



SUMMER NEWS

Newsletter No 24 SUMMER 2007



NEWS FROM THE VEGGIE PATCHES

We are now beginning the busiest time in the garden with thousands of vegetable plants to be planted out, thousands of weeds to be pulled out, and thousands of vegetables to be harvested. This season is slightly more advanced than usual after that very warm sunny April and we are coming out of the lean time earlier than last year. The dry weather in April did become quite difficult for us in the garden for a while. I have never before had to irrigate lettuces in April as I did this year, and usually we have to cover all of our early plantings with fleece to shelter them- not this year. However it did allow us to get on with cultivating the land at Brookthorpe. Now the weather has returned to normal, which I much prefer.

Our new polytunnel is proving a great bonus to the farm. It is planted up with tomatoes, peppers and beans, and we already have harvested crops of lettuce, radish and spring onions from

it. It's still not quite completed but all the doors should be finished by the autumn.

I purchased some rusty old second hand small-scale horticultural equipment from a farm sale in March. This is the type of equipment that became redundant about 20 years ago but suits our operation perfectly. After replacing some worn bolts and carrying out a few weld repairs they have all proved to be invaluable at Brookthorpe. I also had my first foray into the world of Ebay recently when I tried (and failed) to purchase a power harrow for the farm. I have been looking for just such a machine for the past four years and was out-bid in the last seconds of the close of bidding. I prefer standing in a field next to the machine and with a nod and wink bidding in the old fashioned way.

As I mentioned the vegetable area at Brookthorpe has now been cultivated (with said machinery) and we have planted about a third of it with a number of crops including sweetcorn, potatoes and courgettes. There are still 20 000 leeks to be planted there and a few thousand Brassica's (cabbage and cauliflower etc). Please come down to visit if you have the time- we won't

insist that you plant anything if you don't want to.

We have begun negotiating with the trustees of Hawkwood for a 10-year lease. The core group decided that it would make a psychological difference to the farm if we had a more long-term agreement at Hawkwood. The trustees are very much in agreement and would like to encourage our presence at the college. Our current lease is a rolling one-year lease that runs from March to March so we have till next year to sort out the details.

Finally, I would like to welcome a new part time member to the farm team, Ute. Ute has been working with us a day a week over the winter, part volunteering and part 'work share' (working for a vegetable share). She insisted on working so hard that we decided that we'd better pay her. She will work with us for the coming busy months. Thanks Ute and thank you to everyone who has helped out over the past few months,

Mark.



Farm report

It has been a busy few months as it always is at this time of year (though it is never quiet and boring of course) and more so for me, as the time I am spending on the farm has nearly doubled. Before we had the land at Brookthorpe I was working just two days a week, and now that is four. This reflects the increase in size, but I am a lot more involved in the vegetable work now, so my reporting may overlap on Mark's now, though I will try and confine myself to farm and animal. Of the piglets reported last time we have 14 - one caught an infection and did not survive but the others are doing very well and there is now a sizeable contingent in a part of the walled garden - eating the weeds! Our replacement sow - successor to Dulci but as yet nameless - is visiting a boar at Ruskin Mill and will return soon in order to have piglets in September or October. Most of our cows will also have offspring as a result of Dylan visiting, but they will arrive in December, January and February. There were two calves born in March as expected, and a third born in May. This last one was from one of the cows that we bought last summer and which must have been served just before it came to us, although I had been assured that it was not pregnant. We recently had our annual tuberculosis test and our cattle were given the all clear with the vet commenting on how well they looked.

Richie and I have been busy at Brookthorpe dealing with the weeds that are present as a result of the previous years neglect. We have been digging docks and thistles and cutting nettles. The latter has been a positive thing as we have made some biodynamic

nettle preparation, some nettle feed for plants and hung lots up to dry as a supplement for the cows over the winter. The cattle have also been doing their fair share by eating their way through the fields so that we can clear up after them, and things look vastly improved already. We have also been busy in the walled garden, and this has been helped by half a dozen people coming to the recent farm day (next one - 14th July, don't miss it!) and 20 teachers from Wynstones a few weeks ago as part of their staff training and development. Right now it doesn't look too bad, though also not too good, but it is always improving which is a step in the right direction and in which I take heart. Day by day I am able to see an improvement in the land just as was the case at Hawkwood (and that continues of course), but I hope that the rest of the community are able to share in that and that everyone feels free and welcome to come and visit at any time, even if it is just to appreciate the land and the animals. I look forward to seeing you.

