

## The Shallowford Trust Newsletter



Dear Friends,

How on earth can the time have flown so miraculously and at the same time have stolen our summer? August is nearly over, the grass is lush and green and we have been so busy it's slightly unnerving.

The major question since last year's building work? **Have we finished? Does it work? What do the children think?** Well, we have not quite finished yet! Hopefully towards the

end of September, when the birds have vacated the holes in the walls, pointing and electrics will be completed. Maintenance will be on-going of course, with walls, fencing, gates and the Farm House still needs some major work to ensure it is in line with modern regulations. The children so far have been brilliantly positive. We take the frequent comment, 'this is better than our place' as good??

The big question? **Have we managed to engage and work with more young people?** This, of course, is why we are here. Our Vision has not changed since Miss Braund and Rosemary Bird purchased East Shallowford Farm in 1976. The need, we argue is perhaps more prescient now than ever before. Providence House brought a group down to visit in mid August, some daring to camp despite the weather! One Mum with a knotted face introduced her daughter



July 2023 Cotham School Bristol makes it to the top!

as someone 'who never leaves her room.' It's scary! The world that looms ahead of us, increasing urbanisation; an increasing digital age that presents not the real world but a representation of it that is quite often simply not reality, not the truth. The question of truth becomes an elusive concept. Not at Shallowford, where the squeal of a pig in everyone's ears at feeding time is about as painfully real as anything can be. When rain pours down hot little cheeks and lungs heave as they pump oxygen to climb up Corndon, young people who have never hauled their limbs up a hill understand often for the first time that it's *not* impossible to walk for a mile over rocks and through prickly gorse *and* remain alive. We have hosted fifteen residential groups since January of which six were returning schools, two were new schools, seven were Providence House groups and one was young carers. As for day visitors - we have had hundreds!



The value of planting trees moves from theoretical to practical.

We work every week with a Pupil Referral Unit and discuss closely with a small team to find ways to engage young people who struggle with the routine of the standard school system. Some 'older' youth

have also been visiting us, to improve their mental health. The tasks are real - we genuinely do need to plant out the oak seedlings collected by Princetown School last autumn. We do genuinely have to water the tomatoes which if not eaten fresh are dropped into boiling water before being frozen for the spring residential groups. Two secondary schools pulled out a wall of docks and nettles before they seeded, saving one bank and adding a quarter of an acre of grazing to one field. We are born of nature and into we shall return. It's just remembering to live within it that has often been strangely forgotten in our modern world..... but not at Shallowford!





We had several groups re-schedule their visit this year to ensure they coincided with lambing. The joy on children's faces is just pure magic as they learn about birth, the risks, watch the lambs nestling in, the mother's protecting and then of course participate in the spreading of straw and feeding times.

Following lambing, we were totally surprised to be awarded the **Prince of Wales Award at the Devon County Show**, for which Riverside Primary School from Plymouth was invited to attend as special guests! We also seem to have received unprecedented press coverage this year, appearing in several newspapers and on TV. In fact, we discovered that we were not only on Spotlight (BBC South West news) in the August evening news, but the story was repeated several times on Saturday morning! We have been on the BBC Radio 4 Farming Today programme, and on BBC London! What have we been up to? Well, the London coverage was due to Will's completely mad idea to take the **'Farm to the City'**. Of course it was to Providence House, hopping distance from Clapham Junction, encouraged by the celebration of the Youth Club's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday.



