



A Spring Update on the Farm

Spring is always an exciting and delightful time to be around the farm. However, it has been an extremely cold and wet Spring which has caused several problems. The 'Beast from the East' came at the start of March and froze all the water to the livestock. First and foremost, we just want to say a big thank you to all the farm staff who worked long hours carting water by hand to all our animals during this cold spell. As always, animal welfare was our principal priority and thankfully none of our animals suffered during the cold which was down to the dedication of our staff.

We calved all of our Spring calving cattle inside this year and we will be keeping them

inside a little longer to ensure that they are strong enough for the cold and wet weather. Our grass-fed Pedigree Hereford Beef is experiencing a rise in popularity as more and more people are beginning to appreciate the associated health benefits. Consequently we have purchased some more heifers, with an aim to increase production and meet the ever-increasing demand.

Our strawberries are currently running a little later than normal as a result of the cold start to Spring. But we are hoping our Pick Your Own strawberries will be available by mid to late May. A large number of customers last year commented on the outstanding quality of our table top strawberries and many of you really benefitted from the ease of picking – no bending down!



Charity Total

In the last 12 months Essington Farm has raised £4,420 for the Wolverhampton and District Breast Cancer Action Group, bringing the grand total for the charity up to £7,920. Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to such a worthwhile cause. It will enable the charity to provide more and more support to breast cancer sufferers.

Please see the above picture of Mary handing the most recent cheque to the ladies!

Plants, Herbs & Hanging Baskets

We have flowering plants, vegetable plants, herbs and hanging baskets available throughout Spring and Summer to suit both novice and experienced gardeners. Buy a ready-made basket or bring your old one to be refilled. Plant your own from now until early June. In addition, be sure to protect tender plants from frost!



The Bluebell Walk



Each Spring we open our Bluebell woods in aid of Charity; this year we are continuing to support The Wolverhampton and District Breast Cancer Action Group. We suggest a minimum donation of £2.00. We estimate that the Bluebell walk will be opened at the beginning of May, although this is dependent on the weather. You can keep updated on the Bluebell walk opening date via our website and social media platforms.



Tastings

We will be holding tasting sessions throughout Spring for both food and alcohol. We have the Peaky Blinders spiced rum, whiskey and gin which are all new products to the farm shop and they are made in nearby Lye! Look out for dates for this and other tastings.



Special Offers

Keep an eye out for offers which will celebrate British Beef Week, National Barbecue Week and World Gin Day! Other offers will also be introduced throughout the season - information about these offers will be updated on social media and written on our blackboards around the shop, tearoom, butchers and deli!

Keep Informed

If you would like to keep up-to-date with the day-to-day running of the farm, our offers and our upcoming events then you can do this via our social media platforms:

 Essington Farm  @EssingtonFarm  @essingtonfarm

Or you can give us a call on 01902 735 724 or email info@essingtonfarm.co.uk if you have any questions.



Bill Simkin: A Tribute

Most of you will be aware, by now, of the death of my father Bill Simkin, at the end of February aged 93. He was born, had lived, and died in Essington and was possibly one of the best known characters of the village. He belonged to a generation that saw a massive change in farming during one lifetime.

When he started farming with his father Alec, they had no tractors and the work was done by horses. You can see photographs of these in the tearoom. He was always practical, however, and never bemoaned the departure of horses. "With a tractor" he would say, "you finish work and just turn off the engine." Horses were different. "You still had to take off the harness, feed, water, bed down and groom." It was a lot of extra work at the end of a long day.

He worked on the farm all through the war, often helped by German and Italian prisoners of war. For the war effort, was the first person to plough up the grass on Hilton Park to grow arable crops. He always loved growing things and had a lifelong interest in Pigs.

Though my memories are mostly farm or family related, many of you will remember him socially. He always liked a rattle and a joke over a drink in the pub or a cup of tea and he was at ease in any company. He would tell a good tale and was always entertaining.

However, he was wary of appearing too optimistic or enthusiastic and always looked on the bleak side. "I would be failing in my duty" he would say "if I didn't point out the pitfalls." When we planted our first strawberries in 1978 it was his duty, of course, to tell me they wouldn't grow. Secretly, he was glad to be proven wrong.

Regular customers, I am sure, will join family and friends in missing his wit, good humour and ready smile.

RICHARD SIMKIN