

Tam O'Shanter Times

Spring 2013

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Care Farming

There are at least 76 care farms in the UK at the current time (including Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm), providing a range of health, social rehabilitation or educational benefits to over five thousand people a week from a range of 'client' groups*.

Care farming is defined as the use of commercial farms and agricultural landscapes as a base for promoting mental and physical health, through normal farming activity and is a growing movement to provide health, social or educational benefits through farming for a wide range of people. These may include those with defined medical or social needs (e.g. psychiatric patients, those suffering from mild to moderate depression, people with learning disabilities, those with a drug history, disaffected youth or elderly people) as well as those suffering from the effects of work-related stress or ill-health arising from obesity. Care farming is therefore a partnership between farmers, health and social care providers and participants.

Improvements to physical and mental health including improved self-esteem, increase in self-confidence, enhanced trust in other people along with improved well-being and improvement of mood are often reported by care farmers.



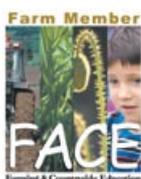
Social benefits include increased independence,

formation of a work habit, the development of social skills and personal responsibility.

In partnership with 'Woodworkout' the farm now provides a structured and supported work environment for adults with barriers to employment. We currently have 10 young people working between 1 and 3 days / week with places for more. Carrying out daily tasks on the farm including feeding and moving livestock, collecting eggs, mucking out, horticulture and general farm duties they are supported by a small team of staff and volunteers.

Thanks to a grant from the 'Your Wirral' Fund of Wirral Partnership Homes we will be erecting a new polytunnel in the allotment area for our workers to hone their horticultural skills despite the weather!

*1 Hine, R, Peacock, J and Pretty, J. *Care farming in the UK: Evidence and Opportunities* Department of Biological Sciences and Centre for Environment and Society at the University of Essex 2008



The Sheepdog with the Littlest Herd



Part Two of Shep's adventure - Shep gets to know goats

By Brenda Noonan

The master had been working for a lady who kept a lot of dogs. She needed a new fence because the dogs were going into other gardens, and as he worked he was sad to see a little goat's face at the end of a shed which she never left, but she always watched him. She was very thin she told us about her each day when he came home. When his work was finished he asked her owner if he could have the goat instead of his wages, and so another little goat called Mini came to my herd. So now I had four to look after, she was very different from Bambi who was now big and white, and then another one called Heidi, she was black, white and grey and had been born into a white pedigree herd, so she was not allowed to stay, but now she would be happy with us.

In time Heidi had a daughter who we called Angel because when she was born she was a lifeless black and white kid, but the mistress made sure she would be alright. She had to swing her around and blow into her mouth. I licked her and the mistress rubbed her and she started moving, but she couldn't stand up. The vet said she had a broken leg so she should be put down. By this time the master was home and was cross to hear that, and said to the vet "You don't put a person down with a broken leg, so fix it!" The vet left carrying the little Angel next to his chest so we didn't know if we would see her again. The mistress was feeling sad as when she was a little girl she used to stay on her aunties farm where there were two goats, one was white and had big horns and used to chase her, but the black and white one used to follow her around, and she was happy to spend her days picking all the tasty greens and herbs that grew on the other side of

the hedges where the goats couldn't get to. Her uncle bought a goat for her from the market, it was a baby called Blondie, she was so happy and wrote a letter to her mother to ask if she could bring the goat home, of course the answer was a big NO! So ever since then she always wished she could have a black and white goat of her own. Now there was a chance to make a dream come true, but would little Angel be strong enough to get better?

The vet returned later with Angel tucked inside his coat. She was yelling, she needed a drink, we all watched as she was taken to her mum when wham! Heidi picked her up and threw her across the pen. She was unable to run away because her leg was in plaster, so she was picked up and we all went back to the house, feeling sad. My job started all over again, out came the feeding bottle, it was just like Bambi, I was a foster mother once more. We had to teach her to walk and fed her every three hours, then she would curl up to the warmth of my body and fall asleep. I would lie very still and watch her sleeping, feeling very important to be part of her life. The vet said her broken leg would be shorter than the other three, and that she would always limp, but when the plaster was taken off she was away on four good legs in no time at all, so the vet must have done his job very well.

The little mistress, Cheryl, had cried a lot because she was allergic to cow's milk, but when she was given the goat's milk she was soon well. There were so many children with allergies to cow's milk, so more goat's milk was needed. Angel had grown big and strong and gave so much more milk which changed our lives forever. There was a neighbour who brought a goose egg to eat, but instead he put it in the airing cupboard to keep it warm, where it hatched. His name was Baby and he used to visit us to play with Angel. The local newspaper got to hear about the little herd in our garden so they came to take a photograph of them and it was put into the paper which they called "Little Wonders".

Before long more goats came to us, two black and white ones, they had been found dumped in the countryside, then another one which was brought as a pet but when it grew bigger it wasn't wanted. They were all loved, fed and tended in the little herd and rewarded us with much needed milk for many children. The mistress also needed more eggs from hens well fed with pure food, so with the help of grandparents and even Cheryl's christening gifts money, six blue feathered hens arrived, chosen because they laid blue eggs! A few days later I went into the house to see a step ladder with a little bulb hanging above it over a large box which was full of baby chicks, their heads were all different colours. It seems a magician had used them in his act at a local club and then just left them there, so they were found a good home with us and gave us many lovely eggs for sick children and adults.

