

## July 2009

Today, in the field called Trumpet Hall beside what was once the old Boston to London railway line, Tim Morse is baling haylage. The baler, which is pulled by a tractor of some 150 horse power (imagine the power of 150 working horses condensed into a single engine), is working its way up and down the field gathering up the heavily scented grass with ease. Every so often it stops and the wrapping device starts up. A minute later a perfectly wrapped pale blue bale weighing half a tonne is dropped behind. It's an impressive operation which Tim's able to monitor on a small TV screen in the cab. As the bales keep rolling out the analogy of a chicken laying eggs springs to mind.

Haymaking seems to be one of those farm activities which holds a special place in the human heart. You make hay while the sun shines and even though most people lead lives separated from the land they can still on some level relate to this ancient farm activity. This may partly explain the enduring popularity of paintings of haymaking by the likes of George Stubbs and of Claude Monet, or of the way Leo Tolstoy writes about haymaking in *Anna Karenina*. Haymaking seems to be an activity that epitomizes more than any other the essence of summer and of what it is to live in harmony with the land.

Over in Romas Field, so called after my old labrador Roma who enjoyed chasing everything there (pheasants, rabbits and even, it's said, scarecrows), Peter Nicols is weeding onions. Like Tim he's driving a tractor with a machine behind, only in this case there are ten people seated upon it, or rather lying on it. This is our home made 'face down weeder', sometimes known as the 'mobile disco' depending on the decibel level of the music being emitted. Up and down the field it goes at imperceptible speed. Believe me, weeding face down is far more comfortable than weeding by hand in the style of an 'arse-up'.

On Tuesday Adrian went to visit Tablehurst Community Farm in East Sussex, a well known biodynamic farm owned and run by 500 members of the local community. Like Woodlands, Tablehurst is a mixed farm, meaning that livestock is kept there along with vegetables and arable crops. All of the produce is sold direct through the farm shop. Tablehurst runs an active educational and cultural program and also offers farm apprenticeships. For more info visit [www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk](http://www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk)

Golly, how the collared dove sang this morning from the elder tree. Long, cooling bassoon-like notes. I'm finding the sounds of the farm more powerful than ever now the animals are abroad in the fields. The cattle and the sheep attract quantities of insects which the numberless birds follow. Barn owls swoop over the mown fields, turkey chicks strut and preen in the orchard where the apple blossom's fallen and the grass is a deeper green. chickens sit and lay in the wild summer heat and bathe in the dust. Everywhere insects catch sunlight in their wings. They are born and they die in a single day.

Now Gavin and Stacey are at this moment snoozing beneath the shade of a young oak. Here they've fashioned for themselves a boat-shaped hollow into which on hot days like today they're wont to lie like porpoises with one eye open. They've shed some of their wool but they're still distinctively curly and always hungry (I can't for the life of me see why seeing they've never been denied an apple let alone a pig nut since they first arrived at Woodlands). I'm convinced Stacey is expecting. Any minute.

Thank you to all those who suggested names for our nameless male piglet. The chosen name is Derek, after Derek 'Del Boy' Trotter in *Only Fools and Horses*. Derek, who's distinguished by an extremely curly tail, has asked me to send you greetings.

## Market Garden News

The warmer weather has ripened the strawberries and currants and brought on the sugar snap peas. There's been great activity in the market garden since last writing, picking, planting, watering and weeding but all in all it's been a strange year so far with several crops such as the red lettuce, running out of steam before the point of harvest. Equally, the broad beans have produced a quality crop but the yield's been unremarkable. Is it the weather, or the variety, I wonder?

The carrots and beetroot are coming along well. Roy Burton's busy hoeing the beetroot while Mark and Simon brush hoed the carrots before replacing the crop covers to keep off the carrot root fly. We usually have bunched carrots by now only this year drilling was delayed because we were waiting for a new drill. Adrian's planted the celeriac and squash and next week plans to plant (already!) Brussels sprouts and the other brassicas for winter.

## Biodynamic pilot project update

Having applied the BD compost based tonic (known as preparation 500) to vitalize the soil, we'll soon be applying the silica based tonic (preparation 501) which is designed to enliven the plants. This will be very lightly sprayed on to our wheat and triticale crops. Thank you all very much for returning your egg shells which we'll be using to make some of the tonics. We've now reached our target amount ! We'll keep you posted when we need more...

**OPEN DAY – SUNDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> JULY**  
**Woodlands will be open from 10am – 4pm (free admission) with lots of things to see and eat!.....**

## Beef and Lamb

**Orders are now being taken for Beef and Lamb boxes which will be ready for delivery the week beginning Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July.**

**Warm wishes, Andrew Dennis**  
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