

TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS

AUTUMN '06

Chicken

During the past half century, genetic selection, changes in husbandry, "improved" nutrition, and control of diseases and parasites have contributed to the escalating growth rate of table poultry production. In the 1940's, broilers required 12 weeks to reach a market weight of 4.4 pounds; today they achieve this weight in 6 weeks! We all are aware of how the poultry industry has been in the forefront of the last 50 years' intensification and industrialization of agricultural production.

Several health and welfare problems seen in table birds are related to rapid growth rate. These disorders are not necessarily associated with body weight or conformation, but instead with the differential

growth of body parts, particularly accelerated growth of muscle that is not commensurate with skeletal development. It is normal for quite a large percentage of intensively reared chicken to "go off their legs". This lack of synchronous growth among body components, including the heart and lungs, can contribute to pulmonary hypertension causing excess fluids in the body. An additional problem is "sudden death syndrome," the cause of which is unknown.

On May 15, 2005, the Observer Food Monthly reported: "It is, on the face of it, the opposite of junk food - a low-fat chicken (long promoted as a healthy alternative to red meat) brushed with olive oil and roasted, with no chemical additives, no batter, no breadcrumbs, no smiling Colonel Sanders and no Happy Meal toy. Last month, however, Britain's favourite bird was shown to contain as much fat, gram for gram, as a Big Mac. Professor Michael Crawford and Yoqun Wang of London Metropolitan University found that a chicken in 2004 contained more than twice as much fat as in 1940, a third more calories and a third less protein - when protein is what the consumer is paying for. As Professor Crawford says, 'We now need a new definition of what we mean by a healthy food.'"

It is no easy task to reverse such trends particularly as chicken is now almost a staple food whereas, up to the 1950s, a family would have had a very occasional chicken roast as a treat. Against this background of demand we have to do the best we can in our production of chicken. BD and organic standards require free range and low stocking densities as a minimum standard whilst at the same time encouraging slow growing strains and an enhanced environment for the birds. (cont'd p2)



Chickens on Tablehurst Farm



The new Co-op committee, elected at the AGM on 22 September. From left: Oliver Fynes-Clinton (Secretary), Peter Brinch, Rebecca Johns, Richard Evans, Brian Swain (Chairman) and John Summers (Treasurer). Krista Braun was also re-elected, but was unable to attend the meeting. A warm welcome to Rebecca and John who are new recruits to the committee.

Chicken (cont'd)

At Tablehurst we buy day old chicks from an organic parent flock; the parents are strains from the Sasso breed which are genetically more akin to what one might term a traditional breed i.e. slow growing and more balanced in conformation. The British consumer has got used to the big breasted Ross/Cobb bird designed for high growth rates. Ours hopefully achieve a balanced carcase of strongly developed legs (the darker meat) as well as a moderately well developed breast. Our birds are also killed at 12 weeks, not at the conventional 6 weeks.

This coming winter we will be planting avenues of plum trees in their field in order to give them the shelter and the feeling of security that trees afford them. Being descended from Jungle Fowl essentially, their natural environment is to be under a certain amount of tree vegetation; what they don't like is an open big sky. The trees should also encourage them to range further. We will also be planting fruit trees in the field where we rear our turkeys.

With our new chicken processing building nearly finished, it has been and is our intention to increase the chicken production by something in the order of another 60 a week to justify the expense and we feel we need to be continuously pursuing the best possible welfare conditions for them to thrive.

Andrew Carnegie

After the Barn Dance

It's Sunday morning, post barn dance; I woke, found my watch and realized I had overslept. I leapt into my clothes still groggy from BBQ smoke and Stein's apple wine, (delicious and highly select!). Jumping too quickly onto my bicycle on my way out to a meeting I managed to wreck the bike and bash my shin by going into the back of our car and falling off. It was a most undignified and an unpromising start to my day off. But maybe not. Here I am having some thinking time. I enjoy that but never seem to get enough. The barn dance was the usual crowded, noisy fun event with lots of young people there to enjoy the dancing and meet each other. But there was also a good proportion of other age groups. It all made for a nice balanced, "something for everyone".



Barn dance? What barn dance? This is the sheep barn just a week later, ready for the autumn lambing

As part of the effort to carry on the Tablehurst farmhouse fundraising, proceeds from the barn dance were entirely dedicated to that cause. The urgent need for accommodation on the farm, (on both farms in fact) reflects the absurd price of property in this country, which in turn is a result of the wealth and success, in some terms at least, of our economy. We are still one of the richest nations in the world; we are also a small crowded island of people with high individual expectations. In this context a viable farm needs reasonable living space for its workers at a price they can afford. And because the price of property in our region is so skewed there is no way the farms are able to provide it all out of farm income. Hence the appeal.

And the appeal? We *are* getting there, with close on £85,000 raised in cash and pledges towards our target of £120,000. And for this we owe a huge thanks to all our donors large and small. Being on the receiving end of this generosity as part of the fundraising team, I am moved by people's willingness to engage in the story and make their gift. I am also fascinated by how and why the giving process works.

When I approached people at the barn dance to buy raffle tickets I was aware that the odd heart sank at the sight of my little ticket book. Yet a lot of people gave what they felt they could afford at that moment and were respectful of my motive in asking, and they enjoyed the banter and even the remote possibility of a Christmas turkey to lure them. One or two vegetarians asked if they could have their Turkey alive, to which, in the interests of my mission of selling as many tickets as possible, I offered a cautious "possibly". But what really strikes me is that it is not so much the money, but the *exchange*, which really matters. If I dare to name it I am certain that for the exchange to work it must contain something that uplifts and gives pleasure to *both* parties; people get more than the chance of winning a turkey or they wouldn't go for it.

Mark Haughton

GM Crops Consultation

The government has recently launched a further consultation process on the introduction of GM crops to the UK. The consultation is limited to a small number of named organisations. However, others with an interest in the subject are free to contribute, and the Co-op has decided to do so. The text of our letter, to be submitted by Brian Swain on behalf of the Co-op and the farms, is reproduced below.

I write to respond to the Defra consultation on GM 'coexistence' on behalf of Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm. We are a community co-operative based in Forest Row, East Sussex which owns two biodynamic farms. We employ some 40 people across the two farms and have over 400 shareholders in the community. Produce from both farms has won awards at the national Soil Association Organic Food Awards.

Our very future is threatened by an extension of GM farming in England and for this reason we wish to respond to this consultation. We understand that though we are not a formal consultee, Defra will welcome views from a wider list of stakeholders than just those on the consultee list.

Paragraph 23 of the consultation states that 'coexistence is about maintaining choice for producers and consumers'. We consider this statement to be a fallacy. Coexistence of GM crops with organic and biodynamic agriculture is not possible due to the risk of contamination that cannot be contained. Once in the environment, GM contamination may persist for many years.

The proposals in the consultation threaten our enterprise at the most fundamental level, by putting at risk our ability to grow uncontaminated biodynamic crops. As well as threatening our survival, these proposals would deny our customers the choice they currently make to by locally produced biodynamic food direct from the producer. This is the opposite of "maintaining choice for consumers".

As biodynamic farmers, we wish to produce entirely GM free produce. GM contamination can currently be measured at levels of 0.1%, and we would consider even this level of contamination to be unacceptable. However the consultation takes the view that it is of no issue if contamination is at a level of 0.9%. In truth over time, we would expect contamination to rise inexorably, as has been seen in Spain and Canada. We understand that Canadian farmers have seen their oilseed rape market wiped out (www.saskorganic.com/oapf/index.html) and that in Spain contamination rates of up to 12.6% have been detected in organic maize. (www.greenpeace.org/rw/content/international/press/reports/impossible-coexistence.pdf)

The Government claims to encourage organic farming. If this is true, it should reject any proposal for the further introduction of GM crops to the UK. The evidence from elsewhere clearly shows that the "separation distances" proposed are not effective in preventing contamination of other crops by GM crops. GM-contaminated organic produce is simply a contradiction in terms.

A further important point for us is animal fodder crops. We grow a great deal of fodder for our own animals, and it is essential to our farming standards that these crops are GM-free. However, the consultation recognises that it does not consider crops grown as animal fodder (para 39) and in this case the consultation does not engage sufficient scope. This issue is a key feature for us as we have extensive meat and dairy farming enterprises.

We believe coexistence of GM and organic agriculture to be impossible. However, even if it were technically feasible, we fail to understand why the Government should be promoting this course when, to our knowledge, there is widespread and growing demand for organic produce in the UK, but no demand at all for GM produce, except from the biotechnology businesses who hope to profit from it.

Overall the provisions outlined in the consultation to protect and support organic farming are simply inadequate.

I trust that these concerns will be reflected in the consultation.

Tablehurst Farmer's Notebook

So, in a few weeks both the shop and the chicken processing building will be finished. The building of both has gone well and they are looking good. The shop staff in particular are really looking forward to the move which will happen on the 16th



Inside the new shop

October. Because the shop is not an agricultural building, all the new building regulations come into play. The original building has therefore received layers of insulation which is covered by blue boarding. The floor is also insulated and the work area even has under floor heating! There will now be plenty of space to work and it will all be in full view of the customers. The larger new cold room and the lack of steps into the shop area will mean that trolleys will be able to be used, which will also make the work easier.

Over the summer the rest of the farm team has done well to free me up from much of the farming, allowing me to get on with the chicken building. There are still a number of things to do such as putting on lots of silicon, plumbing, drains to finish and some landscaping. But then the next building will begin!

We have raised over £80,000 of the £120,000 needed for the conversion of the old veggie store into accommodation. People have been very generous and this includes £20,000 from one couple and £5,000 from Waitrose, who have recently moved into East Grinstead, so a very big **thank you**. This will allow us to convert the part for Raphael and Steffi, but not the three apprentice rooms with toilets, unless we raise the rest of the money. We are still hoping to manage this and are awaiting the outcome of our requests from two companies. The planning permission is through and we are busy with the building regulations. Raphael and Steffi will have to spend one more winter in the caravan!

We have just had the AGM of the Co-op in the Village Hall followed by our Barn Dance the next night. The dance was as full and lively as ever, we estimated over 300 people. Now the barn already has the 59 Dorset ewes in it, which will be lambing in the next weeks, our first proper autumn lambing.

Susan, who has been an apprentice with us for two years now, has left but is not far away as she is the dairy manager up at Plaw Hatch making the cheese and yogurt. Ligio has also left, after one and a half years, and has gone back to Chile together with his wife Tanya. So we have two new apprentices, Duncan who is English and Sven who is German. Next week they are off to Loch Arthur in Scotland for their first week's block course.

Thanks to Johannes, whom we employed over the summer, we are up to date with all the field work. Despite some wet weather and the combine breaking down, the harvest actually went well. The compost is now spread and the winter cereals are in. Two pastures, which did not establish well from the spring sowing, have been re-sown and are doing better this time. The kale and stubble turnips, which we planted to fatten lambs on in the late summer, looked like a total flop earlier due to the dry weather. Amazingly, since the rain, they have recovered and we will still get some good grazing from them.



Waitrose presents £5,000 towards the farmhouse fund

The law changed nearly a year ago allowing one now to slaughter over 30 months old cattle. After slaughter, samples of the brain are sent off to a lab to check for BSE. Most abattoirs are not prepared to slaughter them because of all the bureaucratic hoops that have to be jumped through. We have therefore to bring our over thirty months old animals to an abattoir in Gloucestershire, which is the nearest one that is registered for organic animals. Crazy!! But a good excuse to visit my parents in nearby Newent!

Peter Brown



A night out at Plaw Hatch

Every summer we host camping trips for four Waldorf Steiner schools. The children are in class three and throughout the year they follow the farming calendar, visiting the farm for day trips. Best of all, they come and sleep on the farm for a few nights in spring and early summer. We have to be prepared for some anxious teachers with a fairly in-depth itinerary in mind, some nervous parents and 10 – 20 very excited children! We have to do a risk assessment as is necessary these days, more for us who work here as they never really listen to the do and don'ts when they first arrive. They come for 2 to 4 nights depending on the durability of the teacher. We always encourage for longer as we are experienced in the further benefits of an extended stay. I try to give them as much time as possible while they are here along with Richard Evans who has more patience than possible and enlightens the children with farm life and its interactions with nature. There is really so much to see, touch, smell, understand, it amazes me that they are always such a captive audience.



Which one is the real cow?

Day one they arrive late morning and we all congregate in the barn by the workshop, I find it easier to contain them here. I brief them on what we do, biodynamic farming, with its mixed animals and crops, the social aspects, the farm as an organism maintaining its fertility, etc, what they can do, about the biting dog, electric fences, leaving gates open, the bull, the boar, they love these, the tractors, combine. The list is endless, and it's all working around them. So there is much excitement and quite hard to keep order. They always bring a lot of stuff, as if going on some African adventure!, we pile it all onto the trailer and set off for the campsite at the bottom of the farm. They have to walk and no cars are allowed down. It takes them all afternoon to set up camp, prepare the toilet, we provide a tap for water and that's it. There is a big barn they can use for shelter should it rain, such luxury!! I pick them up around 4 pm for the afternoon milking, they all want to come and floss the dog does her bit to keep the cows moving up the track and children contained... she likes an audience. Its basically chaos for the first milking and I always feel sorry for the cows having so many little hands pulling at them, but they are calm (the cows, not the children!) and barely flinch. It usually takes about three hours instead of one and by the end most children have gone back to camp clutching jars of milk to make butter and I'm left with 2 or 3 potential farmers.

The following days are filled with visits to the many parts of the farm they want to see, there is no pressure and more often they just love being free in the open space, making camps, preparing food, catching escaped chickens. We enjoy the evenings going to visit their camp and chat around the fire. After the first day you can see them changing and beginning to respect and understand how things all work. We like this bit the most and we can start to relax a bit too. Leaving is difficult as many children have become attached to piglets, old cows, cheese! All the parent helpers can think about is there own beds. Many children come back to visit again with their families, some even camp the night again in another quiet spot on the farm. Anyone is welcome just call us and we can arrange it. Summer time is best unless you are very hardy.

Wouldn't it be great if this was part of the curriculum for all schools? I see how much the children get out of coming here and I believe as farmers it is something we should offer. I myself have never lost that memory of first farm experience, it doesn't leave you. (mine was in a milking parlour!)

Tom Ventham



Eating meat

When one of our wonderful egg laying chickens was taken by a fox last week, my immediate sadness and anger was tempered by an admiration for nature and its laws whereby nothing is wasted. Predators are entirely natural and man, as predator, has evolved for thousands of years as a hunter and gatherer.

A vegetarian of 10 years, I now eat meat but I have only recently come to realise how, despite my inner debates around meat eating - should I? What kind? How much? ... one area I hadn't really considered was 'Which bits?'. The answer of course is 'all the bits - well, as much as possible'. Buy the most wholesomely produced meat, then out of respect for the animal and all who have raised it, for financial economy, and overall for use of all our resources - don't waste any bits.... But how poorly prepared I feel for the challenge.

A child of the '70s, my school cookery lessons revolved around chicken breasts stuffed with something and puddings. Cutting up a whole carcass was never mentioned! My mother tried to instil in me the value of 'stock' (the simmered kind), but until recently I never really appreciated why. How different from the recent Tablehurst fund raising dinner at Michael Hall school when Gravetye chef Mark Raffan arrived with a whole lamb carcass and an entire salmon - both duly carved up and wholly utilised.

Inspiration and practical assistance for me has come from the book 'the new english kitchen: changing the way you shop, cook and eat' by Rose Prince (first published in 2005 by Fourth Estate). From her thought-provoking assertion that 'consumers effectively demand lambs with four back legs' (see below) to her observations on the NFU and the use of 'road kill' (which had never occurred to me but was also covered in some depth in a recent issue of the Ecologist) the book is an attempt to 'connect the paths across two current, but very divergent stories' - the one of the 'happy consumer' lifestyle, 'you deserve it' type message of current media and TV chefs, the other the message of the physical and financial 'health' of farming, its products and its consumers, of food miles and intensive farming related narrowness and disease.

This book mixes politics (e.g. the influence of the EU's CFP and TAC policies (Common Fisheries Policy and Total Allowable Catch on fish stocks)) with practical advice on cooking and utilising every last bit of an animal - right through to how to cook brawn and pigs brains though I haven't tried one that yet, and sourcing (though the book is clearly deficient in that it doesn't mention Tablehurst...)

I now feel consciously ignorant of the different ways to use an animal but that is better than unconscious! I am getting into braising and have always managed shepherd's pie and lasagne. I would welcome any more ideas newsletter readers have for different tasty ways to use the non straightforward roasting and grilling bits.

And the lamb with four back legs? Well, Prince recounts 3 days spent working with a South London butcher and when the Welsh lamb lorry made its weekly delivery to the butchers it brought 20 lamb carcasses and 40 extra legs of lamb. The desire for 'prime roasting and grilling cuts' requiring the purchase of extra legs. They made pies at the back of the shop but no way could they have sold all the cuts of 40 lamb carcasses.

With more knowledge and insight this is another area I can start to be more part of the solution - rather than the problem. A Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch recipe book perhaps?

