

Sussex Food Awards Success!

Best Butcher's shop in
Sussex?

Tablehurst Farm!

Sussex Food Producer
of the Year

Runner Up
Plaw Hatch Farm!

Best Sussex Food or
Farm Shop

Runner Up
Plaw Hatch Farm Shop!



Barry and Peter off to collect their award

This is another great achievement for both farms, in a tough competition with food enterprises from all over Sussex. And a special thank you to all our customers and supporters whose nominations helped us onto the judges' shortlists in these three categories.

A brief history of Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Farms (see overleaf)

Emerson College
Founded

Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch

On 22 January, over 30 individuals gathered together at Emerson for our "Memory Day". The day was part of a nationwide project called "Connecting Communities Through Food" (see box) in which our Co-op is a participant, and for which grant funding has been obtained.

Within the broader national context, the specific objectives established for our Co-operative in this project are:

- to collect together information about the history of the farms over the last 40 to 50 years
- to document and archive this information so that it remains available in the future;
- to mount an exhibition about the farms and co-op at the Tablehurst Open Day, June 19th 2011;
- to prepare a book about the history of the farms and co-op, within the wider context of social and community movements;
- understand how the community connects with the farms today;
- to work with the co-op committee to consider the future development of the co-op and farms.

Do you have a story to tell

We want *your* stories, photos, newspaper cuttings and memories of the farms to add to our archive.

Please contact Laurie or Rachel (see facing page for contact details)

What is "Connecting Communities?"

Connecting communities through food: the development of community supported agriculture in the UK.

The research has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (one of the Government's research councils responsible for allocating research funding) as part of its Connected Communities research programme. The Connected Communities research programme seeks to understand the power of individual civil society institutions – such as community farms – to be a force for social support and development. In addition to Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farms, our project involves the Universities of Brighton, Manchester and Durham, Spitalfields City Farm, London and the Lik:t Community Allotment in south Manchester. There will be chances during the project, which runs until October 2011, to meet members of the Spitalfields and Lik:t communities and to experience how different groups approach farming and gardening. The aims of the project are:

- to establish what is known about community farms and gardens in the UK;
- to understand how individuals make connections, with each other, the land and the farmers, through membership of a community farm or garden; and
- to identify the wider social, community, health and environmental benefits that can be derived from community farming & gardening.

The day began with a joint effort to remember the basic story of our farms - what happened when - all the way back to 1967, when Emerson College Trust acquired Tablehurst Farm. The timeline running through the newsletter is a summary of this work. We went on to explore more individual memories - what for each of us were the moments which had created a personal connection to the farms. We shared these - first in small groups, and then more publically, all hearing a fascinating array of stories about harvesting potatoes, planting hedges, launching fundraising drives, organising open days, participating in management teams, and learning about the digestive system of cows. Slowly but surely, a rich picture emerged of how our community farms have evolved, and how the talents and inspiration of so many individuals have contributed to their development.

Emerson College moves to Pixton

Emerson acquires Tablehurst Farm as a training facility

Biodynamic agriculture course begins at Emerson/Tablehurst

Walter and Ellie Rudert arrive at Tablehurst

Manning Goodwin purchases Plaw Hatch with plan to convert to biodynamic.

1966

1968

1970

Memory Day – 22 January 2010

In the afternoon, we focused to the future, first reflecting on the wider world context in which the farms operate today, then starting to think about how change could happen on our farms, and what it might look like. Ideas were diverse and included a stronger focus on sustainable energy, educational initiatives, more cultural activity on the farms, re-examining our commitment to meat, community involvement in the care of the farm residents, closer connections to the wider Forest Row community, stronger links to other CSA initiatives, publication of research on biodynamic farming, and acquiring more land. A big thank you to Steve Briault and Charlene Collinson who acted as facilitators throughout the day.

What Happens Next?

This one-day event is by no means the end of the project. We want to hear from as many of you as possible on the questions posed here - see bubbles and boxes for details. Our contact details are

Rachel Hanney, 01342 824074

rachelhanney@yahoo.co.uk and

Laurie Keller laukel@waitrose.com

We really look forward to your contributions.

Calling artists,
writers & craftspeople

Do you feel inspired by our farms?
If so would you like to create a
piece of work which reflects the
land, people or animals?

Please contact Rachel

A word from our organising team ...

This work is being co-ordinated on behalf of the farms by a small carrying group comprising Neil Ravenscroft (principal investigator, University of Brighton and member of the Tablehurst management group), Rachel Hanney (member of the Tablehurst management group), Tom Ventham (Plaw Hatch farmer), Peter Brown (Tablehurst farmer) and Laurie Keller (community member).

We welcome additional members who would like to get involved in this project. You don't need any specific research skills, just enthusiasm. We also welcome suggestions for actions and initiatives, including meetings, surveys, artistic and other contributions.

If you are interested, please contact Rachel or Laurie.

What inspired
you to join the Co-op?

We want to hear from farm
shareholders, old and new.

Please contact Laurie

Who's who on the timeline?

The timeline running through this newsletter mentions countless individuals, but in addition, it refers to five key legal entities which have been central to this modern history of Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch. They are:

Emerson College Trust, founded in 1962, and owner of Tablehurst farm land and buildings from 1967 to 2004.

St Anthony's Trust, a charity founded in 1972 for the care of the elderly and to support education in keeping with the principles of Rudolf Steiner. Owner of Plaw Hatch farm since 1980. Now owner of the land and buildings at both farms.

Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Ltd, otherwise known as the Co-op, an Industrial and Provident Society through which our 500 or so farm shareholders own the businesses of both farms.

Tablehurst Farm Limited and *Plaw Hatch Farm Limited*, the two trading entities owned by the Co-op.

St Anthony's Trust
founded.

Plaw Hatch Farm News

Well its mid winter here, I expect you are wondering what we all do this time of year. It's quite a small team at the moment. Maeve has just run off to the Dominican Republic for some sun, what a good plan, I'm sure she is going to see where our bananas come from!! Jenny and Andy will hold the reins in the shop with lots of help from Abra. What a great team they are. Even if it's cold and wet outside they create such a warm and welcoming atmosphere for us farmers and for our customers. Johannes is busy working with Marco (recently arrived from Italy) getting the equipment tip top for the summer, and taking advantage of the dry days to do some fencing and coppicing. Liz is grappling with a very wet garden and bracing herself for the busy planting period ahead. The poly tunnels are showing their age with the plastic beginning to wear out. It's quite costly to replace. John is busy with the business aspect, holding the purse strings and grappling with the daunting task of business plans for the future. Tali is doing really well in the dairy as Susan left quite a legacy of brilliance with the yoghurts and cheese. The milk doesn't stop flowing so it's quite a demanding role. She has help from our volunteer AJ (Arwin) who is best described as an Eco Warrior from Australia, and has brought us all very much into the energy saving mode, and I dare anyone to throw away a bucket of hot water, which he could quite easily use for his bath in the evening. Cassie (our apprentice) is helping me with all the animals. She is up early, often before me and is reluctant to take time off at the week ends. She is very dedicated and hopefully learning heaps and best of all getting the experience and confidence. Dairy farming is terribly addictive but luckily without the counselling. Dan who lives in the tree house at the camping field is becoming more here than not, helps us all with those things we haven't time to do and hopefully will take on the camping this summer. Emerson students are in and out also to get some exposure to the farm and it's great we can show them how we look after the land and animals in the best way we know. Mia comes in every Tuesday from Michael Hall School to help with the milking. Susan comes in once a week to keep our books in order, I miss her being around more but happy that she is settling in to a less demanding role at Ashwood Farm School with Wendy and Patrick. Julia my wife continues to cook for us on Wed lunch and Fri breakfast providing the essential link to bind us all as a community here on the farm.



We are milking 30 cows at the moment @ 400li / day. Belladonna (pictured) is top and gives us 40 pints a day. Olivia is the oldest and first in the parlour unless Chalky (a mere heifer) leaps through at high speed to get through the door first. All have calved and the last of the calves were sold last Sunday. Four old ladies have very sadly gone off and we have kept 5 calves for replacements. Hay is running low after such poor yields last summer. Our new Tamworth sows Maria and Brigitta are getting ready to farrow, while Alistair the boar rests and eats. Hens are laying exceptionally well. Retiring hens are moved up to the garden. They are still laying well eating only our own grains and lots of garden pasture. They need final homes if anyone is interested? The sheep.... Well that's another story... I do miss Susan's help here. Last year's lambs are all waiting to go to Tablehurst. The ewes - now mid pregnancy - vanished last week from their field and glancing on to the horizon I saw our neighbour had brought in a mass of sheep to graze his fields. In my mind I knew the answer and was happy to walk away that evening only to be confronted by an angry neighbour the following morning. Trying to filter out 40 from 200 with a half trained sheep dog is no easy feat. Eventually we managed only to find we now have more than 40 sheep of our own. I wonder if he will notice !!

This is a quiet time of year for us, keeping everything fed, watered and clean with straw. No campers around, nobody visiting the parlour. The fields are quiet and as I take a daily walk with the dogs out through the forest I can begin to feel the beginnings of a new year, bursting with promise. Hope you can feel it too, if not come for a walk on the farm, you are most welcome.

Tom Ventham

Emerson College opens Cynrel Bakery

Social development centre established at Plaw Hatch

Emerson College takes over running of Plaw Hatch Farm

Jeremy Kent and Katherine Castelliz leave Tablehurst Farm

1974

1976

1978

Co-op Review of Plaw Hatch Farm

As you may know the Co-op committee initiated a review of Plaw Hatch Farm in April 2010. The committee expressed its concern about declining net assets in the face of declining income and high turnover of senior staff members, as well as a lack of financial controls and long term planning. The high bank overdraft of about £25,000 raised fears about the farm's short term liquidity.

The farm has responded to the review process as outlined below. In a recent letter to the farm directors, the co-op committee members expressed their satisfaction with changes implemented so far. In order for the review to be brought to a close, the co-op committee has asked us to finalise a multi-year plan, and appoint external directors. Here is an outline of the changes implemented to date.

