

Monday 27th April 2015

Dear Customer,

Well, it's been one of those weeks. I was at home, doing my emails, minding my own business, trying to recover from my headache, and the phone rang. A man called Geoff, said that he was a local historian and that he was working on a map of local air crashes and could he come and map out the site of the Garden Centre. Why was I not surprised to find that in 1942, a Blenheim Bomber, losing power and trying to land at Scorton airfield, a strip created during WW11 in case Catterick was bombed, clipped the side of the farmhouse which existed on the site at the time and crashed in my farm shop car park outside the front door..... both pilots had been killed. He then said he perhaps shouldn't be telling me, but that.... and before I had time to interject and tell him I didn't want to know...he told me that one had been decapitated.... a Canadian airman called Bob. And that he knew this because parents of friends cleared up the mess. Unable to get the words in to tell him to 'get lost' and 'geoff off', he went on to say that the place was haunted. I asked him what evidence he had and he said that the previous owners had seen him. 'One of them or both of them' I asked. 'Both of them' he said but at that point I could hear uncertainty in his voice. I asked him why if he knew the previous owners, had he not done it when they were there. I now felt furious and told him I thought it was inappropriate that he should be telling me such things given that he doesn't know me or how I would receive such news..... (and given I'm sinking my life into this !).

When I went up there later that afternoon, it felt distinctly creepy for the first time, and I wondered if I'd ever be able to erase the spectre of the beheaded airman from my mind and I was so angry that he'd had such lack of decency. "He won't do you any harm", Geoff had said.

So going off to try and rationalise all this. Why should Bob have the honour of coming back as a ghost. 'The traumatic death' someone suggested. Well on that basis the Somme should have millions of ghosts and most death is traumatic. Why do ghosts only selectively appear in dark corners when people are alone – there's no logic to that. The logic to that is they appear in the dark corners of one's imagination when one is alone. The brain can easily project the transparent figure of a Canadian airman onto a wall. In fact I've just tried it now.....easy.

I haven't told any of my staff this as I don't want them to be tormented by their imaginations when they are locking up on a dark wintry night. Eve is susceptible, the other day she said she was in the office on her own and the door handle into the kitchen turned and the door opened. She looked up and said "it's ok don't worry, you're coming too (... moving with us). I don't know who that is back from the dead. She might.

I met my friend Liz for tea at the Forbidden Garden yesterday and told her about Bob... and Geoff. She asked if the ghost had a head or not. I think Geoff could be looking for Roman coins as we are very near a big Roman site at Catterick Bridge and he'd told me he wanted to bring his metal detector. What an elaborate way to try and get his hands on our gold.

Progress is slow. I am still waiting for the electrician who is still working his way round the new housing estate, and new quotes on the flooring, and for the joiners to come back. Catering equipment continues to be rounded up from around the country and is piling up in the poly tunnel.

After three long years, on Friday will be the Swaphopper launch meeting. Three years to design the website and since I had, what at the time, seemed like an 'ahead of the game' idea but now seems behind it. Allen, the visual designer told me that his wife was having a scan the next day and they would find out its sex, he already has a little girl. I told him about a programme I'd watched a few years ago which demonstrated, having done a study tracking people from across the world for 50 years, that a person's outcome in life – potential health and lifespan is determined less by genes and their own lifestyle - but more in the womb, and the mothers health and diet, and the weight at birth – the bigger the better, meaning that all the organs were fully developed. It was logical and explained a lot. As we were talking a flash struck me that it would be a boy, it seemed logical at that split second though I can't for the life of me imagine how – something must have occurred to me. He left, I said goodbye, then as an afterthought I called after him and told him I thought it was going to be a boy. I was so angry with myself for doing that – nearly as bad as Geoff. Anyway, next day he texted and said I'd been right, they are expecting a boy.

There are so many food programmes on TV these days and I find them so dull but feel I have a duty to watch them sometimes to keep abreast. But something incredible leapt out of the tedium of one of them the other night and you may have seen it. Mushrooms, as they are grown in the dark contain no vitamin D, they are almost unique in the vegetable world for this (though they are of course not quite a vegetable but a fungus). However, if you put mushrooms directly in sunlight, they absorb vitamin D and they do not lose this when you store or cook or consume them. Isn't that amazing. So that's how to increase your vitamin D, which we need to boost our immunity, reduce our likelihood of getting cancers and heart disease and to enable us to use calcium.

Mycelium is the root structure of mushrooms – a mass of threads beneath our soils. There is one in Oregon which spreads over 2,400 acres and is 2,200 years old. Through the mycelium, a fungus absorbs nutrients from its environment. Mycelium is vital in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems for their role in the decomposition of plant material. They contribute to the fraction of the soil and release carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere. They increase the efficiency of water and nutrient absorption of most plants and confer resistance to some plant pathogens. And one can only imagine what else they can do that we don't yet know and how vital they are. In another life I would like to study mushrooms.

We have oyster mushrooms in a lot of the bags this week. You could make some oyster mushroom and coconut rice. Heat some oil in a saucepan and add some garlic and diced carrots and cook until soft. Add coconut milk and vegetable stock and stir. Add the rice to the pan with the chopped oyster mushrooms and some fresh parsley. Season with salt and pepper, bring to the boil, cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until the rice is cooked and the liquid has been absorbed. You can use oyster mushrooms anywhere you might use normal mushrooms – in sauces and stews and omelettes.

Again I apologise for any out of stock groceries but we are running them down and reviewing the range to improve it.

So from Richmond, the twilight zone, I send you my best wishes.

Visit us if you dare !

Isobel

PS With the Bank Holiday next week, deliveries will be going out a day late. Therefore Tuesday's will go out on Wednesday, Wednesday's on Thursday and Thursdays on Friday. I hope this won't cause any inconvenience.