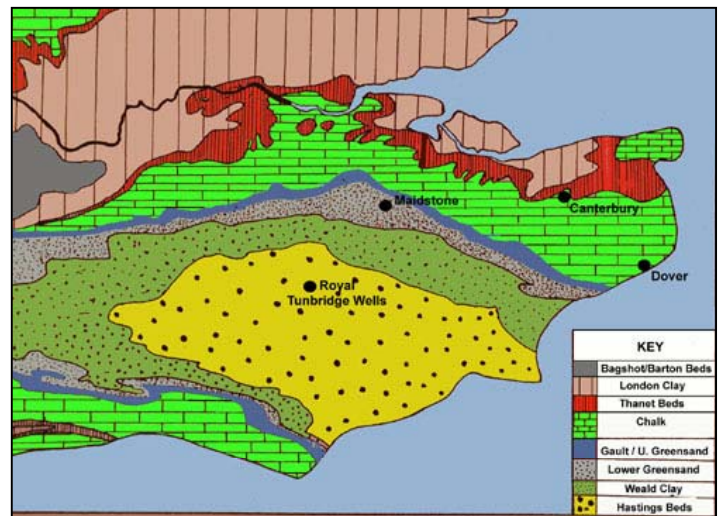


# TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS AUTUMN '05

## A perspective on time

Have you ever thought about what's under your feet, beyond the thin layer of grass/ mud/ concrete/ or the comfortable living room carpet? David Thomas is a local geologist, as well as an esteemed chiropractor, and, on a whim, which he kindly indulged, I went recently to talk to him about the geology of our area. Forest Row is, in geological terms, situated at the centre of the **Wealden anticline** - where the rock strata have been pushed up from the sides and squeezed into a dome. This might seem odd because we do not appear to be high up in relation to the land around us..... but read on!

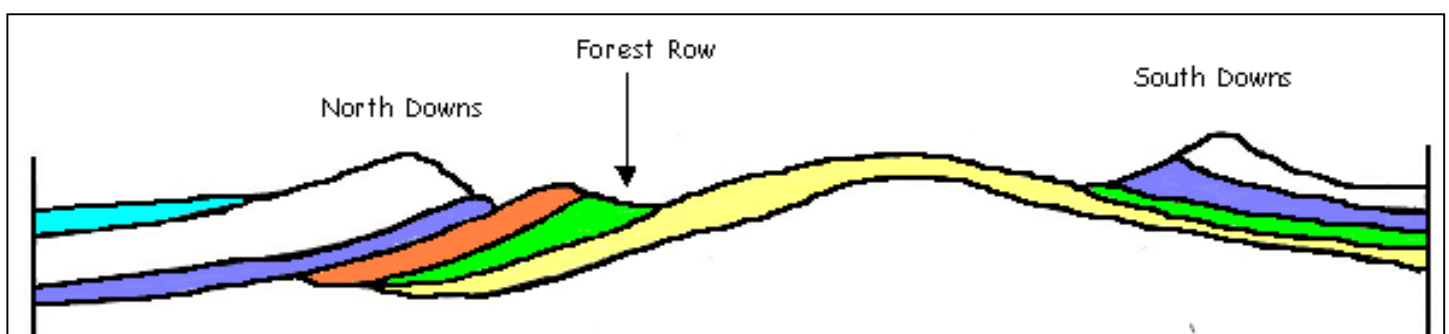


Conventional wisdom suggests the earth is a result of many millions of years of formation, from its beginnings as a fiery spin-off from the sun. One of the main ingredients of life, water, appeared as a result of the combining of oxygen and hydrogen, gases given off as the earth cooled. Over unimaginable spans of time, the earth's crust formed. There were movements and reshaping of this thin crust of rock, throwing up mountain ranges and depositing them back into the sea. These vast movements, called tectonic action, expressed, sometimes literally, the hot and liquid core of the earth and are, as we know, continuing today. Weather and water in their many forms caused erosion and the worn away rock was carried off to seas and lakes. Under great pressure and sometimes heat layers of gravel, sand and mud built up and hardened into new rocks. Added to this was the accretion within these layers of the natural history of the planet, known as the fossil record, from which we learn of the stages by which life arrived at its present state.

An alternative anthroposophical view of this process suggests that the geological history of the Earth necessarily reflects the development of the human being. In this scenario the mineral realm manifests as a densification of the living process - rather as a shell develops out of the living process of a mollusc.

