

MILLENNIUM FARM TRUST

providing opportunities for those with learning difficulties



ANNUAL REVIEW

(referring to year April 2009- March 2010)

MFT... advancing “the education of those members of the general public who have learning difficulties/and or learning disabilities by offering opportunities for training, work experience, and work or employment in agriculture, horticulture and related subjects. Also to encourage such persons in the principles of good citizenship so that they can develop their physical , mental and spiritual capacities: enabling growth to full maturity as individuals and members of society and improve their conditions of life in the county of Suffolk and surrounding areas”.

Millennium Farm Trust Ltd is the registered name of the limited company - Company No. 03567659 and

Millennium Farm Trust the registered name of the charity - Charity Registration No. 1070145. The charity is more usually known as M.F.T.

The charity trustees are:

Pat Higgins - also finance officer

Bernadette Shrubshall – Chairwoman and volunteer support worker

Two further Trustees were elected at the end of March 2010.

The company directors are Pat Higgins and Bernadette Shrubshall .

The Constitution states that there will be no more than ten and no less than three Trustees of Millennium Farm Trust unless otherwise determined by a General Meeting.

The Charity Commission and Companies House were informed our urgent need for new Trustees and permission was given to continue (this was also the declared preference of the members) whilst advertising and recruiting for new Trustees.

At the AGM held in January 2010 five interested individuals came forward with eventually two committing to Trusteeship.. At the EGM at the end of March Eve Mathers and Peter Hankard were voted by the members to become MFT Trustees. Induction and mentoring commenced.

Trustees can be appointed by the existing board of Trustees and this appointment can then be ratified at the next General meeting. A nomination for a Trustee can be submitted to the Charity between 14- 35 days before an AGM or an extraordinary general meeting. All candidates must be eligible (Charity Commission regulations) to be a Trustee and must also be willing. One third of the Trustees must retire at each AGM by rotation ; however if they are willing to stand and there are no other candidates, they can be reappointed at the AGM.

Legal and Administrative Information:

The registered address of Millennium Farm Trust is :

2 Oakey Field Road, Thurston, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3RX.

The bankers for Millennium Farm Trust were;

Lloyd's TSB, 7 Market Place, Stowmarket , Suffolk IP14 1DY.

And

Britannia Building Society, 58 Abbeygate Street, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1LB

The solicitors for Millennium Farm Trust were:

Ashton Graham, Electric House, Lloyd's Avenue, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3HZ

The payroll service and insurance brokerage were provided by:

Suffolk Acre, 2 Wharfedale House, Ipswich. Suffolk IP1 4JP.

The Treasurer position for this period remained vacant. However SAVO Finance dept provided a book-keeping service and Pat Higgins dealt with the day to day financial transaction and monitoring of expenditure.

The independent examiner of the accounts was: Andrew Winearls. Whiting and Partners. Garland House, Garland Street, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1DZ

The senior support worker- farming operations manager for Millennium Farm Trust is Philip Mellor, 2 Masons Drive, Necton, Swaffham, Thetford PE37 8EE.

The workshop manager for Millennium Farm Trust is Mike Jesky. Little Barton, Rectory Road, Kedington, Suffolk CB9 7QL

The position of fundraising and development officer for Millennium Farm Trust remains vacant

The publicity and marketing Officer is Victoria Lawson. Stayer Cottage, Bury Road, Ixworth IP31 2HQ

The MFT webmaster is Yuk Lun Wong 57 Stapleford Close, Romsey, Hants SO51 7HU

Training and advice on running the charity was provided mainly by:

Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations of Dickson House, 43a Woodbridge Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 5QN.

Bury Volunteer Centre , 86 Whiting Street, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1NX

and Resourceful Management Solutions Ltd. 38 Havelock Road, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 3HJ

OBJECTS OF THE CHARITY

The objects of the charity are to advance the education of those members of the general public who have learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities by offering opportunities for training, work experience, and work or employment in agriculture, horticulture and related subjects. Also to encourage such persons in the principles of good citizenship so that they can develop their physical, mental and spiritual capacities: enabling growth to full maturity as individuals and members of society and improve their conditions of life in the county of Suffolk and surrounding areas.

M.F.T. came into existence and was co founded by adults with learning disabilities seeking work and training opportunities in farming and conservation in Suffolk with the appropriate support to their needs. There was no provision and apart from M.F.T. there is still no other provider of supported work and training opportunities in farming in Suffolk.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES:

Trustee meetings are held every 4-6 weeks to discuss policy, management, personnel and resource deployment, legal issues, health and safety, finance and development issues for the Trust as a whole. Consultation with specialists, umbrella voluntary bodies, other organisations involved with adults with learning disabilities or with supported farming projects is actively undertaken by the Trustees and committee members.

The ordinary meetings are held every three months at varying locations in Suffolk. Reports from farmworkers*, the senior support worker, and committee members are given. Fundraising, health and safety, transport, practical work, and publicity and marketing issues are discussed. Feedback from the carers of the farmworkers and also our farming hosts is sought and considered. The farmworkers are actively involved in these meetings. To facilitate participation and decision making, discussion of topics is often encouraged prior to the meeting in small groups at the work place. Use is also made of audio or visual methods of communication for agendas and minutes of meetings. * during 2010 the term farmworker was changed to farmhelper (to denote the beneficiaries)

Only paid up members are entitled to vote at formal meetings of the Charity.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE YEAR:

FARMWORKERS:

David Armsby, James Willer, Chris Drane, Miriam Newell and Alex Quinn attended MFT regularly with Kevin Chapman and Alan Bartrum attending occasionally. Philip Mellor and Mike Jesky led the support teams. David Cook, Heather Reid, Richard Clarke, Felicity Driver, Eve Mathers and Bernadette Shrubshall all provided volunteer support.

Work sites were Rede Hall Farm, Rede near Bury St. Edmunds and Old Hall, East Bergholt

. WORK EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

Upright scented yellow and cream daffodils greeted the work teams on the MFT field at Rede.

The plantings of the previous autumn had survived diggings and tasting by the local wildlife!

Red and golden onion planting took place with the farmhelpers using wooden sticks to measure distance and depth. Rhubarb crowns were planted (this was a new experience for the team). A young foal was born at Rede and a farmhelper was very privileged to observe the 9 hour old foal receiving physiotherapy to his bent legs. As the year progressed raised beds were constructed from large rectangular straw bales and raised bed frames made in the workshop to place on top of the bales. A much needed water tank arrived in June with appreciation to Barclays and Hessel Grain company) and the farmhelpers were involved with the delivery, siting and fixing the taps and hoses. During the summer the work teams planted young sweetcorn plants again a new vegetable for Rede. With netted polytunnel protection in the first few weeks and regular watering delicious cobs were harvested late summer. Workshop tasks provided much needed tunnels, a computer table-office desk and a blackboard.

Attendance at Old Hall resumed in the autumn. Ian Coles, deputy senior support worker and host at Old Hall, had moved to Wales in November 2008 and for several months there wasn't a suitably experienced person available on Fridays to host MFT at Old Hall. Richard Clarke and Heather Reid took on this role in September 2009 providing a regular monthly experience for MFT at Old Hall. Herding geese and cleaning out the chicken houses were new tasks for the MFT team. The herd of Red Polls and Jerseys were delighted to see MFT especially the cow experts Miriam and Alex. Old Hall was a new experience for farmhelper Chris. Selecting the correct volume of mangels to feed the cows and also feeding the furnace with logs and branches were two new learning experiences.

In September a practical First Aid and Fire Marshal training course was held for the farmhelpers and work teams. This was funded by Waitrose and Suffolk Foundation and a generous discount given by the firm WorkSafe who provided the training.

A rotovator was hired and another borrowed during the autumn and winter at Rede to cultivate the vegetable plots. Using a rotovator was a new experience for many of the farmhelpers. A new area was needed for vegetable and fruit growing beds.

During the late summer and early autumn the farmhelpers took part in route reconnaissance to determine a 4.5 mile wheelchair accessible route in the Wickhambrook area for a joint MFT- Ramblers walk in October. Map reading, recognition of footpath signs and understanding the effects of the weather on the land were all part of the learning experience.

By November work and learning experiences at Rede were mainly focussed on measuring a suitable area of flat land and digging it out and filling with stone in preparation for the delivery of a shed. Snow and ice thwarted the initial delivery but by January MFT were the proud owners of a large wooden shed.

Additional information is given in the farm manager's report and workshop manager's report

STAFF TRAINING David Cook attended a one Day First Aid training course.

Staff and volunteers as well as farmhelpers attended a 12 week course in basic sign language

Staff and farmhelpers attended a training session in the care of heavy horses.

Felicity Driver and Mike Jesky attended another session on heavy horse management to gain increased knowledge and competency. This would enable them to support the farmhelpers more effectively on future heavy horse training days.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

A tremendous start to the beginning of this year was made by farmhelper Kevin Chapman who originated the idea of a sponsored swim and in six months learnt to swim achieving 61 lengths raising over £433.

A business consultant specialising in charity management was contracted to help recruit Trustees, improve management procedures and help to increase income for the Trust. Sandra Jarvis of EeTech (later Resourceful Management Solutions) assisted MFT from April to July 2009.

Richard Hopper (committee member, membership secretary and member of the grants application team) attended a seminar on current funding opportunities in summer of 2009.

Philip Mellor, Mike Jesky, Bernadette Shrubshall, Chris Storey and farmhelper Miriam Newell attended various NCFI meetings in the region throughout the year.

Yuk Lun Wong, MFT webmaster, improved the presentation and usability of the MFT website. Many external comments on the excellent standard of the MFT website have been received. During the winter of 2009-10 Yuk Lun created a video on the website of existing volunteers and staff to aid MFT recruitment. This was very effective. An AGM was held in January 2009 and in March 2009 an EGM to formally elect two new Trustees. (Eve Mathers and Peter Hankard). Due to subsequent unforeseen changes in their personal circumstances they were not able to take up position as Trustees. The MFT work team, including farmhelpers, gave an interactive presentation to four classes at Otley college in December 2009. In February 2010 a work experience student from Priory School was hosted at MFT. South Suffolk show, Euston Rural pastimes and two Green Fairs were attended. MFT is very appreciative of the support given by the organisers of all these events. David Cook took two farmhelpers to a farm machinery exhibition at Suffolk Agri, Pakenham in April 2009. During 2009 the MFT leaflet was updated.

In Feb 2009 the MFT team visited Drivers Farm at Brockly to learn about a commercial arable farm and the farm machinery. In early spring 2009 Roger Bird and Sarah Smith from Longs Farm, Hartest visited and shared advice on organic vegetable production. New customers for MFT vegetables were sourced mainly through the networking efforts of Victoria.

RECRUITMENT:

Chris Drane (farmhelper) and his signer Tracey Goodenough joined in April 2009.

James Willer (farmhelper) joined in September 2009

Sandra Dee joined as a volunteer support worker in April

Victoria Lawson joined in July 2009 as an administrative volunteer but subsequently became interested in helping out on the land and working alongside the farmhelpers as well as helping at shows and events. By December 2009 she was offered the job of MFT publicity and marketing officer

Mark Richardson joined the MFT team as a land volunteer in August 2009 and quickly became a valued farming, workshop, support assistant at all our work sites. Mark's expert wildlife knowledge brought a new dimension to the work teams' daily experiences.

Eve Matthers joined in November 2009 initially as a volunteer support worker and subsequently becoming a committee member. Eve's experience of people with learning disabilities, her sign language competence and creative support ideas added a new dimension to the team. Eve subsequently volunteered to become a MFT Trustee.

Ritchie Tennant joined as a part time land assistant and subsequently participated in his capacity as a tutor working on the land and in the workshop with individual students who were not in school. This was organised under the auspices of Suffolk ~Education Department.

The rapport between the students and the work teams was immensely rewarding. Their involvement in the day to day tasks and learning experiences was admirable. Ritchie's initiative in setting up this project was hugely beneficial to all. To see 10-12 year olds responding so positively to adults with learning disabilities and even learning from them was magnificent.

Hugo Starkey joined as administrative volunteer in November 2009. With the completion of a computer desk and shelving Victoria and Hugo set about organising files, paperwork and resources to make a workable office area. Hugo also got involved in raising invoices for vegetable sales, delivering vegetables to customers and helping out at some of the shows MFT attended.

Mike Dyson joined MFT in January 2009 with a view of ultimately taking on the deputy farm manager's post deciding initially to volunteer to become acquainted with MFT and the role of supporting adults with learning

disabilities. Mike's enthusiasm, energy, respect for the farmhelpers, experience of smallholding, loan of equipment and general willingness to help with everything was a great boost to MFT.

Stephanie Hartick visited in the autumn of 2009 and later became a volunteer helping out at shows
Peter Hankard joined as a volunteer in January 2010 contributing his conservation and wildlife skills plus networking with local organisations for funding. Peter also volunteered to become a MFT Trustee.
Cliff Chizu volunteered to become Treasurer in January 2010 and induction was started.

DEPARTURES:

David Axton resigned as publicity and marketing officer in Spring 2009. He subsequently offered to help out as a volunteer car driver enabling the farmhelpers to get to the various work sites.

