



# Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

**AUTUMN/ WINTER  
2017**

newsletter no. 44

**THE FIRST PROPER FROST THIS WEEK** marks the true end of the growing season, with the sweetcorn plants being pulled up today and polytunnel crops that will see us through the winter being planted into their final growing positions. The many articles in this issue show just how busy this season has been, with innumerable **New Arrivals** to welcome and Lena's thoughts on her full summer participating in the **Future Growers course** alongside her work at Canalside. In Dom's **Musings from the Land** he looks back at the season we've had, among other reflections. There's an update on **Buying the Land** from Gareth and some information about **Access from the**

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Summer onion harvest

**Access from the canal** from Caz Ingall, one of the residents of Leasowe Farm. Along with the usual round up of the **Events** and several vists on the **Education Project**, everything that is happening at Canalside is a real tribute to how far everything has come in the ten years since the first shares were distributed in June 2007. Thank you for being part of it all and here's to the next decade!

Ali, October 2017

## MUSINGS FROM THE LAND – by Dom van Marsh

As another growing season draws to a close, it's time to debrief the past year, reflect on our successes and failures, and think about how we can improve in 2018. As anyone who's had the misfortune to speak to me at any point in the last 3 months will know, potatoes have been the stand-out success of 2017, with the total yield dwarfing all Canalside's previous

records – not something we can take the credit for, as this was the story across much of the UK, with a dry spring enabling effective weed control, and the wet summer helping tubers to bulk out. We have also had a good crop of large onions, sometimes a bit too large!

What had looked like a very good carrot crop is now suffering as lots of them have



Bringing in the record-breaking potato harvest



*The winter squash harvest, drying out in a polytunnel prior to storage*

split, almost certainly a result of extremely dry conditions followed by extremely wet, so unfortunately it will be a lean winter in the carrot department. The good news is that other winter stalwarts are looking very good, with squash, parsnips, beetroot, cabbages, kale and leeks all set to see us through to next spring.

The coming of autumn brought another yearly ritual: our annual inspection from the Soil Association, which took place at the start of October without a hitch. By



law, we are not permitted to describe our produce as "organic"

without being certified by the SA (or another of the UK's certifying bodies). This involves an inspector spending a day walking our land and going through piles of receipts, records and paperwork. Growers tend to dread the inspection, because the practical farming mind

usually isn't one that is well attuned to office work, and it means a day or two fewer to work through that huge list of tasks, and in any case who enjoys red tape?

But certification is required as a consequence of consumers being

distanced from producers, with little or no idea how food is produced, and as long as there are unscrupulous traders willing to mislead the public, some sort of assurance scheme is a necessary inconvenience. Canalside, of course, has a very close connection between consumers and producers, and those who eat our food help to grow it and have free access to wander the site and see our horticultural practices at any time; so do we really need certification?

Surely members would notice if any of our

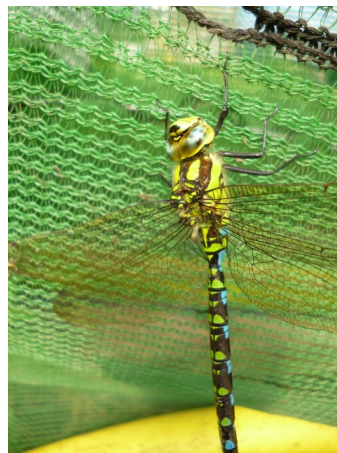
practices contradicted organic principles? However, I feel that there are (at least) three solid reasons as to why we are right to be certified: firstly, as Soil Association licensees we are part of a national and international

movement that benefits from our participation; secondly, we make a small but significant number of sales outside of the CSA, for which certification is essential; and thirdly, being "organic" covers a vast range of things that are often invisible even to members who come to the site most days, and so ensures that our (high) standards never slip.

It is however a sad reflection of the world we live in that those of us who want to grow food by nurturing rather than killing wildlife, providing instead of destroying habitats, improving not damaging public health, negating instead of exacerbating climate change

and without spraying poisons on to the land are forced by law to pay (in excess of £500 per year) for the privilege - which also drives up the price of organic food. How wonderful it would be if those who chose to spray carcinogenic

poisons, broad-spectrum pesticides and potent herbicides had to pay for a certificate instead, with a mandatory skull-and-crossbones motif printed on the packaging of their goods!



