

# The Importance of Organic Food Production

This information board gives an overview of the importance of organic food production. We hope you'll find it interesting and informative. In addition five information boards detailing local organic producers are also available.

## What is Organic Food Production?

**Organic farming is friendlier to the environment, better for the land, healthier for humans, and kinder to animals.**

Chemicals such as pesticides, genetically modified plants, animal cloning, growth hormone drugs or antibiotics are never used. Instead time is taken to work with nature building good soil and encouraging a natural environment that will yield healthy nutritious food.

Our planet is a large and complex eco-system that relies on co-operation. Virtually nothing in nature happens in isolation and virtually everything that happens will have a knock on effect somewhere else on the planet.

Organic farming has minimal impact upon the environment because farmers work with nature rather than fighting it with chemicals. So for example, natural predators are encouraged on organic farms to prevent the need for insecticides, whilst clover and green manures are used to build up soil fertility rather than relying on energy intensive chemical fertilizers.

Organic animals are never kept in cramped conditions, as is the case in factory farming; instead animals have access to lots of outdoor space and fresh air, so encouraging normal behavior.

Unlike conventionally reared animals, organic standards prohibit the routine use of drugs, vaccines, growth hormones, and the use of genetically modified feed and cloning.

Organic animal health is managed using preventative rather than curative methods. This fosters strong immunity, good health and lessens the need for drugs. Sick animals are treated with homeopathic or complementary remedies unless a vet says otherwise.

Many organic farms have breeds native to their region, which have generally adapted to cope with specific regional landscapes, weather conditions and local pastures.

Animals that are farmed organically are kept longer than conventionally farmed animals before being sent to slaughter.

Chief Scientific Advisor John Beddington states that the world's food reserves are at a 50-year low, and by 2030 we need to be producing 50% more food. At the same time, we will need 50% more energy, and 30% more fresh water.

Organic milk is 68% higher in Omega 3, 50% higher in vitamin E, 75% higher in beta carotene (which our bodies convert to Vitamin A) and two to three times higher in the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthine than non-organic milk. OMSCO www.organicmilk.co.uk

There is good evidence linking the increase of allergies with over exposure to chemicals including pesticides. British Society for Allergy Environmental and Nutritional Medicine

There are around 500 different pesticides licensed for use on non-organic dairy farms and around 1550 which can be used on non-organic mixed farms. Hardly any research has been conducted on how these chemicals react together. OMSCO www.organicmilk.co.uk

"Local independent shops are best placed to support local organic growers and producers, by providing customers with daily access to their products. This enables the growers to get on with what they do best - producing healthy organic food."

**THE LOCAL ECONOMY CYCLE**

GOOD WORK  
LOCAL ORGANIC PRODUCERS  
LOW FOOD MILES  
LOCAL MARKET & SHOPS  
LOCAL COMMUNITY CONSUMERS  
CASH KEPT IN LOCAL COMMUNITY  
RESOURCES MAY BE REUSED  
MORE GOOD WORK

Organic production is more people intensive, people orientated and people friendly. The human input is greater and it is more fulfilling in this respect.

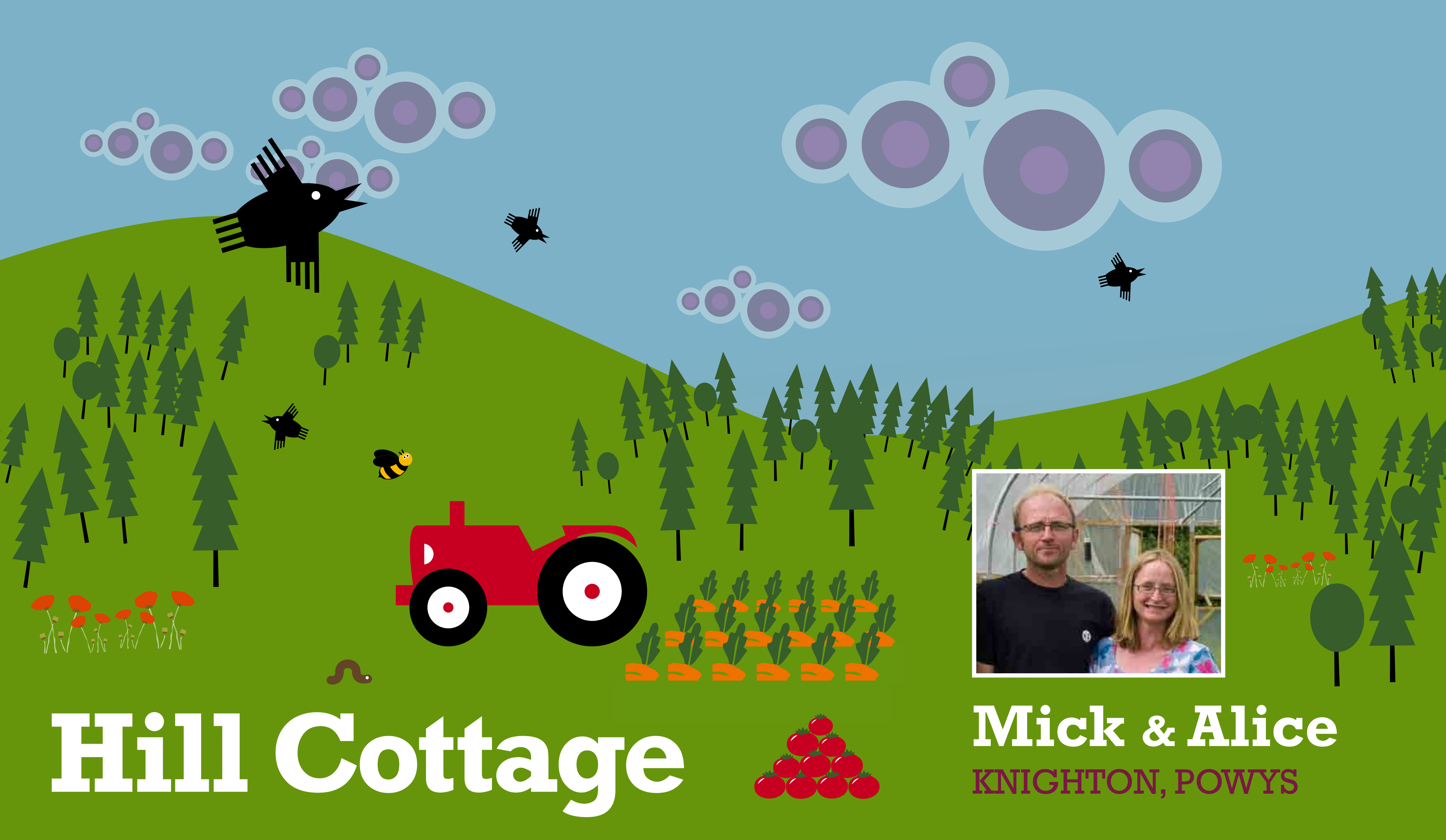
Organic farms are also often involved in community based projects such as educational farm visits or offering work experience or apprenticeship programs for specific sectors of the community.

