

Tam O'Shanter Times

Summer 2011

Issue 55

Bidston Community Archaeology



Bidston Community Archaeology is a community based archaeological society open to membership for all those with an interest in archaeology or historical research.

Project 2011 is the excavation of a farmhouse site in the pig field at Tam O'Shanter farm to confirm the earliest date of occupation. The 1842 Tithe map shows buildings on the site which are listed as house, garden and building (no 139).

The earliest map evidence dates to 1831. The 1841 census shows that the building was occupied by 2 families consisting of 12 people.

Initial findings at this site include pottery dating to the English Civil War Period (17th Century) and a worked flint tool (3000-4000BC).

If you are interested and would like to get involved and help to uncover Bidstons past,

simply come along and see us or email at the address below.

All new members will receive a full training program in research methods, archaeological excavation and recording techniques.

For further information please contact us at bidston-community-archaeology@hotmail.co.uk





Animal update

Our Gloucester Old Spot sow finally delivered her litter of piglets on June 9th. Unfortunately she only produced 2 live piglets. Both black (after the Large Black boar) one male and one female. Sadly she is past her prime. As a result, we decided to buy in 4 weaners from Acorn City Farm, Kirkby. These were born on May 5th and are Middle White crossed with Gloucester Old Spot. All males their all white appearance will contrast starkly with our 2 black piglets.

Our tiny flock of Manx Loaghtan ewes (four) each produced a set of twins in April. As last year one of the ewes decided to reject one of her offspring. A willing helper agreed to hand rear her and has given this pet lamb a new home. Our remaining 7 (5 males) are growing well on a diet of milk, grass,



sheep nuts and sycamore leaves. Visitors will notice that we regularly supply the sheep and goats with 'brash'. Often sycamore at this time of year though can be other varieties of trees and shrubs (Holly in winter). Our grazing land is very poor being a base of shallow, light, sandy soil on the side of Bidston Hill which naturally is heathland habitat. No amount of fertiliser and manure can change the basic nature of the sward which does not produce large quantities of forage. Inevitably we have to supplement the grazing with other forage such as 'brash' and as we have an abundance of trees and shrubs which need selective thinning and management then we try to maximise this resource for the benefit of our stock and the management of the wildlife habitat.

Please do not be tempted to feed the animals leaves though as there are plants on and around the farm that are poisonous or may be detrimental to their health, as well as damaging the trees and shrubs!

Rhododendron (growing nearby on Bidston Hill is lethal to stock and oak leaves with their high tannin content can cause digestive problems if eaten in quantity.

A new hen shed has been built by Andy and his groups of volunteers. Eventually this will be stocked with some of our new birds hatched this year.

Meg's View

A Volunteer's experience

Having always wanted to be a vet, I've done a fair amount of work experience with animals ranging from observing small animal practice to work on farms. In February and April of this year, I spent two weeks at a sheep farm in Wales to help with the lambing. To anyone interested in being a vet, I would definitely recommend that you try and get at least one week lambing. I really enjoyed my lambing work experience and although assisting with the delivery of the lambs seems a little bit disgusting at first, you soon get used to it and the only thing that matters is getting the lamb out alive. I've always wanted to be a farm vet, so I really enjoyed my farm work experience and working with sheep has probably been my favourite. Sheep however, have a tendency to want to do the exact opposite of what you want them to do, and we spent many hours trying to coax 40kg sheep into different pens, which is particularly difficult if your only 5'4 and not exactly strong. On one occasion, this resulted in a sheep trying to escape between my friend's legs and she ended up lying on the sheep's back and then sliding onto the floor as it ran away. Being the good friend that I am, I just stood there and laughed. My friend got her own back though, when I accidentally injected myself in the hand whilst trying to vaccinate a lamb...twice!

The part of lambing work experience that everyone enjoys is looking after the pet lambs. These are lambs whose mothers either couldn't feed them or rejected them. They require bottle feeding several times a day and love to play with you if you sit in their pen. You'll also know when they are hungry as they start head-butting you for food. At the end of my work experience, I wanted to bring all my pet lambs home!

In order to gain some experience with waterfowl, I brought some duck eggs and a goose egg home from Tam O'Shanter Farm to incubate and after a month of nervously waiting for them to hatch, I now have four ducks a goose, who will be coming to live at the farm in a couple of weeks.

