

Stroud Community Agriculture Ltd is registered in England as an Industrial and Provident Society number 29578R

Newsletter 13 Stroud Community Agriculture Autumn 2004

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.

Farm News.....Holidays

Laurence Dungworth

Over the last few weeks many of you may have had only one thing on your mind – HOLIDAY! So while this is still fresh, I thought I might share some of my thoughts about holidays.

We farmers take a holiday, but of course the farm never does. The plants, and the weeds, grow every day, the animals need feeding, everything carries on as normal. When Mark was away Sarah, our new apprentice, worked very hard to get all your vegetables ready. When I am away I will have to ask Mark and Sarah to look after the animals. And if you go on holiday? Of course we still need to plant and weed so that the vegetables are ready when you come back, and the animals still need the same attention.

I don't see your £30/month payment as payment for the vegetables, but rather as your contribution to support the farm – and this still needs to happen when people are away. Your annual 12 payments of £30 equates to a weekly payment of £7.50 for your veg for 48 weeks [plus 4 free weeks!!]. We hope you still consider this to be a valuable arrangement, even if you miss a few weeks for your holidays.

Continuing this theme – we have had several requests from people who grow their own vegetables and would like to have veg from SCA for only maybe 6 months of the year. In the core group meetings we are currently trying to formalise our response to this so that the needs of the farm are met but people are not penalised if they choose not to collect vegetables for a period. Most members ask a friend to collect and eat their veg when they go away. This helps spread the word and makes sure the veg is not wasted. If, however you are not able to find anyone to take your vegetables while you are away, please let Mark know in advance (phone 01453 753866 or email mark@plumtucker.co.uk) so that we can share it amongst the rest of us, and not let it go to waste.

Going back to my holidays, it is easy for me to go away, knowing that if I ask Mark he will take on my responsibilities. It would be even easier if others also wanted to share this. To enable this, and to give the opportunity for further involvement, we would like to extend the 'Hoghands' project into a 'Farmhands' scheme. There are many little jobs around the farm that can be done by anyone.

One person, or a family, could take responsibility to do one feeding each week for instance, or to do one particular task for a short time. The possibilities are endless and the situation vastly flexible. As well as being very helpful for the farm it will be hugely enjoyable and educational for those taking part. If you are at all interested please contact me so that we can arrange something (01453 753768 or 07799015499).

Well, soon I will be on my holiday, but I hope to see many of you at one of the various events as we go into the autumn. We will also be doing some hedge-laying from October, so come and join us on a Farm Day (third Saturday of every month) or any Tuesday or Friday to join in.

MARVELLOUS MEAT

We have a great selection of beef and pork available in the freezer in the pack shed at Hawkwood. Come and have a look at what we have or phone Laurence (07799015499) if you have any queries.

Also available for sale in the pack shed shop – bought in potatoes and onions if you need to buy extra to supplement your share.

News from the Veggie Patch

In my last report in May we were in the middle of the 'hungry gap', well now we are in the middle of the 'overfed gap', from rags to riches in 3 long months. Our wholesale sales of our surplus vegetables have been very good. Despite the hard work I am enjoying being able to harvest so much from the farm (at the moment everything bar the potatoes comes from the farm). There hasn't been much need to irrigate this year, something of a relief for me. The new patch of land over the road is looking quite productive but is terribly infested with field bindweed (a fact those of you who have been to a farm day may well know – thank you for your hard work). Unfortunately I fear that this will be an on going problem but I hope that I won't test your patience too much when you next come to a farm day.

I would like to welcome Sarah to the farm team. Sarah came in June as a volunteer and has enjoyed our scintillating company so much has decided to stay. She has written an article for this newsletter so I won't say anymore except to say thank you Sarah for all your hard work and enthusiasm (and for covering for me when I was away). While I'm on the subject thank you also to Simon Hanks, Liz Webber, Lucy, Jonathon and Lindsay, and all of you have helped out on farm days, you make my life easier and more fun.

Our membership has increased steadily over these last few months from 50 members receiving 60 shares in May to what will be at least 70 members receiving 80 shares this September. Eighty shares is the number I had based my planning on for this season and this brings up the question of whether we should set a limit on the number of members we have for the time being or, allow this growth to continue and buy in more produce to cover the inevitable shortfall of veg. If we do set a limit, then what should it be? We have been discussing this in the core group without coming to any conclusion as yet and we would love to hear from anyone who has any thoughts on this.

A quick note to those of you who collect your veg from the Painswick Inn or Green Spirit: There are often vegetables available on a 'pick your own' basis at Hawkwood. At the moment members who collect from Hawkwood are picking as much spinach, chard, parsley and basil as they need. If you would like to come up to Hawkwood to pick extra veg for your share, then please look on the board in the pack shed for what is available on a PYO basis and where to pick it from. Lastly, if any of you are going away and want to cancel for a week, or make any changes or have any queries then please phone or email me. Please note that my email address has changed to mark@plumtucker.co.uk (please use it, I check it every day). It is better to contact me directly about these things as messages can get mislaid or forgotten.

