

Chickens

Hooray! We have chickens. At last I have the utter joy of going out in the morning to let out " My Girls!" and peek into the nesting boxes and see if there is an egg-Bliss!!!

Rosie and I went on a mission and purchased 4 lovely brown hens ,we did rather like the idea something a little fancier however "Farmer McDonald" only had brown hens in so that was that. I must say I have had Bantams, Wyandotte, Bluebells, Blackrockâ€™s etc but our brown hens have proved to be very very friendly.

I was meant to have a hen house for my 40th but time slipped by and now at 42 years old I had to take matters into my own hands. The boys were out and Rosie and I found the old puppy kennel. We reckoned with a bit of TLC it could be a very fine ,if not rather small hen house. We set forth with great enthusiasm... but we soon realized we were getting a bit out of our depth a call to our lovely local joiner was required. Stuart laughed he said "how long have I got to attach the roofing felt, Give it a door and add some legs?â€• Rosie then declared we were off to Haydon bridge to Farmer McDonald to collect the hens now " No pressure "then he replied! Stuart was a star and rose to the challenge I had a funny feeling even though we offered to help that he would most probably be happier on his own. We left to get the chickens and Stuart said to call and collect the hen house on our way back.

Farmer McDonald is a fantastic character and not only did we collect our hens but we had a great time seeing his horses and pigs etc....we set off with our four hens "coffee, cream, coco and caramel" in a box in the boot.

We dashed back and collected the little house and excitedly filled the nest boxes with straw and put our chickens in their new home.

I wasn't too sure how Charles would react but he laughed not only at the fact we had got chickens but at the fact Rosie and I had made a puppy kennel into a hen house.

All was well the electric fence on the chicken happy until one dark night and Foxy loxy the swine got in and got two of my chickens not only did he do that he left my favorite one Caramel with a hole in her thigh!!!! However with some TLC and some magic antiseptic spray we have she was remarkably perky.

We were thrilled that caramel was bright eyed the next day and we decided to replace our lost chickens firstly so our existing chickens would mix with them as soon as possible and also so that the Fox wouldn't get the better of us.

Another trip to Farmer McDonald followed and this time we got three hens a little older and already laying. Farmer McDonald was busy as his Mare was foaling and we were helped by a very charming young chap who we got chatting to. He must have noticed that I had " I take any poor sad creature" stamped on my forehead as he remarked "we have just got three Ducks in have you seen them?".....

You guessed it we took a few glances at these dear little Call ducks that were very dirty• they will look great after a bath " he said.

He was true to his word for sure enough we put them in the stable with a big heap of straw and water and a very handsome Drake emerged with two beautiful white ducks and a pale "duck egg blue" egg!!!!!!

This minor lapse in my sense of reason resulted in a major effort on the carpentry front as we then had to convert a large "Log box" we had into a bigger hen house so that the Ducks could have the old smaller one as their house. Hector set to work with a friend and what resulted was short of a miracle inside...five nesting boxes. pillars made from some spare staircase spindles with perches on top, a divided area to eat with lovely arch doorways and a great drawbridge style door Perfect.!

The Ducks also got a half barrel sunk into the ground to swim about in....

Now behind the electric fence live in harmony. Poppy , Ruby the pigs with five hens and three ducks. The hens are all laying now and we have had five beautiful blue duck eggs. I feel very lucky indeed.

Posted by Charles & Dee at 14:54

The Greenhouse gets a clean!

The Greenhouse gets a clean!

We had a hysterical time cleaning the greenhouse this weekend. Our Son got hold of the pressure washer and I seemed to get as wet as the greenhouse, I did get my revenge with the watering can later! Now we have a crystal clear greenhouse, no moss or green bits and Charles surprised me this morning as he had made me some fantastic staging for it.

