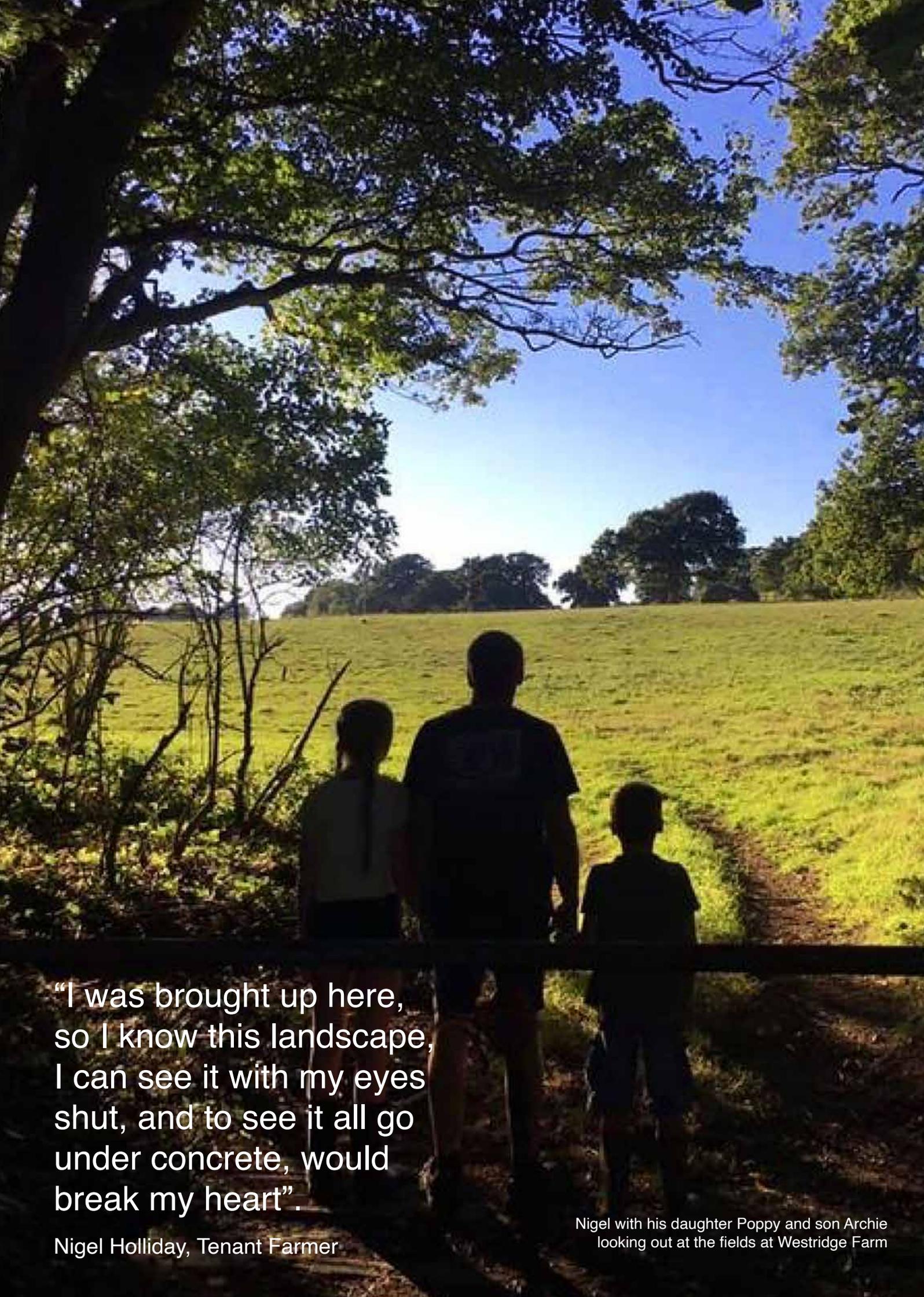




Westridge Farmland Community Initiative (WFCI)

**Safeguarding the future of Westridge Farmland
from development, for the benefit of the community**



“I was brought up here,
so I know this landscape,
I can see it with my eyes
shut, and to see it all go
under concrete, would
break my heart”.

