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**[Trap Ground] Autumn newsletter 2012**

1 message

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## **TGAA News**

### **Newsletter of the Trap Ground Allotment Association**

Autumn 2012

#### **Railway crossing update**

Network Rail (NR) and its dependent organisations' interest in our access over the level crossing has taken a positive turn recently. Gravel slopes to the margins of the crossing make access easier, and these are to be improved with a more convenient surface, as are the non-skid decking boards. A cycle stand is to be placed to the north of the eastern approach to increase cycle parking capacity for those who don't use their bikes as pack horses for produce.

In response to local "concerns" in the form of unattributed letters, NR insist on installing a locked gate on the eastern side of the crossing, with a protective fence to prevent unauthorised access to the crossing. This will operate by means of a key pad with our code and subject to our usual security. Access for railway personnel will be through their own gates to the north and south of the car park.

These works are to be carried out within a few weeks this autumn. They will be undone by the Chiltern Railway scheme when they build their new line on the eastern side, but safety concerns will have been satisfied in the meantime.

Apart from Chiltern Railways' new line, the siding to the south on the western side is to be extended to provide additional capacity for proposed increased rail traffic. This is apparently for the Southampton to Birmingham rail freight traffic and later for the east-west rail proposal. Recent tree and shrub clearing on the west side to the north facilitated survey work for this. Projected tree clearance to the south and west will improve visibility at the crossing.

I have asked NR to repair the pot holes in the access path to the car park and hope this will be done before the winter. Negotiations for the post-Chiltern car park are still underway, delayed by the second Inquiry into the scheme on behalf of bats, newts and other environmental concerns. In the meantime, the Friends of the Trap Grounds have constructed a bridge to the path along the concrete base of the acoustic fence to give an informal access to the Town Green from the south. This is with approval of the City Council but without a Right of Way being approved by the County Council. It remains to be seen how this will fit in with the land transfer to Phil & Jim and our car park. TH

#### **Thefts from plots**

Autumn's mellow fruitfulness is accompanied by its melancholy partner of the systematic theft of crops. Although there had been sporadic theft throughout the growing season from purple sprouting through strawberries to gooseberries, now apples and pears are being thoroughly targeted. If you have had crops stolen the police would like you to inform them. The non-emergency telephone number is 101 and the Crime Report Number for the current TGAA thefts is: BL 4120370/12 which you will need to quote. The Neighbourhood Police Team has been informed about the problem. We need to be cautious about giving our keypad codes to friends who might be helping out or for any other reason. TH

## Memorial bench

Many will have seen the beautiful bench in the orchard by the North Pond commemorating John and Jill Bullock. Their children had it made and installed by a local firm with our agreement. John was TGAA treasurer from 1994 to 2001 and, whilst denying any competence in the subject, put our finances on a sound footing which we have maintained ever since. He was also an energetic and persuasive defender of the level crossing access, against the council's former complacency and the railway's perennial hostility.

John was a distinguished journalist particularly experienced and familiar with the Middle East, and it was he who started these Newsletters. TH

## Bees

2012 has been a very bad year for bees across the country. Bees dislike wind and rain even more than we do. Nonetheless the allotment bee-keepers (Leonie Bennett, Rebecca Jenkinson, Howard Cox and Jonathan Clark) have established the apiary (with its smart new shed), and their bees have come through the season successfully, albeit with very little honey taken this year. We hope for a better season next year, when we will be joined by Liz Greenhalgh and Penny Tordoff.

Other plot-holders should, in theory, see the benefit in better pollination of crops, but Jonathan wouldn't try to convince anybody that this year has been a good one for pollination. We can't blame the bees for that though!

If anybody wants to help the bees thrive, the RHS provide this list of plants which are good for pollinators:

[http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/pdfs/RHS\\_Pollinators\\_PlantList\\_v1](http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/pdfs/RHS_Pollinators_PlantList_v1) .

