

TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS

WINTER 2013

Plaw Hatch Apprenticeship Programme

The beginning of 2013 marks a new phase for apprentices at Plaw Hatch. Gala Bailey-Barker and Rose Bramwell have joined us to do the Biodynamic Association Apprenticeship Learning Diploma, now accredited at level 3. While Tablehurst has been running the scheme for some time, this is a first for us at Plaw Hatch, at least in its new accredited format.

We are really delighted to have Rose and Gala join our team and they both bring unique and special qualities with them. Gala, 22, is an archaeology graduate but loves farming and has decided to make a new career in agriculture. Rose is 18 but has a wealth of experience already with animals and has got stuck straight into milking.



Left to right: Gala, Angie (also an apprentice!) and Rose

The idea behind the programme is that learners study theory and develop skills in concert with the seasons of the year. Right now for example, we have been focusing on crop selection and seed ordering as we prepare for spring sowing. This summer the boys will be accompanied by two new female tractor drivers to make hay and bale straw (I am sure our repair bills will go down as Johannes' wife Anna Jobski has demonstrated by nursing a really old baler through summer with feminine care.)

It is also an opportunity for us to learn more about our subject. Anyone who has taught knows that it is the very best way to learn. We have to pull our socks up and make sure we know what we are doing and what we are talking about.

There is a wealth of experience and opportunity at Plaw Hatch, not least of which is to be found in the able and highly qualified person of Richard Evans who voluntarily plays an active role in teaching, particularly with respect to machinery. Donating time and energy is not the only way to contribute. It is quite a costly programme, and an opportunity for those so inclined to make a contribution to the training of Biodynamic Farmers of the future. If you would like to help by putting together a bursary fund for learners, please contact me, John Twyford at jgtwyford@gmail.com.

Life after Tablehurst



It's hard to believe that a year has passed since we left Tablehurst for a wonderful 2 month holiday in South Africa. On our return to Europe our adventures started to try to find the farm that we could then join. This proved to be far more difficult than we thought. We looked at many different places throughout Germany and even into Austria, but nothing felt right. We realised that we were comparing all options to Tablehurst and in the end had to work hard to see the farms in their own light rather than as a poor substitute for the community we had left behind. After 6 months of searching we finally found a farm near Nuremberg that appears to be receptive to our ideas of developing a CSA-styled enterprise, and so we have moved to a small Bavarian village, with a local dialect and house numbering system that is almost impossible to decipher, to start the next phase of our life. The farm itself is a "small" 70ha rented farm situated in the beautiful Franconian Jura region, with a suckler herd of Limousine cattle and 30 hectares of cereals, which has been managed biodynamically for over 20 years. As there are only 2 enterprises running, there is huge potential for diversification, and we are excitedly exploring new avenues that might add value to the farm. An exciting time indeed! However, it's not the only exciting event in our lives this year. As some of you know, we are expecting an addition to our family. So once we have settled in a little we hope we can look forward to seeing some of you in the south of Germany in the near future.

Raph and Steffi Rivera

Fruit and Vegetables at Tablehurst Farm

At Tablehurst Farm we have been making some decisions about where we see the vegetable enterprise heading in the next 5 years. Originally our goal was to grow and supply only what we can produce; we did this for the first year and during the summer it worked very well. Some of the produce left the farm to be sold elsewhere but the majority went directly to our farm shop. Unfortunately as our supply dwindled during the winter and we could only offer a very limited range so too did our faithful customer base which we had worked so hard to keep during the summer. The next year we took the approach that we need to maintain a good supply of UK only produce that was seasonal in order to keep people coming to get our vegetables. This too worked well until the early part of the year when our customers once again dropped in numbers. I was left scratching my head, what should we do?

My goal has always been since I started growing, to produce the widest possible selection of fruit and vegetables that people would want to buy, even if it meant not making huge profits from them. Take parsnips and carrots, almost all of our work is done manually for them so it takes a long time for us to dig out and clean 30-40kg of root vegetables which we don't get a big return from, chard on the other hand we can pick relatively quickly and have a big market for outside of the farm so we could make more money from doing that and just buy in the vegetables we struggle to make viable. Imagine fields of just Lettuces and Chard, that would be the most viable option, But then I would be going against my goals...

