

Annual Review 2019-2020



Photo courtesy of Charlotte Hollins

Proud to be community owned



Chairman's Report

I trust you are all managing to stay safe and well. What a year so far!

Who would have imagined a pandemic to the scale we have now, throwing our communities, country and the globe into the chaos that we are all experiencing? It's almost unimaginable as we think about the future, the changes that Covid-19 may bring about for us, our children and our children's children. Will we ever get back to normality and what will normal look like?

For those who were able to attend last year's AGM, you will remember that we fit snugly in the meeting room above Arthur's Farm Kitchen. It seems quite contrary to the social distancing rule that we currently have to follow!

This year our AGM is having to take a very different format, but thank goodness for the digital technology that enables us to keep in touch.

It is pleasing to see a shift in awareness and appreciation of our communities. There is more consideration towards the vulnerable in our society, and people are putting more value on good food, health and wellbeing, and are becoming more environmentally conscious. These are all the values that have always been - and will continue to be - at the heart of Fordhall.

You will remember that, at last year's AGM, we launched Fordhall's Strategy 2019-2023. Since Fordhall was saved and FCLI was established 15 years ago, we have been proud of our successes. We have continued to follow and share Arthur's philosophies of farming, and we continue to maximise Fordhall as a place of wellbeing for people and wildlife.

Our vision is to take Fordhall to its next stage, sharing our sustainable farming system, and connecting people with food, the environment, organic farming, wildlife and

biodiversity. Our aim is to achieve all of this by providing memorable learning through fun on-the-farm experiences and through our communications. This year our annual review specifically reports on the five strategic aims of Fordhall.

I truly believe this is our time to inspire, influence and have greater impact. Fordhall has a huge role to play in supporting our community and helping it to lay new foundations and approaches to life.



Katherine Allan enjoys a cuddle from a Fordhall lamb

Progress we made against our aims and ambitions for 2019

The Health and Safety of everyone has always been at the top of our agenda here at FCLI, and I am pleased to say that all the recommendations that we had from the external Health and Safety Audit carried out in 2018, have all now been completed (next one scheduled for 2021).

It's a credit to the team here, volunteers and all who were involved, that we went through the major structural build of the Straw Lodge and met all compliances.

Last year was about getting the foundations



Guests gather to celebrate the launch of the Straw Lodge
Credit: Blue Fox Photography



in place to enable us to deliver on our strategy. This included having the right management structure, recruiting the right people into vacant roles, creating the infrastructure to facilitate growth, continuous learning and development and delivering a volunteer programme to attract more regular volunteers. I am pleased to say we now have a very strong team in place and last year the Board agreed a competitive pay and a staff appreciation scheme to reward and recognise our people and the great work they do. Plus, there are regular 'meet and eat' days across departments to allow staff and volunteers to come together on a regular basis.

Arthur's Farm Kitchen and 'Good Food' continued to be at the heart of Fordhall. We achieved our aims of improving on our costs control and efficiencies in Arthur's Farm Kitchen, despite having to manage with agency chefs for most of the year. However, we are thrilled to have now recruited our full-time Chef, Richard, who, in a previous role,

cooked for the Queen!

The Straw Lodge has given us far more facilities to extend out education programmes and accommodate more visitors and volunteers to Fordhall.

The building of the Straw Lodge would not have been possible without the help of our volunteers and Youth Project students.

When we reopen, we look forward to welcoming more schools, Scouts, Guides and community groups to use this calming space for retreats, as well as businesses for corporate away-days.

At the end of 2019 we celebrated the huge achievement of the FCLI team in acquiring grant funds. We were able to leverage these grants due to the generous support you have given to our appeals, helping us raise a further £240,000, for which we are incredibly grateful. These funds have enabled the building of the Straw Lodge; the running of our Youth Project, which supports young people struggling at school; the construction

of a new greenwood working area; and the installation of our 25ft long polytunnel, which is already being used by our expanding Care Farm. The new growing space will enable the Care Farm team to grow more and for longer. This, in turn, helps us to raise money to re-invest into the programme and enables the Care Farm team to make a valued contribution to FCLI. The Care Farm has been running for an incredible ten years and we hope to be able to celebrate this later on in the year.

To conclude, 2019 was a hugely successful year in building those foundations, extending our facilities and capabilities, and we hope we can soon continue to optimise these for the benefit of all our visitors, supporters and the wider community later this year and beyond.

2020 and looking forward - a year to explore, assess and develop

2020 was to be a period of researching, gathering insights, and trialling courses and education activities, to enable us to prioritise our long-term programme. Covid-19 has obviously put limitations on these strategic aims, and for now we will have to work through the options of a staged approach to the re-opening of Fordhall's activities, as the government guidelines become clearer.

I would personally like to thank all Board members for their hard work, commitment and continued dedication throughout the year, and through the particularly difficult last three months.

Last year one of our wonderful founder members, Bryan Hunt, stepped down from the Board of Directors after 14 years of service, and also several years on the Building sub-group. Along with his wife, Elaine, Bryan was a valued volunteer and had written thousands of share certificates with his excellent calligraphy skills. Sadly, last November, Bryan passed away and we said our heartfelt farewell at his memorial

at Fordhall. Bryan is forever in our thoughts.

We have three Board members stepping down at this time: Richard Priestley has made a substantial contribution to the Board activities over the last eight years, and I would particularly like to commend him for his rigour and thoroughness as Chair of the Business and Finance sub-group. We will miss Mike Perry for his experience and the creativity that he has brought to the Board and to the Marketing and Fundraising sub-group. Katie Shipley has brought new insights to the Board and given expert steer through the Education sub-group. I thank all three for their valuable contributions and wish them well in their new ventures.

