

Newsletter No 22 WINTER 2006

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*WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBERS*

Due to the expansion of the farm, we have been able to take on new members and are happy to welcome an additional 55 families!

Being a member brings even greater riches than lovely food in that it gives people a chance to really get involved with the growing and farming, social events, decision making and using the farm as a wonderful space to enjoy; and its success is due to members doing all of those things. ***So watch this newsletter for what's new for you, and come and join in!***

Farm Days

The farm needs your help! Now that we have the two farms, there is a great deal of work to be done and the farmers value even more the informal work groups (plus children's activities), so

Don't forget!

*Fourth Saturday morning - Hawkwood 10 - 1pm
(Bring and share a packed lunch)*

News of Brookthorpe farm days in the New Year and on Notice Boards

Our A.G.M. will be at Brookthorpe on the afternoon of Saturday 31st March 2007 - come and have your say.

Season's greetings!!



News from the VEGGIE Patch

We certainly have had a wet wet autumn. After the previous dry winter and summer it is a welcome replenishment of the aquifers but it is getting a bit tiring for us mere mortals. With our light soil at Hawkwood it hasn't hindered us too much - we can always manage to dig the root crops, and at least it hasn't been cold. Down at Brookthorpe though it is a different matter and there won't be much further ground preparation done there for a while yet.

We have nearly reached our target of 50 new vegetable shares and I would like to welcome all new members. I hope that you have found your way around things okay and that you are enjoying your vegetable share.

This increase has added to our weekly harvest and packing work, but we have now been joined by Richie, who is in his second year of the biodynamic apprenticeship and is working with us 4 days a week. We have showed him the delights of digging carrots in the rain, packing 100 salad bags in the damp, and eating lunch in the cold. Welcome Richie. We have also had a lot of regular help from a few diehard members. Thanks to Ute, Sue, Simon, Nicky and Finley.

We are still waiting for a decision concerning our planning application to erect another polytunnel at Hawkwood. Hopefully we will get the nod and then we can begin work on it early next year.

The next major job on the vegetable side of the farm is to sit down in a warm room and put together the cropping plan and seed order for next year. This will involve a lot of change for next year with some crops to be grown at Brookthorpe and some at Hawkwood. There is an added complication too that the land at Brookthorpe is in the first year of conversion to organic/biodynamic, which means that we can't sell any produce from there as organic. (This is an unfortunate technicality really because the land has been registered organic/biodynamic for years, and hasn't been sprayed at all for decades, but the previous tenant didn't keep up with the inspections and the registration was removed). This year we sold £3000 worth of surplus vegetables wholesale, so the source of our produce is an important consideration in our planning.

Despite the wet the vegetables are pretty good. We lost a lot of carrots in the summer due to rabbit damage and the heat, but there hasn't been any other major loss. Yet. I still wonder if those pigeons are plotting a major offensive of the cabbages and broccoli like they did last winter. They don't seem to have touched a leaf yet.

Well I'm going to make myself a cup of coffee and start on that planning right now,

Happy Christmas, Mark.

NEW MEMBERS AFTERNOON

AS PART OF THE CANDLEMAS CELEBRATION WE ARE HOLDING A SPECIAL AFTERNOON FOR ALL NEW MEMBERS TO WELCOME YOU TO THE FARM.

PLEASE SEE DETAILS IN THE ARTICLE ON PAGE 5

FARM NEWS

Well, its time again for news from the farm - or should that be farms? As you all know we now have two pieces of land - the 23 acres around Hawkwood and since the summer an extra 22 acres at Brookthorpe, though of course we are running them together as one farm. And that is, I suppose, the news.

Over the last three years our focus has been the land at Hawkwood, and we have done an awful lot together over that period to bring the land into our ownership. Of course we don't legally 'own' the land, but as a farmer friend of mine recently commented: "The land is owned by those who work it". This needn't be an exclusive ownership, and of course in our situation we all 'own' this land; in as much as we have a shared right of use. But of course, together with rights come certain responsibilities. I feel that at Hawkwood we have become very responsible for the land - a responsibility that goes beyond the physical work but is actually a carrying of a love for the land in one's heart. To explain this further would be a challenge in limited space, but suffice to say, I personally feel that I am able to carry our land at Hawkwood in my heart quite easily now, after the last three years.

