

Tam O'Shanter Times

Summer 2010

Issue 52

Animal update

During March and April all of our Manx Loaghtan ewes successfully lambed, each giving birth to twins. Sadly one of the ewes did not take to one of her lambs so she was hand reared and named Colin, yes you may think Colin is a strange name for a female lamb but she was named before the sex was checked and the name stuck. Colin has made a best friend with Alfie the farm dog who checks on her every morning and afternoon. Colin has now been successfully introduced back into the flock and is getting on well with the other lambs.

As you may know we have four of last year's lambs on Hilbre Island off West Kirby. They are all healthy and doing well and have now been vaccinated against the blue tongue virus and clostridia bacteria, dosed for different types of worms from lung to intestinal, sheared and protected against blowfly. After all this treatment they should be ready for a leisurely summer out in the Dee estuary. If you plan to walk out there this summer have a look at them, they are usually in the main paddock.

Well didn't Snuffles the Gloucester Old Spot give us a big surprise! The pig that wasn't pregnant gave birth to eight strong and healthy piglets, who are all doing well and now starting to venture into the paddock. They are now starting to copy mum by digging, foraging and wallowing in the mud.

As you would have read in the last newsletter we had to say goodbye to the gander but we are happy to announce we have introduced a new younger gander who has happily settled in with our two female geese who seem to



enjoy the male company again. If you did not read our last copy we had to say goodbye to our gander as he had had a bad leg for a while and seemed very uncomfortable so along with the vet we thought it would be kinder to have him put to sleep. He had lived a long and full life of sixteen years.

The Golden Guernsey goats Mona and Marigold are now much happier that we have some warm and sunny weather. If you come to visit them you can often find them sun bathing on top of the table in their paddock.

It's that time again pork will be available to buy in the next few months as the weaner pigs are almost ready to be sent for slaughter and will be going in early July. If you are interested in buying any meat please leave your name and a contact number in the office.

Pork for sale

Available soon (July). 'Sides' only (1/2 pig), ready jointed. Approx. 20 – 30 kg. £5.50 / kg (£2.50 / lb) From our own free-range, Large Black cross pigs fed on additive-free feed



WoodWorkOut



At WoodWorkOut, we offer a wide range of courses, activities and crafts using the natural resources of the farm and Bidston Hill. This unique environment provides the opportunity for a closer relationship between an end product and where it came from, as well as promoting sustainability and production with minimum negative environmental impact.

By using tradition skills, techniques and tools that would have been available to the first tenant of the cottage, the woodworkout provides the opportunity for the public to interact with a small piece of living history.

Products

- Spoons (hand carved from sycamore) from £3.00
- Spatulas from £3.50
- Mushrooms, hand turned from £2.50
- Elder whistles from £1.00
- Pet logs from £1.50
- Gypsy flowers from £1.50
- Stools from £25.00
- Dibbers from £4.00

- Bird box from £10.00
- Bat box from £15.00

We also make items to order (sculptures, furniture etc)

Courses

- Trees of Bidston Hill
- Grow your own vegetables
- General horticulture
- Basic woodland skills
- Basic woodland crafts

Activities

Make your own (all of the above) learn how to select the timber from the woodland and then

work it into the desired product prices and dates to be arranged please enquire at the cottage for an update or see the notice board.

Contact Andy by:

Phone: 0151 670 0046

Email:

woodworkout@hotmail.co.uk

Or over the gate of

Tam O'Shanter Cottage



School Incubation and Hatching Projects

This year thirteen primary schools have or will be taking part in incubation projects. The pupils who take part enjoy an educational but fun experience, as they get to see how a chick develops in the egg. You can track the size of the chick by holding it up to a bright light, in the first few days they are able to see some veins and a small dot inside the egg as the chick starts to formed the inside of the egg it becomes dark and the air bubble becomes smaller and smaller over the days. The egg becomes that dark you can no longer see light from the other side. If the egg is completely clear when held up to a light the egg is not fertile. A chicken egg needs to be incubated for 21days.



The schools that have or will be taking part this year are Park Primary, St Peters in Heswall, Wirral Hospitals School, St Bernards in Ellesmere Port, St Georges in Wallasey, Ridgeway High, Liscard Primary, Brookdale Pre-School, Thingwall Primary, Portland Primary, Castleway, Our Lady of Lourdes and St Albans Primary School.

The children and teachers will be looking after the chicks when they have hatched for a few weeks and then returned to the farm. Some will be kept and introduced into our flock while the others will be sold on to back yard poultry keepers. If you are interested in purchasing a chick or duckling then you can enquire at the rangers office.

