



## **Canalside Community Food**

a community supported agriculture scheme

**Spring 2008**

**newsletter no.9**

Welcome to our new newsletter! After a couple of months slipping by without producing a newsletter, I have now decided to do a quarterly, and more elaborate, one, rather than try turning one out each month. Many of you will know that Tom and I had our second baby at the end of September last year, so feeling the pressures of time is certainly something we're getting used to, hence trying to consolidate a few things.

So, Spring is here at last (Is it? Isn't it?), and with it comes some well received warm weather. And now that the clocks have gone forward as well, we're starting on the long evenings, which make the British summertime so special. Plus, it gives us all extra time to get all those things done we haven't managed so squeeze into our daytime, hooray!

Along with the Spring have come a few new arrivals to the project, all detailed below, as well as a dawning of the next growing

season. In between Danny going on paternity leave, and Tom's back giving out, the growers have been busy sowing new seeds and getting ready for the coming months, whilst trying to keep on top of all the million jobs that always need doing. It's always busy here on the farm, but we are certainly now entering our busiest few months.

So, please remember you're always welcome to come along and lend a hand with whatever the work task is for our bi-weekly work mornings. Plus we have our Beltane social event to look forward to, and even our 1<sup>st</sup> year anniversary in June. Wow, we've nearly done our first year, and what a year it's been! As always, we thank everyone that has supported us throughout the last few months, and especially to those of you who come along and help us get all those endless jobs done.

See you all soon, Caz

Tom's News from the field

Well, Spring has sprung and with it the madness that occurs on farms at this time of year! There is just so much to do and it's a constant battle to keep up with the never ending list of tasks.

Back in what felt like mid-winter we started off with an amazing turnout to our Imbolc social celebration with over 60 members attending the day. We were blessed with lovely weather and the volunteer workers, at one point nearly 20 strong, made an amazing job of clearing the ditch running down Mill Field and of sorting the fencing out so as the 'rabbit highways' were well and truly sealed off! The hard work was followed with some lovely food and socialising around a roaring fire, which not only warmed us up but brought some very docile mice out of the straw bales too!



The Imbolc festival marks the coming of the light and as such we start to look forward to the first new crops of the year. These arrived with some fantastic harvests of Purple Sprouting Broccoli which is still producing well now and we hope will still be for another week or two. Most recently we've been enjoying some really lovely crops of Red Kale, an extremely sweet variety

that has lasted us well. It's that tricky time of year, though, when all the stored and root vegetables from the previous season are starting to tire and run out, but the growing season is still some way off. As such, we've seen the end of our Beetroot and more recently and



dramatically the Potatoes finished too. The Carrots have been a mainstay, as everyone receiving a veg share will know all too well! We had two work mornings in mid March digging carrots, and with some brilliant volunteer turn outs managed to dig almost half of the plot; on the first Saturday this equated to some 250kg. They will hopefully be in the share until early May.

It is the new season of crops that are dominating our thoughts now though, and with the Potatoes running out in the store we were keen to get the new early varieties in the ground as soon as we could. They will hopefully give us a crop of baby new Potatoes as early as the end of May, depending on the weather. Garlic has also been planted for the first time, as we weren't able to include it last season; it is now showing some six inches of growth. The Broad Beans have been a bit of a saga, with losing some to the mice and crows and then problems with 'damping off'. Finally we feel we have achieved our intended plot, with the first succession well on its way.

Some of the early plants we've been raising in the hot house over at Ryton have now been hardened off and planted out. Beetroot, Spinach, Spring Greens and Lettuce have been shocked by the cold outdoors, but hopefully they'll enjoy this warming weather we're having right now. These are some of the outdoor crops that we're encouraging early in the season to help with the 'Hungry Gap'. In the polytunnels, an early crop of Baby Carrots has been drilled (Oh no! not more Carrots...) and we've half a tunnel of Climbing French Beans to look forward to as well, hopefully ready in late May. The tunnels have been a fantastic success so far this year, with large bags of Mixed Salad going into the share every week since February. The tunnels are also nurturing our early Spring Greens and Spring Onions, which we're hoping will provide us with some much needed fresh tender produce just when there's not a lot else around.