I welcome new Board members: Nathan Rous, Izabella Natrins and Kathryn Rhodes, who bring with them a wide range of skills, experience and attributes. I am really looking forward to working with them.

I would like to thank Charlotte and Ben, Fordhall's and FCLI's management teams, all staff and volunteers for their hard work and the continued passion that makes Fordhall what it is.

Importantly, I would like to thank you, all of our Shareholders, for your continued support along our journey!

Let's hope we can run the Supporters BBQ in autumn, when I hope to see some of you then. Until then, stay safe and well.

Christine Tate, Chairperson



Isabelle, Marie-Anne, Ben and Jamie Hollins, Charlie Luxton, Charlotte, Oli and Katherine Allan, and Connie Hollins at the launch of the Straw Lodge

Treasurer's Report



I am writing this as though I am going to be standing up in front of you in the beautiful Straw Lodge, giving my fourth talk as Treasurer; but in all probability, you will be reading this in the comfort of your own homes. As

I write this in mid-March, the unfolding consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic are still being revealed day by day. Ironically, in my opening preamble last year, I was bemoaning the uncertainties around Brexit, commenting "who knows where we will be this time next year". Little did I know!

2019 has been another exciting year for Fordhall, with the final completion of the bunkhouse, now christened the Straw Lodge. Its value of just over £608,000 is now sitting on our balance sheet, bringing our total fixed assets to over £1.4 million, up a further 17% over 2018.

From an operational point of view, looking at the Financial Statements published, it is a little difficult to work out exactly what sort of a year 2019 has been because Operating Income includes all the grants and donations associated with the Straw Lodge and Operating Costs excludes all the building and fitting costs. This is simply because all those costs have been capitalised and are now sitting on the balance sheet as mentioned above.

"Have we made any money?" I hear (or imagine!) you asking.

Taken in isolation as a series of 'profit centres', each of our activities - Arthur's Farm Kitchen, the courses and children's parties we host, the beautiful yurts, sales of *The Grazer* newsletter, our educational and care farming activities etc. - all make a 'contribution' to our core operating costs. In addition to the revenue from what might be termed



The Care Farm celebrates a grant of £10,000 to purchase a polytunnel and build a greenwood shelter from Big Lottery

our 'commercial activities', we also receive further 'contribution' in the form of grants from various national and local organisations such as Big Lottery. We also very gratefully receive gifts, donations and - increasingly - legacies from you generous people, our lovely shareholders.

In answer to the question "Have we made money in 2019?" the answer is "Yes". Taking the contributions from our activities, plus grants, gifts and legacies, less the various overhead costs (principally staff), we were left with a net cash surplus of £21,165. However, for 2019, there is a 'but': the total cost of the Straw Lodge came in at just over £608,000, but we had only been able to secure funding of £583,000. The Board therefore agreed that the deficit was to be made up from Cash Reserves.

Every year, a proportion of the interest-free loans made to FCLI by its shareholders fall due for repayment, and during 2019 nearly £21,000 was repaid.

The net effect of all this activity is to turn our surplus into a cash deficit for the year of some £27,000. Considering that our budget for 2019 provided for a deficit of nearly £54,000, this was a good result indeed. We began the year with approximately £154,000 of Unrestricted Reserves, and end it with £127,000, still comfortably within the range of £100,000 to £200,000 as required by Board



Three weddings were held at Fordhall in 2019, including outdoor ceremonies

Credit: J. Taylor Photography

March and the month of April, (at the time of writing it is the 2nd of May), but as for what will happen over the next few months, who can say!

Through December of last year and into the first weeks of 2020, we had formulated what we considered a prudent and realistic budget for 2020, and for the first ten weeks of the year, our activities went pretty much as planned, but since then we have been mostly shut down.

FCLI is definitely holding its head above water financially, in no small part thanks to you, our shareholders and supporters. We have been pleased to receive numerous small gifts, and also several quite significant donations. We are pleased to have received the Government's Covid assistance grant for hospitality businesses, netting a very useful £25,000.

We have, of course, modelled various outcomes. Without going into any great detail, we do feel that we can survive even the worst-case scenario with our reserves dropping back to the lowest level allowed for under Board policy. That worst case is a partial

policy.

Now a few words about 2020. When it became clear that we would not be holding the AGM in the normal way this year, I took a break from writing this review in the hope that things would be settling down by now and we would have a clearer idea of the future. Well, we know what has happened through the remainder of

Plan your future family gathering!

**Hire the Straw Lodge or
Arthur's Farm Kitchen for your party
or function**



**Future bookings
now being taken for
Autumn 2020 and
2021**

**Gatherings of
30-60 people**

**Catering and
accommodation
available**

**Call 01630
638696 or email
project@
fordhallfarm.com
for details**

Please note: All bookings made will be subject to ongoing Government advice on social distancing, so flexibility on dates, together with refunds or cancellations, will be offered if necessary.

unlocking when the furlough scheme ends and all our staff come back on to the payroll, but social distancing remains in place so that no big gatherings would be permitted, and the number of tables in the café, and hence sales, would be much reduced.

Thanks to your support over the years, FCLI does have some money in the bank. Nevertheless, minimum reserves is not a great place to be, so if anyone was thinking of donating, your farm would be strengthened by every penny received, reinforcing our ability to leap back into action with renewed vigour after this crisis is over.

