

August 2009

When the bees arrived shortly after breakfast they were directed, together with their keeper, to the turkey barn across the yard. Inside, Rosie Redzia, our artist in residence, was already setting up in readiness for her drawing workshops, only her subject matter, a trio of enormous lop eared rabbits, had escaped. I was told they'd vanished.

I was dealing with the bees, which for the purposes of safety (and visibility) had been positioned outside a window, when Tim appeared on the scene:

'The hedgehogs are here!' he announced

(Heavens, I'd forgotten about them.)

'Where would you like 'em?'

Hedgehogs, rabbits? I took a quick decision. Hedgehogs and rabbits seemed more compatible than *ferrets* and rabbits, or for that matter *greyhounds* and rabbits (a vehicle belonging to the Lincolnshire Greyhound Trust had just entered the yard). But then again, where *were* the rabbits?

'Quick, let's put 'em here, Tim' I replied, and we found a place for the hedgehogs adjacent to the buzzing.

'Have you seen the rabbits?'

The yard was by now filling up with exhibitors if not rabbits. The burgers were sizzling, the bread making demo was all set to go, the terrier racing brigade had arrived. Things were starting to click. Just time to nip out with Adrian to view the display of farm and vintage machinery. We walked across the yard to the field. Wow, I'd been expecting one or two examples of steam driven engines. What was laid out before us resembled a show in itself. Everything from threshing machines to pelican planters.

'Have you seen them, Adrian? I enquired.

Adrian indicated he hadn't.

'Not a sign of them anywhere. Not even a whisker.'

But then, wait a moment. Really? It can't be!

We were just turning the corner when....bob,bob,bobbing...

I'd never seen such large rabbits in my life.

Rabbits apart, we hope you enjoyed the Open Day! It's hard to tell how many people came (we think around 2000, more than we were expecting given the Waddington Air Show). Our next open Day, a Christmas Day, is planned for Sunday 22nd November so do make a note in your diary. I'll keep you posted...

Meantime, on the Greek Island of Syros (where I'd gone for a fortnight to recover!) okra, aubergines and tomatoes were on the menu together with exotic figs, water melons, citrus and peaches. In the scorching and intense heat the horticultural crops, I discovered, are grown inside, either under glass or in polytunnels where the soil can be improved and the crops easily watered. It's quite wonderful: the vegetable and fruit shops in Hermopoulis, the island capital, overflow with produce whose heady and melting scents pervade and enrich the streets.

Atnd then home via Venice and Paris to a landscape much altered since early July. To barley fields of gold with windhovers over; to swathes of brassicas which are verdant and shining and tropical; to vistas speckled by deep red cattle with shining coats (in profile, how like the hills of Greece). Ahead of the harvest, which won't be long now and imminent perhaps, if the weather allows, Adrian's mowing the headlands of the fields and the woods. The farm looks neat and pristine and cared for.

While over the way, Stacey and her piglets (she gave birth to her second litter a fortnight ago) prosper in the sunbeams and the mottled shade of green leaves. Snoozing all in a row, like plums in custard.

Market Garden News

It's believed that the carrot originated in Afghanistan about 5000 years ago and that at this time it was either purple or yellow in colour. It was only much later, in the 1500s AD, that an orange carrot came to be developed by the Dutch. I mention this by way of a preamble! Do look out for the coloured carrots in your box. This year, as well as orange carrots, we're growing Atomic Red, Cosmic Purple and Yellowstone!

We have plentiful supplies of fennel, celery, lettuce, courgettes, bunched onions and bunched beetroot. Also the popular green Romanesque (or cathedral cauliflower) and the purple variety known as Graffiti. Next week Simon's going to drill more spinach and chard and the last of the lettuce. There are some nice things to come with the polytunnels looking promising. The melon house smells great, like a confectioner's. This is the first year we've tried melons. Fingers crossed.

Biodynamic pilot project update

While I was away Adrian hosted an interesting introductory day to Biodynamics when Bernard Jarman of the Biodynamic Agricultural Association and Sarah Lyon of Slow Food UK came to Woodlands to make some of the biodynamic soil conditioners (known as 'preparations'). Since then more of these preparations have been applied to the crops. We've now planted our first field of biodynamic cauliflowers, kale and sprouting broccoli. Won't be long now...

Beef and Lamb

Orders are now being taken for Beef and Lamb boxes which will be ready for delivery the week beginning Monday 24th August. Individual cuts are also available. Please phone Rachel on 01205 724778 or order on-line...

Warm wishes, Andrew Dennis

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www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk

