



The pole barn and social area swathed in a wintry coat - mid-January

WRITING THIS, *we're in the middle of an unprecedented run (to my knowledge) of snowy veg shares, with the growers bagging all the shares for veg members to collect from the top of the drive. The current weather conditions, and the difficulty getting down the drive, make it seem like things have ground to a halt down at Canalside, and certainly in cold snowy weather, there is plenty that can't be done. But scratch beneath the surface and things are bubbling in preparation for the growing season that is about to come. Things never seem to stand still at Canalside, and this newsletter is no different to previous ones, with its wealth of news and plans stretching it at the*

*seams! There is lots of winter-time planning and activity on the veg and fruit projects – read on for **News from the Veg and Fruit Fields** from **Will** and **Gareth**. Exciting plans are afoot on the **Infrastructure** side of the project, which **Tom** brings you up to date with. Changes are also in the air for the **Socials** at Canalside – **Cathy** will fill you in on this. And perhaps most exciting of all, is the prospect of some **feathered friends at Canalside** in the near future; **Judy** will tell you all about this. Also here, is an update on the **Education Project**, and the usual **Members' Corner** and **small ads**. As always, there's a wide range of different activities to get busy with – we hope that something will pique your interest and we would encourage you to get in touch with the relevant person if you'd like to be more involved.*

Ali, January 2013

NEWS FROM THE VEG FIELD – by Will Johnson

I was eating some of my green tomato chutney this week (made in November) and it reminded me of what winter is for: having a rest and enjoying the fruits of a hard season.



The paltry squash harvest last autumn, and the reason why they haven't featured in the winter veg shares!

This winter, obviously, there have been fewer fruits to enjoy, which is a shame, though since there have been fewer vegetables to harvest it could have been a more restful one than usual. But there is always stuff to be getting on with. The winter is not just for eating and resting, but also for reflecting, repairing, building and maintenance, and meticulous planning for the coming season. We sing the odd song, too, and have a joke (but we do that at any time of year).



Will pauses in bagging up veg shares for drive-top collection

Water management has been high on the list of priorities recently as we don't want to have so much standing water on the fields (the middle of Canalside and the bottom of Millfield are particular black spots) and the corners of polytunnels were it to rain so much again (did it rain a lot last season? Or was that just a bad dream...?). A glance to the social area at the moment will be met with a series of unsightly ditches – not made by an animal, but by us. The idea is to have shallow land drains (as opposed to drainpipes that hang off the sides of the tunnels) running next to the tunnels and channelling the water into the field ditches. The ditches on the

social area will have gone soon, so enjoy them while you can! The fields already have much deeper drains running beneath the soil, so the job there is to find out where they feed into the field ditches, and find out why they haven't been working properly. A wet job, I'm sure you can imagine.

Adjusting the cropping plan and putting in the main seed order can be a head-scratching affair, and this year is no different. Though it can be obvious which crops and particular varieties have performed well/poorly, it is quite another job to know exactly why; there are so many variables in this game. We have certainly learnt which crops do not do well in relentless cold, damp, dark conditions, but we knew a lot of that already! To be fair, we did learn a few things about which crops can put up with such adverse weather, and about which varieties will still produce a worthwhile crop, despite being planted ridiculously late in the season. We've also



Drain digging in the social area



Workshare volunteers give the polytunnels their annual wash, ready for the new season's crops (above – Elaine; below – Amy and Dave)



learnt the different ways in which different fields behave in a wet year, as I alluded to earlier, which is seriously valuable.

What will we do differently in 2013? On the whole, not a great deal. I doubt we'll grow sweet potatoes again, especially when we could use that space to grow much more reliable (but equally exotic) butternut squash. Mainly, we'll hope for more sunshine.

I'll end by saying we've had to be quite careful with the veg over the last few months, making sure we do not leave ourselves too short at any time in the coming months. There is the challenge of getting to March, when the purple sprouting broccoli (PSB), cauliflowers and salad really start to crop (but the swede, cabbages and celeriac are pretty much spent), and then the challenge of getting to June, when not only the PSB and caulis are done, but the last of the winter crops (leeks, parsnips, carrots, potatoes, onions) are finished as well. At that point we hang on with the early tunnel crops (that we are planting next month) until we can start on the maincrop potatoes and onions for another year.

