SPRING!

Today the 23rd of March we have our monthly farm day. Heavy snow is coming down here at Hawkwood, the fields and trees have already a white coat, Hawkwood drive is covered in sleet. How different is that to last year? On last years farm day we had visitors from CSAs from Slovakia. We started with a nice picnic in the warm sunshine, then we cleared the dry fields in preparation for the new sowing season, we stirred and sprayed horn manure preparation... I just became aware of the difference by selecting photos for the newsletter!

Ute Schlossmacher

SPRING FARM REPORT

I would like to start with an example of what I think makes our farm so special...

Mark was away last Friday so Ute and I were left to do the share. This would not normally be a problem as we can prepare a bit for it on Thursday so there is less to do on Friday. But I ended up having to go home to look after my girls who were unwell. This meant I was unable to harvest!

So I sent out a very last minute email asking if anyone was available to help the next morning. I did not know whether I had left it too late, but thought it was worth a try.

I had two great helpers the next day. This made it possible to get all our work done
without stress, and on time. I would like to say a big thank you to Bruno and Jade as well as those who also responded. It’s great to know there is such a supportive group of people surrounding the farm and who would be willing to help when needed. I don’t know any other farmer who has such a supportive group around them.

The sheep are looking very rounded and are due to start lambing at the beginning of April. The sheep are at our Brookthorpe farm and you are welcome to come down and visit them. You can go into the field but please don’t let children go in unattended as the ram is with them. He is not dangerous but is young and trying to work out who he can boss around. So don’t let that be your kids! Please don’t stroke him even if he appears friendly. He needs to keep a healthy respect for humans and not think its ok to rub his head on you. The sheep are currently outside, but might come in if the weather gets worse.

We have had another litter of piglets born in February. They are running around in the orchard up to their knees in mud in places. It does not seem to be bothering them much. The older lot are about to be moved onto last year’s potato patch to dig up and eat any unharvested potatoes they can find. This saves us a job and gives them one instead!

I would like to congratulate Arek and Adilia on their little baby boy born on Wednesday 13th March. We all wish you joy and peace.

Sam Hardiman

VEGGIE NEWS

I am writing this on the 22nd March, a day after the spring equinox, and winter is doing a very good job of stretching itself into spring. The contrast with this time last year, when we experienced unseasonal warmth and drought, and had planted all of our early outside crops, couldn’t be greater. We were looking to the horizon for some rain then, today I can’t see the horizon because of the rain! We have had a period of dry, and we have been able to cultivate some plots at Hawkwood in readiness for planting, but it hasn’t quite been dry long enough for us to plant anything, and anyway, it is far too cold to warrant planting anything yet. So the seed potatoes, onions, and broad beans etc are still stored safely in the garden shed. We have sown a lot of seeds in the greenhouse in the walled garden at Brookthorpe. We have some heated benches there and they are full of small cabbage, pak choi, spinach and lettuce plants, growing slowly, destined to be planted into the polytunnels or outside at Hawkwood.

The first vegetable to be sown and harvested in the new season is radish. Last year at this time we had already begun picking them for the share but this year they are still small seedlings in the polytunnel. We still have leeks, cabbage, kale, and salad to pick for the share over the next month, but we will then come to that lean period known as the ‘hungry gap’. This is the gap in vegetable production between when the over-wintered crops end and the new season crops mature. We use the polytunnels to bring crops on
earlier, but there still is a shortage during May and June. We buy in extra veg for the share during the hungry gap, vegetables grown in the southern European countries or in heated UK glasshouses.

We have begun cultivating a plot in the field at Hawkwood in preparation for the new polytunnel. We have put in an application to the Midlands Co-operative for a grant and are waiting for a decision on that before going ahead with erecting it. We will be erecting it in April whatever the outcome of that decision.

I ended all of my articles that I have written for this newsletter last year with a comment about living in hope for things to improve, whether it to be wetter, drier, or warmer, and I have to do the same for this one. I look forward to writing an article about how great the season has been rather than hoping for it to be better. But if you want a good lesson in hope, have a look at the rhubarb growing between the polytunnels at Hawkwood. It looks a bit ragged round the edges from these late frosts but it seems to keep growing whatever the weather.

Mark Harrison

SCA ANNUAL BARN DANCE
~ 18TH MAY 2013 ~
keep the date!

