

GROWING TOGETHER

The Self-Sufficiency Group
January 2023
Newsletter



GROWING TOGETHER Self-Sufficiency group exists to enable and encourage its members to practice self-sufficiency and self-reliance, and maintain a "sustainable life style" in a fast changing worldwide environment

View this newsletter at:-

www.ehss.org.uk

Indoor meetings are held at 19.30 on the
2nd Wednesday of the month in the:-
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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope you have had a nice time over this winter holiday, the Winter Solstice, Christmas, and New Year.

PLEASE NOTE: there will **not** be a meeting in January.

Your membership is now due for renewal. There are **three ways to pay.** Please **fill in a membership** renewal form and then pay either (i) **Electronically** via **BACS** and **emailing** your membership form using the details on the form (ii) By **cheque** and **post** to the address on the form (iii) at the **February meeting by cash, cheque or contactless card.**

(A membership form is also being sent with this newsletter or you may download one from our website.) **The fee is still £15 for your entire family! Will it go up next year? Don't know yet...**

The **AGM** will move back to its original month of February (8th) and there will be a "Bring and Buy" after.

Would you like to be on the committee? It is possible that someone may resign and a space will be available. It's a very nice experience; we only meet 4 times a year, and it's a chance for you to shape policy and put forward your ideas directly! Frances will announce at the AGM if a space is available and you can put your hand up!

For new members: the hall is open to us from 7.30pm and the talks start at 8.00pm, with a duration of approximate 1 hour. Members pay £1.50 on the door and visitors pay £3. All are welcome!! Free Tea and Coffee are usually available from 9.00pm.

A Resume of:

The Christmas party. 15 of us enjoyed each others company and had the chance to win the quiz, devised this year by Frances Bassom. The clue was in the 20th question; a poem tied all the questions together. Paul Strike seemed to get this connection before anyone else! And indeed, he won the quiz. I didn't get the connection early on so fell well behind! Lovely raffle prizes! Thank you. I shared my mistletoe with a couple of other people, one of whom is a lot younger and would make better use of it... with her husband! It seems so long ago we

had our last raffle. Thank you Jane for donating a CAKE which was the first prize picked!!

As I am still the lucky person who arranges the talks, here are some of the talks and visits we may expect.

I am hopeful of confirmation about several meetings in 2023 before too long and will update you with lots of lovely news to that effect asap.

So far we have a definite “Lambing experience”, on a Saturday in April and a visit to a beautiful rose garden in June.

To be confirmed (people are reluctant to confirm too far ahead... one of the unintended consequences of Covid, but have said they will come back to me in the new year) a market garden talk/visit, a representative of the Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, the ecologist at Knepp, and Tom Hart-Dyke... keep an eye out.

Dru’s life: ups, downs and roundabouts .

Mild, warm even November and the start of December and then my goodness didn’t we pay for it. The big freeze lasted 10 days and my garden fell to -10 each night and didn’t get above -5 each day. I wrapped up the tender potted plants as best I could as I have nowhere to get them under cover. An indoor succulent in the summer house died, so no sanctuary in there. I still went out each morning for a long walk, and enjoyed it very much. The muddy fields were transformed for a while and walking was pleasant as I made my way across. Then the thaw... and since then, omg the mud, mud and more mud. Across those fields my boots doubled in weight. As I passed the gate into a meadow, I passed from one landowner to another. The meadow on Newhouse Farm received the mud. Poetic justice really, as the farmer had been forced to sell those muddy fields a very few years ago.

Up went my decorations! The tree is blue and silver this year. Each year a different theme. Ice lights too. New lights on the pergola which shades the Camelias. (The mild weather has brought them into bud with fragments of color showing: it is not March). The lights I have in the sitting room on a swag above the window BLEW UP. Yes... I plugged them in and BANG! The whole plug blew apart and tripped the circuit. Rather alarming, but

no harm done. The new ones are battery, maybe safer.

We ate out on Christmas Day and had a lovely meal and brilliant afternoon. As the tv was as usual full of tripe (we don’t have Netflix or any of those pay services) I fell asleep. No change there from almost every other evening. We had a lovely Whippet spend a few hours with us as his people were up from Somerset and going to a restaurant for lunch with family. They wondered if he would settle ok... he did. Immediately. I lit the woodburner. He lay in front of it and slept happily.

I went to a NYE party, in the afternoon and went to bed at 10pm. We had Mabel the labradoodle staying and she and I watched the fireworks from my bedroom window. The dam things woke me up!!!

