

FORTY WONDERFUL YEARS
OF MUCK AND
MAGIC!



Chief Executive's Annual Report
1st September 2015 to 31st August 2016
by Dr. Tessa Stone

A considerable focus of the year has been Farms for City Children's 40th anniversary. We marked our birthday – 27th January 2016 – with a celebratory dinner at the Arundel Arms in Lifton, when it was a delight to welcome Nethercott staff past and present, our farming partners, former and current trustees, and to hear from Michael Morpurgo and our Vice President Carol Hughes.

In February we extended the celebration still further when we invited over 1,000 London children from partner schools as well as trustees, staff from all three farms, and friends from across the country to join us at the New London Theatre for a birthday performance of War Horse. The atmosphere was electric as 1,000 children sat on the edge of their seats, and there was much more audience participation than usual as they became engrossed in what was happening on stage. The unforgettable event finished with Michael and Clare onstage with Joey rearing farewell to the children.

Each farm of course held their own anniversary celebrations as well.



At Nethercott Michael Morpurgo and Ben Murray, the original song-man from the stage show, gave a simply magical performance of War Horse Only Remembered in front of a spellbound audience on a beautiful summer's evening.

The next day Nethercott was open to the public again, this time welcoming people to their summer fair, with craft stalls, heavy horses, archery, forest school, ferret racing and

pole-jousting. Mariners Away entertained the crowds with sea shanties and Cogs and Wheels Ladies Morris Dancers kept everyone on their toes.



The Friends of Treginnis summer fete was bigger and better than ever as they celebrated their 25th anniversary alongside the 40th. Hundreds of locals and holiday makers enjoyed watching runner ducks being herded, birds of prey swooping around the farm, and placing a bet on the goat poo bingo.

As always we are indebted to the many local volunteers who make the fete what it is: the friends of Treginnis, the Penknife Club, the WI, the Army, National Trust, National

Parks, Fire brigade, Goodwick Brass Band, Pembrokeshire Ukulele pirate and Glynneath Choir. For the first time Treginnis also participated in Open Farm Sunday, which was a huge success. With invaluable support from Puffin Produce over 500 visitors came to look around and learn more about farming, and find out all about Farms for City Children in the process.



At Wick Court their new Rare Breeds Open Morning and Farm Market provided a wonderful opportunity for visitors to look around the farm in the company of our visiting children, watch pig-weighing and also stock up on a wide range of Wick Court produce, including the first honey of the year, meat, eggs, fruit, veg, plants, and wool from our Ryland sheep.

The hugely inventive cycling theatre troupe the Handlebards once again brought Shakespeare to the

orchard, this year performing Much Ado about Nothing.

We are determined that all our visitors but most importantly our visiting children experience our Farms as warm and welcoming homes-from-home, and 2015/16 has seen us take significant steps towards ensuring that this is the case. The completion of the Building Condition Survey of each Farm has given us a clear view both of urgent maintenance priorities and also of cyclical work that will be required to keep our three listed buildings in good condition. The immediate priority work has already started at all three locations, overseen by a local surveyor in each instance. We have also started a significant fundraising appeal directed at capital works and

were delighted to secure generous funding from The Linbury Trust to support the priority works at Lower Treginnis. Due to the restrictions of having to schedule large-scale maintenance and restoration works into the school holiday period the work will of necessity have to be undertaken piecemeal, but it is good to be able to plan for work – and the accompanying fundraising that will be needed - several years ahead.

Of course the main focus on all farms, in this year as in any, has been on providing a wonderful experience to our visiting city children. While our aims and core principles have remained unchanged over 40 years – to provide a hands-on, purposeful experience of farming and the countryside to children from towns and cities who would not otherwise have access to it – we are constantly seeking to improve and develop the experience for visiting children and teachers.



At Wick our woodland activities have been enhanced by the fantastic new roundhouse, funded with a grant from Tesco's Bags of Help scheme and built over the summer by volunteers.

The Summerfield Trust gave a grant to enable us to equip and train volunteers to help restore the ancient orchards and to provide signage for the rare trees.



At Lower Treginnis a second polytunnel is providing a really good learning area, as well as increasing the amount of produce available for the kitchen. Plans for a new orchard are progressing well with help from The Bumblebee Trust, while the Friends of Treginnis have started work to transform the courtyard garden into a sensory garden for the children to enjoy.

