

Minutes of the Trap Ground Allotment Association's AGM held via Zoom on Tuesday 29th March 2022.

The minutes record the main features of the written reports circulated to members before the AGM with additional points discussed during the meeting added in italics.

A technical fault occurred with the first Zoom link but a successful second link was quickly established.

Present Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil MacLennan (deputy chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Rachel Faulkner (secretary); Virginia Wallis (lettings secretary); Jonathan Clark (website, shop, photo competition); Michael Wheale (compost and bonfires); Robin Nicholas (water); and 30 TGAA members.

Apologies were received from Thalia Carr; Robert McCormick; Jan Maulden; David Kewley; Gillian Skyte; Stuart Skyte; Zohra Jenkinson.

Chairman's Report

Since the 2021 AGM there have been three Committee meetings; June 2021, October 2021 and March 2022.

Access and Security The poor condition of the access path to Port Meadow over the railway bridge (west side) and the ramp within the allotment site are of concern. The repairs are dependent on the City and County Councils seeking adequate funds.

Break-ins to the site have been less serious during the past year. However the steel palisade at the bridge gate has been extended and pyracantha and bramble plants encouraged to deter nuisance trespassers.

Wells In response to Bob Moon's appeal last year and in view of the new water supply a number of wells have been either filled in or made safe with stronger lids. This project is nearly complete.

Site Maintenance The two ponds have been cleared as far as David Haynes' machinery allowed and the spoil placed on Plot 30E to raise it above flood level. Pond life will regenerate from the remaining plant and animal species. However the spoil area will take longer until it becomes suitable for cultivation.

A number of 'nuisance' trees have been cleared to allow increased cultivation and several tree stumps removed by a different contractor.

The Chairman reported there are still fruit trees on several plots planted inappropriately causing neighbouring plots to be heavily shaded, which the Committee still needs to address. Annette Meyer was thanked for contacting Grindforce re the removal of several tree stumps. The Chairman has contacted Julian Cooper (Port Meadow Ranger) about the lopping of the tall sycamores on the southern side of the allotments. Willows near the bee site will also be pollarded.

Thanks The Chairman thanked the Committee members for their energetic involvement, the mowing team and all those who look after our site and make it so productive and enjoyable to work in.

Tony Hollander

Deputy Chairman's report

Coronavirus. *We will continue to follow government guidance and keep things under review.*

Neil MacLennan

Treasurer's Report

2021 Accounts. 2021 was the second year in which fees were doubled to finance the water project. Income from fees was £9357 and total income (including the shop) £10,978. The shop produced an income of £849 when adjusted for valuation changes. This was less than during the first year of lockdown but still provided a useful additional source of revenue. Expenditure was £6,036. This was mainly on machinery and site maintenance, and works (including tree pruning and clearing of plots before letting). There has also been no rent payment to Oxford City Council in the year due to a failure to collect on their part. We envisage that this will change at some point in the future and the assets are sufficient to cover the debt.

The loans for the water project were repaid leaving a bank balance at the yearend of £11,849.

Income from plot fees will be lower in 2022 when rates return to 'normal'. This may prove insufficient to cover expenses but the bank provides a buffer and the situation will be kept under review.

Jim Moore of Chapman, Robinson and Moore has examined and approved the 2021 accounts. His willingness to do this each year is also very much appreciated.

Bob Crabtree

Lettings Secretary's report

Allotment site There are now 42 whole (10-pole) plots, 146 half plots (5-pole) and 20 quarter plots. At this time last year there were 80 on the waiting list (which includes existing plot holders who want to take on an additional half plot). There are now 108 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.

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 2022. New cards are available at the allotment shop. Virginia Wallis

Machinery Report 2021

The mowers proved especially difficult as they are both highly utilised and getting old. Both had numerous trips to Meadhams for repairs. Consequently, the larger mower will be replaced in the coming weeks and the smaller one is likely to be replaced during 2022. The ride on mower and strimmer have been serviced this year. The majority of the equipment is available for all to use.

The list of equipment, the people who can show you how to use it and the shed keyholders are listed on the website: <https://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/shared-equipment>. The one request is that when using the equipment, especially the mowers, please clean them afterwards by removing excess grass but please do not tip the machines up. If you have time, then refill them with petrol. For information, with the changes to petrol formulations we are using the highest grade of petrol on all machinery. Finally, if you have requests for additional machinery then please let me know.

Philip James

Water System Report

We have now seen one complete season of operation of the water project and we can see how it is working. Our water use is monitored by the pump in the borehole driven by its controller mounted inside the shop. As you might expect the really wet weather in parts of July and August suppressed demand, but in June we were all using a lot more water. Peak use on a single day was around 12 tonnes (12,000 litres). On a couple of occasions the tank (but not the troughs) ran dry by about 7.30 or 8 in the evening so in mid-June we installed a 3rd solar panel and re-oriented the panels more towards the evening sun to lengthen the day's pumping capability after which there were no more evening droughts.

