

TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS

Summer '06

Tablehurst Notebook

On the farming front, as is usually the case, you win some and you lose some. Some of our cereal crops, like the triticale and rye at Springhill have fared quite well whilst many of the spring sown crops have struggled to get away this year. Most of the silage has been done, though we still have a little more hay to make and we hope that we can make some more silage later in the year.

The cattle came through the winter very well this year and have continued to do well at grazing. The sheep are never without their problems with the range of ailments that can afflict them at any time. But on the whole they have done well with no major catastrophes and the first of this year's lambs should be coming through in the next weeks. We have experimented with about 8 acres of stubble turnips and kale to fatten lambs later in the summer. We have added 57 new Dorset ewes to the flock so that we can lamb out of season i.e. in October - to complement the main flock which lambs in the spring. This should help us to overcome the lamb supply problem in the shop between May and August.

The porcine division is now being overseen by Raph and he has started to plan a herd with a younger average age than we have had up till now. The table birds have unfortunately had more problems than usual this spring in so far as they have been molested by a very sly and cunning fox whose means of entry into the field has taken us quite some time to discover. On top of that crows have been a problem, as they often are in spring when they are feeding their young; they attack the younger more vulnerable chickens and we have lost quite a few birds in this way.

400 turkey day old poults have now arrived, so we are already gearing up for another Christmas!

We hope you are all enjoying the new roadway into the farm: sorry about the nasty little speed bump, but we must have it in order to protect pedestrians and cyclists using the nearby Sustrans track and the footpath. You will have noticed that building is underway now for the new extended shop as well as for the poultry plucking unit. The latter is being largely planned and done by Peter with some farm labour and so we are trying hard to keep Peter as free as possible to undertake this. We are under pressure to get all this work done according to a



Raphael Rivera and his assistant entertain the visitors at the Tablehurst Farm walk on June 11th - national "Meet the Farmer" day

Tablehurst Notebook (cont'd)

quite inflexible schedule which is laid down by the Rural Enterprise Grant Scheme body. The planning and paper work is considerable.

Ah, paperwork! This could be a subject for a whole newsletter, so perhaps we had better not start on that one! Suffice to say, like many farmers we have had enormous problems with the Rural Payments Agency who are responsible for the delivery of the Single Farm Payment – so much so that we have had Charles Hendry MP come to visit us and to take up our complaints about DEFRA's staggering incompetence and maladministration. The good news is that we have in the last days had a partial payment of subsidy from the May 2005 application. However, we continue to have ongoing problems with them but we have now persuaded them that we need to have a dedicated official from the RPA to deal with us on a one to one basis.

We are very fortunate in having a very good team on the farm. Steffi has now joined us alongside Raph; she is gradually taking on the cattle and sheep while Susan is ably showing her the ropes, so to speak, as she has now had a good deal of experience as she approaches the end of her two year course here. We have a strong group of Emerson students, Johannes (now a B-D graduate), David, Tim and Axel with us at the moment and an agricultural college graduate from Switzerland, Markus. Ligio is also coming to the end of his year's stay here and we wish him well in his future work in Chile.

Perhaps we could end by expressing our thanks to those who helped to set up a very nice farm walk and barbeque on June 11th (photos back page) where we hosted quite a large group of visitors, many of whom were "first-timers". The following week Tablehurst featured on the front cover of the Farmer's Weekly (see front page) as part of a spread on the national "Meet the Farmer" day. Raph and a very large pig featured very prominently in the photograph! I'm sure you'll agree, they both look quite handsome.

Andrew Carnegie

The Yoga of Work

(Some observations inspired by the Plaw Hatch Dairy)

Why do we go to work? Stupid question I hear you say – we all need the money to do all the things that money buys for us. But it's not that simple. My observation is that much of the time, we all end up spending money on stuff and new experiences in order to recover from the work we do in order to get the money! So, in an ideal world, what else should we get from our work?

The sages tell us that 'Work is love made visible' and, to paraphrase, if we can't express love in our work, it would be better to beg from others who can. This is certainly a tall order but it does suggest that work should also be about giving something of ourselves, some process of self-expression of innate talents which results in a better sense of connectedness with the people and things around us. It also suggests (or implies) that this aspect of work is both good for us and that it produces happiness.

What relevance is this to people working on a community farm? Or to someone working on an industrial production line or to anyone at all for that matter? Its easy to dismiss such work definitions as only being applicable to those involved with 'The Arts' – the musician, the painter, the sculptor. Such people are clearly involved with the creative process. But that's clearly absurd. Of course we are all involved in creative processes of all kinds and much of that creativity is expressed in the work place in the form of problem solving of various kinds.

However, there is no escaping the fact that most jobs that fall outside of the obviously 'creative' category do have a significant component which is routine and predictable. It seems to me that it is this routine stuff which presents the biggest challenge to the 'work is love made visible' doctrine. So often routine work can easily degenerate into an experience of boredom. If you think about it, boredom at work is the complete opposite of the connectedness that comes when we feel we are expressing ourselves fully. Perhaps farm work can give us an insight into the deeper potential of routine work?

Farming is, by its very nature, a routine process because it is governed by one of the biggest routine shows on the planet: the passage of the seasons. Spring, summer, autumn, winter. Planting, growing, harvesting. With animals there may be a quicker cycle of birth, growth and death. Every year the same. But not exactly the same. There's the weather, and changing market conditions for produce and the price of all the inputs that come from outside. All these have to be juggled around a central core of predictable routine.

And then there is the appreciation of the context in which the routine work takes place. This routine task of cutting hay is not just another boring task, it's an essential part of the yearly life-cycle of the farm. If we don't cut the hay, the cows won't have enough to eat during the winter. If we don't plant the seed, we won't have anything to sell in the shop. But there's also another aspect that I suspect farmers are tuned into. And that is that they are not really the key players in the show at all. They're just bit extras who give a hand to help the show run a little more smoothly. The real star is Nature itself, which organises all this burgeoning growth in a seemingly effortless way.

So maybe there's a lesson here for the rest of us who show up each day to put in our 8 hours or so of routine work with no apparent great creative input or output. Maybe we just need to adjust our thinking. What is the context of our work? What difference does it make if we do it really well or if we do it badly? How does it make us feel when we know we did that little bit more than we really had to? What would happen if our routine work didn't get done or didn't get done properly? And what if our routine work was really a form of Yoga – something that, if performed regularly with the right frame of mind, could become a tool for self-mastery and self-knowledge?

One final thought – my experience has been that working on a Biodynamic farm like Plaw Hatch has given me a greater sense of involvement and pride in the joint achievements of everyone involved than in any of the other areas of work that I have experienced (which have been quite a few). However, I have also observed that this work space is not immune from two phenomena that routinely threaten others work place environments, namely potential burn-out and rust-out situations (too many demands/challenges or not enough). How small organisations should cope with this could be the subject of a book (and probably is). Maybe the subject for another time.

Patrick Shaw

Any thoughts concerning this article? Maybe some personal experiences? If so, Patrick would like to hear from you: pln@gotadsl.co.uk

Join the Plaw Hatch Farm Yoga / Yoghurt Team!

We are looking for someone to fill a full-time position as Dairy Supervisor. This would involve taking responsibility for all the day to day dairy production processes which currently include cheesemaking, yoghurt making, cream making and milk pasteurisation and the supervision of other dairy staff. Ideally the successful applicant will have had some experience in this field. However, since full training will be provided, enthusiasm and commitment will be the primary requirements.

The Dairy Supervisor will be a key member of the Farm Team and will be expected to involve themselves in the life of the farm. This is not a routine 9 – 5 job. For this reason, we want the job holder to live on the farm – accommodation will be provided.

For more information please call Tom on 07890 888259 or the Farm Office on 01342 810652

Plaw Hatch Farm Faces

A brief introduction to some of the team at Plaw Hatch Farm, courtesy of Patrick Shaw



Andy (Sagittarius). Resident hermit, astrologer and collector of valued items (junk). Often seen masquerading as Milk Roundsman.



Shelagh (Sagittarius) Resident fully qualified Homeopath. Also seen working in Farm Shop.



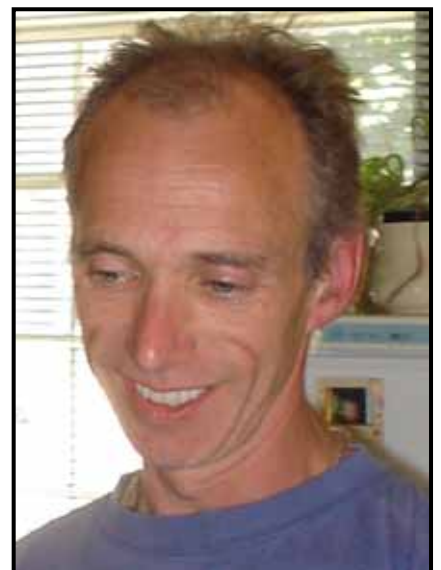
Yaeli (Virgo) Just returned from 6 months in India. Qualified Yoga teacher and current student of Farm Shop things.



Rafal. One half of the Polish invasion. One time lawyer, general all-round good guy and Farm Student.



Lisa (Leo). The shop's very own sunshine generator... only clouded by a self-admitted liking for Terry Wogan. Also expert on bedlinen. (Never mind Lisa; takes all sorts...)



Tom (Aries) Farm & Dairy Manager. Ongoing research project: "How to survive on 5 hours sleep per day".



Anna. Other half of the Polish invasion force & Farm Student. Expert in illuminating Brits' ignorance of Polish history.



Ray (Pisces). Chicken Meister and all-round Mr Fix It. Plaw Hatch's answer to Dirty Harry.



Julia (Cancer) Ongoing research project: "How to survive living with someone surviving on 5 hours sleep per day"



Kate (Leo). Farm Shop Business Manager. Doesn't like being on her own with photographer. Otherwise very O.K.