So now this year we have taken the decision, 'we grow everything that we can for the farm shop and buy in what hasn't worked that year, what we can't grow or what we have run out of and whatever is in Season in Europe'. If we can sell 2 tonnes of carrots in a year then my goal will be to grow 2 tonnes, if we can only grow 1 tonne that is also fine and we can buy in from the UK to make up the rest.

We have also made the choice to begin to offer a wider range of produce at the shop. This will mean we are now going to stock anything that is 'Biodynamic/ organic and seasonal within Europe', hopefully this will mean the shop front is changing through the seasons and that what we do stock will be at its best when it is on offer. Unfortunately this means that Bananas may not show their face on the farm but rest assured if they are growing in Europe and Organic we will try and get them... but it won't be a staple. So hopefully we can offer some special treats once in a while; that is how these exotic fruits were enjoyed in the past. And we will still be offering our usual selection of Biodynamically grown salads, fruit and veg

So now when you come to the shop we aim to offer you continuity, abundance and a good selection all year round. We look forward to seeing you and for you to see how we do develop over the coming years.

Goodbye Jonagolds

I have had a lot of people asking me recently what is happening to the orchard on the farm; 'are we doing some drastic pruning?' is the main question. Well it isn't pruning, the trees are in the process of being removed from the field. These Jonagolds were planted with M9 root stocks, this dwarfs the fruit trees and allows for the orchard to be planted so densely and get a good yield early on in the trees' life. It does however mean that the life span of the trees is reduced. Similar to the way that strawberries work they have peak years and then after that the production drops off and although they still produce it is not like in the first years. This is what has happened to the fruit trees at the farm; they have been growing on the same land for over 10 years now so their time has come.

Stein who owns the trees is in the process of removing them in time for the Spring, there are still some trees left further up the farm so Jonagolds will still be available (weather permitting!) in the coming years. And of course Stein now owns his own piece of land, The Brambletye Fruit Farm, where he is producing other varieties of apples, pears and soft fruits, so rest assured Stein's apples will still be available in the future.



What will happen to this field now? It will be divided into two with 7 rows of apple trees as the division. We will be putting it into a green manure at first to give the field some time to recover from the heavy tractor driving over the 10 years. After that it will become part of the vegetable garden rotation and maybe even some space for a few more polytunnels - you never know. This field space is very important for us as it is one of the better fields on the farm (nice soil), easy access from the field to the shop (less driving) and simply more space to allow us to keep a constant supply coming to the shop throughout the year.

We have all been very grateful to Stein for all the delicious apples we have seen at the farm and will be sad in the spring time when the blossom isn't there to greet us anymore. Thank you Stein and family for all the hard work that has gone into the orchard over the years, we look forward to more bountiful crops coming from the Brambletye in the future.

Rob Tilsley

Tablehurst Farm Report

Like for many of us, 2012 has been a challenging year. It was the wettest recorded in the south of England and it seems it will continue to rain for a while still. On the positive side we have had a bumper crop of silage and hay and not enough animals to feed it to! We have reduced our cow herd over the last, very dry years after we had to order in hay by the lorry to feed them. Now we have an arrangement with Plaw Hatch who rear their male calves for us until they can be weaned. Then they come to Tablehurst and spend the rest of their lives as part of our herd here and that way we can make up the numbers we need to supply you with beef.

We started 2012 with lots of enthusiasm and big plans. The new café did open last spring, Rebekka gave birth to her daughter Hazel, Clive left us to retire and Andrew joined the residents and became a great asset for the farm. A new team around Zoltan had to learn to carry the shop without Raphael, Auke and Robin took on the sheep and the cows from Steffi, Stephen joined the growing garden team, Peter became Chair of the BDAA and got involved in the "Sun Hive" project, we built the new road, a new cow barn, a solar roof on the big barn and finally a new milling room. What followed was a series of disasters.

The café did not take off, partly due to the bad weather, the shop team struggled to cope with the work load, the farm struggled to supply the shop with enough animals, the grass grew lush but with too little sugar in it and made the sheep sick, the damp and humid weather provided ideal conditions for the blow fly who would have killed our sheep by the dozen if we had not brought them in almost every day to shear and treat them. The grain was literally standing in water and once it was finally dry enough to harvest our combine harvester had two major breakdowns in a row (and me too!). Once the harvest was all done it started raining and it didn't stop anymore. The compost that should have been spread on the fields stayed where it was, and also the grain we wanted to sow stayed in the store. The pigs had fertility problems and the low numbers of piglets meant the grain in the grain store stayed in there for too long (we couldn't feed it fast enough) and attracted little beetles who have the amazing ability to turn tons of grain into dust within days. That happened twice this year.

