



## YOU KNOW SUMMER HAS REACHED THE FARM

*when the skylarks trill overhead throughout any sunny day, and swallows and wrens take up their summer residence in the pole barn. Out in the fields, the weather dictates the work – read all about this and the effects on the produce in Dom's **News from the Land**. It's a time of change in the team at Canalside as Will moves on to pastures new, and a new grower – Lena – joins the team. Meet Lena in **New Arrivals** and read Will's **Reflections from the Land** about his time at Canalside. If you haven't made it to the farm for a while, you can hear what's been happening in **Events** as well as in the **Education Project**. And of course there are the*



*usual updates from our partner projects, with notices and ads from members at the back. I hope the busy summer period allows you time to connect with the countryside around us, whether that's through a walk round the farm or in some other way.*

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*Ali, July 2016*

## NEWS FROM THE LAND – by Dom van Marsh

... or: A Tale of Two Summers. With two-thirds of this glorious season now eaten up by the greedy jaws of time, we have experienced two distinctly contrary weather patterns. Most of June was dominated by rain, winds and cool temperatures, which repeatedly frustrated our attempts to get on the land to cultivate, control weeds and prepare for planting. July, however, brought improving conditions, culminating in a sweltering phase of Mediterranean-like temperatures, including one day when Canalside was officially declared by the Met Office to be hotter than the surface of the sun itself.

There were no deckchairs, ice creams or paddling pools for the farm team, however, who seized the dry spell to catch up on some of the work that June's rains had thwarted. The staff, workshares and volunteers have taken to the fields with the speed of a Russian sprinter on the way home from the pharmacy and planted leeks, courgettes, sweetcorn, kale, cabbage, swede, lettuce, french beans, cauliflower and much more. The weeds have thrived in these conditions, but we are taking them on like crawling bingo players: eyes down, fingers at the ready, move



fast! That's not to say that there's not a lot more to tackle, and I would like to personally invite all of you and your extended households to join us in getting on top (sometimes literally) of these superbly-adapted opportunist species. ("Weed" is such a derogatory word – I prefer to call them "plants in the wrong place". So please come and help us put them in the right place!).

Weather aside, this summer will doubtlessly go down in history for its numerous Exits. England's departure from the Euro football tournament was equally humiliating and predictable, and the UK's impending withdrawal from the EU has also made the front pages; nonetheless, the exit that stands out in my mind, and I imagine the minds of those reading this, is Will Johnson's departure from Canalside Community Food after 6 remarkable seasons here. Of all Will's achievements at Canalside, that which has struck me the most is that he has seen the CSA through a tricky period: the transition phase from the heady, enthusiastic early years of establishment, when everything is a novelty and strongly charged volunteers are easy to come by, through the time when that early momentum reduces, and the project becomes not a "project" at all (as that word implies a temporary state) but a permanent part of our lives. The glamour fades but the need to feed people doesn't; and as the rain has fallen, the canal has frozen so solid you could drive a tractor on it, and the sun has sometimes shone but more often disappointingly failed to, Will has turned up, seen the job through, kept the share going, developed new ideas, slogged through winter day after winter day driven by commitment and humble passion. Will knows that feeling of inspecting a crop to find the weather has turned on it, the slugs have eaten it, the rabbits have found a way in, and months of care and toil have turned to gastropod faeces; it is a feeling that is so dispiriting it makes many growers give up forever and decide that call centre work isn't so bad after all (at least there's less risk of trenchfoot) but Will knows how to stay positive and get the job done in the face of huge obstacles. I know that every Canalside member feels the gratitude that Will deserves, and I join you all in wishing him the very best for his future.

*Dom, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016*

## **REFLECTIONS FROM THE LAND** – *by Will Johnson*

When I began working at Canalside nearly six years ago we were harvesting for about 110 shares and the site was a field with 5 polytunnels, a yurt (the veg collection room), a geodome (our kitchen and mess room) and a couple of sheds (one for tools, one a bucket compost loo). I cycled to Coventry once a week during the spring of my first two seasons here to propagate our seedlings since we had no power on site. Apart from collection times (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays - the same as they are now) the site was quiet and still a lot of the time.



*Will's final work morning at Canalside*

But even then Canalside was a leading light in the CSA movement (up there with Stroud) and I felt I'd been lucky to be in the right place at the right time to get the job. I was excited at the prospect of leading the growing at a pioneering organisation that had a committed membership and a 52-week harvest plan. After a three-year apprenticeship at a box scheme in Oxfordshire I was ready to knuckle down for three or four years and learn, learn, learn.

