

TABLEHURST AND PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM NEWS CHRISTMAS '04

Watercress Winner

For the third year running, meat products from Tablehurst Farm have been successful in the Soil Association's national Organic Food Awards. This prestigious competition, which attracts over 1000 entries each year, is open to all organic producers across the UK. This year, Tablehurst won the sausage category with their innovative *pork sausages with watercress*.



This is a great achievement and Peter, Barry and their team are to be warmly congratulated. However, one has to say that this is not the first time. In the last three years, Tablehurst meat has been recognised no less than five times in these awards. This together with awards won by Plaw Hatch and the Co-op probably makes our Co-op one of the most successful enterprises in the history of the awards.

If you would like to taste the best sausages in the UK (it's official!) hurry down to Tablehurst Farm before they are all swept away in the rush.

SOIL ASSOCIATION AWARDS - A HISTORY OF SUCCESS

OLD PLAW HATCH FARM

1999	CHEESE	WINNER
	SHOP	WINNER

CO-OP

2002	LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVE	HIGHLY COMMENDED
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TABLEHURST FARM

2002	SHOP	COMMENDED
	BEEF	WINNER
2003	PORK	HIGHLY COMMENDED
	SAUSAGES	COMMENDED
2004	PORK	HIGHLY COMMENDED
		(AGAIN!)
	SAUSAGES	WINNER

Pericles Woodland Project

Faced with the prospect of bringing into being what is now the Pericles Woodland Project, I was aware of the need to identify not only what I hoped we could achieve but also how we could achieve it best within the setting of the farms; were we to attempt to transplant an existing entity, or nurture the germination of something new? Could the project fulfil the requirements of our students and be useful in the farms simultaneously? Now two and a half years on my primary intention has been to form a link between our activities and the farm environments in which they take place which will bear fruit of practical and qualitative value for all.

It has been important for us to establish a presence at both farms, but as Tablehurst has many more acres of woodland than Plaw Hatch, we have initially done most of our work from there, though plans for exciting developments at Plaw Hatch are currently under way. Having set up our activities base in Minepits Wood, we continue to develop numerous woodland skills such as green woodworking and building, wattle fencing and charcoal making. This summer's additions to the site include a clay bread oven and a reconstruction Iron Age pit forge, facilities which will not only diversify our work but also form educational links with local history and land-related traditional industry. It is important that the types of tasks we undertake for the farms bear a relationship to these growing skills, and consequently up to now these

have included maintaining pathways and ponds, wooden sign carving, bridge building, pipe laying, stile, bench and fence installation and general improvements in areas regularly used by visitors.

During the summer months we have been successfully selling our own charcoal in both farm shops and I have felt that this is an area where the spirit of partnership can be reflected in financial terms, so we have been happy to put fifty percent of the proceeds from this enterprise directly back into the farm businesses.

In addition, the project has been able to take on a number of private orders for woodland products, but we are always keen to stress that what takes precedence for us is the quality of the process involved, rather than solely the physical outcome. This has proved to be an especially valuable distinction to draw in relation to contribution made by Pericles students with special needs.

A practical aspect of working collaboratively at both farms has been the realisation that the process of organising suitable tasks is likely to represent yet another demand on the greatly stretched time and attention of those involved. This has meant that in addition to our farm related work we have also been able to extend our activities out into the local and broader community, working on a number of projects with Forest Row Primary School, the

Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Forest Row Parish Council and RiverOcean Environmental Trust (www.riverocean.org.uk). This type of community-based interaction has now become an important part of our activities.

In order for a seed to germinate it must settle in a supportive host environment and I can say undeniably that all at both Plaw Hatch and Tablehurst have welcomed the project from its outset, while the virtues of farm and woodland settings have been wonderful in extending a rich qualitative and educational environment for us to explore. We hope to continue to develop and evolve what we are doing at both farms and are open to ideas and suggestions from those interested.

Thanks go especially to Peter, Tom and Philip for all their support.

Michael Collins.

Project Co-ordinator

www.pericles.org.uk

Pericles is a small independent anthroposophical organisation based in West Hoathly which has provided work, training and therapies for adults with special needs since 1997. One of the core elements within our approach has always been to work with the positive influence of land based work in a community context.

