

The Grower



CHESHAM
ALLOTMENTS
Group

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OCTOBER 2018

SEASONS GREETINGS!

***Wishing all allotment holders
A Very Merry Christmas and
a Happy and Productive
New Year!***



Badgers on our Allotments—Update

After being granted the appropriate licence, the Council installed one-way badger gates, opening outwards, at the 8 active sett entrances. The sett was visited at a maximum interval of 3 days (although mainly daily) to detect whether the gates had been activated.

At four of the gates, no activity was detected during the 21-day period and the gates were removed and the holes infilled/blocked immediately.

However, there was activity at four of the gates. It was not possible to extend the licence period as this would mean going into the badgers' breeding season. It has therefore been necessary to take these gates out and leave the sett holes as they are.

The Council will continue to monitor the area over the winter period, but without creating any disturbance to the sett, and update the signage on the gates.

If allotment tenants find snuffle holes on their plots (e.g. shallow areas of disturbance where badgers have been digging for food) they can fill these in. If tenants find the beginnings of excavations that are still too small for a badger to get into, these can also be filled in. But if any new sett holes appear, these cannot be touched, as it will be breaking the law.

The situation will be reviewed at the end of the breeding season. In the meantime, please let the Council know of any new signs of badger activity on the site can be fully understood in time for a new licence application in late Spring if that is required.

FOOD DIY By Tim Hayward Penguin 2013 - A review by Tim Andrew

It's mid winter. You rough dug your plot before Christmas and the frost is hopefully working its magic on your clay soil so that when you hit the clods with the back of a fork in April they will break into a lovely friable tilth. (And no, I'm not that naive, I know that it's still full of flints and that by the beginning of May it has turned into a brick.) You are eating the jam, pickles and chutneys you made from the summer gluts. You have spent Boxing Day with the seed catalogues and ordered the beginnings of this year's bounty. The last batch of Seville orange marmalade is safely on the larder shelf. What is an enterprising allotment holder to do before The Management decides he or she is at a loose end and has plenty of time for helpful household tasks?

Practise making sausages and pork pies, that's what. And here is just the book to get you started. Its subtitle is *How to Make your Own Everything*, and whilst that may be a somewhat overambitious target, it does tell you how to make all sorts of things that most of us wouldn't normally think of doing at home: curing and salting, including pastrami and gravadlax; smoking, cold and hot, including haddock and salmon; pastry, including hot water crust pastry and gala pie; butchery, including sausages. The friends who visit us every Christmas always bring gravadlax made at home to Tim Hayward's recipe and it is lovely.

This is very much a book to browse through and pick out a few things to try; it got me making pork pies and sausages. Tim Hayward makes no bones about the fact that this is a book to get you started on things. He also believes that by going back to the old DIY ways of preserving food like smoking and curing, which our ancestors had to do to survive, we gain an appreciation of our food and its flavours that enhances our enjoyment, even when we buy it by the slice at the deli.

Making pork pies, let me tell you, is difficult! I followed his Gala pie recipe and whilst the first attempt was edible, that was about the best that could be said for it. I soon missed out the eggs, so that I was making a standard pork pie, altered the texture of the meat filling and made changes to his recommended mix of herbs and spices, increasing the pepper and reducing hugely the mace and nutmeg. His recipe also makes a very big pie, so I also made them much smaller, although you have to be careful since filling and crust amounts change at different rates as you alter the size. (Geometry enthusiasts can have lots of fun working out the change in the volumes and surface areas of cylinders as their heights and radii change.) Timing the removal of the pie from the tin is a matter of nice judgement: too early and the crust is fragile and it breaks, releasing all the lovely juices and causing a panic that Kate, my wife, insists on calling *Pork-Pie-Gate*; too late and it is glued firmly to the inside of the tin. And I've moved way from Tim Hayward's recipe for hot water crust pastry and now use an amalgam of his and recipes by Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith.

Then there is the jelly that fills the space between the cooked meat and the crust. You can take the easy way and use chicken stock and gelatine. But, *Real Pork Pie Jelly*, made as per Tim Hayward, is the result of boiling a pig's trotter and any bits of pig skin your butcher will give you for 3 hours until it falls apart. The atmosphere in the house can be a touch distinctive for a day or two afterwards, but believe me it is worth it.

The story with sausages is similar. You need a food mixer with a sausage horn (Kenwood and Kitchen Aid both do them), and the first attempts are distinctly experimental, but once you get into the groove, they are very tasty. You know they are made only with the best ingredients and there is enormous satisfaction when you get them right.

If you buy the meat ingredients from them, local butchers who make their own sausages and butcher their own carcasses will almost certainly let you have casings for the sausages (hog for bangers, lamb for chipolatas) and a trotter and some skin bits for jelly. The satisfaction comes from the fact that making these things is not easy. Like learning to grow a successful crop on your plot, there's a fair bit of trial and error involved and you need to persist until you find a recipe and way of doing it that works for you.

And I'm not saying you should make what I've made. Our friends make gravadlax. What would you fancy trying? Pastrami; salami; Finnan haddie; rabbit confit; pickled herring; crumpets? The choice is huge: plenty to keep you busy and creative while you wait for the soil to warm up and dry out enough to start preparing seed beds. And far too busy to have time for wall-papering or rodding out the drains.

CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP CALENDAR

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Coffee mornings	Saturday 10am –12pm They will resume in 2019 for the Chesham Horticultural Society Potato days: 16th & 23rd Feb, and 2nd March	Focal Point Hut, Cameron Road

CHESHAM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY DATES

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Potato Sales	Saturday mornings 16th & 23rd Feb, and 2nd March 2019	Sales Hut (1st gate Cameron Road)

News from Chesham Town Council

It seems to have been a year of problems with the padlocks on the gates with keys not fitting and padlocks falling apart. Collette Littley, the new Allotment Officer at the Town Council, has looked into solutions and it has been decided to change all the padlocks to combination padlocks. The new system will start on Monday 7th January. The four digit combination will be available from the Town Hall. We will also email it to those of you on our email list. You can then take your key back to the Town Hall to reclaim your deposit.

At the same time as we welcome Collette and hope she will enjoy working with us, we regretfully say goodbye to Rachel Watts who, as well as being our Allotments Officer, was also an allotment holder and a stalwart of both Chesham In Bloom and the Bellingdon and Asheridge Horticultural Society. We would like to thank her for all her hard work for us and wish her the best of luck in her new home 'up north'!



Chesham Town Council

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CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

MARSHALL HALL (Chairman) Plot 47A/47B CR	TIM ANDREW (Vice Chair) Plot 48A CR	RAY WILLIAMS (Treasurer) Plots 215/216 CR	CLAIRE MALAN (Secretary) Plot 235A CR
ANDREW SINCLAIR (Community Liaison) Plot 45B CR	JIM ABBOTT (Historian & Archivist) Plot 31/32 CR	DAVE HALL (Maintenance and Facilities) Plot 12 CR	TONY MUIR (Website) Plot 28 AR
CHRIS MACKAY (Database Manager) Plot 6A AR	KATE HUTCHINSON (Editor—The Grower) Plot 58D/80A CR	CHRIS SPRUYTENBURG (Education and Orientation) Plot 93 CR	SIMON LEE (Representative at Large) Plot 46A CR
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