

BROCKLEBY'S WINTER 05/06 NEWSLETTER

At last Net, Max and I are having a break, a bit of a busmans holiday surrounded by sheep and green fields here in the Yorkshire Dales! Thanks to Suzy and Dave (a retired old chap who helps out with the farm and a few farmers' markets) we've been afforded this break as not only is Suzy running the shop and markets but she and Dave are managing our 300+ sheep, growing herd of pigs and, of course, the pack of dogs and pair of horses.

We had an excellent Xmas trade, many thanks to you all, selling some 200 head of Free Range poultry all dressed by Daren and I in a specially constructed unit at the back of our shop in very cold December weather to the sound of Queen's Greatest hits, I think the other staff were jealous as Daren and I seemed to thoroughly enjoy ourselves! My hands have now fully recovered and no longer resemble a bunch of sausages! A big thanks to all the staff (including Georgie who has recently left us to continue her breeding program) who worked very hard to cope with double the usual trade.

Since I last wrote we've had many additions to the farm; more Jacob breeding ewes from the National Trust at Charlecote Park in Warwickshire and Holme Pierrepont Hall near Nottingham, and an assortment from Cross Roads Farm, Eastwell. This last flock of ewes arrived in lamb and are due in April but after closer inspection I think it could be sooner, so Max is busy practising with his lambing rings and purple spray!

On the Piggy side of the farm, (did you know I am the only Swine Herder in the world who makes Melton Mowbray Pork Pies?), we're currently rearing a group of Gloucester Old Spot crosses sold to me as weaners by Martin Enstone from Barlestone which were bred by crossing a Welsh Black / Large White sow with a Gloucester Old Spot boar. I check them every day and at the time of writing out of 16 pigs I have found only one spot! Good job the flavour is not in the spots!

As normal we're doing lots of development on the farm, steadily fencing our land at Kirby Bellars with great cooperation from LCC highways who are helping us with new gates for all you walkers (unfortunately still large enough for pesky Quad bike riders to get through) and at the farm we've enlarged our pig sties so each group of pigs has a dining room, bedroom and toilet (we're currently applying for an AA rating). This summer we're re-fencing the paddock adjoining the pig sties so if they can be bothered they'll have the option of wandering freely around a grass recreational area, complete with pond and picnic table! Our next task to be completed before the first sheep drops (technical term for 'starts lambing') is to refurbish our largest barn, currently used as a tractor museum, into a full blown maternity suite. Although outdoor lambing was successful last year, we discovered that Net can't run as fast as the lambs, so tagging them in a 12 acre field was somewhat difficult! It should hopefully prove easier in the confines of a barn!

This edition's Staff Profile is of new dynamic new member of staff Daren, who we conveniently picked up from our neighbours (Grange Garden Centre Alpine Restaurant). Daren the chef now works for us as a butcher, baker and candlestick maker, oops, I mean market trader! This is great for all of us as he can cover (training prevailing) a multitude of jobs and we can all have the odd day off. His hobbies including working, socialising and sleeping in reverse order of preference but we know where he lives and it's not too far away to get him out of bed! He is soon to start driving lessons so he can take our robust old orange van to market on his own, please keep clear of Central Avenue in West Bridgford if you see it with an L plate on and the roof light flashing!

As previously mentioned we are now officially Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Makers. We've joined the association and last October at the Melton Mowbray Food Festival we officially launched our pie, many thanks to the Mayor and Dr O'Callahan (chairman of the association). Not wanting to keep banging our drum and I'm sure I've probably been heard to say it at many markets but you can't get more authentic than our pie; hand raised (made without any machines) in the borough of Melton Mowbray (and according to the EHO the only one made commercially in the borough), with either my rare breed pork from our farm or pork from David Balls Farm, Frolesworth, Leicestershire and made with organic Leicestershire flour milled at Whissendine Windmill. Clarissa and Johnny liked them so much they bought five, I think they were for her breakfast!

Another food of interest in our shop which has proved to be very popular has been the excellent Organic Longhorn beef we have been selling which comes from Quenby Hall in Leicestershire, these cattle are fully mature and raised in a traditional way that produces excellent tasting meat.

Finally, as we all sit around on a Monday twiddling our thumbs I thought we'd better do something to stimulate trade so now Mondays are officially our 'persons over the age of 60' days (not sure what the current politically correct term is!) So if you are in your prime, and you qualify, you can have 20% off all purchases every Monday between now and the end of November.

Diary Dates:

Wild Game Evening 31/03/06 - Demonstrations and talks from David Stretton (Donington Deer Park) and Phil Cox (local shooter).

First Birthday Party 07/05/06 - A celebration of our first year's trading, special guests, complementary drinks and nibbles.

Farm Walk 08/06/06 - Starting from the Farm Shop and heading around our land against the river Wreake near Kirby Bellars, BBQ & drinks to follow.

Rock Night & BBQ 11/08/06 - Local food (provided by us) and local music all served up at the Garden Centre.

Cheese & Wine Party 29/09/06 - Free tasters of local and organic cheese & wine and an opportunity to meet some of the producers.

Xmas Charity Morning 10/12/06 - Santa's Grotto, Alfresco Dining, local food tombola, free tasters and a great opportunity to meet many local producers.

A Belated Happy New Year and Best Wishes From

Ian Jalland and the team at Brocklebys.

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