

Minutes of the Trap Ground Allotment Association's AGM held via Zoom at 8.00 pm on Tuesday 30th March 2021

The minutes are made up of the written reports circulated before the AGM with the addition of points discussed at the AGM given *in italics*.

Present Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil MacLennan (deputy chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis (outgoing secretary and continuing lettings secretary); Rachel Faulkner (incoming secretary); Jonathan Clark (website and machinery); Chris Beckett (shop); Michael Wheale (compost and bonfires); Robin Nicholas (water); and 30 TGAA members.

Chairman's Report

Since the 2020 AGM Newsletter there have been two committee meetings (in October 2020 and February 2021) and one emergency meeting in January 2021.

Water scheme The main event of the year has been the triumphant completion of the new water supply. Particular thanks to Neil MacLennan, Mike Godley, Robin Nicholas and Chris Beckett for their hard work in developing the scheme and putting it into action. Thanks too to everyone who provided financial support for the project and/or helped out at the working parties during the construction.

The break-in and thefts in early January this year were dealt with quickly by the City Council who reinforced the shed's steel door. Thanks to Jonathan Clark and Michael Wheale who repaired the fence where the intruders entered the site. Michael and a team of helpers have now planted 75 stock-friendly shrubs including 50 Hawthorne whips to reinforce the boundary where it is most vulnerable.

Nuisance trees have been dealt with by David and Lynne Haynes but the stumps have yet to be ground out. We plan to hire a stump grinder and are looking for volunteers to operate it on the twenty or so stumps across the allotment site. *Although the trees that plot holders asked to be removed have been dealt with, there are still lots of unsuitable trees – including conifers, Christmas trees and non-dwarfing fruit trees - on the allotment site. According to the TGAA rules – which are in line with the City Council's rules – only dwarf fruit trees can be planted on plots and then only if branches are contained wholly within the plot and so do not overhang communal paths or neighbouring plots. Members who have trees that are not permitted on the allotment site will be asked to remove them. Plot holders with badly positioned dwarfing fruit trees will be asked to move them come the dormant season. In the meantime, new rules (detailed in the minutes of the 2018 AGM) mean that if a neighbour's tree overhangs your plot, you are permitted to cut them back or – if appropriate - help yourself to any fruits which overhang your plot.*

Committee changes Roger Mumby-Croft has had to withdraw from being Lettings Secretary and we thank him for his help over the last three years. Virginia Wallis intends to carry on as sole lettings secretary but has decided that after twelve years as our secretary it is time to pass the job on to someone else. We owe her many heartfelt thanks for the thorough, accurate and timely records she has kept of our meetings and for her energy, enthusiasm and reliability in supporting her other activities for TGAA. Rachel Faulkner has kindly agreed to take on the job of secretary and will start after the AGM at our next committee meeting in June.

Mowing Thanks to the mowing team for keeping the place in good shape again. If anyone feels they could join us please let me know.

Tony Hollander

Deputy Chairman's report

Coronavirus precautions and information *It is important that we keep our guard up and continue to follow the simple anti-Covid precautions (revised in February 2021) which will be posted on the two allotment noticeboards and were circulated by email prior to the AGM.* There are currently no plans to relax the precautions that have been put in place. *75% of AGM attendees have had their first jab with 25% have had both.*

Allotment Water Project There are currently 29 troughs spread evenly round the site. Water is primarily for crop irrigation whether using watering cans or hoses. Members should not drink the water or use it for hand washing as it is not purified. If members want to wash anything else, this should be done under running water from the tap rather than in the troughs so as to keep them silt free. It is proposed that a page on the TGAA website will be created to provide more detailed instructions for using the new irrigation system. *Full details of Irrigation system were circulated by email prior to the AGM.*

