

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Winter 2020-2021



Welcome to Fiona Our new Chair

Hello and Happy New Year

My name is Fiona Dare and I have recently taken over from Colin Sparkes as Chair of BADAS following his retirement. Happily, with his great knowledge, Colin remains a valued committee member.

I have been an allotment holder for 7 years now, working a small patch on the Priory Gardens site with the help of my husband. This proved invaluable during the first lockdown giving us focus and exercise in the fantastic weather that we had. The second lockdown giving us no excuse for not doing winter work there! Obviously, not everyone was able to take advantage of this due to work commitments and health issues so let's hope that 2021 will prove easier for us all.

If anyone has any allotment related issues that I may be able to help with, my email address is:-

and my phone number is:

Covid fuels demand for allotments

The Coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdowns appear to have generated an increase in the popularity of allotments, both locally and nationally. From the onset of the crisis, the Government announced that ploholders would be allowed, even encouraged to continue to cultivate their allotments, both as a means of socially distanced exercise and as a source of healthy food.

Despite its generous provision of allotments, Bridport Town Council now has a waiting list of 120 residents wanting an allotment, a significant increase since the start of the pandemic.

Meanwhile a study by academics at the University of Sheffield, published in the *British Food Journal* in November 2020, outlines the wellbeing benefits of allotment gardening. 163 volunteers recorded "high levels of social and community activities, including the sharing of surplus food produce, knowledge exchange, awareness and interaction with wildlife, emotional connection to their allotment, appreciation of time spent outside and aesthetic delight in the natural world".

According to Miriam Dobson, one of the report's authors, there was "quite a wide spectrum of mental health benefits". People "were talking about community events, the nice feeling of sharing food, knowledge and skills", as well as a "connection to seasons and a joy in weather".

With loneliness a growing issue in the UK, allotments can provide a valuable community. For Jen Anderson, a lecturer in Glasgow, coming together with fellow allotmenters isn't "necessarily about connecting with people who are similar to me – it's about connecting with people you have nothing in common with apart from growing".

In terms of physical health, Dobson notes that on top of the exercise involved in growing, people who have allotments are also "more likely to get their five-a-day fruit and vegetables than people who don't grow their own food".

My Winter Project

*BADAS Treasurer **Mandy Rathbone** describes how she has made good use of her time under Covid-19.*

This winter, for the first time in many years, I have some time on my hands.

This is partly due to semi-retirement and partly due to curtailing of other activities due to Covid.

For whatever reasons I decided I needed a "winter project" on the allotment to keep me going through the deep dark months.

It started with the idea of getting a new and bigger shed on my allotment – my small old shed being on its last gasp. There had once been a shed at the top of my allotment, which had been removed some years ago so I knew there were some shed bearers there somewhere.

However due to several very busy years with work and family responsibilities the top section of my allotment had got itself into a somewhat disreputable state! The alders growing on the bank between my allotment and St Marys playing field had got enormous and overhanging. Brambles the size of trees were growing out of said bank and had colonised the whole space along with ivy and couch grass and a host of other unwelcome settlers. This needed tackling and I set to with enthusiasm plus scythe and loppers!



As I slashed and lopped and sawed off enormous branches I found to my delight, not only the shed bearers, but some forgotten compost bins and a hitherto unknown to me stone wall along the base of the bank. My allotment neighbour reckons this could be part of the old Bridport boundary. Once I had done my initial cutback and was able to stand back and assess, I could not believe just how big the cleared space was. There was room for a shed and so much more!

At the same time I had been hearing and reading

about the Forest Garden initiatives. Forest Gardens are self-sustaining areas of woodland with many other "layers" of planting beneath the trees, shrubs and groundcover plants, a diverse range of species of fruits, nuts, edible leaves, medicinal plants, perennial vegetables etc. I read about the Agroforestry Research Trust who have forest garden projects on the Dartington Estate in Devon (www.agroforestry.co.uk) and went on an afternoon guided walk around their tree planting research site –



an inspiring visit.

Following all this I decided to try and make my very own mini-forest-garden at the top of my allotment. It turns out that my enthusiastic alders were a very good start as these are nitrogen-fixing trees – taking nitrogen from the air and into the soil making it available to other plants. No doubt that is why the brambles had grown so enormous!

I am going to plant a walnut tree and some dwarf plum trees as a start off. I have a never-ending supply of alpine strawberry plants in my garden which romp everywhere, so I will use some of these as ground cover to begin with. And then I'm going to take it from there, researching what I can grow and what will thrive in the space.