Finally, a few thank yous. To all those who converted their loans to donations, thank you. Then there are the legacy givers. While it is a bit late to thank those who have already donated, perhaps I could thank in advance those who are considering remembering us in their Wills.

It only remains for me to thank Charlotte and all the office staff for their sterling work during the year, and the support they have given me, and also of course my fellow Board members, particularly those on the Business and Finance sub-group.

Thank you very much.
Stay safe and stay sane!

Bob Griffiths, Treasurer



	2019 (£)	2018 (£)
OPERATING INCOME		
Merchandise	793	677
Property rental	13,900	13,100
Events & courses	4,806	9,209
Education	52,073	45,815
Arthur's Farm Kitchen	137,028	139,631
Newsletter	14,402	14,654
Gifts & donations	56,141	159,693
- Legacy income	2,630	50,400
Gift aid	12,493	18,594
Grants	236,466	286,693
Other income	2,091	9,815
Consultancy	938	3,752
Yurts & Straw Lodge	14,757	6,593
TOTAL Income	558,518	758,626
OPERATING COSTS		
<u>Costs of generating funds</u>		
Merchandise	210	1,292
Events & courses	5,428	13,134
Advertising & marketing	4,984	4,336
Project delivery	15,437	14,578
Education materials	7,671	12,139
Arthur's FK purchases	62,330	67,640
<u>Management and Administration</u>		
Sub contract sum	210	12,803
Staff salaries, NIC & pension	209,878	172,827
Travel	2,094	677
Printing & office supplies	12,334	17,612
Accountancy & audit	3,575	3,872
Heat & light	7,278	5,713
Insurance & rates	8,416	7,416
Repairs & maintenance	5,819	8,109
Telephone & internet	840	970
Subscriptions	497	1,065
Bank charges	2,219	3,194
Legal & professional	750	870
Staff training	4,597	1,352
Sundry expenses	234	10
Depreciation	4,357	3,665
Total Costs	(359,158)	(352,554)
Operating Surplus	199,360	406,072
Other Interest receivable	389	418
Interest payable	(1,316)	(1,306)
Surplus/Deficit	198,443	405,184

Auditor's Report by Howsons Accountants

In our opinion the financial statements: give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31st December 2019 and of its surplus for the year then ended; and have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice and with the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

Your Tenant Farmer's Report



Well what a year! Amazing highs and successes along with inconceivably difficult lows.

2019 started off great. Maz and I were given the opportunity to buy our very own

piece of land from our neighbours, just across the river on the east side of the farm. They had owned the land for 13 years but never farmed it themselves. Following a couple of Christmas drinks in 2018 they mentioned that, if we were interested in buying, they would prefer to sell to us as friendly neighbours. We were really keen as the land is the closest bit of grassland to the main farm, and dad, the late Arthur Hollins, had even farmed it himself in the past. We set about getting all our savings together to see if it would be possible.

I am always really keen to invest in the farm's infrastructure and improve the core of Fordhall - the farm. Over the years we have invested in new sheds, covered feed areas, handling systems for the livestock and lots of gates and fences. 2019 was the time to start putting some investment back

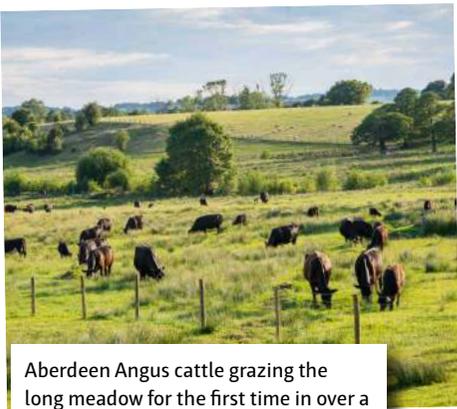
into the land itself.

Dad spent his life draining and maintaining the land to enable it to be farmed, as well as allowing it to be a haven for wildlife. In the early 2000s, when Charlotte and I took over the tenancy at Fordhall, the farm was very understocked, and so our first priority was to build the livestock levels and rebuild the farm business to create a sustainable income stream. Over the past 20 years, the land

"I can't tell you how proud we are to own our very own patch of land ..."

drains have not been maintained and large areas of the farm were becoming increasingly water-logged. Our farming system was becoming unbalanced. We want Fordhall to show how we can farm in harmony with nature. We do not intend to be an intensive agribusiness, far from it, but we are also not a nature reserve. Hopefully, we are the sweet spot in the middle.

My vision for the farm is to be a sustainable organic farm, which can provide habitats for wildlife while managing a profitable existence. We need to maintain our happy medium. There was an area of about 25 acres that we had completely lost from the farming system. The old drains had failed and become unsafe for cattle to graze, or tractors to travel on. We would regularly get the quad bike stuck when crossing these meadows. These fields are named Little Meadow and Long Meadow. During 2019, we began replacing some of the failed drains in these fields and I am pleased to say, we are seeing the results already. Today, while writing this, the beef



Aberdeen Angus cattle grazing the long meadow for the first time in over a decade

Ben and son, Jamie, walk the Cottage Field before access was lost in September 2019



cattle are grazing the Long Meadow, and we have been able to access the land with a tractor to maintain the rushes. The Little Meadow used to be dad and stockman Terry's paddock of choice for the ewes with new-born lambs. This meadow isn't dry enough yet, but my hope is to get it back into a state where we can allow sheep access to it in the early spring again. We will keep you updated on how the field work goes.

