



# Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

AUTUMN/WINTER  
2018

newsletter no. 45

**LAST WINTER WAS MARKED BY UNUSUAL SNOWFALL** at the farm, and combined with extreme heat and lack of rainfall throughout the summer, it's been a record-breaking year since the last newsletter. In the wider world we've seen a high profile media presence for plastic, as the effects of our addiction becomes more acknowledged in the mainstream. Alongside this, our largest polytunnel collapsed in the snows of the winter and was replaced in the spring, massively increasing our consumption of new plastic for the year! Dom pondered the question of plastic through the snow and rain of the early part of the year, and has some interesting and thought-provoking perspectives on plastic relating to our ability to grow organic vegetables in the British climate – read this in his *Musings from the Land*. During the recent warmer months of the year, we've had a season with levels of busyness that have been unprecedented, and many of you will have visited the farm in relation to our big project for the year: buying the land. Read the *Land Purchase* update below, along with a round up of other *Events & Socials* (and details of the events planned for the remainder for the year). There are also the usual *updates* about the *Education Project*, and from our partner project 'The Willows', as well as several notices in the *Members' Corner* and *Small Ads*. We hope to see you down at the farm soon, whether for collecting your share, joining in on the autumn and winter jobs on the land, or for an event. In the meantime happy reading!



Midsummer BBQ & brash fire

Ali, October 2018

## MUSINGS FROM THE LAND – by Dom van Marsh



Fixing the skin T5

*I wrote this in April: It's amusing now (in the light of the rain starved summer we had) to think that we were wishing the rain would stop and the land would dry out a bit in the early part of the spring!*

Anyone unfortunate enough to have had a conversation with me or any of the rest of the growing team will know that we've been hampered by a series of setbacks more or less since Christmas: the collapse of tunnels 6 & 7, the "Beast from the East", a very late and very wet start to the spring with soil conditions so soggy that we were forced to postpone the onion planting social. Although I feel that the share has looked relatively good throughout the winter and continues to look good into spring, there may well be leaner times to come as we experience the effects of all the delayed early outdoor crops, and main crops such as potatoes and onions, going in later than they should have.

All the rain has given us a bit of thinking time, and one of the hottest topics of the cold winter has been plastic. For those of us who have been beating this drum for decades it partially brings a feeling of relief that finally the developed world seems to be waking up to the catastrophe that is single-use plastic, accompanied by a sense of frustration: politicians and mainstream society could have been taking action on plastic waste thirty plus years ago instead of



allowing the problem to escalate ever further. Perhaps which of these two is prevalent in you depends not just on whether your glass is half full or half empty, but also whether it is recyclable at the local bottle bank, “not a plastic cup” or a disposable beaker manufactured from fossil fuels.

One would expect the organic movement to be at the forefront of drives to create a post-plastic world, but one recent article in the Guardian newspaper implied the opposite, investigating the extensive use of unnecessary disposable plastic wrapping to package organic products in supermarkets<sup>1</sup> - including products such as swedes, beetroot, apples and carrots that can easily be retailed without any packaging at all (and the non-organic versions often are). I found this article extremely frustrating as the culprits here are definitely not the organic producers: it is a requirement of EU-wide organic certification standards that organic products, when sold alongside non-organic, must be packaged to prevent mixing so that the consumer knows what they are getting. Guidelines set by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN) state that “organic products must be protected at all times from co-mingling with non-organic products”.<sup>2</sup> As amusing as the thought of vegetables anthropomorphically co-mingling may be, this shows it is not the grower's fault, not the Soil Association's fault, arguably not entirely the supermarkets' fault, and for once not even DEFRA's fault. Of course this isn't to say that recyclable or compostable alternatives can't be found, but organic growers who would love to see their products free of packaging are sadly hampered by regulation.