I leave Canalside nearly six years on still working out the best way to grow the food, and still working out how to remain sane whilst doing so. It is a changing organisation, a constant work in progress and I'm glad to be handing it over to some new energy (I ain't got a lot left) and



*Looking back - Will's first Canalside squash harvest*

new ideas with the business in good shape and the membership the highest it's ever been (we harvested for 155 last week). The site has changed a lot - more tunnels, a barn of our own, a beautiful collection space, a fancy compost loo, an office, two kitchens, a care farm, a bee club, a forest school (and a few hundred houses going up within half a mile). But Canalside is essentially the same and the busy season blended with the quiet, thoughtful winter will always keep it exceptional and beautiful.

It's the best thing I could have done with the last six years. Thank you for all your support.

## **NEW ARRIVALS...**

As Will moves on from his work at Canalside, we have a new member of the team – an assistant grower who will work with Dom (now grower manager). We warmly welcome Lena Sucker to Canalside – here she introduces herself:

"Hi, my name is Lena and I just started as new assistant grower at Canalside. Growing up on an organic smallholding sparked my interest in the outdoors, farming and the importance to take care of our environment from an early age. After spending 20 odd years in rural northern Germany I decided that it was time to see the world, which I put into practice by working and studying (politics) across various countries. In 2010 I came to the UK to complete a degree in Peace Studies in Bradford. Here I met my partner, and thus decided to stay for a while longer and complete a PhD."



I always knew that I wanted to go back to the way of life that I grew up with, and I took the step after finishing the PhD last December to look for the right position in organic farming. Since we have been living in Leamington for almost two years, it felt a bit like it was meant to be when the opportunity at Canalside came up just a short time later."

Outside the growing I am passionate about anything to do with sports, especially cycling and playing handball and football. I also love to play boardgames and enjoy the outdoors through hiking and camping at every given opportunity."

The growing team has grown recently in other ways too – both small and fully grown!



*Nanda and Robin*

Dom has a new son to introduce to us: Robin Scott van Marsh crashed into this world in the small hours of 17th June 2016, to the immense pride of parents **Nanda and Dom**. Weighing a breathtaking 11 lb 3 oz at birth, he's a somewhat chunky boy! But he's already doing his duties as a Canalside member, having spent many hours sideshooting tomatoes in the polytunnels with his mother and dancing the night away at the Summer Party.

We welcome **Tom Dimambro** to the field team as an official seasonal workshare (Tom and his wife Rachael having participated in almost every

Saturday work morning through the late winter and spring). We also welcome Tom and Rachael's new baby, Elsa, who Tom says, "...was born on 4th June to a good weight of 7lb 12oz. She enjoys feeding and having her nappy changed, but hates baths! We are sure she will enjoy coming down to Canalside and getting stuck in when she can get her hands on a trowel!"



*Patrick with his big sister, Rosie*

There are other small arrivals to Canalside households – Patrick is a new addition to the family of **James Amor and Erin MacDonald**. Born on 7<sup>th</sup> April, he's settling into the family well. He loves pulling sister Rosie's curls, and she, patiently and lovingly leans down so that he can. Mutual adoration for sure!

And finally, long-standing members **Tom and Heather Foulerton** greeted their third daughter following a lovely water birth for Francesca (Frankie) Isabel. This was her very gentle, happy entrance into the world on 10<sup>th</sup> January. Now nearly 7 months old, she is much loved by her two sisters.



*Frankie, shortly after her arrival, with older sisters, Mila and Lola*

### **...AND DEPARTURES**

After six years at Canalside, **Will Johnson** (our grower manager) is moving on. His committed work has taken produce growing at Canalside through various challenges, including carrot seedlings repeatedly decimated by slugs in an infamously wet summer and sweetcorn that sat in water and produced nothing. Whilst the weather is the uncontrollable factor in these outcomes, Will's calm, pragmatic approach to challenges has enabled us to weather these storms and come out stronger – and hopefully each time things showed an upturn before too many nights' sleep were lost to him.



Equally many successes on the growing front stand out too: developing ever increasing time/labour/cost efficiencies working with Paul Fryer as assistant grower; bumper crops of potatoes, squash, onions, beetroot (variously, depending on the year in question) or almost everything when thinking about 2013; endlessly responding to the way crops are growing with a fill-in crop planted here and the share size adjusted there to ensure that year round we have received a delicious share that is as varied and bountiful as the season allows; with Paul, establishing a bed of asparagus which is due for its first harvest next May; changing the rotation to have a 'garden plot' behind the pole barn for early season crops that need extra TLC.

