



WINTER NEWS

Newsletter No. 30 Winter 2008

Come and sing to the cows on Christmas Eve...

Whatever your religious views, it has to be recognised that domestic animals have played and need to continue to play an important role close to our hearts. They provide meat and milk (for those that want); manure to grow vegetables, fruit and grain for all; they graze the fields which encourages the flowers; and they give us the opportunity to have a unique experience of the animal world which their wilder cousins do not allow. It has even been said that, 'we should keep animals in order to be near the wellsprings of all existence and creation'.

It used to be the case that most people had daily dealings with animals and it was not uncommon for farmers and stock to dwell in the same building.

Nowadays however, these opportunities are few and far between, and so we make a special effort during this festive season. The reason we do this is because on the first Christmas when Jesus was born the first earthly witnesses were the stock that were in the stable.

Members and friends are welcome to meet on Christmas Eve and sing carols to the animals in their barns, at **5.30pm at Brookthorpe and 7.00 pm at Hawkwood**. Please bring song books/sheets and some form of lantern (making sure that it is completely firesafe and in responsible hands!), as well as a quiet atmosphere of love and respect.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Christmas Vegetable Share Arrangements

Remember that our farmers are having a week off over Christmas and so your share will be larger than usual when you collect it the week before.

For those collecting from Hawkwood (Friday to Tuesday) and Painswick Inn (Friday to Tuesday) you can collect as normal from Friday 19th 6pm.

There will be no share on Friday 26th and then normal collection from Friday 2nd January.

For those collecting from Brookthorpe, Green Spirit, Hawkwood (Tuesday to Friday) and Painswick Inn (Tuesday to Friday) the share will be ready earlier than normal, from 12pm Tuesday 23rd Dec. There will be no veg share on Tuesday 30th Dec, and normal collection will resume on Tuesday 6th January 6pm.

NEWS FROM THE VEG PLOTS

I am still reeling a bit from Laurence's news that he is leaving (it's only been 2 months since he told me). I hope that we can find someone who will be as good a person to work with as he is. Compared to that news all the comings and goings on the farm have been fairly routine. We're in the middle of the winter routine now. That routine consists of putting together the farm budget, crop plan, and seed order for next year, slogging round in the mud harvesting leeks and kale etc, and catching up on some of those repair jobs we've been meaning to do all year.

The vegetables generally have grown very well over the autumn and as I wrote in the last newsletter, the crops and soil at Brookthorpe are much much better than last year. We have covered a few beds of carrots and celeriac with straw to protect them against any severe winter weather and there is a good supply of vegetables and salad for over the winter. The pigeons have started to take a fancy to the Brassica (cabbage) plants. We will be putting up some scarecrows and we have someone coming round to shoot them.

We've finally purchased a power harrow! I bought it on ebay. It looks okay but we haven't been able to use yet. We will use

it to work down the soil after it has been ploughed and hopefully it will be very effective at Brookthorpe where the land is heavy. I have been looking for one for the last two years and am very pleased to have finally found one at the very reasonable price of £635.

We are still intending to apply for a grant of £100 000. Our first stage application has been accepted but we now have to put together the detailed full application. We intend to apply for money to develop rainwater harvest systems at Brookthorpe and Hawkwood, to purchase some machinery and tools, to employ a development officer, and to set up a program to promote CSA's. The application is on hold at the moment as we need to negotiate a long-term lease for Brookthorpe Farm.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has volunteered at the farms over the year. To all of you who come each week or have come to a farm day or two over the year, thanks you. Your help is invaluable and makes our job easier and much more interesting.

Happy Christmas and New Year,
Mark.

Farm Update

We had a litter of 10 piglets on the 18th of October, actually during a biodynamic workshop, which was an added bonus for those that had come along. The runt did not survive, so we are left with 9 very healthy animals that until this week had the free run of the farm. I have penned them in now as yesterday they had ventured out onto

the lawn in front of the bungalows here at Brookthorpe.

They had made great friends of the horses, coming and rubbing themselves on the horses feet and even at an opportune moment grabbing hold of one of lead ropes and leading one of the horses off. Maybe the horses will miss them now?

We have had three calves born within the last fortnight. They are all doing well now and would welcome visitors to Brookthorpe. Two more are expected soon and one a little later.

We had more trouble with sheep, unfortunately. We borrowed a ram at the beginning of November, but it very quickly became ill and died. We managed to borrow another and so far it seem very well which is a great relief.

All the cattle and the piglets are in the barns and I would encourage you to come and see them whenever you have the opportunity. There is something special about being able to take a moment to watch these wonderful beasts. They are doing a lot for us and ask for very little in return. So I like to think that an occasional visit, your interest and love are appreciated.

Laurence

Local Food Worker needed

At a recent meeting several local projects involved in food production decided that they would like to co-operate more closely to improve promotion and education about local food. We are looking for someone who could take on a paid role promoting local food projects. The work would involve raising funds to pay for the post.

