

# TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS

AUTUMN 2014

## Raw Milk returns to Plaw Hatch!

For four and a half months I have been eagerly anticipating this day, not knowing when it would come, the day we are no longer under restriction. So let it be known that Plaw Hatch now has raw milk for sale again! Not only that, but we are also able to make unpasteurised cream, kefir and cheeses!

You may have read previously that we lost our 'officially TB free' status last May, when one of our cows, Maria, showed a positive reaction to the routine annual bovine TB test. As a precaution, we had to pasteurise all our milk while the whole herd was retested twice.

There were no further positive reactors in these tests and none of the post-mortem and tissue culture analysis of Maria showed signs of bovine TB, so we now have approval from the authorities to sell raw dairy produce again.

At the time we received the test results in May, we had never before had this situation, and didn't have the equipment or infrastructure to pasteurise so much milk. In 8 days we managed to acquire a second hand pasteuriser, new bulk tank to separate the raw from the pasteurised milk, and fitted all the milk pipes, electrics and plumbing. Even then, we've had logistical hurdles and some extra work pasteurising the milk and pumping it from one tank to another. The reality is that it isn't an ideal arrangement slotting pasteurising into a system entirely designed around raw milk. I've had an interesting Summer experimenting with making cheese with pasteurised milk, which required a number of changes to the process given that pasteurising the milk destroys the native lactic acid bacteria that are so helpful in making the cheese and giving it the complex flavours we enjoy. We have now tasted those early pasteurised cheddars which are ready to be sold as mild cheddar and they have a sweet and earthy flavour, firm body and creamy texture. Although personally I don't feel they have the depth of



flavour that our unpasteurised cheddar does (I could be biased here), I am very happy with the results. It will be interesting to see how they change as they mature.

In all this two lovely and good milking cows, Maria and India (who tested inconclusively in the initial test and first retest), were lost to us and are sorely missed. However, we are very happy that the rest of the herd are in good health and are enjoying the last of the Summer grass in the pastures.

We are very fortunate to have had so many loyal customers, who continued to support us throughout our foray into pasteurised produce. However, I hope you'll be as pleased as we are that we're enjoying our raw milk again.

Tali Eichner



Saturday 11 October in Peter Griffiths Hall, Forest Row 10.00am – 1.00 pm

TWENTY QUESTIONS ON FRACKING with Charles Hendry MP and Professor Tim Green. Donations appreciated.

To get your question in the schedule, phone Vanessa Underwood 01825 790774

# How do we get ready for the future?

Organisations go through development phases, just as human beings do. Not to be aware of these phases usually leads to some form of crisis. One can of course ignore the first signs of the need to change. However, the social, economic and spiritual health of an organisation is bound to decline over time and many anthroposophical institutions worldwide have suffered from this. Tablehurst Farm has recently undergone such a transition. This has not been an easy task and is by no means completed but the first positive effects have become visible.

On Tablehurst we were blessed to have had a member in our management group who realized the need for transition when conflicts started to arise. He made us aware of the book "Developing Organization" by Bernard Lievegoed. Lievegoed, a Dutch medical doctor and influential anthroposophist, founded the Dutch Pedagogic Institute for Economics in 1954. His book describes three phases of development of organisations, the "pioneering phase", the "differentiation phase" and the "integration phase".

The pioneering phase thrives on the enthusiasm and energy of a pioneer. Everything depends on him, a great deal of improvisation is needed and the work environment is very personal. When the organisation grows more complex the management needs to become more differentiated. Processes, communication and decision-making have to be formalized, responsibilities are divided up and employees become more specialized. It takes effort to transform an organisation in this way but it can lead to a well-functioning organism. But not to proceed further from this point would eventually lead to stagnation where different parts of the organisation lose the contact to the whole. The next step is a transition to the integration phase. This means that the management structure becomes flatter, employees are encouraged to take leadership, eventually working as "independent" entrepreneurs within the context of the whole organism for a common goal. This means that everyone needs to have an understanding of the whole and the ability to work as individuals independently and in teams for the common idea.

So far the theory. But what solution did we find for Tablehurst to transition from one phase to the next? It was clear that the nature of a community farm does not lend itself to a strictly hierarchical and bureaucratic structure. People want to be involved in making decisions and shaping a future which is also theirs.