From a wider perspective, the period of extended stability through having the same main grower overseeing things has been a real advantage to Canalside as the organisation has grown and developed: during Will's time here our membership has expanded; infrastructure projects have developed and come to bear; from the Canalside team, workshares, steering





"Hello, is that the open road calling?"

group members and assistant growers have come and gone...

And we've benefited from more than just veg and fruit growing from Will – the strains of beautiful music drifting through the pole barn at lunchtime, magnificent harvest feasts at the camping weekend and most recently the opportunity for jam-making with our soft fruit, to name but a few other things Will has brought to Canalside.

We know that the open road beckons for now, so Will, we wish you safe journeys on the road you travel next. Stay in touch and may the bounty nurtured by your green fingers bless others' dinner plates again in the future.

## EDUCATION PROJECT – by Ali Jeffery

In May we received a class from Provost Williams Primary School in Ryton-on-Dunsmore – another school which is participating in the Soil Association's 'Food for Life' partnership. The children in year 1 made the visit to link in with their topic 'Growing', which included a walk around the fields and looking for all the ways the growers keep the pests off the crops.

There are more visits in the pipeline in September – having enough volunteers in the autumn visits means that we can offer a vegetable snack to the children. I believe this is one of the most valuable parts of the visit as the children are often willing to try the things they have already handled, vegetables they might usually turn their nose up at. Please look out for details nearer the time and let me know if you can help on the date(s) of the visit(s).

## EVENTS – by Ali Jeffery

The summer is always a happening time for events, and this year is no exception. We hope you have made it to the farm recently to enjoy the season's pleasures in some way, and if not hope to see you at sometime in the months to come.

### June – open farm Sunday:

Around 40 people – members, non-members and the 'Per-farm-ance' team enjoyed sunny tours of the farm with Will. If you missed the opportunity for a detailed guided walk round the farm, come to the CSA open day on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October, where we will have apple pressing from late morning, and a tour at 1.30pm.

#### – Leamington Peace Festival publicity stall:

Thank you to everyone who helped out over the weekend on our annual stall at this important local event. As always a significant number of new trials resulted, and we hope these new recruits will take on a subscription at the end of their trial.

#### – Xandra's pop-up café – by Bruce Knight:

On the Friday after the summer solstice, a dozen people comprising Canalside members and friends gathered for a fundraising Pop-up Cafe event, organised by Xandra Gilchrist.



Menu, designed by the Willows

We were blessed with a glorious sunny evening and a tremendous rainbow, not to mention much sumptuous food. Xandra had obviously been working all afternoon to prepare the feast and we had to be careful not to eat too many canapés and allow room for the main...not to mention the three desserts! The meal started alfresco, and we retired to the pole barn for the main course during a brief shower. Highlights for me were the polenta chips, the raw veg dips and the new potatoes. I also loved the strawberry shortbread and the rhubarb crumble. It was a really lovely evening, and I'd like to say thank you to Xandra on behalf of all the diners. The Canalside Social Area was an excellent venue - let's have more events here soon!

### July – summer party:

Fine weather – the start of a mini-heatwave – graced the site for this year's summer party and over 200 people of all ages enjoyed our beautiful location for an evening of



*Open mic maestros*

music, dancing, convivial company and fire-side chats. Thank you to everyone who volunteered on the bar on the evening, and the people who helped to set up everything on Saturday and pack it away on Sunday.



*The site dons its party clothes*

### – jam-making workshop:

Will and Jodi led a small group to the orchard on the hottest day of the year. The group then sweated over pans of bubbling sweetness to turn their pickings into pots of jam.



### Upcoming events

**Sept: Sat 10<sup>th</sup>–Sun 11<sup>th</sup>** – Leamington Food and Drink Festival publicity stall

**Sat 17<sup>th</sup>–Sun 18<sup>th</sup>** – **big autumn social** – potato harvest, camping weekend, harvest meal

**Oct: Sat 1<sup>st</sup>** – apple pressing, bring a picnic, CSA open day tours

**Nov: Sat 5<sup>th</sup>** – **big winter social** – beetroot harvest, shared meal

**Dec: date TBC** – final social of the year

**Jan: date TBC** – AGM

Additional events may be added at shorter notice. Look out for these in emails to our members' mailing list and in the list of upcoming events in the weekly update.

**Want to be more involved?** If you have an idea for an event, workshop or activity that you would like to offer to other members, please get in touch with Ali to discuss possible dates.

