Welcome to our 61st issue of the SCA newsletter.

Mark and Sam will be telling us all about how they are getting on growing in their usual farm reports. We have also some great news from Kees who is starting his Micro Diary on the new land next to Hawkwood.

We have also couple of yummy recipes to share with you this time (thanks to all those who contributed!)

Happy reading and Merry, merry Christmas!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Singing to the cows
• Saturday 24th December - 5pm at Brookthorpe
  Read more on page 5.

Three Kings preparation making
• Friday 6th January - at Hawkwood, time TBC

Candlemas
• February - day and time TBC

Check out our website
www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org for more information about the events.

Merry Christmas &
a happy New Year!
The weather recently has been cold and crisp. It seems like it’s been couple of years since we had a good frost with sub zero temperatures continuing into the day. It has been a pleasure harvesting vegetables under a blue, cloudless sky even if our toes were a bit cold. Hopefully it will kill off some slugs!

During November Mark went on holiday for 3 weeks. While we managed without a hitch, it was a lot of work as we were a bit short staffed, but with the help of Sebastian, our regular volunteer and Kees from the Micro Dairy next door we managed to get by.

On top of all our daily tasks there is a lot of organising: who gets what, what weights and numbers to pick, what orders there might be, new drop off locations etc. It did remind me just how much planning work Mark puts into the share each and every week. It is no small feat to put out a full share every week without fail... ever!

Our 'together Wednesday' (work days) have been going well. We have a regular group of very dedicated people coming along every Wednesday from 10am. During the summer the work was predominately weeding, but recently we have also harvested a lot of root vegetables for the share and to store. During the time that Mark was away their work was invaluable, thank you.

I would like to thank Kris who helped us until October and Richard who will be with us until Christmas. Thank you for all your help this year, it was a pleasure working with you. all the best for the future.

I would also like to say a fond farewell to Page, Page has been our apprentice working with us for the last couple of years. It has been a real pleasure to have you as part of the team. I've really appreciated your input both on a practical level and as a member of the core group.

I wish you all the best, and please visit us from time to time.

Merry Christmas!

Farmer Sam Hardiman
The cold snap in November has been rather a shock to the system. This was the coldest weather we have experienced for four years or more and it caught us out a bit. Unfortunately some of the root vegetables were damaged by the cold frost (though many were unaffected). Most of the green winter vegetables such as cabbage and leeks etc. can tolerate very cold weather, as can the parsnips and swede, but most of the other roots can’t, and so we lift them and store in an insulated room at Brookthorpe. We don’t harvest the carrots to store though; they just don’t keep so well there. If the weather threatens to turn very cold then we cover the carrots in the field with straw and plastic to insulate them. This does attract the mice though, who for some reason enjoy living in a warm dry place with an endless supply of food.

I often write at this time of the year about carrot root fly. This small fly lays its eggs on the carrots in the summer. The maggots hatch out and then feed on the roots throughout the autumn and winter, tunnelling into the root. We cover the carrots in the summer with a fine net to keep the pest off but inevitably some do get in. This year, (touch wood), there doesn’t appear to be too much damage, but we may discover more as we harvest the carrots later in the winter. We try our best to grade them out when we harvest them but you may well discover some carrots in your share with these most annoying tunnels in the root.

Well that’s all a little bit on the gloomy side so I must say that we have a lot of fine vegetables for the winter - some in store (plenty more squash), plenty in the field (leeks, purple broccoli, cabbages etc) and some in the polytunnels (spinach and mixed salad). We hope you enjoy them over the winter.

I was away from the farm for three weeks in November visiting my family in Australia. Sam and Rich shouldered the extra workload while I was away... thank you so much for that... it was so nice to be able to have a holiday and know that everything will be okay. Finally, I would like to thank Rich and Kris who have worked with us over the summer. Thank you for all of your hard work and for your conviviality whilst doing it. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Happy New Year to you all,

Farmer Mark
The cows are here. Hooray!

With the frosts and dark misty mornings gaining pace, it seems a long time has passed since those first signs of spring when the community planning workshops for Oakbrook Farm took place and we sent you our survey (asking if you were interested in a Micro Dairy and raw milk). And how far we have come! Stroud Micro Dairy is becoming a reality and come March 2017 raw milk, yogurt and kefir will flow.

It is exciting to be a new addition to the Community Supported Agriculture family in Stroud; instead of veg shares, ours will be milk. As Oakbrook farm (the new plot of land that is home to the Starter farm and Stroud Micro Dairy) converts to Biodynamics, I look forward to working together with Mark, Sam, Clare and Sylvie to create a diversified farming collective in the spirit of the farm organism.

There is still a lot to do and it is all very exciting, erecting fencing, installing water for the cows or commissioning a little dairy in which to make our yogurt and kefir, and chill our milk. Over the course of the winter the farm will start to take shape.