What we came up with is as follows: As directors we take legal responsibility for an organisation and therefore the final decisions are being made within this group. To make the decision making process efficient we established the "Senior Management Team", three executive directors who work closely with the different enterprises on the farm. One could say that the SMT creates a safety net should democratic decision-making fail in a time of transition. The former management group was transformed into the "Strategy Group".

The Strategy Group is the most important organ of the farm, setting the goals and giving the impulses for the future. Since it is not a decision-making body as such, and all necessary day-to-day management decisions can be made irrespective of the Strategy Group, it does allow necessary short term developments and decisions to take place and in return can work without any pressure on its quest to establish a vision, a future picture and a strategic plan for the farm. The outcome of the work of the strategy group will be a will-expression of everyone who takes part in it (all staff and many other members of the community are invited) and at the same time prepares us for the next phase in Tablehurst's development. It will allow every participant to shape and understand the whole picture, a prerequisite for the next transition towards integration.

David Junghans

## Tablehurst Strategy Group

The Strategy Group, chaired by Jeremy Smith, has met three times so far. Our first task was to review and finalise a statement of vision and values for Tablehurst Farm. This has now been formally adopted by the farm, and will form the foundation for our strategy work.

The next phase in the work will be to formulate a picture of how we imagine Tablehurst could be (and should be) in about five to ten years' time. This picture will be developed through wide consultation, and will address questions such as:

- Land - how much does Tablehurst need?
- Farming - what are the priorities?
- Shop - what should it sell, and why?
- How the community on the farm should function
- The best way to manage Tablehurst
- Cultural activity, particularly education
- Environmental and economic sustainability
- Engagement with the wider community

Once a picture has emerged and been agreed by the farm management team, it will in turn be used as the basis for developing a strategic action plan. We hope that much of this work will be completed in the next twelve months.

Chris Marshall

### Tablehurst Farm Vision

Our vision is to continually create and develop Tablehurst as a biodynamic community farm which is as close as possible to the ideal of such a farm for those involved.

We seek to develop a deeper understanding for integrated approaches to biodynamic farming and associated cultural activities, and to transform these into impulses relating us to the rest of the world.

### Tablehurst Farm Core Values

To farm biodynamically, ensuring the sustainability of the farm, in social, cultural, spiritual, and economic terms

To foster a mutually supportive and caring community, on and off the farm.

To be a centre for cultural activity including education, training and research in biodynamic agriculture.

To work associatively with other people and businesses.

# Closing the loop

"Now a farm comes closest to its own essence when it can be conceived of as a kind of independent individuality, a self-contained entity. In reality, every farm ought to aspire to this state of being a self-contained individuality ... any fertilisers and so forth that are brought in from outside would indeed have to be regarded as remedies for a sickened farm". *Agriculture, Rudolf Steiner, 1924.*

"The best can only spring from that kind of biological completeness which has been called wholeness. If it is to be attained, the farm itself must have a biological completeness; it must be a living entity, it must be a unit which has within itself a balanced organic life. *Look to the Land, Lord Northbourne, 1940.*

Lord Northbourne is credited with being the first person to name and describe organic farming. It is of interest to us that his book *Look to the Land* was published shortly after Lord Northbourne invited Dr Ehrenfried Pfeiffer from Dornach to present the first Biodynamic Farming conference in Britain.

In the last newsletter we spoke about the fact that most of our straw comes from conventional farms in the area rendering our farm "sickened". This is an update to review some of the plans we are making to address this.

The farm as a self-sufficient organism is integral to Biodynamic Farming. This means finding the right balance between the amount of land in cereals, the amount of land in grass and the number of animals. It is interesting that while it is not required to have livestock on organic farms (as it is for Biodynamic farms), there are very few organic farms in the UK that don't have livestock. In fact one of the hurdles conventional farmers on the east coast face when considering conversion to organic farming, is the cost of re-introducing livestock on their farms. Stated differently, they face the challenge of reverting to traditional farming. This raises the question: why do organic farms find it necessary to include livestock?

