

**Minutes of the TGAA Annual General Meeting (AGM)** held at 8.00pm on 28 March 2017 at the St Margaret's Institute.

**Present** Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil McLennan (vice-chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis, (secretary and lettings secretary); Roger Mumby-Croft (lettings secretary); Peter Jarvis (pest control); Jonathan Clark (website, machinery and skips); Tim Halliday (shop); and 22 TGAA members.

**Apologies** from: Julia Aston Smith; Sue Bateman; Bee and Richard Hillier; Rupert Jones-Parry; Kate and Alastair Lack; Tom Landell-Mills; Meg Movshon; Freddie Quartley; Gillian and Stuart Skyte; Isabella Underhill.

### **Minutes of the 2016 AGM**

These had been distributed by email and were approved at the meeting.

### **Matters arising**

Very welcome drinks and nibbles were provided before the meeting as at last year's meeting. Thanks to Sally and Neil for providing the refreshments and to those who helped with the washing up afterwards.

### **Chairman's Report**

Since the last AGM, there had been three meetings of the committee in June and July 2016 and January 2017.

**Allotment site** David Haynes has put down 10 tons of hardcore to reinforce the churned up land between the shared equipment shed and the allotment shop at a cost of £550. To deter further nuisance, plants with spikes and thorns have been planted in the area where vandals got into the allotment site over the winter. The noticeboard which was by the now-closed level-crossing entrance has been moved to the bottom of the new ramp. The other one, which was blown down over winter is now fixed to the fence next to the allotment shop. Members are welcome to use the noticeboards to put up allotment-related business.

**Railway works** The final path surface on the new railway footbridge will be put in place once the weather improves. The new gate and palisade fencing to replace the temporary entrance at the bottom of the side spur have been ordered. The work should be completed by the end of April. Network Rail (NR) did not have planning permission for the steps down from the new ramp that we asked for and so will not build them for us. Instead, we will use some of the £7,000 to £7,500 that NR has promised us to get them built by an independent contractor. David Haynes will be engaged to widen the path between the ramp and the new pond to 1.5m. and make it secure with a fence

**Car parking** The new car park has 12 car-parking spaces which is four fewer than before. It is intended that one space will have eight cycle racks installed on it although it was suggested that cycle racks should be put elsewhere so as not to diminish the number of parking spaces yet further. A notice makes it clear that the car park is for allotment members only but non plot holders have been spotted using it. If this becomes a problem, steps will be taken to deter non-members such as requiring allotment membership cards to be displayed and/or putting an unlocked chain across the entrance.

**Skips** Both the skips made available in autumn and spring got filled with a lot of material – such as old bicycles - which had clearly not come from the allotments. More seriously, the contents of the skips included asbestos last year and tyres this year both of which can result in us having to pay big fines to the skip company if we don't go over to the other side of Woodstock to remove such items. This is clearly unsatisfactory and so it was suggested that newsletters should include information on what not to put in skips.

**Mowing** The mowing team of 11 is doing a great job but more mowers would be welcome. Everyone can help to give mowers a smoother ride by filling in ruts in the paths with surplus turves.

**Harvest Supper** Stuart and Gillian Skyte again organised a fabulous harvest supper in 2016 and have very kindly booked the St Margaret's Institute for this years' supper on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Last year's was their final event, and we thank them warmly for having organised what has been a very enjoyable social occasion over the years.

### **Treasurer's report**

The accounts for 2016 were circulated. The Treasurer thanked Jim Moore for auditing the accounts. TGAA's main sources of income are fees of £4,711.75, proceeds of £981.10 from the plant sale and profit of £446.53 from the shop. The main expenditure has been £1,000 on the new ride-on mower and £800 on skip hire. The very healthy bank balance of £12,140.09 will be boosted this year by the £7,000 to £7,500 that NR has promised us. It was suggested that we should fund more first aid boxes. However, there was a general feeling that plot holders should be responsible for having their own first aid kit and should be made aware of that. The issue of ambulance access needs to be addressed now that the level crossing has closed.

### **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 order forms are available from the allotment shop.

**Membership cards** are not compulsory but are needed to benefit from discounts at Yarnton Nurseries and Burford Garden Company. Membership cards issued before the AGM will expire on 1 May 2017. New cards will be available at the allotment shop and will be free if swapped for an old card but will cost £1 otherwise.

**Plant sale** Last year's sale made a very healthy £981 but the Treasurer confirmed that income from the plant sale is not needed as much as it has been in the past given the healthy bank balance we have. The plant sale in its current form also takes a lot of people a lot of time with the biggest job being taking unsold plants to the allotment shop. As we don't need the money the plant sale makes, it was suggested – and agreed – that the plant sale should take a back-to-basics approach and become a plant swap and sale to be held next to the allotment shop primarily as a resource for allotment members. This would be very much like the mini plant sales that have been held at the allotment shop over the past few years but with the new swapping element. It was agreed that members would be encouraged to bring, swap and buy plants on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of May during shop opening hours (which may be extended).

### **Lettings Secretaries report**

There are now 44 whole plots, 140 half plots and 17 quarter plots. The site is largely in a good state although 11 plots were given the benefit of the doubt but due for re-inspection at the end of April because of lack of cultivation. One plot holder was in danger of being given notice to quit under the new 'three warnings and you are out' rule agreed at the 2015 AGM. There are currently seven people on the waiting list.

### **Website and machinery**

**Website** The TGAA website has a great deal of useful information that people may not know about. Let Jonathan know if you have any suggestions for improving it.

**Shared equipment** The servicing bill for the petrol-driven equipment was very high with most being spent on the ride-on mower.

### **Pest Control**

The 'super rat' has arrived which is capable of eating rat poison but surviving. This means a return to old-fashioned rat traps instead of poison which could be a problem. Pete intends to put the last lot of poison down and then stop rat control altogether. Thalia Carr suggested that an alternative to putting down rat poison would be to put up barn-owl boxes on tall trees as a pair of barn owls in the breeding season can kill around 3,000 rats. Bat boxes need to be at least 12ft up so could be appropriate for the tall cherry tree and silver birch on the site. It was agreed that installing barn-owl boxes was worth a try but that further investigation into the suitability of the allotment site – given that there are barn owls on Burgess Meade – would be needed. RSPB member, Hoonie Palmer agreed to look into it and Jonathan said he would talk to Catherine Robinson as there are already barn-owl boxes on the Trap Ground nature reserve.

### **Communal compost and bonfire**

The communal compost and bonfires are hugely popular and very much valued waste disposal facilities. Members are encouraged not to put compostable matter on the bonfire pile as green matter and soil do not burn. Thanks to Michael and Martin for looking after these vital facilities.

### **Allotment shop**

The shop is now stocked with a plentiful supply of manure, seed potatoes (Charlotte and Pink Fir Apple) and all the other usual stock. The shop is staffed by a band of seven volunteers who open the shop from 11.00 to 12.00 on Saturdays and from 3.00 until 4.00 on Sundays.

### **Any other business**

**Trees** The trees on the south and west sides of the allotment are a problem because they shade the adjacent plots. The city council is responsible for pollarding the trees on Port Meadow but have reduced their activity resulting in excessive growth and neglect.

**Mulberry tree** Ian Salisbury's proposal to plant a mulberry tree was put to the vote and rejected by a large majority.

**Memorial bench** Plot sharers of the late Sue Howarth are planning to put a bench near the old pond in her memory. It was pointed out that it should be placed on weed-suppressant material.

**Election of the Committee** All committee members were re-elected with thanks from the floor for the committee's work.

**The meeting ended at 9.20 pm**