

TAM O'SHANTER TIMES

Thanks to:



green pennant award

WINTER 2008



Animal Update

This year has passed all too quickly. The chicks and ducklings have grown up and have gone to good homes. The animal house looks empty. It's time to prepare the pens ready for the next incubation project and the next batch of chicks in the spring.

There is a handsome ram with the Manx Loaghtan sheep. He is here for a couple of months from the farm in Shropshire where our ewes came from. We should see some lambs in April. His name is Diablo, by the way!



Many of you will have noticed Arnie has lost some of his coat. He suffers from Sweet Itch (which is an allergy to fly-bites); this makes him rub his back. Cold weather will kill the flies and stop the irritation.

Hopefully we will be borrowing a boar again from Croxteth Hall in December in the hope of more piglets in the spring.



Future plans

We are often asked to put in more play equipment such as swings. Whilst we are conscious of these demands we are reluctant to turn the farm into a playground with a few farm animals. We intend to keep the farm as a place for rearing livestock but with the bonus of being a recreational and educational site.

Our future plans do include a new café with the emphasis on healthy eating and the links between food production and meals on the plate. For this big project we will be seeking funds, probably from the Big Lottery amongst others.

During the last year we received grants and donations from the **'Your Wirral' Fund** of Wirral Council (£5,000), the **Secret Gardens of Oxtun** (£3,720), **The Hemby Trust** (£1500) and the **P H Holt Foundation** (£2,000).

These pots of money were used for specific purposes including the funding of children's activities during school holidays, the new 'little grey Fergie' tractor and the production of a DVD about the history and memories of Tam O'Shanter Cottage.

Some of the remaining funds will be used for 'sensory' equipment around the farm, which should entertain and educate children by magic! Look out for this exciting development, which we hope to have installed by Easter 2009.

Many of these events and initiatives are funded and planned through the 'Friends of the Farm' otherwise known as the 'Wirral Urban Farm Association' which currently has around 40 – 50 paid up members (£5 p.a. subscription). Members receive 1 copy of this newsletter 3 times/year and support the farm through practical work or financially through subscription and donation. Some of the 'friends' funds go on café vouchers for volunteers. Currently, many of our volunteers record the hours worked for which they receive vouchers for use in the café. This is not payment but a small thank you for their hard work.

I want to be a vetpart 2

My next farming placement took me out to a place in Cheshire, which held nearly 3000 sheep and lambs. This was a placement I had been looking forward to attending for a long time as I have regularly worked with and handled sheep at Tam O'Shanter's. My first week at this farm was in February and my mornings generally consisted of feeding and cleaning and I also had the pleasure of bottle-feeding a small number of lambs. During the afternoon however, blessed with good weather, I would accompany the farmer and his old sheepdog Meg to herd in the sheep and we were "helped" by the newly recruited trainee – the troublesome puppy, Fly. This first week gave me a real feel for life on a sheep farm and allowed me to see a wide variety of ailments and treatments that will greatly assist me on my path to becoming a vet and I always found myself suitably impressed watching the sheepdogs at work.

After finishing the week in February I decided to ask if I could return for another week over Easter, the farmer agreed and so I returned for a week of lambing. On my first day back I realised I had my work cut out for me as I was given the task, along with a first year veterinary student, to look after 800 lambing ewes. It would be an understatement to use the term "understaffed" and I found myself well out of my depth. Between the two of us and the farmer all 800 sheep would have to be fed, watered and have their pens cleaned. This, however, wasn't the main problem. It seemed that a large number of sheep decided that they would lamb a week early and we found that we were having several new lambs being born every half hour. Not only did we frequently have to assist the sheep in delivering their lambs, but both sheep and lamb would have to be relocated to a small private pen directly after the birth and sheep already taking up pens would have to be moved into larger pens. In addition to these tasks the lambs' navels and umbilical cords would have to be sprayed with iodine to prevent bacterial infection, lambs would have to be castrated and have their tails docked (a harmless process which is achieved by placing a special type of elastic band around the designated area), lambs and ewes would also have to be sprayed with an individual number and information collected about each ewe and her lamb. Sick lambs would also have to be cared for and there were a handful of about 20 lambs, which also required around the clock bottle feeding or feeding via a tube, which is placed directly in the stomach. As can be imagined there were not enough hours in the day to complete all the necessary tasks, which involved the farmer working through the night and the veterinary student and I running ragged trying to do as much as possible throughout the day. All in all though I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and would not change anything about the week. It was great knowing that I was doing something worthwhile and that I was really making a difference. Luckily the following week brought a professionally employed shepherd and three more students to lend a hand, which so happened to be the week that the sheep decided they had finished their lambing rush.



I have certainly not finished with work experience and I feel I have a lot more to learn. I have already arranged to spend a week at the Leahurst large animal vet department, a week on a pig and beef cattle farm and a week in Cornwall at the Seal Sanctuary and I also have an upcoming interview with regards to spending a month next summer working at Chester Zoo.

