

PRESS RELEASE
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Magical Christmas farm visit for Telford school children

Educational charity The Country Trust organises a special Christmas themed day for children from John Randall Primary School to Morrells Wood Farm, Shropshire.

Christmas came early for Year 5 and 6 children from John Randall Primary School in Telford last week when they had a fantastic festive visit to Morrells Wood Farm in Shropshire. The visit, organised by national education charity The Country Trust began with a tour of the farm and an introduction to farmer Derek Harper's herd of beef cattle. The children then explored nearby fields and woods collecting holly and foliage along the way in order to make Christmas table decorations to take home.

Farmer Derek, who has been hosting visits for The Country Trust for nearly 10 years, really enjoys showing Morrells Wood Farm to the children. *"It's such a rewarding experience" he says "and I'm always surprised by how little some of the children know about the countryside. This is a great opportunity to share something unique with them, as well as show them what life on a real working farm is like."*

After lunch in farmer Derek's converted barn, with a wood burning fire providing a cosy, warm atmosphere, the children were first given a demonstration by Country Trust volunteer, Sheila Henaghan on how to make a simple, yet effective table decoration using holly, pine cones and conifer leaves. Sheila was helped by other Country Trust volunteers including Barbara Dewhurst who had spent weeks preparing baubles, tinsel, and bows for the decorations. The children then set about cutting and arranging the items they had foraged into a variety of impressive looking festive decorations which they could take home for their family and friends to enjoy.

Finally, before boarding the coach home, the children were served mulled apple juice and warm mince pies and sang carols around a huge Christmas tree along with their teachers, Farmer Derek and staff and volunteers from The Country Trust.

Class teacher, Kay Curtis said *"The children love these Country Trust visits where they can get away from their usual urban environment to the beautiful Shropshire countryside and have the opportunity to interact with nature, develop new skills and see things they wouldn't ordinarily see."* Kay often sees a change in some children's behaviour after a farm visit, *"They are often more confident and animated, talking about their trip for months, if not years, later."*

Cathy Evans, Farm Coordinator at The Country Trust says *"Farm visits like ours teach disadvantaged children from all faiths and backgrounds about farming, the Countryside and where food comes. It's even more special that during the festive season children have the opportunity to learn about farm and country life, while enjoying some traditional Christmas themed activities."*

If you would like to know more about the work of The Country Trust or become a supporter, please go to www.countrytrust.org.uk

-Ends-

Editors' notes

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Class teacher: Kay Curtis

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Famer: Derek Harper

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About The Country Trust

- Founded in 1978, The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that brings the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it, whether through disadvantage or disability. Every year we support hundreds of volunteer farmers and landowners to welcome thousands of disadvantaged children from all backgrounds and faiths onto their farms.
- The Country Trust has 3 main strands of activities:
 1. Farm Discovery - day visits to real working farms
 2. Countryside Discovery - residential visits to the countryside
 3. Food Discovery - yearlong programmes exploring every aspect of growing, cooking and even selling food
- The Country Trust focuses on working with the following:
 - Primary age children from schools with an above average percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals
 - Schools catering for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Looked After Children and Pupil Referral Units
- In 2015 The Country Trust enabled
 - 17,961 children to go on a farm or estate visit
 - 6,600 children took part in farm led assemblies and food and farming workshops
 - 860 children took part in Food Discovery Programmes
 - 883 children went on 29 Residential visits
 - 415 children with Special Educational Needs took part in Countryside Adventure days in Hampshire.
- The Country Trust currently works with schools in and around London, Essex, East Anglia, Hampshire, Birmingham and the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West, North Wales and Northumberland.

What we do

- We make it easy and safe for children to visit farms and for farmers to share their knowledge and passion.
- We bring urban and rural communities together, increasing communication, respect and understanding of the countryside as a place of possibilities but also a place on which livelihoods depend.
- We facilitate children's cultural understanding about the life and work of the British countryside through visits and talking with those who live and work there.
- We enable children to experience the wonder of the countryside:- open space, breathing space, the people who live and work there, habitats, farm animals and wildlife.
- We enable children to understand the possibilities of food, what a variety there is, why and how it grows, who grows it and where, what it tastes like, why all this matters.
- We introduce adult role models who nurture and take responsibility for crops and animals. People who often work in strong family units.
- We bring two interdependent but disconnected communities together for a stronger future. Our school community includes many urban children and a significant number of children from ethnic minorities.
- We can help schools to meet the new Ofsted common inspection framework which now includes a judgement on 'personal development, behaviour and welfare'. Ofsted states that the first-hand experiences of learning outside the classroom can help to make subjects more vivid and interesting for pupils and enhance their understanding. It can also contribute significantly to pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

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