



ANYONE WHO HAS VISITED *Canalside* recently will know at least that the social area is suffering from the rain by turning into a mud bath. Find out here how the fruit and veg are being affected by the mild, wet winter weather in **News from the Veg Field and Fruit Orchard** by **Will and Gareth**. The winter always means that there is less going on at the site, but there are still a few **Site Developments** that **Tom** can tell us about, and **Socials and Events** have continued to take place every month – read all about them, and find the

outline of events for 2014 to put in your diary too! You can also find out who has become part of the community at Canalside recently, as well as reading updates from our partner projects: **Canalside Community Bees** and **The Willows**. The usual **Members' Notices** and **Small Ads** are right at the back. I hope you enjoy this quarterly update, although with our new weekly 'news snippet' in the members' update, you may already feel well informed about what is going on at Canalside!

Ali, January 2014

NEWS FROM THE FIELD – by Will Johnson

Things are pretty quiet on the farm at the moment, which is great. After a really productive season we're enjoying a period of time with a distinct lack of urgency; the plants (food crops, green manures and weeds) slow right down and we follow their lead.



A carpet of purslane



Paul harvesting polytunnel rocket

That said, the weather has not been as cold and the growth not as slow as you would normally expect at this time of year. The leafy crops in the tunnels are growing steadily and will need cutting back again soon. Outdoors, I was a bit unnerved to find myself harvesting purple sprouting broccoli (PSB) just after Christmas. It's not supposed to be ready until the first week of March - panic panic panic, if in doubt panic!

However, when I checked the harvest records (we have records dating back to 2007) I found that it is quite normal to pick a little bit of PSB in January and February before it really gets going in the spring. Panic over.

It is important that the PSB and Roscoff (overwintered) cauliflowers hold on until the spring as we have plenty of food ready now (in the field and in storage) that will not hold on until then. The way we plan things is to have fresh brassicas (PSB, cauliflowers) available when things like sprouts, cabbages, kale and stored celeriac have run out and not before that time.

The red cabbages and sprouts are all but over now, the celeriac is running low too. I will miss my grated celeriac salads though we have plenty of carrots waiting in the field so I can always grate those instead – they don't have the same kick, but I can eat more of them in one sitting (which is helpful as night vision is handy on a Tuesday night when I go back to the farm to close up).



We have *masses* of beetroot. We have enough for every medium share to have about a kilo per week until June. I fear that if we did this we would risk creating a new ethnic category (the purple people) so please send in any ideas for getting rid of a few hundred kilos.

Away from vegetables we have been renovating the polytunnels. We have made roll-up doors



The polytunnels with their new doors sparkle in the sunshine, freshly clean

out of wind netting which are much cheaper than plastic sliding doors but hopefully more fit for purpose and easier to look after.

Thanks to everyone involved in cleaning the tunnels over the last few weeks. It is the kind of job that would be arduous, monotonous and a bit soul-destroying on your own but becomes productive, fun and uplifting with a few of you; a great symbol of what Canalside stands for.

Here's to a vegtastic 2014!

Will, 20th January 2014

FRUIT FIELD – by Gareth Davies

The orchard is basking in what has turned out to be a relatively mild winter so far. As I write the harvest of the past season is fading from memory but we are looking forward to next years harvests already. To that end we are pruning the orchard over the winter and tidying it up in preparation for the next season. We have already pruned back most of the soft fruit – the raspberries, gooseberries, currants and black/hybrid-berries. We will also be pruning the top fruit (apples and pears) over the next few weeks followed by the plums and cherries in the spring once the sap begins to flow. Keep an eye out for our work mornings when we will be doing this and come along and join in.



Bringing the blackberry canes back under control

We are also embarking on a programme of experimenting with various ways of establishing groundcover plants under the trees over the winter and hopefully increasing the amount of strawberries we produce among other things. The intention is that by establishing a permanent groundcover of various plants we will be able to reduce the amount of management (that is weeding!) needed in the orchard in the future. The groundcover should also give the orchard a more 'permaculture' feel and make it a great place to spend an hour or two in the summer!



