

Gaddesden Estate News July/August 2017

As we move into the “dog days” of summer, and the cuckoo changes its note, farm work eases off a bit. There is still a need to keep an eye on the growing crops particularly for insect pests like aphids. The wheat has flowered and the grains are beginning to set and fill. We have completed our T3 fungicide application on the wheat, mixed with some of the trace element manganese. As harvest approaches the milling wheat will need an “ear-wash” of liquid nitrogen and the oats their final fungicide.

We are providing a temporary home for some White Park cattle and this makes the farm much more alive with the sounds of the munching as they graze and the occasional “moo”! Our dairy herd went in 1992 but memory is a strange thing, as one can sometime imagine that one hears the sound of the vacuum pulse of the milking machine, and the sounds of these cattle bring this all back. How we wish that economic circumstances would allow us to become a mixed farm again.

We await to see how the Brexit negotiations turn out and we discover how the re-patriated agricultural regime will pan out, having lived for nearly half a century under the Common Agricultural Policy. Whatever happens, there is no doubt that we will be in a very different world. The Common Agricultural Policy is the principal “true policy” run from the EU so “bringing it home” after so many years will be incredibly complicated.

Harvest

Having had that very dry spell earlier in the year, we are anticipating an early harvest and when it starts life will be all “go” for several weeks, as drilling the winter crops follows on almost immediately, with the oilseed rape being sown around August Bank Holiday. As always we pray for fine weather.

Forestry

On the woodland front we are awaiting our contractor, Mike, who is coming in July to thin the plantation we call Hilton Bank. This was planted in 1990 under the now defunct Farm Woodland Scheme. The trees planted were 50% oak, 40% beech and 10% wild cherry. At the age of 27 years they have virtually no timber value, and will all go for firewood. In Newlands Wood Mike will be extracting windfalls and leaning trees which are all conifers and will be sold into the market as saw logs.

Last year we experimented in buying some tree seed, to see if it was practical to grow our own saplings for replanting in gaps where trees had blown over. The three commercial species we tried are European Silver Fir, Grand Fir and Douglas Fir (not technically a “fir” at all). Of these the Douglas

have done really well and are lined out in the kitchen garden, while the silver firs have been rather disappointing.

Mike, as well as being a forestry contractor also flies drones for both woodland surveys and crop inspections for agriculture and he came recently to demonstrate his small drone and the great contribution these mini-aircraft can make to crop husbandry.

Roadside Trees

Our roadside tree survey has now been completed, and several trees on the sides of the lanes around the parish will either have to be felled or have tree surgery. The last time we did this we had complaints about one of the trees, but following surgery three years ago it is now looking healthy.

Filming

We continue to have quite a few enquiries about filming on the estate, both feature films and TV series. Most recently we were involved for the first time in a fashion shoot, which was great fun, though it involved a large number of people, not just the models from America and the photographer from France, but a large number of technicians with their electronic equipment and trailing leads.

Offices

We currently have a double unit at the Home Farm Business Centre which might be let as one or two units and will be available in August, though we are doing viewings at present.

Residential Property to let

Apart from one former farmhouse, all the properties which were available in May have been let to new occupants, and we warmly welcome them.

Whitehouse Farmhouse is still available. This is a four bedroom house with two bathrooms and three reception rooms, recently refurbished. Please enquire for details from the Estate Office: telephone 01442 252421 or estateoffice@gaddesdenestate.co.uk.

Gaddesden Ride

The annual subscription ride year started on 1st June and we have received a steady flow of renewals and new membership applications. There are still some places available and if you are interested please contact the Estate Office.

We have hosted three Park and Ride days this year. We are extremely grateful to the Gaddesden Place Riding for the Disabled and the British Horse Society for all their help in making these days such a success. These days are run primarily to cover the cost of maintaining our estate ride, however we are also supporting and working with local businesses in the form of photographers and caterers. There will be two further Park and Ride days on Sunday 30th July and Sunday 27th August, entry is £15 per rider and bookings are via www.equoevents.co.uk. Sunday 24th August sees our final ride of the year, the Charity Ride. Entrance is £25 per rider and bookings are via Equo Events. The charities we are supporting are the Gaddesden Place RDA and the British Horse Society. We are

looking for businesses small or large to take a stall on the day, contact the Estate Office for further details.

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