

# SMALL FARM TRAINING GROUP

## October 2021 Newsletter

This month's newsletter includes:

- 1000 years of traditional farming - Part 3
  - Meet the Member - Lee Maitland
- Sow & Grow (minus the 'cook' part)
  - Dehydrating for Beginners





## Letter from the Chair

By Zoe Chinman

I hope you have all been enjoying the very last flush of late summer sunshine, I know I have, but there's definitely a nip in the air and the days are getting noticeably shorter. I am now looking forward to some cosy nights in front of the fire, seed brochures to hand, (maybe a cheeky sloe gin) and making notes and plans of how to live more self-sufficiently next year.

We are also busy planning the Small Farm Training Group Social Supper and AGM on the 19<sup>th</sup> November. This is going to be held at the Village Hall in Punnett's Town and is FREE to all members.

AGM's aren't traditionally the most exciting of events in any organisation, but they play an important and essential role that must be fulfilled. The outgoing committee will give reports, and we will approve this year's accounts, and have a time for any questions from our members. We also need to vote in committee members for the following year. ....Then we can party like it's 2019, and pre-covid..... There will be a lovely buffet supper, provided by Horam Home Kitchen, as well as wine, beer, soft drinks and tea and coffee. We are also putting in the final plans for our fun vegetable show - watch this space for more details - there will be prizes to be won. However, in order to cater for the right number of people we need

## What events are coming up..

### OCTOBER

23<sup>rd</sup> October - Introduction to Smallholding

30<sup>th</sup> October - Small Small Farmers Autumn Antics

### NOVEMBER

7<sup>th</sup> November - Mushroom Log Making Morning

13<sup>th</sup> November - Bacon Curing and Sausage Making

19<sup>th</sup> November - AGM and Social Supper (Free!)

20<sup>th</sup> November - Hedge laying

### DECEMBER

5<sup>th</sup> December - Felt Bauble Making Workshop

to you BOOK A TICKET from our website.... Please do get this done sooner rather than later if you are planning on coming (remember you need to be logged on to book our courses).

For those of you who can't make the AGM, I hope to see you at some of the workshops in the next couple of months, we have our smallholding course, mushroom log making, hedge laying, bacon curing and sausage making, felt bauble making and an event for Small, Small Farmers, all before the end of the year- so there should be something for everyone as the year comes to a close.

We are also looking at what workshops and courses to run next year and will be aiming to have a bumper packed 2022 lined up for you, so do keep an eye on the website, read the emails we send, or follow the Facebook page for notifications of new events being added - they do get booked up quickly.

That's it from me today, enjoy your newsletter and I hope to see many of you soon!

Zoe x



Figure 1: March's illustration from the Julius Work Calendar (1000-1050 AD)

# 1000 years of traditional farming

## Part 3 - March

By Paul Lovatt-Smith

March: Even in these days of warming climate, the winter is not yet done with us. Despite this, the equinox on the 21<sup>st</sup> heralds the arrival of spring and what little plant growth there has been up until then begins to accelerate. It's a time for finishing off winter jobs and preparing for the growing season to come.

The British Library summarizes the illustration from 1000 years ago as "digging and sowing". But the word "digging" covers many tasks, some unrelated to farming. You can dig a ditch, or a foundation of a building, or a hole in the road. It seems to me that each illustration

## JANUARY 2022

21<sup>st</sup> January - Free Talk:  
Keeping Rheas

## FEBRUARY 2022

18<sup>th</sup> February - Free Talk:  
Farming for Wildlife

## MARCH 2022

13<sup>th</sup> March - Mushroom Log Making Afternoon  
18<sup>th</sup> March - Free Talk: Practical Fluid Therapy for Sheep & Goats

If there is a course you would like to do but haven't seen listed, please don't hesitate to let us know.

## Get Social

Don't forget that we're also on Facebook and Instagram...why not follow us and see what we're up to!