We had Barry’s daughter, partner, and grandchild here after Christmas. Millie and I had a long conversation, the bulk of which would bore you. However, we talked about lambs... not at the mint sauce stage... little fluffy things leaping about and going “baaaaaH”. I may bring her to our lambing experience in April. Oh, and by the way... the lamb I bought recently from member Rob Jenner is LOVELY.

Now it’s the New Year the days are getting longer. The Rooks are looking to start building new nests, (there’s optimism for you) and the bulbs are coming up. I went for a 6 mile walk this morning and really enjoyed it. Had a few nice walks over the holidays some with dogs, but most without. Mabel the labradoodle is coming on Friday for a couple of days. Back to work on Wednesday. Started to take down some decorations today. The outside ones are gone. I will take down everything in the dining room tomorrow. By 12th Night it should all be gone. I wonder what theme I will choose for next year...

Looking forward to seeing you for the AGM and bring and buy in February.

The Compost Bin

I’m being replaced by AI: It was lovely to see so many of you at the Christmas Social, and I’m so pleased to have made it. Frances had created an excellent general-knowledge quiz, so all I could

think of contributing was a jolly Christmas poem to set the mood. However, I had to admit that I didn't write it. Let me explain.

Since the end of November I had been playing around with a new computer program called OpenAI.com. My son had sent me a preview (he's in the business of cutting-edge computing) and I found it intriguing. I won't bore you with the technologies so I'll just say that all the words in Wikipedia (42 billion words) plus another nine times as much on top were fed in, and it analysed the way the words fit together to make sentences, chapters and books, and then find a way to recreate them according to your wishes.

As I still wasn't feeling up to 100% fit, I asked its "chat" section just these words "write a jolly poem for the Christmas social of the Self-Sufficiency Group". I told it nothing about who we are, what we do. The result was read out very nicely by Dru; it's as if the writer knew all about us, our members and our objectives. And there was no delay while such matters could have been looked up – the entire process took about three seconds from pressing the key, and that was before the arrival at Heather Cottage of our ultra-high speed broadband.

Well, to get back to earth as it were. I've currently now got a bad attack of laryngitis (or something similar) and so my further progress into garden work was curtailed. Hence, nothing stirred in the compost bin, no garden tasks to base my comment on.

However I did ask the AI program very nicely if it could write an article on the subject, just to tide me over for the month. It certainly did, and came up with the most concise piece about the compost heap, which I repeat here:

"Composting is a great way to reduce waste and improve the health of your garden. Compost is made up of decomposed organic materials, such as leaves, grass clippings, and food waste, which can provide essential nutrients for your plants.

Having a compost bin allows you to easily collect and store organic materials until they are ready to be added to your garden. To create compost, you'll need to mix together a balanced combination of "green" materials, which are high in nitrogen, and "brown" materials, which are high in carbon. Green materials include things like fruit and vegetable scraps, grass clippings, and coffee grounds, while brown

materials include things like leaves, twigs, and straw.

Once you've added your materials to the compost bin, you'll need to turn the compost regularly to help aerate it and speed up the decomposition process. Depending on the size of your bin and the materials you are composting, it can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months for the compost to be ready to use.

Using compost in your garden can help improve the soil structure, promote healthy plant growth, and reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers. So, having a compost bin is definitely worth it!"

Well, I don't think I could improve on that for a general introduction to the essential elements of composting. Even the Editor tool along the top line of MS Word - through which we filter all written text (don't we?) - only picked out "mix together" as a mistake, on the basis of the second word being repetition, but then I think it's better with both! Mind you, as Microsoft are behind OpenAI, so they're in the same league.

So I'm obviously redundant, as is every semi-literate human being on this earth as far as writing articles is concerned. I then asked it to convert the piece into a rhyming poem, which also only took a couple of seconds; it's amusing and fabulous but I won't print it here - or that really would be repetition!

With sincere greetings to all, and wishing you a 2023 that is nothing like as bad as the last one,

Alec and Erna.

This is great Alec. However it leads me to wonder if some of the books (novels) being published recently were written by AI. I still think the human touch has a lot to recommend it!

~ Dru

Tickets For RHS Wisley

We have an RHS card to share which will admit up to 2 of us with a 30% discount. At £14.95 each full price entrance that's a total saving of £8.97. So that's a large chunk of your £15 EHSS membership fee for 2023 ! Alec has them. 01730816316