

**Minutes of the TGAA Annual General Meeting (AGM)** held at 8.00pm on 17 March 2015 at the St Margaret's Institute.

**Present** Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil McLennan (vice-chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis, (secretary and lettings secretary); Carol Jarvis (lettings secretary); Vibeke Mannion (shop); Peter Jarvis (pest control); Jonathan Clark (website, machinery and skips) and 21 TGAA members.

**Apologies** from: Thalia Carr; Richard and Bee Hillier; Clare Hollander; Rupert Jones Parry; Alastair Lack; Rebecca Mather.

### **Minutes of the 2014 AGM**

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

### **Matters arising**

**Drinks and nibbles** As agreed at the 2014 AGM drinks and nibbles were provided before the meeting began. Thanks to Vibeke and Neil for providing the refreshments and to Sally for washing up the wine glasses afterwards.

### **Chairman's Report**

Since the last AGM, there had been three meetings of the committee in August and October 2014 and March 2015.

**Allotment site** We were spared flooding this winter and the allotment site looks in good order. However, a record number (25) of warning letters were sent to members following the August 2014 plot inspection and it was agreed to put a 'Three letters and you are out' rule change (see below) to the AGM. The plot inspection also identified plots in need of clear boundary posts. These have now been purchased and installed where required. The rubble bank will be moving from next to the shop to near the communal compost.

**Railway works** As part of the works on the railway line Scottish and Southern Electricity (SSE) had to dig up our path in order to re-lay its cable. We were originally promised £1,000 in compensation for the disruption caused but this has since been reduced to £500. It is likely to be another year before Network Rail (NR) can undertake work on its new railway bridge as well as mitigation works for the closure of the crossing as their planning application has been rejected. NR has submitted new plans which show that the path on to Port Meadow will not be raised. Ian Salisbury is still fighting to keep the level crossing open (see below) and currently has the support of Bob Price from the city council which won't give up its rights to the crossing unless NR makes two planned footbridges compliant with rules for disabled access. NR has not honoured its promise to give us more land when putting up its new fence. A NR surveyor, accompanied by Mike Scott of the city council's corporate assets' department, is coming to assess the new fence to see if it should be moved. The next railway meeting railway meeting at Phil & Jim school will take place on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

**Composting area** Michael Wheale, who was welcomed to the committee, is now looking after the communal compost and bonfire. It was agreed to send a card and flowers to John and Diane Ashby who were the original architects of the very valuable resource that the communal compost has become for the allotment site. The flood-prone area near the compost site is to have raised beds planted with bee- and butterfly-friendly plants.

**Trees** Thanks to Carol for organising work by the Oxford Tree Company on various trees around the allotment site. Trees on the perimeter were dealt with by the council. Both sets of work produced a mass of wood chippings. The council intends to pollard every fifth tree each year on the site's boundary.

**Mowing** The new mower is much more exciting to use than the old one but there have been teething problems. The grass collector is proving invaluable for supplying grass cuttings to the communal compost and to individual compost bins. More people are needed on the mowing team.

**Harvest Supper** Stuart and Gillian Skyte again organised a fabulous harvest supper in 2014 and have very kindly agreed to organise the harvest supper again this year. It will take place on Saturday 21st November 2015 at the St Margaret's Institute. The subject of the 2015 photo competition is 'allotment gardeners'.

### **Treasurer's report**

The accounts for 2014 were circulated. The Treasurer thanked Jim Moore for auditing the accounts. TGAA's main sources of income are fees of £5,223, proceeds of £1,005 from the plant sale and profit of £272 from the shop. Expenditure was up by £6,000 on last year largely down to the £4,458 spent on the new mower and £1,500 spent on work on trees and the communal compost. It is the committee's intention to spend money on external labour for communal jobs.

### **Secretary's report**

**Seeds** We now have only one discount seed scheme with Dobies which as well as giving individual members a 50% discount on seeds, gives the association £30-worth of free seeds for the allotment shop.

**Membership cards** are not compulsory but are needed to benefit from discounts at Yarnton Nurseries and Burford Garden Company. Current membership cards expire on 1 May 2015. 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 respectable £1,005. This year's plant sale will take place on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at the earlier start time of 10.00 (rather than 10.30). As well as needing donations of plants, seedlings, jams and

pickles, volunteers will be needed to help manage the plant sale both before, during and after the event. More details of the jobs for which volunteers are required will be circulated at the beginning of April.

### **Lettings Secretaries report**

From the point of view of climate, this last year has been a much better – and drier - one. There are now 45 whole plots, 146 half plots and we have established 4 quarter plots. The waiting list has fluctuated throughout the year. Following the autumn inspection, 25 warning letters were sent although the spring inspection showed a distinct improvement. One of the main problems is persistent offenders who do not consistently cultivate their plots and so receive a warning letter after every inspection. To tackle this problem a rule change was proposed which would mean that any plot holder would get an automatic 'notice to quit' if his or her plot was found to be not properly cultivated – and so generating a warning letter - at three consecutive plot inspections. The rule change was voted in unanimously.

### **Website and machinery**

**Website** Let Jonathan know if you have any suggestions for improving the TGAA website.

**Shared equipment** Members were reminded that, after being shown how to use it - they can borrow any of the shared equipment which includes a rotavator, tiller, strimmers and mowers including a new self-propelled mower. There is also now a petrol-fuelled electric generator for members to use. It was agreed that we will acquire an electric grinder which will be mounted on a collapsible work bench so that it can be tucked away when not in use.

### **Pest Control**

The rabbit population is almost non-existent thanks largely to the foxes and there are no deer, but if you need a rabbit trap, ask Pete Jarvis. Badgers are a problem but we just have to live with them. Pete also has rat bait and rat boxes.

### **Communal compost and bonfire**

About £700 has been spent on getting help with work on the communal compost this last year. This year, there will be separate bins for different types of material. When compost becomes available for use, members will be informed on a Friday so that more people have the chance to get compost at the week ends. The reason we have a communal bonfire is to discourage bonfires on individual plots which can be a nuisance to plot neighbours. Communal bonfires are usually lit at a quiet time on the allotment site.

### **Trap Trading**

The shop is running very nicely and currently has a good stock of seed potatoes. Thanks to Vibeke for all her hard work manning the shop and keeping it so well stocked.

**Election of the Committee** The whole committee of nine was re-elected with thanks from the floor for the committee's work.

### **Any other business**

**Notice boards** need revamping and weather-proofing. It would be helpful if notices had larger type to make them more readable. The list of keyholders needs updating. It was agreed that notice boards will be checked as part of the plot inspection.

**Level crossing** Ian Salisbury continues to fight to keep the level crossing open. He has suggested that NR installs Bombadier four-track safety lights but this has been rejected by NR. With one objection, it was agreed that TGAA should support the view that 'provided the crossing remains safe, then it should remain open using – if necessary – safety lights to control the crossing'. It was noted that no horns would be required if lights were installed.

**The meeting ended at 9.30 pm**