



Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

newsletter

no. 8, Thursday 31 January, 2008

- Winter Solstice Social/Xmas veg collection
- Great turnout and feedback from AGM
- News from the field
- 2008 seed order done
- Welcome to new committee members
- Hello & Goodbye to workshare volunteers

Well, somehow 2 months have gone by since our last Newsletter – there's something about the Christmas and New Year period which seems to warp time. Anyway, here we are, well on our way into 2008, and our second full year of growing and harvesting veg.

We had a great **Winter Solstice Social event**, which also doubled as the 2 week Christmas veg share pick up. Almost everyone stopped for a glass of mulled wine and a biscuit or 5, which was wonderful – fantastic to see so many familiar faces and people getting to know each other round the fire. Here are a few of our favourite photos from the day:



Ruth & Tallis survey the crowds



Members mingle round the solstice fire



Andrew & Dick chatting

News from the field (a lengthier edition of this to be available for download from the website soon!)

Well, it's the time of year to get on top of all those jobs that we've been putting off and off. So, several gates have been hung around the field in the last month, not least a double gate at the entrance to the site that means we can lock up at night and maintain better security.

Larger scale work has been underway on the drainage issue, with a dramatic new ditch dug from the track to an existing ditch along the boundary of Mill Field. Our intention is to collect all the water shed from the woodland around the poly tunnels and future barn site and filter it down into the Leam on the far side of the canal.

Up in the poly tunnels we have seen considerable growth in the last two months, with all the salad leaves becoming well established and leading to our being able to put the first salad bags into the share for the Christmas pick up. It's such a treat having fresh green salad leaves at this time of year! These leaves are growing well now and we hope to see salad bags in the share more and more often from now on.

It seems like we talk about poly tunnel erection in every newsletter and here we are again, but the end is in sight! Tom was rewarded for his hours spent on eBay regularly checking for new tunnel frames when he managed to purchase an ideal tunnel from a farm in Sussex. He hired a lorry in order to drive down to collect it just before Christmas. This frame is so long that we are able to make two from it and therefore reach our target of five tunnels.

Out on the field, things seem very slow at this time of year but already there are signs of growth. The early broad beans have germinated and if we can keep the mice and crows away from them we hope they'll do well! The *brassica* plot continues to provide drama for us at this time of year. It is by far the most productive plot in the winter, but this also attracts others to its food source. As such, we

started suffering heavy bird (mainly pigeon) damage on the plants before Christmas and had to cover the whole plot in a protective cover of horticultural fleece. However, this is not ideal, and it gets ripped, damaged and blown about very easily. Consequently, we recently took the step of investing in a much higher quality mesh cover that will last many years and provide the crops with protection from both birds and butterflies.

So, it's been all go, planning for the season ahead. We are really excited to implement all that we've learned in the last year, and that's been taking shape during many planning meetings over the last two months. This culminated with our placing the new **seed order** for 2008/2009 which has since arrived and the first seeds are already in the compost and poking their heads above the surface in the warm greenhouse at Ryton.



Everyone settling down for the meeting

After a well earned rest for everyone over the festive period, the beginning of January saw our first **AGM** on the 8th, in Radford Semele Community Hall. Not really knowing how many people to expect, but being warned not to expect too many as AGMs generally didn't draw in the crowds, we were really pleased with the number of people that turned up. So many thanks to everyone that came and supported us – as I have written to you all before, we were very pleased with how the evening went and with the outcomes of the meeting.

At the AGM we also put the call out to the Membership for anyone who wished to get more involved in the organisational aspects of Canalside and join either the **Steering Group** or newly formed **Events Committee**. A number of people have subsequently offered their services, so on behalf of everyone in the project, I'd like to welcome Julia Wright to the Steering Committee, and Chris Philpott, Carolyn Pickering and Jane Ingall to the Events Committee. If there is anyone else who would like to become more involved in either of these groups, please get in touch.

Lastly we'd like to say a really big thank you to both Margaret Preston and Chris Lyle-Goodwin who have decided to stop as '**workshare**' volunteers. Both Margaret and Chris have been coming and working with us once a week in return for their veg since the project began and gave a lot of their time early last year before there was any veg being harvested, so thank you! We'd like to welcome Graham Williams to the regular work team now, who joins Ali Jeffery as one of our two work share volunteers. There are spaces available for other folk if they'd like to do a workshare, so if you or anyone you know would be interested, please let us know.



Graham harvesting carrots



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