Now we have the opportunity to be able to take on our new land at Brookthorpe - we have the legal rights of use, but I also feel we need to carry this land in our hearts. For me this is relatively easy to develop as I am on the land every day - experiencing the heavy clay that the pigs in the field have been digging up, watching where the water flows when it pours with rain, experiencing the trees and hedges in the landscape and coming to terms with all that lies before us.

But, as we are a community supporting the farm, how is that responsibility shared? Is it simply through articles such as this, or through the farmdays and the festivals? Do we all need to carry this, or is it sufficient that Mark and I or the core group do that by proxy? For me these are interesting questions. I believe that a group of people functions best when each individual is able to carry the group or community (and in our case the land) in their hearts; and at the same time, that within the community, and on the land, the expression of each individual can be reached. The real question is then - how do we achieve this? Answers on a postcard please!

Laurence

Singing to the cows.

Again this year we will be singing to the cows on Christmas Eve, in recognition of the fact that they, and they alone were witness to the magical event of the first Christmas.

We will sing at Hawkwood at 5.30pm and at Brookthorpe at 7pm. This is an event for our farm community, but you are welcome to bring friends of course. Come to one or the other, or to both. Bring your lantern/torch, songsheet and your reverence.

MEAT– we have beef and pork available – please contact Laurence to obtain.

01452 810 763 or 07799 015 499

Three Kings Celebration

Saturday 6th January

January 6th is the day when traditionally the three kings from the east are said to have visited the Jesus child. They brought with them three of the most precious gifts of their kingdoms - gold (symbol for earthly wisdom), frankincense (devotional offering to the Gods) and myrrh (symbol for the victory of life over death).

For a number of years now a special preparation made from these substances has been sprayed out over the land as a gift to the earth and to counteract some of the many negative effects of our civilisation. This year we will meet at Kolisko Farm in Brookthorpe to make this preparation together. This involves stirring the three substances together in warm water for an hour. We will meet at 13.15 and aim to start stirring at 13.30. We will then spray the land at Brookthorpe and at Hawkwood. Please do join us. There will be plenty available for you to take some home for your own places afterwards. FFI contact Laurence or Bernard

Have you thought about joining the Core Group?

The Annual General Meeting of Stroud Community Agriculture will take place on the 31st March. This is when a new Core Group is formed. The Core Group meets once a month in the evening. It is the group which carries the ongoing business of SCA and supports the farmers in their day to day work. The only qualification for joining the core group is enthusiasm and a willingness to contribute towards making our community a continuing success.

If you would like to stand for election or know someone else who would be willing, please contact a member of the existing core group for more information. (see contact details on page 7)

Fruit Share

The regular fruitshare will be arriving in February. This includes citrus fruits, olive oil and nuts from a community supported farm in Spain.

More details available from Carol Mathews,

membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org or www.lajimena.de

Would anyone be interested in co-ordinating orders for Fruitshare and liaising with Mathis in Spain (by email or phone)? If so, please contact

Nick Weir on nick.weir@freeuk.com

(We at SCA have a longstanding relationship with La Jimena and one of our members is a drop off point in Nailsworth)

Mid-Winter Welcoming Festival (Candlemas) ***Saturday 3rd February***

It is some weeks after the winter solstice that the earth reaches its coldest point in the northern hemisphere year. Candlemas (February 2nd) is a winter festival marking this point. Two weeks later spring is very clearly approaching with the birds and the bees on Valentines Day. It is also very noticeable at this time of year how rapidly the day length increases. The lighting of candles is a way of celebrating the returning light.

The festival has long been associated with purification and cleansing within the Christian tradition and within the religious life of the ancient Celtic world and the idea of spring cleaning is surely not unconnected either. Candlemas or Imbolc as it was known in pre-Christian times, is one of four festivals which mark the high point of each season. They are placed midway between the transition festivals of the solstices and equinoxes (Christmas, Easter, St John and Michaelmas). Candlemas is thus halfway between 22nd December and 21st March.