*Organic farm visitor at Canalside this summer*

Dom, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017



## BUYING THE LAND – by Gareth Davies

As you are all aware we have been planning to buy the land we rent and on which we grow in order to ensure that the community farm is secure into the future. The good news is that we now have a plan! Even more good news is that you the members have already pledged £60,000 which gets us over half way to the target of £110,000 needed.

We are going to convert the current company into a community benefit society (or CBS, a sort of community coop) and launch a community share offer which will enable everyone to invest in the farm and become co-owners of the land. All investors will become members of the society and will potentially gain an initial tax relief on their investment and a modest amount of annual interest. Perhaps more importantly, they will also have an influence on how the

society works and the land is used.

Community shares can only be sold back to the society which will gradually come to own the land over time as members cash their investment in (but hopefully still remain as members!).

Now we need to execute the plan. To that end we need to formally ask you as members if you all agree to converting the company to a community benefit society. We will do the conversion after Xmas should we get 75% of our members agreeing, so we will be asking you to vote 'yes' or 'no' over the next month either when you pick-up or at other events. Keep a look out for the ballot papers!

In addition to this we have produced a tender describing



*Site view on our 10th anniversary in June*

the skills necessary to establish the CBS and implement the share offer. We would love our members to be involved in this so if you think you have the skills necessary for part, or even all of the task, please get in touch with Gareth ([finance@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk](mailto:finance@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk)). If you know someone who might be able to help let us know and we will contact them.

We are hoping to get underway by the end of November so don't delay. The tender and plans are available from [this Dropbox link](#).

## NEW ARRIVALS...

We've had a busy season for new workshares this year, with several new people taking up a regular role working in the fields alongside the growers each week.

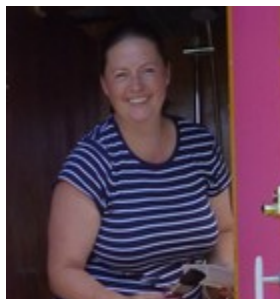
**Charlie Swallow** was the first workshare arrival of the summer.



*Charlie*

Charlie was in fact a Canalside grower in the past and told me that, when she moved back to Leamington, she wanted veg from

Canalside again. She loves the workshare arrangement and says it works well for her



*Joanne*

alongside her work as an Alexander technique teacher. Having a former grower on the team is a wonderful bonus for us too!

**Joanne Hull** started shortly after as the summer reached its high point. Here she introduces herself: "After

turning vegan, I started to really look at what I was actually eating and what was healthy, and so I searched for a way I could learn to grow my own organic veg and found out about Canalside. It not only changed my way of eating and cooking, I have since started my new business growing microgreens too. I love the community feel of volunteering and going home with the produce is the cherry on top. It's given me confidence and self esteem to follow in what I believe in."

**Annie Talbot** also began a workshare in high season and has sent her own introduction

too: "Having moved to Leamington a couple of years ago, I finally took the plunge and joined Canalside in July, as I started changing careers from ecology to horticulture. I'm really interested in organic growing and producing food in a way that cares for our environment, so becoming a Workshare Volunteer has been a revelation to me. I've had great fun getting to know other members of the community and adapting to eating seasonally; I've even become a preserving enthusiast! I can't wait to see



*Annie*

what the rest of the year brings and harvesting (and eating!) some of the crops that I've helped to plant with the group."

I think this has been the busiest season we've seen since the very early years of Canalside, in terms of new trial members and people who have gone on from there to subscribe for a share of the harvest on-going. As the temperature drops we give a warm Canalside welcome to everyone who has taken up a subscription since the start of the summer:

*Catherine Griffiths and family • Sarah Biddle and family • Amy Beaumont and family • Mary-Ann Baynes • Ann Smith • Lisa Lawrence and family • Ashley & Karen Cromack Sarah Reaves-Town and family • Nik & Ewan Rodden and family • Peter & Kath Neale • Laura Holland • Marc Tran • Penny Halpin • Danny Dawes • Judit Juhasz & John Kelly Susan Gibson • Gaëlle Guillaume & Fabien Sadet • Andrew Mulley • Kathy Webster • Marianne Browne and family • Simon Enstock •*

We hope you're enjoying your share of the harvest, and being part of our farm community.

We hope existing members have had a chance to chat to one of these new members to help them settle in as

Canalside share members.

As well as these full sized new members, we also have a stork-delivered, new member.

Congratulations to members **Claire and Mike Lucas** on the

safe arrival Earthside of their daughter: "Grace Esmerelda Lucas arrived 18th September

weighing 8lb 5. Mummy, Daddy and big brother Josh are delighted with her."



