



# farms

Newsletter for tenants of Cambridgeshire County Farms Estate

## Changes at Shire Hall

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Approved for circulation



Ian Stewart (left)  
and Keith Walters

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Keith Walters, is to stand down this month. The Conservative Group, who hold control of the Council, elected Shona Johnson as his replacement. She is the Council Member for Willingham.

Councillor John Powley, who was the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services, has been replaced by Councillor Alan Melton. He is the Council Member for Chatteris. Councillor Powley was well known to many on the Estate as part of the Tenant Selection Panel, for his involvement in the Farm Management Plan review and as a Muckspreaders Cup umpire.

Ian Stewart, the Council's Chief Executive, will retire in June. The search for his replacement has begun.

Andrew Rowson, Director of Property and

Asset Management, left the Council at the end of March. His departure, along with several other senior staff, was part of a cost saving restructuring. Andrew was regularly involved in County Farms issues in his 10 years with the Council.

His role has been taken on by Nick Dawe who, in addition, has responsibility for the Council's finance and performance. He has made an early start with County Farms matters attending both of the Tenants' meetings and meeting with representatives from the National Farmers Union. 1

# tenancy matters



## What to do if you have a water leak

If you become aware of a leak during the working day you should telephone your Patch Officer in the first instance. He will be able to tell you whether repair of the leak would be the Landlord's or your responsibility, and provide guidance and advice.

The repairing obligations are set out in your Tenancy Agreement but as a guide

repair of a water pipe above ground in board of the main stop cock or meter is your responsibility. Underground water pipes for those of you on Full Repair, Shared Repair or FBT Agreements, are your responsibility. For those of you on the older Standard Agreements approximately pre-1982, the responsibility is the Landlord's.

If you have a leak or emergency "out of hours", you

should contact a competent plumber to get a repair effected. You should then, if you are uncertain as to repairing liability, speak to your Patch Officer at the next convenient opportunity to check whether the Landlord is responsible. If the Landlord is responsible we will reimburse you the reasonable costs upon production of a paid receipt. 1

## Asbestos removal on your farm

We shall be arranging in July 2007 for an Asbestos Remover Contractor to visit to collect any lying asbestos sheeting etc you may have originating on County Farms. There will be no charge for this collection unless the asbestos is from a "tenant's" building where we reserve the right to levy a charge. We have a note of some farms where you have already notified us or we have noted during a visit. If you wish to check that we are aware or tell us about asbestos for collection, please contact Sarah Matthews on 01223 717034 or by email at Sarah.Matthews@cambridgeshire.gov.uk no later than the 21 June 2007. 1

**If you have any Health and Safety queries regarding asbestos please contact Christopher Burton on 01223 717413 or by email at Christopher.Burton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

## Meeting with National Farmers Union

Council Members and officers met in April with tenants' representatives from the NFU for an annual meeting to discuss matters of mutual interest. David King and Philip Bradshaw represented the tenants and were supported

by Gwen Davies from the NFU. Matters covered were the Farm Management Plans, the policy review, investment on the Estate, single payment delays and the curtailed service resulting from the loss of staff. 1



## New tenants welcomed to the Estate

Oliver Owen has taken on a 91 ha equipped holding at Edwards Farm and Warners Farm, Somersham. This farm was formerly farmed by Neil Dixon who emigrated to New Zealand (see Tenant's article). He has had many years' experience as a Farm Manager in both

Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. At Swanbridge Farm, Parson Drove Andrew Spriggs has taken over an 88 ha equipped holding formerly farmed by Tony Rowell who retired from farming. Andrew was a heavy plant operator but had worked on the farm with Tony Rowell since he was a boy. 1

## Bouncing boys for County Farms girls!

Beverley Burn (nee Jones) gave birth to a baby boy, Oliver John Burn Jones, on 22 December 2006 in Detroit, USA. He weighed a healthy 7lbs 6ozs.

Beverley left in February 2005, married Colin who works for Ford and moved to the USA. Her patch was mainly in the north of the County.



Beverley with Oliver



Vicky with Charles

Victoria Mitchell gave birth to her second son, Charles Nicholas Mitchell, brother for Hugh, on 10 February 2007 weighing in at a healthy 6lbs 10ozs.

She will be returning to work two days a week from September 2007. 1

# From Somersham to Methven New Zealand



**I took over the tenancy in Somersham in October 2001 following Foot and Mouth and with wheat prices declining. A couple of years in as more information came on the SFP we thought farming in the UK was becoming more paperwork and less farming and with a public perception that farming was an unnecessary industry we started to look for alternatives.**

I had always had connections with NZ and had travelled here in the mid-90's and knew farming there was still valued by society and that rural communities were thriving. We decided to holiday as a family in February 2005 travelling extensively around the South Island and made the decision to emigrate later that year.

In mid-October 2006 we arrived in the town of Methven, mid-Canterbury about 1 hour south of Christchurch to take up a job with a firm specialising in agricultural haulage that includes fertiliser spreaders and sprayers.

With a client base from the Canterbury high country to the flats of the Canterbury Plains, you can find yourself working on extremely steep slopes or fairly easy flat lands all in one day and travelling distances of up to 80 km each way from base.

The normal climate is similar to mid-France. However, we keep being told this is not our

normal spring/summer as we are having one of the wettest harvests for a few years. Rainfall varies from 40" in the foothills to 20" in the heart of the plains per annum but with extremely light loam free draining soil, irrigation is a necessity with walking centre pivot irrigators of up to 1km long commonplace.

Starting at the Canterbury Plains area of Rakaia this is mainly combinable crop production, i.e. wheat, barley, peas, vining peas also grown in this area too, and then radish, clover and rye grass all for seed, very much the norm.

