

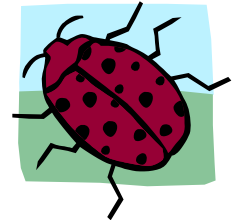
TAM O'SHANTER TIMES

Thanks to:



green pennant award

SUMMER 2008



Animal Update

A lot has been happening since the last edition of the Tam O'Shanter Times! Sadly we lost another rabbit, Chloe, an English breed, mainly white with brown spots. However, we've also recently introduced two new bunnies, Bramble, who is very large and all black and Bryony, a white and black English variety.



Our four Manx Loaghtan ewes gave birth near to the end of March, however due to the exceptionally cold weather at this time, we lost two of the six lambs and a further one lamb most likely to a clostridia infection. However, the surviving lambs (and the sheep themselves!) are settling in fine and not as scared as they were at first!

We're pleased to say that 'Snuffles', our sow, gave birth to an incredible 17 piglets on April 12th. One of these piglets had to be hand-reared (being too small and unable to compete with it's siblings). However, so far Snuffles has been able to rear 14 on her own.



Another addition has been a cow! Not a real one, but 'Molly' can be 'milked' showing how cows are hand-milked. She can be found on the yard next to the animal house. Why not have a go at milking her?

A further addition has been a number of chicks and ducklings, raised in primary schools across the Wirral, including Bidston Village, St Albans, Stanton Road, Somerville Primary and St Peters primary schools. Some will be introduced into the flock and some will be sold.

By Tim Davies

Incubation Project

The incubation project is now drawing to an end, with only four more batches of eggs set to hatch. So far all the schools hiring an incubator from us have had some success, with at least one chick or duckling hatching. This year we seem to have had more success with our own eggs (which are hybrids) rather than the eggs which were bought in from other sources.

Rossmore's Chicks

Chicks, Chicks

All happy and sweet

Tweeting and eating fast and slow

All running round all happy as can be

Chicks, chicks so wonderful to see.

By Adam Cobb

Rossmore Primary School

This year we have been inundated with people wanting to buy hens to keep at home. Assumably due to recent campaigns run by celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall on the conditions endured by battery hens.

Anyone wishing to provide a home for ex-battery hens can find details on the Battery Hen Welfare Trust website – www.bhwt.org.uk

I want to be a vet

Starting as a youngster of 12, I worked as a Sunday volunteer on Tam O'Shanter. Some 5 years later I am still there and have learnt how to handle a wide variety of animals and gained valuable communication skills. Working on the farm has greatly encouraged my aspirations of becoming a vet and given me the confidence to go out and ask for a number of other placements working with animals. Over the last year I have attended several work placements including a dairy farm, a sheep farm, the RSPCA centre, a kennels and cattery, two stables and four veterinary surgeries.

My first farming placement was at a dairy farm, which consisted of over a hundred cows. I started bright and early on the morning of the 24th of December 2007. My jobs included cleaning and feeding, however upon my second day at the farm I was faced with my first challenge – to teach some newborn calves how to drink from an artificial feeder. The farmer informed me this involved placing ones finger into the calf's mouth in an attempt to teach them to suckle. Hesitantly, and in fear of losing a few fingers, I obliged. I then had to place my other hand around the calf's rear end and push them towards the feeder and very slowly swap my fingers for the artificial teat in the hope that the calf would continue to suck. This often took several attempts and often involved the calf losing the teat and having to start the process over again and proved to be a very time consuming and tricky task. Eventually after the newborn calves had managed to drink their fair share it was time to move onto the older calves, which certainly did not prove to be any less challenging and often turned into a 2nd half scrum with me as the rugby ball. The artificial feeder had three separate compartments so three calves could be fed at the same time with each of the three compartments containing the same amount of milk (as shown below). However the calves did not understand the rules and did not agree with sticking to the one compartment they were given but would head-butt each other and I often found myself caught in the middle, trying to pinion each of the three calves to their original compartment.



However my efforts with the calves did not end there, as I was faced with a calf that had been unwell with diarrhoea and refused to drink. This certainly complicated the task as it involved mixing a special high-energy glucose formula drink and feeding it via a tube that was inserted directly into the calf's stomach. Overall the instruction to "feed the calves" proved to be nowhere as simple as I expected it to be. After my exertions with the calves the day certainly wasn't over and it was time for the evening milking session.

The farmer kindly offered me the opportunity to assist and eagerly I took it. Milking was not a difficult concept; the milking parlour was set in the ground with two raised aisles on either side. A gate would open and the cows would file into the aisles nine at a time ready to be milked. The first part of the process was to clean the cow's teats, and then a cluster containing four suction pumps would be activated and placed on the cows' udder on each of the four teats. It would take approximately three minutes for the average cow to be milked and a good milking cow can give up to around 60 litres of milk per day. Once the milking had been completed the cows' teats would be dipped in iodine solution to protect the cow against bacterial infection. The cows would then be moved out of the parlour and the process would start again. Throughout my time on the dairy I found myself constantly being challenged and meeting a variety of new situations. My time at the dairy proved to be fun and extremely worthwhile and I gained a great deal of knowledge and handling skills.

