



I'm writing this on New Year's Eve. The rush of Christmas is over, all the orders are delivered, the stock check is in hand and we are about to shut both shops for five days to have a bit of a break. It's the first time we have ever shut Blickling (apart from Christmas Day) so this is a bit of an experiment for us.

To be honest we have just about run out of steam and rather than face collapsing in a heap in front of our customers we thought we should be sensible and have a break. Recharge the batteries – or something like that. Of course we have loads to catch up with on the smallholding so it won't exactly be a few days with feet up in front of the fire, instead we will be out mending fences, tagging animals and stopping roof leaks. Still, it will be different, which is the main thing.



We have had our best year yet at Blickling, a huge summer with so many visitors. For many it is a regular pilgrimage for fresh samphire, pork pies and sausages and by June I am getting almost daily emails from people checking we will have their favourites in stock. It's lovely to see old friends returning and we love getting your postcards too telling us how much you enjoyed the trip (and the food !).



Our Open Day also smashed previous attendance levels. Hundreds of people made their way to our smallholding in South Norfolk to spend the day with us. I took three groups of people around to meet the pigs and it was great to see so many young children happily mucking about with the piglets. The stallholders who made up our Food and Craft Market had a good day too, in fact some of them sold more with us than at Holkham's Country Fair. If you would like to come to the next one it will be on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July, so put the date in your diary.



2009 was also the year when we attended loads more fairs and Farmers' Markets. We are now at a market every Saturday and attend fairs over the summer too. The Norwich Food Festival in October was really good for us and gave us the chance to publicise our latest venture – our second shop in Wymondham.



We opened the shop at the end of September and added a café area in October. I love real coffee and we have invested in a fantastic Gaggia machine to ensure we make the best in the area. I am often disappointed by the coffee I have when I am out and I didn't want that to happen with us. I tasted loads of different beans and grinds until finding a really nice organic, fair-trade one. The ones that I had been initially offered as being the most popular (and cheapest) were uniformly awful, over roasted and loaded with too many Robusta beans making for a really bitter cup. No wonder I was so disappointed when buying coffee locally if that's what most were using.



We've had quite a few compliments on our coffee so far so I'm hoping we've got it right. It's no hardship to keep tasting though so who knows we may find even better in the New Year.



The new Wymondham shop has had a really busy December. We started on the 3rd December by opening late for the Dickensian Evening. Our long table was fully booked for two supper sittings and we were rushed off our feet serving the meals and shop customers. Luckily we had help from Bernice who did an excellent job of washing up. Thank you so much, we would have been stuck without you !

Christmas orders then came in thick and fast and in the end we had more here than at Blickling. Large pork pies were really popular, we cooked over 50 in the end, making it one of our biggest sellers of the season.

Another thing which has proved popular at Wymondham is our Pig-in-a-Box. We launched it in the Spring and sold quite a few over the year. A mention in a local magazine in December brought in loads of orders and quite a few were given away as Christmas presents. We still have a few orders to go as some people have ordered one as a New Year present to themselves.



I also became a published author in 2009, how exciting ! My two books about how we started our smallholding and about keeping pigs have proved really popular. We even have a mention in January 2010's Country Living magazine under the title 'Be Inspired'.

As a result of the books I have been asked if I would give a course about pig keeping here on the smallholding but so far I have resisted. Maybe once I've had a rest I will think about it again. The trouble is I think anything that encourages people to understand a bit more about what they eat is a good thing and I want to do it. But there are only so many hours in the day, aren't there ?!



We have a number of things coming up in 2010, new products, new events ... but I'll keep those things for later. Can I just take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone who supported us in the past year and may 2010 bring you health and happiness.

Happy New Year from everyone at Samphire.

**Farmers' Markets**

We attend these Farmers' Markets but don't sell everything at every one of them so if you want something special then call us and ask us to bring it along.

**Beccles**                                      Beccles Heliport                                      1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month  
Selling sausages and pork pies

**Diss**    Diss    2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month  
Selling pork pies, fresh pork and sausages

**Alder Carr**                                      Needham Market                                      3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month  
Selling fresh pork, sausages, pork pies and cakes

**Lopham**    Lopham    4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of each month  
Selling pork pies and cakes



**Both shops will be closed from  
Monday 4<sup>th</sup> to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January inclusive.  
Open again as normal on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January  
when we will also be at Diss Farmers' Market.**