

## **Course Resumer for Matthew Hayes at the farm Les Nègres with Jerome Keller**

### **The course objectives where as follows :**

Matthew experiences garden farming with animal traction.

That he starts to understand the working system of the soil, follow through of the agricultural work and the organisation of these methods.

Contact and care for the animal.

Working with the horses, therefore building a solid experience and confidence, appreciating the horses rythemand to learn horse handling.

Familiarisation with the kassine, the different utensils, their different settings and their uses.

Finally to be able to transmit this knowledge and practical acquis when returning to Babat, there would be a part by AT work, then organising initiation to practical sessions and finally course work.

The main objectives were accomplished Matthew had acquis what he had come to learn. He had obtained a real confidence with his horse handling and working methods. The practical work was extremely useful for trial and error and learning from this.

He was capable to work alone with horse, follow through a job with different utensils, this is proof of good capable handling, especially he was able to control the horse in a problem situation.

It took him a few days to understand our working methods and organisation, he insisted on questioning this until he finally gathered the real basis of the work system here centered around the animal. Although there was a difference of opinion when it came to the level of cleaning around the crops !

For the future and follow up of the course Matthew feels that his experience is not yet up to teaching level, he feels more hands on experience is needed. He wishes to continue working with SILARD and learn more with the AT at Babat, to be more natural and confident with the horses.

Matthew has a natural feeling with the horses ( he is English) this allowed him to adapt very rapidly and place himself instinctively where he should be around the horses.

In terms of the garden Matthew understood completely the importance of the relationship with the animal for the students, this contact, a 'life changing experience', another way of educating man ! This is why he feels the animal traction has its place at Babat.

Matthew's course was a very rich and intense exchange for both of us as we both share a common passion for agriculture and work with the earth.

## Report of „Trainer’s training” in Kassine use at Les Nigres, Limousine, France Thursday 28 May 2010 – Thursday 3 June 2010

<p><b>Kassine Trainer: Jérôme Keller</b> <b>Kassine Trainee: Matthew Hayes</b></p>
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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the training course was for Matthew Hayes to learn the necessary techniques for teaching introductory courses into the use of the Kassine system for organic vegetable production.

### **Background to the training:**

As part of a two week visit to France (23 May- 4 June 2010), which included the 3rd BIOTACC international project meeting (23-27 May 2010), I (Matthew Hayes) spent one week at Les Nigres (Jérôme Keller’ 30 ha horse and vegetable farm), Limousine.

Jérôme Keller is one of PROMMATA’s most experienced trainers and users of the Kassine animal traction system for organic vegetable production. Jérôme had visited our farm in Hungary („Open Garden”, Babat Valley, Gödöllő) for a one-day demonstration of the Kassine in May 2009 and for a 3-day introductory training course for the use of the Kassine system in vegetable production. I attended both the demonstration day and the user’s training course, and during the spring of 2010 gained some additional experience with the experimental use of the Kassine system in our vegetable garden at Babat Valley, Hungary, using the Kassine equipment sent by PROMMATA to Hungary as a demonstration model. Theoretically, therefore I was already initiated to the use of the Kassine system in organic vegetable production. The purpose of my visit to Jérôme’s farm was to gain further experience and enough knowledge to be able to run introductory courses into the use of the Kassine system for organic vegetable production for students in Hungary.

I arrived at Les Nigres late in the evening of 27 May and was shown around the farm by Jérôme on 28 May. On Thursday and Friday 28-29 May 16 students (and their teacher) from a nearby agricultural training college came for a two day training in Kassine use for organic vegetable production (similar to the course run in Hungary). The rest of my time on the farm 30 May – 3 June I was able to have many one-on-one training the trainer sessions with Jérôme.

### **Description of the training:**

The first two days were essentially observation of how Jérôme trained a new group into the introduction of the Kassine system. The group was too large (actually the largest group Jérôme had ever taught – larger than the optimum) to allow for me to actively take part in the training, but it was a good opportunity to observe Jérôme’s training techniques. Part of the skill of training in the use of the Kassine (or any other animal traction techniques) is how to handle the group and quickly identify those people in the group who are nervous of either the horses or equipment, and give them the attention they require, whilst at the same time give the rest of the group the instruction they need ... not an easy task.