Pruning the fruit trees

We hope that you enjoyed the share over the past season, the highlights being the currants and apples and melons - and of course the rhubarb! Thanks to a local food lottery grant we bought and installed some solar powered freezers over the summer, as well as some shelving and racking for storage. We are testing out the potential for storing and distributing (frozen) stored soft fruit now that the apples and pears in store have finished as you will know if you take a fruit share. We also ran sessions on jam making and juicing that hopefully gave members ideas as to what to do with surplus fruit and will do so again in the next season.

We will be encouraging more members to sign up for a fruit supplement over the coming year so please let us know if you are interested in doing this. We are currently charging £25 per month but will be discussing with members over the next few months if this is the best way to take a fruit share as we are conscious that in some periods there is very little or no fruit and at other times we can have gluts of one type of fruit as happened with rhubarb and apples in the past season. Let us have your opinions about the fruit and fruit share as we need to ensure that our income for fruit is sustainable now that the grant funding has finished.

Gareth, 17th January 2014

NEW ARRIVALS...

The rate of new members joining slows during the winter, but nonetheless, we welcome all the following people who have joined Canalside in the past three months:

• *Lucy Burton* • *Amy McLennan and Katja Bier* • *Isabel and Mike Hunting and family*
Alice and David Etheridge • *Debra Whitaker* • *Gabi Siemon and David Mond and family* •
• *Sarah Goler and Kevin Solecki* • *Jodie Barker and Ed Wood* • *Claire and Mike Lucas*
Cat McLoughlin • *Loretta Mancini* • *Emma Stummer* •

We send our congratulations to social members *Michelle and Graham Parton* who now live in



Birmingham and who have announced the safe arrival Amélie-Rose. She made her appearance on Saturday 4th January, and despite a difficult birth is a healthy and contented baby. We wish them well in settling in as a family and will perhaps see them at Canalside once the warmer weather arrives.

SITE DEVELOPMENTS – by Tom Ingall

Things have been ticking over on site and this despite some very wet and occasionally blustery periods. The pole barn has stood firm and the drainage work seems to have helped to keep

water moving through the site. The pole barn has taken a back seat for the last few months but we've big plans to take on the next stage of its developments through 2014.

Paul has knocked together a great little wood store towards the treebog end of the barn and this will allow us to consolidate and dry all the wood we collect for burning in the social area. When things warm up a little in the spring we'll be looking towards putting a cob render on the straw-bale wall inside the barn. This will be a great community work day when you'll be able to come along and get your hands dirty covering the straw wall in clay. Look out for information about when we'll be doing this work to get involved.



The new lean-to wood store

EDUCATION PROJECT – *by Ali Jeffery*

Work on the Education Project is just restarting for the coming season. Free visits will again be available to schools and other groups of school-aged children (16 years or under) between 1st April and 31st October this year. I will shortly be sending fliers round to all local primary schools, for display in the staffrooms, and there is a teacher information pack on our website which can be downloaded by anyone interested in taking up this opportunity. If a school or teacher you have links to might be interested in visiting Canalside, so that the children can see how vegetables are grown and learn about seasonality or organic production methods, please direct them to <http://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk/getting-involved/educational-visits/> or ask them to get in touch with me (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk) allowing at least 4 weeks' notice to make all the arrangements for a visit.

SOCIALS AND EVENTS – *by Ali Jeffery*

Our social events have continued with a steady regularity through the winter months.

November – *beetroot harvesting and soup lunch; CSA event:*

Several members of CSAs like ours, based in places as geographically diverse as Nothumberland and Devon, converged at Canalside for a day of knowledge and experience sharing, with interesting and useful input from Rachel Harries (the Soil Association) and Jade Bashford and Rebecca Marshall (the Community Land Advisory Service), as well as a session on CSA finance run by Gareth. We paused to share a delicious, but simple, soup lunch with those who had been harvesting the beetroot ready for clamping. Thank you to Gareth for organising the day.



