

Tam O'Shanter Times

Summer 2009

Animal update

We had seven new piglets born on 23rd May 2009. The piglets are Gloucester Old Spot (Snuffles), Large Black (Archie the Boar, from Croxteth) crosses. They were delivered with the help of the vets at Leahurst and Linda, in the early hours of the morning. They are currently being weaned from mum, who is looking forward to a rest after 8 weeks of pestering piglets and sharp teeth. The piglets will be moved to the big field on New Land to dig up roots and play in the shade as soon as they are big enough not to escape through the fences. They will be going to the butcher at around 5-6 months old for pork, so we should have some pork by October/November, some will be kept back for bacon, gammon and sausages in December. Anyone interested in buying the meat please leave your name and telephone number in the Rangers office.

We recently sheared our sheep (as usual) with an audience, this time we enlisted the help of Tony Oakley an experienced shearer who made short work of our little flock. The fleeces will be washed and spun by Heswall day centre and used to create all sorts of woollen craft projects. We still have some sheep harassing Dave Cavanagh on Hilbre, and we have recently sent the two rams to the butcher (because of their continued destruction of gates, fences, mangers etc) and have some fantastic mutton, which is now frozen. The prices are as follows and the meat is sold on a first come first served basis.



Mutton prices

Cut	£/kg
Breast	£2.00
Mutton Mince	£5.40
Mutton Shank	£6.36
Shoulder – sold out	£6.90
Diced – sold out	£7.96
Cutlets	£9.80
Leg	£9.90
Chops	£10.00
Leg Chop	£10.36
Leg fillet of Mutton	£10.36
Leg – Boned	£10.36
Neck Fillet	£10.74

We have just had our annual health and safety inspection by students from Liverpool University studying at Leahurst. The study is an in depth report looking at all aspects of the farm from Animals to Zoonoses (diseases that can be passed from animals to humans, if people don't wash their hands properly after working with or stroking the animals).

Nic
Ranger,
Bidston Hill SBI, Rigs
Bidston Moss LNR, SBI
Flaybrick Memorial Gardens

Thanks to





by Sarah Tijon

Part three continued...

The last job of the day was to travel to the other two farms owned by the farmer to feed not only more pigs he kept there, but also a 300 strong herd of Limousin cross beef cattle.

On the Tuesday I was told that a lorry would arrive early the following day to take the pigs to the slaughter house and was asked if I would help load them. I agreed and only later realized that “early” meant 5 o’clock in the morning. And so at 5 o’clock the next day I arrived at the finishing shed. This shed had a number of very large pens, each with around 20 almost full grown pigs confined inside. All pigs that had been weighed and chosen to go that day had been “slapped” the day before. “Slapping” was done using a collection of long fine needles attached to



a base with a small pole attached to the middle. The needles would be dipped in ink and the pigs would simply be slapped on the back. This imprinted an identification number onto the pig that the slaughterhouse would use to identify

which farm which pig had come from. The pigs would then be lead to the loading platform where they would subsequently be chased onto the lorry. After the lorry had left the pigs remaining on the farm would have to be moved around. Sows and older piglets would be separated with the piglets being vaccinated and placed in a pen together and the sows being released into the fields. Sows from farrowing crates would be released into bigger pens with their piglets and older, bigger piglets would be moved into the finishing shed. Overall an average of about 300 pigs had to be accommodated that day.

On my fourth day I was placed with a new challenge – to clean out the “hospital”. This consisted of a series of pens where sick and damaged piglets were kept until they were well enough to return to the rest of their litter. I was quite relieved with this task as I believed I would not find it too challenging and mucking out was something I did regularly and was used to. The smell that hit me as I entered I was not so used to. The top of the beds were clean but underneath the top layer was a layer about 4 inches thick of blackened dripping straw. Trying hard not to throw up, I had to scoop the straw, take it down the narrow corridor to put in a wheelbarrow at the end – and ended up dropping most of it on the way. I found holding my breath between wheelbarrow trips was the best way to stomach the job and was later told that my series of facial expressions had kept the farmers entertained throughout the day.

Overall my placement on the pig farm was enjoyable and certainly taught me a lot. I would have no reservations about recommending this pig farm to any potential vet students looking for farming experience.