Though it felt like 'the end' of the season a few weeks ago, it certainly feels like 'the beginning' now.

Will, 17th January 2013

...AND THE FRUIT FIELD – by Gareth Davies

As I write the orchard is under a layer of snow and it feels good to have a brief spell of real winter weather that will harmonise the trees with the annual cycle and hopefully knock back some of those pests and diseases. To encourage them we are holding a Wassailing ceremony in the orchard on the upcoming weekend (26th Jan) so if you want to meet the team and see how the trees have grown over the past season, come over this weekend to enjoy a fire, walk around the orchard, drink some cider and make some noise in this traditional ceremony.



Gareth takes a break!

The orchard team (Team Fruit) are currently preparing the orchard for the new season. We have mulched all the tree rows, after putting down mulch matting, which ought to prevent weeds (especially couch) growing into the rows next year and will enable us to begin establishing ground cover plants under the trees. To that end we have already planted some strawberries to



Mulching with the local home ed group (above) and members (below)



complement our alpine strawberries that did well last season. We have also added a row of autumn raspberries that should extend the raspberry season next year and into the future. In the spring we will also begin sowing new ground cover plants like lemon balm, mint and sage. Apart from this work we will also prune the apples and pears in the next few weeks and hopefully stimulate them to their first season of good production. We will also finish mulching the soft fruit (raspberries, currants, blackberries) in the coming weeks so if you fancy a work morning in the orchard get in touch and we will tell you when we are there (generally Thursdays, weather permitting).

Some great news is that we have been awarded a capital grant by the lottery local food team in order to help us make the fruit project more sustainable. We will be using the grant to buy a solar fridge-freezer kit which will enable us to cool the soft fruit like raspberries and strawberries in the summer and freeze a portion of any gluts so that we can hold some fruit over to the winter months. We also have the money to buy a shelving and racking system which will enable us to collect and store the top

fruit, especially apples and pears.

The grant will also enable us to buy the material to run workshops to construct three solar driers so look out for these later in the summer if you want to get involved in this. Apart from that the grant will also enable us to label all the trees and soft fruit which is something that our members and work shares repeatedly ask for, and will allow us to install a glasshouse that will enable us to raise and plant out ground covers in the orchard over the longer term.

All this means that in the next season we are now confident in offering a fruit supplement to our members. Following discussions at the AGM and at steering committee the idea is that we will offer a fruit share for £6 per week or £24 per month. Although we aim to have some fruit every week (with our improved storage facilities) the fruit share is more likely to be affected by the seasons and the share will be very much larger in the summer and autumn than winter and spring. Traditionally such gluts have been ironed out by preserving and taking a fruit share will provide the opportunity to indulge in jam making, juicing and fruit preserves, although you may want to eat everything fresh as it becomes available! If you would like a share fill in a leaflet and return it to Ali or email her directly and she will add you to the list. You will need to change your monthly standing order for veg – Ali will advise you about this.

Gareth, 21st January 2013



Winter pruning in the orchard



SITE DEVELOPMENTS – by Tom Ingall

So, as Will has outlined above we've been working on and around the project site over the first months of winter to increase the drainage capacity of the polytunnels and fields. We've also

been doing the same around the circumference of the pole barn. The need for this was highlighted back in early November when Paul and I had to contend with a river running through the back of the barn that threatened the store of onions. Since then we've installed a 'French drain' style trench all the way around the barn that effectively acts as a moat carrying away any flood threats to the ditch and beyond. We're beginning to research systems that will also allow us to collect this channelled water and store it in a reservoir to be used on the crops during the drier (summer??) periods.



