

BROADLY SPEAKING

Our man behind the gates, **Richard Jordan-Baker**, shares life living at Broadlands



Richard's bountiful harvest

Glorious food

As I write, it is the most fruitful time for picking, sharing and eating our homegrown vegetables. It has been the most mixed year since we started fighting all the pests that nature delivers to frustrate our efforts. This year we have had them all: Slugs of gargantuan size; armies of snails; and the worst – the most destructive mole of all time. Every morning more dark hills to greet the new day. Craig, the mole man was convinced this one was a 'clever one' and set about outwitting it. However, this wasn't accomplished before the lawn resembled a miniature mountain range for a film set for *The Borrowers*.

On top of the pests there are also the unexplainable failures that provide great disappointment but are helped somewhat by hearing Monty Don say: 'And of course it's a been a dreadful year for such and such'. This year, despite simply repeating all the same processes as last year, weak, feeble melon plants delivered absolutely nothing.

Then, there are what you think are really clever new ideas. I thought, why not grow morning glory amongst the runner beans?

For much of the summer, beautiful purple flowers added to the cane wigwam. Now however, we have fewer beans than ever as the morning glory has apparently taken more than its share of goodness from the soil and moisture from the rain.

Great success was had from the carrots however, and we had the best beetroot ever. This we put down to merciless thinning early on and Major Tom and Ziggy controlling the mouse population. We are eating sweetcorn almost every day and still giving plenty away. This is down to the new fence erected in the spring to keep the deer in the woods and not in the garden. Last year, when the sweetcorn were a day or so away from being ready to be picked, overnight, the deer ate every cob and trampled every plant. All the growing, watering, weeding and tending was for nothing. Broadlands sees the commercial harvest on somewhat of a larger scale. Literally millions of sweetcorn cobs are harvested each year by tenants, Barfoots, all quickly reaching the supermarkets for customers to buy and enjoy. They have enough that they can share with the deer.

The autumn sees Lady Mountbatten attend the annual Royal British Legion Earl Mountbatten Memorial Service in the glorious Romsey Abbey. It is one of the highlights of the year whereby Broadlands reaffirms its connections and history with and to the armed forces whether veterans or serving men and women.

This and other civic and charitable occasions are often and regularly attended by the Countess either as a private individual, such as the recent 'Demfest' event organised by Romsey Dementia Action Group and the leaving party of the retiring chief officer of Romsey Town Council, Judith Giles, or, in her role as the High Steward of Romsey, such as Remembrance Day or the St George's Day service and parade in April each year.

As well as attending events, on some occasions, Lady Mountbatten occasionally hosts events for the charities closest to her – most recently, a fundraising event for the Southampton Hospital Charity, of which she is patron. These are rare or they do not remain special. The same philosophy, it would seem, as the melons in my greenhouse! ●