



New Year News

Newsletter No. 38 January 2011

www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Farm report

After a warm dry summer we have been plunged into prolonged freezing weather with minus 11 degrees recorded inside the barn. This has lead to frozen water troughs pipes and taps.

However the animals seem unperturbed. Since November the cows and pigs have been in the barn. The sheep however stay outside because they are not a heavy animal and will not damage the ground with their hooves. During the heavy snowfall I would carry hay out to the sheep and smash and scoop out the two inches of ice in the water trough that formed every day.

Ezmie our Gloucester old spot sow is due to farrow around the 29th January. The timing might seem unnatural, but pigs farrow twice a year one inevitably happens during the winter months.

New born piglets are surprisingly tough; to keep warm they snuggle up against the sow's udder which is much warmer than the rest of her body. Piglets always return to the same teat every time they feed: the

biggest piglet suckles by the front legs where the most milk is available; the runt will feed at the last teat. The runt is the name given to the smallest, usually last born in the litter. Last year's runt grew rapidly so that within a month he was the same size as his siblings.

In the beginning of November, Class 9 from Wynstones School came to work for two days on the farm. They did a range of jobs from clearing out an old hedge to harvesting vegetables to building a fence around our orchard. They worked very well in spite of the windy wet weather. It is great to see 14-15 year olds so

enthusiastic to work outdoors and never complaining. The work achieved was both valuable and fulfilling.

I would welcome volunteers at Brookthorpe to help with the feeding of animals. If you are interested you can phone me at 07531 270206.

Sam



Dates for your New Year Diary

Three Kings Day – Thursday 6 January, Hawkwood 2- 4 pm: Biodynamic preparation & study. Bring & share drinks/biscuits

Candlemas – Sunday 6 February, Hawkwood: candles & candle-making. Bring & share tea/poems.

Farm Days: – Fourth Saturday of each month, 10.00 to 13.00: Check email for dates. Bring hot drink or children's activity to share.

Annual General Meeting – Sunday 20 March 2- 5 pm venue tbc in Stroud. Bring & share tea.

News From The Veggie Fields

I'm writing this article after Christmas after all that lovely snow has gone, replaced by mist and murk. We seem to have survived all that cold weather with only a few casualties (that I can see so far).

A lot of the cauliflowers are looking very frosted. We have three different varieties planted that should mature at three different times between now and May. They may recover but they don't look good.

With the cold, the pigeons have decimated the purple sprouting broccoli (yet again), and I'm not very hopeful that we will have much of a crop this spring. We have set the bird-scarer gun - you won't miss it if it goes off - but the pigeons have still done their worst. Our neighbours have been very tolerant.

As much as I enjoy the cold weather, it does make every job that much more difficult. We have struggled to try to keep the frost out of our stored vegetables. We store the potatoes and beetroot in an insulated shed in the walled garden. The beetroot was frozen, but so far seems to be okay. Despite the fact that the temperature in the shed dropped to minus 4 deg C the potatoes have not been frozen. However they should be kept above



zero, because they can become sweet at temperatures below that. Again, so far it seems that they are okay. The celeriac is stored out in the field covered with straw and fleece. The parsnips can withstand the cold so they are best left in the ground.

All of the salad crops in the polytunnel seem to be weathering the cold very well. We can't cut them when they are frozen, hence we couldn't make up salad packs for the Christmas share (something I have to admit we weren't too unhappy about, because standing in the shed handling icy salad leaves for a couple of hours is not much fun). A lot of the salad plants do survive being frozen. It always amazes me that they do, as they don't look that robust.

Well, cold weather is the dominant theme on our minds at the moment, but I will be turning my mind to warm weather soon and the new season and planning our crops for next year. We are planning to plant up some new ground at Brookthorpe next season and grow extra crops, including some more feed crops for the animals. Sorting out the crop plan and ordering the seed is an interesting job, and it's done indoors next to the fire!

Keep warm!

Mark

Harvest Supper

Thanks to everyone who helped make the Harvest celebrations an enjoyable event. I have collated the ideas gained from the post it notes and ideas sheets, and these will be presented at the next core group meeting in the New Year. We are considering holding a visioning day in the future where we can plan events, consider changes to the farm to benefit the farmers & members. Ideas include compost toilets & having cats in the barn.

Also to work up a plan to look into land for sale in the area, for pasture/crops, and to check out funding for rainwater harvesting, ponds and farm vehicles.

Sue

Fruitshare from Sunny Spain

I know many of you are aware that at this time each year we have the opportunity to buy a mixed box of fruit, nuts and olive oil that comes direct from an organic farm, La Jimena, in Andalusia. SCA has been involved with this farm, run by the Mathis and Mariann and family, for a number of years and a few of our members have travelled there to stay in their holiday cottage.

Mathis has written with news from the farm. He says that they began the olive harvest early this year. It seems that the climate is changing, causing the fruit to ripen earlier and creating at times inclement harvest conditions. However they have had plenty of help and should have enough olives for their orders in the UK.

Mathis usually drives up to the UK in February with the fruitshares and delivers to a number of places, including Stroud, ending up at Forres in the north of Scotland. He says that there are fitting a hydrogen cell to the truck to supply some of the fuel to power the vehicle and saving on diesel and improving their sustainability. Hydrogen cells produce hydrogen and oxygen and release only water, so there is no pollution.