The beetroot clamp, steadily filling up

December – *mulled drinks in the pole barn at the bumper collection:*

Thanks to Guy Hodgson, one of our steering group members, who made some lovely mulled

apple juice for members to enjoy in the pole barn when they came down for their bumper, double, pre-Christmas shares. Eleven litres were drunk, so a good number of people enjoyed some festive cheer with other members of the community before heading home with their weighty shares!

January – AGM:

As always, a good number of members joined the steering group last week to hear an overview of 2013, both in terms of the activities of Canalside, and the finances. Interesting discussion followed the annual business of the evening, covering topics that were as wide ranging as: the fruit project; the capacity of the land; the education project; our partner projects; and how people feel about the quantities of different vegetables.

pruning workshop and orchard wassail:

Last weekend, around 18 people came to the fruit orchard to find out how to prune young pear and apple trees. This included a number of members of the public who had found out about the workshop through our reciprocal links with Action 21 and their 'Skillshare' programme of events. The morning was filled with much discussion and lots of questions, and was led by the expertise of Gareth (orchard manager) and Dick Ashworth, who has been very involved in the orchard since its inception. Participants particularly enjoyed the fire which was lit by the orchard and enabled everyone to have hot tea during the morning!

The pruning workshop and a soup lunch was followed by singing and noise making to wake the fruit trees and scare away any malevolent spirits from the orchard, along with the burning of a willow model tree to encourage the energy to go from the roots of the trees up into the branches. Members of all ages, led by Bruce Knight, sang a wassailing song and the trees were blessed with toast and Canalside cider, as is traditional.



The willow model



Wassailing the trees

2014 socials

Feb: Sat 15th – lactic fermentation workshop – find out how to make sauerkraut and other fermented vegetable preserves, with member, Erica Moody. Limited places available.

March: Sat 29th – **big spring social** – onion planting and lunch

April/May: blossom walk, date to be confirmed

June: Sat 14th–Sun 15th – Peace Festival publicity stall

Sat 28th – open day for the general public – tours, picnic in the social area

July: Sat 5th – **big summer social** – annual barn dance

Sept: Sat 6th–Sun 7th – Leamington Food and Drink Festival publicity stall

Sat 13th–Sun 14th – big autumn social – potato harvest, camping weekend, harvest meal

Oct: Sat 11th – apple pressing, bring a picnic

Nov: Sat 9th – big winter social – beetroot harvest, shared meal

Dec: date TBC – final social of the year

Jan: date TBC – AGM

Want to be more involved? Our big event of the year – the annual barn dance – needs people to help prepare for it. If you'd like to be involved, please get in touch. Also, as you will see there are some months with no events planned. If you have an idea for an event that you would like to offer to other members, please get in touch with Ali to discuss possible dates (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk).

WORK MORNINGS

Work mornings continue all year round (except in extreme weather conditions such as thick snow!) and your help is greatly appreciated, whether you can spare an hour or the full 3 hours. We are edging towards the busy time of year, when young plants will be planted out in fields and polytunnels in their hundreds. In the meantime there are a few maintenance jobs that need finishing before things get too busy to fit them in.



An autumn work morning to bring in the squash harvest last year

You don't need to book in to come and help – just come down between 10am and 1pm on a Wednesday or Saturday. If you arrive after the start of the work morning, the chalk board in the middle of the collection space will tell you where to find the workers, and there's always a contact phone number in case you're not sure how to find that place.

CANALSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD - PARTNER PROJECTS' UPDATE

Canalside Community Bees, by Kath Pasteur

Happy New Beekeeping Year! After our successful honey harvest in 2013, we are optimistic that Canalside Community Bees has another good year ahead! And we are better organised this year. Below are proposed dates and activities for each month, though additional talks and workshops will, no doubt, be added. At each sessions there will be an opportunity for hive observation if the weather is good and you will learn something new about bees and beekeeping. Membership forms are available in the veg collection space, from our Facebook page, or via email: canalsidecommunitybees@yahoo.co.uk.