Thanks, Mark

Book Review

Have you read **Not on the Label** by Felicity Lawrence (Penguin 2004, £7.99)?

We found this book a real insight into the food industry of the 21st century. Felicity Lawrence's Introduction appears to be an essay in praise of supermarkets but even here the cracks in the glossy façade are starting to show. In the remainder of the book she examines in detail the top supermarket chains and exposes their overweening power, their sharp practices and their sheer meanness of spirit.

The principle chapters are entitled Chicken, Salad, Beans, Bread, Apples and Bananas, Coffee and Prawns, and The Ready Meal. Lawrence does not deal only with these products; rather, she uses them as vehicles to explore how the supermarkets have gained a stranglehold on food supply in the western world and how they attempt to dictate what we eat.

Her message is that if supermarkets supply cheap food to consumers, then someone somewhere else in the world is paying the true price, and that the cheap products are not merely lacking in taste and nutritional value, but are destroying social systems and people's lives. This is a compelling, if sometimes depressing, read but Felicity Lawrence's approach is pragmatic and cautiously optimistic. One is more convinced than ever that the future lies with local food suppliers and co-operative enterprises.

Pam and Mark Bowden

Eggs Anyone?

It looks as though it will be possible for us in a couple of months time or so to link up with a farm near Evesham who will be expanding their organic free range egg production. They will be able to deliver fresh eggs each Tuesday to Hawkwood. I would like to set up a regular supply of eggs to any members who would be interested in making a commitment to having a weekly order.

What I would like to do is make an order each week then set aside those eggs that are pre-ordered and have a few extra to sell in the shop as well. People collecting from Hawkwood could pay into the shop money tin each week. People collecting from PIP could leave money in the lockup. I would prefer people collecting from Greenspirit to buy eggs from Greenspirit to support Michael.

We are currently selling about 6 dozen eggs in our 'shop' each week. These eggs come from a collective of farms in Monmouthshire. I would like to get a system going as soon as possible with our new supplier, so in September I will leave a list in the 'shop' for you to write in your names if you would like some eggs set aside each week. Or you can phone me as soon as you've finished reading this article. We can be fairly flexible with this so you will be able to cancel your order from time to time by ringing me by the Saturday before.

The new supplier will be putting some information together about their production system and farm. I will display this in the shop when it arrives. The price will be a bit less than the current price but I don't know what it will be yet.

We would like to either produce our own eggs in the future, or support a more local farm but that is not possible at the moment. This is a good step in the right direction, supporting both a new business and our own farm.

Mark (Tel: 01453 753 866)

Membership Administrator Needed

As the membership of Stroud Community Agriculture grows, we need help to deal with the necessary paperwork. This involves a few hours every week processing new applications, responding to emails and phone messages and sending out joining packs and membership documents. Some basic computer experience is necessary. If you can help, please contact Nick on 01453 840037 or nick.weir@freeuk.com

Accountant Needed

Now that Stroud Community Agriculture is a grown-up limited company (Industrial and Provident Society) we need an accountant to prepare our year end figures. We would like to hear from anyone who can help with this – for a fee of course! Please call Mark on 01453 753866 or email mark@plumtucker.co.uk

Lets get in a Pickle!

We want to have a preserving evening soon, we have found a good recipe for courgette chutney!

We could also preserve other surplus depending what we have got.

Anyone interested should contact Sarah on 01453 836369 or sarahluddington@yahoo.com.au.

Shopping and producing locally is key to Organic's success

According to a survey published in August, nearly two-thirds of organic farmers rate their profitability as low or borderline, and 12% said their business is no longer viable at current prices.

While almost 90% of respondents said they expected to be farming organically in a year's time, 30% were undecided about whether that would be the case in five years. Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G) sent the survey to all 4,000 organic farmers and the findings are based on a 29% response rate (or 1,144 replies).

The key to success seems to be providing quality organic produce and encouraging people to shop at local farms.

Stroud Community Agriculture has its first apprentice! **Bernard Jarman**

From September Sarah will be starting her two year apprenticeship in biodynamic agriculture. She will be spending some of her time at Stroud Community Agriculture and the remainder at Ruskin Mill.

As part of the apprenticeship programme, several farms and gardens have joined forces to provide background seminars on a regular basis to all their apprentices. These seminars address different aspects of the biodynamic approach and include a mixture of theoretical, practical and artistic inputs. The emphasis is very much on enabling participants to research questions for themselves. Subjects covered include such themes as the farm organism, biodynamic preparations, the spirit of place, community, cycle of the year and nutrition. The seminars move around from place to place. In early May next year it is hoped that one of the seminars (on the biodynamic preparations) can be at Hawkwood. Every year the Biodynamic Association arranges two week long block courses for apprentices from all over the country. These focus by turns on the soil, plants, animals and astronomy. The next one will take place at Oaklands Park in October on the theme of animals.