From the two day introductory course with the 16 students I could see that Jérôme was very skilled and experienced both in the handling of the Kassine and the horses, but also the students themselves. Jérôme's teaching technique is clearly very effective and quickly gives students the chance to experience first-hand the challenges and joys of working with the Kassine with horses (or other traction animals). His technique is to provide room for the student to have maximum hands-on, practical experience, and learn by their own mistakes and triumphs, but to be there whenever students need help or run into problems. I could observe that students quickly gained confidence and experience and learnt a lot in a short time both about the theory of the Kassine and its practical use. Observing the two day training course was a good opportunity to see the challenges facing the trainer. It was clear with such a big group, why Jérôme and PROMMATA set a limit to the size of the group, with an optimum number being around 8 students. Larger groups limit the hands-on experience for each participant, and perhaps more importantly also affect the behaviour of the horses, and tend to make the animals nervous.

The rest of the week (31 May to 3 June) I had many sessions working under Jérôme's tuition or practicing together with Jérôme's trainee. Over these days I was able to experience:

- Theory of ridge cultivation as the basis for the Kassine system
- Setting and use of ridge cultivation discs for ridge making
- Setting and use of 3-tine goose-foot cultivator
- Setting and use of cultivation discs for weed management in ridges
- Setting and use of spring-tine harrow on ridges for weed control
- Setting and use of subsoiling tine
- Setting and use of the ridge cutter blade for recultivation of ridges
- Horse care (feet and grooming, diet, haltering)
- Horse commands and handling for use with Kassine
- Harnessing and unharnessing of horses for work with Kassine
- Single-handed working of Kassine with harness and guide lines

The training and practice took place on various plots of Jérôme's 1 ha area of organic vegetables. The training took place in early-mid season and provided insights into both soil preparation work and cultivation methods for weed control.

### **Results:**

By the end of the week-long training Jérôme's verdict was that I was „trained as a trainer for introductory courses in the use of the Kassine system for organic vegetable production”.

### **Conclusion:**

Personally, I felt very satisfied with the week's training. While I felt myself I would still benefit from more experience before taking on a training course of new students to introduce to the Kassine, I had to recognise that under Jérôme's skilful tutorage, within a short period I did in fact know the basics necessary to introduce novices to the Kassine.

What became clear for me over the course of the week (which was not clear in my mind at the outset) was that there is a great difference between being experienced in the use of the Kassine and being experienced and competent in the use of horses for animal traction. For someone familiar with organic vegetable production, it is possible within a short period to

learn the necessary basics (theory and practical) in order to understand the Kassine system and extend this knowledge to others.

The learning, and even more so the mastery, of working with horses for animal traction is a process which requires many years of experience. Basic methods can be understood relatively quickly, but developing confidence and competence with working with horses requires much more time and steady experience.

I could relatively quickly feel confident that I understood the basics of the Kassine and would be able to apply this knowledge and impart it to others. Learning how to work with horses and gain confidence in this is a much greater challenge.

Within the week I spent with Jérôme at Les Nigres I also gained enormously in confidence and knowledge of working with horses, and felt that if there were no alternative I could manage many tasks alone, but I can also see that mastering working with horses requires many – as much time in fact as it would take to master any practical profession.

Jérôme was a very generous host and a wonderful teacher. His relaxed approach and great depth of experiences allowed me to quickly gain confidence in both the use of the Kassine and a real initiation into working with horses in vegetable production.

I would like to thank Jérôme, PROMMATA and the BIOTACC project for providing the opportunity for me to undertake this training-of-trainer for the introduction of the Kassine in organic vegetable production.

My plan is to be able to apply this knowledge and experience for the training of students at SZIE, hopefully starting in the autumn of 2010 in 1 or 2 day trainings.