



It is predicted that Wallace & Gromit's 'The Curse of the Wererabbit' will have children clamouring to get into the countryside. In this film, as the annual Giant Vegetable Competition approaches, the two loveable heroes are hired as an Anti-Pesto SWAT Team, to protect the vegetable patch from an evil force lurking behind the pumpkins. They humanely deal with the hungry rabbits, but have no idea what else awaits them as veggie-mania takes over their neighbourhood.

NWFTI is gearing up for a wave of enquiries from parents whose children want to get down on the farm, to learn more about farm animals and check out the vegetable 'patch' for themselves. Full details about such experiences, and the accommodation choices near to them, are available from tourist information centres with something to appeal to every family hungering for a taste of country life.

Farm tourism is already benefiting from a bookings boom, as parents seek to teach their children about nature and organic food and the NWFTI has many farms and tourist attractions catering for the family that wants to focus on the farm, the flock, or the foods produced.

EUROPEAN RURAL TOURISM CONFERENCE
THE 2ND EUROPEAN CONGRESS ON RURAL TOURISM
HELD AT YALTA, UKRAINE SEPTEMBER 26 - 28 2005



The North West Region stars who attended the conference – left to right Rachel Boothman, Pam Copeland, Harriet Sykes, Carole Mitson, Iona Frost Pennington with a small group of other delegates.

Five intrepid rural tourism operators travelled to Yalta, with the help of a Vocational Training Scheme grant from DEFRA, to benefit from and to contribute to the 2nd European Congress on Rural Tourism. The conference was organised by Eurogites with the assistance of the Ministry of Tourism in Crimea and under the patronage of Gunter Verheugen, Vice President of the European Commission, responsible for Enterprise and Industry. **Iona Frost Pennington, Muncaster Castle, Pamela Copeland, Bailey Mill and Harriet Sykes, Long Byres at Talkin Head** went from Cumbria and **Carole Mitson, Higher Wanless Farm and Rachel Boothman, Blakey Hall Farm near Colne** went from Lancashire.

The 2 day conference, held in English and Russian, welcomed speakers and delegates from all over Europe, 27 European states were represented. The main themes covered were sustainable development; eco tourism including green certification of tourism businesses; integrating cycling routes into a country's main infrastructure, as well as the cultural and tourism offer; the benefits of tourism to rural communities and villages and how to measure the economic value of units of tourism. There were also opportunities to network with operators from all over, academics and equivalent tourist board/development agency personnel and to meet our Crimean/Ukrainian hosts.

Occasionally the organisation was erratic but overall the trip was very worthwhile, especially the post conference tours, which included top quality accommodation (marble baths etc in a beautiful hunting lodge) and some very primitive sanitary arrangements, beautiful countryside and local produce to battery farmed quails not up to EC standards! We met some wonderful people and enjoyed some excellent hospitality including, of course, the local specialty chili and honey vodka served with pork fat!

I hope one of the outcomes will be that we in the Northwest can host a future Congress and show off what we have to the whole of Europe.

Farm Tourism Innovative projects

The Initiative's farms have diversified into tourism to help generate valuable additional income, but most are still working farms at which children can learn more about rural life. Excellent accommodation is provided at these farms, which will also serve up wonderful meals to satisfy any appetite however much sharpened by the country air and a host of once-in-a-lifetime memories.

The focus is on local produce, with innovative choices available such as Ewe's Milk Ice Cream and Lemon Drizzle Cake, which can be purchased at lively farmers markets, such as the National Farmers Market of the Year(2005), at Orton, near Penrith. Fresh food, straight from the farm, is appealing to those who want to eat healthily and teach children how food should look, taste and be cooked.