Laurence

PEAK OIL AND PLASTIC BAGS

I would like to open a discussion on the use of plastic bags for packing our vegetable shares. With the growing awareness of climate change, peak oil, and environmental concerns it seems healthy for us as an organisation to review our policies occasionally.

For those collecting from Hawkwood we use second-hand plastic supermarket bags. (It doesn't matter which supermarket; we dislike them all equally). We try to use these bags as well for the delivered veg. shares but sometimes the stock of these bags runs low and we pack the delivered veg. shares in new plastic bags. However I do wonder sometimes whether we should be using these bags at all. What happens to them after we empty them of dirty vegetables?

There are more sustainable containers that we could use; cotton bags, more robust plastic bags, woven nylon bags, plastic boxes, cardboard boxes, etc. Any one of these is a possibility, each have their pros and cons, but the main consideration is that it would need us all to remember to bring them each week. I would suggest that this won't happen every time, so we would need more than one per member, as well as the fact that they would become damaged, lost and forgotten over time. For the delivered veg. each member would need three containers, even if they were diligently returned each week.

For the time being we will continue with the present system and make some investigations into the various possibilities. If you have any comments or suggestions, please let me or a core group member know.

Mark Harrison

From Richie, our SCA apprentice...

Hello SCA members,

The many different forms of positive community development are very well expressed in Stroud and the surrounding area and when I return to Southern Africa I hope to apply many of them.

The image I have while living here is that the different initiatives here are a type of cream off the top of a society which has rapidly developed and is now realizing its lack of sustainability. In Southern Africa and I guess many other developing countries the image is quite different.

This society is highly developed and functional. It is one to aspire to. It would not be in the interests of the western Governments to shout out, "Its not working quite right over here, please don't attempt to copy this model!"

If one is lucky to be born in a rural area of a Southern African country, one may have access to school, life maybe tough but in comparison to the life in a shanty town surrounding a city there is more spatial freedom.

The country is not the most exciting place if you want to experience more of the life which is so well expressed by the 'developed world'. The old ways seem 'backward'. As well as the fact that jobs are not hanging from trees.

Traditional healers are still an integral part of community. Many people will visit a modern doctor by day and a

Traditional Healer by night. They are found in and around almost any town or village in Southern Africa. There are healers who work with plants and ones who work with divination and the spiritual world. Within this there are those who practice with the dark force and those who use the light.

The Traditional Healers Organization of Southern Africa based in Swaziland was set up by T Dr. Nhlavana Maseko as requested by the late King Sobuza 2nd. When I first visited there a very friendly lady explained to me how they had a very good program training the healers in basic modern health care practices. They make a medicine to help people with HIV and Aids, which is getting very good results.

Where I grew up in Zimbabwe was very close to the rural area, but was in a agricultural farming community, not subsistence. Therefore although I may have many ideas of how I can do good, until I actually am living in an area for a time I can not say I have any answers.

Recently I have written to Mr. Maseko to see if he would like to come to England to see the making of the Biodynamic preparations, have a look at Camphill communities and the SCA. Places of education like Ruskin Mill are such a great example of how one can do much with little. The workshops I have seen are so basically set up yet they offer such a wealth of information.

He has written back and would like to come for a couple of weeks in September.

Now I am in a position where I need to raise around £1500.

As well as set up and advertise a place for him to give lectures and find suitable accommodation.

If you have any advice, questions or ideas on the matter or any other surrounding related topics please send me an email, richeartix@gmail.com or call 07886640605

Much thanks
Richard Lockie
SCA Apprentice



ADVENTURE* FUN*ADVENTURE*FUN

Hedgerow Seed Collection Day

15 September, Brookthorpe Farm Day

It is a while away yet, but children over 6, please ask your parents to remember this date, or put it on your ADVENTURE* FUN* noticeboard or in your diaries if you want to help plant new hedgerows at Brookthorpe Farm.

