

## October 2009

And so, we're told by *The Times* newspaper, giving a cow a name can have the effect of increasing her milk production. This surprising insight into bovine motivational psychology by scientists at Newcastle University has been rewarded with one of this year's Ig Nobel prizes, an institution that rewards research that makes you laugh and then makes you think. 'The most important thing', said one of the 516 dairy farmers who took part in the research, 'is for cows to be treated as individuals'.

I guess it does make you think. Then again, to name something, whether it be an animal, or a field, a bird or another person is to give recognition to it and to invest it with value. That this might prove rewarding in some way doesn't seem inconceivable. What I like best of all is the rainbow way the research helps re-animate an important and skilful activity like milking. Hooray!

This leads on, somewhat neatly, to the naming of our two Lincolnshire Longwool ram lambs, Glass and Glinka. Most years Bruce selects the best and most vigorous ram lambs to hold back for breeding, and these two, named after classical composers, are two marvelous specimens. Our pedigree females have also been named (after flowers) and registered with the Lincoln Longwool Society. Our Lincoln Red heifer calves are registered with the Lincoln Red Cattle Society. As farmers we're compelled to ear tag all our animals. Even so Bruce knows all the cows by name (sheep are more difficult. They're usually at the end of the field!).

This spell of dry weather has enabled us to make good progress with field cultivations following harvest. Adrian's been dragging, flat lifting and ploughing the land and this should enable us to achieve a useful weed strike when it rains and the land greens over. Last year (and the year before) we were unable to make such good progress because of the wet. Needless to say, there's a negative: it's been too dry to lift potatoes without causing damage to the tubers (the land is very cloddy which has a bruising effect 'Treat your potatoes like eggs' my father used to say...). We've lifted some of the crop but still have 35 acres to go.

Meantime we've switched our attention to the harvesting of beetroot in Roma's Field, a very neat operation involving Tim on the harvester, Chris on the topper (his machine removes or tops the beetroot before Tim lifts it) and Ginteras and Vilmantas on the carts. After lifting the crop's taken to the barn where the clods of earth are removed and the crop's stored. We have a pretty decent yield this time. The variety is Pablo.

On the brassica front the first of our **biodynamic** crops are being harvested. These include cauliflowers, white, green and purple, along with a range of mixed kales and cavolo nero. For interest, biodynamic produce carries an orange and green Demeter logo (Demeter being the Greek goddess of the Earth), a black and white version of which is reproduced above. You'll find the correct colour version on the Home page of our website [www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk](http://www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk). Interestingly our biodynamic crops are very clean with hardly any need for hand weeding. A promising beginning.

Today the turkeys spotted me among the pigs and fairly raced though the young trees to observe what I was doing (filling the water troughs). Many of them took off and flew. Such nosy inquisitiveness. This week we've four school visits taking place. I can guarantee the turkeys (and the pigs) will be the star attractions (but, heaven forbid, don't tell them I told you!).

## **Market Garden News**

**Many warm congratulations from us all to Simon who married Rebecca Brown last Saturday!**

This week Adam, Marcin and Vida have been picking sweetcorn, lettuce and spinach, and lifting pink fir apple potatoes by hand. The dry conditions had had the effect of bringing crops forward so they've finished earlier than normal.

The peppers in the polytunnels are nearly over having produced a wonderful crop. We've also dug all the atomic red carrots and kohlrabi. Things to come include celeriac, the first of which we're lifting this week, and butternut squash. Cropped land has been ploughed in and the garden lies in good heart.

## **Biodynamic pilot project update**

On Friday I went to the biodynamic Soil Conference at Laverstoke Park Farm in Hampshire. The soils there, amounting to a thin layer of light topsoil (say five inches) above chalk, are quite different to ours, and impressively receive 10 tonnes of compost per acre per year across the entire estate running to some 2500 acres. The farming is very mixed. Jody and Claire Scheckter keep everything from water buffalo for the manufacture of mozzarella cheese through to wild boar, hops and (yes!) turkeys.

## **Beef, Lamb & Pork**

**Individual cuts are now available to order. Please click on our Extras page at [www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk](http://www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk) or phone Rachel on 01205 724778.**

**Orders are also being taken for Beef and Lamb boxes which will be ready for delivery the week beginning Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October.**

**Warm wishes, Andrew Dennis  
Tel 01205 724778  
[www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk](http://www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk)**

