

FARMLAND MUSEUM TODAY



A Newsletter from all involved at the Farmland Museum
The Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, Ely Road, Waterbeach. Cambridge. CB25 9PQ.

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BEAUTIFULLY RESTORED - A JOB WELL DONE!



The Farmland Museum's iconic example of the once ubiquitous Ferguson tractor which has recently been absent from display has now been restored to near pristine elegance in readiness for re-display as a static non-working (well they did try) exhibit as witness above - where volunteer members of the restoration team, Steve and Graham, proudly present the product of their recent labours.

The 'Fergie' is from a time when small was beautiful - totally different from today when, as you will doubtless have seen for yourselves, machines of quite monstrous proportions patrol our fields in the interests of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Life for the tractor drivers must have been most

difficult in the 1940's and 1950's. Designed by Harry Fergus and manufactured from 1946 until 1956, in only one colour as seen above, the 'Fergie' TE20 model with its versatility rapidly established a loyal following virtually everywhere in the UK.

However, unlike today's larger tractors it did not offer their drivers air conditioned cabs, any GPS systems, no stereo or computer systems and no weather protection. How did farm workers of that era manage? Life must have been tough!

Mind you, going back to an even earlier period, that of the heavy horse, these facilities were not available either - but more on that later... Next time a report from those involved in this restoration.

THE MUSEUM MANAGER'S REPORT

Do Museum Managers hibernate over winter?

Sadly this one doesn't! It's been a very busy few months chasing my tail and pulling my hair out.

All the dates for this year's events have now been sorted and the leaflet is being designed. If you can't wait for a copy all the events are on the website and some are listed on our Facebook page. Sometimes I will approach individuals and organisations to see if they'd like to participate in an event but more often I get approached out of the blue by people who have heard how much fun our events are and can they join in? It's great that we have a reputation for being friendly and welcoming to everyone taking part. Last year over 200 people in addition to our core volunteer team gave up their time to come along and help make the events enjoyable and memorable for our visitors. Some own vintage cars, others dance, care for owls or live life as medieval knights - they all have a passion and enthusiasm to share their interests with us and our visitors; which is why so many familiar faces return annually to our events. I'm always interested to hear from anyone who would like take part - so get in touch!

This year's temporary exhibition in the Cottage Gallery will be about Chivers. I haven't set a date yet but it should open during May and run throughout summer. We're borrowing objects from the Museum of Cambridge - many have never been on display before which is very exciting. I'm very keen to include in the exhibition written memories of anyone connected to Chivers. If you or a family member has a story that you'd like to share please write to me at the museum or send an email.

I'm delighted that we are continuing our partnership



with Cambridge Headway to look after the allotment. Last year the brief was to grow vegetables recommended by the government during World War 1. This year I'm letting David and Andrew who work on the allotment to grow what they'd like - peas and onions have already been planted; I've got my fingers crossed that they'll plant runner beans later in the season as I think Denny runners are the best I've ever tasted!

We're planning to spend more time this year on keeping the displays looking fresh and interesting. Top of my list is the Farrier display - 'Ginger' is going to get some fresh straw! I also want to improve the information that's in there and in the Dairy. Emma plans to put some 'new' stock in the Village Shop, all the objects have recently been donated and are exciting additions to the collection.

Since last year we have welcomed new volunteers to the team but always have room for more! There's always something that needs doing - research, painting, gardening - the list is endless - and of course we must never forget the endless fight to keep the cobwebs down! This year I'd like to increase the number of volunteers helping on event days either to run activities or assist in the Tea Room. I'm also keen to have some volunteers for the shop at weekends to free up the Visitor Services & Museum Assistants (VSAMs). Their job description has been tweaked so that they can take a more active rôle in helping with schools, groups, planning events, research and collection management. We've only just interviewed so I will introduce our newest team members in the next issue.

Looking forward to greeting all our visitors when we open on Sunday 1 April. Don't forget that our new opening hours will be 11am - 5pm; Tuesday - Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE FARMLAND MUSEUM.

Once again many thanks to Peter Reeves for cajoling, threatening and encouraging the contributors to the latest newsletter .

