvis – pest control/plant sale