



THIS QUARTER IN THE CANALSIDE YEAR started with the arrival of our *La Jimena*



*La Jimena
sunshine*

*sunshine delivery, which Mathis packed on the tailgate of his truck, racing the sun to finish before it was dark. The boxes of citrus brightened the yurt for a few days in February. Although we have had pretty much every type of weather and in the most surprising sequences since January, it seems now that the warmer weather is finally set in and we have sunshine of our own! This is not before time, and now all the veg seedlings finally have plenty of sun energy they can harness to grow big and strong to give us our fantastic summer crops. Read about how things have been affected by the late frosts in **News from the Veg and Fruit Fields** by **Will and Gareth**. You will have undoubtedly noticed a few developments around the social area, even if you haven't ventured across the area which has spent much of the last few months as a*



Mathis weighs out the citrus fruit

*mud bath – in **Site Changes** hear from **Tom** about how the new veg collection space is developing and find out what other changes have been made to the site. There are more details here about the **price increase** which will affect the veg shares from July, as well as updates about **Socials**, our **Education Project** and our two partner projects – **The Willows** and **Canalside Community Bees**. Turn right to the back for the usual **Members' Notices** and **Small Ads**. I hope you're now enjoying the welcome spring-time sunshine as much as the seedlings are, and we'll look forward to seeing you on-site in the new veg collection space very soon!*

Ali, April 2013

NEWS FROM THE FIELD – by Will Johnson

This year's veg growing seems to be going more or less to plan so far; it's just that the coldest March in decades has pegged a lot of crops back by 2 or 3 weeks. We had a frost every morning for about 20 days, which was unexpected and certainly not ideal conditions to



Courgette seedlings



Seedlings coming on in the new glasshouse

get vegetables like cucumbers and aubergines started. We lost the entire early batch of cucumbers and about half of the aubergines. Still, we have had good germination and survival rates of most other things, which puts us in a better position than this time last year.

The weather (apart from those cold mornings and the gales blowing from the south) hasn't been too bad in terms of working the fields and we are on time with the first batch of potatoes and the maincrop onions. Thanks to everyone who helped to plant onion sets at the social. Despite the wind's best efforts, the mulch has not blown away yet (though it has been worryingly close...). It is up to the plants and the weather to do most of the rest of the work on those crops.

The early crops in the tunnels (and here and there outdoors) are all doing okay; we are fleecing whatever we can (bunched beetroot, spring onions, carrots, potatoes, sugar-snap peas) to get them moving as quickly as possible.

As for the share, at the time of writing we are amidst what we call 'the spring glut'; a period in April (it has come a bit later this year as you can imagine) when the purple sprouting broccoli and spring cauliflowers begin to produce good quantities and a lot of the winter leaves in the



Will and Paul prepare seed potatoes for planting

tunnels have a spurt of growth just before they bolt (stop producing leaves and begin to produce flowers and seed).

The little carrots (lovely to eat, a pain to harvest) are all but done and though we have a few week's worth of parsnips and leeks (relatively successful crops of 2012), and potatoes and onions, we are facing an extreme example of 'the hungry gap' of late spring/early summer. We will patch up some of the holes with dried beans and mushrooms from Leasowe farm, which is an exciting idea, but be warned that the shares may look a little lean for a few weeks.



Small hands of the local home education group help harvest those little carrots on their farm day

Will, 21st April 2013

FRUIT FIELD – by Gareth Davies

At last the winter seems to be over! The good news is that the orchard is looking good and the buds are bursting into full leaf on both the top fruit (apples, pears and plums) and the soft fruit (raspberries, currants and gooseberries). The bad news is that the unprecedented cold spell has knocked the start of the season back by at least a few weeks. Despite all that the rhubarb is now back on course and those taking a fruit supplement should soon be getting regular supplies. Hopefully the other fruit will catch up now and we will soon be harvesting a more varied share.



Ellie (team fruit) and Will wassail the fruit orchard

The orchard team and volunteers have done a grand job over the winter in getting the orchard looking tidy with neat rows of well pruned and mulched fruit from top to bottom. (And in January it was wassailed in the traditional way, with lots of noise to chase out anything that might hinder good harvests.) It is worth coming up and having a walk around if you have time when you are collecting your veg. We are beginning to plant bee friendly plants and ground cover into the orchard and it will be buzzing with the sound of busy insects, so come up and relax between the trees.

