



Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

Winter 2008

newsletter no. 11

HELLO! Well, I have to start off by apologising, as somehow I've managed to bypass the Autumn newsletter and move straight into Winter! I always fool myself into thinking that our busiest times of year are Spring and Summer, daring to breathe a sigh of relief as the leaves turn golden and the countryside quiets down for the colder months. But as the project expands, in terms of both veg share numbers and project diversification, more and more of our time is taken up outside these two seasons.

It's been another amazing year on the farm, shown brilliantly through the growers' photo presentation at our **AGM on the 2nd December**. Thank you so much again to everyone that turned up for the evening, and especially to those who helped set up, clear away and serve refreshments. We had a great turnout (45 people) and there were some lively discussions! Overall, I think we all feel amazed by the continued level of support that our members show towards the

project. Thank you all for your amazing dedication and commitment.

On the basis of members' feedback, I've now added some new sections to the newsletter, such as a **Recipe Ideas** page, and some more detailed information on the different ways in which Canalside is moving forward. So, there will now be regular updates on our Building progress, as well as our other funding proposals and Dan and Kath's **Energy** ideas.

As usual, if anyone has any comments or suggestions about anything in the newsletter or about the project in general, please get in touch.

Wishing you all many Winter Solstice blessings, and a very Happy Christmas and New Year. May all your festive periods be peaceful and filled with much delicious feasting! Caz x



tOM's News from the field

Well, it certainly feels like a long time since I wrote for the Summer newsletter - July, when was that!? It's hard to convince yourself that the farm was lush with greens, leaves filling the hedgerows and warm when we're firmly in the throes of Winter. Mid summer was a truly abundant time though, our second season of harvesting summer crops and we felt we'd made a lot



of positive progress. For us growers it's the time of year that requires an early start each Saturday morning; in order to get everything harvested fresh for the share by 10am we often start at 5.30am! This is an incredible time of day, though, and every now and again you are rewarded with a magical moment like looking up to see two swans swooping over your head, the sound of their wings echoing through the air as the sun is rising.

With the last two polytunnels finally operational, we were playing catch up for much of the summer, mainly trying desperately to keep one step ahead of the weeds! Some crops did slip the net for a while, though, and it's been a lesson in the importance of getting plants in the ground on time. This said, nearly all the Summer crops out-performed those grown in 2007, and we presented the harvest data at this year's AGM. The extreme was the 3485 Cucumbers we picked! Hopefully we managed to help you out with some novel ways of getting through all of them! We'll

definitely be growing fewer plants next year, most probably making space for an early crop of Celery and Fennel.

Throughout the Summer and Autumn, we had a great response from members to calls for help at specific times. Whether it's weeding or harvesting, your help is invaluable and works to keep the cost of the share affordable. The turnout for Onion pulling was of particular note, with a large gang of folk filling the pickup with Onions in no time at all. The Onions were also a heavy crop this year, with an estimated total of 1.5 tonnes.



Unfortunately August brought with it some really crappy weather that we felt we didn't deserve after the wet Summer of 2007. Unseasonably cold mixed with record rainfall made for hard work out on the field; luckily, unlike in 2007, the plants were largely well established enough to cope with it. It did nothing to help our already struggling squash and pumpkin plants though, and sadly the harvest from these was very disappointing; third time lucky in 2009! Surprisingly however, the weather didn't hinder a bumper crop of Peppers in the polytunnels. More sunshine might have meant more coloured Peppers but we were pleased with nearly 2000 being picked and lasting right through to the middle of October.

Autumn did bring with it a brief Indian Summer which we made the most of, enjoying a fantastic end to a bumper Sweetcorn harvest. It's at this time of year that our focus turns to getting the polytunnels turned round and planted up with Winter and Spring crops. It's exciting to have all the extra space this year and we're enjoying being able to plan in extra crops for the Hungry Gap next year. It wasn't long before many of the salad leaves in the tunnels were being picked and the hugely enjoyable Winter Salad Bags were back in the share. We've planted over 25 different leaves for your enjoyment over the next few months!



