

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Summer 2014



Carlos Guarita has submitted these newspaper extracts from 1918 which provide evidence of the allotment movement in Bridport towards the end of the First World War – also evidence of the important role of the Trades Unions.

Nationally, the allotment movement had received great impetus from the Smallholdings and Allotments Act of 1908, which consolidated previous legislation obliging local authorities to provide allotments for the “labouring population” (?the political equivalent of today’s “hard-working families”?).

Demand grew overwhelmingly because of the War, and in 1916, local authorities were given powers to

take over unoccupied land without their owners’ consent. In February 1917 the food crisis was accentuated with the start of U-boat warfare and Kaiser Wilhelm II’s threat to “starve the British people”. Common land, parks and playing fields were commandeered for growing vegetables, and Prime Minister Lloyd George had stormy meetings with landowners who resisted pressure to provide land.

By the end of the Great War there were a million and a half allotments. After the War it appears there was a clash between the desire of landowners seeking to reclaim their land, and an ever-increasing demand for allotments, particularly from returning ex-servicemen. By 1919 it was estimated that nationally there were some 7,000 new applicants coming forward each week.

The notices and reports of the meetings in 1918 are evidence of the demand for allotments in Bridport and the active role played by the National Union of General Workers. More information about this period and the events in Bridport will be gratefully received.

POTATO GROUND.—A meeting was held in the Foresters Hall on Monday, under the auspices of the National Union of General Workers. The question of formulating a scheme to secure ground to meet the demand of the men of Bridport was brought forward and discussed. Mr. E. P. Rendall, at the invitation of the branch, attended and submitted some very useful and practical suggestions to those present, for their consideration, and after different members had expressed their views it was decided to postpone the subject until the first week in June, when an open meeting will be held in the Foresters Hall to proceed further in the matter. It is hoped that a co operative scheme can be produced by which Chemicals, seed potatoes, and other seeds required can be obtained at the lowest rates by buying in bulk. As the question of allotments and potato ground is of vital importance, affecting every home in Bridport, it is hoped that the people of Bridport will take up the matter seriously and place the scheme upon a firm basis.

(The Foresters’ Hall is now the British Legion Hall in Victoria Grove).

Next Allotments Society Meeting

Thursday 12 June 2014, 7.00 pm

Summer meeting and walkabout—meet at the Flaxhayes Allotments.



Yes, it's Slug Heaven – Again!

Conversation topic of the season on Bridport allotment sites, after a very mild, wet winter, seems to be Slugs and Snails, so it seems a good moment to revisit the advice of Professor W.O.C. Symondson, first quoted in this newsletter three years ago.

Professor Symondson, of Cardiff University's School of Biosciences, has an unusual interest: **"I have a particular interest in slugs and their natural enemies."**

"Britain has few serious pests compared with the tropics where all vegetation in a whole region can be wiped out by insects such as locusts. However we do have one pest that can, under certain circumstances, destroy most of our crops. No gardener needs two guesses as to what this is; it has to be the slug."

The bad news, according to Professor Symondson, is that **"Britain is the slug capital of the world."** Nowhere else has such ideal conditions for a broad range of slug species, for our cool, damp summers and warmish, wet winters allow slugs to be active, breeding and feeding for so much of the year. Added to this, we have recently suffered a succession of milder winters, and cooler, wetter summers. Normally icy conditions kill off a percentage of slugs and prevent the remainder from breeding and eating our crops for a while. Similarly, hot, dry weather kills slugs, which have to burrow deep into the ground to find the moist conditions that they need to survive."

Types of slug

There are four main types of slug, the largest of which, the "Black Slug" (which is often red), is probably the least damaging, except to seedlings in the spring. The three smaller varieties, the Field Slug,

the Garden Slug and the Keel Slug, are the chief villains when it comes to brassicas, potatoes and root crops. An early season blitz on these can help.

Some slug control measures

There are disagreements as to whether so-called "organic" slug pellets can be classed as organic, but some varieties on sale contain ferrous phosphate rather than metaldehyde (which is harmful to birds and other vertebrates).

Your Editor has had success with beer traps (yogurt pots), but one tip is to ensure the rims of the traps are 1-2 cm above the soil surface. This still allows the alcoholic slugs to crawl in, but makes the pots less likely to trap ground beetles which are valuable slug predators.

Barriers of sand, ashes, eggshells, etc, can be effective but are hard work to maintain.

Professor Symondson recommends night-time hunting by torchlight with a hat-pin on the end of a stick - he says you can collect a couple of hundred slugs in an hour, finishing them off by plunging them into salt or boiling water.

Encourage slug predators such as ground beetles by having wildflower areas, shrubbery, hedges, herbaceous borders and nesting areas for birds.

