Welcome to your issue of the SCA Spring newsletter.

We’ve got lots of News to share with you! Mark and Sam will update you on the farming progress and Kees and Alice - our Micro Diary neighbours at Hawkwood will tell you all about their recent activities.

Also we have nearly completed the Community Building. Have a closer look next time you are at Hawkwood!

Finally, we have an opening for a Treasurer so if anyone would be interested in helping us with maintaining the finances, please give us a call!

Happy reading!

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**Dates for your Diary**

- 2nd April - Community Building work day
- Annual General Meeting
  
  Wednesday **June 7th**, 7 - 9pm in the Community Building at Hawkwood
- Barn Dance
  
  Saturday **June 10th**, we will need some help with organising the event. Please if you would like to help, get in touch with Sam on **samueljhardiman@hotmail.com**
It's official, spring is here!

We had our first lambs on Thursday 16th March. For me this is a real sign of spring, along with flowers on the Hawthorne and the grass beginning to grow in earnest. I have to remind myself it is still just March!

We have also had a litter of piglets born down at our Brookthorpe farm. We used a new breed of boar this year, he was a Duroc and is deep red colour, this meant our piglets came out for the first time with a colour other than black and pink! They are incredibly varied, we have spotty ones, ginger ones, black ones and a couple with a white strip over there shoulders like their mother. They are growing fast and enjoying the spring sunshine in the orchard.

The cows are still in the barn eating hay and silage. They are in the barn for a couple of reasons, not because they can't handle the cold and wet, but because they are big and heavy and their hooves would churn up the pasture, damaging the soil. Also their precious muck makes wonderful compost for the veg and hay meadows.

For many years on the farm for one reason or another we managed to get by with some pretty old and basic equipment and whatever we were missing we borrowed from our neighbors. However recently we have decided to invest in some new equipment. One of these machines I'm really exited to now own is a fence post driver that goes on the back of a tractor. It might seem like an odd thing, but when you take into account all the old and dilapidated fences we have, it will make repairing them a much easier job.

We are also investing in a comb harrow, this is used on the grassland to scarify the land, pulling out dead grass and moss and stimulating more grass growth. It can also be used to lightly cover freshly sown seeds, and even used as a weeding tool in some veg crops.

From next week we will be trialling an arrangement whereby you can select meat from the fridge at Hawkwood when collecting your veg. It will be re stocked twice a week and will work on a first come first served basis. If there is something in particular that you would like, or a large amount of something please get in touch with me and I can make that available to you. This method was stopped previously due to break ins and theft. However with a new door and lock I am cautiously optimistic it will work, and hopefully increase meat sales.

I would welcome any feed back you might have on the meat, and please, try a joint now and then, they are really delicious and not difficult to cook!

Farmer Sam Hardiman
As I write this in early March, the weather feels very spring like, the tree buds are swelling, the grass is growing, and many of the vegetables still left after the winter are putting on a new spurt of growth. But the weather can be fickle, particularly at this time of the year, and farmers very prone to worry (at all times of the year), and we could yet get a return to winter. It feels like we have had a proper winter this year, a relief after so many mild and wet winters, and everything has grown well on the farm. We still have plenty of cabbages, kale, parsnips and leeks left. We may all be a bit tired of those winter stalwarts but this is Britain, and this is local food grown on our own farm. To brighten things up though there is also plenty of chard and mixed salad in the polytunnels, and purple sprouting broccoli in the field to come later in the spring.

We have had one of the best crops of carrots ever this year. We are now lifting the very last of them but there has been little loss from carrot root fly and rots that we often get over the winter. I can’t remember the last time we were still able to harvest carrots in March. We will soon have to buy some in, stored UK carrots to begin with, and then usually new season Italian carrots as the UK ones run out. This then heralds the beginning of the “hungry gap”, that time of the year when all of the winter crops have finished but the new season crops have yet to reach maturity. We will have to buy in more and more imported crops as we go through May and June, before our main season crops are ready to harvest. We try to get produce from as local as possible, and we are fortunate that there are some local organic growers who grow in heated glasshouses, but we will still have to buy produce that comes from afar afield as Italy and Spain. Crops produced in our polytunnels will help to bridge this gap but there is still a fairly limited supply and variety of them.

In anticipation of the coming warmth and light we have sown thousands of seeds into trays in the greenhouse in the walled garden at Brookthorpe. These trays are kept on heated benches to keep off the worst of the cold. The peppers and tomato seedlings are grown under artificial light on their own heated bench, covered with plastic, heated to 20 degrees C. All of these seedlings will be planted out in the polytunnels and fields at Hawkwood as the weather warms and the soil dries out. The first crops sown directly in the polytunnels in February were the carrots and radish.

Let’s hope for a continued warm and dry spring.

Farmer Mark Harrison
On Monday 13th of March, members of Stroud Micro Dairy picked up raw milk for the first time from Oakbrook farm! Raw milk from Stroud for the Stroud region is now a reality. A big ‘thank you’ to everyone who helped make it possible. Throughout the week, and as this goes to print, we will be giving members a tour of the land, the cows and the dairy and answering their questions. As they collect their milk they will be given our snazzy glass milk bottles to refill every week.

It has certainly been an exciting time at Stroud Micro Dairy! Our cows calved early and gave birth to 7 beautiful calves that are full of life. Setting up our dairy we learnt many new skills in construction, plumbing and electricity and we were so lucky to find Ianto and Stan to work for us. After many set backs and many small victories however, we are open for business, with a dairy and parlor that is good on the land, approved by government bodies and suited to our needs. Our first volunteer started last week and we are so delighted that she is back for more! We have also had our first visit from a dairy farmer who pioneered aspects of small scale dairying in the UK and whom we look up to; that he was excited about our set up was quite something.