A number of new people have joined the farm management team in key positions. **Jenny Wright** has been managing the Farm Shop for the last year and the results are evident in customer feedback and excellent financial performance. Jenny has recently been appointed as a director. **Tali Eichner** has joined the team as trainee dairy processing manager and brings a lot of new energy with her, together with her partner Nick. See page 9 for a message from Tali. **Susan Cram** has joined Patrick and Wendy at Ashwood Farm near East Grinstead where she is pursuing her passion for animal husbandry. We are very glad that Susan will continue to help us with bookkeeping. **Liz Charnell** has taken on the garden and is working very closely with Jenny to bring more Plaw Hatch salads, vegetables and fruit to the shop. **Tom and Julia Ventham**, who have won the trust of our team and our customers for their approach to animal husbandry and the land, continue in their role as the senior farmers. **John Twyford** has taken on the role of business manager. His remit is to make sure that Plaw Hatch defines and achieves its financial objectives. John is a third generation farmer who has returned to farming after a business consulting career and 2 years on the BD course at Emerson. **Johannes Nilsson** and his partner Anna Jobski have been on the team for two years now. Johannes, who grew up at Sturts Farm, brings a mighty will with him and is responsible for producing all the animal food and grain for human consumption. **Richard Evans** has also joined our management team, and supports us with all things mechanical with which he has such a wealth of knowledge and experience.

We also have new external members of our management group: **Jenny Exley**, is a local landscape architect whose work centres around helping communities form shared landscapes/spaces; **David Thomas** from St Anthony's Trust; **David Junghans** from Tablehurst Farm; **Barry Durdant-Hollamby** is a change management consultant who has done great things in helping us sort out team dynamics on the farm, and has brought us through our first step toward a sustainable long term plan, namely a shared set of values. We are still looking for people with business management experience to join our management group.

We have implemented basic financial reporting controls, such as budgets and forecasts, which are updated regularly and allow us to set goals. We have done very well this year and are ahead of budget. From an overdraft of -£20,000 a year ago we now have a positive bank balance of about £20,000. Everyone on the team has a growing understanding of how important these basic controls are.

We have a separate stream of activities focused on long term planning. These include the work we are doing with Barry which will culminate in a long term vision and plan for the farm's development. About once a month we get together on a Sunday to look at the long term future of the farm. Related to this we are in the process of applying for grant funding for the development of a farm community room/kitchen. With the help of a £4,000 social enterprise grant we have been working on understanding our business better. One outcome of this has been a customer survey which has already given us key insights. It has become very clear, for example, that our customers are more interested in fresh food, produced biodynamically, right on our farm, than any other aspect of what we do. They also value our approach to food production very highly. Of interest is that not many co-op members have responded to our survey. If you are happy to fill out a survey please respond to John Twyford at jgtwyford@gmail.com so that we can send an online survey to your e-mail address.

If you have any comments or questions please feel free to contact us at info@plawhatchfarm.co.uk.

John Twyford

St Anthony's Trust launches public appeal for funds to buy Old Plaw Hatch Farm and becomes a developing community-owned biodynamic farm. 90+ community members respond to appeal raising £80,000

David Adams and Paul Martin manage Plaw Hatch Farm

Adams family leave Plaw Hatch Farm and Paul Martin is joined by Michael and Jacquie Duveen

Paul Martin leaves Old Plaw Hatch Farm for Botton Village

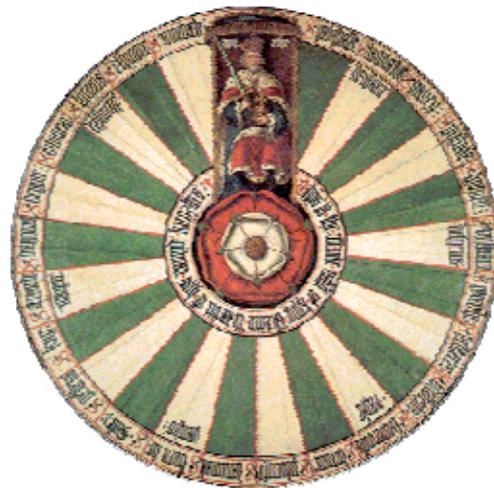
1978

1980

1982

Around the table

On a long journey driving back from France before Christmas I made a stop over in the beautiful city of Chartres. Hungry and cold, I was in no mood for a picnic in my bleak hotel room so I did something I rarely do; I went to a restaurant for a meal - alone. As I waited for my food I idled my time discreetly looking to see what other customers were eating, and wondering if what I'd ordered would be good. It did feel a bit odd sitting alone at my table, waiting for my food, and I got to thinking of all the tables I have eaten at where there have been lots of people.



I grew up in a large family so there was always a bit of a crowd at meals. Mum and Dad couldn't find a table big enough for us all to get round, so they asked a local joiner to make one for us. The under frame was chunky pine, the top a thin sheet of ultra modern 1960's formica, laminated onto chipboard with a thin solid oak edging all the way round. The formica surface was a nondescript cold blue, but the table was big, long, very functional and it looked, and was, bomb proof. And it needed to be. As well as the preparation and eating of thousands of meals for all of us and many friends over the years, it had to

withstand being used as a den, a theatre stage, woodwork bench, art and craft table, and office desk.

But most of all it was where we all met. It is in the nature of tables that they don't remember, especially formica topped ones, although the years of dents and scratches on an old oak table do tell a story of age and use. But the people who sit at tables, any table, can and do remember.

More than in any other context, meals eaten with others are where we build our social foundations. Sitting, eating and relating is one of the most fundamental and persistent human activities. The manners and rituals of eating are part of the social fabric of all cultures. The place and time of eating is a recurring ritual from early childhood. It's where language and social behaviour is learnt. Meals together in families or communities like Tablehurst and Plawhatch farms are times to relax from the day's work, to integrate and plan. But they are also a space to get to know each other better, to laugh, and, sometimes, to experience our differences.