Those who have visited the farm will have noted the shiny, new solar panels on the pole barn roof and we are in the process of installing solar powered fridge/freezers which will help us to keep the fruit fresh as we harvest it over the summer. We will also be organising a weekend workshop to construct solar driers on Sunday 23rd June, and another to experiment with jam making on Saturday 10th August. This has all been made possible by lottery funding from the Local Food Programme- so thanks to them.



George and his novel script for the wassailing

If you are interested in getting fruit from us, why not take a fruit supplement to complement your veg share? It is currently £25 per month (works out as about £6 per week). Although we aim to have some fruit every week the fruit share is more likely to be affected by the seasons (and we have already had a bit of a hiccup at the start with the cold spring weather delaying the rhubarb harvest). The share will be very much larger in the summer and autumn than winter and spring. If you would like a share fill in a leaflet and return it to Ali or fill in an

online form at <http://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk/the-produce/fruit/sign-up-for-a-fruit-share/> and she will add you to the list and tell you what to do to pay for your share.

Gareth, 20th April 2013

VEG SHARE PRICE CHANGE

You will have received an email from the steering group about a veg share price increase. This decision was not taken lightly by the steering committee and we felt it was necessary here in the newsletter to set out in more detail why we felt the price increase was necessary.

There are three basic factors that we have taken into account in making this decision:

- Firstly, everyone reading this will be acutely aware that prices have increased steeply over the past few years, in particular for fuel, manufactured goods in general and food. All this is allied to the generally poor global financial situation. As an organic farm and CSA serving members locally, we are of course aiming to be as ecologically and economically self-sufficient as possible but as a community business we are not completely immune to price rises and the economic downturn. There are certain things we must buy, and the cost



Tomato seedlings

of seeds, compost, bags, tools and other resources have increased in price. Although we are careful what and how much material we buy, our costs of production have inevitably risen, especially as we try to source our goods ethically and responsibly.

- Secondly, we have a long standing commitment to raise the wage we pay our staff to at least £10 per hour as this was felt to be a fair wage at the time the decision was taken (some years ago!). We still haven't raised wages to this level despite the fact that our growers are subject to the same price increases in their daily lives that we face as a business. We felt some obligation to continue working towards this target wage and a price increase may help us get to this if the season is good!
- Finally, our budget is set to make a modest profit. (Although we are a not-for-profit company we still need some extra money to invest back in developing Canalside, replacing equipment etc.) This year the budget is currently projected to make a substantial loss, partly because at the moment we are under-subscribed for the number of shares we are producing. Although we have some reserves to cover this we are obviously hoping that our annual spring/summer publicity drive we will be able to get numbers back up to our budgeted level. However, this is still likely to leave a slight loss at the end of the year and hence the necessity for a modest price rise.

Offset against these factors has been our acute awareness that the general financial situation in the country is likely to mean that many people are feeling the pinch this year, meaning that any increase in the price of their veg will be unwelcome.

However, in the end, we felt that on balance the time has arrived when we too must put our prices up. We hope you understand our reasons, and are able to support the decision. We have factored in the willingness of our members and their friends to pitch in and help with work around the farm on work mornings and socials. All such work reduces the necessity for our contracting casual labour and helps keep costs as low as possible. Because of this we have set the price rise at the minimum that we think is necessary.

If you have any significant concerns about the price increase please get in touch - we would far rather know if people are having difficulty with the decision and price rise so that we can take steps to offer people support or explore other options rather than have them leave the community – after all you, our members, are the heart of the community farm.

We have decided that in the future, the steering group will review the veg share price at least every two years, to ensure that we can make manageable price increases that allow us to cover any increased production costs or even take into account any reduced costs!

Finally, thank you for your ongoing support of Canalside. It was a tough year in 2012 with reduced yields and veg quality due to the relentless rain, and it's been a hard, cold spring so far this year. We hope that you will stick with us and look forward to the exciting things coming in the summer: the new pole barn and veg collection area, fruit shares, a bigger-than-ever barn dance, and an exciting social calendar (see page 6). By buying your veg from a small, local producer such as Canalside, and by making a positive commitment to supporting the farm by paying a regular subscription, you are helping to build a truly sustainable system that will be resilient to what the future holds.