We had been renting 65 acres of land on the south side of the farm, which enabled us to expand the herd of cattle and flock of sheep over the past four years, but with a large rent increase expected next year, we had been looking at other options which would be more sustainable long term. The offer of purchasing our own land seemed like the best option, and timed perfectly with the loss of the leased fields. Maz and I managed to complete the purchase in November 2019 and have since registered

it with the Soil Association to begin organic conversion. Although not farmed organically in the past, it is very extensive land, which has had little added to it over the years. Indeed it appears to have very similar old-fashioned grass leys to Fordhall. It will take two years to complete the formal organic conversion process. In the meantime, I will be managing the length of time our cattle and sheep are allowed to graze the land.

I can't tell you how proud we are to own our very own patch of land, and so close to Fordhall, too. We could never have dreamt this ten years ago, and we would not have been successful if not for all your support over the years.

As great as this new land is, however, it does not reduce the importance of the Cottage Field to our farming system. The new land has merely replaced the rented meadow to the south of Fordhall, so we are still down by 12 acres of prime out-

wintering land for our cattle. The 12 acre Cottage Field was lost to us in September 2019. The landowners have allowed us to continue renting a small area where we rear our pigs and store the catering trailers, which has lessened the impact. Nevertheless, it is still a big blow to lose such essential out-wintering pasture, which we, as a family, have relied on for years to successfully run our organic Foggage farming system. It has felt like the worst possible year to lose the Cottage Field due to the wettest winter since national records began in 1910. It has meant the other fields have suffered greatly through the winter and are now in need of some TLC to get them back to productivity for the summer months.

We have since been hit with a very dry spring, which was needed to dry the waterlogged ground, but the intense heat it is now inhibiting grass growth. As a result, we are grazing some meadows that would normally be reserved for making hay. Nevertheless, I remain hopeful it will all balance out over the season. It usually does.

The summer of 2019 was a colossal success for the catering business. We operated more outlets than ever, selling Fordhall produce at Edgbaston for the

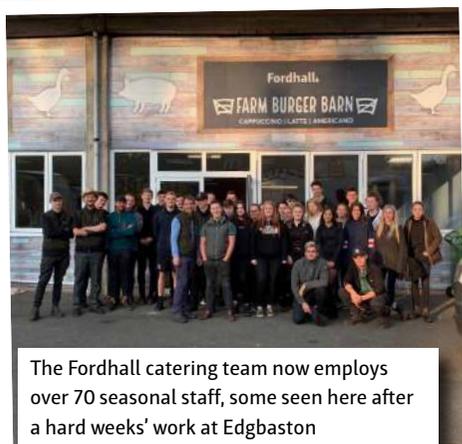
Cricket World Cup, Ashes and T20 matches and we even managed to get our foot in the door at Twickenham for the major match days. All that was propelling us through to a big year in 2020. We gained some extra events such as the Bramham Horse Trials and The Great Yorkshire Show. But then Coronavirus hit. Wow! What a blow this has been. Of course, all of our catering events are cancelled for the foreseeable future, and at the moment we just do not know when we will trade again. Will it be winter 2020 or spring 2021?

Unfortunately, the catering business doesn't qualify for much of the government grant support apart from furlough for the staff and low interest loans. Most of the catering staff have now been furloughed apart from a few guys helping in the Farm Shop and butchery. We have also received a Bounce Back Loan which will be extremely useful to maintain cash flow until we reopen.

The shop was extremely busy at the start of the pandemic when lockdown began. Our sales grew fourfold for a few weeks until it all settled down. It was hard work on the team and everybody chipped in to keep our customers happy. We have now got into a new more manageable routine and sales have dropped back, but we are hoping we will have gained lots of new customers who will stick with us.

Planning for the rest of 2020 is difficult and will all depend on what the Prime Minister, Mr Johnson, says, and what the virus does. We are in a strong position with the farm and catering business. We will ride it out and hopefully be stronger for it at the other side. In the meantime, we will strive to retain Cottage Field.

Ben Hollins, your Tenant Farmer



The Fordhall catering team now employs over 70 seasonal staff, some seen here after a hard weeks' work at Edgbaston

Manager's Report



This is a hard report to write. There have been many changes over the last 12 months. We have seen the completion of the wonderful Straw Lodge, together with the commiserations of

losing access to Cottage Field. Then, just as we settled into our new building and our projects had started to expand around it, we crashed into Coronavirus and the world was turned on its head.

Nevertheless, this should not mean that we do not celebrate all the wonderful achievements of 2019, and this annual review serves to do just that.

Many years ago, I read E.F. Schumacher's book 'Small is Beautiful'. I found it an inspiring view of economics, of global growth and of sustainable development. Its main message, as can be gleaned from the title, is that smaller, focused and passionate enterprises were proven to be more resilient and successful in the long term than large corporations. The same principles can perhaps be shared in farming, through the comparison of small, diverse, species-rich pastures and farming systems, versus acres and acres of a monoculture crop. The evidence for this approach can be seen each year as climate change gets worse, and as global corporations fall at the face of change.

For me, it serves as a useful reminder that we should always be reviewing what we do at Fordhall and, most importantly, how we grow. Or indeed, how we don't. It is not always about doing more, or doing something bigger, but it is also about doing it better and smarter.