Our biggest news is that we are to be honoured with a visit from HRH the Princess Royal early in the new season and so we are busy making sure that the site will be extra specially spruce to welcome her. It is an enormous privilege and will recognise 21 years of working with English Heritage who have the guardianship of Denny Abbey. As more and more homes are built in the region and open countryside disappears, the Museum and Abbey remain an oasis of peace and serenity and remind people of what life was once like in this part of the world, both in the more recent past in the Museum and much longer ago through the story told by the Abbey.

Since the last newsletter was published Amey, our neighbours who run the waste management site across the road, have submitted a planning application for an Energy from Waste plant on the land to the left of the large green building which is just visible through the trees as you stand in the Museum car park. This new plant would burn waste, which would otherwise go to landfill, to produce enough electricity to power a large number of homes and potentially also heat homes in the new town. The proposed building is very large and although the plans as submitted have included some tree planting to act as screening it is still going to be hard to miss. Historic England, English Heritage and the Farmland Museum have all submitted responses to the County Planning department objecting to the effect the new plant would have on the setting of Denny abbey site which is a unique listed Scheduled Monument. The application highlights the conflict which can occur between conservation of the historic environment and

conservation of our planet's resources by using waste materials, that cannot be reused or recycled to create heat and power. We now wait to see the outcome of the application with interest.

Meanwhile we also await the outcome of the outline planning application from Urban and Civic for 6000 new homes on the old Waterbeach barracks site and the submission of planning application by RLW for their part of the proposed new town Site.

We live in interesting times as we plan for the future of the Museum and Abbey. They will provide an important and unique cultural and recreational resource for the new residents in the region.

For now though the new season approaches, with Easter Sunday this year coinciding with our opening day. I do hope that a many of you will visit and bring your friends, have tea in the Tea Room if it is open (or buy a more limited choice of refreshment in the shop) and spend some money in the shop. We had a very positive year last year with an increase in visitor numbers and with visitor spend up but we cannot afford to be complacent and sources of funding get ever harder to find. The story our Museum tells is becoming increasingly important as new people move in to the area. Many know very little about how people lived here until the changes which began to take place during the middle of the 20th century and we can give them an idea of what how the land was used what life was like. Please continue to support us in whatever way you can. Tell your friends, come and visit, make a donation, sign up to Easyfundraising (which costs you nothing) and let as many people as possible know what a unique and important place the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey is.



...Come to the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey and enjoy Easter with like minded folk. Amusements for all the family as the Museum opens for the year.

**April 2nd for EASTER MONDAY FUN.
11.00 am until 4.00 pm.
Plenty to see and do.**

MEET THE MUSEUM TEAM. Volunteer Joy Prime. Joy is the current volunteer managing the Museum Bookshop.



I have been volunteer at Denny for about 10 years. My first job was transcribing interviews, by hand, of people whose memories had been recorded. I have taken part in most of the jobs needed as required - cleaning floors, the cottage, painting walls, chasing spiders, painting ploughs, refurbishing horse leather, cutting out material for rag rugs and craft activities and many others, now forgotten.

More rewarding than cleaning have been taking part in setting up the artefacts for the Memory Box Project. I was given a budget to buy small

items which could have been found 'in your first house'. This involved searching charity shops, car boot sales and antique centres. The reason for all this was to visit day centres and care homes with our boxes to help rekindle their memories and to help communication. Helping Elly Wright at the time, this was very successful and came into use for other displays. On another subject we did a similar scheme with Chris Leuchars taping some individual interviews with interesting results.

The book shop I became involved with when the previous custodian left and I was pleased to take over sorting the books out and pricing them up. All the books are donated by members of the public and ourselves and when we open this year we should have a good selection including subjects for children. Browse among the paper backs and hard covers, fiction and non-fiction, cookery, craft, sport, history, travel, gardening, natural history, crime and many more subjects. When I first started looking after the books I used to price them all but now we just rely on suggested donations, this seems to work alright and the money mounts up so it is worth doing. All donations are welcome but the only ones which had to be passed up on were about gay sex as I did not think Denny was a very suitable place for these! The most unusual book I can recall was titled 'In Bed with the Romans' this was placed on the top shelf... and eventually disappeared.