Drainage channels near completion on a mild January day

The most exciting development regarding the pole barn has been our decision to convert one 'bay' into an all singing and dancing produce collection hub. We felt that by building another new building we were missing the opportunity that this beautiful new pole barn extension was offering us! So our hope is that by the spring of this year we will have a new site for the distribution of the CCF produce. It will of course be sad to say goodbye to the yurt after it's many years of faithful service, but the yurt has pastures new to move on to and Canalside needs a more functional and appropriate hub. Within the pole barn we will be able to include a small site office space for Ali to operate out of and therefore the possibility of her being on site to liaise with members during some fruit and veg collection times. We will also insulate the room so as to make temperature regulation easier and therefore better suited to housing fruit and veg as well as a more comfortable place to collect for you folk too! It will, of course mean a slightly longer walk from the car for you all, but we'll be installing a sturdy path and also a disabled access parking space nearer to the barn too to make this as painless as possible. All very exciting!



Hub-to-be! Early work underway

As you'll be aware the fruit side of CCF won extended funding recently for, amongst other things a photo voltaic power system to run two super efficient fridge-freezers and a small glasshouse. So we will be busy putting all this fancy new equipment together in and around the newly improved pole barn over the next couple of months too: lots to do! As always if you feel you'd like to contribute your time to this side of the project then please get in touch as we'll be putting regular work days into getting all this completed over the next two months. (tomerlingall@gmail.com)

NEW ARRIVALS...

It's been a busy winter for arrivals 'Earthsides' amongst Canalside's members.

The first arrival on 29th October was **Florian** weighing 9lbs – a brother for Tobi. Parents **Helena Verrill and Marco Schlichring**, who are veg members, welcomed him into the world after a fast birth at home.

Next, on 3rd December, was **Evelyn Rose** – the first child for **Mark and Amanda Williamson**. Mark is our webmaster and helps us to maintain the beautiful website he designed for us in 2011.

Hot on Evelyn's heels was **Marco** – who was arrived, at 8lb with a head full of hair, on 13th December after a quick home-birth. Veg members **Charlotte and Mark Vernon** and his big sister Isabelle (who is pleased to see him) enjoyed a 3 week babymoon, when Charlotte said

she barely left the house!

We wish all these families many blessings as they adjust to a new rhythm. May all these little ones thrive over the years to come.

EDUCATION PROJECT – *by Ali Jeffery*

The winter is a quiet time, outwardly, on the Education Project, as it is too cold for children to visit (with no proper indoor space and the risk of hand-washing facilities freezing up altogether). However, the new season will soon be here, so I am focussing on contacting local schools that may be interested in visiting the project after the start of April, to remind them about what we offer.

If you know of a class that might benefit from coming to the project site for a free visit to learn about aspects of vegetable growing and organic agriculture, please put their class teacher in touch with me (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk) to discuss a visit – there's also a section specifically about educational visits on the website. We need 4 weeks notice to make the proper preparations for a visit, including recruiting enough volunteers to prepare the site and ensure the visit goes smoothly.

If you are interested in helping out at Canalside when a class visits, please look out for emails in March and April, once I have some visits booked.

SOCIALS – *by Cathy Bell*

'How valuable are the social aspects of the project?'

The 'Social Sundays', set up and facilitated by Abi, stopped happening in the summer when Abi left the project. It soon became clear, however, that members were missing these events and would like them to continue, so in the Autumn it was decided by the Steering Group that it would be a topic for discussion at the AGM and Amy and myself agreed to organise a couple of social events prior to the AGM to get a feel for what members would like. At the first gathering on a cold Sunday afternoon in October we sorted the wood pile and made a start on re-organising the geodome, two jobs we had already identified as needing priority for the social area. We also ate soup, drank tea and exchanged ideas for the future of the social side of Canalside.

We decided to hold the November meet on a Saturday afternoon following a work morning as it was felt that different timings may suit different members. This time John Liddamore had volunteered to present a film about water and hold a discussion about how some of the ideas could be implemented to benefit the project.

The question posed at the AGM came out of these two afternoons. The response was a resounding VERY! There were also lots of suggestions as to how the social aspects could be managed and what form they could take. The matter was also discussed briefly at the January Steering Group meeting.

As Caz has now stepped down as Social organizer it makes sense to consider the main, regular social events and the 'Social Sundays' under the same umbrella, the idea being that we hold one social per month, 4 or 5 of them being large events and the others of a social Sunday (although some may be on Saturday!) nature when we develop the social area and socialize with other members.

