

# **The Bushy Times**

**Newsletter of the Bushy Park Allotment Association**

[www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk](http://www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk)

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## ***BUSHY PARK ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION***

### ***COMMITTEE & COUNCIL NEWS***

The committee held their regular meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March and the Secretary reports the following: -

- The opening of the woody waste facility had been a great help to plot holders, thanks to Giuseppe for supervising.
- The next Open Day will be 21st May. Food will be served but will not include meat in any form. Food will be served on paper plates, as opposed to plastic.
- A facility will be set up this year to enable plot holders to donate excess produce to a local charity foodbank. Details will follow.
- The Council is still promising action on the reletting of vacant plots and the clearance of overgrown plots.

## ***ODD NOTES***

### **BRUCHID BEETLE**

One of my jars of saved bean seed has been attacked by Bruchid beetle. It's a few years since this has happened to me, so last year could have been a good year for them. The seed has been damaged beyond use! Bruchid beetle is endemic and is primarily a pest of broad beans. It is widening its appetite, my bean seed was a climbing French bean which is a bit disturbing!

The beetles have one life cycle each year, feeding on pollen and then laying their eggs on the developing bean pods. The eggs hatch and the larvae bore through the pod wall and the life cycle continues inside the bean seed. When the pupae turn into beetles they bore a neat circular hole about 1 millimetre in diameter out of the dry bean and head off to repeat the cycle. These holes alerted me to their presence.

### **TOMATO SEEDS**

I have sown a selection of tomato seeds this year trying out several new varieties. I have also saved seed from the Valentina tomatoes sold by Lidl, a useful and tasty small plum tomato. They were sown into a pot to see if they germinate and I will then have to get them to a productive stage to see come true. I was unable to confirm from the internet whether or not they are an F1 hybrid.

It is worth knowing that if your tomato is not an F1 hybrid you can save your own seed and money at the same time! Choose a fully ripe tomato for seed saving. You need to remove the gelatinous coating from around the seed, it contains a germination inhibitor. Rubbing them on a rough surface will do this, then rinse them and spread them out to dry thoroughly before storage. I use the miniature jam pots from hotel breakfasts to keep my seed dry and store them in a cool location. Some of my favourite tomatoes were procured this way, the Datterino were from a market in France.

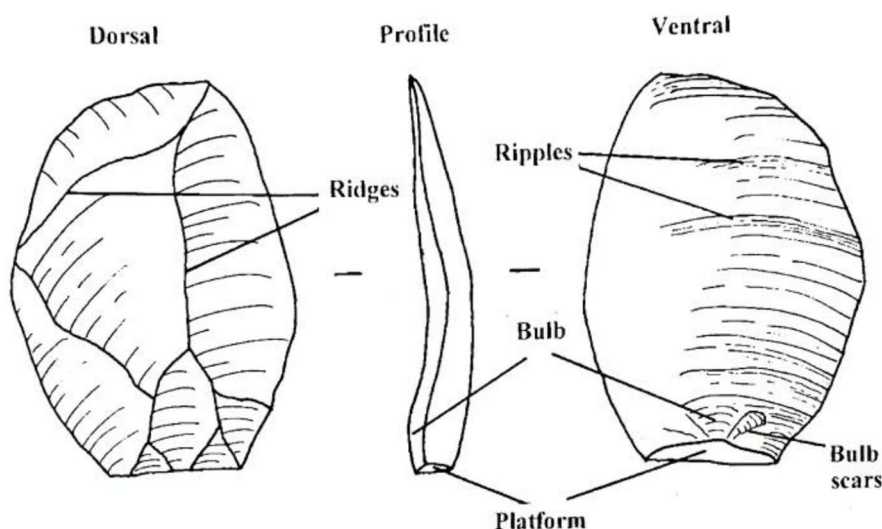
## **FLINTS**

The stones that you find in your allotment soil are overwhelmingly flint nodules and fragments, weathered out of the chalk that covered southern England. They are amongst the hardest of rocks and were formed when silica was deposited in the chalk.

