

Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations

Founded 1919

O&DFAA Newsletter November 2012

I finally managed to clear my bean sticks (I am behind with everything this year) in the sun on Sunday. By now it may be you are planning a few of the warmer activities associated with this time of year. Do look at <http://www.allotment.org.uk>. John Harrison has a great allotment site. It has discounts for members on gardening stuff. Also associations can get discounts on seeds at Kings, Dobies, Thompson and Morgan and Marshalls if association members can find a way to work together. Here are a few reminders of things that will be on our agenda for the January Liaison meeting and some that require action nowif you have not already done it.

OCC Rent Review September 2015.

As you know O&DFAA is working with the Allotment Liaison Meeting and Oxford City Council to agree the basis for new allotment rents on for the last 7 years of the present OCC leases. These run until March 2021. The new rent is due in September 2015 so we hope to have this settled by September 2014 to enable committees to go to AGMs with any changes. All associations should have received 2x A3 copies of their site plan from Corporate Affairs. These were circulated by OCC at the September Allotment Liaison Meeting. Parks posted them to associations who could not attend. If you have not got them please contact Ruth. Please **return these** with the information as requested to **Ruth Whelan at Corporate Property, Oxford City Council, St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BX before December 1st**

O&DFAA and Oxford City Council Allotment Competition



97 entrants on 18 sites participated this year. The overall results are in the attachment. In spite of it being

a really difficult growing year the competition committee reported on plots and sites that had weathered the Olympic slugs, rain and cold. Excellent brassica crops now seem to be the reward for those that kept planting out.

The competition award evening was held in the Town Hall on October 25th. Photos of the awards are attached if you wish to pass them onto your members. The members who attend get to see a slide show of all the participating members and sites. For many this is the only time they see another allotment site or so many other plots. The judges gave us the benefit of their wide experience. John Alcock was impressed at how we had overcome such awful weather and commented that he saw far more diversity amongst present day gardeners. Mike Kent encouraged us all to support our new members who had had a 'trial by rain' in their first year. The competition's 'main man' Tim Treacher, exhorted us to improve our composting. Our presenter this year was Val Bourne of The Oxford Times. She gave us a lively talk on her background as a gardener and plotholder.

Lenthall Road was the Alderman Knight Shield winner for best site this year. It has reclaimed its beautifully situated site and is



now a thriving and fruitful allotment in all senses of the word. We received the

following thank you letter from the chair.

Dear, Wendy,

A short message just to say how honoured we all were that Lenthall Road received the best Allotment prize. We decided that with all we have to offer - playground, 18 nationalities and languages, diversity, wildlife area, flourishing shop and devoted allottees it would be worth the effort to give it a go and it is marvellous to see that the hard work by all our members, but especially

Adrian the Field Secretary and Cathy, has paid off. It was also fitting that Michael was able to receive the shield on behalf of the Committee as he has given so much of his time to the site over the past twenty plus years and the success was in many ways down to his past stewardship. So, on behalf of all our members I would be grateful if you could thank Tim and his team for what we see as a job well done! Colin Chairman LRRHAA



I understand the site award was proudly on display at their AGM. Bill Whaley of Lenthall Road won the

highly coveted Challenge Trophy. Here he is with Val Bourne of the Oxford Times. He took his Challenge Trophy shield to the AGM too. Michael



Fernandez is pictured with the Alderman Knight Shield. He received one of the warmest applauses of the award evening.



Other category winners were David Porter of John Garne Way, Ian and Shelly Salisbury with Fiona from Trap Grounds, Tim Bartlett from Elder Stubbs, Jake and Ria Snaddon from Cripley Meadow, Roy Leach from Kestrel Crescent and Madison Trafford from Barton Fields. The full lists of awards and results are attached and congratulations go to all.

The allotment award evening enables plot holders from across the city to meet, share, celebrate and encourage each other. We understand that most plot holders want to get on and do their plot. We note that at the award evening they share plot successes and failures, good seed varieties and composting secrets. The participants go back to their associations rewarded and, whether actively or passively, pass on good practice.



I was sorry that I could not join the competition team on their site visits this year. I have valued this in previous years as it is invaluable. The many ways and means that ploholders and sites use is amazing ...and I can be useful and do the photos. I first went along to observe in 2008 and the change is very marked. Then the majority of sites still had unused land but now there are more members, more worked plots and more varied cultivation and this has transformed many of the sites across the city. So many more people can and do enjoy the benefits of producing their own local food.