That said, the aspect of the article that really pushed my buttons and led to my copy of that paper being flung from a first-floor window in rage (don't worry, I picked it up and recycled it afterwards) was that it gave no mention whatsoever to the 20%<sup>3</sup> of UK organic food that is distributed not via supermarkets but through alternative methods of distribution (of which Canalside is a superb example). This is where the organic movement leads the way, and has been pioneering low-packaging solutions for decades. Veg box schemes pretty much universally use boxes that are not only compostable but also reusable five to ten times over. Organic veg sellers at farmers' markets can keep packaging to an absolute minimum as there will be no co-mingling on these stalls thank you very much, and produce is likely to be eaten very soon after purchase. Farm shops that only sell organic produce can do the same – Leamington's own Gaia wholefoods for example only offers compostable paper bags for customers to pack fruit and veg into, which you're unlikely to see in any supermarket.



*Potato topping*

And what about Canalside? Well, one of the things that makes me proud to work here is the miniscule amount of plastic packaging waste our farm generates, especially when compared to the farms with box schemes and farm shops I have worked for in the past. Crucial to this is our “plastic bags for re-use” box, with many of our members routinely washing plastic containers and bringing them in every week for all members to use. And of course, most members collect their share into reusable cotton bags or solid boxes, and our veg bags

that are collected in town only use second-hand or reusable bags that are returned to us weekly.

But where could we do better? One constant source of frustration is the plastic wrapping that farm purchases such as tools come mummified in, but unfortunately as a lot of specialist horticultural products are only available mail-order this is hard to avoid – we do however have a policy of buying good quality tools and products that will last over the seductive poorly made trash that sadly swamps the market, and swiftly ends up in landfill after breaking.

Many modern horticultural methods which have so successfully extended the growing season and helped offer a far wider range of home-grown vegetables and fruit have also brought an upsurge in synthetic plastic materials with a short lifespan, such as polytunnel covers, fleece, crop-cover mesh and groundcover fabric.



*Folding mypex - Ground cover sheeting*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jan/20/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/Y2772E/y2772e0b.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/Y2772E/y2772e0b.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Soil Association Organic Market Report 2018



Large plastic sheet, such as the silage sheet that we have been using for our onions, is becoming increasingly common on organic farms as a tool in no-dig systems. “Biodegradable” alternatives such as cornstarch sheeting bring their own problems, as they are frequently made with non-organic or genetically modified corn whose production uses more fossil fuels than the plastic version of the material itself! The aforementioned onion sheeting that we use will save untold litres of diesel over its 3-year lifespan (as it renders tractor-based weed cultivations unnecessary), but who can decide whether this is a fair trade-off for the environment?



*Onion sheeting*

Without the plastic sheeting that covers our polytunnels, which has a limited lifespan, we wouldn't have more than a handful of our own tomatoes, and would that just mean importing more from overseas which may well be produced in environmentally damaging ways? All of these are dilemmas that we wrestle with daily and whilst we do strive to set an example sometimes compromises have to be made.

Salad and green leafy veg is another flashpoint. Without plastic packaging salad simply will not last more than a couple of days in any sort of palatable state.<sup>4</sup> At Canalside our current policy is the compromise of offering optional biodegradable plastic bags (new), most of which are reused. Again the minefield awaits our stumble: increasingly, evidence suggests that these (extremely expensive) “biodegradable” plastics are nothing like as degradable as we have been led to believe<sup>5</sup> – in fact some environmental organisations are calling for them to be banned.<sup>6</sup> They are in any case manufactured from fossil fuels.

There is no doubt that the ultimate solution lies in reusing, as many times as you can. And the beauty of Canalside is that our intimate structure can facilitate sharing and reusing in a way that no supermarket ever could. In the meantime, ideas and suggestions are welcome as to what else we can do better.

Dom, 23 April 2018



*Laden Tomatoes*

---

4 Incidentally, you might like to know non-organic supermarket salad is often washed in chlorine (yum!) and thoroughly dried to stop bags from misting, which dramatically limits its lifespan, along with being doused in a range of “anti fog” chemicals.

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/23/biodegradable-plastic-false-solution-for-ocean-waste-problem>

6 <https://newplasticseconomy.org/assets/doc/Oxo-paper-13.03.18.pdf>



## LAND PURCHASE UPDATE

You most likely know that this summer we had a hugely successfully share offer running, to raise the funds to buy the land we farm. It took just four and a half weeks to reach our target of £110,000, and 185 people (both existing members of Canalside and others: from the local area, other parts of the UK and far flung places around the world) are now investor members of the farm.