The problem is Nitrogen. In the Agriculture Course Rudolf Steiner dedicates the whole of chapter 3 to understanding Nitrogen and its mediating role in agriculture. All farmers get Nitrogen from the atmosphere. Conventional farmers get it via a process known as the Haber-Bosch process, which involves turning Nitrogen into Ammonia amidst much burning, smoke, heat, pressure and noise, with the help of metal catalysts. Legumes on the other do the same thing via quiet and steady relationships with little bacteria, from whom we originally learnt about metal catalysts. But without a sound and with exquisite beauty. It's a little bit like comparing an apprentice blacksmith thrashing about noisily with a hammer, with the grace and fluidity of the old master. A field of grass and clover takes 3 to 4 years to produce enough Nitrogen to grow grain crops for another 3 to 4 years. That means that an organic farm, banned from using Nitrogen out of a bag, must divide the land in half, and then leave the one half producing Nitrogen for 4 years, while growing grain on the other half. But what to do with the half that is grass and clover? The very best thing is to graze it, that's how it thrives, and the best animal to use is the cow, followed by the sheep. These ruminants also form quiet relationships with bacteria in their stomachs that allow them to turn grass and clover into meat and milk.

But why grow grain at all? To eat of course, but there is another reason that follows from the conclusion that animals are a necessary part of farming. Most soils can't cope with the weight of cows over winter. The air and life gets squashed out of the soil. So we need to bring the animals indoors to protect the soil and they need warm dry beds. Cereal straw is currently the best material we have for preparing fresh beds for the animals in the winter.

To close the loop at Plaw Hatch and produce sufficient straw for bedding the cows - 120 tons, of which we currently produce 20 tons ourselves - we are learning how to produce grain properly on our difficult soils. We currently produce 1 ton of straw per ha, while organic farms in the UK are producing 3 to 4 tons per ha. Once we are confident in our ability to produce grain efficiently we will be looking to increase the amount of land we farm. This will also require us to increase the number of animals we keep, but we will need to make sure they are animals that don't need more straw and winter housing. That means we will probably need to keep more sheep! We estimate that, provided we can improve our straw yields, Plaw Hatch will be in the market for an additional 40 ha of land, 300 ewes, and a shepherd! At our current yields we need 100 ha of extra land and 1000 ewes to close the loop, which highlights the economic case for improving yields. The final outcome will be much more grain to sell. It seems that local bakers could use the extra grain we will produce, and we are very excited about the prospect of growing spelt and rye. Spelt should grow well here, and like rye, produces lots of straw. We are about to plant our first crop of spelt at Standen.

John Twyford and Johannes Nilsson

## Forest Row Energy



13th - 28th September 2014 was Community Energy Fortnight and Forest Row Energy chose Saturday 27th to formally launch our new Coop. The Coop is there to work together to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and develop more resilient, sustainable and ecological ways to meet our energy needs, for the benefit of the whole community. The aims are to: reduce energy usage; reduce energy cost; reduce fuel poverty; derive more energy from sustainable, local, renewable sources; reduce reliability on hydrocarbons; and increase education of the community regarding sustainable energy.

Founding members Kate Taylor-Smith, Sarah James-Wright, Rod Hughes and Rachel Gamble presented how the Coop came to be and their vision of how the Coop could grow. A lively discussion resulted in a democratic decision to lower the cost of membership of the Coop to £10 and more than twenty residents immediately joined the Coop.

Over the next year, the Coop will strive to raise green investment to build renewable energy projects in and around the Forest Row Area. Surplus revenue from projects will return to the Coop to spend on projects to benefit the community. FRE already runs surgeries to reduce the cost of energy for residents and to help insulate homes.

Your Coop is working hard with the Parish, and Wealden District Councils, both Sussex County Councils and directly with UK Government (DECC) and is open to membership for those who want to make a difference and share in this initiative.

Please apply to join the Co-op via our website: <http://www.forestrowenergy.com>

Rod Hughes

# Tablehurst Farm ...

As the summer draws to an end, the mornings are darker and misty, one would think things are winding down on the farm and we can all slow down a little. I wish! It seems to be as busy as ever, with a never-ending list of things to catch up on after the busy harvest season - Preparing barns for the winter, making sure all the wood sheds are fully stocked and seeing to the maintenance of farm tracks, buildings and machines. There is also the autumn cultivation and drilling of cereals, and not to forget the Barn Dance on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September.

