

Farm Report 2022

Crops

It has been a mixed year, dominated by the awful heatwave in the summer, with weeks without rain plus very high temperatures. This affected some crops badly (e.g. our onions stopped growing and dried out instead, giving an early crop of small bulbs), others managed to survive with outdoor mains irrigation (e.g. chard and kale), others got through but were smaller than normal (e.g. leeks and squash), others failed to germinate completely (e.g. carrots), and others suffered due to unusual hot-weather pests (e.g. tomato leaf mould, and turnip sawfly on the outdoor salad). But we got through it whilst hating every minute. This could be a sign of the future, so we will be looking at ways to produce veg even under heatwave conditions – more on this later.

Thankfully we have had a mild wet autumn so we have had crops of beetroot, turnips and radish later than normal, and better than expected.

The horrible weather was perfect for hay though, so we took advantage, and had the fastest least-stressful hay harvest ever, in August.

Veg boxes

Weekly numbers are around the 80 mark, so 30 a week more than we were supplying pre-Covid, but about half what we were supplying at peak-Covid. More than 90% of the veg in the boxes is grown here on the farm, and 90% of the rest is from local organic farms, the remaining 1% is occasional deliveries of organic veg from an upcountry wholesaler. We need more veg box members so please spread the word!

Live West funded a number of veg boxes throughout the Summer for local families and we have recently set up our own Community Veg Box Fund, which has had almost £1500 of donations paid into it so far, allowing us to supply veg boxes to local recipients who otherwise could not afford them, and we have enough funding for this to continue into December. We are seeking anonymous donations for this fund – payments can be made into our veg box account with "veg box fund" given as the reference.

Chickens

We have spent most of today (Tuesday 15th November) building a small enclosure inside the chicken field, totally fenced in and meshed so as to prevent wild birds entering, so that we can let our chickens out into the open air and green grass. Avian flu has been with us since this time last year, worse than ever before, with millions of birds culled across the UK, and high numbers of wild fatalities. Since 2016 this is the fourth time we have had to enclose our flock by law, at the start of November, and we were only allowed to have them free-range from the beginning of May. This year we have not bought any new birds to top-up our flock numbers, which we would normally do in both spring and autumn, by 75 or 100 birds each time. We now have 240 birds, the fewest for several years, and egg numbers have dipped with the season, so eggs are now in rare supply. Our veg box members are limited to half a dozen per week each, none are available wholesale, or at markets, and shop customers are often disappointed but mostly sympathetic.

This raises the important question of - do we continue to keep chickens at all? We have decided to see how things go this winter and make a decision in the Spring.

Land use

Carn Field = cut for hay.

Top Field = cut for hay.

Four Acres (rented) = unused.

No Name Field = chickens.

Far Field North = unused.

Community Woodland = trees.

Home Field = parking, open days, compost sites, set-aside, Work Experience Project etc..

Meeting Field = maincrops.

Far Field Middle = cut for hay.

Market Garden = veg.

Far Field South = cut for hay.

Hotel Meadow = unused.

Pepper Field = allotments.

Standing Stone Field = cut for hay.

Markets

Sennen market started again just over a year ago now and St. Just began again a few months ago.

We have a weekly stall at each, run by volunteers, and mostly delivered and collected and organised by volunteers too. Both markets are well attended and worth doing. Pendeen market has stopped running.

Wholesale trade

We continue to supply a handful of local eateries with weekly orders.

Farm shop

The shop is now fully staffed by volunteers (more on this later). We have decided to close the shop on Sundays and Bank Holidays, partly because it tends to be very quiet on those days, but also to give us time to work on other areas of the farm without interruption. Our normal shop hours are 10am-5pm Monday to Saturday.

The shop is nowhere near as busy at it was during the Covid lockdowns, when people would be queuing across the farmyard at 2-metre intervals, but we do have regular customers and it ticks over. It also underwent an extension back in the spring which has been generally well-received, making it brighter and airier, more spacious and welcoming. It now also has a computer terminal so can be used as a "reception" for the farm (this will improve once we get our IT sorted out).

Head Grower Forward Plans

Re-skin Valentine polytunnel.

Harvest and store rainwater from polytunnels for irrigation.

Build fertility and optimise production of market garden with improved "no-dig" areas.

New shelter belts.

Investigate drought-tolerant crops.

