Welcome to your autumn 2015 issue of SCA newsletter. We have lots of things to share with you. This issue includes as usual, the Farm Report and Veggie News, latest pictures, as well as an update on the Hammonds Farm purchase and plans for the SCA Community Building. So read on for the latest news.

P.S. Don't forget to check out the SCA website for the latest updates (www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org)

Happy reading!

Autumn Farm Report

There is a clear feeling that autumn is fast approaching. The mornings are cooler and misty with a heavy dew and a nip in the air. Looking across the farm and to the hills beyond there are trees already starting to turn yellow.

On the farm there are signs the season is changing too. The cows have started growing their winter coats, fieldfares and red wings flock across the farm and the swallows have long gone.

Thoughts are turning towards what is to come and what needs doing in preparation for the autumn and winter. The barns are full of hay and straw in readiness but we still have one last field to cut for silage before we are completely ready for the cows to come in in November.

We have recently had a litter of piglets born on the farm. I have been lucky enough to have seen many piglets born however I thought I might share the spectacle with you. If you are interested in seeing a brief film of these piglets being born follow the link to it on youtube (https://goo.gl/9BzQo9) or for more farm updates, pictures and videos check out our facebook page www.facebook.com/StroudCommunityAgriculture.
Kids from the new class-three of Wynstones School started coming to the farm in September. They are all keen and have done some great work already. They arrive at 8.30 am and then split into groups. Some were harvesting carrots, some working in the walled garden picking apples and composting old plants, while some fed pigs and moved cows to new grass. They work till 12.30 before having lunch and walking back to school.

The groups rotate each week allowing all the children to get experience of the different jobs that need doing on the farm. During their second visit it rained heavily for a prolonged period, but it did little to dampen their spirits, only making them a bit muddy.

We had a very productive farm work day in August with a small but enthusiastic group. We worked in the vegetable field weeding the cabbage patch with great affect. Thank you to those who helped, it was a job well done and a great help to the farm team.

The next **FARM WORK DAY** will be on **Saturday 24th of October**. We will let you know what work we will be doing closer to the time, so keep an eye on the 'News' section of the SCA website and/or Facebook page.

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**News from the Veggie Fields**

We have had a good season this summer, with most of the autumn and winter crops looking very lush and healthy. The general opinion of the summer is that it’s been a pretty poor one, dull, windy and cool, but the crops have grown well. We did have a difficult few weeks in June and July with very little rain and very dry conditions. We had to irrigate continually in the walled garden and in the fields to get crops established. It did mean that the weeds didn’t grow. They are now, because now it’s wet, very wet.

The only exception to our good news is the squash. The plants were battered by the drying winds when they were planted out in June. I don’t think that we have as many as in previous years, and virtually no pumpkins this year. This is the first year with our latest polytunnel and we have been able to grow many more peppers this year. Normally we only put peppers in the share on two or three occasions in September and October. This year we have been able to harvest the first peppers in August and we still have many more to ripen through the autumn.

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**Ol, get on your land!**

I would encourage you to explore your farms and walk around, maybe go to Brookthorpe if you haven’t been before or the woods and fields at Hawkwood or around the ponds. It’s beautiful out there and you can see where your food is grown. You are most welcome but I would just ask you to please keep dogs on leads and children with you as it is a working farm.

Enjoy!

**Farmer Sam Hardiman**
We have returned the pigs onto the veg field at Hawkwood. We put them out on the ground after the first carrots were harvested so that they can eat the weeds and left over carrots. We will move them regularly so that they don’t damage the soil. Their next spot will be on the potato patch so they can root out any spuds that we have missed.