The atmosphere on the farm this year has been very good, and we are lucky to have three very capable 2<sup>nd</sup> year apprentices, who are now familiar with all the farm jobs and routines, which has enabled us to make the most of our workload. We also have a new 1<sup>st</sup> year apprentice, Eelco, who started volunteering in the spring and has now joined the farm team.



We were very lucky with the weather this year, especially compared to last summer, which was incredibly dry, leading to grass shortages that caused us all sorts of headaches with feeding livestock and getting in the winter supply of hay and silage. We have made easily double the amount of fodder this year, allowing us to go into the winter with the secure knowledge that we have enough food for the animals. Part of the reason we have so much hay is that we were able to make 450 bales on the new land in Groombridge, where we also had 52 youngstock grazing all summer. The new flock of sheep will be arriving in Groombridge in the first week of October, which we are all looking forward to.

The cereal harvest was good, and it's great to know its all cleaned and stored, ready for winter. We did things a bit differently this year, cleaning the grain

before drying it, to speed up the drying time and save some gas and diesel in the process. We were very pleased with the results.

One of our other aims this year was to tidy things up a bit and present a cleaner and neater farm to the public. I think we made some good progress, but there is still a long way to go.

The Shop was a little quiet over summer, but the trade is picking up again as school has started again and everyone is back from summer holidays. We are looking forward to the arrival of our new butcher Steve, who is starting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September.

The Café has been doing very well, with lots of new customers, and an increasing number of regulars. We will be stopping the Saturday BBQ's soon. The last one will be on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October.

The new House Parents in the care home - Sebastian & Emily - and their son Rufus have settled in nicely, and it's great that the residents have such a comfortable family atmosphere to come home to after a day on the farm. We also have a new co-worker, Helena who helps with the residents. She is getting to know the farm and people, and already cooking great meals.

So all in all a productive and satisfying spring/summer, and I have to thank the farm team and volunteers for all their hard work, which made it possible.

Robin Brown



# ... Tablehurst Garden

In the garden this summer it has been a successful and bountiful year, we have had many successes that we can be proud of, there have also been a few crops which we have struggled with and are still learning how to grow efficiently. This year we are once again very proud of our carrots, they have performed well after regular and sufficient watering, also the Broccoli this year was fabulous, this is the first year we had tried and it will certainly be a feature for us every year. We are also very proud of our leeks you'll see some of them as you drive into the farm are quite splendid, I've always been told what amazing leeks you can grow on our Tablehurst soil, this is the first year I can really see how amazing they can be.



Our flower production has been a huge hit for the whole farm and shop team, we are developing a good planting schedule that should give the shop a steady stream of flowers from Early May through till October, hopefully well complemented with the potted garden herbs and flowers we sell. I am making plans to move into producing a slightly larger range of plants for sale so please can an eye open for that next spring.

With all the expanding and diversification it does mean we are often left overstretched in some areas of the garden, certainly this year it has always felt like an extra push to get some of the essential jobs done around the garden that we would have liked to such as hoeing, harvesting



and grass cutting. We will be striving this winter to find solutions to our weed management, this winter we want to further develop our steorage hoe that does the majority of the weeding for us on the tractor.



This summer has been the first time we have successfully sown and grown a healthy green manure. Green manures have several purposes for the soil, firstly it has a role to improve the soil structure, you can also add lots of organic matter which holds onto the nutrients and improves the workability of the soil and it can be a source of nutrition for the soil, particularly nitrogen in our case. It is quite normal in Biodynamic and Organic agriculture to use this method to improve the soil, it means that you have to sacrifice some land in the short term but we feel the longer term benefits for the soil life far outweigh the



damage done by constantly trying to produce on the same piece of land. You can see our green manure on the drive into the farm (chicory, red clover and cocksfoot mix and an annual rye and vetch mix closer to the polytunnels) and at Emerson college garden (a red clover and rye grass mix).

If you are interested at all in bulk buying vegetables we are happy to offer larger quantities of our own produce, if it is pre-ordered, at a reduced price from the retail (minimum orders are required). Order either directly through the farm shop or via the email [tablehurstgardn@gmail.com](mailto:tablehurstgardn@gmail.com) Please contact us for more details.