We want to grow our own hedgerows from seed and this autumn we will start collecting the first seeds from the existing hedges on the farm and grow them on in pots.

See you then,
Nadine



SCA News Membership Drive

In the autumn of this year SCA will be looking to increase the number of people receiving vegetable shares from the farm. We hope to offer roughly 50 extra vegetable shares around September/October. In the meantime we ask all existing members to encourage their friends and neighbours to join Stroud Community Agriculture.

Dave Judd

How about grafting our own apple trees and planting an orchard at Brookthorpe?

Gloucestershire has a tradition as a fruit and cider county and it used to have over 100 different apple varieties in its hey day.

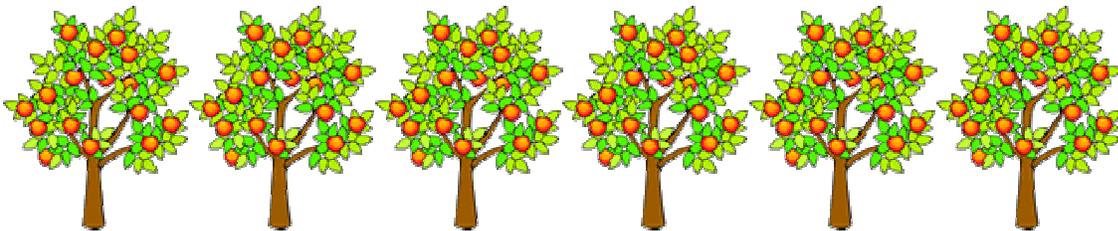
The SCA orchard group is working hard to find an existing orchard that is closer to Stroud, but would also like to see a new orchard planted from scratch at the farm.

We would like to gage whether members would be interested to come to a grafting event and learn about Gloucestershire apple varieties, so that we can graft and plant our own apple trees at Brookthorpe?

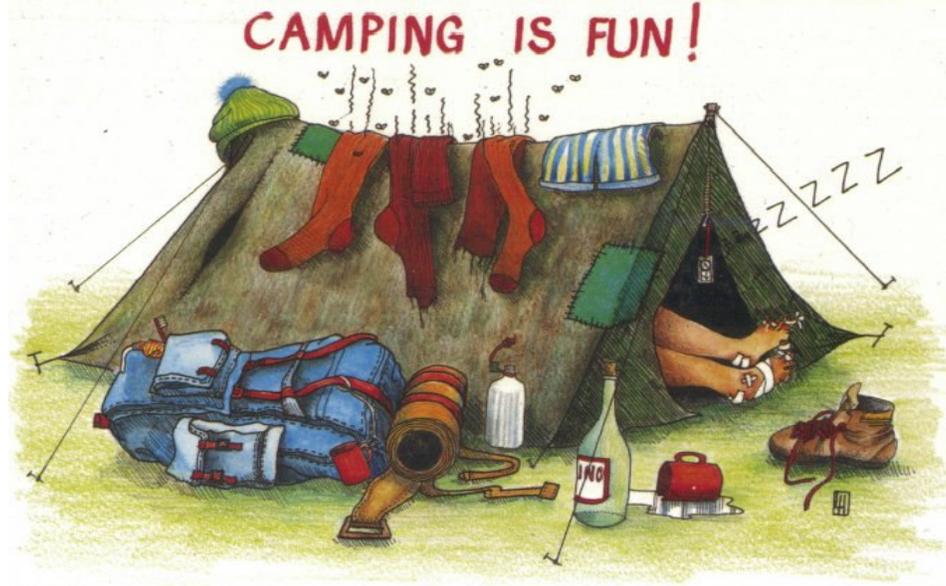
The event would take place early next year (February or March), and there may be a cost implication to take part, as we would need to pay David Kaspar from the Gloucestershire Orchard Group to run this event specially for members of the SCA.

Please let me know if you are interested so we can see whether there would be sufficient people to organise such an event.

Please contact Nadine on 01453 840351 or e-mail: nadine@smykatzkloss.fsnet.co.uk



Stroud Community Agriculture



**Invites you to...
Come Camping
On
Saturday 23rd June
(from lunch time onwards)
At**

Brookthorpe

Campfire, Cooking, Conversation, Fun!