This is such exciting progress for Canalside as it means we can secure the land for food production into the future. Thank you to all of you who have helped us to achieve this long-term goal for our scheme.

We are now going through the legal process to complete the purchase of the land. Anyone who has bought a house will be familiar with the drawn out nature of conveyancing, with solicitors' involvement and all that entails. It's no different for buying a piece of farmland, so suffice to say the purchase is in process and we are working through all the necessary steps with the Ingall's solicitors and our own. We hope to be able to share the good news of completion of the purchase before too long.

## NEW

**Jane and John Ingall** are pleased to announce the arrival of **Pip Rosaline** who arrived earth side on 18<sup>th</sup> April and is the first child of **Angie and Mark** (their daughter and son-in-law). Although Angie, Mark and Pip live in London and are too far away to be members of Canalside, we know they would be if they lived nearer and we're sure we'll be seeing lots of Pip as she grows up with regular trips to visit her grandparents on the farm. In fact she had her first visit at just a couple of weeks old!

We also welcome a small person whom we can expect to see spending a lot of time in our community. Head grower, **Dom**, and his partner, **Nanda**, are delighted to announce the germination of their son **Sammy Kestrel van Marsh** who sprouted at 2.35am on 10<sup>th</sup> July, weighing a cool 8lb 13oz.

We have a number of new volunteers who have joined the field team for regular contributions to the bi-weekly work mornings. Welcome to **Amy Crowther, Stephen Hayward, Julia Hart, José Couto and Eddie Woodland** who have joined the farm team since the last newsletter. We hope you've enjoyed the diverse weather you may have experienced during your volunteering so far! Thanks also to **Darren Birch, Vendy Donatova and Jacqui Milton** for their contributions in the fields during the summer.

There are also many new members to welcome into our community of veg eaters. Warm greetings to everyone who has joined Canalside since the last newsletter: **Catherine McGlone, Gideon & Helen Wilkins, Julie Davies, Susan Littlewood & Hugh Tottle, Zoe Versey, Tori Moffet.**

## EDUCATION PROJECT – by Ali Jeffery

We had a good handful of visits from local schools during the summer heat: two year 3 classes from Woodloes Primary School visited for the second year as part of their 'Where my wellies take me' topic. They played a game to help understand how pollination takes place and the role bees and other pollinators play. On our walk around the farm, they recorded all kinds of things that they observed, including the many ways the growers protect the crops from



*Land Share – 1 Week to Go*

Look out in the weekly update for how we will mark that fantastic milestone! Also watch out for details of the first AGM of Canalside Community Food as a community benefit society, which will take place in early 2019. We'll be contacting all members of Canalside (investor, produce share and social members) with details of the date and venue in the near future.

## ARRIVALS...

**Chris Drury and family, Nick & Erica Kemp, Chris Hone, Aseia Rafique and family, Viv Egid, Morgane Sourget, Manuela Perry and family, Emma Inglefield and family, Katherine Branch, Susan Smith & Graham Birch, Frankie Davies and family, Jodie Dobson, Tina Mord, Sean Haacke, Franco Bosio, Susanna Kallioinen, Maria Koecher & Marcel Genssen and family, Tom Kenyon-Brown, Barbara Gekoski, Pip Smith and family, Adrian Parsons, Sarah Smith, Candida Watson and family, Surekha Parekh, Sophie Di Gesso & Julien Poncelet and family, Annabel Clarke & Nathan Downes, Hannah Greyson-Gaito, Jenny Brown and family, Chris Henderson, Hannah Smith, Richard Robertson and family, Rebecca Green, Lynda Erroi and family, Michael Brazier, Elise Houdijk, Ursula Adams and Rob Liddle.** We hope you've enjoyed a summer of abundant tomatoes and sunshine filled fields, and will continue to enjoy the produce of this land for a long time to come.

And, of course, we have numerous new members in the form of our 185 generous investors who helped to buy the land in the summer. Huge and grateful thanks, and a big welcome to all our new investor members who are part owners and stewards of this little piece of the Warwickshire countryside.



