



newsletter

Issue 4, November 2005

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Manx Organic Network newsletter. As you can see, we now have our own unique logo: an important step towards achieving our objective of developing a Manx Organic brand.

News round up

SO MUCH has happened since the last issue, we've had to extend this one to eight pages! The highlights are...

Organic certification of Manx meat gets underway

Following the Peter Segger talk reported in the last issue, MON have been actively encouraging the Fats Stock Marketing Board and DAFF to recognise the market for Manx organic beef and lamb.

As a direct result of our discussions, organic processing inspector Gabrielle Lanceley came to the Island in September to start the certification process of the abattoir. With EU organic regulation requiring that everything from origin of the animal to final packing be certified, this is vital to the integrity of organic meat.

Butchers also need to be inspected if they are cutting the meat, so Gabrielle visited Radcliffes Butchers in Castletown and Fenton Campbells in Douglas to start the process there too. She also met with management at the Creamery, Shoprite and Robinsons, who unanimously agreed there is a market to be tapped into.

"I was very impressed by all the establishments I visited," said Gabrielle. "Praise must go to the abattoir in particular for the humane and thoughtful way the animals are dealt with."

This is a major step forward for MON as a whole and for our organic

farmers Andrew Moore and Pheric and James Curphy. Time and again they have seen their stock entering the food chain as conventional meat, which means it hasn't been marketed with the premium status it merits.



Chris Lennon of Radcliffes Butchers

On that subject, we know that producers and retailers alike have concerns about the cost of organic food. Having been selling organic meat since May, Chris Lennon of Radcliffes Butchers told us, "We've found that many customers expect to pay a lot more for organic meat, and so are pleasantly surprised to find it's often only around 50p per pound dearer. We are amazed by how quickly it has taken off – it really has surpassed all expectations."

We're hoping that certification will be confirmed in the next few weeks, and will keep you posted on developments as they happen.

MON creates a stir at Agricultural Shows

OUR STANDS AT the Southern and Northern Shows generated a huge amount of interest and enthusiasm, with 80 new members joining on the spot and many more taking information away.

We were repeatedly told of people's passionate belief in local organic foods, frustration at limited availability, and relief that there is now an organisation in the Island driving the issue forward.

Southern Show, July:

Once again sharing marquee space kindly offered by the Beekeepers, our stand featured a huge display of fruit and vegetables grown by members and brought together by Bill Mizen.

The display board showcased our pin-up organic farmers Andrew, Pheric and James (handsome and earthy images that were not a marketing ploy to attract new female members, simply a testament to good healthy living!)

Northern Show, August:

This year we had our own stand, organised by Ian and Viv Davies.

We were also delighted to have Peter Lawlor, a farm inspector from Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G) on hand to answer technical questions.

Our fantastic displays of fruit and vegetables highlighted the fact that while many people expect organic produce to be meagre and misshapen, quite the opposite is true.

DAFF to host meeting on organic dairy farming

IN ANOTHER exciting development resulting from recent talks, DAFF is holding a meeting on Thursday 17 November for farmers interested in learning more about organic conversion.

Richard Parks, a dairy farmer from Cumbria who gained organic certification in 2003, has been invited to share his experience.

His farm, Lower Sizergh Barn in Kendal, comprises 250 acres, with 120 cows, 250 laying hens and 20 sheep. The orchard has been restored with traditional varieties of plums, apples, damsons and pears, while the farm's 400 year-old hedges are maintained by laying and cutting in the traditional way.

Run by the Parks family, the farm shop features their own organic Kendal cheese, ice cream, eggs and a whole selection of organic vegetables.

We look forward to bringing you a full report in the next issue.

In the meantime, if you are interested in attending, please contact Andrew MacDonald at Knockaloe on 842335.

Green Mann market is a sell-out success

THANKS TO the huge success of the inaugural Green Mann market on 13 October, this natural produce market is now being held every Thursday at Ballabrooie from 12 to 4pm.

All grown to organic principles, produce on offer at the first market included apples, potatoes, cauliflowers, including the Romanesque variety, swedes, cabbage, beetroot, runner beans, kale, chard, fresh herbs, aloe vera plants, jam and chutney.