The first rocks to appear were the igneous, equal grained, undifferentiated granites. These are made up of crystals of quartz, mica and feldspar rather like unicellular life - very similar to the initial 'mulberry' stage of embryonic development. The next stage was representative of the 'plant' aspect of life on earth and is reflected in geology by the 'bladed' and cleaved qualities of schists and slates which exhibit the characteristics similar to the leaves of plants. The 'animal' phase of the evolution of the Earth finds its material expression as the remains of numerous minute and large sea creatures that are collectively represented - for instance - by the Carboniferous limestones and Cretaceous chalk. It is suggested that these Earth evolutionary phases had to be achieved **prior** to man being able to 'incarnate' as a fully conscious being.

The latter geological picture is strange to us. This is man's evolution depicted, not so much as an expression of the summit of biological life, (a Darwinian perspective which our western culture locks us into), as the arrival of a higher level of consciousness in the physical realm. It begs some big questions about where we are going and what we, and the earth, are preparing for.



But here and now is Forest Row, sitting on what's left of layers of chalk sandstone and clay, pushed up by forces somewhat greater than Peter's tractor, into that anticline, and **worn away again**. In the central area the chalk has disappeared and successive layers beneath have formed the lovely valley of the Medway flowing out to the sea through the lower softer Wealden clay, and the various sandstones of the Weald which form the higher ground. The Ashdown Forest for example sits on the so-called Lower Greensand which is not green but brown, and soft, and porous, and a poor holder of nutrients. The soil here is often thin, sandy and free draining. Plawhatch occupies this latter soil type. Tablehurst for the most part comprises the former, the Wealden clay, which is also a relatively difficult soil and needs careful husbandry. It is sometimes known as a "five minute" soil because it has a very short window during which it can be cultivated, moving very quickly from impossibly wet to bone dry and hard according to the weather. The farmer or gardener working either of these soils knows well the particular importance of maintaining humus in the soil to hold fertility. But with good management, a lot of love and more than a bit of magic this very thin top few inches of the earth's crust is where our food grows; without which no incarnation for the wandering soul.

In its **relatively** recent primeval state the Weald was all forest, and its timber and the plentiful iron ore deposits beneath were for many centuries the basis for a rich iron industry. With skill, burning wood in the form of charcoal gives sufficient heat for the ore to be extracted and worked. When the diggers were excavating the reservoir at Tablehurst a few years ago a layer of charcoal was discovered about a metre below ground. A local enthusiast had the remains carbon dated to about 200 AD: Roman Britain!

One well known tree which thrives in the area is the oak. Interestingly oak is full of tannin (tannic acid) which reacts powerfully with iron turning the metal black and corroding it; in reverse the wood is also stained permanently by the metal. The oak tree is of course a wonderful resource for humans as well as other wildlife. Recent visitors to Tablehurst cannot have failed to notice a huge oak trunk lying beside the track which has now been set upright and is having strange shapes cut into it. It is being sculpted by Ken Smith at Emerson college. That tree came from Priory Road in Forest Row and was removed by the parish because it was rotten. I counted the rings on its base: nearly 200 years of growing, which began during the Napoleonic wars and the mass enclosure, (with hedges) for the first time of the English countryside. And here we are again planting hedges on the farm. But these are drops in the ocean of time. It's only we in our modern madness who never seem to have enough of it.

Mark Haughton with help from David Thomas who refers to; Walther Cloose, "The Living Earth", for the Anthroposophical perspective

## You too can be a Biodynamic dinner lady

Some months back, I decided that I would like to give a little practical help to the farms. I am a technophobe, so admin was out; nor do I drive tractors, but when I heard that everyone working on Tablehurst Farm shares a communal lunch daily, I offered to cook there once a week. I was welcomed into the farmhouse just as Helle and Jup the houseparents were about to leave. And so I plunged into cooking Tuesday's lunch for about 20, together with Stuart and energized by his rock'n'roll tapes which sometimes made me feel hopelessly nostalgic. (We had to be careful to keep off each others' blue suede shoes when working at the sink!)

The lunch is consumed by farmers, their wives and children, apprentices, students, butchers and their assistants, foresters, mechanics, carpenters and anyone visiting that day. Many arrive on tractors and JCBs! My heart goes out to Jamie Oliver's dinner ladies who often witnessed the pitiful sight of their well-prepared food going into the bin, and not even the compost bin at that. At Tablehurst, having blessed the meal, everyone eats healthily and without complaint, even though I usually cook vegetarian and I suspect that some of them would prefer a juicy steak. There is never any waste since leftovers go into the pig bucket.