## ...AND DEPARTURES

**Kapil Kurdiker** also started as a workshare over the summer, but a posting away from the area has meant he's had to step back from this for the time being. Thanks for all your help over the summer season Kapil, and we hope to see you back at the farm when you return to Leamington.

Steering group members wanted! Look out for more details coming via email very soon.

## EDUCATION PROJECT – by Ali Jeffery

Since the last newsletter back in April, we've had several visits to the farm by groups of school children of a variety of ages, with some longer visits offering an opportunity to take a departure from the usual visit format.

In late June we were pleased to welcome the two year 3 classes from Woodloes Primary School in Warwick. Each class came for a full day to make the most of the opportunities for work that linked to their topic 'Where My Wellies Take Me' (after the book by the Morpurgos).

We planned a variety of different activities including some new ones for these unusually long visits. The new activities allowed the children to explore the space and find out which plants and animals live on the farm, with identification guides to help them name what they'd

found. They also sowed bean seeds to take back to school as well as looking at what goes into compost and searching in compost to find out which animals help to make it. Each child went home with a little booklet that contained their record of all the many things they'd discovered on the farm.

After those long visits, we had a run of visits from the three Reception classes at Telford Infant School, Lillington, thanks to member Hilary Wilson who is a teaching assistant in the year group. These much younger children had fun on their half day visits playing a game pretending to help the growers look after the plants, and tramping round the fields and peering into the polytunnels.

Finally more recently we've had autumn visits from year 3 & 4 children of Charter Primary School, Coventry. These children explored a wide range of vegetables, with even the most reluctant



*Searching for minibeasts*

children eventually tasting a few! They then applied the theory of which part of the plant we eat to find them growing in the fields and polytunnels. After their return to school, the children wrote some lovely thank you letters and had fun writing riddles for the different veggies, using their new, in-depth knowledge of them!

As always, huge thanks to the members who volunteered to help with these visits. I know that the children really enjoy having additional people to talk to about their experiences during their time at the farm.

The next visit season will start in April 2018. If you know a local class that might like to visit, please take a flier from the collection space or direct the class teacher to the relevant part of our website: <http://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk/getting-involved/educational-visits/>



*Discovering polytunnel sprinklers are on!*

## EVENTS – by Ali Jeffery

The summer into early autumn is always a busy time at the farm and this year has

been no different!

**June – Peace Festival stall:**

What must have been the hottest Peace Festival on record meant fewer visitors



than usual to our stall and, unusually for this event, no trial share sign ups at all! Luckily we haven't suffered from any ill-effects with high subscriber numbers putting us in a great position. Thank you to all the members who signed up for a shift or helped with transporting plants and other materials to the festival site. Your help was invaluable, as always.

### **July – summer party:**

This year the event was a wonderful celebration of community participation, with each area of the party being managed by a different individual or team of members. The amazing food was mostly cooked in-house by the talented food team, and their delicious concoctions, along with all the local and organic drinks, fuelled a night of dancing to the toe-tapping tunes of the Aardvark Ceilidh Band who'd travelled over from Coventry. And once again we were blessed with fine weather, perfect for an evening on the

farm. Thank you to everyone who helped out and came along for making it a memorable evening.

### **Sept – Food & Drink Festival stall:**

The weather was at times even wetter than last year's event but this did not deter our stalwart stall volunteers from sharing the joys of Canalside with innumerable visitors to the festival. In between the deluges, the stall with busy with interested enquirers and trial shares sales showed a spike in the weeks that followed, even though none were sold at the festival itself. Once again, thank you to all our volunteers for sharing their enthusiasm and time to publicise all that is Canalside.

### **– potato harvest & social:**

The harvest of our bumper potato crop progressed well at the special work day for this annual activity. Work continued into the afternoon with a small group opting to make some delicious damson jam instead, that was then sold to members in the

collection space.



*Damson jamming*

### **Oct – apple pressing & open day:**

Over 400 litres of apple juice resulted from a mammoth juicing day! Some has been pasteurised ready for next summer's party, and another quantity is being turned into cider for the event.

### **Upcoming events**

There are a few more events in the diary for the last part of this year into early 2018. We hope you can join us!

