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NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2004

- o **A Community Orchard**
- o **Winter festival**
- o **Our Cows Are Named!!**
- o **Top Tips**
- o **News from the veggie patch**
- o **Supermarkets shun UK Organic Food**

Stroud Community Agriculture produces organic food locally. It is supported by a community of people who share the financial costs of the farm. They also share the produce that comes from the farm. For more details on Stroud CA – see back page.

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Farm News.....We Have A New Tractor! Laurence Dungworth

It is big and (almost) shiny and red and it has made me a happy farmer. It means now that I can freely get on with looking after the fields, doing topping and harrowing when it needs it through the growing season. There, now I have that out of the way I can tell you all the more important things.

I wanted to let you know about visiting the farm. Since the last newsletter we have has a lot of visits. In February Mark and I were visited by the Demeter inspector. Demeter is the official name of produce grown according to biodynamic methods. (Demeter was also the Greek goddess of the earth's fertility). He looked at our files and paperwork and then around the farm. As a result of that visit, Hawkwood now has its own organic certification, and we are officially 'Biodynamic in conversion'. Biodynamics is the oldest official form of organic agriculture, yet goes beyond most organic thinking in seeing that all life is interconnected. Thus, stronger emphasis is placed on the influence of the movement of the planets, and on the ideal of closed-farm systems where the farm feeds the animals and the animals manure the farm. Various preparations are also used to bring about harmonious growth and ripening. I will leave some biodynamic leaflets in the Hawkwood packing shed for anyone who is interested, though I am always happy to talk about it. I have also been applying some of these preparations late on a Sunday afternoon and would be very happy for any interested people to come and join in. It is probably best to phone and make sure that I will be there (01453 753768 / 07799015499).

The quality of the next visits we had contrasted quite strongly. Firstly we had a small group of academics from a Japanese university who were interested in the success of community supported agriculture in Britain. Through an interpreter I told them as best I could about the development and success of Stroud Community Agriculture. Being

academics we spent most of the time sitting in Hawkwood and discussing the issues with just a short walk around the farm. The next visit was more practically based. There were 8 or 9 permaculture students from Bristol who were very interested in the land itself, but they were also very impressed with how things are managed and the involvement of the community. Hopefully we can offer a little inspiration to people to begin to explore new models of farming.

Just at the beginning of this month we had hundreds of people visiting. It is true that they were coming for Hawkwood Open Day, but a strategically placed Land Rover meant that everybody's first contact was Janet handing out our new leaflet and enthusing about Stroud Community Agriculture. About 30 people came on a tour of the farm, and scores more came to see and scratch the pigs - both the big Hog Hands pigs as well as the new Gloucester Old spots.

Now the only other person to visit your farm is you. It is very wonderful to see you at your workdays (on the third Saturday of every month), collecting your veg, saying hello to your pigs, but I am sure I have not met all of you. That may be my fault for not being there at the right time, but I do hope that you all feel very welcome to be there. In June we will be having a barbecue after the workday (the 19th), and in July (17th) we will be making hay and I will need all the help I can get. Hopefully these opportunities enable us to meet each other

Laurence Tel: 01453 753768 / 07799015499



A Community Orchard

There is a danger that a Stroud-based allotment will be sold off for building. To prevent this, Adrian Lawton has offered to pay the rent on all the vacant allotments for a year to buy time to develop a community orchard on the site. We could then plant fruit trees next winter and set up a community supported orchard along similar lines to Stroud Community Agriculture. In order to make this happen we need people / person to help manage / coordinate the project. Elements of management will include:

- Managing the membership of the project
- Recruiting someone to plant and maintain the trees
- Drawing up a budget (annual rent cost + species purchase)
- Arranging a public meeting to discuss options and develop local support
- Publicising the new project (once everything is in place).

If you can help with any of this please contact Adrian Lawton on 01453 764574

Our Cows Are Named!!

Grace has been named by Eliza Felicity Grace Stokes.

Hazel has named by Finlay Ferguson and

Daffodil was named by Saffia Morris

We also have the name for our first calf (when it comes) - **Shimmer** - courtesy of Chay Morris. Come up and see them in the field. Or come for the barbecue and we can all go together and let them know their new names!

Top Tips—It's easy to refresh your vegetables...

Here's an easy way to refresh all greens if they've gone a bit limp. It's suitable for all green salad, cabbage, purple sprouting, herbs, spinach, chard etc., even cut flowers which have travelled in the car for instance. Fill a mixing bowl or washing up bowl with cold water, enough to cover the veg and add a small piece of bread, not more than couple of cms cubed needed. The veg is able to use the starch in the bread, so after a couple or three hours, sometimes less, it will be as crisp as when freshly picked.

This is a trick we've used successfully for years, but I can't remember who told us about it. The main thing is that it works

Jehanne Mehta



Supermarkets Shun UK Organic Food

Tesco, Asda and Safeway are importing substantial amounts of organic food rather than buying from UK farmers, even when UK supplies are available, according to a survey by the Soil Association, the UK's main charity promoting organic food. In the period covered by the survey, less than a quarter of the organic pork on sale in Asda was from UK farms, in Tesco only half the pork and under half the organic beef was British. Only 13% of Safeway's cauliflowers were home-grown, and in Asda only 19% of onions.

The Soil Association is urging organic shoppers to ask their supermarkets for UK food that can be produced here if they find that it is not available. The charity is particularly concerned about imported pork and beef.

In the UK, farmers producing organic pork must meet high animal welfare standards, which is not always the case in other countries. All imported organic food must meet European organic legal requirements, but for some

products such as pork these may be lower than the standards required of organic pork reared in the UK. Some EU countries allow pigs that have lived nearly half their lives indoors, and have been bred from non-organic parents, to be sold as organic.

The Soil Association has written to Tesco and Asda asking whether they can assure their customers that their imported organic beef and pork is produced to the same high animal welfare and environmental standards as beef and pork from animals reared in the UK. However, the Soil Association's survey found that 100% UK sourcing is possible: in Waitrose all organic carrots, chicken, beef and pork were home produced, as was all the organic beef and pork in Safeway.

In Marks & Spencer all organic carrots were from the UK. Sainsbury's managed to source 96% of beef and pork from UK farmers, and Marks & Spencer achieved 95% with beef. Waitrose achieved 99% UK-sourced potatoes.

Nearly 1,000 shoppers around the country visited their local supermarkets to find out what percentage of staple organic vegetables and meat on sale were produced in the UK. All these products were in season at the time (mid-November to mid-December 2003) and readily available from UK organic farmers.

Peter Melchett, the Soil Association's Policy Director said, *"We congratulate Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer on their achievements, but some supermarkets are letting down their customers and UK organic farmers.*

"It is unacceptable for staple foods like cauliflowers and carrots to be imported when they are in season in the UK, and in plentiful supply. Buying British organic food supports British farmers, guarantees the highest standards of animal welfare and helps British wildlife thrive. It also cuts down unnecessary food miles, reducing pollution and climate gas emissions.

"All organic consumers value the high standards of animal welfare and environmental stewardship inherent in fully organic systems, and we believe Tesco and Asda customers have a right to know if these standards are not being met when they buy imported organic meat."

The Government has set a target for 70% of organic food on sale in supermarkets to be sourced from the UK by 2010 as part of the Organic Action Plan, which was launched by the Government in 2002. The Soil Association has written to Ben Bradshaw, the Government minister responsible for organic food and farming, asking him to raise these results with Tesco, Asda and Safeway.

None of the supermarkets were consistently good, or bad. For example, Waitrose only managed to source 41% of their organic onions from the UK (the third best performance), and Sainsbury's achieved 23%.

Marks & Spencer did worse than any supermarkets in the survey with potatoes (58%). Tesco were second best on chicken (96%). As well as sourcing 100% UK pork and beef, Safeway were third best on potatoes, and Asda sourced 96% of their carrots from the UK.

The survey results were revealed in the spring edition of Living Earth, the Soil Association's publication for members. Living Earth is available for £2 a copy at selected retailers including Planet Organic and Fresh and Wild.

**To become a member, call 0117 914 2444 or visit www.soilassociation/support
The full results of the survey are available at www.soilassociation.org/supermarketsurvey**

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We Now Have A New Website!!

Put together by **Dave Cockcroft** with some considerable skill, the website is now live. There are pages that tell how the project came about, what is involved in becoming a member, the core principles of the community farm and much more. There is also lots of scope for to developing it further. All ideas are welcome. Do visit the site and let us know what you think.

www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Dave writesI'm a new member of Stroud Community Agriculture although a familiar face around Stroud. I'm a self employed website developer, part time photographer and full time greenie. A Bisley Roader with two kids and lots of apple trees who spends too much of his time running Stroud Woodcraft Folk. I used to travel to London a lot and do well paid meaningless work for banks and the like. Now I walk or cycle to poorly paid but much more fulfilling work around and about Stroud. So if you need a website, or know someone with lots of money to spend on a website then email or call me. **Dave Cockcroft** - dave@cynatech.co.uk
Tel: 07768 418960

Pork Processing Day

A chance to come and experience the art of sausage and salami making, to learn what to do with which cut, and how to traditionally cure and keep your meat.

Sunday 6th June at Upper Grange in Stroud

Phone Laurence on 01453 753768 to book your free place (space limited - phone asap)

Mid Winter (Candlemas) Festival

Bernard Jarman

This year our festival was celebrated on Sunday 1st February. This is the feast day of St. Bride so important in the Celtic world. Legend tells how these people in the far west of Scotland and Ireland were able to experience directly the moment of Jesus' birth. It also tells how Bride travelled to Bethlehem as in a dream and nursed the child for one night. Through this she became known as the foster mother of Christ. How this legend relates to Candlemas can perhaps be pondered on as can also the connection with Imbolc the pre-Christian Celtic festival of purification (from where perhaps the traditional idea of spring cleaning originated). Another legend (from Greece) is that of Persephone who was taken into the underworld and who to this day must spend half a year below and half a year

Activities

Presentations and displays by CSAs from around the UK Workshops: organising farm events / growing vegetables for local retail / running a farm shop / establishing a local organic group / CSA: discussing shared development issues Cooking demonstrations
Art, drama, poets and storytellers Barn dance / BBQ / Organic bar.

24 Sept 7.30 — Shared Meal

I'd like to arrange another shared meal for Harvest time. People to bring a dish and their friends to share as before.

For more information contact Jade Bashford (Venue to be decided)

What is Stroud Community Agriculture?

In 2001, a group of people came together wanting to care for land and grow food in a new way. We agreed the following principles:

To support organic and biodynamic agriculture.

To pioneer a new economic model based on mutual benefit and shared risk and ensure that the farmers have a decent livelihood.

To be fully inclusive. Low income shall not exclude anyone.

To encourage practical involvement on all levels.

To be transparent in all our affairs. To make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible. To strive towards social justice.

To offer opportunities for learning, therapy and re-connecting with the life of the earth.

To network with others to promote community supported agriculture to other communities... and farms and share our learning (both economic and farming).

To encourage Stroud Community Agriculture members, in co-operation with the farmers, to use the farm for their individual and social activities and celebrations.

To develop a non-exclusive sense of community around the farm.

We have about 60 members who share the costs of running a 23-acre organic farm at Wick Street, near Stroud. Two farmers work with us. The farmers are paid a fair wage and the farm works for the principles above, not for profit. Members can work on the farm if they wish, but this is not compulsory. They can also use the land for celebrations and social events, and we often come together for work days, bonfires, picnics, meetings etc. We are a co-op and the members decide collectively how to run the farm. A 'core group' of members undertake most of the organising. Members share the produce and receive a weekly box of vegetables. This is a quote from a recent new member "I just

received my first bag of vegetables and they are great and bursting with health". We have some pigs for meat and hope to expand towards a 100-acre farm for eggs, beef, milk, bread, fruit, and other produce.

We would like to welcome more members. Members agree to support the principles above, and pay different contributions according their means and how much food they would like.

Everyone is welcome to join in and enjoy the farm, including non-members.

Stroud Community Agriculture core group contacts:

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In December 2003 Stroud Community Agriculture received a £20,200 National Lottery grant from the £15.3 million Social, Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Programme, for its Growing Home project. The SEED Programme, managed by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) and 11 consortium partners, distributes National Lottery money on behalf of the New Opportunities Fund, under its Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities funding programme.

The SEED Programme aims to stimulate local economic development and support community enterprise, promoting sustainability and helping disadvantaged communities improve the quality of their environment. For more information visit RSNC's website: www.rsnc.org/seed