When we sit at a table, or on cushions on the floor, as in some cultures, from an early age we learn to "read" how to behave. Just as, without thinking, we hold a book the right way up and read it from left to right down the page, so we also sit side by side or in a circle facing each other. This arrangement facilitates social connection.

Andrew and Mary Carnegie and Malcolm Potter arrive at Plaw Hatch Farm

Help us fill in the gaps in our timeline. See Page 3 for details

BSE first recognised in the UK

1982

1984

1986

All the time we are at the table with other people we are doing this extraordinary thing called communicating. Even with silence there is a sort of communication going on. The food has a context which we share; the aromas, the sounds of cutlery and crockery, the passing to each other of what we need, the table, the room, view through a window, the mood; all as well as the conversation. All too often we take it all for granted, or worse, watch telly! It is sobering to remember the 2 billion or so of our fellow humans who share our hunger but with whom we don't collectively share our food. It is no accident that many religions have a place for food in their traditions - to help remind us not to take it for granted.

To my mind the link between religious expression and the eating of food is inevitable. All spiritual traditions seek to help us make sense of and deal with our manifestation as physical beings - with living bodies - but with heads which think and hearts which feel. My body tells me I am hungry for food, my head shows me how to get it; my heart, that, to eat, I need others as they need me, and that, as well working alongside others, I have to put up with, and can laugh with and love them. The daily rituals to do with food have something of the sacred almost built into them, even without specific religious reference. The use of candles, best china and decorations at Christmas dinner or for other feasts serve this purpose. But the everydayness of hunger, for food and each other, is a baseline of living. I often feel if our western, market dominated society was not so keen on being secular they might notice how religious we all are; we have replaced our cathedrals with supermarkets, a sad distortion of this impulse. Yet paradoxically a deeper truth about us cries out to be acknowledged in the madness of these places!

The level space before me on which my food is laid out, whether I am alone or not but especially when with others, is the space in which I am given permission, every day, to acknowledge my shared humanity. The Arthurian legend of the round table speaks of this archetypal truth, and the wisdom it bestows. Differences with others of background, wealth, race, gender or intelligence are necessarily put aside in the implicit acknowledgment that we all share hunger and the means to satisfy it.



And the long and complex chain of human endeavor, which brings food to our table, is work, not just of a commercial nature, but of service, meeting this common need. It is work which contributes to a social levelling and to the rich possibility of discovering, if we care to, who and what we really are, as individuals and as part of the human family.

Mark Houghton



1986

1988

1990

Co-op committee report

The role and responsibilities of the Co-operative and its elected committee are not as clearly defined as perhaps you might think on first glance at the two well established, successful farm enterprises that fall under its umbrella. The Co-operative adopted a simple rulebook at its inception and its unwritten guiding principles of strong community involvement, belief in the value of education and an over-arching wish for sustainably produced, local biodynamic food are embodied in the founders, members and the broader biodynamic movement. This has allowed the Co-operative to be flexible in its approach, however, it has also on occasion resulted in a questioning of that role. Last year as part of its oversight role of the financial health of the businesses, the committee was primarily engaged in the review of Plaw Hatch which we fully anticipate will be successfully concluded later this year. Certainly substantial progress has been made and we look forward to the presentation of their business plan on completion. This year the committee is seeking to look closely at the Co-op's *raison d'être*, how may it better serve the farms, whether we have the right structure for the future and what is our vision of community supported agriculture. This will be an ongoing process over the course of the year where we will seek to engage with as broad a group as possible from Co-operative members, farm teams, customers and the wider community. We will shortly be holding an EGM which will be an opportunity for members to discuss the project.

At the establishment of the Co-op the desire for full transparency and accountability of the farm businesses and the Co-operative was considered very important. Consequently all three enterprises, the two farms and the Co-op, were independently audited. For the farms this was a choice rather than a requirement, indeed, most small businesses would not have their accounts audited. That belief in integrity and transparency has not changed. The processes and structure that have been put in place to oversee the financial well being of the farms has the confidence of the management teams, the Co-operative Committee and the members attending the AGM, where the question of audit was discussed in 2009 and 2010. It was decided, in particular in light of the substantial rise in the cost of the audit and the business transparency established over the life of the Co-op, that auditing the farms was, at this time, an unnecessary expense. Accounts are still produced with the same level of detail by an independent accountant and the farm management teams of both farms report regularly to the Co-operative Committee. Copies of the accounts are available to members on request. The Co-operative itself, an Industrial and Provident Society, continues to be audited as required by our rules despite the fact that it carries on very minimal business and so has the simplest of accounts. The Committee has concluded that the cost of the audit, our single largest annual expense, is money that would be better spent on projects directly associated with the farms. The Committee proposes that the Co-op change its rules to allow this and will call an EGM for April 19th to be held at Tablehurst Farm (over lunch) to consider such a change. The Committee will write to members in due course outlining the proposal. I look forward to seeing you there. Robin Evans

Harnessing sunlight

I would like to share a new and very exciting development which is being investigated for both Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch.

With the government's guarantee of paying a particular price, for the next 25 years, for electricity produced in a 'green' way, many individuals and farmers are putting photovoltaic panels on the roofs of their houses and buildings. These panels are able to change sunlight into electricity, which can be used by the owners. Any surplus electricity is fed into the grid. One is paid for what one uses oneself as well as what is sold. This means that it is possible to earn a good return on the money invested.