Organic farms tend to be smaller units than conventional farms. Products tend to be distributed and sold through local markets or through independent retailers such as Myriad Organics. As a result profits generated are re-circulated within the local community which helps sustain a dynamic local economy.

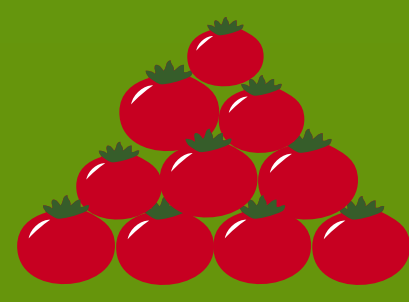
**Myriad Organics**  
Tel: 01584 872665  
www.myriad-organics.co.uk







# Hill Cottage



**Mick & Alice**  
KNIGHTON, POWYS

SALAD MANGE TOUT CARROTS SPINACH PEAS BEANS LEEKS ONIONS PARSNIPS BRASSICAS ALLIUMS SALAD MANGE TOUT CARROTS SPINACH PEAS BEANS LEEKS ONIONS PARSNIPS BRASSICAS

START READING HERE

## Overview

### DETAILS

4 acre rented market garden

### LOCATION

Rhos-y-Meirch, near Knighton, Powys

### STARTED

By Mick and Alice in 2008

### FULL ORGANIC STATUS

Early 2010

### PRODUCE

Variety of high quality, seasonal organic vegetables including salad, mange tout, carrots, spinach, peas, beans, leeks, onions, parsnips, brassicas, and alliums

### YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Over 25 years between them

### COMMITTED TO

Sustainability and organic food production

### STAFF

Mick and Alice plus one employee learning about organic production, with two regular volunteers on-site and at weekly farmers' markets

### OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

Based on a rented site (land owners also have an interest in local and sustainable food production and are keen to see the land being used positively)



THIS IS THE IMPORTANT STUFF

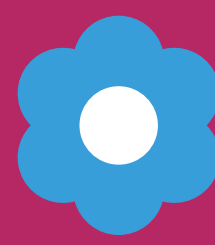
## Why organic production?

Mick & Alice believe that Organic production is the only truly sustainable system, and the system is completely holistic. They feel that **nurturing and cultivating the land is key**, which then has an impact on what can be grown and how well it grows. If this is done well there is no need for the use of harsh chemicals. Hill Cottage use sound crop rotations, lime and clover fertilisers, and good husbandry which all help to ensure that crops are less prone to weeds, pests and disease. The rich biodiversity that Mick and Alice have worked hard to achieve here also attracts beneficial insects. **So if there is a problem from a specific insect there is generally a predator present that can deal with the problem naturally.** Introducing specific biological controls such as predators for pests works well in glass houses or poly tunnels.

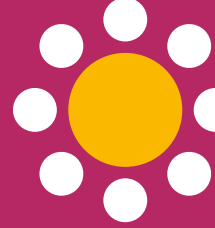
Hill Cottage has **recently been awarded a grant from The Lorraine Trust**, set up to reward farmers and growers who **work with and care for wildlife and habitats.**

**"Word of mouth has been our biggest help as we continue to grow awareness of our business locally"**

## The Year



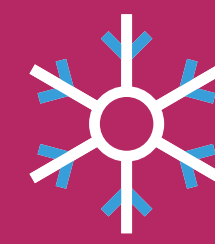
Sow lettuce for succession; cultivate ground for planting; incorporate green manures; protect young seedlings from frost



Busiest time: planting out; weeding; harvesting first crops; trying to prevent pests and diseases



Planting winter salad crops in tunnels; covering all bare patches of soil with green manures to help fertility



Picking leeks and winter cabbage thinking about next year; think how we might improve what we do and how we do it; fixing machinery; possibly fit in a holiday!

THIS IS WHAT THEY GROW

## Products

Hill Cottage produces around 40 different vegetables mainly throughout the summer and the autumn. At other times of year they source vegetables grown elsewhere which are always organic and always as local as possible.

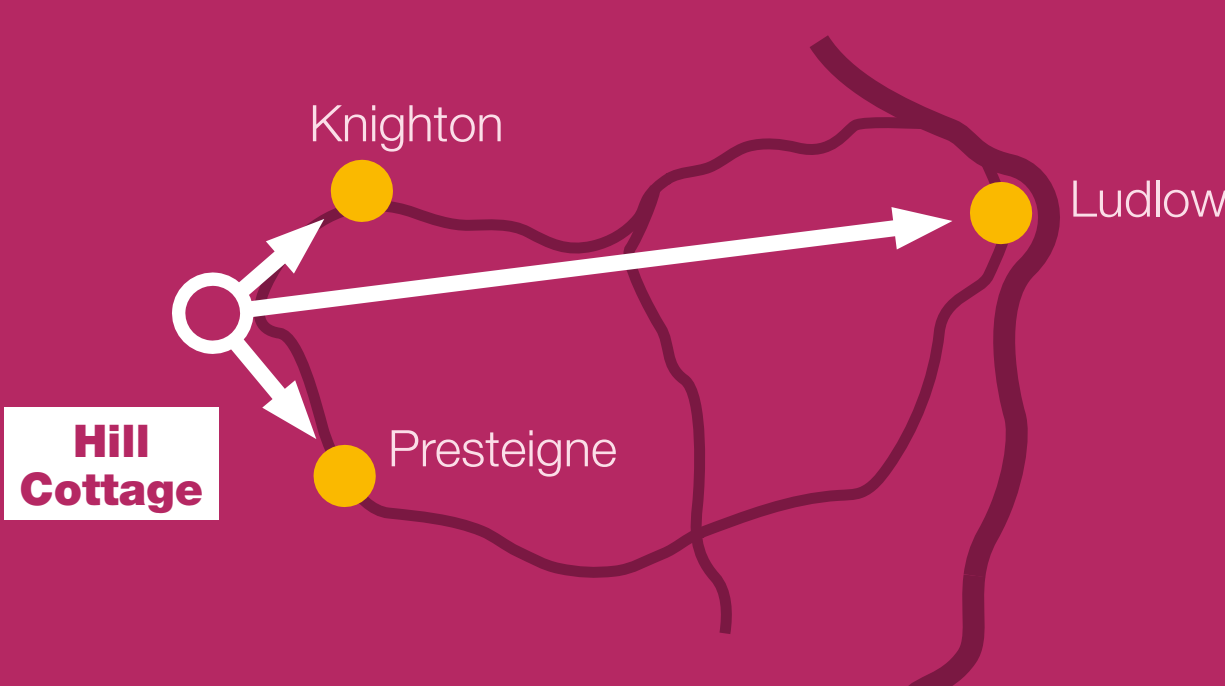
**Produce is sold at local farmers' markets and vegetable bags are produced and sold locally.** It includes salad, mange tout, carrots, spinach, peas, beans, leeks, onions, parsnips, brassicas (such as cabbages and sprouts), and alliums (the onion family).