Winter then came early this year with an amazing snowfall in late October covering the field and throwing the polytunnels into darkness. This spelled the end for any late tender crops such as climbing beans out in the field and we had a great work session for the Samhain social clearing all the bean poles away and planting next years early crop of Broad Beans. Soon after

Samhain also saw the erection of Dan's Peruvian wind turbine on the site which is now providing renewable energy to light the yurt every Tuesday evening. It has added something quite special to the site: our very own beacon of energy independence. Tom

general information

Recipe Sheets: As the project grows, more members join up and the Canalside horizon begins to expand to more than just growing veg, I am finding that I do not always have enough time in the week to get everything done that I need to from an admin perspective. As such, I have been trying to work out means by which I can cut down on some of the million different things I have to do, and one of the main ways I thought of was to stop producing a weekly Recipe & Information Sheet. Instead, I will focus more on the seasonal newsletters, including in them a collection of recipes which would incorporate all the different veg we expect to see in the share over the following months (just like here, although this one only incorporates veg over the Christmas period).

In terms of the 'News from the Field' etc, we have recently started a blog (see below) which we foresee as serving as a better medium for letting you all know the regular

updates from the veg fields. The fact that by doing all this would also cut down on both the amount of paper and ink (and electricity!) we use is also a huge bonus.

I know that many members really enjoy the Recipe Sheets, which is why I wanted to ask your opinion on this. By cutting out the weekly job of putting these sheets together, I would be saving myself a good 2 hours work, which, when I'm only meant to be doing 8 hours a week (ha!) is quite a large proportion. I would really value your feedback on this, so if you have any opinions about it, **please let me know!** If the response I get back from this is generally in favour of it, I will produce a 'recipe collection' for the winter veg in the New Year and stop producing the weekly Recipe & Information sheets at the same time.

Cotton bags for veg..?! On her Feedback Form, one of our members, Kath, had the great suggestion of getting some fair trade, organic cotton bags made up with the Canalside logo which people could use to put their veg in. Bishopston Trading Company could provide these bags for us, which are sourced from India, at a price of £1.75 per bag. As a small money-making incentive for the project, we would then add on a bit to this price, which would then pass on to members, should they wish to buy one. In the future, purchasing one of these bags could be an additional option when people first sign up for a share. What better way to advertise Canalside to all your friends, family and people in the street?! **If you have any thoughts on this,** please email Kath at katherine@pasteur.net

Canalside Blog! I have been recently introduced to the world of 'blogs' and a number of people have highly recommended setting one up for Canalside. So... that's what I've done! In an attempt at cutting down on the number of emails I send out to you all, I will now be regularly updating our blog instead. Check it out and **let me know what you think:** <http://canalsidecommunityfood.blogspot.com/>

building project

As those of you who were at the AGM would have heard, we are busy putting together a proposal for a new building on the Canalside site at the moment. This building is to serve a number of different purposes:

- replacement for the yurt for veg collection
- small office
- kitchen area
- sheltered space for workshops and group meetings

Our ideal timeframe for this building is to have it up by the end of Summer 2009 – (yes, after saying we wouldn't be taking on any other big projects this year, following our polytunnel flurry this year, we've given ourselves another big job to get our teeth into!) Our vision for the structure at the moment is to build it out of straw bales, which ideally we could source from this very piece of land.

We have a small sub-committee of interested folk working on the proposal at the moment, but we are looking for anyone else with any particular skill, experience or interest to join us. If you would like to get more involved, please contact Caz. As you can see, our timeframe for this project is pretty tight, so we need to get moving with it a.s.a.p! We're currently working on the design, so get in touch if you have any inspiration!

Coppicing workshop – **by Kath**

We had a beautiful crisp and clear day for the coppicing workshop on Sunday 7th December. This was held in the woodland on the opposite side of the canal from the CSA, which belongs to Tom and Caz. After a nice hot tea round an open fire, and some introductory guidance on what to do from Dan, we got started.