Controlled refuges, such as old wooden boards or small pieces of carpet, slates and so on, will provide daytime refuge for beetles and other predators, also for slugs, which can easily be collected and destroyed.

Professor Symondson's advice on slug control can be found at:

<http://www.cf.ac.uk/biosi/staffinfo/wocs2.html>.



St Mary's School allotment appoints a part-time Gardener

Readers will remember from the previous newsletter the provision of a new polytunnel on the allotment at St Mary's School.

Recently the tunnels and allotment gained a parent gardener, Emily Gainsford, who has a son in year one. She has been given a contract until the beginning of October funded by the 'HOME in Bridport' project. The new polytunnel was installed in early March, with help of parent volunteers and members of Transition Town Bridport.

Emily is doing brilliant work and is very skilled and knowledgeable about things like permaculture and biodynamics, as well as being really interested in food. She has come up with a plan which empathises

"Community, Education and Production". Emily said that this garden "can only be sustained by the parents". She wants to create a place where families want to come, guided by their children.

Plans are afoot to have a Fun Day in late June/early July where everyone will help to build a cob clay oven so that pizzas can be cooked.

The tunnels are still in process of being set up for productive gardening too; we need lots of help. As Emily says "This space is not just about growing food, its also about growing communities."

If you could volunteer some time in this place, say just an hour a week, especially to water, please contact me on [REDACTED]. This is for you people who like being outside, having your hands in the dirt, eating good food, things being affordable, hanging out with friends, sharing skills.

Join us in one of the many 'HOME in Bridport' projects emerging; inspired by Robert Golden's film *Homes for HEROES* presently being exhibited at Bridport Arts Centre until 31st May.

Sarah Wilberforce
photos: Robert Golden



BADAS at the Food Festival

The Bridport and District Allotments Society will have a table in the Town Council tent at the Bridport Food Festival on Asker Meadow on Saturday 14 June. Come and visit us there.



Community Allotment News

After a very wet, but mild, winter our weekly allotment sessions started again on 6th March. It was a cold and overcast day but nine of us got stuck in tidying and preparing the plots for the forthcoming season. We experimented with different types of green manure for the first time last autumn – field beans, Winter Tare and Rye grass mix – and they all sprouted but the Rye grass was the most successful. All of these were dug in to nourish the soil. The polytunnel, which at the end of the season becomes a bit of a storage area, was cleared of old junk (to the tip) and old pots (to Groves for recycling).

Our first consignment of recycled scaffold boards, which we purchased with a grant from Palmers Brewery Community Fund, were delivered and two of our stronger lads set about installing them. It didn't take too long and has transformed the edges of the beds making them much neater and easier to keep tidy.

The large herb bed, magnificently created and maintained by Susan, came through the winter mostly intact but with a few losses of mainly Mediterranean plants which were probably waterlogged.

Our tomatoes and cucumbers are doing well in the polytunnel with this nice warm weather and we have experimented this year by planting them in large pots with the bottoms cut off and then sunk halfway into the soil. This method was recommended by Joy from Sea Spring Seeds to concentrate the water around the base of the plant. We have just sown our runner bean seeds which, this time, we are growing over an archway – I only hope we don't get too many high winds!

Last week we had two new members join us and we also welcomed a group from Moving On who have planted up a raised bed with salad crops.

Happy gardening everyone!

Jenn Baker

Appeal for garden tools

The Bridport Mental Health support group, 'Moving On', recently secured an allotment for the use of their members. They are delighted to have it but have a problem in that they have no **garden tools**.

Should you have any that you no longer use and would like to donate them, please drop them off at the **Bridport Youth Centre in Gundry Lane**. If you are unable to get them there, please contact Roz Copson on [REDACTED] to discuss.

Enviromesh available

Laura Dron writes: I have large quantities of (used) genuine Enviromesh, cut to various sizes, which is only safe deterrent for cabbage whites and carrot fly. Sizes and prices on application, will be far cheaper than new. Contact Laura on [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Grow Your Own Stall

The Grow Your Own stall on May 3rd this year was busier than ever. Loads of tender veggie plants were donated and had all been rehoused by 12 midday. Some went to visitors who were taking them back to London etc, some to locals wanting to try something new, and some to an enterprising woman who is going to grow in pots in a car park by her flat in Poundbury!

Over £100 was collected in donations for the Water Survival Box which the View From is supporting this year. A lovely social morning was spent by all those who came along to help on the stall, or just dropped by to say hello.

Jude Hopkins

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 [REDACTED]. Contributions to the next edition (articles, news items and/or photographs) are welcome at any time, but by **10 August 2014** please. Many thanks for contributions this time - please keep them coming.