On that note, we welcomed a number of new staff through the year, all recruited not only for their skills, but also for their passion and their

shared values, the latter of which have become vital elements in our recruitment process. The Fordhall we have today has a stable footing. We have the infrastructure we need to move forward and we are constantly improving our natural environment.

As we move into 2020, we celebrating Dad's 105th birthday year and all that Fordhall is. The Coronavirus crisis has resulted in a dramatic increase of visitors to the farm, both to the farm shop and our trails. We have also seen the dramatic impact that losing Cottage Field has had for the farm and our soils. The challenge for us as we move forward will be to ensure Fordhall's sustainability in an ever-changing and evolving landscape. We need to weather the storm of the virus, we need to secure Cottage Field and we need to plan growth sensitively and evolve sustainably.

Hopefully, within this report, you will see that we are making progress in all areas of Fordhall, ensuring we continue to nurture and safeguard our finances, our people, our health, and our landscape.

Thank you to each and every one of you. Your support, large and small, keeps us going. It motivates us when life is hard, and it helps us to celebrate successes when life is good.

To us, it is one big Fordhall family and we are, and will always be, extremely honoured to share it with you all.

Charlotte Hollins, *Manager*



Ben and Charlotte with Arthur in 2004

Cottage Field update

As noted in Ben's farm review, the family were evicted from the 12-acre Cottage Field at the end of September 2019. It was a heart-breaking time. Since then, Cottage Field has sat empty. No cattle are grazing it and no lambs are skipping in it. Nevertheless, it remains green. The rabbits and butterflies are loving it!

In recent weeks, we have been informed by the owners that they are imminently going to seek planning approval for housing. This is devastating, but expected. We have confirmed with them that our intention to purchase it remains steadfast and strong, but no offer was forthcoming. They are determined to seek the highest value possible for the land and that means development. We will do everything we can to safeguard this beautiful meadow from development, with a view to bringing it back within Fordhall's historic farmstead as soon as possible.

We want to thank everyone who has signed our petition of support and all those who have already sent in donations. These have been ring-fenced to support the campaign to purchase Cottage Field and we will add in any new donations to this ring-fenced pot.

The petition of support remains open and will be used to demonstrate the wealth of support to councillors, planners and all those of influence. We will use it to demonstrate that you care about this field as much as we do, and to demonstrate that keeping prime farmland as farmland, is vital to our economy as well as to our environment. We will also use the petition mailing list to keep you informed of all Cottage Field-related developments.

You can still sign the petition by visiting www.fordhallfarm.com/petition

The damage caused to the rest of Fordhall during the last wet winter, with 30% of our winter grazing lost in the Cottage Field, was



Cattle leaving Cottage Field for the last time. Sept 2019

heart-breaking to see. In fact, the damage was so extensive, for the first time in 13 years we had to close our trails to the public for four months of the year. This is not something we wish to repeat on an annual basis. Fordhall should always be open to the community. We desperately need Cottage Field back.

Things could start to move quickly over the coming weeks, or it could take months. We will be seeking advice where we can and as soon as we have a definitive target to raise we will let you know.

In the meantime, please do keep sharing the word, adding signatures to our petition of support and keep your fingers and toes crossed for us.

Our very best wishes and heartfelt thanks to you all.

Charlotte and Ben x

P.S. Whilst we are not actively fundraising for the purchase of Cottage Field yet, any donations received will be ring-fenced to support our campaign to purchase it.

Sign the
petition at www.fordhallfarm.com/petition

What did your community farm achieve in 2019?



The restoration of the Old Three Ponds is almost complete



Promoting an understanding that small-scale farming can be in harmony with wildlife and biodiversity

Our farm trails provide our biggest opportunity to achieve this aim, and so it was particularly disappointing that they were closed for four months through the wet winter, primarily due to the loss of Cottage Field.

Nevertheless, a lot has been done on the farm to improve our natural habitats, and nowhere can this been seen more than with the restoration of the Old Three Ponds. All the ponds are now dredged; we were careful to leave at least five to eight months between disturbing each pond. It is incredible to see how quickly nature has re-established itself since. Many species – damselflies, frog spawn, dragonflies, rushes and reeds, speedwell, red campion and water mint have already established themselves.

A dead hedge has been created by our

hard-working volunteers. We have already spotted a field vole nest, a buff-tailed moth caterpillar, frogs, nuthatch, silver leaf fungus and wren all using the dead hedge. Overtime, this dead hedge will act as a perfect wildlife corridor around the ponds providing food and shelter for hundreds of different species of wildlife. As seeds get trapped within the logs and branches it will gradually turn into a living hedge. With all landscaping now complete, the next task is open it up to the public – watch this space!

Other recent spots on the farm have included a barn owl, otter, kingfisher, heron, geese, swans, nesting ducks and coots, grass snakes and many others of our usual friends.



Volunteer Neil, from Oxford, building a dead hedge around the Old Three Ponds

Creating educational and fun experiences which leave lasting memories and encourage a shift in behaviour towards a more environmentally conscious society

2019 saw a shift in how we work towards this aim. Our Spring Fair in 2019 was, sadly, our last one, due to the loss of Cottage Field, which we used for car parking. Close to 1,000 visitors attended the event to see sheep shearing, tractor rides, the straw bale maze, pond dipping, music, food stalls, woodland games, farm tours

Our free-range Gloucester Old Spots continue to delight visitors



and more. Our plan as we move forward will be to provide smaller, but more regular, family events on the farm.