For several years the farm community has celebrated this winter festival by making candles in the earth and lighting them as dusk falls. We would like to do this again on Saturday February 3rd. ***This time we will combine it with a welcoming event for new members and their families.***

Making candles in the earth 13.00-14.30

We need lots of old candle ends and wax that has dripped. Please bring any left over bits and pieces from Christmas and place them in the collecting box which will put out in the vegetable shed at Hawkwood. We need to have the wax well before the day so that we know how much we have and can find more if necessary. On the day the wax will be warmed up and melted. We will then make small holes in the ground on the fields to create moulds for earth candles. The plan is to make these candles from 13.00 onwards. We will meet at the barn at Hawkwood. Once they have all been made, they will be left alone and allowed to cool. This can take several hours.

New Members Afternoon 15.00-16.30

All members and especially those who have just joined Stroud Community Agriculture are warmly invited to a special gathering ***in the studio room at Hawkwood*** during this Candlemas event. If you are unable to come to the outdoor festivities you are still very welcome. The gathering will begin at 3.00 pm and will be an opportunity to learn more about the farm and get to know other members of the farm community. Any ideas and suggestions you may have can also be shared.

Bring and share refreshments 16.30-17.30

Following the meeting we will share tea, juice and cakes

Lighting the Candles 17.30-18.00

Once it is fully dark we will go out over the winter fields and light all the candles that were made earlier in the day. Please bring candle lanterns to light the way in the dark. We trust that the weather will be kind and not tipping it down. Once all the candles are lit we may perhaps sing together to bless the new farm season before leaving them to twinkle on into the night.

Bring warm clothes, wellies, some goodies to share, a candle lantern and your good selves! For further information contact Bernard Jarman Tel. 01453 757436

Reluctant Supermarket Shoppers

According to a Guardian/ICM poll published 23rd November 2006, Britain is becoming a country of sceptical supermarket shoppers who use big stores but worry about the consequences. The poll shows that "most consumers do not trust food labels and do not believe the claims shops make about healthy food. [...] The picture that emerges is of a country of concerned consumers who aim to pay attention to the environment and good health when they go shopping, even if they do not always manage to do so.[...] The vast majority of people accept that supermarkets make shopping simpler and cheaper; 81% agree, but that does not mean they trust the stores to give them the full picture about the food they sell. Only 31% have faith in the descriptions given of food by shops"

....*New research* suggests the Stern report was too conservative

The world has less than a decade to reverse the growth in greenhouse gas emissions if dangerous climate change is to be avoided, according to a report from a think tank that goes further than the landmark Stern review last week. Lord Stern's report said that unless greenhouse emissions were tackled the world faced an economic downturn on a par with the great depression. 8th November report from the Institute of Public Policy Research suggests Lord Stern's analysis was too conservative and governments need to move further and faster

(Ed. Thanks to Jade Bashford for sending these items in)

POSTCARD FROM ITALY

(Sarah who worked with us for two years left us in September to travel and work in Italy. She hasn't forgotten us yet and recently sent this.)

Greetings everyone from Perugia in central Italy. You will be happy to know I have not entirely escaped the winter, after a long sunny autumn in Sicily I feel ready to confront the icy mornings of Umbria. I am not confronting them for very long, about ten minutes as I walk to work in a nice warm kitchen. I am working at "Un Punto Macrobiotico", an association that has about 150 restaurants and shops throughout Italy. It's not quite Star Anise but it is a nice place to work and I am enjoying doing some cooking.

It is an interesting association as they have relationships with farmers who grow grain, pulses and vegetables for the restaurants. The farms all have a direct relationship with the association but there are no certifiers (or certifiers of certifiers) involved. Instead, the packets of grains and pulses have a label with information about the product, for example, where it was grown, what is the origin of the seed, what fertiliser, weeding method was used and how it was harvested. The farmer signs his/her name to the information and that is good enough. I think it is a great idea for communicating and creating interest in how food is produced.

Apart from all that, it is a nice bunch of people to work with and I am eating very well after too much white bread, cheese and olive oil in Sicily. I might do a bit more wwoofing before finding a farm to work at in the spring. I might head to Germany as I have some contacts there.

I hope it is all going well with Brookthorpe and Hawkwood. I miss SCA and the English countryside. I even miss those frosty mornings (a bit). I was always happy to go to work at SCA, it is a good, down to earth project and I miss being a part of it. I hope you are all well,

Sarah

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

We work to 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.*

Stroud Community Agriculture contacts:

General Enquiries & Information

Carole Vaughan - Tel: 0845 4580814 Email: info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Membership Admin

Carol Mathews - Email: membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

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