

# Tam O'Shanter Times

Summer 2014

Issue 64

## The Angoras have arrived!



They were collected from York on the 15th June and have settled in well. Adorable cute and curly! We have two does (females are called this not nannies!), and four kids, two sets of girl /boy twins. We still have two Golden Guernsey nanny goats Mona and Marigold, which are doing well, and hopefully will

share their paddock with the new arrivals.





getting plenty of visits from the community.

The ewes have delivered six lambs between them, three sets of twins and a singleton, and all are doing well.

Its animal warfare down on the allotment area! We are fighting back the birds, caterpillars, slugs, snails and squirrels from eating our crops. We have planted potatoes, onions, lettuce, rhubarb, peas, beans, tomatoes, beet root, cabbage, strawberries, cucumber, pumpkins and marrows! Last year we were able to feed the workers and the animals throughout the summer on lush greens.

We now have a Facebook page for the farm that you can follow, the address is Woodworkout at Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm. Geoff, one of our volunteers, is writing a Dr Dolittle column about the animals for your amusement. Check it out!

The summer is fast approaching bringing its blooms and blossoms, after a very busy spring period on the farm.

The egg incubation programme has gone well this year at the local schools which brought many chicks and ducklings back to the farm. Our breeding sows, Alison and Ruby, have produced 15 piglets this

year - well done girls! Eight of the piglets have been sold as weaners, six of which will go to Bebington High School Farm and we will keep the rest to bring on.

Jacko the donkey is doing very well on his own. We were concerned he may miss Arnie's company, but he is still kicking up a fuss as usual and keeping us on our toes and he's

## Butterflies

There are four stages in a butterfly's life. They start out as eggs, inside which a tiny larva or caterpillar develops. These eat and grow rapidly, shedding their skin from time to time, like a snake. Caterpillars can be called 'stomachs with legs'. They generally eat leaves. They gather all the raw materials for use in later life as a flying adult butterfly. The third stage is the most mysterious. The caterpillar hardens a case around itself called a pupa and eventually a butterfly comes out and flies off to mate and produce more butterflies.

Nearly all butterflies visit flowers for a special food called nectar. A butterfly sucks nectar through its long tongue (called a proboscis) which is curled away when it is not feeding.

Butterflies such as the Cabbage Whites fly and live everywhere. This is because their caterpillar food plants are very common – such as nettles. Butterfly wing colours fade as they get older – the fine coloured scales that cover the wings rub off so old butterflies can be hard to identify.

Butterfly enthusiasts may also like to know our list of sightings



on and around the farm this year: Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Brimstone, Small Copper, Holly Blue, Orange Tip, Small White, Large White, Green-veined White, Common Blue, Large Skipper, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and last but not least a *Clouded Yellow* (11.6.14). We will also expect to see Small Skipper, White letter Hairstreak and Purple Hairstreak before the end of August.



## Cottage Crafts and activities

The Angora goats are linked to the textile heritage skills we are developing on the farm in spinning, natural dyeing, peg loom weaving and crochet work. We have been processing fleeces from a local sheep farmer in Eastham alongside the Manx Loaghtan we already have on the farm. If anyone has fleeces they could donate to the farm, this would be very much appreciated'.

Any spinner out there knows what this process involves! Cleaning, picking, carding and spinning. We are hoping to provide tailored activities for the community to get involved in or 'Have a Go', demonstrations and basic courses in spinning, weaving and natural dyeing. We are also developing a small range of hand crafted products for the gift shop to sell. Watch this space!

Reduce, reuse and recycle! Our children's activities have been very popular and generated enough money to buy the Angoras. We try to use recycled, donated or natural products that are available on the farm. We are asking for recycled woollies to turn into puppets! Hats,



# Happy memories



**I really enjoy my visits to the Farm as they bring back happy memories of when I was in the Land Army and working on farms.**

My love of the countryside and animals started many years ago when I was young. I was living in Birkenhead and when I was 11 years old the 2nd World War broke out and along with many other children I was

evacuated to Shropshire. I settled in to my new home and school and my free time was spent helping on the farms potato picking and feeding the animals. It was then that my love of the countryside was born.

After the War I returned home and was happy to be back with my family. I started a job in an office but missed the country and animals tremendously. It was then that I

decided to join the Land Army and was sent to Stratford on Avon where I spent 4 years working on farms which I loved.

Coming to Tam O'Shanter's Farm all these years later brings back all those happy memories of years gone by.

**Cora**  
*A Friend of the Farm*



gloves and socks odd or paired, jumpers and scarves. Recycle your pop bottles at the farm (large 2 litre size). The children turn them into rockets to launch. Any unwanted craft materials can be put to good use on the farm through the children's activities which will run through the school holidays. Bear us in mind when having a throw out!

