



Summer News

Newsletter No. 33 Autumn 2009

Letter from Sam

Dear All

I am writing to you as your new farmer, having taken over from Laurence in June. I would like to thank Laurence for the strong foundations the farm has been built on, and I look forward to continuing his work.

I was born and raised in Stroud and, as a lad, helped out at Kolisko Farm, which is now our Brookthorpe site. After school I studied Biodynamic/Organic farm management at Emerson College in East Sussex. During my time at college I met my wife Kalihi.

After graduating I lived and worked at Tablehurst Farm before moving to Oregon in the US. In Oregon I managed my in-laws' property and farm as well as running my own small farm business. There we had our two daughters, Rowen and Eliza.

When we heard about the job at SCA, we thought it far too good an opportunity to pass up. For me this is a lifelong ambition and dream: to farm a mixed farm producing food for the community.

I feel like I am settling in well. I especially enjoy the early mornings, feeding the pigs. It

is a lovely time of day, and pigs are always happy to see someone with a bucket of food.

The cows are looking very well at the moment. Paul, an Aberdeen Angus bull, is visiting - so we can expect calves in the spring. The sheep are looking healthy. I plan to expand the flock to bring the numbers into balance with the cows. I have heard people express an interest in poultry. This is something I would like to do if there is enough community support.

I would like to thank everyone for this wonderful opportunity. I look forward to being your farmer and developing this farm and community together with you.

Sam Hardiman

Harvest Celebration

Our Harvest celebration is on **Sunday 18th October**, between 1 and 3pm at Brookthorpe Village Hall. As usual, it is a bring-and-share meal. Do bring your own apples because we will be doing some juicing. There will also be children's activities, such as apple bobbing.

From the SCA Visitors' Book: We all went away with our heads spinning with admiration for what you have achieved and how we might do something similar!



New Gloucester veggie pick-up?

Contact Matthew Sideford if interested:

aubisque@lycos.co.uk

News From The Veggie Plots

I have good news to report from the vegetable fields: we are having a very good year so far. Though the summer has fizzled out into showers and cloud, there has been enough dry weather for us to tackle the weeds, and the rain has benefited many of our crops. I can report that the Brookthorpe crops (leeks, cabbage family crops, carrots etc) are still doing well, such an improvement on the last two seasons. In fact I think that all of our crops are doing well.

We have just begun harvesting the healthiest looking sweetcorn; there are a lot of leeks, and plenty of carrots, three crops of particular mention. Although there is slug damage on the potatoes, they are still improvement on any potatoes we have grown previously, and I hope that you can bear the extra fiddle factor when you come to prepare them.

I would particularly like to mention the squash growing at Brookthorpe. If you do go to visit the fields and look at these plants you'll see that they are growing in a sea of clover. We sowed this clover in July once the young squash plants had become established, and the clover has developed as the vines of squash have grown over them. When the squashes are harvested in the autumn (and there is a lot of them) the clover will be left undisturbed to grow throughout next year. This is important part of our organic system as clover adds nitrogen to the soil and improves the structure of the soil. Sowing it this year gives it a head start.

The walled garden is still improving. Some members who are working in exchange for their veg share have been tackling the weed-infested borders. They've started in the back

corner under the pear trees and have done a fantastic job of taming what was pretty much a wilderness last year. Tim and Laurence pruned all of the fruit trees in the winter and the combination of the two jobs has given us a nice crop of pears.

In my last veg report I wrote of the fire in the polytunnel at Hawkwood. We repaired and recovered the tunnel in July, with help from some farm members, and although all the crops in the tunnel have grown well, they were all set back somewhat. The polytunnel looks like new again though, and at least doesn't have any holes cut in it as the old plastic did. One bright light out of that arson was that we received a good settlement from our insurers for the rotovator and mower. With that money we have purchased a much better rotovator (a big throbbing Italian machine). We are still on the lookout for another mower.