My advice to any upcoming veterinary student is to work hard to achieve fantastic grades and start getting work experience as soon as possible. It's great fun and I have not had a placement yet that I have not enjoyed. Hopefully my hard work and time spent on my placements will result in gaining a place on a veterinary course.

Sarah Tijon (17 years old)



Blue Peter's

Mission Nutrition

Do you want to help children eat and grow better food? Then why not hold a bring and buy sale, or other fundraising event, to support Blue Peter's Mission Nutrition appeal. This is Blue Peter's biggest appeal yet and will help children in the UK as well as Bangladesh, Colombia and South Africa. The plan is to raise enough money to put two million meals on plates, as well as setting up garden and breakfast clubs to help children grow their own food and eat well. To find out more about the appeal, and to download a fundraising pack, go to: www.missionnutrition.org.uk.

Staff Changes

Sadly, we must say goodbye to Dawn at the end of November, as funding for the post (Big Lottery and Tudor Trust) runs out after three years. Dawn has worked hard over this time co-ordinating all our volunteers, running the incubation projects in schools, producing this newsletter and covering with general farm and office duties. Her enthusiasm and sense of humour will be greatly missed around the farm but we wish her well in securing new employment elsewhere.

On a brighter note we welcome Tony to the team. As a gardener/estate worker with Wirral Council, Tony will be working with Nic (Ranger) on Bidston Hill carrying out much needed management of the heathland and woodland.

John Jakeman
Farm Manager

Meat for Sale

Free range - fed on additive free food and butchered by Edge and Son, New Ferry.

Pork Joints – frozen

Shoulder - £2/lb, Chops - £3/lb, Leg - £2.50/lb

Bacon and Gammon joints – fresh

Middle bacon – **Sold out**

Streaky bacon – **Sold out**

Gammon joints – **Sold out**

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

Wildlife Update



Have a peek at some of the wildlife that visited the farm this past year....



Can you identify them?

green pennant award

Communities the civic trust ENGLAND

2008
Award Winner

**Tam O'Shanter Cottage
Urban Farm Trust**
Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm

The Green Pennant Award is a national award that recognises high quality green spaces in England and Wales that are managed by voluntary and community groups.

R. dale
Rachel Arrundale
Chair of the
Green Flag Advisory Board

08

Sunday November 30th

12 noon – 3pm

Festive Mask Making

Come and have a go at making a mask.
Small charge. Suitable for all children,



Saturday December 13th 2008

Santa visits the farm



12.30 – 4 pm

Ticket only, £2.50 each, guarantees a present from Santa. Available from December 1st from the Gift Shop or Rangers Office.

Also Christmas craft items, roast chestnuts and stable nativity scene.

Some tickets may be available on the day.

* Limited to 250.

Thanks To:

Mrs Wheeler – for her donation of garden furniture.

25th Birkenhead Cub Pack – for their donation of £100 following the Wirral Coastal Walk.

Vee Gattrell – for jumping off Leasowe Lighthouse and raising £100 for the farm. Also for making and selling £182 worth of hand-made craft items.

Russell, Sue, Fiona and Terry – for arranging children's craft activities, pumpkin carving and the owl display during October half-term.

Danny Daniels – for hand made cards.

All the members - who generously gave donations with their annual subscription – many thanks.

Fun with a Scottish Flavour!

There are celebrations every year on 25th January enjoyed by those all over the world, who have links to Scotland. This date marks the birthday of that nation's best-loved poet and song-writer, Robert Burns. He it was who wrote the long poem 'Tam O'Shanter', some lines of which are painted inside the farm's activity room. 19th century Stonemason Richard Leay, in carving the scene from that poem now set into the gable end of the cottage, unwittingly gave the urban farm its name.



Many people mark the day by holding Burns Night Suppers with haggis, neeps and tatties (and of course, whisky!) but in 2009, the 150th anniversary of his birth, we thought we would celebrate in the daytime, when more people can take part.

We can't guarantee haggis; however, there'll be fun with a Scottish flavour around the farm, with a treasure hunt, children's activities and perhaps a few surprises too! Come along and be part of the celebrations between 12.00 and 4.00, and find out more about the man who gave Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm its name.

Gift Shop

We have had some changes over the last year or so but currently the shop is manned by volunteers whenever possible. Pat, Joan and Sophie have managed to open the shop at weekends and most of October half term but we really need a few more volunteers. Anybody willing to spare a few hours behind the counter please let us know.

Stocking- fillers this year include:-

- Farm yard jigsaws – £2
- Animal soft toys - £1 each.
- Tractors £1.40 - £2
- Bear puzzles - £1.50
- Finger puppets - £1 each.
- Animal masks - £1.50

