

Newsletter No 23 SPRING 2007

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More news from YOUR farm

Comment from someone who went by chance to the Candlemas celebration:

" I had thought of joining the farm so went to the event where they made candles in the ground. We didn't get there until quite late and it was dark. It was quite magical to see the light coming from the ground"

Core Group Member Nadine Smykatzkloss writes:

"We felt it would be a good idea to combine the Candlemas celebrations this year with an afternoon to welcome our new members.

Thanks to a good collection of wax beforehand, we started the afternoon by making candles in the ground on the field in front of Hawkwood and in the vegetable fields.

While the wax was setting we went back up to Hawkwood and Mark and Laurence introduced themselves and talked about the farm set-up. Nadine explained how people can be part of the CSA:- this can happen in many ways, from coming up to the farm days at Hawkwood (every 4th Saturday); taking part in the social events or joining one of the task groups (fundraising, community building, core group, etc). Volunteers during the week are always welcome to help with the picking of vegetables, feeding animals (talk to farmers first), taking on admin or becoming part of the core group which makes decisions on behalf of all members in liaison with the farmers."

If you would like to volunteer for any of these tasks, or would like to suggest anything or ask a question, contact us on the freephone number 08454580814

Spring is nearly here - good time to start! (SEE ALSO PAGE 6)

News from the VEGGIE Patch

Reminder: my telephone No 01453 752 484 (Mobile as before: 07891615103)

NEWS FROM THE VEGGIE PATCH

In the last newsletter I complained about the continuous wet weather. I don't think that I have stopped complaining about it since. Now it has become more than an inconvenience as we are not able to get on with some of our early plantings and ground preparation. It is difficult at Hawkwood and impossible at Brookthorpe. We have a lot of seedlings growing in the propagation tunnel and hopefully we will have some dry weather by the time they are ready for transplanting. Some of them will be planted out in the walled garden at Brookthorpe but there is a lot of ground preparation still to be done there and we will need a long dry spell before we can get on and do that. When we get this dry period we would like to organise a farm day there with a team of people to help.

Since I last wrote we have been given planning permission to erect the polytunnel. Laurence and Richie have done a lot of work putting the frame up (with voluntary help from various people on the way) and on Friday, with a lot of patient help from about 10 volunteers we covered it with the polythene. This job was made all the more difficult with the slight breeze that came on just as we opened out the sheet of plastic. After much flapping and struggle we did get it fixed securely and hopefully by the time you read this we will have completed the doors. There are a few lettuce seedlings destined for this tunnel and I have 300 tiny tomato and pepper plants growing in my greenhouse at home, hopefully to be planted in there in May.

March is often quite a productive month in the garden as the days lengthen and become warmer and the over-wintered plants reawaken and begin growing. At the moment we have a lot of purple sprouting broccoli and leeks in the field, and salad and spinach in the polytunnels. However this productive period is soon followed by what is commonly known as the 'hungry gap'. This is when this growth flush has turned to flower, and the new season plants haven't yet made it. We try to reduce this hungry gap by growing plants in the polytunnels but we will have to resort to more and more imported produce from Spain and France to make up the veg share.

I hope that we all don't tire too much of this winter veg whilst we wait for the spring and summer.

Mark.

FARM NEWS

I have just come back from visiting our two new litters of piglets that have been born in the last few weeks at Brookthorpe. For both pigs it is their first litter, which is normally around 5 piglets (the reason we kept two to begin with), but they have had 11 and 6 respectively. Admittedly two from the first litter did not make it, but we still have 15 little ones running around. Of course they settle around their mothers, but they do venture out and are even 'sleeping-over'. Within a few weeks the two families will almost be indistinguishable.

We also bought in a few weaners (10-week old pigs) and they are in the barn at Hawkwood. They and the young stock have quickly made acquaintance and readily share sleeping arrangements.

With many of you visiting the two sites over the winter you may have noticed the cattle in the barns. We have arranged it that the cows are all at Brookthorpe, so that I can be more aware of them. They calve there and suckle their calves until they are about 9 months old. Then the young stock come up to Hawkwood where they grow on until they are ready for the butcher at about 2 ½ years old. So there are two separate but connected communities of cattle.

Joining the cows at the moment is Dylan - not the singer, but the bull. He has settled in very quickly, becoming part of the herd and is getting on with the task in hand. We are due two calves during March, and then there will be quite a break until around Christmas time.

