

Farm Visit Report

Garford Farm Yarkhill

Prepared for Farm Stay by B.Hainsworth on behalf of
Farming and Countryside Education (FACE)
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Part of the 'Wake Up to the Heart of the Countryside'
Project.

Farm Visit Report.

Farm Contact Details

Farm Name	Garford Farm
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Brief Farm profile and on farm provision.

The property is a family owned arable farm of around 200 acres with some land away, set in beautiful Herefordshire countryside, yet within easy reach of many places to visit. The farm has been in the care of the Parker family since the 1950's and Bed and Breakfast accommodation has been offered for approximately 25 years.

Garford Farm has good connecting roads and is easy to find. Arable operations- mainly wheat, with break crops of beans and oil seed rape are the main concerns. Historically hops were grown here as evidenced by the superb kilns on the site. Over the years farming practice has had to change.

Potatoes and hops were grown, and livestock kept. Farming is always changing!

The accommodation itself is set in a splendid old farmhouse with a wealth of original features. It is set in a beautiful spot and surrounded by gardens and with the farm and hop kilns nestling close by.

The farm, like many, has seen changes over the years, but offers an authentic farm experience for guests.



Particular Points of interest. *Features that would be of particular interest to visitors.*

The farm has a number of features that might be of specific interest to visitors.

These might include:

- The possible walks that could be developed around the farm and in the area
- The flora and fauna that can be seen on and around the farm
- Opportunity to learn about the history of your farm and how farming practices here have changed



Using Objects and Artifacts.

The various everyday objects around the farm all tell a story, or rather, there is a story there to be told. Particularly interesting are historic artifacts that tell us something of past times behind. But don't forget that how farming works today will be of interest to some visitors as well.

Be aware:

It is wise to 'zone' the farm into areas visitors can freely spend time and wander and areas that you are able to give access to with supervision. Some simple signage or information in visitors' information should easily differentiate these areas and help keep everyone safe.

Possible activities that might be offered.

Easily

- A chance to enjoy the farm buildings with interpretations of how they were used traditionally. For example, understanding how hop kilns work could be fascinating for visitors
- A simple opportunity to see how the land is being utilized and learning a little about each crop-how cultivated and managed. (Right: a crop of winter cereals becoming established).
- Opportunities to engage with nature via walks around the farm, for example, along hedgerows, down to pools, or to Yarkhill Church.



Hedge Information.

Giving visitors some understanding of the importance of hedges, how you manage them, species used, how to lay a hedge-can all add interest for people walking your tracks and paths.

Hedgerows:

Hedgerows are important habitats in their own right. They are a primary habitat for at least 47 species of conservation concern in the UK, including 13 globally threatened or rapidly declining ones. They are especially important for butterflies and moths, farmland birds, bats and dormice. Over 600 plant species, 1500 insects, 65 birds and 20 mammals have been recorded at some time living or feeding in hedgerows. This hedgerow has seen better days and will continue to deteriorate. The evidence of hedge lying is still apparent (top left). In the UK there are 500,000km of hedgerows for farmers to manage, yet it is extremely time consuming and does not contribute to farm income in any real way.

A little More Effort required

- Produce simple maps/leaflets with routes across the farm and on public paths, with identified points of interest on it, with regard to farming, researched or gathered local history or the countryside flora and fauna. It would be worth getting hold of any local walk leaflets available via Herefordshire Council, Wildlife Trusts, etc.
- Plan your supervised walk around the farmyard with the points of interest you will pick up/talk about. Include some facts and figures at different points, but avoid information overload. A short- 30 minute- farmyard walk could be offered for interested guests.
- It might be possible to offer to visitors chance to observe a farming operation taking place, for example, ploughing or harvesting. Learning a little about the good things farmers are doing, for instance, using field margins and planting birdseed and nectar mixes can alter in a positive way the negative attitudes people sometimes have towards agriculture. (Right: Library picture of a 6m grass margin with seed mix used in an arable setting. Right inset: Site on Garford Farm where this is used, though in winter, hardly distinguishable).



Why Farm Margins?

There are wildlife benefits by leaving the edges of fields either uncultivated or sown to various seed or nectar mixes. The margins of cereal fields can be managed in ways that benefit wildlife, without having spoiling the cropped area. Cereal field margins provide nesting and feeding sites for game birds and some passerines. Many species of butterflies, grasshoppers, and plant bugs are associated with such sites. Many polyphagous invertebrates (i.e. feeders on a range of foods) breed in crops, spending the winter in grassy banks and at the interface of crops, hedges and other features.

