



Blossom, bulbs, and baby lambs

The Woodlands Farm Trust newsletter

APRIL 2025



Spring has sprung, and the Woodlands Farm is full of life after Lambing Day. In the barns, the last of the ewes have given birth, and are now resting under the care of the farm volunteers. The newest lambs are being cared for indoors, bonding with their mothers before heading to the fields. Along the lane and in the gardens, fruit trees and bulbs are blooming. On the education centre, a new sign has been hung, marking the centre's refurbishment, and celebrating two donors who made the work possible. Read on to find out about events at the farm this April, and life on the farm.

April events

Guided Farm Tours — Wednesday 16 April — 10.30am-2.30pm

Come and find out all about Woodlands Farm with one of our guided tours. There will be a chance to see all our animals including our newborn lambs and young calf. One of our team will provide opportunities to touch some of the animals and take a walk in the fields with the lambs. There will also be children's crafts available on the day too. Tours will start every half hour from 10.30am. £5 per child. No need to book, just drop in.

Thursday 17th April – Where the Wild Things Are – 10am-12pm and 1pm-3pm. £7 per child

Come and join us for some activities all around the Maurice Sendak classic 'Where the Wild things are'. We shall be exploring the story and our woodland with wild crafts and activities. Sessions from 10am-12pm and 1pm-3pm. £7 per child. Booking essential, to book please visit www.thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org

Friday 18th April (Good Friday) — Egg-cellent Easter Trail — 10am – 2pm

It is time for our annual Easter Egg Trail. Drop by to find all the hidden Easter Eggs around the farm to claim your chocolate egg prize. No need to book, just drop in. £3 per child. A pop up café serving tea and coffee will also be available on the day.

Lambing Day – Meet the new arrivals



On **Sunday, April 13**, the farm welcomed visitors to its annual **Lambing Day**. It was a chance to see our newborn lambs as well as browse a selection of craft and food stalls. The day marked the end of months of work by the farm's volunteers, as well as by the ewes.

Farm manager David 'Dai' Jones had been overseeing the care of the animals. The work had started five months earlier, when the rams were introduced to the ewes. Through the winter, the volunteers cared for the animals. The plan had been to carefully time their mating, and to keep rams and ewes of each breed together.



But not everything goes to plan—nature always finds a way. One ram, eager to spend time with some attractive strangers, jumped the fence and fathered a mixed breed family. These were the first to be born, in early March. In the barn, these first new lambs rested with the ewes for a few days, before heading out to pasture.

The ewes were cared for in the fields over winter, before being brought into the barns a few weeks ahead of lambing. It was important that each ewe received the right amount of food. Too little, and the lambs would not grow to a healthy weight. Too much, and their birth would be harder on the ewe.



The traditional way of doing this is by eye: bigger ewes are likely carrying twins, and must receive more feed. But this winter, the farm welcomed a new specialist. Armed with an ultrasound, she scanned all of the ewes, and determined which were due twins, and which were carrying just a single lamb. Specialists like this travel the world, following the lambing season, and scanning tens of thousands of ewes each year. From her scans, she could accurately judge how far along each ewe was in her pregnancy, and when the lambs would be born. Each ewe was marked, lower on the back for those further along, and higher for those who would lamb later.

The ewes received a measured ration of feed each day. These came as pellets of wheat and barley: the ewes carrying twins receive 750g, and those with single lambs, 500g. While they receive all their nutrition like this, the ewes' instinct is to keep feeding. They were provided with hay, which they can munch on happily, without putting on excess weight.

Dai explains that the sheep could have been fed with silage. This is prepared from freshly cut grass. But Woodlands aims to boost biodiversity. Rather than cutting the grass in the pastures early, the mixed grasses and other plants in the pasture are allowed to grow through the spring and set seed in June. This preserves and supports biodiversity on the farm, but uses energy that could otherwise feed the ewes.



When the lambs were born, they naturally broke their umbilical cords. One of the first tasks was to spray the stump of the cord with iodine, sterilising it. Each ewe was kept in a stall with her lamb or lambs, to see how well they bonded. Sometimes, this didn't happen—but lambs would often find a new ewe to bond with. Either way, after a couple of days, ewes and lambs were given more space to mingle in the barns, before heading to the pasture.

The Big Day



When April 13th finally arrived, Woodlands Farm came alive with sunshine and smiling faces for our much-anticipated Lambing Day. We were lucky with the weather - clear skies and warm spring air made for the perfect setting to meet our newest arrivals. The lambs stole the show, of course, drawing in crowds of all ages who gathered to see them bounce around in the fields or rest with their mothers in the barn. The farm was buzzing with activity, and it was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the day.

Alongside the lambs, visitors explored a lively array of craft and food stalls, tried their luck in the raffle, and soaked up the springtime atmosphere. We at the farm would like to extend a huge thank you to the generous companies who donated raffle prizes, and to NatWest Bexleyheath for kindly providing volunteers - we couldn't have done it without you. And of course, thank you to everyone who came down to visit and helped make the day such a joyful celebration of spring on the farm.

A cosier classroom

Part of the farm's mission is to support education and access to nature in the local area. Initially, classes were held in the large barn next to the gardens. With its high roof, the space was chilly, particularly for its young visitors.

A new classroom was built back in 2014, education officer Hannah Ricketts explains. Supported by Natural England, and a generous bequest from donor Alan Mills, this was assembled sustainably by reusing modular, container-style structures. But this space was still not quite suitable for teaching. The roof had needed regular repairs, and paintwork was beginning to show its age.

With the support of a Greenwich Community Grant, a plan was put in place to refresh the space. The roof was properly sealed, and the structure repainted inside and out. Children visiting the space now have a warm and dry classroom in which to study. Outside, the picnic area has also been refreshed, with sand replacing gravel.

The completion of the project was marked with the fixing of new sign on the centre, recognising the contribution of Alan Mills, and the long term support of David Vaughan, one of the original trustees of the farm, and, as a retired biology teacher, a committed advocate for the farm's educational mission.



A message to our members

Finally, for those of you still waiting for confirmation on your membership renewals: we will be in touch shortly. We apologise for the delay, as we are currently undergoing a change in membership secretaries.