### Insta:

@small\_farm\_training\_group

### Facebook:

Small Farm Training Group



Why not let us follow you and your Facebook/Insta accounts and we can help you with your smallholding dreams and promote your goods to SFTG followers?

in the Julius calendar depicts a scene representing an activity captured during a moment in time, like a photograph or snapshot, rather than un-connected events. The style of the artist is that the activity on the left is likely to be directly related to the sowing on the right. Read on and I hope you will agree that "cultivation", not "digging" would be a better choice of word.

The type of seed is likely to be that shown being harvested in the August illustration, which is cereals of some kind, most likely wheat, barley, oats, or rye - collectively "corn" in farmer's language. In March the seed is more likely to be wheat or oats than barley. "Sow wheat in clods and barley in dust" is an old saying meaning wait for warmer, dryer weather before sowing barley.

The sowing on the right is a joint effort between the man broadcasting from a bag of seed and a man raking it in. The fact that a rake is being used indicates that the soil is a relatively fine seed bed. This would be achieved by cultivation to break up the clods and level the ridges and furrows, preferably of ground that had been previously ploughed and left for a while.

The man on the left is wielding a tool that looks like a mattock or stout hoe. Such a tool has been (and still is, in many parts of the world) widely used for cultivation. I have a similar mattock which I bought in a builder's merchant (Figure 1). Having ground off the spike on the opposite side to make it lighter, it is the perfect tool for digging furrows in cultivated ground. I am sure it would be good for cultivation of ploughed ground, but much harder and longer work than a tractor plus rotavator, which is what I use 1,000 years later. The January article describes my method of sowing wheat in detail if you are interested.



**Figure 1: My sawn-off builders mattock**

The man next to the man with the mattock is pressing his foot down on the lug of a long-handled spade. The spade is a curiosity compared with that which we commonly use today and in the interests of calling a spade a spade, we should examine this in more



## Jobs for the month

By Caroline Upton

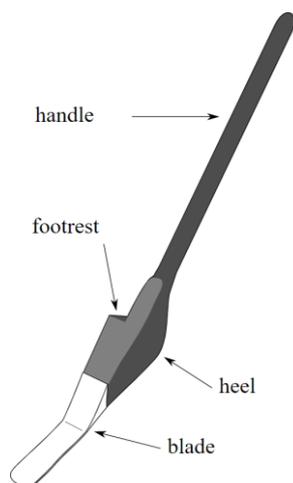
Now's the time for planting bulbs ready for a glorious display next spring (yes, I can't believe it's come round that quick either!!). If like me, you're a sucker for a tulip I hope you've not made the same mistake as me. I like to get my orders for bulbs in early and then I forget I've done it and order some more! Last weekend was a pleasant surprise when some bulbs showed up and the a few days later some more showed up. I know I'll use them, so all is not lost but I do now have to plant more than I was expecting to.

It's also time to harvest squashes - the recommendation is to leave them on the vine until the ends start to curl, forming a slight hook. Then harvest them and leave to cure for a few weeks before storing them for use over the winter.

You also need to start moving your tender perennials into a greenhouse or somewhere sheltered to protect them from winter frosts. Plants like cannas, lemon trees, chocolate cosmos and some salvias such as *Salvia*

detail. Its shaft appears to be continuous with the blade, it is asymmetric with only one lug and the artist has drawn a solid black horseshoe-shape around the tip of the blade. I take this horseshoe shape to represent metal, like the solid black blade of the ploughshare in the January illustration (see previous article). Metal would have been scarce and valuable, so tools would have used as little as possible. So here we have a long-handled, asymmetric, wooden-bladed spade with a metal tip.

While researching this article, I came across a similar form of spade called a "loy" which was used until recently in Ireland by farmers who could not afford a normal plough or who wanted to grow crops on steeper slopes. (Figure 2). In fact, it is still used in ploughing competitions in Ireland.