Fresh local produce

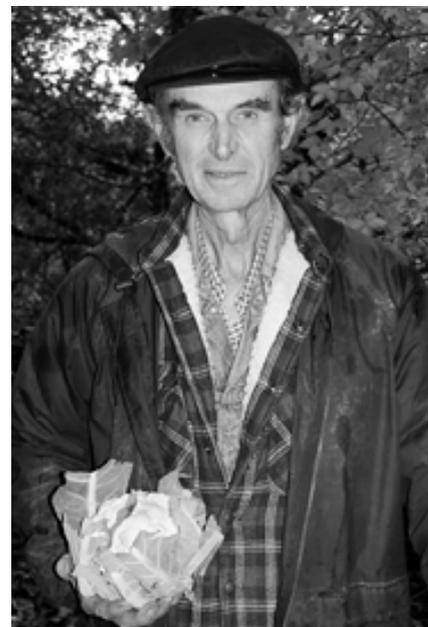
Green Mann is the brainchild of Jimmy, Nadine and Kista, whose Ballabrooie smallholding has been run along organic principles for the last 30 years. The kitchen garden provides vegetables, soft fruits and herbs, chickens enjoy total freedom in around 25 acres of woodland and meadow, and the five acres of orchards boast more than 100 varieties of apples.

"We would like to thank everyone for making the market work so well," said Jimmy Lawton. "This success means we can all start producing more now and plan ahead for next year. We are committed to holding this special market, which will grow as more people get involved."

More to come

The range is already growing – for example, with the recent addition of

locally produced charcoal, logs and hand-made cards, while a regular fixture not to be missed is Andrew Moore's mouth-watering selection of organic vegetables.



Andrew Moore at the Green Mann market, every Thursday 12-4pm

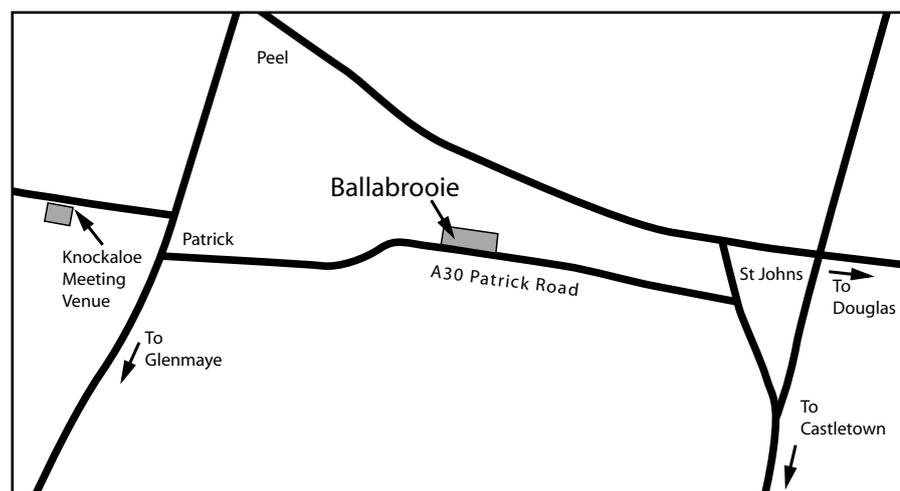
Apple day festival

Nadine added, "As a result of the first market, we are planning to hold an apple day festival next October. This will be a joyous affirmation of the huge variety we have bred and cultivated over the centuries and a stand against the trend towards monoculture and uniformity."

MON Chairperson Janet Bridle said, "We're delighted to support the Green Mann Market. As well as providing a regular opportunity to buy fresh local produce, it offers members free stall space for selling any surplus produce of their own that has been grown to organic principles."

Helpers wanted

Another planned addition to the market is hot refreshments. If you can spare the time to help out, or would like to sell your surplus produce, call Kista, Nad or Jimmy on 843738.



MON gardening news

By Sharon Jamieson

THE gardening section of the Manx Organic Network is very active, with lots of opportunities to get involved, either in your own garden or through our communal plots. We always welcome newcomers, so come along and bring your children or grandchildren - if we don't teach them how to grow their own healthy produce, who will?

Next meeting

Although generally on Saturdays, our next monthly meeting is on Wednesday 23 November, 1-3pm at Ballakilley Farm (opposite Rushen church, just up from the Four Roads roundabout). Come prepared to help plant a new hedge, learn some new gardening tricks and tuck into tea and organic cakes!

