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# **NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2004**

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- Top Tips

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Stroud Community Agriculture produces organic food locally. It is supported by a community of people who share the financial costs of the farm. They also share the produce that comes from the farm.

For more details on Stroud CA – see back page.

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Farm News......We Have A New Tractor!

# Farm News..... We Have A New Tractor! Laurence Dungworth

It is big and (almost) shiny and red and it has made me a happy farmer. It means now that I can freely get on with looking after the fields, doing topping and harrowing when it needs it through the growing season. There, now I have that out of the way I can tell you all the more important things.

I wanted to let you know about visiting the farm. Since the last newsletter we have has a lot of visits. In February Mark and I were visited by the Demeter inspector. Demeter is the official name of produce grown according to biodynamic methods. (Demeter was also the Greek goddess of the earth's fertility). He looked at our files and paperwork and then around the farm. As a result of that visit, Hawkwood now has its own organic certification, and we are officially 'Biodynamic in conversion'. Biodynamics is the oldest official form of organic agriculture, yet goes beyond most organic thinking in seeing that all life is interconnected. Thus, stronger emphasis is placed on the influence of the movement of the planets, and on the ideal of closed-farm systems where the farm feeds the animals and the animals manure the farm. Various preparations are also used to bring about harmonious growth and ripening. I will leave some biodynamic leaflets in the Hawkwood packing shed for anyone who is interested, though I am always happy to talk about it. I have also been applying some of these preparations late on a Sunday afternoon and would be very happy for any interested people to come and join in. It is probably best to phone and make sure that I will be there (01453 753768 / 07799015499).

The quality of the next visits we had contrasted quite strongly. Firstly we had a small group of academics from a Japanese university who were interested in the success of community supported agriculture in Britain. Through an interpreter I told them as best I could about the development and success of Stroud Community Agriculture. Being

academics we spent most of the time sitting in Hawkwood and discussing the issues with just a short walk around the farm. The next visit was more practically based. There were 8 or 9 permaculture students from Bristol who were very interested in the land itself, but they were also very impressed with how things are managed and the involvement of the community. Hopefully we can offer a little inspiration to people to begin to explore new models of farming.

Just at the beginning of this month we had hundreds of people visiting. It is true that they were coming for Hawkwood Open Day, but a strategically placed Land Rover meant that everybody's first contact was Janet handing out our new leaflet and enthusing about Stroud Community Agriculture. About 30 people came on a tour of the farm, and scores more came to see and scratch the pigs - both the big Hog Hands pigs as well as the new Gloucester Old spots.

Now the only other person to visit your farm is you. It is very wonderful to see you at your workdays (on the third Saturday of every month), collecting your veg, saying hello to your pigs, but I am sure I have not met all of you. That may be my fault for not being there at the right time, but I do hope that you all feel very welcome to be there. In June we will be having a barbecue after the workday (the  $19^{th}$ ), and in July ( $17^{th}$ ) we will be making hay and I will need all the help I can get. Hopefully these opportunities enable us to meet each other

Laurence Tel: 01453 753768 / 07799015499

# A Community Orchard

There is a danger that a Stroud-based allotment will be sold off for building. To prevent this, Adrian Lawton has offered to pay the rent on all the vacant allotments for a year to buy time to develop a community orchard on the site. We could then plant fruit trees next winter and set up a community supported orchard along similar lines to Stroud Community Agriculture. In order to make this happen we need people / person to help manage / coordinate the project. Elements of management will include:

- Managing the membership of the project
- Recruiting someone to plant and maintain the trees
- Drawing up a budget (annual rent cost + species purchase)
- Arranging a public meeting to discuss options and develop local support
- Publicising the new project (once everything is in place).

If you can help with any of this please contact Adrian Lawton on 01453 764574

# Our Cows Are Named!!

Grace has been named by Eliza Felicity Grace Stokes.

Hazel has named by Finlay Ferguson and

Daffodil was named by Saffia Morris

We also have the name for our first calf (when it comes) - Shimmer - courtesy of Chay Morris. Come up and see them in the field. Or come for the barbecue and we can all go together and let them know their new names!

Top Tips—It's easy to refresh your vegetables...

Here's an easy way to refresh all greens if they've gone a bit limp.

