

# Brilliant Businesses

## Layhead Farm Cottages, Rathmell



### Why repeat visitors lay their heads at Layhead Farm Cottages

Rosemary Hyslop (pictured) is a modest, quietly spoken woman who, together with her late husband Tim, used to farm at Rathmell, near Settle. Yet, though she doesn't shout it from the rooftops, what she has to say is well worth listening to.

For a start, she has almost 20 years' experience of running self-catering cottages at Layhead Farm. The first two-bedroom barn conversion was completed in 1994. In 2001, she and Tim ceased to farm and today she has eight cottages with 20 bedrooms.

Second, she has a strong voice in Farm Stay UK. For several years she has been the organisation's Yorkshire Director and in 2010 she became its national Vice Chairman. Given her experience – and her commitment to sharing her knowledge with others – it's no surprise that she is also a member of Welcome to Yorkshire's Advisory Board.

### Promoting local produce...saving time shopping

One of the many things she has learned is that visitors like local produce and they particularly appreciate it if you can do some of their shopping for them. This is why Rosemary set up an armchair shopping service, The Trading Post. Visitors are given a list of tempting, locally sourced produce to choose from. Hand it to Rosemary by 8pm and the following morning, it's delivered to your door.

In this case, local really does mean local. There's jam made from the plum tree in Rosemary's garden, Yorkshire butter made at a creamery in Settle, bread from the Olde Naked Man Bakery, also in Settle, readymade meals from Hellifield and meat from the Blue Pig Company three miles down the road at Long Preston. Other treats include Raydale Farm Preserves from Wensleydale.

Farm Stay UK is a co-operative with around 1,000 members who provide quality-inspected, bed-and-breakfast and self-catering cottage accommodation throughout the UK.





“I like the thought of supporting local businesses and my visitors like the convenience of my doorstep delivery,” says Rosemary.

She takes The Trading Post concept one stage further by offering to provide produce from her list on the day her guests arrive if they order in advance. Even if they don't, she provides a welcome basket on arrival.

For returning guests, it gets even better. They are provided with a hamper of bacon, sausage, marmalade, tea, butter and cheese when they come back for a return visit. Whether it's the lure of the hamper or not, repeat business at 62 per cent of bookings is very healthy. “Quite often, everyone here is a repeat visitor,” she says.

### **A passion for recycling**

Those who return obviously appreciate another of Rosemary's passions – recycling. There are polite but encouraging notices in each cottage urging guests to recycle. Again, she makes it easy for them. In addition to a bin for general waste, each cottage has a bin for glass bottles and a third bin for plastics, tins and fruit juice cartons. Papers and cardboard are kept separately.

“We store the paper and cardboard and also all the other recyclable articles in a barn,” says Rosemary. About once a month, when we have a trailer load, we take it to the recycling outlets in Settle. The paper and cardboard goes to the local swimming pool, which helps raise funds to sustain this important local amenity. It's no great inconvenience for me and the vast majority of guests embrace the recycling concept willingly.”

In further green moves, Rosemary has installed double glazing and is introducing low energy light bulbs. She has also devised three short walks around the farm and leaves information about them in the cottages enticing visitors to leave the car alone for at least a day.

“We're very pet-friendly here, too. Apart from dogs and cats, we've had guinea pigs, budgies and even a rabbit called Jack to stay!”

Sustainable tourism – for people as well as pets – works at Layhead Farm. Just look at the figures. In 2011 an average of over 30 weeks was booked in each of the eight cottages, not including short breaks. This suggests Rosemary has the right approach.



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