

Blue Sky Thinking

Chapter Five

August 04

Early in August, with harvest progressing well, I took Timmy and decamped for a week to a Greek island with a friend. The idea is for Michael to get on with combining in peace, while Timmy and I have a break from riding in tractors and hanging about! We had a lovely time on the beach and in the tavernas, but on our return, we found that it had rained every day in our absence and Michael had only combined 12 acres! The rain and the cold winds continued for the next two weeks, until the situation became fairly serious. The media began to report tales of ruined harvests and bankrupt farmers and Michael was called upon to perform on Meridian TV news and our local radio station. He duly found a field of soggy, flattened barley, which was growing in the ears and explained the problems. The resulting report was fairly accurate, unlike the one on the BBC national news, which introduced a report about a wet harvest with a picture of a John Deere turning hay! Thankfully, the weather improved in early September and, as I write this, we are hoping to finish harvest today.

The wet harvest and the price of grain have caused much chuntering from the older generation. If my father-in-law Jim is to be believed, in days gone by, the sun always shone; farmers were revered by the public and the government alike; wheat prices were high; beer was cheap; the breathalyser hadn't been invented and everyone had a much better time! However, a cold, hard look at the lives of many women in the not too distant past paints a different picture, of cold; hardship; few rights; many children and menfolk who were largely absent in the fields or in the pub. Certain farm workers were described jovially as 'a bit of a character'. As far as I can gather, this means that they regularly spent too long in the pub, went home (driving) and beat their wives and children. Give me the modern world, with all its faults, any day!

Our website is now up and running and the business of promoting our new diversifications is gathering pace. The meat room is still not finished, although the freezers are in place. Come what may, in five days time I will be collecting twenty 12kg packs of our own beef, so I hope that the plumbing is done by then! I already have advance orders and will be distributing advertising flyers over the weekend, so fingers crossed!

Another of our diversifications has caused my mind to wander into a delightful fantasy land of mystery characters. Abi Adventurer; Swift Charisma; Lunar Planet (Jupiter); Conway Challenger; Elldis Typhoon; Ace Airstream and Marauder (my favourite) are surely super heros in an outer space adventure of the type watched avidly by Timmy on the CBBC channel? But no - bafflingly, these are the names given to those infuriating white boxes pulled sedately around the English countryside in the summertime, much to the dismay of anyone who is caught in the

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resulting traffic jam! I can't help feeling that caravan manufacturers are slightly misguided when naming their products, but anyway, our caravan store is always full and the waiting list for storage grows ever longer. We will be setting up our new caravan site this autumn. I hope that it will be as popular as our storage service.