

## June 2009

Today, Sunday, turned towards the wind and the tall steeple of Sutterton Church, Charlie, Peter and Jonathan are fencing Overline Field. First, the thick wooden posts are positioned and knocked in with the help of the Matbro forklift; then the wire is fixed in place - pig netting topped by strands of barbed wire. Yard by yard as the field of lush grass bordering the A16 is enclosed you sense the landscape changing before your eyes. Once the fencing is complete the field has a wholly different character.

It's striking: put a fence round a field and the landscape seems to become more human, more personal. It takes on the quality of intimacy. Soon, encircled by its new fence, Overline Field will be dotted with sheep and red cattle. Soon the animals will grow heavy on clover and the grasses of midsummer. Soon in the long afternoon we'll be able to hang over the gate and watch. When in autumn the animals return to the great barn at Lammings they'll be fat as butterpats, hungry for haylage, impregnated.

Beyond the fence among the weasels and herons, beady eyed pigeons swoop down on to brassica fields where they strip and peck the young plants. Some of these plants are rendered useless, others are severely damaged. CDs on strings, flags, scarecrows, brightly coloured bags, bangers. Mark's trying every method he can to try and control these able-minded birds with a singular appetite for organic vegetables.

Now Adrian's finished weeding the arable crops. The cereals and the beans are looking well (these days we drill the crops in a much wider row which makes weed control easier). It's interesting to note the effect the previous crops have on the present ones. Wheats following brassicas or cattle show striking differences of character (of colour and vigour) than those following cereals. It's as if all the greens of the spectrum exist in this little corner of England

Weather and soil conditions have been dry since last writing and today, for the first time this year, we're irrigating potatoes. In Lees Yard Field it's nearly twilight and the great boom of the irrigator moves across the land at the speed of a stalactite. The timing of this operation is critical: by applying water at tuber initiation the potatoes should be of better quality and 'skin finish'. For a picture of the irrigator at work take a look in the Gallery [www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk](http://www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk)

Stella's having great success with the turkeys this year. The percentage of eggs hatched has never been higher, a fact she ascribes to the new layer ration we're using. The Lincolnshire Buff chickens have also performed well with around 140 eggs hatched. This morning we moved the young birds into their new free range homes (approximately fifty birds to a house). It will be november before we have oven ready birds ready for sale. They're a slow growing breed when you consider a standard chicken is slaughtered at 30 days as compared with the six or seven months needed for a Lincolnshire Buff. But they do have a quality of life and by growing slowly seem to produce meat of a nice flavour.

Meanwhile, out in the pig pen at about 3.45pm Gavin and Stacey took a mud bath. This was followed by a vigorous tree scratching session after which at around 4.10pm (to their great delight), I hosed them down with fresh water. Wildly contented grunts and a kind of pig jig followed as they danced like dryads through the trees oblivious of the nuts and apples carpeting the forest floor. Their six piglets watched, the cuckoos sang and a heron flew over the barn. Then they bathed again.

## Market Garden News

Helped by the rain a week ago and some sharp sun the crops have really moved forward. The strawberries are ripening quickly and the spinach and chard is growing away. Occasional spinach plants produce seed heads, a consequence I think, of the weather.

June unfailingly throws up a wonderful crop of weeds and this year is no exception. Last week we weeded the celery, spring onions and fennel. This leaves the carrots to follow. Nearly all the weeding is carried out by hand but we do try to minimize this by tractor hoeing as much as possible. Sometimes a pass with the tractor will suffice.

Next week Simon and the team will be planting lettuce and runner beans, along with peppers, aubergines and melons in the polytunnels. It's a busy time...

## Biodynamic pilot project update

On thursday Adrian and Tim applied the first of the biodynamic preparations (homeopathic tonics) on to our BD land. To do this they used a specially adapted sprayer (which resembles an irrigator, except it's pulled by a tractor). This took place in the late afternoon, the idea being that at this time, when the earth draws in, the tonic will be more effectively absorbed by the soil. I then used my knapsack sprayer to cover areas they couldn't reach.

## Beef and Lamb

**Orders are now being taken for Lamb and Beef boxes which will be ready for delivery the week beginning Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Individual items are also available – joints, steaks, chops...**

**OPEN DAY REMINDER!!  
SUNDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> JULY 10AM - 4PM**

**Warm wishes, Andrew Dennis  
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