



Autumn News

Newsletter No 29 Autumn 2008

NEWS FROM THE VEGGIE PLOTS

I ended my last article in June with the hope that the proper summer weather would return in July. And here I am at the beginning of September still wondering when the summer will get here. Oh well, at least our crops (and weeds) are well watered. Most of the crops have matured a week or two later than last year, even in that wet wet summer. We have now planted out all of our seedlings, work we managed to fit in between the rain.

You may remember me commenting last year that the plants growing at Brookthorpe were very poor. I can report that we have noticed a marked improvement in all of the crops down at Brookthorpe. The fertility and structure of the soil has improved, and hopefully it will continue to do so over time. The leeks in particular are doing well compared to last year (last year the yield was more than halved by damage from the leek moth). We have had a battle with the weeds at Brookthorpe. When the weather is wet, it is very difficult to get onto the land to cultivate to kill them. However this last

It seems that my hope for a light-and-warmth-filled summer was not be. Although it was not technically a wet year, it just seemed that summer was hardly ever here. It has been good for the grass, and there were enough breaks for all our hay to be brought in (thanks for all those that came

week we have made a big effort with a team of people and cleared the bulk of them. Hopefully we will get dry spells in September to be able to continue to hoe the land. Thank you those who came to help out.

I would like to welcome Tim, our new apprentice to the farm team. Tim will be working with us three days a week. He is already very familiar with the weeds of Brookthorpe and hasn't run screaming back to Bristol (yet).

We have been putting some apples in the veg share in August. We have good crops of apples and pears in the walled garden at Brookthorpe, and may well put these in the share as they ripen. We also have sweetcorn, sweet peppers, and kale to look forward to in the autumn. We are now lifting our own carrots at Hawkwood and nearly all of the share is produce grown on our two farms.

I am not going to make any wishes regarding the autumn weather. As I write this on the 6th Sept, it is still raining, after 2 solid days. I give in.

Mark

to help - I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did). Much of the vegetables have grown well, with quite an improvement at Brookthorpe. Unfortunately the weeds have also grown and it has been difficult to keep on top of them due mainly to the wet weather, but also due to holidays in August

reducing the farm team. Thanks to some help from Germany (Lars and Marian), our work-share people, our new apprentice, Tim, a few members and the rest of us getting back to work, we managed to rescue the leeks, squash, corn and brassicas at Brookthorpe and things are looking good.

We had a surprise arrival at Hawkwood in July - a heifer calf born to a young cow we bought in the winter. She must have been just in calf when we bought her, though neither I nor the other farmer were aware of the fact at the time. She got a little infection early on, but is very well now. We have also recently moved this year's three ewe lambs to Hawkwood for the winter while we have the ram visiting the older ewes at Brookthorpe.

We recently had the vet out to check whether our cows were in calf as they should be after the visit of Dylan. Indeed they all are and we will be expecting the first ones by December. The cows are all

at Brookthorpe and will be in the barn by then, so you are all welcome to come and visit them. Before then, we are also expecting a litter of piglets - due in the second half of October.

With all our visitors over the summer we have been able to get lots done, but also there has been a great social atmosphere on the farm. Things will quieten down as we head into winter, but it would be great to be able to share what is actually happening on the ground at the farm with more of the members. I am not sure how we can achieve this. Possibly it seems a little inaccessible because of our focus on getting things done, or maybe it is difficult to find the time. I would be happy to hear from people as to how they think the members can be more integrated in what is already happening on the farm - maybe someone even wants to write an article for the next newsletter?!

Laurence

Collecting Vegetables

Firstly, I want to say sorry that there has been some trouble recently with there not being enough vegetables available when people come to collect. It is very frustrating if you come to the farm to collect the lovely produce (that you have already paid for) to find it all gone.

On the farm we make sure that we harvest enough vegetables every Tuesday and Friday for everyone. We think the problem arises when people come to collect the vegetables on a different day from the days they have chosen. If someone normally collects on Thursday, but is unable to do so one week, so collects on Saturday, the consequence of this is that someone coming on Monday will have to go away empty handed and upset.

The other possibility is that there are problems with weighing the vegetables. All it takes is for 10 people to accidentally take an extra 30 grams, for some people to be without things. The scales are quite good in the shed, and often we include some extra to allow for error.

