



# true loaf

*...keeping it real from seed to sandwich*



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The quarterly magazine for Real Bread Campaign members  
Issue 6. Winter/Spring 2011



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You can share ideas and information, join in with general Real Bread chit-chat and keep up with the very latest related goings-on in the following places out in the virtual world:

- The Real Baker-e (Campaign members only): <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/realbreadcampaign/>
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For much more information about Real Bread and the Campaign please visit: [www.realbreadcampaign.org](http://www.realbreadcampaign.org)

## Credits

Issue 6, Winter/Spring 2011

*True Loaf* is the quarterly magazine of the Real Bread Campaign, part of Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming.

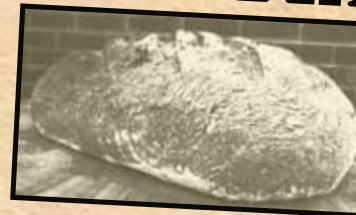
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DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 7 (APRIL - JUNE): 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2011

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in *True Loaf* are those of the individual writers and not necessarily those of the Real Bread Campaign or Sustain. Inclusion of a product, service or organisation in the magazine does not imply an endorsement.

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# Starter

Altogether now: 'Pappy birthday to you, pappy birthday to you, pappy birthday dear Chorleywood Bread Process, pappy birthday to you!' Yes, 2011 marks the 50th anniversary of the launch of that ever-youthful\*, white sliced nemesis of Real Bread. Although neither the original additive-enhanced loaf or the killer of British craft bakery (it ain't died yet, and if we have anything to do with things, its future will be ever healthier), it certainly is the over-inflated icon of both.

So, what better incentive to gird up our loins to redouble our efforts in the fight for better bread in Britain? Are you in? Goodo, onward!

In this issue, we're going back to our roots, saying to the children of the land that it's time to Bake Your Lawn. This ties in neatly with Lessons in Loaf, our new scheme to encourage people with bread making skills to pass them on to the next generation and help make food education in schools mean more than designing pizza boxes.

Still at that end of the grain chain (am I allowed to say that? Has the Home Grown Cereal Authority copyrighted the phrase?), Mark Gatenby looks at the commodification of wheat, then I head off t'mill, and John Letts looks at the impact that added dried gluten could have on a loaf's carbon footprint. Silvija Davidson generously dons her chief reporter hat once more to visit Bread Hero Andy Forbes, founder of a group in south London that works with children to grow it, mill it, bake it and eat it. Sarah Moore is dispatched to Hackney to chat to the founder of a recycled bakery and I drop by our friends at the School of Artisan Food in Nottinghamshire – who've also kindly donated a bread making day worth £150 for our latest prize draw! Phew...

Also in this issue, we introduce Knead to Know: the Real Bread starter, our introductory guide to baking for your local community, which is available to order now.

Oh, and if anyone can think of a way we can celebrate (if that's the right word) CBP's birthday later this year, please do drop me a line.

\*prolonged softness and lack of mould courtesy of a lacing of artificial additives, preservatives and quite possibly hidden processing aids...

Chris Young

Project Officer,  
the Real Bread Campaign

Chris Young  
by Katharine Hillier







# Andy Forbes

As the Real Bread Campaign gears up to encourage Britain to bake its lawn, Silvija Davidson meets Andy Forbes of The Brockwell Bake Association, a man who already is up to much the same in South London.

Drop by a Brockwell Bake event – a familiar sight down in Lambeth, but making an increasing impact at feasts and festivals in Hyde Park, Kings Cross, Southwark Bridge, and indeed Melton Mowbray – and beyond the bustle of threshing and grinding by flour-bedecked kids and bemused parents, you'll spot a seriously informative display.

Amongst grain samples, posters and an esoteric collection of tomes old and new, familiar and foreign, on bread, baking and above all grain, you'll also no doubt catch sight of Andy Forbes. Wiry, floppy-haired, bespectacled, and most likely shovelling grain into a stone quern, in contrast to his merry band of energetic helpers, he's a somewhat shy and reserved figure. Until, that is, you catch him in conversation on the history of Old Hoary (aka Tunstall) wheat, or debating the merits of heritage landrace sowings, broadly defined as a genetically diverse crop from farmer selected and saved seed, usually with centuries-old origins,

adapted to a particular area. At these times, he appears intense, animated, erudite. An unplaceable, quasi-casual accent belies what is clearly an intellectual, ideological devotion to his chosen topic. Ah, you feel, here is an expert of long standing, his natural home the research library, plunged rather improbably into pragmatism.

