

Gaddesden Estate News

The Home Farm

Land work has now finished for the winter. The arable crops are looking well. Though we are fortunate in having soils which are generally moisture retentive, we do still need more rainfall this winter, if we are to avoid the drought stress of last spring.

The Beef Shorthorns are grazing quietly at Hawbush Farm. We sent our steers and a batch of heifers to Thame Market at the end of October, when we had a successful sale, with the heifers winning the prize for the Best Pen of Beef Shorthorn Heifers. The sale was supported by Morrison's supermarkets that now have an arrangement with the breed society to promote Beef Shorthorn meat.

The beautiful red, white and roan Shorthorn breed was developed in Yorkshire and County Durham in the late eighteenth century at the time of the Agrarian Revolution, concurrent with the Industrial Revolution, and the herdbook goes all the way back to that time. The original stock was selectively bred from Durham cattle. Though there are many herds in the North of England, the stronghold in the UK is Scotland. Because of the quality of the well "marbled" meat, the breed is gaining popularity around the country. The Dairy Shorthorns, which the Home Farm had during the middle years of the 20th Century, are related, but bred for milk production, and the breed has been used for cross breeding, for example of the Belgian Blue, and exported throughout the Commonwealth, the USA and the rest of the world. It is particularly successful in Australia and Canada.

Estate Activities

Having had a very busy year in the building front, with house and cottage refurbishments and repairs as well as work to the commercial units and the new water supply to Bridens Camp, we are hoping that things will quieten down over the Christmas and New Year time, so that we can all draw breath!

Our commercial units are almost all let or spoken for which is very gratifying, though it probably means we have to revisit the future of the Victorian Home Farm buildings again. Hedgecutting is now completed on the arable land and we shall soon make a start on the hedges on the grass land.

Over the past couple of weeks the jumps on Gaddesden Ride have been tidied up and repaired. New red and white marker flags have been put in place.

Once again we are about to have a film crew coming to use the Home Farm site as its base unit while filming at and around Gaddesden Place. This time it is for an episode of "Midsomer Murders".

Mill Hill

Mike Grayson of Mill Hill Farm tell us that Kathy's young Suffolk Punch "Casper" is growing on fresh air and despite being only two years old would, in height and weight, put many a more mature horse to shame. The young chap has already had a collar and plough gears on and took to it without concern although he has not yet started formal training.

For those who have known the team over the years you will be aware that Pip Reid took on Kathy's 19'1" Shire "Gaddesden Brigadier" (Sam) who, now aged 21, has retired to stables on the Sandringham Estate. They hope that 7 year-old Gaddesden Connor will be able to match his myriad of prestigious awards as he assumes the onerous mantle.

As the show season came to an end the final events were the Ashridge Country Show where the Graysons met Dave, Debbie and their young son who run the Horses Helping People centre at Aston Clinton. (Their website is worth visiting.) The last show was at Luton Hoo, which was great fun and a very relaxed day. One of the favourite events of the year was the visit to the farm by members of the Chiltern Driving Club. This year Mike and Kathy were pleased to welcome twelve or so members and presented Casper for his first public

appearance. The presence of the young chap and the Clydesdales gave Kathy and Mike the opportunity to talk about their very different origins. Mike and Kathy have been approached by an East Anglian land owner about running an introductory course on horse logging which the landowner hope to use in his woodland standings.

In the third week of November “Silent” once again became a media personality when he gave a star quality performance for the BBC’s Country File programme which should be screened on 4th December 2011. Sadly despite being the horse in the horse-logging piece he was somewhat marginalised which Mike and Kathy found somewhat sad. Still it all helps raise the profile of these larger horses.

Upperwood Farm Stud

Greg Parsons of Upperwood Farm has been telling us about his son Billy’s sheep breeding. He has bought a new Texel tup or ram. The young ram is the grandson of a prize winning ram called “Strathbogie Python” which is the Texel breed “sire of the year” and despite only arriving on the farm this week has already got to work. Billy is hoping that next spring will see the arrival of some award winning lambs to add to his flock.

At last the repair work following the fire and explosion in August 2010 is finally finished.

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