Training & Work Experience Project

The Training & Work Experience project recruited and supported another two groups of participants during the past year who in turn supported the farm with a wide range of horticultural, cookery and retail tasks. Overall we had over 100 enquiries for this project and actively supported over 40 people, many of whom moved into work or training. The project, funded by EU and Cornwall Council was a huge success, providing local, economically inactive adults with training and development opportunities in planting, growing, harvesting, retail, chicken care, conservation and cooking food. Together with one-to-one support from our staff, this has equipped participants to successfully compete for work, or training and development opportunities. To support the project, a portacabin was purchased and a dedicated polytunnel was bought and constructed by the trainees themselves. On completion of the project these facilities will be owned by the farm. Fencing, conservation, and foraging workshops were delivered by visiting tutors. Visits were arranged to local colleges, employers, and neighbouring projects to share and enhance skills. Across 2021 and 2022 the project has delivered four training programmes and achieved all its goals. A full evaluation report will be available at the end of November 2022. The European funding for this project and the team of staff who supported it, comes to an end this month.

Volunteers

For the first time ever we are fully covered in the shop, with 9 regular volunteers taking half-day or full-day shifts, two of the shop volunteers originally joined us through the Training & Work Experience project and have continued to help us. This full rota allows our growers (staff and volunteers) more time to get out onto the farm.

As well as the 9 regular shop volunteers, we have 2 regular chicken volunteers (it would be good to have more), 12 regular field volunteers, 4 volunteer delivery drivers (we need another), 5 farmer's market volunteers, and 2 maintenance volunteers. A rough calculation of local volunteers, helping in all sectors of the farm, gives 160 hours per week, so 8,200 hours annually.

Plus we have our wwoof-volunteers (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). This year we have averaged 6 or 7 house residents. Our 4 long-termers volunteered for 3 days per week, and took on extra responsibilities such as housekeeping, training new volunteers, looking after the farm on weekends and evenings, and covering for staff when they were away. This allowed them to find part-time paid work to supplement their stay. Our short-termers (we ask for a minimum of 4 weeks) volunteer for 5 days per week. A rough calculation suggests wwoof-volunteers would put 160 hours per week also, so 8,200 hours of effort into the farm annually, if we followed this model (which as of November 2022 we aren't, but we had for the previous 8 months).

We are hugely grateful to all volunteers involved in the farm, whether out in the fields or on the Board of Directors, running the shop or assisting with open days, and everything in between. I don't want to single out any particular volunteer or volunteers, because they are all valuable and important to us, as I hope the farm is to them – but I do think that Polly, our wwoof-host, is worthy of special thanks, as she has guided the farmhouse through a very difficult 2 years, and became a

treasured member of the team, before moving on to pastures new last week (Polly is still volunteering on Fridays for salad picking and veg box delivering).

Schools

We have developed a good relationship with Cape Cornwall Secondary School in St. Just, with a small group from their KITES Special Educational Needs department volunteering on the farm every Thursday morning, and a larger group from the main school volunteering for one hour every second Thursday.

This week, the second week of November 2022, we have 2 minibus-loads of Mounts Bay Academy students coming to the farm on 3 consecutive days, for a one-hour guided tour, as part of their Environment Week.

WWOOF House

The bathroom, kitchen and Host's bedroom have been refurbished by a small group of volunteers and the house has switched from oil to wood fired heating. More work is needed if we are to make the house energy efficient but we do not currently have adequate funds.

Staff

We were very sad that Andy ('Otta') left the farm at the end of June, after 6 years with us as Assistant Grower – he wanted to help his partner with her gardening business and take on a few clients of his own.

We were extremely lucky to be able to take on Rosie for 3 days a week as our Assistant Grower, from May to October, before she decided to return to New Zealand. In her short time with us she proved herself to be hardworking, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, friendly, and a real asset to the farm – Rosie taught me a few things particularly in efficiency and time-saving.

We now have Ross as our Assistant Grower, currently for 2 days per week, having been the Growing Lead on the Training & Work Experience Project for the previous 2 years.

Ali Campbell, a part time sessional Cookery Tutor, left us in early Summer at the end of the Training and Work Experience course.

Karl Teifel who first enrolled as a project participant last Winter and was then taken on as a project Support Worker in the project for a few months, is now working full time at Penwith College but often returns to volunteer with the Tree Planters.

We will say a big thank you and farewell to Julie Daybell at the end of November. Julie has done an excellent job as the Project Finance Officer for the past two years.