The farms are producing food for the surrounding communities. Their ability to do so is not just dependent on the farmers and gardeners but also on machines. There are water pumps, milking machines, cold rooms, fridges and freezers, feed mills, feed mixers, flour mills, lighting, power-washers, welding machines and so on. The list is very long and all these machines run on electricity. This puts us in quite a vulnerable position as food producers. Who knows how things will look in 10 or 15 years time with peak oil, gas coming from Russia and other potential risks? The farms and their customers would therefore be in a much more better position if, over the next 25 to 30 years, we have a secure source of electricity.

So, how can we make this possible?

We could create a co-op (or some other legal form) of individuals who would like to invest money in this project, who would receive a good interest rate and would, at the same time, be supporting the farms.

So the benefits would be:-

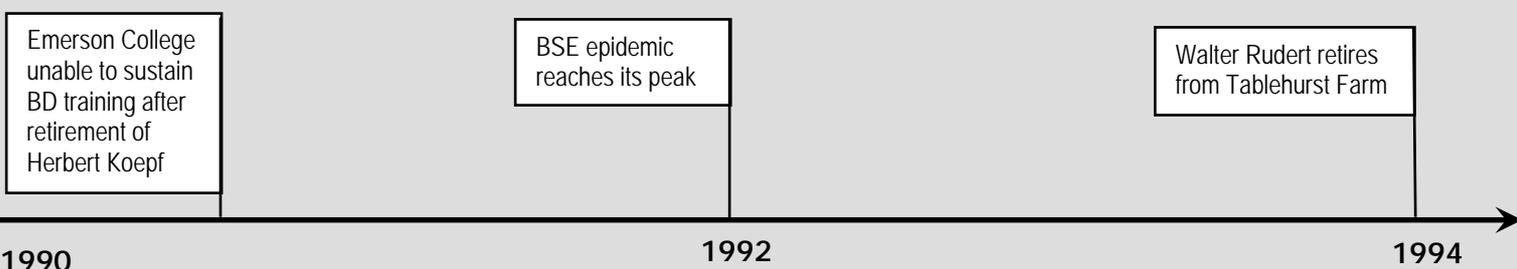
- The community would benefit from the farms having a secure energy source that would allow them to continue producing food for a long time to come.
- Investors would be putting their money into a scheme to produce green electricity for the local community.
- Investors would receive a competitive interest rate on their investment.
- The farms would immediately have cheaper electricity bills.

Currently we are considering installing the photovoltaic panels on the existing roofs of some of the farm buildings. However, we are looking at the future needs of both farms. In the light of this we are considering whether to increase the size of the scheme to include, for example, putting up a much-needed grain and vegetable store at Tablehurst with a roof especially designed for the panels.

Belinda Heys and Neil Ravenscroft are at present getting quotes and putting together a proposal for the farms' Management Groups and the Co-op Committee.

Let's make this happen!

Peter Brown



Hello from Tali



Well, I may be a familiar face to some, having worked with Susan in the dairy at Plaw Hatch for much of 2008, but now I return to take her place as she has moved on to pastures new to teach and look after the animals at Ashwood Farm.

My partner Nick and I moved onto the farm in November and have been enjoying the idyllic setting and community spirit. Life in the dairy is busy and all-absorbing, and most of all rewarding, particularly when tasting some fine products that we've made and seeing them nestled in someone's shopping basket. At this time of year we are also very lucky to have the cows in the yard just outside the dairy door. What an incredible thing to have the cows that give us the milk for our products and the customers that come to buy them both literally metres away! The herd are providing us with around 400 litres a day, which gives us plenty to play with and make a wide range of products, and usually two cheesemakings a week. Following requests from some of our customers, we have also started bottling our unpasteurised whey, which can be found in the milk fridge in the shop.

Thanks to the capable hands of Antonia and Arwyn (the 'A-Team') looking after the dairy I've already managed to take a holiday in the Alps. While there I visited a 'fromagerie' and brought back much inspiration and some local Savoie cheeses for the farm staff, which were gobbled down while I was bombarded with questions about whether we could make them in our dairy! It truly is an exciting time when new ideas are coming from every direction and at this stage all are just seeds, but as Spring beckons I wonder what might start to blossom?

Tali Eichner

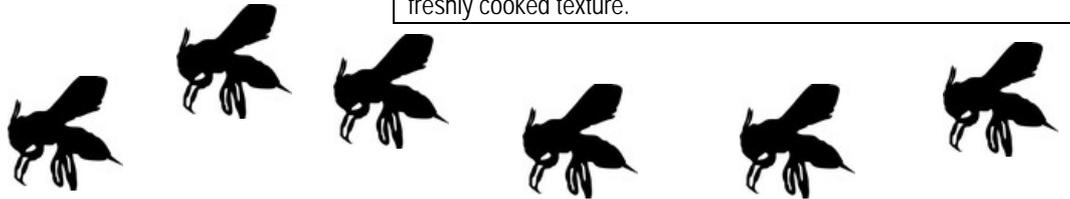
Tali's Halloumi

Halloumi is believed to have originated in Cyprus, and has an established place in eastern Mediterranean cuisine. Although halloumi is traditionally associated with warm-weather dishes, it now has a niche in many styles of cooking. Here are a few suggestions to try:

- Stuff peppers with a mixture of halloumi cubes, cous cous, mushrooms and parsley and oven bake
- Brush Portobello mushrooms with chilli, garlic or herb oil and grill before covering with a slice of halloumi and returning to the grill until golden
- Make halloumi burgers with a thick slice of halloumi and your favourite chutney in a bun
- Cut halloumi into small cubes and dry fry them to make 'cheese crisps' that can be added to a salad
- Use halloumi cubes or batons in a stir-fry or fajitas
- Grill halloumi and vegetable kebabs on a barbeque (if you can brave the weather at this time of year!)
- Dip halloumi cubes in egg then spiced breadcrumbs before frying in oil
- Halloumi fried in slices makes a great addition to a fry-up (it is also known as 'poor man's bacon' or 'veggie bacon')

Tips: Halloumi is a fresh cheese, but preserves well due to its salt content. However it can also be frozen to extend the shelf life without affecting the flavour or cooking qualities. If you prefer your halloumi less salty, you can wash it under a running tap just before use to remove the brine for the surface, or leave it to soak in a bowl of water for 5-10 minutes to reduce the saltiness even further. Cook halloumi just before serving to appreciate best the soft, freshly cooked texture.

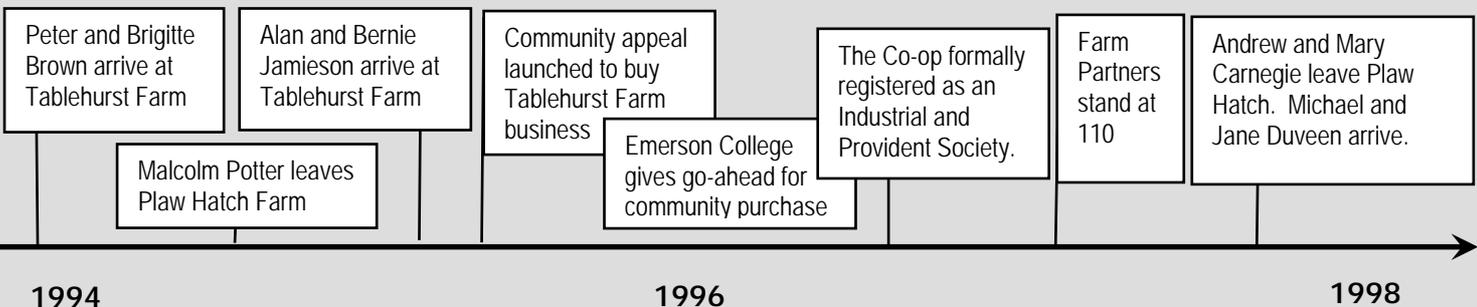
Beekeeping News



The Natural Beekeeping Trust is running events throughout the spring and summer. Our first two beekeeping courses on the 26th February and the 26th/27th March are fully booked, with waiting lists, so please register early if you wish to attend "Introduction to Honeybees" on **Saturday, the 9th April at Plaw Hatch Farm** or the full beekeeping course from the **28th-29th May**, also at **Plaw Hatch Farm**.

On the **27th February and 3rd April** we will once again welcome **master skep maker Martin Newton**, who will lead us in a peaceful and therapeutic day of skepmaking, in order that we may be ready for the first swarms in the spring. There are still one or two places on each course, which will take place in our new bee teaching building. Thanks to a most generous donation from one of our supporters we are delighted to be able to offer some of our courses in a dedicated building right next to our bee garden in Ashurstwood. Further details on these and further upcoming courses can be found on our website www.naturalbeekeepingtrust.org.

We are pleased to be co-hosting the UK's first **Natural Beekeeping Conference** in August this year. It will take place at a unique tented conference centre in the Midlands and offer natural beekeepers of all persuasions an opportunity to exchange ideas about the themes close to all our hearts, bees, flowers and agriculture. Please register your interest via www.biobees.com as soon as possible as places are limited to one hundred.



Tablehurst Farmer's Notebook

January has been a time of preparing for the busy year ahead. December and Christmas were especially challenging for the farm with the cold and snow. Frozen drinking troughs and water pipes and customers unsure if they could reach our cleared and salted road were all part of the fun. For the moment we are back to a more typical winter with our lovely mud! A new concrete road from the end of the tarmac to our shop is definitely part of the plan for this year. We are very aware of how much it puts off many of our customers. The turkeys must have been extra special this year - we have never had so many positive comments.

All turkey cuts on special offer at Tablehurst now!

The planning permission for the cattle and pig buildings as well as the 'Learning on the Land' building, enabling school children to live on the farm for a week at a time, came through in the autumn. That means that we can now start building at least one of the cattle and pig buildings this spring, and that we have to re-form our little group behind the 'Learning on the Land' project to find the money to realise it. If you have suggestions as to who may be able to help us do this, then please contact me.

Being in an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' the planners require us to dig the buildings into the hillside and plant trees to ensure they are well hidden. This will require a large amount of earth to be moved, and this will be our starting-point, followed by putting down hardcore and then erecting the buildings. Part of the plan is that the cattle will have the use of outside yards so that they can stand in the sun and rain. This will mean that there will be run-off water which must therefore be stored so that it does not pollute the pond or river. The water can then be usefully used in the summer months for irrigating fields and vegetables. The pipes and water storage needed are not cheap, like the rest of the buildings, so we will only be able to do a certain amount as a first phase. We still have £100,000 from the legacy of Manya Parkinson, which is enabling us to start the project.

