

SPRING
2024



DISCOVER FARMING

NEWS FOR SCHOOLS

THE CLASSROOM @ WASHINGPOOL FARM

Local Primary and Secondary Schools are invited to visit the Discover Farming Classroom to learn and experience what is involved in bringing the food they eat to the table as well as gain an understanding of why farming and agriculture is so important to the local economy and environment.

NEWS FROM KATIE VINING, DISCOVER FARMING'S EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR



It is drawing to the end of winter here at the classroom at Washingpool Farm and although there is still very little growing there is still lots to do. It is a good opportunity for farm maintenance, repairs, cleaning, painting and making sure all the machinery is in good order. The classroom has also had a spruce up with a new work bench.

The pigs are in their winter accommodation for the moment. Annie, Ada and Max are tucked in the shed.

The cows are also inside being fed on silage. Until it's time for them to enjoy the new grass when the weather improves.

Lettuce seeds have been planted in one of the polytunnels and in a few weeks they will be hardening off outside and then planted in the growing fields.

SCHOOL VISITS TO THE CLASSROOM

We have had a small group visit us from St Mary's Primary School. The children fed the pigs and the chickens, spent time talking about the young calves in the large shed and asking questions about how the animals are looked after during the winter months. In the hands-on session in the afternoon they looked at the soil in the growing fields and then planted broad beans to take back to school. We are looking forward to welcoming more pupils as the weather improves.

VISITING THE DISCOVER FARMING CLASSROOM

Visits to the Classroom will continue to be free within a 12-mile radius of Melpash village church. Schools outside this area will be charged £100 for a full day.

One visit is made per day during the school term. Each is tailored to individual requirements with activities in the morning and an opportunity to structure the afternoon to link with school topics.

The teaching sessions are run by the Education Co-ordinator, Katie Vining, formerly a primary school teacher. Katie has the Countryside Education Visits Accreditation (CEVAS) and all the relevant DBS checks.

If your class would like to visit the farm or you would like more information please email katie@discoverfarming.co.uk



"The pupils were engaged in all the activities which were adjusted to meet their needs and interests. Everything we needed was there on site for the pupils to make the most of the time we had. It was lovely to see the pupils getting their hands dirty and enjoying learning in such a practical hands-on way."

Helen Farmer, St Mary's Primary School, Bridport



500 FARMING WORDS COMPETITION PRESENTATIONS

We, along with the judges – Gemma Harvey from the National Farmers Union (NFU), the Melplash Agricultural Society President, Michael Fooks and his wife Pam, and the competition sponsors, Nigel Jones and Jamie Willis from Chesters Harcourt – had a wonderful time visiting the schools to present the prizes. The winners of each category received a certificate and book voucher for £30 and the runners-up received a certificate and book voucher for £20. The winning school received a plaque and vouchers for £500 and the runner-up received a plaque and vouchers for £250.

Sarah-Jayne Samuel, Deputy Head at St Mary's School said ***"At St Mary's, the library has recently been completely renovated with new shelving, a reading nook and a computer barcode system for the children to use. Some of the children have recently requested more books on farming and fishing so the kind donation from Discover Farming will be spent in the best possible way!"***

Each of the eight Schools that entered were also given a certificate and a copy of the award winning family board game 'The Good Life' which aims to teach farming and sustainability to a new generation!

We look forward to running the competition again in 2024 and hope that even more schools and children will be inspired to enter.



Kindly sponsored by



Top: Joseph Dare and Franklin Laszlo-Bushrod from Symonds Primary School. The school also received the runner-up plaque and a cheque for £250. Above left: Edward Keen from Salway Ash Primary School. Above right: Winners Harry Rhodes, Theo Cox and Joe Cox from St Mary's Primary School. The school also received the overall winner plaque and a cheque for £500. Left: Max Beyon from Greenford Primary, Maiden Newton.



CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE

The Discover Farming Careers team is busy working with the Bridport Council on a bid to the UK Prosperity Fund to help fund higher education in agriculture and on farms. They have also attended Open Days at Bicton College and will be attending Kingston Maurward College's Open Day in May.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE SOCIETY'S SCHOLARSHIP ARE NOW OPEN

The Melplash Agricultural Society's annual scholarship is offered to students aged 16 years and over who live within a 12-mile radius, and who are planning to pursue further education courses in subjects connected to agriculture. The scholarship offers financial assistance with their apprenticeship, diploma or degree courses.

Scholarship recipient: William Banham

William received the Scholarship in 2023 and is attending Bicton College in Devon studying Agriculture Level 2.

"I am 16 years old, and live at home in West Dorset where I attended the Sir John Colfox Academy. I've always loved farming, although my parents are not from the farming industry. My ambition is to run my own sheep farm and contracting business, living in Dorset initially but I'll see where the sheep take me!"



My course is for one year and I hope to stay at Bicton next year to progress onto the next course. I chose the course because it gives you a broad range of knowledge in farming and I love being able to stay at college for a few nights a week.

My course involves work experience which all the students are required to do. I work on a local sheep farm in West Dorset and get involved in all aspects of helping to run the farm. I really enjoy the time I spend at the farm, being able to be at college for 3 days and then doing the practical job is the best of both worlds. I am lucky to have people to help me learn and support me to expand my skills.

The scholarship has helped me massively, it has allowed me to attend Bicton College and be a residential student and start my agricultural adventure. I would recommend others to apply, I found the application process really straightforward, and the Melplash Agricultural Society were really supportive."

The closing date for applications is 1st July 2024.