We have a good team working on the farms. Sam has settled straight into the job after Laurence's departure. Over the summer we had a lot of great help from Mark 'Sparky', on placement from agricultural college, and from Amelie, on work experience from Germany. They have both left now and it's back to the old faces; me, Ute, and Tim, and Sam, the new face. Hope to see you at the farm sometime.

Mark Harrison



Wanted: Diesel 4X4 Pick-up

SCA needs a new farm vehicle. Laurence had his own truck, which he naturally took with him, so now we are sharing Mark's. What we need is a four-wheel drive diesel with a pick-up type body. If you know of one, have one to sell, or want to lend one to SCA, phone Sam on 07792 934348.



Thanks For Your Help!

SCA had a stall at the Stroud Festival of Nature, on **Saturday 18th July, Stratford Park**, along with a host of local and countywide organisations involved in the environment, conservation and green lifestyles.

We had some fantastic help from our members. Thanks to Sean Nolan for tons of work on making our new banner – it looked great (and much better than this photo!)

Thanks to Finlay Hudman (and Clare) for the



Core Group

There are eight of us on the core group, meeting one evening a month. At each meeting we get a report about the farm and then discuss all those issues that support the smooth running of SCA.

Simon Hanks	01452 812608	
Simon Ryder	01452 504607	s.ryder@artnucleus.org
Andy Jones	01453 840351	metamoph@onetel.com
Molly Scott-Cato	01453 764730	molly@gaianeconomics.org
Justin Tait	01453 762990	justintait@hotmail.com
Richard Swann	01453 765588	rswann@tiscali.co.uk
Sue Dance	01453 752068	susandance@googlemail.com
Mark Harrison	01453 752484	mark@plumtucker.co.uk
Sue Baker	01453 757259	sue.baker@talktalk.net

For more information please contact Jade on jadebashford@hotmail.com

lovely artwork that brightened up the stall's display (also not done justice by photo!)

And thanks to all the volunteers who helped on the stall on the day: Carole Ross, Francis Gobey, Gabriel Miller, Greg & Sue Dance, Jenny & Justin Tait, Karen Saunders, Kate Levett, Paul Sheridan, Philip Henesy, Richard Swann, Ruth Davey, Saffron Ray, Swithin Fry and Tamsyn Widdon.

And finally, not to forget, our great farmers, Mark and Sam who put in a lot of time to make the stall so attractive. THANK YOU!

We had about 140/150 people stop at the stall and find out more about us. We have learned a great deal about this event and plan to be there again next year.

Carol Mathews

Use The Gift Box!

Don't like that veg? Not eating this one for health reasons? Please weigh out your unwanted veg and put it in the gift box - there's one at both Brookthorpe and Hawkwood.

And take whatever you fancy - and can make use of - out of the gift box.

Don't waste our veg! If you leave your unwanted veg, it may go to waste. Thank you!

Stroud Community Agriculture – How it has Shaped My Life

Stroud Community Agriculture has influenced every aspect of my current life: my family, where I live, my work, my friends, my food and my drink!

I was living in Bristol and working at the Soil Association, as part of their local food team. My job was to promote and support the development of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the UK.

Early in the project I received a call from Nick Weir representing a group in Stroud interested in supporting a troubled farm - Kolisko, at Brookethorpe. The group organised a public meeting, held at the Shambles in Stroud, and invited me to talk about the examples I had come across in a previous study I had done. I went with my partner Jade, who also worked at the Soil Association. The meeting went really well and we met some great people.

As Jade and I drove back to Bristol chatting, it was clear that we were both eager to be involved. We signed up to be on the 'farm' group, both of us keen to get our hands dirty and grow some food. As the organisation took shape, a 'core group' was formed, representing all the interests of the developing farm community – farming, events, governance, land etc. Jade and I drove to Stroud every month to attend the meetings.

