



Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

WINTER 2015-16

newsletter no. 38

THIS WINTER HAS BROKEN ALL RECORDS *for*

extreme and unseasonal weather, with many parts of the country experiencing severe flooding. At Canalside we have been lucky to have had nothing worse than a quagmire in the social area for a few weeks, and meshes regularly blown off our crop of



Winter salad harvesting

*brassic, that favourite of the pigeons. To find out how the mild weather has affected things in the fields and stores, read Will's **News from the Land**. As I write we await an important **New Arrival** in the form of our new grower, who was appointed in December – Dom Marsh says hello here. We near the start of the visit season for the **Education Project** and you can find out how to help*

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Winter landscape - the view across Mill Field in early January

*promote the free visits we offer to schools. Read **Events** to hear about what has been happening recently on the social side of things, and to note all the dates for the events which are planned so far for 2016, especially our annual summer party. And as always at the back you'll find updates from our partner projects and the members' ad section, along with much more news in between the other features. The celtic festival of Imbolc takes place on 2nd February, when the first signs of spring and the 'return' of the sun are noted. This time of year marks the start of our new growing season. I hope the season ahead holds as much promise for you as it does at Canalside.*

Ali, January 2016

NEWS FROM THE LAND – by Will Johnson

Only in the last week or two have we had familiar winter weather – December was crazy by any standards. Generally speaking, unpredictable weather causes more problems than pleasant surprises but all in all the mild and wet start to the winter has not hurt us too much at this stage. The most obvious drawback of that spell of weather was a few hundred cauliflowers opening over Christmas while we were having a well deserved break. Although we harvested about half

of them anyway, they were past their best – it was a shame. This particular variety, I was pleased to discover when checking my field plans from last year, was a new one (called 'North Forlander') that we were trialling due to the unavailability of a tried and tested variety. The other varieties all seem to have withstood the mild spell and will hopefully open in March and April, as planned.



Will gets stuck in the Mill Field bog

A lack of cold weather and plenty of rain has left a lot of standing water in the fields. I had to dig out my own boot from a swamp in the carrot beds a couple of weeks ago (while it was still on my foot). Apart from that it is not a major problem at this stage, as long as it shifts in time for the first field cultivations of the spring.

The mild weather has helped turn our 2015 leek crop from 'good' to 'outstanding' – I would just about award them 'crop of the year' ahead of brussels sprouts and onions. The parsnips did well, but they always do. The beetroot and swede



Canalside's best ever leeks

that we are usually inundated with at this time of year are noticeably short (a good or a bad thing?) but they were grown on Canalside field and that never seems to yield as well as Big Gorse and Millfield (our other two fields). The carrots have been disappointing, though they did much better than our sun deprived sweetcorn and french beans at least. The jury is still out on the spring

cauliflowers and the purple sprouting broccoli, but I would not be surprised if they both crop very, very well at the start of the spring (or perhaps a little earlier given the mild weather).



Whopper sprouts from early November



Harvesting carrots for the double share in December

We do really love getting feedback on quality and quantity of produce so please get in touch with any comments – especially if you missed the Christmas survey. After feedback this time last year (MORE GREENS PLEASE, was the polite



Pak choy looking radiant in polytunnel 3 just before harvesting

request) we have tried to get more kale and other greens in the share at this 'rooty' time of year. We juggled a few sowing dates around and tried some new varieties and we do now have a lot more leaves in the field than last year for January and February. If the weather had been colder who knows though; there are always so many factors.

The main produce related feedback from the latest survey is the desire for more salad leaves and more tomatoes. I have to say we had already identified this as an area to improve on and in the coming season the melons, that have never really done very well, are giving way to more tomatoes and, even more excitingly, we are to have a 'garden' plot just behind the pole-barn specifically for growing better quality salads and other produce that we feel would benefit from a bit more love and attention. More on this new 'garden' soon.

We have been working hard in the orchard and are looking forward to more fruit in the share in 2016. We have just finished pruning the apples and pears, having mulched all of the trees over the last few weeks and most of the soft fruit, too. We have planted about a hundred new raspberry canes and weeded and thinned hundreds of strawberry plants ready for the coming season.



The new raspberry bed

We have put muck round all of the rhubarb though some

was up as early as December – it was our plan to plant another 25 crowns this winter but we are having to leave it 'til next year since they have broken dormancy so early.

More exciting news: our new grower, Dom Marsh, is starting in a couple of weeks!

It has not felt like a very restful winter so far and seeing as we have begun our propagation for this year already and our early potatoes are in trays, chitting away, I think we've missed the boat – oh well!



A beautiful example of a pruned apple tree in the orchard (photo: John Liddamore)

Will, 25th January 2016

NEW ARRIVALS...