It's suitable for all green salad, cabbage, purple sprouting, herbs, spinach, chard etc., even cut flowers which have travelled in the car for instance. Fill a mixing bowl or washing up bowl with cold water, enough to cover the veg and add a small piece of bread, not more than couple of cms cubed needed. The veg is able to use the starch in the bread, so after a couple or three hours, sometimes less, it will be as crisp as when freshly picked.

This is a trick we've used successfully for years, but I can't remember who told us about it. The main thing is that it works

Jehanne Mehta

# News from the veggie patch

Since our last newsletter we have erected both the polytunnels. There is still more to be completed but they are both functioning and I am now harvesting the first produce from the first tunnel. I am very pleased with them and it is a pleasure to be inside the tunnels in such a productive area. I would like to thank all of you who came to help cover the tunnels, it is on such days that I really feel the strength of the people supporting the farm.

May is a very busy month on the farm, growth is very luxuriant, and it feels as though we have to run to stand still, but ironically there is not a lot of produce to harvest. In order to cover this 'hungry gap' I will be buying in a lot of produce over the next few weeks, some of it from the Continent but as much as possible from the UK. We made a decision last year to not buy in any produce from further a field than Europe. The only organic onions that I can currently buy come from Argentina.

We have begun outdoor plantings including the new plot over the road. Two thirds of that plot has been sown with grass and clovers (called a green manure) to improve the fertility and structure of the soil for future crops. The top third will planted out with plants from the cabbage family. So this year we will have doubled our area of vegetable land. At this time last year we had 25 members receiving 35 shares, this year we have 50 members receiving 60 shares.

Our landlord has kindly fitted a new packhouse door so you won't need a jemmy bar and winch to open it now. Hawkwood are also arranging for electricity to be laid on to the old hay barn (costs to be shared by us, Hawkwood and David at Amber

Sculpture). From there we will run a cable to the packhouse and move the freezers over sometime, plug in the fridge for the summer, and install some proper lights.

Well that's my news for now. Don't forget our summer get together on June 19th.

See you there. Mark

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# Help Required - Benches needed

Cotswold Care Hospice have asked us about our vegetables and also about people coming to enjoy the landscape at the farm. Some visitors are infirm and would need a bench to be able to enjoy the view. No doubt other visitors would enjoy a few quiet moments on a bench too. Would anyone like to make or give the farm a bench, preferably a nice looking wooden one?

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## Supermarkets Shun UK Organic Food

Tesco, Asda and Safeway are importing substantial amounts of organic food rather than buying from UK farmers, even when UK supplies are available, according to a survey by the Soil Association, the UK's main charity promoting organic food. In the period covered by the survey, less than a quarter of the organic pork on sale in Asda was from UK farms, in Tesco only half the pork and under half the organic beef was British. Only 13% of Safeway's cauliflowers were home-grown, and in Asda only 19% of onions.

The Soil Association is urging organic shoppers to ask their supermarkets for UK food that can be produced here if they find that it is not available. The charity is particularly concerned about imported pork and beef.

In the UK, farmers producing organic pork must meet high animal welfare standards, which is not always the case in other countries. All imported organic food must meet European organic legal requirements, but for some

products such as pork these may be lower than the standards required of organic pork reared in the UK. Some EU countries allow pigs that have lived nearly half their lives indoors, and have been bred from non-organic parents, to be sold as organic.

The Soil Association has written to Tesco and Asda asking whether they can assure their customers that their imported organic beef and pork is produced to the same high animal welfare and environmental standards as beef and pork from animals reared in the UK. However, the Soil Association's survey found that 100% UK sourcing is possible: in Waitrose all organic carrots, chicken, beef and pork were home produced, as was all the organic beef and pork in Safeway.

In Marks & Spencer all organic carrots were from the UK. Sainsbury's managed to source 96% of beef and pork from UK farmers, and Marks & Spencer achieved 95% with beef. Waitrose achieved 99% UK-sourced potatoes.

Nearly 1,000 shoppers around the country visited their local supermarkets to find out what percentage of staple organic

vegetables and meat on sale were produced in the UK. All these products were in season at the time (mid-November to mid-December 2003) and readily available from UK organic farmers.

Peter Melchett, the Soil Association's Policy Director said, "We congratulate Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer on their achievements, but some supermarkets are letting down their customers and UK organic farmers.

"It is unacceptable for staple foods like cauliflowers and carrots to be imported when they are in season in the UK, and in plentiful supply. Buying British organic food supports British farmers, guarantees the highest standards of animal welfare and helps British wildlife thrive. It also cuts down unnecessary food miles, reducing pollution and climate gas emissions.

