

Autumn Newsletter 2023



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View across the wildlife pond ... to Stephen

Ah, the arrival of the Autumn Equinox, heralded by the bountiful harvest of fruit and veg, plus the usual Devon signs: an influx of university students and the throngs of retirees and pre-schoolers clogging SIRs (sights of interest and refreshment).



As well as a downfall of Damsons our bountiful harvest included cuddling carrots, a cucumber trumpet and David's tribute to Mickey Mouse

A newcomer to EGC this season was a trial of mushrooms.



!
Steve was found guilty
... of a successful crop!



Jake's idea of laying hay from our meadow as a mulch, (instead of deploying mypex), was put into action and found to use up a lot of energy!

From Exeter Community Agriculture to EGC - Challenges & Achievements 2011- 2015

Preparing for our review meeting for the season 2011 - 12, our chair noted “a harvest for 22 people, lovely (£5) bags of produce, but only 3 or 4 members come to the field to do the work ... discontent by those who did the work ... regular workers expressing concern about the responsibility for maintaining the land ... not enough commitment to continue the £5 bags ... recommendation to ‘pick your own’ “ ...



Building our first poly tunnel July 2011



£5 pounds a bag

The Chair’s annual report for Apr 2013 - Mar 2014 noted the increase of full members from 10 to 21, that we had successfully moved to ‘harvesting your own’, based on the principle of trust, that our finances had improved and there was much to celebrate.

During the winter of 2011-12 a huge amount of work took place to re-orientate the beds crossways. Later in the year our shed was built and much more besides. In Bloom started its first season. We were building commitment, as the photographs in this newsletter testify.



Our first beds ran down the slope 2011-2012

Change of bed direction



Digging shed foundation 2012



Shed floor joists 2012



Shed completed 2012

It was not until April 2013 that ECA changed to EGC, abandoning the Committee of Management structure (about 6-8 members meeting off-site every month 'to do the business') and became, very roughly how we now manage our affairs with all members able to set the direction of the Co-Op and being equal participants in decision-making through the monthly meeting on the field.

This change didn't come out of the blue. Lots of honest thinking about why we were struggling, and with the aid of external, off-site facilitation in 2012, we kept faith and found the way forward.



Small poly tunnel first crop 2012



Delicious tomatoes 2012



Sarah Collier and son building the willow dome 2013



Shed water tank 2013



Windbreak planting 2014



Our first water reservoir 2014



2 New poly tunnels 2015

We were still - for this whole period - reliant on a small group of 3/4 members to organise the 'growing' plans' - with a 'to do' list in chalk on the shed door. Liz Owen helped to get us better organised, but it was not until 2016 that we had our first proper planting schedule ahead of the season with precise details, spacings, varieties and timings, thanks to Neil Mercer, and ably taken on by Stephen Mosedale after Neil and Julia moved on.

Above all, we recovered and revived in this period by understanding that we needed to be a co-operative in more than name, and I think that was the key and that which we now all value. It brings commitment and vegetables as well as fun, learning and new relationships.

David



A central control point for both electric fences was installed on the Shed-in-the-Hedge, powered by one small solar panel



Open Day saw a wonderful display of our produce and welcomed neighbours, friends and family

Jenny was pleased to turn out some turnips.

A Cinderella pumpkin in all its glory.



Nature Notes



An admirable Admiral enjoying an apple. Apparently, they also feast on plums and damsons. (Just the Orchard Champion's luck!)

A friendly baby bird later identified as a Robin.

Was this an Adder?

Another view of the wonder of the wildlife pond.



Huge thanks to those who supplied the photos, with special thanks for the wonderful article on the history of EGC, (which I found most interesting).

Apologies if your offering has not been included. Apparently, distribution dictates that size does matter – if you want everyone to be able to receive the newsletter with no hassle.

JX