Dates for your Diary

- **Singing to the cows, 24th December** - Christmas Eve, Sunday 5:30pm, Brookthorpe
  We will be singing to the animals at Brookthorpe this year. Please make your way to the barn quietly. This is a very special event with a unique mood of reverence and rejoicing.

- **Farm work day at Hawkwood, 6th January** - Saturday, 10am-1pm (and every first Saturday of the month)
  This will be our second farm work day held on a Saturday, come along and we will treat you to a great company and some warm soup.

- **Three Kings Preparations, 6th January** - Saturday, 1:30-5pm, Hawkwood
  We will be stirring the preparations and spraying it on the land at Hawkwood, Oakbrook and Brookthorpe. Please see more details on page 4.

- **Candlemas at Brookthorpe, 4th February** - Sunday, 5pm
  Every year we celebrate the very beginning of spring by lighting candles on the farm at Candlemas. We will be gathering at 4:30pm to begin our ceremony at 5pm.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Winter Farm Report

In my last Farm Report I wrote about the subtle changing in the seasons and how I experience this working outside everyday... Well today (10th December) there was nothing subtle about the weather - we had a good blanket of snow with more in the forecast.

The cows are now settled into the barn for winter, and we recently had a little calf born. We have enough hay and straw to see us through the winter which feels good as the weather gets colder. We also had a great crop of fodder beet that we harvested with the help of Class 3 from Wynstones School.

The sheep will stay outside during the winter as they don't churn up the soft ground like the cows would.

We have had a litter of piglets recently, they are growing fast and will be snuggling close to their mum for warmth the next few days! In fact I was in Mexico for an old friend’s wedding when the piglets were born. It was a last minute trip and I would like to thank the farm team for stepping up and covering for me. It was great to be able to relax knowing I had a good team taking care of things while I was away.

Some less positive news: we were recently burgled and the thieves took all the farm’s power tools and some hand tools. Fortunately all equipment was insured but still it was a pretty big shock to us. It happened in the middle of the day at Brookthorpe while we were working at Hawkwood and all the tools were kept in a locked room.

As the Winter approaches we are still busy at the farm. There is no more planting or weeding to do, but there are other tasks that need doing. The work includes servicing the tractors, building the starter farm poly-tunnel and improving our cattle handling system. We have done some fence repair recently, which is now much easier with our own post knocker, but there is still more work to do.

I would like to say a big thank you and good bye to David Lashley. David has been working with us this year and is now off to pastures in sunny France. We are very envious, I hope it all goes well. Thank you!

Farmer Sam
News from the Veggie Fields

We are going in to the winter time with an abundance of vegetables in the fields, in the vegetable store, and growing in the polytunnels at Hawkwood. It has been a very good growing season and hopefully the winter will continue in a similar manner and be kind to us. We have harvested all of the beetroot, squash, celeriac and kohlrabi, crops which can be damaged by severe cold weather, and put into the well insulated vegetable store at Brookthorpe. We had a good crop of potatoes this year, but they are now all gone, and we now buy them in from a local organic grower.

The polytunnels are invaluable at this time of year. As the summer crops finish we clear them and immediately plant up vegetables for the winter. These are mostly mixed salad plants (in 3 of the 5 polytunnels) and chard (in one tunnel), with some spring cabbage for harvest in April. The polytunnels provide a much warmer climate for the plants, but they won’t stop the plants from freezing if it gets very cold. There are mornings when we find the salad plants frozen and have to wait till later in the day before we can cut them. So the crops grown there still have to be tolerant of the cold, though they wouldn’t grow at all without that protection. The other difficulty inside the tunnels is the damp. The modern plastic tunnel covers have anti-condensation properties, but still on cold nights the tunnels get very damp, which encourages fungal diseases and mildew. So the quality of the leaves usually deteriorates gradually during the winter but we usually have enough to see us through till when the days lengthen and everything begins to grow strongly.

On the subject of polytunnels, we have begun construction of the new tunnel on Oakbrook for the Starter Farm. We have cultivated the plot and concreted in the ground posts. The frame has all but been erected and hopefully we will put the plastic on early next year. Kit will be managing this tunnel when she returns to run the Starter Farm next year.