One of the important techniques of growing crops organically is to rest the soil every few years and allow it to regenerate. To do this we grow a mix of legumes (usually red clover) and grasses on these plots for a year or more. It can be difficult for the clover to germinate and get established as it needs to be sown very shallowly and is susceptible to drying out. Generally we aim to have all of the clover sown by the end of August as soon as any early crops have been harvested, so that it is established before the winter. These summer months can be too dry though, so we often try a technique called undersowing, where the clover is sown under a vegetable crop as it is growing. We have often undersown the squash and sweetcorn at Brookthorpe, but weren’t able to that this year as it was too dry in July. However we did successfully undersown the early cabbages at Hawkwood in May. When we cut the cabbages in June and July, the small rather weedy clover seedlings that had been struggling to grow under the cabbages were able to get more sunlight and grow away quickly. This clover will now grow for another two years. We will cut it regularly in the summer and the cuttings will decompose and feed the soil.

Our two gallant summer workers, Clare and Sylvie will have left by the time you read this. They will still be working towards setting up the starter farm though. Thank you both for all of your hard work and being such great work-mates to all of us.

Farmer Mark Harrison

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**SCA Harvest Meal**

Like every year we will be celebrating the crops with a Harvest Meal. We will start with apple pressing and a bring-and-share meal will follow.

The Brookthorpe Hall provides both indoor and outdoor children friendly space. We will provide an apple press, so bring your own apples and a container for the juice. There will be a harvest display so you can see all the lovely vegetables that were grown on our farm. New members are very welcome! It is a great opportunity to meet the farm team, ask questions and find out how we grow our food. And it’s a great opportunity to mingle with other SCA members.

Come along, bring your children and friends, and lets celebrate this year’s crop!
Community Land Buy Out Going Forward: Next Steps and Celebrations

The Biodynamic Land Trust (BDLT) has agreed the sale of Lot 3 of Hammonds Farm with the Burcombe family and the sale process is currently underway. The short time scale – the appeal was launched on 5 June – of this successful campaign is truly amazing, as is the support of over 200 people who generously invested in community shares or donated to help buy the farmland. Many SCA members helped the appeal financially or through volunteering to help spread the word. The BDLT is still accepting funds towards the buyout, if anyone is interested in investing or donating please check www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk for more details.

The BDLT has invited SCA members and the wider community to connect with the land and celebrate the success of this appeal through various upcoming events. On Sunday 15 November there will be a participative workshop, using Goethean science methods to observe, survey and understand the land. The day will be led by Dr. Isis Brook, MA in Agroecology. For more information and to book in advance (spaces are limited) contact Gabriel at gabriel@biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk or 01453 367233.

Another event is a celebration at Lansdown Hall with a family bring and share meal on Sunday 11 October from 6.00–8.30pm. The evening will be an opportunity to get to know other Hammonds Lot 3 co-owners and trustees of the BDLT, create a farm future dreaming gallery, hear a bit about the farm and discuss the participative land planning and community engagement events planned.

SCA has agreed to begin the process of converting the 41 acres of Lot 3 to biodynamic management during the first year after the sale is finalised, which will allow the BDLT to facilitate a comprehensive consultation and planning process for how the land will be used in future. The SCA Core Group has continued to discuss potential longer-term engagement by SCA in use and management of the land, building on discussions with SCA members at the Extraordinary General Meeting in July. As always, we welcome input from farm members so please don’t hesitate to contact Core Group members if you have any ideas or questions.

The Starter Farm is also hoping to begin production on the new land next year. Along with SCA, the starter farmers are in touch with Demeter to begin conversion to biodynamic certification as soon as the land is bought, a process which takes three years. This means that, although the land will be managed biodynamically, the produce grown by the starter farm will not be certified initially. They hope farm members will support the conversion process and this new initiative, which will extend the land being sustainably managed and supported by SCA. If members have any questions or concerns about the conversion process, please contact Clare or Sylvie at scastarterfarm@gmail.com.
Invitation to Contribute to Festivals, Food and Farming by Hawthorn Press

People keep mentioning to us their often ancient, well-used copies of our books such as 'Festivals, Family and Food' (1983), 'Celebrating Irish Festivals' and 'All the Year Round'. And asking us for an update based on the seasonal festivals celebrated by SCA families, family festive games, stories, poems, stories, crafts and for seasonal food recipes drawing on what is grown all the year round by SCA. So, we thought we’d plan a new book provisionally called 'Festivals, Food and Farming'. However, we need contributions from SCA family members drawing on what you do in your family. Meredith Debonnaire and Martin Large would welcome hearing from you if you can contribute material.

