

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Winter 2012-13



16 new allotments at Flaxhayes

Bridport Town Council hopes shortly to provide about sixteen new allotments on two sites at Flaxhayes (Rivervale). The land is to be transferred into town council ownership from West Dorset District Council.

The site shown above is in fact in Bradpole parish, but the parish council declined the offer to take on the land, so it is to be transferred to Bridport Town Council for allotments.

In the past two years Bridport Town Council has also provided new allotment sites at West Allington and Priory Gardens, making it one of the most active councils in the country in the provision of new allotments and its efforts to meet demand for plots.

In the autumn issue of this newsletter, we reported the summer flooding at Skilling and Priory Gardens, but omitted to report that the existing Flaxhayes allotments were also affected. A long-standing plotholder at Flaxhayes recently informed us that most of the allotments there had been flooded on the afternoon of Saturday 7 July, but that they have recovered well since. He also reported that vandalism and theft of produce had reduced recently. If any Flaxhayes plotholder would be willing to provide a regular (quarterly) short report for the Newsletter, please contact the Editor on [redacted] or email [redacted]

Come along to our winter meeting

An invitation from the Society's membership secretary, Lynne Atkinson:

"We are trying to make our meetings more relevant and attractive in order to increase attendance. We held a brief survey at the AGM held on 8th September – asking how we could improve future meetings. It was felt that the meetings were too stuffy with most time being spent on procedural matters which were not really of much interest.

"So, in future, the boring stuff will be left to the committee and the general members' meetings will be less formal with features such as guest speakers, raffles, and a more social atmosphere with discussion of gardening matters of real interest.

"A talk on vegetable growing will be given by local expert Bob Symes at the next meeting on 6th December 2012 at Mountfield – do and come along and meet your fellow members!

"Wine, mince pies and nibbles will be available after Bob's talk.

"If anyone has ideas on further items for the meetings please let me know."

Lynne Atkinson [redacted]

Theft and Vandalism

Lynne has also sent us the following reminder:

"A member has informed me of an attempted shed break-in at West Allington allotments - this has been reported to the police.

"It is important that the police are aware of any anti-social behaviour such as this - which should always be reported."

Lynne Atkinson

Date of the next Allotments Society Meeting:

Thursday 6 December 2012, 7.00 pm, at Mountfield (town council offices), Rax Lane, Bridport (see article above).

Composting Perennial Weeds

The National Allotments Society's magazine (*The Allotment and Leisure Gardener*) carried a useful article recently (Issue 4, 2012) about composting perennial weeds, such as nettles, couch grass and bindweed, which have apparently indestructible roots, and which are the curse of many allotment plots (including the Editor's).

The author of the article, Rob Carlyle, reminds us that if these weeds are put in the compost bin they will not die, but if composted will re-infest the ground when reintroduced to the soil.

One suggestion, to leave perennial weeds to dry out on mesh, is only really practicable if the volume of weeds is small and when conditions are hot and dry – otherwise the perennial roots will not be killed off.

Bob Flowerdew is quoted as recommending drowning perennial weeds by placing them in a bucket, filling it with water and tightly fixing on a lid. Roots and seeds will be killed by long submersion in the dark, and can then be added to compost after a number of weeks. The liquid "leachate" can be drained and stored to be used in a highly diluted form as a nitrogenous plant feed.

Garden Organic recommends bagging perennial weeds to kill them. Without light they will die and the contents of the bag can then be added to the compost. Grass cutting can be added to the bag to speed up decomposition, although this will not work as quickly as drowning. But the bagging method will provide barrows full of excellent organic soil conditioner.

The National Allotments' Society quarterly magazine is free to members of the NSALG, and individual membership of the Society costs £20 per year. Other benefits offered include discounts on seeds and equipment from some suppliers.

A reminder of some useful websites:

The **National Allotments Society** (The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners):

<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

Garden Organic, formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Association:

<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/>

Bob Flowerdew (gardening writer and broadcaster)

<http://bobflowerdew.co.uk/>

Allotment Growing (John Harrison)

<http://www.allotment.org.uk>



A report from Bridport Community Orchard

Despite the challenging weather Bridport Community Allotment has continued to thrive. Since coordinator Carolyn Brightwater left earlier this year some of us from the Bridport Community Orchard Committee have continued to meet there every Thursday afternoon from 2 pm to 4 pm.

We have been joined by several local people, many of whom have limited space to grow produce at home, and who are happy to make use of the community area for some gardening with company, (plus tea and biscuits).

Our polytunnel proved its worth, with the tomatoes grown inside continuing to produce masses of fruit while their cousins outside succumbed to blight. Slugs and snails enjoyed the summer, declining to chew on the nasturtiums planted for them to the detriment of our cabbages and lettuces, but we are experimenting with beer traps, so may have even happier if shorter-lived molluscs. Hopefully this will mean our broad beans will survive at least one winter challenge.