I have moved the sweetpea seedlings from our rather cold North facing porch onto the new shelves and I am sure they have grown in the few hours they have been in their new sunny site! On Saturday I just recieved my seed orders. I usually get a mix from [Marshalls](#) and [Unwins](#) I do find that Marshalls Onions are fantastic. This year I am trying white onions but Red Barron is one of our favorites. Now I better crack on outside with my seedlings and get them installed in the " spring cleaned "greenhouse.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Dee's diary at 15:43

New Bird Boxes

New Bird Boxes

Today our new Wildlife Boxes arrived. We love the wildlife on the farm and have always encourage it where possible. We already have several birdboxes and feeders. One very special one our Daughter made with my Father it is like a little house with a proper lead roof, last month it had a makeover and a new coat of paint and is now back in pride of place! I thought it would be fun to add to our collection hence we now have a Bat box which is going to go near the front garden, a Butterfly and Moth habitat-feeder which we are going to put in the orchard along with a solitary Bee beehive, again I think the Orchard will be the best place for this with all the fruit trees and I also bought a Squirrel feeder and hope it may attract some red squirrels to the garden. It is lovely that the Owls are around and the feeders in the Cherry tree are a mass of Goldfinches. We are thrilled that guests have been adding to our list of sighted birds.

Posted by Charles & Dee at 15:21

Friday, March 28. 2008

Game to Eat

We would like to introduce courses for our guests under the [Game To Eat](#) campaign which is a [Countryside Alliance](#) initiative.

We are trying to promote the eating of local in season Game. Charles loves nothing more than taking people shooting, fishing, beating or maybe just a day observing in the Countryside. We have found that many of our visitors would love to go beating for the day, learn all about it and finish with a real Country Pub lunch and all the banter that goes with it!! We have some great Characters for you to meet and we hope as the weather gets better we may organize picnic days by the river with a BBQ of hopefully Fish! You can learn how to catch or if you prefer how to Cook game. We can prepare it for you to have in the Cottages or to take home and can supply you with Fish or Game to take back to your freezer. Or you can enjoy preparing it yourself, the idea is for it all to be enjoyable and informative but most of all fun, and for all ages too! Keep an eye on the "Game To Eat" logo on our Home Page and click on to keep up to date with all new events. We are happy to try and tailor make a days activities for you- if we can we will!!

Posted by Charles & Dee in Dee's diary, Southlands Farm News at 17:20

Wednesday, March 26. 2008

Going Green

Going Going Green.....

When we started converting the Barns into Cottages it was at the forefront of our thoughts to incorporate as many green policies as we could. Now a year on it is constantly evolving.

Last year saw the development of the new Vegetable garden which I love. A fantastic place to be and we were lucky enough with our produce to still be eating our onions and potatoes now and the abundance of sweet peas were an added bonus! They filled the cottage vases thought the summer and smelt divine.

This year we have seen the arrival of the Pigs and Cows and we are now planning Chickens to be next! I am surrounded by copies of Smallholder and Country Living Magazines Easter "Hot chick pin up" trying to decide what sort ,how many, what kind of house..... We will keep you posted!

We have expanded the herbaceous cottage garden borders and I wait with baited breath to see what will appear. Already small red Peony shoots are visible through my heavy layers of good organic muck! And the delicate buds of the Magnolias stand waiting to steel the show!

We have planted hundreds of trees on the Farm and we hope as they mature hope to welcome even more bird life. For the last eight years we have ben in a Higher Level Stewardship scheme. This is an initiative to encourage and improve the flora and fauna. We have introduced a much less intensive grazing regime, and also a programme of capital works which include the planting of native trees and hedges that include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Dog Rose, field Maple, Guelder Rose ,Hazel and Oak. I have spent several hours with my secateurs walking the hedgerows trimming the tops in the hope we will get nice fat hedges. We have also been working on the restoration of our dry stone walls. We also made a wildfowl scrape and this month we have sighted a pair of ducks there! We have started to see if guests can add any new sighting to our list of birds that live here at Southlands and around Gunnerton. There is nothing quite like the arrival of spring and with it the dawn chorus.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Dee's diary, Southlands Farm News at 23:32

Pies ,pies glorious pies.....

This is a great find!