*Woodloes Pollination Game*



pests. All the children left the farm with a bean plant they had sown into a pot of compost, ready to watch it grow back at school.



*Radford Year 1 Visit*

We also had the first visit for a while from our most local school. Year 1 from Radford Semele visited to learn things to link in with their science topic about plants. These children were excited to spot the swallows flitting in and out of the pole barn during their visit and got up close to different types of crop covers and the minibeasts that help make their home in compost.

The visit season has now finished and will restart in April 2019. If you know a teacher who might be interested in a visit to the farm during the summer term next year, please direct them to our website:

(<https://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk/getting-involved/educational-visits/>) or take a flier from the collection space, which has details of what we can offer. We need 4 weeks to make all the arrangements, so it's worth starting to work on teachers over the winter so they can book a visit in good time.

## **EVENTS** – by Ali Jeffery

The year that has elapsed since the last newsletter must have been the busiest in Canalside's history! The spring and summer were punctuated with diverse events, and we welcomed not only many of our existing members to the farm but also innumerable people who were visiting for the first time.

### **February – mid-winter feast and AGM**

We held our landmark AGM, at which we all agreed to convert Canalside to a community benefit society (CBS – to allow the land purchase plans to go ahead), in the cosy hall of Radford Semele Baptist Church. Thank goodness for Judy and Dave Steele with their contacts in the local village networks who helped arrange this venue out on the day when we discovered the community hall wasn't booked for us! We had a great turnout of members who voted in favour of converting to a CBS and enjoyed a convivial evening of sharing food, hearing Dom's A to Z of the year and getting to know one another.

### **April – onion planting and social**

Members of all ages came to help with the annual big onion planting – made easy these days by simply needing to push the onion sets into the soil through a hole in the plastic sheeting. A small group planted over half the onion sets for the year – a great achievement!

### **May – launch of the land share offer**

What an amazing start to the investment offer, with interest from members and many other visitors, and £36,000 of shares applied for by the end of the day.

### **June – mid-summer fire and BBQ**

It was the summer of BBQs at the farm, and this one was alongside an enormous brush fire (using all the hedgerow

## **New education visit leader needed in 2019**

Within the next year we will need to find a new person to lead educational visits to the farm as, sometime in 2019, Ali will need to step back from the role for a while. If you have educational/teaching experience, especially with primary aged children, and would like to know more about leading occasional visits to the farm (between April and October) for classes of (usually primary aged) students, please get in touch with Ali: [mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk](mailto:mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk)



*Woodloes Bean Planting*

prunings from the winter). It gave the opportunity to celebrate reaching our fund-raising target too!

### **July – summer party**

A large number of members contributed in many different ways to make our summer party another successful community-run event. From running the bar to planning the decorations, and booking the band and catering, dedicated members helped ensure everyone who attended had a lovely evening. If you missed it, look out for next year's event when tickets go on sale in late May.



*Party Kids*



## September – potato harvest and autumn social



For the first time in a long while, the potato harvesting crew (who came down for a special 'all day' work session) brought in the entire potato harvest in one day. It's now stowed in the pole barn ready for distributing throughout the winter.

## October – apple pressing and CSA network

### open day

We had a great turnout for apple pressing and lots of interest in the tour of the farm. The blustery wind died down and by the afternoon we were enjoying a sunny, blue-skied day. Alongside apple pressing and the tour, several younger visitors made the most of pebble painting, offered by the Willows project.



Apple pressing juice drinker

## Upcoming events

**Dec: Tues 18<sup>th</sup>, Wed 19<sup>th</sup> & Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec** – final social of the year

**2019: date TBC** – AGM

**July: Sat 13<sup>th</sup>** – summer party

There may be additional events such as socials in the pub and skill share workshops, which are added at shorter notice. Keep an eye on the weekly updates and other emails for details.

**Do you have an idea for an event?** The staff team and steering group will soon be planning the socials calendar for next year. Please get in touch if you have an idea for an event, workshop or activity that you would like to offer to other members. Maybe you are a budding restaurateur and would like to run a pop-up cafe! Or perhaps you have a skill that you could share with other members. Whatever your idea, contact Ali to discuss possible dates.

