



Llangattock Green Valleys newsletter

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

Ahoi! What Grows Here?

By Melissa Appleton



Photo by Vaida Barzdiate

Ahoi! What Grows Here? is a project about food, land, community resources and imagination on the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal. It's part of a wider arts and environment programme happening on the canal between 2018-21 called [Hinterlands Wales](#), developed by [Canal & River Trust](#) and arts organisation [Peak](#). Llangattock Community Woodlands have been marking time since the lockdown to engage in this project with us.

Ahoi! What Grows Here? is guided by Wales-based artists [Owen Griffiths](#) and Ella Gibbs working with community groups, residents and cross-disciplinary collaborators, from geologists to poets. The project reimagines the Mon & Brecon as a *slow food highway* and is shaped by the seasons, its contributors and political and social context. Linking local producers, allotments and community food initiatives, *Ahoi!* uses communal activities including harvesting, apple pressing, composting, clay oven-making and cooking to facilitate open conversations exploring food, climate, land and sustainable futures.

During Season 1 (2019) the project was located at Pontymoile Basin, Pontypool and made connections with community, education and health groups in the area such as Talygarn Unit, Growing Space, Griffithstown Primary School and Panteg Employees Club. On Saturdays throughout October, Pontymoile Basin became our outdoor studio as we hosted workshops on clay oven building and foraging, a conversation for local growers and served up a lot of soup (thanks Kelly and James at the Boat Yard Café!). We were joined by a host of specialists, growers and makers including natural building specialist Sam Makumba, forager and author Adele Nozedar and weaver Amanda Rayner. You can [view a short film about Autumn School](#).

Season 2 of *Ahoi! What Grows Here?* extends our previous activity at Pontymoile Basin and sets sail along the length of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal during Autumn 2020. Repurposing a narrowboat as a roving larder market stall and conversation space, **Storm Kitchen** will travel slowly from Brecon to Pontypool during October 2020, guided by artists Ella Gibbs and Owen Griffiths, historian-in-residence Abu-Bakr Madden Al-Shabazz and an incredible group of speakers, activists and thinkers. We'll also be launching our new website ahoiwhatgrows.com, which features a slow food highway map of the Mon & Brecon highlighting growers and producers as well as community projects and deep time. Please get in touch with melissa@peak.cymru to add your contribution to the map!

A weekly conversation series, **Storm Kitchen Talks** will discuss climate, colonialisation, food, land, deep time and radical futures from the Mon & Brecon. Join us via Zoom, on Wednesday evenings throughout October, as we travel north to south along the canal with invited guests: public philosopher Roman Krznaric, poet Marvin Thompson, broadcaster and food activist Dee Woods, author Carolyn Steel and many others. On Wednesday 14th October, Storm Kitchen will be moored near Llangattock Community Woodland as we discuss water, land and food resilience. Full details and booking via Eventbrite <https://storm-kitchen-talk-2.eventbrite.co.uk> or email melissa@peak.cymru for more information.

We'll also be hosting a series of community events with groups based along the Mon & Brecon Canal celebrating slowness, biodiversity and natural wellbeing practices. On Saturday 17th October, James Scrivens, head mushroom grower at Coed Talyfan, will lead a **Fungal Kingdom** workshop at [Llangattock Community Woodlands](#), 10.30am-1pm. James will take the group on a fungal foray, giving an introduction to the fungal kingdom and some practical cultivation techniques using logs and woodchip beds. If Covid-19 guidelines allow, we will also be firing up the clay oven, built as part of Autumn School last year and now installed in its new home at Llangattock Community Woodland. Please contact James Godding by email jgodding@yahoo.com to take part in the Fungal Kingdom workshop, all welcome but numbers are limited due to Covid-19 health and safety guidelines.



Photos by Vaida Barzdiate

<https://storm-kitchen-talk-1.eventbrite.co.uk>, <https://storm-kitchen-talk-3.eventbrite.co.uk>

ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS

By Steve Sharp



Hydro scheme update

We had some typically rainy periods in Wales during August but otherwise our schemes have been quiet over the summer months.

Another hole opened up just before the intake weir at our Cwm Gu scheme over the summer. This is not unusual in an area with water running over limestone but any diversion of water before the scheme intake clearly reduces the generation. Work to remedy the problem was scheduled for August but was delayed by rain but the hole has now been filled and the area before the weir has been reinforced.

