

Our thanks to:



TAM O'SHANTER TIMES



Winter 2007

Animal update

The rabbits have now moved back into their newly furnished pens, and seem a lot more settled.



Unfortunately, we lost our old sow Yorkie in October this year. She was 12 years old, which is quite an age for a pig! We also lost Bobtail, our albino Dwarf Netherland rabbit, who was the most popular character in the pat-a-pet sessions.

We will be purchasing four pregnant Manx Loaghtan ewes towards the end of the year, to replenish our old stock which had become interbred. Most of our existing flock has now gone for slaughter, and we have no sheep out on Hilbre Island at the moment.

We have now purchased four turkeys, two Bourbon Reds and two Cambridge Bronze. They will be moving into the new turkey shed in the New Year.



We will be borrowing a boar again from Croxteth Park near Christmas, so fingers crossed we should have another litter of piglets born in the spring.

Unfortunately, due to the Foot-and-Mouth outbreak, the Westmoreland show was cancelled, dashing our hopes of showing our two new Golden Guernsey goat kids. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity to show the goats next year.

Schools will again be invited to book incubators for hatching eggs next year.

Incubators will be distributed on a first-come-first-served basis as of the 1st January 2008. Teachers are asked to telephone the Rangers' office on 0151 653 9332 to book.

Hérons continue to visit the wildlife pond to feed, with three spotted at once early one morning.

A fox has been digging out an earth near to the piglets' field, and is possibly planning to take up residence there, so staff will have to be extra vigilant when locking up the poultry every evening.



Greenfinches, woodpeckers, nuthatches and siskins have all benefited from the bird feeders this year. Visitors will have a chance to help their feathered friends and make their own bird feeders at the farm in the coming months. Watch the blackboards for further details.

Vigilant visitors may have noticed that the dozen or so bird boxes scattered around the farm now have metal plates around the entrance holes. These are to prevent squirrels and woodpeckers damaging the edges to reach the nestlings inside.

Bat Training

Funding secured through Natural England meant that a further 10 people attended a bat detecting seminar earlier this year. The intensive three-day course enabled participants to distinguish between the Pipistrelle, Noctule and Myotis species using a heterodyne bat detector.



Volunteer Profiles

Sophie Morris



" I came here on work experience as a pupil from Prenton High School. I found the experience enlightening and informative. My favourite animals are the goats, they are so sweet and affectionate. Linda was great, she helped me care for the animals in the correct way and helped boost my confidence."

Sarah Johnson



"My name is Sarah Johnson. I'm currently studying a Foundation Degree in Leisure and Tourism at Wirral Met. in conjunction with John Moore's University. I have chosen Tam O'Shanter Farm as my placement because I want to learn about the voluntary sector and how the different components work i.e. the Council and charities that are involved within the organization. I will be working with Dawn for 4 months, once a week. I enjoy working with the animals and learning about how the business works."

Meat for Sale

Quality Old English pork sausages (min. 70% meat) £3/lb (£2.50/lb for orders over 5lb plus). Frozen.

Ham/gammon joints and bacon from early December £3.50/lb.

All from our own free-range pigs (Gloucester Old Spot x Berkshire) fed on additive free feed.

We have limited stocks and can sell out quite quickly.

Thanks To:

Katy Jones – For raising £50 for the farm through a sponsored abseil.

Mr Thorning – For his donation of £20.

To all the volunteers – Who gave up their time to make our Autumn Fair and Halloween event so successful.



Race Night

There will be a Race Night on Friday, April 4th 2008 at 7.30 pm at Beechwood Social Club to raise funds for the farm. Horses are £3 each – winners get a prize. This year's Race Night at Houlihans bar in Claughton was a resounding success and raised £1000 for the farm. Please give your support by attending this fun-filled event. Details can be obtained from the Rangers Office at the farm on Tel: 0151 653 9332.

Jewellery and Gift Shop

The new gift shop is run by Cindy Wight as a separate enterprise and is open every Wednesday – Sunday, 10 am – 4.30 pm.

Cindy is selling a wide range of silver jewellery, unusual gifts, toys and souvenirs.

Tam O'Shanter Farm Café

The café is run by Richard and Jane Jeffers as a separate business from the farm. If you are interested in holding a birthday party at the farm please contact Richard on one of the following numbers:

0151 652 9197 café at the farm

0151 342 1273 home

07984 173466 mobile

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

Secret Gardens Of Oxton 2008

Help Wanted!