A new and improved composting area has increased the amount of physical work the children can get stuck into, and our expanding herd of milking and meat goats provide ever more jobs.



Nethercott's pedigree Large Black Pigs are now the best-housed pigs in Devon having moved into their new pig 'palace'. The children have also loved working with our newest residents – four Devon Closewool sheep. They are clearly thriving under the children's care, as they won 3rd and 4th prize at the local district Okehampton Show!

Thanks to a huge amount of pro bono work and expertise from Interserve Construction, the previously overgrown and almost invisible pond at Nethercott has been dug out, landscaped, edged and filled, and a wonderful wooden jetty will enable children to try their hand at pond-dipping.

It is important that our visiting children see that the work they do with us is purposeful, and has real impact. Each farm is working hard not only to make sure that as much of the produce supplied to the kitchen is grown or reared on site, but also to develop a thriving local business. Nethercott's Large Devon Black weaners are in high demand, and they are looking to become a trusted source of Christmas turkeys.

At Wick all the early lambs were sold, and our Gloucester old spot pork is a firm local favourite. Building on last year's success of field-scale growing, at Treginnis this year the children have sown potatoes, swede and pumpkins which are all sold to local wholesalers, while a local restaurant served our goat meat to very happy diners. Both Wick Court and Nethercott House produce delicious home-pressed apple juice – well, the children do – and Wick Court's honey is in high demand.

Particular mention must go to two very long serving members of staff at Wick Court, brothers Brian and Pete Dimmock. Pete has long undertaken the day to day maintenance that an historic house hosting 40 visitors every week requires, while Brian has transformed the garden into the thriving and enormously productive resource which is the envy of anyone who visits and, most importantly, keeps the children busy and the kitchen abundantly supplied. Pete and Brian both retired this summer, and we owe them our enormous thanks. We were also very sad to lose Amanda Bearman who, as the administrator at Head Office, has been a lot of people's first point of contact with the Charity for the last three years and we wish her well.

There are so many people who ensure that Farms for City Children can continue its crucial work: our staff at all three farms and Head Office, our farming partners, our visiting schools, Friends' groups, local and national supporters and funders all combine to make what we do possible. We would like to offer our warm thanks to all of them, and in particular to: Peter Spargo, Wick Court's retiring GP who raised an utterly magnificent £8,000 for Wick by cycling from Land's End to John O'Groat's; Elsevier Ltd and Interserve Construction who fielded over 20 riders who cycled the Devon Coast to Coast from Exmouth in the south to Instow in the north; Brian Dimmock and David Dungworth who have founded a Friends group for Wick Court; Emma Bridgewater Pottery for donating some beautiful serving bowls to all our farms; The Pig at Combe for donating a range of furniture and curtains prior to their refurbishment; Alasdair James from WBW in Torquay who donated a sofa to Nethercott for use in the quiet room; illustrator Tony Ross who donated paintings of each of our farms for use on publicity materials; Peter Sheldon and his team of children's illustrators for donating their artwork for our Christmas Calendar; Exeter School for donating board games to Nethercott House; the John James Bristol Foundation, John Lyon's Charity, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Linbury Trust, Leathersellers' Company Charitable Fund, David and Claudia Harding Foundation and Trusthouse Charitable Foundation for significant grants and Tesco Bags of Help for funding the Roundhouse at Wick.

As well as funding and gifts in kind we rely ever more on a wonderful range of volunteers both at the farms and at Head Office. Huge thanks for their time goes to: the pupils of Shebbear College who volunteered at the Nethercott Country Fair; Helena Penfold, Alice Rubbra and Anthony Barnes who all volunteered their time to help at Head Office; staff from UPP at University of Exeter, who did an invaluable volunteering day at Nethercott; the Blunderbirds (aka Brian Dimmock and Bill Church) who did a cycling tour to a number of schools who had visited Wick, telling stories and Wick-inspired poems; the volunteer gardening team at Wick Court; the volunteers who built the Wick Court Roundhouse; the volunteer army at Treginnis who help with decorating the house and at our growing number of events; and Interserve construction who volunteered their time to renovate the Nethercott pond as well as providing £8,000 worth of materials.