One day we discovered 'we' were pregnant, and decided we would like to live in Stroud. Our search for a house ended in Thrupp, (beautiful allotment, woods out of our back garden, a primary school 50 metres away and cycling distance to Stroud). We moved in on 11th July 2002, just 3 months before Amber was born. Because we both wanted to stay involved, we offered to host the SCA core group meetings at our house, and there they

continued every month for probably 2 years, maybe more. It was a fantastic group, and every month I looked forward to the challenging issues we had to wrangle with, opening the way for the farm to develop.

Jade started back to work part-time, and with Amber strapped to my back I took up an old interest – home brewing beer.

One Saturday farm work day, doing a little weeding and chatting with Andy Jones on the subject of ales, we came up with the idea of a brewery in Stroud - Stroud Brewery! That was it, I was possessed! My own business, building a brewery, creating new beers, promoting them, trading locally, the challenge seemed to meet my every interest.

Jade groaned – we were having another baby – Esme. And I had no money! I had basically been travelling since I left University.



It was friends and members of SCA that offered to lend me money to start up the enterprise, and I agreed to pay interest on their loans. I took on a building close to home and had a brewery built by local fabricators. Andy and I brewed our first beer – Budding – on May 22nd 2006.

Steadily Stroud Brewery beers have made their way into many of the local pubs and the brewery is feeling quite established. I seem to have let go of the thrill of my itinerant past and now embrace the challenges of my business, my community and family life in Stroud.

Through the farm we have made friends, we share childcare, we look at our children's education differently, we eat differently, we share cars, we've raised money to start a new business and I continue to do some local food consultancy work inspired by my experience of SCA and how it can impact on peoples lives.

The Majangir people of Ethiopia describe their 'community' as 'those that share the same beer'. They live on the forested South Western slopes of the Ethiopian highlands. They are subsistence farmers living in dispersed hamlets. The range of an individual's community is determined by the distance they are prepared to walk to someone's hut (whichever family has brewed that week) to drink their beer.

I am pleased that my 'community' has largely become the people I can walk or cycle to meet and share the same food and beer!

Greg Pilley

Food Festival

SCA did its bit for the Stroud Food Festival this September by laying on a splendid BBQ in the sunshine (see below). Leading a brigade of sizzling cooks, Sparky turned SCA meat into a feast – and veg into more salads than you can shake a stick of celery at. What with a farm tour, tree rides for the kids, and some of Greg's Stroud Brewery ale for the gowns, it was – thanks to all involved – quite the perfect day.

Campfire Gossip

My first impressions, after being a member for one week, are very positive. I had my first bag of food – liked the variety, liked the quantity. It seems all good to me. And we got to come and pick it up, which was fun for the kids as well.



Coming to the farm day today has been nice, especially for my daughter – she did all the work. And now we are getting ready to camp.

Belonging to the farm will have many benefits for us. Having the organic veg will be one of them, as will having it easily accessible – we will be picking up from the Painswick Inn. And then coming down here – we live in Uplands – we can come over and see the food whenever we feel like it.

Adam B in conversation with Francis



Photos on pages 1, 2, 5 & 6 are by Ruth Davey, who is documenting the farm.
Contact: ruth@ruth-davey.co.uk
Other photos by Carol Mathews

Stroud Community Agriculture

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

We are looking for new members for the farm. Please tell everyone you know about us. If you know of an event or somewhere that you think would be good for us to promote the farm, please let the core group know. 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 be transparent in all our affairs. To make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible. To strive towards social justice.*
- *To encourage practical involvement on all levels.*
- *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.*



Caught red-handed in tomato heaven!



General Enquiries & Information

Claire and Paul Sheridan: 0845 4580814

info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Membership Admin: Carol Mathews

membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Newsletter: Francis Gobey

francis.gobey@phonecoop.coop

Farm Workdays

These alternate between Hawkwood and Brookthorpe on the fourth Saturday of each month. Our Harvest Celebration is on Sunday 18th October, 1 to 3pm, at Brookthorpe Village Hall. There will be another Farm Tour at Hawkwood on 24th October.

I visited Stroud Community Agriculture. My eyes were on stalks. *NT spokesperson*