(Ed. - If you have suitable books or recent DVD's which are surplus to requirements, why not bring them along to the Museum on your next visit for positive recycling to help funds?)



TWILIGHT AT DENNY ABBEY AND THE FARMLAND MUSEUM.

Once again the local Museums evening free open event proved very popular at Denny with good numbers attending and enjoying themselves in an educational environment. Being dark outside making mini-lanterns generated much interest amongst the numerous younger attendees.



THE VOLUNTEERS CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2017

You may not be aware of this but each year the Farmland Museum Volunteers hold a celebratory Christmas lunch to which Trustees and Museum staff are invited to attend. This is not of course on Christmas day but in the days leading up to it. Now, you may feel this to be obvious but I have to confess that some years ago I was part of a Cambridge based organisation which, having the Christmas period as a busy time - held their Christmas lunch in May, complete with turkey dinner, in a room festooned with Xmas decorations, cards and complete with an artificial Christmas tree. (I can assure you that they are not all locked away yet!) Anyway I digress, back to images of the Farmland Museum Volunteers in celebratory mode for your possible interest.



Left - the lunch in full swing. The menu is variable as each participant is invited to bring along part of the meal as a contribution.



Right - Debonair 'senior' Volunteer, Adrian Wright, displays more of his millinery collection. Would not we all like to peer, very cautiously, into his wardrobe?



Above - The lunch, very much like the Volunteers themselves is very much an informal and relaxed affair. Below - Being an independently minded lot, the Volunteers even provide their own entertainment. (Rolling Stones eat your hearts out!) Now if you are tormented by remembering seeing these faces before and cannot place them - No it wasn't at Glastonbury but try turning back to page one - Yes, its multi-talented Steve and Graham again !



THE DIMMOCKS OF DENNY - Lorna Delanoy.

When one walks through the Abbey a Time Line (prepared and illustrated by Ann Biggs and paid for by a Heritage Lottery Grant) lists people and events which have been involved with Denny Abbey since the monks from Ely established it as their home "just above flood level" in 1159.

Various religious groups made use of the site and then the estate became a secular farming one.....familiar names such as Hobson (he of the "choice") and Chivers (of jam fame).were tenants and the very last farming- owners to live at Denny was William Dimmock (1883 - 1929). Photos of the family depict "tea in the garden" and more info may be obtained from the English Heritage guide which is on sale in the museum shop

The approach to the Abbey was along a slubby (good Fen word!) drove from the A10 and across the causeway from Chittering to Waterbeach which perhaps will be "opened up" when further housing is built across the Denny land which was taken in the early Forties for the site of an airfield. Estates built since the war at Denny End incorporate field names such as Winfold Farm, Convent Drive, Pembroke Avenue, Abbey Close and Clare Close.....perhaps the new development will include Dimmock Drive....with one or two M's!

The Dimmock family were well-represented in the Stretham/Haddenham locality in Victorian times but there are only three listed in the present Cambridge telephone directory.....any reader who knows of more who may have Denny connections, I would like to hear from. One afternoon some ten years ago I was on duty in the Walnut Tree Cottage playing interviews of farming folk from the seventies (now available at

www.farmlandvoices.org.uk) when an elderly visitor asked me if I knew much about the family who had lived at Denny; she was the granddaughter of William Dimmock and had lived in Gloucestershire for many years.

Travelling along the road from Stretham to Wicken one passes over the River Cam and on the left is the lime works, named Dimmock's Cote and a farm south of the Red Lion at Stretham is referred to by older residents as "Dimmock's Farmhouse".....this was the family home, where in 1913 Doctor Horace Dimmock, a GP based in Wisbech (where he was hounded by certain people) sadly committed suicide as reported in Enid Porter's books; his grave is in the Parish cemetery



Old post card bought at an Antique Fair for £3 showing the Dimmock Farmhouse with Mrs Dimmock name written (with one M) in ink.

Stories told me by the Ely author, Audrey Denton, were of how much her mother had enjoyed Christmas Parties with the Dimmocks in the early twenties at the Abbey...an

ideal home for hide-and-peek in the candle-lit

rooms and a possible glimpse of a ghost! Friends and relations would arrive by pony and trap or bicycle and Summer visits were particularly appreciated because of the "very attractive gardens"....as recently as ten years ago the Cambridge Federation of WI had an evening function in the walled garden and the Friends of the Museum were entertained there one evening by Lady Hughes, former chair of Museum Trustees, and the Cambridge Orchestra together with strawberries and wine!

