

TRAP GROUND ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Spring Newsletter 2009.

The Fence.

Whether or not El Nino or La Nina deflected the Jetstream to give an old-fashioned winter, the natural effects on our soil's freeability and on pest control could be beneficial. Apart from this, the snow displayed the tracks of much busy animal traffic, rabbits, muntjac and others having clearly not fully understood the deterrent purpose of our expensive new fence. Waterhens climb and other bird life will probably not be put off, but it is generally agreed that we will try to support the effectiveness of the fence by discouraging the large plant predators from breeding and sheltering in our plots and by removing them.

Access from Port Meadow was radically renewed so skip lorries and others can now deliver without risk, and the new combination locks, after some initial problems, seem to be doing their job. It seems important to keep the gates locked if ineligible visitors are to be kept out. It remains to be seen if opportunistic intrusion, theft and vandalism will be prevented this summer. The alternative route for public access to the meadow over the bridge could be improved if the city council's officers deliver their estimates for a raised and culverted causeway to allow entry during flood episodes.

Network Rail, having laid its new track, repaired the level crossing and graded and repaired the car park road as they said they would, so their uncooperative attitude to the fence is, to some extent, compensated for by recognising and responding to our access needs. Their attitude to our use of the crossing on the other hand, remains negative and we need to avoid giving them any pretext for closing it.

The land triangle, claimed by the county council for use by Phil and Jim School, remains a matter of negotiation. The next step in its evolution from rough ground to school play area is to undergo a wild life survey. Our track to the car park is recognised and incorporated into the plans.

Site Plans.

After corresponding with and meeting plot holders on the eastern side, we agreed to widen the eastern boundary path to make traffic and mowing easier, and allow delivery of manure and such like by tractor on a circuit around the eastern perimeter. Everyone concerned generously conceded a few feet of their plots and helped move their boundaries. The fencing contractor then levelled the path and seeded it with grass, the latter effort being largely negated by hungry seed-eaters and winter weather.

The path's northern outcome is low-lying and flood-prone, the plots recently reclaimed there,

having been abandoned and reverting to marsh. Some members have proposed planting an apple orchard in this area and creating a second pond in the wettest north east corner. Apple trees are reasonably flood-tolerant, and excavating a pond produces soil which can be used to raise the surrounding ground level.

The circuit track will need reinforcing with hardcore and we plan to arrange working parties to make these various improvements. Please join us and make light of the work. We have asked the city council to remove the burnt and threatening willow trees in this NE area.

Soil Analysis.

The samples have been taken and analysed by Land Quality Management Limited, an environment analysis firm in Nottingham whose report is awaited. They have promised to let us know the outcome by our AGM at the end of the month, and Karen Seal, the city council's officer in charge, has agreed to come to our meeting to present the findings and answer questions. In the meantime, the existing precautions we have been recommending against soil ingestion need to be applied.

Machines.

The hand mower and strimmer have been serviced and, according to insurance requirements, borrowers need to sign the declaration that they have familiarised themselves with safety and operating instructions.

The Toro mower will be serviced and members of the mowing team will again look after our main paths. Please keep nets, black plastic, and other obstacles off the paths to make mowing a less hazardous activity and avoid the loss and destruction of our kit. If you would like to join the mowers please let us know; we usually take on a few weeks each - not necessarily contiguously - just when you can fit them in.