School visits were down last year due to a change of staffing. We received 40 visits and 1,000 children (2018: 72 visits and 1,850 children). In the latter part of 2019 we employed a new 'Officer of Educational Fun'. Wild Wellies outdoor toddler group was soon initiated; families are encouraged to have adventures in the woods, indulge with natural crafts and sit around the campfire. We hope this type of informal, family, outdoor education is something we can build on further at Fordhall.

“Outside in the open, you get three dimensional, high definition, full colour, millions of pixels scenery and full surround-sound and all for free.”

Due to the new Straw Lodge facility we also welcomed a number of residential volunteers through the winter period, including Jenna from Germany for seven weeks. She wanted to improve her English and learn all about farm life. In return for board and lodgings she got stuck in with every job going. Soon after we welcomed Kraig on the same basis, and with the Straw Lodge as a new facility on the

farm, we hope to welcome more residential volunteers each winter.

The Youth Project, Growing Confidence, has continued to support young people struggling in the classroom. Each member gaining AQA certification for their activities, including greenwood working, using a draw knife, making a bug hotel for wildlife, post and wire fencing, problem solving and even cooking and ceramic wall tiling! They have also been working on understanding mental health and together created a mental health first aid box called the 'brain box'. It is filled with things to relieve any social, emotional and mental ill health. including, stress balls, calming essential oils, useful telephone numbers and tasty treats. Unfortunately, we couldn't get the piglets to stay in the box, but we hope a walk around the farm helps, too!

Youth events have been growing during the holidays including a very popular pallet furniture building day, where young people made coffee tables and stools out of old pallet wood. A youth volunteer day on the farm was equally popular, which saw young people learning how to cleft fences, as well as completing some conservation work and install a rabbit-proof fence for the community garden. These youth days have formed a catalyst for continued youth activity, including one young man choosing to start his own enterprise making furniture and items from old pallet wood.

“It inspired, excited and motivated me to make more and more items from pallets” Tom, age 15



Case Study: Fordhall inspires change

David H. spent his career as a scientist working for the Ministry of Defence. However, a house move towards the end of his 'formal career' prompted David's interest in organic gardening, as he commented "organic gardening just grabbed me".

As a result of this interest in things organic, David was enthusiastic to embrace the opportunity to attend a two week 'Permaculture design course' at Fordhall in 2006. He described this experience as "a great, wonderful fortnight" which "has flavoured my life ever since". After the permaculture course, David attended two or three volunteer weekends at Fordhall and regularly kept in touch via *The Grazer*.

Fordhall's work with young people and adults with learning disabilities inspired David. He began to volunteer with learning disability charities and a Care Farm closer to his home. As well as the 'land management' aspect of

care farming, David began to use his artistic talents with the clients of the Care Farm, introducing them to green woodworking. He also started to learn about wood carving and clay modelling, which he integrated into his volunteering with an art group for people with learning disabilities. David observed that 'you give ... but you get so much back'.

In reflecting on the impact of his engagement with Fordhall, David mused that, from the first time he came across the farm "it has been part of my life ever since ... it is great fun ... they are the happiest bunch of people". Indeed, Fordhall was instrumental in what David described as his "... journey of being open to new ways of thinking, of being and of understanding the relationship between people and the land".

David summarised his thoughts about Fordhall: "... those two weeks were just fantastic ... it's a wonderful place".

Have a positive impact on well-being through increasing people's connections to nature and the environment

We have been determined to make Fordhall more accessible to our wider community, especially those less able than ourselves. Unfortunately, we were not successful with the funding bids we submitted, but we continue to search for a way to make this possible.

Our Care Farm and Youth Project very much support this aim, and in 2019 they were successful in securing £10,000 from the Big Lottery Local Community Fund. This funding, along with some very generous donations from some of our shareholders,

paid for a nine metre polytunnel and supported the construction of a fantastic greenwood shelter. The new facilities aided the expansion of the Care Farm to a third day. We have taken on three new members of staff to support this growth. Here are some of their highlights:

"TH has developed the skill and confidence to cycle independently to the farm every Thursday for his session and he is immensely proud of that."

"AJ has developed enough confidence to run the Tuesday group warm up and makes it fun and involves everyone. Perfect!"

"A highlight was getting involved in the lambing they loved it and learnt how the animals need to be cared for. They were choosing pet names for the bottle fed ones!"



Aberdeen Angus bull. Farming remains at the heart of Fordhall

Provide and increase the understanding of good food from local/seasonal produce

Arthur's Farm Kitchen is the focus for this aim and 2019 was a tricky year as we spent most of it without a permanent chef. This made it difficult to devote time to developing and growing our reach. Nevertheless, we still catered for four successful weddings and numerous functions and parties. We even found time to launch our Grazing Table – a wonderful array of Fordhall goodies presented on large wooden logs, fit for a king! Developing our food offer and the links to nutrition, whilst retaining the connection to the soil, will hopefully be our focus for 2020 and beyond.

The lockdown in 2020, however, has presented a wonderful opportunity. With Ben no longer away on the catering trailers he has found a new vocation creating farm videos for our website!

Influence innovative approaches to using farming assets and the land for the benefit of the community

Charlotte provided support to a number of community businesses including Café INDIE in Scunthorpe and Trecadwgan Farm in Pembrokeshire. The farm team came to visit Fordhall in the summer to learn about our journey. We shared our fundraising experiences, but also how rewarding it is to have such a large membership. They were fighting to buy a beautiful farm from Pembrokeshire County Council and it looked possible on many occasions, but unfortunately, it was not to be. However, the Fordhall message lives on and we are sure their group will go on to achieve great things.