There will be a BBQ, Dancing, Stroud Beer, Childrens Activities and Camping, etc...
Come along and have fun with all the family.
The venue will be the big barn at Brookthorpe
Time and cost will be announced later!
VEGETABLE SURVEY

Every now and then we discuss the variety of vegetables in the share. People have individual likes and dislikes, dietary needs, children who don't like particular items and so on. Some people have asked whether we could give choice to accommodate these various needs.

On the other hand we have our two farm sites on which we can grow certain items very well, others with some difficulties and some not at all. We have the weather, which can ruin our well contemplated planning. We have the wildlife, which sadly has a strong negative impact on crops such as purple sprout or peas. And we have our agreed principles such as providing vegetables seasonal and sourced as locally as possible.

On this years AGM we did a vegetable survey to find out what our members would like to see in the share. We had a good turnout and already a few hints of what we could do differently in future.

This survey will be sent out to everyone and can be completed online. There will be paper copies available in the packing sheds. Once we know what people wish to have in their share we can find out if and how we can accommodate it. I expect we will have a lively discussion. Please complete the survey and share your ideas. Together we can develop our CSA towards what we want to see happening in the future.

Ute Schlossmacher

REAL Bread for SCA

As you walk into the Veg Shed, the warm aroma of fresh bread is pleasantly appealing. You find yourself looking at some deliciously, crusty, wholesome looking breads....

It’s arrived! ‘Chickpeas’ REAL bread. These breads are hand made in Ruscombe with a passion for good, nutritious, REAL bread. Using organic ingredients and a long fermentation process, these breads contain no improvers, preservatives, or artificial additives.

REAL bread is now available for you to order and collect at the Hawkwood & Brookthorpe Veg Sheds. Two different varieties of REAL bread are offered each week in either Large or Small sizes. Once you have registered your interest, simply order by return email, and your bread will be delivered to the Veg Shed on a regular day of the week for your collection. To register your interest and to find out about payment methods; contact CLAIRE at chickpeas.bread@gmail.com. For those who are not internet friendly you can telephone 01453 757348 for more information. Thanks!
A GROWING MOVEMENT

In February, Mark Harrison (the farmer) and Jade (a member) went to a CSA gathering in Cardiff where we met up with dozens of budding and trading CSAs from around the UK plus some additions from further afield including China. This event was the latest step towards developing a network of farms like ours that can support each other to survive, increase and thrive. There was a real buzz and the room was full of people. It was heartening to see established trading CSAs giving practical advice to groups just setting out.

A few days later, Jade joined some other UK CSAs on a trip to France, to meet with the international network of CSAs called Urgenci, to share a study visit to French CSAs with some brilliant characters from around Europe. We laughed our heads off together and also really deepened our perspectives on how to proceed with the CSA movement. Observing the Croats talking to the French housewives I was struck by how citizens and farmers worldwide have the same needs and the same problems. Last year Andy Jones (a member) went on a similar visit to the Czech Republic and Sam (the farmer) went to share our story in Slovakia.

When Stroud Community Agriculture started 12 years ago we had no land, no farmer, no bank account and no money to put in a bank account. There were almost no CSAs in the UK or Europe. Bernard Jarman (a member) sat in an armchair in someone's front room and reckoned that we would set up a 'large mixed farm feeding 200 people and demonstrating a new economic model in the UK and internationally'. I confess to thinking at the time that he was more than a little over ambitious... I was wrong.

Urgenci and the UK CSA network are grassroots organisations where ordinary people like the French housewives and SCA members are making an equitable food system for ourselves. Both the international network and the UK network welcome participation from CSA members and supporters. To find our more contact www.urgenci.net/index.php?lang=en or sign into the CSA googlegroup from this page http://www.soilassociation.org/communitysupportedagriculture/findacsa

Jade Bashford

CHEMICAL FREE MEAT

In response to yet another food scandal involving meat, this time horse meat in beef products, I would like to tell you a bit about the meat we produce on OUR farm and how it is raised.

There are so many things to consider when keeping livestock in an organic/biodynamic and sustainable way. On one hand we must consider their place in the farm organism. This means how do they fit into the farm and what is their role or purpose. We also try to meet their physiological needs as best we can. That means cows eat grass not grain or maize and pigs have the freedom to root in soil (weather permitting).
All these things cost time and money but we feel it is the right way to do it. On large scale factory farms time and money are the driving force behind how they raise their livestock.