"All organic consumers value the high standards of animal welfare and environmental stewardship inherent in fully organic systems, and we believe Tesco and Asda customers have a right to know if these standards are not being met when they buy imported organic meat."

The Government has set a target for 70% of organic food on sale in supermarkets to be sourced from the UK by 2010 as part of the

Organic Action Plan, which was launched by the Government in 2002. The Soil Association has written to Ben Bradshaw, the Government minister responsible for organic food and farming, asking him to raise these results with Tesco, Asda and Safeway.

None of the supermarkets were consistently good, or bad. For example, Waitrose only managed to source 41% of their organic onions from the UK (the third best performance), and Sainsbury's achieved 23%.

Marks & Spencer did worse than any supermarkets in the survey with potatoes (58%). Tesco were second best on chicken (96%). As well as sourcing 100% UK pork and beef, Safeway were third best on potatoes, and Asda sourced 96% of their carrots from the UK.

The survey results were revealed in the spring edition of Living Earth, the Soil Association's publication for members. Living Earth is available for £2 a copy at selected retailers including Planet Organic and Fresh and Wild.

To become a member, call 0117 914 2444 or visit www.soilassociation/support The full results of the survey are available at www.soilassociation.org/supermarketsurvey

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#### We Now Have A New Website!!

Put together by **Dave Cockcroft** with some considerable skill, the website is now live. There are pages that tell how the project came about, what is involved in becoming a member, the core principles of the community farm and much more. There is also lots of scope for to developing it further. All ideas are welcome. Do visit the site and let us know what you think.

## www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Dave writes .....I'm a new member of Stroud Community Agriculture although a familiar face around Stroud. I'm a self employed website developer, part time photographer and full time greenie. A Bisley Roader with two kids and lots of apple trees who spends too much of his time running Stroud Woodcraft Folk. I used to travel to London a lot and do well paid meaningless work for banks and the like. Now I walk or cycle to poorly paid but much more fulfilling work around and about Stroud. So if you need a website, or know someone with lots of money to spend on a website then email or call me. Dave Cockcroft - <a href="mailto:dave@cynatech.co.uk">dave@cynatech.co.uk</a> Tel: 07768 418960

# Pork Processing Day

A chance to come and experience the art of sausage and salami making, to learn what to do with which cut, and how to traditionally cure and keep your meat.

# Mid Winter (Candlemas) Festival Bernard Jarman

This year our festival was celebrated on Sunday 1st February. This is the feast day of St. Bride so important in the Celtic world. Legend tells how these people in the far west of Scotland and Ireland were able to experience directly the moment of Jesus' birth. It also tells how Bride travelled to Bethlehem as in a dream and nursed the child for one night. Through this she became known as the foster mother of Christ. How this legend relates to Candlemas can perhaps be pondered on as can also the connection with Imbolc the pre-Christian Celtic festival of purification (from where perhaps the traditional idea of spring cleaning originated). Another legend (from Greece) is that of Persephone who was taken into the underworld and who to this day must spend half a year below and half a year

above the earth. Candlemas is the time she could return to the surface of the earth. It is fascinating to learn of the very different ways in which this festival period is celebrated across the world and also discover what each has in common.

This year we made candles in the earth and lit them. While they hardened we walked over the land to a little forest cabin to have a bring and share meal around a fire. Afterwards when it was completely dark, we walked back over the fields carrying lanterns and see the now lit and twinkling candles shining from the fields.



At the moment we have a good supply of beef - mostly cuts good for the barbecue, such as steaks, sausages and mince - and we should be having more pork towards the end of May - lots of bacon and sausages. I plan to be at Hawkwood on Wednesday mornings between 9 and 10 if people want to buy some, though I am happy to arrange to meet at other times.

Give me a call on 01453 753768 or 07799015499

are needed to help make the summer festival happen on 19 June - ideas welcome For example why not bring a musical instrument, inviting new people who might be interested to see the farm, taking the photos, organising a fire, running a BBQ, setting up something for the children. Please contact the core group with your ideas.

A member has given the community some bee hives and kit, including a suit. They need a bit of a makeover. Would anyone like to volunteer to care for bees and make honey for the community?

Please call the core group if you are interested.

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# Thank you......