Well that is enough about the animal communities of the farm, I still had unanswered questions about the human community - I didn't get any postcards after my last farm report. But as was pointed out to me recently, the point about community is not to talk about it, but to actually do it. This I have seen over the last few months, whether it was the group of people putting the plastic on the new polytunnel at Hawkwood, the Candlemas/new members day, or the gathering on 3 Kings day to do some preparation stirring and spraying. All of these events have been opportunities for parts of the community to come together and create community, without worrying about whether they are doing so. The next opportunity will be the A.G.M. at Brookthorpe at which I look forward to seeing you.



Meat – we have beef and pork available – please contact Laurence to obtain.
01452810763 or 07799015499

Richie's Introduction:-

Hello everyone!

My name is Richie. I am the new apprentice of SCA. I live at Brookthorpe with my partner Helena. I was born in Durban SA and grew up most of my life in Mutare Zimbabwe.

Growing up on a small holding was a blessing which I only now really appreciate.

Capetown SA is a place where I studied and found great friends.

Studying Fine Art then natural medicine were fields I walked but did not settle.

Travelling and working, living for a year or so in London allowed me the benefits to travel further and understand the world better.

Still standing still with nothing really to offer the world I returned to England with the intention of doing the degree offered at the Centre for Alternative Technology. Severe lack of finance meant that would have taken many years before even starting.

Then I realised that I would need some type of agricultural training as a strong will is in me to develop community and live on the land. Conventional, organic, bio dynamic?

Well with those options and discovering that an apprenticeship existed I was so excited. Slight sad to spend two more years in England. (No disrespect)

I jumped whole-heartedly into a something I knew very little about. Knowing that people were farming with holistic intentions was about enough for me.

Sturts Farm Camp Hill community was where I did my first year.

Now I am working here at SCA for my second year.

Things are going well, with Spring around the corner I am looking forward to get more into understanding the garden.



Come and see us sometime!

Situated on the Stroud Road out of Gloucester, on the outskirts, Brookthorpe is easy to get to by bus! Whether coming from Gloucester or Stroud, the 93 bus service passes through Brookthorpe, leaving Stroud at ten past the hour and Gloucester on the hour. They stop almost outside. For more detailed information goto <http://www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables/93.pdf>

The farm is located to the right (walled garden) and beyond the shared drive to Brookthorpe Hall Elderly Persons' Home. This is on the same side of the road as the Four Mile House, about 150 yards in the direction of Stroud. Laurence will produce a plan of the farm in time for the AGM.

Give him a call if you would like to visit. 01452-810763 or 07799015499

Farm Days

Don't forget Farm Days at Hawkwood – 4th Saturday of each month

9.30am – 1.00 and bring a picnic

Sam Judd writes:-

Price comparison with Stroud's Supermarkets

Dear everybody

On Sunday 25th February 2007, Mummy, Daddy, Hannah and myself decided to compare the cost of vegetables from the farm with those from Sainsbury's, Tesco's, The Coop and Waitrose.

The result of our investigation is shown in the table below.

stroud community agriculture	tesco	waitrose	sainsbury's	coop
share 24/02/07				
500 g potatoes	£0.40	£0.50	£0.36	£0.57
500 g carrots	£0.48	£0.66	£0.47	£0.36 (non-organic)
400 g onions	£0.32	£0.73	£0.51	£0.84
400 g leaks	£1.73	£2.00	£1.85	£0.80 (non-organic)
400 g brussel sprouts	£0.40 (non-organic)	£0.56 (non-organic)	£0.71	£0.62 (non-organic)
1 kolhrabi	£0.79 substitute swede (non-organic)	£0.87 substitute swede	£0.98 Substitute swede	£0.59 substitute swede (non-organic)
150 g - 1 salad pack	£2.40	£2.82	£2.99	£1.86 Non-organic)
PYO parsley	£0.99 small bunch (non-organic)	£1.69 Small bunch (non-organic)	£0.79 Small bunch (non-organic)	No parsley. Substitute Tesco's price £0.99
£7.38	£7.50	£9.83	£8.67	£6.62

1. No supermarkets stocked kolhrabi, so we substituted swede.
2. All prices were calculated accurately relative to weight

We found out that the farm vegetables are the cheapest, as well as being the freshest and yummiest. I think that the reason the farm vegetables are cheaper is because.....the farm food is picked freshly and stored very closely in the packing shed, whilst the supermarket vegetables are picked a long way away and transported in a truck or ship and then wrapped in fancy packaging before going to the supermarket.

Sam Judd (aged 7)

Editor's Comments:

Well done, Sam and thank you for sending this to us. We very much welcome children taking an interest like this and are happy to print what they send us. Please send more!

AGM reminder Saturday 31st March 2007 at Brookthorpe – see Notice Boards at collection points for posters giving details.

- **Farm walk starts 2.00 for one hour**
- **Business 3.00**
- **Tea break**
- **Discussion and plans - what is Community?**
- **Buffet and Ceilidh – please bring food to share**

(Please note: There is a room for children but we would ask parents to take responsibility for them. Dave Judd is going to organize a stomp around the farm and we will have materials to make scarecrows.)

It's YOUR farm, so tell us what you think.....

At the recent event for Candlemas and welcoming new members, suggestions and questions were raised. These are listed below and it could be that you strongly agree/disagree or have other points you wish to make. The AGM is where we can add to, subtract from and take forward plans for the year to come so that the farm is run as you would wish it to be. Please join us to make it really worthwhile.

- **Producing our own grains and having chickens and eggs**
- **Milk including goats?**
- **Something on nutrition – in Newsletter?**
- **Woodwork activities for 12-yr olds**
- **Get walled garden up and running again with maybe more fruit including soft fruit**
- **An allotment idea where people can grow what they want to eat if different**
- **List of tasks for people who could only come on Sunday**
- **Tree house**
- **Map of farms and exactly where can members go?**
- **Continuing development and diversity – dairy produce?**
- **Water – rainwater harvesting to be put in plan**
- **Consolidate Brookthorpe**
- **Community Building**
- **Enjoyed picking flowers - more?**
- **Children to make a Guy Fawkes figure**
- **Flour and other produce – could be stored in community building**
- **Further develop links with La Jimena, fruit farm in Spain. ? trip.**
- **Growing clothes?**

What do YOU think?Come and tell us

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

Mark Harrison's Mobile no: 07891615103

Stroud Community Agriculture core group

Laurence Dungworth	01452 810763 07799 015499	laurencedungworth@yahoo.co.uk
Mark Harrison	01453 752484	mark@plumtucker.co.uk
Jeannie Ireland	01453 810998	jeannie@ravendance.co.uk
Bernard Jarman	01453 757436	bernardnkarin@phoncoop.coop.uk
Ali and Dave Judd	01453 889069	daveandali@phoncoop.coop.uk
Carole Vaughan	01452 310077	cv005a6380@blueyonder.co.uk
Nadine Smykatz-Kloss	01453 840351	Nsmykatz-kloss@stroudvalleysproject.org

Comings and Goings.....

This will be the last time I edit the Newsletter. I have enjoyed doing it and have learned a great deal. It has been good to feel so much a part of the farm.

This means that we will need someone else to do this job, starting with the Summer Newsletter (No24) in June

Also, we will need a volunteer to man the telephone. This means having the number transferred to your phone and fielding the calls and keeping some statistics plus sending out application forms to prospective new members.

Carole Vaughan - please call me if you can help (08454580814)

The following people have expressed an interest in joining the core group for the coming three years:-

Sue Baker

Sue will introduce herself at the AGM

Molly Scott Cato: 2 Spring Cottage, Brewery Lane, Thrupp, Stroud GL5 2EA
Telephone: 01453-882662

"I am a green economist, working to create a sustainable economy to replace the capitalist one we all live with today. The ethos and structure of the community farm fits in with this perfectly and I was delighted to find it when I came to Stroud in September, I have lived by the sea for 13 years and am enjoying connecting more with the land, which the farm allows me to do. I work in co-operative research, which I think is a relevant skill. I should confess that I am afraid of animals, although keen to find out more. I feel safer with carrots and have grown vegetables for myself on various allotments. If you are interested to find out more about green economics you could try my blog: <http://gianeconomics.blogspot.com/>.

Thanks,
Molly

Richard Swann

I have been connected with the social side of the land for many years having lived in various Camphill Communities in Gloucestershire. I recently moved into Stroud after having lived in a nearby community for several years. With the move I decided to join the SCA as I have followed its progress from the beginning and have recently taken on the treasurership. I work for the Biodynamic Association as a Demeter Certification Officer and edit the BDAA membership magazine 'Star and Furrow'. I also have two daughters and recently one beautiful granddaughter.

Richard