We're all looking forward to our new grower joining the team in just a couple of weeks time. **Dom Marsh** will start his work at Canalside in mid-February in time for the start of the new growing season. I asked him to write a bit to introduce himself:

"Hello! My name's Dom and I'm the new grower at Canalside. It's been a long and winding route that has brought me here: I was studying for a degree in Chinese at Leeds University in



Dom (right) and Nanda

2003 when a friend me to see his parent's allotment. I was unimpressed, but he insisted that I take home half a dozen freshly harvested leeks, which changed everything - I'd never tasted anything like it! This led to me taking on a plot of my own, then two, then getting a job at the Permaculture Association until eventually I did an apprenticeship in Biodynamic Horticulture at a farm near Darlington from 2011-2012. My wife Nanda and I then spent a season growing in

stunning Pembrokeshire before becoming Farm Managers at the Pillars of Hercules Organic Farm in Fife for the last two years."

I love cycling, making stuff, board games and quizzes, and I'm a lifelong supporter of Sheffield United FC; however, I'm anticipating a new hobby in the coming years as Nanda is expecting our first child this spring. I'm looking forward to all the challenges a new town, new job and new baby will bring in 2016!"

We have more new subscribers and social members who have recently joined our community too. A warm Canalside welcome to the following people who are now members:

• *Kate Griffiths and family* • *Anne Blackwell* • *Daniel Garrido & Monica Moldoveanu*
James & Erin Amor and family • *Louise Weickert* • *Sybil Roberson* • *Pablo de Juana* •
 • *Akos & Benedek Ferencz* • *Sharna Ebanks* •

We also welcome back *Caz and Tom Ingall and their daughters* who have returned from several months in North America to once more enjoy the bounty of *this* land.

SITE DEVELOPMENTS – *by Ali Jeffery*



The shed gets a spruce up in its new location

This winter has been a comparatively quiet one on the infrastructure side of things. However, in between all the work in the orchard and veg fields, there has been time for a few little changes. The tool shed is now in a much handier location near the end of the pole barn, meaning that things such as gloves which are in regular use can be stored in it and still be close to hand when needed.

We've also been working on getting our own address, and this has necessitated installing a letterbox by the road (it's on the post for the

sign that is nearest the gate) – this will mean we can get our letters directly, rather than via the farm house on the other side of the farm. It also means that if you need to leave post for any of us, you can do so even when the site is shut.

There is a list of small tasks that Paul Fryer and Tom Ingall are going to work on over the coming weeks – keep your eyes open to see if you can spot any changes!

EDUCATION PROJECT – by Ali Jeffery

We're approaching the start of visiting season again – this runs each year from 1st April to 31st October. The visits we offer are available to school groups (of any age) and are free of charge when they last for at least 2 hours and include a tour of the fields and polytunnels. We may also be able to offer a bursary to help with the cost of transport if the visit wouldn't otherwise be possible. If you would like your child's class to visit Canalside, please contact me for some information to share with the class teacher. Alternatively you can take a flier from the hooks next to the pinboard in the collection space – this has details of example visits for different age groups, and the website address where teachers can find more information. We need 4 weeks' notice of the date to ensure that we can make all the necessary preparations, so it's worth telling schools about this opportunity now!



One of our small visitors last autumn

If you are interested in helping out with these visits, please look out for emails with details of dates and times – I will send these out once I have some bookings.

EVENTS – by Ali Jeffery



Beetroot harvesting lunch

The cold weather always coincides with fewer social events at the farm. Here's what has happened in the past few months.

November – beetroot harvest and shared meal:

Last year's beetroot crop was smaller than usual, as already mentioned by Will, and so there was a smaller workload to fill the clamp in the pole barn. Lucy and Charlotte (aged 7) helped make a big pot of beetroot soup while the adults braved muddy conditions to bring in the



harvest. By lunchtime the sun had come out and we enjoyed our soup and other delicious homemade contributions in the social area.

December – social in the pub and double share collection drinks:

A group of members and workers shared a convivial evening in the Town House pub. This was followed by mulled wine in the pole barn and an opportunity to ask you for your views on Canalside, alongside the double share collections. Thank you if you were able to give some

feedback. We hope you enjoyed your mid-winter treat of hazelnuts from Leasowe Farm as a thank you for your time! You can see the feedback that members gave at [this link](#), and on the whiteboard in the pole barn, in the form of word clouds (like this one to the right). The larger the word, the more people there were who gave that answer.

January - AGM:

This year's AGM brought together a couple of dozen people – staff, workshares and members – to share a delightful array of homemade preserves, with jams, chutneys, pickles and jellied vegetables all featuring! Following the tantalising tastes, we heard a round up of 2015. Founder member, Judy Steele, had a look back into the history books at how Canalside started 9 years ago, with a photographic trip down memory lane too. If you weren't able to attend, the minutes, and other documents including the slide shows that went with Will's review of the year and Judy's 'Back of an envelope' reminiscences, will be available soon. Look out for links to the documents in an email in the near future.



Members' favourite Canalside vegetables

2016 socials

April: Sat 2nd – big spring social – onion planting and lunch

April/May: blossom walk, date to be confirmed nearer the time

June: Sun 5th – Open Farm Sunday tours and picnic

Sat 18th–Sun 19th – Peace Festival publicity stall

July: Sat 16th – big summer social – annual summer party

Tues 19th – jam-making workshop

Aug: jam-making workshop, date to be confirmed nearer the time

Sept: Sat 10th–Sun 11th – Leamington Food and Drink Festival publicity stall

Sat 17th–Sun 18th – big autumn social – potato harvest, camping weekend, harvest meal

Oct: Sat 8th – apple pressing, bring a picnic

Nov: Sat 5th – big winter social – beetroot harvest, shared meal

Dec: date TBC – final social of the year

Jan: date TBC – AGM

Additional events such as socials in the pub and skill share workshops may be added at shorter notice. Look out for these in emails to our members' mailing list and in the list of upcoming events in the weekly update.

Want to be more involved? As you will see there are some months with no events planned. If you have an idea for an event, workshop or activity that you would like to offer to other members, please get in touch with Ali to discuss possible dates (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk).

REMINDER: the social area is yours to use!

The social area is available for members to use for their own events. If you'd like to book it for a child or adult's birthday party, camping weekend or any other kind of private event, please contact Ali to find out more (mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk).

FOOD BANK COLLECTION POINT AT CANALSIDE – by Di Sinclair

I'm pleased to let you know that Canalside has set up a collection point for our local food bank.

Demand for the foodbank's service is ever increasing and they will be very grateful for any support which Canalside members can offer by way of donations. For more information about the foodbank, see www.trusselltrust.org



There is a clearly marked box in the collection space, together with the foodbank's basic shopping list as a guide. They will accept nearly all food stuffs providing they have a long shelf life and do not require chilling/freezing. They are also grateful for toiletries/household cleaning products.

Some of you will already be donating but I hope others will feel inspired to donate at Canalside. A suggestion might be to buy one extra item for the foodbank each time you shop for groceries.

Donated goods will need to be delivered to the food bank (they have several local distribution points) - if you're able to help with this please let me know: sinclair.di@virgin.net

CANALSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD - PARTNER PROJECTS' UPDATE

Canalside Community Bees, by Dave Fenton

The new membership has opened for the Bee Club and renewal forms have been emailed out to all current and past members directly from the Bee Club.

If you are interested in becoming a member for 2016 and want to know more about the things we do then please drop us an email at canalsidecommunitybees@yahoo.co.uk We'll then send you a membership form directly.

Membership runs from January until December each year and costs £20 for an individual or household. We run a number of activities during the year with regular apiary visits during the summer months, talks and workshops relating to beekeeping and using hive products.

There's little bee activity at this time of year. Our main job is to make sure that the hives have sufficient food available for the the bees. during these colder, winter months. We'll be holding our annual meeting soon.

The Willows Care Farm, by Sybil Roberson

Hello, we hope you are all well! Thank you for the generous support from Canalside members for the Christmas products made by the Wednesday Willows group and Enterprise Fridays from up-cycled and found objects. Please check out our new product range of lavender and hop sleepy blend, peppermint lip salves, lavender bath fizzas and calendula hand balm - all perfect for unwinding after a day on the land! For St. Valentine's day we will be selling live willow hearts, catkin hearts, flower seed bon bons. We are happy to refill jars and tins once empty and can fill orders, please leave your contact details in Willows treat jar.



Hazel and willow

On Wednesday, Angus has started keeping a bird count after interest from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust regarding his swallows photo. This week we saw a bullfinch, a pair of greater spotted woodpeckers and a coal tit alongside our usual feathered friends including skeins of gulls and Canadian geese.

We ran a successful partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and local children last year and they are interested in working with us in the Spring.

Willows are recruiting volunteers for the project and for the Easter holidays helpers to erect the poly tunnel, anyone interested please contact the Willows email address (thewillowsproject@gmail.com) and leave your details, for our free Green gym!! We have a group of adults visiting the Willows for Fridays in April; so must have the site ready.

Willows wishes everyone well with their growing and continuing endeavours, near and far.

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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FOOD UNION is a new organisation based in Coventry aimed at tackling **food poverty**. Over the next few months we will be setting up a community garden, running a café with local produce, and strengthening ties with local projects. Want to know more? Email: chris.maughan@coventry.gov.uk or visit timetodigestcoventry.wordpress.com.

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Leamington Peace Festival 2016 are looking for volunteer organisers

We need people to join the Steering Group and help with planning workshops, peace talks, kids entertainment, stall admin and publicity / communications. You will be part of a team who will guide and support you. If you are interested then email katherine@pasteur.net or come to the next Steering Group meeting: Tues 9th Feb, 8pm at the Garden Shed Café (side door behind Gaia, Regent Place. Leamington).

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Ecotherapy @ Foundry Wood

ARC (www.acrcic.co.uk) are running weekly Ecotherapy sessions for people with mild mental health problems, depression, loneliness or addictions. Ecotherapy is about connecting to the natural world for positive mental health benefits. Sessions are held at Foundry Wood, Princes Drive, Leamington, every Tuesday from 10am til 2pm (free). For more information visit www.foundrywood.co.uk/ecotherapy. Please share details with individuals or groups who might be interested.

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Link to our Flickr photos for a fuller selection of photos of the past 3 months:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/65686573@N02/sets/>

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Next newsletter due out end of April 2016.

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 17th April.

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