Many thanks again for all the support and great feedback we've had over the summer

Tablehurst Garden Team

# My work at Tablehurst and for the Biodynamic Association

It is a while since you have all heard from me directly and I would like to take this opportunity to share what I am doing, to share an interesting initiative and to share about a conference called Biodynamic Agri-culture: a Matter of Life.

Some years ago I became a Trustee of the Biodynamic Association. Previously I was so occupied by the farm and building it up that I did not have the time or inner space to do this. When I became a Trustee you could argue that I still didn't, and it was challenging trying to do both, yet it felt more and more important to me, in our times when we face serious questions of how we grow our food, to help make biodynamics more known and accessible to people. Events led to me becoming the Chairman of the Council for a year and a half and during part of this time I also had a year's sabbatical from the farm. Then, last January, I became the Director of the Biodynamic Association, whilst still working two days a week for Tablehurst. This new role has been a big change and a steep learning curve. David Junghans took over as Tablehurst Managing Director the previous year and, with its wonderful team, the farm is going well. My responsibilities now mainly involve managing the Care Home, so I am doing no real hands-on farming any more, which I miss. I do still care for the bees on, which is important and which I enjoy.

As most of you know I am passionate about farming and trying to help develop new methods and social forms which support nature and community life. I have been trying to put biodynamic methods into practice since I was 21 and this has convinced me more and more in the principles behind biodynamic agriculture. It is exciting being part of a worldwide movement which has brought so many innovations and developments about and is still doing so. None the less biodynamic farmers do not have all the answers and it is only by working together with others that we can be really effective in the world. I find it inspiring the number of people and organisations in the world who do want to contribute to the development of good farming and healthy food. Yet, it sometimes seems a daunting task to wake up the majority of people in our country and the world to what industrial agriculture is really doing and to the real alternatives, which work. We need lots of help.

I feel for many reasons the direction in which British agriculture - strongly backed and encouraged by our government - is going is very problematic. It appears they are trying to follow the American direction of industrialised agriculture dependent on a variety of chemicals, GMO's, hormones and medicines. The result is devastating for our birds, bees and the environment generally, as well as for public health. The more one learns of this route, the more baffled one becomes as to why we, as society, are following it!

Biodynamic farming offers something so completely different from our modern agricultural industry that it seems unbelievable! The agricultural industry is dominated by the use of external inputs; focusing on treating the soil with chemicals and neglecting the living soil biology. The biodynamic farm produces food without external inputs of feed or fertility while the industrial farm is dependent on mining the limited supply of phosphate and potassium in the world and using vast amounts of oil and gas to make nitrogen fertilisers out of the air. Added to that come all the 'cides' associated with industrial agriculture; herbicides, fungicides and pesticides.

This is a massive difference in thinking, the fertility has to be generated on the farm itself; and it works! So, if all farms converted to biodynamic farming then we would have biodiversity, a healthy environment, healthy food AND enough of it to feed the world too!

For those of you not aware of it I would like to share an example of something which augments biodynamics and which, if taken up, could have a massive effect on the world, particularly those areas with drier climates than our own. It is called Holistic Management, and was developed by Alan Savory through his life experiences. Alan is now in his eighties but was responsible for large game parks in Africa. He was responsible also for the killing of more than 40 thousand elephants in the belief that there was too high a stocking rate which was causing the observable decline in the habitat and its ability to support so many animals. He was to realise that this was a massive mistake and that through grazing in a way that mimicked the large herds of old the land can improve in an incredible way and carry many more animals. This is a fascinating story of discovery and well worth watching. [http://www.ted.com/talks/allan\\_savory\\_how\\_to\\_green\\_the\\_world\\_s\\_deserts\\_and\\_reverse\\_climate\\_change](http://www.ted.com/talks/allan_savory_how_to_green_the_world_s_deserts_and_reverse_climate_change)

From 30th October until 2nd November 2014 the Biodynamic Association is holding a conference called Biodynamic Agri-culture: a Matter of Life, partly to celebrate the 90 years since biodynamics started but more importantly to bring together amazing speakers and practitioners from a number of countries. I can't recommend it highly enough, whatever your interest in food or bees or gardening or farming. You can book on the Biodynamic Association website at [www.biodynamic.org.uk](http://www.biodynamic.org.uk)

Part of my task as Director is to help bring about two initiatives; one for producing biodynamic seed and breeding new vegetable varieties and the other around bees together with the Natural Beekeeping Trust. I will share more about the plant breeding in the next newsletter but you can in the meantime find out lots about it on our website.