Today there are many different options open to consumers from cheap ham from Tesco to free range pork at the farmers market to organic pigs raised in a way that's open to scrutiny by the very people who buy the meat. How often do you get a chance to ask the farmer that feeds and cares for the pigs how they have been raised?

We have recently moved to a new butcher, Marsh field organic farm. It is a small farm just outside of Bath where they have their own butchery. One great reason for going to this butcher is that they are able to cure bacon without the use of sodium nitrite. Sodium nitrite (E251) is used in almost all bacon and sausages produced in this country as well as in fertilizers and rocket fuel! It also helps keep it pink. It is however banned by Demeter our Biodynamic certification body and not used as much in Europe. This means that the bacon will be slightly brown and not the usual pink. It still tastes great as it is only cured with salt, sugar and black pepper.

The new butcher also uses a different recipe for their sausages which means we will no longer have Toulouse sausages. In future we hope to make some, as well as different flavour sausages using some produce from the farm, like pork and leek or pork and apple. If anyone has any special request for anything please let me know and we can discuss how we can make it.

Also if anyone is interested in seeing any part of the butchering process please let me know.

Sam Hardiman

THE WORKINGS OF ANOTHER CSA

I recently attended the annual international biodynamic conference at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. It is an event that, this year brought together over 600 people from from 33 different countries across the world. The theme was “Alliances for the Earth”. Developing the farm as an island of culture has always been experienced as an important objective for biodynamic and organic farms. It reflects the principle that change comes about by example. At this conference however another aspect was considered as being equally important at a time when so many social, ecological and spiritual challenges are facing us. Building alliances locally and across the globe reflects another principle that, together, we can move mountains. 'Alliances for the Earth' was addressed in many different ways at the conference. One of them was through a special report about Roxbury Farm, a community supported farm in New York state.

CSAs have been developing particularly strongly in America. At the latest count there were between 6,000 and 12,000 operating CSAs across the United States and serving anywhere between 10 and 2500 members. One of these is Roxbury Farm some 130 miles from New York city. Most CSAs form communities with people in their immediate surroundings. Since other CSAs were already active in the neighbourhood of Roxbury farm however another opportunity somewhat further afield had to be sought. It was, therefore, to New York city that the farm directed its attention. Supplying families in the city from a farm 130 miles
away, however, requires careful thought.

There was a lot of enthusiasm from the townsfolk and it wasn't long before a commitment was made and a delivery system established using a truck donated by the newly formed community. Each week freshly picked produce is being brought into town and driven to a number of collection points. All members are given a list of what is available and asked to take whatever they need. No limit is set on the amount each can take but there is an understanding that no one will take more than they can use. It is important that nothing is wasted. Anything left over at the end of the day is taken to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, a local soup kitchen which would normally have received only surplus government supplied canned soup and corn flakes. Fresh biodynamic vegetables were a real treat. The people commented how wonderful it is that finally someone is thinking of us. During 2012 Roxbury farm donated almost $100,000 in food to people who would otherwise have not been able to afford it.

One day the farm truck broke down and an appeal was sent out to members asking them to support the purchase of a new vehicle. To the great surprise of the farm team the soup kitchen responded by offering $10,000 which had been granted to them by the state for purchasing food. The regular supply of fresh vegetables had become so important for them that they couldn't imagine doing without. The truck had become a real lifeline between the farm and the city.

The link between farm and city also brought about a change in behaviour. In the early days the people signing up to the CSA were familiar with the idea of fresh produce. Then came a moment when about 200 people from the Roman Catholic congregation decided, on the recommendation of their priest, to join in. Many of these people had never cooked or prepared fresh vegetables before and had no kitchen. Joining the CSA meant a complete change of lifestyle that even required some people to find new homes that had a kitchen.

Roxbury farm is a 300 acre mixed biodynamic farm producing meat (beef, lamb, pork), fruit and vegetables. Every year members and farmers meet to discuss the farm's operating budget. An interesting dynamic can be observed on these occasions namely that the farmers propose a budget aimed at keeping costs to members as low as possible while during the discussion members seek to increase the share price out of the conviction that the real cost of food should be paid for. Once the budget is agreed the costs are divided up between the members. This forms the basic share price to which is then added a delivery charge and a local collection site administration fee. Like many US community farms, the CSA scheme does not run throughout the year. Vegetable shares are for 23 weeks. In addition to vegetables, members can also buy meat shares. In 2012 these shares were priced $612 for vegetables, $145 for beef, $150 for lamb and $135 for pork. Payments are made in advance either for the full year or in three instalments. There are over 1000 members and their contributions are sufficient to cover the farm costs for the whole year as well as supporting a team of two farmers, seven farm workers and three apprentices.

