

Senior Support Workers Report For
Millennium Farm Trust
April 07/ March 08.

April 07, sees continued expansion of the veg garden area, deep layers of compost are added to our existing clay soils, allowing us to grow Early potatoes in an attempt to beat potato blight which decimated main crops on our land.

This was a valiant attempt completely thwarted by a wet June & the earliest attack of blight for years. If, after many attempts you don't succeed try something completely different, which in our case was pumpkin & squashes, which did extremely well & bodes well for the future.

During May/June, both teams combined to create a new wooded area for Nigel at Rede Hall Farm, this involved removing old fencing, cutting back over grown hedges, & ring fencing a new area with wooden posts, rabbit fencing & barbed wire. The farm workers practised many skills, including Coppicing, Sawing, Measuring distances, Stapling & use of a ringing gun to secure rabbit fence to barbed wire.

Mr Emmeney, with help, dismantled an old 2 furrow horse plough, which we restored during the summer.

Spring work at Old Hall included fencing, land preparation & livestock tasks.

June/Oct saw foot & mouth reappear with restrictions on activities.

A brief respite in August allowed potato harvesting at Old Hall.

Blight attack necessitated early harvesting, allowing sound tubers to be stored in cool dry storage.

Potatoes were lifted by machine, allowed to dry for 1 hour before picking by hand & transportation to store, the signs & effects of blight were explained to the Farm Workers.

At Rede, Autumn saw us harvesting seasonal veg & preparing land for planting daffodil bulbs, a trial area for selling flowers in early spring.

Mypex – a weed suppressant material was purchased to help reduce the onerous task of weeding.

We made more use of the workshop, making bird boxes & boot jacks plus designing & planning wooden veg markers, subsequently made for us by Street Forge & allowing 2 charities to work together for mutual benefit.

At Old Hall autumn means extra feeding of animals & the chance to improve our observation skills, muddy conditions encourages foot problems necessitating foot trimming for the cows in a cattle crush.

Cattle are gently restrained & their feet paired to improve shape, preventing retention of mud & stones which can damage the soles & increase possible infection, this is carried out by a skilled operator with help from Farm Workers, working with large animals in confined spaces improves understanding & awareness of animal movements & reactions.

Good weather in Jan/Feb made life easier when coppicing hedge for a local farmer, coppicing removes old growth allowing hedge to grow thicker new growth in spring, this process also allows access to the ditch for cleaning. Coppicing is carried out before March, so as not to disturb birds when nesting begins.

During the year MFT participated in several local events, including a FWAG walk in June on a farm near Ipswich. Showing how careful & eco friendly can help wildlife & natural vegetation to flourish.

In Sept we joined with a local Ramblers club on a walk at Redgrave & Lopham Fen, followed by a quiz to exercise the brain cells.

In April we welcomed the general public to join us on a sponsored walk from Bury to Clare to raise funds & awareness for the charity. Sam. Whose original idea this was, worked tirelessly in helping to organise this great event.

Several training days were organised for both Staff & Farm Workers. Two half day first aid training courses at Old Hall, showed first aid in action in everyday farming environment far different than a clean lecture room.

Nigel – our host at Rede, gave two informative horse training days, describing how to care for Suffolk Punches these gentle giants offer a magnificent opportunity to appreciate the inter reaction between man & beast.

In the future, we need to improve the skill pool & training of our Support Staff in order to expand the opportunities for the Farm Workers, this is one very important area where outside supporters can help Donating occasional time to impart knowledge to our trainers can infinity improve the broader picture.

The wider our appeal to prospective members, the more secure is our future. Specialist skills in plumbing, carpentry, practical engineering, horticulture, vintage restoration marketing & design are all areas to improve our ability to deliver training of practical importance.

Philip Mellor
Senior Support Worker.