Seating around the farmhouse table is limited, so the overflow would have to sit on the steps - once someone even took a chair into the larder! Thankfully, since the installation of the new kitchen up near the shop, complete with beautiful table and drawers hand-crafted by Mark Haughton, everyone can (*just*) sit down together. It is also good to be cooking at the heart of the farm, surrounded by busy activity, whilst we are slaving away over a hot stove. However, these facilities still fall far short of the community centre which is envisioned for the farm.

It would be so lovely to be able to host Co-op members, school parties and the general public, to see a working biodynamic farm and to enjoy meals cooked with seasonal produce at zero food miles. I know that this is possible because this summer I visited Riverford Farm in Devon which hosts groups for two-hour conducted tours followed by a mouth-watering feast in their beautiful self-built "Field Kitchen". And how about starting a nutrition and cookery school for the dinner ladies of the future ...?

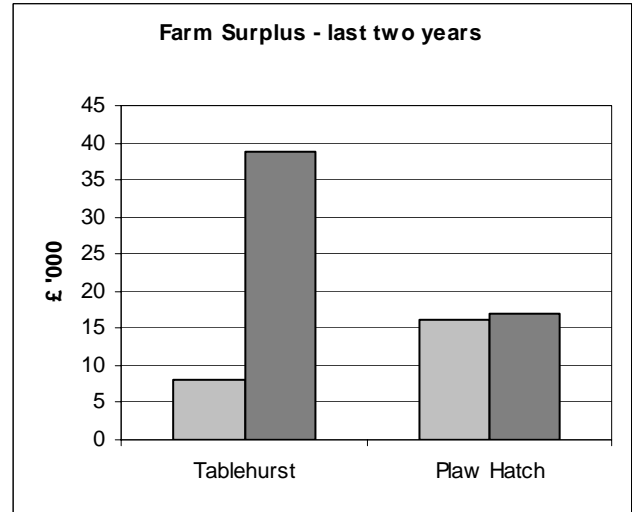
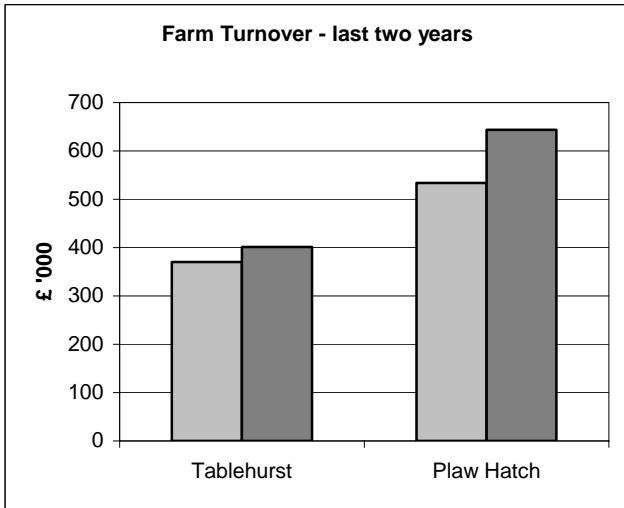
Rose Moore

# AGM Report

On September 23rd we had the Annual General Meeting for the Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm. The meeting went well with the farms giving engaging reports on what has been a good year with total trading for the farms exceeding £1 million for the first time. We are moving in the right direction but there is much to do.

I look forward to the new year as being one of renewed activity in taking the Co-op and the farms forward and I hope that many, many more of you will be able to find the time and resources to help us in this building process.

With warm regards, Brian Swain



## AGM Highlights

- New committee: Brian Swain, Steve Harvey, Oliver Fynes-Clinton, Richard Evans, Peter Brinch and Krista Braun.
- Priorities for the next twelve months are to increase active membership, to raise funds, in particular for housing, and to broaden the Co-op committee skill base.
- Plaw Hatch Farm reported that it has split the milk round, creating more capacity for new customers; that it is refurbishing the "bothy" by the farm entrance as a meeting place; that the new entrance will go ahead shortly, necessitating the demolition of the pole barn and the construction of two new barns; that it has acquired a new (but 30 year-old) combine harvester; that they are about to start pig breeding in a small way, and that a new cheese - the Plaw Hatch Dutchman - is now on sale
- Tablehurst Farm reported the new barn is now completed and in use; the old sheep milking parlour is now used for communal farm meals, with a newly fitted kitchen next door; that Tablehurst would have swept the board at the Organic Food awards this year (maybe!) had the event not been cancelled by the Soil Association, and that plans are now well-developed for a major expansion of the shop. The next big initiative at Tablehurst is to build housing for Raphael and Stefanie, who joined the farm team in September.

