



## Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

Spring 2009

newsletter no. 12

HELLO! Well, Spring is most definitely in the air and what a welcome respite it is after what has felt like a long and very cold winter. The hawthorn buds, always one of the first trees to come into leaf, are opening, and the daffodils are about to join the crocuses and snowdrops in all their flowering glory. This is always such a magical time of year and what with the beautifully warm sunny days we've had in recent weeks, it really does feel like the earth is slowly thawing out.

While the growers begin to shed their many layers of warm clothes, the increase in workload is piled on. At this time of year, they all move up a day's work a week to try and keep on top of all the seed sowing and bed preparation, but this year at least we're up to our full capacity of 6 workshare volunteers so at least they have a bit of a helping hand.

So... in this edition, what do we see? Three of our newest workshares, Charlie Veronica, and John are introduced to you all below in the **New Arrivals** section. We bid a very fond farewell to our trusty consultant, Thalia, in **Departures**, who is moving to Australia with her family, and catch up with what is happening in all the different sub-groups, such as the **Building** project, **Fruit Field**, and new **Schools** committee. And there was me thinking this year was going to be a bit more relaxed...

As the sun gets stronger and the days longer, I wish you all very many bright Spring blessings and look forward to seeing you on the farm over the coming weeks, Caz x



### Tom's News from the field

It feels like it's been a fairly long and cold winter and we're now looking keenly forward to the first tentative signs of Spring. The cold snap over Christmas and New Year left everything on the field thoroughly frozen with temperatures plummeting to -12C! Even the hardiest of the veg didn't like this and we struggled to keep the harvested produce in the yurt from freezing before folk collected on Tuesday evenings. The cold weather meant that all growth out on the field ground to a complete halt. In the polytunnels, however, things have just about managed to keep going with the over-wintered leaves managing to keep the share in fresh salad packs through the darkest Winter days. It's amazing seeing crops like Rocket growing right back over the winter after an initial cut in November. With all the roots that Winter brings, the salads coming from the tunnels are a real blessing!

The Christmas pick-up was a great success with a bumper selection of produce this year. Out on the field we were particularly pleased with the Brussels Sprouts which compared with last year have surpassed themselves. The other side of the coin has been the disappointment of the Celeriac and the Cabbages this year. We've yet to master the Celeriac and as you'll have seen, the ones that we've had so far this

Brussel Sprout bonanza



year have been very small. They are sweet, and we're hoping that there'll be more to come in the following weeks. The Cabbages have been a frustration, though, as we planted so many this season and they've struggled to make an adequate size. We've managed to harvest a selection of medium sized heads but it's really a case now of waiting for the warmth to get them growing again.

The real drama came along with the February snow. We suddenly couldn't see any of the veg let alone harvest it and get it to anyone! With three inches lying over the mesh that covers the Brassicas, Danny was left with no option but to roll huge snow balls across the field in order to remove it get to the Cabbages. Hannah spent an afternoon sweeping the drive so as folk could collect their veg on the Tuesday pick up, but by Saturday the job had become too much and we decided to deliver everyone their share, which made for an interesting trial of a system that



Bad for veg, great for sledding!

we've often talked about. With no rest from the snow, we were left with no option but to cancel the following Tuesday collection and folk then had a Christmas style collection the week after with twice their usual share! So it was with great relief that we finally saw the snow begin to melt allowing the fields to start drying out.

It's certainly approaching that time now when we start to focus on the many tasks of the coming season whilst trying to maintain a steady flow of fresh veg for the share over the leaner months of the Spring. We are, of course, still some way off the hungriest period during May and early June but timing at this time of year in preparation for the early season is crucial.

Just recently the weather has really warmed up with several days feeling almost Spring like. This has prompted the drilling of our early Peas and the early carrots in the poly tunnel. So what's to look forward to? Well, we've been eagerly awaiting the new season of Purple Sprouting Broccoli for some weeks now and it has at last arrived in your shares. Also we've varieties of Cauliflower due to



begin cropping any time now too. The Leeks have begun bulking up and should be in the share for most of the Spring having been largely absent unfortunately in the Winter months. Really it's a matter of waiting for the warm weather to let everything begin growing again... Tom

New arrivals...

Since I last updated our 'new arrivals' list, we have 3 new workshare volunteers to add to our already fantastic workforce. Here is a little summary of each of these wonderful people...