Paying the rent

When the day to pay the rent comes around, that's not generally considered a cause for celebration. Things are different at the farm, though. When the Trust's lease on the land was first set up in 1976, the rent was decreed to be one peppercorn. A 'peppercorn rent' is a traditional term used to denote a very small sum, less than an old penny, that was paid as a token rent. Pepper is one of the most widely used spices in the world, and was a prized and widely traded item between India and Europe in earlier times. A peppercorn had a very small individual value, but was still significant.

When the lease was amended in 1986 to include what is now the farm, the rent was stated to be 'one Bidston pine cone' - something agreed to be more 'local' and appropriate than a peppercorn. Ever since then, the incumbent Mayor has been invited to the farm every year to receive the rent. The pine cones have been decorated in a wide variety of ways over the years, and a selection of previous rents is kept in the Mayor's parlour. This year, it was Councillor Andrew Hodson's agreeable duty to collect the rent; he received the pine cone from Chair of the Trust, Councillor Denise Roberts, accompanied by



Treasurer Sue McCulloch and Trustee Joan O'Neil. He met farm volunteers, enjoyed a walk around to admire the animals, and tried a little rustic woodcraft under the guidance of Andy McCulloch, the cottage tenant. The visit was rounded off with tea and biscuits.

Sometimes the rent collection is the only opportunity a Mayor has to visit the farm; The Trustees always look forward to welcoming him or her, and showing off this much-visited and well-loved Wirral attraction, of which they are justly proud.

JVT

The beekeepers unveiled...

Hello all,
And welcome to our first beekeeping newsletter which we hope will inform the community of how the bees are progressing and highlight our objectives for the year. But first, behind that "stig" like appearance are beekeepers Alan and Mark. We are easy to tell apart; Alan is the old grumpy one and Mark the young handsome one!

As you are probably aware, the honeybee population across the world is under pressure and the UK is no different. So after a long and cold winter we were very pleased to see that our bees had survived very well and were looking healthy with good numbers. We started the season



with two hives and have set an objective to increase our hive numbers – hopefully up to 5! We were able to split one hive last month which resulted in 1000s of bees all over us but no stings! Such good bees!

Currently we have two hives with mated queens and one with a potential new queen. We also have a small nucleus of bees – the one with the fairies painted on it – where we hope to raise another queen. We still have time this year to do some further

queen rearing and will be focusing on that over the coming month (July).

We are lucky at Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm, the bees have good variety of food sources, plenty of water – bees use lots of water – and good shelter. Our bees are well behaved, with good temperament and we hope good producers. As we are concentrating on the bees health and numbers this year it is unlikely that we will extract any honey for sale but if we see that everything is going really well we might be able to have a small amount for sale.

That's it for now but feel free to ask us questions whenever you see us we are always delighted with the interest people show in the bees – particularly ask the old grumpy one (Alan) he loves talking about bees...

Until next time
Alan and Mark

Thanks to:

The *Soroptimist International Club Wallasey* for their continued support with the Gift Shop on Sundays and their generous donation of £500
Trustland Ltd for their contribution of use building materials for the 'Bug Hotel' under the Builder Scrap scheme
The *Oxton Churches Annual Men's Charity Dinner* for their donation of £200.
Eric Loudon for all his work
Sheila for her supply of fertile duck eggs
Brenda Noonan for goats milk used for bottle feeding the lamb
All our members who generously gave a donation with their subscription
Les Bradley for his annual gas check in the cottage

History Busters



This is a group of fantastically talented young people who, with the help of staff from 'Active Drama' create an outdoor play after researching a topic of local history. With songs and a script of their own making their latest production was performed on the farm and Bidston Hill on April 25th 2010 entitled 'Bidston Hill the musical' and was about Bidston Hill through the eyes of teenagers on a school trip. The performance was enjoyed by an audience of 85 people on the day and was funded by a £5000 Grassroots Grant obtained from the Community Foundation for Merseyside. Subject to further funding, the intention is to maintain the group, albeit with different youngsters, using the farm as a base for rehearsals.

Events and activities

Life, Leisure and Combat in Viking Wirral

Saturday July 17th 10am – 4pm,
Come along and enjoy some family, historical and archaeological fun.
Re-enactment, guest speakers, exhibitions. Free event
Part of the Festival of British Archaeology

Carousel Ride

Small fairground ride suitable for young children. Here every

Tuesday and Thursday from July 20th - September 2nd, weather permitting. 80p / ride.

Summer Play Scheme 2010

Monday – Friday from July 26th – August 20th
Join Laura and Amy on this year's scheme with games, arts and crafts suitable for 6 - 14 year olds. Register from July 26th 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.

Bidston Windmill open to the public

Saturday 7th August and September 4th 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.

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*.

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.