Hill Cottage is also involved in a scheme called **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**. Its aim is to develop partnerships between growers and the local community. CSA supports the grower by investing in the growth of the market garden to give security to the grower and ensure a supply of locally grown food. With this scheme Hill Cottage offers **the option for customers to make an annual payment in advance for produce**. In return vouchers are given which are redeemed on a weekly basis at the weekly market stalls.

Mick and Alice also run **a programme of workshops throughout the year** which focus on growing food organically. **They also hold an annual open day** where members of the public can visit the market garden and see how things are grown and what Hill Cottage is involved with.



Hill Cottage produce at their Presteigne market stall



THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS UP

## Product distribution

Hill Cottage aims to sell the majority of its produce to the local community and it is **distributed through their weekly market stalls**. A vegetable bag is also delivered weekly to **drop off points in Presteigne and Knighton**. Hill Cottage also works closely with Myriad Organics to develop ideas for land management, growing, and the distribution and marketing of produce.

**"A big part of our work here is nurturing the soil and getting it ready to be used again. Initially the soil quality was quite poor so this was our main priority"**



There's loads of stuff in the polytunnels



### MICK SAYS:

"Organic production is about small scale localised production which is sustainable"



### ALICE SAYS:

"We're not experts at creating habitats, but this has happened naturally as a result of what we've been doing here"



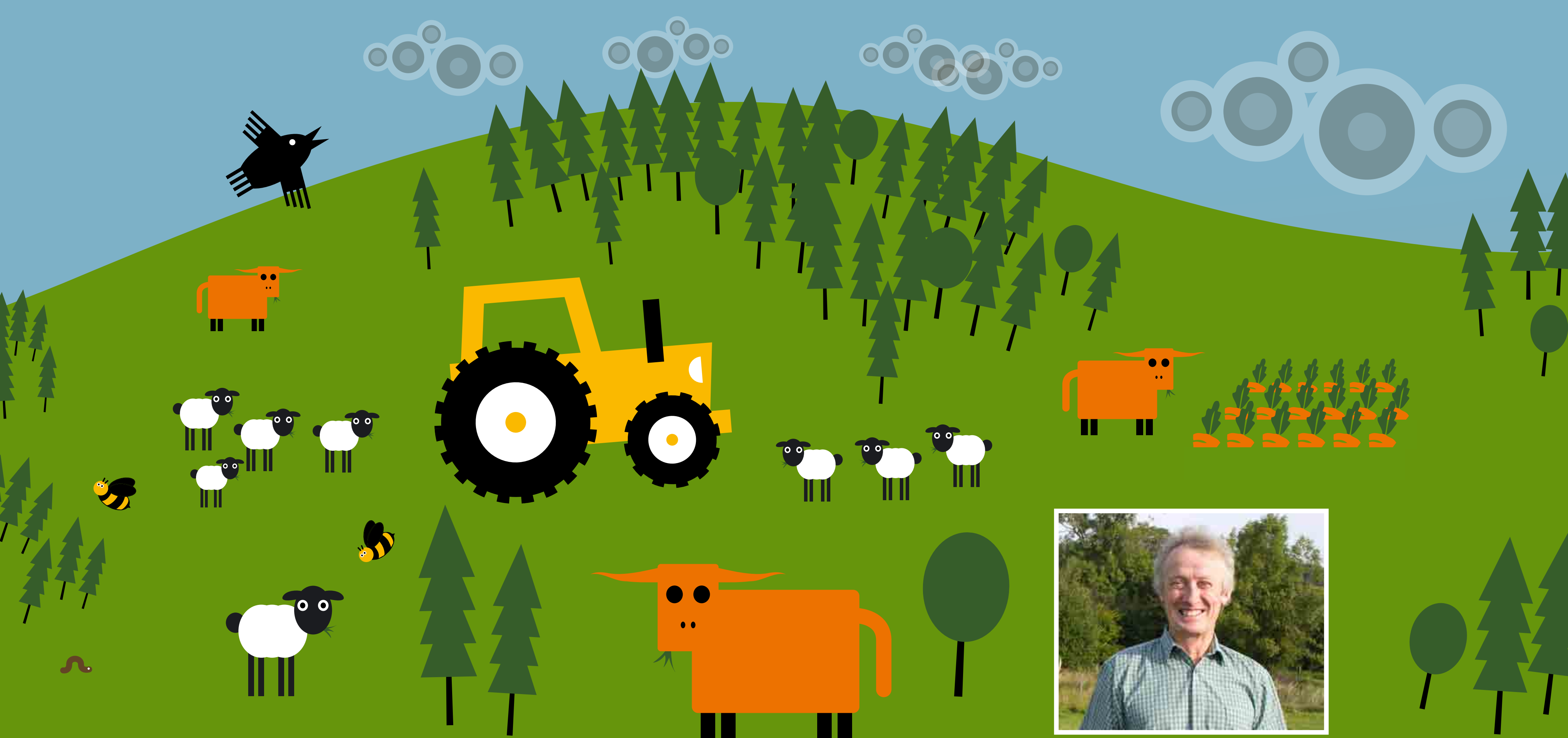
Heath Spotted Orchid



SUPPORTED BY THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY'S  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND







# Brynmawr

**Trevor**  
NEWCASTLE-ON-CLUN

LAMB POTATOES BEEF CARROTS LEEKS SWEDES BARLEY PEAS OATS LAMB POTATOES BEEF CARROTS LEEKS SWEDES BARLEY PEAS OATS LAMB POTATOES BEEF CARROTS LEEKS SWEDES