Moving inland from there the landscape soon changes into very intensively farmed dairy units, all with rotary parlours, milking at least twice a day; very slick operations with good pasture rotation i.e. pasture sprayed off and re-drilled every 4-5 years. Nearly all these units have irrigation systems of one type or another.

Continuing inland you start to

get mixed farms i.e. arable and mainly sheep, slightly smaller family operated concerns but with lamb and wool prices at an unsustainable low these farms are finding it hard to exist in the current climate.

From the foothills to the high country this is beef cattle, deer and sheep country with deer

production for velvet, venison and some trophy stags. These are very professionally run with the highest levels of husbandry production.

The area has some fantastic scenery to see every day and for anyone considering a NZ holiday this is a must see area on the trip. <sup>1</sup>

## competitions

### The Muckspreaders Cup

The Cricket World Cup has ended and the focus shifts to the Muckspreaders Cup. Our annual cricket match this year will be held on Friday, 9 June 2007 at Sutton Cricket Club.

There will be refreshments and a barbecue. Please come along and support the sporting event of the summer.

We hope to have all areas of the Estate represented at the match. Even if you do not play come along for a beer and a burger on what has always been an enjoyable event. <sup>1</sup>

*If you would like to take part please get in touch with John MacMillan on 01223 717432 or Dale Abblitt on 07798 643002.*

# Tenants' meetings

This year's meetings were held later than usual in March at Denny Abbey Museum, Waterbeach and the Oliver Cromwell Hotel, March.

Attendances were low at the Waterbeach meeting but there was a better turn out at the March meeting.

Councillor Alex Reid attended the March meeting and the new Director of Finance, Property & Performance, Nick Dawe, attended both meetings.

John MacMillan gave a review of the estate for the last year. He advised that budgets will again be extremely tight for 2007/2008. John also touched on Single Farm Payments and acknowledged that he was aware that a number of tenants were still waiting for part payments from 2006 and 2005 and said that if anyone felt this was going to make rent payment difficult to contact County Farms as soon as possible.

David Nuttycombe advised of staff changes including the departure of Andrew Rowson from the Council. David introduced Nick Dawe who gave a short overview of his new role encompassing Property (including the County Farms Estate) within his existing Finance and Performance Directorate.

Richard Self from English Farming & Food Partnership (EFFP) gave a very interesting and informative presentation on 'Collaborating for Profit'. The presentation raised a good deal of interest from the floor.

His conclusion of Collaborating for Profit was:

- Outlook for farming is getting brighter.
- Global market is unforgiving.
- Need to work collaboratively to create and capture value.
- EFFP is there it help. 1



## environment

### Environmental compliance workshop

It is still not too late to register for an Agricultural Waste Disposal Exemption. We are indebted to Ian Hill, Team Leader for Environment Management and Mel Cornwell, Environment Officer leading on Agricultural Waste (both from the Environment Agency at Ely) for facilitating this Compliance Workshop.

Some 18 tenants attended in March 2007 in the pleasant surroundings of Girton College, Cambridge.

Topics covered included:

- how to reduce potential for pollution;
- Nitrate Regulations;
- Agricultural Waste Regulations; and
- working through the Agricultural Waste Exemption forms.

Those who hadn't done so and wished to complete the Exemption forms completed them and handed them in on the day. All who attended gained a greater understanding of how to handle and deal with waste. Thanks go to both Ian Hill and Mel Cornwell for making the Workshop productive and enjoyable with Girton College providing a simple but excellent buffet lunch.



### Barn owls

Report by Peter Wilkinson and Alistair Berry of the Barn Owl Conservation Network

Summary: (there is some double counting, eg where Barn Owls had been present, but Stock Doves actually bred and the figures include the private boxes).

Barn Owls breeding: 7 successful pairs plus 3 failing at egg or young stage.

Barn Owls present in the summer but not breeding: 2 boxes and at some time in the year but not breeding, 6 boxes.

Kestrels breeding: 6 boxes.

Kestrels breeding: 2 pairs.

Stock Doves definitely breeding: 4 boxes, probably breeding 3 boxes.

Jackdaws breeding: 2 boxes.

Against the background of a

generally poor breeding season for Barn Owls because of the low population levels of small mammals, 2006 was nothing like as bad as might have been feared and not as bad as the last poor season in Cambridgeshire generally, 2003. Brood sizes, however, were mostly rather small. The number of boxes that have now been used or found by Barn Owls is very encouraging.

### Trees around buildings: keep them under control!

It is your responsibility to keep trees and bushes close to buildings under control. Elder bushes soon become trees and can eventually cause damage to foundations. Please ensure that you do not neglect this area of important maintenance which is best done before trees get too big and a chainsaw is required.

## More Willows for Wildlife – launch of new willows leaflet

Willow trees are a beautiful feature in our riverside landscape and are very valuable for wildlife. Pollarding makes willows live long beyond their normal lifespan and helps to create many niches for wildlife.

A new advisory leaflet has been produced by the Biodiversity Partnership and the Cambridge Green Belt Project with funding from the Environment Agency. This leaflet encourages landowners

to manage their willows for wildlife by describing how to pollard a tree and also plant new ones. They thrive in wet soils and are very effective at stabilising river banks. Willow trees support a huge number of insects and thereby supply food for birds and other animals. They also provide homes in their hollows for bats and birds. Willow trees host 150 different plants, including mosses and lichen, and make a very special

contribution to the local flora and fauna.

For a free copy of the willows leaflet please contact Laura Watson, Cambridge Green Belt Officer, on 01954 713530 or email [Laura.Watson@wildlifebcnp.org](mailto:Laura.Watson@wildlifebcnp.org). You can find an electronic version at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside/biodiversity/partnership/publications/Willow+Pollarding+leaflet.htm>