Stuart Fitzsimmons, Head of Parks and Open Spaces, attended the evening. As you know we have worked with Oxford City Council since 2009 to enable the



competition to continue. Oxford City Council kept a dedicated budget for the competition. But this was much reduced as the allotment officer post was removed. Presently it covers postage, most of the prizes, an allowance for the award evening and an honorarium for the chief judge. The Federation has a much smaller budget which funds the site prize, the certificates and expenses. Tim Treacher for O&DFAA organises the entry paperwork, the site visits and the results and the award evening itself.

The cups and shields are long standing. The Challenge Trophy winners each get an engraved spot on the main shield and we can see these go back to 1970. The criteria have changed and presently focus on encouraging diversity and good allotment use and practice and the monetary prizes are very modest (£10 to £25) but the standard at the top is very high! The judges make the decisions on awards. The organisation is mostly borne by Tim Treacher in liaison with the Competition Subcommittee of Reg Curnock and David Mead. The subcommittee meet with the judges before and after the 4 days spent on sites.

Here is John Alcock, David Mead, Mike Kent, Tim





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Treacher and Reg Curnock at work John Alcock has been a competition judge for 15 years and has had a life time working in horticulture. Mike Kent has been a judge for 3 years. He was asked to join the judging team by Wendy Skinner Smith as he has been a local plot holder and chair of a local site for 40 years. This year we also thank volunteers Corrine Laydon from Kestrel Crescent and Bernard Clarke from Elder Stubbs for taking the photographs. Wendy organises the slide show and designs and prints the certificates. This year Richard Barrett O&DFAA secretary, served at the bar at the award evening with assistance from a Bartlemas member. O&DFAA fund 3 small honoraria for the competition and bear the cost of lunch on site days.

The competition will be on the liaison meeting agenda in January. I hope members will join with me in supporting the competition which I feel celebrates and supports many more plotholders than the entrants. These excellent gardeners do much by their example to encourage good allotment practice across the city. I hope O&DFAA members will also think of other ways we can supporting and celebrate allotments (how about some talks by members). So far this is the only one, apart from our liaison meetings, that allows members from across the city to meet. It keeps allotments (and local food) in the eye of OCC and the public and that is important in these days of austerity.

Security

Many sites benefitted from the security improvements brought about arrival of OCC fencing in 2007-2010. This ended many years of underfunding and neglect on many sites and came at a time where there was a groundswell for renewal. However two sites have recently reported vandalism and crop stealing this year. Security will be on our agenda next year but meanwhile please encourage your members to be alert and report any problems to your local beat officer.

O&DFAA members Public and Employer Liability Insurance for

Jonathan Clark, O&DFAA Treasurer, recently sent each association treasurer an update on this year's O&DFAA insurance. This is renewed each October. To qualify you need to pay your

O&DFAA membership in April. His email contained 2 attachments. 1. The renewal information had the dates of cover, and listed the two parts, being the Public Liability and the Employer's Liability cover. There is a level of detail included about the Public Liability cover.

2. The Oxford Federation of Allotment Associations.pdf is the Certificate of Employer's Liability cover, which is supposed to be displayed anywhere you have employees. For us, that probably means contractors and volunteers from the membership working on site. We are not qualified to give insurance advice but we recommend Associations should print this off and display it on the notice board. If you are not an O&DFAA member please check your site has public and employer liability. OCC has a general public liability insurance which applies to all its land in its name. O&DFAA public /employer liability insurance was taken out on the advice of OCC to specifically protect our member association's sites, trustees and committees from any public or employer liability claims.

Here are some dates for next year

- Dec 19 Weds 8.30am OCC /Fed Committee
- Jan 22 Tues Allotment Liaison meeting 7pm for 7.30pm
- March 5 Weds 8.30am OCC /Fed Committee
- April 23 Tues 6-7 pm O&DFAA AGM /7.30 Allotment Liaison meeting
- May Allotment Competition judging (to be decided at Jan meeting)
- Aug 22 Weds 8.30am OCC /Fed Committee
- Sep 24 Tues Allotment Liaison meeting 7 for 7.30pm
- Sept Allotment Competition judging (to be decided at Jan meeting)
- October O&DFAA members insurance renewal

Thanks to you all. Without your work Oxford City's allotment provision would not function. I hope to see you at the meeting on January 22 in the Town Hall. As usual refreshments are provided from 7 and the meeting starts at 7.30

Best wishes,

Wendy Skinner Smith

Chair Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations /Joint Chair OCC Liaison Meetings