Here is a run-down of what we are looking for – please remember that these are guidelines:

- Why festivals? A short piece of writing about why you celebrate the year. Are your festivals the festivals of your parents or not? Why is it important to you and your family? What drew you to the festivals that you have chosen?

- Festivals, big or small: by this we mean any kind of celebration/festival-marker that is important to your year that others might be interested in. Examples are things like Candelmas, Easter, Beltane, family traditions (for example, me and my dad like to climb up Swift’s Hill on the solstices with the dog to watch the sun rise, then we head down to Star Anise and eat breakfast). Basically, celebrations that are not birthdays...

- Recipes: this may or may not fit under the festivals umbrella for you. We’d love recipes for food that relates to your festivals and celebrations, or just food in general. We really want these recipes to be seasonal, simple so children can have a go. We are also very interested in including the stories behind the recipes – is this a recipe you learned from your family? Your friends? Found in an old diary hidden beneath the floorboards?

- Favourite family Songs/poems/rhymes/stories: again, we’re looking for seasonal. These can be local, traditional, from different cultures as made up by your family, stolen from the neighbour’s family. If they relate to your festivals, that’s fantastic. If they don’t, also fantastic.

- Local special places to go/nature or wildlife spots: any places you go at particular times of year, how to get there etc.

- Activities, crafts or games: again, this may or may not come under festivals for you. We’d love to hear about any seasonally related activities, crafts or games that happen in your family, in enough detail that they can be replicated by others.

If you are interested, please contact Meredith on 01453 757 040 on Monday or Tuesdays mornings or email meredith@dawthornpress.com

This book might well develop into a ‘SCA connected’ book, and if successful Hawthorn can then contribute to SCA and or Hammonds farm development work.

We will be accepting contributions until January 2016.
Going to the Fair by Rowen and Eliza Hardiman

The morning of the fair we woke up early to get ready, we were taking some of the farm animals to the Frampton fair. After breakfast we went down to the farm to load up the animals. We put the two bottle fed lambs into the back of dad's truck, it wasn't easy as they now weigh 45 kilos!

Then we loaded Clara the cow and her calf Rosie into the trailer. After packing the halters and some hay we trundled down the road with the lambs baaing loudly in the back.

We arrived at an already bustling show where the early birds were already busy unloading. We helped Dad unload the animals and settle them into their pens. then we fetched buckets of water for them and put out some hay. By now there were lots of people gathering around looking at the various animals people had brought along. Next to us was some goats, then some horses. On the other side was more cows, sheep and some pigs.

Someone then suddenly shouted, "a pig has jumped into another pigs pen and it's not happy about it!" people were rushing around not quite knowing what to do, so we wandered over with dad and his friend Johnathan and his son Ollie and sorted them back into there proper pens. The funny thing was that the pig had jumped over a horse jump that was forming the barrier between the two pens. After all the pig excitement we walked back towards our animals to find princess Sophie of Wessex stroking our cow!

During the next few hours we heard lots of funny comments from people looking at our cow and stroking the sheep like; "wow look at that huge bull", and "that calf is so tiny". It was fun telling the people all about our animals and that it wasn't a bull but a mother cow. The lambs were very popular and lots of children got to stroke and pet them. most of them had never touched a sheep before and were surprised how soft and friendly they were.

Later that day we decided to take the lambs out for a walk around the show ground to meet some more people. our friend Ollie also brought his calf. some people were quite surprised to see three young children leading farm animals around the show ground, one boy asked his grandad if he would buy him a sheep.

Soon it was time to go home, we had been there for 10 hours!