NEW ARRIVALS...

Welcome to Canalside to *Felix Devon* who was born to *Naomi and Kev Northey* on February

13th. He was 11 days overdue, but managed to arrive without needing to be coaxed out into the world, having achieved a very good pre-birth weight of 9lb 11oz! Naomi said Felix arrived within just 2 hours of her getting to hospital. His older siblings, Dylan and Issy, are mad about him.

...AND DEPARTURES

Although she is not actually leaving Canalside, *Helen Mitchell* is stepping back from being a workshare for the time being following a short break from her voluntary role. Her help was much appreciated in the fields, and we hope she might be able to return to this role in the future. As she is still a very committed member of Canalside, we look forward to continuing to have her involvement in social events and other aspects of the farm.

SITE DEVELOPMENTS – by Tom Ingall

As many of you with a keen eye for change will have seen, things are moving along at quite a pace on site at the moment. With a new glasshouse built and a solar power system installed, we're now able to generate our own heat for 'plant survival' and our own power for construction projects. The latter has made a big difference with our progress in the pole barn. We are getting very excited about this project as the finishing line is now firmly in sight! One exciting job still to come is the construction of the internal straw bale wall, this will



Unloading the parts for the new glasshouse

be a beautiful partition leading into the new produce collection area. We'd like to invite anyone



The new veg collection area in mid April

who's interested and would like to lend a hand to join us for this activity. When I'm clearer on exactly when it'll be, I'll ask Ali to let you all know. We're hoping that by the end of May you'll be able to experience this space, and that you will enjoy all the advantages it will bring over the coming months and years. We will of course be saying a fond farewell and thank you to the yurt for its near six years of faithful service!

Tom, 21st April 2013

EDUCATION PROJECT – by Ali Jeffery

At the moment, despite contacting a large number of local schools at the start of the year, and quite a lot of interest from teachers initially, things are looking very quiet on the education project, with no visits in the diary for this year.

If your child(ren) is/are at a local school, please do speak to their teacher if you'd like to encourage them to take advantage of our free visits! We have a range of curriculum linked activities we can offer, and we can tailor the visit to tie in with what is being taught in science, geography, and other subjects. Please note that we do need 4 weeks notice to ensure that all the relevant arrangements can be made prior to the visit. There is a teachers' information pack which they can download from our website, under Getting Involved → Educational Visits, for

further details about what we can offer.

If you're interested in helping at future education project visits, please look out for an email which I will send out if/when I get any bookings.

SOCIALS – by Ali

We had a busy run of socials in the late winter – in particular Team Fruit arranged for the fruit orchard to be melodiously wassailed in the snow, with toast and cider playing key roles. A star gazing evening was also organised, by workshares, Elaine Newman and Graham Williams. The equipment was brought along by Keith from Long Itchington, and Dave Dimambro (a Canalside member). Delicious homemade soup warmed our fingers and toes, and a number of members of all ages were fascinated by what could be seen in the night sky.

In March, a pub social at the New Inn was enjoyed by workers, workshare volunteers and a handful of members, along with members of Five Acre Community Farm in Ryton and a visiting researcher from Spain!

The big spring work task for planting onions followed in April, and the workers enjoyed a curry lunch together afterwards. Thank you to Amy Willoughby for leading the meal preparation!

The rest of 2013

Cathy Bell has had to step back from taking a lead on socials due to illness, so in her stead the steering group has discussed how to take the socials forward for the rest of the year. As always, we welcome as much input as possible from you, and would love any member to organise an activity or social event that they want to see happen. However, in order to ensure a varied range of events, that are spread throughout the year and tie in with the seasons, different steering group members have volunteered to take the lead on different events and we have planned a skeleton programme of events. This sees some type of social event happening each month, often linking in with some type of activity that we think will interest you or a big job that we would appreciate your help to complete. We are aiming to make one of these events each season a bit bigger and involving more preparation and organisation. I have also included here the publicity events at which we have a stall each year, as they are an important part of the Canalside calendar.