Members were also asked for ideas as to how the socials should be managed. Having a working party to share the load was the favourite idea and a few members put their names forward to be part of this group. However, the feeling at the Steering meeting was that a working party needs a co-coordinator/facilitator and I have volunteered for this role. This doesn't mean I will be doing all the work all of the time but I will ensure that the work and organising gets done by someone. Any member can volunteer to organise a social event, large or small, or suggest or request a particular activity.

There were also plenty of ideas for activities, including education/training skills based workshops relating to work morning jobs such as composting or pruning; music workshops or group; having some of the days allocated specifically to introducing new members and butchering rabbits! A suggestion from the steering group is to have a harvest supper.

As you will know from recent, e-mails a couple of social events have already been scheduled - **wassailing on 26th January**, and a **stargazing evening on 2nd February**.

To keep the ball rolling and, in the spirit of Imbolc (welcoming the spring and returning light) I suggest a **gathering on Sunday 3rd February from 11am** when we will light a fire, share lunch and discuss further how to move forward. Personally, I am pretty bogged down with meetings so suggest we use the social gatherings as meeting time as well. All welcome to come along and contribute or just to chill out.

Other recent socials



As Cathy has said, Caz has now stepped back from her role organising the socials. In November, the final social organised by Caz was held, with the range of activities we have come to see as typical of socials organised by Caz. Garlic planting was progressed during the work morning and others who were less keen to kneel in the mud experimented with dying fabric and wool using a wide variety of plant materials, with Jane Ingall, with some amazingly beautiful results. A superb squash curry lunch was produced by those who persevered with the difficult job of peeling some of our small squash harvest, and this was followed by a tour with Will which took in the compost bays which were constructed last spring, to see how they're doing in their work.

This was a great example of socials organised by Caz – what a good one to finish on - and this is the ideal time to thank Caz for all her amazing hard voluntary work in putting on socials for 4 out of the past 5 years. We hope that she has the space for other new projects now, and look forward to seeing her able to relax a bit more at future socials.

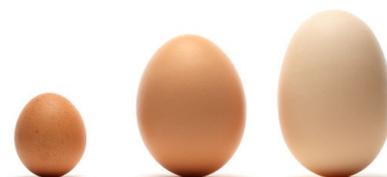


HENS AT CANALSIDE – by Judy Steele

Since the AGM in 2011, we have been thinking about keeping hens at Canalside, and at the 2012 AGM discovered there was a lot of interest from members. The final details of the scheme haven't been worked out, but it could be a share system for eggs similar to the existing vegetable and fruit schemes. The Soil Association has very strong welfare standards which of course we wish to keep to, or exceed.

A small group visited Abbey Home Farm near Cirencester last summer to look at their system, which is much bigger than ours is likely to be, but gave us some useful ideas.

At the moment we are planning to use the fertility-building ley on the veg project to create a large paddock with electric fencing - to keep predators out and hens in. We are thinking of buying a house on skids that can be moved around the paddock with a tractor. Hens tend to hang out close to their house a lot of the time, and a fresh area for intensive scratching is a good idea.



For those of you familiar with permaculture, we unfortunately can't use the very sensible chicken tractor concept, where a smaller run is moved along the vegetable beds before planting or after harvesting, because it doesn't comply with The Soil Association standards.

If anyone is interested in helping out with the hens when we get them, or being part of the working group, please contact Ali – the first meeting will be on Wednesday 30th January, at 1.15pm – meet in the geodome initially. Also let us know if you are interested in an egg share.

A NEW IDEA – MEMBERS' SKILL EXCHANGE

Struggling to contribute in the fields? Maybe this idea will help:

Annie Barker, a Canalside veg member who works as a massage therapist, recently discovered that one of her clients is also involved with Canalside. They got to talking about helping on the project, and Annie admitted that she was struggling to make it to the project to help out. She and her client came to an agreement that, for doing her 9 hours contribution in the fields (the amount of time we encourage veg members to give each year), Annie would give a discount to the client on the cost of the treatment she was receiving.