By autumn time we were all exhausted and frustrated. And then we started to turn things around. Amelia who worked in the garden with Rob offered to take on the role as commercial manager to oversee and integrate shop, café and pie kitchen - a great solution for us since it is very important to understand the workings and rhythms of the farm when you run our shop, a quality we had lost when Raphael decided to leave us. Holly, Robin's partner, has joined the team to run the café and Stephen took on Amelia's position in the garden and joined the team permanently, Tamas, our Hungarian pig whisperer, decided to join the team at least for the season and I can tell you the pigs are very happy with all the attention they get now. Auke and Robin are two confident husbandry men now after they had probably the worst year you can imagine for taking on a new enterprise and the recent scanning results show that our ewes are expecting 280 lambs this spring! A great result. (A herd or flock of animals usually always suffer from any change of staff responsible for them so big thumbs up for both Robin and Auke!). Despite the difficult situation we were in we felt that Peter really deserved a gap year, which was overdue for two years already, and we are very happy for him to be able to leave and hopefully get a lot of rest and inspiration. Our amazing management group has stepped in to carry some of his responsibilities and we now have a very strong team to carry the farm out of a difficult (also financial) situation into the future - for the first time not resting on Peter's shoulders. It is a big step in the development of every community or business and when it reaches maturity and finally can stand on its own feet like a child that slowly grows independent of its parents and leaves home for the first time, a feeling equally daunting and exciting.

When we all came together on Three Kings day to spray the boundaries of the farm with preparations I felt strongly that the team carrying the farm at the moment can, without doubt, continue what has been up to this year a story of success and, by the end of this year welcome Peter back to a home that is even more flourishing and stable than it was when he left it.

The start into the new year has been even more encouraging through the best Christmas sales ever and I would like to take the chance to thank all our loyal and patient customers for their great support. We are working hard to improve the quality of our products and our service and plan to open up the shop for 5 days from April with an extended range of products, particularly fruit and vegetables.

The farm team wishes you all a great year 2013 and we hope we see many of you on the farm soon!

David Junghans

Latest updates

Due to staff shortages our café will not be open on Sundays for the time being. Full English Breakfast will be served on Saturdays for now.

Zoltan our butcher manager left us after Christmas. We wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Due to the bad weather conditions we have stopped our popular Saturday BBQ. We will start serving again on March 23rd with our annual lambing BBQ and then continue as usual every Sat 12:30-14:00pm

Lien has joined the team last autumn and we welcome her as our first garden apprentice

"Big" Luke (pictured) has joined the shop team as a trainee butcher



To shop or not to shop?

Chris Marshall raised an interesting and highly pertinent question in the last newsletter, about the policies that underlie what we sell in the farm shops. As he observed, there are many issues attached to the choices made when buying in produce - issues that both management groups are well aware of when making strategic decisions about the future direction of the farms. What is immediately clear, to all who have shopped at either farm over the years, is that the shops have evolved from adjuncts to the business of production to significant financial, cultural and social organisms in their own right. Where once the shops were largely run by the farmers, they are now run by specialists. And where once it was very much a case of opening to suit the productive rhythm of the farms, it is now a case of opening in a predictable manner to suit the needs of customers - and, of course, stocking the shops accordingly.

This direction of travel has been applauded by farm partners and customers. Many people continue to tell us how much they enjoy their shopping experiences at the farms, and how much better the shops have become over the years. What this tells me is that we have all - hopefully consciously - made this journey together; a journey that has taken us from bare subsistence to a combined turnover of more than £1.5m per annum and the provision of numerous full and part time jobs. This is, in any terms, a major achievement. But it does mean that we - collectively - have chosen to put pressure on the farms to supply more and more produce. This inevitably has a cost, as the farms have at times had to put short term production ahead of their longer term biodynamic ideals. We have accepted this, and we have enjoyed the benefits that have followed - not least the bountiful food in the shops and the healthy end of year financial balances.

