

Baroness Mallalieu

Speaker notes/ Clarissa Dickson Wright Award

Countryside Alliance Awards

Cholmondeley Room

Wednesday 27th April 2016

12.30-14.30

My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honour to introduce the third annual Award given in the name of our friend, Clarissa Dickson Wright, who we lost two years ago. A longstanding judge in these Awards, she was a passionate defender of our farmers and producers, and she had given her blessing to this Award in her name before she died.

Together with her great friends Sally Merison, Tim Bonner and the inaugural winner of her Award, Peter Gott of Sillfield Farm in Cumbria, we have chosen this year's winner from amongst the finalists in the Awards.

We have been mindful of what mattered most to Clarissa, namely high animal welfare standards, the ability to connect consumers with their food and, crucially, the ability to stand up for farming and conservation.

The winner of her award certainly meets these exacting requirements and more.

Padstow Farm Shop is a family run farm just outside the tourist hotspot of Padstow in Cornwall. Farmer Charlie Watson Smyth and his family have an entrepreneurial flair and a down to earth attitude that we feel sure chimes with what Clarissa would have appreciated.

Originally, a vegetable box delivery scheme to sell direct from the farm was thought up by Charlie's son. In high summer, as you can imagine, it was nigh-on impossible to get the veg boxes delivered because of tourist tailbacks, so in 2006 part of the farm was converted to include a shop, enabling locals and tourists to come straight to them. The range then increased to include the farm's meat and went from there.

95% + of the produce on sale is from Cornwall. The family supports lots of local producers & also takes in excess produce from allotment holders.

All the signs in the shop specify the origin of products and the family actively promotes home-produced beef, lamb & pork. Charlie

says they are very specific about local produce, believing that “Cornish” is a brand in itself.

Members of staff know all suppliers and have been to visit many of them. They are all fiercely loyal to the Cornish brand and customers are very complimentary about their helpfulness, knowledge & attitude.

Sausages, burgers, kebabs and much more are all made on site with Padstow beef, pork & lamb available in any type of cut that a customer may require. Three full time & one part time butcher run the busy butchery counter at the shop, one of whom has been apprenticed since school. Charlie’s wife Jane is a member of Ladies in Beef, the excellent organisation behind Great British Beef Week, currently taking place. Although to everyone here, and certainly to Clarissa, every week was British Beef Week!

Much of the land is in Countryside Stewardship so no sprays or fertilisers are used. Also, field margins are left uncultivated, creating a better habitat for rare species of plant & endangered wildlife such as the corn bunting, barn owl, and hare. Several permissive footpaths are open to the public to

show them how their money is spent & enjoy the benefits of that.

In 2008 outdoor pigs were introduced to the farm. The Padstow pigs are fed on brewer's grain, a waste product from The Padstow Brewing Company, and their beer in turn is used with the pork to make pork & ale sausages, so things go full circle!

This is the only shop in the country that makes pasta from home grown durum wheat – marketed as Padstow Pasta...Charlie did extensive research and trips to Italy to learn how this could work for Padstow. With tourism so much a part of the economy there is always an eye on “what next” to push the farm forward. Top quality bread is also made from the wheat.

The family is working on a project with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust to reintroduce grey partridge to Cornwall. Funding has been secured to employ a part-time gamekeeper & Padstow will lead The Cornwall Grey Partridge Project.

One of the butchers is a very enthusiastic bird watcher & is always pleased to engage with customers on anything ornithological (he will

also become a recorder of bird movement when the grey partridge project begins.)

Padstow Farm Shop also supports The Cornwall Red Squirrel Project, which would have made Clarissa extremely happy!

Both local primary schools visit at least twice a year (combined with a farm visit) to make pasta & sausages, which they can take home with them. Sometimes the farm will “lend” the schools lambs to feed for a week. Matthew, one of Charlie’s sons, has helped plant crops in the school garden for the children & explains how they grow and are processed.

Farmer Charlie is an immensely likeable character whose attitude is one of which Clarissa would approve. She would enjoy hearing about this family enterprise working hard on the farm, growing and developing new ideas, supporting and employing local people while also keeping an eye on conservation and being true custodians of this beautiful part of the world.

Congratulations to Charlie and Jane Watson Smyth, deserving winners of the

Clarissa Dickson Wright Award. Please come and receive your special claret plaque, we hope it will be displayed with pride at Padstow Farm Shop!