The main aim of the day was to extract some nice long hazel poles for the geodome which we will be making on December 20th, but in the process of coppicing nothing goes to waste. We sought out nice straight bean poles and pea sticks to be used on the CSA next year, some fat pieces will be used as mushroom logs for those wonderful shiitakes, and the rest of a decent size will keep Tom, Caz and the kids warm as firewood for their wood burning stove. The remaining brash (twigs and small branches) was used to cover up the hazel stumps so that the deer don't nip off the new growth in the spring.

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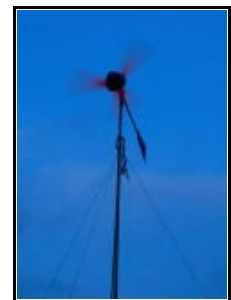
did all the work using hand tools (bow saws, loppers and billhooks) so we could really enjoy the tranquillity of the woodland without the revving of chainsaws. It's obviously working like this, but much more pleasant. By the afternoon were 16 adults and 3 children so it was a lovely way to get know other Canalside members.

At lunchtime we sat round the fire and feasted on hot soup, and other shared contributions including Graham's home made bread, Tom and Caz's salad and Pam's rock buns. Mmmm.

People seemed to enjoy the day so much that we discussed organising further regular coppicing days (there is plenty more to be done!). **If you are interested then keep an eye on the emails/blog.** Alternatively, if you would like to share a skill or interest you have with other members of Canalside then get in touch and let's see if we can make it happen!

Keeping the lights on! Putting up wind power at Canalside

The yurt is very dark on a winter's evening and without light it's impossible to collect your veg. However, that part of the farm has no mains electricity. How, then, to keep the lights on? The Canalside project is about more than just healthy, organic veg. It's about demonstrating local, low carbon, sustainable ways of living – and that includes how we get our power. So, what better than a wind turbine?!



Dan also has an interest in having electricity on the farm as his van is just behind the yurt. So he took the initiative to get something organised.

The wind turbine came from Peru. It was designed for Practical Action (an international development charity based near Rugby) to provide basic electricity in remote communities in Peru. Kath, a Canalside member who works for Practical Action, bought one from the local manufacturer when working in Peru in October and brought it back -surprisingly easy given that the main turbine was in her hand luggage and looked a bit like a bomb!

Putting up a turbine is not a simple task – but plenty of Canalside members had skills and enthusiasm to help out. Graham has the electrical genius for sorting out the wiring. Steven had actually been on a course in Peru where he had put up one of these very turbines! And about 15 other people came along to find out more and help in various ways to get the turbine up and working.



Steven gave a simple but informative introduction to how wind power works, and Dan explained how we were going to put the

turbine up. Then we all set to the different tasks: putting the blades and rotor together, digging in a base for the turbine post, rigging up the wiring, and fixing on the guy lines. Given the days are so short, it was getting dark by the time we came to winch the turbine up into place – but it was a great sight to see the blades spinning (it was a really windy afternoon) and the battery charging. Now, as long as there is enough wind, there should be light when you collect your veg. Well done and thanks to all involved!

- You can buy a wind turbine for a Peruvian or Nepali community through Practical Presents www.practicalpresents.org/
- You can get involved in other aspects of sustainable energy through the Action21 energy group in Leamington http://www.action21.co.uk/energy_index.html
- You can get involved in actually making (from scratch!) some more wind turbines for Canalside in the coming year by contacting Dan at urbanwoodsman@hotmail.co.uk

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

A reminder to everyone that we are always open to new ideas and suggestions on how our social events could be organised. Although we've now moved from 8 events a year to just 4, they still take a lot of work and energy, so if anyone is able to come and help at all, please let me know.

Our next formal social event is on **Saturday 7 February**, in celebration of the Celtic festival of **Imbolc**. Imbolc is traditionally the time of new beginnings, hope, cleansing and healing. It represents a time to look within ourselves and seek our potential, then set ourselves new tasks and challenges for the year ahead. More specific details nearer the time, and also on the website.