David had been instrumental in raising MFT's profile with the local business community and had secured a company sponsorship plus grants from local businesses and organisations since coming to the Trust in 2006.

Sandra Dee resigned as volunteer support worker in July 2009

George Emeny volunteer car driver for MFT taking passengers to and from Rede, EastBergholt and many of the farming shows retired in September 2009 due to moving out of the district. Mr. Emeny had been volunteering with MFT for over 6 years and often helped out with practical tasks such as farm machinery renovation, workshop activities and transporting equipment.

OTHER SUPPORT:

Suffolk Acre (payroll), Bury, Stowmarket and Newmarket Volunteer Centres, Business Link, Optua, Savo, Suffolk Community Car service, Braintree community car Service and 3C Community Car Service have all provided invaluable support and /or advice to MFT.

Suffolk Deaf Association provided deaf awareness and sign language training.

SB Surveyors provided support at shows and events, printing resources plus business advice and business networking.

Thompson and Morgan provided free and discounted onions, garlic and seeds.

Suffolk Foundation provided grants and guidance on the Trust management in times of Trustee shortage.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Income for the year was £22,825 which included a £250 loan and transfer of £6,000 funds (restricted monies) from the Building Society for designated expenditure (i.e. running costs training, purchase of a shed). Income from placements fees was £13,500 and donations grants amounted to £7,750. Grants were received from St.

Edmundsbury Council £1,000, (paid in Feb 2009) Suffolk Foundation £3,075 and a carried over figure of £6,750 from the Henry Smith charity which was awarded in December 2008. East Bergholt Parish council donated £150 and an anonymous donation of £500 was received. In November 2009 a classical guitar concert was held by the Magical Musical Moments at Ofton church near Ipswich. A memorable evening of music and candlelight church was experienced with an amazing sum of £1051 was raised.

Expenditure totalled £27,690 which included £726 on consultancy fees, £10,497 on wages and NI and tax. Land and workshop rent amounted to £4,660, transport costs were £3,203 and the discounted of a 1,200 gallon water tank was £747.

Priority was given to increasing income through further recruitment of farmhelpers, increased vegetable and fruit production and increased woodwork production. Whilst the interest and demand for placements with MFT by potential farmhelpers continued nearly all were hampered by the lack of external funding for the placement fee.

During this period there was not a Treasurer in post. Pat Higgins (MFT Trustee) maintained the day to day accounts in conjunction with Shelagh Everitt and Tom Bright at SAVO who maintained the spreadsheets and issued invoices. This dual system proved very valuable when all three were variously affected by ill health, family ill health and bereavement during the course of the year. This system was supplemented by the generous donation of time and advice by Andrew Winearls of Whiting and Partners who inspected the end of year accounts and gave his time freely to advise. Without the support of all these people MFT would not have been able to operate.

The year ended with demonstrable improvement in productivity on the land and workshop. Negotiations had also taken place with Activities Unlimited who were keen that young people with autism and learning disabilities should be able to benefit from occasional farm experience days with MFT in school holidays. Many discussions were taking place to develop this proposal.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTING

MFT was operational 48 weeks of the year and provided training and work experience opportunities two days per week which equates to 96 sessions .There were additional opportunities such as the MFT Ramblers walk and various farming shows and events during the April- October period usually at weekends . Furthermore help was given to enable any farmhleprs who wished to attend MFT meetings. 170 farmhelper days were provided to regular attendees and 4 days to occasional attendees. During this period a farmhelper who was regularly attending weekly had to cut attendance to fortnightly as the individually could not afford the self funding each week. By the end of the year the same situation affected another individual.

Visits by prospective farmhelpers, staff and a client from Suffolk Mental Health team, interested individuals in the deputy farm managers post were hosted by the team. Induction of six new volunteers was given.

CONCLUSION:

The pace of developments in 2009-10 were rapid. Shortages of human resources at management level had a significant impact. Considerable time was spent on recruitment, advertising and networking . Without the commitment and support of the regular staff and existing and new volunteers plus the support of external organisations, business and individuals MFT would not have been able to continue to operate.

The recession was affecting all charities and funding was more difficult to obtain. One positive effect of the recession was the ultimate recruitment of three volunteers post redundancy.

Despite the difficulties progress was made and the year ended with more volunteers on board to help with land productivity, grant applications and committee work. The urgent Trustee situation seemed resolved and there were plans afoot to diversify provision to improve income (through provision of workshops in the summer holidays plus special farm experience days for young people with learning disabilities).

Bernadette Shrubshall
Chairwoman

Pat Higgins
Trustee