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## Overview

### DETAILS

217 acre organic mixed hill farm

### LOCATION

Shropshire Hills in the beautiful Clun Valley

### STARTED

1989

### FULL ORGANIC STATUS

Started organic conversion in 2001, full organic status achieved in 2003

### PRODUCES

Quality lamb and beef, potatoes, carrots and leeks

### YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Trevor has been farming all his life

### COMMITTED TO

Organic farming and its support of human health

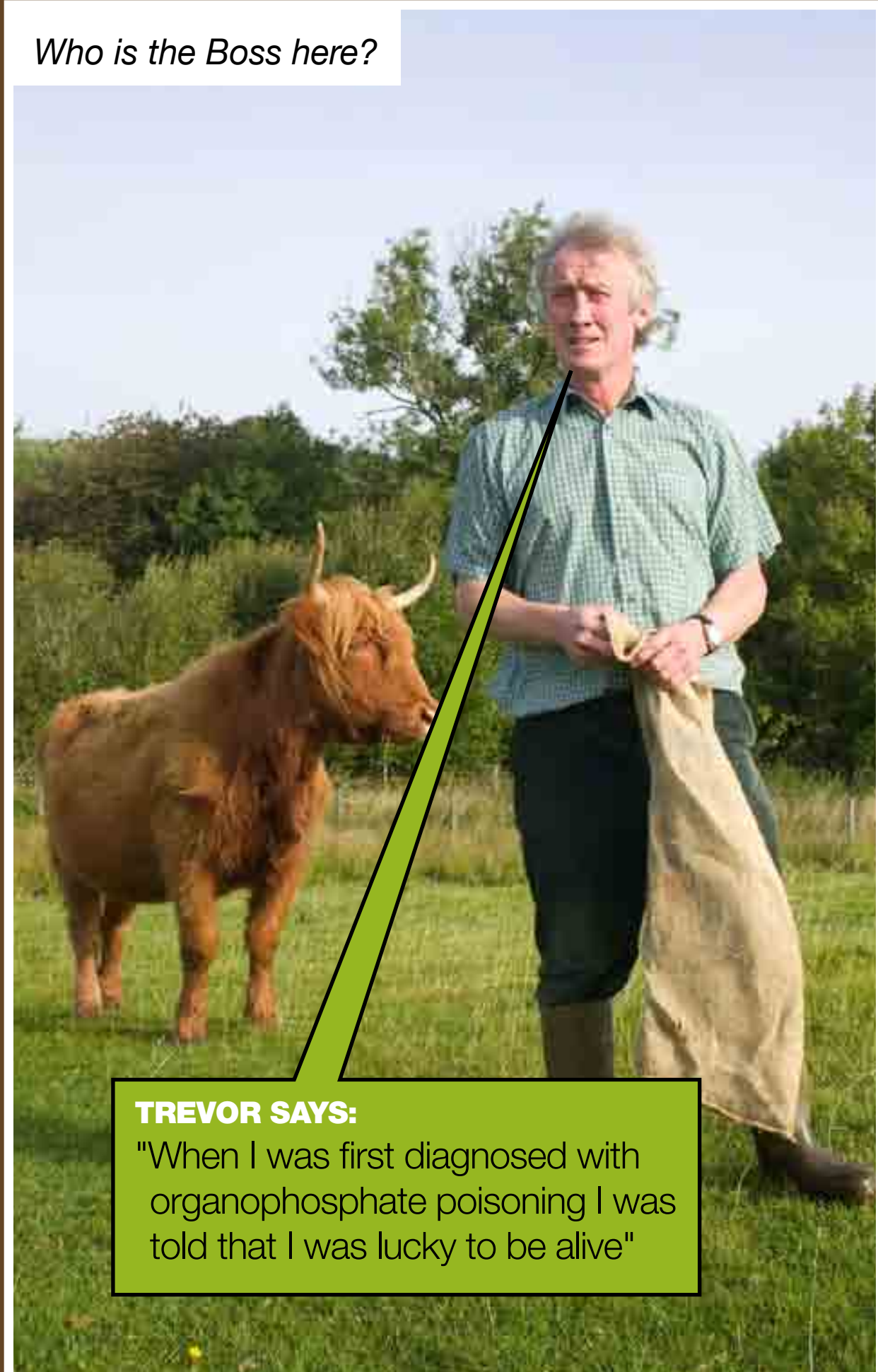
### STAFF

Trevor, Sue and son Paul

### OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

Also helps manage nature reserve nearby at Rhos Fiddle, a beautiful expanse of upland moor - home to a variety of birds and wildlife

Who is the Boss here?



**TREVOR SAYS:**  
"When I was first diagnosed with organophosphate poisoning I was told that I was lucky to be alive"

THIS IS THE IMPORTANT STUFF

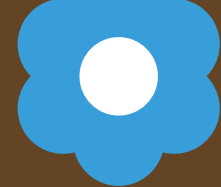
## Why organic production?

The main reason for Brynmawr choosing to farm organically is **Trevor Wheeler's personal health issues** which became a major concern for him in 2000.

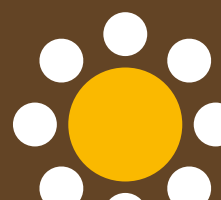
Trevor suddenly began experiencing a number of symptoms including **unexplained pain, allergies, headaches and shaking**. After undergoing several tests he was **diagnosed with organophosphate poisoning** and was given advice to avoid chemicals including formalin - used in sheep dip - and also diesel fumes. Trevor was told it could take up to 6 years for his body to be clear of the poisons he had inhaled, however **after only 6 months avoiding these substances his health began to improve dramatically**. It was at this point that **he and his family began investigating organic conversion** and took the first step in converting the farm.

Trevor is also committed to organic production because of the **minimal impact it has on the land on which he farms, and the wider environment**. The farm has several Higher Level Stewardships (HLS) - **monetary awards given to farms who achieve positive practices for nature**. Brynmawr leaves crop stubble in fields for birds and wildlife to feed off, bird boxes in fields, and hedges around fields so bird and wildlife can feed and nest.

## The Year



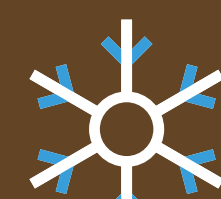
Busy time: lambing; calving cows; planting seed potatoes, barley, feed (arable, clover, oats, barley, peas)



Shearing sheep; making hay & silage; checking health of animals



Lifting potatoes; rams with ewes; harvesting winter oats; corn and barley



Housing cattle and sheep; sorting young stock; sorting and grading potatoes

THIS IS WHAT THEY GROW

## Products

Brynmawr produces traditional breed of cattle and sheep, including Hereford and Highland cattle and Hebridean sheep. Around 300 lambs are produced per year and around 30 calves. Ten acres of the farm are dedicated to growing potatoes, carrots, leeks and swedes. **Barley, oats and peas are grown for animal feed**.



