



October 2008 diary

RABI dinner

The farmers' own charity is the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, [RABI](#), which looks after farmers and farmworkers who are struggling financially during and after their careers. The dinner was to celebrate 100 years of the [NFU](#). I was both a county chair and national committee chair a decade ago, so I still feel empathy with the NFU. Heading up a membership organisation such as the NFU – where members are a very broad church and on occasions stoical – is no breeze. I wish them well them – and an industry where [turnover doubles in 8 years but the value added halves](#) needs all the help it can get

Worshipful Company of Farmers dinner

I know, another dinner... Makes me laugh though - I'll let you into a little secret: when farmers have a set meal it is always beef... yeoman of England, and in this case of the Scottish Borders too. We ate at the Tilmouth Park and it was excellent, which was just as well with an audience who can tell the difference between sirloin and rump. As one farmer's wife said to me, when she and her husband do eat out – a rare event for most muddy-boots farmers – she always has the fish as they rarely have that at home; her husband (a beef and sheep farmer I presume) always has a steak and usually grumbles that it is sub-standard. As a caterer I have plenty to say on this topic!!

Lee Moor sown up!

Tenants on the Lee Moor Business Park may wonder what the crops are as they wind their way down the lane into work, so here is the update on the cropping. During the bulk of 2008 Lee Moor was split 50% stubble (fallow) and 50% spring oilseed rape. The stubble was cultivated in August and planted with winter oilseed rape... these are the fields that will be yellow in May 2009 and possibly cause angst to those who have sensitive lungs! These fields were flooded by the very heavy September rains but are mostly looking well. The spring rape was harvested last month, in reasonable order given the horrific harvest weather, and the land was quickly broken down into a fine tilth to plant winter wheat. This will be harvested in August/September 2009. Wheat prices were £150/tonne when the seed was ordered and are £91/tonne now, and who knows what the price will be when the crop comes to fruition in 10 months time? Who'd be a farmer?

New opportunities in a recession

Bring it on... I don't for one minute underestimate the severity of what is happening in the different economies that now operate around us. I did though notice as Lindsay and I came in from a birthday celebratory meal...

(...this is a treat... I'm not a regular, sadly, in [the Tree House](#). I had a partridge that may well have had a life (and death) at Lee Moor via



Northumberland Estates Gamekeepers... it was plump enough and had lived a good life. One should not eat anything that has not been treated with respect...)

NOW BACK TO MY POINT... when Lindsay and I got out of the car the stars were still there... indeed, many things are much as they were. Some of the things that have changed needed to, and life for most of us will go on. I have friends who have lost jobs and others who are involved in property who have halved their staffing. I will give these individuals as much help as I can.

Lee Moor Business Park remains a good port in a storm - happy to 'pipe' new tenants aboard anytime!

Our built environment

I was at the [Landmark Awards](#) in Newcastle in October and was depressed that all of the award-winning buildings had been paid for with tax payers' money and most had paid only lip service to renewables. Well done to the doctors at Sacriston for pushing for a green building. Lee Moor has just been inspected by [Cheviot Surveys](#) for an energy performance certificate and I am looking making it part of [a Display pilot](#), so watch this space.



Bong... Swans scrapping at Lee Moor!!

When I saw two pairs of swans at Lee Moor I quickly remembered this was not such good news as I first thought. We have 7 ponds but this one is a small pond in front of the Business Park where the habitat is more suited to one pair. The scrap lasted a good hour. I got a few snatched photos of the males in a neck-lock, while the females too had a metaphoric 'handbags at dusk' scenario. Sad and spectacular. Nature can be cruel - and more proof that we all need more affordable housing in the countryside!!

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