Overall we pumped approximately, 430 tonnes (cubic meters) over the whole season. On average each of our 130 full plots used 3.3 tonnes (3,300 litres). This is approximately 410 watering cans and previously would have needed an average of around 3600 buckets of water to be raised from each of the 20 or so wells that we have around the plots. Some plots will clearly have used much more than this.

Could we all use more? Undoubtedly. In the summer our pump can lift over 30 tonnes on a sunny day provided that the use is spread evenly throughout the day, such as by filling your own water butt. Extraction from groundwater is limited by Thames water to 20 tonnes per day, so we certainly still have plenty of headroom. By extracting the groundwater from the gravel level we are taking water which is high in ammonia salts and by filtering it through the ground on our plots, where the ammonia turns into fertilizer and most of the water goes back to the river, we return it to the river in a better state than before, so higher use is beneficial to the environment.

Winter precautions

If you have installed a manifold (a connector to enable multiple outputs to your tap) this should be drained down over the winter by either disconnecting it or just closing the lever tap on your trough and opening one of the outputs. We had several of these connected over last winter as a test and most of them were made from hard plastic which failed in long hard frosts. The taps and connections on the troughs are frost resistant and do not need any extra precautions.

Robin Nicholas. (October 2021)

Members are extremely pleased with the new water system. It was agreed that adding an additional tap for a hosepipe near the compost area would be beneficial. It would require digging a trench of approximately 30 m. RN will liaise with MW. Michael Wynell-Mayou kindly volunteered to be part of a working party for this project. Other volunteers will be sought.

Compost and Bonfires

It was a rare dry autumn, and the bonfire area was not under water so I could have 5 fires to clear non compostable material (09/02, 22/01,14/11,25/09,27/09). All were burned through in c.90 minutes with minimal smoke and no complaints.

I am always intrigued at the way fires draw a watching group of plot holders.

There was one occasion I thought asbestos had been added and burned to dust in the hot ash, but investigation determined it was plasterboard. It still shouldn't have been there of course.

On 12/10 David Haynes turned over the Compost bins with the JCB and did other useful work round the pond and site generally. I posted photos showing the steam rising indicating the high temperatures reached inside the compost.

There is recent work to suggest garden compost, even if a bit rough, is more valuable than fertiliser for our plots, substantially because of the huge number of micro-organisms necessary for healthy topsoil, notably fungi. Apparently, there are tens of thousands of species not yet identified or named fulfilling useful functions in good soil.

I need to renew the various advice posters via "Instagram" ahead of the new season - they last quite a few years but not forever.

Additionally, a motley crew of volunteers turned up to raise and move the shed on 07/10/21; it weathered the recent storms well. David Mannion painted the outside too so should be well preserved.

Finally following a nuisance break-in over the bridge fence at New Year Jonathan and I extended the green bars and subsequently I put anti-climb paint above the height of 2m with the required Notice attached to the gate. It may be possible to put a bit at the very top of the main gate with similar notice. There is enough paint. Michael Wheale

Website

The website has a host of information from the rules of the association, advice to new members, notices about facilities provided (the shop, shared equipment, discounts from local garden centres). It hasn't changed for a long time and I hope to get round to freshening it up a bit, to make it easier to find relevant material. Meanwhile if anybody sees something clearly wrong or out of date, please let me know so that I can correct it. On the contacts page there are links so that members can invite themselves to join the Whatsapp group (most used), the Facebook page (not much used) and the Signal group (hardly ever used). They are each voluntary mechanisms to facilitate member to member communication. There is also the email distribution list which is maintained by the committee with the aim of having everybody on it, for necessary communications to members. We try to send out only information relevant to almost all members via the email route. Jonathan Clark

Lease

For the last three or four years the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA) has been in discussion with Oxford City Council (OCC) about renewing the leases for the city-owned sites which expired in 2021. The basic message has been that, in an increasingly litigious society, and with anticipated changes to the lease which impose greater responsibilities on allotment associations, associations might wish to consider whether the traditional allotment associations with trustees is an appropriate legal entity to be the leaseholder. It has been recommended that associations consider incorporating (e.g. as a co-operative, as a limited liability company, or as a Community Interest Company) so that trustees do not have to take on increasingly onerous liabilities.

A potential cost of becoming a co-operative could be approximately £200

The last news we had from the ODFAA was that they have agreed in outline a new lease with OCC, and that they are working with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to agree model rules for a Co-operative Association which associations could use.

The TGAA is waiting for that work to conclude. Assuming it is successful we expect to come to the association at some point in the future to recommend that we set up a co-operative to be the leaseholder of the site, although until we see the final outcome of the negotiations we can't say for sure that that is what we will wish to do. Members of the existing association would be invited to become members of the co-operative.