Charles and I have been on a quest for some time now to find a really good pie to put in the Cottage freezers for our guests. It has meant we have had some jolly good lunches! However on the Hadrians Wall tourism day on 4th March we met a great familybusiness "[Pie Mill](#)" who make great pies.We bought and tried traditional lamb and Charles a game pie, fresh ingredients and all hand made locally.They are so good we have now placed a large order and they will be in our freezers next week, waiting for you to try.....

Spring at last

I just wanted to share my enthusiasm for Spring!!!! Recently we have had storms, gales, snow, power cuts etc. And today it was beautiful! Earlier in the year I found a bargain job lot of Tet-a-Tet daffodils and we planted them around some of the trees in the first field and they are wonderful-tiny golden yellow heads making quite a show after the snowdrops. Only snag is that the pigs have been showing quite an interest in them so I may need to move some for next year (little swines!)

On the subject of the Pigs I have to note that it is totally untrue that Kune Kune pigs do not dig the ground up, they do!!! However as with all animals once you have got them we tend to not dwell on the bad points... so I shall instead tell you how hysterically funny they are and what defiant Characters. Ruby being the bigger bossy one and Poppy is the social one. We have laughed as Charles can now get Poppy to sit! When the Dexters arrived they became jealous pacing up and down the fence line until they got some attention. We had a visitor who said "so who lives in that little house" and there face was a picture when we called "Ruby, Pops" and within second these two pigs were racing towards us ears flapping squeaking with delight. Digging or no digging they are truly adorable...well as long as they don't touch the daffodils!!!!

Posted by Charles & Dee in Dee's diary, Southlands Farm News at 22:57

Our Dexter Cows

I now need to introduce you to the latest editions to the Farm.....Valentine. Celtic and Mini (because she really is mini!) -Our lovely new Dexter cows. After several fun weeks of searching we found them just near Carlisle and they arrived in late February. We also took delivery of a huge round bale of Straw and one of Hay from our very helpful neighbour. To start with we kept them in the stable - there they stood these tiny black yearling heifers knee deep in a thick bed of straw staring straight at me it was a great sight. I have discovered there is nothing nicer than going out after dark to say hello quietly and having a chat with our new friends. They have settled in very well and are slowly getting used to being halter trained!!!

Charles decided to let them out for the first time I was a bit miffed as I had wanted to be there on this momentous occasion!! When I got back there they were happily grazing in the fields it just looked so right to at last have cows on the fields. They are loving the freedom and spring grass....just think maybe calfs in a year or so!!!!

Posted by Charles & Dee in Dee's diary, Southlands Farm News at 22:31

Thursday, February 28. 2008

What's on

[WHAT'S ON?](#)

A very good resource for what's going on. ["What's on"](#)

This is the local council notice board, and has most things on it.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Charles' rants, Local News at 20:23

Sunday, January 20, 2008

The pigs

Pig ark:

For Christmas Dee and I gave each other a small heap of timber with which to build an ark. Everyone pitched in and worked very hard, and the pigs moved in on New Years Day.

We used insulation left over from the cottages, and made a very cozy home for them. Though interestingly they have removed insulation from roof on the lee side of the prevailing wind, which gives them better ventilation. I should reinstate it to see if they do it again.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Charles' rants, Southlands Farm News at 13:10

The Art Tour 2008

THE ART TOUR

If you are planning a holiday in between the 8th of June and the 13th of July and are interested in art, The Art Tour should not be missed.

For information about individual artists:

[The Art Tour](#)

Posted by Charles & Dee in Charles' rants, Local News at 11:34

Farmers Market

Farmers Markets

9.00am - 1.30 pm

Hexham Market Place - Second and Fourth Saturday of the month.

Bellingham Town Hall - First Saturday of the month.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Charles' rants, Local News at 10:11

Friday, December 21. 2007

The pigs

On November the 11th I was conned by my daughter Rosie; she asked if we could get two Kune Kune pigs, I agreed for one day only, thinking that a movement licence could not be got on a Sunday. I was wrong she found pigs and licence in Yorkshire, we are now the proud owners of Poppy and Ruby, we collected them on Remembrance Sunday, and they have taken over the stable while their ark is being built, which will probably happen over the Christmas Holidays.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Charles' rants, Southlands Farm News at 23:27