

S U M M E R 2 0 1 4

Broughton Grounds Farm



What's this, a farm newsletter? Good golly gosh!

We thought you might like to hear about what has been happening at the farm recently. Hopefully the nice picture makes up for my shocking spelling!

As I (James) write, hay-making is drawing to a close. The last field we make hay of each year is Dairy Ground, which, due to its huge range of wild flowers and grass species (over 130) we don't cut or graze between 15th May and 15th July each year to allow plants to seed. It will soon be time to harvest barley, and then there will be a break before the winter wheat and spring oats are ready. Lambs will be weaned in late July and the early lambing ewes will then be put with the rams in late August, ready to lamb in February (sheep gestation is 144 days, decent pub quiz question eh). Like many industries, as farmer's we now operate in a global market, and the cereal price is extremely volatile at the moment. The Ukraine crisis caused the wheat price to rise two months ago, but on the back of predictions over a bumper harvest the price has recently crashed. On the bright side the dry weather means hay feeding value this winter should be good. And there you have farmers' two big concerns, weather and prices!

About half the land we farm is in permanent pasture. You may be interested to hear about our six-year rotation on the remaining 170 acres. (And you may not be, but I'll tell you anyway!) Its winter wheat, winter wheat, winter barley, and then spring oats under-sown with a two-year clover ley. This means that when we harvest the oats in August the clover is ready to be grazed and we don't have to plough the field again. Stubble turnips are grown over the winter between the barley harvest and planting spring oats in March, and are used to fatten lambs. This is a traditional system that helps build soil organic matter and fix nitrogen from the air (clover being a legume) which means we don't have to use as many herbicides or as much artificial fertilizer as many farming systems. The manure from the cattle is spread on the arable land and rotating sheep and cattle on permanent pasture means we don't have to worm the livestock as often as we would if we just kept sheep.

We are in Natural England's 'Higher Level Stewardship' scheme. We have 12 'management options' intended to encourage wildlife, from hares to lapwings. I'll explain more about that in the autumn edition (plug). To be sustainable we believe a farming system needs to be economically viable, enhance the environment and be socially engaging and responsible. Which leads me on to...

Visits and Farm Clubs

Over the last few months we have set-up two farm clubs. One is a monthly group for young children who attend Frank Wise School, and the other is weekly for adults from a day care centre. We try and make activities hands on, sensory and fun, from wool felting to lamb weighing and egg collecting to pancake making. So far feedback has been encouraging and we hope to develop more 'care farming' activities in the future. We also offer free group visits throughout the year and we are accredited with CEVAS (www.cevas.org.uk) so if you know a group who might like to visit please ask them to get in touch. Traditional mixed farms like ours aren't very common nowadays, and one of the advantages is that there is always something different going on. We're keen to put in some accessible paths around the farmyard for wheelchair users, if you'd like to get involved please get in touch.



Broughton Grounds Lamb!

We will shortly be taking some lambs to Long Compton Abattoir. They will have only travelled 12 miles, had a great life and only been fed grass and their mum's milk. Half a lamb will be £70, packed ready for the freezer. Please order by 20th August, ready to collect in September.



Broughton Grounds Honey!

James and our good friend Steve Cocks have started keeping bees. With such a range of habitats on the farm, including the wild flowers in Dairy Ground and pollen and nectar strips, we're hopeful it will be tasty stuff. Currently available in half a pound jars for £3, the pound jar range is about to be launched. Keep an eye on the national press for details, RRP £5.

Oh and a whopping 30p discount if you bring your jar back!



Broughton Grounds Eggs!

My Father, Andy, has been delivering eggs for 35 years. As he has (just about) completed his apprenticeship, we hope to expand the egg round over the next few months. We've even bought a new Chicken House, hen feedback has so far been excellent; 24 hour buffet and hardly any foxes. If you'd like to have eggs delivered to your door on Thursday's, please do just get in touch.

Finally, thanks to everyone who attended the open day in June, we raised £220 for the air ambulance. Also, you may have heard we celebrated being tenants at the farm for 100 years on June 21st, particular thanks to Lesley Wragg, Terry Andrews and Carl and Jill Evans for their generous help on the day!

If you would like to receive future editions of this newsletter (four times a year) please drop me an e-mail.

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PS If you're interested in birds and would like to help with a farm bird survey, please get in touch!

