



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

Oak Tree Farm Rural Project

Annual Review

2023



Registered Charity No. 1138396
Co Ltd by Guarantee 07343296

What is Oak Tree Farm?

Oak Tree Farm provides training and support for adults with learning difficulties (our Team Members) in the attractive rural setting of a fifteen acre smallholding near the village of Hilderstone. The charity provides a supportive environment where people gain practical work experience and instruction in catering, farming, horticulture and pottery.

Our buildings are set well back from the road, grouped round the old farm cottage. We have a growing field and an attractive cottage garden with flowers, fruit and vegetables. More plants, vegetables and cut flowers are grown in the nursery beds and in a range of greenhouses and polytunnels. There is a fully equipped pottery, craft and work rooms, and a tea room and shop to cater for visitors.

The farm has beef cattle, poultry, a pet goat, cage birds, rabbits, guinea pigs and a tortoise. Pigs are kept for part of the year. We grow plants and flowers for bedding, baskets, cutting and drying. We make hanging baskets and Christmas wreaths. In the pottery we make hand built, thrown and occasionally slip wares, with design, decorating, fettling and firing all performed on site. The 'Oak Leaf Tea Room' is open six days a week for morning coffee and lunch. It uses locally sourced ingredients, much of the salad and vegetables used are grown by the Team Members on site. The tea room is noted for its delicious cake!

People attend the project on a part time basis to fit in with their other commitments. They are helped to build on their social and life skills with reviews to agree personal targets and assess progress. Team Members are involved in virtually every activity of the project including the Health and Safety Committee, the staff interview panel and writing thank you letters to donors. All our activities are run by experienced, dedicated, trained staff with support from committed volunteers. This voluntary work was recognised in 2014 when the charity received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service.



Oak Tree Farm in 2023

This was a year of 'back to normal', we were fully open and the pandemic was fading into the past. The daily activities of the animals, plants, tea room, pottery and Branching Out were thriving again. The highlight of the year was 'Staycation Day' when the Team Members enjoyed a day packed with fun activities. We had archery, laser shooting, alpacas, an Eagle Owl, ferrets, a vintage car, a motorbike, the potter's wheel, a Jurassic Park Ranger with his Jeep and baby 'dinosaur', the Lions did a hog roast and we finished off with ice cream.



The annual Bike-a-thon took place in July, the Team Members raised money for Oak Tree Farm and for The British Wildlife Rescue Centre which has its base in Sandon. We are very aware that others regularly raise funds for us and make donations and grants, so raising money for others is important. We received financial help in 2023 from NFU Mutual, Staffordshire Agricultural Society, Inner Wheel, Rotary and Lions clubs, grant making trusts, legacies and many personal donations.

Links to the community are important to us, so it was great to be able to plant up the tubs for the WI marquee at the County Show and to take part in the Stone Advent Window event once again. We planted up some barrel planters for Burston, put in bulbs for Swynnerton and tidied up 'The Village Green' at Hilderstone, it is good to be involved in the local villages. We visited Sandon church to learn about its history and wildlife as part of their bid to gain funding for development work. We welcomed visitors from the Stafford Art Group, albeit on a very wet day. Our own Art Group run by volunteers meets regularly.

Our 'off site' team, Branching Out, has regular groups volunteering at Sandon Hall Gardens and Biddulph Grange and working in private gardens. Branching Out and Acorn Garden Services use the Ford Ranger crew cab pick-up truck to transport Team Members, tools and mowers to work sites and to pick up supplies and materials for use on the farm.





The Tea Room is busy once again, the Team Members rise to the challenge of these busy times; cooking, serving, clearing tables and washing up as well as having fun with everyone on Pancake Day, Valentines Day, Halloween, The King's Coronation and Christmas. The tea room team held two 'Musical High Tea' events, with musicians, a master of ceremonies and of course their signature sandwiches, scones and cakes.

Our own fundraising group is working hard: stalls were held at Sandon Fete, Baswich, Bramshall, Salt and Colton. Midsummer Music was held at the farm as was a Quiz Night, a talk about Sandon Hall Gardens and of course our annual 'Christmas at the Farm' fundraiser.

Volunteers continue to be a crucial part of everything we do, running the monthly Craft Group, the willow weaving enterprise and being key to the daily work on the farm, Oak Leaf Tea Room and Pottery. We still have regular support from a small number of volunteers from Vodaphone's 'Engagement Squad', they held a draw for a mountain bike with the proceeds being matched by Vodaphone. Keele University Medical School also placed a student for a period this year.

The development of new toilets and office that had been put off due to the pandemic is now well under way, the building's shell is complete with walls, roof and floors. This should be completed by summer 2024 and will include a shower room and staff room as well.

The staff did their 'Safety Interventions' training again, updated their first aid certificates and likewise the Trustees completed the annual review of policies. Health and safety meetings take place at six monthly intervals and health and safety is a permanent agenda item at Trustee meetings.



Chairman's Report

After the last three years, that were all either fully or partly affected by the pandemic, it was wonderful to enjoy a full year of normality. Our Tearoom was fully open to visitors throughout the year, and we were able to hold our public events such as Midsummer Music and Christmas at the Farm. We also held several smaller events in the Tearoom. We are very grateful to all our friends and customers who have continued to support us. Of course, central to everything we do are our Team Members. Whilst some have moved on to other activities, this has meant that we have been able to welcome new Team Members. Each of them has brought their own unique personality, character, and sense of humour to enrich the farm. We thank all our Team Members for their hard work and enthusiasm throughout the year.