## SHARE APPLICATION

I would formally like to apply to become a member of TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETY (No 28403R) and enclose:

A cheque for £ ..... to buy ..... share(s) at £100 each

Please make your cheque payable to Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Ltd and send to:

The Secretary, Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Ltd, Trees, Priory Road, Forest Row, RH18 5HF.

Full name..... Signature.....

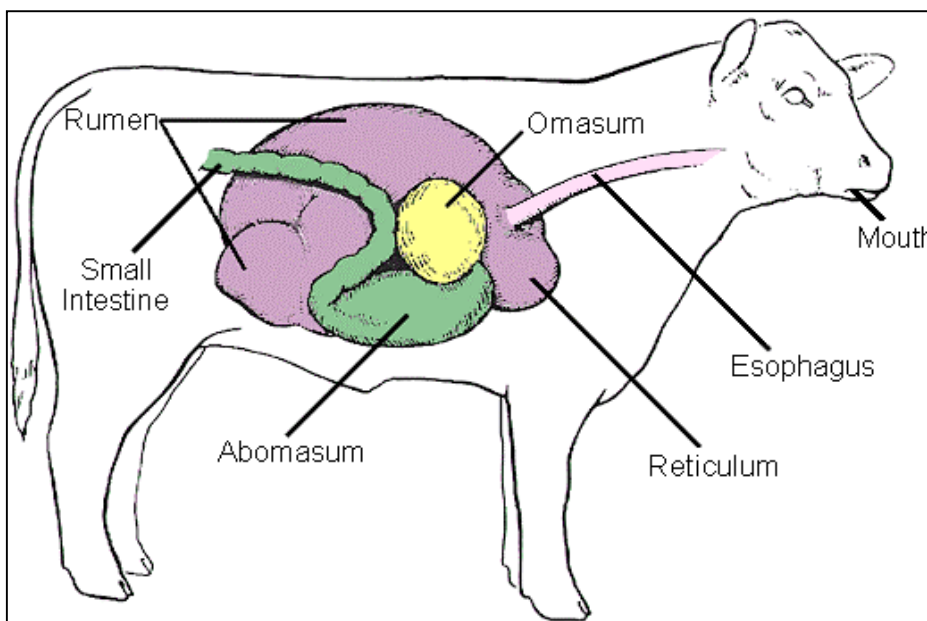
Address .....Postcode .....

Telephone no.....Email.....Date.....

## The Secret Life of the Milking Cow

It's like making beer really. You need good ingredients, a 36 gallon barrel, and just the right conditions so that fermentation will take place. Beer is made in a brewery of course, but in the case of milk production, the brewery has legs. It may be hard to believe, but the *rumen* - the largest of the cow's four stomach organs, really is about 36 gallons, or 150 litres, in capacity. And what goes on inside is complex, delicately balanced, and amazing.

The natural diet of a cow consists of grass and other coarse roughage - all of it plant material that human beings and most other mammals are incapable of digesting. To break these tough, cellulose-based materials down into their constituent parts so that they can be digested is a slow process, mostly taking place in the rumen. In a healthy cow living on a natural diet, this extraordinary fermentation tank contains billions of micro-organisms - bacteria, protozoa and fungi, living in a symbiotic relationship with the cow. It is actually these micro-organisms that break down the cellulose, with the cow's primary role being to chew, then chew again, the food often being regurgitated several times for further mastication before it is finally digested. This fine balance of life forces means that the health of the cow depends not just on it eating the right diet, but also on the health of the teeming masses of micro-organisms living within its digestive apparatus.