## A lifelong passion

Which is, of course, only very partially so. When I meet Andy in his living grain museum terrace, he is reticent on his 'political activist' past in Leeds, and his intellectual credentials. He refers briefly, ruefully, to his typesetting training, the advent of Apple, DTP, a career in web design ended along with the dotcom bubble. More to the point are the origins – in Leeds, courtesy of Bradford baked Ukrainian rye loaves – of a lifelong passion for Real Bread and baking; and, remarkably recently, inspiration to seek out British, particularly south-eastern, heritage wheat varieties, and to repopulate areas of the UK with these hardy and flavourful grains.

As documented at *myplot.org* (Andy still puts his web design skills to excellent and entertaining use), for most of the time since leaving Leeds for London some twenty-five years ago, Andy has only been able to bake his own bread in domestic ovens, much to his frustration. Then came an allotment and the serendipitous discovery of a supply of clay under the topsoil of his Lambeth plot. *Myplot* invites you to roam through galleries of photos depicting the communal building of a cob oven with this clay, and the baking and partying that followed. Meander further along *myplot* and the path to The Brockwell Bake and beyond seems a given.

## From competition to classroom

The Brockwell Bake began as a competition just three years ago, when Shane Collins of Lambeth's Urban Green Fair invited Andy along to the event

to 'do something with bread'. At the second edition of the 'Bake, the thatching consultant and archeobotanist John Letts gave a talk about heritage grains in mixed populations, which sparked rather more than curiosity in a receptive Andy Forbes. This meshed with other ideas for expanding Brockwell Bake activity and in 2010, the association helped seven schools and colleges in South London, along with numerous community gardens and city farms, to grow early cultivar and UK landraces of spring wheat from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's Small Grain Cereal Collections.

Local primary schools benefit from workshops that include a slideshow and talk depicting the evolution of wheat from wild grass to modern cultivar, baking classes and visits from local bakers armed with samples of their bread, outlining artisan baking as a career. From the website, teachers can download a well thought out set of notes and instructions for wheat growing, which suggest keeping a 'wheat log' from sowing to harvest. Happily, spring wheat has a growing cycle that coincides nicely with the school year and the heritage varieties thrive without the petrochemical fertiliser or herbicide inputs impossible for a school garden.

## Diversity

Andy's own allotments (and those of other budding enthusiasts he manages to persuade) currently carry a re-mix of John Letts' heritage winter wheats collection, with some of the more recent (relatively speaking) cultivars selected out, and additions of traditional wheats from Spain, Madeira and Italy, which Andy refers to as the 'Latino mix'. Space is also devoted to wheat that Andy has sourced from fellow Madeiran origin allotment holders, a very rare example of a landrace that has been used in Europe continuously. Other precious plantings include a few grains of Old Kent Red (a local Red Lammas wheat retrieved from the Dutch gene bank) and the colourfully named Old Hoary white winter wheat, once prevalent in Essex, Kent and Sussex. The French, their gene bank a prime source of this now rare variety, have equally evocative names for the downy hulled grain: *blé a duvet*; *blé velouté*. Both on the allotments and at partner Hophurst Farm on the Weald, there is also the largest UK crop trial for many decades of the 17th century Blue Cone Rivet, reputedly the grain in the toast at Nelson enjoyed for his last breakfast.

## Vision

This represents rather more than the fruit of fanciful Internet based detective work. Andy's desire and belief is that we can identify and source from gene banks across Europe certain wheat varieties that pre-date the UK's diversity loss, not just that of the 20th century Green Revolution (with its focus on prolific monocultures) but dating back to the 1830's. This was the point at which prolific 'farmers' wheats' became increasingly favoured for their productivity, particularly as livestock fodder, at the expense of lower yielding traditional bread making landraces. We may yet be able to repopulate Britain with bread wheat that is not addicted to chemical inputs, hardy and – crucially – flavourful.

Andy's twenty or so small accessions of Old Hoary and Red Lammas wheats were sown last December. Late summer 2011 will see the first harvest in many a year of these heritage varieties, as prior to this, only a single example of Lammas remained in the UK collection, and none of Old Hoary.

Meanwhile there's little prospect of stemming the cereal encroachment of Andy's house, already nine-tenths occupied by grain samples, seedlings, flour, mills and mixers. A much-needed grant might at least secure a trailer to liberate the Brockwell Bake Association's mobile oven, and Andy has visions of a *moulin Astrié* [a type of stone mill, named after its designers, two French brothers]. Come what may, South London is about to witness a truly unprecedented journey from seed to sandwich.

You can read more about the Brockwell Bake Association at [www.brockwell-bake.org.uk](http://www.brockwell-bake.org.uk) and [www.myplot.org](http://www.myplot.org)



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