Olive. Just returned from 4 months in India with new hair and new name. Currently planning return trip; been in the Farm Shop longer than the tills.



and finally ...

Patrick (Aries) 'Mr Yoghurt' & author of this piece so less said the better.

Would you like to get more involved in the Co-op?

As you may already know, both Plaw Hatch and Tablehurst Farms have management teams that make the day-to-day decisions to run the farm businesses. However, because the farms are community-owned, there is a separate group – the Co-op committee – sitting between the two and representing the interests of the community in the farms. The role of the Co-op (and hence of the committee) is to develop the long term direction of our community farming project and to increase community engagement with and support for the farms.

If you think our community farms are important, and would like to give a little of your time to help them to develop, why not put yourself forward as a candidate for the Co-op committee? No special skills are needed – energy, and a belief in what the farms are trying to do are much more important. If you are even slightly interested, please contact me for more information.

Chris Marshall
01342 822611
chrismarshall@f2s.com

P.S. If you can count, the committee is in particular need of a new treasurer!

Midsummer Farmhouse Update

As you may be aware some of us have been meeting since last autumn to discuss how to raise funds for the new farmhouse at Tablehurst. It has been a good experience. Friendly gatherings of people have squashed into Bernie's sitting room and sweated by log fires or more recently by the day's heat. But the warmth has been more than just from room temperature. We share a passionate belief in the farm and the farmhouse project. The idea of creating living space for people who work at the farm is intensely exciting. It goes to the heart of creating durability and sustainability for Tablehurst and links the farm's human element with earthy things like bricks and building stuff as well as with what grows our food. A house needs a bit of earth to sit on too. Also for me the project has always had the possibility of engaging a wider circle of people into the farms life. And it's working!

The process is nourished by the generous support of many of you who share the vision and want to be part of it through donating or giving time; such gifts are always precious in terms of what they signify. We have been meeting you all at Michael Hall market, in the village, and outside the farm shop with our stand of photo's (thanks to Susan and her talent for photography and display) and very readable up to date explanatory text by Peter. We've tramped the streets of Forest Row dropping off invites to everyone in the village to come and enjoy the farm, its scenery and its food.

That was a highlight for me – posting the invites I mean. I discovered such a wonderful variety of houses and gardens in the village and was accompanied all the way on my evening task by the ubiquitous song thrush singing its heart out from leafy garden reaches. I also discovered what I think must be the bane of post men and women: getting ones fingers trapped in letter boxes. I did meet the other traditional bane, one or two dogs, but they were more idly curious than territorial thank goodness.

The occasion of that invite was lovely too, with Peter as usual guiding the walkers. Bernie prepared enough food for half the village so there was plenty! Neil and Oliver, dressed in stripey aprons, looked the part as they dished out burgers and sausages from the bbq in the shade of the trees by the river bank. I was aptly put on the vege burger stand which saw quiet trade! There will be more such events; do come and enjoy them. The walks are a great way to be informed and to meet people, the food is great value and delicious, and we do the washing up!

Another arm of the fundraising has been an attempt to engage local businesses and gain their support for our project. Many businesses are by definition too busy but some have been interested. HSBC with whom the farm has an account may be interested in offering support which could be substantial. We have also approached some of the big food retailers with a local presence and we hope they will be interested in what we are doing. In a further line of inquiry we are exploring other charities and trusts which might have resources suitable for the project.

Belief in this venture is crucial to give it energy and make it "go", but fundraising needs to be fun too. The fundraising group has plenty of these qualities, but like many such groups we are learning and have limits on our time. New people and skills are always welcome. We have a fantastic architect on board in the person of Nic Pople; the Douch Partnership is offering to be available in a consultantancy role when building work starts. We hope planning consent will come through in the next few weeks, which will put the whole thing into a more definite frame. The fund is not at a stage yet where we can say when we could start building work but with current irons in the fire we are hopeful. We would want other construction projects to be complete before making a start.

Mark Houghton

If You Go Down to the Woods Tonight...

a site specific theatre event devised and directed by Philip Beaven & Ashley Ramsden

28, 29, 30 September 2006 at Tablehurst Farm

The performance will take the form of a journey at night around the farm land. What is a property developer doing on the farm at night? Does John Prescott have more trouble up his sleeve for the South-East? What is going on in the woods, who said they could have a party!? Why are a couple rowing a boat on the pond dressed as though it is a summer's day? And who is that swinging in the trees?

To get the answers to these questions, don't forget to book your tickets in time, or just come and join in we need up to 60 volunteers - ushers, lighters, performers, singers etc

If you would like to take part in this community event email Philip at phil@philipbeaven.co.uk

More info coming later and ultimately (but not yet) at www.ifyougtdown.co.uk

Plaw Hatch Farm
at the South of
England Show in
June. 600 farm
leaflets were
distributed and
over £1400 worth
of cheese was sold.



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.....

AddressPostcode

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



Tablehurst barbecue 11 June



Co-op AGM - 22 September, 8pm - Small Village Hall, Forest Row - ALL welcome