School incubation projects

We first started loaning out incubators and all the necessary equipment to schools in 1992. This was in response to one or two schools asking us to take chicks from their own incubation projects. Unfortunately, the chicks that they hatched were often unsuitable for free range conditions, hence we decided to supply eggs from birds that we wanted in our flock or knew that we could sell on to 'backyard' poultry keepers.

We started off with three or four projects a year (February – July) and one incubator. Now we aim to do fourteen to sixteen projects each year with our four incubators. This year we have had or are still doing projects in the following schools:

Wallasey School
St Bernard's Primary, Ellesmere Port
Prenton Primary
St Michael and All Angels
St Peters Primary, Heswall
St Albans Primary
Sandbrook Primary
Greenleas Primary
St George's Primary
Portland Primary
Elleray Park
Castleway Primary
Bedford Drive
Brookdale pre school
Cole Street Primary
Mostyn House Nursery

At least 500 children are involved in total each year which amounts to over 7,000 children over the years! Although it is often a considerable strain on the teachers involved, most recognise the enormous learning benefits to the children. To actually see chicks hatching from the egg is an experience that will stay with most of them for



ever. Only occasionally do we have total failure and no chicks, which can happen for a variety of reasons. The demand for our assistance is now much greater than we can supply. We are restricted by our time to manage the projects, space to rear on the chicks (or ducklings) and suitable purchasers of the mature birds. We do not make a charge but ask for donations and thank St. Bernard's, St George's, Brookdale pre-school and St Oswald's for their generous donation this year. Bookings are not taken until January 1st. this year we had two bookings by 2.30am, and were fully booked by the first day of term, January 5th!

Some schools return the chicks to us after only a couple of days being hatched whilst others keep the chicks for several weeks and learn about growth rates, animal behaviour and animal welfare. If you are a teacher and interested in doing a project please ask for details at the office.



Membership renewal

Just a reminder, if you are a member of the *Friends of the Farm* your membership was due for renewal in April. Membership costs £5.00 per year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Date of application _____

Age (if under 16) _____



The Yarn Spinner storytelling

Wednesday 22nd July
Thursday 23rd July
Friday 24th July
Monday 27th July
Tuesday 28th July
Wednesday 29th July
Thursday 30th July
Sunday 2nd August

Storytelling sessions, on a variety of themes. All free. Some stories are told simply, some will involve props or puppets, but no staging is used and the sessions take place inside. Suitable for all ages.

Summer Play Scheme

Monday – Friday from
3rd August – 28th August

Join Laura, Claire and Scott on this year’s scheme with games, arts and crafts suitable for 5 - 14 year olds. Register from 3rd August for a summer of fun. Under 8’s must be accompanied by an adult. The activities are free apart from trips out to various attractions. Once registered, children can take part in as many of the activities as they want.

Fools Gold Theatre Company present... *The Owl and The Pussycat, Hunters of the Lost Snark*

15th August 2009
5.45 for 6pm start

Based on the poems of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. A walkabout outdoor production by our regular professional thespians. Ticket prices £10 adult, £5 per child and concessions, £25 family ticket (2+2). Available from the Rangers Office or Gift Shop.

Carousel ride



Small fairground ride suitable for young children. Here every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the school holidays, weather permitting. 80p / ride.



Kids Summer Painting competition

Pick up an entry form from the farm.

Windmill open to the public

Saturday 1st August 10-12 noon

Height restrictions apply. 106cm minimum to go up the mill. No dogs, last entrance into the mill at 11.50 am. First come first served, visitors may have to queue. Entrance is free, but a donation is welcomed. Why not join the Friends of Bidston Hill while you’re here, only £5 per family.

Thanks to

Mr Lynch and Mr Thorning for their generous donation with their subscription. Lisa Frost and Pat Fairclough for eggs for hatching in schools. Mrs Noonan for goats milk. Karen Strachan for donating plants for sale. Morris Nevin for the loan of his photo album with old pictures of the cottage and Bidston Hill. Les Bradley for our annual gas check. John, apprentice with Ken Beard and Son, for various items including new pig pen doors and animal rockers. Various schools (including Hilbre High and Egremont Primary), Beaver, Cub, Brownie and Rainbow packs for their donations. Mrs Randall and all the individuals who put money in the donation box. BBC Radio Merseyside for grant.



We need ewe!

Or rather, we need your skills.

Are you handy with a spanner, or fine with figures, can you wax lyrical or just want to help! Then we need you. We need people with skills on occasion to help out and would like to set up a database so we know who to call...

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Skills we can call you for! _____