Children can also get up close to the animals by visiting North West Farm Tourism funded businesses such as Ducky's Park Farm in Flookburgh, south Cumbria, the Bowland Wild Boar Farm at Chipping (www.wildboarpark.co.uk/), Lancashire or, for more unusual animals, The Alpaca Centre, near Penrith (www.thealpacacentre.co.uk/). A host of equestrian-focused farm tourism experiences can be explored, including the Working Dales Pony Centre near Gilsland in North Cumbria (www.daleslogger.com/) and Rookin House at Troutbeck near Penrith (www.rookinhouse.com/)

Milking galleries from which children can watch the cows being milked are on offer at Blaze Farm in Wildboarclough in Cheshire (www.blazefarm.com/) and at Low Sizergh Barn, near Kendal (www.lowsizerghbarn.co.uk/), Cumbria. A two-mile long educational farm trail is a fantastic part of the experience on offer at Low Sizergh Barn, this featuring organic chickens, ancient hedgerow, organic cows, limestone walls and other aspects of life on the organic farm. It is the cheese counter at Low Sizergh Barn that they will be hard pushed to leave. The multi award winning retailer has just become the National Winner of the Specialist Independent Category of the 2005 Retail Cheese Awards from Dairy Crest & The Grocer Magazine a title that currently runs alongside that of UK Farm Retailer of the Year.

HINT If you go to the Farm Tourism Initiatives website www.farmtourism-matters.org and look for WHATS NEWS > RECENT UPDATES you will find an electronic version of this newsletter. From this you can simply click through to the web sites given above.

Wigwams are spreading south

Timber Wigwams are an interesting well developed product in Scotland www.wigwamholidays.com/ with their own network. Two Wigwams have appeared at Wild Rose Park, Ormside near Appleby in Cumbria www.wildrose.co.uk/ with support from the North West Farm Tourism Initiative.



The site owner David Stephenson explained that whilst they have a large static caravan site on their holding they have wanted to diversify their tourism product to offer an outdoor camping experience in a secluded valley. The two Wigwams are a trial to assess demand before acquiring more. So far results have been encouraging with other site users asking about them and take up of the accommodation has been brisk.

Camping Barn

Mrs Sutcliffe at Walton on Hadrian's Wall Trail has responded to visitors passing her door and asking about local accommodation by creating a six bed camping barn out of byres on her farm. Latterly the byres were used as dog kennels and have been converted to provide a shower room, kitchen, bunkroom and sitting room for up to six walkers.



Scott Allsop said this about the farm on his web blog about his walk along the Hadrian's Wall Trail: "...where we left our bags in the care of the lovely Sutcliffe family at their farmhouse "Sandysike" B&B. Successfully de-bagged, we thus set off to walk back from where we had come that morning - a great experience to do a few miles without carrying an extra 3 stone in weight! The weather was again glorious - perfect for balancing out the tan as, having only walked East to West thus far, we were looking a little stripey between left and right."

Luxury in a Farm 2006

New for 2006 - Cumbria Tourist Board and The North West Farm Tourism Initiative are undertaking one of the most exciting development projects for farm tourism in Cumbria.

'Luxury in a Farm' celebrates excellence and quality, showcasing the best farm-based accommodation throughout Cumbria. In line with the new 2006 VisitBritain quality assurance grading scheme, all members of 'Luxury in a Farm' must hold a minimum 4 star national quality assurance grading.

Visitors can select from a wide variety of individually styled Lakeland farm cottages, cleverly converted granaries and coach houses, each packed with an eclectic mix of contemporary and traditional architectural features. Both serviced and self-catering accommodation operators based on a working farm will be working together to offer an indulgent collection of breathtaking countryside scenery, distinctive interior design and cosy evenings by an open fire for all those looking for a romantic break in rural Cumbria.



All members of the 'Luxury in a Farm' campaign will actively promote the use of local and regional food and drink, local materials and quality fittings in their accommodation and where appropriate introduce additional local furnishings.

Luxury in a Farm will be officially launched on Valentine's Day, promoting Cumbria – The Lake District as the ultimate romantic break destination all year round.

Love – Luxury in a Farm!

For further information, please contact:

Jonathan Perkins - Cumbria Tourist Board

Telephone: 015394 40430

Email: jperkins@gocumbria.org



The Tourism and Conservation Partnership

A unique and thriving non-profit making organisation that works with tourism businesses in Cumbria to raise funds, through simple and voluntary visitor 'pay back' schemes, for vital conservation projects within the county.