Nigel Holliday, Tenant Farmer

Nigel with his daughter Poppy and son Archie
looking out at the fields at Westridge Farm

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Our inspiration and aims

The Westridge Farmland Community Initiative aims to safeguard the future of Westridge farmland for the benefit of the community.

We have been inspired by the Hollins family of Fordhall Farm (www.fordhallfarm.com) in Shropshire. As tenant farmers they faced the prospect of being forced out of their farm due to development. In 2006 the community saved the farm from development to become England's first community-owned farm. With the support of the charity Plunkett Foundation (www.plunkett.co.uk) community-owned farms have successfully been achieved in communities all over the UK.

Fordhall Farm is owned by the 'Fordhall Community Land Initiative' (FCLI). The FCLI rents the farmhouse and land to the tenant farmer. The FCLI uses the same land to benefit the community through the provision of community events, educational visits etc.

The community become members by purchasing £50 non-profit making lifelong shares. With over 8,000 shareholders they raised the funds to purchase the farm and secure it's future away from development.

We believe we can achieve the same for Westridge Farm. Safeguarding Westridge Farmland for the future, for the benefit of local food, the environment and the community. As a community-business the primary trading purpose will be to provide benefits for the community. Any profits are primarily reinvested back into the business or into the local community.

The Westridge Farmland Community Initiative (WFCI) have successfully gained fully-funded support from the Plunkett Foundation. A steering group with members of the community has been formed to take the community owned farm forward. With the support of a Plunkett Advisor the WFCI will harness their community-business expertise. Planning and building a business, with additional provisions at Westridge Farm, to benefit the whole community.

Our initial aims:

- Safeguard the future of Westridge Farmland away from development.
- Secure the home and livelihood of the current tenant farmers, the WFCI would rent Westridge Farm to the Holliday family.
- Farm produce to be sold to the community through farm gate sales.
- Educational farm visits.
- Community events and activities.



Three generations of the Holliday family at Westridge Farm
Archie age 9, Nigel age 47 and Bernard age 78

The key benefits of community-owned farmland

- Will support the principles of the Isle of Wight **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve** status. Community-owned farmland allows people and the natural environment to coexist harmoniously.
- Will enable **locally sourced farm produce**. Within the hospitality industry demand has increased for local food.
- Will give the community, including those within deprived areas access to **farm produce** that is fresh and nutritious. Reducing food miles makes it more **environmentally sustainable**.
- The natural environment of farmland will **benefit the wellbeing** of the community, giving them access to a rural lifestyle. Studies show that being in nature **improves mental health**.
- The Isle of Wight is a **tourist destination**, with Ryde being the gateway for tourism. Visitors are attracted to the island for the **rural environment**.
- Will assist with **eco-tourism**, with visitors able to enjoy the benefits of the farm. The natural beauty of the Island is largely sustained by **rural communities** and the **rural economy**.



About Westridge Farm

Westridge Farm is located in Ryde, Isle of Wight and is 1 of 10 dairy farms left on the Island.

Farming has been recorded in the Westridge Farm area at least as far back as the 13th century and the Domesday Book. There was once hundreds of farms on the Island. In one 20 year period the island lost over 80% of its dairy farms, now just 10 remain on the Island.

All too often the land has been lost forever as agricultural or wildlife resource. In living memory there were once 11 farms within a mile of Westridge Farm, now there is just Westridge Farm remaining.

