



**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013**

Dear Customer,

I'm sorry I never managed a newsletter last week. It was a rough week of being an appalling hostess and the cleaning out of a water trough which led to the design of 'dogospheres'.

The Wensleydale sheep were moved last weekend to a field adjacent to a disused cow byre. The Wensleydales like their shelter from the rain and run inside as soon as they spot a dark cloud on the horizon. Ernest helped me open up the byre for them. The farm at Hornby went out of dairy over 15 years ago and the only water supply for this particular field was a trough in the byre. The water was a dark orange/brown, 15 years of rust and dissolved drowned rats. I must have spent two hours emptying it with a small bucket, stirring it to let the sediment rise, then bucketing it out as fresh water automatically refilled it. That repetitive action took its toll on my neck and shoulder and Sunday morning I felt the start of a migraine.

I had to go to bed and I lay praying that I would be ok in time for Tuesday when a girl who I had never met before, was arriving to stay with me from Cardiff. Train tickets booked months before. Monday came, I was still in agony, still in bed repeating the mantra 'please let me be ok by tuesday, please let me be ok tuesday.....'

Tuesday came and I was still very ill but dragged myself out of bed and picked her up from the station, I hadn't prepared her room, any food, was behind with all my work. Once she had unpacked, Ernest kindly came along and took her to see the sheep. I presented myself very well - an unwashed, depressive, ill, wreck. I was glad to get back to bed on Tuesday night to continue my migraine in peace.

On Wednesday morning I woke up hopeful that the migraine was shifting but it was now starting on the other side of my neck and head. It was raining torrentially and I suggested she might want to have a wander down to Richmond, I drew her a map - the waterfall, the castle, the Georgian cobbled market place. She went while I endeavoured to sort out this week's vegetable bags and catch up on emails. She didn't come back for many hours.

By late afternoon, still ill, I had to take her out somewhere so we went up to the moors, to where there are normally dramatic views but the fog was so dense and the rain torrential so we couldn't see a thing and all I was focused on was stopping Myfa from rolling in dead rabbits - she had that look in her eye.

By late evening, I was finally starting to feel a lot better and went off to bed having arranged that in the morning I would take her to the converted station, now Art Centre and then to Hornby to see the rest of the sheep before seeing her off on the midday train. I went to bed but was struck with post-migraine insomnia, I started designing sculptural, spherical, coloured Perspex dog beds (the 'dogospheres'), with matching bowls, matching Perspex, spherical, wall-mounted, dog biscuit dispensers and Perspex dog tin stackers. It must have been 6am when I finally felt sleepy enough to sleep, I pondered setting the alarm but didn't bother. When I woke up I looked at my clock, it was just before 11am. Mortified, I rushed downstairs to find a packed suitcase in the hall and my visitor sitting quietly waiting for me. There was no time to take her anywhere, just get dressed and rush her to the station. I waved her off and said she should come again soon.

Now I had to get on with preparing for my Friday meeting with William Hague at his surgery. I have had various correspondence with him in the past - milk prices - the British Wool marketing Board refusing to allow a welfare standard on wool - Nat West bank being horrible. I said 'hello' to him when he was opening a local organic bakery and I have seen him striding past my house with Ffion many times on his Sunday walks. But I have never met him.

I took my friend Pat for support. At the entrance were three bodyguards chatting. I had heels on but he towered over me, not sure if it was his height or his presence. He seemed very chipper, not grave and jet-lagged. I said it was odd finding him in this context, a metal industrial unit in the outskirts of Northallerton. He said he was there all the time.

It was a 10 minute slot. He knew I was there about live exports and referred to some pre-prepared notes. As he started to tell me that it couldn't be banned under EU Law, I interjected and referred him to the Ports and Harbours Act of 1857 suggesting that if that were amended and the ports were given the right to refuse the trade, then they would as they hate it. He agreed but said that even if the Act were amended, it would probably still be over-ruled by EU Law. That was a blow, then he said, if it could be banned, he would ban it without a shadow of a doubt. That came as quite a shock.

He then started to say that maybe it could get written into the renegotiation of the European Treaty. He saw my eyes light up and said he didn't want to raise my hopes too much, but that this way, if there were a renegotiation of the treaty and this was accepted by Europe, it would be banned and if there were a referendum and we came out of Europe, then it would be banned. I couldn't really believe what I was hearing.

He was shocked that the whole trade, all the cruelty, all those long desperate journeys of tiny calves and little lambs to abattoirs in the suburbs of Marseille and Istanbul benefited only, and was orchestrated by, one Dutch man who is a convicted criminal. He was convicted here in the UK for exporting live sheep in an enclosed lorry which he claimed was frozen fish. He agreed that even farmers would not like their animals to endure this fate.

When my friend started talking about how there should be more rigorous inspections at the ports, I said, "no, as once they hit the Continent, all rules were out the window, it should just be banned" and he immediately said 'yes'. He agreed that it should just be banned full stop.

As we left, I told him I thought that the government seemed to be doing a good job with the economy - he said that "yes, unemployment was coming down, the economy was picking up..... so all we have to do is ban live exports and it's job done?" he said laughing. I said "Yes".

That's all I want at this moment in time, that this trade - which has haunted me since childhood and our caravan being pulled up alongside lorries full of animals at Dover - that it ends. I walk in the Dales and I see lambs playing, growing, getting fat, being penned up, going past in lorries, I go to bed and I fret for them, fret for what they are to endure. I had started to believe I would not see it end in my life time but now I believe it might.

On later reflection, I was incredulous at his support but shocked at myself and how much I had stopped him speaking, and just talked over him. Time will tell.

Hope this letter finds you well,

Kind wishes,

Isobel