With the success of these 3 polytunnels we are working hard to have the fourth and fifth up and skinned by the end of month. This has been a major undertaking given the number of jobs this time of the year presents, but with an army of Tomato and Cucumber plants sitting in the greenhouse at Ryton, the clock is ticking! We've a little extra help with all these tasks now though as we've welcomed two new work share volunteers to the project. Dan Britton has swapped from being a veg share member and now does a weekly work share along with his brother Will who is new to the scheme. Their help is very welcome and appreciated, as is everyone who has volunteered their time towards making this second season a success. Thank You! Tom

### important information!

At our latest Steering Group meeting, it was discussed that we should raise the level of pay for Canalside employees in line with inflation. At the moment, all employees are paid £7.18 per hour, so the wage increase would be 16p, taking the hourly rate up to £7.34. Rather than it being a simple motion, however, there are a number of issues to consider:

- \* Being at the end of our first year now, we need to start repaying some of the £10,000 loan we took out at the beginning of the project, plus other expenses which the CSA owes the farm.

\* It has always been an aim of the project to pay any workers a fair wage. This, we have decided, would ideally be £10 per hour. However, being in its infancy, and a not-for-profit organisation, the project simply cannot afford to pay this rate as yet.

\* We worked out the initial rate of pay based loosely on what we projected to be our expenses for our first year. This also included setting the cost of veg shares at £7.50 for a small and £11 per large.

\* If we are to increase wages in line with inflation, we will have to raise the cost of the veg shares in order to cover the increased cost to the project.

As such, the Steering Group has decided that we need to raise the cost of veg shares from the beginning of July to £8 per small, and £12 per large. This increased amount will cover the increase in pay for the workers, plus give us some capital with which we can begin to repay our loans, as well as covering the increased cost of all the inputs to the project. All Canalside employees have agreed that they are happy to wait until the beginning of July for their pay rise.

If anyone is not happy with this proposal, please get in touch and we can discuss it further. Asking members to pay more at the same time as receiving a smaller share during the Hungry Gap is not ideal, we know, but letting you know this far in advance will hopefully give anyone the opportunity to cancel their subscription, in the 2 months notice we ask for, if they are not happy with the increase.

I will be in touch again soon with more information and details about this, but we just wanted to forewarn you all.

#### New arrivals at Canalside:

##### Babies



We'd just like to say a very big welcome once again to little Esme Sorrel Brookes-Steele, the latest arrival to one of our main growers, Danny, and his family. Born in the early hours of 7 March, Esme joins her big sister, Ruth, in a beautiful blooming family. Congratulations to Danny, Meg and Ruth, and welcome back to Danny, who has been off work on paternity leave for the last 3 weeks.

Also a very belated welcome to Phoebe, who was born on 27 November last year to Cat and Nick, 2 of our veg share members who live in Radford. Congratulations to Cat & Nick and Phoebe's older sister Toulou!

##### Work share volunteers



Dan

Brothers Dan and Will Britton now join our regular work share team of Ali Jeffery and Graham Williams. Dan and Will were both brought up locally and still live in Leamington. Many of you will recognise Dan and his silver *Urban Woodsman* van; he is a very skilled tree surgeon and woodcraftsman and both him and Will are great additions to the team. Welcome!



Will

As a result of the AGM and asking if there was anyone who would like to join either of our core organisation groups, we would also like to formally welcome Wendy Donnelly, Julia Wright, and Carolyn Pickering to the Steering Group, and Jane Ingall, Carolyn Pickering, and Chris Philpott to the Events Committee. Wendy and Julia are also advising Tom and Caz on funding issues at the moment, both having had a lot of experience in this area. More information on all these lovely folk on the website in due course! And if there is anyone else that would like to be a part of either of these 2 groups, please get in touch.

### Work mornings

Please remember we hold 2 work mornings every week. These are on **Wednesdays** and **Saturdays**, from **10am – 1pm**. If there is a specific task to be done, I will notify you in advance, otherwise please just turn up and get stuck in to whatever there is to do on the day. No need to let us know if you are coming, just come!

### Socials

Our next social event is on **Saturday 3 May**, in celebration of **Mayday** and the Celtic festival of **Beltane**. Beltane represents the return of the summer and celebrates the fertility of the coming year. More details nearer the time, and also on the website.

FYI, social dates for your calendar for 2008 are:

Saturday 3 May  
Saturday 21 June

Saturday 2 August  
Saturday 20 September  
Saturday 1 November  
Saturday 20 December

**Beltane/Mayday**  
**Summer Solstice/First Year Anniversary!**  
**Lammas/Harvest Festival**  
**Autumn Equinox**  
**Samhain/Halloween**  
**Winter Solstice**



Please see the website for more information nearer to the time of each event.

***Please note that we still have a number of veg shares available – if you know anyone that is interested in taking out a subscription with us, please ask them to get in touch!***



Administrator: Caz Ingall  
Canalside Community Food, Leasowe Farm, Southam Road, Radford Semele, Leamington Spa,  
Warwickshire, CV31 1TY  
t: **01926 423939** e: **mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk**  
w: **www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk**