

Pericles Training, Work and Therapy

Land based interaction with the Community

Visitors to Tablehurst and Old Plaw Hatch Farms may have looked round either of the Pericles Woodland Projects - Marlpits Wood or the Round House - and wondered what is going on there and how the farms came to host such activities, so we thought to give you a bit of Pericles history and update you on what we are doing at the farms.

When Paulamaria and I, our three middle daughters and three cats moved from Camphill Aberdeen to Hoathly Hill in 1991, we were asked to bring about a social-therapeutic initiative in the community.

The foundation for bringing this about was the need to provide a group of some five or six elderly community members (and also some other local elderly) with a freshly cooked organic/biodynamic

lunch and it was with the support and encouragement of Peter Clark between 1992 and 1995 that especially John Orbell and I dug new beds in the lower half of the fertile West Paddock adding to those already devoted to horticulture, (where Michael Haigh had been growing vegetables for the community) and planted it up with vegetables and soft fruit. We began making BD compost with the active support of Matthias Guépin, who ran workshops there, and later put up a poly tunnel. In 1997/98 we were asked to take on some residents and - based on the work already going on - also adult trainees with learning difficulties and began teaching gardening. For the next few years first Peter Brinch and then Malcolm Potter worked with Pericles students on this rewarding piece of land and for some years a harmonious interaction between Pericles, its students and the community arose with the needs of all being met in a mutually fructifying manner, allowing us to build craft workshops and the use of



Hoathly Hill Barn and Kindergarten for festivals and cultural events as well as rehearsals of Pericles Theatre Co, which became a project of Hoathly Hill Trust.

From 1998, the original nucleus of elderly members gradually died, while the changing needs of students attending led first to the purchase of two further residential houses in Sharpthorne and then to the founding of the Sharpthorne Organic Cafe, where trainees could further develop their catering skills, using our own and local produce, and things made in the craft workshops.

For those who were strong and active, but for whom horticulture was not the right activity, the Pericles Woodland Project was pioneered by Michael Collins who was soon joined by Nick des Forges and made

{continued overleaf}

Pericles (continued)

possible through the old caravan provided by the Virbela Institute and towed to the site of Marl Pits Wood by Peter Brown to keep us warm in bad weather.

At Old Plaw Hatch Farm we had already been active by pulling down and removing the old piggery and clearing the field around it, while creating paths and wooden benches around the lake, clearing around the spring and helping with other odd jobs around the farm, illustrating what from its first inception was a fundamental intention of both Pericles and its students: to do real work which is needed in the community and to this day the notion of providing a useful service remains an important part of Pericles' presence in all its locations.

And while doing useful and important jobs, the students are of course gaining considerable educational benefit in all these beautiful and protected locations: in Hoathly Hill for instance where students help with weeding gravel or mowing grass, growing soft fruit and helping to clear and compost ashes from the boiler house and making the community's biodynamic compost.

At Tablehurst the team experimented and learned about traditional Sussex woodland building techniques, draining the bog at Marl Pits and building small Roundhouses for stores and our first Eco Loo!

Robert Hunt joined the team and took the project into its next round of exciting development, building a traditional Sussex Round House at Old Plaw Hatch Farm.

The students have been involved in all parts of this project so that they really feel it is "their" building, which is still being beautified when someone decides to carve a log or paint patterns on the eaves or landscape the garden! In or around this building the students do carving, greenwood turning, bodging, tool maintenance for the farms, wattle fence making, sawing, landscaping and gardening, while at Tablehurst there is also charcoal burning.

When at Marl Pits the old caravan could not be patched up any more and had to go, the team was able to use its acquired skills to start building an A-frame building, again out of local and self harvested or recycled materials, sturdy and like the roundhouse build directly onto the soil, ecologically sound and growing naturally into and out of its immediate surroundings.

Both the farms, and specifically Peter Brown and Tom Ventham have consistently gone out of their way to be helpful, welcoming and supportive.

