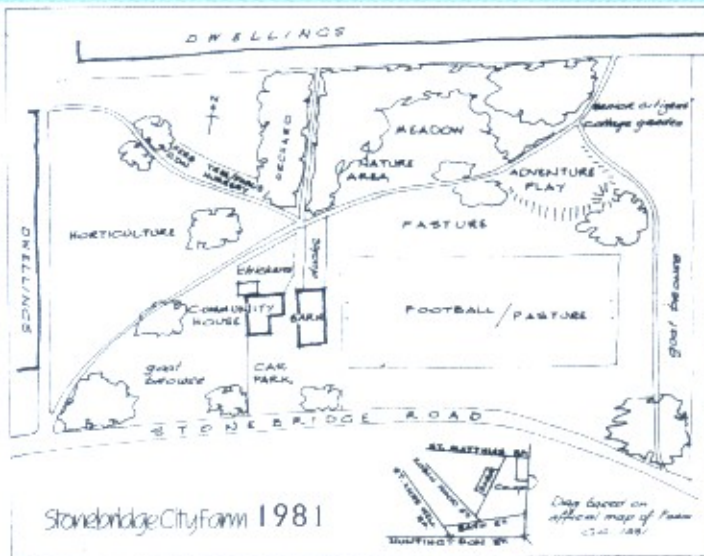


30 years at stonebridge city farm

PLANTS
FOR SALE
SALE



Then and Now

From modest beginnings in 1979 Stonebridge City Farm has grown and grown. It now employs 12 professional staff and twenty regular volunteers. It has over twenty separate funders, and delivers innovative programmes for adults with learning and physical difficulties and disabilities and young people not on school roll. In addition it offers guided school visits and has become one of Nottingham's most visited free attractions for the public. It opens 363 days a year, attracting 10,000 visitors.

The most common observation made by visitors who remember the early days is how the Farm has changed over the years, how inspirational it looks and how it has grown to become clean, tidy, organised and accessible with something for everyone. The Farm has developed over the years from a pile of rubble to a tranquil place of beauty in the middle of the City of Nottingham.

Facilities for the visitor have expanded. A visitor can pop in, feed a contented Kune Kune pig, enjoy a healthy meal in the cafe, wander round the gardens and pick a bag of Kale to purchase from our new shop, while the kids frolic in a safe Sure Start play area. In the early days, the farm was a work in progress. Today it is a valuable community resource which continues to grow and thrive for the benefit of the wider Nottingham community and beyond.

A big thank you to all of the people who have helped make the Farm a success.



stonebridge city farm

...a blossoming community

30 years at stonebridge city farm



When the old St. Anns was redeveloped all buildings were demolished to make way for the new. The land the Farm stands on belonged to the County Council and was designated for a replacement school for Bath Street Infants but then it was found it wasn't needed.

In 1977 a group of local activists got together who were interested in the new idea of Urban Farms. Key people were Elaine Medrano (now Carter-Fox), Margaret Evans (now Hall) and Ken Bates who had a background in horticulture and had worked at Wheatcroft's Rose



Gardens. SATRA, St. Anns Tenants and Residents' Association, and their worker Julie Hilling, backed the group. They set up a lantern lecture at Russell Youth Club as a fund raiser with Doug Scott the mountaineer. They door knocked and leafleted the area, proposing to use the land as a City Farm until the Local Authority decided what to do with the land. (No-one imagined the Farm could last for 30 years!) After lengthy negotiations they were given tenure of the land for a peppercorn rent, and planning

permission by the City Council.

The Manpower Services Commission provided funding for one worker for one year and Ian Macfarlane was appointed. He got people to sow a field of wheat with a hand-pulled drill, so it could be ground into flour to make bread, but the sparrows ate it all.

The site they took over was mostly rubble. The land on the corner had some trees and good soil from the gardens of Stewart Place. But for the rest the soil had to be brought. They used soil washed off sugar beet from a factory at Colwick. It was decided to grow plants like herbs, flowers and vegetables in specific areas, rather than having allotment-style plots, so that more people could be involved, including the very young and very old. The first building was a concrete garage for storing tools, then two wheeled sheds that bolted together. They got funding from the new Youth Opportunities Programme for 2 workers to work with 12 YOPS (young trainees). There were 2 farm workers.

Ted Moul, the television farmer came to the formal Opening Day. Ken says "He asked if we wanted a couple of kids- we thought we'd already got thousands. But he meant goat kids. That's how we got our male goat Solomon. The goats were always going round and round a peg and their rope would get shorter, so people felt sorry for them and set them loose."

The chairman of the management committee took the goats for walks on a dog lead and even got



one to pull a wheeled trolley. The animals became the main focus of attention for visitors and volunteers. The plentiful supply of manure was used to build up soil fertility for organic gardening. The Farm got a gosling christened Gilbert who turned out to be an Aylesbury Duck who enjoyed the duck pond built by young people. Elaine remembers "One evening I got a phone call 'Get down to the farm we've got a crisis!' There were rabbits in hutches and every rabbit had bred in the space of a few days. We were snided with rabbits and didn't know what to do with them all."

Bonfires had recently been banned from the streets and Bonfire Night became a popular Farm event. Margaret, Elaine and worker Maggie Mann would organize an Easter Bonnet parade every year for the kids to Long Hedge Old People's Home on the corner. Everyone got a prize.

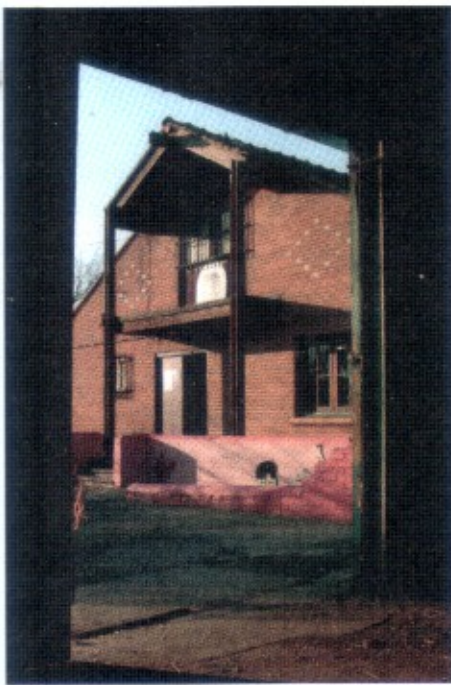
Ken left in 82. There was a succession of different workers with different ideas of how to run the Farm. Elaine remembers "One of the things we used to fight for when making policies was to always keep a path across the Farm to keep in touch with the local community. We also tried to keep no fencing." But later others felt the "network of paths has been a nightmare to the succeeding guardians." In 1992 City Challenge funded new security fencing on the boundaries and the layout was



redesigned with the north-south footpath we have now.

For some time the Farm ran a playscheme on its playground with its pirate ship which had been built as a community art project. It worked closely with Maggie Mann who had moved on to be Play Development Worker at Blue Bell Hill Community Centre.

For a while land was rented out as allotments- but this was not



closure at various times in its history. In 1981, the County Council proposed to sell off the land but were persuaded not to by a petition of local people and teachers who saw the Farm as a valuable asset. Funding has never been secure and sometimes almost dried up.

There were also tragedies. Early on, one of the goats and her kids were lost through illness. In 1983 a fire practically destroyed the barn extension, along with a year's supply of hay and straw and the Farm's van. But the worst incident was in 2001 when vandals broke into the barn and attacked many of the animals. This resulted in a great outpouring of sympathy and support for the Farm from across the city, demonstrating the widespread affection held for it.

Guy Jones started in 94 as Community Gardener and brought the number of staff up to 3. "It was always a fun job. Anything was possible. That was the beauty of it - it was so diverse. It's a fascinating project that can almost be anything. It's an untapped resource - ideas can be taken away to run a project. Activities are low skilled and people can be easily trained. The principle is getting people not normally allowed to do things, to do things.

We used to refer to it as the People's Republic of Stonebridge. Our connection to the outside world was limited - we were in the 13th century while they were in the 20th.

Compiled from interviews and articles by Colin Haynes



What was happening on the farm 30 years ago

(from Chase Chat)



On Sunday 1st July the City Farmers of St. Anns celebrated Summer in a big way.

The OMORO Theatre Group were there all day helping the kids to put on make-up and dress up in clothes saved from a jumble sale. They then had a parade up to Long Hedge Old People's Home and presented the old folks with some paper flowers they had made. The residents responded by giving all the children orange squash.

There was a Treasure Hunt, a big scarecrow was built. OMORO presented their beautiful "Cycle of a Seed" during the afternoon and the day's events culminated in a Barbeque and Bonfire, with a spectacular demonstration of Fire Blowing by OMORO.

All-in-all a great day and we are looking forward to the next event.

Special thanks are due to all the people and kids who worked so hard to make the day a success.

Ken Bates

Mr. Sid Smith is an ardent supporter of the farm. He set up a tea and hot-dog stall to raise funds at the Summer Festival and says "It's amazing what's been achieved. The message of the Farm is to get people together - out of their homes and join in the fun. People who never spoke to each other have met for the first time. I hope it'll spread through the estate".

