



Bee Friendly Monmouthshire: Winter Newsletter: January 2018

Dear Beefriendlies!

Welcome to the winter edition of the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire newsletter. **Happy New Year 2018** to you all and here's wishing all our pollinating insects a bumper 2018 season!

Tribute to Morris Jones

We are very sad to report that our dear friend and colleague, Morris Jones, passed away unexpectedly in late November 2017. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife, Jenny, and his family. Morris was an exceptionally kind and gentle person with a charming, engaging personality and wry sense of humour that endeared him to everyone who met him. It was a great privilege to know Morris and we will miss him so much. We are immensely grateful for his tireless commitment to Bee Friendly Monmouthshire over the past few years. He worked wonders on fund-raising, running stalls and selling wild flower seeds and won many new supporters to the pollinator cause. There will now be an empty space in our group that no-one else can fill.



Morris at his Beefriendly best.

Later in the year we propose setting up an award in honour of Morris, an annual **Morris Jones Bee-Friendly Award** for a special contribution to the wellbeing of pollinating insects. We also plan to plant some bee-friendly trees in his name. More details will follow in due course. Would local businesses that received their Monmouthshire Mix seeds from Morris please contact us by email on beefriendlymonmouthshire@gmail.com to ensure we maintain your supply. If any new businesses would like to sell our seeds please get in touch.

Important bee-friendly events in 2018 – dates for your diaries

- **World Bee Awareness Day May 20th**: Bees for Development and Bee Friendly Monmouthshire will be organising the **Monmouth Bee Festival** again this year on the weekend of the 19th/20th May in the Nelson Garden in Monmouth. More details later.
- **Agricultural Shows: Chepstow – 11 August: Usk – 8 September**. Dates to be confirmed.

Update of BFM activities July-December 2017

Events

- **Chepstow Show, Saturday 12 August**: Another very successful show with plenty of visitors to our marquee, shared with Gwent Energy CIC and other local environmental groups. The children's quiz was popular and brought young families in so we will make more of a feature of this next time
- **Usk Show, Saturday 9 September**: A rather drizzly day with a few bursts of sunshine. A lot of public support for our Hedgerow Manifesto.
- **Abergavenny Just Food Fringe Event - What future for fish? – Friday 15 September**: BFM had a stall alongside other environmental groups at this well attended event which featured two informative talks about sustainable fishing.
- **Gwent Best Kept Village Awards, Chepstow Garden Centre, Friday 6 October**: For the first time in 2017 the new category established by BFM – **Best Pollinator Village** – was added to the awards. BFM members Cyrene Powell, Phil Powell and the late Morris Jones spent 3 days in July touring 14 villages and rated each one against our set of pollinator-friendly criteria; **Abundance** (the amount of pollinator-friendly planting), **Diversity** (the range and continuity of flowers) and **Creativity** (the imaginative use of planting space). The BFM judges produced very detailed written feedback for each village listing what they enjoyed and making suggestions for pollinator-friendly improvements for next year. Cyrene gave a short summary of their conclusions at the ceremony and presented a certificate for best pollinator-village to Llandevaud. Llandevaud Common was a wonderful example of a good wildlife friendly area, complete with signs to educate the public and help raise awareness.

BFM certificates have also recently been presented for two outstanding pollinator-friendly gardens in St. Arvans – “Pear Tree Cottage” and “Grange House”.



Cyrene Powell presents the certificates

Meetings with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC)

In the autumn two very useful and encouraging meetings were held with MCC to raise issues concerning the management of green spaces and hedgerows for the benefit of pollinating insects.

Issue 1: Management of verges and grassland

Although there has been some reduction in the number of cuts to verges in the County we feel there is still scope for far more. Unfortunately some verges are still being cut at the wrong time of year, often when wild flowers are still providing food for insects. More attention also needs to be paid to removal of the arisings after cutting. This is necessary to reduce the fertility of the soil to discourage the growth of tough grasses at the expense of wild flowers. BFM advocates no cuts from early spring to late summer. It was agreed that BFM would report problems with specific cutting regimes to MCC. MCC now has a cut and collect machine but it is only suitable for large areas, not smaller verges or steeply sloping ground. So we acknowledge the practical obstacles to collecting the cuttings.

We had sight on line of the maps of the County showing the green spaces managed by MCC and the number of times they are currently cut annually. BFM now have a major piece of work to do – which is to survey as many of these sites as possible and to recommend changes to the cutting regimes where we think this will benefit pollinators and wildlife without compromising safety, etc. If you would like to help with this please let us know - the more people who get involved, the more sites we can survey!

Issue 2: Need for public signage on verges

We agreed to identify priority green spaces in Monmouth, Chepstow and Abergavenny for wildflower management regimes plus NO MOW signs. BFM has offered to design and fund these signs. It was agreed that we would submit sample designs. Here is an example.

Issue 3: Potential adoption of BFM's Hedgerow Manifesto by MCC

The BFM Hedgerow Manifesto was launched in May 2017 at the Shire Hall, Monmouth with Professor Dave Goulson from Sussex University as our guest speaker. We put forward the manifesto as an example of good practice that we hope MCC will consider adopting as official county policy. It was agreed that hedges owned by MCC away from the highway would be a good place to start, perhaps creating a few pollinator-friendly hedgerows as exemplars.

We are confident that BFM and MCC will continue to work together on new environmental policies and practices, building on the close cooperation that led to the development of the County's Pollinator Policy.

BFM Talks

In September Rose and Glyn Parkhouse hosted the Chepstow U3A Gardening group and gave an illustrated talk on wild bees in the garden. In October Sue Harrison gave an illustrated talk on **Gardening for Bees** to the Usk U3A Gardening Group at the Garden Centre in Usk. These talks have inspired a lot of interest and enthusiasm from these keen gardeners. If you know of a group which might be interested in hosting a talk please email us on beefriendlymonmouthshire@gmail.com

Facebook and Gmail – bringing all BFM members up to date with social media

At our steering group meeting on Nov 23rd BFM Chairwoman, Cyrene Powell, led a practical workshop session on how to manage our BFM Facebook page and our Gmail account. This was much needed and much appreciated by everyone. Many thanks to Cyrene for passing on her expertise. Find our Facebook pages on www.facebook.com/beefriendlymon .

NB: Extra (shorter) address for our website www.bfmon.org.uk

BFM priorities for 2018

- **Hedgerows:** Spread the good practice contained in our Hedgerow Manifesto to landowners, farmers, local government, businesses, schools and colleges etc. Work closely with MCC to incorporate the principles of wildlife-friendly hedge management into their official management policies.
- **Verges and green spaces:** Continue to press for much greater reduction in unnecessary and untimely mowing of verges and green spaces in the county. Actively discourage the use of herbicides such as Glyphosate to clear green spaces. Encourage the natural growth of native wild flowers and grasses in green areas to provide food and habitat for insects and wildlife.
- **Pesticides, herbicides and fungicides:** Provide information on our website with links to relevant research about toxic substances that are harmful to pollinating insects. Raise public awareness about this issue. Engage with local garden centres, nurseries and other plant sales outlets about the level of pesticides in the plants they sell.

We rounded off 2017 with a combined BFM/ Bees for Development Christmas picnic at the Bees for Development shop in Monmouth. Extra excitement was provided by Stephanie Tyler's new dog which managed to escape into town but was eventually retrieved safe and sound from the Police Station. Maybe he should be renamed "Lucky"!

Sue Harrison - January 2018