I need to say that this is OUR responsibility. I say a big OUR, because I am referring to the community. If we could all make an extra effort to collect when we are supposed to and take exactly what we are supposed to, then we will be able to avoid people going without.

Thank you.

Laurence

COMPOST

We have from time to time had comments from people requesting that we have a communal compost heap. We don't often make a compost on the farms as most our vegetable waste and weeds are fed to the pigs and cows. Occasionally we do have so many weeds or crop residue that we do build a compost heap, but really we don't have the facilities and machinery to make compost efficiently.

Anyway, having said that, we have decided to set up a bin outside the packing shed at Hawkwood for a trial period. Please bring along your vegetable scraps and garden waste if you can't compost it yourself at home.

We can accept any vegetable scraps, tea, coffee grounds, and any green garden waste (but nothing woody at all), etc.

We definitely cannot accept any cooked food or meat (cooked or raw). This includes bread and similar products.

I'm sorry that we have taken so long to respond to these requests but we have been in two minds as to what to do. Mark.

Dear All

I am writing to let you know that there is an opportunity for someone to lead on the apple juicing day at Resthaven in October. I am very involved in the Slad Stroud CSA and also in tending an orchard in the Slad valley and therefore don't feel I have time to help lead the gathering this year.

Please let me know if you would be interested in taking an active part in the making the day happen this year - I will support in any way I can.

Best wishes

Gary Morter, 01453 766 350

We hope you'll never leave the farm!! But if you really must...

Occasionally when people leave the farm they forget that we have all agreed to give at least 3 months notice. I am writing this article to remind everyone about this and to remind you why this is the case (and to save me the embarrassment of having to ask people to reconsider their leaving dates when they cancel!)

SCA is not a box scheme. It is a co-operative supported by us all for the benefit of all. Our three-month notice ensures that the farm is fully supported and gives time to recruit someone to take your place.

Our farm is a new model for sustainable farming. It builds on cooperation and mutual support so that the risks and rewards of farming are shared between the farmers and consumers. The consumers commit themselves to supporting the farm and providing a fair income for the farmers.

People who stop their vegetable share are welcome to continue to support the farm as members and can do this for an annual membership of £24 or £2 per month.

Before anyone considers leaving for financial reasons, and because SCA has as a core principle: "To be fully inclusive. Low income shall not exclude anyone", there are a couple of ways of helping people who are struggling to pay for their veg share:

- There is a bursary scheme, which makes the veg share cheaper – ask Carol for more details
- There is a WorkShare scheme where people can work for veg instead of paying cash. These generally run from Jan/Feb through to December each year. Currently there are people working for 2 veg shares and the core group will be reviewing what WorkShares might be available in January 2009

And finally....

Our grower, Mark, did a small survey recently. He discovered that to get the same quantity of veg as was in the share that week (in August), you would have to pay Tesco £9 for organic veg or £6 for non-organic. Our veg share works out at £8 per week, for 52 weeks of the year. So it's cheaper than Tesco!! And completely local. And financially & environmentally sustainable for all involved!!

Carol Mathews,
Membership administrator, membership@stroudcommunityagriculture.org

Latest News from La Jimena....

I am glad to bring further encouraging news of La Jimena farm in Spain, especially that we can once again look forward to Mathis and Mariann's farm's wonderful produce at the beginning of 2009. Get in touch with me as soon as you have made a decision to receive fruit, oil either or both, so that we can once again contribute our support for their CSA venture as early as we can. Contact me about produce by phone, letter or e-mail any time!!

John Meletiou 01453 833985/836134(day) john.meletiou@btconnect.com

Mathis writes:

Well , it has been a good summer here. There has been a very good amount of irrigation water coming down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada and our olive trees have a very nice and promising crop hanging amongst their leaves.

We have been able to dig some more terraces into previously untterraced slopes, gaining room for some more fruit- and olive trees.

Furthermore and maybe most exciting the yearlong search for the absent owners of a small neighbouring farm and the generous help of Mariann's parents, has finally

resulted in the acquisition of 1.3 hectares of terraced land with olive and almond trees including a house to be renovated right next to our farm!

Our local organic olive growers cooperative has finally received permission for the building of an organic only olivemill.