If you'd like to do something similar, please send brief details of what you can offer in exchange for someone volunteering on your behalf. Your notice will be added to the Members' Corner in April, and if we have board space in the new collection hub, can also be posted there. Your notice should include full contact details so that other members can get in touch with you directly if they are able to take on your volunteering contribution.

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.

House wanted for rent in Leamington Spa, Warwick

Canalside CF member family of three, non-smoking, pets free looking for a minimum two bedroom house to rent preferably in Leamington Spa, sometime from the first half of this year.

Please contact: Laz 07799587671 or Zita 07961058905

Please support Bruce Knight's Marathon effort for WaterAid (www.wateraid.org), ensuring that everyone in the world has access to safe, clean water.

I was 40 in November 2012, and this seemed like a good excuse to get super-fit and do something memorable. Running the London Marathon in April is going to be a real test - I didn't own a pair of trainers until a couple of months ago!

I've promised to raise a whopping £3500 for WaterAid, so I'm very grateful for whatever you can give - big or small. Please visit my fund-raising page: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/BruceKnight> Many thanks, Bruce



SKILLSHARE **Action 21's new Skill Share project** We're very excited to be introducing Skill Share sessions into our 2013 programme. The sessions are a fun way to gain skills and knowledge at minimal cost, and will be open to the general public or aimed at particular sections of the population such as single mothers, the unemployed, senior citizens or families.

We're now in the process of recruiting people to run various skill share workshops. Sessions could involve sewing, handicraft, upcycling or DIY. No teaching experience is necessary, and we'll help you turn your ideas into a structured workshop or sessions. If you're interested in finding out more about being a Skill Sharer, please call the Action 21 office on 01926 339077 or email louise@action21.co.uk.

Canalside Community Bees Membership from Jan to Dec 2013 is just £20 and will give you: apiary visits through the warmer months (all equipment provided), other talks and workshops (first one on 7th Feb), a jar of honey (if the harvest is big enough) and the chance to buy more at a discounted price. So visit our website canalsidecommunitybees.blogspot.co.uk, pick up a flier in the yurt or email us at canalsidecommunitybees@yahoo.co.uk for joining details.

2 Workshops: Living Willow Structures: Fedges, Tunnels and Domes – Sunday 10th Feb OR Sunday 17th Feb 10am - 3:30pm

Booking essential - places are limited! Special introductory price £20! Contact for details: kristie@arccic.co.uk

LETS: Ever wanted to swap something with someone, but you haven't got anything they want in exchange? LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) gets around that problem neatly with no cash involved. It uses a notional currency (Leamington's is the Oak) so that you can 'pay' for your swap, and go on to trade your Oaks for something else.

You pay a small cash fee to join and then have access to our website with a list of goods and services which members are prepared to exchange for Oaks or a mixture of cash and Oaks (if there has been a cash outlay for materials, for example).

You don't have to earn before you spend, as you won't be in debt - just in commitment to the group to earn some Oaks at a later date and bring your account back into credit. But perhaps the best thing about LETS is the people you meet. It's a great way of getting to know people if you are new to the area and don't have anyone you can ask for help. Go to <http://www.learnets.org.uk/> for more information. If you are interested contact Penny Wright 01926 407196, email: membership@learnets.org.uk

SMALL ADS Do you have any business or money-making ventures you'd like to advertise to other members of Canalside? Then this is the space for you. Please contact Ali for future adverts.

kd carpentry & maintenance

Call **Kev Northey** to discuss any small scale carpentry or maintenance jobs you have in mind. Any service available from hanging doors, to fitting flooring or tiling Kev can give you a free quotation.

For a locally (Radford Semele) based experienced tradesman who provides a professional service: Call: **07894 345843** or e-mail: kd.carpentry@yahoo.com

Dryad Organics Stoneground Wholemeal flour for sale, available in 1.5kg bags (£1.50) or 25kg sacks (£20), for those more serious bread makers. Made from organic wheat grown at Leasowe Farm by the Ingall Family and milled at Claybrooke Mill in Leics. Please contact Caz at cazingall@gmail.com or on 01926 423939 to place your order.

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Next newsletter due out end of April 2013.

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 21st April.

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Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV31 1TY. t: **07758 340491**

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