October meeting update

OUR LAST meeting was held on 29 October at Ballakilley Farm. Members' soil samples were analysed for acidity levels by Cilla Platt (with her rather stylish soil testing kit!) Most samples proved to be relatively alkaline, except for one from uncultivated Curraughs land, which was positively acidic.

Other topics included different compositions of composts, manures and minerals for optimum soil treatment, feedback on what grew well this year, and that age-old bugbear: keeping the slugs at bay. Suggestions included beer or sour milk traps, dried holly leaves, eggshells and copper wiring - and for caterpillar-stricken lettuce, sifting flour (organic of course) over the crops.

Making the most of HDRA membership

REMEMBER, we have a group membership of the Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA). Established in 1954, this is the national charity for organic growing which is dedicated to researching and promoting organic gardening, farming and food.

Just one benefit is the gardening advice service for members. This is available by phone on 024 7630 8215, 10am-1pm and 2pm-4pm Mon, Weds and Fri, or at any time by email. To email, go to www.hdra.org.uk and

access the members section by typing in user name 'Member' (using a capital M) and password 'selmazeera' (all one word, lower case).

Thanks to our group membership, all MON members are entitled to 10% off the 2006 Organic Gardening Catalogue, which offers a great selection of seeds, plants and gardening accessories. So if you don't already have a planting plan for next year, call 0845 130 1304 to order, quoting membership number 155259 to get your discount.

Exciting experiments for 2006

Every year HDRA invites members to take part in simple trials, and the 2006 experiments are a great opportunity for MON members to get involved. HDRA advises that you undertake only two of the four trials planned, and will supply the seeds, instructions and assessment sheets. The trials are:

1. Carrot flavour test

With Nantes and Resistafly seeds provided, you'll need space to grow at least one 1m row of each variety.

2. Summer cover crops

Vetch, sweet clover, crimson clover, phacelia and buckwheat seeds will be provided, in order to grow green cover crops which will suppress weeds and draw up and fix nutrients between crops. With 3sq m needed for each crop, you can use the seeds as required.

3. Rose black spot

You will need at least two established rose bushes and will be provided with a sample of Chase Organics SM3 Liquid Seaweed.

4. Plants for birds

Provided with sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), Teasel and Good King Henry seeds, you will be asked to report on how the plants have established and

which birds visit once the seed-heads have formed.

To take part, contact Sharon Jamieson by 10 December on 836626, maljam@btinternet.com or in writing: Ballakilley Farm, Church Road, Port St Mary, IM9 5LW.

In other news from HDRA, the latest edition of *The Organic Way* quotes that New Zealand flatworms are endemic in the *Isle of Man*, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Liverpool.

And finally... apologies to any gardening friends who didn't receive details of the last meeting as details only went out by email.



Organic focus *In every newsletter we'll be focusing on different organic issues, with a view to sharing insight on both local and global developments.*

In this edition, Director of Agricultural Services Richard Lole gives his view on the future of organic farming in the Island. Our numbered responses to some of his points follow.

Organic farming in the Isle of Man

By Richard Lole

THE Manx Organic Network has done some excellent work in raising the profile of organic farming in the Island. It has been interesting to see people's reactions, with consumers showing interest while farmers express scepticism based on previous experiences both on and off the Island.

It was exciting to discover, in a recent DAFF survey, that consumers are concerned far more about food safety, freshness and taste than cost. However, it is important to acknowledge that what consumers say and do can often differ!

Looking across the water, it seems there is a solid core of around 4% of consumers who are prepared to buy organic foods consistently, while a further 18% would often do so. Relating this to our population would indicate that we have around 3,000 people (1, 2) who would be prepared to buy premium-priced organic products: a small but significant number.

This estimated market size is a fundamental issue from a business perspective. In terms of organic milk production for instance, this would mean around half a single farm's production would satisfy all of the Island's organic milk requirements (3). The balance of that producer's organic milk would then need to be sold under the conventional brand, or converted into small volumes of organic cheese, yoghurt etc. Alternatively it could be exported for sale at a price reflecting the additional transport costs.

The real question is whether we can build a brand for Manx organic produce which would allow us to sell that produce in adjacent markets at a premium to their own organic produce. Bearing in mind the issue of 'food miles' and consumers' desire for local produce, this would necessitate extremely effective marketing.