We have had some families come out here for a holiday , and would really like to see some more of you out here. It is a very nice place with a good feel to it ! Here you can see a lot of stars at night. The peaceful setting and stunning views are something precious in our busy world ... , and we'd like you to enjoy it too as the idea is, to find out where your food comes from and of course foster the CSA link.

Also the first kilometer of our bumpy access track is now being cement surfaced which will help reduce the wear of our poor little car! All this news is really good news and we feel positive about being here!

We have been working on the pricing for next February, which with the events during this year we have found very difficult. The hugely fluctuating fuel costs and the weak pound means that to reach the equivalent income for our costs, we will have to increase prices slightly from last year.

Keeping the increase to a minimum, what I can say for the present, (but this does assume that we do not experience another sudden drop of the pound or an erratic rise of fuel price between now and February) what we are offering is as follows:

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| 1. | Family box comprising 5 litres of oil & 10kg of fruit | £69 |
| 2. | 5 litres of oil (no fruit) | £41 |
| 3. | Small box comprising 3 litres of oil & 5kg of fruit | £49 |
| 4. | 3 litres of oil (no fruit) | £28 |

Please contact John Meletiou (details above) to order.

Biodynamic Food Fortnight 3rd - 19th October **celebrating biodynamic food and farming**

A number of events are taking place in Gloucestershire to celebrate biodynamic food and farming. Several are being arranged in Stroud including two at Stroud Community Agriculture.

Saturday 11th October 11.00—16.00

'GREEN' Apple Day - Celebrating the apple harvest, juicing, making cider at Upper Grange, Lovedays Mead, Stroud. Drop in any time FFI Tel. Mike Atherton 07806 718319

Wednesday 15th Oct 11.00 am

'Biodynamics and the health of the world A tour of Stroud Community Agriculture's land at Hawkwood College with a conversation centering on how biodynamics helps the health of the earth and our own individual health. Approx 1½ hours. FFI Tel. 07799 015499

Wednesday 15th October 7.30 pm

A concert with acclaimed singer song writer Sue Raven followed by a showing of newly released film "*Biodynamic Gardening: the Tools and Techniques to Nurture your Garden*" at Hawkwood College, £8-£5 on the door. Biodynamic refreshments, books and CDs on sale. FFI Tel 01453 759501

Thursday 16th Oct 8.30am - 6pm

Stroud's highly commended *Star Anise Arts Café* on Gloucester Street will serve Biodynamic (Demeter) Food all day including for the very first time—Demeter Coffee.

Saturday 18th October from 2.45pm

'The role of Biodynamic Preparations and how they impart quality to Demeter food' A tour of Stroud Community Agriculture's land at Brookthorpe. To include the making and spraying of the preparations. Approx 3½ hours. Refreshments available - contributions welcome. FFI Tel Laurence 07799 015499

and a little further afield:

Saturday 4th Oct 3.30 pm - 5.00 pm at Taurus Crafts, Lydney Park

'Planning Balanced and Delicious meals' with Wendy Cook.

Acclaimed author and first wife of Peter Cook, Wendy inspiringly reveals how to plan a nutritious meal whilst not agonizing over proteins, carbohydrates and fats. Instead she follows the principles of root, leaf, shoot and fruit. £8 / £4 (children) FFI Tel. 07840 757010

Saturday 4th October 7.45 pm

'Food & Consciousness' - Talk by Wendy Cook - £5 or a combined ticket for both events £10 / £9 (children) at Taurus Crafts, Lydney Park Estate, Lydney, Glos. For tickets Tel: 07840 757010, email: cliff@worthattention.com

A full national listing of events can be found on: www.biodynamic.org.uk

I am still looking for someone to take over as editor of this Newsletter. Please call me, Sue on 01453 757259 if you would like to help.

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.*

General Enquiries & Information:

Claire and Paul Sheridan- Tel: 0845 4580814

Email info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Website: www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Membership Admin:

Carol Mathews - Email: membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Stroud Community Agriculture core group

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Upcoming Diary Dates:

September 27th 10-1 Farm Day at Brookthorpe

September 28th 6pm Harvest Supper at Hawkwood

The SCA Bonfire – details to be circulated nearer the time.

All newsletter contributions, letters, views, recipes, poems, gratefully received. Deadlines:

Spring 15th March,

Summer 15th June

Autumn 15th September

Winter 15th December