Dunchurch Allotment Association



By Paul Sanders

It was one of those dull, cold and dank January days when I visited the allotments to sort out a few maintenance tasks. You would expect that in such a bleak and misty day there would be no one tending their plot, but wrong, there was Richard turning over his soil with spade and another Richard doing the same with a motorised cultivator. Across the fields Dave was striding out no doubt having just harvested a few parsnips for Sunday dinner.

For many people the allotments in Dunchurch have become a haven during lockdown, giving some semblance of normality. In a recent study published in the *British Food Journal* the authors found that evidence is emerging about the wide range of social and environmental benefits 'grow your own' can provide. Allotmenteering can increase mental and physical well-being, as well as improving nature connectedness, social capital and community cohesion. Participants in the study recorded high levels of social and community activities including the sharing of surplus food produce, knowledge exchange, awareness and interaction with wildlife, emotional connection to their allotment, appreciation of time spent outside and aesthetic delight in the natural world around them.

It is possibly that the desire to be in the great outdoors has prompted the unprecedented rise is the number of people requesting an allotment. In April 2020 Dunchurch Allotments had two people on the waiting list; by January 2021 this had risen to twenty two.

At a time when waiting lists for allotment plots in the United Kingdom are on the rise, and allotment land is subject to multiple pressures from other forms of development, the *British Food Journal* study demonstrates that these spaces are important sites not only for food production but also for health, social capital and environmental engagement.



And when it snows just enjoy the view