Were the entire Island organic, we would have a real and exciting sales feature. However, there are two very real practical issues to be considered:

A. The avoidance of sprays/ vaccinations against known pests/ diseases

Where there is one organic producer surrounded by conventional producers, the former's lack of routine chemical prevention is substantially underwritten by the continued action of the latter (4).

Current organic techniques achieve a level of production only slightly lower than conventional systems, but producers are aided in this by the preventive measures of those around them. If the whole Island were organic, we should have no illusions that stocking rates and yields would be much lower than those of most modern organic producers (5).

Unfortunately, this sets up a vicious circle (6). The lower the production, the higher the production cost per unit, and so the higher the premium we would need for our organic produce. The issue of profit is always contentious. However, to be truly sustainable, any farming

system must return a livelihood to its operators or money runs out and the system flops (7).

B. The farmers' view

For myriad reasons, the majority of Manx farmers do not currently want to get involved. If we want successful results, we cannot force individuals to make what is a substantially emotive choice. Therefore, MON needs to focus on reassuring farmers that a viable business opportunity exists.

We at the Department strongly believe there is scope for continued development of a niche organic market in the Island (8), and have 'put our money where our mouth is' with, for example:

- the provision of the organic conversion scheme
- the provision of on-Island organic training
- contributing to costs involved in certifying organic throughput at the meat plant, and training farm advisors on organic production issues

However, we also believe that, like all niches, this must progress at a pace which allows the producers involved to build their sales. We have observed the over-supply in the UK following Government promotion of the organic route as a universal solution, and do not want to make the same mistake here (9).

The most effective way to gain the support of more farmers is to have those already involved running thriving businesses, supplying a known market of consumers who demonstrate the desire for more products by buying all that is available, at premium prices. This is the result we should all work towards, and the Department is happy to support initiatives that will help the market develop.

Bright ideas

From the kitchen to the garden, organic projects guaranteed to go down a treat with all ages.

Recipes for success

The Organic Week supper on 14 September featured a fantastic array of locally produced organic fayre. As well as saying a big thank you to everyone who contributed, we'd like to share two recipes which proved especially popular.

Marrow and blackberry chutney

- 2lb peeled, de-seeded and chopped marrow
- 11b chopped onions
- 3lb blackberries
- 300ml white wine vinegar
- 1/2 sachet pickling spice
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 1b sugar

- Simmer blackberries on a low heat without water, then sieve.
- Add marrow to blackberries with sealed sachet of pickling spice.
- Add chopped onions, half of vinegar and cook until soft.
- Add sugar and rest of vinegar, then place in sterilised jars once cooled.

Courgette buns

- 2 eggs
- 100ml sunflower oil
- 225g caster sugar
- 150g courgettes, coarsely grated
- 75g wholemeal self-raising flour
- 75g self-raising flour
- 1/2 level tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp ground mixed spice
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- flaked almonds to sprinkle on top

- Heavily grease 12-hole muffin tin, 24-hole mini muffin tin, or paper cases.

- Whisk eggs, oil, sugar and courgettes together.



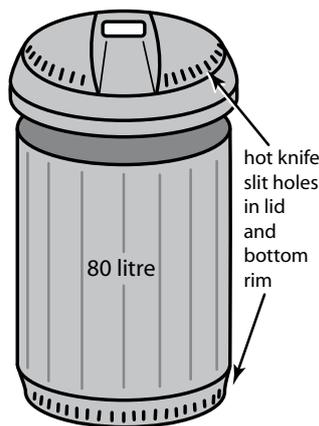
- Gradually add remaining ingredients and mix to a thickish batter.
- Pour or spoon into tin/cases and sprinkle tops with almonds.
- Bake at 200°C/gas mark 6: 20 mins for regular tin, 10 mins for mini tin or cases.

Make your own wormery

Vermiculture (aka getting worms to provide you with the ultimate in nutrient-rich compost) is the gardening activity of the moment. And the good news is you don't need to splash out on an expensive kit, because Julie Walker has kindly given us this step-by-step guide to creating your own.

What you need:

- An 80-litre black dustbin
- A minimum of 50 worms: brandlings (red wigglers) and tiger worms (stripey), which are far more efficient at eating through kitchen waste than earthworms.



