



## **Home Farm**

Hurray! Harvest is safely gathered in. We began on 30th July and finished on 16th September, with a lot of “down-time” in between. After the long drought in the spring, and the cold wet summer we were very apprehensive of what the land would yield. As it turned out the field beans suffered most, with early flowering near the base of the plants, producing pods which were too low for the combine harvester to pick up, without taking in earth and stones as well and causing internal damage. Otherwise all the crops, winter wheat varieties “Oakley” and “Alchemy”, have done reasonably well, even though there were several green “berries”, as wheat grains are known.

The land at Whitehouse and Upperwood Farms, North of Gaddesden Row, which carried rape this year, has all been drilled with “Alchemy” wheat. The fields behind the Village Hall and those between the “Red Lion” and the “Crown & Sceptre” were drilled before August Bank Holiday with rape for 2012. The former bean ground has been cultivated in one pass with the “Solo”, a massive “tillage train” pulled by the tracked “Challenger” tractor, ready for the “Oakley” wheat. The land at Hawbush Farm, from which we took the wheat straw for the cattle bedding this forthcoming winter, remains in stubble, until the beans are ploughed in.

Cultivations have changed over the past few years, primarily to reduce cost, but also to improve soil structure and to reduce the emission of carbon from the soil. Land work is very expensive, not only on labour, machinery and fuel, but also, with our “clay with flints” soil, on the steel which is used for plough shares and cultivator legs, tines (points) discs and other wearing parts. Nowadays we only plough each field one year in four, when we “plough in” the beans which have previously been scattered.

## **Beef Shorthorns**

Having been grazing at the Golden Parsonage for a couple of months, we ran the herd back to Hawbush on 16th September, at the same time taking our bull, “Wavendon Red Rattler”, (known as “Red”), out, having done his work for the year. He remains in the Golden Lodge paddock with one cow to keep him company. Our next operation is weaning, which we will do in November, selling the steer (bullock) calves and the heifers (females) which we don't want to breed from, as store cattle for other farmers to finish. The remaining heifers will come into the herd to bring the numbers up to around 35 breeding cows. Weaning is always noisy for a couple of days, as the cows and calves “moo” loudly after they have been separated, and we try to make the distance between them as great as we can. They settle down very quickly.

## **Upperwood Farm Stud**

Greg Parsons tells us ... things are quieting down at this time of year. Racehorses are now coming back out of training at the end of the season and will be spending a well earned holiday at Upperwood. As with the calves and lambs it is time to start weaning the foals from their mothers.

## **Other ventures**

Following the success of the Craft Fair and “Macbeth” we are negotiating with the organisers for 2012, if we can squeeze them in between the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics. The Oddsocks play is expected to be Shakespeare's “Julius Caesar”, “Friends, Romans, countrymen &c”! We are hoping to have a caravan rally to coincide with the Craft Fair. As I write this we are busy preparing for the “Gardeners' Question Time” at the Golden Parsonage in aid of the Friends of Great Gaddesden Church. The “Cloth of Gold Archers” have held two open “shoots” at Bridens Camp this summer. Our big excitement on the farm has been the filming of “The Royal Bodyguard” starring David Jason, who arrived by helicopter. The BBC film unit visited us on several occasions, both using the farm yard as their Unit Base and actually filming in the farm buildings and Marsh Wood.

## **Ledgemore Farm**

Reg Cornthwaite tells us... the last few weeks have been very busy at Ledgemore. This is the time of year when all the lambs are weaned and the ewes given a bit of a rest and a pampering. It is also the time when we say goodbye to some of the old girls who have served us so well and hello to the new young things coming to us all the way from bonny Scotland. It's also the time when the rams wake up from their summer of lying under the apple trees and begin to look out over the fence – D-Day this year was the 1<sup>st</sup> September which with a bit of luck should see our first lambs born in the first week of February. This year two new rams Pablo and Ricky have arrived from Billy Parsons flock on Gaddesden Row, we hope the lambs turn out to look as good as their dads.

The meat side of our business has also been busy especially last weekend when we attended three farmers markets, did a lamb roast and also sold burgers at Ashridge. This month will see us beginning to prepare the sheds for winter – doesn't time fly!

## **Woodlands**

The last oak trees from this year's felling were taken in September. These were poor trees, or ones that had previously died and the timber will go to an Essex sawmill, to be used for fencing. Several of our Cricket Bat Willows reached maturity this year. This normally takes around 16 years. These, too, went to Essex, where they will be turned into "blanks" for cricket bats. They will be replaced by new willow "sets" this winter. The tree surgery we had planned to do on roadsides and public rights of way has been completed, as has tree surgery on trees at 43 and 44 Bridens Camp and Gorse Cottage. This winter we are considering establishing a small "Diamond Clump" to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee next year. The half-way stage in our 20 year Forest Plan has now been reached, so we are planning thinning and felling operations for the next five year.

## **Residential Properties**

19 The Park has had several viewings and has hopefully been let, though requires a good deal of work to bring it up to modern standards, including a new kitchen and electric wiring. We are hoping to connect 19 and 20 The Park to the public sewer. 5 Bridens Camp will become available the following month. We are approaching applicants on our waiting list. A recently refurbished four bedroom house is coming up in November.

## **Commercial Premises**

We are delighted to welcome the "Nutmeg Spa" who have opened in Oakengrove Yard at the Home Farm Business Centre and wish them every success in their venture. Whitehouse Farm Business Centre has just one unit left, the "Harness Room" in Fensom's Yard, otherwise is fully let, and provides a friendly working community. Major building work recently has included re-tiling the roof of the Old Estate Office.

## **And finally**

Several people in the community will remember Herbert Wright and his daughter Peggy. They lived latterly in Bridens Camp. Mr Wright, known as Bert, died in 1976 after which Peggy moved to one of the late Mrs Pryor' Church Cottages. I recall that Mr Wright was a leading member of the Methodist Church. We have been given a photograph album, and some loose photographs, which we understand belonged to one of the Wrights. The pictures seem to have been taken between the late 1940s and the early 1970s. Some of the people and places we can identify, but there are quite a few we cannot. The book will go into the estate archives. If anyone is interested in seeing this, please contact the Estate Office.