They suffered a minor landslide in the spring that cut off their irrigation water supply for a few months. In their part of Spain they rely on irrigation to grow most things. The supply has been restored now but they lost most of their garden crops for the year.

Local Stew Story

Sue received a lovely Christmas present this year: *Beatrix Potter's Country Cooking*. This recipe is taken from there and adapted.

"Beatrix formed a lifelong friendship with her cousin, Caroline Hutton, who later became a farmer after her marriage, just as Beatrix

Anyway, what about the fruitshare?

You can purchase a standard or small fruitshare box.

Small box contains 3L olive oil, 1.5L olives and 5kg citrus, almonds and figs. The cost is £52.

Standard box contains 5L olive oil, 1.5L olives and 10 kg citrus, almonds and figs. The cost is £74.

You can also purchase *olive oil* separately;

3 litres £30

5 litres £45

25 litres £198

The ordering and collection is co-ordinated by SCA member John Meletiou. Payment will either be by cheque or BACS. Please place your orders and payment as soon as you can. The fruitshare was very well subscribed last year with over 60 shares ordered in Stroud alone. The fruitshare should arrive in February sometime and will be available for collection from Nailsworth. John will let you know.

If you would like to order something please contact John at john.meletiou@btconnect.com.

Or telephone: day 01453 836134; mobile 07884 336778; eve 01453 833985. leaving messages if necessary. Thanks

Mark



did. She first stayed with Caroline at her home Harescombe Grange, near Stroud in Gloucestershire when she was 27.....Beatrix made several sketches of the city (Gloucester) on excursions from Harescombe Grange."

Gloucester Cheese Stew

900g (2lb) potatoes
600ml (1 pint 21/2 cups) creamy milk - I used goats milk
Salt and freshly milled black pepper
Freshly grated nutmeg
3 medium onions or 2 large cloves of garlic
350g (12 oz/3 cups) grated Double Gloucester cheese (I used a hard local goats cheese)
Chopped fresh parsley
Pre-heat the oven to 180 C (350 f, gas mark 4). Peel the potatoes and slice thinly. Put them in a saucepan with the milk. Season

well with salt, pepper and nutmeg, then simmer gently for 15 minutes until almost tender, but not broken up. Using a slotted spoon, remove the potatoes from the milk, reserving the milk on one side. Chop the onions or garlic finely.

Butter an ovenproof casserole dish and arrange layers of potato, onion or garlic and cheese in it, seasoning well between each layer and ending with a layer of cheese. Pour over the reserved milk and bake uncovered in a moderate oven for about 1 hour, or until most of the liquid has been absorbed and the top is golden brown. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with a green salad for supper or lunch, or in smaller portions to accompany meat, fish or poultry. (Serves 6)

I serve this dish with cooked red cabbage & swede.

Sue

DEFRA Learns from SCA

This autumn Jade undertook research on behalf of The Plunkett Foundation for DEFRA. This research was about our farm membership and how the farm has been set up and is run. Sue Dance helped interview a variety of members.

Jade presented this information in Somerset to a study day for the South West. Mark Harrison & Sue went along too, listened to presentations from all sorts of projects connected with food, including village shops, organic collectives & luncheon club/school meal providers. They also participated in the small discussion groups in the afternoon.

"It was a very interesting event," says Sue: "The farm continues to gain admiration as a model for the future. We positively encouraged DEFRA to use our community supported agriculture as the way forward for the 2030 policy for food production!"

The farm benefited from the research in a variety of ways: gaining a better understanding of members' thoughts and opinions, receiving a small financial reward for the work, and getting positive encouragement that we are a thriving example of farming in these difficult times.



Open Gardens 2011

We have 5 gardens and 4 allotments so far for the open garden weekend in July 9th and 10th, including forest garden, organic veg, wildlife friendly, rainwater collection, composting, chickens, pigs, herbs, fruit, and biodynamic gardening. If you know of anyone who would be happy to open their garden for the weekend to encourage people to grow veg etc. please let me know. *Helen*

helenroyall@lineone.net

Stroud Community Agriculture

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

We are looking for new members for the farm. 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. At each meeting we get a report about the farm and then discuss all those issues that support the smooth running of SCA.

Core Group meetings - Venues & times tbc - Contact Sue Dance 01453 752068

Tuesday 18th January, Wednesday 15th February, Thursday 17th March, Tuesday 19th April

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|---------------|---------------|--|
| Sam Hardiman | 01452 814 440 | samueljhardiman@hotmail.com |
| Simon Ryder | 01452 504607 | s.ryder@artnucleus.org |
| Andy Jones | 01453 840351 | metamorph@onetel.com |
| Justin Tait | 01453 762990 | justintait@hotmail.com |
| Richard Swann | 01453 765588 | rswann@tiscali.co.uk |
| Sue Dance | 01453 752068 | susandance@googlemail.com |
| Simon Hanks | 01452 812608 | |
| Mark Harrison | 01453 752484 | mark@plumtucker.co.uk |
| Tamsyn Widdon | | |
| Kevin Ashby | 01452 814620 | kevinashby@phoncoop.coop |

For more information please contact Jade on jadebashford@hotmail.com

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