

FARM NEWS



SUMMER ISSUE

Welcome to your Summer Farm Newsletter!

The weather has been more than amazing so far (for those who love heat)! While most of us enjoy the sunny weather it's a bit challenging for the farmers and plants...

In this Issue:

Mark and Sam will tell you about the recent activities on the farm and how they deal with the dry weather. You will also read about the last year's core group activity. We have a Starter Farm update from Kit, Citrus Carrot soup recipe from Jules and more...

Happy reading!



Summer Farm Report

In my last piece I wrote about how in March still felt like winter, well we are now definitely in summer! We have had some lovely warm weather, we have made silage at Brookthorpe and hay at Hawkwood. It is a very comforting feeling having the animals' winter feed already in the barn.

The cows are doing well and have recently passed our annual TB test. We are required to test all our cattle for bovine tuberculosis every year. This involves bringing in all the cows and running them through the cattle crush where the vet injects a small amount of TB solution into their skin on their neck and measuring their reaction two days later. We have been incredibly fortunate to not have any TB on our farm (touch wood!). My hope is that by having robust healthy and stress free cows we can increase their resilience to the disease.



The sheep are doing well too. We had a successful lambing with all ewes giving birth unassisted and with no bottle lambs. We are working towards having



as low a maintenance flock as possible, this means breeding for sheep that can give birth unassisted and look after their lambs with no help. We grow fodder beet for them but we don't feed them with any grain, just grass all year round.

Our sow only had four piglets which was a bit of a disappointment however they are growing very fast!



Our new little tractor has been very useful and surprisingly versatile, including being the ideal tractor for trailer rides at the Barn Dance and has given us some more flexibility having two tractors at Brookthorpe.

We are looking forward to a good growing season, plenty of sun with a few good showers to keep everything growing happily!

Farmer Sam

News from the Veggie Fields

It has been a rather difficult and tricky spring and early summer on the farm this year. Although the weather recently has been quite glorious for us humans, for the farmer it has been difficult. Early spring was very cold and late, and then turned quite wet, both of which meant that we couldn't get on with the ground cultivations that we needed to do to prepare for planting. It then turned very hot and dry, and the heavy soil at Brookthorpe seemed to turn from porridge to concrete overnight. Sam had managed to do some ground preparation and we planted brussel sprouts and celeriac into very rough ground. I think about 20% of those plants died but we couldn't wait for better conditions. Fortunately we had a spell of rain in May that helped enormously (and we avoided those torrential storms that affected parts of the country).

However, as I write this in late June, it is again very dry and hot. We have a lot of early season cabbages etc growing at Hawkwood that need regular watering, and we have 18,000 leek seedlings at Brookthorpe that we are going to have to plant into the same kind of rough ground as the brussels. These will also need watering in afterwards. To do this we lay out long lines of drip pipe and then someone has to take the time to move them over to the next row every 20 minutes or so.



The plants growing in the polytunnels are doing very well and we are now picking the first beans and courgettes of the year. One of the major pests in the polytunnels at this time of year are aphids. These small insects live on the plants and suck the sap. The population can explode in a very short time when the



weather is warm. They are especially troublesome on the courgettes plants. If you get a slightly mottled courgette in your share that will be because some of these insects will have attacked the fruit when it was very small and caused its growth to distort slightly. We introduce small parasitic wasps into the polytunnel to help control the aphids. These wasps lay their eggs on the aphids, the larvae then hatch out and devour the aphids from the inside. Nasty but useful! We also like to see ladybirds in the polytunnels as they also eat aphids.



We now have a new member join us on the farm team, Ellie. Ellie manages the chickens next door at Oakbrook and is also working with us part-time for the season. (You can buy her eggs if you join the Microdairy at Oakbrook).

Let's hope it rains before this article is published!

Farmer Mark

Core Group Report 2017-18

The Core group consists of 9 SCA members including both farmers. We serve a 3-year term. We meet monthly, except in August and it is very interesting to be involved in the inner workings of the farm.

