

Tam O'Shanter Times

Winter 2009

Issue 50

Welcome to our 50th edition!

This is the 50th edition of Tam O'Shanter's newsletter. The first appeared in December 1985 and is pictured here. It carried articles on urban farms, Tam O'Shanter's cottage, the Wirral Urban Farm Association and an appeal for volunteers to help out at the farm, as well as a provisional plan for the farm

We have copies of all past editions of the newsletters in the Activity Room. If anyone has an interest in catching up on our history, why not call in and have a look?



Santa at the farm

Sunday 13th December
12.30pm – 4.00pm

Visit Santa in his Grotto and also see Jacko in the nativity stable.

Tickets are £2.50 and are available from December 1st and on the day from the Farm, although numbers are limited to 250. Suitable for children under 10 but they must be accompanied by an adult.

This event has been supported by the Vauxhall Motors Employees Charity Fund with a grant of £500. Many thanks.



Farm News

Work has started on installing equipment for our 'Sensory Trail'. With funding secured from *the Big Lottery's Awards for All* (£3,500), *Wirral Council's 'Your Wirral' Fund* (£2,500) and *BBC Radio Merseyside's Charity Fund* (£2,257) we hope to have the installation completed by February half-term. Two of the play tractors, the small slide, the bridge near the pond and 'Betty' our fibreglass cow will produce sounds as if by magic, so fingers crossed that all goes to plan!

Bad news in that we failed in our bid to secure funding from the Big Lottery's Local Food Fund to build a new café. Our existing café has limited seating space, very limited food preparation space and a leaking roof. The building was built in 1990 with a limited budget and consequently will not last for ever. We will have to go back to the drawing board and review the situation. Good news is that we were awarded a Green Pennant for the fourth consecutive year. This is a national award that recognises high quality green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups. See www.greenflagaward.org.uk

We have borrowed a Manx Loaghtan ram lamb from a farm near Shrewsbury to put to our four ewes. Thanks to Mrs Joyce Newby, a top breeder and winner at various shows, we should have a crop of lambs next spring. Meanwhile, this year's four lambs

(all ewes) are out on Hilbre Island, enjoying the peace, tranquillity and ample grazing on offer there.

All this year's chicks and ducklings hatched in the various schools have now been sold or added to our own flock. May we remind those schools interested in doing a hatching project next year to contact us after January 1st. We are limited to 15 projects from February through to July and accept bookings on a first come first served basis. There is no charge but donations are very appreciated.

Jacko will be earning his keep this Christmas as an interactive prop as his stable is refurbished as a Nativity scene. We are still seeking a role for Arnie but in the meantime he will be enjoying his regular diet of hay and carrots.

In the next few weeks we will be borrowing a pedigree

Large Black boar from a smallholding in Irby. Hopefully Snuffles, our Gloucester Old Spot sow will enjoy his company over Christmas and produce a litter of piglets next spring.

Our four turkeys, a pair of Cambridge Bronze and a pair of Bourbon Red, will be lying low keeping their toes crossed for the next few weeks as usual! Whilst Mona and Marigold, our two pedigree Golden Guernsey goats will be hoping that it does not rain too much during the winter as they hate the wet – just like the rest of us.

Look out for a notice soon advertising sausages, bacon and gammon joints. Priced per pack they should be available in the New Year.



A student's viewpoint

I am 17 years old and my name is Rebecca. I have always been fascinated by wildlife and nature and when it came to leaving high school I started looking at my educational options. Looking on the internet I found Rease Heath and Myerscough colleges offering animal related courses. I am now attending Myerscough College at the Croxteth Park Centre in Liverpool studying for a National Certificate in Animal Management, where I do animal husbandry, sciences and basic veterinary skills. As part of the course I must do work experience in an animal related place and I chose Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm because it has a variety of animals and I could get involved in a practical way. I have learnt a lot of new skills from handling large animals, learning about their dietary needs and all the different breeds. This will give me broad understanding of animals for when I go on to university next year, where I hope to do a wildlife conservation course. Eventually I would like to work in a zoo or go abroad to help care for and conserve wildlife.

My main goal is to work with Jaguars in tropical South America, as it's been my dream to conserve and help protect the species since I first saw one in Chester Zoo a few years ago. In the meantime I have secured a position as Santa's helper in the grotto on December 13th. Although the position is unpaid, as an elf, it should entitle me to some brownie points...

How long do farm animals live?

