

## **GADDESSEN ESTATE NEWS**

February 2012

### Cattle

The Beef Shorthorn herd has been housed now for about a month, bedded on wheat straw and fed on silage. We had a few bales remaining of a big stock of straw, in round bales, from 2007 which we have been using up before starting on the 2011 stock, which is in square bales and easier to handle. There was a reasonable crop of grass silage last year and we should have enough to feed the herd before they go out to grass in April. The silage is wrapped in air tight polythene to allow it to “pickle” and to stop it rotting. After the bags are cut open, the plastic is saved and collected with the baler twine for recycling. Our next operation is to have the cows ultrasound scanned to see whether they are in calf and to decide which, if any, “barreners” to cull.

We have just received our Beef Shorthorn Journal for 2012 and it confirms that the breed is really “on a roll”, helped considerably by the support of Morrison’s supermarkets. The “Perth” Bull Sales come up this month, though these now take place at a new mart near Stirling. There is a massive entry for beef bulls. Although we won’t be going this year we need to consider a new bull again because so many of the herd are daughters of our current chap “Wavendon Red Rattler”.

Rob Pratt, who helps us with the herd, has been grazing his sheep on several of the pastures. They are excellent for cleaning up the grassland as well as providing the much needed “golden hoof” in the form of manure.

### Arable

So far all the crops are looking well after the first part of the winter. There is little to report on in this department. Grain and beans have been moving out of the grain stores on a regular basis.

### Horses

Work continues on upgrading the ride, with jumps being repaired or replaced and new red and white direction flags fitted to each jump. The white flags are marked with the number of the jump using a pen with plastic ink, designed for marking cattle ear tags.

The grazing paddocks are currently all occupied, though Avery’s yard at Gaddesden Place Stables is empty, awaiting refurbishment.

Greg Parsons of Upperwood Farm tells us that his first foal of the year was born on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January with a second due next week. Is this filly foal a sign that Spring is on the way?

### General Farm Work

Hedge cutting is being carried out over all the estate, hopefully finishing by the end of January. Legally we cannot cut hedges after the end of February to avoid disturbing nesting birds. On the

few occasions that one undertakes “cutting and laying”, this can continue till March 31<sup>st</sup>. Stephen Behr, our contractor, has trimmed many of the roadside hedges and those on the arable land, while either Nathan or John has cut those on the grassland and around the woods. We are now into our second five year Entry Level Stewardship Scheme, “ELS”, under which we choose which hedges are to be cut on a biennial or triennial cycle. Three years’ growth needs a heavy duty hedgecutter, which is a contractor’s machine and bigger than the one we have here on the farm.

Regular estate maintenance continues with the usual work on fences, roads and buildings.

### Forestry

We are in the process of preparing our draft Plan of Operations for the next five years, before it is sent to the Forestry Commission for approval. This details all the operations we intend to undertake, including thinning, felling, planting and re-planting. The first of these Plans of Operations on the office shelf began in 1957 and they have been renewed on a five yearly basis ever since. We sold several of the Cricket Bat Willows in the Water End Meadows last year and these are soon to be replaced by new willow sets.

### Diamond Jubilee

We are thinking about planting a small diamond shaped spinney to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. We planted Jubilee Wood for the Silver Jubilee and with the help of the Parish Council and Dacorum put up the new cricket pavilion at Bridens Camp. We are having discussions with the PCC and the Parish Council about how to celebrate the Jubilee on 4th June.

### Residential and Commercial Lettings

We are very grateful that all our units at the Business Centres at Whitehouse and the Home Farm are currently occupied and indeed have had to turn people away! The same applies to houses and cottages, but if you are interested, don't be put off, as there is always a turnover!

### Mr Besent

Readers may remember Molly Besent who lived at Waterside Cottage in Water End, who died several years ago. Her cousin John Besent, formerly Superintendent of Epping Forest, recently sent me several photographs taken by Molly's father, taken I should think in the 1940's many showing the old herd of Dairy Shorthorn cattle in Gaddesden Park. The package included reports of Mr Besent's funeral at the church; he and his father were Farm Bailiffs for Sir Walter Halsey, 2<sup>nd</sup> baronet.

### Future Events

Some dates for your diary:

4<sup>th</sup> June: Possible Jubilee Celebrations

5<sup>th</sup> July: Oddsocks Theatre production of William Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" ( I did this play for "O" level, so I shall be delighted to see how much I can remember!)

9<sup>th</sup> September: Friends of Great Gaddesden Church Sponsored Ride - to be confirmed

We also have one, and probably two, Caravan Rallies.

NGH