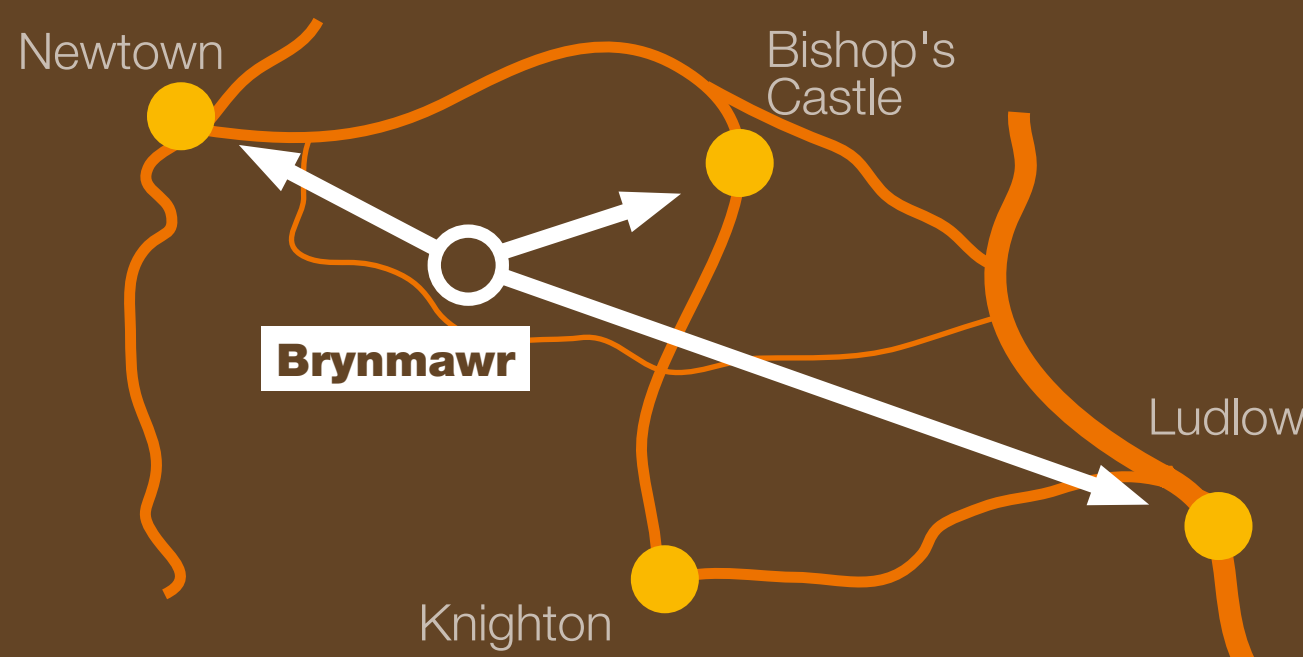
Lots of space to roam and graze

Trevor is actively involved with Bangor University in **developing and growing potato varieties that are resistant to blight** - a disease that attacks the potato stem and ruins the crop. Blight thrives in wet weather and so can devastate a crop during a particularly wet summer. This is increasingly likely in future due to climate change. On non-organic farms potatoes are routinely sprayed with chemicals to prevent blight. But Trevor has found that two varieties called **Mira and Axona, originally grown in Hungary, seem naturally resistant to blight**.

Brynmawr is also involved with a scheme which places people in training apprenticeships. The scheme **helps foster individual growth and well being and increases understanding of organic farming**.

Educational visits regularly take place too, funded by The Soil Association - Farms for the 21st Century. They highlight the **importance of organic farming for local wildlife and the wider environment**, and involve nature trails and walks around the farms and surrounding countryside.

**An Eco Cottage is available at the farm** for visitors who would like to stay. A wind turbine and solar panels generate energy and hot water. There are four vegetable and herb beds which guests can use, and bicycles are offered as part of the environmentally-friendly holiday package!



THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS UP

## Product distribution

Produce from Brynmawr is sold via **local farmers' markets in Ludlow, and Bishops Castle**, and via local and regional shops. Trevor also sells produce directly from the farm. Seed potatoes are sent to Bangor University and Bio Select, key UK distributors. Meat is also distributed via Graig Farm Producers, another main organic distributor in the region.



Potatoes up on the hilltops



**TREVOR SAYS:**  
"My health started to deteriorate in 2000, I was experiencing all sorts of symptoms like aches and pains, headaches and shaking at night"



**TREVOR SAYS:**  
"Our productivity as an organic farm has not altered that much. We may be a little down on what we used to produce, but it's negligible"



**TREVOR SAYS:**  
"I've found new and innovative ways of generating income from what we do here on the farm, such as the HLS schemes and our eco cottage"







# Pentre Farm



**Catherine**  
CHAPEL LAWN, SHROPSHIRE

LAMB MUTTON EGGS GLAMORGAN PATTIES LENTIL & CHEESE CAKES FRESH APPLE & CHEESE ROUNDS MUSHROOM BURGERS SPICY CHICKPEA BURGERS MINI WHOLESOME PIZZAS LAMB MUTTON

START READING HERE

## Overview

### DETAILS

Over 70 acres, two thirds of the pastures are rough grazing and woodland

### LOCATION

Chapel Lawn, near Bucknell, Shropshire

### STARTED

1995

### FULL ORGANIC STATUS

2000

### PRODUCES

Highest quality organic lamb and mutton are produced from Texel/Lleyn crossed sheep and rare breed Soay sheep

### YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Over 15

### COMMITTED TO

Animal welfare and the impact this has upon the quality of the end product, the environment and the health of humans

### STAFF

Just Catherine!

### OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

Catherine is also committed to organic production because of the minimal impact it has on the land on which she farms and the wider environment. The positive implications of organic production for human health are also key motivators at Pentre.

Catherine's got lots of friends on the farm

### CATHERINE SAYS:

"I have a strong belief in the Organic concept and believe that well cared for animals ensure better quality, tastier and healthier meat as an end product"



THIS IS THE IMPORTANT STUFF

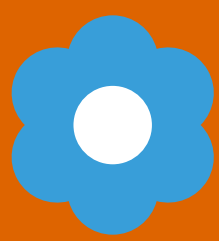
## Why organic production?

The main concern for Pentre Farm in choosing to farm organically and traditionally is **animal welfare and the impact this has on the quality of meat produced**. The high standard of animal welfare is evident on the farm when considering the care the animals receive and when considering their health. The animals are identified individually and have **large open acreages in which to roam**, which ensures that land is not overgrazed. Giving animals access to plenty of food and space minimises stress.

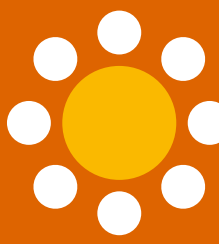
Animals are kept in their own groups which helps keep them **happy, healthy and stress free**. If and when illness occurs animals are treated individually rather than the flock as a whole, which is often unnecessary and can cause resistance to future treatment. The use of **homeopathic treatment has also been successful** in treating certain illnesses that did not respond to conventional treatment.