On top of that its going to be a social space. During the 2020 lockdown and restrictions, which look set to continue well into 2021, I have missed meeting with friends for drinks or picnics or stationary outdoor socialising. We've been for walks but inviting people into my garden has been difficult as the only access is through my house. In my "forest garden" we can meet outdoors, sit at a social distance, in a "safe space", relax and enjoy nature, the elements and good company. What could be better?

In the meantime, I'd better get on with digging out those brambles!

***Mandy Rathbone**
December 2020*

New fencing at Skilling

Following requests from the Society on behalf of ploholders, Bridport Town Council has replaced broken fence posts and fencing at Skilling, provided new fencing to the whole of the roadside fencing, and adjusted all the gates.

Town surveyor Daryl Chambers says, "We have also replaced the combination padlock at Flaxhayes and have added the ditch clearance to our Winter jobs list."



News from the Community Allotment - our New Polytunnel

The allotment Covid year carried on slowly with me "inviting" six people only to attend each weekly session.

The system worked well. We managed to look after everything and, in the end, have a decent crop of vegetables and fruit. Potatoes and brassicas did particularly well and all the crops benefited hugely from the watering rota which I shall set up again this year if we have another hot summer.

We now have a brand new polytunnel, expertly constructed by orchard volunteers Ian (the Mayor) and Danny. They worked as a socially distanced couple and only needed a bit of help with putting on the cover. We were lucky enough to receive a grant from the West Bay Car Boot Fund which contributed towards the purchase cost for which we were very grateful. Can't wait to get started on filling it up and hope that we can all be working again in the Spring.

Jenn Baker, BCOG Chair

Please keep dogs on lead

Bridport Town Council has instructed that as of January 2021, all dogs on council allotments must be kept on a lead.

Seeding our Future

In the last newsletter we carried an article about the "Seeding Our Future" initiative. Mandy Rathbone visited their stall in December and spoke to Candida about the project.

Following this Mandy has signed up to be another Allotment Ambassador for Seeding our Future, hoping to share and exchange ideas for her forest garden and other climate-adapted tactics for successful allotment growing in these challenging times - any suggestions for edible plants that like to be regularly underwater very welcome!!

On the afternoon of Wednesday 17th March, Seeding our Future plan to hold an allotment walkabout event, visiting some of the Allotment Ambassadors. Covid Rules permitting, this will be open to all interested growers, and should be an opportunity for outdoor, distanced meeting and chatting.

BADAS will send out an email to members nearer the time to confirm details of the event.

Bridport Town Council and allotment waiting lists

Bridport Town Council maintains waiting lists for allotments, and although the council offices are currently closed, information about council allotments and a waiting list request form can be found at; <https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/services/allotments/>

And a reminder that incidents of vandalism and/or theft from allotments should be reported to the council, police and the Allotments Society.

Groves still open

Garden centres have been classed as an essential shop, so Groves Nurseries in Bridport remain open. The company states that "Our aim is to provide the safest possible shopping environment for our wonderful customers and fabulous team during this difficult time. January is a quiet time in the garden centre anyway so there will always be plenty of space for you to shop safely. Please ensure that you follow our guidelines when visiting."

"We have seed potatoes, onion sets, shallots and all of the vegetable seeds you need for you to grow your own food this year."

Groves also offer a home delivery and click-and-collect service, with ordering [online](#) or by telephone, 01308 422654 and both of these can be completely contact free.

Groves Nurseries in Bridport will be open 8am until 5pm Monday until Saturday 10am until 4pm Sunday.



Colin Sparkes, who has retired as BADAS Chair, at his presentation celebration in September.

Bridport and District Allotments Society has signed up to support the Plastic Free Bridport campaign headed by Town Mayor and BADAS member Ian Bark.
More information on Facebook.

Bridport and District Allotments Society

Membership of the Bridport & District Allotments Society costs £2 per annum, and gives entitlement to discounts e.g. on some items at Groves'. Our Membership Secretary/Treasurer Mandy Rathbone will be pleased to receive your subscriptions. For information please contact Mandy by email at [REDACTED]

Receiving the newsletter: We now send out the newsletter, meeting agenda and minutes by email — if any member is unable to receive these by email, please contact the Secretary, Lynne Atkinson, on [REDACTED] to receive a copy by post or hand delivery.

Newsletter contributions welcome: if you have any items you would like to see included in future issues of our Newsletter (which comes out quarterly) or if there are subjects you would like us to cover, please contact the Editor, Charles Wild, by email at [REDACTED]. Contributions to the next edition (articles, news items and/or photographs) are welcome at any time. Many thanks for contributions this time - please keep them coming.