Meg July 2011



Hatching projects

We will have completed a total of 12 hatching projects this year with the following schools/groups:

St Albans Primary School
Bidston Avenue Primary School
Mendell Primary School
Rockferry Primary School
Sandbrook Primary School
St Peters Primary School Heswall
Prenton Primary School
Thingwall Primary School
Irby Primary School
Tam O'Shanter Farm Tots (Claughton Children's Centre)
Woodlands Primary School
Millfields Primary School, Eastham
Our Lady of Pity Primary School, Greasby
Park Primary School, Wallasey
Castleway Primary School.

Chicks of the following breeds have been hatched: Andalusian, Barnevelder, Dorking, Salmon Faverolle, Indian Game, Ixworth, La Fleche, Lakenvelder, Cream Legbar, Maran, Rhode Island Red, Vorwerk, Welsummer, Light and Speckled Sussex, Brahma.

Ducklings have also been hatched and include Aylesbury and Welsh Harlequin. Look out for the chicks and ducklings as they arrive back at the farm to be reared ready for sale or incorporating into our own flock.

Farm Friends Footpath update

At the beginning of this year, the farm's 25th Anniversary, a 'Farm Friends Footpath' fund-raising scheme was launched. You may remember seeing the publicity for it back in January.

Due to the limited response, and lack of resources to promote the project in this challenging financial climate, the Trustees have decided reluctantly that the

Farm Friends Footpath project will not go ahead. We extend our apologies and our thanks to all those who expressed an interest, and to those who spent time and energy promoting the project in its introductory phase.

We are still looking for ways to raise funds to support the farm, and would welcome any help Friends of the Farm and their friends and families can provide - staffing the gift shop for a couple of hours, helping at an event etc. We hope to hold an autumn fair, and will be in touch again nearer the time with ideas for how people can help us make it a success.

Janet Thorning *Secretary to Trustees*

Events and activities

Carousel Ride

Small fairground ride suitable for young children. Here every Tuesday and Thursday from July 26th - weather permitting. 80p / ride.

Summer Play Scheme 2011

Monday – Friday from July 25th – August 19th

Join our playleaders on this year's scheme with games, arts and crafts suitable for 6 - 14 year olds. Register from July 25th onwards for a summer of fun. Under 8's must be accompanied by an adult. Parents should also be aware that there will be an hour at lunchtime when the children are not supervised. 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.

Police Community Roadshow

Tuesday July 26th 10 – 4pm
Police vehicles, horses, dogs, face painting, reptiles, owls, cowboys, stocks

Bidston Hill Guided Walk

Wednesday August 17th
10am – 12.30pm

Discover the delights of Bidston Hill on this guided walk. From its triassic sandstone

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
www.tamoshanterfarm.org.uk

Herb border

We are planning to re plant and rejuvenate the herb border next autumn with volunteers.

We would be grateful if anyone has any spare herb plants if you could donate them to the farm. Ideally in pots, around September time would be great. Many thanks



foundation, and its Viking colonisers to its Victorian Protectors. This gentle circular walk is suitable for the whole family to enjoy, and will include a brief look at the geology, the rock carvings, the observatory and lighthouse, and the flora and fauna. Meet at Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm. *Free, no booking required but sorry, no dogs please.*



Bidston Windmill Open Days

Saturdays August 13th and September 10th 10am – 12 noon
There is a minimum height restriction for access to the

higher floors (1.06m). Children under 11 years old must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Free admission

WUFA fund café vouchers for volunteers

As well as providing free hot drinks (tea and coffee) volunteers can claim £1.00 voucher for use in the cafe for every 10 hours worked. For those working all day we fund half price vouchers for hot food from the café.

Please ask a member of staff for details

Thanks to:

Pensby Ladies £20
Mr Bryson, Phil Baker and Mr Chalton
All members who have recently joined or renewed their membership, especially those who have kindly included an extra donation

Membership

£5/address/year due on the 1st April. New members joining after January 1st will not be due for renewal until April the following year. If a membership form has been included with your newsletter then you are due for renewal. Please make cheques payable to: Wirral Urban Farm Association. You will receive 3 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. re-newing their membership.