As many of you will know we have talked for a long time now about starting a Café and we even have the 'change of use' permission to use the room next to the shop where we sell the pies. That of course is part of the problem, as Adele makes her wonderful pies there and needs the space. We, of course, want the pies to continue so we have been racking our brains as to how we can make it possible to squeeze a café in there too. There is no warm place in which people can sit down, because with all our other plans we cannot afford to build it; it will just have to be a warm weather café. We shall try to incorporate the small rooms behind the existing pie-making room to at least make enough space to serve food and drink, so that customers can eat on the decking or in the BBQ area.

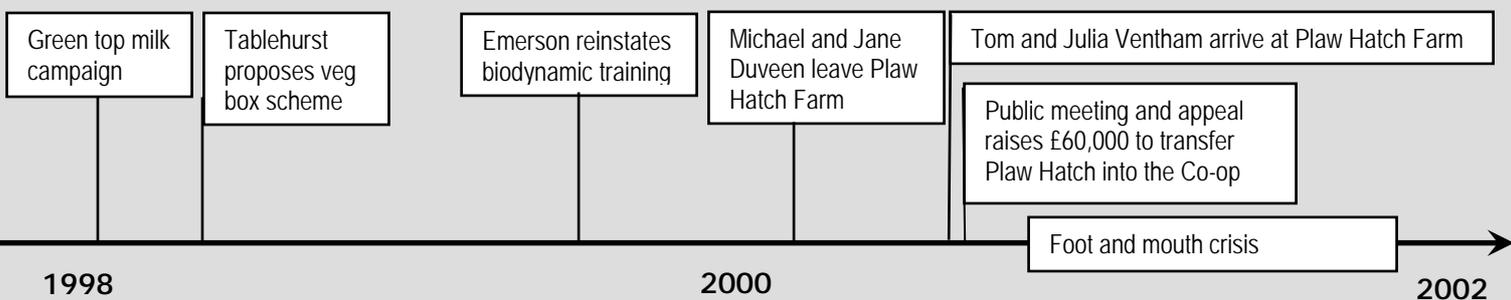
Robert Tilsley, our gardener since last April, has had a good first season. The vegetables he grows are of the very best quality and are much appreciated. It feels very right that once again we are producing vegetables on Tablehurst. For this coming year we are extending the garden into part of Lower Parklands Field and we have applied for permission to put up four more polytunnels next to those at the bottom of the orchard. We still hope to get them up this spring. We are also buying a transplanter, similar to what we used to have in the 'old' days; this will make the garden team's work more manageable. At present everything is done by hand.

We have also been looking at the next steps to be made in the development of the poultry, which Robin Brown is managing. We have decided to produce slightly fewer turkeys for next year and to buy in 75 goslings, thus selling some of our own geese next Christmas. One is able to feed geese on good pasture, unlike turkeys that are not able to utilise much of the grass they eat and are more dependent on a grain-fed diet.

For a while now the demand for chicken has been for about 160 chickens a week compared to the 200 that we could produce. Due to frequent requests for duck we have decided to try them on a small scale. Unlike the chickens, where we have fresh birds every week, we will try having fresh duck once a month and frozen duck for the weeks in between. It will, of course, entail much more management and time to have both geese and ducks but we will see how it goes and if the finances stack up in practice.

The poultry are the only 'animals' on the farm which are only organic and not biodynamic. This is because we buy in their feed; this we would like to change. We have been developing the arable side of the farm with the intention of being able to grow most of their grain. We have still a way to go there but the Brockmans near Canterbury grow biodynamic grain which we could use. Unfortunately having grain is only part of the challenge. The protein is the difficulty and the cost of pelleting the food. Most feed millers manage it by using soya meal, which is high in protein but does not grow in this country, and usually some fish meal is required. We have some ideas, so we are going to work on it and if the results are good we shall let you know!

Peter Brown



Apprenticeship at Michael Hall Garden

My name is Perry Haldenby, and I am the new garden apprentice at the Michael Hall walled garden. I am working, studying and playing with the world famous master gardener Dorothea Leber. Since living in Forest Row for the past 8 months, there is always one question which people love to ask me when I first meet them, and that question is... "How did you get to know about Forest Row and Michael Hall" ? As always, my Northern accent is a big give away to my heritage, and I am quickly recognised as not being a local by any stretch of Rudolf's epic imagination. So how and why did a 31 year old ex cocktail bar owner turn his hands from mixing exotic drinks to lively party people, to then come about stirring and spraying herbal preparations on vegetable beds to ensure a natural eco system for the plant and mineral kingdoms, which establishes the perfect combination of nutritional food for mankind ? Well ... I shall tell you ...

... If you would have met me a few years back, I would have told you that gardening is the last job in the world that you could expect me to be doing, but that all changed 3 years ago when I started to seriously look at my diet and health. I was not particularly ill, but then again I was not particularly beaming with life, I was just kind of...'OK' ... I never liked the thought of me being just 'OK', for I had always desired to be full of life and to be that of a dynamic force ... Biodynamic some might say around these parts. I needed a dramatic change, and I then remembered how Einstein once said "insanity is doing the same things over and expecting different results". To cut a long story really short, my dramatic change to save me from insanity came in the form of a 7 day green juice fast. That means I didn't eat anything for 7 days apart from drinking the juice of celery and cucumber. After the 7 day cleanse, for some reason unknown to me, I felt that after 31 years I didn't want to eat meat anymore, and that now, instead ... I would only eat a plant base diet. It was not long before I felt the need to eat fruits and vegetables in their raw form, for I realized that these foods are absolutely full of the living life force I was yearning for. As the importance increased for me to eat a diet rich in high mineralized organic plant matter, so too did the importance of wanting to know how to grow my own food, because by now, I had begun to understand the important evolutionary relationship between the plant and human kingdoms...

