

2018 5 May Newsletter

1. ODFAA and Allotment Centenary planning

Phil Baker writes - I have been co-opted onto the ODFAA Committee to take the lead on one specific aspect of the planning for 2019.

You will recall that we are planning to produce a short history of the Oxford City allotments to coincide with the centenary of the Oxford Federation in 2019. Each Association was asked to provide a contribution to this publication of about one side of A4, with or without photos or illustration. We have received a few, for which thanks to those concerned; but there are a lot outstanding.

While 2019 still feels a way off, in terms of the schedule for writing, editing, printing etc, the next 6 months are going to whizz by. So, can I encourage those of you who have yet to start on your 'one pager' to give some thought to the process and begin to get something down on paper soon. Ideally we would like to see contributions by the end of July, but appreciate the task may be more difficult for some than others. To refresh the brief - write about what you know of the history of the site you are on and your own association. In some cases allotment gardening long pre-dated the formation of the current association, so if there is something interesting and relevant to say about the site before your association was formed and took it on, then do please add this detail if you know it.

Please don't worry about providing perfect prose or how the page is organised, as long as the association is represented in some way to start with. If you are lucky enough to have full sets of minutes and other records, you may be able to put something together with little need to look elsewhere for information. If, however, you don't have this material, you might be wondering where to go, where to look, for relevant details and things like pictures. It is my intention to approach the obvious local sources of potential material, like the newspaper archives, the City Council records, historical societies and others holding things like old maps, on everyone's behalf to begin with. This will, hopefully, avoid everyone having to duplicate the effort and prevent the possible sources getting pursued by 35 different associations looking for the same things.

If anyone has original historical material that contains details of other associations and/or the Federation itself, do please let me know.

If anyone is struggling with just getting going, for whatever reason, do let me know rather than sitting on the problem. I am always happy to chat things over and help to find a solution if I can.

I will be in touch again once I have approached the sources mentioned above with details of what they have available that would be relevant to different associations, and the gaps in material and knowledge that we might need to try and fill by other means.

Phil Baker - ODFAA and St Clément's & District Association.

Email me - philbgood@hotmail.co.uk

2. Winter talk

We are negotiating to have a NO DIG talk from Charles Dowding. Date to be advised at September ALM meeting

3. Competition

We think that we will be able to run an allotment competition in centenary year, next year. Funding has been identified to offer bigger prizes. Details at the September ALM meeting.

4. Is your association having a problem with Thames Water's new billing method?

Mike Nunn writes - The three sites of the Headington & District Allotment Association have historically been customers of Thames Water, but new rules about the water market meant that Thames Water were obliged to transfer non-domestic accounts to one of the newly-emerged water retail companies. Accordingly, without our being consulted, two of our sites were last year transferred to Castle Water.

This proved problematical, as Castle Water operates a complicated billing method, using estimates based known consumption in a previous period, extrapolating that up to the bill date. As allotment consumption varies according to the season, this produces inaccurate bills. They also have a policy of billing in advance on the same basis and have made it clear that they will not change it. This can be problematical for cash-flow, especially if a site is billed for a future low consumption period estimated on the basis of a high consumption period. We are aware of at least one site in the Oxford area badly affected by this.

As it is possible to switch to another retailer, we set about trying to identify a retailer with a more reasonable billing approach. This led us to First Business Water, who have been very helpful. They will allow us to pay by monthly direct debit on the basis, in the first instance, of our own estimate of annual consumption. As Thames Water recently advised us that the third site should also be transferred to a retailer, we have now gone through the formalities to have all three sites transferred to First Business Water.

The contact at First Business Water is Tina Patel (tina@firstbusinesswater.co.uk). In order to obtain a quote, it is necessary to have prepared the ground by going back through previous bills and working out from the readings a fair cubic meters figure of annual consumption. They will then use this as the basis for giving a quote. We have undertaken to provide them with our own meter readings on a monthly basis and the resulting quote seems very fair

Mike Nunn - Headington Treasurer

5. Insurance

We have been assured that cover is continuing despite documentation still being awaited.

6. Grant Forms

Should be with you in the next few days.

John Lardner ODFAA Treasurer.