Next time Part Three - Shep learns about goat's milk and goes on holiday

Animal update

With Spring around the corner we will be looking for quite a few new arrivals on the farm.

Our two Oxford Sandy and Black gilts (young sows) should farrow (give birth) around Easter. If they are successful their litter will be a mixture as the boar (male pig) was a Large Black loaned to us from a farm in Irby. Look out for them in the pen at the end of the Animal House.

Likewise our 4 Manx Loaghtan ewes (female sheep) should have lambed by the end of March. Their lambs will be pure Manx as the Ram was also a Manx loaned to us from Mrs Newby from a farm near Shrewsbury. After a few days inside they will be out in the paddocks as long as the weather is reasonable.

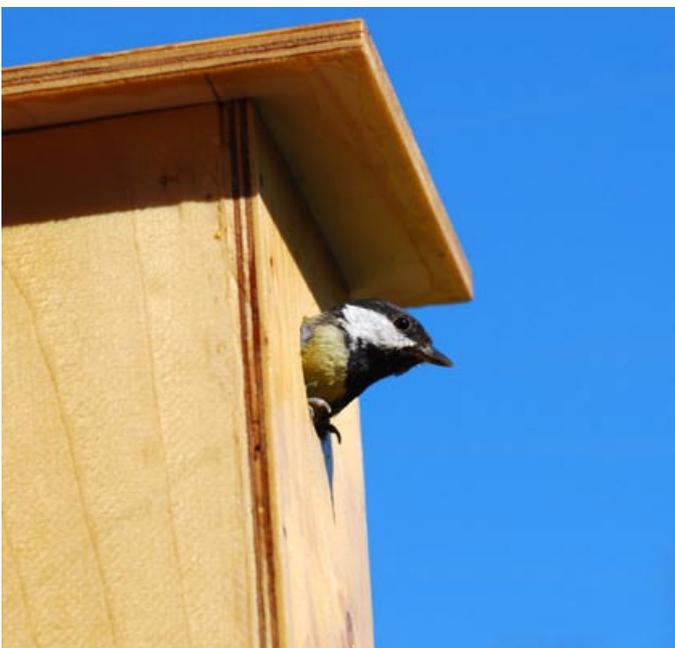
There should also be a number of chicks and ducklings hatched in schools in March and on the farm for the Easter holidays. Look out for these under heat lamps in the Animal House where they will stay for several weeks until they have developed enough feathers to keep warm (or sooner if we have a heatwave).

Arnie, our Shetland Pony, and Jacko, our donkey, will also be looking forward to spring when the grass begins to grow again and they can begin grazing again. Unfortunately, just like the rest of us, we have to limit their intake unless they get more exercise!

Look out too for live pictures of nesting wild birds should they choose to use the 'right' box. After feeding hundreds of Blue, Coal, and Great Tits, Greenfinches, Chaffinches and the odd Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker throughout the Winter some will stay and use the many nestboxes on the farm. Hopefully one pair will choose the box with the camera!



For those of you who enjoy our fresh free-range eggs Spring is also the time when our geese, turkeys and Guinea Fowl start laying. Not available in supermarkets these are a delicacy for those who want something that bit different.



Events and activities

All events are free unless otherwise stated.

Traditional Storytelling

Wednesday 27th March and
Friday 5th April

1 – 2pm and 3-4pm

Come and be entertained by our storyteller Fiona Angwin. Be amazed by tales of Fire, Earth, Air and Water. Hear stories brought to life from all over the world from the Isle of Man to the Native Americans. Designed for ages 4-11 but suitable for all the family

No need to book, just come in and take a seat anytime during the sessions to be whisked away to the land of make-believe. Meet in the Activity Room. Free admission

Carousel Ride

Tuesday 26th and Friday 29th
March

Tuesday 2nd April and
Thursday 4th April

All day, weather permitting. Small fairground ride suitable for young children - £1.00 per ride.

Play with Clay or Throw a Pot

Every weekend and every day in the school holidays. Paint various pieces, prices from £1.50 to £12.00. Aprons, paint, brushes supplied. Fancy throwing a Pot or modelling with clay, these can



be fired and collected 1 week later. £3.50 to throw or model £1.50 firing charge

Egg Decorating

Easter Monday April 1st

12noon – 3pm or until eggs are all used
Come and decorate an egg (hard boiled) for Easter. There will be a small charge to cover costs



Craft Fair

Sunday May 19th

10am – 4pm

Various stalls

Thanks:

The Oxton Society who ran the 2012 Secret Gardens of Oxton event and gave us a share of the profits totalling £4,435.

Mr and Mrs Duckers for their very generous donation

The Charles Brotherton Trust

Kiwi Drilling Consultancy

Sue and Steve Taylor

Wallasey Soroptimists and Bibby

Birkenhead High School

Academy year 9 pupils

'Your Wirral' Fund for £2,480 towards the allotment project.

Contact details

Friends of the Farm is the working name of the Wirral Urban Farm Association

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Bidston,
Wirral CH43 7PD

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Fax 0151 652 4236

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Membership renewal

£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.