A friend of a friend of mine happened to be at a party in Lewes and she met a girl who was a volunteer gardener at Michael hall. The word got back to me that a Biodynamic gardening position was soon to be available. I was living in London at the time working as a raw food coach and I had never heard of biodynamic gardening. With some quick research, I learned that the equation of 'bio'-life + 'dynamic' -force = the combination I was looking for. I eventually met with Dorothea and it soon became clear that we would work together and that I would be her next apprentice for 2 years.

I have learnt so much about biodynamic gardening in just 8 months, so much so that I feel totally confident that by the end of my two year apprenticeship I will be very competent in growing my own high vibration, mineral rich vegetables all on my own. The walled garden is idyllic and dreamy and the sense of elemental beings can be felt in the abundance and variety of crops. My typical working day can entail anything from harvesting vegetables for local shops, weeding beds to allow space and light, planting and watering seeds, cleaning tools and of course ...no biodynamic garden would be complete without creating composts using the herbal preparations of chamomile, nettle, dandelion, valerian, oak bark and yarrow. Do these biodynamic practices really work ? ... well, whenever eat I salad or vegetables that are not from my garden, I can tell straight away the difference in quality and flavour. If I ever spend time in London, I always crave to come back to Forest row, for its as if the cells in my body know that they can only receive the highest quality of nutrients from the food that has been grown by my own loving hands, confirming to me that ...'what we truly do sew ... so shall we reap'. Please come by and visit us in the angelic garden of Michael Hall and let me share more with you about the connection of plants with the human spirit, I look forward to meeting you.

In Gratitude ~ Perry Haldenby

Concert in aid of the
greenhouse window fund!

Saturday 26th March, 8pm

Michael Hall Mansion

With Julian Broughton,
Diane Howard, Dorothea
Leber and friends

Michael Hall Garden Workshops

Gardening classroom
Michael Hall School

Saturday, 12th Feb
2.00 – 5.00 p.m.

An Introduction to
the Bio-Dynamic
Preparations and how
to use them

Saturday, 12th Mar
2.00 – 5.00 p.m.

Bed preparation and
crop rotation

£20 per workshop

For information and
booking:

[Dorothea.Leber@
michaelhall.co.uk](mailto:Dorothea.Leber@michaelhall.co.uk)

or 01342 825604

Farm partners
stands at 340

Emerson College
transfers ownership
of Tablehurst land
to St Anthony's Trust

Appeal launched for
funds to convert barns to
housing at Tablehurst

"Learning on
the Land"
initiative
launched

2002

2004

2006

come and celebrate
the start of lambing
on Saturdays 19 & 26 March

from 12:30 til 2:00pm

organic BBQ,
hot pies
refreshments
& live music



at Tablehurst Farm



Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch

Memory Day

22nd January 2011

See pages 2 and 3 for details

Sale of Brambletye Field

In 2002, two Co-op members bought Brambletye Field, 37.74 acres (15.27 hectares) of agricultural land and woodland which had been part of the Spring Hill Farm Estate. The land is in a beautiful setting close to Forest Row nestled between the lane to Weirwood Reservoir and the River Medway.

The purchase was made with the aim of supporting the vision of Tablehurst farm. In January 2003 the land went into organic conversion. Hedges, scrapes and widened field margins were introduced; these features greatly enhanced the field's value to wildlife. After 8 years the land has biodynamic certification, is valuable grazing land and has good capacity for grain production.

The owners are now intending to sell the land and are obviously concerned that, if possible, Tablehurst continues to farm the land. There are two preferred options:

1. The ideal outcome would be that the farm has its use protected in perpetuity by a buyer, *or buyers*, donating the land (or funds) to St Anthony's Trust (which owns the land of both Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Farms)
2. A new owner giving the farm security of tenure for a period.

Recently Brambletye Field was given an informal open market value of around £6,000 per acre if sold as a whole (£226,440). A proper valuation will be sought as part of the process of sale. The owners would consider on offer that ensured farm use in perpetuity very favourably. Tablehurst currently pays rent of £40 per acre per annum.

If you are interested and would like to know more please contact:

Peter Brown 07803 932283 peter_gbrown@yahoo.co.uk or

Oliver Fynes-Clinton 01342 823966 oliver@fynes-clinton.com

Your Open Day Needs You!

Tablehurst Open Day is on 19th June. We need lots of people to help both in the week beforehand and on the day.

We are also looking for musicians, entertainers, crafts people and local organisations who want to join in.

Please contact Rachel Hanney on 01342 824074 or rachel.hanney@yahoo.co.uk

Kate Munden and
Jonathan Wellman
leave Plaw Hatch Farm

Bernie Jamieson and
Andrew Carnegie leave
for France

Plaw Hatch closes milk round

Emerson in crisis. BD agriculture training
transfers to BDAA

2006

2008

2010