



June 2007 newsletter

Barn owls fledged/partridge chicks survive rain

Jordan has been helping Philip Hanmer to ring the legs of the barn owls so we can track them as they grow up and fly away. The grey partridge chicks are also carefully counted on the farm by staff from Northumberland Estates to monitor the effect of different habitats and feeding regimes. The numbers have increased very significantly during the past four years - from 2 to 20 pairs per 100 hectares: this shows that conservation and shooting can be linked. Hadrian Game Larder is also at hand to put any shot birds on the table. Sustainable in every sense of the word, when done correctly.

Toasty Takes on expertise

Keith Hudson is now working full time for Toasty Heating Ltd at Lee Moor Business Park and next month Throckley will open to give a domestic focus to the wood-fired heating business. Students from the MSc course on renewables were shown around by Dr Paul Bilsborrow from Newcastle University. It is worth mentioning the CREEL project as a project that is keen to show complete sustainability hand in hand with research on a farm-based site.

(See <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/press.office/press.release/content.phtml?ref=1174398430>)

Beer festival

Two directors of Toasty were able to sample the delights of the Tynedale beer festival. This was my first ever beer festival; I know that will surprise some folk but Roy Iliffe - fellow director in Toasty - and his good lady Mary kept me in line with local traditions in the Tyne valley. As somebody heavily involved with local food and drink policy it was fantastic to get this hands-on experience. I stayed over in Prudhoe and the low-provenance, high-saturated-fat breakfast from the mobile van was the perfect pick-me-up, although a little off-message. Thanks to the organisers for an event that I feel sure Toasty Heating would be keen to sponsor next year. With 103 beers to sample it is only sensible to spread that over three days and nights!!

Floods... Cancel the locusts!!

Plagues abound and Northumberland has missed the worst of the heavy rains. Yorkshire has had it bad and I sit on the flood defence committee down there. 20 swimming pools per second fell in the Sheffield area - 400 million tonnes of water in 24 hours in one catchment. A 1-in-400 years flood event is rare, but one feels it is going to become less rare due to the impact of climate change. The willow has been planted up with extra cuttings this month and that would normally be a mad decision, but summer weather in April and 'April' showers in June allow a flexible approach.

Natalie is off to Canada

Natalie is now 14 and carries the responsibility of being the eldest child at Lee Moor well - 8 end-of-year certificates out of 13 categories spooks her mum and dad! She is in the Duchess's High School choir and they were invited to play in the Canadian world choir festival in Newfoundland. Fresh Element was delighted to sponsor the tops with the tag line "Local food: worth making a song and dance about". More on this trip next time.

Shotton and then to the mountains on bikes



Ever wondered where the Sunday supplements end up? We've seen them, all 200,000 tonnes of them, at Shotton Paper Mill on the Welsh border near Chester. The visit from Lee Moor was organised by one of the tenants, UPM Tilhill. The day was also extended by a fantastic local Welsh artisan lunch and a visit to North Wales to see a mountain bike centre which attracts 120,000 visitors each year.

Ian E Brown