"When my animals are taken to be slaughtered I try to minimise the stress as much as possible. They are transported quickly to a local abattoir, in their own groups where possible, and not in an overcrowded lorry with animals they do not know"

## The Year



Lambing – 24 hours per day at this time of year and looking after orphan lambs



Shearing; selling wool; general animal welfare; gathering and sorting males from flock in late summer



Hay making; set lambing dates; rams with ewes



Checking flocks; daily feeding; general animal welfare – keeping a close eye on health needs

THIS IS WHAT THEY GROW

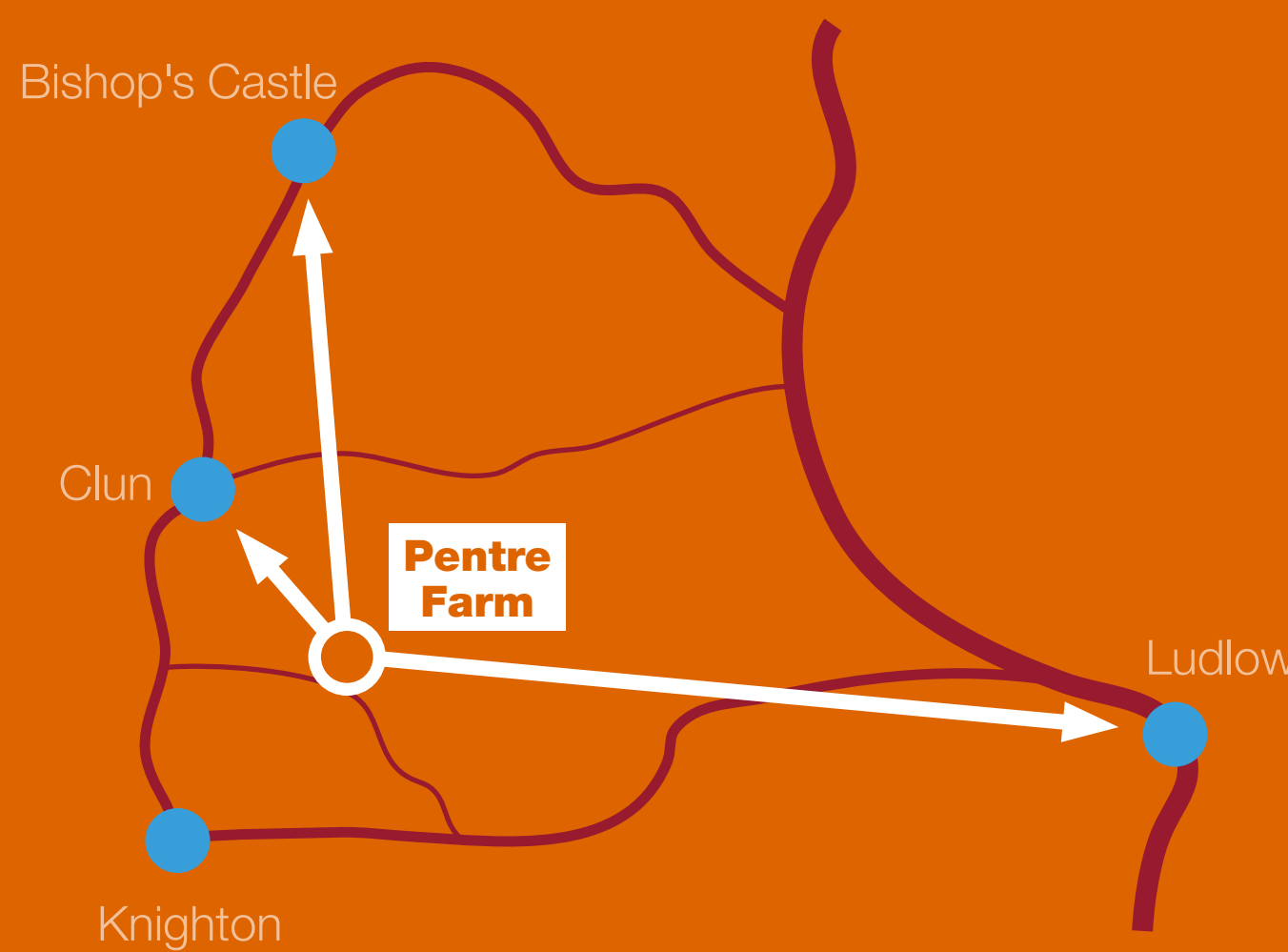
## Products

Pentre farm produces around **40-50 animals per year** two thirds of these are lamb and one third is mutton. Eggs are also produced on the farm and sold weekly at the farmers' markets.

Catherine has also **recently started to produce vegetarian meals** and sells these alongside the meat on the market stalls.



Feeding lambs in the early summer



THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS UP

## Product distribution

Produce from Pentre Farm is sold mainly via **local farmers' markets** in Ludlow, Bishops Castle, Clun and a market in Birmingham. Catherine also supplies a friend's pub and restaurant in London. Myriad Organics in Ludlow also sell Pentre Farm produce.

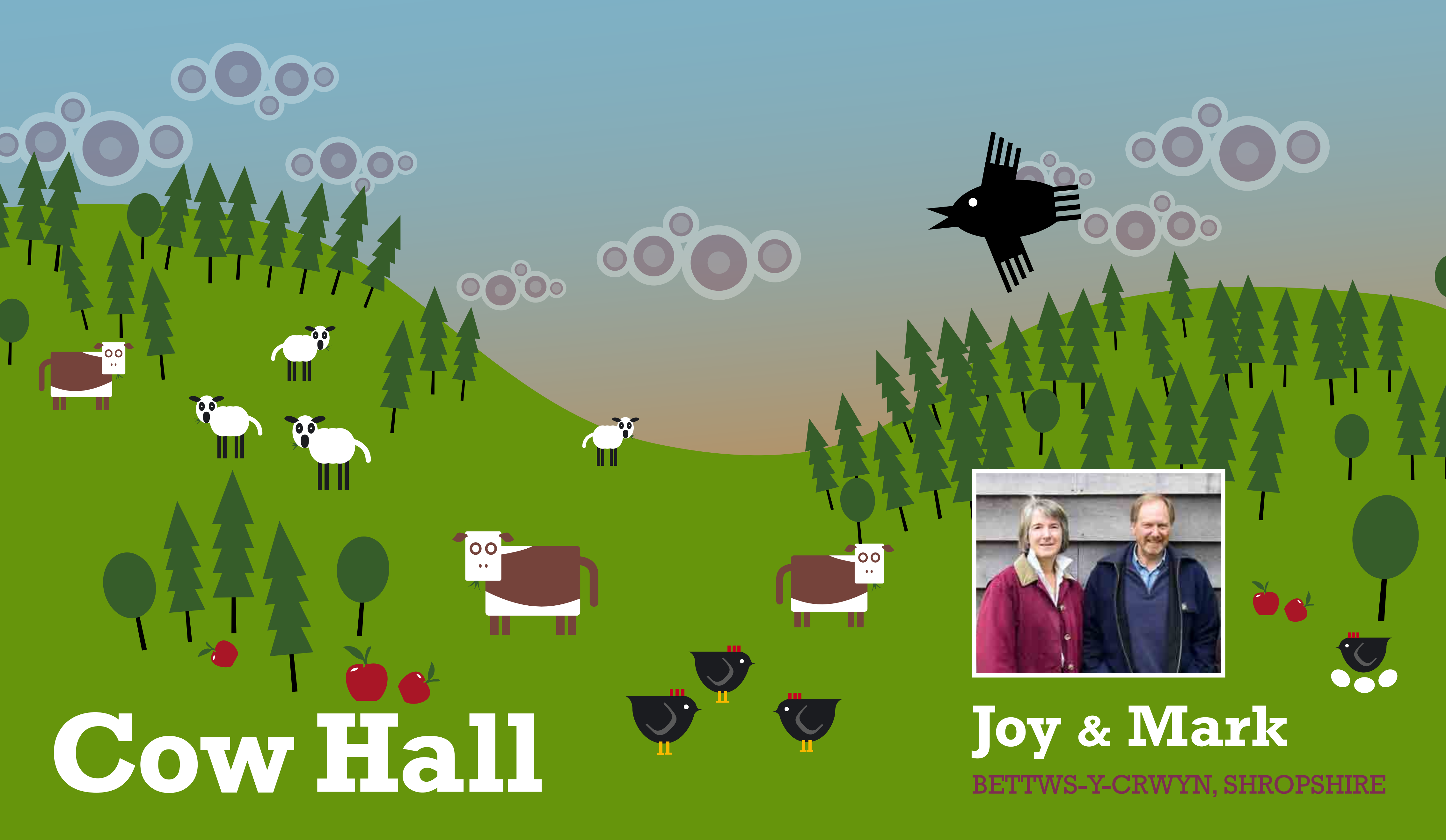
"I leave the ewes out on the field where I believe they like to be to lamb, finding a spot away from the flock. There is also evidence that they stay healthier. Many people lamb indoors because it's easier, for instance to check on a ewe in the middle of the night. As necessary, depending on the weather and strength of the lambs and ewe, I move the ewe indoors after lambing or leave her and her lambs out"



