

## **Horspath Allotments Association - Annual General Meeting 17th November 2010**

### **Chairman's Report**

Thank you all for venturing out tonight for our first AGM and I would welcome all here tonight plus the balance of our 24 plot holders who unfortunately could not be here tonight. Yes 24, that is our first success!

I think you will all agree that for our first year we have had to contend with conditions that would have challenged established allotmenters.

More success was achieved with our first and dare I say a most successful working party to cut the Cuddesdon Road hedge down to size. We also reinforced the gaps in the hedge with a selection of traditional hedge plants. Given the weather we had most of these are biding their time to greet us next spring.

After the first proper winter for years we had to wait many weeks before we could ask Brian to wake his tractor from its winter slumbers and try to harrow the ploughed surface before we could begin. A retired farmer friend of mine told me not to be too hasty with this and he advised a very late start, telling me nature would catch up. Well of course we were impatient to make a start and of course nature showed us that she could and did catch up with a vengeance!

Now the struggles began, the less said about the conditions when I surveyed and marked out the plots the better. I am sorry if any of you have suffered any problems with your plot size or access as a result of my efforts. I well remember having difficulty walking across one area not so very far from my own plot. I would however note my amazement when I next returned to find that Heather had battled her way around with her plot number tags and we all should thank her for that noble effort.

From here I can report the success after success that was so visible in what you produced in all your allotments. It was certainly beyond my wildest dreams to see so much productivity well perhaps excluding one plot may be.

This being achieved despite, what I think was 12 weeks without rain and with a water usage that was a testament to low impact allotmenting. I think another "thank you" is due to Brian Sewell who remembered where the spring was that was used in his father's day and seemingly, even long before that. I must say the relief that I felt when I saw that life giving one gallon per minute flow that continues unchanged even now, was one of my favourite allotment experiences of our first year.

It was also a great surprise to see just how little our plots dried out, at least below the surface layer.

Both our impromptu summer barbecue and our harvest festival on the village green proved to be well worthwhile and give us something to build on next year.

On the subject of building, I should mention a few problems that we have had. I would say we all have now experienced the danger of our access from Cuddesdon Road. The recent

tragic accident further up the road from our entrance has brought this home to us and has shown us that we really can't take chances. We will have to improve both the space for our cars to stand and of course increase the visibility.

Thanks are also due to Chris Pym for his efforts to keep the old gate in useable condition now we have so many people using it. This will of course have to be the subject of a couple of working parties, which I will come to later in the meeting.

The final two problems have been the track from the gate and we must also improve this when we sort out the gate. I regret that I don't see it being feasible to extend this right up the hill and we allowed plenty of parking room lower down to allow for this.

The last problem being the water supply, which we will also briefly touch on later but suffice to say with more thanks to Chris, we have some serious tanks to and pipes to play with.

Whilst I can't claim it a particular success we will have 10% discount at Mill View Nurseries and I would add extremely knowledgeable local advice we can also get from them comes free. We are talking of someone with a long connection and who knows our extremely varied ground conditions well and who would be only too happy to advise. Unfortunately with the approach of winter I have been unable to contact Marston Allotment Association in order to confirm their agreement also but I am sure I will have made contact before our cards are issued.

You will have read on the AGM notice that I also need to report to you that HAA Secretary Pete Frankum and committee member Heather Palmer are retiring at the AGM and are not standing for re-election, so more nominations are required.

Finally can I give all our thanks to Heather, who in addition to not only getting our allotments off the ground in the first place but has also been a key committee member and despite her unfortunate illness has continued to provide such a terrific service. We are very fortunate that she has kindly agreed to continue with the other work for HAA including the vital task of liaising with the Diocese land manager and with our future plans – so many thanks to Heather!

*Peter Ewart, Chairman Horspath Allotments Association*