Here are some of the topics we've covered this year:

- **The Starter Farm project:** We agreed to get the Project up and running again in 2018 and have been very lucky that Kit has come back for another year. We are supporting the project on a slightly different basis and one of the topics for the next few meetings will be to discuss how the Starter Farm will continue as Kit's year comes to an end.
- **The Community straw bale building:** As Sam has noted in his report the building is moving slowly along and, as those present at the AGM will see, is nearly complete. We've held some Core Group meetings in, or just outside, the building and these have been really special. Looking forward to getting the lights working and a wood stove being installed.
- **Bio Dynamic Land Trust (BDLT) and Oakbrook:** The farmers have taken part in some of the Community Meetings about the Oakbrook Farm land and its usage. We've developed a close working relationship with the Micro-Dairy that is operating there and there is now an egg producing unit as well as the Starter Farm. So, a real sense of progress is being achieved.
- **Financial Governance and budget:** We have had another good year in terms of maintaining the finances. Tarra (our new Treasurer) has led some changes to the way our financial governance has operated.
- **Newsletter:** We hope you like the new format of the Newsletter that is sent to Members quarterly. We are very grateful to Aleks for doing a lot of hard work on this.
- **Pensions and Pay:** We've up the Farm contributions to the pension scheme in line with Government recommendations and increased permanent farmer's pay in line with inflation. We've also raised the pay of the non-permanent staff to the national minimum wage.
- **The SCA decided to join the WWOOF organisation** (WorldWide Opportunities On Organic Farms) to attract Summer Work volunteers and our first Wwoofer started earlier in 2018.
- **Together Wednesdays:** This has been a more or less weekly event, except when the forecast looked awful. Volunteer members and their families have helped us with a number of tasks. All Members are welcome to join us – just let Sam know. We've also started work days on a monthly basis and these are advertised in the Newsletter or via email. Again, all Members and their families are welcome to come and meet your farmers and fellow members.



• **GDPR:** Like all organisations SCA has had to review its Privacy Policy and Data Handling procedures in line with the GDPR. Aleks and Tarra have led us in this work and we believe we are now compliant – thanks Aleks and Tarra!

• **Visioning:** Every few years it is healthy for an organisation to take stock of what has been achieved and ponder what to do in the future. At the AGM we will commence a visioning exercise for the Farm and we will be inviting Members to join us in thinking about if the Farm should change in anyway and if so, in what direction.



Barn Dance 2018 success!

This year we returned to a spring barn dance and the weather was ideal. We had a good turnout with several people camping over. The tractor rides were a huge success. The band and a caller were also excellent with everyone enjoying the dancing. The caller did a great job encouraging enthusiastic children, adults and even a dog or two to join the dance floor. The BBQ and food serving was expertly staffed as was the bar. There were enough buns left over for the campers to enjoy bacon and egg butty's for breakfast.

We had a couple of people helping with the set up and decoration on Friday. Especially big thank you to Martin Hardiman who spent all of Friday, Saturday and most of Sunday helping. Also thank you to Rod Peel for putting up the lights. We had also a lot of people taking shifts on the day, which made it go smoothly. We rely on members to help make the barn dance happen and we would love to have even more volunteers next year to make it even more amazing!

Farmer Sam



SCA statement regarding the Javelin Park incinerator

SCA is committed to re-using, transforming and re-incorporating all waste material arising from the activity of farming. Other waste material – plastic, old wire, glass etc. – is kept to a minimum and recycled. Care is always taken to ensure that lethal toxins are not released into the atmosphere or water courses. SCA strongly supports efforts throughout the region and across the world to reduce the amount of waste produced, to recycle and compost as much as

possible and to prevent the release of toxic fluids, fumes and radiation into the environment.

There is very little that we can do about the pollution blown in on the wind. Along with everyone else we as a community farm also suffer from it. We believe however that our farming approach can help mitigate these effects by producing strong and resilient animals and plants, microbes that detoxify the soil and food that is full of vitality.

'Hi' from Kit - Starter Farm update

The Starter Farm is flourishing. I've got lots of produce ready, more things coming on, and in the last month have started selling my wares in various places around Stroud. It feels really exciting to be getting my veg out there, and it's so gratifying to receive positive feedback about its tastiness and vitality. I do get stressed out at times about how much there is to do, particularly because since I'm just setting up I'm figuring out systems as I go along, which has meant tolerating a certain level of chaos! Things are starting to run more smoothly now though, as I develop routines. And it all feels more than worth it when I see people eating and enjoying what I've grown, or on a sunny day when I look up at my veg beds and feel my heart swell with pride, and delight in their beauty.

There's now a Starter Farm shelf in the packing shed at Hawkwood, so SCA members can buy things from me to supplement the share. There'll be things there each week that aren't in the share, plus extra stuff if there's something you want more of. So far I've been producing lots of salads, herbs and greens, but with the arrival of summer courgettes, beans, broccoli, sugar snap peas and various others are appearing on



the scene. Later on I'll have some interesting varieties of tomato for you to sample – I'm quite excited to see how they come out! Plus aubergines, which again I'm really looking forward to, and sweetcorn in late summer. The thing I'm proudest of at the moment is my salad mix – it's got an average of 15 different kinds of leaf in it, plus several edible flowers, and - though I say it myself - is the best salad I've ever eaten.