Rowena Moore

Editor's footnote: If you fancy a provocative yet brilliant 500-page rant on how to treat meat with respect, including recipes for every part of our familiar farm animals, try *The River Cottage Meat Book* by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

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.....

Eating biodynamic

The Biodynamic Food & Cookbook by Wendy E. Cook

Wendy is a familiar figure in Forest Row and from time to time runs cookery courses at Emerson College; she has been cooking with biodynamic produce for over 30 years. My kitchen shelf is already full of cookery books; and most of them I never open. So what is so special about this one that I really think it is a must for your kitchen?

As soon as I flicked through I was inspired to try unusual and tempting recipes such as a Honey, Saffron and Pistachio sweet rice dish or Nettle Oat Cream Soup. The latter giving a combination of ingredients I would never in a million years have thought of, and I've often wondered how do I choose and cook with all those nettles growing so profusely in our garden. Now I know. As I dipped in, which is what you do with cookbooks, I was drawn into the threads of personal stories which weave their way through this beautifully produced book with wonderful photography, appealing lay-out and extremely clear instructions.

However the importance of the Biodynamic Food and Cookbook is the explanation of biodynamic farming in lay terms which reflects Wendy's deep understanding of Rudolf Steiner's thinking and how biodynamic agriculture has developed. There is also an exploration of the ethical issues around our current food culture: both the fast food industry and the growing interest in a return to a local food economy which is what our community farms are striving to provide. It is rich in many fascinating details from a historical perspective, the nutritional values of foods and a colourful chapter on Mallorcan culture which has informed and enthused Wendy's cooking.

"We imbue cooking with qualities of ourselves" she writes, and we all know how our mood may well affect the meals we put on the table for our families. It is the alchemical nature of the sun's rays on growing plants, the fertility in the soil, and the craft and love of cooking which Wendy imparts so fully to remind us that in the kitchen real magic can take place in our daily lives as we bring our awareness of this process into how we engage with our food.

This year the flour from Tablehurst's wheat harvest has excellent bread making qualities. Above is an adaptation of a basic bread recipe (p.197). Try it with Tablehurst flour.

Monica Suswin

Focaccia recipe

Use wholemeal or strong unbleached flour or a mixture

14 oz/400g flour

¼ pt/150 ml hand-warm water

1oz/25g fresh yeast (or dried equivalent)

5 tbsp/75 ml olive oil

1 tsp salt

1 tsp honey

1 tsp rosemary leaves

1 tbsp reserved from the olive oil, for the top

1 tsp coarse salt for scattering

Dissolve yeast with honey in the tepid water and allow to stand for 10 minutes. Sift flour and salt into a large warmed bowl. Add 4 tbsp olive oil and then the yeast mixture. Knead into a ball. Add a little more water if needed. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until it is smooth and elastic. Leave to rise in a warm place until dough has doubled in bulk. Knock back the dough and knead again for a few minutes to get an even texture. Preheat the oven to 200°C. Roll into 2 equal discs and place on a baking sheet. Poke little dents into the dough with your fingers and sprinkle coarse salt, rosemary leaves and olive oil on top. Leave for 20 minutes to prove. Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool on a rack. Best eaten on the same day.



Spring into October!

The next **Tablehurst Community Work Day** is on Sunday 29 October from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

We have **3750** spring bulbs to plant around the farm
 Bring boots and a trowel, and a garden fork if you have one.
Everybody welcome. Come all day or for as long as you can.
 Free cake for volunteers! Please do come – we need a crowd.

C o n t a c t s	<u>Newsletter Editor and General Co-op Enquiries</u>		<u>Co-op Officers</u>	
	Chris Marshall	01342 822611, chrismarshall@f2s.com	Brian Swain, Chairman	824740
		15 Riverside, Forest Row, RH18 5HB	Oliver Fynes-Clinton, Secretary	823966
			John Summers, Treasurer	
	<u>Farms</u>			
	Plaw Hatch Farm Shop	810201	Old Plaw Hatch Farm, Sharpthorne, West Sussex, RH19 4JL	
	Tablehurst Farm Shop	823173	Tablehurst Farm, Forest Row, East Sussex, RH18 5DP	



Flowers and fruit - the Tablehurst orchard in May and September



Are you interested in wine?

The Co-op is launching a Wine Club specialising in organic and biodynamic wine. We are looking for an events co-ordinator who would be willing to organise three wine-tasting events a year at which members could taste wines and purchase cases at discounted prices. If you could help, please contact Brian Swain on :

01342 824740

Many thanks