A Butcher's Life

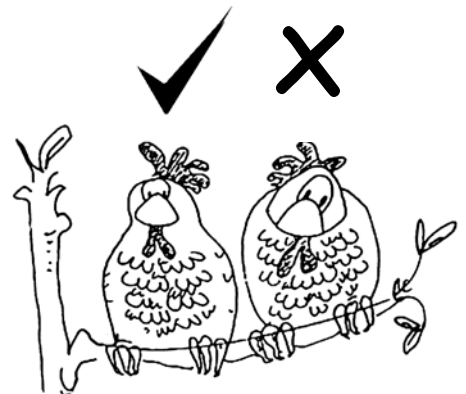
A week in the life of Barry and Rosemary, Tablehurst's award-winning shop team

- Thursday - Saturday** - These are the shop days at Tablehurst. Barry prepares meat throughout this period, juggling the various animals and cuts to meet customer demand. By Saturday evening, just about everything prepared for the week will have been sold.
- Sunday & Monday** Barry and Rosemary call this "the weekend", but back on the farm, there is plenty of activity. This is the day the farm animals go to the abattoir. In a typical week, there will be one beef animal, four pigs and five lambs. Back on the farm, around 150 chickens will be prepared for the shop.
- Tuesday** By Tuesday morning, just about the only thing left in the fridge is the beef, which has to hang for two weeks before it is used, and pork held back for making sausages. The fridge is emptied completely every Tuesday and cleaned. By the end of the day, the beef is back, accompanied by the fresh supply of chickens and about 150kg of sausages - 14 varieties out of the 20+ sausage recipes are made each week.
- Wednesday** All the chicken portions are prepared, and whole chickens trussed ready for sale. The meat comes back from the abattoir, and the main butchering begins ready for the shop opening again on Thursday.

...except at Christmas time of course, when everything goes mad. Already, in the first week of December, beef demand is at double normal levels, and everything else is going up fast. Barry and Rosemary are pouring over their Christmas order lists to make sure that they can match every item on each order correctly. And then, come mid December, there's the small matter of over 300 turkeys to deal with ...

Chicken Lickin'

On November 5th there was an informal chicken tasting session on the farm to see if people were able to tell the difference between the commercial, fast-growing white Cobb that the farm has been producing until now and our new slower growing chicken. (It has the uninspired name of JA 57 by the way). The result did show a 70:30 preference for the new chicken, the most common comment being that it was moister and had a better flavour.



Embarrassingly both myself and Peter chose the "wrong" one, but what do we know? Be that as it may, we are obliged to use this new bird anyway as the standards now insist that organic farmers use chicks from organic parent flocks. Being slower growing, they should be less prone to disease and illness and should be more flavoursome. However, they are unlikely to achieve the same large weights of the Cobb in the allotted time; they are growing to what one might call a normal size and weight that you would find in any supermarket. We will be experimenting with another breed in the New Year, which also has organic parent credentials and which is reputed to reach higher weights.

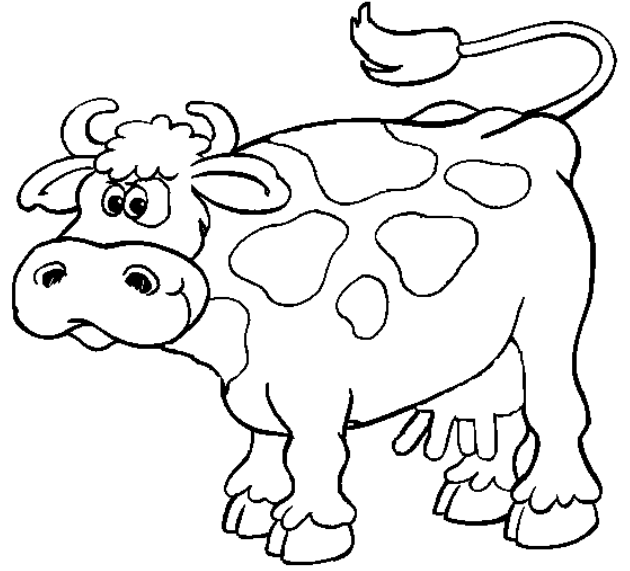
The birds are now being housed in their new 5 star accommodation in Clay Field. We say farewell to the lorry bodies, which to be fair, though unsightly and difficult to manage, have done the job till now. The chicks for the first four weeks of life have also been housed in lorry bodies but are now beginning to be housed in permanent rat-proof purpose built brooding sheds on the farm. These are BIG steps forward and represent very real milestones for the farm.

