



WINTER CONTINUES TO SWING BETWEEN *cold, frosty days, and wind and rain that turn the social area and fields of soil into mud baths. Read Dom's **News from the Land** to find out what is occupying the growers at this time of year. In this issue you can read about the planned **Price Increase** and find out how to help make our annual **Summer Party (and other events)** fabulous. If you missed recent events, you can get a flavour of them in **Events** and*



The social area and polytunnels, dusted with frost

*as always in **New Arrivals** there are plenty of new members to*

*welcome into our community. Sunshine on the horizon is the arrival of the annual **La Jimena** orders which will arrive in the next couple of weeks. If you haven't ordered sunshine from Spain, I hope your winter has some other spots of brightness in it to make up for the lack of sunny days. Happy reading!*

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Ali, January 2017

NEWS FROM THE LAND – by Dom van Marsh

Winter on the farm is a harsh and bitter time. At Canalside it is often necessary to struggle on through deep snow and gales to get that fencing job finished, or crawl through mud and ice to pick frozen Brussels sprouts with frostbitten fingers.

Luckily for me there is the Assistant Grower (Lena) to do all of that sort of stuff – I have spent most of the winter holed up in the "office" (the green caravan), toasty warm thanks to the burning bits of old fencing crackling away in the woodburning stove, endlessly poring over 6 years of sowing records and crop harvest data, trying to devise a cropping plan for 2017 that will meet the threefold needs of Canalside's members, the land itself, and our team of growers and volunteers.



Christmas sprouts, incoming!

My preference is for a cropping plan that is extremely detailed. I like to get everything down on

paper well before the season gets going: which varieties of which vegetables are to be sown, on which precise date; how it is to be sown (in modules, pans, pots or direct drilled, and if the latter, with which seed drill on which setting); where it is to be sown, and then where it is to be planted out, across how many beds, with how many rows at what spacing. Consequently, where my predecessor's cropping plan fitted comfortably on to one side of A4 paper, mine takes up around 40!

Despite the hefty environmental cost in both ink and paper, I find this exercise is mentally beneficial, for it gives the perhaps illusory feeling that everything is under control (a feeling that, by mid April, has inevitably been swept away by a deep-seated sense of panic and impending



Preparations for this season's sowings include making and filling frames for manure hot beds



Tomatoes ripening for last summer's abundant harvest

disaster). It is also of great practical benefit, as it allows very accurate calculations of the seed requirements to be made, and so when it comes to placing the seed orders, we can ensure we will have enough of everything without wasting a lot of money (the viability of all seeds declines over time, and certain species such as carrot and parsnip are not reliable beyond the season of purchase, so it's very important to not over-order). Some seeds, particularly F1 hybrids (more on these in a future issue) are eye-wateringly expensive; for example, the seed for the F1 cherry tomato we grow, Sakura, costs more than double the price of gold at around £68 per gramme. But surely one is a lot better off with 300 tomato plants than with a lump of shiny metal – as I insisted to my wife when instead of an engagement ring I proposed with a jar of passata.

To return to the point: the most important thing about the cropping plan is is not to use it. "Plans are worthless. Planning is everything", as Eisenhower once said. Given a certain recent electoral outcome it might not seem like a good time to give great weight to the opinions of Republican presidents, but nonetheless I believe Ike was really on to something. It is the process of planning, and what you learn from that process, that matters; more important than the plan is to be prepared, and to carry the ability to be flexible, responsive and adaptable to dynamic situations. Or at least that's what I tell myself, since it's been a few days since I last saw my only copy of those 40 sheets of paper - and I vaguely recall at the weekend my wife, having struggled to find any paper for kindling for the fire, mumbling something along the lines of "I guess I'll just burn any old rubbish I can find lying around"...

In any case, a few minor changes are afoot for the 2017 growing season. I hope to do something to tackle our terrible infestations of couchgrass by taking slightly more land out of production than before, to tackle that pernicious weed through repeated spring-tine cultivations followed by a dense seeding of a smothering green manure crop such as

buckwheat. If you didn't understand most of that previous sentence then don't worry – Lena and I are employed to do this stuff so you don't have to (except on work mornings). This loss of productive land will be more than compensated for by cropping the remaining land slightly more intensively than previously by doing more "double cropping" (growing two short-season crops successively on the same bit of land in the same season) and making better use of our polytunnels during summer and autumn. We will grow a small trial crop of what is probably a new vegetable for most people: the black spanish radish. This delicious root will add variety to the share during the winter months, as will a small crop of Jerusalem artichokes – but it's not all roots, as celery



A work party tackling the couch grass in the garden plot last spring



Black Spanish radishes (image from www.mariquita.com)

will be making a return to the tunnels this year. We will also grow more annual herbs, particularly parsley and basil, and try to maintain a high level of leafy greens in the share throughout the year, as many of you requested in the last survey. So hopefully, plan or no plan, there will be a lot to look forward to in 2017.



Celery - set to return to Canalside this year

Dom, 21st January 2017

NEW ARRIVALS...

As always, recruitment of new share members slows in the winter, but we still benefit from the tail end of the previous season as trial members from the Food & Drink Festival complete their trial and subscribe for a regular share of the harvest. This winter we welcome the following people as share members or social members:



Our stall last September

- *Sally & Kevin Hunt* • *Henry Pickup & Amy Butt* • *Rosa Gurnett* • *Patricia Henderson* •
- *Charlie Swallow* • *Stephen Hayward* • *Penny Halpin* • *Cyp Vella* • *Stacey Corcoran* •
- *Lisa, Andrew & Jacob Lawrence* •

And as well as the full-sized new arrivals we have one little one, whose arrival in our community coincided with his arrival 'Earthside'. Members *Ellie and Hamish Sutcliffe* introduce *Reuben* who was born on 3rd August. Ellie says, "We were very relieved after a difficult pregnancy. He is a lovely, joyful, smiley little boy, adored by us and his big sister Rowan. He enjoys coming to Canalside each week to



help collect our share." We hope he thrives on the produce and enjoys playing with Rowan and other small members at the farm once he gets a bit bigger.

PRICE INCREASE IN 2017 – by Ali Jeffery

As mentioned in recent emails, we have reached the difficult decision to increase the price of the shares this year. The new prices will be £72 / £50 / £34 for our three share sizes, with these prices covering the share subscription and the social membership fee. This will take effect from the April standing orders for existing members, and any new members will start their subscription paying the new price.

The last price increase was nearly 4 years ago in June 2013, and the journey to the decision to increase the price this year has been long and involved. We initially thought we'd need to increase the prices in 2015, and consulted with members in the December of 2014 and had the increase agreed at the AGM. Then our finances surprised us and we were set for a significant surplus so at the last moment we cancelled the increase. This time, though, it really has to happen as several things have changed since 2015:

- The share price now includes fruit for all members and the growers manage the fruit orchard as well as growing the veg; there's no additional income to cover the cost of this extra labour.

- Inflation continues to increase.

- As a result of these two, our costs have risen significantly.

- The organisation remains committed to paying a fair, living wage, so is implementing an annual RPI linked wage increase this month.

- We are now also required to pay into a pension for some staff and, to look after all staff, we offer this support to all our employees for pension provision.

- For all these reasons the only way to balance our budget this year is with a price increase.



*Fruit for all share members
since the last price increase*



*The poorly tractor,
ready for a visit to Dr. Tractor*

On top of all this, last season the surplus that was expected was wiped out with very expensive repairs to the tractor being needed right at the end of the season, which means we were unable to set any additional money aside invest in the business.

We have set the level of the increase such that we anticipate it will be enough to carry us forward for a couple of years. The steering group aims to review the share price every two years. To read fuller details of the increase, [please click here](#).

EDUCATION PROJECT – *by Ali Jeffery*

The start of the year is the time when teachers are looking towards their summer curriculum and

starting to think about possible visits. I've already heard from a teacher in Warwick who would like two classes to visit the farm in June as part of their topic 'Where my wellies take me'. I will put a call out for volunteers who can help enrich the visit for the children, once these (and any other) visits are fully booked.

If you think your child's class teacher would be interested in visiting Canalside, please take a flier from the collection space, or email them the link to the page on our website that gives information about educational visits:



Young visitors naming crop pests

<http://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk/getting-involved/educational-visits/>

And if you are interested in volunteering this year (subject to your availability on the date of visits, of course) please drop me a line to let me know: mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk.

EVENTS – *by Ali Jeffery*

Despite winter being a time of less activity at the farm, there have still been a few opportunities to meet and enjoy time together in recent months.