Another alliance which had to be built concerned the land itself. In the beginning the farm operated on rented land but then came a time when the landlords wanted it back. The community then set about finding land that could guarantee them long term security. The
present farm was identified and, with the help of two trusts, purchased. The first trust - the American Farmland Trust - is well established. It purchased the development rights thus ensuring that it would remain agricultural land. A second trust was then formed to buy the farmland at an affordable price with contributions made by CSA members. The farmers were then granted a 99 year lease to the land, and the house and farm buildings were sold to them with a resale restriction. In this way Roxbury farm will always be affordable to future farmers. To find out more about Roxbury farm and the way it works visit www.roxburyfarm.com.

At the recent AGM of Stroud Community Agriculture I read out the following quote shared by Jean-Paul Courtens, the farmer who made the presentation during the conference. It comes from "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl. We agreed to reproduce it here:

"Don't aim for success ... the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as a by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success; you must let it happen by not caring about it. I want you to listen to what your conscience commands you to do and go on to carry it out to the best of your knowledge. Then you will live to see in the long run - in the long run I say! - Success will follow you precisely because you had forgotten to think about it."

Bernard Jarman

GET INVOLVED!

It has been suggested that we could improve our communication within the SCA by socialising over a community meal once a month. The cooking of which could be shared between a number of people (3) each month to prepare a starter, main and dessert. The ingredients could be sourced from local supermarkets (who bin their produce which is passed it's sell by date!), any abundance of vegetables and fruits from our farms, and elsewhere locally. The venue would need to have a workable kitchen, a space large enough to accommodate those who would be interested in taking part, and a reasonable cost to hire. This could be a wonderful way to get to know each other, learn from others about the farms biodynamic ways, exchange recipe ideas, etc., and take a night off from the kitchen at home! The cost should be minimal but enough to cover the cost of ingredients and venue hire.

Available to all members and their families, and perhaps a way to welcome new members into our community. This regular meal could be the introduction, which is presently missing, in which to put faces to names and places, and raise awareness of the whole workings of the SCA within a pleasant environment.

If you think you would like to take part in any way, suggest a venue, volunteer to help with the cooking preparations, or have any other ideas to add to this, please contact Mark Harrison to register your interest. Thank you.
SEASONAL RECIPES..

Veggies coming into season over the next 3 months are:
Purple sprouting broccoli, Radish, Pak choi, Chard, Rhubarb ...and continuing with Kale, Cabbage, and Leeks

I can never get tired of any of these vegetables, especially as they are rich in iron and have been found to play a crucial role in fighting disease by stimulating the body's defences. But if you're feeling the need for inspiration, here are a few recipe suggestions to whet your appetite...

PAK CHOI with CASHEW NUTS

Ingredients:
2 red onion
175g red cabbage
2 tbsp groundnut oil
225g pak choi
2 tbsp plum sauce
100g roasted cashew nuts

* Cut the red onions into thin wedges and thinly shred the red cabbage
* Heat the groundnut oil in a large preheated wok until really hot
* Add the onion wedges to the wok and stir-fry for approx 5 mins, until onions are just beginning to brown
* Add the red cabbage to the wok and stir-fry for a further 2-3 mins
* Add the pak choi leaves to the wok and stir-fry for approx 5 mins, until the leaves have just wilted
* Drizzle the plum sauce over the vegetables, toss together until well combined and heat until the liquid is beginning to bubble
* Scatter the roasted cashew nuts over the stir-fry and transfer to warmed serving bowls, and serve immediately

N.B. You could also try this with chard/shredded cabbage/purple sprouting broccoli in place of the pak choi, with a variation on nuts, seeds or dried fruits!
LEEK & SWEET POTATO TERRINE

Ingredients:

- 800g sweet potatoes, peeled
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 leek, trimmed and quartered lengthways
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tbsp sour cream
- ½ tbsp fresh rosemary, roughly chopped
- salt & pepper to taste
- 70g pancetta (optional)

* Preheat oven to 190°C, and prepare a loaf tin by lightly greasing it

* Using a peeler, make long strips of sweet potato

* Heat up a frying pan and add the garlic, (+ pancetta) and potato strips, with a knob of butter. Mix well and cover with a lid. Cook for 3-5mins until potato is just soft. Spoon mixture into a bowl

* Return frying pan to heat and add the oil and leeks and cover. Cook for 5 mins until just softened. Set aside.