Over the past quarter we have completed the compulsory Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme (ALoMCP) changes to the electronic controls of our five schemes and our contractors, SCS Ltd., also carried out an electronic service at the schemes. The cost of this work was more than covered by a grant paid by the local electricity network operator company Western Power.

LACAS

By Sue Cartlidge



This year's Annual Summer Show did not take place, sadly no tea tent or dog show – and not because of the weather this time!! So instead we held a Socially Distanced Allotment Summer Show, whereby participants displayed their best produce on a table by their plots and we could all – socially distanced of course – have a wander round and admire our growings and generally congratulate ourselves. The sun even shone for us and a good time was had by all; we even had a few visitors who were deeply impressed by our lovely allotment site.

There was no external judge this year and of course we weren't able to judge the produce itself, but the Committee was able to do a thorough plot inspection relying on criteria such as quantity, quality and variety of produce, neatness of plot and pathways, effort put in, conformity to the Society's clause regarding sustainable gardening practices, attendance, and altruistic contributions to the Society and fellow plot-holders. The awards made this year were for Plot of the Year (won by Pavel Vitek), the Dr J.L. Morgan Memorial for half-plot of the year (Anne Sheldon) and the Llangattock Challenge Cup for Best Newcomer (Chris Coventry).

In April/May there was a sudden surge in people wanting to grow their own fruit and veg, so that now we have no vacant plots and a fairly long waiting list. Most of the newcomers have done a sterling job in bringing previously neglected plots up to standard and this has been reflected in awarding them a 50% reduction in allotment fees next year.

As the growing season draws to a close, allotmenters are busy covering our plots for the winter to help keep the weeds down for us all – “one year’s seeding, seven years weeding” is the rueful gardener’s saying. So a good layer of some organic mulch will conserve soil moisture, improve health and fertility of the soil, reduce weed growth and generally improve the looks of the plot. When in doubt, some black plastic or carpet will do some of the job!



BACK IN BUSINESS

By Jackie Charlton



Llangattock Community Woodlands are working well now to get more product and prepare for the autumn coppicing season. Our Charcoal Burner has been doing remarkably well and sales are soaring. Burning charcoal and tending the bees were two activities we could undertake in lock down and the charcoal was particularly welcome as people stayed at home in the fine weather and needed that charcoal for the BBQs.



The bees have done well this year too with about 40lb of honey harvest from just one hive. We have two other hives and more about those below.



BOB'S BEE NOTES - September

We are now in the last throws of summer after another unusual weather year for both ourselves and the bees. I have been out of the country (in England) for eight months since the end of December so my bees along with other people's were very much left to do their own thing during the main Covid shutdown. Attention to the hives has been very limited apart from me adding brood boxes during the first half of April to give the Queen bee

ample space to lay eggs and for the bees to store both honey and pollen needed to keep her brood well fed. Inevitably some of my colonies swarmed and then died out; interestingly they were the more hybridised bees that were from swarms collected a few years ago south of Abergavenny, when I first moved into Llangattock. My more native British bee colonies have all survived, even though some had swarmed, but alas next to no honey surplus for me this year. I have had lots of brood frame wax drawn out for next year's colony expansion so all is not lost but not getting enough local honey is disappointing and that also means no expansion of my colony numbers.

I have been asking round this year to see how many beekeepers have had a surplus of honey and most are saying perhaps one box of honey if they were lucky, so not a good year. Llangattock Woodlands bees have had one of the colonies produce two boxes of honey that has a very nice taste and colour. The other hives in Llangattock Woodlands are just OK and with some feeding should get through the winter as they have new Queens, so should do well next year. There has been little sign of the Varroa mite in any of the hives I have inspected this year, so perhaps that bug has also had a difficult year.



Queen bee cells. Images by Franz Schmid, [Pixabay](#).

About a month ago I started raising some new Queens to take over colonies that were headed by Queens aged two or three years; they should have mated with the local late-bred Drone bees that were raised about two weeks before so that they would be mature when the Queens were on their mating flights. One of the colonies that swarmed left no Queen so after a short while, one of the worker bees started laying eggs but as she was not a Queen and had not mated could only lay unfertilized eggs. The result is all the eggs laid in worker cells are Drones but small, so not of any use and as the drone is longer than a worker bee, the cell is extended.

There is always next year.

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@llangatockgreenvalleys.org.