If you've got friends who aren't farm members but would like to buy from me, my produce is currently selling at the Shambles market on Friday and Saturday mornings, at the Country Markets stall. You can also order it through Stroudco – look for 'Oakbrook Starter Farm'.

The whole thing is a massive learning experience – the Starter Farm is definitely doing what it was intended to. My confidence is growing a lot, as are the knowledge and practical capabilities that I'll take with me whenever my time here comes to an end.



Farmer Kit

Carrot citrus soup

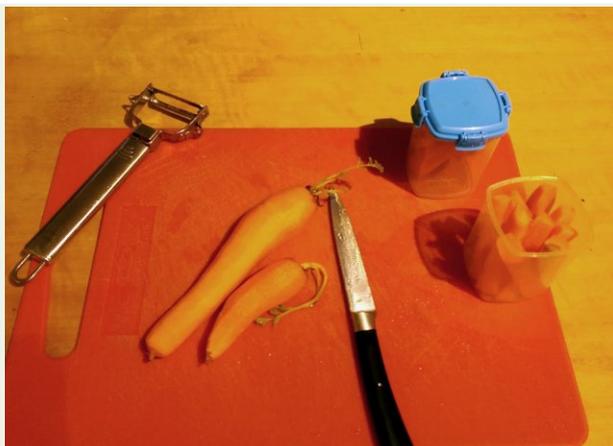
If you have a few carrots (4 or 5 medium or about 8 small) which might have gone a bit wilted, hairy or woody, they're still fine to use in a soup. I don't have a fixed recipe, but rather shove in whatever I want to use up, and simply adjust the seasoning accordingly. If you've got the oven on for something else, you can roast the carrots for about 20 minutes in a little oil to give the soup an earthy flavour, but it's not necessary and you get a 'fresher' taste with unroasted.

I make this soup a lot and the key to variety is to try different citrus flavourings. Again this is a great way to use up the odd lemon or orange that

has been hanging around in the fruit bowl and doesn't seem appealing enough to eat. I find orange gives a nice mellow soup but I prefer the zinginess of lemons. Surprisingly, this works really well with ruby grapefruit or clementine as well. I've not tried it with lime but I'd encourage you to give it a go, if lime is what you have handy.

The quantities given below are approximate and I sometimes need to add extra stock if it is too thick. I find the soup keeps for a couple days in the fridge so you can reheat portions of it over a day or so if that suits.

- Peel about 250g of carrots (or what you have left over) and cut into equal size pieces.
- Peel and chop 1 medium onion and fry gently in a large pan until soft in oil or butter.
- Add the carrots and about 500 ml of chicken or vegetable stock.
- Add about a tablespoon of red lentils, if you have some, as a thickener; a small piece of potato will work too (you can use a left over cooked one if you have it) but I find too much potato makes the soup go gluey and less palatable.
- Bring to the boil and simmer gently for about 15 to 20 minutes until the lentils are cooked and the carrots soft.
- Blend with a jug or stick blender until smooth.
- Return to the pan and add the zest and juice of one to two lemons, clementines, or small oranges (or 1 large orange or grapefruit).
- Then taste and adjust to your preference: you may want to add more liquid or some salt, or a little more citrus; if you have a bit of parsley you can add that or a bit of cumin if you like spice; I usually add a large slug of pomegranate molasses as this is my favourite ingredient for introducing a bit of middle eastern pzazz.



And if you're peeling carrots for the soup or for any other meal, you could try peeling a few extra and cutting into fingers/crudites. Then put them into a small container and pop in the fridge. You can then put these in with packed lunches for a satisfying, crunchy snack, or have them ready with a dip or two when you need a little treat between meals.

Jules

Stroud Community Agriculture

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

For almost a year now we have had a long waiting list to join the farm, but now we have the starter farm up and running we have spaces for new members. 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	07891 615103	mark@plumtucker.co.uk
• Francis Gobey	07890 042877	francis.gobey@phoncoop.coop
• Simon Hanks	01452 812608	
• Sam Hardiman	07531 270206	samueljhardiman@hotmail.com
• Michal Chodasewicz	01453 825103	micho0281@gmail.com
• Tarra Gilder-Rai	07981 760982	tarragilderrai@gmail.com
• Bernard Jarman	01453 757436	orion@phoncoop.coop
• Aleksandra Osinska	07435 344640	creativealeks@gmail.com
• Jane Thatcher		jane@thewildflowergarden.co.uk
• Joe Mancell		joe.mancell@gmail.com

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

General enquiries and information: Clare & Paul Sheridan 0845 4580814
info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Membership Admin: Carol Mathews membership@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

Newsletter: Aleksandra Osinska creativealeks@gmail.com