Meanwhile we continue to occupy the site without a lease from the City Council (in common with the other associations who used to have leases with OCC). We are not particularly concerned about this - the last lease between OCC and TGAA was not signed for the entire twenty-one year term of the lease, because OCC had concerns about their ability to guarantee access to the site when we used to access it over the level crossing. We seem to have managed to run the association, occupy the site, and grow our fruit and vegetables without a signed lease for over twenty-one years. Jonathan Clark

A further meeting with ODFAA is scheduled to take place on 5th April which Jonathan Clark will be attending. If he has any further information following this meeting this will be shared with the members.

Shop

The shop continues to function as usual. Opening hours between March and September are Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and Sunday 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

There is a price list at <https://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/trap-trading>. The shop is card only. We try to price things to make a modest profit and generally we are able to do that while keeping prices lower than you would find at local garden centres – I believe. It only functions due to the volunteers who each do roughly one session pre month. Special thanks go to [Howard Cox](#), [Sue Ledwith](#), [Vibeke Mannion](#), [Katalin Pinter](#), [Faye Pring](#), [Meg Movshon](#) and [Virginia Wallis](#). We are seeking more volunteers to help spread the load. If you can spare an hour per month or so, please contact me. If you think of something we ought be selling, please let me know. Jonathan Clark

Two more members have now volunteered to man the shop.

Photo Competition

The photo competition held in 2021 was on the theme "Plague, virus, decay, recovery and revival." Karin Fremer kindly judged the entries and the winners (in order) were: 1. [Mary Hossain](#) 2. [Sam Bickersteth](#) 3. [Thalia Carr](#)

Members also voted for the people's prize which was won by [Chris Beckett](#).

The photos can be viewed here: <https://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/photocompetition2021.2022>

There will be a Photo Competition 2022 and the theme will be "Exotica". The usual modest prizes of vouchers for the shop will be at stake. Karin has kindly volunteered to act as judge again. Please start taking photos and the mechanism to submit entries will be announced in due course.

The reason I like to run the competition is that all the photos which are entered end up in the library of images which are used randomly to enliven the website. Jonathan Clark

Cotteslowe Larder Report

Cotteslowe Larder is a food and community event that meets every week at the Cotteslowe Community Centre. It is run by volunteers. In order to access the service all that potential members have to do is sign up and agree to pay a monthly nominal sum by direct debit. They are then able to use the larder and also obtain discounts from a number of local retailers. The food had mainly been store-cupboard items, with some fresh food coming from supermarkets but fresh, locally grown and largely organic produce is highly valued.

TGAA started this scheme in May, and all through the summer and autumn a steady stream of produce was left in the cupboard at the bottom of the ramp. This included, marrows, squashes, edible gourds, courgettes, cucumbers, lettuce, chard, spinach, beans, tomatoes, raspberries, carrots, swede, turnips, onions, potatoes, apples, plums and some watercress type salad. (I am sure to have forgotten some others). Naturally enough the supply dwindled as winter approached.

It has been well received by the Larder and even the occasional glut has been most welcome, with members using monster marrows for curries or soup.

I have been helped with collection and delivery by Chris G and Vibeke, thanks to both of you. Thank you too, to those of you who have donated your surplus produce.

As soon as the growing season gets under way, stuff will be collected weekly. In the meantime, if you have any surplus greens you can't use during this fallow time, can you kindly let me know. You can do this by email: mary.gurr1@btinternet.com or via the allotment WhatsApp group.

Mary Gurr

Secretary's Report.

With the completion of the new water system in 2020, the Committee's attention turned to the safety and maintenance of the wells situated around the allotment site. Thank you to all those members who filled in or made safe their well during the past year. It has helped to make the site much safer, particularly when children are present.

Last summer the Committee was fortunate to have additional onsite maintenance help from Mark Foster. As a former allotment holder he helped with clearing some of the perimeter fence and filling in of wells. If you are currently looking for help with work on your plot Harrison Fannon can be contacted on 07826723880 or by email: harryfannon@gmail.com He has several years experience, mostly in vegetable gardening.

Reminder: Please ensure your plot is clearly numbered and therefore easily identified.

Rachel Faulkner

RF reported that on 26th March twitchers were spotted taking photographs of a Siberian ChiffChaff in the hedge facing Port Meadow. In addition a newt and two frogs were seen on her plot. Wildlife is clearly thriving on the allotments.

Election of the Committee

The committee was re-elected with a unanimous vote.

AOB

Prior to the meeting Thalia Carr had requested that members should stop using pesticides and herbicides on their allotments. It was thought impossible for the TGAA to enforce this as these products are widely available and sold legally. However TGAA acknowledges the benefits of minimising pollution and encouraging greater biodiversity thereby encouraging members to be mindful of the use of chemicals on the site. Bee Hillier asked if more guidance could be added to the website on HOW to garden organically. Many of the newer members are keen to adopt an organic approach e.g. by using cover crops. Chris Goodall agreed to contact Thalia Carr to suggest guidelines to reduce use of polluting materials.

The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

