

The Shallowford Trust Newsletter



Dear Friends of Shallowford,

What a year! When we last wrote in May, I doubt any of us would have guessed the major chaos or perhaps more glumly, the sense of negativity the world would now be hurtled into. Strangely for us on the moors, dictated to by the seasons and weather, Corona Virus has been a nasty sting, but it could have been much worse.

As you know **we are building!** Perhaps more accurately, one new building, one conversion and a lot of visitors squeezed down a temporary path to find the way to the front or back door. We'd had seven groups before lockdown on 18th March, during which, by some small miracle, we happened to have our building team on site! So, they simply stayed and kept on building! We lost 19 groups throughout lockdown but our first intrepid visitors returned on 5th July and then poured in over the summer with 23 groups staying for varying periods until the cool of September and the seriousness of school lured everyone off the hills. 11 of these groups were our main target group – considerably less than were booked and we would have hoped for, but planning mixed groups from different households proved extremely tricky. Schools largely could not travel, but everyone who came helped with the animals and submerged into the magic of Dartmoor. Trying to keep up with the washing was masterfully achieved with the domestic washing machine at full tilt, the Aga pumping out its delightful warmth and a struggling tumble dryer. However, now we are linked into the electric network with our fantastic solar panels. We may not be carbon neutral (yet), but we are working towards it!!



Sadly, due to Corona Virus we had no visitors when lambing, when the shearers arrived, nor when hay and silage were being cut. It's been a sad year where the delights of a normal farming calendar could not be shared and helped by our volunteers.



On 11th August we had our first **Providence House** group down for the summer. The Girls Group dared to dip in the West Webburn, which was icy cold within the magical green arms of Dartmoor. The water was slightly warmer at South Milton, where the delights of the summer sunshine were

enjoyed by huge numbers of people and our girls swam and paddled on boards, between investigating the rock-pools.



We raised **two batches of chickens** and experimented with our own killing and plucking equipment to enable us to sell direct to the public or eat on the farm. Perhaps more importantly, we are now more efficient butchers and can teach the skills to those willing to understand how to raise and prepare their food in a wholesome and humane manner.



10th November 2020

Although we obviously have closed during the lock-down periods, when the Govt and common sense permitted, we have been open. We are also welcoming family groups to stay or as day visits, within Covid Rules whilst we juggle the lack of school visits. Bovey Youth Café came for an afternoon of proper moorland exploration and farm work. We have had intrepid visitors from London who came with various nervous fears only to enjoy the delights of Charlotte's ponies and discuss the



virtues of a poor farmers life compared to an urban income! The workload has been huge and the need to adapt to these changes has kept us on our toes.



Having interviewed over thirty people, chatted with all sorts of locals and people who have been involved with the farm over the years in many different roles, we finally gave a presentation of our **Strategy** findings to the trustees on 10th October. How to move forward, address urgent modern issues including the Climate Emergency, the general over use of screen based

technology and lack of engagement with the outside world and the massive if not huge gap of knowledge about food production and the environment..... to list all but a few!?

The answers have thrown up some interesting suggestions, including employing and training young people in youth and farm work on an annual contract. We have many ideas pinging around that will be debated as we move forward. Many of the ideas involve returning to farm activities that were the daily tasks for Miss Braund and Rosemary in their youth and encourage hands on work with visitors. Other ideas including craft activities and life skills development that our screen based youth rarely learn and can now be easily undertaken in the Ark.



Staff changes have also taken place with Alethe moving out of the farm house and into Ashburton but remaining heavily involved with the farm as she dashes around ensuring all the animals are kept in tip top shape. The farm house remains occupied to ensure good security, but of course

we are currently closed to new visitors due to this second lock-down.



Watch out for us on '**Britain's Best Walks with Julia Bradbury**'. We could not quite work out how they had found us, as almost no one has heard of wee little 'East Shallowford Farm' on Dartmoor. However, it appears we have a secret marketing executive. He is deep, measured and highly inconspicuous telling a yarn better than most and has details that those in their graves would struggle to remember - Peter Dracup, had a gentle word in the ear of a filming executive and so the filming crew swooped in to interview everyone, but delightful wee Tosha (photo to the left) explained everything without a wince of camera shyness.

We aim to **open the converted barn in May 2021**. The builders will finish their work hopefully in March and then the *real* work for us begins. Our very great thanks go to Penny and Brian Whale who, after their family had run the Wayside Café for 99 years, generously donated some of their wonderful equipment for our

new kitchen. We cannot thank them enough as the quality of the items donated is far beyond our normal means and is truly appreciated. The Whales have kick started our aspirations for the commercial kitchen. However, we have to paint, decorate and fit out the entire building. This includes completing the commercial kitchen, buying bunk beds, mattresses, mattress protectors, sheets, duvets, pillows, towels, pine antique furniture in keeping with the Shallowford's 'homely welcome', pans and cooking equipment and anything you might think could be useful! Please contact us if you have any donations in kind, in funds or could spare some time **painting in April - May 2021**.

Volunteers needed on Thursdays AFTER lock-down (hopefully 10th December): mucking out, wood chopping, grass strimming, mending, cleaning, polishing, outdoor jobs as needed. We will provide tea, coffee, bread, soup and cake. Covid Rules! Come just when you can, occasionally or even just once - it all helps. Please contact Serena: serena@shallowfordfarm.co.uk or Tel: 01364 621 392 (usually Julia).