This is, of course, the historical context to which Chris refers. The question now is how we develop in the future, in a world that is rather different from the cultural, economic and social environment in which the co-op was formed. At Tablehurst we remain utterly committed to our biodynamic and community principles. This means that we must not compromise or over-produce to satisfy short term demands, but must take a more measured, long term, view that secures biodynamic production and maintains strong and healthy links to our communities and our farm partners. This means that the shop must neither dominate, nor be dominated by, the farm, but must fulfil its function, which is to provide food for the community, a window through which people can engage with a working farm and, of course, financial security for the farm. Encouragingly, this is consistent with the demands of many of our customers, who increasingly want to come to a single shop for the majority of their weekly purchases. For many, it is no longer a question of going to different shops for different goods; a mix of time, environmental concerns and financial pressures, allied to the hegemony of supermarket-style shopping, means that convenience and provenance increasingly go hand-in-hand.

As a result, it is tempting to suggest that we are moving beyond questions about the origin of the goods in the shops - although of course this remains important - into new territory in which our shops become social assets in their own right: places that simultaneously sustain the farms and the community. Indeed, we might even understand this as the burgeoning of a new three fold order in which: the farms respond as far as they can to customers (in Tablehurst's case, for example, by making pies, growing more vegetables and introducing new types of flour); the shops stock what is produced on the farms and supplement this according to agreed buying policies; and the community undertakes to shop responsibly by buying what is available at prices that reflect the cost to the farms of producing the food.

In closing, I realise that I have not answered directly Chris' question. This is not because it isn't important, but because I believe that it is part of a much wider debate about the future of the farms. And this debate focuses centrally on our own individual and collective responsibilities towards the farms and the food that they produce. The shops are, after all, no more than a reflection of the relationship between the farms and the community, and it is up to all of us, farmers and farm partners alike, to play a conscious role in planning this future. So, Chris, thank you for raising the debate; may it lead us towards increasing consciousness of our roles in underpinning our vision of biodynamic community farming.

Neil Ravenscroft



New Yet Old Faces on the Farm

Having been part of the local landscape for some years, we are familiar faces to some folk in this area. We are Nir Halfon, Ioonah Woods and the children: Finnian, Benjamin and Rosie. As of December Nir started working as the garden co-manager at Plaw Hatch farm and in January we moved to the farm house. It has been a very exciting move for us and a long awaited dream.



So now I am taking active part in the growing of fruit and vegetables on the farm. Winter means that there are a lot of preparations and planning for the season ahead, which I am looking forward to. I moved to the UK nearly 12 years ago. During the first year, I lived in the Bothy here at Plaw Hatch and assisted Tom with milking the cows and Kate and Jonathan in the garden. I came to study

at the Biodynamic training which had just started at Emerson College. I remember spending a wonderful summer at the farm before the course started. Since graduation in 2004 I worked as a gardener and teacher. In recent years my job has been co-running the Biodynamic course at Emerson College/ Biodynamic Agricultural College and developing the online training for the BDA. As a teacher at the college, I often referred to myself as a 'desktop gardener'. I talked and lectured about horticulture and agriculture. Only when I started working at the farm I realized how much I missed actual gardening - working in the field, being outside and interacting with nature. I have a strong belief that education is the way to transform our future and I am still active in the Biodynamic Apprentice Learning Diploma.

I, Ioonah, came to the area to study anthroposophy and education 20 years ago, and like many have stayed. I teach local organic food and Bee keeping at Trefoil Montessori organic farm school in East Grinstead, where the younger children go. At the moment I am studying at University, developing further my knowledge in health. As my studies recede for the summer I am looking forward to working on the farm and finding my niche with the farm organism. Hoping my Bees will settle well here in the spring.

Finnian is 17 and studying at Sackville school. Benjamin is 10 and Rosie is 7 both of them are studying at the Trefoil Montessori farm school in East Grinstead. As a family, we look forward to a good life taking part in the farm community.

Nir Halfon and Ioonah Woods

Spraying the Three Kings Preparation at Tablehurst

A dozen members of staff and management group at Tablehurst got together on the afternoon of Sunday 6th January - Epiphany - to spray the Three Kings Preparation around the entire boundary of the farm. The Three Kings Preparation is one of many created by Hugo Erbe (1885-1965), a biodynamic farmer in Germany. Erbe experienced a close connection to the elemental world and sought ways to encourage their beneficial influences. This was particularly significant for him in the period following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, when he observed the flight of beneficial elemental beings from the land - a process that he experienced as the demonization of the elementals. He looked to the gifts of the three wise men as a means of helping to heal the damage done to the earth and to help bring the elementals back to equilibrium. In making a preparation from gold, frankincense and myrrh, Erbe recognised the power of these substances as symbols of awareness of the



spiritual events taking place behind the outer physical phenomena. Prepared in the right way, Erbe believed that this preparation could serve as a gift to the earth and the elemental world. The spraying took place in the afternoon of epiphany, with the preparation sprayed outwards at 50m intervals along the farm's boundaries at Tablehurst, Kidbrooke, Michael Hall and Springhill. Working individually or in small groups, those involved made a conscious gesture of an offering to the elemental world. The afternoon finished with tea and cakes at the Tablehurst café.

Neil Ravenscroft

Super modern or old fashioned?



The question about local and seasonal food

To start with I will have to admit, that I'm most probably not neutral in this debate, since for many years I've been making an effort to grow a wide a variety of local and seasonal vegetables including some less known varieties, such as scorzonera, black radish, sugar loaf, corn salad, kohlrabi, etc.

I always find that it's much more difficult to sell things that people don't know (in spite of having written various articles on scorzonera black radish chicories, corn salad kohlrabi, etc.) and that it takes a long time to introduce a new vegetable. I think in "my" shop (Michael Hall Garden shop) Kohlrabi, Florence Fennel, Cornsalad and Winter Purslane sell reasonably well at last. I try to find a balance between what customers want and what I, maybe slightly arrogantly, think they should eat, if they want to live local and seasonal because it grows well and also because if one wants the local gardens to exist they do need support, it really is a mutual thing

As I'm writing this I'm on holiday at my parent's in the Black Forest, enjoying the snow and their lifestyle. We have a cellar. The floor is natural stone and there is no concrete between that floor and the rock underneath. In that cellar is the 25litre earth ware pot with sauerkraut (which I made on my last visit). There are boxes of apples from my parent's own tree, and carrots, beetroots, potatoes, celeriac, bought in bulk from a local demeter farm. At the moment there still are a couple of loafs of "Hutzelbrot" from Christmas (a bread made with 1kg of rye flour and 6kg of dried pears, nuts, etc) there are a couple of bottles of oil from the oil mill which we pass on the way to the airport. The fresh salads and greens my parents buy from Karl, a demeter farmer who comes once a week to a nearby market. In Summer there are vegetables in their own garden. in our loft are hanging 3 net bags of walnuts, from a local farm, baskets of onions and bags of rye spelt and oat grain, also local. That's similar to what my grandparents had, except, that my grandmother had a wooden box full with white flour instead of the whole grains, and lots of jam made with lots of sugar. but of course there also were the potatoes, carrots, beetroots mostly from their own garden and we used to open baskets full of hazelnuts there, which we had collected in the hedgerows.

Especially since I am here my mum bought some exotic fruit, it's become a habit, that my family always treat me with things that I can't grow, and in fact would never buy for myself. I enjoy these things very much: I like it, when the out of season and far away things are something that is special.

As a grower I'm often disappointed, that others can't share the joy about the first beans or courgettes etc., just because they've had imported ones all year round, but I also think about places like Sekem in Egypt which live and flourish from the exports of their demeter products, or also places like Tree Harvest, that encourage traditional growers to grow what's traditionally been grown in that area and find outlets for them here in Europe.

I myself only in exceptions buy vegetables. I eat what grows in the garden, mostly things which don't look perfect, etc. and find them just as good.

Having written all this I went to a bite size talk last week where David Thomas spoke about nutrition and the chemistry in our bodies. One thing impressed me so much, that I have to include it here, since it really seems to say that our efforts to grow local food and promote it is worthwhile and will help all of you: He told us about the amazing research the dentist Weston Price did in the 1940s, travelling all over the world, studying different indigenous cultures in relation to their nutrition. Eskimos live nearly exclusively from seal, Polynesians from fresh fruit, etc. What he found was that all these cultures were very healthy as long as they ate what nature around them provided. As soon as they got in contact with "civilization" and ate imported foods their health declined.