**Nov: Sat 4<sup>th</sup>** – beetroot harvest and social

**Dec: Fri 15<sup>th</sup>** – pub social  
**Tues 19<sup>th</sup>, Wed 20<sup>th</sup>, Sat 23<sup>rd</sup>** – seasonal drinks and double share collection

**Feb 2018: Sat 10<sup>th</sup>** – AGM and winter feast

## **ACCESS TO CANALSIDE FROM THE TOWPATH – by Caz Ingall**

Hi everyone. Many of you know me, many do not. I'm Caz Ingall, and I live on Leasowe Farm with my family. I was one of the co-founders of Canalside, and every day feel blessed to live on such a beautiful piece of land. It feels so wonderful to see

Canalside blooming as a scheme, watching people come and go and seeing new people engaging with the land. I think I can speak for all us Ingalls in this! It is particularly great to see people accessing the farm by bicycle, and our aim is to

make it as easy as possible for people to ride up from the towpath to get their share.

However, Leasowe Farm is also used by other groups at times, and it is really important for us that their space is respected while they

are here. As such, I want to gently ask that any Canalside members accessing the farm via the towpath please avoid going through any areas that are obviously being used by other groups or individuals. If, for some reason, the usual route up through the farm is blocked, we will signpost you a different way. **Please** follow these signs to avoid

disturbing any other people using the land for different purposes.

We **really** want you all to enjoy spending time on the farm! And... we want others who come to use the land for retreat purposes to



also feel their space is being respected.

There is a map of permissive routes through the farm on the wall in the collection space – have a look next time you're there!

Many thanks!

## 'FUTURE GROWERS' COURSE – *by Lena Sucker*

During this year's summer and autumn months I had the fantastic opportunity, part funded by Canalside, to take part in the Future Growers Program, run by the Soil Association. This program is aimed at new growers to provide them with practical skills and theoretical know-how regarding organic vegetable and fruit growing.

So, on a sunny Friday evening in May I made my way down to Devon, where I met 16 other hopefuls in a flowery meadow that usually served as pasture for cows. After setting up base camp in this beautiful environment and warming up on veg-stew, there was no hesitation and we started into the weekend with the first talk of the

course.

Between May and October we spent six intense weekends comprising seminars, farm walks, talks with farmers and growers, and discussions of all our impressions among peers.

The course saw us travelling between Devon and East Sussex and back across to the coast of West Wales. For a new grower it is invaluable to be able to talk to a range of experienced farmers and growers and learn about some of their best tips and tricks. It was also highly interesting to see how the different growing conditions in different parts of Britain are being handled, and turned to an advantage.



*One of many farm tours*

In the same way, we also visited different types of entities which all make use of different outlets, showing different ideas of how to produce and distribute organic veg and fruit sustainably. In addition, learning in a group of peers who come from different walks of life and each contribute their own knowledge to this process has brought about challenging discussions and forged rewarding connections.

## CANALSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD - PARTNER PROJECTS' UPDATE

### *The Willows Project, by Ness Ainscow*

The Willows Project has continued with its regular Wednesday and Friday groups for people with

special needs. We've been helping plant, weed, pick and store the Canalside fruit and vegetables, as well as

the flower gardens and making items to sell. Our enterprise products are displayed in the Canalside



*Proud card makers*

pole barn, in Gaia shop and Lighthorne Pavillion Cafe. Do have a look at our many festive items for sale and contribute to the sustainability of our project.

The Challenge Network joined us again, for the 4th summer in a row. This year they raised money and installed the first stretch of pathway from our cabin towards the pole barn for

easier access. We are currently bidding for some more funding from AVIVA to complete the path. Please register with AVIVA to cast your votes for our Project. Only 27 days to go!

Otherwise the Willows Project is running well and enjoying the wider farm. Thanks everyone for your support.

**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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**Sing for Unity!** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 11.45am

Join your local community choirs Songlines and Morning Chorus outside Leamington Town Hall and sing songs on the theme of unity. There will be a few short speeches between songs.

Singing for Unity events started in London last year in response to the recent peak in hate crime. The idea is spreading across the UK to bring communities together to sing songs to celebrate unity, tolerance and diversity in our society.

The songs are all super easy to learn, no previous experience of singing is required.

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**CALLING ALL FREETHINKERS** A new meet up group called 'Just Do Something Leamington Spa' may be just for you! If you're open minded and are interested in a variety of topics from diet/health to the occult/natural law and would like to participate in discussions, presentations and documentary screenings please go to [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) and join for free.

**SMALL ADS** There are none this time! 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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Link to our Flickr photos for a fuller selection of photos of the past 6 months:

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

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Next newsletter due out end of April 2018.

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

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