The cows have just arrived and we would love for you to meet them. You will find them in the arable field (behind Sylvie’s and Clare’s veg) so come and say hello.

From 6pm on Tuesday the 20th and on Saturday the 24th in the morning my partner Alice and myself will be present in the packing shed at Hawkwood with some hot chai, to say hello, to answer questions, and enable you to sign up for milk in March.

Do get in touch if you have any questions, or would like to lend a hand. I would love to hear from you.

Kees

phone 07954533648
In praise of... SWEDES, TURNIPS, AND KOHLRABI

Swedes, turnips, and kohlrabi, those little loved root vegetables of the winter, are all related and are part of the cabbage family, Brassicaceae.

Cabbages, Brassica oleracea grow wild on some parts of the coast of England. There is some dispute as to whether they are truly native to this country or whether they were introduced by the Saxons or Romans, but either way they’ve been here a long time and cultivated and eaten for even longer (at least three thousand years). The waxy skin of the cabbage sheds water very effectively; hence it is able to withstand the moist salty winds of the coast. Many of the Brassica vegetables can withstand cold weather, some to a remarkable degree, hence their importance to us, and our ancestors, as a winter vegetable.

Of the winter trio of this article, kohlrabi is the most closely related to the cabbage. It originated in Europe in the 15th century, though a similar vegetable was described in AD 70. The part we eat is a swollen stem. The skin can either be purple or pale green. They are generally grown quickly, in the summer and are picked when about the size of a tennis ball. However, we also grow a green skinned variety called “Supersmeltz” which grows more slowly and to a much larger size that can be stored over winter. This variety, despite its appearance, is quite sweet and crisp, and not tough.

Turnips are in the species, Brassica rapa. The part we eat is the fleshy taproot of the plant (though the leaves can be eaten as early spring greens). The skin can be purple, white or yellow, and the flesh white or yellow. We have grown two varieties this year, an early variety “Purple Top Milan” and a later winter type, “Golden Ball”.

Swede, Brassica napus, originated from crosses between the turnip and cabbage. They arrived in England in 1775, from... surprise, surprise....Sweden. The edible part is also a fleshy taproot. Swedes are the most cold tolerant of these three root crops, and will withstand the worst winter weather without any protection, a very valuable attribute when trying to produce vegetables all year round.

It isn’t my intention to give recipes here but swedes are fantastic mashed with butter and milk, turnips have a lovely spicy crispness, great in stir fries, and kohlrabi can be grated and eaten with salad. And of course all are great additions to soups and casseroles. I hope that you will make the most of them when you next get them in your veg share.

Farmer Mark

Singing to the cows!

We will be singing to the animals as usual this Christmas eve.

It will take place at Brookthorpe only this year at 5pm.

Please make your way to the barn quietly, there will be carol sheets by the door. This is a very special event with a unique mood of reverence and rejoicing. To help maintain this, parents please keep your children with you through out. Please don't drive down to the farm yard, park on the Brookthorpe drive where you can.

(If you feel strongly about singing at the Hawkwood barn instead and would be willing to lead the singing there please get in touch with Sam)
Goodies from La Jimena

Would you like to buy organic olive oil and a citrus fruit box direct from a farm in Andalucia? For a number of years, SCA has had a direct relationship with La Jimena, an organic farm run by Mathis and Mariann Rosenbusch. Mathis and Mariann used to run Earthshare CSA in the north of Scotland before moving to the south of Spain (we’re still not sure why?). They maintained their connections with many CSA’s in the UK and each year, in February, Mathis drives up to the UK and delivers fruit boxes, olives, and olive oil to CSA’s from the south coast of England to the north of Scotland. This high quality olive oil comes from olives harvested by hand from ancient trees. The citrus are from old varieties valued for their full flavour, something you won’t find elsewhere in the UK. If you would like to order some please see the flyer below or visit their website www.lajimena.co.uk for more information.

- A standard fruitshare box contains 5 litres of La Jimena olive oil, and 10 kilos of mixed citrus, almonds and sundried figs. Price £89. please order other items additionally if you’d like them!

- A small box contains 3 litres of La Jimena olive oil, and 5 kilos of citrus, almonds and sundried figs. Price £59. please order other items additionally if you’d like them!

A good Olive Oil is an investment in your health and fine cooking!

Orders: as soon as possible or the latest by the 6th January to oliveoil@lajimena.co.uk please make your cheque out to Mathis Rosenbusch and send it to Mark Harrison 60 Peghouse Rise, Stroud, GL5 1UR

Delivery: mid February to SCA Brookthorpe, GL4 0UN please note your phonenum. with your order, make sure your Cheque is present at delivery and you’d order in time before 6th January

More info at www.lajimena.co.uk
Mathis & Marianns Farm in Andalucia Spain

La Jimena olives are grown on the sunny slopes of the sierra nevadas without pesticides. They are picked from the ancient trees, carefully washed and dried, then milled within 48 hours of harvesting.
Curried parsnip soup

We really enjoy our fortnightly veg box, and I was one day wondering what else to do with parsnips other than roast them, when I came across a recipe for a curried parsnip soup which went down very well.