Our farmer David will be leaving us at Christmas. He is intending to move down to the south of France to take up a growing position there in the Mediterranean sun. Thank you for all of your help David and I wish you the best. As I wrote in my last article, Sam and Else are to stay on for another season (in the British sun). Thank you to you as well for making up a great farm team.

Farmer Mark
Three Kings Preparation
6th January, 1:30 - 5pm

On Saturday 6th January you are warmly invited to join us at Hawkwood to stir the three kings’ preparation and then help to spray it out over the land at Hawkwood and Brookthorpe and also at Oakbrook farm. You can take a little home for your own patch too if you so wish.

This preparation has a different purpose to that of the biodynamic preparations which the farm uses to stimulate soil life, enhance fertility and improve quality. This preparation can be seen as an offering to the earth and to the many nature beings that are continually at work to ensure that harmony prevails in nature. Although unseen to most of us we can have an inkling of their presence when for instance morning vapours gently caress the banks of streams or a flock of birds adjusts its movement to the flow of air on the woodland edge. We can also feel the vitality in landscape transition zones, hedgerows and brook sides and cultivate a sense for the spirit living in the different places. As farmers and gardeners we also work to create and maintain a harmonious balance in the landscape between the plants we are growing, the livestock and all the manifestations of wild nature.

There was once a biodynamic farmer based in southern Germany called Hugo Erbe. He was actively farming in the middle of the last century and so experienced the destruction of the second world war. He was a musician and had a great sensitivity towards the more subtle and intimate processes occurring in nature. He also had the capacity to perceive the activity of nature beings. At the end of the war in 1945 a nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima with catastrophic consequences for the people of Japan. On his farm in Germany Hugo Erbe felt how this event inflicted a wound on the earth as a whole and could experience how it even affected the activity of nature spirits living on his farm. He described them as becoming confused and chaotic. He then asked himself whether there was something he could do to recreate harmony and begin to heal the wounds.

After much meditative thought he came up with idea of the three king’s preparation. The legend of the three wise men who came bearing gifts for the Christ child contains within it deep mystical truths. Each wise man came from another corner of the then known world – Europe, Asia and Africa. As ‘kings’ of their realms they chose gifts that could represent the pinnacle of their people’s cultural achievement and at the same time correspond to the three distinct yet equally important human qualities of wisdom, devotion and sacrifice. The red king brought gold, the blue king frankincense and the green king myrrh. In relation to nature these can be connected to the magic of dawn (gold), midnight (frankincense) and sunset (myrrh) the key transition moments of night and day. A deeper study of these three gestures can discover many further connections.

Hugo Erbe then decided to create a preparation from these three substances as a gift to the nature spirits so that they could once again find peace and harmony and begin to heal the wounds inflicted on the earth. Making the preparation is a two stage process. On New Year’s Eve during the hour of midnight we will be dynamising these three substances in preparation for stirring them in water and spraying the land on January 6th.

If you would like to join in a New Year’s Eve celebration that includes this process please contact Bernard Jarman Tel. 01453 757436

Bernard
Inspections and Certifications

The farm is fully certified biodynamic and organic by the certification body Demeter. This involves two annual inspections, one for the production of vegetables and livestock on the farm, and one for packing and processing of the veg share.

The latter of these two inspections was instigated for the first time last year as our turnover reached a threshold. The inspector checks that the vegetables that we buy in to supplement the share are of organic origin, and that our processing and packing systems meet the relevant regulations. This is done by checking through our invoices and procedures, and a visual inspection.

In order to maintain a balanced range of veg in the share we buy in other organic produce when we don’t have our own. If you collect your share from either Brookthorpe or Hawkwood, you will see which is bought in as we write the place of origin in brackets on the share list. Currently we are buying in onions from Herefordshire and potatoes from Wootton-Under-Edge. We grow little of these two and usually have to buy them in from November onwards. Hopefully we will have plenty of our own veg now throughout the winter until we run short in April until June. We try to buy in locally grown or UK veg but often have to buy in veg from as far afield as Italy if no UK produce is available. This is common with all box schemes and CSAs that provide veg twelve months of the year.

