

# TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS

Christmas '07

## Tablehurst Farmer's Notebook

Autumn has been beautiful but busy on the farm.

For the second year running we lambed 50 Dorset ewes. They came in straight after the Barn Dance. They are all doing well; we only lost the one lamb, and most are now back out in the fields. The main flock has in the meantime been with the rams, thus ensuring we have a lambing in spring.

The cattle came in later than usual due to the dry weather and plenty of grass.

Now they are all in and seem to be quite content with the abundant haylage and the straw bedding. As in other years some of them are sharing their yards with the pigs. This is not done on most farms but we find it has a number of advantages. The pigs get a much bigger area to explore than they could be given if they were to be kept separately and that means that the pig smell is also not as strong as it is spread over a much larger area and is bedded regularly. The pigs are far less bored than they otherwise would be and therefore happier. The young pigs have to be kept with the younger cattle as, if left with the cows, they invariably discover that there is a milk bar open and suckle from the cows. Although the young pigs have hardly any fear of the



Photo courtesy of Will Heap Photography Ltd



cattle and will happily walk under them and between their legs they do occasionally get a kick from a frisky animal, not always with the best results!

The poultry are all doing fine and the turkeys look particularly good. We did lose a few laying hens to the fox on a couple of nights due to an electric fence not working properly. We are lucky he did not create the wholesale slaughter he is capable of.

# Tablehurst Farmer's Notebook (cont'd)

After being quite involved on the farm throughout the summer I have managed to devote more time to the building over the last couple of months to help Mark who has been doing really well. We have also had help from various members of the farm team including Andi and Orsi, two Hungarian girls here for two months who are studying at university in Hungary. The building is progressing well but it is going to be touch and go with Raph and Steffi will be able to move in before Christmas. Having now laid all the lovely Terracotta floor tiles, Mark is busy on the kitchen and I on the bathroom.

Jors Opperman, originally from South Africa, has just joined the farm as our third apprentice. Jors has a degree in agriculture, so is much better qualified than our usual apprentice but is keen to learn about biodynamics. His wife is also living on the farm but is busy studying. Our farm team is studying Steiner's Agricultural Course every Monday night. If anybody was particularly interested to join us and is prepared to come regularly they could contact me.

These are worrying times for farmers, with all the disease problems in the country and the world. Foot and Mouth, Blue Tongue or the Bird Flu could all have disastrous consequences for the farm. So far it has just cost us more to get our animals to the abattoir, as we have had to make separate trips on different days, instead of taking them in one lorry (with partitions). All we can do is carry on farming the best way we know how without dwelling on the consequences of what might happen and the resulting fear.

We on the farm wish you all a time of inner peace over Christmas.

Peter Brown

## Plaw Hatch Shop – Christmas Update

The shop is preparing for Christmas; Bio-dynamic Demeter certified turkeys can be ordered from us. We only have 25 or so left now. They can be collected from the shop between 12 and 6pm on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> December and between 9 and 2pm on Christmas Eve. We close for Christmas at 2pm Christmas Eve and open on Thursday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January.

We have a range of Christmas products in store now, juices, chocolates, wreaths, stocking fillers and frankincense and myrrh. (You'll have to bring the gold!)

We would like to wish all of our customers a very happy Christmas and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Alex Baxter

# News from Plaw Hatch Farm

Cows on strike! Its possible, well its one reason why we are not getting much milk at the moment. In truth we had a bountiful summer and they produced well over their normal, and now having been brought in for the winter decided to shut down on our not such good quality hay....BUT we have just calved 16 cows for the winter supply and another 4 heifers due in January so all should be back to normal soon. At least it's given Susan a chance to understand the accounts for the farm, as our bookkeeper has emigrated to Canada.

We planted a stone in the middle of Home field. Sounds a bit strange, and we are not hoping for lots of little baby stones. Its purpose is to connect the earth with the heavens and to harmonise any wrath which is stagnating underground. It was a great experience to put it in the ground, with offerings of our produce underneath, we manovered it into place with many helping hands. Its right in the middle of the field, and thinking of practical issues here our tractor driver was quick to ask "how long it's going to be there?" Oh.... I said... "Probably about 500 years!"



Peter Brinch our gardener who came to us in May has decided to move on, at least it's a quiet time of year, Martin our apprentice will keep things going until a new gardener is found.

Probably the biggest dilemma at the moment has been the milk round. Some time ago (2 years) we decided it was necessary to expand the milk round to make it more viable. Milk was delivered 3 times / week but the round was too long taking up to 8 hours and covering 60 miles. So we decided to split the areas and move to six deliveries / week and give us space to take on an extra rounds man and expand the round. Recently we have done a leaflet drop over most areas to generate more interest. But although a few more have joined the number still remains at around 180 customers, which includes delivering pasteurised milk to Emerson college, Nutley Hall and Philpots Manor. The impression is that people are not really interested in raw milk delivered to the door. Maybe it's too expensive, dangerous to health!! Or just not important in their lives....

The round as we know is a great way of reaching out to the community with our produce, we are a community farm and its something we have always done for decades, but with Andy's recent health problems and great difficulty in finding people to deliver milk out of hours we questioned whether it can be sustained. We have also found that it is not financially viable with high vehicle and labour cost making it less worthwhile for all the effort. So we have decided to close the round for the time being from early January. Raw milk will still be available through the shop along with all the other things we produce on the farm. I can forsee in the future there may well be a place for delivering milk in a much more ecological way.

We would like to wish all our customers a very Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year and thank you for all your valued support.

Tom Ventham



# “Learning on the Land”

We have all heard the shocking statistics on child health and obesity and the news that many children do not know where their food comes from. Lots of children in the UK have never been on a farm, even if they live in rural areas. And even if they have visited for the day the nearest they get to an animal is milking a cardboard cow. So how can such children gain an appreciation of where their food comes from, of how it is grown, of the importance of sustainable farming practices for the future?

“Learning on the Land” is designed to address this exact question. When fully operational, it will provide over a thousand children a year with a profound, memorable and hugely enjoyable experience of food and farming through a week-long, hands-on experience at our new residential facility at Tablehurst Farm.

## The first stage – testing feasibility

Thanks to a very generous private donation, we were able In October to appoint two individuals – Georgia Taylor and Tom Forward – to spend three months researching the feasibility of the project. They are developing a detailed business plan, researching what would make the “farm-school” attractive to primary schools, and seeking further sources of funding to take us to the next stage.



Tom

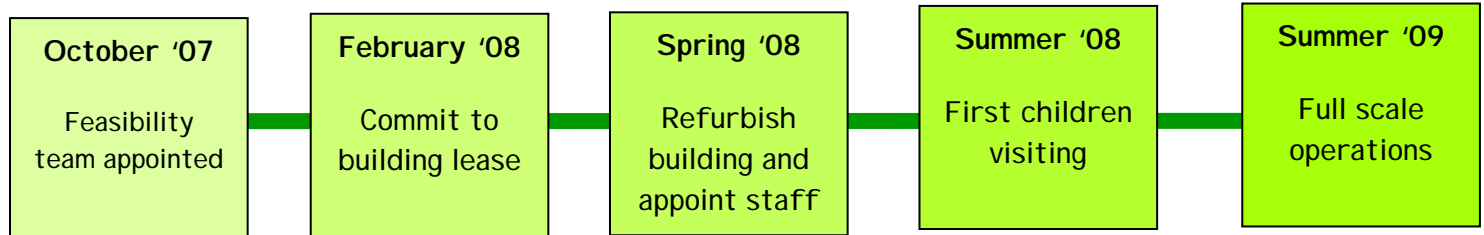
Georgia

## When, where and how

If all goes according to plan, Learning on the Land will be based at the biodynamic building at Emerson College. The building will need some conversion works to create dormitories and a large kitchen, but its location, adjacent to Tablehurst and only five minutes walk from the farm shop, is ideal. Conversion works would take place in the first half of next year, with the first groups of school children arriving in the summer.

To make this happen we need money. Our outline plan shows that the project should be able to fund itself once up and running, with operational costs covered by income from schools and holiday activities. However, the costs of building works and project start-up are substantial, and we are seeking funding from a wide range of sources to bridge this gap.

The actual farming experience will take place partly in and around the biodynamic building at Emerson, partly out on the farm at Tablehurst, and partly through visits to Plaw Hatch Farm so that the children can experience the dairy and the vegetable growing.



## Public Meeting

Please come to Emerson College on Sunday 27 January at 11.00am to hear more about this initiative, get involved and help us turn it into a reality.  
**Lunch included**

# A new initiative at Tablehurst Farm

## A week on a school farm

### Monday

Travel to Forest Row. Briefing session and farm walk.

### Tuesday

Milk & feed cow. Prepare lunch for all students and staff. Plough soil. Collect & grade eggs. Wool work.

### Wednesday

Harvest vegetables. Visit to Plaw Hatch dairy and garden. Candle-making.

### Thursday

Feed pigs. Gardening and wood collection. Flour-making. Storytelling.

### Friday

Light bread oven. Breakfast. Bake bread. Travel back to school.



The farm school building

## The first month ...

We have phoned over 90 schools and have detailed information from 20 head teachers and school managers. All of these schools are interested in the Learning on the Land initiative and would consider booking for the next academic year. A few might look at summer 2008. Many schools and local authorities are interested in the project because of government initiatives including: Learning Outside of the Classroom, the Year of Food and Farming, Healthy Eating and Every Child Matters.

Schools are being urged to look at the whole child and to value experiential learning much more. East Sussex local schools are interested in Tablehurst Farm as part of their extended schools agenda – linking in with local resources and expertise. One local comprehensive is interested in supporting pupils with behavioural problems through farming and gardening NVQs.

Detailed research into the building conversion costs, running costs, health and safety and curriculum links is nearly completed. Links have been made with several organisations and partnerships are planned with the Country Trust and the Sussex Wildlife Foundation. The market has been scoped and visits to two farms in Devon and Somerset are planned for December. A business plan should be finished by mid-December. Immediate applications for funding will most likely go to the Lottery “Reaching Communities Fund” and the Tudor Trust (both of whom are interested in the concept). Access to Nature and the Esme Fairbairn Foundation applications will take place in the New Year. Social Enterprise loans (e.g Future Builders) will also be applied for.

Tom and Georgia

## £££ The crunch issue – your help and ideas needed ! £££

Once Learning on the Land is up and running, we believe it can be self-sustaining, with income from schools and subsidies balancing the cost of the project. However, there is still a substantial funding gap to finance the building conversion and the two year start-up phase when expenditure will exceed income. To cover this, we need to raise about **£200,000**. We are therefore looking for (i) major donors who would consider helping to make this project happen through a substantial gift and (ii) opportunities to apply for grant funding from as many different sources as possible. If you can help – whether it is with cash or with ideas, do please get in touch with our project team.

Georgia Taylor:  
Tom Forward:

[georgiat@btinternet.com](mailto:georgiat@btinternet.com)  
[tmforward@gmail.com](mailto:tmforward@gmail.com)

07717 222 953  
07877 575 554

# Christmas Shopping Solutions

## First, the food ...

Do you really need to go to the supermarket for your Christmas food shopping? No, of course not! Instead, just buy organic everything at our farm shops ...

Xmas pudding  
Clementines  
Chocolate  
Milk  
Herb tea  
Cream  
Yoghurt  
Fruit galore  
Cordials  
Cocoa  
Cheese  
Beef  
Butter  
Sprouts  
Biscuits  
Chipolatas  
Potatoes  
Coffee  
Honey  
Rice  
Burgers  
All your veg  
Nuts  
Turkey (of course)  
Pasta  
Flour  
Pork  
Cakes  
Spring water  
Brownies  
Bread  
Dried fruit  
Herbs  
Sausage meat  
Fruit juice  
Olive oil  
Garlic  
Muesli  
Panettone  
Stollen  
Ginger  
Chicken  
Eggs  
Dates and figs  
Lamb  
Truffles  
Bacon  
Tomatoes  
Salad greens

## Next, the drinks ...

Would you like easy access to top quality organic wines, beers, spirits, port, cider, mixers and more? Would you like it even better if you could donate 5% of the cost to the Co-op at no extra cost to yourself? Well, now you can. We have done a deal with **Vintage Roots** – a leading mail-order organic drinks company. It works like this: you pay their normal prices, and we get 5% of what you spend. That's it. There are no strings or tricks.

So how does it work? If you want traditional mail order, fill in the postcard\* that should accompany this newsletter and send it to Vintage Roots, and they will do the rest. If you prefer web shopping, just go to [www.vintageroots.co.uk](http://www.vintageroots.co.uk), register as a customer (very simple), order as normal and go to the checkout. Find the "special offer reference" box on the first checkout page and enter "TABLE". Then complete your purchase. That's it. We get 5%. Tell your friends, your kids, your granny, your postman, your colleagues at work and everyone at the bus stop. Anybody can join in and our farms get the benefit ...

\* For more information or another postcard, please call Paulette Revere on 01342 823738





# From Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch

## And finally, the Christmas gifts ...

Having such spiritually nourishing food on our doorstep is a gift, a gift I believe that should be shared. Tablehurst and Plawhatch are farmed biodynamically. One of the main principles of this system of farming is to be as self-sustaining as possible, so that a profound inter-dependence is fostered between animal, crop soil and cosmos. But both farms are also community owned, so how can we as a community apply these principles to the way we support and nurture these farms? As the buying fervour of Christmas approaches, one way is to consider one of the following options as an alternative gift this Christmas.