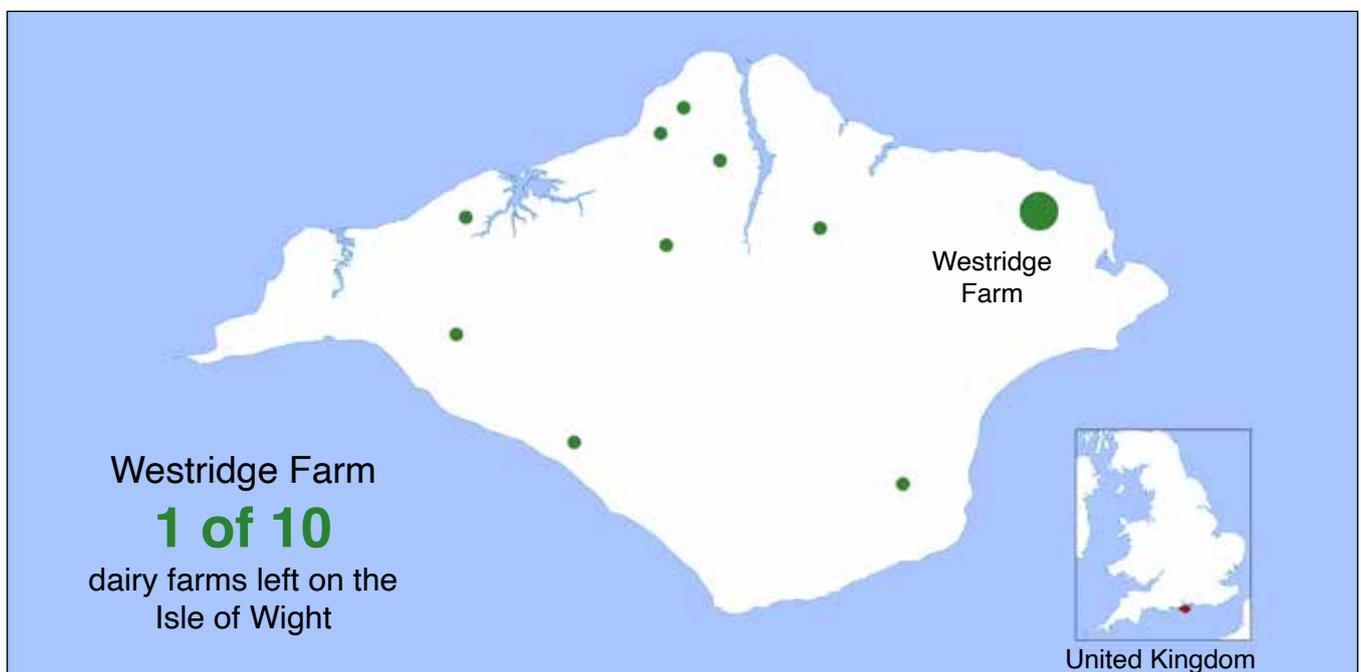
Westridge farmland has been put to many agricultural uses over the generations and centuries including provisions of timber, sheep, pigs, dairy and orchards.

The ancient hedgerows, pastures and environment are home to and provide for many endangered species, some of which are internationally red listed such as starlings, curlew, linnet, cuckoo, woodcock, yellow wagtail, hazel dormouse and the barbastelle bat.

Westridge farmland is well placed, located in a rural area, between the two urban communities of Ryde and Nettlestone/Seaview, with Ryde being the largest conurbation on the Isle of Wight. The parish boundary of Seaview & Nettlestone runs directly through the farm. The farm is easily accessible and within walking distance for residents and has good public transport links. Westridge Farm is the only dairy farm in the East Wight, with the next closest dairy farm approximately 6 miles away.

Planning application!

Westridge Farm is at risk of development. In July 2020 developers, Westridge Village Ltd submitted a planning application to the Isle of Wight Council to build 475 properties West Acre Park. The landowner Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd wants to sell once planning permission has been granted. It is more favourable for the landowner to sell the land for development rather than as agricultural land, as the land value will increase substantially. The IW Council has not made a decision on this application, the next planning meeting is 27/07/21. Without planning permission the tenants have the legal right to farm the land at Westridge Farm for the next 2 generations under their AHA Tenancy.



Community engagement

Over **4,600** signed petition to save Westridge Farm
www.change.org/savewestridgefarm

Over **1,300** active Facebook followers
www.facebook.com/savewestridgefarm

Over **700** completed survey, over **98%**
in support of Westridge Community-Owned Farmland

Over **400** objections submitted to Isle of Wight
Council for planning application 20/01061/FUL
(475 properties West Acre Park)



The tenant farmers

The Holliday family have been the tenant farmers at Westridge Farm for over 54 years.