Charlotte was invited by previous Guardian Environmental Editor, John Vidal, to sit on a debate panel as part of Oswestry nature Festival, to discuss the decline of nature in the area and what we could do to support it. The strong message was that we can all do our bit to support wildlife-friendly farming in our locality. As farmers, we should not wait for policy to catch up, we should - and we can - act now.



Borage in the farm's community garden attracts vital bees and other pollinators

The Fordhall message continues to spread worldwide. We recently received a lovely email from Tess, a small dairy farmer in Australia, who has been inspired by Fordhall's achievements.

"Since receiving my shares I've been on a full journey of leaving my family farm in North East Victoria in Australia, doing some city time to then realising I wanted to farm after all, gaining experience on a goat dairy and now I'm six months in to running my own little herd of 10 milking cows with an onsite factory to process bottled milk and yoghurt.

So reading your book carried far more weight of what you've gone through and achieved. Thank you so much for creating what you have and for sharing the story of getting there. The loss of family farms in Australia is huge also."

Finally, Charlotte was awarded a fellowship from Plunkett Foundation for her services to the community business sector. An accolade which we hope will aid in sharing our experiences and approaches.

The Straw Lodge

Last autumn we were honoured to have Charlie Luxton, architectural designer and presenter of Channel 4's *Building the Dream*, at Fordhall to launch our beautiful eco, multi-purpose Straw Lodge.

The TV star, known for his support of environmental issues, was very impressed by the building's green credentials. He said:

"I really can't recommend enough coming up here and staying in the Straw Lodge and experiencing it first-hand. The subtle sense you get when you're in a low impact building is incredible. They are far nicer spaces to be in, better places to live in, healthier and more enjoyable."



In 2019 we hosted six private hires including a Wilderness Medicine group, two overnight school visits, three functions and three weddings, as well as daily use by our Care Farm, volunteers and Youth Project. We were thrilled to welcome an excited group of 10 and 11-year-old school children, along with their teachers, on a cultural exchange from China. They experienced life on our organic farm; walking through fields with live animals is something they would never experience in the big city that they live in, in China.

Monitoring and evaluation

Evaluating our impact has been something we have grappled with for a long time. Some baseline surveys were completed in 2019 and these will form a strong focus for us through 2020. We want to get better at recording all the wonderful stories we hear from our visitors and customers; we want to be better at capturing the change we are encouraging, all of which we will share with you; but most importantly, we will use it to improve and review our own progress.

Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers in 2019

Carol Ainley, Elliot Ainley, Rosemary Barker, Claire Bridgewater, Richard Clarkson, Grace Eardley, Jenna Filsinger, Tom Griffin, Tanya Jones, Grace Lee, Lesley McNeil, Alaric Miller, Nick Pinton, Kathryn Rhodes, Dilys Riley, Peter Riley, Alexandra Rook, Nick Rowe, Katie Shipley, Kristian Snelling, Helen Wilton, Alexander Allan, Oliver Allan, Andrew Bailey, Jane Bayliss, Paul Bayliss, Paul Beevers, Dan Bridgewater, Cheryl Cartwright, Neil Clark, Katherine Earle, Beverley Fox, Paul Fox, Dylan Franklin, Joanne Gill, Bob Griffiths, Peter Hampton, William Hawkings, Eric Hawkings, David Holton, John Hughes, Jennifer Humphries, Fran Hunt, Jill Jones, Gary Kanes, Ruth King, Sarah Knowles, Issy Lear, Ellie Lee, Helen McSherry, Stephen Morris, Christopher Mould, Cecile Ors, Christine Patterson, Joseph Phillips, Dominic Pinto, Cadi Price, Richard Priestley, The Probation Service, David Proctor, Rosalyn Puddlefoot, Pat Raynor, Paul Raynor, Rachel Roche, Maz Simon, Christine Tate, Jack Tavernor, Bryan Hunt, Leda Tustin, Jane Walkington, Ben Walkington, Chloe Walkington, Stephen Walkington, Steven Wallington, Sally Wasser, Viv Watkins, Carol Webb, Eleanor Wreay, Jason Wright, Vanessa Hinfey, Lesley Nunn, Haines Watts Accountants, Arthur Philips, Geoff Turner, Katerina Tepla, Mike Perry

Interested in volunteering? We have weekly opportunities to help in our office (general admin, marketing support, design are skills all welcomed) and practical opportunities on our Volunteer Weekends. Call 01630 638696 or email project@fordhallfarm.com for details.

Thank you to our funders in 2019



Thanks to the Big Lottery – Our Bright Future Programme (Growing Confidence Project), Power to Change (Straw Lodge), Shropshire Community Council (Straw Lodge), School for Social Entrepreneurs (training and funds for core costs) and National Lottery Awards for All (Care Farm Polytunnel) for which the initiative is extremely grateful.

We would also like to acknowledge the generous support from our wider community including the Tepla family and those who left us a gift in their wills or pledged to do so in the future, ensuring they further their legacy and enable us to continue our vision.

Visit us Tuesday - Sunday

Fordhall Community Land Initiative Ltd.
Fordhall Organic Farm
Market Drayton
Shropshire
TF9 3PS

We are on the outskirts of Market Drayton on the A53, next door to Müller Dairy.

