

Tam O'Shanter Times

Autumn 2014

Issue 65

Cottage facelift



Dave working on the south side of Tam O'Shanter Cottage

It has been nearly 40 years since the cottage had a new thatch roof and time, rain, snow and wind has taken its toll. Although various patches have been re-done over the years it was time for a new roof.

By early November this should

have been achieved by thatchers from Altrincham. Peter Brugge and Master Thatchers (North) will have almost completed the work by the time this newsletter is out though you could maybe see the finishing touches in the October half term (weather permitting).

Staffing and Opening Hours

There are changes afoot in the way the Parks and Countryside department is organised; a major restructuring is taking place. The Council is in a very difficult position and has to make many cuts, from which various organisations are suffering; but our farm is unique in Wirral, and we hope that the Council will acknowledge the need for staffing support in the future. We should know more clearly where we stand with regard to staffing by Christmas. It is possible that the way the farm operates in the future may have to be slightly different, and seven-days-a-week opening to the public might not be possible.

The Trust is exploring ways to maintain adequate staffing and avoid any reduction in opening hours.

The farm has a host of willing volunteers of all ages and abilities and they help a great deal. The Woodworkout staff are vital and do most of the day to day work Monday to Friday. They are very supportive and help out as much as they can, but the people in their care are their top priority. The Trust's priorities have to be the welfare of the livestock and the safety of visitors; the number of qualified staff available has an impact on those things, and upon the availability of educational support, guided tours, special activities etc. Any changes to opening hours will be notified well in advance by posters on the farm, email, Facebook and on the website. Please continue to support Wirral's only urban farm in these challenging times.



Woodworkout update



Why not follow Woodworkout on Facebook? Below are some of the recent posts that you can read on our page.

...As Winter looms upon the horizon, things are looking busy for our farm workers, with leaf raking almost every day, thoughts of Halloween and Christmas not far away, and the coming freeze! At least we have some moral support from the animals, such as Zeus the cockerel. Happy Autumn from us all!

...Two of our lambs haven't been great these past few weeks, so they have currently been taken to the vets and we hope for the best for them. The lambs that are still on the farm however are looking splendid indeed and are enjoying the long grazing paddock!

...our Ewes have gone on their jollies for extra grazing, our goats have been looking good since their spot of bad health a few weeks back, and our service users have all earned a weekend of rest!

You can also find 'Tom's Poetry Corner' on our page, here is one of his recent efforts...

Bidston Green

Down by the tall trees; below the rising of the golden heath,
Through the long drive this is the leaf-gilded old trail,
Unto the shallow slope that descends to the lightening Oak,
Halfway turns to the Witch-hunted Rider's memorial cradle,

The stone-brick and thatch dwelling; retreat of O'Shanter,
Unto this land lies erected; a grand paddocked pasture,
One for which the fluttering wing of life can flourish,
For many a soul have flown from this learning nest,
And many a forest have rooted from the seeds it had sown,
But some yet remain among the company of the grazers,
Alongside beasts; not of wildlife; below the Bidston Green,
For a work of living and the life of a working,
And though the years pass by under blazing Sun and storms,

We shall not go until the last of the leaves have blown,
Because life will only flourish where the fluttering can take place,
Heroes can only rise; when there is something left to climb.

Egg or l'oeuf?

As a primary school teacher, I have used the services of Tam O'Shanter Farm for many years to obtain fertile eggs and hire an incubator for the New Life topic in my Key Stage 1 and Reception classes. I also keep my own hens at home but the fox had killed the current flock so I was keen to hatch some more. It seemed an ideal opportunity to try something new with the children I teach in Chouette French clubs and classes.



During the Easter holidays I began an exciting project combining the science of reproduction in chickens with French language. The course could be adapted to any age but my students were of Primary age. The idea is to teach the subject in the target language using an approach called CLIL, which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. Research suggests that learning in both the content and the language is more effective than through teaching the subjects separately.



During part 1, 'La biologie de l'oeuf' the children carefully cut into a raw egg to find the structures inside. Using picture books intended for French children, we looked at the development of the chick. We looked at photos showing the huge variety in size, shape and colour of birds' eggs. Using plasticine models we investigated the rolling properties of rounded eggs like an owl's compared to tapered eggs like those of a guillemot. We found out then where these birds made their nests and understood that the egg shape had an important function. We investigated the strength of an egg and found that an egg would even support the weight of a child!

Part 2, 'L'éclosion et le développement du poussin', took place in the half-term holiday, when the eggs hatched. The chicks were weighed regularly and their growth recorded on a graph. They were named Strawberry, Raspberry and Loganberry by family members... they really should have French names!

The traditional tale of 'Picorette' and 'Bébé Chouettes', by Martin Waddell and better known to us as 'Owl Babies' were texts that the children could study in a very enjoyable way.

Please phone 625 1998 if you want more information about Chouette French for Children or visit www.chouettewirral.co.uk

Barbara Gleave



Events and activities

All events are free unless otherwise stated.

Happy Hallowe'en

Friday October 31st, 12 – 3pm
Face Painting, mask making, pumpkin carving and lots more.



Dr Bike

Every Saturday, 10am – 4pm
Free bike check
Cycle maintenance and servicing by local mechanic. 25 years experience. All makes serviced
Grab a cuppa and cake at the café whilst you wait.

Bidston Hill and Flaybrick walks

Every Saturday
From 10am and 11 am
Come along and enjoy the wonderful historic woodlands and monuments of Bidston Hill and Flaybrick Memorial Gardens. Choice of free guided walks for all! All walks are for over 16s only and sorry but no dogs. Please wear sensible footwear (may be muddy or slippery). No sandals please!

Friends of the Farm is the working name of the Wirral Urban Farm Association (Charity number 515789) based at: Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm Boundary Road Bidston, Wirral CH43 7PD
Tel: 0151 653 9332
Fax: 0151 652 4236
Email: tamoshan@wirral.gov.uk

Birds of Prey

Saturday October 18th and
Tuesday October 28th
11am – 4pm
Fantastic display of owls and hawks by John Burgess from the Wirral Herpetological Society

Painting clay models

Weekends 11am - 3pm
Choose from a selection of animal models and have a go at painting them to your own design. Charge 50p to £3.



Thanks to:

ASDA for their support at the Summer Fair, especially Nichola, and for the donation of raffle/tombola items.

Young people from the National Citizens Service who put on a fund raiser here and donated over £600.

Daphne for the freezer.
Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Tesco, Chester Zoo, Ness Gardens and Circuit Express for raffle prizes.

Santa's Grotto

Friday December 5th,
6pm to 8.30pm and
Sunday December 7th,
12.30 to 4pm

Limited numbers. Ticket only, for sale from the gift shop and office from October 25th (weekends and school holidays only). Free entry into the Grotto but for a present from Santa there is a charge of £3.50. See Jacko and the stable Nativity scene too.

Stop Press

A very big thank you to Wallasey Ladybirds for their recent generous donation of £1500. They are a busy group of ladies who meet weekly in the Conservative Club in Liscard, and support several charities each year by running a variety of fund-raising events. Their energy and enthusiasm in their support for their chosen causes is admirable!



For further information about the farm and past history look at our old newsletters on the website. www.tamoshanterfarm.org.uk

Membership

£5/address/year. due on the 1st April. New members joining after October 1st will not be due for renewal until April the following

year. Please make cheques payable to: *Wirral Urban Farm Association*. You will receive three newsletters per year, an invitation to the AGM and the opportunity to become more involved by joining the committee

We do appreciate donations either through the box in the Animal House or with your subscription.