Since it was established in 1993, it has raised over £868,000 and supported 190 conservation projects, maintaining and enhancing the landscape.

It is a very successful approach for directing a little of the visitors money towards protecting the landscapes and places they come to enjoy. The scheme can come in many shapes and sizes, from optional supplements added on the cost of accommodation and services, to a request for donations made through collection boxes. These schemes can make both the tourist and the participating business feel good about themselves. Not only are they participating out of their own free will, they are also producing real and visible improvements to the local environment.

The Partnership offers government subsidised training and consultancy for tourism businesses, helping you generate cost savings and make environmental improvements.

For further information please call on 015394 34630 or visit www.lakespartnership.org.uk.

Picture shows mountain footpaths being reset through funding from the partnership.



50 Fabulous Walks

England's Northwest - the perfect place to walk

Does England's Northwest have all the best walks?

It's a strong contender. Footpaths and organised trails criss-cross the country from the Solway Firth to Cheshire, giving you more freedom than ever to explore and enjoy the region's gloriously varied landscape. We have produced a guide where you'll find 50 of the area's finest walks, both rural and urban. Fifty, because it's ITV's 50th birthday this year.

Go to this website to order your guide and enter a competition to stay for a weekend at Inn at Whitewell in Bowland.

www.visitenglandnorthwest.com/walking

Winter Training Events



“ The second Cumbrian Business Development Day was held in mid November in the Crooklands, Kendal area. Participants had a great time at the Fire Fighters Experience, should we form a Farm Tourism Fire Fighters Brigade, www.firefighterexperience.com, Wath Sutton fishing lake and Holmescales Activity Centre www.holmescales.com”

As the days shorten the opportunity arises to relax a bit, get out the paint brush for a spot of decorating and make improvement to your facilities or you could join one of our training events.

This is a chance to meet other farm tourism operators, informally improve your skills and see another locality. A number of Business Development Days are planned over the winter and one has already been held in Cheshire on ICT skills and a second in the Hadrian's Wall area of north Cumbria. Here operators looked at Diane Horn's B&B and cheese making business, Low Luckens organic Farm was visited and Craighurn B&B and country restaurant.

Many made the comment that the best part of the days was not just about learning something new but meeting other farm tourism operators and exchanging ideas.

Other Days are planned – to receive information go to www.farmtourism-matters.org and JOIN the email list to receive an email of details when an event is being held. Project officers will also mail out details to farm tourism clients in the locality of an event.

One day county conferences are planned for the New Year on specific topics, Cumbria - Equine Tourism, Cheshire - ICT developments and Lancashire - Farm Shops. Details will be posted nearer the time.

VAT BILLS CUT BY 35%

Businesses which dread their regular VAT return will be interested to know that by using the VAT Flat Rate Scheme they could both simplify the way that they complete their VAT returns and save money in the process. Some bed and breakfast businesses that have joined the scheme are already benefiting from a 35% reduction in their quarterly VAT bill.

Under the scheme, instead of calculating output VAT and input VAT in the usual way, a business simply works out its turnover for the period, and then pays a percentage of this over to Customs as its VAT bill. The percentage that most bed and breakfasts and hotels use is 9.5%, or 8.5% in their first year as a VAT registered business.

Businesses can still claim the input VAT back on goods costing over £2,000 that will be used on an ongoing basis by the business – such as a van or a large piece of equipment.

The scheme is targeted exclusively at smaller businesses – and only those with sales after VAT of less than £150,000 are able to sign up.

For more information on how your business can benefit from the Flat Rate Scheme contact Faye Armstrong at Dodd & Co Chartered Accountants on 01228 530913 or email

faye@doddaccountants.co.uk

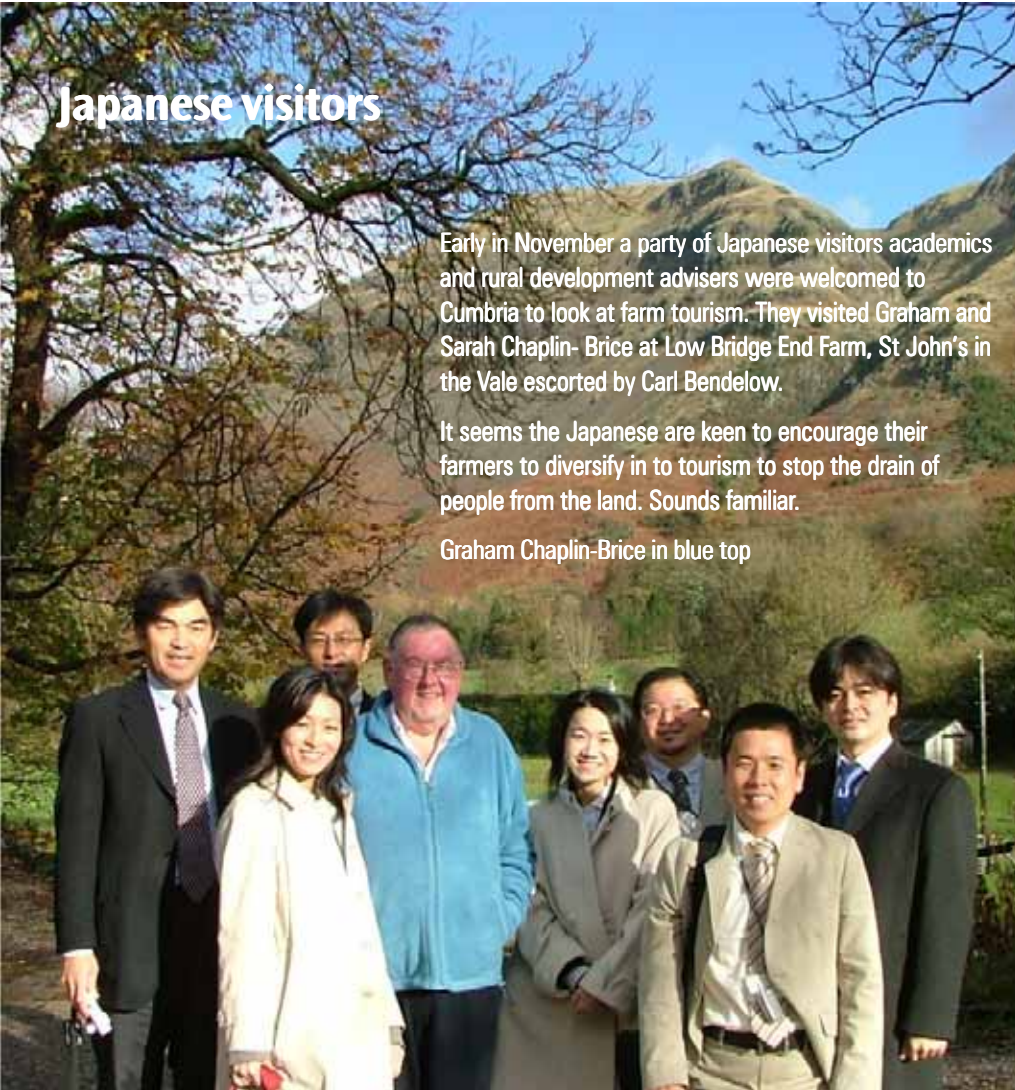
Look also at www.hmrc.gov.uk/

Japanese visitors

Early in November a party of Japanese visitors academics and rural development advisers were welcomed to Cumbria to look at farm tourism. They visited Graham and Sarah Chaplin- Brice at Low Bridge End Farm, St John's in the Vale escorted by Carl Bendelow.

It seems the Japanese are keen to encourage their farmers to diversify in to tourism to stop the drain of people from the land. Sounds familiar.