## **CANALSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD - PARTNER PROJECTS' UPDATE**

### *Canalside Community Bees, by Nanda van Marsh*

After a shaky start to the season with bees swarming all over the place and no-one to look after them properly, we now have a team of members keen to learn the ropes from our two knights in shining armour: Pete and Steve! Both answered our call out earlier in May for knowledgeable and experienced beekeepers to help us see through this season.

With them we are hoping to get the hives ready and ship-shape for next season. As it stands

we have 4 National hives, 2 Warre and 2 Top Bar hives, all with varying sizes of colonies. To build up their strength and see them through the winter, we are foregoing a honey harvest this year, however, don't let this put you off becoming a member! We have some jars from last year left in our stores which we will share out, and it's always good to remember that bees are not only here to provide us with honey - without their pollination many of the foods we eat would simply not exist (you may have noticed how the adjacent Canalside Orchard has benefited from them this year with many apple trees dripping with fruit).

We are planning to carry on with monthly Bee Sessions to every second weekend of the month all through the Autumn and Winter too. Join our facebook page or become a member to find out what's on when! [canalsidecommunitybees@yahoo.com](mailto:canalsidecommunitybees@yahoo.com)

### ***The Willows Care Farm, by Sybil Roberson***

At last the summer has arrived at the cabin! The slugs have retreated and the garden has been blooming marvellous with a swathe of red poppies, golden calendulas and trailing ribbons of pink dog roses. There will be bunches of flowers for sale in the barn, picked and made by our enterprise group.

The Midsummer pop up art show was a great success and was a real boost for our participants, especially receiving the thank you letter from Adoption UK.

The Youth Challenge network have visited twice recently and were blown away by Canalside; their enthusiasm will be documented in a promotional video for Willows which will be shown to Dragons den.

The group of 12 students aged 17, are challenged to raise £ 350 for our project and will return on the last Friday of July.

We had a great team building day of introductory willow weaving with the talented Caz Ingall in her garden studio. We learned how to make woven dragon flies, stars, platters and wreaths using different colours of willow; with amazing results

We were so excited to have baby Robin join us when we were weeding celeriac this week on Big Gorse; he is gorgeous. Well done Dom. And Nanda!

### **Can you help support the 'Willows'?**

'The Willows' is a Care project that is based at Canalside. The Willows provides nature & farm based activities for people who face a range of challenges (for example, recovering from addictions) or learning difficulties. The people who come to the 'Willows' really value the time they spend here. Annie says 'I love the garden' & Simon says 'I love planting out flowers'. To continue successfully, the project needs one or two volunteers to give a few hours every week. The kind of jobs that would really benefit the project would be: garden maintenance & supporting staff during sessions. DBS ideal, but can be applied for via the Willows. If you can help, please contact the Willows by email ([thewillowsproject@gmail.com](mailto:thewillowsproject@gmail.com)).

**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.



*Trade without cash*

Join Leamington LETS and use virtual money to exchange goods and services. It's free to join. Recent trades have included loads of plants, loan of a gazebo for a party and loan of a device to turn vinyl to CD or digital.

Contact Judy Steele [judy.dmac@gmail.com](mailto:judy.dmac@gmail.com)  
or phone 07786 137770



*Lots of exciting events and activities taking place at Foundry Wood in Leamington this summer - starting with a 'Bring & Share' Summer BBQ & Moth Walk on 7th August! Visit the website for full details:*

[www.foundrywood.co.uk](http://www.foundrywood.co.uk)



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**Waiting staff needed:**

My daughter is having her wedding in a field on Leasowe Farm on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

We are looking for a group of 4 or 5 people to assist at the reception, pouring and serving prosecco, handing round canapés, topping up salads drinks etc during the meal, clearing tables, serving tea and coffee. Would probably need to be here 12.30 – 6.00 and we can pay £50/person. Would need to be over 16 years old and able to do this without being constantly supervised! **Please reply to Jane Ingall 07747 753799 or 01926 421935**

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**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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**THE CLARENDON CENTRE  
(Debbie Collins, Eileen  
Gilmour and Julie Squires)  
moves to 52-54 Regent St.  
Contact Debbie  
(07960 040985)  
for details of therapies  
offered and rooms to let.**

Bungalow To Let in Radford Semele.

Newly refurbished 2 bedroom bungalow in centre of Radford – within walking distance of Canalside!

This is advance notice as we haven't completed the purchase yet but anticipate it would be available from 1<sup>st</sup> September.

Rent would be in the region of £900 per month.

**Contact John or Jane Ingall  
at Leasowe Farm. Tel 01926 421935**

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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 in late October 2016.

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

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