For the production certification the inspector checks through our documentation and paperwork, including our records for livestock levels, veterinary visits, cropping plans, seed purchases, and field work. On one occasion some sample crops were sent for chemical analysis.

Just as a side note, our apprentice from last year, Page, is now an inspector with the Biodynamic Association. I don’t think they will let her inspect us though.

Farmer Mark

A Nutritional Query

Food reduced to mineralised nutrients alone does not fully feed or nourish us;
That which makes for wholeness and sustains us in our daily bread;
Is the uniqueness of its innate vitality;
Is spirit and is life.

As a baker I have for a long time been aware of the bio-active nature of both yeast and sourdough starter, as substances that have a biological effect, but have wondered about the role of the Ayurvedic term ‘prana’ (vital life energy) and its incorporation into our daily diet.

I would be happy to hear from anyone in our Stroud community, who may be able to give advice on the subject.

Many thanks,
Simon Hanks
tel. 01452 812608
Chickens are coming!

As of next spring, eggs from Oakbrook Farm will be available to buy, courtesy of a batch of 100 laying hens arriving in April. They will be a colourful bunch, a mix of breeds including Lohmann Brown, Rhode Rock, Silver Link and White Leghorn. These girls (plus 2 cockerels to keep order within the flock) are to live in a mobile coop which will be moved to follow the cows of Stroud Micro Dairy around the pasture. Here they will provide a valuable pasture cleansing and fertilising service. As they gobble up unwanted larvae and insects, they will spread the cow manure about by their scratching, and impart their own fertile droppings too. All this will contribute to the aim of improving soil health and fertility on the farm, with the added bonus of producing lots of lovely eggs! As they will live a very natural lifestyle with lots of fresh pasture to range in, the eggs will be super nutritious and delicious. They will be kept to organic standards although the land is still in conversion so they will not yet be certified.

Look out for more info in the spring newsletter.

Ellie Price

Would you like to buy organic olive oil and a citrus fruit box direct from a farm in Andulcia? 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.

La Jimena Olive Oil, Olives and Fruitbox

Will be delivered to the stroud sc in February 2018 from our family farm in Southern Spain!

Once again we are excited to offer to you our organically grown

- Olive Oil of high quality harvested by hand from ancient olive tree varieties
- Fruitshare Boxes containing La Jimena olive oil,
  Sunripened Citrus with the full flavour you would not find elsewhere in the uk and sundried figs.
- Olives dried or in Brine and more.

La Jimena Olive Oil 11 £15 / 2l £28 / 3l £39 / 5l £60 25l £270

Olives in Brine 1 kg £8
Dried Olives 0.5 kg £8
Extra Oranges £2.50 kg
Extra Mandarins or Lemons or Sevilles £3.50/kg
Sundried Tomatoes £3/100gr; Sundried Cherries £6/100gr
once again Herbsalt £3/200gr
New: Almonds cracked £3/100gr or in the shell £3/kg
New: ceramic oil pourer from local potter £10

- A standard fruitshare box contains 5 litres of La Jimena olive oil, and 10 kilos of mixed citrus and sundried figs.
  Price £99. 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 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 oilv oil@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 Brookhorpe,, GL4 1UN

please note your phone no. 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 Andulacia Spain

La Jimena olives are grown on the sunny slopes of the sierra nevada without pesticides. They are picked from the ancient trees, carefully washed and dried, then milled within 48 hours of harvesting.
Everyone is welcome to join in and enjoy the farm, including non-members.

For almost a year now we have had a long waiting list to join the farm, but now we have the starter farm up and running we have spaces for new members. 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.biscoe@gmail.com
- Francis Gobey 07890 042877 francis.gobey@phonecoop.coop
- Simon Hanks 01452 812608
- Sam Hardiman 07531 270206 samueljhardiman@hotmail.com
- Michal Chodasewicz 01453 825103 micho0281@gmail.com
- Tarra Gilder-Rai 07981 760982 tarragilderrai@gmail.com
- Bernard Jarman 01453 757436 orion@phonecoop.coop
- Aleksandra Osinska 07435 344640 creativealeks@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 Mathews membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

**Newsletter:** Aleksandra Osinska creativealeks@gmail.com

www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org