* Add the remaining ingredients tin with the potato mixture and mix well (keeping leeks separate)

* Spoon half of the potato mixture into the loaf tin, pressing down into the corners. Then add the leeks. Then add the remainder of the potato mixture, pressing down all over to level the surface. (If you want, you can add some parmesan shavings in between each of the layers)

* Bake for 30-35mins until firm. Remove from oven and leave for at least 5-10 mins before turning out, using a chopping board placed over the top of the tin before tipping it upside-down. Alternatively, leave to cool completely before turning out

* Served with soured cream, this is delicious hot or cold

N.B. You can always change the quantities of leeks and sweet potatoes around to suit your store cupboard. The colours are impressive, and the taste is to die for!

RHUBARB & GINGER ICE CREAM

Ingredients:

- 5 pieces of preserved stem ginger
- 450g trimmed rhubarb, slices
- 115g unrefined caster sugar/rapadura
- 30ml water
- 150g mascarpone cheese
- 150ml whipping cream/soya cream

* Roughly chop the preserved
stem ginger and set aside. Put rhubarb slices into a pan, add the sugar and water. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for 5 mins until rhubarb is just tender and still bright pink.

* Tip the mixture into a food processor/blender, process until smooth, then leave to cool. Chill if time permits.

* If making by hand, in a bowl mix together the mascarpone, cream and stem ginger with the rhubarb purée. Pour the mixture into a plastic tub and freeze for 6 hrs, or until firm, beating the mixture once or twice during the freezing time to break up the ice crystals.

* If using an ice cream maker, churn the purée for 15-20mins until it is thick. Put the mascarpone into a bowl, soften it with a wooden spoon, then beat in the cream. Add the stem ginger, then churn in the ice cream maker until firm.

* Let us know your recipe ideas... chickpeas@hotmail.co.uk  *

... **I went on a little adventure** just before Christmas to what is for me a little explored place, the fruit and veg aisles at Sainsbury's. This isn't an advertisement for Sainsbury's, but I was quite surprised how many of the vegetables that we provide in our share they did sell. They had nearly all of the vegetables that we have had in the share over the winter on display, but only half of them were organic. I noted down the prices and the total cost of the share of the week of the 11th Dec, if purchased in the supermarket, would have been £8.96. Only four out of the eight items were organic, the rest chemically grown. They were all scrubbed clean (not good for storage or for maintaining the plants natural nutrition) and wrapped in lovely colourful packages! The weekly cost of our veg share was, at that time, £8.54.

Although price comparisons can be interesting, the farm is about much more than that. It means different things to different people and for me the most important thing about the farm is that it is a community of people working together to reconnect or maintain a connection with the land. Caring for a place and growing some of our own food, in a small but significant way can only make for a better world.

*Mark Harrison*
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.

Core Group

The core group meets one evening a month. For dates, venues & times, contact Mark Harrison

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark Harrison</td>
<td>01453 752484</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mark@plumtucker.co.uk">mark@plumtucker.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Hardiman</td>
<td>07792 934348</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jessica_hardiman@hotmail.com">jessica_hardiman@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alun Hart</td>
<td>01453 790766</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Alun.hart@gmail.com">Alun.hart@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Holterman</td>
<td>07749518024</td>
<td><a href="mailto:helen@lilou.me.uk">helen@lilou.me.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Ashby</td>
<td>01452 814620</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Kevin.ashby@phonecoop.coop">Kevin.ashby@phonecoop.coop</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Simon.charter@live.co.uk">Simon.charter@live.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Sheridan</td>
<td>01453 827286</td>
<td><a href="mailto:clare@solarious.co.uk">clare@solarious.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Daley</td>
<td>01453 755866</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sallydaley@hotmail.com">sallydaley@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno Sabin</td>
<td>01452 507533</td>
<td><a href="mailto:brunosabin@yahoo.com">brunosabin@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamsyn Widdon</td>
<td>01453 751558</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tamsynwiddon@hotmail.com">tamsynwiddon@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

General enquiries and information: Clare & Paul Sheridan 0845 4580814
info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org  www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Membership Admin: Carol Matthews membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org
Newsletter: Claire Griffiths chickpeas@hotmail.co.uk