Andrew Carnegie

Milking the Cows ...

You can never forget about it, never say "no, I'll do it tomorrow." You can be late, but they won't like you for it. You can't rush - it only takes more time in the end. You can't be angry - they have very thick skins! But you can enjoy it.

The cows like best to amble into the collecting yard at their own pace, where they establish a place to stand - ready in just the right order to come into the parlour. Blueberry is invariably first, or Dawn, or Dewdrop or Oak. Cows like rhythm, routine, the same food, same time, same milker. They appear (and are) very inward in thought, but as sharp as prey, with eyes that can see behind and a nose that can smell beyond ...



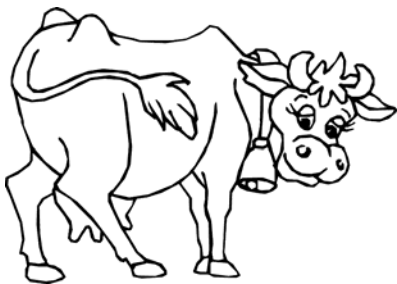
We feed the cows in the milking parlour: oats, beans and seaweed. This helps them to break out of their meditative state and come in to be milked. It's also an opportunity for us to replace the nutrition coming out with the milk.

They come in and eat and listen to the pulse of the machine, we wash them, dry them, milk them. We touch, see, smell each cow. We know them intimately. Some milk very fast, some very slow. We notice if they are not well, or having a troubled time. We can treat them with homeopathy easily while they stand to be milked.

We talk to them sometimes, but they know what you're thinking by the way that you move about. Some rush out to get to the first bite of hay or get back to a hungry calf, some Hoover the floor for any spilled oats.

Now the cows are in for the winter, we miss the walks out to the fields to collect them. They don't! Some mornings we find them all asleep, some mornings they are all waiting at the gate. I don't know why!

People often say to me it must be tough milking cows day in and day out. It is if you have 350 cows and all the milk disappears from the farm in the morning. I think that milking the cows at Plaw Hatch is the best job, and I wouldn't change it for anything. We use every spare drop of milk in our yoghurts and cheeses, which makes it all the more satisfying and worthwhile.



Tom Ventham

P.S. Anybody interested in relief milking or working in our dairy should give me a call. If you like cows, I can recommend a book "The Secret Life of Cows"! It's a lovely read.

... and making the Cheese

5.00 am

Pump in milk and heat

7.00 am

Add culture

7.45 am

Add rennet

8.45 am

Cut curds mechanically

8.55

Stir and de-lump

9.15 am

Heat again

9.35 am

Leave to cool

10.00 am

Pump out whey

10.30 am

Cheddaring (three cuts)

12.00 noon

Milling

12.20 pm

Add salt

12.30 pm

Curds into moulds

12.45 pm

Press cheeses

Making cheese, as any cheesemaker will tell you, is as much an art as a science. In one sense, the process is very straightforward - milk is encouraged to "turn" under controlled conditions, the curds and whey are separated, and the curds are pressed into a mould. What could be simpler than that? In practice, however, the chemistry of cheesemaking is extremely delicate, and small changes in temperature, timing, and handling during the crucial first few hours can mean the difference between a delicious end product and cheese that is too moist or too dry, too acid or too bitter, the wrong texture or incapable of maturing properly.

Philip Donker has made cheese at Plaw Hatch for several years. He learnt his craft in Holland, where cheese making was a commonplace in his childhood home. However, since coming to England, he has mastered the special process required to make a traditional English cheddar. He has also devised a unique semi-soft cheese called Dewpond made only at Plaw Hatch Farm.

I joined Philip on a chill, bright November morning to assist with the making of a mild cheddar and learn a little about the process along the way. I arrived at just after 8am, just in time for the interesting work, but Philip had been there since five o'clock, pumping 660 litres of into his cheese making vat and warming it to the right temperature for introducing the bacterial culture that sets the process in motion. Just before I arrived, a small quantity of rennet, which encourages the curds to set and separate from the whey, had been added, and half an hour later, we were ready to begin work.