The apiary last winter

Thurs 30th Jan - Pub Social – Town House, 8pm

Sun 2nd Feb – Make balms (lip salve/hand cream) from our wax and honey;
Make bait hives to catch swarms

Sun 16th Feb – Skep making workshop (straw hives) (£40 full day including lunch)

Sat 1st March – Make a "Warre" top bar hive; Set traps for queen wasps

Sun 6th April – Work on the nectar garden; Spring clean the apiary

Sat 3rd May – Set bait hives to catch swarms; Hiving of swarms

Sun 1st June – Add supers to the hives

Sat 5th July – Nectar garden and apiary maintenance; Bee fun and learning for children

Sun 3rd Aug – Honey harvest and extraction

Sat 6th Sept – Honey and wax processing; Autumn feeding

The Willows Care Farm, by Amy Willoughby

We now have a regular day running on Wednesdays for adults with SEN (special educational needs), which grew out of our summer taster day. This success really highlights the importance of hosting taster days and giving people an opportunity to experience a day at the farm prior to becoming regular participants. Therefore, we have allocated some of the money raised from the hugely successful November promise auction to putting on more taster days in 2014. Willowers would again, sincerely like to thank everyone involved (either as buyers, donors or organisers) with the promise auction which felt like an overwhelming show of support for the Project.



Winter 'Elf craft activities



Winter 'Elf willow working

As well as our regular Wednesdays, we also ran a 10 week programme "Winter 'Elf" from October to December, which was a very magical time. Participants were referred either from addiction recovery or mental health services, and came to the farm every Thursday to make natural gifts and goods from materials harvested from the farm, eat well and talk a lot. We really hope that participants will come back to the Willows and that we can repeat the programme next year. Our next event is a volunteer day focused on developing our site on 20th February and Canalside members are welcome to join us! (Please let us know if you are coming – thewillowsproject@gmail.com)

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.

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Car share wanted!



I am looking for someone based in Warwick or Leamington who doesn't use their car all the time, for a car share arrangement which I would use for a few days every 4-8 weeks. If you might be interested in this, please contact me to discuss possibilities: 07912 883422 / ali_jeffery@yahoo.co.uk

Thanks! Ali Jeffery



CHEAPER MOTORING!

I have recently converted my diesel van to run on waste vegetable oil (WVO).

If you know of any good sources of waste deep fryer oil (restaurants, take aways...) who would be open to the idea of giving it away, please let me know! Small payment also considered. Would also be interested of knowing of anyone else's WVO experiences. Guy on 07739 135 406.

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Basket Making Workshop at Foundry Wood – Sun 29th March.

Participants will learn how to make a rustic basket using willow & some materials harvested from Foundry Wood. Lunch & cake provided! £55 per person. Places limited, booking essential. Contact: avrilmolders@hotmail.co.uk



Half-term activities at Foundry Wood. Looking for something to do with the kids these holidays? Check out our range of workshops - including forest school days, willow weaving and other craft activities. Visit www.foundrywood.co.uk for details.

Fire lighting – the Bushcraft Way. Sat 8th March. Discover the hidden secrets of fire making! This full day workshop is suitable for teens and adults at £45 per person. Discounts for more than 2 people. Booking essential: wildearthuk@gmail.com

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In May 2014 I am planning to cycle 315 km in Cuba to (have fun and) raise funds for the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, which will go towards purchasing essential educational equipment for visually impaired Cuban school children. I am paying for the trip myself but am looking for help to raise a further £2000. If you would like to contribute, I will put a box in the vegetable collection area at Canalside, or send to me at the Canalside address. Or, if you have any ideas of any other ways to raise this cash, please get in touch!

Jane Ingall 07747753799

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100+ tonnes saved from landfill 2012-2013

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.

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Ellie Brown (Canalside workshare / Fruit Project / The Willows Project) has a new album out now!

Many of the tracks were written at the farm – please support local music!

'Spirals' is available on CD from Gaia or download at

www.eleanorbrownmusic.com

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Next newsletter due out end of April 2014.

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 20th April.

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