We look forward to seeing many of you over the coming months. As all our calves have calved we can now sign on more members! Please do also visit us on the land; we love visitors, as do the cows.

Kees and Alice

Stroud Micro Dairy is a small community supported dairy farm. We produce delicious and healthy raw milk, yoghurt and kefir.

We have seven cows to milk (with more on the way soon). We farm to regenerate soils using a method of farming that revolves around biology, life and the sun; to positively impact our soils, animals, people and the nature that surround us.

If you would like to know more or join the community please visit our website at:

www.stroudmicrodairy.co.uk
Purple sprouting broccoli

This is the time of year when we look forward to having purple sprouting broccoli in the veg share. Broccoli is in the Brassica family, the family of plants that includes cabbage, cauliflower, and cress etc, all bred over thousands of years from wild cabbages that are still found today growing on the coasts of Britain and Europe. The botanical name for broccoli is Brassica oleracea var italic and it probably originated in Italy and the eastern Mediterranean in the 17th century. It is very closely related to cauliflower (in fact in Cornwall they still call winter cauliflowers broccoli). There are three main types of broccoli; the ever present large green type, which is grown in the summer, and what I know as calabrese; the romanesco type, which has beautiful spiralled florets, grown in the autumn; and the sprouting type, either purple or white, grown over winter for picking in the spring.

We grow four different varieties of purple sprouting broccoli, all planted in July, and all maturing in succession from February till May. The first variety to mature, “Santee”, didn’t grow so well this year, the second “Rudolph” has grown okay but not great. We have been harvesting these two occasionally through February and March. Although the plants are very cold hardy, the sprouts that we eat (which are flower buds) aren’t, and they can be damaged by frost. This year we have suffered some frost damage but the pigeons have done more damage, and we had to set up a gas gun to scare them off (and annoy the neighbours in the process).

The next variety coming into bud now is “Cardinal” and “Burbank” (which is actually a white variety) which we expect to pick later in the spring. They are time consuming to pick but are worth it for the colour, taste and variety they give to the vegetable share.

Farmer Mark

Community building update

The community building is coming along steadily. There are a few areas we are working on at the moment. One of them is the roof. Some of you may have noticed it looking a bit odd with lots of sand bags and tires up there. This is to hold down the rubber roofing material till we get some soil up there to create our “living” roof.

Another still to do job is the final coat of render on the outside, and for that we would love you to give us a hand! The more hands the better actually.

We will be doing this and other jobs on Sunday 2nd April.

If you wish to help, please bring a pair of strong rubber gloves if you have them. We will provide tea and coffee if you bring enthusiasm and a willingness to muck in.

For more updates on progress and work days please see our Facebook page (at www.facebook.com/StroudCommunityAgriculture).
WANTED

SCA Treasurer

Perhaps you have some experience with managing money. Maybe you have worked on the finance side of a public, private, cooperative or voluntary sector organisation. And possibly you have a few hours a month spare.

Would you like to help SCA continue to flourish?

The Core Group is looking for a Treasurer to oversee the finances, make sure the group is advised on financial governance and support the running of SCA as a cooperative community organisation. You do not need to know about farming!

You would support others in managing money:

Mark Harrison, who looks after the farm budgets and expenditure, My Accounts Online, who do the bookkeeping and pensions, Accountants Godfrey Wilson Ltd, who prepare the annual accounts for the AGM.

You would oversee financial operations:

Authorise monthly wages for the farm team, and any exceptional payments.
View all SCA bank accounts, monthly cash flow, quarterly income & expenditure.
Review annual accounts and projected budgets for the AGM.

You would advise the Core Group:

Attend most monthly meetings to review budgets and plan investment.
Ensure financial management is fit for purpose (e.g. moving to online books).
Bring advice on any other aspects of financial governance.

These responsibilities should take no more than a few hours each month. As Treasurer you may find it useful to join the Core Group, for which the usual term is three years.

If you are interested, please contact:

Mark Harrison on 07891 615103 mark@plumtucker.co.uk
Francis Gobey on 07890 042877 francis.gobey@phonecoop.coop
• 2 large dollops of virgin coconut oil
• 4 cloves garlic
• half a fresh chilli or half a teaspoon dried chilli flakes
• zest and juice of one lime
• large bunch of fresh coriander with large stalks removed
• pinch of seasalt
• glug of extra virgin olive oil

Whizz it all up in a blender till totally smooth and use as a marinade/dip/salad dressing/sauce/spread - it's delicious with anything savoury. Kept in the fridge, it may loose its emerald brightness but will keep for 3 days and will solidify due to the coconut oil.

Hope that's useful - thanks to SCA for making me want to cook good food again. I had been rather disillusioned of late by my own rubbish allotment harvest and bland, expensive supermarket organics.

Alixandra
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 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 07891 615103 mark@plumtucker.co.uk
- Adam Biscoe 01453 759241 a.j.bisoe@gmail.com
- Francis Gobey 07890 042877 francis.gobey@phonecoop.coop
- Simon Hanks 01453 812608
- 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 Jade Bashford at jadebashford@hotmail.com

General enquiries and information: Clare & Paul Sheridan 0845 4580814
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Membership Admin: Carol Matthews membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

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