We have been invited by the Oxton Society to apply for funds from their Secret Gardens of Oxton event on Sunday May 11th 2008. In 2005 the Society very generously gave us over £5000 which enabled us to purchase picnic tables and a new poultry shed among other things. We are again likely to benefit by £4000 – £5000 depending on the weather and how much we help. As part of our application we have agreed to provide as many volunteers as possible on the day to do a 3-hour stint. Duties may include being a steward at one of the gardens, manning a ticket sales point or helping with car parking duties. We also need to sell at least a 100 tickets for the event (the more we sell the higher the grant to the farm!)

If you can help by selling tickets or volunteering on the day please leave your name and telephone number at the Rangers' office by April 7th.

We are grateful for your support.

Year of Food and Farming

September 2007 heralded the launch of the 'Year of Food and Farming' – an exciting campaign to help children find out about the countryside and where their food comes from. The project is being led by FACE (Farming and Countryside Education) with active support from three government departments. You can check out Tam O'Shanter's page on the Food and Farming Megamap section at www.yearoffoodandfarming.org.uk.

Christmas Grotto



The Christmas grotto and fair will be run as usual this year on Sunday 16th December. Tickets will be £2.50 per child. There will also be roast chestnuts for sale and various stalls. Tickets are available from December 1st from the gift shop or the Ranger's office.

How is the Farm Run?

Wirral council lease the land to the Tam O'Shanter Cottage Urban Farm Trust (Reg. Charity No. 505444) for a peppercorn rent and provide three full-time members of staff (Rangers) to carry out day-to-day management.

The Trust has to find £20 - £25K for the running costs – feed, insurance, utilities, repairs and maintenance etc. This is achieved by donations, sales, café rental, grants, events etc. The Trust is made up of representatives from the Birkenhead History Society, which restored the cottage in the 1970's following a fire and the threat of demolition: WUFA (Wirral Urban Farm Association - which initiated the farm in the 1980's) and local councillors – all voluntary.

WUFA has a 'Friends of the Farm' membership scheme and an Executive Committee to help raise funds.



Roof Repairs

Thatchers John Burke & Sons carried out some general repairs and maintenance to the thatched roof of the cottage at the end of October. Work included patching up the valley and scraping off moss and lichen to prevent moisture retention and subsequent rot.

Bluey and Baloo

During autumn half term a series of craft activities and games took place at the farm by 'Bluey and Baloo' who run environmentally friendly workshops. During the sessions participants had the opportunity to make a board game of the farm and to create mosaic bird-baths.

Bluey and Baloo will be back at the farm on Saturday 8th December making salt dough Christmas decorations. Watch the blackboard for further details.

Halloween Event

This year a lively Halloween event was held, hopefully the first of many.



Around seventy-five families gathered at the farm on Sunday 4th November to join in a Halloween treasure hunt. Participants met a range of weird, wonderful and scary characters to gather clues, culminating in a visit to a witch's den to receive a prize. The event proved extremely popular with a lot of positive feedback. Everybody involved had tremendous fun and we hope to run something similar again next year.

Bidston Hill – The Musical

October heralded two performances of Bidston Hill – The Musical, a unique, dramatic play about the hill. The performance involved local young people aged 12 – 19 years who researched, scripted and performed the musical themselves. Watch the blackboards for future performances.



Friends are Good to Have!

Wirral Urban Farm Association (WUFA) has a growing 'Friends of the Farm' group; we'd like to encourage more people, especially regular visitors, to sign up and show their appreciation of this popular local attraction. Annual membership only costs £5, and is a good way of making a donation and registering support. The membership year runs from 31st March; for anyone who joins or renews from 1st December '07 membership will run until 31st March 2009! Ask at the farm for an application form or email membership secretary Vee Gatrell at vee.gatrell@hse.gsi.gov.uk

An executive committee meets monthly at the farm, usually on the third Wednesday. Friends who would like to play an active role in organising and taking part in fund-raising events are invited to contact farm staff on 653 9332, call Janet Thorning, Chair of WUFA, on 606 9702 - or email jan@wirraltreewardens.co.uk for details.

This newsletter will be going out shortly before Christmas, so whatever your faith, and however you celebrate, I'd like to wish all supporters of Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm a happy and fulfilling festive season. Why not come along and join in the seasonal fun at our Grotto event on Sunday 16th December!

Woodchips



'Woodchips' will be running every Monday during term time 1 pm – 2.30 pm in the activity room, providing arts and crafts for the under 5's. The sessions, run by volunteers from the Birkenhead Woodcraft Folk are free and friendly, but there is a £1 charge if you want snacks or drinks. Booking is not necessary - just drop-in.