



# HURST LODGE SMALLHOLDING

## NO 4



The small holding is going to be run by the children, thus the children should make decisions and help create the site. With this in mind, I had put the volunteer list up for building the chicken shed. It was oversubscribed in minutes and disgruntled children came to find me to say that the list had gone and they weren't on it yet! What was I going to do about it?

At Hurst Lodge, children are usually fairly willing to help out, but volunteering for digging, cement laying and moving large quantities of wood, sand and soil is not something that I expected there to be that much enthusiasm for. Thinking on my feet, I happily told them in assembly not to worry, if you didn't get on the building list you could always come and help with the gardening, anyone interested should meet me just outside the kindergarten play ground at lunch time. Lunch time is that wonderful period straight after lunch and before the afternoon class bell sounds when all the children should be outside but rarely are. There follows a cat and mouse game with staff who visit all the places the children lurk and send them outside, only to find they have taken another route back in and are still not in the playground when the staff get back. After assembly the staff smiled knowingly and said "not a chance", I should know better..... 27 volunteers for gardening later, I realised we were going to need trowels, small forks, large forks, spades and more gardening gloves. It appears that if there is something tangible to do, preferably where they can get muddy, the children want to do it. I had several conversations with parents that evening saying how good their children had been, how knowledgeable about plants, how determined to uproot brambles and they said "what.... my child?", they didn't believe me, so just to prove that it happened, below is evidence.....



We then needed to construct the chicken shed. I talked to the Maintenance department and after we looked at spades, pick axes and rakes, the bursar muttered health and safety, risk assessment, and 'I'll call the insurance people' rather loudly under her breath and took herself off to what I presume was a darkened room for a lie down..... and then the children turned up. Most of our children are physically fit, they dance, do sport and are rarely still, however you need different muscles to wield a pick axe but they managed, with 5 members of staff standing by and two first aiders on call. They dug a trench, a hole for the duck pond (actually it's a plastic cement mixing trough from Homebase – but don't tell the ducks) and laid sand and paving slabs and put the pond in the hole so it could be removed for cleaning. They moved all the earth that appeared out of the various holes and carried the wood from one end of the site to the other and they did it three days running. It then rained for a week and operation chicken shed came to a standstill while the children went into full time rehearsals for the show. Meanwhile the maintenance department installed new showers as the old ones had decided they were rotten and had started to leak into the staff room. I am pleased to inform you that the chicken house is now just about finished and ready to take its residents and the staff no longer need umbrella's in the staff room.



I would like also like to take this opportunity to thank the parents and children who signed up for 'chicksitting' over the summer holidays. The ducks are still living with me but will be moving into their new home shortly. I have become extremely attached to them and happened to say at a family gathering that I was going to miss them. I was delighted to discover that my birthday present this year was a box of three Indian Runner Ducklings of my very own.