This is graphically illustrated when the cow undergoes a change of diet, for example when it is given access to fresh spring grass after a winter of hay and silage. The change of diet requires a change in the balance of micro-organisms in the rumen, and this cannot be achieved instantaneously. Thus diet changes are best introduced slowly to allow the bacteria time to adapt. The farmer's clue to a problem in this area is the condition of the cow-pats - too liquid suggests the bacteria are out of balance

At Plaw Hatch, the cows' dominant food is grass in the summer and hay or silage in the winter. This is supplemented with a little extra protein in the form of either home-grown oats, or biodynamic field beans bought in dry and then sprouted on the farm. Contrast this with so-called "conventional" herds, where the cows subsist entirely on protein pellets, denying them the cellulose for which their digestive organs are designed. This destroys the microbiological balance in the rumen, and routine application of antibiotics becomes essential to keep the cows "healthy". Perhaps the most graphic demonstration of how the animal's nature is upset by this unnatural diet is its pulse and breathing rate, both of which are constantly twice as rapid as in a grass-fed animal.

In total, a Plaw Hatch cow in milk consumes 14kg of dry matter and 70 litres of water a day, all of which finds its way into the fermentation vat. In return, it gives us an average of around 20 litres of milk a day.



The Plaw Hatch herd is currently 46 cows, of which about three-quarters will be giving milk at any one time. Of course, to create the milk supply, the cows need to calve regularly. The herd is a breed called MRI, and if a calf is destined to join the herd as an adult, it must be purebred. For such replacement animals, artificial insemination is used, as MRI bulls, in common with the bulls of most dairy breeds, are highly temperamental and difficult to handle.

For the rest of the time, a Sussex bull (the same breed as the Tablehurst cattle, and quite docile) lives with the milking herd, producing MRI/Sussex cross calves. These normally go to market at three weeks old, to be raised elsewhere for beef.



A purebred MRI calf becomes a *yearling* at a year old, then a *heifer* on its second birthday. It will produce its own first calf at around the age of three. Thereafter, the mature cow will produce a calf annually, and settles into a steady rhythm. The newborn calf will be weaned at between 3 weeks and 3 months old. The mother will start her next pregnancy about 90 days after the birth, and will continue to supply milk to the

farm for another six months - about nine months in all therefore, before being allowed to gently dry off for the last three months of the pregnancy. Unlike sheep, not all the cows calve at the same time, so a supply of milk is available all year. The usual lifespan of a milking cow at Plaw Hatch is about eight years - considerably longer than on conventional farms - during which time the cow will produce five calves. The farm's oldest, however, is thirteen and is currently pregnant with her eighth calf.



By nature, cows are introverted, unhurried and docile. This is no accident, equipping the animal perfectly for the slow, steady processes of grazing and chewing the cud.

Milking the herd twice a day, every day, is one of Tom's favourite tasks, despite its repetitive nature. It is his opportunity to spend time close to the animals, to assess their condition, to spot problems, and to get to know each individual in the herd better. I joined Tom for the morning milking recently, and was fascinated to see the temperament of the cows so clearly demonstrated. They seemed to know exactly what was coming, where

to go and what to do, but unlike human beings in a queue, nothing would hurry them and they were content to wait their turn. As Tom says: "You can't rush - it only takes more time in the end."



Chris Marshall

## Jonathan Francis Lumley, Tablehurst Vet

17 September 1950 - 8 September 2005

Jon was born on 17 September 1950 in rural Huntingdonshire. He spent much of his childhood on the nearby farm of one of his school friends. He went to Kimbolton School where he excelled at English and languages. He was a fine athlete, winning many trophies for, in particular, high jump and triple jump - even ranking among the best in Scottish universities when he attended Glasgow University to study Veterinary medicine.

After graduating, Jon worked in a mixed practice in Totnes, where he became known as 'the vet who doesn't wear a tie'. Just over a year later, he joined an overland trip to Perth, Western Australia where he arrived Christmas Eve 1974. Jon married, and worked in a variety of country and semi-rural practices. When their daughter Jessamine was two Jon and his wife separated, and both moved to the city of Perth.

It was during this period that Jon's outward participation in various spiritual paths intensified. Having had a Christian upbringing, he explored Yoga & meditation and Buddhism. Jon was a seeker and sought a spirituality that was practical. He maintained an ongoing commitment to meditation. Despite his background in science, he deplored reductionism and pure Darwinian thought, and during the weeks before his passing he would reflect on the transcendent capacity of the human being.

Jon's first encounter with Anthroposophy came about through his involvement in a pioneer Steiner school where his daughter Lyssandra commenced Parent & Toddler group. The following year Jon attended an introductory lecture, for a Foundation Course in Anthroposophy, which centred on the seven liberal arts of ancient people. At its conclusion Jon announced that he 'wanted to do that course'. The year's study was a rich one and his final project was the application to Australian mammals of Wolfgang Schad's threefold approach.