**Socials team helpers wanted:** We're always on the lookout for new people to come and help out with Canalside events and socials. If you enjoy catering/meeting new people and would like to help with this side of things, get in touch with Ali to be added to the Google group so that you can hear about opportunities to help.

Contact Ali on:

[mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk](mailto:mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk)



Apple pressing small helper



## POTENTIAL COHOUSING PROJECT AT LEASOWE BARN ON CANALSIDE BOUNDARY

You may have heard about plans to create a cohousing project in the barn adjacent to the car park. We would like to take this opportunity to add a little more detail to this proposal to avoid any confusion about boundaries and land use.

A small group of Canalside members have incorporated the Heartwood cohousing project and with the support of the current landowner (of Leasowe Farm) hope to create a cohousing project for 4-5 families. The project is however; wholly independent of Canalside Community Food and the barn is not included in the land of which we are currently completing the purchase. No planning application has yet been submitted and if and when it is, it will be open for public consultation. In the meantime, if you wish any further information about the project please use [the link to the leaflet](https://www.dropbox.com/s/pv1as4anp659c71/HeartwoodCohousing_Flier%20for%20Canalside_V2.pdf?dl=0) that Heartwood Cohousing have provided: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/pv1as4anp659c71/HeartwoodCohousing\\_Flier%20for%20Canalside\\_V2.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/pv1as4anp659c71/HeartwoodCohousing_Flier%20for%20Canalside_V2.pdf?dl=0).



*Brassica Planting*

## CANALSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD - PARTNER PROJECTS' UPDATE

*The Willows Care Farm, by Ness Ainscow*



*Grow to Grow Participants*

We are delighted to now be working in partnership with Canalside Community Food.

It's been a hot and busy summer for our regular Wednesday and Friday sessions with adults with specific and general learning disabilities, as well as our 10 week 'Grow to Grow' project funded by an Awards for All grant. This was well attended and we had excellent positive feedback from all those who attended. As well as planting seeds there were diverse activities: willow weaving, pond dipping, spoon carving, bee keeping and many other nature based craft activities to join in with. A wholesome meal was also provided using fruit and vegetables from the farm.

We will be running more 'Grow to Grow' sessions next spring thanks to Tesco's Bags for Life scheme. Thank you to all those who placed their tokens in our box and came to run sessions.



*Annie and Simon*

The young people from Challenge Network will be laying another stretch of pathway for easier access to our cabin and to the loos in the next couple of weeks.

Our flower gardens suffered during the drought but we have continued to have a few flower posies available for sale each week in the pole barn along with various items made by Angus, Simon and Annie. Look out for our winter festive arrangements that will be available soon!

Thanks everyone for your continued support.  
[www.thewillowsproject.org.uk](http://www.thewillowsproject.org.uk)



**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.

☆☆☆

**CAR CLUB.** A group of Canalside members have set up a community car-sharing club. We have a 7-seater Vauxhall Zafira available for car club members to borrow at a flat rate of 30p / mile, plus membership fee of £12 a year. If you're interested in joining please speak to Head Grower Dom, volunteer Nanda or Assistant Grower Lena.

☆☆☆

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

☆☆☆

Holiday cottage for rent in North Wales.

10 minutes walk from sandy beach. Well-behaved dogs welcome. Discounts for Canalside members!

[www.fairbourneholidays.co.uk](http://www.fairbourneholidays.co.uk)

**Ness 07688 636044**

☆☆☆

**ROOM TO RENT**

To a woman, in a peaceful house in South Leamington.

Call Debbie on 07960 040985.



Handmade Vegetable basket,  
perfect for carrying, washing muddy vegetables,  
and for all types of storage.

£20

Phone Joseph on 07786 692390

☆☆☆☆☆

Link to our Flickr photos for a fuller selection of photos of the past 6 months:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/126538300@N02/albums>

☆☆☆☆☆

Next newsletter due out end of April 2019

Deadline for ads with payment, and notices – Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April.

☆☆☆☆☆

Canalside Community Food, Southam Road, Radford Semele, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV31 1TY.  
t: 07758 340491 e: [mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk](mailto:mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk) w: [www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk](http://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk)