

The Completion of East Shallowford's New Farm Yard

The story begins in 2013, when the trustees reviewed the long-term goals and objectives of The Shallowford Trust, aiming to ensure long term sustainability of its main mission. One of the many objectives was to secure modern, quality farm barns that could provide shelter for outdoor human activities whilst also being used for a range of animals in a way that would enable easy and safe access for young people.

The Project:

The completion of the Ark in 2020 and the Barn conversion into accommodation for 21 beds in 2021 left us with growing demands and a much greater opportunity to provide significant experiences and challenges to an even greater number of young people. Our target at the time was to support 1,049 young people on a four night, five day residential course by 2025/26. However, by the end of 2022 we had already hosted 609 individuals on charitable residential visits, collectively reaching 5,241 visitor days in a combination of residential and day visits. The two main donors were Ernest Cook, who funded 110 young people on week long residencies from the most disadvantaged high-rise communities in Bristol and a Heritage Lottery Green Recovery Grant that enabled us to recruit a Conservation Officer to build resources for the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly and also fund over 1,600 day visitors, which were mostly local schools and community groups. Outreach and word of mouth has continued to increase the overall number of groups visiting both on day and residential trips.

Following the increase of youth growing up in urban areas with unchallenged immune systems, scares around bacteria, viruses and general higher levels of allergies to a wide range of triggers, the need to demarcate clear zones of 'green' and 'red' areas was considered a necessary demand in our modern world. The transition from the animal 'red' area to human 'green' areas were to be facilitated by the provision of hot hand washing facilities both outside and inside buildings.

The Outcomes:

The overall space created by these buildings enabled:

- More year round work with visiting groups
- A greater variety of animals
- Increased variety of activities and greater handling of animals
- Overall increase in the breadth of discussions and learning
- Increased area for conservation work and biodiversity development as part of a growing conservation programme

The Farm Yard was completed largely by the Symes Brothers digging drains which ran through a field soakaway in a controlled manner in line with Dartmoor regulations. The cemented area provides a protected and safe space enabling groups to learn to handle animals in preparation for shows and competitions. Having areas for different groups of animals kept in different ways (single farrowing sows vs sows and boar in pens, goats and calves) is aimed to inspire useful discussions and also enable large groups to be separated for different activities and more rotations of daily tasks.

Most work for the Farm Yard was completed in 2022:

The final Barn completion, pending only electrics was completed in December 2023 with the installation of the farm yard gates.

1. **A Corner Barn:** Level 1 entry from the house yard: between the existing Shippen and the old Main Barn, providing an out-door covered, dry area protected from the wind and elements in which to work. The aim was to enable practical outdoor activities (wood chopping, and general wood work, plug planting, willow work, preparation of chickens for eating etc) out of the

standard winter mizzle of Dartmoor. The structural building was completed in 2022 with only electrics pending.

2. **Corner Barn Extension:** Level 2 entry from the farm yard: a covered space for mixed animals, essential during the winter months when the pigs are brought in to reduce soil poaching, but need to mix within a larger group to ensure fertilisation. Electric lighting and sockets are to be completed.
3. **A Lean-to on the Shippen:** to provide two accessible outside toilets, a rodent proof farm store, a covered open space for food and animal preparation. Essential underpinning and a new roof on the Shippen have been completed to ensure the longevity of this Grade II listed barn which was at risk of the walls collapsing whilst the roof leaked badly.
4. **A Lean-to on the side of the animal barn:** for covered and safe storage of straw, hay, large tools and small machinery. Prior to this lean-to there was no space for normal farm equipment storage as the Animal Barn is for animals and feed only. This building is now complete.

Most of the work was completed by Matt Symes, a family building company, with additional support from plumbers and electricians.



January 2020:
compared to
May 2022: the
Shippen



August 2021
and May 2022:

No Corner
Barn (left) and
one
constructed
(right).





August 2021 and May 2022: the Animal Barn transformed with a lean-to and cemented yard. Note, the Animal Barn was constructed in 2018.



August 2021 open stone yard turned into a covered open and cemented yard May 2022. Corner Barn extension /Animal shed.



August 2021 to May 2022 Shippen Lean-to (disabled toilets and store).



Scrappy and Girlie enjoying the freedom of the yard.



The new Animal Barns: Corner Barn & extension.



Extra metal work in the roof was required by Building Control taking the standard over and above agricultural to domestic levels. This added to the overall costs considerably but was stipulated to ensure safety given the intended volume of human work within the barns, rather than simple animal farm work and storage space.

The gates in the photos above were held temporarily and insecurely to the walls with bailer twine.



The Barns were superficially completed for the deadline of 3rd May 2022 when the Earl and Countess of Wessex officially opened the new facilities.

The Corner Barn is often referred to as the Cathedral!



Harry Symes pointing at the end of the Shippen: November 2023 funded by the Clothworkers Foundation.



Holding mounts for the Farm Yard gates: December 2023. The gates are too heavy to be moved by the general public, but the ability to remove them enables a more diverse space.



Final completion of the 'child and cow safe' gates in the Farm Yard by December 2023, fabricated and installed by Matt Irish Engineering.



Car park & Farm Yard January 2020



May 2024



Car Park & curtilage wall January 2020



May 2024



Animal Barn towards the House & Yard January 2020



Animal Barn & Lean-to towards the new Corner Barn & House May 2024



Robert Musgrave clearing up behind the East Barn before work begins, September 2019



The Converted East Barn with its 'pig run' and the back of the Plant Room, May 2024



One Acre Field is levelled ready for the poly-tunnel February 2022. Funded mostly by Rural Development Programme (RDPE).



Poly-tunnel, raised beds and fruit cage all in place by May 2022. This photo May 2024.



One Acre Field is levelled ready for the poly-tunnel February 2022



View over the highly productive vegetable plot, May 2024



May 2023: enjoying the delights of the poly-tunnel



From spring to summer groups help at every stage of planting to consuming.



And then there are the chicken, guinea fowl and duck pens, constructed by many and enjoyed by more!

Many thanks indeed to the Symes Brothers who have pointed areas not catalogued here, but leave a feeling of 'tidiness' that also prevents rats and mice from sneaking into the buildings.

Many thanks to:

- Will Dracup for all his organising.
- Matt, Harry, Jake, Nick Symes, Paddy, Trevor & Darren (Kevin Hoare), Keith & Adam & Paul (shirtless man), Nick Creasy, Tristan, Ed, Mike, Demelza, Matt Irish's two engineers for their work and especially Elly Baker for her determination and dedication to complete a demanding project.
- Malcolm Hunter, Chris Houston, Dave Adams, Steven Wilks, Anita Dowman, Simon Burdel, Sally Hyne, Charlie Kendall, Elias Desouza, Antony Radford, Robert Musgrave, Valentine Newey and Serena Walcot for volunteering their hard work.
- Special thanks to Neil Thurlow, Serena Walcot and Karen Lieurance for their plant donations.