### **John Liddamore**

John has been part of the workshare team since October and is a regular sight to be seen in the fields, often alongside at least one of his two beautiful little daughters, Daci and Hazel. He is also a very active member of the Leamington Transition Towns movement and spearheads the Communications group.

### **Veronica Lindop**

Veronica moved to Leamington Spa recently after graduating from Cardiff University and got involved with Canalside because she 'thought it would be a good way to meet people and learn more about where (her) food is coming from'



## Charlie Swallow

Charlie moved back to Warwick from Brighton at the end of last year, where, at the end of her time there, she was volunteering as a gardener at a community project and fell in love with it. She is now back in Warwickshire, volunteering at Garden Organic and has just got a job in a plant nursery, but is 'really thrilled to be doing the workshare at Canalside, meeting lovely people and enjoying (her) weekly bag of organic veggies!'



On behalf of everyone at Canalside, I'd also like to say a very huge 'Welcome to the World' to wee Toby Sebastian, born to our lovely friends and members, Ben and Claire Phillips. Toby was born at home on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March, the latest addition to a beautiful and loving family along with his big sister, Jasmine. We wish you all many new-life blessings and sleep-filled nights!

### ...and departures

With a definite amount of sadness, we have said goodbye to our fantastic consultant, Thalia, who left for Australia last week with her partner, Dave, and their baby Erin. Thalia was the Manager of the Research field at Garden Organic until she went on maternity leave last Autumn, and has worked as our trusty organic horticultural expert since the project began in 2007. Dave is originally from Sydney, and has managed to persuade Thalia to give the sunny life a go for a few years. We miss you already but wish you all very much luck and love on your new journey!

### Building Project

As many of you will know, we are in the process of planning and designing a new building for Canalside; a replacement for the yurt and a place to meet and socialise with other members. The building group, which is made up of Canalside members, has been working through all the different issues that such a big and permanent (!) project like this brings up. It has coincided with plans that the Ingall family based at Leasowe farm have for erecting a new barn to act as the hub of all their new enterprises. So, the plan has developed to make the new Canalside building integral to this new farm barn, thus creating a compact development all on one site that we can realistically achieve whilst keeping costs to a minimum.

The Canalside building will run along one side of the new barn sited almost opposite where the yurt is at the moment. There will be a considerable amount of earth to move in order to level the site but this has two bonuses; one is that we can use the clay and soil to make a cob mixture in order to build the walls of the building; the other is that the siting of a veg store near to the back of building where the earth has been dug out will make for a naturally cooling effect to save on any refrigeration. Separate to the CSA building will be a small composting toilet block with washing facilities using solar thermal hot water.

Once we've obtained funding for this project, we will start to put together a diary of events and be able to invite members to volunteer to get involved in the actual building process. We intend to use mainly low-tech environmentally friendly building materials and methods that are easy for everyone to learn and use. Although the timing of these things can never be entirely known, we are presently looking are starting the landscaping for the buildings in May and June, with building work continuing through the summer and autumn.



### Fruit Field - by Tom

It's always been the long-term vision of Canalside to start to grow both top and soft fruit. Presently, myself, Gareth Davies and Julia Wright are developing this vision and starting to

form ideas for a fruit CSA to run alongside the established veg CSA. Growing fruit is, however, very different from growing vegetables! Amongst other things, the produce has a tendency to come in much more of a glut than seasonal vegetables. Therefore we've been looking at different ways of stretching the season, including particular varieties that fruit early and also store well. We'll be exploring ways of storing and processing the produce in order to make it available to members throughout the year and this could be by way of a community freezer, juicing, drying or preserving.

Before we can go much further with planning this new arm of the CSA, we need to develop a design. At present and we know from word of mouth at the AGM that there is project. The fantastic news is that discussing our ideas with the well-Patrick Whitefield, he has agreed workshop to produce a design. of Patrick or even seen him on the BBCs 'A Farm for the Future' extensively on Permaculture design. Hopefully his skills and experience will help us to achieve a fruit field that will work with the natural lie of the land.