Neil MacLennan

Treasurer's report

2020 Accounts The accounts (which will be displayed on screen at the zoom meeting) show income for the year of £11,494 but expenditure of £19,124 resulting in a net loss of £7,629. The income was mainly from the increased fees (see below) but the shop produced a margin of almost £1,700 which reflected the high turnover due to Covid. The costs for the year were dominated by the £14,506 for the water equipment. *The total spent on the water project was £16,500 as the cost of drilling the bore hole was covered in last year's accounts.* There has also been no rent payment to Oxford City Council of £657 in the year due to a failure to collect on their part. We envisage that this will change at some point in the future. Fees for membership and plots were doubled in 2020 in order to finance the water project. Loans totalling £7,000 have been made by two members and this helped to support us financially during 2020. This lending is greatly appreciated. The intention was to repay the debts in 2021 and this has now been done.

Jim Moore of Chapman, Robinson and Moore has examined and approved the 2020 accounts. His willingness to do this each year is also very much appreciated.

Bob Crabtree

Secretary's report

Seeds: It is still possible to order seeds at a 50% discount from Dobies as there is no cut-off date for seed orders. Catalogues and the necessary discount code are available from the allotment shop.

Membership cards are not compulsory but are needed to benefit from discounts at Yarnton Nurseries, Burford Garden Company and Cassington Nurseries. Current membership cards will expire on 1 May 2021. New cards are available at the allotment shop.

Plant sale and swap Members brought, swapped and bought plants at the allotment shop during normal shop hours in May which worked well with the swapping element proving particularly popular. We'll do the same during all shop opening hours in May 2021.
Virginia Wallis

Lettings Secretary's report

There are now 42 whole (10-pole) plots, 144 half plots (5-pole) and 22 quarter plots. At this time last year (pre lock down) there were 30 people on the waiting list (which includes existing plot holders who want to take on an additional half plot). There are now 80 people on the waiting list so if you are finding working your current plot a struggle, please consider giving up all or part of it.

Following the spring plot inspection (by a minimum of four committee members), you may be asked to give up all or part of your plot if nothing much has happened on it since the start of the growing season. Members are reminded to let the lettings secretary know of any change in contact details.

Virginia Wallis

Website

The TGAA website is in the process of being updated – suggestions welcome.

Jonathan Clark

Machinery

Following the burglary in January, our main loss was the old Honda strimmer / brushcutter and the maintenance toolkit. Most of the stolen items have been replaced ready for the new season. We don't insure the equipment in the shed, believing it is more cost effective to 'self insure'. We have considered if that is the right policy, and we still think it is, although of course our location means we are remain vulnerable to break-ins at night.

The powered shared equipment has been serviced over the winter and is available for members to use. We have mowers, rotovators and the strimmer. Full details of what is available and how to access it are on the [shared equipment page](#) on the website. If you do want access, it is a fair bet that the shed will be open when the shop is open, at least during lock downs.

And speaking of the covid-19 pandemic, government advice is still 'Hands, Space, Face', so we continue to ask you to:

- use disposable gloves when using shared equipment (there is a supply in the shed);
- supply your own ear and eye defenders (rather than using the communal ones) - this is particularly important for the strimmer;
- make use of the cleaning products in the shed to wipe down the equipment where you may inadvertently touch or have touched the equipment with unprotected hands.

Jonathan Clark

Communal compost and bonfires

The weather made it a difficult year, with a long hot dry Spring following a very wet winter, so conditions were not the best for composting: it was difficult to get the job in to turn over the heaps early on, and then Covid restrictions ruled that out til much later. In addition there were more members actively working their plots because of "lockdown" and more material arriving.

My thanks to members who came to take away some fairly rough compost...it does breakdown over the winter and is still perfectly useful. I hope for a more normal round of compost making this year, but now there is water on tap if we get a dry spell.

Bonfires were suspended by OCC for a while, and managing the build up of material was a bit tricky. Finding a dry spell with a wind from SE or E is the problem, to avoid a nuisance to neighbours, but at least with the collective bonfire site we manage this pretty well and even big quantities are burned with minimal smoke.