**Figure 2: Irish Loy (Wikipedia)**

According to the Gorey Echo of April 2011 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110723154317/http://www.goreyecho.ie/news/mhidsnojsn/>) the English Loy, brought into Ireland by Cromwell for plantation workers, used the left foot and the Irish one used the right, which gave rise to the Irish saying, "Which foot did he dig with?". True to this, the Englishman in the Julius calendar is digging with his left foot!

Like those poor Irish farmers, those Saxons depicted may not have had access to a plough, plus the draft animals required to pull it. A plough in Saxon times would have been a very expensive piece of kit - I remember that in the Domesday Book, the number of ploughs is one of the main records for each settlement. They may well have had to plough manually. Either that, or the process of cultivation of ploughed land involved both mattock and loy.

So here is my interpretation: We are in a field in March, it's cold and breezy but sunny and the wind has dried out the ground enough for it not to be too muddy and wet. Alfred, Egbert, Ethelred and Harold are out sowing wheat. The field has been ploughed in January, so Alfred is filling in the furrows with the soil from the ridges with his loy. Egbert is following, breaking up the larger clods with his mattock. Afterwards comes Ethelred, scattering seeds from his

Amistad. The latter is really easy to propagate from cuttings, but you'll need to be quick because ideally, you'd have done this in September. Just take a non-flowering stem about 8cm long, remove the lower leaves and cut just below a node. Insert the cutting into some gritty compost and off it goes. Be sure to remove any flowers that grow from the new plant so that it puts its efforts into creating a good root structure as opposed to flowering. Keep it in the greenhouse or polytunnel over winter and plant out next May after the frosts have gone.



## **Best 'Piperade with baked eggs and crispy chorizo' recipe (probably)**

By Caroline Upton

This is a really simple dish yet its big on taste. It's taken from the Feast magazine and is a firm favourite in our house as a mid-week dinner. Do give it a go and if anyone has other recipes that they want to share please email it to me on

pouch across the cultivated ground and then finally comes Harold with his rake, levelling the ground and trying to bury as much of the seed as possible in between the small clods. They are all working hard to keep warm and are looking forward to the warmth of the fire and a good meal when they get back home.

A final detail: the man with the loy has his mouth open and appears to be looking in the direction of the men who are sowing. Is Egbert perhaps singing? "Come, all you jolly ploughboys and help me to sing...."



## Sow & Grow

By Jenny Huggett

The only crop I plant in October is winter salad mix. Most seed producers have one, they are a frost-hardy mix of rockets, purslane, lambs' lettuce and Japanese leaves.

These mixes include a mix of colours, round and frilly leaves so they make an attractive mix in a salad bowl. The salad mix does well out in the open as well as under cover. The sooner you plant, the greater chance the plants have of putting on some growth before winter. Other leaves that survive the winter outside are sorrel and giant ladies' smock, the latter has a taste like watercress, I don't know it's real name, but it's very useful, goes well with orange segments. I can supply plantlets.... If you planted radicchio or red leaved lettuce in the late summer, they should still be cropping in October, it all rather depends on the weather. As this is the last newsletter before December, I should also mention that November is a good time to plant broad bean seeds, though I would only do this under cover, because outside if they are not eaten by mice, the weather will bash them about as soon as they have any height. Make sure you use an autumn planting variety.

[editor@sftg.org.uk](mailto:editor@sftg.org.uk) and I'll publish it.

Prep 15 min  
Cook 50 min  
Serves 4-6

### Ingredients

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
100g chorizo, very thinly sliced  
1 large red onion, peeled and finely sliced  
3 large peeled garlic cloves—slice 2 finely and leave 1 whole for rubbing  
1 tsp ground fennel seeds  
1½ tsp sweet smoked paprika  
1 red pepper, cut in half, deseeded, and cut into ½cm-wide slices

1 green pepper, cut in half, deseeded and cut into ½cm-wide slices  
5 large and juicy tomatoes, cut into rough 1cm cubes  
3 tbsp manzanilla sherry  
Salt and black pepper  
½ tsp soft brown sugar  
4-6 eggs

Sourdough bread, to serve

### Method

Warm half the oil in a large frying pan (ideally with a lid) over a medium-high heat. Once hot, add the chorizo and fry for a few minutes, turning once, until golden and crisp. Remove and drain on kitchen paper.

