

West Ashton Magazine Article November 2017

We have a couple of new projects on the farm at the moment, We have been buying in young calves for the students to handle and Halter train, these calves come to us at about a month old and the students are able to make up their milk by measuring the right amount into a bucket and then add water, whisk the milk and feed it to them from a feeder with teats on, the students have to encourage the calves to suckle from the teat, once the calves have grasped this there is no stopping them. When the calves are around five to six months old they are then sold onto local farmers, because the calves have been hand-reared and trained to walk on a halter this obviously makes them easier to handle which the new owners like.

We also have purchased two Gloucester Old Spot Gilts, these again will be handled by the students, they learn about feeding, weighing and following health checks. Our old sow Porgy has been put out to retirement after eight years of being such a good mum, Porgy would give us eight piglets a year, which we would rear and then sell on. The new gilts will also be reared and sold on to local customers.

The third project has come about through a Club I belong to which is the Wessex Heavy Horse Society, they were running a Bursary for their members to apply for, with a statement of what the Bursary would be used for, I submitted my article on how I would like to train with Heavy working Horses using farm implements that we could use on the farm, ie chain harrow and Logging chains to haul logs. To my surprise my article was chosen, and I was awarded three days of training with working horses with a farmer who still uses them in Mere, those three days were very rewarding and enjoyable, I was taught how to hitch up a Percheron to the chain harrow and use it on the land, I was also taught how to use a logging chain around huge logs for the same horse to pull them out of woodland. All I need to do now is to pass on what I have learnt to some students who are interested in working Horses, Eros my cob who already pulls a carriage also has done a little of the Chain harrowing with the club on working days, so after purchasing a chain harrow I will now work with the students to harrow the paddocks on the farm.

Learning all about these 'Gentle Giants' is an experience I will never forget, and to have the chance to keep the working horse alive is a reward in itself.

Wendy Self

Farm Manager