

Cyrenians Farm Newsletter



December 2011

Hello and welcome to the Farm's winter newsletter.

What's new?

There has been a fair amount of activity over the past while, not least of which are the 53 new arrivals. Number one was Kerry who will be volunteering with us until February as part of Project Scotland. Numbers two and three are Charles and Liam, our new Farm assistants under the Community Jobs Scotland programme - both will be with us for six months. All three are settling in well and will allow us to crack on with all the jobs that having been taking up so much space on the office whiteboard!

What about the other fifty? I hear you ask. Well they are our new chickens. They arrived in late October and were somewhat taken aback at their new home, in fact some were quite speechless. Not a squawk, not a crow - well for the first day at least.



Eggs not just for life they're for Christmas too. The hens need fed, watered, cuddled and cared for each day as they don't take holidays and just keep on laying.

We have three groups of chickens (hens actually, as once they start laying they lose the chicken tag and become "grown-ups"). The new ones are seven months or so old, and really behave like a Primary 2 class. Everything is an adventure and they are set on playing and having fun whenever possible. The middle group are nearly two and are quite a sober bunch. They take the laying business very seriously demanding food - lots and often - but in return they give us lots of delicious organic eggs, often. The last group however, are heading towards their retirement and are pretty unfazed about *most* things that happen, they lean towards good behaviour, eat some food and give us some eggs, but overall they are definitely on the wind down towards pension time.

Despite the natural winter slowdown in egg production we are still collecting a fair amount each day - every last one free range, organic and very, very tasty.

Thanks to....

A Guy Fawkes BBQ was held in November (no surprise I suppose) to say thank you to our Day volunteers and to the Farm Community for their help and support throughout the year. The sun shone on our burgers and a jolly time was had by all.

Elsewhere on the Farm we have had a very successful run of corporate Team Challenges including staff from Lilley UK, BSkyB, Lloyds and JP Morgan. Some of the tasks accomplished included pruning and tying in our raspberries, dismantling a redundant chicken pen and supplying the materials and labour to refurbish a polytunnel.

To put the value of Team Challenges into some perspective, the apparently simple task of pruning and tying in the rasps took a team of 14 and a team of 12 one day each. That's over 140 hours of labour so really, it would have taken Farm staff over a week to finish the rasps on our own!

So a genuine 'Thank you' to all who have come and worked on the Farm.

More thanks ...Volunteers

As you know Cyrenians Farm relies heavily on the goodwill and hard work of our volunteers, so the year end is as good a time as any time to recognise the efforts they make – irrespective of the weather. Some volunteers have left to take up new posts, continue their studies or moved home, to those I wish good luck. Remember, you are always welcome back – even just for a visit, a cuppa and a blether.

Produce

Our chutneys, jams and preserves continue to sell well, as does our produce. Along with our regular stall at Balerno Farmer's market, we have been making guest appearances at various locations including the inaugural Kirknewton Apple Day and at the offices of JP Morgan and BSkyB (thanks to Mark, Liberty and Nicki). We also held produce stalls at The Scottish Health Service Centre, Crewe Road South. I would like to give special thanks to Vivian Maeda and her colleagues for all their support and fundraising activities they have undertaken on behalf of Cyrenians Farm.

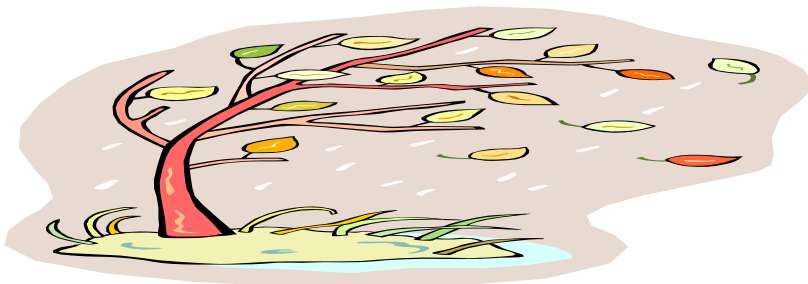
As far as the growing side of the Farm is concerned the very mild weather has allowed us to continue harvesting excellent salads. The last of our turnips will come out the ground before Christmas and our parsnips continue to do well.

Although the mild start to winter has been kind, there is a downside – the weeds and grass have only just stopped growing!

You also don't need me to remind you how wet it has been - parts of the farm haven't been dry since the tail end of the summer. Ploughing planned for November has still to happen, and our main crop garlic seed is still sitting in the barn with little chance of being planted any time soon.

The weather also brought unexpected and unwanted drama to the Farm. The storm that struck on Thursday 8 December lifted one of our chicken arcs from its usual position and deposited it some 100 meters away in the orchard. The residents were more or less intact (but would have perhaps benefited from flying helmets!) and were soon rounded up and led to temporary accommodation by some of our community volunteers. The arc however is no more.

(At the time of writing it is uncertain if the Farm insurance will cover the loss, if not our letter to Santa will have a new item)



Christmas Greet

Christmas will soon be all wrapped up and then the New Year will be upon us. Although there is still a fair amount of work to do on the farm I eagerly anticipate the arrival of the new growing season when we can start moving our new cropping plan from paper into the soil.

2012 promises to be a very busy year for us. A recruiting drive for further volunteers, corporate partners and other supporters will shortly get underway. It will be all hands on deck and we will need all the help and support we can muster.

Remember - our Farm needs YOU!

With best wishes for the Festive Season,
Stephen, Tom, Charlie, Kerry, Liam (and the chickens)

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