In 1966 Archibald Holliday and his wife Ruby, with their two children Bernard and Michael, relocated to Westridge Farm. They brought with them their dairy herd of Holstein Friesian cows from Mill Farm in Liss, Hampshire. Archibald, Bernard and Michael were all named on the AHA Tenancy Agreement on 11th October 1966.

An AHA tenancy has a lifetime security of tenure with statutory succession rights, on death or retirement, the tenant's family can work the holding for 3 generations.

Bernard was named on the tenancy in 1966 as the 1st generation, it can pass down to his son Nigel as the 2nd generation, then Nigel's children as the 3rd generation.

Westridge Farm was owned by the Hutt family until the late 80's when they put the farm up for sale.

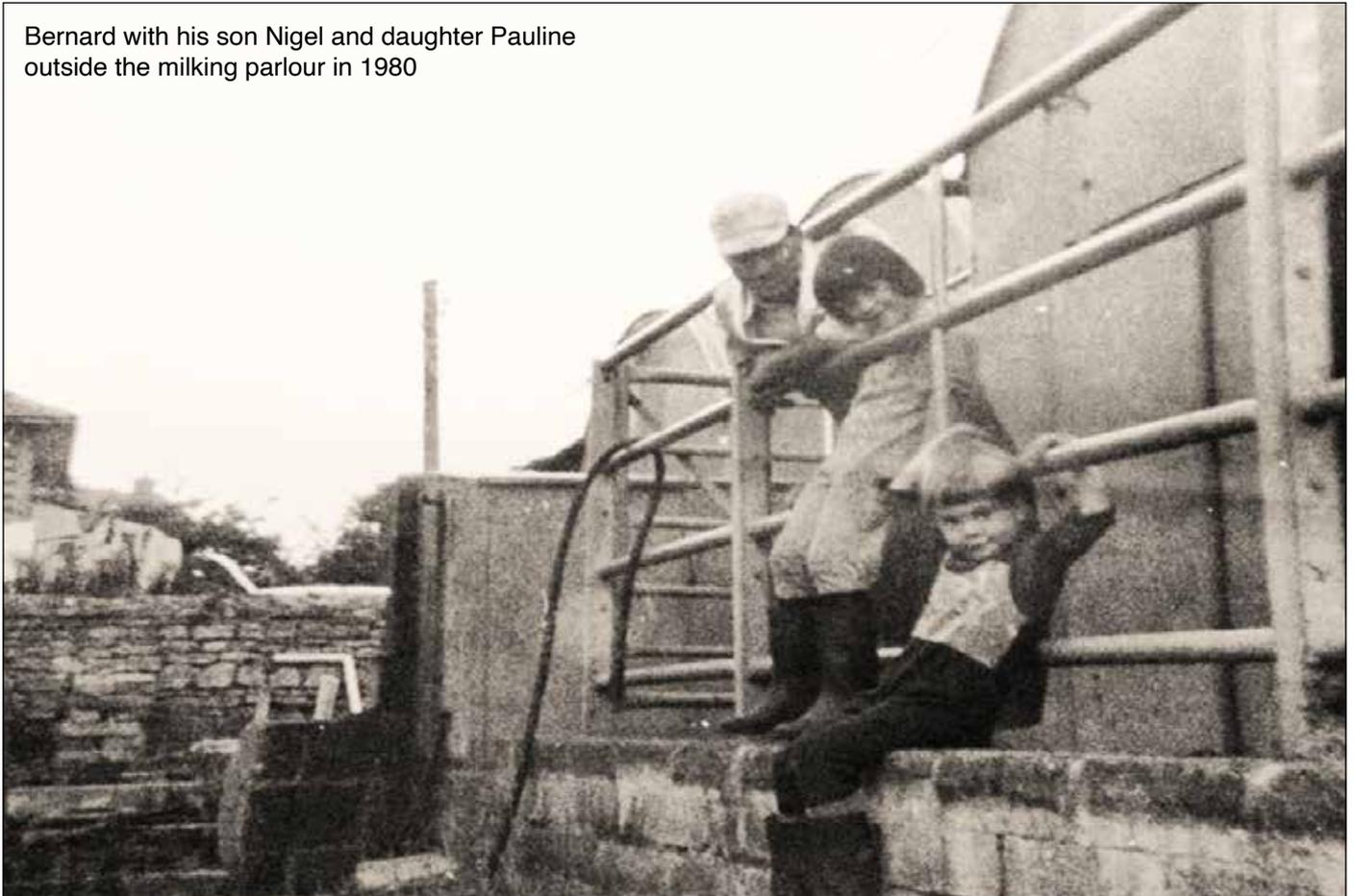
The Holliday family had hoped to buy Westridge Farm but it was sold to the Ball family, with the Holliday family remaining as tenants under their AHA tenancy.