Building your wormery:

- Slit holes in the dustbin lid and bottom rim using a hot knife (don't make them in the base, as the worms will escape).
- Place the bin in easy reach of the kitchen outside, on concrete, compacted earth or stones. Weigh down the lid with heavy stones.

- Add worms in a layer of soil to the bin.
- Add your kitchen waste to the bin, alternating with layers of soil or compost (not peat) and build up layers until bin is full.
- Leave undisturbed until waste is converted to soil by the worms.
- Use the soil for seedlings, garden beds, pots and tubs.
- When the bin is empty, keep back at least 50 worms and start again!

What to feed your worms:

- Cooked food, takeaway leftovers and pan scrapings
- Tops, tails and peelings of fruit and veg, cut small
- Crushed eggshells
- Cheese ends and sour milk
- Teabags
- Water filter granules
- Shredded newspaper, thin cardboard and corn-starch packing material (not polystyrene)

NB: worms do NOT eat onion or avocado skin, meat, fish, citrus peel, pet hair or vacuum bag contents.

What to look out for:

- Big worms wearing an egg band
- Eggs – match-head-sized, orangey colour
- Pot worms – white thread-sized hatchlings
- 'Spaghetti groups' eating tasty morsels.

Good luck – and happy wormerying!

The challenge of sustainability

By Janet Bridle

'Ecological footprint'. A phrase I've always thought sounded very interesting while never fully grasping what it meant. But having got my head around the basics, I'd like to share them with you, so here goes...

- If the ecological capacity of all land is considered with the area of available land, an average capacity per hectare can be estimated.
- The area of bio-productive land available to support each person on the planet has been estimated at 1.9 hectares.
- Per capita resource consumption can then be estimated and expressed in terms of the area of global land used. This is the 'ecological footprint'.

The ecological footprint of each individual in the UK has been estimated at 3.5 hectares, giving a deficit of 3.7 per person. This means we need radically to reduce our resource consumption, or find a way to increase the ecological capacity of our landscape – or both.

This is the challenge of sustainability, which is a strategic response to live within the limits set by the ecological capacity: a progressive rather than consensual response.

The ideal is to sustain and even extend the economic and social advantages of industrialisation while simultaneously protecting natural resources. This would see a return to a proper relationship with the natural world, in which humans are part of and dependent on an overall ecology.

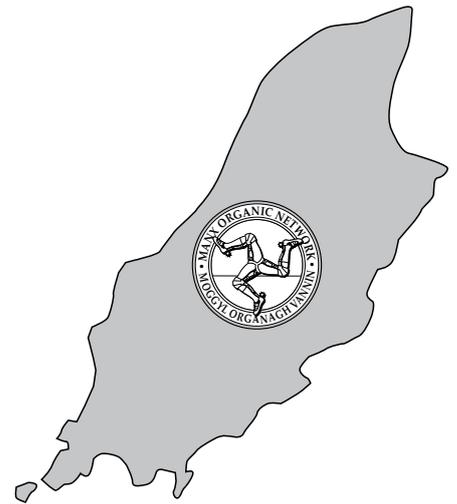
The complexities involved in achieving sustainable landscapes require the intellectual capabilities of the whole by community, not just those experts who in the past were often viewed as 'weird eco types' (who's laughing now?)

So often we hear farmers complaining that organic farming would mean a return to the old-fashioned methods they view with horror and suspicion. But this is the 21st century: no one is advocating a return to the horse and plough.

The beauty of modern organic production is just that: it's modern, benefiting from all the advances made over the last 50 years together with an intellectual capacity to marry it with the natural world.

Far from recommending a step backwards, we are praying for a huge step forwards.

Sources: Sustainability Institute, The Positive Network, Earth Day Footprint Quiz.



MON on the doorstep for northern members

If you live in the north and don't fancy travelling down to Knockaloe on a regular basis, help is at hand in the form of Viv and Ian Davies, who act MON co-ordinators for the northern region.

Says Viv, "Following our inaugural meeting at Andreas in July, we'll be putting together a programme in time for the next newsletter in the new year, so we'd love to hear from northern members with any information or ideas we can all share."

