

EUROPE 2023

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Puppies, Falcons and Sheep Racing

The 94th rendition of the Chipping Agricultural Show took centre stage today. According to the locals it's not just an event; it's a piece of history interwoven with the fabric of this town's identity—a living testament to the profound connection between rural life, agriculture, and our shared spirit. It was something we were looking forward to - a day to relax and chill - and just act like a local.

We all woke late and after a leisurely breakfast ambled down the main street to the show grounds located out in the fields via a short cut around the back of houses. The rolling hills and lush paddocks provided a timeless backdrop as we walked. The grass was wet and there were muddy patches which we had to tip toe around. But thankfully the sky remained overcast but clear of drizzle for most of the day. No sunburn, but no rain either.

On entry (£12 each I thought a bit steep), Maddi and Heather made a bee line to the horse/equestrian displays, while Blayze was more interested in whatever vehicles were on show. Vintage tractors juxtapositioned next to the latest electric cars released by Audi, were his priority. I spent my time taking photos while watching the antics of the cattle and sheep and their handlers. I meandered through the many stalls. I was particularly impressed with a sparkling white bull. It was being fussed over by two lady handlers in white attire (including white sneakers) which were quickly covered in bright green specks when the animal suddenly



got the urge to eliminate. The crowd rapidly moved away from the pungent aroma.

We sat down on the sidelines as a family group and watched the heavy horses go through their paces. Maddi,, as a proud owner of a friesian working horse, was in her element. We also watched the shetland horse events. The judge was a tiny lady, in keeping with the occasion.

The highlight of the day was the sheep racing. People were asked to place a bet on the winner but we decided that not one sheep stood out as a certainty. The race began when the gates were opened and a farmer ran ahead shaking a bag of feed. The sheep took off after him. Hay bales were strategically placed for the sheep to jump over making the race a funny spectacle. There was a clear winner although the rest of the flock crossed the line in a dead heat.

What followed was a rather wonderful presentation of horsemanship and falconry by a well known performer - who was in Game of Thrones. He galloped his magnificent black horse (friesian) around and allowed it to go free (with and without a saddle) while his 2 falcons dive bombed and entertained the spectators. It was an enthralling exhibition.

We finished the day watching the dog show. Events included Best Wagging Tail, Best Handler under 6 years, Best Conditioned Dog over 8 years and The Dog A Judge Would Like To Take Home. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, including the dogs.

As a final flourish we took a peek in the "taste of the land" exhibit tent with finalists on show in the onion, beans, carrots and other vegetables plus flowers, eggs and cheeses categories.

I was rather struck by the artistry and diversity of talent of this community, a reminder that art and agriculture aren't separate, but harmoniously intertwined.



The Chipping Agricultural Show is not just about the spectacle; it's about the shared pride in rural heritage, in the hard work that sustains the land and the values that bind the community. I'm glad we attended. So were the kids.

We even cooked a roast for tea.

The weather was the nicest we have had — great for the show.

Tomorrow we clean up in readiness for heading towards London on Monday.