Please contact Nick on nick.weir@localfood.org.uk

The farm day in January will be at Brookthorpe farm from 10.00 with a shared picnic lunch at 12.30. Please come and enjoy some good company, help with some farm work and get some fresh air, all welcome including children. No need to book, just turn up.

We will be hosting some visitors interested in looking at what we have achieved in Stroud and so there will be a guided farm tour at 11.30 which you are welcome to join to learn more about how the farm works.

From 1.30 the Soil Association will be running a workshop on CSA, starting with a presentation about the history and workings of Stroud Community Agriculture. You are very welcome to attend and it is free, but you must book the workshop with cmuspratt@soilassociation.org tel 0117 9142423. This may be of particular interest to new members who would like to understand how the CSA runs. The workshop is across the road from the farm, at Brookthorpe Community Centre.

Moving on

Katja, Isabel and I will be taking on a new community experience when we join Botton Camphill Community in April

2009. Botton is on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors and is made up of woodland and five farms, totalling 600 acres. There are around 30 houses and 280 members of the community, some of whom have learning difficulties

and other special needs. We will be 'houseparents' in one of the houses and I will be running a farm together with a team from the community. The farms are there in order to produce as much food as possible for the community as well as being a valuable work place and a way to care for the land. So in many ways there are similarities which got me thinking about communities:

Thankfully life moves on and winter gives way to spring (though winter is not halfway through yet of course) and I also move on, also thankfully, though thankfully to all of the members of SCA especially to all those who have put in a little extra effort or time to make this project such a wonderful, successful example of what is achieved through working together. It is possible to achieve a lot as an individual if we put our mind to it, but it is amazing how as a community so much more is achieved. In life there is a constant interplay between the freedom to follow one's one path where one needs to go, respecting the rights of the other in their life and actually supporting others in a brotherly/sisterly way. These are basic principles that were recognised in the French Revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity. It has recently been observed that if the United States had also been given statues of equality and fraternity then things might not be so bad in the world, as there might have been a bit more responsibility. But, it is easy to blame others, and all we can do is our part. I think that SCA is an amazing example of people in a small way doing their part to make the world a better place.

Firstly, individuals join for reasons that are very close to their heart. Often it is a case of accessing some of the best food in the country. I do believe that our meat is of very high quality, being the tastiest that I have ever eaten. Occasionally there is a dissenter, so I look forward to widening my culinary experiences. It is also extremely healthy with the beef having higher amounts of the omega fatty acids due to it being grass-fed, and the pork must be good due to the varied diet the pigs have. The vegetables from the farm are exceptional, with such a wide variety being grown through the year, and all of it being presented to us so beautifully and so soon after it has been harvested.

Secondly, many people are inspired to become members of SCA because of the respect such a community affords to the rest of the world. To start with there is the respect that we have for the earth itself. We farm biodynamically which aims to re-enliven the earth with the help of the preparations. Included within this is attempting to work free from chemicals and medicines that pollute the earth. There is also the respect that SCA has organisationally to other organisations and businesses.

Lastly, there is the support that the community is able to give. In the first instance there is amazing support given to those that work on the land. Members can also find support in practical terms such as the bursary or work-share scheme, but there are a myriad of other ways. There are shared cultural and social events, being

involved in decision-making at meetings, or simply meeting other people down on the farm. These all can help us personally but also give a great deal of support to those around us.

It has given me great pleasure to have been the farmer for SCA over the last five years. I have made great friends and learnt a lot about farming, community and life. It does make me a

little sad to be leaving, having helped to build up things thus far, but especially with so much still to potentially happen. The great thing is though that some other farmer will also be lucky enough to experience all this. I wish him/her and the whole community the best of times into the future.

Laurence

We are still looking for a new farmer. Please tell anyone that you know who might be interested. A job description has been circulated on email or is available from Mark, mark@plumtucker.co.uk

More news from La Jimena

Dear SCA members and Lovers of Olive oil and Citrus fruit,

Every February a truckload of Olive oil and citrus fruit arrives in Stroud from our farm, La Jimena, in the south of Spain. Our farm and its team have established a CSA -like relationship with farms like yours with the idea being that food may be appreciated adequately if it is known where it comes from!

All produce is hand picked, and small scale produced, so it has character and is truly delicious. We picked the figs in August, the olives in brine were picked in November and the olives for the oil are being picked now and will keep us busy for at least 8 weeks. This years olive crop does look very good. The citrus fruit will be picked just the day before we head north.

The recent wintry weather has been very rainy and windy which was not so helpful for the harvesting of the olives, but we have made progress anyhow and hopefully we'll see some gentler weather soon. We have four fantastic, willing helpers just now who have joined our team through the wwoof (worldwide opportunities on organic farms) scheme. In the meantime the finishing touches are being done to bring our newly established organic olivemill into working order (too late for the first pressings of this season, but it always takes a little longer than one thinks).