Just don't bring doubtful stuff...shreds of old asbestos insulation in a vinyl mower cover was a most unwelcome find, and it doesn't burn!

Michael Wheale

Allotment shop

As the Treasurer has reported we had an exceptional year in the shop. This was, I think, down to a number of factors:

- Covid restrictions initially made ability to travel - and so obtain items from garden centres - extremely difficult;
- keeping the shop open with Covid precautions in place and introducing contactless payment as part of this. (Other allotment sites closed their shops.);
- expanding the product range to include – new for this season – pea and bean netting which is also ideal for sweet peas;

- front-loading the purchases of material, early in the season, in anticipation of COVID, mostly limited stock supply issues through the year. The same process has been adopted for the 2021 season, and currently the shop is almost completely stocked with the usual items.

Thanks to Virginia Wallis, Jonathan Clark and Howard Cox for taking on the shop rota and keeping the shop open.
Chris Beckett

Photo competition

We have decided to reinstate the photograph competition this year. For those new to the association have a look at the entries for the [2019 competition](#). It gives you a feel for how the competition works, because the prizes and rules for entry are listed there. (By the way, I know that the links to some of the older photo competitions don't work any more and I will be fixing that). One of the reasons for holding the competition is that where there are photo's on the website they are almost always a random photo from the collection, which has very largely been populated from the competition. If you press F5 to refresh a page with a photo, normally you will see a different photo for each press of the button. And the ones which were competition entries tend to be of a very high standard.

Karin Fremer has very kindly agreed to judge the entries this year. Whether we will be able to announce the winners at the harvest supper this year as we usually do is for obvious reasons an open question. And most importantly the theme for this year's competition is **Plague, virus, decay, recovery and revival**. Start taking photos and I will publish details of how to enter in due course.

Jonathan Clark

Allotment Association – potential changes of organisation

The lease on the allotment land is due for renewal in September 2021. The Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA) are negotiating with the Oxford City Council (OCC), on our behalf and with our input. The National Allotment Society is also giving guidance. It is likely that the responsibilities placed on associations will be more onerous than those in the existing lease, and it is being recommended that becoming an incorporated body would be a sensible move for us and the other local allotment associations. The main options appear to be: become a co-operative; a limited company; a community improvement corporation; or remain an unincorporated association.

There are pro's and con's of each type of association. At the moment it seems that a co-operative would be the most appropriate organisation for us, but there are questions to be resolved. This notification is to let you know that we are likely to call an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of members later in the year to ask you to approve a change of organisation.

The ODFAA have created a [useful web page](#) with documents about the need to change, and information about the various options. Jonathan Clark and Michael Wheale are looking at the implications and communicating with the ODFAA on behalf of the association. If anybody would like more information, please contact [Jonathan Clark](#).

Finally, it is very possible that the negotiations will not be complete by September and in that case we will probably continue to rent the site on the terms of the old lease, remain an unincorporated association, and no EGM will be called.

Jonathan Clark

Election of the committee

The new committee – minus Rodger Mumby-Croft but plus new secretary, Rachel Faulkner – was elected by a majority.

Any other business

Wells *The new water system is a huge success but in the unhappy event of the theft of the solar panels and pump we will need to fall back on existing wells. For those plot holders who are nearer to a functioning well than to one of the new trough, wells still have a part to play in irrigating the allotment site. However, Bob Moon made the point that there is an urgent safety issue with some wells as they pose a threat to small children in particular. **Action** Bob Moon to join members of the committee to inspect wells and identify which need to be made safe or filled in.*

Pesticide use *Chris Goodall (not at the Zoom meeting) is keen to set up a working party to assess the possibility of making the allotment site pesticide free. It was felt that it would be wrong to impose new rules on the lawful use of pesticides and/or herbicides. But this may not have been Chris' intentions. **Action** Chris to clarify the purpose of the working party.*

Car parking *We need to keep an eye on the use – if any – of the allotment car park by non allotment users.*

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

