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CSA Launched

On July 20th 2002 about thirty people came together in the Walled Garden at Brookthorpe to celebrate the launch of the Stroud CSA Project. The mayor of Stroud and members of the Core Group gave brief addresses. Everyone then participated in the ceremonial erection of a long row of bean poles for the newly planted seedlings. After looking round the already abundant garden the focus moved to the vegetable field out on Kolisko Farm. Here a barbecue had been prepared along with a treasure hunt for the children and a snail race!

From this moment on and throughout the summer an increasing variety of vegetables became available to supply a community of at first 20 and now more than 40 CSA members. This is the beginning of our farm project. Do join us.



Work of the Core Group

The Core Group has devoted much of its time during the last few months to the question of structure. At a workshop hosted by Stroud Common Wealth Ltd in the Spring, the ideas and intentions behind the CSA Project were presented and discussed. A representative of the Plunkett Foundation (which is well versed in the structures needed by co-ops) was present. He recommended that any structure be kept as simple as possible. He also suggested that we produce a detailed business plan. This is an important tool to help us to become clearer about our aims and objectives. The draft business plan, currently some 28 pages long, is being worked on and should be ready (as far as it can ever be) during the next few weeks. Because of the changes at Kolisko Farm, the promotional flyer has had to be amended and is available to distribute widely. A copy has been sent with this newsletter for that purpose. Finding appropriate land will be the most important challenge in the coming weeks and months. The next two meetings of the Core Group are scheduled for October 23rd and November 13th.

The CSA Project and Kolisko Farm **Bernard Jarman**

Since our last newsletter a new farmer has been appointed to take on Kolisko Farm. He is now finding his feet and has begun adapting facilities to make the efficient operation of an enlarged dairying operation more manageable. He has brought in his own herd and most of the machinery needed and is investing enormous energy in its success. The farm shop remains an important part of the enterprise and a small milk round has been restarted. Its future looks hopeful.



The complications connected with the departure of the previous farmer and the structural framework of the new appointment have however resulted in a situation where a direct link up with the CSA Project is hard to envisage. Members of the CSA would clearly feel the farm is theirs and have a direct say in how it develops. This is unlikely to be the case under the present set up. The company also appears to be set on pursuing a more traditional approach to its marketing.

By the time the CSA was launched in July, it had become clear that its hoped-for integration with Kolisko Farm would no longer be possible - at least not in the short term. Meanwhile the CSA Project continues to rent the Walled Garden and part of a field from Kolisko Farm to grow the vegetables collected by CSA members each week. This arrangement will continue until April of next year. Thereafter the field will definitely revert to the farm. The new farmer has however expressed an interest in the CSA continuing to use the Walled Garden as at present. It might therefore be possible for the CSA to negotiate a new lease for the Walled Garden beyond next spring.



The CSA Project is now actively looking for suitable land in the Stroud area on which to develop its farm project. It is very important for the CSA to be able to grow into a diverse and mixed farm which can offer a full range of indigenous produce to its supporters. A farm of up to 100 acres is needed. With farmers and gardeners already identified for this next step, and more than forty supporters signed up, the future looks very hopeful. The location of suitable land for the CSA Project in the course of the next few months will enable the next exciting steps to be taken. All leads are

eagerly awaited. Inklings of land possibilities are already beginning to show themselves and we can look forward in quiet confidence towards finding a home by early spring.



Trip to Radford Mill Saturday 19th October

A trip is being arranged to visit Radford Mill near Bath. They are also developing a community initiative around their farm, and we have arranged to visit them and discuss common interests. It is a stock farm (cattle/dairy/sheep) with a box scheme and small processing unit. Programme for the day:

10.45 Arrive, **11.00** Farm walk - veg garden/box scheme, dairy, processing unit, **12.30** Lunch, **14.00** Structured discussion - Stroud CSA and Radford to explore shared issues, **16.00** Finish

All members are welcome. Lunch will be provided. If numbers are sufficient we will hire a minibus. If interested please call Greg Tel. 01453 885 233 as soon as possible.

Cheap Food? Jade Bashford

We didn't come to the CSA looking for cheaper food, but to find a new way of growing food that is equitable, human, gives us a community life with food and the land, and nourishes the land as well as the people.

We were therefore surprised to discover that if we go to our nearest supermarket the vegetables are not only of lower quality but actually more expensive! Looking at their website yesterday and going round the shop we found the following:

Apples organic £2.69/kg
Cabbage organic £1.09/kg
Carrots organic 99p/kg
Courgettes organic £2.39/kg
Lettuce organic £1.49 for 2

Broccoli organic £2.89/kg
Onion organic £1.45/kg
Potatoes organic £1.98/kg
Green beans organic £6.76/kg
Cucumber organic £1.19 each

Not only that, but despite having taken control of a global supply chain, the supermarket is still unable to supply us with organic parsley, spinach, chard, endive, radicchio, lettuce or black currants, let alone Mark's good company in the packing shed, fresh cut vitality or an environmentally benign history. And if we were not chuffed enough about this, our contributions to the CSA also provide a much greater economic benefit to Stroud, pound for pound. The reason is that the CSA spends its income mainly on local inputs, whereas the money we hand over at the checkout leaks away to pay bills for air fuel, salaries at the plastic bag factory, glossy adverts and suchlike. A study of a box scheme (in similar vein to our CSA) in Cornwall ('Plugging the Leaks' by the New Economics Foundation) found that every £10 spent at the box scheme generated £25.90 for the local economy, compared to only £14 from the supermarket.

The CSA has an income of about £1200 per month. By these figures, we are between us already generating £37,300 per year for the local area, and mainly in support of other sound enterprises.

And I think we are set to grow!



Vegetable Update **Mark Harrison**

Well we are enjoying a lovely spell of warm autumnal weather and reaping the benefits of mine and everyone's labours. Mostly it has been a very productive season. I would have enjoyed a bit more rain but a lot of things have flourished despite the rather dry times. Unfortunately the badgers have been enjoying our work as well. They have eaten more than half of the sweetcorn, or more correctly they have eaten a quarter of the corn and just destroyed the other quarter. I was pleased that we had any sweetcorn considering the very dry soil that we planted it in to in June so I guess that I'll count my blessings.

The beans, courgettes, spinach, cucumbers, and now calabrese have done particularly well over the summer and I have managed to sell over £2000 worth of produce over the last 3 months. This money has been invested back into the CSA project. I am expecting that the calabrese, spinach, and mixed salad packs will continue for sometime yet and am looking forward to harvesting fennel, kale, and the squashes soon (with some pumpkins in time for Halloween) along with cauliflowers later on.

I will soon be meeting with Anne Cox (who, along with her husband Ian, run the market garden at Duchy Home Farm) to discuss our veg supply for the winter. They have been supplying us with the carrots, onions, beetroot, and potatoes and they will have produce for us during the winter. I have grown some winter produce but we will need more.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped in the garden over the summer. You have made my work easier and have rescued me from the terminal boredom of picking beans all the time!

What is Good Food? **Simon Charter**

What is good food?

How can we qualify wholesomeness?

What is vitality or health in a plant?

How do we experience nourishment?

We would like to explore such questions by stirring up our senses and adding a pinch of reasoning! It is possible through disciplined observation and perception to see the principles at work in nature. Such knowledge is not abstract theory but real understanding. We are unfortunately all novices, however working as a group can be very helpful. We imagine holding such study sessions every two weeks.

If you are interested in joining us please contact
Simon Hanks Tel. 01452 812608 or Simon Charter Tel. 01453 755614

New CSA Member!

Congratulations to Jade and Greg who are now the happy parents of a baby girl. Amber was born on 2nd October at 7.40am. Both mother and child are doing well.



CSA Public Meeting 17th September

About twenty attended. There was positive feedback on the current operation of the CSA and in particular the current vegetable pick-up system. Warm thanks were offered to Mark for all his hard work. There continued to be some concern as to how collection by more remote members could be facilitated. This is of particular concern to those from Nailsworth. Mark offered to drop off produce in Nailsworth at "Green Spirit" on Thursdays and Fridays between 10.30 and 12.00. Please contact him if you would like this service. Tel. 01453 753866.



Farmers Interested in joining the CSA farming team Eden Cormack and Claudia Weis are currently managing a small-holding in Hampshire. They are keen to come to Stroud and be involved in helping to develop a mixed biodynamic farm. The ideas and intentions of the CSA Project appeal very strongly to them. They are available from next April. They were proposed and accepted as potential farmer members of the Core Group. A further discussion point concerned future CSA events and activities which might be arranged. Suggestions included - weaving workshops, baking, a starlight walk, marking the seasons and celebrations linked to farm work activities.

The following are now in the planning:

Harvest Supper at the Painswick Inn Cafe on Tuesday 22nd October 7.30 for 7.45pm. All are welcome. Further information from Simon Hanks Tel. 01452 812608

Bonfire Night Celebration at Days Cottage in Brookthorpe complete with hot soup to share on Tuesday 5th November. Everyone welcome from 6.00pm onwards. Further details contact Mark Harrison Tel.01453 753866.

Other Events

Common Ground is holding an Orchard Week celebration and to mark Apple Day in the SPACE. Local apple varieties will be on display with talks and other events each day. Monday 14th - Monday 21st October.

Evening Concert at Trinity Church Saturday 19th October 7.00pm with "The Bearded Singers of Rossdorf" in the former East Germany and "Circle of Song" from Stroud. Tickets from Moonflower, High Street, Stroud.

Seed Exchange arranged by the Biodynamic Agricultural Association at the Painswick Inn Thursday 14th November 7.00pm. Bring and swap seeds grown this season.

Future Meeting

Next Public Meeting - Wednesday 6th November 7.30pm at the Painswick Inn Cafe.

Newsletter design and layout : Sean Nolan (01453 884850 / dobbin@clara.co.uk)

Please submit any reports, or anything else you might like to Bernard Jarman. bdaa@biodynamic.freeseerve.co.uk