My plot continues to yield a steady supply of prehistoric flint tools and production debris such as cores that have been worked to make blades and scrapers. I put any interesting fragments to one side for more detailed study. A few turn out to be fully worked tools. The main identification points for a flint tool are summarised below.

### Key identifiers for a flint tool: -

- The bulb(al) scar often appears as a distinct hump on the flint surface
- Next to this scar there will be the *emileur* scar, it looks like a chip of flint has flaked away from the parent material.
- The ripples across the flint surface radiate out from the bulbal scar.
- Sharp edges (ridges) show where more material has been removed to create the tool.
- Edges may be 're-touched', tiny chips are broken off to create a sharp edge or serrations.



The scraper shown below was a recent find and clearly carries the identification marks of a worked tool.



The '*platform*' is clearly visible at the bottom and the *erailleur* scar is the large flaked area in the middle of the bulb. The left and right hand sides have been retouched to provide scraper functions. The back also shows signs of material being flaked off the flint, with *ridges*.

The rough area at the top of the flint is the *cortex* material, this surrounds the flint nodules that are used to create the tools, it provides a non-slip surface to aid grip of the tool.

This year I was rummaging through 'possibles' that I had accumulated and found 6 flints that look very similar. They are quite chunky and range from 40 to 85 millimetres long. All four have roughly the same shape and are made from similar dark to light grey flint nodules. They display too many worked facets to be natural creations. They are probably flint core tools created by taking a flint nodule and repeatedly striking large and small flakes off it until the desired shape was achieved. They are considerably less sophisticated compared to the scraper above and may be older or just more easily made, requiring fewer skills.



Some websites identify these as 'hand axes' but that seems like imposing modern tool terminology on our forebears. They hadn't seen the Screwfix catalogue! They are easy to grip and have one end with a blunt point, useful for bashing something to break it up for food or fuel, but unlikely to be an offensive weapon.

## ***HERBS***

Bushy Park allotments have a resident population of herbs which naturally propagate around the site. Both the golden marjoram and lemon balm appeared on my plot by themselves and I suspect that the red-veined sorrel arrived the same way, via seed from other established populations.

They seem quite happy surviving on the edges of paths and are ready to crop from late spring through the summer, very useful to inject extra flavour into a cooked dish or salad.

I do admit to doing some propagation of seedlings or root cuttings to insure a regular supply.

## ***FREEKEH OR BULGUR PILAU***

Freekeh is roasted green wheat which can be purchased from specialist middle eastern stores such as the Mediterranean Food on Heath Road in Twickenham. It was a traditional product of Syria, green wheat was harvested as soon as the grain had developed and the sheaves were burnt to smoke and char the grain and also release it from the husk. It was a harbinger product for the main harvest. Samples that I had in the 90's would confirm this processing with a smoky aroma to the product and bits of charred husk included. It was notoriously liable to include small stones so I measured out 6 oz and washed it thoroughly, pouring off any floating debris and then agitating to make sure stones sank to the bottom, throwing away the bottom layer from the bowl in case there were stones. Modern production has largely eliminated this problem but the wheat does not have as much of the smoky aroma that I remember!

If that all sounds too complicated, then a coarse bulgur (AKA burghul) wheat will do very well in this recipe.

Slice a shallot finely and brown in a generous quantity of olive oil. Added a diced fennel bulb leaf/celery stick and a diced red pepper or other appropriate veg to hand, a courgette would do service. Cook these a little and then mix in the freekeh/bulgur and cook for a few minutes. Cover with boiling water, there should be a little water above the grain and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes with a lid on. Check at this point that the water has been absorbed and that the grain is tender. There should be some moisture in the mix.

Good with grills/barbeques

Phil Iddison On behalf of Bushy Park Allotments Association	Please contact the Council via their website <a href="https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/allotments">https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/allotments</a> <b>for any matters relating to your tenancy or the T&amp;Cs. Please also report gate issues &amp; water leaks directly to the Council.</b> Contact, Hugh Munro (Secretary) <a href="mailto:allotsec@protonmail.com">allotsec@protonmail.com</a> for local allotment issues and <a href="mailto:phil.iddison@arcadis.com">phil.iddison@arcadis.com</a> about the newsletter.
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