This is my very simple adapted version:

What I did was fry up some chopped onions (leeks could also be used) and curry paste (quantity dependent on personal taste), then add the chopped parsnips and some potato, chicken stock (but could be veg stock) and a tin of coconut milk then simmer until all softened and smelling delicious, blend until smooth and serve.

Simple and delicious for something different.

Clara

Spicy baked red cabbage

Spicy baked red cabbage is nice at this time of year. Not so much a recipe - just a way of life...

Red cabbage, one onion, one apple, scattering of sultanas, dash of honey-vinegar, pinch of mixed spice. Bake for 40 mins.

Yum!

Francis

Chocolate beetroot cake

• 1 bunch beetroot (4 small)
• 80g of greens (e.g. spinach/chard)
• 125ml vegetable oil or some butter (120 – 150g)
• 200g brown sugar
• 60g unrefined sugar
• 1 tsp vanilla extract (optional - not essential but if you have it then why not?)
• 75g of chocolate (just add more cocoa powder if there’s no chocolate to hand)
• 200g plain flour
• 30g cocoa powder
• 2-3 tbsp carob powder (optional)
• 2 tsp baking powder and ¼ tsp salt (not much!)

Once the beetroot and greens are cooked, preparation is approximately no more than 10 mins!

Here’s a recipe for “Chocolate Beetroot Greens Cake”. It comes from a book that I bought recently called “Greens 24/7”. Check out this book if you can as it has a wealth of simple but inventively tasty dishes. It is aimed at vegan/vegetarians but I usually substitute vegetable oil for butter etc. Whatever works for you will do! I picked up a cheap copy of this book in The Works in Stroud.

The recipe does not need to be followed strictly – I think that the exact proportions of ingredients are not essential. I have made this a couple of times and I have just used approximate/relative measurements when making it. The exact taste/form will therefore vary slightly but it really doesn’t matter as it has always tasted good! (I didn’t use chocolate and I didn’t use vanilla extract and it was fine! - I actually made the ganach a day or two after baking the cake. Very unprofessional, I know!). It’s also a great way to use up some beetroot and some unwanted greens (within reason any greens would do but I personally have only used spinach and chard myself). I also used slightly more beetroot and greens than the amount suggested here so don’t worry about using too much veg! (I used equivalent to about 6 small beetroot and probably about 120 – 150g of greens, and probably slightly less sugar than recommended – although maybe the extra veg compensated. There’s a lot of natural sugars present in beetroot for example. Just depends what your taste preference is).

Wash and cook (boil) the beetroots with skin on for about 30 mins. Chop and steam the greens for about 5-10 mins. Peel off the skin of the beetroots (careful if they are still hot). Chop up beetroot and put both the beetroot and greens into a food processor and puree.

Then, in a mixing bowl, mix together the vegetable oil (if using butter, melt it) with the sugars and vanilla extract. Melt the chocolate and add it. Then add the beetroot/green puree and mix well.

In a separate bowl mix together the flour, cocoa powder (I actually added extra cocoa powder because I didn’t have any chocolate. I also added some carob powder to compensate as well), with baking powder and salt. Once mixed together, add to the wet mix of beetroots and greens etc (until no clumps remain). It should be a nice stodgy texture/mix.

Pour into a prepared tin or pyrex dish. By prepared I mean roughly brush the dish with a bit of butter or oil and dust with cocoa powder. Then pour the cake mix into it. This will stop the cake sticking once baked (and it’s remarkably very good at doing this – I think the cocoa powder mainly does this?). Bake in an oven for approximately 45 mins, or until a toothpick/fork when inserted into the cake comes out clean. Remove from oven and leave to cool for 15-20 mins before removing (tipping) the cake out onto a bread board or something to let cool off completely.

Optional: to create a ‘ganache’, melt chocolate with some oil/butter, and then drizzle all over the cake to form a thin layer e.g. 2-3 mm thick. Let it set before serving. That’s all there is to it! It tastes great without a ganache as well by the way!

Greg
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.

- Mark Harrison 07891 615103 mark@plumptucker.co.uk
- Adam Biscoe 01453 759241 aj.biscoe@gmail.com
- Francis Gobey 07890 042877 francis.gobey@phonecoop.coop
- Simon Hanks 01453 812608
- Clare Whitney 07837 024552 clarewhitney22@gmail.com
- Sam Hardiman 07531 270206 samueljhardiman@hotmail.com
- Bruno Sabin 01452 507533 brunosabin@yahoo.com
- Michal Chodasewicz 01453 825103 mich0281@gmail.com

For more information on CSAs please contact Bernard Jarman at Bernard@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org
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