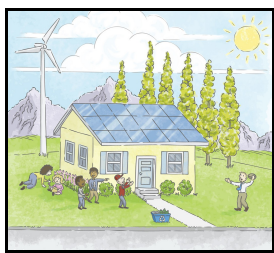


we've a field that is available and from a brief show of hands considerable enthusiasm for this after approaching and known Permaculture designer to help lead a weekend

Some of you may have heard TV, (he recently featured on the programme) and he has written

Unlike with the vegetable CSA, the fruit is going to take many years to properly establish. We'll be aiming at having at least some soft fruit within 18 months but as you'll appreciate, the apples and pears will be a few years down the road. So, it'll be a gradual process of folk getting produce, and likewise the project needs to be financed whilst in its infancy. Our hope therefore is that after the design is developed, we will be able to apply for funding to help plant this field and then to help run it until paying members can take on the running costs long-term.

**If there are any members that feel they'd like to get involved with the planning and development of this project then we'd be really happy to have more folk on board, we've also got a few available places on the weekend with Patrick for members who feel they'd like to be a part of that design process. At present we are looking at the weekend of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April.**



### Schools Committee - by Caz

Since the inception of Canalside, we have always talked about getting school groups involved in the project, be it just in having walks around the site, or having a separate area where groups of children could have their own little veg plot. I have also had a number of different local schools get in contact with me over the past couple of years regarding bringing groups from their schools along for a visit.

Back in February, a few different people met up in the guise of a new Canalside 'Schools Committee'. We had a good discussion about all the different options on getting school groups onto the land, from what tasks they may be interested in getting involved in to the legal requirements around having groups of children on the farm. Overall, the response was very positive and the general feeling is that getting school groups along to learn more about food, organics and healthy eating would be nothing but beneficial.

However... we are very keen to take things slowly, and as such are not rushing into having groups onto the land before the beginning of the next academic year *at the earliest*. Ideally we would have our new CSA building and toilet block up and fully functioning before having bus loads of children on site, and that may well not be before the end of the year.

We are currently working closely with Action21 to see how they could help us move forward with our ideas. Not only do they have fantastic resources and links with other local networks, including schools, they also have the experience and knowledge about the real practicalities of getting this kind of thing up and running. So... watch this space for more information on our Schools Committee, and **if you have anything to contribute, 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! And don't forget to put your name in the Signing In book in the yurt when you arrive and leave, so we can keep track of our volunteer hours over the year!

#### Socials - **by Bruce**

I'm very happy to be involved as the new organiser for the Canalside socials. I have always had them circled on my calendar as events I don't like to miss, so I decided if I'm going to commit to each day, I may as well take a more active role. I'm not planning any radical changes, because I think they already have a winning formula. We will stick to the 8 Celtic festivals (which means a social every 6-8 weeks), enjoying a bring-and-share lunch after the optional work morning. Lots of sitting around the fire, chatting, eating homemade cake and



Bruce with his son Jamie

seasonal grub - you can't really go wrong. We'll continue to erect a marquee for shelter for the next year, until the Canalside building is ready. And the event I'm most looking forward to: a Canalside barn dance (in the new barn!) to celebrate the late Autumn equinox harvest on September 19th. If you would like to give me a hand on any of the social days, or have any ideas or activities you would like to offer, please do get in touch: [bruceknight.voice@virgin.net](mailto:bruceknight.voice@virgin.net) or 01926 778454

A most massively huge 'Hip Hip Hooray!' to Bruce for taking on the organisation of the Canalside socials. What a star...

Our next social event is on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**, in celebration of the Celtic festival of Beltane. Named after Bel, the Gaulish god of light, fire and healing, Beltane can be literally translated as 'Bel's fire'. Officially starting at moonrise on Mayday eve, the festival is normally celebrated on 1 May, standing midway between the spring equinox and the summer solstice. More specific details on the social nearer the time, and also on the website.

FYI, (provisional) social dates for your calendar for 2009 are:

Saturday 2 May	<b>Beltane/May Day</b>
Saturday 27 June	<b>Summer Solstice</b>
Saturday 1 August	<b>Lammas/Harvest Festival</b>
Saturday 19 September	<b>Canalside ceilidh!</b>
Saturday 31 October	<b>Samhain/Halloween</b>
Saturday 19 December	<b>Winter Solstice</b>



**At the time of going to press, our number of veg share members is at 104, so definitely on the up, but still not at our target of 110. Please don't forget to keep telling your friends and family about us and get them to sign up for their share of the harvest!**



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