We look forward to seeing you!

Stroud's second Community Supported Agriculture project.

Stroud Slad Farm Community (SSFC) has been set up to support Stroud Slad Farm which is a 100-acre farm on Slad Lane, Stroud producing veg, beef, lamb and firewood. The community took over paying the wages of 2 veg growers and all other veg production costs on 1st June 2007. It has doubled the veg production area at the farm and is now looking for new veg share members. The project is slightly different from SCA in that it will be delivering veg shares to members' houses and to several local drop-off points.

SSFC is raising loans from the community to pay the transition costs (taking over the existing veg. box business that was running at the farm). It has already raised £6,000 in loans from community members and is paying interest on these loans in vegetables.

For more details on SSFC please call William on 01453 835313 or email ssfc@cooptel.net
Nick Weir

**Supermarkets talk green at home
but workers abroad suffer 'appalling'
pay and conditions, says report**

from 'Guardian Weekly' May 3rd 2007

Many of the big UK supermarket chains have signed up to the Ethical Trading Initiative, but the charity ActionAid argues in its 'Who Pays?' report that 'the voluntary code is barely worth the paper it is written on and that it is time for binding measures to be imposed'

Researchers working for ActionAid spent nine months collecting evidence about the way the big supermarkets do business abroad. They said they found numerous examples of British companies locking suppliers into exclusive deals, regularly threatening to "delist" them to extract more favourable terms and joining together in big international buying groups to increase their purchasing power.

- In Costa Rica banana workers' wages are as low as 33p per hour. Women workers here have told ActionAid that they cannot afford to take time off when planes spray dangerous pesticides.
- In Bangladesh young women are working 14 hour days for as little as 5p per hour to make clothes for Tesco and Asda. Out of a £2 T-shirt the supermarket takes £1.40 while the Bagladeshi worker gets 6 pence.
- In India, price pressure from UK supermarkets has produced a black market in cashew nut processing plants where women

earn as little as 30p per day and suffer permanent damage to their hands from corrosive acids. 45% of the retail price of cashew nuts is retained by the supermarket. The processing workers get just 1%.

Tesco recently reported an annual profit of 2.5 billion. This is a 20% increase in annual profit.

A spokeswoman for Tesco admitted it was "no secret that conditions in developing countries can be difficult. These countries believe, like we do, that trade is the best route out of poverty. In conducting trade we uphold and enforce standards laid down by law and by the Ethical Trading Initiative", she said. "We are ready to listen to any ideas for making progress. But we think this will be best achieved not by framing more rules from a distance but by engaging on the ground."

Neither Asda nor Sainsbury returned calls asking for comment.

Nick Weir (who spotted this report) says: I agree with Tesco that 'engaging on the ground' is the best way forward. I am just grateful that SCA allows us to engage in ways that do not exploit and maim the people who are growing our food.

Anyone interested in other ways we can all vote with our feet and stop using supermarkets, please contact me on 01453 840037 or nick.weir@localfood.org.uk



Upcoming dates for the SCA:

Farm days are the 2nd Saturday in the month at Brookthorpe and the 4th Saturday at Hawkwood. Bring a picnic!

23 rd June	Hawkwood Farm day 9.30 - 1.00 THE SCA SUMMER CAMP - Brookthorpe
14 th July	Brookthorpe Farm day
17 th July	EGM to discuss core group members' need for election. 7.00pm, Upper Grange. More details in the packing shed nearer the time.
SCA Ceilidh!	In our Barn at Brookthorpe. Look out in the packing shed for details later on in the summer.

Minutes from Core Group Meetings may be read by anyone who is interested. They will be posted on the notice board in the packing shed at Hawkwood.

Many thanks to Carole Vaughn for her work editing and producing the newsletter. She has now passed it on to me, Sue Baker. If you would like to submit an article, letter, recipes, poems or thoughts please email them to me at the address at the end of the newsletter or give me a call. I will be delighted to receive them.

Thank you too to Claire and Paul Sheridan who have taken on the general enquiries role.



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:

Claire and Paul Sheridan- Tel: 0845 4580814 Email info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Membership Admin:

Carol Mathews - Email: membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Stroud Community Agriculture core group

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