I would also like to take the opportunity to invite you to become a member of the Biodynamic Association. We have grown to a 1,000 members who pay £30 a year or more and some students and apprentices who pay £20. This enables us to manage what we do at present but we want to do so much more. Our goal is to have at least 5,000 members because this would enable us to do this and give us more of a voice in the world. Through the exciting biannual publication of the BDA, the Star and Furrow, our website and our newsletter you can be in touch with what is happening and also contribute and be involved and be heard. Please do consider becoming a member, because it will make a difference in the world. You can do so on the BDA website.

Thanks, Peter Brown

## Biodynamic Agri-culture A Matter of Life



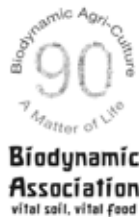
A conference to explore the innovative solutions with which biodynamic farming and gardening addresses the burning issues facing food and agriculture

30<sup>th</sup> October to 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014  
GLASSHOUSE COLLEGE, STOURBRIDGE, W.MIDLANDS, UK  
[www.biodynamic.org.uk](http://www.biodynamic.org.uk)

**Key themes:** Long term soil fertility, food quality, animal health, bees, seeds, social & economic renewal

### Speakers and Workshops include:

**Patrick Holden** ( Director of the Sustainable Food Trust)  
**Gunther Hauk** (U.S Biodynamic Beekeeper & Gardener)  
**Friedrich Wenz** (Minimum Tillage)  
**Wolfgang Gutberlet** (Food Quality)  
**Vincent Masson** (Soil Vitality)  
**Monty Waldin** (Biodynamic Wine)



## Do vegetables and flowers like our attention?

I often think plants probably might do better without us humans, polluting, cutting down rain-forests, using all kinds of poisons, etc. etc. Probably its more us who need the plants than the plants needing us.

Having said that, once we start to garden and taking care of a plot of land I think we do need to give our attention. Working in different gardens there are a few things which seem to be the rule, at least for cultivated plants.

Repeatedly I see, the vegetable gardens that are close to the house, that get regular attention, i.e. looking, watering observing the condition of the plants and some real interest do so much better than the places where the veg. is far away from the house, and where I once a week try to keep things going, even if they just about get the water they need.

I find as soon as people go on holiday the slugs or caterpillars become more of a problem. That included my own 5 day holiday (that's when slugs ate some of my lettuce seedlings and caterpillars decimated my kale. I do check for slugs, of course, especially in my propagation area, and at the moment I spray my "slug soup" very regularly, even though the smell, and also the thought of it is a little disgusting.... now you will want to know what that is: so here the little aside: - well the slugs I do find eating my seedlings go in a bucket of water, swiftly cut in half, apparently they don't feel pain. they ferment for a week and then I spray this smelly soup diluted 1:20. It gives the message "please don't eat my vegetables and flowers and please don't breed here". I feel this is a lot better than even the organic slug pellets. At least every slug I kill will have the purpose of giving it's fellows that message I think that over time it really helps.

It's not just the slugs. I even think if I look at my seed trays more often they seem to germinate better....and I see that with other people too. Thank God

## Value for money

Do you feel that the farm shops represent good value for money? Do you care about how much your food costs or where it comes from? We do care about all of these issues and try our very best to ensure the produce we supply is good value. The best way to take advantage of this is to buy fruit and vegetables that are in season. The farms tend to lower the prices when they have abundance of certain crops. This can be taken advantage of by processing a little at home or preserving. Tomato sauces are a great way of doing this and so are oven dried tomatoes. Another crop that is perfect for this is beans, they are never good out of season from abroad so why not take a few extra portions and freeze them for the winter?

At Plaw Hatch the best way to spot this is to look on their display table, where Jenny tends to put the best or new produce from the garden. At Tablehurst we try to show what we have the most of through the sizes of the boxes used for display.