Dilys Down will continue with reduced hours when her project contract ends but will continue her role as part-time Finance Officer for the core farm.

Next week we are expecting Lyndz to arrive at the farm to fill the 1 year voluntary position of WWOOF Host in the farmhouse and Tessa Tulloch is starting as part time Administrator on Monday working 12 hours a week during the next year. Katie Kirk, formerly the Training & Work Experience

Project Lead started in her new role as Chief Development Officer at the beginning of November and is also contracted for one year. This post is fully funded thanks to a private donor and allows us to develop future project proposals and to bid for inward investment.

Conservation

We continued to leave areas of scrub as an important habitat for wildlife as well as having wildflower meadows in some of our outlying fields. The Penwith Landscape Partnership team use our farm for studying biodiversity and archaeology and with their help we also introduced several 'scrapes'. These shallow ditches are designed to improve biodiversity by filling with rainwater in some seasons and drying out in others. We are pleased to report evidence of burrowing bees already.

Tree Planting

4000 trees were planted to form a community woodland at Bosavern a few years ago. Recently we have averaged planting around 700 new trees each year, all of which we continue to care for by strimming, weeding, mulching and keeping tree guards in good condition. We have just received this year's batch of saplings which have just been heeled in this week to keep them in the ground temporarily until they can be transferred and planted in their final destination; more volunteers are needed to help plant them.

Our Tree Planters are a small, friendly volunteer-led group meeting weekly on Sundays 2-4pm at the Farm. No experience is necessary, and there are jobs that are suitable for all ages and abilities. Tools and gloves are provided. Giving time to nature by planting trees is a fun way of contributing to our personal wellbeing as well as caring for our environment. For more information email Terry at tezsut@hotmail.com or text Katie on 07946746396.

Refugee Collection

We assisted with a one-off local collection for refugees by acting as an extra depot. The community of St Just responded generously and we were able to fill a transit van with quality donations of food, medical supplies, blankets and clothing.

Allotments

Caroline recently stepped down as Allotment Co-ordinator after fulfilling the role for a year and a new team have stepped up, led by Rose Wiles. All the existing allotments are fully booked with a waiting list of over 25. During the past year we installed a drain at the top of the allotment field which now sends surplus groundwater into the adjacent fields to avoid waterlogging the allotments. So far this is working well. The channelled water now benefits the newly planted trees which are establishing well and, in time, will form a shelterbelt for the allotments.

allotments@bosaverncommunityfarm.org.uk

Bees

We had an issue this Summer when we suspect some of Matt Pitt's Cornish Black Bees had interbred with some Italian bees we hear were being kept locally. This caused aggressive bee-behaviours which in

turn caused problems for some allotmenters. Our bee-keeper Matt Pitt removed the problematic hive and continues to inspect the remaining hives fortnightly.

Hospitality Angels

We have a new, small group of hospitality volunteers who are helping with events, teas, lunches, washing up etc. These roles are perfect for those with good social skills or baking skills but might not feel able to undertake heavier activities. Text Katie on 07946746396 if you would like to join this group.

Christmas Orders, Markets & Opening Hours

- Order your Christmas Veg box by 5pm on Tuesday 13th December for delivery on 23rd. We recommend the standard £12 box plus £1.50 delivery for a good range of festive potatoes, carrots, sprouts, parsnips etc plus herbs for your stuffing! Email vegbox.bcf@bcents.org with your name and address. This can be a one-off Christmas order if you are not sure about joining our veg box membership on an ongoing basis.
- Bosavern Community Farm Shop will be open on Christmas eve, closed 25th, 26th 27th, open on 28th, 29th, 30th. Closed on Saturday 31st and will reopen on Tuesday 3rd January and thereafter Mondays-Saturdays 10-5pm as usual.
- St Just Farmers' Market runs up to and including the Christmas Market on Saturday 17th Dec at the W.I. Hall and then takes a break in January, resuming on 11th Feb 9:30-12:30pm as usual.
- Sennen Market hold their Christmas Market on Tuesday 20th December. There is no market on 27th but they resume on Tuesday 3rd January 9:30-12:30 as usual.

Celebration

Each of our Training & Work Experience courses ended with a celebration tea where the trainees' stories and achievements were shared. An Open Day was held this Summer and we invite you all to join us for a festive gathering with hot drinks and nibbles on Monday 19th December 10am-12noon in the Castle Polytunnel.

Thank you for supporting us during the past year!