By this time, the milk is the consistency of thick cream. Philip then introduced cutter blades into the vat. These circle gently round, cutting through the thick milk, beginning the process of separating the curds from the whey. At this stage, the curds are extremely soft. Philip explained that this part of the process must be very gentle. We are trying to extract the whey from the curds, but if it is done with too much aggression, highly desirable constituents of the milk - particularly lactose which imparts richness and sweetness to the cheese - will also be lost from the curds, resulting in a bitter, unpalatable cheese.

After about ten minutes of cutting, Philip began to warm the mixture again to further progress the coagulation of the curds. At this stage, we were both working hard to prevent the sticky curds from coagulating into big lumps. This continued for about twenty minutes, then we left everything to stand for another half an hour before we were ready to pump the whey out of the vat. The whey doesn't go to waste, as it makes good food for the pigs. At this stage, the cheese vat, full of white curds, looks like a giant pot of cottage cheese.

The next stage in the process is called *cheddaring*. As time passes, the curds in the vat begin to stick together. Cheddaring consists of cutting them into blocks about 15cm square, then turning these on their sides. This process, which is repeated three times at half hour intervals, helps to extract more of the whey from the curds.

I thought at this stage that the curds had received enough abuse, but I was wrong. The final stage of the process is *milling* - the curds are passed through an ingenious hand-cranked device which breaks them up into smaller pieces, just right to create the distinctive, crumbly texture of cheddar. At this stage, a little salt is added. Milling, like every other stage in this process, is also about removing whey. Once milled, the curds are ready to be placed into cheese moulds where they are pressed (to remove a bit more whey) before finally going into storage.

Since this cheese was a mild cheddar, it will see the light of day in about three months time. The maturing period for Philip's mature cheddars is much longer, usually between six months and one year.

Chris Marshall

Recipe Corner - Cheddar Cheese

660 litres milk

Rennet

Cheese culture

Pinch of salt

Warm the milk in a big saucepan. Add culture and rennet. Allow curds to form. Remove whey. Cut and mill curds. Remove whey. Add a pinch of salt. Remove whey. Press into a mould. Remove whey. Refrigerate for three months. It's ready.

Easy!

Tablehurst Farmer's Notebook

Looking back over the last couple of months we seem to have been relentlessly busy. We have not managed to do all that we should have done, but a lot has been achieved. The usual seasonal activities have been happening on the farm. The rams have been in with the ewes, the cattle are all in their yards, most of the pigs are also housed now, many of them in with the cattle in the straw yards. This is something that you do not see on many farms but which we have done for a number of years with great success. The pigs just love it. They enjoy the space and being able to root in the cow manure and straw and are definitely the healthier for it. They also do not have the strong pig smell, which pigs alone in a building do.

The pigs, together with the expert shop team, **won** us the best sausage in the **Organic Food Awards**, with the new Pork and Watercress sausage. Barry and I had a very enjoyable day at Sheepdrove Farm where the awards were presented, instead of in London as previously. We had a tour of the 2,250-acre farm as well as a private tour of their modern on-farm butchery and chicken processing building, very impressive.

Our new chicken processing building is no further yet but the day old chicks are in their new rooms now. Mark Haughton has been very busy, when he could fit it in with his other work, with the building. The storage area is nearly complete but for the doors. All five new (second-hand) mobile chicken houses, which I wrote about last time, are also erected and are clearly going to work very well. Robin, my son, came and gave me a hand for a couple of days, which enabled us to get the area in front of the shop paved with bricks. This is something poor Barry has waited a long time for.

As you will read elsewhere in the newsletter we have just heard the wonderful news that finally **the land and buildings of Tablehurst Farm have been donated by Emerson College to St Anthony's Trust**. This

is something that we have waited for for many years, as it was part of the original agreement when it was decided to make Tablehurst a Community Farm. This should not take away from the enormity and courageousness of the deed on Emerson's part, for which I am very grateful. I hope that the good working relationship that has built up between the College and farm goes from strength to strength. We also look forward to forming a good working relationship with St. Anthony's Trust over the coming years. The first thing will be for us to put finance in place to enable the new barn to be built.