The lambs went in easy and so did the calf but Clara the cow, who had been quite reluctant to go in the first place, now didn't want to go home, but with some help from the goat owners we finally loaded her up.

Back at the farm we returned the animals back into their flocks and fields and it looked like they were telling them all about there day out.

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**SCA Bonfire Night**

Come and join us for Bonfire Night at Hawkwood, on Saturday 7th November starting at 6pm with lighting the fire!

(more details will be send to the SCA members by email closer to the time)
Here is a little reminder of why we need a Community Building at our Hawkwood farm:
It will be a place for the farm team and members to gather, to enable informal workshops, shared meals and meetings, it will be a shelter from the rainy weather, and you can just drop in to have a cup of tea after picking up your veg. Sounds good, doesn't it?

The building we are proposing is a round straw bale building (like on the picture on the left), with lime washed walls and a living reciprocal roof. It will be large enough to accommodate around 25 people. It will be off grid, have a disabled access and will face south-west across the farm. It will be available for farm members to book for their personal use, and for Hawkwood college to run some courses in it.

**Timetable**

**Winter 2015** dig out a level pad and build foundations.  
Earth work around build.  
**Spring-Summer 2016** build walls and roof  
**Summer 2016** landscape around building pathways etc.

We are well on the way to making this happen. We have planning permission, a grant from the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for 21% of the cost, local skilled green builders willing to help for free and we have fund raised £1500.

Our budget is £6-8k and as you can see we need some help to reach our target.

We need both practical and financial support for this project, we appreciate many of you might have bought into the new land recently, but if every member donated £25 we would raise around £5000!

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**Your Pint, Your Place**

Stroud Brewery is committed to using barley malt grown in the Cotswolds. The brewery promotes these links through its project Your Pint, Your Place with case studies of the farms that grow its malt.

Once all barley malt has been used in the brewery, the spent grains are a valuable food for cattle and pigs. As about 30% of Stroud Brewery production is organic, some of these grains make their way to feeding SCA pigs. The spent grains are great pig feed as it fills them up without making them too fat.

If you are interested to see how Stroud brewery makes beer the brewery is open to wander around on any of their weekend bar nights.

See www.stroudbrewery.co.uk/yourpint-yourplace
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.

- Mark Harrison 01453 752484 mark@plumtucker.co.uk
- Jade Bashford 01453 885233 jadebashford@hotmail.com
- Francis Gobey 01453 766339 francis.gobey@phonecoop.coop
- Page Dykstra 07869 630376 page.dykstra@gmail.com
- Adam Biscoe 01453 759241 a.j.biscoe@gmail.com
- Simon Charter 01453 882114 simon.charter@live.co.uk
- Clare Sheridan 01453 827286 clare@solarious.co.uk
- Sam Hardiman 01452 810763 samueljhhardiman@hotmail.com
- Bruno Sabin 01452 507533 brunosabin@yahoo.com
- Matthew McStravick 07739 753956 stravick@gmail.com

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
Membership Admin: Carol Matthews membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org
Newsletter: Aleksandra Osinska creativealeks@gmail.com
I am a member of a wonderful local initiative which brings fresh, locally grown organic vegetables into my house every week. And, optionally for those who want it, the finest biodynamic meat and organic eggs. Not only that but it guarantees the farmers an income, they can concentrate on what they are very good at and don’t have to deal with greedy supermarkets .... and any profit goes back into the two farms. A real community-owned enterprise and delicious too! Children get to learn where their food comes from, there are social events like camping, barbecues and singing carols to the cows – and, if you want to, you can get involved in the farms too.

It’s so much more than a top quality veg box!

Talk to me to find out more about how it works. And when you want to join then go to www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org and click on the 'Get Involved' tab to get more information and download the Joining Pack.

Or if you don’t use the computer phone Clare or Paul on 0845 4580814 for a membership pack.
Now is a great time do it – with the autumn harvest nearly here. So join today and see why I love being a member. See you there!