Each apprentice has regular tutorials (usually) with the farmer, participates in a study group and keeps a weekly diary. In the second year he/she chooses a project to work on and present at the end of the training. A certificate is presented by the Biodynamic Association at the end of the training. There is usually no shortage of opportunities for the graduating apprentice.

Learning about biodynamic farming and gardening is a very comprehensive education. There are very few vocations so linked to the entirety of life as agriculture. Many young people join the apprentice course in order to learn how to care for the earth, bring about positive change, work with others and discover themselves. These are all goals that also underpin community supported agriculture. With Sarah starting her apprenticeship here at the farm this autumn, Stroud Community Agriculture has reached a new landmark in its development.

A warm and renewed welcome to Sarah!

Hello From Sarah!

Hello there, I am Sarah Luddington and I have been working with Mark and Laurence at SCA since the beginning of June. Up until the end of August, I was living and working part-time at Hawkwood College. I really enjoyed having such regular contact with the farm. I got to do lots of pig feeding and scratching, helped catch our swarm of bees from the shrubbery on the Hawkwood patio and welcomed our calf Shimmer one summer evening. It has also meant that I have had the chance to meet quite a few members as you have come to pick up your vegetables. Thanks to the community work days and our recent camp out (which was great fun) I now have the picture of many member's faces in my head. This is what I really enjoy about working for SCA.

I recently worked on an organic farm in Australia that sold vegetables to organic wholesalers. The wholesalers then sold them to the retailers and the retailers to the consumers. Growing for such a market means the grower tends to equate a box of vegies to the amount of money expected from the wholesaler or supermarket. Will the price be good? Are the vegies sufficiently uniform? The person who actually eats the food is quite an abstract figure and in a way, none of your business. When growing for a community supported agriculture project, the main focus is the members. Did they get beetroot last week? When will the tomatoes come on? Our daily thoughts whilst out in the field are focused on the people we are growing for. This makes it quite a different experience! It seems like a much more natural and pleasurable motivation. For me it keeps it real and makes all the hard work worthwhile.

In September I am beginning the two year Biodynamic Agriculture Apprenticeship part time at SCA and part time at Ruskin Mill. Although I will be living in a Ruskin Mill house in Nailsworth I will look forward to meeting more members at the coming work days and various community events.

Is there anyone who drives from Nailsworth to Stroud in the mornings? I will be looking for a lift Tuesdays and Fridays. Please leave a message for Mark or Laurence if you think you could help.

Sarah Luddington

The Finances

As of this year I have taken over the role of treasurer and I thought that you might be interested to hear how things are going financially. At the beginning of the year Laurence and I put together a budget for this year. Our growth has met the projections that we made and as I mentioned in my other article could be exceeded easily at the end of the year. However we underestimated some of our expenses, particularly on vegetable produce bought in, and on labour, and I think that at the end of the year we will just break even.

Cash flow was difficult for the first half of the year as we spent out a lot of money on capital items and farm expansion as well as the usual farm running costs. We need to plan for this for next year. If anyone is willing to lend us money on an interest free basis to help then please talk to me. We have been given various gifts totaling about £2,600 and a loan of £1,500.

This year we have spent a total of £13,700 on capital items including:

polytunnels:	£4,400
farm machinery:	£1,700
livestock :	£2,300
irrigation/water:	£800
tractor:	£3,200
other items:	£1,300.

Of this total we have spent £6,200 of our own money, and £7,500 of it came from the SEED grant. We still have a further £750 to spend from the grant.

Our shop has been very successful averaging about £110 turnover a week for the past 5 weeks. About half of this is meat sales, which of course are sales that we had budgeted on anyway, but it has made it very easy for people to buy what they need. I really feel that it adds another positive element to our enterprise.

Our current monthly income is £2,300. So in summary our finances are tight. We have made a lot of investment this year and we have expanded very rapidly. We do have about £4,000 balance in our accounts from month to month and hopefully as we go into the last part of this year we will save a little more.

Mark.

Camping at the Farm

It was hoped that the sun would shine – and it certainly did! In the searing afternoon heat of Saturday August 7th, a group of hardy SCA members gathered for a one-night camping adventure.

When I organised the event I didn't know whom, if anybody, would come. So it was with much relief that, having pitched our own tent, a steady trickle of other campers arrived. Although not everyone in attendance knew one another, this did not seem to matter.

Everyone fused, perhaps united by their being part of something special – the farm. It was also great to see children having such great fun – roaming free and unshackled from their “usual” domestic routines.