Jup, Helle and their daughters had a week's holiday in Denmark in October. Whilst skating, Jup unfortunately fell over and broke the top of his leg. This needed an operation and a couple more weeks before he was well enough to travel home with Helle. More than a couple of weeks later he is still completely house bound and it looks like it will take quite a while until he is able to work again. He is missed, but we have a good team. It has focused our minds though on the necessity of finding another farmer to join us, to replace Sam who has left for America.

The end of September, Michaelmas, is when we have our annual Barn Dance and Barbeque. As usual it was well attended and went very well. It is also the time of year when we make many of our **biodynamic preparations or elixirs**. These are mainly preparations made from different herbs such as dandelion, chamomile yarrow, stinging nettle, oak bark and valerian, which are prepared in different ways and then buried in the soil until spring. They are then dug up and stored. They are put in the compost heaps, when these are made after mucking out the yards.

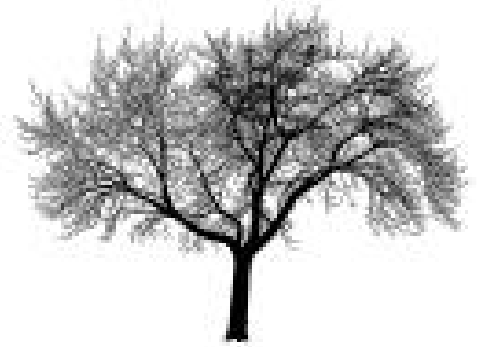
The cow manure preparation is also made in the autumn. This is done by putting cow manure into cow horns, and then burying them over winter. The horns help concentrate the cosmic and earthly forces working in

the earth over the winter into the cow manure. The horns with their transformed cow manure, which is more like compost by the spring, are then dug up and stored. Quite small quantities of the preparation are taken and stirred for an hour before spraying over fields and seed beds in the spring and autumn and also in-between if possible. This cow manure preparation encourages humus formation in the soil and helps enliven it. There is a second spray preparation, which has quite a different function. It is made from silica, from rock crystals, which are crushed into a fine powder. The powder is then put in a horn and buried over summer and dug up in autumn. Only a pinch is needed per acre, it again being stirred for an hour in water before being sprayed on the fields and plants. This has to do with the light pole, as compared with the dark humus-promoting pole of the cow manure preparation. It affects the ripening, the taste, and the storage, in other words the quality of the produce. All biodynamic farms are expected to use these sprays and compost preparations in order to be registered biodynamic and be able to sell their produce using the Demeter label. These preparations can sound quite strange to somebody who hears about them for the first time. I, who have used them for years, also do not pretend to know exactly how they work but I know that they do! I am very conscious of the fact though that to understand nature, the plants, the animals, ourselves and nutrition, i.e. **what really feeds us in the food**, is a lot more complicated than modern science makes out at present. There are definitely forces, and not just substances, that have to be taken into account, be these forces from the sun, the moon, the earth, the planets or the zodiac etc. These forces also cannot be dismissed, as there is enough scientific evidence of their existence.

Peter Brown

TREE PLANTING CEREMONY

TO CELEBRATE THE TRANSFER OF THE
TABLEHURST FARM LAND FROM
EMERSON COLLEGE TRUST TO
ST ANTHONY'S TRUST
SATURDAY 11 DECEMBER, 11.00 AM
TURN LEFT AT TABLEHURST SHOP
& CONTINUE UP THE HILL. EVERYBODY WELCOME



Building a Legacy

Dear Co-op Members and Friends,

On December 11th the formal of transfer of ownership of Tablehurst Farm to St. Anthony's Trust will take place. It has been some years since it was first conceived and agreed that Emerson College would provide our community with Tablehurst Farm as the first land for our farm cooperative. This is an important milestone in the history of the Co-op and forms a key aspect of what is becoming a legacy for the future.

I use the term "legacy" quite specifically as it is a key concept in the formation and development of our Co-op. What we now have in Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch farms, as lovely places to go and places to buy wonderful produce, is the result of the vision and gifts of many people over the last forty years. This giving has provided the foundation for what we now have. But there is much to do, as we have not completed the task of creating a really stable legacy for the future.

We have accomplished much but there is much to do and much to build. On the occasion of the transfer I would like to look back with thanks for all of those people who have given so generously to the Co-op and thank them. I would also ask of all who benefit from the Co-op and have the vision of what it can be for our community in the future and to lend their ongoing goodwill and support to furthering the legacy that is being confirmed again in this transfer.