Karen of Ferrers Walk says she originally objected to the Farm "when they dumped that smelly earth". But now she goes out and does weeding when she has time and has organized a stall selling sandwiches and barley water to raise a bit of money. She says there isn't any trouble with vandalism "The kids'll not mess up their own work".

Ken Bates is pleased to point out the patch of barley (to malt and brew into beer), wheat (to make into flour and bread) and oilseed rape (for margarine). There are just a few technical problems on the way. But the main thing to notice he says is the lack of feet marks.

allowed by the lease. Due to an error in siting, the main barn building was built the wrong way round with the main entrance at the side to avoid the mains drains across the site.

City Challenge in the early 90s supported a café worker to try to set up the café as a community business. At one point the Farm sent surplus pigs to the abattoir, which were sent back again to sell as bacon. This was not popular with everyone, but reflected the way a real farm works.

When the new education block was built the spoil was dumped on the site. This put the garden out of use for 18 months, but the spoil was used it to make hillocks and landscape the gardens.

The BBC filmed for TV's 'A Thing Called Love' in the polytunnel. Edwina, the pot bellied pig was in the Radio Times.

When there was no news going on the Post would phone the Farm because of its fluffy animals. They always publicised the first lamb of the year.

The Farm always had a manure problem - what to do with it. They built a heat exchange system to run greenhouses - with a radiator in each bin and hot water being pumped round. The pump was run by a solar panel that cost a jar of honey. But the radiators rusted quickly. Then they tried composting on a semi-commercial level.

The Farm has been under threat of



Our Stan

In 1993 Stan Jones was sent to Stonebridge by an unemployment agency for 6 weeks but he is still here today.

After a few years of volunteering Stan came to manage the barn. "That was one of the best days of my life when I got my keys for the barn. I've had all my best days here. I retire this year at 65 but I'm hoping to keep coming in on weekends. I love meeting people and that's my job here.

Things have changed a lot. When I started there was only a wooden hut here we called Stalag 13 because it was like a prisoner of war camp. I've enjoyed every year of it. But the best thing of all is meeting people."

Our garden

The secret's out! The farm's having a party and the plants have heard about it. They're all battling it out for the title of 'Carnival Queen'. The sunflowers stand tall and proud brimming with radiant promise. The cosmos nod their heads coyly abashed by their own simple beauty. The marigolds and sweet peas jostle for space in amongst the luxuriant fruit and vegetables. If you watch the undergrowth carefully you might be lucky enough to spy a garden worker busily squirrelling away. The garden worker is a shy furtive creature who dislikes any interruptions to their labour (apart from the occasional tea break of course).

Even the smallest of the garden's small creatures are happy this year with lots of flourishing wildlife habitats to hang out in, the latest addition being the new mini-beast corner.

In its 30th year the farm is a shining example of a diverse community of people interacting positively with their environment.



Our animals

Over the years the animals at the farm have changed regularly. We are now aiming to keep all our larger animals, as most of them are Rare Breeds, which is beneficial to the continuity of the Breed, and the public and schools have an opportunity to have hands-on experience with the animals they wouldn't normally see. We also have animal sponsorship.

We have 3 goats. Norman, our Angora goat was donated to the farm when his owners moved to America. His coat can be used for making jumpers.

Custard is a Nubian goat. She was donated when her owner became ill. Due to arthritis she walks on her knees. She loves bananas.

Sparkle is a Pygmy goat. Everyone asks if she is pregnant - she's just fat.

We have a sheep, Crinkle, and a Shetland pony, Charlie, who was rescued from being ill treated.

Our small breed cow, Dexter, has had 13 calves, the last being Molly, who has stayed at the farm.

We also have some Kuni Kuni pigs, which are a small breed which originated from New Zealand- Spice, Titch, Sugar and Prudence.

And, of course, Tigger the cat.



Our vision - the Next 30 Years

The management committee, staff and volunteers are determined that the farm should:

Become a flagship urban farm, pushing back the barriers of what can be achieved.

Evolve into one of Nottingham's premier free visitor attractions

Provide better, stronger and more person-centred programmes to our service users and learners

Offer a wide range of training, development, advice and guidance to the people of Nottingham.

Enhance local awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and healthy eating for emotional wellbeing

Challenge the people of Nottingham to protect the environment around them

Achieve financial sustainability, develop a culture of innovation and improve community accessibility

Be considered by our staff, learners and volunteers as a place of excellence in which to work, train and grow.