Also look out for the thatcher in September who will be working on the cottage roof. Another rare craft – it will be a treat to watch these skilled craftsmen practising their art repairing the roof in time for winter.

## Love Wirral and Tam O'Shanter

Thanks to everyone who voted for us in the 'Love Wirral' grant organised and funded by Wirral Council. We succeeded in getting the £500 which will go towards hanging baskets and planters around the farm, building on the colourful show last summer thanks to the hard work of Andy and Woodworkout. This year there will be a number of window boxes around the café and yard. Built by our trainees and volunteers they will be planted up with attractive flowers that not only will look good but should provide pollen and nectar for bumble bees, honey bees and other valuable pollinating insects.

This is also the time of year when the beautiful scented rambling rose, 'Kiftsgate', produces a mass of blooms over the old Nissen hut. If anyone has seen it at its best they will see it covered in bees when in full sun. The sound of bees and the smell of the flowers is unbelievable. Stretching way up in to the adjoining elm tree it is hard to believe that it all comes from only two plants.

Many visitors during the first part of half term will have seen our



brood of Blue Tits in a nest box on the cottage. With a nest box camera we were able to show great views of the eggs being incubated for two weeks in early May followed by the hatching of 6 nestlings. These were reared on a diet of mostly small green caterpillars with the odd spider and other insect. This high protein diet enabled them all to leave the box successfully by May 28th.

As we move into summer look out for our nesting swallows. We now have three pairs nesting in the Animal House. Only five years ago we did not have any and it is great to see them return each Spring and rear their young. I am sure Jacko also looks forward to sharing his stable for a few months each summer even if he stands underneath them at 'wrong' time occasionally!

# Events and activities

All events are free unless otherwise stated.

## Summer School Holidays Cottage Crafts for Kids

Tuesday to Friday 12 – 3pm  
Suitable for ages 3 - 11 but must be supervised by an adult please. No need to book, just come and have a go at making something from natural or recycled materials such as a mini raft, sock puppet, elder friendship bands or scarecrows. One activity per day.

There will be a charge of £1.



## Summer Fair

Sunday August 17th  
11.00 - 4.00pm.

Birds of prey display with Rockcliffe Raptors  
Stalls, games, activities, fun for all the family. Free admission.

## WUFA AGM

The AGM of WUFA will take place on Wednesday 17th September at 6pm in the farm café. All members are welcome. This is your opportunity to find out how WUFA has been helping the farm over the past year (up to March 2014). You are also invited to submit your fund raising ideas via the Suggestion Box on the Gift Shop counter. We are planning to extend the café / office building and all ideas for raising funds towards this will be welcome.

Janet Thorning will be stepping down as Chair after many years in the hot seat, so a new chair will be voted in on the night – please see attached nomination form. We look forward to seeing you there. Please send apologies if you would like to attend but are unable to.

## Thanks to:

Everyone who has made generous donations and standing orders including; Bob Hughes, Peter Vincent, Mrs Garroch, Mrs Williams (knitted goods), Mr Docherty, Green Blade (performing mummings).

Thanks also to Woodworkout staff and volunteers for helping with activities during the school holidays and also to everyone who took part helping to raise over £600 which was used to purchase our new flock of Angora goats.

Thanks to Mr Ted Gray for the use of his photos in the last edition and for his efforts many years ago without which the farm may not be here today.

## Mary Connell

**Mary Connell passed away on May 18 .**

For seventy-seven years, Mary has been a constant presence on the hill that she loved. She moved into the Lighthouse Cottages in 1937 with her parents Mick and Mary Connell and younger sister Patricia. She worked as a funeral director for many years, and walked her dogs on Bidston Hill twice a day. She fought Wirral Borough Council and the Natural Environment Research Council for the right to stay in the Lighthouse Cottages, and



against all the odds, she won. She was in her seventies when ill health forced her to retire.

Mary was a strong and feisty woman with a sharp wit and a heart of gold. Bidston Hill will not be the same without her.

Mary is survived by her sister Patricia, her nieces Collette, Paula, Claire and Jane, and her Yorkshire terrier Lacey.

**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](mailto:tamoshan@wirral.gov.uk)

For further information about the farm and past history look at our old newsletters on the website. [www.tamoshanterfarm.org.uk](http://www.tamoshanterfarm.org.uk)

## Membership

£5 / address / year. due on the 1st April. New members joining after October 1st will not be due for renewal until April the following

year. Please make cheques payable to: *Wirral Urban Farm Association*. You will receive three 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.