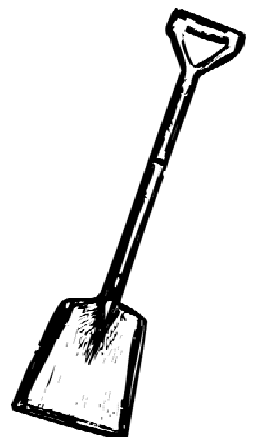
Sincerely Brian Swain, Co-op Chairman

Thanks for the tools ... more donations welcome

Dear Co-op shareholders, friends and readers.

I would like to thank everyone very much who has kindly donated tools to us at Old Plaw Hatch Farm during the summer - even a small shredder has been left with us which is coming in useful. Should you still find garden or workshop tools in good working order that you no longer use we will be happy to receive them. They can be left with the shop attendants for me to collect. If you wish to call me about it my phone number is 0845-3457173. Again thank you for your positive response.

Peter Brinch, Plaw Hatch Farm



WOODCOTE DINNERS

From January you can book for dinner, during the week, in our friendly Edwardian house in Forest Row.

Groups of 6 to 12 people welcome. Off street parking available.

A 3 course meal of biodynamic / organic produce from Tablehurst Farm cooked with love in our AGA kitchen.

Served in our candlelit dining room with open fire, we hope to create a warm and private space for business meetings and family dinners.

All proceeds will go back to Tablehurst Farm.

Price: Business £45,- Others £35,- per person

Drinks can be catered for by Marc, but will be extra on the bill.



Phone Suzanne Hillen on 01342-822170 to discuss your request or if you are willing to help.

Volunteer Hedge Planting 22 & 23 January

Tablehurst Farm has put the land at Springhill and Brambletye Field into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This winter we are therefore going to be planting hundreds of metres of hedges and putting up miles of fencing. The Stewardship Scheme contributes to the cost of some of this. Planting hedges is a big but satisfying job, which can be made light with many hands. We are therefore hoping that we will get **many, many volunteers to help us plant the mixed native hedge plants on the weekend of 22nd and 23rd January 2005**. We will start at 9am on the Saturday and the Sunday at Springhill Farm, so even if it is just for a couple of hours please come and join us. Dress appropriately and please bring a spade.

NO ROOM for a share application form in this edition! Call Chris on 822611 if you want to apply for a share.

Plaw Hatch Mince Pies With Boozy Fromage Fraiss

This home made mincemeat contains no animal fat and no added sugar. It can be stored in a cool place or in the fridge until needed, can be used immediately, or will keep for up to a year.

8oz dried bananas	8oz dried apricots
8oz raisings	5oz sultanas
2 - 3 oz orange peel	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp mixed spice
$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground ginger	$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground cloves
$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp freshly grated nutmeg	1lb grated apples including skins
8oz creamed coconut	Juice of 1 lemon
3 tbs apple concentrate	4 fl oz brandy

Separate the dried bananas and chop them into small pieces. Chop the apricots and add to the bananas along with the raisins, sultanas and spices.

Chop the orange peel and boil it for about five minutes to soften it and kill the toxins. Drain and allow to cool.

Add the grated apple to the fruit mixture along with a little lemon juice to stop it browning. Grate the creamed coconut then add it along with the orange peel, brandy and apple concentrate.

Mix thoroughly, then pack into clean, dry jars. Use as commercial mincemeat. Serve your mince pies warm with a brandy sauce made with sweetened Plaw Hatch fromage fraiss flavoured with a little rum or brandy.



Contacts For all general enquiries about the Co-op, please contact Chris Marshall in the first instance

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Shops

Plaw Hatch Farm	810201
Tablehurst Farm	823173
Michael Hall Garden	825604

Co-op Officers

Brian Swain, Chairman	824740
Oliver Fynes-Clinton, Secretary	823966
Steve Harvey, Treasurer	824808

FARM SHOP XMAS OPENING TIMES

Plaw Hatch	Tablehurst
Thu 23 rd 9 - 6	Thu 23 rd 10 - 4
Fri 24 th 9 - 1	Fri 24 th 10 - 4
Reopens 4 th January	Reopens 6 th January