Next time I will tell you about my experience on a sheep farm.

Sarah Tijon (17 years old)



Comments

It is heartening for the farm staff to witness the impact that volunteering has for many young people. The majority of our volunteers show an increased confidence and self-esteem during their time with us, with an associated increase in opportunity for employment and further study.

Some comments from our Volunteer Questionnaires are as follows:-

"I first came to the farm to visit, on that day I decided to become a volunteer. I have been ever since that day. I have more confidence in myself, find it more easier to talk to and meet new people, also I made new friends, to work with the animals, to help run fairs and school groups etc. I feel more like a team player and have fun with other volunteers after work"

"I first came to the farm to work when I was in year ten. I spent a week here, but I wish I had spent more. I have been coming to this farm for many years now. I am now in the process of completing another two weeks at the farm, and I am enjoying it. I love working with animals and I intend to work with animals in the near future. The experience on the farm has encouraged me to do all the things that I have dreamed of doing when I was little. I hope to work at the farm again soon as I love working with everybody there."

"The group that works at Tam O'Shanter Farm on Tuesdays is a mixed group of service users – three female and six males, most of the group have been participating for many years. Over these years working at the farm has been of great benefit to each person. Their confidence in themselves has considerably increased due to meeting/making new friends and work colleagues, and participating in the various work activities. The members of the group really enjoy the jobs they are given and they particularly like to work with the animals. They greatly appreciated the attendance at the awards ceremony for completing their hundred hours of volunteering. Upon returning to Heswall Centre following a day at the farm, the group members are always eager to talk to their friends/family about what they have been doing at the farm, I feel that this shows the benefits of the voluntary work the group participates in at Tam O'Shanter Farm."

Heswall staff member

Heswall Day Centre

The Heswall Day Centre has been coming to the farm for many years now. The Centre brings three groups during the week. The Wednesday group use the activity room to make a variety of knitted and sewn craftwork using wool from our own Tam O'Shanter sheep, which is hand-spun by one of the Centre's staff.

The Tuesday and Thursday groups undertake a variety of vital maintenance tasks around the farm such as fencing, grass-mowing, muck-spreading and raking-up leaves in the autumn.



Recently the groups have been helping Peter in raising the level of the bottom paths to prevent flooding. They have also been planting-up the hanging baskets and planters around the farm, money for which was donated by the café, the shop and the Farm Trust. The work that the Heswall Groups undertake is greatly appreciated by the farm staff, and they undoubtedly make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of the farm.



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

Events

Sunday July 20th - Birkenhead Lions Fun Day. Games and activities. Free admission. 12 – 4 pm

Wednesday July 23rd – Friday July 25th
Arts and crafts for under 12's in the activity room. See blackboard on the farm for times. Free.

Monday July 28th – Summer Play scheme starts. Monday – Friday until August 22nd. All children must be registered. Free and open to all under 14yrs old, but under 8's must be accompanied by an adult. See blackboard for times.

Every Tuesday and Thursday during the summer holidays, weather permitting. Jolly Joyrides. Small carousel ride, suitable for small children. 60p / ride.

Wednesday 17th September – guided walk on Bidston Hill. Meet at the farm. 10am – 12.30 pm. Free. Sorry no dogs.

Monday October 27th – Friday October 31st
Arts and crafts for under 12's in the activity room. Free. See blackboard for details.

Thanks To:

Mr Les Bradley – gas check and gas box.

Mr John Broster – locating a tractor to be used as play equipment.

PH Holt Foundation - £2000 for children's activities.

Oxton Society - £3,720 for play equipment.



Wirral LA21 – Tables and chairs.

Gordale Garden Centre - £100 and seeds.

Karen Dransfield – purchase of eggs for the incubation project.

Hemby Trust - £1500 for children's activities.

Alice Wight - £75 from her 8th birthday.

Inner Wheel Club, Hoylake - £100

All members who gave a donation with their annual subscription

PUPPET SAFARIS AND FANTASTICAL FOREST

Come and meet an exciting array of wild animals and magical, mythical beasts on Bidston Hill!



Thursday July 31st – Puppet Safari

Sunday August 2nd – Fantastical Forest

Saturday August 16th – Puppet Safari

Tuesday August 19th – Puppet Safari

* Priority given to special needs and individuals with mobility problems at this event.

Wednesday August 20th – Fantastical Forest



* These are pre-booked events. Please book at Tam O'Shanter Farm.

Suitable for age 5 and upward.

All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Admission – FREE

Times – t.b.c

Meeting Place - Tam O'Shanter Urban farm.

Sorry – no dogs