May: Sat 4th – shocking shitake mushroom logs with Tom, bring a picnic (please see newsletter email for full details)

June: Sat 15th–Sun 16th – Peace Festival publicity stall

Sun 23rd – making solar driers with Team Fruit, bring a picnic

July: Sat 13th – open day for the general public – tour with Ali, picnic in the social area

Sat 20th – **big summer social** – annual barn dance

Aug: Sat 10th – jam making with Team Fruit, bring a picnic

– tours with Ali for recently joined members or anyone who wants an orientation of the site

Sept: Sat 7th–Sun 8th – Leamington Food and Drink Festival publicity stall

Fri 13th–Sun 15th – **big autumn social** – potato harvest, camping weekend, harvest meal



One of the sights Keith captured on camera

Oct: Sat 12th – apple and pumpkin day, bring a picnic
Nov: Sat 9th – **big winter social** – garlic planting, shared meal
Dec: date TBC – mulled wine
Jan: date TBC – AGM (a new time of year for it)

If you have additional suggestions that you'd like to help make happen, or if you can help with the organisation of any of these events, in particular the big socials for the different seasons, please get in touch with me.

FLICKR FEED

You can now go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/65686573@N02/sets> to see a selection of photos from each quarter on our Flickr feed. A new set is added alongside each newsletter being published and shows all the photos from the newsletter and some extras.

CANALSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD - PARTNER PROJECTS' UPDATE

The Willows Project, by Amy Willoughby

The Willows Project will be officially launched on 18th May as we host a volunteer day in partnership with the Challenge Network and Canalside Community Food. This should see about 50 volunteers (young people and representatives from local charities) getting involved with tasks and sharing food to celebrate our beginning, and their achievements.

One of the jobs for this day will be painting our building (currently just a platform) so we are now under a bit of



The Willows team - L-R Amy, Ness, Verity, Ellie



Building parts arrive on site

pressure to give it some walls. Maybe even a roof! Our set-up weekend on 16th -17th March got all the building bits bundled into the right places, the timbers clean of nails, and the ground nearly level. I'm feeling confident that walls and roof will be the easy bits – just like Lego I'm told! So many thanks to those who braved the snow and maintained the appearance of being chipper and energetic, despite the testing conditions!

So what next? When we have a building and the ribbon has been cut? Well Willowers are busy meeting potential user groups and advisors, working on our marketing and sowing the seeds of our future. We feel we are able to offer potential service users a very different experience in being on the farm, and it's encouraging to feel that being recognised by visitors. Please check out our website www.thewillowsproject.org.uk.

Canalside Community Bees, by Kath Pasteur

It's been a long tough winter for the bees and we are still not sure how many of the hives have

survived. But whilst the bees were resting, we were busy. In February and March we built another horizontal top bar and a Warre hive. To learn about these, come along to an apiary meeting!

Earlier in April we planted a nectar garden in the fruit field near the apiary. The plants will be labelled up so that you can learn about good nectar and pollen producing flowers.

Last week we organised a talk: 'Skep beekeeping: Looking to the past to look to the future'. We will be organising more talks and workshops in the coming months. Do let us know if you have ideas.

Hopefully soon we will start opening up the hives. This is a great experience, and we have suits and veils so you won't get stung. Why don't you join the project so you can come along!

By joining CCB you help support bees, learn something new and you might even get some honey! It's just £20 for the whole year and you need to join to be on the email list and know what is happening! See <http://canalsidecommunitybees.blogspot.co.uk/> for more.

MEMBERS' CORNER Do you have any interesting projects, charity fund-raisers or other not-for-profit activities you'd like to promote to your fellow Canalsiders? If so, then this is the space for your free advert! Get in touch with Ali for advertising in future issues of the newsletter.

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The Friends of Foundry Wood Steering Group are looking at ways to make the woodland an educational and interactive space. Now that we have spent 12 months making the site accessible we would like to know what activities you would like to see happening there. Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey to help us plan for how the site can be best used by the community in the future (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CRXVZZP>)

SMALL ADS Do you have any business or money-making ventures you'd like to advertise to other members of Canalside? Then this is the space for you. Please contact Ali for future adverts.

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Link to our Flickr photos for a fuller selection of photos of the past 3 months:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/65686573@N02/sets>

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Next newsletter due out end of July 2013.

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 21st July.

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