It was around this time that Jon became interested in homoeopathy, having observed its dramatic efficacy on Lyssandra. He began exploring its application in veterinary medicine. His desire to increase his skill with homoeopathy was one of the factors influencing his return to England in 1999.

Jon's love of the outdoors and the Australian bush - and magnificent wildflowers - went hand in hand with his commitment to conservation. In the mid nineties, he successfully spearheaded a campaign to prevent an area of pristine bush near Perth from being rezoned for development. The bushland is now preserved for posterity. Previously Jon had initiated and funded the establishment of a community recycling facility on his veterinary clinic premises. Money raised was donated to charity. Jon had also been a very active member of Oxfam - Community Aid Abroad where he committed himself to fundraising and awareness.

In Forest Row Jon was best known for his work at Tablehurst Farm. He joined the farm team full time in 2002 and delighted in his first year there, especially during the lambing season, which is such a community event at the farm. At the same time Jon began developing a local clientele for veterinary homoeopathy and many people will remember him for that.

Jon spent the last eight months of this life back in Perth; partly because medical treatment was more easily accessible and partly to return to the open space, the ease of lifestyle, the warmth and to reconnect with old friends. He was to have celebrated his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday among friends, and Jessamine had already sent out invitations. However he passed over to the spiritual world nine days before - on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2005.

Mary-Anne Lumley

# Tablehurst Farmer's Notebook

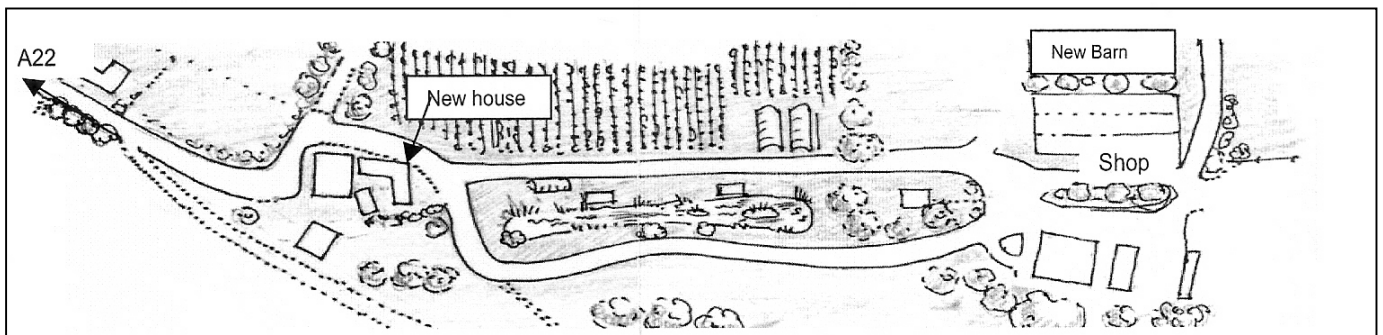
We are well into September and it is again very dry. This has allowed us to spread all the compost in perfect conditions, but it also means that the grass has stopped growing and we are already having to feed hay and silage to some of the cattle. I have never before had to do this so early.

Although it was also dry earlier in the season, we had some rain during the harvest, which meant we had to use the grain dryer again this year. The combine also gave us a bit of trouble and a lot of work had to be done to the header, the wide bit on the front of the combine which cuts the crop and feeds it into the machine. Johannes, the Emerson College student who worked over the summer with us, did a very good job of fixing it and then did quite a bit of the combining too. Most of the yields were good, so we are happy.

The new barn, which was supposed to be finished at the end of July, wasn't. It is up now though, and full of hay, straw and machines. The doors have still to come and be fitted and we have yet to move the workshop up from next to our shop. The farm team will be working on that over the next months. It is going to make a big difference to our lives, and it is still difficult to believe that it is now there, having waited so long for it.