December:

As well as an enjoyable evening at the pub, many of you stopped to chat and enjoy a warm seasonal drink at the double share collections. Those who collected on the Wednesday double share even had the chance to join in with carols round the fire, accompanied by grower manager, Dom van Marsh, on saxophone and Nanda van Marsh on trumpet. We also asked for your feedback about Canalside in 2016. Thank you to everyone who gave feedback. We have now collated all the responses and will be identifying what improvements should be made, and then working on them over the coming months. We



Carols around the fire

hope you enjoyed the hazelnuts we bought from Leasowe Farm, as a thank you for your support over the past year and for taking time to give us feedback in December.

January:

We tried out a new format for our AGM this year, combining it with a mid-winter feast in Radford Semele Community Hall. We had a very pleasing turnout, and completed the business of the evening, before settling down to diverse and delicious, home-cooked dishes for a bring-and-share supper, with many of the dishes featuring our produce. The after dinner speaker was Dom (our grower manager) and we enjoyed hearing his talk: 'A history of Canalside

(in 2016) in 100 objects'. Those delicious hazelnuts featured strongly, along with many other objects that illustrated Dom's first year at the farm. You can see clips of Dom's talk [by clicking on this link](#).

2017 socials

April: Sat 8th – big spring social – onion planting and lunch

June: Sun 11th – Open Farm Sunday tours and picnic

Sat 17th–Sun 18th – Peace Festival publicity stall

July: Sat 15th – big summer social – annual summer party

Aug: date TBC - jam-making workshop

Sept: Sat 9th–Sun 10th – Leamington Food and Drink Festival publicity stall

Sat 16th–Sun 17th – big autumn social – potato harvest, camping weekend, harvest meal

Oct: Sat 14th – apple pressing, bring a picnic

Nov: Sat 4th – big winter social – beetroot harvest, shared meal

Dec: date TBC – final social of the year

Jan: date TBC – AGM

Additional events such as socials in the pub and skill share workshops 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? As you will see there are some months with no events planned. 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 (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk).

REMINDER: the social area is yours to use!

The social area is available for members to use for their own events. If you'd like to book it for a child or adult's birthday party, camping weekend or any other kind of private event, please contact Ali to find out more (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk).

THE SUMMER PARTY AND OTHER EVENTS – by Ali Jeffery

This year we're really keen to change how the summer party and other events are organised. In the past, most of the organisation has fallen to a few key people (mainly staff) and we want to change this so that everyone can enjoy the events we hold.

You can see the dates we've set for events above; we'd love to hear from anyone who is interested in organising the social and/or food side of a gathering. Right now, we're especially looking for people to take on different aspects of organising the summer party as the ball needs to get rolling on several different areas very



*Dom's talk at the AGM:
there are the hazelnuts*



The social area wears its party finery

organising the summer party as the ball needs to get rolling on several different areas very

soon!

The organisation of the summer party falls into four main areas:

- entertainment
- food and drink
- site
- publicity and promotion (including ticket sales)

If you're feeling inspired to do some event



Music-makers adding to the vibe



Community circle dance at the summer party

organisation for our community this year, and this information and the photos from previous summer parties have what your appetite for helping with the summer party, [please get in touch](#) to tell us what you would be able to do, whether that's overseeing the organisation of the whole event with a small group, or a more specific role.

AUTUMN TURNS TO WINTER IN PICTURES: NOVEMBER



Planting out in the polytunnels...



Turning the compost heaps.



Picking late apples



Putting straw down to protect carrots from frost

DECEMBER



Moving the growers' shed with the telehandler from Leasowe Farm (photo: Nikki Cooper)



Roofer at work on the re-positioned shed



Starting hot bed construction - here the frame is being painted with linseed oil for protection against rotting

JANUARY



Replacing the rabbit-proof fence in Canalside field



Pigeon protection installed above the purple sprouting broccoli (if you can see it without straining your eyes!)



Bubble-wrapping the greenhouse to insulate it for 2017 seedling raising

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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New Foundry Wood programme for 2017 now out! Lots of regular activities for the whole family including Forest Schools for all ages, Wild Creations, reading & writing for home schoolers.

New workshops Spoon Carving, Firelighting by friction, Storytelling and more!
Visit <http://www.foundrywood.co.uk/> for details.

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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? There are no ads in this issue. 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 April 2017.
Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 23rd April.

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