Building Appeal – Forest Row is an expensive village to rent property, especially if you are a farm worker on a low income. This is why we urgently need to finish the building project we started over the summer. We are converting the old vegetable store into accommodation for apprentices and our new farming family who are currently renting accommodation in the village. The raising of funds is only possible with community support. So if you find yourself having to buy gifts for friends and relatives you know are not in need of more material things, you might consider making a donation (no matter how small) on their behalf. By doing so you buy yourself a warm fuzzy feeling, and your recipient the knowledge that instead of receiving yet another pair of slippers, or other unwanted gift, your donation will help provide affordable housing for the next generation of farm workers, thus helping to secure the farm for the future.

Alternatively for £100 you could give someone a life-long share in the ownership of Tablehurst and Plawhatch Community Farm Ltd, the community co-operative that owns Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Farm businesses.

Each share or donation will come with a certificate and a beautiful card. Please complete the appropriate form below (separate form for each recipient). Forms are also available from both farm shops, or can be downloaded at [www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk](http://www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk). The certificate and card can either be sent to you to give as a present or posted to the recipient. Please clearly state your preference on the form.

If you have any questions, I can be contacted on 01342 826154 or [r.pereira@bso.ac.uk](mailto:r.pereira@bso.ac.uk)

Rachael Pereira

### Application to purchase a Co-op share as a gift

I wish to purchase a share or shares in Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Industrial & Provident Society (no. 28403R) on behalf of another individual

No. shares required : ..... I enclose a cheque for £100 per share payable to "Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Limited"

**Details of share recipient** Full name .....

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

Telephone no..... Email address .....

**Purchaser details** Name of purchaser.....

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

Telephone no .....Email address .....

**Delivery details** Please deliver the share certificate and greetings card:

Direct to the share recipient  To the purchaser

**Message for card** .....

(If insufficient space, enclose a separate sheet)

Please send this form to Rachael Pereira  
9 The Abbey, Ashurst Wood. West Sussex RH19 3SA  
**Don't forget to enclose your cheque**

### Christmas gift donation to Tablehurst Farmhouse Fund

I wish make a donation to the above fund on behalf of another individual

**Amount to be donated** £.....

**Name of Christmas gift recipient** .....

**Name of donor**.....

Telephone no .....Email address .....

#### Gift Aid

I am eligible as a UK taxpayer and consent to St Anthony's Trust claiming Gift Aid on all donations from 1st April 2007

**Address to post certificate to:** .....

.....Postcode .....

**Message for card** .....

Please send this form to Rachael Pereira  
9 The Abbey, Ashurst Wood. West Sussex RH19 3SA  
together with your cheque payable to **St Anthony's Trust**

# Shall we have another farm Open Day??

Many years ago now at Tablehurst Farm, Open Days were held where up to 800 visitors came to see the farm, or perhaps more correctly to have fun on the farm. It was very much orientated towards families and children, with play areas in the straw, a flying fox in the barn, face painting, pony and tractor rides and much more. As well as food there was also a lot of information about the farm, various talks and craft and wood working demonstrations.

The Co-op committee felt it would be great to have a similar event again in summer 2008 and if successful perhaps every two years. To make this possible we would have to form an organising group who would meet regularly from January until the event. We would like to ask for individuals to come forward who could and would join such a team. If we do not find six to eight people we will have to leave the idea as the farmers cannot manage it by themselves! If you are interested please contact Oliver on 01342 823966 or email [farmco-op@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:farmco-op@hotmail.co.uk).

... it's up to you

## A Job Opportunity ... in France

The European Farm for Children is a mixed 74 acre farm in Normandy. They take school classes from England as well as France and do various activities. They are offering work from March to November next year for somebody who can do a bit of everything. This includes vegetable and landscape gardening, general farm work and helping with the children. Their web site is [www.la-fee.org](http://www.la-fee.org) and the contact is Veronique Bauos on 0033681263076



## Christmas Shop Opening Hours (normal opening hours up to and including Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> December)

Plaw Hatch 23<sup>rd</sup> 12 noon - 6.00pm 24<sup>th</sup> 9.00am - 2.00pm Reopens Thursday 3 January

Tablehurst 23<sup>rd</sup> CLOSED 24<sup>th</sup> 10.00am - 4.00pm Reopens Thursday 10 January

### C Newsletter Editor and General Co-op Enquiries Co-op Officers

O Chris Marshall 01342 822611 [farmco-op@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:farmco-op@hotmail.co.uk)

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Oliver Fynes-Clinton, Secretary

823966

n Tablehurst & Plaw Hatch Community Farm,

Robin Evans, Treasurer

822682

a PO Box 653, Forest Row, RH18 5XA

### Farms

c Plaw Hatch Farm Shop

810201

Old Plaw Hatch Farm, Sharpthorne, West Sussex, RH19 4JL

t Tablehurst Farm Shop

823173

Tablehurst Farm, Forest Row, East Sussex, RH18 5DP

s

[www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk](http://www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk)

Important diary date ... Sunday 27 January ... see page 4