

## West Ashton Magazine Article May 2021

Wow where did that year go....and what a year it was!

This time last year we were in the throes of the first lockdown. One year on we are delighted to have all our clients back at the farm. This is thanks to the amazing, combined efforts of our great team of staff, Trustees and supporters.

COVID aside, we have seen some other major changes; not only to our premises, with a new main Farm sign and railings around the entrance, but also with our livestock. On Valentine's Day 'Big Pig', one of our Saddleback sows, went on a romantic journey to West Ashton to meet a gorgeous Saddleback boar. She returned 4 weeks later with, what we hope will be, our next litter of piglets. We are eagerly awaiting the sound of tiny trotters in June 2021.

At the end of February, we sadly said goodbye to our oldest Anglo Nubian goat Gertrude. She was almost 17 years old when she was put to sleep. She was a real character and sorely missed, however, she had a wonderful life here at Larkrise. Gertrude will always be remembered for her many cheeky ways, including happily chewing on students' paperwork when our backs were turned!

In April we also bade farewell to our current 4 ewes. They all went away to pastures new, either to breed elsewhere or to live out retirement in luxury. We subsequently took delivery of six gorgeous orphan ewe lambs who will be our next breeding flock. The adult clients and students all thoroughly enjoy bottle feeding them, (as do the staff!) and we are now having fun training the lambs to walk on leads.

We are currently trialling a 'Quiet Corner' session for some of our Riding for the Disabled clients so they can renew their contact with our horses and ponies. We view this as the first step towards restarting our Larkrise/Hampsley RDA Group, which is planned for the Autumn.

We aren't open to the general public just yet but hope to be able to do so once restrictions are lifted on 21 June. We are really looking forward to finally being able to see our many friends in person rather than via Zoom! We have missed them all and have very much appreciated their support in these challenging times.

Take care .....and hopefully see you in the summer. 😊

Ashley Wicks, Business Manager, Larkrise Community Farm.