Finally, but not least, there is the social aspect, the area where there can be a measure of true human interchange between the students and those who work and live on the farms, in the local community and at Hoathly Hill, working towards greater inclusion, social awareness and compassion.

Inevitably there are ups and downs in this area, but it may be worth re-stating the aim of Pericles: to create opportunities for the positive aspects of "care in the community" to be made manifest, to the benefit of all.

Simon (and Paulamaria) Blaxland-de Lange

Plaw Hatch Shop Update

For those of you who have been enjoying the activity of the chicks opposite the shop and have watched them grow - from fluffy chicks to small perfectly formed 'hens' in four weeks - you can still watch their progress as they are now in a larger space in the vegetable garden behind the polytunnels. These are mostly Light Sussex, a traditional breed, which we will grow on to increase the number of traditional breed hens on the farm. The advantage of these older breeds is they will lay for longer although not so intensively as the main flocks. It is not only the children who will miss observing them each day!

This is a great time in the shop with almost every week bringing a new crop from the garden - the latest being broad beans, strawberries, basil (try making basil icecream, I love it!), mange tout and beetroot. It is a great sight each morning when Liz and her crew arrive from the garden in her truck laden with goodies, still with the dew on them and with her merry band of helpers 'riding shotgun' on the back.

It is very rewarding and encouraging for us all on the farm to see the shop so busy and to hear such positive feedback. There is tremendous local support for the farms and real passion for the farm produce, whether it be from the garden or the dairy. Certainly I feel the quality is second to none.

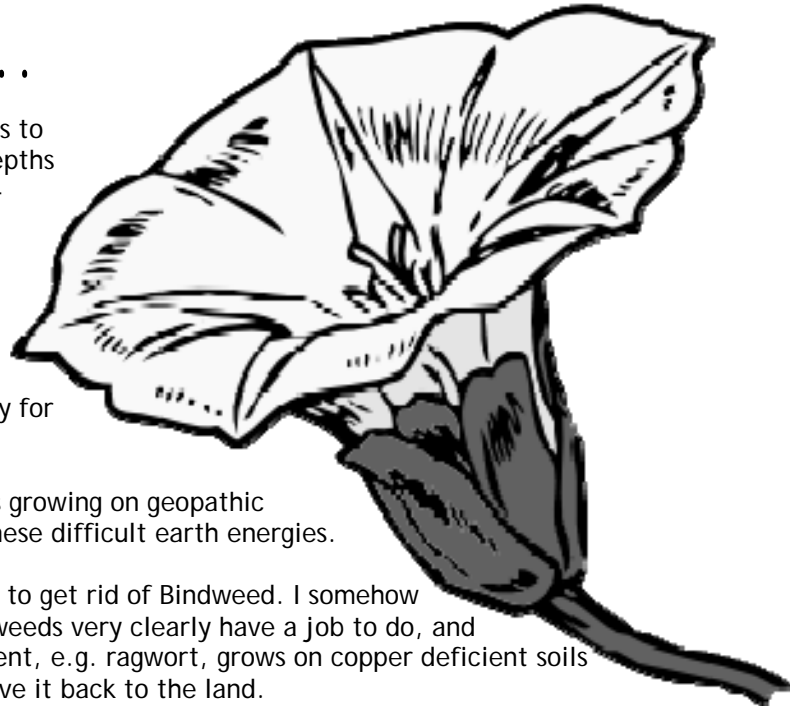
The wines have proved extremely popular and are selling really well. We hope to have Tom Dean's wines and olive oil soon - unfortunately they have been held up due to changes in customs regulations. Along with the wines are Einkorn and Spelt grains which we are looking forward to trying.

We had many vegetable plants available and these were snapped up very quickly along with the freshly shorn sheep fleeces. The money from the plant sales is going towards setting up a picnic area next to the vegetable garden which we hope you will have time to enjoy once it is completed.

Jenny Wright

Living with bindweed ...

I live with bindweed. It's one of the most difficult weeds to get rid of. Its task is to relieve stagnant water in the depths and you might have noticed that its roots go very deep - as much as half a metre, or deeper. They can grow in absolute darkness, and they are not compostable. You can dry them, that's about the only way to kill them, and then compost them. I have tried to put them in a barrel with water and make a tea, but they just keep growing. You can put a heavy mulch on (cardboard and a black sheet on top) but it needs to stay for two years.



Bindweed releases stagnant water in the depths. It likes growing on geopathic stress. Many plants which do that help with balancing these difficult earth energies.

I think, I wish too, that there was any easy, natural way to get rid of Bindweed. I somehow had to make friends with it and study it a bit, because weeds very clearly have a job to do, and usually they are somehow able to balance what's deficient, e.g. ragwort, grows on copper deficient soils but contains copper.... So it's good to compost it, and give it back to the land.

There is a chap in America, who's bought a piece of land completely depleted from chemical farming, and within 4 years revived it by growing weeds on it, at first deep rooting ones, to remedy the plough pan and to reconnect topsoil and subsoil, then he grew others, closely watching what nature does on disturbed land.

It's quite exciting really, but doesn't help the bindweed problem, it just helps to like them more (I've just had some couch grass juice, juiced in my hand-wheat-grass-juicer, which I've just put into the garden shop, for people to juice their own wheatgrass. Bindweed isn't edible though, I think, it's slightly poisonous even.

Even if people get rid of a weed with herbicide, within a short time it will grow again, because there is usually something which attracts that particular weed. In a way one needs to find out what that is, or just keep balancing soil life with good compost, etc. However, that won't help very much for bindweed because it works with stagnant water rather deep down.

Bindweed is a member of the convolvulus family. There are about 1100 varieties spread over the whole world, lots of them in the tropics. All of them have very vigorous roots, any part of which can produce a new plant, that's of course, why they are such obnoxious weeds, all of them have an abundance of short lived, very beautiful flowers, often scented, and colourful. Many of them are ornamental plants. The sweet potato belongs to that family too, producing many side roots that turn into large tubers.

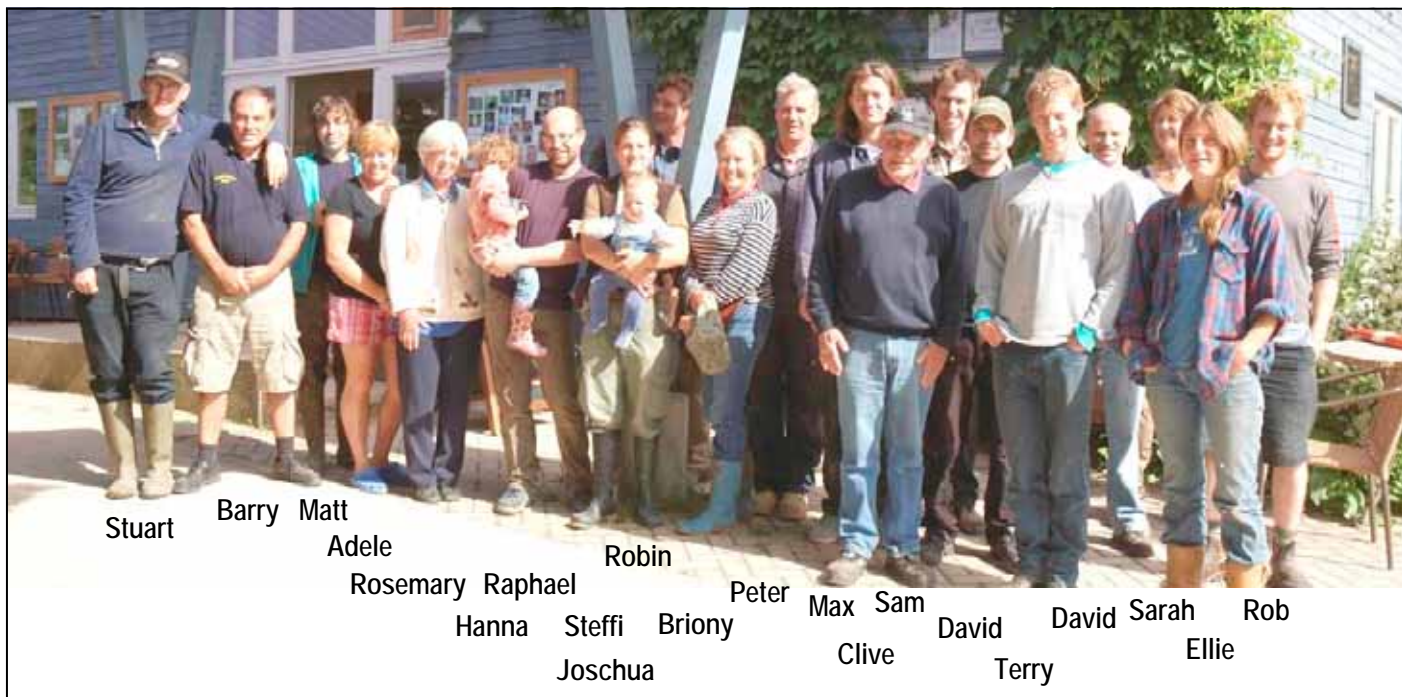
The convolvulus family produces a resin like substance in their roots, called scammonium, which helps to speed up the peristaltic movement of the gut, and is used as a laxative. In folk medicine bindweed was used for constipation, but it seems to be an irritant to stomach and gut. In some areas of Germany it's popular name is "Teufelsdarm", devils gut, which somehow makes me smile, when I pull out long strands of the flower border, but I think might also correspond to its properties to move stagnation.

Now the "peppers", a suggestion from Rudolf Steiner, it has worked wonders for some people. Full moon is the time, when it's most easy for the seed to attract water and germinate, the time of strongest germination.

If you do the opposite to the seed at that time, and rather than giving it water, put it through fire at that time i.e. burn it, and then dynamise, it, which means grind the ash in a mortar for an hour, and then sprinkle it, you will discourage that species to grow. Bindweed is somewhat different, because it propagates vegetatively, as well as from seed, and I would also burn some of the roots with the seeds. You have to sprinkle your ashes regularly, though, like every half year over 4 years. One should notice an effect after the 1st year. You can potentize your ashes, 8X is often recommended. And also one shouldn't burn the seeds in a metal oven, because that interferes with magnetism, energies, etc....

I have to confess, that I couldn't get rid of my bindweed that way, but I might not have done it consistently enough.

Meet the Tablehurst Farm Team



Stuart Barry Matt
Adele Robin
Rosemary Raphael
Hanna Steffi Briony Peter Max Sam
Joschua Clive David David Sarah Rob
Ellie Terry

Max and Lucy and their two children left the farm in May for America, where they are going to work in Copake, a Camphill Village with a beautiful farm. This has brought about some changes in our farm team, which it would be good to share.

We are very happy that Ellie Woodcock, who has not quite finished her second year as an apprentice, has decided to join the permanent staff and become the 'housemother' of the care home and continue as one of the farmers too. She is well liked and has a natural way with Stuart, Terry and Clive. On the farm one of Ellie's responsibilities is the pigs and she has also taken on responsibility for the weekly Saturday barbecue. 'Little Max' joined us last September from Germany and is here for a year, doing his social service, and he also lives and helps in the house. Amongst his duties is, together with Clive, baking bread for us all and cooking twice a week, once with Terry and once with Stuart. This is the third year that we have taken someone to help and work with the residents in the house and on the farm and it is going very well.

The sixth person in Tablehurst Farm Cottage is Robert Tilsley. Rob is doing the vegetables in the field next to Emerson and in the three polytunnels. Rob is not only a good, hardworking gardener but has a lovely sense of humour, which is greatly appreciated on the farm and in the house! The vegetables are being sold in the shop but also to Seasons and locally. Sarah Vaughn, who completed the biodynamic training at Emerson in the spring, is also working with Rob in the garden for the summer. She stays in one of the apprentice rooms.



With Raphael now full time in the shop and Steffi having her second baby and with Max and Lucy leaving we took on Robin Brown as one of the farmers in March. Robin, who was brought up on the farm, trained as a blacksmith but has been doing building work the last years, with a local firm. Robin is now responsible for the poultry and complements and supports David well in the workshop and with the machinery. He and Holly Coleman, his partner who works at the local veterinary surgery, live in the flat above the shop.

Stein and Noor, who planted the apple orchards, complete their ten year contract in January 2011. This February they moved from the farm accommodation at Tablehurst to a caravan on their own land at Brambletye. We therefore have a new agreement with them where they do not have to work 2.5 days a week for their board and lodging. Stein now works only on a Monday morning on the farm, for which they still get their main meal every day with the farm team. Noor had her third child, a lovely baby girl, a couple of months ago in their caravan. We will review, from both sides, on an annual basis how long Stein continues to rent the land for the orchards. Poor Stein has just had to have an operation on his foot to try and correct a problem that developed after hurting it about a year ago. He is therefore not able to work at present and finds being confined to one spot very difficult!

David and Robin have worked on the small house, along from the apprentice rooms, which Stein and Noor vacated. The roof has been retiled and the bathroom and kitchen refurbished and a new wood-fired heater has been put in, which will also heat the hot water tanks for the apprentice rooms and Raphael's house in the winter. David Junghans, now one of the main farmers and responsible for the arable and field work as well as the machinery, has just moved into the house, having lived in a caravan for the last couple of years.

Steffi Rivera is no longer able to work full time on the farm having two lovely children, but she still has the very important job of responsibility and therefore consciousness for all the cattle and sheep on the farm. Tablehurst is a complex farm so we manage it by each person having specific areas of responsibility but ensuring through regular meeting and sharing that each also has a consciousness of the whole. Peter Brown is one of the farmers, helping out where needed rather than having a specific area although he has final responsibility for things like the Care Home and Health and Safety etc.

Last summer and then again this year Briony Young has lived on the farm and worked three days a week with us and two at Michael Hall garden with Dorothea. Briony did the BD training at Emerson and in particular helps carry the area of the BD preparations on the farm. During the winter she has been in India.

We have three apprentices: Ellie, Sam, an Englishman in his first year and Bernardo from Portugal, who has just decided not to continue. We will therefore be looking for two new apprentices to start in September. The BDAA Apprentice Training is in the process of becoming accredited so that our apprentices will have an internationally recognized level 3 qualification at the end of their training. I am in the small group helping bring this about and I am very happy that the farm is in a position that they can free me up to do this.

We have Jonas, a student from the Dutch biodynamic college Warmonderhof, here on a six month placement. We also have a variety of people here for shorter periods, particularly in the summer. They vary from veterinary students to teenagers for work experience, to overseas students wanting experience.

In the shop we also have a very good team. Barry and Rosemary Western have been instrumental over the years in achieving the high quality of the butchering are now working a three day week. Raphael Rivera works full time in the shop not just involved in the day to day work but also in a managing and coordinating role. David Coldman has been with us since November and is a fast and efficient butcher with a ready smile who we are very happy is part of the team. He and Barry will now be able to pass on their skills to Matt Ball, who has just started as an apprentice butcher, following on his grandfather's profession. Adele Marshal joined the team three months ago to work in the shop and her experience in pie making combined with our meat is producing very popular pies and sausage rolls. We look forward to seeing how it all develops.

There are others on the farm who are perhaps not quite so obvious (and not in the picture) but who are also very important. Julia Fraser has been doing the expenditure side of the bookkeeping for many, many years now and you will often see her car parked outside the office during the weekend. Oliver Fynes-Clinton took over the income side of things when Bernie left and now does quite a bit of other administration including overhauling our Health and Safety policies and risk assessments. He now does, on average, two days a week on the farm.

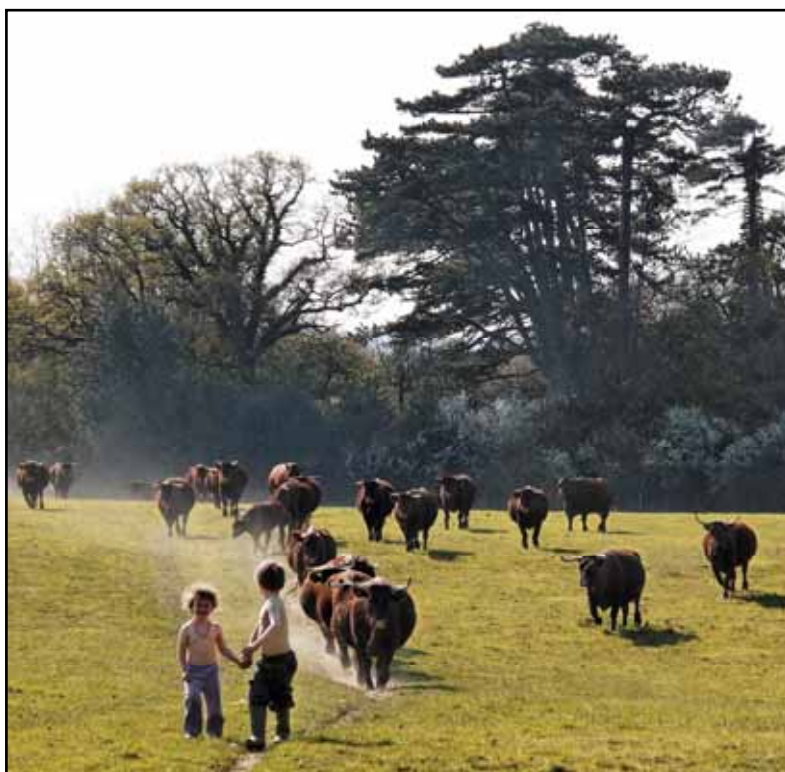
We are lucky in having a large, active and incredibly helpful Management Group who are invaluable in helping the farm develop as it does. Although not paid like the rest of us they put in a lot of time and effort, which we are very grateful for. They are Neil Ravenscroft (chairman), Oliver Fynes-Clinton, Mark Houghton, Julia Fraser, Rachael Pereira, Rachel Hanney, Juergen Schumacher, Robin Evans, Johannes Nilsson from Plaw Hatch and David, Raph, Steffi and myself from the farm team.

Somebody you might meet when visiting the farm is Sarah Merryfield. Sarah is very much part of the farm, as are her three beautiful Haflinger ponies, which live in the stables below the car park. Many people enjoy riding lessons with Sarah and the horses are an important part of our diverse farm organism. I am also very happy that last year, for the first time in the sixteen years that I have now been here, we had swallows actually nesting on the farm; in the stables. Happily they have returned again this year.

Another person very much part of the farm and here on a daily basis but not employed, is Mark Houghton. Mark you will know from his many articles in the newsletter over the years. He has his wood workshop here, has been involved in many of our building projects, has helped organize volunteers in the garden and polytunnels, helps out at BBQs and many other things and so is an important part of the farm.

Where do I stop? Rachel Hanney helps in the shop most weeks, which is much appreciated and there is actually an endless list of people who in bigger or smaller ways support, care for and help the farm. People's involvement often goes in cycles of weeks or months or years and I could not possibly mention them all. Nonetheless the farm would not be what it is without this big circle of people like a large warmth body around the farm. We are very lucky!

Peter Brown



The Biodynamic Training continues!

Following the changes that have taken place at Emerson College, the biodynamic agriculture and horticulture training courses have been taken over by the Biodynamic Agriculture Association (BDAA). The BDAA has created the Biodynamic Agricultural College (<http://www.bdacollege.org.uk/>) as the new body that will run the courses, while St Anthony's Trust will become the College's new landlord, when it takes ownership of the Rachel Carson Building from the Emerson Trustees (hopefully in the next few months). In addition to the Rachel Carson Building, the Emerson Trustees are also transferring to St Anthony's much of the Tablehurst land that had remained in Emerson's ownership. This makes the future of the biodynamic training and the farm much more secure, and we should all be grateful to the trustees of Emerson College and St Anthony's Trust for ensuring that this can happen.