Catherine points the way to an organic future!







## Joy & Mark

BETTWS-Y-CRWYN, SHROPSHIRE

PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS IN HERE PRODUCTS

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### Overview

#### DETAILS

130 acre mixed hill farm

#### LOCATION

Clun Forest, South Shropshire

#### STARTED

In the same family for four generations

#### FULL ORGANIC STATUS

1998, but was always run without agrochemicals before organic conversion

#### PRODUCE

High quality meat from local breeds of cattle and sheep. Nuts, Shropshire prune, pears and apples in the ancient orchard, and potatoes

#### YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Over 30 years of organic farming

#### COMMITTED TO

Wildlife, conservation and organic methods of land management and animal husbandry to support traditional and sustainable food production

#### STAFF

Joy, part time stockman Reg Oliver, plus Mark

#### OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

Artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides have never been used on the farm. There are three Shropshire Wildlife Sites situated on the farm, flower-rich hay meadows, permanent pastures and rough grazing. The local Wildlife Sites are designated by Shropshire Wildlife Trust and include some of Shropshire's best rural and urban wildlife areas and important habitats



THIS IS THE IMPORTANT STUFF

### Why organic production?

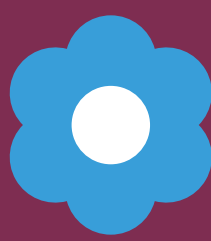
Joy and Mark are passionate about wildlife, organic methods of land management and animal husbandry which support traditional and sustainable food production. Joy has worked in wildlife and landscape conservation for over 30 years, and Mark has been involved in organic farming all his life and has been an organic consultant for over 25 years.

Animals graze on flower-rich permanent pastures, and **low stocking rates ensure high standards of health and a high quality end product.**

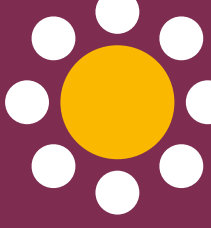
**The hay meadows contain more than 130 plant species** and the farm supports a wide variety of wildlife including badger, otter, barn owl, kingfisher and curlew.

**"I am very fortunate to be able to continue the traditional management carried out on this family farm for generations. This brings a great responsibility to do all I can to care for the land and beauty here, to ensure the best lives for our animals and a long term future for the farm and our rural community"**

### The Year



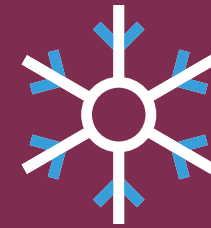
Lambing; cows back out after winter



Sheep shearing; bull with cows; making hay/silage



Harvesting produce; lifting potatoes; finishing lambs; rams with ewes



Selling potatoes; cows into barns until spring; feeding; general animal welfare

THIS IS WHAT THEY GROW

### Products

Cow Hall rears local breeds of cattle and sheep. The herd of rare breed pedigree Traditional Herefords was established in the 1940s along with the flock of Clun Forest sheep.

Around 20 cattle are produced for sale annually, and are 'finished' usually around 30-36 months old - **at least 8 months later than most conventionally farmed animals.** The animals' diet and the high standards of care they receive ensure that the end product is premium. **Generally organic meat contains higher levels of vitamins and beneficial omega 3 fatty acids.**

The farm also produces around 100 lambs per year for sale.

**"We have local breeds here on the farm which are important to us because they are better adapted to the local upland conditions. We have found that the cattle bred and reared on the farm on the local soils of the Clun Forest are better able to thrive than bought-in cattle"**

Potatoes are grown on the farm and these are **mainly sold as seed potatoes to organic farmers and growers throughout the country.**



Herb-rich pasture

THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS UP

### Product distribution

Cow Hall produce is mainly sold to Graig Producers, a local producer group of around 300 organic farmers. The organisation is based on the Welsh borders.

Some direct sales are made to individuals but at the moment this is limited as it is time and labour intensive.



A fine specimen of health



Kerry and Clun sheep



Maran Cross chickens







# Pimhill Farm



**Ginny**  
HARMER HILL, SHROPSHIRE

MILK WHEAT FLOUR PORRIDGE OATS JUMBO OATS MUESLI OATCAKES MILK WHEAT FLOUR PORRIDGE OATS JUMBO OATS MUESLI OATCAKES MILK WHEAT FLOUR PORRIDGE OATS JUMBO OATS

START READING HERE

## Overview

- DETAILS**  
Mixed organic farm of 770 acres, with a dairy herd of 220 cows
- LOCATION**  
Harmer Hill in North Shropshire
- STARTED**  
1920s
- FULL ORGANIC STATUS**  
1949, one of the first in the UK
- PRODUCE**  
Milk from dairy herd, wheat and oats grown and milled on site
- YEARS OF EXPERIENCE**  
Over 20 years
- COMMITTED TO**  
Making organic food affordable and accessible to all
- STAFF**  
Ginny Mayall and her husband Ian Anderson, third generation of the Mayall family. 4 full time and 6 part time people - Roger & Jimmy manage the dairy herd; Fred & Andrew manage the arable; Merve the Miller; and Pat leads the team of Mill packers
- OTHER INTERESTING STUFF**  
The farm has always used traditional methods and was known as a 'compost grown' farm before the use of the word organic became fashionable



**GINNY SAYS:**  
"We are not trying for mass markets by selling to supermarkets. It's important to sell products to local companies and those with similar values"



*Clover is a legume, that 'fixes' nitrogen which is then available for other plants - another positive implication for organic production*

"We spend a lot of time walking the fields and paying attention to what is going on with our crops"



*Mechanical weeding replaces the need for herbicides (weed killers) - you won't see poppies growing in a chemical blitzed non-organic field of grain!*



Ginny's taking a break

**GINNY SAYS:**  
"I would like to make organic food more affordable and accessible. Pimhill is striving to achieve this with the prices we set for our products"

THIS IS THE IMPORTANT STUFF

## Why organic production?

Ginny and Ian believe that **maintaining and nurturing the health of the soil is the key to organic farming**. This feeds the plants so there is no need to feed them directly with chemicals. Plants grown this way have been shown to have larger cell walls and so are less susceptible to attack from pests. From her experience Ginny feels there are other positive implications of looking after the soil health including **higher mineral content which has additional health benefits for humans** consuming the end product. Properly cared for soil also has positive influences on the problem of soil erosion which can cause significant problems with flooding in certain areas.