Westridge Farm has always been a big part of the Ryde community, until the late 1970's Westridge Farm unpasteurised bottled milk and farm eggs were delivered to the local residents of Ryde and supplying the local holiday camps of Puckpool and St. Clare. Many local residents still remember the Holliday family milk round.

Bernard and son Nigel farm approximately 120 acres between Ryde, Nettlestone and Seaview. They have a herd of over 150 head of cattle, consisting of young stock, 1 Hereford Bull and 70 Holstein Friesian dairy cows.

They run a viable dairy farm producing over 400,000 litres of milk every year. They also have a small flock of chickens producing eggs for the nearby residents.

Bernard with his son Nigel and daughter Pauline outside the milking parlour in 1980



What the community says

Response to the online survey asking “Do you think Westridge Farm should be saved from development and become a community-owned farm?”

“We need the farmland, as we’ve already lost so many on the Island over the past decades.”

“Should be a farm, especially as they got rid of Branstone Farm for the schools.”

“100% behind a community farm.”

“Should stay as a farm, we need the local produce.”

“A farm it has been for years and a farm it should stay.”

“Retain this historic family farm.”

“It should remain as a farm. We have already lost too many farms.”

“Community-owned farmland sounds a good idea. Would benefit Island schools/college to have a community farm.”

“A community farm would be amazing.”

“Keep it as farm! After all the Island is and has always been a farming community.”

“It’s a no-brainer! Community farmland and the family should be left to farm it.”



Dairy farming at Westridge

Westridge Farm is a family run dairy farm, passing down the trade through the generations.

The cows at Westridge Farm enjoy the freedom of being out to grass for the majority of the year. Farming traditionally, away from the more intensive farm methods, with a low yielding herd, utilising home grown forage to feed the herd. This reduces emissions from purchased feed which would attract a higher carbon footprint.

The tenants are members of the Arla Farmers Co-operative, whose dairy farms are already among the most climate-efficient in the world.

Arla regularly undertake climate and welfare assessments in relation to the farming operations at Westridge Farm.

Between December 2017 to October 2018 the Holliday family modernised the milking facilities. Following a visit to the Royal Farm in Windsor in April 2017 to view their robot milking operation, they invested in the future of Westridge Farm.

The Fullwood milking robot milked its first cow in October 2018. Westridge Farm is currently the only farm on the island with this modern facility which has the Royal seal of approval.

Westridge Farmland



- Land farmed by the Holliday family (under AHA Tenancy)
- Other land farmed by the Holliday family



Archie Holliday standing next to the Fullwood milking robot

Local Council support

- Ryde Town Council unanimously voted against the planning application in September 2020.
- Nettlestone & Seaview Parish Council unanimously objected to the planning application in August 2020.
- Isle of Wight MP Bob Seely objected to the planning application August 2020.
- Ryde Mayor, Cllr Michael Lilley strongly opposes the planning application.
- Our Ryde group of 8 independent Ryde Town Councillors all support the Save Westridge Farm campaign.
- Ryde Town Council are making an application to the Isle of Wight Council to list Westridge Farm as a community asset under the Localism Act 2021. Following approval of motion on 5th July 2021.



Contact details

Email savewestridgefarm@gmx.com

Website www.savewestridgefarm.org.uk

Facebook www.facebook.com/savewestridgefarm

