



CHALDEAN ESTATE NEWSLETTER Spring 2012

FARMING UPDATE

By Gordon Paice

My team and I are busy with out-loading of the grain from last year's harvest. We produce 2,000 tonnes of wheat for bread making that typically goes into Warburton's Mill near Peterborough. We also produce 2,000 tonnes of feed quality wheat which is used in animals' feed production by various regional mills. We are also producing 750 tonnes of oil seed rape this year. This will be crushed to produce oil for cooking.



The early, dry Spring delayed crop growth this season, but the wet weather has now allowed everything to catch up so our crops are growing well but, like us, would love some sunshine! In the meantime, I hope you are all enjoying the sight of the bright yellow oil seed rape which always makes the landscape look sunny.



Harvest begins mid-July. There is never a convenient time to drive our huge, slow combines on the local roads; we know how frustrating it is to be caught behind one but it is a necessary activity and I hope everyone will be patient and accommodating as we make our way between fields and the various grain stores.

ESTATE ARCHAEOLOGY



This flint tool was found by Kevin Easton near Barwick Ford and is thought to date from between 2900BC and 1600BC. Tools of this nature fulfilled a wide range of tasks that would have included hide/bone/antler preparation, woodworking, fish scale removal, cutting, planing/smoothing and other associated tasks where a scraping action was necessary.



CHALDEAN ESTATE

ESTATE UPDATE

by Edd Mowbray

With the recent rainfall the grass, hedges and young trees are all growing rapidly. I will be busy removing overhanging branches on the farm tracks to help the large agricultural vehicles to use them without being damaged. I will also be filling in the worst holes in the farm tracks to help save their tyres; no doubt the many walkers on the footpaths crossing the estate will benefit from the work too.



HEDGE CUTTING

Once the nesting birds have fledged in August, the hedge cutting season will start, running through to February. We operate a three year rotation of hedge cutting across the whole estate.

SUSTAINABILITY

We are passionate about sustainability. Because of this we installed two 99kw woodchip boilers on the Estate in June 2010. They provide heating and hot water for four properties at Chaldean, including the Estate Office and also produce all the energy for grain drying in our principal store. The boilers have together operated for nearly 20,000 hours since their installation and we are proud of this use of renewable energy. Anyone interested in biomass would be welcome to come and see the boilers working – just call me on 07906 024580.

ESTATE BIRDLIFE

The Cuckoo

For many, the arrival of the cuckoo to the UK from Africa around mid-April, heralds the arrival of Spring. This is timed to match the breeding season of its host species here, mainly Dunnock, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail and Reed Warbler.

Since 1994 cuckoo numbers have dropped by 50%. It has been suggested that declines in its hosts or climate-induced shifts in the timing of breeding of its hosts could have led to a reduction of nests available for cuckoos to parasitize. Another explanation could be the reduced availability of prey (mainly caterpillars) during the breeding season.



Barwick Ford Flood
3rd May 2012

Courtesy of Amber Smith