We are hoping to have all the oil, olives in brine, citrus fruit and almonds and figs ready to go by mid February so that you may enjoy all our efforts. Please let me know soon (via John Meletiou) whether you'd like to receive a box or a bottle of these goodies, as this makes it a lot easier for us to plan, package, and prepare accordingly.

1. Family box comprising 5 litres of oil, 1.5 litres of olives in brine & 10kg of mixed citrus fruit and a ring of dried figs £69
2. 5 litres of oil (no fruit) £41
3. Small box comprising 3 litres of oil, 1.5 litres of olives in brine & 5kg of mixed citrus fruit £49
4. 3 litres of oil (no fruit) £28

Please contact John Meletiou to order: 01453 833985/836134(day)
john.meletiou@btconnect.com

You can also find out where your produce comes from by booking a holiday on the farm! You may engage in the farm activities, or go hiking, enjoy the wonderful views, swim in the Mediterranean sea (40 min drive), explore the local market day, go horsetrekking, paragliding just to name a few!

Saludos and warmest wishes for a Happy Christmas,
Mathis, Marianne, Milan, Birta, Florina, and many more helpers.



Stroud Community Agriculture was presented at the national Soil Association conference in November and got plenty of acclaim and interest from a large audience.



Meat production within SCA

With regard the issue of meat production I was interested to come across an article in the Guardian (30/09/08) that reported the Food Climate Research Network as recommending that we cut meat production and consumption but that we should definitely still keep animals as they can provide us with manure, leather, tillage options, eating of 'waste' etc. They recommend a healthy diet would include 500g of meat and 1 litre of milk per person per week (well exceeded by most in this country). This got me thinking about our meat production and I came up with the following figures:

- Maximum beef produced annually: 1000kg

- Maximum pork produced annually: 1000kg
- Number of shares currently: 170
- Number of **adult** members: 336

If everyone ate meat, then
 $2000\text{kg}/336\text{members}/52\text{weeks} = 115\text{g}$ meat per member per week.

If a third are vegetarian, then
 $2000\text{kg}/224\text{members}/52\text{weeks} = 166\text{g}$ meat per meat eater per week.

Including children in this and considering the meat figures would be for very good years, it could be less than 100g per person per week. Even with the higher figures this still leaves a considerable amount of meat consumption from other sources i.e. beef from the dairy farm we get our milk from, chicken from our egg supplier, pork from the farm where our wheat is grown etc. So, overall I feel that SCA is producing the right amount of meat from the

right number of animals for the right number of members. I hope you continue to enjoy it.

Thanks to all the members who have been buying more meat recently (and to all the members who have always bought their share of the meat produced by SCA), especially all the orders in the run up to the festivities. This has helped keep things looking healthy financially and with more of the meat staying within the community.

Due to the loss of piglets last spring, there is only a little pork left until May, so do get it while it lasts. There will be however, a greater amount of beef for those months. So, if you don't mind buying slightly more beef to compensate then that will help to support the farm.

Laurence

At the AGM in March 2009 the core group will be looking for 2 new members. If you are interested in standing for election please contact a core group member. Remember that any members are welcome to attend a core group meeting as an observer.

A Local Currency for Stroud?

Award winning founder of Europe's most successful local currency is visiting Stroud. Christian Gelleri manager of the Bavarian 'Chiemgauer' will be speaking at the Centre for Science and Art, Lansdown.

Talk: Friday 9th January 7.30 pm
Workshop: Saturday 10th January 10.00 - 16.00

While the global currency (Pound, Euro Dollar) draws out wealth to support international banking, a local currency retains wealth to support local initiatives. "*It is vital for the future of our district that means are found to utilise the wealth which local people have created for the benefit of our town's future*" said John Marjoram, Mayor of Stroud. During a period of economic downturn and severe credit restrictions, a means of exchange which directly benefits the local economy must be good for the real needs of local people.

Come and find out more about the Chiemgauer, one of Germany's most successful local currencies. It began as a school project. Today there are over 600 participating businesses and 2,600 members who keep nearly 300,000 Chiemgauers in circulation. Learn how businesses, charities and the person in the street can benefit directly from using local money. Understand how it can help rejuvenate the economy of the whole community and discover how it could inform a similar development here in Stroud.

The workshop costs a very reasonable £25 and there is an early bird rate of £20 for those who book before December 22nd. The evening talk costs £5.

To book: Tel. Neil Buick 01453 76746, email: n.mail@virgin.net or visit www.transitionstroud.org

Supported by Stroud Town Mayor and Stroud Common Wealth Ltd

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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All newsletter contributions, letters, views, recipes, poems, gratefully received. Deadlines:
Spring 15th March, **Summer** 15th June, **Autumn**, 15th September, **Winter**, 15th December.

**Farm Workdays alternate between
Hawkwood and Brookthorpe farms.
The next one is on January 24th 2009
and is at Brookthorpe.**