There have been some changes in staffing. In May Louise Croome joined us as Pottery Instructor. It has been wonderful to see so many of our Team Members enjoying sessions in The Pottery, some of them for the first time, and to see the results of their creativity on sale in the shop. Wendy Jupe joined our Oak Leaf Tea Room staff after first being a volunteer. Lisa Maaskant has recently moved on to take up a role leading a forest school; we wish her well and hope that some of the skills she has developed at the farm will prove to be useful. We look forward to seeing her back at the farm as a visitor and possibly a volunteer. We were very pleased to welcome back Nathan Hammersley after a gap of 2 years. Once again, I must pay tribute to David Moreton and all the staff and volunteers for the skill, dedication, care and support that they give to our Team Members. We are so very lucky to have such a wonderful Team who also make Oak Tree Farm such a happy place to be.

After all of the delays of the pandemic it has been good to see work starting towards the end of the year on the long planned building in the farmyard. This will provide new office accommodation as well as improved toilets and facilities for Team Members. We are very grateful to a range of organisations who have helped with grants and provision of materials.

Financially, the year was also very successful finishing with a healthy surplus as can be seen in the final accounts in this report. This doesn't happen by accident; it arises from income from sales in the tea room and shop, sales of plants, donations from individuals and organisations, bequests, and fundraising events. So, I want to end with a sincere thank you to everyone, who in these difficult financial times, has remembered and supported Oak Tree Farm.

Accounts Summary

For the Year Ended 31st December 2023

2022	Income	2023
181,217	Fees charged for team members	194,954
70,829	Sales of produce and goods	125,986
989	Gardening Services	3,215
129,183	Donations	100,379
7,065	Fund raising activities	8,405
2,069	Interest received	10,821
<u>391,352</u>	Total Income	<u>443,760</u>
	Expenditure	
245,581	Wages and salaries	277,642
28,177	Plants, goods and services purchased	48,488
4,000	Rent	4,000
11,304	Electricity, gas and water	15,143
7,251	Insurances	8,335
10,637	Building, Vehicle and plant maintenance	8,941
5,661	Postage, stationery, telephone and office expenses	4,877
5,546	Hygiene & Waste Disposal	6,609
2,687	Bank Charges	3,825
5,555	Miscellaneous expenses	5,819
<u>326,399</u>	Total Expenditure	<u>383,679</u>
<u>64,953</u>	Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year	<u>60,081</u>
	<u>Capital Statement</u>	
167,563	Buildings and Equipment	166,114
31,526	Stocks and amounts due	32,903
299,633	Bank Accounts	349,679
<u>498,722</u>	Total Assets	<u>548,696</u>
(10,539)	Amounts owing	(18,475)
<u>488,183</u>	Total Value of Fund	<u>530,221</u>

Our People

Team Members

Sophie Abbott
Marie Aston
Ben Barker
Brett Bowers
Aaron Bye
Lee Clewlow
Matt Dawson
James Fenn
Barbara Green
Shabena Harrison
Anthony Heeley
Mark Leech
Guy Moore
Stephen Peers
Skye Riley
Nick Salmon
Keeley Stanford
Kelly Trotter
Darren Yearsley

David Alcock
Cassie Bailey
Hadley Beare
Becky Brandrick
Paul Cartlidge
Joseph Colley
Derek Eardley
Michael Folkes
Tim Green
Michael Hartwell
Mathew Hill
Peter McTaggart
Kathryn Mycock
Clive Pepper
Josh Ruane
Adam Shallcross
Annie Tankard
Dan Tyne

James Arrowsmith
Jayne Ball
Robert Booth-Jones
Liam Burgoyne
Alfie Clare
Chris Collier
Tom Elliott
Tom Foster
Simon Hackett
Tom Haywood
Kieran Jones
Becky Minor
Ben Patrick
Emma Redhead
Jaymie Rudge
Nordy Smith
Callum Thomas
Lawrence Williams

Patrons

The Earl of Harrowby

The Countess of Harrowby

The Lord Stafford

Staff

David Moreton - General Manager
Sam Caffery - Plants & Animals
Julie Collins - Tea Room Cook
Louise Croome - Pottery Instructor
Vicki Darlow - Tea Room
Claire Grimes - Plants & Animals

Nathan Hammersley - Plants & Animals
Louise Jeans - Plants & Animals
Wendy Jupe - Tea Room
Emma McLuckie - Plants & Animals
Sheila Richardson - Admin & Finance
Ruth Weightman - Retail Catering Manager

The Board of Trustees/Directors

Chairman - David Folkes
Vice Chairman - Anne Bird
Secretary – Helen Anderson
Treasurer - Colin Campbell
Carol Blurton
Stacey Holmes

Simon Mountford
Jean Pattinson-Evans
Sheila Penfold
Alan Rawlings
Angela Thomas
Paul Wyatt

Appointed Trustees

Ian Parry
William Scarlett
Janet Markwell

County Councillor
Volunteer/Former Trustee
Former Trustee

Mission Statement

‘Oak Tree Farm provides a unique rural working environment where people with learning disabilities gain the skills, independence and confidence to take them towards an active role in society.’



**Oak Tree Farm Rural Project
Sandon Road
Hilderstone
Stone
Staffordshire
ST15 8RT**

**Tel: (01889) 505653
Oak Leaf Tea Room: (01889) 589030
E-mail admin@oaktreefarm.uk.net
www.oaktreefarm.uk.net**

**You can now donate through CAF Donate at www.cafonline.org
Registered Charity No. 1138396
Company No. 07343296**