The frame and roof of the new chicken processing unit went up at the same time as the big barn. The second step is to build the rest of it and to expand the shop into the present workshop. The plans are all drawn up and four companies are tendering for the work. We are then submitting an application to DEFRA for a grant of 50%. It is not at all clear that we will get the full amount, as we will be competing with other farms submitting their projects to the same deadline. We are also concerned that the cost is going to be higher than we anticipated, due to the specs changing to meet building regulations relating to a complex drainage system that deals with both poultry waste and toilets. The money needed for these projects will be borrowed, so we will be paying for them for quite a few years to come. Should we not get the 50% grant, it will be a big question whether we can go ahead with the project.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, Jup and Helle, who lived with the residents in Tablehurst Farm Cottage, left in February. They have now bravely moved to Denmark, where they have bought a house with some land, which they will develop into a garden and nursery. Robin, my son, and Laura, his partner, have been running the house since they left, until we found the right house-parents long term. To our surprise and delight, Andrew Carnegie, who has worked full time on the farm a year last July, applied for the job. Clive, Stuart and Terry, when asked for their opinion, were also very happy so Andrew will be moving in within the next couple of months. Andrew will clearly need help with this task, as he will still be working on the farm, and there are a couple of possibilities that we are following up. Robin and Laura will be moving into the village in October, so Brigitte and I will hold the fort there in the meantime. Brigitte finished the first year of her speech and drama course and loved it. She has now started the second year but is still doing too much here on the farm.



Raphael Rivera and Stefanie Moy will join us in a few days time as farmers. With 200 more acres and continuous development we really need them. Raphael, who was an apprentice here, comes back with a degree in organic farming, and Stefanie is about to complete hers. They will move into a caravan until we can find accommodation to rent in the village. As this is going to be very expensive for the farm, we are launching a fund raising appeal to help us convert an old farm building into accommodation. This will not only be cheaper but also enable them to live on the farm. As the farm is already committing itself to paying off substantial loans, we hope the fund raising will be successful, allowing this to happen.

Peter Brown

## Accommodation for farmers - We need your help to build

At the Co-op AGM on 23 September, a new initiative was announced to raise funds to improve the accommodation for our farmers. The first objective is to refurbish an old farm building at Tablehurst Farm to create accommodation for Raphael Rivera and Stefanie Moy. Raphael and Stefanie are trained farmers who will be joining the farming team on a permanent basis, but for now the farm has no accommodation for them. Your help is needed to raise the £120,000 that is needed to convert the building.

Fund-raising leaflets with more details are being issued with the newsletter where possible, but if you do not have a copy of the leaflet, please contact Chris Marshall (contact details below) or Brian Infield (01342 822777, [brianinfield@gmail.com](mailto:brianinfield@gmail.com)) for more details. If you are able to offer practical help with the refurbishment work when it gets underway, please contact Mark Haughton (01342 826824, [m.Haughton@zoom.co.uk](mailto:m.Haughton@zoom.co.uk)).



Raphael and Stefanie

## Understanding our customers and community

We have for some time needed more comprehensive knowledge about our consumer community, who are they, what they like about the farm and what they would like in terms of expanded goods and services. Additionally we are very keen that our consumer body and our Co-op membership are more aligned and unified community. In this regard we are designing a customer survey that would be done over a six-week period this year. We need helpers to accomplish this who would be willing to go to the farms, meet our customers and to survey what they would like from the farms and what they like about them.

If you are able to help in this process please call Patrick Shaw at Plaw Hatch Farm on 01342 810652.



## Gourmet Fundraising!

The Co-op committee has been considering a small fundraising event that would also celebrate the excellent quality food that is produced on the farms. A small group have begun the planning of this event, which we are planning on February

We have the immense good fortune to have secured the guidance of Mark Reffan of the Chef and Co-owner of Gravetye manor to create a menu and manage the cooking on the night. All of the food will come from the farms with the menu built around the season and organic and Biodynamic wines will be sourced. Additionally there will be carefully selected entertainment throughout the evening to compliment the meal and the wonderful venue of the Long Room at Kidbrooke Mansion.

We are confident that this will be a superb evening of gourmet eating and entertainment that will become an annual fundraising event for the Co-op.

In support of this event we are canvassing for people who will help in promoting the event and others who would like to participate in cooking on the evening (it will be a masters class in cooking with Mark).

Please contact Brian Swain for further information on 01324 824740 or [brianswain@rubiconassociates.com](mailto:brianswain@rubiconassociates.com)

## Contacts

For all general enquiries about the Co-op, please contact Chris Marshall in the first instance

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### Co-op Officers

Brian Swain, Chairman	824740
Oliver Fynes-Clinton, Secretary	823966
Steve Harvey, Treasurer	824808

### Shops

Plaw Hatch Farm	810201
Tablehurst Farm	823173
Michael Hall Garden	825604

Farm walk at Plaw Hatch - Sunday 23 October, 2pm - All welcome