Planting those either at home or on the allotments should be good for all bees. JC

## Mowing

Thanks once again to the fine volunteers - too numerous and modest to mention by name - who have mowed the paths weekly through the season, despite the rain which has made it difficult at times.

Mowing all the main paths, and those minor paths which are sufficiently clear for the mower to get by, takes about 2 1/2 to 3 hours, so we should all be grateful to them. Between them they do it every week, for all our benefit. You can help them to help you by making sure that there are no obstructions on the paths near your plot. The worst things that make it hard to mow are:

- Pieces of plastic - ground cover or netting - whose edges encroach on the paths. It gets wrapped round the blades, destroying the bearings, and isn't much use to you afterwards.
- Bits of stone, bricks, or lumps of metal hidden in longer grass on paths which are seldom mown. Please try to keep this kind of stuff well away from anywhere the big mower might go.
- Raised beds close to the path which get overgrown by grass. When the mower hits these hidden obstacles, things break, and that costs money to fix.
- Brambles and other growth which gets in the way.

- Narrow paths and dead-ends. The mower needs at least a 1 metre width before it can get through. If we have to reverse out of somewhere it needs to be even wider, otherwise damage to the mower occurs. JC

## **Seed discount schemes**

Catalogues and order forms for ordering discounted seeds, plants and other gardening sundries from Dobies will be available in the next month or so. You can order – and pay for - discounted seeds online from Marshalls Gardening Club at any time. If you want to join the Marshalls Gardening Club, please email [virginia.wallis@whatho.net](mailto:virginia.wallis@whatho.net). Members will get the best value on seed potatoes by ordering through Vibeke who puts a bulk order in to Tuckers. VW

## **Weeds**

The long period of rain may have ruined many of our crops but it has proved wonderful for weeds. Autumn is a good time to wage war against the more pervasive ones which die back in the winter, only to reappear with renewed force in the spring. Please do your best to get rid of ground elder, bindweed, buttercups, wild Michaelmas daisies, golden rod and couch grass. Roundup is one way of tackling them, but after that it comes down to digging and getting out as much of the roots as possible, continued over a period of time. CJ

(Please be aware that, if you have a fence around your plot, you are responsible for controlling weeds on both sides of the fence – not just on the plot side. VW)

## **Vermin**

Autumn is the season for rats to move into sheds, compost heaps and sundry piles of rubbish. Please keep this in mind when doing your end of year clear up.

There are over twenty black rat bait boxes distributed throughout the allotments and left since last winter. They will now be empty so if you find them please return them to the shed on plot 88. We shall re bait them and put them out when the weeds have died back. If you have evidence of rat infestation on your plots, please let us know exactly where.

There has been very little rabbit damage since the spring but, as food becomes scarcer, they may target remaining crops. We have two very effective live traps. If you want to set them yourself, let us know and we can give a lesson in their operation. Alternatively, we can set them on your behalf.

NB. Don't bring household food scraps down. It only encourages the badgers and rats. PJ

## **Plant Sale date**

The annual plant sale will take place at St Margaret's Institute, Polstead Road, on the morning of Sunday 26 May 2013.

## **Harvest supper reminder**

The annual harvest supper is on Saturday 3 November. Stuart Skyte will be seeking bookings from early October. As well as excellent food, the evening will include the results of the....

## **...Photographic competition**

This year's theme (as voted for at last year's Harvest Supper) is "size matters", which offers lots of scope. The closing date is 20 October. To enter, send an email to: [trapground.photocomp2012@picasaweb.com](mailto:trapground.photocomp2012@picasaweb.com)

You should include the photo(s) as an attachment, and on the email subject line put *Your name: Photo title* (i.e. your name and the title of your entry, in that order, separated by a colon. Italics are not necessary.) If you don't do that, we may not know who sent the entry. You may enter up to three photographs.

As usual, we will have an independent judge who is a professional photographer, and the prizes will be £20, £10, £5 and £5 vouchers to spend at the on-site “shop”. All entries will appear on the website as usual. SS

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