Welcome to our 60th issue of the SCA newsletter.

We have some good news to share: recent news from the farms and the Starter Farm with loads of pictures this time!

We continue recruiting new members too so keep spreading the word!

Happy reading!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Harvest Meal • Sunday 16th October
It's our annual Bring-and-share celebration meal. It is a brave decision, but it will be in our brand new, shiny Community Building! It might be a bit drafty so dress warmly.

Bonfire Night • Saturday 5th November
As per usual it will take place at Hawkwood.

Singing to the Cows • Saturday 24th December
As the tradition goes we will be singing to the Cows on Christmas Eve.

More details to follow by e-mail and on our website (www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org)

Join the Farm! • Share the Harvest!
**Autumn Farm Report**

Autumn is now in the air, the mornings are crisp and misty.

The poplar tree in the farm yard at Brookthorpe is always the first to drop its leaves and they are starting to drop off now. We have had a good summer, the mix of rain and sun has meant grass has been plentiful. We have enough hay and silage to see us through the winter.

Since having cows at SCA we have always borrowed or hired a bull, but we recently bought our own. He is a pedigree Hereford from a local farm. His official name is Wonderland 1 Bonanza. However he will get a nick name that is less of a mouthful. We've had a few good proposals that came from our Facebook page visitors, that include names like Wooley, Sir Loin, Ferdinand, Bartholomew and Stroganoff, and we are still thinking of the name that would fully reflect his personality so please continue sending your suggestions and we will let you know!

We had a Barn Dance on our farm at Brookthorpe this September and it went off without a hitch. All the people who came seemed to all be enjoying themselves. We had a BBQ and a bar and several people camped the night too and the dance floor was full!

We will be going back to the usual spring Barn Dance next year as it looks like it would be more convenient for many people to participate (it's always good to stretch your legs after the winter, and the weather also should be better!). We promise to let you know the dates as soon as we can, so you can book it in your diary!

I would love it if anyone wanted to come on board and help us organise it for next year as it's quite a lot of work to prepare for the barn dance, but it's a lot of fun too, so please get in contact (and new ideas are always welcome).

**Farmer Sam Hardiman**

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[www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org](http://www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org)
News from the Veggie Fields

This season has probably been one the best we have had, with very good growing conditions throughout the summer. No extremes - enough rain and sun - most crops have grown well and we have an abundance of crops going into the autumn and winter.

However, having said all that, it has also been a season of plant diseases. The frequent humid weather seems to have encouraged some leaf diseases. All of our cucumber plants in the walled garden died, just as they were beginning to fruit which was a shame (hence the reason for the many half cucumbers in the share, these were grown in the polytunnel in Hawkwood and were unaffected). Also, our plot of potatoes succumbed to blight about a month earlier than we usually expect it. We first noticed a small patch of affected plants and then it spread very quickly and within a fortnight most of the plants were dead which means we had less than half the yield of last year. And to top it off, the beans in the walled garden and celeriac have also been severely affected by their own leaf diseases.

All is not lost however because fortunately everything else has done very well. A particular success this year has been the peppers. These are grown in one of the polytunnels and they have all been phenomenally productive. We have a range of varieties, some pale yellow, red, and purple, and one chilli/sweet pepper called “Hungarian Hot Wax”. These will all continue to produce into the autumn.

I wrote in my article last September about the importance of growing clovers on the farm, as these plants produce their own nitrogen. By mowing or grazing the clover this nitrogen is returned to the soil for use by the following crops.

During the latter part of the summer we try to sow this clover underneath some of the crops that we are growing for harvest later in the season. The conditions and timing has to be just right for this and this year we have managed to undersow the squashes, sweetcorn and cabbage family plants. If you have picked any of the Cavelo kale at Hawkwood this summer you will have seen that there is a thick carpet of red clover growing under the plants. This isn’t because we neglected
to weed them, it was deliberately sown! Although the kale needs extra watering they are otherwise unaffected by the clover. When the kale is no longer productive we will mow it down and leave the clover to grow for another two years to feed the soil.

We continue to get great veg for the share from the starter farm. This will continue throughout the autumn and winter. The last thing I would like to say in this report is that we have had a great farm team and work sharers this year, and I appreciate everyones hard work. Sadly Page (one of our farmers) will be leaving us in Sept. We all wish you the best Page, thanks for everything!

Farmer Mark Harrison

Starter Farm: Growing success!

Since mid-july we’ve been harvesting the starter farm’s first season of produce, hooray! It began with our lettuces, followed by dwarf beans, rainbow chard, those funny yellow ‘flying saucer’ like courgettes and the green round ones (called ‘geode’), and lately broccoli and cauliflower. The early leeks are now ready, the squash plants are revealing their colourful fruits, the root veg are growing well and the winter cabbages are beginning to heart up. Lots of produce to drive up the packing shed at Hawkwood, to be divided up for the week’s vegetable shares!

Looking back, the spring was fast paced and pretty scary, with everything at the starter farm yet to be created, soil cultivated, seeds sown and the daunting question of whether we’d manage to get all these plants to grow and produce food for SCA members! With the summer crops harvested, the winter ones well established & the fast growth of both produce and weeds slowing down, we’re breathing a little sigh of relief...

Along with members of the core group and farm team, we’ve been working to publicise SCA locally to let people know we are looking for new members to eat all this produce.

If you would like to get involved or know friends or family or neighbours who would like to join, please point them to our website where we now have a new easy online joining form!

www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org/join

Farmer Sylvie
We are progressing steadily with the Community Building at the Hawkwood site and have made some good progress to date. Our dedicated group of volunteers have done a great job, working on weekends and evenings despite the weather, and we are absolutely amazed with the results so far.

We applied 3 coats of lime render on the outside walls and 2 inside, and have fitted all the windows. Please feel free to take a look inside the next time you go past.

Yet, there is still quite a bit of work to do! We still need to do the final coats of render inside and out (4 all together) as well as put the waterproof membrane on the roof and fit the door.

We are hoping to get it all done for our Harvest Meal on 16th October!

We are always looking for new volunteers to come and lend a hand. You don’t need any previous experience as you will be given all the training you need on site. You will also get to meet other members and enjoy helping to create this building for everyone to share. There is always plenty of tea and biscuits!

We will soon have another work day so expect an e-mail and an update on our website and Facebook page!

We hope to see you there!

We are looking to expand the newsletter and we welcome any and all contributions from SCA members - both old and new. If you would like to submit an article on farm related or community news or have other contributions in mind such as pictures you have taken or drawings you have made on the farm, poetry or have a good recipe that you would like to share, then please contact Aleks (newsletter editor at: creativealeks@gmail.com). Remember this is your farm and your newsletter too!

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

We are looking for new members for the farm. This is especially so, now we have the starter farm up and running. 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 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 members, in co-operation with the farmers, to use the farm for their individual and social activities and celebrations.
- To develop a sense of community around the farm.
- To work co-operatively with other enterprises that share our principles.

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

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