Tel: 01630 638696 Email: project@fordhallfarm.com

Opening Times for Arthur's Farm Kitchen and Farm Shop:

Tuesday - Saturday: 9.30am - 5pm
Sunday: 10am - 4pm (also open Bank Holidays)



Find us on Facebook
[Fordhall Organic Farm](#)



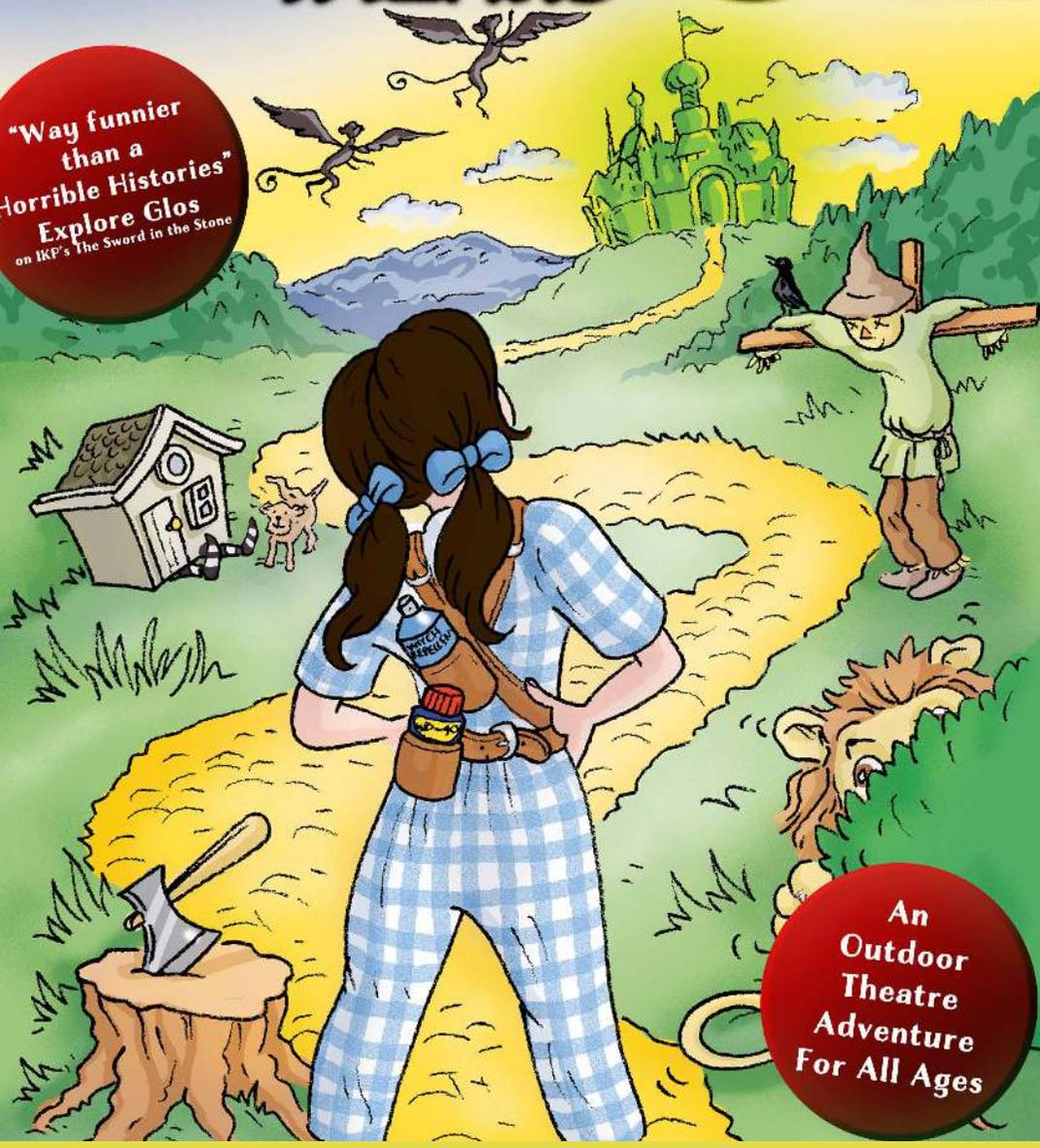
Follow us on Twitter
[@fordhallfarm](#)



Follow us on Instagram
[@fordhallfarm](#)

THE Wonderful WIZARD OF OZ

"Way funnier than a Horrible Histories"
Explore Glos
on IKP's The Sword in the Stone



An Outdoor Theatre Adventure For All Ages

Coming soon to Fordhall Farm!

Friday, August 7, 2020 at 2:30 pm – 4:15 pm

Book through our website or Facebook | outdoor theatre | social distancing applies | limited tickets | www.facebook.com/events/449478885736756/



Dear shareholders

Can you take a small action to make a big difference to Fordhall's future?

As a shareholder, your contribution forms the foundation of our financial stability. If you are considering writing or amending your Will, please remember your shares form part of your estate.

By choosing to donate your shares back to Fordhall, or by passing them onto someone else in your family who wants to support our work, you'll be making sure this special place can live on after you're gone.

We would like to politely ask, that if you are writing your Will or looking to review it, please do include a clear instruction of what you would like to happen to your shareholding in the Fordhall Community Land Initiative.

For more information on this, visit www.fordhallfarm.com/leave-fordhall-a-legacy-or-bequest
You can also call us on 01630 638696 or email charlotte.hollins@fordhallfarm.com

Our Community Benefit Society incorporation number is: IP30030R.
Our Exempt Charity Reference number (for the purposes of Gift Aid or for us to receive tax-free gifts) is XR91116.

Thank you x