The lifespan of domestic animals varies widely depending on the conditions in which they are kept, how they are fed, and how often they reproduce. The animals at Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm are given the best care and conditions the farm can provide, but how do their lifespans compare to the average? Here are some examples.

A hen can live 10 - 15 years, long after she stops laying. Egg-laying starts to decline after 2 or 3 years, so most commercial laying birds are killed when they reach that age and cease to be profitable. Ducks can live up to 20 years, being less prone to



disease than hens - assuming they can steer clear of predators like foxes.

Sheep generally live 8 - 15 years. Wear and tear on their teeth eventually means they become less able to feed themselves well, and will decline unless given food they can easily manage. Goats generally live 10 - 12 years, possibly up to 15 if they're lucky. On the farm, we have had a sheep live to 15 and a goat to 19, so we're doing well!

Thanks to:

Lorraine Logan (Beady Beady) - donation.

The ladies from the *Soroptimist International of Wallasey* - generous donation and manning the Gift Shop.

Pat Cooper, Yvonne Mace, Daphne Knock, Susan Buckley and *Sophie Tibbs* for manning the Gift Shop.

Rachel Mace for making masks with children

The Vauxhall Motors Employees Charity Fund – donation for Santa's Grotto (see photo below).



Janet Thorning (left) receives a cheque from *Stephen Anderson*, *Phil Squires* (*Vauxhall Motors Employee Charity Fund* Chairman) and *Jennifer Stephen*. *Josh Anderson* enjoys the moment.

The Charles Brotherton Trust – annual donation.

Christopher Johnson, Smith and Sons and '*Prohelp*' for their professional assistance.

St Andrew's, Meols – donation.

Des Dougherty for his magic roundabout and donations.

BBC Radio Merseyside Charity Fund (£2,257) and the '*Your Wirral*' Fund (£2,500) funds towards our planned sensory equipment installation.

A domestic pig can live 10 - 15 years, but intensively reared sows having two litters of piglets a year are unlikely to reach 5 before being disposed of as unprofitable. A wild pig is capable of living up to 25 years! We have had a pig live to nearly 13, which compares well to the average.

The average lifespan for a Shetland pony is 25 - 30 years, but a pony called Scribbles in Cornwall has just turned 51, and is healthy - apart from having lost most of his teeth. The average donkey lifespan is similar, but the Donkey Sanctuary in Sidmouth, Devon, houses donkeys in their 40s. Jacko and Arnie are only in their early teens, so they have many happy years ahead of them!

J V Thorning



Events

Thanks to funding from the Grassroots Fund from the Community Foundation of Merseyside we were able to put on Storytelling sessions for a total of 30 days this year. Although aimed at 4 – 11 year olds they were enjoyed by people of all ages as some of the comments we received from the 3000 participants can testify:

15.4.09 *The story telling was very entertaining. Myself and three grand-children all enjoyed it. I think story telling is a good way to get children to learn to explore their own imagination.*

16.4.09 *The story telling was brilliant especially the trolls. Thank you for making a good day, wonderful and magic The story telling was absolutely fantastic. Adults and children alike were held spellbound! What a treat to have such a creative and interesting outlet for the visiting children. Completely original and 100% worthwhile.*

3.5.09 *An absolutely gripping story telling session. Myself (61) and my four year old grand daughter enjoyed it immensely.*

These comments, and many more like them, are much

appreciated and show that our efforts at fundraising and Fiona's skills at storytelling were not wasted.

Look out for two more sessions during the February half-term.

Santa at the Farm

Sunday 13th December
12.30pm – 4.00pm

See the article on page 1

Christmas Opening Hours

The farm is open as usual every day 9.30 – 4.30 including Christmas Day!!!!

The café, which is run as a separate business by Richard and Jane, will be closed on the following days:

Thursday December 24th
Friday December 25th
Saturday December 26th
Sunday December 27th
Thursday December 31st
Friday January 1st

Farm Tots

Every Thursday from January 7th 2010 though subject to change at short notice.

10am - 11.30am in the Activity Room

Most suitable for under 5's but must be accompanied by an adult.

Arts and crafts and also outdoor activities on the farm. Free

Run by Claughton Children's Centre Tel 0151 488 5948

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

Membership

£5 / address / year. Due on 1st April. Please make cheques payable to *Wirral Urban Farm Association*.

Recent subscriptions (i.e. since October 1st 2009) will last until April 2011.

You will receive three newsletters per year, an invitation to the AGM in the autumn 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.