Thanks are due to the member who has loaned a substantial sum to help with our cash flow. This makes it possible to manage at times such situations as we had recently, when we had to buy the polytunnels before our grant money arrived. Thanks also to another member who made a generous gift towards our new tractor and to Dave at Days Cottage for the donation of wooden barrel in response to our capital appeal. Thanks must also go to Global Organics and Days Cottage for gifts of pig feed



#### Volunteers at the farm

Occasional or regular volunteers at the farm will be welcome to help with growing and harvesting vegetables, care of livestock, and care of the land. Interested?

Please call Mark 01453 753 866 or Laurence 01453 753 768 if interested.

#### **Events**

Farm Days on the morning of the third Saturday in every month;

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June, work morning followed by summer barbecue and informal meeting. All welcome.

Saturday 17th July, haymaking. All welcome.

....and the third Saturday of every month

# September 04

10 - 12 September 2004 - Soil Association

#### Conference

#### "Finding our Food Culture"

The final conference of the Cultivating Communities Project at Abbey Home Farm, Burford Road, Cirencester, Gloucs,

## Aims

- To explore the impact of food culture on sustainable agriculture and communities
- To encourage local food activism
- To provide a networking opportunity for community supported
- agricuture groups and food activists

### Who should attend?

Members of organisations promoting and supporting local, organic, community food initiatives - CSAs!.

# Format

Day 1: Fri 10th Sept - speakers and workshops - £40 for Individuals

Days 2 & 3: Sat 11th & Sun 12th - Events around the farm both to

explore the conference theme and to appeal as a family weekend on an organic farm - £40 adults and £20 children

Bookings and Information contact Lucy Wallis, T:0117 9142425,

E:lwallis@soilassociation.org

#### **Activities**

Presentations and displays by CSAs from around the UKWorkshops: organising farm events / growing vegetables for local retail / running a farm shop / establishing a local organic group / CSA: discussing shared development issues Cooking demonstrations

Art, drama, poets and storytellers Barn dance / BBQ / Organic bar.

# 24 Sept 7.30 — Shared Meal

I'd like to arrange another shared meal for Harvest time. People to bring a dish and their friends to share as before.

For more information contact Jade Bashford (Venue to be decided)

# What is Stroud Community Agriculture?

In 2001, a group of people came together wanting to care for land and grow food in a new way. We agreed 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 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.

We have about 60 members who share the costs of running a 23-acre organic farm at Wick Street, near Stroud. Two farmers work with us. The farmers are paid a fair wage and the farm works for the principles above, not for profit. Members can work on the farm if they wish, but this is not compulsory. They can also use the land for celebrations and social events, and we often come together for work days, bonfires, picnics, meetings etc. We are a co-op and the members decide collectively how to run the farm. A 'core group' of members undertake most of the organising. Members share the produce and receive a weekly box of vegetables. This is a quote from a recent new member "I just

received my first bag of vegetables and they are great and bursting with health". We have some pigs for meat and hope to expand towards a 100-acre farm for eggs, beef, milk, bread, fruit, and other produce.

We would like to welcome more members. Members agree to support the principles above, and pay different contributions according their means and how much food they would like.

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

# Stroud Community Agriculture core group contacts:

Bernard Jarman: 01453 757436 <a href="mailto:bernardnkarin@phonecoop.coop">bernardnkarin@phonecoop.coop</a>
Jade Bashford 01453 885233 jadebashford@hotmail.com

Greg Pilley 01453 885233 gpilley@soilassociation.org

Simon Charter 01453 755614

Laurence Dungworth 0779 901 5499 <a href="mailto:laurencedungworth@yahoo.co.uk">laurencedungworth@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Mark Harrison 01453 753866 <a href="mailto:mark\_harrison@onetel.net.uk">mark\_harrison@onetel.net.uk</a>
Nick Weir 01453 840037 <a href="mailto:nick.weir@freeuk.com">nick.weir@freeuk.com</a>

In December 2003 Stroud Community Agriculture received a £20,200 National Lottery grant from the £15.3 million Social, Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Programme, for its Growing Home project. The SEED Programme, managed by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) and 11 consortium partners, distributes National Lottery money on behalf of the New Opportunities Fund, under its Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities funding programme.

The SEED Programme aims to stimulate local economic development and support community enterprise, promoting sustainability and helping disadvantaged communities improve the quality of their environment. For more information visit RSNC's website: www.rsnc.org/seed