



Spring News

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www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

SPRING FARM REPORT

As I sit here writing my report the weather outside is looking blustery and wet. It had been looking like Spring was just around the corner.

By the time you read this I expect we might have the first spring lambs. The sheep are looking very big and heavy right now. They are due mid march and will be lambing down at our Brookthorpe farm. To sustain them in the late stages of pregnancy they are being fed some concentrates and fodder beet we have grown on the farm. It is high in energy and low in protein so as



to support the ewes energy needs but not produce overly large lambs that might have trouble squeezing out!

We have also recently had a litter of piglets. Her last litter was disappointing with only four piglets but this time she produced 10! This is much more like the numbers I expect. I was concerned the low piglet count last litter was due to our boar being sub fertile and if the numbers had not improved in this litter he would have had to go.



I wrote in my Autumn farm report how I hoped producing cross bred piglets using our Pietrain boar would improve the piglets, and it has. The four that were born in the last litter are growing amazingly well.



The cows are doing OK in the barn eating through great quantities of fodder.

We have a new mother cow at Brookthorpe. Her name is Clara, and her calf is called Molly. I wasn't looking for one, but when a Camphill in Bristol called to ask if we might take her as their farmer was moving on and they had no one in place to look after her, I went down to have a look at her and was met by a big beautiful cow and calf. She is not a Hereford like the others, but a cross between a dairy shorthorn and a Sussex. I am happy with the decision and she looks at home already in our herd. Please feel free to visit the animals and say hi to our new cow and look at the highly entertaining piglets. Please refrain from entering there pens though.

Here's to a prosperous year and great growing weather.

Farmer Sam Hardiman

NEWS FROM THE VEGGIE FIELDS

There is a definite feeling of spring in the air as I write this; the days are getting longer and lighter. The weather this winter has been average, a bit of everything but no extremes, just what a farmer likes. The ground is still very wet so we haven't been able to do much in the fields (except continue to harvest those vegetables) but in the polytunnels and greenhouse it is a different matter. We have sown a few thousand seeds, of all types, all growing in their trays on heated benches in the greenhouse in the walled garden, all for planting out over the next few weeks. The tomatoes and peppers are grown on a special protected bench, under artificial light to get them going early. We have sown some early carrots and lettuce in the polytunnels and will soon start planting out other crops as the winter crops finish.

We put the pigs out in the vegetable field at Hawkwood again this winter to see how helpful that might be in digging the ground for us. We tried it last year with limited success, they didn't seem to eat much of the couch grass then, but this time it has been more successful. We put them out

earlier in the winter and moved them around the field every two weeks or so, and then cultivated the ground with the tractor to expose more of the grass roots. We then return the pigs to the plot again and they continue to root around and eat the couch grass. They also look happy and it is nice to see them out there. It always seems amazing that one flimsy looking strand of electric fence is all that is needed to keep a big strong pig fenced in. They completely respect the fence, and it can be tricky to get them to move to another part of the field when you remove the fence. The new polytunnel is complete now, all planted out with spring cabbage and red Russian kale. The other tunnels are full of salads and chard, plenty to keep us going for a few weeks, but we will soon come to what is known as 'the hungry gap', that time of the year when the winter crops have finished and the newly planted spring crops have yet to mature. We usually manage to harvest something from the farm every week of the year but in May and June we will have to buy in a lot of vegetables to fill that hungry gap. Our policy when buying in produce is to get it as local as possible but we will need to buy it from as far afield as Spain and Italy for a few weeks in late spring as there will be very little UK produce available.

Finally, I would like to wish Vassilis (and Maria) farewell, as they are leaving Stroud and migrating up to the Black Isle in Scotland (somewhere near the Arctic Circle) to take on positions at a biodynamic herb nursery. Vassilis has been a great apprentice on the farm and I wish him all the best. I can then welcome Clare (back to her full time position with us now), and Sylvie (of starter-farm fame) who will be joining us for the season in April. Let's hope we have a good season.

Farmer Mark Harrison

----- VACANCIES AT THE SCA -----

Newsletter Editor

You will be creative, have an eye for detail, and be able to work on own initiative to produce 4 seasonal Newsletters per year, based on content supplied by core group members.