"You have to be a better farmer in many ways; for example, pre-empting problems and finding alternative ways of doing things"

## The Year

- Spreading well composted manure on the land; sowing Spring beans and Spring cereals; wheat and oats; combing harrow and aerating pasture land; cows go out to grass end of April
- Weeding arable crops with mechanical weeder; checking young cattle daily in outlying fields; checking calving cows on calving paddock; making hay if weather allows; preparing combine and grain storage bins for harvest
- Harvesting wheat, oats and beans; baling and storing straw; mechanical cultivation of land to control weeds; ploughing; sowing autumn cereal crops; bring young cattle and milking cows in to straw yards for the winter
- Feeding all housed cattle; mucking out housed cattle; creating compost heaps; cutting hedges and repairing fences; conditioning grain in store to keep in good condition for milling



## Products

The product range includes flour, porridge oats, jumbo oats, Pimhill-branded muesli. Oatcakes are made locally using local organic butter.

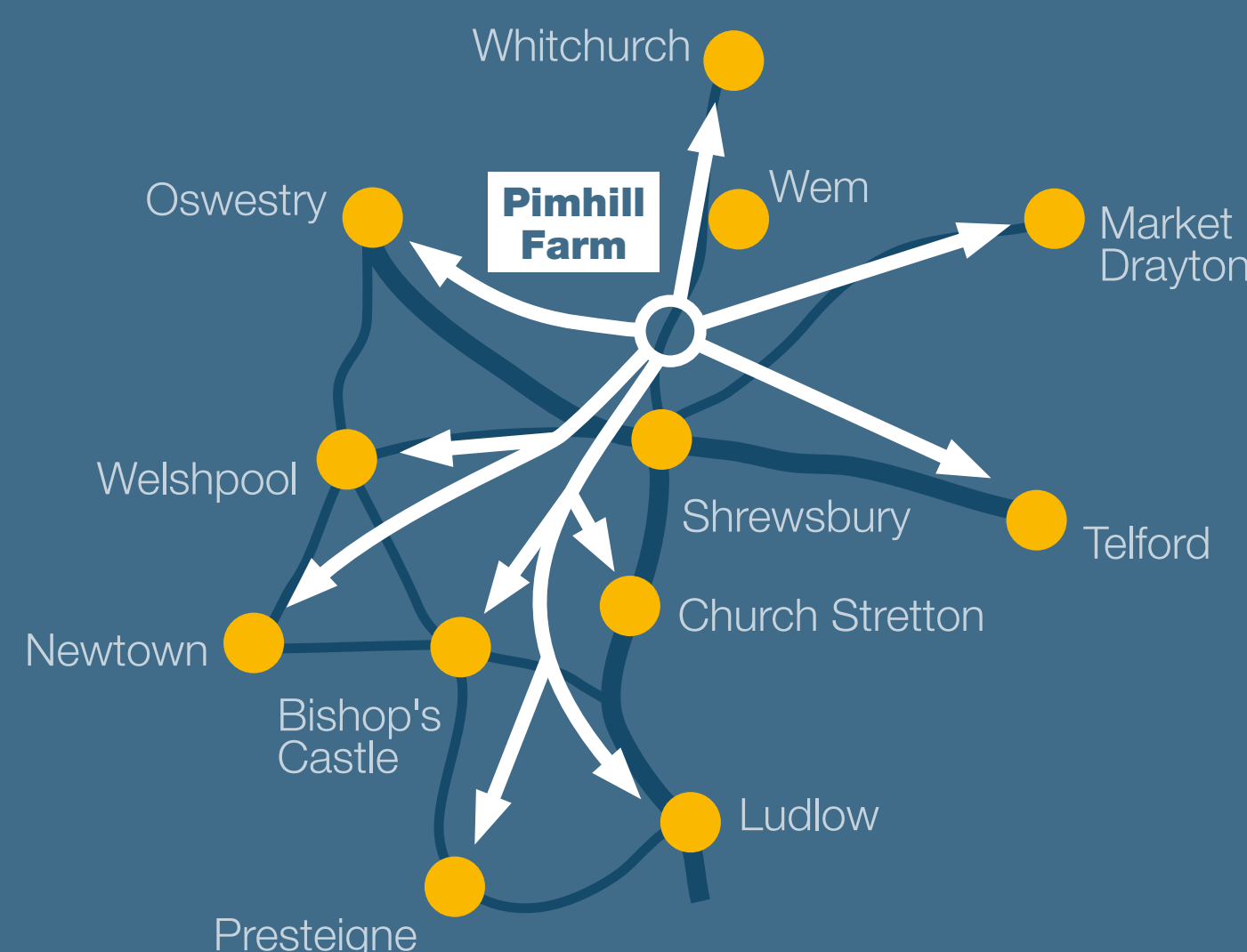
Milk is produced at Pimhill from a dairy herd of 220 cows. This is then distributed to OMSCO (The Organic Milk Suppliers' Co-operative) where it is sold and used to make organic dairy products. OMSCO is a co-operative of 500 British organic dairy farmers using traditional methods to produce delicious organic milk. It is the longest established supplier of organic milk in the UK.



"The main aim of Pimhill is to deliver wholesome, tasty and nutritious organic food, without the use of any artificial fertilisers or chemicals"



**GINNY SAYS:**  
"The farm has been run this way since it began and I wanted to continue with this system, primarily for the health of the land and the animals. Organic farming is a better system for the land, for animal health, and for the environment"



THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS UP

## Product distribution

The oats and oat-based products are sold to a national and local box scheme, and on a national scale to retailers like Myriad Organics. Pimhill flour is sold locally to several bakers and directly to local and national retailers. Milk is sold to a co-operative which is then used by national companies to produce organic milk and cheese products. Direct sales are increasingly being made via the Pimhill website which is something Ginny and Ian wish to grow over the next few years.

**GINNY SAYS:**  
"One of our main selling points is that we see through the whole production process from start to finish"



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