Keeping the fat in the pan, add the onion and cook for 10 minutes, until it is beginning to soften. Add the sliced garlic, fennel seeds and paprika and cook for a few more minutes, then stir in the peppers, tomatoes and sherry. Season well with salt and pepper, add the



sugar and cook, uncovered, for 20-25 minutes, until you have a lovely, chunky sauce.

Turn the heat down to medium-low, make four to six indents in the sauce and crack in the eggs. Season again, and either cover and cook on the hob or pop into a medium oven for about eight minutes, until the whites are just set (you can also do this under a grill).

Take off the heat, spoon into bowls and scatter with the crisp chorizo.



## Letter from the Editor

By Caroline Upton

Who doesn't love a cheeky goat! They're the furry friends that stole the show at the SFTG picnic and they look gorgeous. I definitely would have tried to sneak a few out under my coat!

We have the AGM and Social Supper headed our way and it would be great to see you there so I do hope you can make it. It continues to be fab that we're getting the courses back on and sharing knowledge around the members. Please make sure you keep an eye out on the website for what's

## Meet the Member - Lee Maitland.....

By Jenny Cloke

This was the second Meet the Member (MTM) Event I attended this summer. Both times the weather was good, and the hosts showed us round their land and explained what has worked for them and what has been less successful. Meet the member events are very informal and lots of questions are asked. At Lee Maitland's we learnt about the difficulties of erecting a large polytunnel. It would have been easier with more people; we could be bolder and ask for help on the forum or consider turning it into a 'learn as you go workshop' - send ideas to me and we might be able to make it an SFTG event. Zoe Chinman and Jeanette Arthur have already started this theme with learning to make mushroom logs because they would like to learn how to grow mushrooms on some oak trees that are being felled.



Lee's vegetable garden and polytunnel are both very productive. The polytunnel extends the growing season and in a poor summer, enables one to harvest melons and aubergines that would struggle to ripen outside. We were given tips on what to grow, irrigation systems and ways to protect crops from animal intruders. I last

visited Strawberry Hill Farm at the 2020 SFTG picnic and its interesting seeing and hearing about the changes that Lee and Simon are making. Lee knows that sheep are my passion, and she moved her Lleyn shearlings to a field close to her house so that I could admire them! They looked lovely.

We finished by chatting in the sunshine over a cup of tea and with a choice of two delicious cakes made by Simon - I hope I am invited again!

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## Small Small Farmers Scavenger Hunt

By Debbie Gordon

To kick off the August bank holiday fun we had a scavenger hunt at Sanctuary Farm in Horam. Although this was an event for our younger members it was much enjoyed by all. The weather was kind, and we spent a happy few hours rampaging around looking for sheep's wool and just the right shaped twig. It was especially interesting to bring back our finds and look at them under the microscope provided by Jenny. We then incorporated our finds into pictures. We all agreed it was lots of fun and great to get the kids outside and moving. Huge thanks to all involved.

coming up and as always if anyone has any ideas for articles or would like to contribute an article, please send your ideas to [editor@sftg.org.uk](mailto:editor@sftg.org.uk)



## SFTG Picnic

By Debbie Gordon

The annual bring and share picnic was held on one of those late summer Sunday afternoons where the fabulous sunshine feels like a real gift. Emboldened by the meteorological forecast of only a 5% chance of rain we gathered in the farm garden at Hale Farm, and we were not disappointed. The tables were laden with a wide range of offerings, many made from our own produce, of course, and we certainly ate well! In these most peculiar of times, it underlined what a privilege it is to be able to meet and spend time together and it was so nice to chat with friends old and new. It was great to see so many familiar faces, some returning from travels and adventures, and to see some new members and to learn more about them and what they do. Later in the afternoon we were treated to a farm walk with our host Ruth Rance.



