



Grimsbury Farm E-Newsletter – December 2009

Hello everyone

It's been another busy summer with a number of changes at the farm so, with the Carols in the Barn in a couple of weeks time, I thought that it was time to bring everyone up to date with what's been going on recently.

Fun day

The Fun day in September seems so far away now but we are able to remember that it was a tremendous success with even more visitors than previously and once again we were fortunate enough to have good weather. It was really good to see so many people enjoying themselves and we have had a lot of good feedback since the day.

The games and attractions once again proved to be a big draw with the crockery smash being particularly popular. Perhaps it's the stress of modern day living that makes people want to smash plates.

Our new apple press was given it's first outing and once again our Friends from Cock Road Ridge did sterling work pressing pears, apples and grapes giving people the chance to taste fruit juice straight from the presses with no additives put in.....a truly natural product.

From the financial point of view it was very successful and gives us the funding necessary to put on other events and to generally help to improve the farm.



Apple pressing day

Back in October we had the apple pressing day which was a pre-cursor to a larger event that is hoped will run in October 2010. We hosted and used our new apple press to assist the Orchard group to produce nearly 60 gallons of pure apple juice from apples collected in and

around South Gloucestershire. This juice has now been taken away and is fermenting to produce a traditional cider, which we hope to be able to offer taster samples of at the Wassail in January.

Next year it is hoped that people will be able to bring their own apples along for pressing and to be shown how to produce their own cider at home or to come along to an orchard to pick some apples, which can then be pressed for them. More information on next years event will be sent out in the new year.

Meanwhile you can see a collection of photographs taken at this years event at :

<http://theorchardgroup.wordpress.com/>



Carols in the Barn

The Carols in the Barn on Saturday 12th December is approaching very quickly and all the plans that we have been working on for some months will hopefully be put in place.

We have changed the format slightly this year, although the carols and the nativity will remain the same, as we strongly believe that whilst it is the fashion nowadays to modernise everything, some things must remain in their traditional form.

As last year, we will be having a barbeque with hot and cold drinks to keep you refreshed but as an added attraction this year we will also be having a children's puppet show. To welcome you as you arrive, the trees in the driveway will be illuminated with coloured lighting as well as some other features, which will add to the festive atmosphere. We have tried very hard to create an evening out that will remain in the minds of the children for a long time as well as being entertaining for our more mature visitors at the same time.

As previously, this will be an entirely free event, but you can support us by buying some refreshments or by making a donation in one of our collecting buckets. This is, of course, entirely voluntary, but it does help us to keep these events free to attend, which is something we intend to do for as long as possible.

If you have a child that would like to be part of the nativity, please let me know and they will be more than welcome to join in.

Although there will be some shelter, this will be limited, so please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and bring along a torch to be able to read the carol sheet and to sing along.



Wassail

The wassail will be taking place on Saturday 16th January 2010 and this year will include the opportunity for children to make shakers, lanterns, ivy crowns etc that they can use during the wassail ceremony. (*This activity is open to children of all ages from 2 to 100, so no-one should feel left out*). This will be happening between 4:15 and 5:15 when the traditional wassail celebration will take place, after which we will be entertained one again by the Bristol Voices choir who proved so popular last year.

There will be some refreshments available including the hot spiced apple drink that went down so well last year. We also hope to have samples of the cider that has been made using the juice from the apples pressed at the farm in October.

Although the Wassail will be partly held in the barn, it is primarily an outdoor event so, as with the carols, please wear the appropriate outdoor clothing.

Web-site

The Friends new web site is continuing to have content added to it and is the place to find information on events that are coming up in the future and to see photographs of past events. Please log on to www.fogf.co.uk and take a look.

If you know of anyone who would like to sign up for the E-newsletter, then this can now be done via the website. Also, if there is anything that you would like to see added to the website that would be of use to people when visiting the farm, please let us know and we'll see what we can do.

Animals - Update

The ram is in currently in with the sheep, so we should get lambs in the spring when we hope to be able to open the barn again over the weekend for you to have a closer look. This proved very popular when it was done before and gives everyone the opportunity to get a very good look at the new born lambs.

Our latest arrival, the Billy goat, is now settling in with the milking goats and although he is still quite young, he is getting on with what Billy goats do, so we should get some kids in the springtime. (*The self help manual we bought him must have worked !!!*)

The pigmy goats are already in kid and may possibly give birth by Christmas as in previous years. If that happens, you might be able to see them at the Carols or the Wassail, something that has proved very popular, and appropriate, in other years.

There is another TB test due to be carried out on the cows in the first week of December. This is a routine test that must be carried out on a regular basis and allows cattle to be moved. If it is clear then we will be allowed to take delivery of the final, in-calf Hereford cow.

After this, a decision will be made as to the best time to put the bull in to serve the other cows which will see our own calves born later next year. (*No manual required for him !!!*)



General farm information

The area around the orchard / picnic site is currently being cleared of scrub and the overhanging hedges and trees. This includes important management of some of our ancient hedges and although it can look rather dramatic when it's first done, there are great benefits in the long term. Once we can see what space there is, then the existing fruit trees can be pruned and it will then be possible to see if there is space for further fruit trees.

In the next few weeks we hope to erect some new interpretive signs giving details about the farm to our visitors. These signs have been funded by a Breathing Spaces grant with the research and artwork being done by the Friends. We hope that they prove to be informative and a useful and tasteful addition to the farm.

The Farmhouse

Most people will have noticed that the farmhouse is now looking much better having had a lot of work done on it during the summer. All of the old render has been stripped off, a new coating applied and then the whole lot painted. New guttering and fascia boards have completed the job, the result of which is a big improvement to the farmhouses' appearance. In the new year there will be some further work carried out internally to update the heating, lighting and general decoration.



You might also have noticed at the back of the house that some holes have appeared in the house wall following the renovation work. This isn't the builders having forgotten to put all the bricks back in, but the discovery of some old dove nesting points that had been covered up at some time in the past but have now been left open as a feature.

Memorial Park

The groundwork for the memorial park is now complete and you will probably have seen that the grass is already starting to grow and the first of many trees have also been planted. This week and next should see the fitting of the main gates following which the drainage work that is required as part of the development will be started.

Most people are not aware that new planning regulations require that all new developments have to take action to avoid over loading the drainage system. There is a formula that is used to calculate the amount of water that must be held back and allowed to enter the drains at a controlled rate. The formula takes into account the surface area that is being developed and states that the chosen storage system must cope with the once in a hundred year storm plus 20%, so you can see that it has to potentially cope with a very large volume of water.

A number of options have been considered and the one that has been chosen is a partially buried tank system that will be installed in the small field between Grimsbury road and Hop, Skip and Jump. This work will start as soon as possible, so when you see the diggers move in, you will now know what is going on.

When finished, the tanks should not be obtrusive and will ensure that the local drains can cope with severe storms, which in turn means that homes locally should hopefully remain safe from flooding, the catastrophic effects of which have been brought home to everyone recently with the pictures from Cumbria.

It is hoped that an open day will be organised in the near future for people to have a good look around and to have the chance to talk to representatives from SGC.

Miscellaneous

The Friends have been busy recently applying for numerous grants from various bodies. This takes a lot of effort but can be very worthwhile when we are successful in getting funding for various farm activities and projects. Hopefully everyone will see the full benefits of this work in the fullness of time.

Dates for your diary

Carols in the Barn : Saturday 12th December.

4:15 for refreshments and children's puppet show.

5:15 for the Carols and the Nativity.

Wassail : Saturday 16th January 2010.

4:15 for the "Make a shaker and lantern".

5:15 for the Wassail ceremony

Lambing : March. Date to be announced.

Farm Open Sunday : 13th June. 2010

Fun day 2010 : Saturday 18th September 2010

Scrumping day : October 2010

More details of all our events can be found on our website : <http://www.fogf.co.uk/>

I think that this brings us up to date for now. If you would like to know more about the farm or would like to become involved with the Friends of Grimsbury Farm, please contact me at

Chairman@FOGF.co.uk or just come along and talk to any of the volunteers at one of our working parties or events.

This will probably be the last E-Newsletter for 2009, so, despite it being a little bit too early, on behalf of the Friends of Grimsbury farm, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

I hope to see you at one of our forthcoming events.

Peter Davies

The Friends of Grimsbury Farm