

# MILLENNIUM FARM TRUST

providing opportunities for those with learning difficulties



## Senior Support Worker's Report M.F.T. AGM October 20<sup>th</sup> 2007

Here at the Millennium Farm Trust

We run two work teams, one on Tuesdays at Rede Hall Farm and one on Fridays at Old Hall Farm East Bergholt.

The Friday team is managed by Ian, a support worker & resident of Old Hall.

This team have been busy feeding & bedding the cows & young stock, feeding & fencing the outdoor pigs & helping with coppicing, planting, weeding & harvesting organic vegetables. Knowledge of food production, preparing & cooking healthy meals helps the farm workers to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, written & verbal reports of the working day helps to improve basic skills & enhance general confidence.

Here at Rede Hall, the team have been very busy constructing large garden areas & improving soil structure, this involves moving large quantities of compost from one area of the field onto new beds to a depth of 8-10 inches, this improves our heavy clay soil to help us grow crops not normally suited to our land.

In May 06, KPMG visited us for a day, bringing 35 enthusiastic volunteers to help us with rabbit fencing the field, erecting a new fruit cage, installing an irrigation system & restoring old farm machinery.

Their input was greatly appreciated by all members of MFT.

We have finally completed the fencing & hope this will keep out our unwelcome visitors.

The potato harvest was a disaster due to early dry conditions followed by a wet summer & heavy blight attack.

This year we tried early potatoes but again these were heavily blighted, so we will stop growing them for a while.

Sam's celleriac again performed very well as did our new venture of raspberries & old favourites onions, beetroot & spinach.

In the workshop, we have constructed boot jacks, bird boxes & wooden frames for raised vegetable bed, these were placed on top of large straw bales, and filled with compost to enable some of our less flexible helpers to work without bending.

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We find that measuring the wood for sawing & the discipline of nailing & screwing wood together to make these items helps enormously with practical numeracy and helps to make 'sense' of boring numbers. All practical applications of basic skills helps put into perspective what many of our farm workers find very difficult to comprehend.

David joined our team in January 07 & was helped to settle in by 'old stalwarts' Sam & Alan, these two experienced farm workers have shown great patience, understanding and encouragement to a young man experiencing the work place for the first time.

In February 07 we visited the Doe Show which is a large exhibition & demonstration of tractors and farm machinery. We were joined by Kevin, and all members enjoined a great informative day out.

Since April 07 we have grown a greater variety of vegetables including lettuce, onions, leeks radishes, squashes & pumpkins. Our improved vegetable production, means we have to address our marketing strategy before the new season.

More recently we have completed the renovation of an old 2 furrow Horse plough & have been asked to renovate two more.

In March I visited the National Care Farming conference to hear what other organisations & individuals are achieving in this field. The projects were many & varied helping disadvantaged children, people with learning disabilities and drug & alcohol abuse.

The most common factors were – working in the open air, physical activity, appreciation of animals & healthily food production & the desire by all to be viewed as valuable human beings, being able to contribute to society.

Here at MFT, the varied skill mix of support workers & volunteers includes personnel with experience in arable and livestock farming, vegetable production.

Basic skills, woodwork & conservation & in-depth knowledge, through personal experience of living and supporting people with learning difficulties this cross section of skills and abilities helps us to try different approaches for understanding the range of disabilities & develop structures for improving the knowledge & skills of our farm workers.

The team can only be strengthened by the addition of others with many varied skills & knowledge.

Finally, on behalf of both Teams I would like to thank everyone for their help & support during the year.

P Mellor.

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