Later, as the sun dipped behind the hills, cool air and darkness descended into the valley. Under a star-peppered sky, people sought the warmth and mesmerising glow of the campfire. Campfire conversations were full of humour too. Perhaps frazzled by too much sun and possibly too much home-brew, all talk of self-sufficiency, sustainability and the virtues of community participation and empowerment were sidelined. After all, there was a more pressing issue: what to do with the ubiquitous courgettes! All this against the background of good old campfire music, courtesy of Andy, Nadine, Keith, Nigel and Al.

Special thanks to Hawkwood College, to Mark and Laurence and to everybody who came, enabling us all to have such a memorable time. Shall we do it again?

Dave Judd

Fruitshare

Great news the feedback was positive about the last Fruitshare - the idea of having a nest of supporters/friends in Stroud sounds really good to me! We are excited about producing a high quality olive oil and creating a link between the farm and you, the people, who use the olive oil.

We are using the concept of CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) to connect farms and people who eat its produce. Interested people subscribe to a harvest share and can choose to spend some time on the farm in Spain. In our case you get a box of mixed organic produce from our farm and some other organic farms in the neighbourhood. There will always be olive oil in the box. The other products will vary from year to year, according to what we can harvest (element of surprise).

The boxes cost £50. It is also possible to just get the olive oil for £30.

We deliver your boxes once a year in early March to your local pick up point – John Meletiou in Nailsworth 01453 833985 or john.meletiou@btclick.com.

For more details see our website www.lajimena.de

Mathis

Hay!!!.....Thanks

Despite the atrocious weather this summer we managed to make hay – almost 600 very heavy bales. Thanks to the Judds and Alison Parfitt for coming to help, and Benedict and his wife for the rustic hayracks. But special thanks to **Watch Oak Farm** (where Laurence used to work) for coming and staying until half past ten at night to ensure we got all the hay off the field.

We couldn't have done it without you!!

Thanks also to the following people: **Dave Judd** for all his work on publicity and organising a great camp out **Hawkwood** for being such good, flexible, friendly landlords, **Sarah** (our new farmer) for all her hard work beyond the call of duty, **Lucas Schoemaker** and Shire Training Workshops for donating a picnic bench, **Lesley Davies** for her excellent work creating our newsletters (this is the 2nd), **Carol Mathews** for setting up a wonderful new filing system for our paperwork and **Global Organics** for giving us their surplus vegetables for pig food.

Events:

Stroud Community Agriculture welcomes anyone who is interested to join in the following events:

Friday 1st October:

Harvest supper

Bring & share meal and conversation cafe.

We would like to discuss the future of the farm in an informal but structured evening over a meal. If possible please bring food prepared using local food (ideally from Hawkwood). There is a kitchen and oven to warm things up at the **Venue**, which is:

All Saints Centre, Springfield Road Uplands.

Time: 7 pm

Thursday 14th October:

The core group will be doing some long term planning for Stroud Community Agriculture

We plan to prioritise our objectives for the next 5 years and propose plans to the community for raising capital.

Venue: call 01453 840037 for details.

Time: 7.30 pm

Friday 5th November:

Bonfire party.

All welcome. Contact Mark on 01453 753866 for details

Friday 12th November: New members' evening.

Focusing on people who have joined Stroud Community Agriculture over the last year.

Discussing the background on the project and answering any questions.

Everyone welcome.

Bring & share meal.

Venue: All Saints Centre, Springfield Road

Uplands. **Time:** 7 pm

Farm Days:

3rd Saturdays of **every month.**

Working (and playing!) on the farm at Hawkwood, Painswick Old Road, Stroud from

9.30am to 1pm.

Bring & share picnic at 1pm.

What is Stroud Community Agriculture?

We have about 70 members who share the costs of running a 23-acre organic farm at Wick Street, near Stroud. Three 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 new member “[I just received my first bag of vegetables and they are great and bursting with health](#)”. We have some pigs and cattle for meat and hope to expand towards a 100-acre farm for eggs, milk, bread, fruit, and other produce. Members agree to support the principles below, and pay different contributions according to their means and how much food they would like.

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

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 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.

Stroud Community Agriculture contacts:

General Enquiries & Information

Janet Smithson - Tel: 0845 4580814 **Email:** info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Stroud Community Agriculture core group

Bernard Jarman: 01453 757436 bernardnkarin@phonecoop.coop

Jade Bashford - 01453 885233 - jadebashford@hotmail.com

Greg Pilley - 01453 885233 - gpilley@soilassociation.org

Simon Charter - 01453 755614

Laurence Dungworth - 01453 753768 - 0779 901 5499 laurencedungworth@yahoo.co.uk

Mark Harrison - 01453 753866 - markplumbtucker.co.uk

Nick Weir 01453 840037 - nick.weir@freeuk.com

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