Graham Chaplin-Brice in blue top



Letter

Crooklands

Milnthorpe

12th October 2005

Dear Mr Bendelow

My family and I (including 4 grand-children) spent a few days last August in a tipi in the Langdale Valley. The tipi, which slept 6 comfortably, was excellent and everything was provided – gas cooker, utensils, etc., cool box, lamp (which gave enough light to read and the children to play card games) a table and picnic chairs and a barbecue (including charcoal).

There was ample space for the children to ride their bikes and play outside without being restricted. The toilets and showers were close by and were clean and adequate.

The location was peaceful, but within easy walking distance of Chapel Stile where there is a shop, café and 'Wainwrights' for a hearty bar snack.

We took the opportunity to walk part of the Cumbria Way, which was an added bonus.

I understand that the North West Farm Tourism Initiative was involved with this project, well done.

Yours faithfully

Anne Galbraith



The children enjoying their BBQ



The Tipis

Farm Heritage Centres

Required!!

The North West Farm Tourism Initiative and Lancashire County Council Museum Services are currently looking for farms, with attractions, to establish farm heritage centres.

The Museum Service has a large stock of farming artefacts which it has built up over the last 30 years, and would be prepared to enter into loan arrangements with suitable farms in setting up Farm Heritage/Rural Museums/Education Centres. The stock includes: tractors, carts, ploughs, threshing machines, butter and cheese making equipment, milk churns etc.

The farms must be located in Lancashire and already have a visitor attraction such as: farm shop, farm attraction, farm craft and art centres etc.

The Museum Service has the expertise to assist in the development of the centres, by designing lay out and interpretation.

For further information contact: John Dickinson
01942 493415



initiative



Welcome to ...courses in Cumbria

The courses are applicable to all businesses whether you have none, one or fifty plus employees. Corporate status is available to those businesses which put 50% or more of their staff through any of the Welcome to Excellence courses – so for a small business this could just mean one of you! Once you have corporate status you can use the logo on your stationery/advertising etc as a public statement about your commitment to excellence in customer service.

Autumn Dates/Winter Dates:

Welcome Host	24 th November	South Lakes	£55
Welcome Line	29 th November	Barrow	£65
Welcome All	30 th November	South Lakes	£65
Welcome Host	25 th January 06	Barrow in Furness	£55
Welcome Host	3 rd February	Carlisle	£55
Welcome Management	9 th February	Keswick	£75

Further dates in March, April and May across the county.

If you would like further information about any of the courses, please contact Pauline Crossley on 015394 40446 or email on pcrossley@gocumbria.org.

KNOW YOUR REGIONAL TOURIST BOARD

There has been much change over the past year and we now have five regional tourist boards in the North West. Look at the websites for each and subscribe to any listing to receive updates/news on developments.

Cumbria Tourist Board www.golakes.co.uk

Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board www.lancshiretourism.com

Cheshire and Warrington Tourist Board www.visitcheshire.com

Liverpool and Merseyside Tourist Board www.visitliverpool.com

Manchester www.visitmanchester.com

You can find links to all regional tourist boards at www.visitnorthwest.com

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR ACCOMMODATION

Agreement of Common Standards - say goodbye to the confusion of keys, roses, leeks, thistles, daffodils and frogs. VisitBritain, VisitScotland, Wales Tourist Board, AA and RAC have engineered common standards across all the British accommodation grading systems and are set to start rolling them out from 2005-2006.

Also from 1 January 2006, VisitBritain will market only quality-assured accommodation.

More information is available from:

www.tourismtrade.org.uk/QualityStandards/

HELP

A useful guide from the English Tourism Council is a booklet setting out guests legal rights with respect to accommodation. It covers topics such as the grading scheme, cancellation charges, insurance, false statements under the Trade Descriptions Act, service charges, food and cleanliness, personal safety, luggage, discrimination – a good read.

The guide can be ordered FOC from the English Tourism Council on 020 8563 3000, ETC publication 8002/03/02.



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Christmas Tidings



A Happy Christmas to you all and we look forward to a prosperous New Year.

Farm tourism email updates.

Visit our website, www.farmtourism-matters.org, and JOIN the email list to receive regular snippets of information on farm and tourism developments