All contributions should be sent by end of January 2006 to Viv and Ian, who will send them on to 'MON HQ'. Every member in the north – that's Laxey to Kirk Michael upwards – will receive a copy of the programme, but please note that email is preferred, so if you don't have an email address it would be helpful to use a friend's.

Contact:

Ian and Viv Davies
Boayl Chirrym, Ballacottier
Andreas, IM7 4BB
Email: iandavies@manx.net
Tel: 882332

Food for thought

A selection of facts and quotes on organic food, farming and other issues

For a wide and diverse range of facts, figures and in-depth articles, visit the Soil Association website at www.soilassociation.org

Vitamins and minerals

No food has higher amounts of beneficial minerals, essential amino acids and vitamins than organic food. The use of synthetic fertilisers, plant breeding, and longer delays between harvesting and consumption have led to reduced trace element and vitamin content in food.

*Independent medical charity
The Kings Fund*

Pesticides

"The best means of reducing exposure to potentially harmful pesticides would be to consume organically grown food, where their use is avoided."

*Professor Vyvyan Howard,
University of Liverpool*

Under Soil Association standards only four chemicals are allowed in sprays on organic crops – 430 are allowed on non-organic crops. As a result, organic foods contain fewer pesticide residues and fewer 'cocktails' of chemicals than non-organic food, including 'conservation grade' food or food from 'integrated pest management' farming.

*BP Baker, CM Benbrook
KL Benbrook and E Groth (2002)
Pesticide residues in conventional,
IPM-grown and organic foods: Insights
from three US data sets.*

Additives

Only 32 of the 290 food additives approved for use across the EU are permitted in organic food. The controversial additives aspartame, tartrazine and hydrogenated fats are banned in organic food. Therefore

a wide range and large quantity of potentially allergenic or harmful additives are avoided on a diet high in organically grown foods.

*JF and PA Balch, Prescription
for Nutritional Healing
Avery publishers, USA*

Fats

"Trans fats have no known nutritional benefits and because of the effect they have on blood cholesterol they increase the risk of coronary heart disease. Evidence suggests that the effects of trans fats are worse than saturated fats."

The UK Food Standards Agency

Antibiotics

"Prophylactic and regular use of antibiotics is not permitted in organic standards for animal husbandry. There is growing concern that antibiotic residues in meat and dairy products could result in the development of antibiotic resistance in bacteria that are prevalent in humans, thereby reducing the effectiveness of antibiotics used to treat human disease."

World Health Organisation

Coasts and marine life

Coasts and marine life around Britain are under pressure from pollution, coastal erosion, overfishing and climate change, experts have warned.

The Environment Agency says better management of the seas and coasts could help protect their fragile ecosystems. The recommendations are published in the agency's first State of the Marine Environment report. Sir John Harman, agency chairman, said there needs to be a balance between

using the coasts and protecting them.

The report found many coastal waters are at risk from pollution from fertilisers and pesticides. These can change the delicate balance of marine ecosystems, which in some cases are already having to adapt as sea temperatures begin to rise.

*[http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/
mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.
co.uk/1/hi/uk/4423772.stm](http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4423772.stm)*

Manx Organic Network in a nutshell



Aims and objectives:

- To promote awareness of the benefits of organically produced food and sustainable agriculture.
- To promote Manx organic farmers and growers by encouraging consumers to buy locally produced organic food.
- To create a network of local resources, information and advice.
- To encourage the Manx Government to continue and increase its support for organic production.
- To develop an identifiable Manx Organic brand.

Membership:

300 and growing. For membership forms to pass on to family and friends, please get in touch with Kim Lamb.

Contact:

Janet Bridle, Chair, 835436 or jbridle@manx.net

Kim Lamb, Secretary, 832029

MANX ORGANIC NETWORK,
C/O THE SPINNEY, HOWE ROAD,
PORT ST MARY, IM9 5AU

Help us save time, costs and paper!

Now that we have more than 325 members, communication can be very expensive and time consuming.

While we're happy to print and distribute the newsletter, more immediate communications are cheaper, faster and easier by email. But we need to make sure that everyone gets the stop press information we issue between newsletters.

We know that many of you have your own email addresses, and we would like to encourage an email 'buddy system' in which members with internet access can get emailed information to members who don't have access.

If you'd like to have an electronic buddy, please contact Kim Lamb on 832029 or Janet Bridle on 835436.