# Dehydrating for beginners...

By Naomi Friend

As I woke early on Sunday morning, I thought:

'Oh no, why did I agree to go on a dehydration for beginners' course? It's cold, damp and that course is going to be dull. I mean

Ruth and Scott, along with Ruth's dad Bob run a diverse and successful venture in Chiddingly. The undisputed hits of the tour were the pygmy goats who stole the show. We are hoping that Ruth will be running a course for us in the not-too-distant future so that we can find out more about keeping these adorable and very popular goats.

## Welcome....

We'd like to give a warm and hearty welcome to the following people who have joined the SFTG in the last few months.

We are very much looking forward to learning more about you and what you are doing over the coming months. Our new members are:

- Bev Toogood, Alyson Flower, Gill Coomber, Carol Adams, Tim Rudman, Luke Hindmarch, Jackie Rehal, Roger Brown, Karen Boehm, Jonathan Greenway, Andrew Keen, Megs Bellamy, Barry Tobin,

you just have to switch on the machine, and it dries a few vegetables, right?! However, dutifully I got ready and arrived on time at Yaffingale House in Whitesmith, and I am so glad I did! From the moment I drove in through the gates, the sun seemed to shine.

We were all greeted by Zoe, who is a very welcoming, friendly host, and shown into the 'Kitchen Table Classroom'. It is, in fact, Zoe's actual kitchen table, and it is such a beautiful space, I think we all felt instantly comfortable. Furnished with drinks and biscuits we were introduced to our tutor for the morning. Denise is another lovely member of the SFTG and genuinely full of interesting knowledge about Dehydrating foods. She too was warm and friendly, and we all introduced ourselves to each other, informally sat around the table drinking coffee.

We then dived into the wonderful world of dried foods. It was a festival of vibrant colours, intense flavours and luscious smells.

I was right, of course, you do just switch on the machine, at the appropriate temperature, for the right amount of time and your food stuffs are dried. And, yes, you could buy a book to tell you all that, but this course literally brought it all to life. Samples of dried foods, and wonderful insights from Denise provided inspiration to want to create some of our own recipes. You can marinade food before it's dried, like jerky, food can be dried raw in some cases, cooked in others. Pot noodles and fruit leathers were also on the menu. Our tutor had brought examples of so many different foods.

We had a little hands experience in preparing fruit, veg and herbs for drying, and lots of food tasting, including a courgette and lime cake made of course using some dried foods, but to me it seemed that laughing, and chatting were also important ingredients. The consensus seemed that we all felt inspired to try our hand at dehydrating, and I felt I had made new friends.



Denise is not an experienced tutor, and she admitted to being nervous, but she kindly gave her time to share her passion with others. I know that everyone on the course felt very grateful that she did. The beauty of this course was that it was presented by a keen amateur, whose personal experience of what and how to dehydrate foods brimmed over.

I would encourage anybody with experience and passion for their crafting to consider offering a kitchen table course. Sharing your knowledge and making new friends, is a keystone to the SFTG and these 'Kitchen Table Courses' offer a fabulous way to achieve that.

So if all of the SFTG courses are as enthusiastically, warmly and knowledgeably presented as this course, you can sign me up for more!

Rebecca Jenner, Jennifer Sparkes, Marie-Angel Chevrier, Graham Scott, Helen Bardsley, Marion Lucken, Philip Taylor, Lisa Offer, Luke and Razi Hughes, Mandy Ranger, Jake and Darran Foss, Teresa Cox, Phoebe and James Green, Tyrone and Debra Diprose