David explaining pig management to a group with the Duchess of Edinburgh

Yes, we genuinely did take *some* of East Shallowford to London! Will, our Farm Manager set a new record for the number of times a van and trailer could drive up and down the A303 without falling asleep at the wheel, using a series of accomplices to poke and prod him. Ellie sported a high viz jacket as a stylish debutant whilst managing to organise everyone to be ready sharply for the rhemes of visitors, whilst everyone stood to attention as group after group poured through the doors to 'ooo', and 'ahh,' to question, to touch, feel and learn and enjoy. From Monday 5<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2,100 visitors filed through the doors of Providence House. The event could only have taken place with the support and collaboration of so many people, willing to provide their time, energy and expertise. With five **Dartmoor Farmers**, experts in tractors, milking, sheep, pigs, grass, birds, hedges – you name it, they could answer the question! For a full immersion in **Dartmoor, the National Park** provided dedicated staff who lured young hands into dark boxes to feel and touch either the strange sphagnum moss, weird sheep horns or the slime of a slug (OK – not a real one).



Olly demonstrating the sucking power of a calf

in August was shown one of the moths caught overnight in a trap and said "I know that one! It's an elephant hawkmoth!" (which indeed it was). When asked how she knew, she replied that she remembered learning it at Providence House! There were 16 different educational activities, with **Foundation for Common Land** able to demonstrate the value of protecting our 'spaces' drawing similarities between Clapham Common and Dartmoor. **Peatland Partnership** splattered many young people with water as the reason for 'slowing the flow' was demonstrated extremely practically! However, not all essential learning came from Dartmoor. Recycling and climate change activities were demonstrated by Waste Not Want Not

**Butterfly Conservation** discovered that school visits are genuinely worth it, when one young girl on visiting the farm



Anna helped around 2,000 young people to make woolen bracelets at Providence House!



Battersea, with the visual process of composting food peelings, illustrating that each of us can make a difference to the Climate Emergency.

**Waste Not Want Not Battersea** also worked tirelessly to feed everyone breakfast and lunch for which there was massive gratitude, although some of us came away with more kilos around our wastes than we would have wished for! We were also blessed with our second visit from the Duchess of Edinburgh who questioned the children at length as she toured every activity, endorsing the value of our work.

If anyone dares to despair at all the gloom and doom doled out on the news. STOP!! What this event demonstrated above all, was that when people come together, to share, work towards a common goal, it does not matter where you come from; if you are a milk farmer fifty miles from the nearest shop in deepest greenest Devon, or a Rasta from the hustle of Wandsworth. When you have a shared vision, a shared goal that is important to all, people unite, solve problems and help each other. Providence House became a farm and a place of



Farm to City Providence House: Information banners securing the animals during the night



Banned from the Moor once again serenade the pixies in the West Webburn Valley at East Shallowford

environmental learning for a week! The community of Battersea took care of a bunch of Devonians who don't travel to London too often. They showed everyone true care, hospitality, kindness and went out of their way to provide security (which was probably not needed), information, support, but most importantly, interest and the curiosity of all humans to learn, question and just enjoy something and have a bit of fun. Two very different communities joined together! And it was FUN!!

In the mean time back at Shallowford, one family took on the huge task of caring for the animals remaining at the farm. Special, huge **Thank You** to the Plumley's!!

Then, of course, it was time for the City to return to the Farm! Nearly sixty people, some in tents, some in the House or Barn, came to Dartmoor and the Devon beach for a proper family holiday. Tuesday night was BBQ night, with Banned from the Moor generously igniting the itch to dance and twirl as the sun gently dipped behind Corndon and lashings of food was hotly prepared with a flair by Hadas and a team of dedicated supporters. Thank you everyone who turned up to help and enjoy!



Hadas bringing Waste Not Want Not Battersea skills and food to Dartmoor for our BBQ



Bury the Giant brought their amazing moss carpet to the BBQ. Started at Providence House, the circle between people, city and life was joined

**Two things we ask of you:**

- If you think your school or youth group might like to visit. Please send them our details.
- If you have just £10 to spare in this very difficult year, please support us through the **Shallowford Trust Big Give Christmas Campaign**, 'One donation, twice the impact' details of which can be found on our website. We will send reminders out for the deadline from 28<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to help us raise £80,000 to subsidise groups with limited funding. [www.shallowfordfarm.co.uk](http://www.shallowfordfarm.co.uk)