

Chair's report 2024-25

Some plotholders had wonderful tomatoes as a long dryish summer went on and on, balancing out the seemingly endless cool, damp spring that disheartened others. Swings and roundabouts.

Court Place Farm is not alone among Oxford allotments in having a few empty plots - we have more plots to start with than so many other sites. Currently of our roughly 150 lettable plots, 108 full ones and 44 half ones are let and 20, including some small beds, looking for tenants.

Through the year, we have again benefited from the physical help offered by the Unpaid Work teams of the Probation Service, supervised by Colin Cutler and Dave Lee. They have cut grass, cleared brambles, collected rubbish and looked after their plots which enable some gardening skills to be practised by those serving community hours sentences.

We have also benefited from the donated surplus compost from University Parks, likely enough to keep plot holders going for a good decade, and the wood chip from New Leaf and other tree surgeons, all available free for plot holders.

Ian Ross and Rick Bauer have kept the water system going, including repairing a tank damaged by a plot holder who insisted on attaching a hose pipe against the rules. In the coming year, more rainwater harvesting points will be constructed around the site and all plot holders encouraged to harvest rainwater rather than use the expensive (and less sympathetic for plants) mains water.

Anuj and Shilpa Bhatt and Jennie Collier have worked hard in the Shop which has been refurbished thanks to a grant from Old Marston Parish Council. We are also grateful for a financial grant from the Parish Council for yet another skip to swallow the seemingly endless supply of stuff, some historic or fly tipped, but plenty simply thoughtlessly left behind by plot holders. We are discussing charging a deposit for plots, returnable when a tidy plot is returned at the end of a plot holder's tenure.

Another grant was given by the National Garden Scheme Community Garden fund, to improve the vehicle entrance area and provide raised boxes around the site for pollinators and also for herbs, which plot holders and locals can take a pinch of. We very much hope a pinch, not the whole plant! Very sadly, the handsome welcome board paid for by this grant had been up for only a short time when it was completely removed on the night of 5 March. This feels like the last straw of a couple of years of pilfering and we are very close to arranging for a number code padlock to be attached to the vehicle gates as there is now a pedestrian gate. As the Secretary says, something that can be discussed at this meeting.

We are enormously grateful to the Secretary, Steve Bagnall, who helped launch the CIC and has since kept exemplary records. We are very grateful to Fiona Davenport-White who is taking over.

We are also very grateful to Duncan Hatfield who has set up our new website, which will be expanded in the coming months.