- Make the prospect of a stay more appealing by linking certain weeks with particular events that are happening on the farm. Try to produce a 'seasonal map' of what you might see at different times of the year to try and promote to visitors.
- Family visitors could be encouraged more, if desired. Farm walks with activities for children to get involved with could be developed. Younger children enjoy 'making' activities, for example, hay hats (right). Bear in mind though, that the 50+ age group may not always be delighted to share their break with lively youngsters!



www.naturedetectives.org.uk has many great examples of activities you could set up for visitors, mostly on seasonal walks, so farmers would not have to devise too much, just select a few ideas to make parents aware of, that they could use with their children whilst out.

Use some history to make a visit to a Herefordshire farm an interesting learning experience for adults and children alike. Avoid tomes of written information. Snippets can be used effectively to engage people with our farming history, for example hops in Herefordshire.

Kent had its pickers from the East End of London, Worcestershire from the Black Country and Herefordshire from the Welsh Valleys, as Garford farm can recall. Men, women and children welcomed the opportunity of leaving the grimy industrial areas for the open countryside and the chance of earning money. Hop picking also attracted gypsies who would time their arrival in the hop growing areas to correspond with picking. The number of people who came hop picking is not recorded, but most growers built long-term relationships with their pickers who came to a particular farm year after year.

Between six and eight people were needed to pick an acre of hops so that in the 1870s as many as 500,000 pickers were employed.

There were advantages for the locals in the influx of pickers. Housewives sold them pies or eggs, the local ice cream van called in the yard, as did the grocer and the fish merchant. The local pubs prepared for the invasion either by repainting their "No Pickers" signs or putting away the chairs and replacing them with benches!

Farmer involvement. *In what ways can the farmer facilitate adding value to the Farm Stay experience?*

Adding the personal touch by giving of ones time to visitors is a great way to add value to the farm, but obviously can be time consuming. Having time to be further engaged may be a challenge, so leaflet guides may be a practical way forwards.

These have the advantage that they can be produced in different formats to account for different audiences. For example, a family using some local footpaths leading onto a farm route might have a series of tasks for children and young people to carry out en-route, such as various 'hunts'. Adults would be happy just to have a 'bullet-proof' route set out, with points of interest.



Where next?

There are some splendid walks to take. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to be confused as to where countryside paths are leading. To actually enable visitors to enjoy these walks may need a good sketch map clearly showing where styles lead and can include points of interest too. Other than ardent walkers, people generally need encouraging to use these routes, so if you can take the guesswork out of it, that is a big help.

Three examples of activities for children- if you ever wanted to encourage more visitors with children!

Spot-the-photo-have a set of photos of things to spot at certain points on the route. A catchy name like 'Photo-safari' can make this engaging.

Age of a Tree-'How old is that tree'? With very basic equipment, it is possible to work out how old a tree is. Select a tree on your route easy to access/walk by. The 'Farming Counts' Resource has an example of how to do the calculation, but there are other sources too.

Sound Maps- At a certain point get visitors to listen for 30 seconds and map out what they can hear. This can be done by drawing on a postcard or circle of paper. The booklet 'Environmental Arts' (right) at the FACE website explains the activity fully.

Goody Bag- Provide the children with a small bag or container linked to the activities they will do. It could contain a dress makers tape measure for measuring the circumference of a tree for example, a small sticky card to collect hedgerow leaves, or a few crayons and a piece of calico cotton to take a bark rubbing, and so on.

Hedgehog- Provide a hedgehog-this one made from blackthorn and get children with parents to collect as many leaf types as they can on the walk to 'dress' the creature on their return. Watch the spikes though as they are sharp!



Developing interpretation. A few examples of *ideas for boards, leaflets and/ or trails.*

Here is an 'easy-to-spot' route-marker (right), on a walk and a clear landmark on a route. However, look where it points- apparently nowhere, but a disused lay by (below).

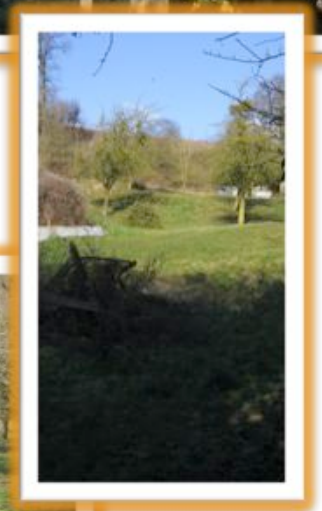


It is here a simple leaflet with sketch map can assist to encourage less confident walkers to continue, for the next exit point is hidden (right), which does lead the way somewhere pleasant!