For more details and an application form visit www.discoverfarming.co.uk

DISCOVER FARMING CHAT WITH LOCAL FARMER, SOPHIE GREGORY

Tell us a little about your farm and what you do?

I am an organic dairy farmer from Dorset where, with my husband Tom and our three children, we farm 900 acres and milk four hundred cows. Our milk goes to MacDonalds, Yeo Valley, Tesco and lots of other places. Our cows eat grass as much as possible.

Do you come from a farming background?

No I'm not from a farming background; before I became a farmer I worked in accountancy. I think my husband inspired me to become a dairy farmer along with my love for animals and the outdoor life and the boredom of sitting at a desk full time. I am keen to get the next generation excited about where their food comes from and to encourage them to consider a career in agriculture.

Do you have a favourite farming season?

Spring and summer

Why cows?

Obviously, they are the best animals!! Cows are extremely intelligent and have great personalities. Their ability to turn something inedible for humans into something nutritiously dense for human consumption is incredible.

For some fascinating facts about cows from Sophie visit www.discoverfarming.co.uk/on-the-farm



Do you have areas set aside for wildlife on your farm?

We have big field margins on the arable farm. Lots of hedges on all the land and wild corners left alone.

If you could farm anywhere in the world, where would you be and why?

I mean home is where the herd is but there are two other places I would farm: Tasmania because it's the most beautiful place and has a great dairy climate or Argentina as its where a lot of my family are from – my dad was born there and spent some of his life there.

Sophie received the Dairy Industry Woman of the Year Award in 2021. The award aims to celebrate the achievements of women in the British Dairy Industry. Sophie received the award for her work in:

1. Pioneering regenerative farming industry
2. Supporting children's education in farming
3. Championing LEAF Open Farm Sunday

@farmer-in-training



NEW SOCIETY PRESIDENT 2024 – MARTIN COX

Martin Cox is the Managing Director, with his wife Vanessa, of West Dorset Leisure Holidays (WDLH). He was born and bred in Bridport and has lived there all his life. His father, with his brother, ran the local coal business in the centre of the town. He went to St Mary's Primary and Colfox Secondary Schools.

Martin is delighted to become the President and is looking forward to his year. Commenting he said: *"Although I am in the tourism industry, the farming community and the work of the Society is important to our success. Visitors are attracted to this part of Dorset for the beautiful coastline and the stunning countryside which would not exist if we didn't have our farmers caring for it. The Melplash Show is a major summer attraction and many of our regular holiday park visitors book their holidays especially to take in the Show. I am a very keen supporter of the Society's Discover Farming and Scholarship schemes. WDLH & Highlands End have been sponsors for many years. It is vital that the next generation understand the role and importance of farming in food production and the local economy."*



DISCOVER FARMING OUT & ABOUT

at **LEAF Open Farm Sunday**
on **Sunday 9th June 2024**
at **Buglers Farm Machinery, Beaminster**



As in 2023, Discover Farming will be collaborating with the Marshwood Vale Farmers Cluster to host Open Farm Sunday, a free event, that gives families the opportunity to find out more about farming and the countryside.

This year it will be based at the Syndicate Grain Dryer which is on the site of Buglers Farm Machinery in Beaminster. Here guests will be able to see first-hand how wheat is grown, harvested and stored before being transported to flour mills and made into bread, biscuits or cakes. Trailer rides will take guests to Knowle Farm Dairy to see the cows and across country to learn about the crops and what environmental measures are being taken in order to combine food to feed the nation with environmentally friendly farming.

At Buglers there will be a range of farm machinery to investigate and climb over. More information will be available nearer the time at www.discoverfarming.co.uk and on social media.

at **Melplash Show**
on **Thursday 24th August 2024** at **West Bay**

Once again the Discover Farming marquees will be packed with free fun activities designed to educate children on the importance of agriculture, the role of farming in delivering food to our tables and the role wildlife and conservation play in building a thriving countryside.



CHILDRENS' CORNER

Beetroot Banter

An excellent vegetable to grow in March and is considered to be a super food. Beetroot is a root vegetable also a good source of vitamins A, B and C and antioxidants. It has been shown to help improve athletic performance especially cardio endurance ...keep on running! All parts of the plant are edible. Beetroot can be used as a red dye.

1. What was the largest beetroot ever grown in the U.K?
2. What is the botanical name for beetroot?
3. What is the name of beetroot soup?
4. What is the name of the root of the beetroot plant?
5. When was the first beetroot cultivated?



There will also be a fantastic number of competitions for children to enter for free, including cookery, crafts and horticulture. The schedules will be available to download from www.melplashshow.co.uk in May.

Entrance to the Melplash Show is FREE for children 16 years and under. For the latest information visit www.melplashshow.co.uk

BEETROOT QUIZ ANSWERS A1. 52lb14oz (23.995kg) – September 2019 (Guinness Book of records) Fortey family in Gwent.
A2. Beta Vulgaris – Beta comes from the Celt 'bett' meaning red. A3. Borscht – popular in Eastern Europe, full of goodness.
A4. A taproot – a large central root tapering as it grows downwards. It has smaller fibrous roots growing from it.
A5. The common beetroot was cultivated throughout the Mediterranean about 2,000 BCE grown for its leaves.

The Discover Farming Classroom at Washingpool Farm (DT6 5HP) is situated just outside of Bridport on the B3162 heading towards Salway Ash. The Classroom is part of the educational programme set up and operated by the Melplash Agricultural Society to help educate children about food, farming and the environment. (Charity No 1130201)

www.discoverfarming.co.uk



@discoverfarming