

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Summer 2017

Summer meeting, 15 June

The summer meeting of the Bridport and District Allotments Society will be an informal visit to the allotments in Burton Bradstock, which we last visited in 2013.

We will meet on site at 7 pm on Thursday 15 June. Local member Geoff Adderley has kindly provided [directions](#), as follows:

Coming into Burton Bradstock from Bridport, go past the Anchor Inn and continue to the Texaco Garage. Do not turn towards Abbotsbury but go up the side of the garage and turn sharp right into Southover. Down Southover the allotments are on the right (opposite what used to be the Dove pub, sadly now closed). For SatNav users the postcode is DT6 4RD. Parking should be OK at that time along Southover.



Food Festival

BADAS will have a stand as usual at the Bridport Food Festival on Asker Meadow, Saturday 17 June, in the Bridport Town Council tent—leaflets, advice, information displays—come and visit us on the day.

13 New Allotments at Dibdin View

Bridport Town Council has created thirteen new allotments in response to the continuing demand. The new plots are at St Cecilia's/Dibdin View in the north of the town. Most of the three whole plots and ten half-plots have been allocated to people on the Town Council's waiting list and are already in use by their new tenants.

The new plots bring the total number of Town Council allotments to 181. There are still 39 Bridport residents on the waiting list, and another 31 from neighbouring parishes.

Next BADAS Meeting - Thursday 15 June 2017

The next meeting of the Bridport and District Allotments Society will be held on Thursday 15 June 2017, 7.00 pm, at Burton Bradstock—for directions see above. All members welcome..



Jim Binning speaking at the meeting in March

Asker Meadow Bees update

At the Society's quarterly meeting in March 2017, Jim Binning gave an update on the Beehives in Asker Meadow. Notes by Brian Atkinson.

In July 2015 Jim installed the largest swarm he had ever captured; but next day it had disappeared. Normally he would lock them in for 24 to 48 hours but he did not have a sponge with food and they were all gone in the morning.

A few weeks later he split a hive and put half into the hive in Asker Meadow. To keep the bees, he included some cones with eggs and larvae. At the start of winter, he commenced feeding. In February bees were flying but within a few weeks were all dead – the weather was very wet. The peak starvation time is from now onwards for 6 weeks, as the queen starts to lay; because of lighter evenings – but there is little food available and bees cannot fly if it is wet.

In June 2016 Jim bought some bees from a supplier in the Midlands. It was a 3lb package with the queen in a captive cage (a hair curler with some food on a sponge). The plastic mesh of a bee box had a rip in it and during the journey back, 5 hours via M5, bees were crawling all over the interior of the car – he hurried to Asker Meadows and put them in the hive!

The queen was hung off the centre frame and was liberated within 24 hours giving the bees a chance to get used to the queen's pheromones – without doing this the bees would have killed the queen as an invader. They made a lot of combs and were a good friendly swarm of bees. The queens from this supplier are all English.

On 24th December, he opened the rear of hive and took a picture. It showed a knot of bees clustering around the queen which ensures sufficient heat to ensure survival. Jim will keep a close eye on the weather as now is the critical period for survival as mentioned above. At present flowers are scarce but

dandelions are available and are excellent for insects and one of the commonest sources of nectar, particularly at this time of year.

Jim thinks that the best method is to feed the bees in September with sugar water, depending on the summer and then to let them overwinter on their own honey. This is the minimum of interference necessary. DEFRA sends out "Bee Starvation" notices from Christmas and the new year, with fondant being recommended with lower temperatures.

As of today the Asker bees are doing well and Jim's intention is to put a further hive in the boot field. Two hives are better than one and he will thus again get some bees from his Midlands supplier by the middle of May

A bee takes 21 days to hatch and the first job for worker bees when they hatch is to clean up the cell. A worker will live for about six weeks. Male drones will live through the summer; leaving the hive in the afternoon to fly in the "drone corridor" looking for virgin queens to mate with. Few achieve this and in September the colony ejects the drones and they thus die out.

Without a catastrophe, the colony will regenerate. The queen will live for five or six years unless expelled with a cohort of three to five thousand workers. A full hive may have around forty thousand bees. When a swarm does occur, it will have scout bees which will find a suitable new location; indicated by a waggle dance – the best dance wins!

A queen will only leave when a new queen is available. At that point, the colony is very vulnerable. The new queen needs four or five mating flights with up to fourteen drones. Subsequently she can lay up to 5 million eggs and lay more than her body weight each day. The successful queen will ensure that she is the only one surviving by killing the others. Egg laying can commence within 36 hours.

The two hives in the community orchard continue to do well and have been inspected by the government bee inspectors. If the inspectors know of the presence of a hive they will visit it and ensure that the law is being followed. Five or six years ago top bar hives were not common and bee inspectors were not familiar with them. Jim knows the local inspector who is reasonable but probably thinks that Jim doesn't intervene enough! They are particularly keen to record instances of the Asian hornet – these have been detected in Somerset. They can completely kill off a complete hive.

The native hornets found in Dorset do not seem to be a problem, and although wasps and bees seem to coexist reasonably well, but attacks on a hive can be fatal. The design of Jim's hives incorporates a periscope entrance which is defensible by the bees. If wasps are a problem then sugar water placed away from the hive can divert them and the bees seem to ignore it.

Bee update (continued from page 2)

A serious pest is the varroa mite which is conventionally controlled by chemicals. Jim checks hives by putting a white card beneath the hive and seeing how many mites fall on it, caused by the bees grooming themselves.

Jim is convinced that allowing bees to determine the size of their comb construction lowers stress and raises their resistance to diseases such as varroa. A method of control recommended by apiarist Phil Chandler is to dust the bees with icing sugar. This stimulates grooming which removes the mites. To try this Jim uses an old-fashioned barber's talc puffer.

Jim does not use smoke to control bees. This indicates a fire to the bees who then eat their own honey and protect their queen by closing around her. The honey subsequently requires replacement and this may cause stress to the colony.

US bees are normally extremely stressed; at any one time $\frac{3}{4}$ of the country's bees are on the move – by lorry. The hives start at the almond orchards on the west coast and progress north. The film "Vanishing of the bees" describes this progression and subsequent problems. In the US, the loss of a percentage of bee colonies is merely seen as a business expense.

The colonies are habitually subjected to insecticide, with replacement colonies being bred and supplied from Florida. Bees are subjected to overwork which exhausted them. They are subjected to exposure to monocultural diets and colony collapse is frequently encountered. There is even an attempt to develop a mechanical bee to take over from endangered natural bees to counter the type of problems seen in China where in some districts excessive use of pesticides has eradicated bees, and crops are now pollinated by hand using paint brushes.

Notes by Brian Atkinson

***Suggestions for speakers, or talks
or subjects members would like to
see at future BADAS meetings will
be welcome—contact the
Chairman, Colin Sparkes***

***or
Secretary, Lynne Atkinson***



National Allotments Week

A National Allotment Society initiative

***National Allotments Week (14-20
August 2017) is an initiative of the
National Allotment Society***

This year the theme is “**Growing the Movement**” a celebration of all the hard work put in by voluntary association management committees, plot-holder volunteers and councils managing, creating, developing and safeguarding sites.

The NAS says: “let’s tell the world about our thriving movement, we want to hear about new sites, site regeneration and innovative projects across the UK to include in our National Allotments Week press release. Email [redacted] with details.

“We will also be publicising Open Days and Allotments Shows in the Regions during National Allotments Week and over the summer, let us know about your plans and we will put them on the website and our **National Allotments Week facebook page**.

“Email diane@nsalg.org.uk with your event details and we will send you a paper or digital publicity pack. We can also email you out the new National Allotments Week logo above to use on your website or publicity materials.

“The NAS aims to protect, promote and preserve allotments and we call on all those who value allotments to support us in this endeavour, we can all do our part-

“Allotment associations - protect your site, register as a community asset. Allotment Federations -keep allotments in the public eye, make sure they are mentioned in the Local Plan and lobby your councillors and MPs.

“Councils preserve and value your allotment service – it has the potential to deliver some of your public health targets.

“Plot-holders — join the National Allotment Society and support your regional allotment network to promote the allotment movement.

“Aspiring plot-holders - do not be put off by the thought of a long wait – sign up for a plot now; without waiting lists allotment authorities cannot assess demand “

NAS website—www.nsalg.org.uk.

News from the Community Allotment

*We shall put on our usual **open afternoon**, which coincides with National Allotment Week, on Thursday 17 August. There will be the usual plants and produce plus our Gazebo café groaning with home made cakes and other goodies. It will run from 2-4pm.*

Over the winter we met once monthly as usual to keep things tidy and prepare for the new year. We did lots of pruning as we now have about 14 various fruit bushes and one very productive grape vine. The broad beans were sown at the end of October and have come up splendidly this spring with loads of good looking pods and not one instance of blackfly.

Our weekly meetings started on 23 March and we've had an average of 10 members per session so far. All the individual raised beds have been allocated and are looking good and this year three people have taken on a small flat plot each. These were created from part of the "new" allotment we took on last year and which has undergone much digging and de-weeding over the winter to knock into shape.

For Bridport Museum's "Season of Heritage" we were asked if we could sow a small flax bed so that anyone interested in the old rope & net industry could come and see what it looked like. We sowed this at the end of March but it took a while to get going due to the very dry weather. Now we are getting some decent rain it is doing much better and by the end of June the plants should be about 1 metre tall with lovely blue flowers starting to bloom.

We have just planted out pointed sweetheart cabbage and a cavolo nero type kale and, this year, made sure they are well covered with a tunnel of enviromesh to keep the pesky butterflies off. We have also planted out tomatoes, basil and cucamelons in the polytunnel.

A few weeks ago the very large willow in the Church House grounds next door was having its 5 yearly pollard with all the branches being shredded on site. A couple of our members asked if we could take a few barrow loads, to which the answer was yes, so we now have newly topped paths that are nice and springy to walk (and kneel) on!

We recently discovered that one of our compost bins had attracted a family of rats so we emptied it out (after giving the outside a good bash to scare the critters away) and used the contents to fill a trench where the runner beans will be grown. Last week we erected the frame for the beans using some tall hazel poles left over from last year's hedge laying. In fact



they are so tall we had to get the orchard ladder out to tie the tops together - once the beans have grown we'll have to find someone called Jack to shin up and pick them!

Jenn Baker

Community Allotment Organiser

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, but by **20 August 2017** please. Many thanks for contributions this time - please keep them coming.

Website: visit our website at:

www.bridportallotmentsociety.co.uk

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