



LIVING ROOTS

Maria's Musings

Digging by Seamus Heaney*

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; as snug as a gun.

Under my window a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge
deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade,
Just like his old man.

My grandfather could cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened
up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, digging down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mold, the squelch
and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it.

- from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966)

Last Wednesday standing in the soup kitchen beside Adam** watching him peel potatoes for some reason Seamus Heaney's poem Digging came to mind. With slow, sure and silent concentration Adam wielded the peeler with great precision until every potato was as clean and smooth as a freshly laid egg.

Many books have been written on the power of the present moment. Self help, CD's and DVD's line the shelves of bookshops. Yet one morning peeling spuds with Adam was enough to bring me right back to the natural time it takes to plant, dig, peel and cook a simple potato. A good life like good food can not be rushed, I guess that is what Seamus Heaney was trying to tell us.

Speaking of spuds Scott and crew will be planting on St Patrick's Day as usual on the allotment. As for freshly laid eggs we now have three chickens installed in the backyard of the Ark. They too are teaching us patience. For three weeks we have been waiting for even one egg!

Anyone got any tips for making hens lay?

Ah I guess that good things are just worth waiting for.

* The newsletter's title, 'Living Roots', was inspired by this poem by Seamus Heaney.
* **Adam is a young man who has Downs Syndrome, a passionate Manchester United fan and a great chef who joins the Root Soup crew every Wednesday morning in our Soup Kitchen.



The Ember

We are entering the team relay in the Belfast City Marathon in May. Between 5 people we will be running 26 miles around Belfast!

Additionally a few will participate in the fun run! If you are interested in sponsoring us contact Henri (finance@larchebelfast.org.uk). We would also appreciate prayers for nice weather for training and on the marathon day!

Like many homes this time of the year, the Ember has experienced a spring clean! It was great fun to get our hands dirty and make the Ember shine like it should!

Congratulations to May, who won a gold medal in a Special Olympics bowling competition in Londonderry!

The beautiful Jillian has glasses now! She is even more lovely and looks very sophisticated!

Do you have any spare bicycles? The volunteers would really appreciate a new 'set of wheels' on which to cruise around Belfast! If transporting them is a problem, feel free to call us and we can arrange to pick them up in our trusty van, 'Rosie'!



The Loom

Aaron Rose stated, "In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary". The Loom is searching for a floor lamp to help make the space extraordinary! If you have an extra floor lamp, please consider the Loom for its new home!

If you are interested in being part of one of the prayers in the Loom contact Sharon at 028 9027 2977 or sharonmatchett@hotmail.com.



Root Soup

Training has continued in the kitchen with delicious vegetable soups, delectable potato and leek soups and yummy homemade breads being made weekly. If you would like to join the Root Soup kitchen crew for a lunch on Wednesdays, contact Micah at root.soup@larchebelfast.org.uk.

Root Soup hosted a great evening on 24 March entitled 'Friends and Forks'. It was an event filled with fun, food and friendship. The Root Soup kitchen crew prepared mushroom lasagna, chili and rice, and califlower macaroni and cheese! With all the delicious food and lovely conversation, everyone left with happy bellies and happy hearts! Be on the look-out for the next Root Soup event...You don't want to miss it!



The Allotment

After a long, harsh winter that has seen our hardy garden crew chopping through frozen ground, slipping over muddy paths, and nearly being blown off the hillside, there are signs that spring is coming! The daffodils and crocuses are poking out of the soil, and the first new leaves are starting to emerge on our strawberry and raspberry bushes. Since the beginning of January, we have been busy preparing our new allotment, which will nearly double our production capacity. We have built 14 new raised beds, and hauled countless loads of soil and manure into the back of long-suffering Rosie. It has been exciting to watch the allotment take shape!

We are still in need of basic garden tools and rain gear for those wet and wild spring days. Spades, hand trowels, garden forks and rakes would be particularly helpful, but all donations are welcome!

Also, if you'd like to get involved in a bit of garden work, we are at the allotment, rain or shine, every Friday from 10am until 4:30pm (though it's a good idea to ring Scott at 078 4964 7641 if you are planning to stop by).

We will also be having our usual St. Patrick's Day BBQ and spud-planting party on 17th March. All are welcome!

--Scott



Mark Your Calendar!

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FRIDAY, MARCH 4 L'ARCHE TABLE QUIZ AT 7.30PM IN ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH, KING'S ROAD, BELFAST. ORGANISED BY MURRAY AND PAM HUNTER. (If you want to form tables of approximately 6 people please phone Murray at 90761295 to ensure a table is booked for your group and to help with planning. If you are coming on your own or with a smaller group there is always the chance to join up with other tables.)

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FRIDAY, MARCH 11 MUSIC IN MARCH: A MUSICAL FEAST IN FISHERWICK CHURCH WITH ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL 'SCHOLA CANTORUM', JONATHAN JOHNSTON (INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED FLAUTIST) AND RORY DOWSE (CONCERT PIANIST). ORGANISED BY SHELAGH CALDWELL. TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM HENRI HARPUR IN OUR OFFICE 90641088.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 17 ANNUAL SPUD-PLANTING AND ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY AT THE ALLOTMENT. ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN! CONTACT SCOTT AT 078 4964 7641 IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO COME!

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FRIDAY, APRIL 1 FUNDRAISING COFFEE MORNING HOSTED BY RACHAEL GREGSON IN

THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S LODGE, 16 LENNOXVALE, BELFAST BT9 5BY FROM 11-1. YOU ARE INVITED TO ENJOY A COUPLE OF HOURS OF SPOILING IN RACHEL'S BEAUTIFUL HOME, WHICH WAS ONCE THE HOME OF SIR WILLIAM WHITLA. YOU SHALL BE INDULGED WITH HOME-MADE TRAY BAKES AND MUSICALLY ENTERTAINED BY METHODIST COLLEGE'S TRADITIONALLY IRISH GROUP AND SOME OF DR. ANGELA FEENEY'S CLASSICALLY-TRAINED PUPILS. ROUND OFF THE MORNING WITH A STROLL IN THE GARDEN-SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE! PLEASE RSVP TO HENRI KNOW IF YOU ARE ABLE TO ATTEND BY MARCH 21 (028 9064 1008).

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FRIDAY, JUNE 3 GOLF CLASSIC IN ROCKMOUNT GOLF CLUB, ORGANISED BY FONSIÉ CORR. DETAILS TO FOLLOW.

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 ROOT SOUP CINEMA NIGHT AT TUDOR CINEMA IN COMBER

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1 OUR 10 TH BIRTHDAY EVENT – DETAILS IN THE COMING MONTHS.

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8 ROOT SOUP CINEMA NIGHT AT TUDOR CINEMA IN COMBER

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