



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

# Farm Connection

by  
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## **2017 HIGHLIGHTS AT STRATFORD ECOLOGICAL CENTER**

Having just returned from a wedding trip to my native England, in time to celebrate Christmas in Ohio, I thought it would be a fun way to end the year by sharing a few highlights from our trip. Then continue with a recap of my favorite events during the past year at Stratford Ecological Center on Liberty Road.

Fortunately, the rain mostly held off in the UK, but Mother Nature threw in some snow days, bone chilling winds, and authentic fog on our final day's drive to Manchester airport, over the Pennine Hills known as the backbone of England. In the Cotswolds our sheep farming friends have enlarged their herd to 900 ewes, which necessitated finding more pasture. Thanks to word of mouth, offers to barter acreage for free mowing flowed in from surrounding country houses. We saw every inch from the back of a pick-up during a bumpy two-hour tour!

In the north of England, close to George Washington's ancestral home at Washington Old Hall in County Durham, we had tea at Wynyard Hall. Once owned by the 9<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Londonderry, and sold in 1987, it is now a hotel. It was my first visit inside the beautiful parkland and "Downton Abbey-like" home. We were seated in the paneled library with tall windows looking out on the terrace, and treated to "Gentleman's" Afternoon Tea to celebrate our Wedding Anniversary. This relatively new phenomena included more savories than sweets, and a glass of Glenfiddich. The venison and quail scotch eggs, pork pie, salmon sandwiches and trifle were delicious.

Back at Stratford, the working farm, extensive nature Preserve, and woods is a pleasure anytime of the year. We are so fortunate to have such an interesting place to visit. This year fifteen thousand children and adults came to enjoy tours, farm camp, education programs, events, volunteer, and more.

Looking back reminds me that cabin fever sets in early in Ohio, and our Maple Sugar tours to the Sugar Shack and March Breakfast were once again very popular. The first Sheep Shearing Day took place on Sunday, May 7 and people filled the "dry" parking spaces by 11 am. and overflowed into the North Pasture. The mobile sheep shearing facility and numerous hands-on wool related crafts for kids made for an awesome day.

For the first time, archery was taught at summer farm camp. It proved very popular. I took a turn and still recall the thrill of strength upon releasing the arrow. Our annual fundraiser "Enchanted Evening" took place outside of Stratford at the Columbus Zoo. It was a brilliant evening at the Africa Event Center with the giraffes looking on in the setting sun.

The blossoming trees and bushes were laden again, thanks to our humming honey bee program. The livestock thrived on the plentiful grass due to the excessive rain fall. Haymaking did not go so well, but a fine spell in September saved our bacon. We said an emotional goodbye to dairy cow Sugar and beef cow Sweet Bessie who's offspring fortunately remain on the farm.

Great strides have been made in the cemetery to clear brush and re-erect the stones. So much history of the area has come to light as the work progressed. The number and enthusiasm of volunteers continues to increase, ensuring Stratford remains a vibrant entity.

It has been a pleasure sharing these highlights. We wish you a Happy New Year and encourage you to visit us and form memories for yourself this coming year.

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