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

Saturday 7 February	Imbolc
Saturday 21 March	Spring Equinox
Saturday 2 May	Beltane/May Day
Saturday 20 June	Summer Solstice
Saturday 1 August	Lammas/Harvest Festival
Saturday 19 September	Canalside ceilidh!
Saturday 7 November	Samhain/Halloween
Saturday 19 December	Winter Solstice



Please note that we are still not up to our present target of 110 veg share members. The sooner we reach this target, the more financially stable we will be, so if you know anyone that is interested in taking out a subscription with us, please ask them to get in touch!



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 blog: <http://canalsidecommunityfood.blogspot.com/>

Christmas Recipes!

Fancy doing something different with your vegetables this Christmas? Then hopefully some of these recipes will give you a bit of new inspiration on how to use your share over the festive period. **Happy Feasting!**

Roasted Vegetables with Cardamom

Serves 6-8

350g/12oz carrots, scrubbed
350g/12oz parsnips, peeled
350g/12oz swede, peeled
350g/12oz potatoes, peeled
150ml/¼ pt olive oil
4 cardamom pods, lightly crushed
1 tbsp soft brown sugar
sea salt & freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Mark 6

Quarter the carrots and parsnips lengthways, and cut the swede and potatoes into chunks.

Heat the oil in a roasting tin and add the vegetables, turning them to coat well. Roast in the oven for 30 mins, turning them twice.

Add the crushed cardamom pods and sugar, mix well and return to the oven for another 30 mins, until well browned and soft.

Season well with salt & pepper and serve.

Brussels Sprouts with Chestnuts

Serves 6-8

400g fresh chestnuts
1kg brussels sprouts, trimmed
2 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, peeled & cut into 8 wedges
juice of ½ lemon
pinch ground cinnamon

Firstly, make slits in the chestnuts and put them in saucepan of water, bring to boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain and allow leave to cool, then carefully peel off the skins.

Meanwhile, trim the sprouts and cut a cross in the base of each. Blanch in a pan of boiling salted water for 5 mins.

Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and cook the chestnuts (until they begin to brown) and fry the onions until just going crisp. Add the sprouts, lemon juice and cinnamon and continue cooking until heated through.

Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Roasted Potatoes with Red Onion & Red Wine Vinegar

Serves 6

1.15kg/2lb 8oz red potatoes, unpeeled
3 tbsp olive oil
2 medium red onions
1 ½ tbsp red wine vinegar
salt & freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Mark 7

Firstly, put the oil in a large roasting tin and leave to heat up in the oven for about 10 mins.

Meanwhile, cut the potatoes into 2cm chunks. Peel and chop each onion into 16 wedges.

Remove the tin from the oven and carefully spread the potatoes and onions in the oil, turning them to coat well. Then sprinkle over the red wine vinegar, season with salt & pepper and return the tray to the highest shelf in the oven for 45 mins, or until the potatoes are crisp and onion slightly charred at edges.

Serve immediately!

Parsnips with Mustard & Maple Syrup

Serves 6-8

1.8kg/4lb parsnips, peeled, topped & tailed
4 tbsp sunflower oil
2 ½ tbsp wholegrain mustard
2 ½ tbsp maple syrup (mixed with mustard)
salt & freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 240C/475F/Mark 9

Firstly, cut the parsnips in half lengthways, then cut the top half into 4 and the bottom half into 2. Place in a steamer, cover and steam for 6 mins.

Meanwhile, put the oil in a baking tray in the oven to heat up. When the parsnips are ready, remove the tray from the oven and carefully add the parsnips to the hot oil, turning them to ensure even coating. Season well with salt & pepper and return to the oven for 25 mins.

Remove from the oven, coat well with the mustard and maple syrup mix and return to the oven for 8-10 mins. Serve immediately!

Swede Mash

Serves 6

1 large swede, cut into chunks.
butter/margarine
2-3 tbsp double cream

Simply simmer the swede in boiling water until tender. Tip into a food processor with the butter/margarine and cream and whiz until creamy. Season well with salt & freshly ground black pepper and serve.