Dorothea Leber

Famous in Europe – a problem ...

The Coop with its two farms is famous in Europe particularly with school pupils wanting work experience in 3 or 4 week blocks spring to summer and also with adult agriculture based students who need to do training placements for 3 to 6 months any time. Out of the dozens and dozens applicants it would be nice to be able to accept at least a few of them. Many apply because of word of mouth from those who have been before and have found it a life changing experience.

On the farms however, we have no space to accommodate such students as we already have the requisite number of staff to occupy all our housing and also on Tablehurst 4 apprentices and on Plaw Hatch 3 apprentices doing an accredited 2 year biodynamic training.

Do you have accommodation near the farms that could be available for short or longer term students? The school pupils are 15 to 16 year olds and need supervision when not on the farms. The adult students would be independent. In both cases they work as volunteers on the farms and as a rule are not well placed to pay a rent. So anyone offering accommodation would be supporting a great experience for these young people and supporting the farms.

If you are interested in helping with this problem please contact me on 07904 095175.

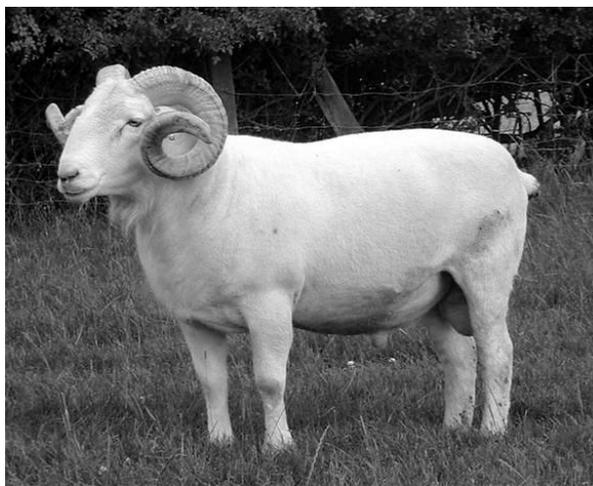
Oliver Fynes-Clinton

...can you be part of the solution?



Sheep on Tablehurst Farm

Tablehurst Farm has kept sheep for many years. In the early days we had dairy sheep and supplied a local cheese maker with the milk, but after an abrupt stop due to too many problems Tablehurst decided to keep sheep to supply the shop with lamb and mutton. Lleyn and Dorset ewes were bought in bit by bit, and shortly after that Tablehurst established an autumn and a spring lambing flock. Dorsets (with the woolly face) were chosen because they can get pregnant all year round and could lamb in the autumn, and Lleyn because they are in general a good all-rounder.



For many years Tablehurst has worked with these sheep, but we felt that we needed a bit of change and to try out different breeds. As a result we brought 2 different new breeds to the farm, maybe you have spotted them already? We decided to buy in some Wiltshire horn sheep (pictured) an old rare breed which has horns and sheds its wool naturally. The wool shedding we are practically curious about, of course this means that we won't have to shear them and that we won't have wool to sell. The biggest problem we find in sheep is the blowfly, this fly lays his eggs in the wool until they hatch into maggots and cause damage to skin and flesh, and if this is not treated it is most of the time fatal. This is very disturbing to see, to treat and to deal with. We don't want to use chemicals and we don't want to run every other day after sheep we have to treat. It stresses both the sheep and the farmers too much. By having a self-shedding breed which is also more hairy than woolly, we hope that the fly strike cases dramatically drop. Further it's a beautiful looking sheep which has horns and has a certain grandeur of carriage!

Also we have a few Portland sheep on the farm now. Portland is also a rare old breed, it's smaller than a regular sheep and also has horns, and the remarkable thing is that the lambs have a foxy red woolly fur when they are born. The Portland sheep came from Ian Bell who stopped farming on his biodynamic farm to become the director of the bio-dynamic agriculture course at Emerson College. The sheep needed a good new home, and after very enthusiastic and promising stories and comments we gave them a new home. We will sell both breeds through the shop later in the year; both breeds have excellent quality meat and taste. Try some and tell us your experience. (you can ask questions and tell your experience to the shop team also there is a customer feedback book in the shop next to the tills) it's important for us to know what the customers like and prefer, so we can work towards a certain goal and help us make decisions.