With the onset of winter we shall be meeting less often but planning for next spring. If there is anyone who would like to try their hand at growing some food but who doesn't want to take on a whole allotment we would be pleased to welcome them. Some raised beds are also available for would-be growers to do their own thing in a small space.

Meanwhile the garlic is planted, the broad beans have germinated, and we are looking forward to spring.

For more information please see our website: www.bridportcommunityorchard.org.uk or contact our chair Jill Lloyd [REDACTED]

Gill Massey



Ralph Probert

Bob Driscoll, founder chairman of the Bridport and District Allotments Society, pays tribute to former committee member Ralph Probert, who died on 4 November 2012

I was deeply saddened to learn of Ralph Probert's death recently, following a short illness.

I met Ralph through the Society several years ago - he had an allotment in Skilling and was an early recruit.

As the Society expanded he became a very proactive member and joined the committee. His carpentry and building skills (Ralph was involved in the construction of stage scenery for many productions by Encore at the Arts Centre) were



Ralph at the Summer meeting of the Society in 2011, held at the Palmers allotments at Gundry Lane, second from right

legendary and he was a driving force behind the Society's 'stalls' at several events, in particular the Bridport Food Festivals on Asker Meadow and the celebration of the 60th anniversary of VE Day, held at the Bridport Town Hall, the latter being the recreation of a cottage with 'allotment garden'.

After he and Babs moved to West Bay from Bothenhampton, he gave up his allotment to devote more time to a new and very large garden, but continued to be closely involved with the Society.

Ralph was a very generous man, both with his time and energy and was passionate about growing fruit and vegetables and all things 'green'.

He will be sadly missed.

Bob Driscoll



... and organising the Society's display at the 2008 Bridport Food Festival

Colin Sparkes, BADAS Chairman, adds:

"Ralph was involved with the Food Festival for several years, designing, erecting the Allotments' Society display, growing some veg. (including runner beans in a pot growing up canes). He collected other members' plants for them, everything arranged by him.

"Ralph also built the 1940s House in the Town Hall a few years ago. He carried all the timber up the stairs, built the structure without a nail in the floor and then removed it all afterwards.

"He had some help from local groups including Encore, but much of the design and work was his."

Town Council rules out Allotments Sex Probe

Committee member Roger Pollock has sent in a cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* dated 15 November 2012, reporting that Leeds city council has issued a questionnaire to its 4,000 allotment holders which included a question on sexual orientation.

Leeds plotholders were asked to state whether they were heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. A report to councillors said that the exercise was carried out to "gain an understanding of the demographic profile of allotment users".

A Leeds councillor criticised the questionnaire, saying that he failed to see what sexual orientation had to do with gardening. "We are talking about people growing potatoes, onions, leeks or whatever. I am all for equality but this is ridiculous."

The Chairman of the Leeds and District Gardeners' Federation said that the expense and effort involved in carrying out the survey would have been better spent on reviving the city's many derelict allotment sites.

A spokesperson for Bridport Town Council said this week that the council had no plans to enquire about its allotment holders' sexual orientation.

Other News from Bridport Town Council

Waiting List

There are 43 residents of Bridport parish on the town council's waiting list, with another 40 from neighbouring parishes, indicating a strong demand for more allotments despite the recent provision of getting on for 100 new plots at various sites.

Manure deliveries

At the October meeting of the Society's committee, the Secretary reported a telephone call from a member, inquiring whether the council could give notice when they deliver manure, as a heap was delivered to the Priory Gardens allotments and there was some doubt about its provenance. It was thought that the council gave the manure to those who were badly affected by the floods in July.

Town surveyor Daryl Chambers has responded that normally the town council gives notice when it is planning to deliver manure to its allotment sites, but the situation at Priory Gardens after the floods was considered exceptional and in need of an urgent response.



Burton Bradstock allotments – the Society's summer visit in 2007 – and due to host the 2013 summer meeting

Report from Burton Bradstock Allotments Society

Like everyone else we have had a rather poor season, although some veg have grown well. Onions grown from seed produced good sized bulbs, and the leafy types like spinach grew well. Runner beans have had a variable time, but beetroots were small. Our allotments were partly flooded in the July deluge, and with the tragic cliff fall, added to the gloom. Our barbecue was cancelled, although the village produce show went ahead. We are now looking forward to our winter meet at our President, David Barnikel's house, where we pay our dues, and then drown our sorrows in some good ale! Lets hope for a better new year for us all.

Margaret Tebbs, Treasurer

Bridport and District Allotments Society

Membership of the Bridport & District Allotments Society costs £2 per annum. Our Membership Secretary/Treasurer Mandy Rathbone will be pleased to receive your subscriptions. Please contact Mandy on [redacted] or send her an email at [redacted].

Receiving the newsletter by email: If any member who currently receives the newsletter/minutes of meetings through the letterbox could receive them by email (and save us delivery cost/time), please contact Lynne Atkinson - [redacted].

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, [redacted]; or email entries to charleswild@btinternet.com. Contributions to the next edition (articles, news items and/or photographs) are welcome at any time, but by **10 February 2013** please.