A team of five people has been asked by the BDAA to form a Board of Studies for the biodynamic training, to steer it through the next stages of its development, including gaining accreditation and partial public funding through Plumpton College. The team comprises Timothy Brink (BDAA), Arjen Huese (Course Director), Richard Thornton-Smith and Charlotte von Bulow (BDAA Council Members) and Neil Ravenscroft (Chair of the Tablehurst Management Group). The first big step for the Board of Studies is to raise enough working capital to recruit staff and students, to complete the accreditation and to be able to make a start in our own building this coming September. This includes purchasing basic equipment such as chairs, tables, computers, teaching materials, telephone, internet and electricity. Recruitment for September is strong and we have no doubt that the new College can achieve financial sustainability. But there is an urgent need for £60,000 of working capital to see us through to September. Steps have been taken to secure donations (currently £20,000 has been raised) and loans, but more is needed. We need everyone's help with this - if you feel able to make a contribution, however modest, please contact Arjen Huese at the Rachel Carson Centre, or go to the website of the Biodynamic Agriculture Association (<http://www.biodynamic.org.uk/training/emerson-bd-course.html>).

Arjen Huese and Neil Ravenscroft

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy: we need to be heard

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the financial support and incentive mechanism through which farming in Europe is directed towards certain social, political and, at the margins, environmental, goals. Both Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Farms are paid subsidies through the CAP, currently largely according to the amount of land they farm (an amount called the Single Farm Payment), with a small additional subsidy for the way that they farm it (Environmental Stewardship). Since the inception of the European Community, CAP subsidies have concentrated on the large scale production of commodities - foodstuffs that can be traded internationally - allied to a development programme that has encouraged the amalgamation of small 'uneconomic' farms into large, capital-intensive, industrial agriculture. The result has been catastrophic for the citizens of Europe, for farmers and rural communities, and for the land and environment. It has also been very expensive to run and has proved difficult to reform, given the vested interests of nation states and the food, machinery and agri-chemical industries.

With the emergence of Green politics in the European Parliament, there is now a chance to seek lasting changes through the forthcoming CAP review of 2013. It is important that we grasp this opportunity to make the case for an alternative economic model for European farming, one that places land, farmers and local communities at the centre of agricultural policy and production. Members of our Co-operative, together with members of Stroud Community Agriculture and a number of other community supported farms in western and central Europe, have been actively campaigning for the 2013 CAP reform to recognise the significance of the land - farmer - community relationship as a founding stone for sustainable agricultural policy. We have coined the term 'Community-Connected Farming' (CCF) to represent a wide spectrum of interests, including farmers, communities and small local business sectors allied to farming. With financial support from the French Fondation pour le Progres de l'Homme, we have been able to start developing the materials and arguments necessary to make a representation to the European Parliament. As a result of this, we have been invited to participate in the formal hearings about the future of CAP, the first round of which will take place at the European Parliament in October 2010.

Further information can be found about the campaign at the website of Forum Synergies, a Belgian non-governmental organisation that fosters community development and the ability of civil society to participate in European politics (www.forum-synergies.eu/index.php?pid=1&lid=1). If you would like to get involved, or have your say, please do contact Neil Ravenscroft (neil@reevesravenscroft.co.uk), who is part of the steering group for the CCF project, and who is currently working on the presentation that will be made to the European Parliament. Another useful website is that of the Agricultural and Rural Convention, which is where the European Parliament is collecting evidence from civil society on CAP reform (www.arc2020.eu).

Neil Ravenscroft

Father of the Ducks!

