

17th June 2013

FUTUREFARMS – THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

Its now ten years since the idea to form a community farm first took hold of ten people in the brightly lit kitchen of Hancocks Cottage, Tidpit.

These are the names of the 10 people who took the idea and made it into Futurefarms-Martin Ltd, with a mass of effort and goodwill: Nick Snelgar, Clive Bouchier, Mark Farmer, Paul Taylor, Margret Scoggings, Janet Richards, Charlotte Burghley, Suzzane Spreadbury, Mark Barnes, Liz Hapke,

Both Clive Bouchier and Liz Hapke left the committee owing to family and work demands leaving the final eight. Mark Barnes was elected Chairman and Janet Richards became the Treasurer. Both hold these offices to this day. The committee members became Directors of the new company.

We began by growing a selection of 6 trial vegetable crops on Folliotics Farmyard, Tidpit in the summer of 2003. A rough corner of Knapp Barrow Farm was kindly offered to the fledgling scheme and we cleared the land for pigs.

We won an award for the idea from Unltd – a social enterprise organisation - for £5000 (followed by a further £15000 from Unltd a year later).

With the permission and encouragement of Tony at Hancocks Farm, Tidpit we soon housed 50 poultry for meat in the open barn. Three enterprises were underway by the winter of 2004.

In May 2004 the Saturday Market was opened in the Village Hall from 9 - 12.30. It has opened on every Saturday ever since.

15 acres of land became available for rent in 2005 and all the enterprises were moved up to Drove End field.

Fortnightly meetings were held in Martin Club with astonishing progress. Directors left and others joined. Beth Blandford-Hull, Janet Richards and Nick Snelgar drew plans, produced costings and negotiated with the Village Hall committee to build a new shop within the Hall building. The Futurefarms shop and general stores was opened in 2010.

The Community farm is firmly established in the village. The shop is run by volunteers and is a great success. The scheme provides an alternative to industrial farming for those who want it. It provides a 'joint venture' for those who want one. It enables the village to become more self-reliant. It demonstrates, in a very small way, what can be done in a very small place.