

FARMERS SAVED FROM EVICTION

By Chief Reporter Helen Berwick



School trying their hand at some cookery as part of activities are Dylan Klein and Amy Williams.
Picture by: Dave Wainwright

An 11th hour change of heart has saved a struggling town farming family from eviction.

The Hollins family from Fordhall Farm were due to be thrown off the 140-acre site yesterday, Thursday. But brother and sister team Charlotte and Ben have now been given an 18-month reprieve to prove their business acumen to trustees.

They also hope to eventually buy the farm with the help of a Defra grant once they get some security.

Charlotte told the Advertiser: "We had a last minute meeting yesterday with the agent and landlord and instead of throwing us out, they offered us an 18-month tenancy to prove ourselves!

"We've got to get a business plan together, tidy the farm up and look at re-stocking it.

"The plan by the end of the 18 months is to show that we can run the farm and to secure enough money to buy it from the trust for £500,000, though we don't really know what the land will fetch by that time.

"The trustees said they didn't know what their intentions were for the land and they were

putting off their decision for 18 months."

The tenancy has yet to be signed but is expected to be in Ben and Charlotte's names while their father, 88-year-old former pioneer Arthur, will take things a bit easier.

The Hollins family already have some livestock on the farm but intend to re-stock with beef, lamb and pork and sell it on as free range, rather than organic.

Charlotte added: "They originally offered us a 12-month tenancy but realised that wasn't long enough to prove anything, so they extended it.

"We're now looking for more local suppliers, but we can't sell anything on until we've had a health and safety check."

Meanwhile, the ambitious

Fordhall project - which aims to turn the farm into a tourist attraction - is on the backburner until the business is running as a farm.

Charlotte, who is a member of the Taste of the Town Company, said she was also considering setting up a stall at the summer festival to boost their profile.

She added: "We still intend to go through with the Fordhall Project but we just don't have the time at the moment.

"It will be Ben and I doing most of the work. We think dad deserves a rest after all the years he has put in on the farm. It's our turn now."

Agent for the trustees Philip Godsal was unavailable for comment as the Advertiser went to print.

Win £100 Easter egg

Chocoholics have the chance to win a giant Easter egg worth around £100 in an annual prize draw hosted by the town's Rotary Club.

Tickets for the giant Easter egg draw will be on sale in Safeway next Friday, and Saturday, April 2 and 3, and the draw will be on Saturday, April 10.

The super-sized egg will be first prize and runners-up will receive normal sized eggs.

Tickets cost 20p with all proceeds going to the club's charity fund, which supports good causes locally, nationally and internationally.

Club spokesman Frank Fuller said: "Last year we raised more than £800 and we hope to beat that."

not too late

man who has er is giving people in a special walk in charity close to her

Brend Bin, had a the article in last ents to remind people to take part Sunday.

to the article has market on Wednesday in donations, ar a lot of my customer was wrong with paper I was incurring money."

Janet said she had already raised well over £1,000 for Breakthrough Breast Cancer - a charity dedicated to fighting and researching the disease.

More than 40 walkers are also set to take part in the special walk which will start at 10am at the Wharf Tavern, at Goldstone, this Sunday.

People can choose to walk either a five mile or nine mile route around the Cheswaine, Knighton and Ashington area to raise money for the worth while charity.

Janet, was diagnosed with breast cancer last May and underwent surgery as well as a course of radiotherapy treatment.

She said taking part in the walk was her way of helping other cancer sufferers.

Spring forward

We're all set to lose an hour this weekend as the clocks spring forward signalling the start of British summer time.

Don't forget to put your clocks forward on Saturday night so you wake up at the right time on Sunday!



Scott

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