

April 2010

Some field names are intelligible: *Deans, Rowtams, Langleys, Capps*. They embody the names of our predecessors. Other names: *Treasure Ground, Seven Sisters, Ying Yangs* are as mysterious as mice. Who were the Seven Sisters? Can anyone explain to me *why* they should be relevant to the Lincolnshire Fens? Legend has it that seven sisters were placed by Zeus in the night sky for their own safety (they were being pursued by Orion the hunter). Zeus transformed them into doves and put them among the stars where they became known as the Pleiades. Where they glitter to this day.

And *Ying Yangs*? The only reference I can find here is of the Ying Yang twins, an Atlanta-based American crunk rap duo famed for the hit singles *Salt Shaker, What's Happnin, Shake, and Badd*. Is there really a connection? I doubt it. And so the imagination races on, delighting in the space created by uncertainty.

You drive beside our *Ying Yangs* on the way to the great barn at Lammings. The dark chocolate soil flecked by gulls runs all of a piece towards the sea wall. The field is level and calm, mottled by sun dapples. It reminds me of the sea. The first part of the field, known as *The Chase*, is different. It hugs the ground like a hare. *The Chase?* What is meant by this? Who or what was chased? The seven sisters? A white stag?

The ground rises slightly marking the site of the old house. The house, demolished during the 1950s, crowned the field like a jewel. I never knew the house but even now fragments of blue pottery, clay pipes, horseshoes and where the vegetable garden stood, fertility, tell the story of its existence. I know the garden paths were laid with ashes. They show up in the frost. Like the veins on a beautiful hand.

A Marsh Harrier, a hen bird, glides up, her wings tipped black, wing beats slow, slow, beats slow, and back towards the marsh. Adrian sees her first gliding over the wheat where giant electricity pylons stride, their feet immobilized in concrete. He slows the truck and we watch her hunting, diving.

The living world is wilder than ever. The towering bird, the miracle of the wheat, the skill with which the field has been ploughed and cultivated and drilled by Jonathan and Peter. The ebb and flow of *Ying Yangs*: its multi-tiered micro-worlds; its galaxies of intangible perfumes, its extraordinary capacity to nourish.

A light railway once ran along the edge of *Ying Yangs*. A steam engine went back and forth along the narrow track conveying produce from the lower portion of the field to the yard. Potatoes, beet, carrots. In those days, especially during winter, the farm roads quickly turned to mud (they still do). The horse drawn carts would sink in to their axles and they were difficult to pull out. Grandpa Frank had other ideas. He built the railway. Today the engine shed serves as a bull pen. It's home to Chino and Meshach. Time, I guess, marches on...

Further on the, the land dips. If you lie flat, belly down against the warm earth, your vision is speckled by reeds. This is the delph, the wide creek fed by salt water from the marsh. I watch one of the swans for whom the delph is home glide serenely past. A couple of mallard raises an alarm, a moorhen splashes for cover.

Everywhere the field.

Market Garden News

The first spring crops, at last: cauliflowers, chives, not-so-far-away rhubarb. The heat in the polytunnels builds palpably. Daffodils romp away suddenly transformed. One minute a suggestion, another, full-flowered trumpets.

Carrots are drilled between showers. Washed by rain the land glistens. You sense it's awake. When the weather calms, when the wind drops we plan to fleece them. It can be very frustrating - waiting for a moment which might then escape you as the wind rises again.

Simon's planted the first lettuce and salad leaves (they're already pricking their ears). He's tractor hoed the spinach and chard while Adam and Marcin have finished weeding the strawberries and lifted the artichokes. The sticky conditions are challenging. Today we're planting horseradish.

Biodynamic pilot project update

Adrian's about to make the next batch of bd preparations to apply to our manure heaps and the growing crops once they get established. These will be predominantly plant based incorporating plants like yarrow, chamomile, nettle and dandelion along with the egg shells you saved for us. Should be interesting.

BEEF, LAMB, PORK & TURKEY
Individual cuts of meat and oven ready birds are available to order on-line with your box or by phoning Rachel on 01205 724778.

NEW PRICES – REMINDER!!
will apply from the week starting Monday 5th April. If you missed the info circulated in the boxes do please check our website for details or phone Rachel on 01205 724778.

Warm wishes, Andrew Dennis
www.woodlandsfarm.co.uk