



Llangattock Green Valleys newsletter

Issue 114
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<http://www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org/>

ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS

By Steve Sharp

Hydro scheme update

The very dry Spring in South Wales has meant several records have been set for low electricity generation at our hydro schemes. May was the lowest generation month since our final hydro scheme, Cwm Saerbren, was commissioned in February 2018 and total generation of only 7.5 MWhs in the past three months for all five schemes compared to 191 and 168 MWhs in the two previous quarters, which had set new records of high generation.

In the last newsletter I mentioned that some of our hydro schemes had experienced problems including a landslip at Cwm Saerbren due to the heavy rains which had exposed the penstock pipe, fortunately after the main rainy period. This has now been fixed and a photograph of the new gabions which have been put in place to secure the penstock at Cwm Saerbren is below (it's interesting to compare this to the photograph of devastated landscape in the previous newsletter).



Photo: New gabions filled with stone to support the penstock pipe at Cwm Saerbren

The penstock near the intake of the Nant yr Hafod scheme had also come apart when one of the clamps worked its way loose. In the end we purchased a new, slightly larger clamp and were able to secure the pipe in place more effectively and this scheme is now generating again.



Photo: Repaired penstock with new clamp near the intake of Nant yr Hafod

Our first virtual AGM took place remotely using Zoom last month. As a result, many new Members of LGV-MH2 were able to attend the AGM this year including an investor from Northern Ireland. They were informed that the Society had had an excellent year, with record income which had generated an operating surplus for the first time.

LACAS

By Sue Cartlidge

This time a couple of years ago, we were able to have a work party on the allotment site to manage the hedges and the grounds generally. This year – no such thing! A year ago we held our Big Lunch get-together and of course this year, we are unable to hold such social events. We had scheduled our Summer Show for the end of August, but it looks like this may well have to be cancelled for 2020. One of our members has suggested that we should hold a huge party for NHS workers once the restrictions are lifted, which sounds like a great idea!

Fortunately, allotmenters have been permitted to attend their plots in these last three months of lockdown, assuming social distancing of course, which means that most plots are being well tended and are now fairly productive. We've managed to arrange a few

“caretakers” for several plot-holders who have been unable to get to the allotments due to being isolated – on the understanding that they are handed back next year!

The LACAS community orchard is coming on apace and we are looking forward to hooking up with the Woodland Group in the autumn on their apple juicing day – here’s hoping that will go ahead as planned.



Apples



Sweetcorn



Artichoke

For the first time in several years, we are now completely full up with a waiting list of folks wishing to take on an allotment.



BACK IN BUSINESS

By Jackie Charlton



Charter
for Trees, Woods
and People

Well, that was a quiet three months. Volunteers were not able to get into the woodland as a group but we were able to continue to do a few jobs around the site. The time allowed us to get moving on our planning application for a new green matting roadway across the meadow to the woodland site. It has been a long haul but we just have the final bits to agree with the National Park Authority. The good news is the Ecologist for the National Park was very impressed with the work we have undertaken on the site. In line with our ecological aims we want to improve the meadow by encouraging more wildflowers.

Last year we planted Yellow Rattle, seen in seed here on the right. This is a parasite plant which lives off the roots of rye



grass, thereby opening up the site for more diverse plants and flowers, and it’s working!



The photo to the left shows the 10 meter square that was built for the Yellow Rattle experiment.

Whilst in lockdown, two regular volunteers were able to get into the site to continue to burn wood for charcoal. This has been a lifesaver as selling charcoal is proving very important to our sustainability now. [Natural Weigh](#) in Crickhowell proudly sells our charcoal as it fits into their ethos of selling sustainable, local produce.

We are really pleased to start volunteering again and this week our group met for the first time since March. We can't cook our traditional sausages, drinks have to be brought in with lunch and we are very careful about how we are all operating and observing social distancing. A new Risk Assessment has to be adhered to and everyone is signing in and confirming they are well. Cleaning fluids and sanitisers are within easy reach of the work activity and everyone has their own pair of marked gloves for protection. It was so good to see everyone this week.



Making charcoal



BOB'S BEE NOTES - July and August

A swarm in June is worth a silver spoon. June is usually the month that bees swarm when the conditions are right and the bees are in the swarming mode.

Several things can play a part in the natural swarming impulse such as the Queen losing her



ability to breed consistently as her pheromone levels decrease with age. Overcrowding in the brood nest, where it becomes too small in brood box so the Queen runs out of laying space can also be a trigger.

Other causes can be that the colony begins to feel wealthy with stores but too cramped, and the weather can play an important part too - good weather for the bees to collect nectar can cause the laying area to get choked with honey, and wet, cool, confining weather can also mean the Queen runs out of laying space.

The type of Queen heading the colony can have an impact too; some races of bee swarm most years in their natural habitat. In this country, a July swarm may not have time to build a wax comb on a new site and then fill it with young brood and sufficient stores in time for the winter months. In these circumstances, the old Queen will go with the prime swarm even though she may be waning.

She may be replaced later in the year by the bees in a process known as supersedure. This is done when the bees realise the Queen's pheromones are declining, prompting them to build a few new Queen cells. These are very different to the normal cells. When this happens, the bee-keeper will begin to take action either taking the cells to hatch a Queen or destroy them. These new Queen cells are deliberately built in a carved-out hollow made by the bees in the face of the comb. I have not heard of many swarms this year but others have told me some areas of the country are inundated with them. Good beekeeping, Bee Bob.





LCW Trustees are justly proud of the commitment and enthusiasm of all our volunteers. We meet regularly every Tuesday and you can find information on where and when we meet on our website www.lcwg.btck.co.uk. If you are interested in environmental management, green wood crafts or bee keeping then please do get in touch. Please email Eric Gower eric.gower@gmail.com for a membership form.

LGV VOLUNTEERS NEEDED PLEASE! CAN YOU HELP?

We are looking for a number of people who would like to get involved at Director and non-Director level. Please get in touch with Andrew Fryer if you would like to explore the ways in which you can help: andrewfryer70@gmail.com. You can meet our Board of Directors [here](#).

We'd also like to get a few more volunteers involved in monitoring the hydro schemes and taking readings. This would only take around an hour or so once every 6–9 weeks. If you are interested in helping, please contact Simon Walter admin@llangattockgreenvalleys.org.

www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org

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