So when you come to farm when the sheep are back in the barn (January), or when you come to one of the lambing BBO's, 23rd and 30th of March, don't be surprised to see some big and small horned sheep.

Dogs

Dear customers, dog walkers, and walkers, we are very sad to announce that we lost our beloved little black sheep. Blacky one and Blacky two were born here on the farm in March 2011 and became unmissable in our flock ... We want to make everyone aware that dogs must be kept on their lead, that dog walkers and their dogs must stay on the public footpaths and to pick up any dog faeces being dropped on the fields. Not only with the sheep we have problems but our cows can pick up diseases that cause abortions which can be spread through dog faeces. We want to ask you to help us by reminding people to stick to these rules and to make them aware of the causes. You can always talk and ask questions to one of the farmers on the farm or the staff in our shop and café. With many thanks.

Auke Zirkzee

The Co-op Goes Global!

In the last six months, our names and story have travelled far and wide as more and more people become interested in biodynamic community farming. In October last year, Peter Brown travelled to Brussels to give a speech to Demeter's European Agricultural Policy Conference about Tablehurst as a pioneer CSA. In the same month, Neil Ravenscroft was invited to give a talk about the co-op's approach to sustainable agriculture during a visit to Fudan University in Shanghai, and was subsequently invited to visit two embryonic CSAs close to Shanghai. And in March 2013, we will be present at a community showcase event at the Congress Centre in London, sponsored by the UK Research Councils.

Peter's speech is available at

http://www.demeter.de/sites/default/files/article/pdf/Land%20Sharing%20Conference%20report_October%202012.pdf

Neil's talk was based on a case study recently published by Forum Synergies in Brussels, and is available at:

<http://www.forum-synergies.eu/article15.html>

Information of the emergence of CSA in China can be found at:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2011/09/24/140670551/how-community-supported-agriculture-sprouted-in-china>

Neil Ravenscroft

Forthcoming Events at Tablehurst Farm

Celebrate lambing on 23rd and 30th March

Café, lunchtime barbecue, music, face-painting and storytelling.

All welcome



Farm Garden Walk & Talk with Rob Tilsley

Sunday 5th May & Sunday 23rd June 11am for 11:15 start. Meet outside the shop. All welcome.

Tablehurst Breakfast available from 9:30am and Organic BBQ available from 12:30pm.



Tablehurst Barn Dance
Saturday 29th June
8pm £5 entrance
14 years + welcome

Do you want to become a Co-op shareholder?

It's easy, and you get to own two farms!

Contact the Secretary, Robert Mensinga at

Robert@mensinga.com for details



Tablehurst Farm is looking for volunteers to help organise seasonal community events working alongside the farm team.

If you might be interested in getting involved, please contact Amelia at

ameliaerrazuriz@gmail.com

The Coop: looking for a new Treasurer

GET INVOLVED!

The Coop Committee, comprised of elected and co-opted members as well as ex-officio farm management team members, represents the shareholders of the Co-op. The Committee adopts an oversight and governance role, generally not involved in the day-to-day running of the farms. When the situation requires, the Committee works more closely with the farm management teams, providing advice, assistance and guidance where it is able.

At present the Treasurer, Robin Evans, is also acting as Chairman. Over the last year the committee has expanded and as it seeks to take a more active role it becomes increasingly important we fill all the roles with suitable individuals. The Committee has proposed Robin as Chairman and is now seeking a new Treasurer to fill this important role.

The candidate will have some financial or accountancy skills and be comfortable reading financial statements. They should be able to demonstrate some competence and experience in managing the accounts of a small organisation, although common sense and enthusiasm are the key attributes. The candidate will ideally live in the wider Forest Row area, share a passion for community supported agriculture and have some appreciation of biodynamics.

The main responsibility of the Treasurer is to work with the auditor to produce the annual financial reports. This covers some minor bookkeeping and attending regular Committee meetings every six weeks or so. As the Coop's assets comprise its holdings in the two farms, the Treasurer is also expected to having a working knowledge of the farms' accounts, be able to identify trends or developments and report on the farms' accounts to the Committee. It is estimated that the job requires a few hours per month. It is an honorary position.

If you are interested and feel you have the right qualifications we would like to hear from you. Please contact the Secretary, Robert Mensinga on 01342 811332 or preferably by email to robert@mensinga.com.



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