



# Spring News

Newsletter No.50 March 2014  
[www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org](http://www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org)

## SPRING FARM REPORT

In my last Farm Report I wrote about how it did not feel very wintry yet, well its march and it still doesn't feel wintry. We have had only one real frost! What we have lacked in cold weather we have made up for with rain. It has rained almost non-stop all winter. We have also had some wintry storms with very high winds. Thankfully we have not been flooded and, with exception of the polytunnel, have not experienced much damage.

There are definite signs of Spring now though. It's getting much lighter in the evenings, there are daffodils blooming and the grass is starting to grow already! The real sign of Spring on the farm is still a few weeks away...

lambing! This year we are expecting lambs from eleven ewes. This is double the number from last year. They are due from the third week of March down at our Brookthorpe farm. In the next weeks we will have to clear out the barn and prepare their pen for lambing.

Over the winter we are busy repairing and building new fences at Brookthorpe. For years they have been neglected and desperately needed fixing. Now with a long lease and with some of the money we made

this year, we have been able to invest in this much needed project. Our neighbour has kindly lent us a post knocking machine which has made this job much easier.



By the time you read this I will have collected Ivy, our new cow. Over the last months I have been looking for a replacement for Cauliflower, one of our cows that has left us. I visited two farms that have traditional Herefords like ours. I found one that I liked down in Wiltshire. I hope she settles in quickly and enjoys becoming the newest member of our herd.

We have one sow and some porkers up at Hawkwood. They are out on part of the veg patch, digging over the soil and exposing couch grass roots. Our other sow is at Brookthorpe with George, a saddleback boar on loan from Ruskin Mill.

Let's hope this Spring brings another good growing season with plenty of warmth!

*Farmer Sam Hardiman*



## VEGGIE NEWS

As I write this article at the beginning of March, it is raining. We don't keep accurate rainfall records on the farm, (you don't really need them this winter to know that it has been extremely wet), but there is a website of someone in Stroud who does, and they show that the winter has been wetter than any other, 80% more than the average. But it has been very mild and most crops have fared very well over this time. In December I wrote about harvesting root crops to put into storage against the cold..... totally unnecessary this year. We left some beetroots and celeriac out in the fields and they have

kept better than those in store (though the ones in store have kept well). Harvesting in the wet has been a bit of a challenge though, particularly the parsnips at Brookthorpe. At the end of a morning of lifting parsnips, everything; boots, hands, fork, bags and parsnips are covered in mud. We don't usually wash any of our root vegetables, as they keep better covered in some soil, but we have had to wash the parsnips as they are just unmanageable otherwise.

We have had lots of good feedback from you about the new system for collecting the root crops. Everyone seems to like the extra bit of choice and flexibility. From our point of view it has worked well and we will continue with the system until the root crops run out (probably in April). We are buying all of the potatoes, carrots and onions now, so we have put these three together for your selection as well. The potatoes come from Wotton-under-Edge, the carrots from Worcestershire, and the onions now from Holland.

The plastic blew off one of the polytunnels in one of those big storms in February. It wasn't such a disaster as we had intended to recover it anyway (it was one of those tunnels that was badly damaged by vandals some years ago) but unfortunately some of the framework was also damaged as it blew off so we have some extra work to do, and some extra expense. There weren't many crops in the tunnel either and what is there has survived okay.

This is the time of year when we begin sowing seeds and raising seedlings for the coming season. We already have some 8000 plants growing in small trays in the greenhouse in the walled garden at Brookthorpe. They are kept on heated benches and will be planted out into the polytunnels or the field at Hawkwood in April. The tomatoes and peppers have their own



special protected bench and lights to get them growing early. We will be sowing seeds in the greenhouse every week now until the last lettuces are sown in August.

We have put some of our pigs in the veg field at Hawkwood to turn over the soil ready for some of these plants. They are doing quite a good job and have uncovered rather a lot of couch grass roots, but we aren't sure yet whether they are eating them. We just need it to stop raining and for the soil to dry out so that we can begin preparing the ground in earnest.

There are plenty of vegetables for the share for the next few months. Plenty of greens, roots and salad, out in the fields, in the veg store and growing in the polytunnel.

*Farmer Mark Harrison*

### **PURPLE SPROUTING BROCCOLI**

This is the time of year when we look forward to having purple sprouting broccoli in the veg share. Broccoli is in the Brassica family, the family of plants that includes cabbage, cauliflower, and cress etc, all bred over thousands of years from wild cabbages that are still found today growing on the coasts of Britain and Europe. The botanical name for broccoli is *Brassica oleracea var italica* and it probably originated in Italy and the eastern Mediterranean in the 17th century. It is very closely related to cauliflower (in fact in Cornwall they still call winter cauliflowers broccoli). There are three main types of broccoli; the ever present large green type, which is grown in the summer, and what I know as calabrese; the romanesco type, which has beautiful spiralled florets, grown in the autumn; and the sprouting type, either purple or white, grown over winter for picking in the spring.

We grow four different varieties of purple sprouting broccoli, all planted in July, and all maturing in succession from February till May. The first variety to mature, "Rudolph", has grown very well this year and we have been harvesting it for the share. Although the plants are very cold hardy, the sprouts that we eat (which are the flower buds) aren't, and they can be damaged by frost. So this year they haven't been affected by any damaging cold at all. The pigeons also love them but, again due to the mild weather they haven't been troublesome so far this winter.



The next variety coming into bud now is "Red Spear", and then there will be "Red Head", the most productive of the four varieties, and finally in May, "Cardinal". They are time consuming to pick but are worth it for the welcome addition of colour, taste and variety that they add to the vegetable share.

*Farmer Mark Harrison*

## REAL Bread for SCA Members

'ChickPeas' Organic REAL breads are hand made to order from Ruscombe, and available for members of the SCA to collect from the Veg Sheds every week. With a passion for making REAL breads, all ingredients used are organic, good & nutritious, to give you true taste every time, without any unnecessary artificial additives or preservatives. Tempting descriptions of all REAL breads are offered to tickle your taste buds! All breads are made using wild and fresh yeasts and generally with a long fermentation process .... as natural as it gets! Baked to order; Mondays & Thursdays and delivered to the Veg Sheds at Hawkwood and Brookthorpe.



Contact [Claire](#) if you'd like the list of REAL breads and to be included on the mailing list !  
01453 757348\*/ [chickpeas.bread@gmail.com](mailto:chickpeas.bread@gmail.com)

**ALSO bespoke 'Bread Making Workshops' for individuals and groups. Ring for details\***



*Dear Farm members,*

*We will be having a **BARN DANCE** again this year, which will be held on **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June.***

*There will be dancing for all ages, music, a caller, and food and drinks.*

*More details to come...  
See you there!*

*Farmer Sam*

### **ORGANIC FARMING: I am Steve Marsh...**

A landmark legal case, being watched around the world, is currently being heard in the Supreme Court of Western Australia. Organic farmer Steve Marsh is suing his childhood friend and neighbour, Michael Baxter, for losses associated with the contamination of his land from Baxter's GM canola planted next door to him. As a result of the contamination, Marsh lost his organic certification on 70% of his land and suffered significant loss of income as a result. The trial has been couched within the wider issue of farmers' rights. Perhaps the most insidious thing about the introduction of GM is their potential to contaminate organic and non-GM land, gradually destroying the distinction between the two. In a world where GM crops are planted in abundance, cross-contamination with non-GM is inevitable, and the choice to eat GMOs or not will become obsolete. [Sustainable Food Trust](#) (14 February 2014).

The Soil Association campaigns against GM and is supporting [Steve Marsh](#).

## SEASONAL RECIPES..

*Some quick and delicious recipes to feed the soul!*

Two celeriac favourites..

### **Raw tossed salade in french dressing:**

Grated [peeled ]celeriac mixed with any of the following, plus apples  
beetroot/cabbage/carrots-your favourite herbs

### **Celeriac Patties**

Grate celeriac [after peeling] and mix with grated potatoes-[+ chopped chillies & garlic if you like them, plus herbs]

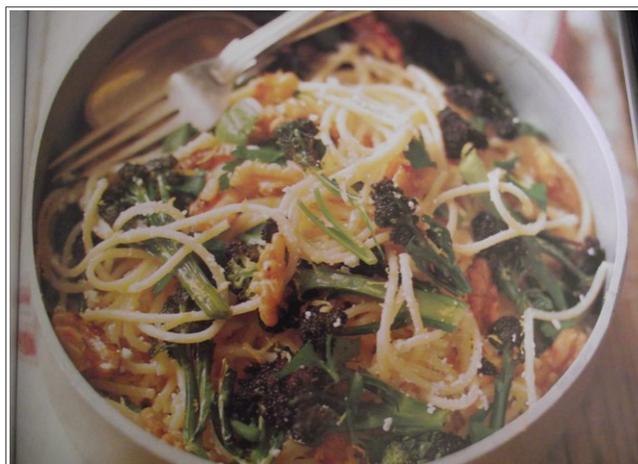
Mix well.

Turn into hand sized cakes, flatten a bit, then fry gently in a little oil on both sides till brown

*..Thank you, Trish Dickinson*

### **Spaghetti with broccoli, walnuts & ricotta**

100g walnut halves  
500g fresh broccoli/purple sprouting  
3 tbs olive oil  
3 garlic cloves, crushed  
Handful of fresh flat leaf parsley, chopped  
finely grated zest and freshly squeezed juice of 1  
unwaxed lemon  
200g ricotta cheese  
400g speghetti  
sea salt & freshly ground black pepper



- Preheat oven to 180 C
- Spread out walnuts on a baking sheet and roast for about 8 minutes, until they start to brown.
- Prepare the broccoli by trimming off the gnarly part, thinly slice the stem, then cut off florets.
- Heat oil in wok/frying pan, add the broccoli stems and cook for about 2-3 mins, turning often, then add the florets and cook for about 5 mins, until the broccoli has softened.
- Add the garlic, parsley lemon zest and walnuts and cook for 5 mins, stirring often.
- Reduce heat to medium and stir through the ricotta and lemon juice.
- Season well and keep in pan until spaghetti is ready.
- Cook spaghetti as normal, then add to the pan of broccoli and sauce, stirring gently to combine.
- Serve immediately.

*Let us know your recipe ideas... [chickpeas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chickpeas@hotmail.co.uk) \**

## 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. For dates, venues & times, contact Mark Harrison

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