

**Cripley Meadow Allotment Association
Newsletter
March 2021**

What a difference a month makes! The waters are down and the sun returned. Plenty of time yet for frost etc but I hope you have been able get onto your plot in the warmth, thinking of the promise to come.

There's a real buzz as members prepare for the new season with new sheds going up, compost bins being set up, repairs to shed roofs, new water harvesting, digging, manuring and weeding. May I make a plea? **If your plot is not numbered, please put something up.** It is in the rules! And it doesn't have to be fancy – take a look around the site for inspiration. It is helpful to those of us with a less-than-encyclopaedic knowledge of site layout when doing site jobs.



I hope everyone saw my email reporting that the site is open for vehicular access. As long as we are not deluged again. And all members should have received their invitation to the

AGM

Sunday 21st March 2021

16:00 by Zoom

Many have already registered – please email secretary@cripleymeadow.org.uk with name(s) of attendees and plot number. **It will greatly help logistics if you send questions or comments ahead of time**, to the same email address.

After our appeal in the last newsletter for a Committee **Castle Mill rep**, I am delighted to say that PhD student Alice Sprinkle has volunteered. Alice took on 126E last year. She has been co-opted to the Committee and will be standing, together with Alex Hollingsworth and all the current committee (except Wendy) at the AGM.

The Committee again reviewed our **Covid management arrangements**. From now on, we

intend to follow the [national roadmap](#). So if 'the rule of 6' comes into force on 29th March, the same will be allowed on site. But please keep your guard up, keep distancing and keep using gloves/sanitiser at the gate.

The communal **bonfire** area is very full. Thank-you for putting dry materials under the tarps. That will reduce smoke nuisance to our neighbours when we burn (soon, wind direction permitting). If you are not sure where to put different types of waste, answers are in our **Good Waste Guide**, on the [Waste Management page](#) of the website.

Member Laura Burt (83A) is creating a forest school (www.naturescapeoxford.co.uk) at St Nicholas Primary, Marston. She asks members for contributions of woody (not thorny) waste for her to collect Thurs 18th. Contact laurammw at aol dot com for details.

Good to see the **skip** used for plot tidying and, on the whole, what is in there is appropriate. Just a reminder – no weeds or earth, please (compost on your plot) and take recyclables home.

Tree contractors have been catching up on management of willows on our north boundary.



Willows need regular work to stop shedding of branches or slumping into waterways or plots. Ours are cut on a cycle with others in consideration of views from Port Meadow. The contractors also took some weight out of the large tree by the gate (on the advice of Oxford City Council tree specialists following its shedding of a limb in the storms last year) and improved sight lines outside. Cripley Island is next on the list.



James Allan (5th September 1959-15th February 2021) – Celebration of a life well lived.

Wendy writes “As surprising in death as he was in life. James Allan’s funeral on February 26th at St Michael and All Angels in Summertown was a deeply spiritual affair, introducing some of us to ‘liberation theology’ and news that James was to be buried at sea the next day off The Isle of Wight near The Needles, as was his wish. James’ faith was a very private affair as we learned from an excellent eulogy by his eldest son, Matthew.

Jamie, Jeremy and I were invited to represent his allotment friends and so many of those attending knew and had visited Cripley Meadow and knew what an important place it was to James.

Serendipity.. that life well led...meant James had been latterly introduced to the Rev Giles Knight, and this had led to his “Celebration Of A Life Well Lived”. Mathews eulogy so captured the man and his Canadian route through theological training, art college, being an electrician, into a stage lighting and finally to Oxford and Digital Imagery at The Bodleian. I knew James as a gardener first, when he took Plot 73 in 2003, shortly after he had moved to Oxford. He was amazed he could have a small plot of land and I was amazed at the quick succession of planting and the objet trouvé. We shared another passion as artists and we knew the allotment and painting were the real stuff of life for us. However, James was a renaissance man with so many skills, interests, loves and such a zest for life that I think there are lots on the site who felt a special link with his many interests. James was a committee member in the early days of reclamation. He was not a confrontational man but when the issue of ‘old trustees’ began to stop the reclamation in favour of some *‘half assed notion of trees and brambles and wilderness’* he stood up to be counted and led the AGM item which meant the site could move forward. He had a powerful attachment to land that was for growing and celebrating food and harvesting. Cynthia wrote *“Thank you for being such a good friend over all these years. As you know James’ happiest times were spent either painting or at the allotment. It broke James heart not to be down there keeping it in shape and enjoying all the seasons these past 13 months. It broke mine that I couldn’t be with James and at the allotment for him too, but it was too much to do both I will be able to remedy that soon, in honour of James.”* With attention to lockdown and safety, his friends will be helping in

the honour of reclaiming his plot to its former glory.



Cynthia and James, front right.

The photo is Midsummer 2019 when allotment friends met on Jeremy’s plot for dinner. Rodney took the photo of our beautiful evening ... now made all the more special. Hopefully when lockdown rules are a thing of the past we can return to summer gatherings and I hope plan how we celebrate our long guardianship of this piece of land. On that occasion there will be time for a quiet reflection on our lovely allotment neighbour.”

Winter pruning fruit trees - The next week or two is your last chance to winter prune your apple and pear trees – our rules say that they must be no more than 10ft/3m so you need to prune smaller than that to allow for the season’s growth. RHS advice on how to do it [here](#).



More advice for this month on the website ([Your plot→The gardening year](#)) includes suggestions for soil preparation and the start of seed sowing. I have just put a few first early potatoes in my polytunnel; starting seeds in there soon. This week’s harvest of polytunnel crops sown last autumn and first of this season’s rhubarb.

Good gardening,

Manda, CMAA Secretary and Vice-chair