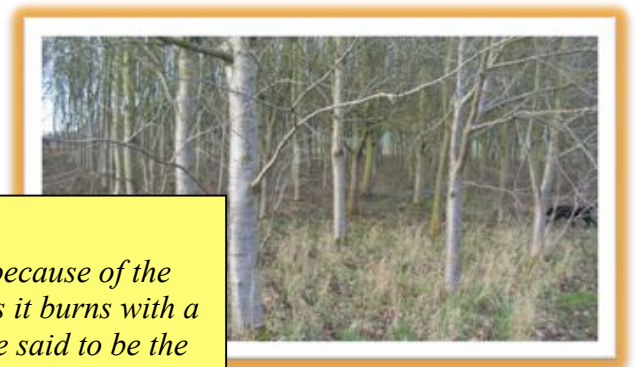


Interpretation information here might include the name of this orchard, a fact or two about mistletoe or cider making.

Perhaps historical information can be presented on routes about the geography of the area, about arable farming or cider and perry orchards.



Learning to spot species and their value to farms and biodiversity can be rewarding. The trail could include spotting 3-5 species with a snippet of information on each.



Wild Cherry.

The timber is prized for furniture, woodturning and carving because of the rich reddish-brown colour. The wood is also used as a fuel as it burns with a fragrant smell similar to that of the flowers. Wild cherries are said to be the best type to use in cherry brandy. It was thought to promote a good complexion and eyesight and help to cure coughs.

Examples of questions that could be posed about the farming in the area: What type of soil is this? What crops does it favour? What is changing, farming-wise here?



Encourage visitors to walk further along tracks and paths, by giving them a focus for walks. Have points of interest marked out on a map/leaflet, for example Yarkhill Church. Photos taken at key points can keep visitors on track and secure they are not lost. Visuals are preferable to over-wordy leaflets.



Further information.

A list of walks and adapted walks from Ordnance Survey maps can be useful as well as lists of local places to visit.

A number of other organizations produce materials that could be adapted for use with visitors and as a bank of ideas. They would be good resources for you to refer to:

Herefordshire Circular Walks.

There are 15 way-marked circular walks in the county with free leaflets available from Tourist Information Centres and other local outlets. The leaflets can also be downloaded from the resources box below. Check if these are realistically close enough to use.

http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/community_and_living/25724.asp

RSPB (Royal Society For the Protection of Birds)

Information including images and even bird sounds! Could be a focus for some information on trails/walks.

www.rspb.org.uk

Nature Detectives

A website full of useful resources regarding the countryside and activities with trees, margins, hedges and wildlife that children can get involved with. Part of the Woodland Trust.

www.naturedetectives.org.uk/

Hedgeline

Information on hedges, species and management, which might be conveyed to visitors.

www.hedgeline.org.uk

HGCA (Home Grown Cereals Authority)

Produce web based information and teaching resources for all things in the grain chain. Includes flour advisory bureau Fun with Flour materials. An Arable crop information source.

www.hgca.com/content.template/9/0/Education/Education/Education.n.aspx

See also www.grainchain.com

LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming)

Produce information and support for farm visits, particularly regarding 'Open Farm Sunday'. They produce an online virtual farm walk suitable for schools use.

www.leaf.org.uk

The National Trust.

Days at their properties suggest ideas that could be translated to days on farms in some cases. The resource 'Fun and Learning in the Countryside' is a book of countryside activities for key stage two which is a compilation and celebration of many of the successful educational activities offered by the Trust. Each activity is designed to be applicable to any site, anywhere in the country.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

The Countryside Code

The Countryside Code information and downloads are available, which might be useful for visitors.

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/countrysidecode

Herefordshire Through Time

The website for Herefordshire Archaeology and the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record. The website provides access to a wide range of information about the archaeology and history of Herefordshire. For example the guest author Essay: Hops, by John Edmonds, a former hop grower (2005) is particularly interesting.
<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/htt/default.aspx>

Woodmanton Farm Walk, Yarkhill Near Hereford

A permissive farm walk close to Garford at Woodmanton Farm. Located off the main A4103 Hereford to Worcester Road. Parking is available along the no-through road by Yarkhill Village Hall. A permissive bridleway has been set up to link with existing Public Bridleways in Rough Plantation and to create circular routes round the farm and to Kymin. The permissive footpath links with the PRow network and takes walkers through the farm and along the disused Ledbury-Hereford canal between Woodmanton and Kymin. Walkers may use the bridleways to create circular walks around the farm.
<http://cwr.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Module=CountryWalkDetails&Site=5329>

It is hoped that some elements highlighted in this document can be used to develop a better or wider offer for visitors.