Hello, my name is Manuel. I'm a volunteer from Germany and I have been working since February in the garden and on the farm at Old Plaw Hatch Farm. I have had many new experiences here on the farm, and one of the best was to become a "duck's father" in the spring. Already a few days before the young ducklings were going to hatch in the incubator, one could hear them pecking on their eggshell from the inside. And I was quite curious, when then the first one would hatch.

Afterwards, the young ducklings lived for a short time in a big box with a heater lamp in my room, chatting and beeping. And they couldn't resist to jump in there little water drinker to have a bath, even before they were really water resistant.

One week later they could go outside in the garden and soon they were walking all over the farm, watching people, sleeping in the shadows, stopping traffic or searching for something edible.

To this day they are quite big and have no more fluffy feathers left and almost fully grown. And one can see them swimming in the garden pond or walking to the milking parlour, where they often search for some oats in the evening from the farm manager.



Busy, Buzzing Bees....

You are all aware from previous articles that the Natural Beekeeping Trust (NBKT) is establishing a bee sanctuary in the woods to the right of our garden. It seems that we (or should I say, the bees) are inadvertently creating an impromptu sanctuary already in our staff car park.

Last Summer, just 2 weeks after Heidi placed the beautiful blue hive in front of our office window, they swarmed and produced 2 queens at the same time (almost unheard of) and very exciting for us to experience. They are one of the most friendliest bunch of ladies. We have used this hive as a "show-hive" in the courses that have been held on the farm and they always behave themselves beautifully.

In May and early June, this same hive produced 4 new queens in a matter of 3 weeks!

As they were quite small swarms Heidi has given them the traditional skeps to live in. They do need to be protected from the weather, so some lovely shelters were made by Manuel, and they are all happily foraging close by. These can be seen when visiting the shop, just keep a respectful distance out of their flight path. Observing bees has a great calming effect on you I can attest.

What is ever more spectacular is to be present when the hive starts to swarm.....

A hobby of mine is photographing animals and nature, but having the problem of a cumbersome camera usually means that when a photo opportunity arises you never seem to have it on you! However on May 21st I happened to have the camera in the office to download pictures when the swarm started before my eyes. Heidi Hermann (our amazing human "bee queen") was summoned so I witnessed and photographed the whole process, what a privilege.

Ironically, Heidi was also mid-process in writing an article for the Star and Furrow on swarming and didn't have any pictures for it, so I happily snapped away.

It's crazy to imagine that we have been conditioned to be cautious of bees, thinking they will sting you. They aren't by nature suicidal, it's a sacrifice and great shame if they felt the need to sting you because of some threat. During a swarm, before they start to settle somewhere (hopefully close by and easily accessible) you have no fear of being in the way as they have one mission in mind, so you can stand underneath and feel the collective energy and beautiful harmonies they create.

We are so blessed to have the bees with us.

Susan Cram

PICTURE OVERLEAF





Bees! (See page 7)

Insects in the garden

A themed walk in
Michael Hall Garden
with Dorothea Leber

Saturday 10th July at 2pm



Plaw Hatch e-updates

We're very excited to be launching this new regular way of keeping you up to date with what's happening on the farm including any events and also what's coming in from the garden and is new or on offer in the shop. We'll also give you useful links such as a regular link to an online biodynamic gardening calendar so you can keep a check on when is the right time to do things as far as the biodynamic calendar is concerned. If you would like to receive Plaw Hatch e-updates, please send an email to plawhatch@artofchange.co.uk.

Cheese mountain - help needed!

We are offering you our amazing vintage cheddar at an affordable price in hope that you will support us in creating some space in our cheese-store.

It can be kept in your fridge for quite a long time (or frozen) as there is much less moisture in the cheese. Grated and grilled on top of your dishes, or with pickle on fresh bread. You don't need much, it's full of flavour and has a great "bite" and tickle on your palate.

Normally £17.90/kg, now just £10.00/kg



Tablehurst Barn dance: Sat 3rd July at 8pm. Over 14s only. BBQ available

Tablehurst Farm Walk and Barbecue: Sat 17th July from 10.30 (BBQ from 12.30)