For more information, please contact Claire ASAP : chickpeas@hotmail.co.uk or 01453 757348

TREASURER

Do you have a financial background and are interested in working closely with the SCA team? The SCA are looking for a Treasurer who can support the SCA team and have oversight of the SCA finances.

Responsibilities:-

- Have financial oversight of the cash-flow, income & expenditure and Budgets.
- Attend some Core Group meetings.
- Pay the monthly wages for the farm team.
- Authorise larger payments.
- Attend and review the SCA Accounts and Budget at the annual AGM.
- Deal with financial queries during the year.

These responsibilities should be no more than a few hours a month.

If you would like to find out more then contact Helen (the current treasurer) at helen@lilou.me.uk

~ Ute Schlossmacher ~



Ute, as many of you will know, was one of our farmers and died recently after a difficult illness. Ute's ashes were returned to the earth, which she loved so much, at the farm in Brookthorpe, on Friday 20th March, the day of a solar eclipse. They were buried under the big ash tree in the vegetable field and farm people were invited to attend. Ute's sister said that Spring Equinox is a time of intense increase of daylight and Ute's departure at Candlemas is so connected with the theme of light that it seemed the obvious day to choose.



That there was a solar eclipse taking place on this day could not have been planned better for anything to do with Ute. As you perhaps know, Ute has watched two total eclipses of the sun in her life time and, if she could have, she would have been out there first thing doing her observations!



OWL LISTENERS NEEDED



Would your household like to spend half an hour one evening on the farm listening for owl calls? The CSA manages our grass in a way that is great for wildlife: flowers, insects and also small mammals. This should be good for owls too, plenty to prey upon. Owl Conservation UK are doing a survey and would like members of the public to report owl sightings and hearings. The Barn Owl Trust have good recordings on their website for identification purposes. Here's the page for ID and for reporting <http://www.barnowl.co.uk/page34.asp>

We'd love it if members went out and listened for owls at the farm and told us what they discovered. Once we know what kinds of owls we have, we will put up the appropriate nest box for them. Owls are welcome on the farm because they control pests.

What next? Well, just get on and do it! Go out one evening and tell us what you find out, we'd love to know.

Please send your findings to jadebashford@hotmail.com

Wildlife Walk at Hawkwood

on Sunday 19 April 6-8pm

led by an expert.

We hope to see signs of evening birds & animals
and investigate the wildlife made welcome by the farm's organic
methods

All welcome

SCA Community Meal

on Saturday 9th May @ 1.30pm

at Stroud Co-housing

Anyone who would like to help with this event

please contact Clare on 01453 827286 or clare@solarious.co.uk

LAND WANTED

Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) are looking to rent 2 to 5 acres of land for our new project: a biodynamic “starter farm”.

SCA is a community supported farm which has been successfully running for over a decade.

The starter farm project is a new initiative, aiming to give young growers the opportunity to produce crops and run a business independently, with support from SCA for mentoring and sales.

We are looking for land for vegetable production

- in the Stroud area (within 5 miles of SCA's current sites at Hawkwood and Brookthorpe)

- with vehicle access

- with existing or easy to install water supply

Please email scastarterfarm@gmail.com or call Clare on **07837024552**/Sylvie on **07732487837**

Work offered - 2 part-time posts in Stroud with The Biodynamic Land Trust & Ecodynamic cbs

Seeking one or two people with good administrative skills for secretarial work, data entry, website updates etc. with suitable experience to support the Executive Director, Administrator and Financial Administrator of these two sister companies. Self-employed basis with flexible hours:

Post 1: Administrative and communications work; generally 3-6 hours a week to tie in with a BDLT person;

Post 2: Data entry, financial records and admin work for Ecodynamic CBS; generally 2- 4hours a week under direction of the Financial Administrator.

Skills in IT (including Word and Excel), good communication, organisation and admin experience needed.

Pay starting at £9ph for both posts.

Please send CV and full contact details to:

Gabriel Kaye gabriel@biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk or Helen Appleyard ecodynamicltd@gmail.com

www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk and www.ecodynamic.org.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

Mark Harrison	01453 752484	mark@plumtucker.co.uk
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For more information on CSAs please contact Jade Bashford at jadebashford@hotmail.com
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