

Life and faith in rural Britain...

COUNTRYWAY



Farmers' day at the cricket

Towards the end of last summer's County Championship season, Somerset County Cricket Club hosted a crowd of over five hundred farmers and their families during their four-day game against Yorkshire. The day was jointly organised by Somerset CCC, the Farming Community Network (FCN) and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute (RABI).

Suzie Wilkinson is the Coordinator of the Farming Community Network in Somerset. 'Farming is a unique way of life because often everything is tied up in the farm. It is your livelihood and business, your daily work routine, your identity, your lifestyle and very often your social circle. But it can also be very lonely and isolating as you spend hours working on your own. There is an inability to switch off because you can never get away.'

It was this reality that drove the determination of Rob Walrond, Rural Life Advisor for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre trustee, to host the farming day. He was delighted with the response.

'I wanted to create an opportunity for farmers to get together with friends and family, to have a catch up and switch off from the pressures of their working lives for a bit. Those of us involved in farming are well aware that it's a way of life that can be all-consuming, and opportunities to get away from the farm are rare. In the current political and financial climate, livestock farming across the UK can feel quite precarious; the opportunity for a bit of a recharge hopefully helped.'

Rosemary, a Somerset dairy farmer, enjoyed the day out with her husband Barry. 'The last cricket match I went to was at school, sixty years ago. I've always wanted to come but farming doesn't let you do things like this too often. Coming to watch a Somerset cricket match has been on my bucket list for 60 years.'

Another farmer, Billy, who hadn't seen Somerset play for nearly five decades, commented that 'it's interesting to come along and talk about something other than farming for a change'.

The day was made possible through Somerset CCC's commitment to the local community. Free vouchers were available through a local farming cooperative, and local clergy across the diocese gave out vouchers to farming families in their parishes.

As well as enjoying the match – which Somerset went on to win by 298 runs inside three days – the farmers had the opportunity to chat to representatives from FCN and RABI who were on hand to offer support and advice for any financial and emotional worries farmers may have had.

Rob Walron

This article first appeared in Country Way 83: Difficult Questions?, February 2020. Go to germinate.net/country-way for more information about how to subscribe.