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Fwd: TGAA Spring newsletter

jc <jonathan.clark@whatho.net>

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To: Jonathan clark <jonathon.clark@whatho.net>

On Monday, March 19, 2012 10:57:53 AM UTC, Virginia Wallis wrote:

TRAP GROUND ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**Spring Newsletter 2012****Access**

Our continued use of the level crossing is an unexpected and welcome outcome of the inspector's decision at the recent Inquiry. Despite our renewed defence – this was the third time in the last fifteen years - we had only the slightest hopes of the inspector viewing our case with any favour against the blunt opposition presented by the railway. The likelihood of his agreement, let alone support, seemed too remote to dare to hope for. The burden of heaving our loads over the bridge path is again held at bay.

However, the weight of new objections to Chiltern Railways' proposal means the Inquiry has to re-open so the project is further delayed. In the meantime we are trying to get the car parking site to remain more or less in its present position instead of as the proposed continuation of Aristotle Lane. Our idea is supported by the city and county councils and Phil & Jim school as it increases the land the school gains from the land triangle exchange.

The new Inquiry opens on 29th May and, until its conclusion, we will not know if the new line can be built to allow for our suggestion and the other modifications proposed.

Soil Analysis

We have finally got the results of analysis of Trap Grounds soil, which was carried out between 2008 and 2011. I am pleased to say the results are very reassuring.

Soil samples were taken from across the whole site and tested for chromium, lead, mercury and hydrocarbons.

Chromium was present but only at low levels and in the less toxic trivalent form.

Lead was also present in the soil but again not at significant levels. There were a number of 'hotspots' but further testing of cluster soil samples taken from around the 'hotspots' did not confirm high levels apart from in two places, although even these were not thought to be significantly contaminated.

Mercury levels were low apart from two small 'hotspots', which again were not thought to be significant.

There are polyaromatic hydrocarbons, which are likely to be from Victorian ash but could also come from bonfires. They are not thought to be worrying but we are advised to use the communal bonfire rather than have bonfires on our plots.

The conclusion is that the Trap Grounds is not significantly contaminated and that we can safely continue

to grow and eat produce from our plots.

We should continue to wash leafy vegetables and wash and peel root vegetable before eating them. Small children should be watched to make sure they do not eat soil. We should try not to tramp soil into our homes and we should wash soil off hands before eating.

Plant Sale

Spring is sprung, or almost. The Plant Sale is scheduled for Sunday 13th May 2012 at the Institute. For the past two years we have made over £1000 which makes a very significant contribution to our finances.

So, when sowing your early seeds, dividing your garden perennials or taking cuttings, do think of a home for any surplus. We have become something of a local fixture and almost anything of reasonable quality and price will sell including redundant potatoes, onion sets, overgrown pot plants and the like. We shall be sending out more details nearer the date.

Vermin

Apart from the intractable badger problem things seem to have improved greatly in the past year. A mixture of trapping, the new fence with Burgess Field and the aid of Brer Fox seems to have reduced the rabbit menace and far fewer plot holders have signalled rat infestations.

We have good relations with the Council pest officers so if you suspect a problem please let us know. We have our own rabbit traps and rat bait boxes but remember that it is for individual members to deal with vermin hot spots like neglected compost heaps, dilapidated sheds or weed covered burrows.

Communal compost and bonfire

The communal bonfire and compost have been a boon to plot-holders since they were established in 2008 and 2009 respectively. We are now so used to them that we miss the amenity when it is not available. Unfortunately the communal compost is full, so you need to revert to managing your own garden waste for the time being. The empty bin needs to be rebuilt before we can use it again.

John Ashby does a tremendous amount of work, preparing the compost bins, organising the burning (with the invaluable assistance of Mary Gurr) and generally keeping the area tidy. Without their efforts we wouldn't have these facilities. So please help them to help you by following the guidance John puts on his various notices and on the website - <http://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/compost.html>. He spends an inordinate amount of time moving stuff which has been put in the wrong place - e.g. damp weeds on the bonfire, soil and stones on the compost - because some of us just dump our rubbish anyhow. It is not supposed to be a tip, but a facility to help you dispose of your compostable and burnable materials.

Equipment

This is a reminder that the association owns various tools including mowers, cultivators and strimmers. They are for the use of members and there is a web page - <http://www.trapgroundallotment.org.uk/sharedequipment.html> - which tells you how to get access to them. Copies (sometimes somewhat out of date) of the web page can also be found on the notice-boards at the allotments.

Mowing

A team of volunteers mows the main paths on the allotment. It takes about three hours to do a proper job, and we try to do it weekly during the growing season. If you see somebody doing it, feel free to give them a cheery wave of thanks.

Although **plot-holders are responsible for mowing the small paths adjacent to their own plots**, (and strictly speaking for mowing the main paths where their plot fronts onto them), most of the volunteers try to do side paths if they are wide enough, accessible, and free of obstruction. It also helps if they are not dead-ends, because reversing out of narrow spaces often damages the mower's discharge chute. The more clear and accessible you keep your side paths, the more likely it is that the volunteers will help you by mowing them. Equally, if you don't want us to mow them, put something large and obvious across the path so we know.

The biggest problems we have with mowing the side paths are: the amounts of plastic (e.g. frayed ground cover, baler twine and netting that has strayed onto the path) adjacent to them; hidden hazards such as semi-submerged planks which were once the edges of raised beds; or half bricks and other objects hidden in the grass. Plastic gets wrapped round the mower bearings and ruins them. Hitting bricks, planks and other objects breaks the mowing deck. All of this costs time and money to repair and shortens the life of the mower. Please keep all your paths clear and, if you see plastic (or indeed any) litter anywhere on the site, please pick it up and dispose of it; don't leave it to entangle the mower. Thank you for your co-operation.

Harvest Supper.

We held this on Saturday 12th November in SMI. About fifty of us enjoyed a splendid meal and some light-hearted quiz questions, the latter still quite hard for most of us. The entries for the photographic competition were projected; again the standard was pretty high. We have booked SMI for this year's Harvest Supper again on Saturday 3rd November 2012; a date for your diary.

Photograph Competition 2012

The theme for the photograph competition for 2012 is **Size Matters**. Details of how to enter will be announced later in the year, but start taking those photographs now. There will be prizes, and the winners will be announced at the Harvest Supper on Saturday 3 November 2012. For inspiration, try looking at the entries for previous years: [2011](#), [2010](#), [2009](#) or [2008](#).

AGM

This will be held in St Margaret's Institute at 8 pm on Thursday 5th April 2012. Please come to hear the reports from committee members, take part in discussions and elect the committee for the forthcoming year.
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