If only walls could talk, what a lot of stories could be told and shared....and I should like to hear them!

LOCAL REPORT

Robert Stripe, erstwhile Chairman of the now redundant Friends of the Farmland Museum brings us up to date on local issues which will impact upon the Farmland Museum in the future.

Robert writes “Since winding up the Friends of the Museum, I really have not been privy to what has gone on, except that Emma invited me to three courses last year, two of which I joined and learned much therefrom. Roz (Wright) did ask me to play the keyboard at the proposed Carols in the Abbey’ and I was all set so to help, but... mother nature had different ideas and the event was cancelled, so I can't even comment on that.

There is a little money still in The Friends Account and which Adrian (Wright) will talk to me about when he and I have a moment spare. It will of course come to the Museum in one shape or another.

We have more news from Urban & Civic worth relating, whilst Royal London Waterbeach Estates

have got their skates on, but which really relates more to the east of Denny and the proposed new station.

The Tithe Barn Trust in Landbeach (I am a Trustee) has put forth a request for a Grant of some considerable amount. We shall not know whether we have been successful until May I believe but if we are and everything can take off Barn-wise, then in time we shall look to be part of an educational triangle, The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey being at the northern apex. Both U&C and RLWE are keen to help by providing new cycle and walk ways twixt the Barn and the New Town and connecting with your duo. Now whether I shall still be alive at that time, only...! Should that happen and the old Causeway linking with the old Village (U&C propose this) via the Waterbeach Military Heritage Museum (I am a Trustee of that too!) then of course the Farmland Museum will be a local attraction to many thousands of folk... within walking and cycling distance.”

EMMA’S MYSTERY OBJECT

So, how did you get on with the previous mystery object? Those who spend time in the kitchen, as I do, will



no doubt have seen this as a potato masher - but not as our domestic examples. This is for mashing potatoes, swedes, turnips etc. for pig/animal feed from the days when mechanised gadgets on farms were

rare and manual tools more in use.

Try your luck with the next one - well, technically two, - (right).



WHAT'S COMING UP AT THE MUSEUM?

THE MUSEUM WILL RE-OPEN FOR THE 2018 SEASON ON SUNDAY 1ST APRIL - YES, THAT IS APRIL FOOL'S DAY

Opening times are Tuesday to Sunday inclusive 11.00 am. until 5.00 pm. The Museum will be closed on Mondays except for Bank Holidays. On Easter Monday 2nd April the Museum will be open from 11 am. until 5 pm.

The 'Docky Box' Tearoom is open for food and drinks Weekends and Bank holidays, also on Wednesdays and Thursdays during school holidays. English Heritage current members visit Denny Abbey free of charge and enjoy a price reduction on the Museum admittance charge.



April 2nd. EASTER MONDAY FUN 11.00 am until 4.00 pm (Museum open to 5.00 pm)

Come and join in some traditional fun and games for all ages (!) Make it a special day for all your youngsters in an environment reflecting our agricultural background and historical past.

April 14th. ENGLISH HERITAGE MEMBERS' STUDY MORNING.

10.30 am until 1.30 pm

An exclusive opportunity for English Heritage Members to have a cup of tea with Ann Wise and learn more of the fascinating history of the site, including a guided tour. (*E.H.members only.*)



May 7th. MAY DAY MONDAY CRAFT FAIR. 11.000 am until 4.00 pm (Museum open to 5.00 pm)

A chance to grab a bargain! Whether buying or selling this is a great opportunity. Sellers contact the Museum now to book a stall. Buyers - make a note in your diaries to ensure you do not miss out.

May 27th & Monday 28TH. THE 40'S AT DENNY.

11.000 am until 5.00 pm .

Go back in time to see life as it was in the War years. So much to experience in the colour and bustle with suitably clad re-enactors binging it all to life for you against the timeless backdrop of Denny Abbey. Treat your children to living history and be sure to bring a camera to capture some really different images and vintage vehicles.



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