So my suggestion is. Try to save a little from the summer when we have plenty, so it can be enjoyed all winter long by adding a little something extra to the winter meals.

Here are some examples of price comparisons I have picked up over the months, so you can see what good value we can offer.

Courgettes £2.50kg	Sainsbury's £3.00kg
Cherry Tomatoes £3.50kg	Riverford £7.80kg
Leeks £2.80kg	Waitrose £6.38kg
Black Kale £1.70 (300g)	Sainsburys £1.50 (200g)

Obviously not everything comes out cheaper at the farm shops, but you can be sure if we have grown it ourselves the taste and freshness will be better than you can get in most stores, and that must be worth something?!

Rob Tilsley



for the children who will always look.

Also the gardens where the vegetables have a really lovely spot in full sun do better. there are vegetables which can grow in half shade, (beetroots, spinach) but still they do a lot better in the sunnier spots but they also might appreciate the sun of our appreciation and gratitude?

I more and more start wondering why we separate vegetables and flowers and why vegetables can't be seen as beautiful and ornamental too.

Another little aside story about how our loving attention works: I will never forget the compost course with Hans Balmer, who initiated the Basel Compost initiative with the result that there everything compostable got composted. He got people to see their compost as their friend, thinking of the macroscopic numbers of invisible life forms in there cutting up the food scraps for the compost to make them easier to digest for the soil life. He got people to give their compost names and mix the top layer which usually needs a lot of oxygen daily (it only takes a minute) And a Chipping service got instated.

In my new small vegetable garden I combine flowers and vegetables, just like I did at Michael Hall, and of course now I have the added motive of including flowers for bees. In a small hand worked garden it's much easier to pop flowers in between....and all of a sudden the vegetable garden looks really ornamental.

There are also vegetables I've seen bees on e.g. Broad Beans attract loads of bumble bees, courgettes and pumpkins are always full of bees, Runner Beans are visited by bees, it might be more the beans that need the bees than vice versa. Later in the season when more attractive food supplies for the bees gets less they are valuable.

Dorothea Leber

Last chance this year

to enjoy the Saturday barbecue at Tablehurst

18 October 2014

Don't miss!

# The season in Plaw Hatch Garden

Autumn time is the time for reflection on the last 12 months. The last few weeks have been marked with changing beds in the tunnels and sowing and planting winter salads. Each bed that is cleared is an opportunity to reflect on how that crop grew. Each plot in the fields that is now harvested and cleared brings new ideas on how to do things differently next year. Every year we are a bit more experienced.



By all accounts, I feel that in spite of the wet and mild winter, in 2014 the weather in spring and summer was almost ideal for growing. Long stretches of sunny warm days interspersed with bouts of rain meant that cultivation and planting were followed by a good heavenly watering which helped the young transplants to establish. Following a good shower, the soil dried and could be worked again. Our soil in that state has a crumbly structure which lends itself willingly to light cultivation and weeding. We enjoyed several of these periods during the season.



Now, looking back while harvesting, some crops did very well. In the distant past, in May and June, we had an excellent crop of strawberries which was followed by all the other soft fruit. All of these ripened 3 weeks earlier than last year. From the fields, we have a good crop of onions, potatoes and squash. They are stored and ready to be sold over winter. In the tunnels there was an exceptional crop of tomatoes and the shop has enjoyed a continuing supply from June till now. Also, cucumbers and beans did very well. This year you could find new crops for sale such as flowers, sweet corn and these days, celeriac.

Nir Halfon

## Could you help to lead our Co-op initiative?

The Coop Committee is looking for new members who have the time and passion to contribute to the welfare and management of the Coop and the farms. The Committee meets monthly in its governance role as the representative body of the shareholders. Enthusiasm and a passion for community farming are the main requirements. We are particularly keen to attract people with skills or experience in the following areas: fund raising, event organisation, community engagement, the law (especially employment and planning issues), education and schools liaison. We would like to increase the number of women on the committee. However, in the end, enthusiasm and time are the main requirements. If you are interested kindly email a short resume of your background and relevant experience to the Co-op Secretary [robert@mensinga.com](mailto:robert@mensinga.com) or contact any committee member. We look forward to hearing from you.

