



FARMING IN THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS: CASE STUDY SERIES



Shropshire Hills
National Landscape

Bodbury Farm A DIY organic journey in pasture-reared pork.



INTRODUCTION

Bodbury Farm is the home to Sarah and Byron Odell and their five children. In only two years, Bodbury has started strong and are doing amazing things for their land, animals, customers and in their business model. The Odell's specialise in outdoor, pasture reared pigs in a rotational grazing set-up. They are newly certified organic with the Soil Association. Sarah runs the food business and Byron manages the on-farm operations.

BACKGROUND

Sarah and Byron knew they wanted to get into farming and saved for years to buy their 30 acres of land. They've since been transforming the space into hedged paddocks for their pigs, plus orchard, woodlands, pools and wetlands for biodiversity.

They started out allowing the pigs to graze off the existing rye grass that had been used for sheep production over many years. Then they re-seeded with herbal leys to implement a rotational grazing model. **"We converted the land fully to organic last November. So now anything born from November onwards will have the Soil Association stamp."**

They have also been learning from the 'Impeckable Chicken' model at Planton Farm to launch an outdoor dual purpose chicken flock for eggs and meat in an environment that mirrors how wild fowl live. To keep their feed as local and circular as possible the pigs and chickens are fed from organic grain cleanings from a nearby wheat producer, which benefits everyone involved and finds a use for what is otherwise a waste product of flour production.

DIY PIGS

Byron's dedication to developing his stockmanship skills has been an important part of the farm's success. The journey has not always been a straightforward one, though, since finding mentorship and specific training for outdoor reared-pigs was hard to find.

"We got all the books, watched all the YouTube clips, all the Joel Salatin info on how you can mob graze pigs... we did a River Cottage course.... just, none of it was any help... But we ended up learning from mistakes in the first year and are happy with the model we have developed"

Learning on the job has shaped how Sarah and Byron approach their operation and they are happy to share their experience with others who are interested in outdoor pork production and rotational grazing systems.

REGEN AT A GLANCE

"There was no life in the soil, no worms, no mole hills, nothing. And, now where the pigs have been, it's full of worms. In such a short time, it's already making some improvements to the soil... we get stacks of wildflowers."

Sarah Odell

BODBURY ORGANIC FARM

BODBURY FARM

Organic, pasture-reared pork
from the Shropshire Hills National
Landscape.

Bodbury Farm, Wheathill,
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DIRECT SALES: FOCUSED ON LOCAL

Sarah and Byron take a diverse approach to sales. Bodbury pork is available for purchase online through DHL overnight delivery or local collection. The meat is also sold at Myriad Organics in Ludlow, with demand for their sulfite-free frozen sausages regularly outstripping supply. "They're just the healthiest they can be - No additives."

Their model also includes 'Salt Pig' their pop up farm trailer selling roast pork and farm produce at Ludlow market every Saturday, which they describe as the 'bread and butter' of their business. It's a great way to reach people and share the message about high-welfare and high quality pork.

The Odells are also in the process of converting a shipping container into a prep kitchen. "I would really like to do a nitrate free bacon and just cure with sugar and salt, because that's just how we want to eat as a family. So, I'd like to be able to offer that."



FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Bodbury has received funding from the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme (FiPL), as well as LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) and the Trees Outside Woodlands project with Shropshire Council.

"FiPL helped us set up a 24 paddock grazing system with double stock fencing, and we've planted hedgerows around every grazing cell. It has also helped us set up masses of habitat creation because it was a bare site with no biodiversity when we took it on" -

Sarah

Bodbury Farm has benefited from this funding to create and enhance habitats, including wetland, woodland, orchard and silvopasture. New hedgerows are connecting woodland and existing hedgerows and help to reduce soil erosion and surface runoff, and provide wind breaks across the farm. The new boundaries protect areas of rough pasture from stock leaving it undisturbed for wildlife. A late summer cut of hay is taken which is helping to increase species diversity in the meadows, seeing the return of cuckoo flower, orchids, legumes and yarrow. The hay is stored in a new barn (part funded by FiPL), which also provides undercover space for visiting groups.

"We've put in a 90 tree orchard, two extra pieces of woodland, one along the stream and one on a steep bit of the hill. We've planted woodlands and a wood pasture that we keep the weaners in and created four big ponds."

Sarah received CEVAS training (the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme) and she and Byron are eager to engage with students to showcase their approach to farming and food.

A NATURAL SYSTEM

"It's as close to the a natural way of being as possible". The health and wellbeing of the animals is central at Bodbury. The British Middle Whites are crossed with a Duroc boar for extra vigour. While the boar is kept with a group of dry sows, the gilts and piglets live in multi-generational family groups.

"They're in groups where you have a grandmother and aunties. It's lovely because we've never had to bottle feed. The pigs foster - sometimes you have one sow and she's feeding all the piglets, but it's lovely that they're just in these groups that mimics nature."

The pigs are slower growing because they are reared outdoors, but the quality of forage available to the animals gives the meat a dark colour and rich flavour. Eating organic is important to Sarah and her family and this is what they want to offer their customers through their farm business.

