

# Small Animal Barn Benefits from

# Senior Exhibition

## Farm Page



by Connor Killigrew '07

<above> **THE AUTHOR POWER-DRIVING A BOARD INTO THE CONCRETE FLOOR.** <right> **CONNOR KILLIGREW '07 DESCRIBES HIS PLANS FOR RENOVATING THE SMALL ANIMAL BARN DURING SPRING WORK DAY.**

As the opportunity to take on a Senior Exhibition is considered by many to be the highest honor a student can receive at The Putney School, I feel lucky that I was awarded a Senior Exhibition in my fourth and final year here.

I planned to research animal housing needs and redesign and remodel the pens in Putney's small animal barn (the barn housing all of the animals besides the cows and horses) with a partner. We would then tear out and remodel the pens using mostly Putney lumber, focusing on animal comfort, barn flexibility and ease of grounds and animal maintenance.

Senior Exhibition applicants each pick an area of study and design a project that allows them to creatively explore this field in a structured and academic way. The student then submits a proposal and curriculum to a faculty committee. Upon the project's approval, the student is able to drop two project-related classes after March break. This time is then dedicated to the exhibition. Ultimately, after roughly two month's work, the student makes a presentation to an open audience as well as two project sponsors and an outside evaluator. The idea of this presentation is to show mastery in the field of study and present the culminating work of the exhibition. I can verify that it truly is an outstanding chance to further one's knowledge and demonstrate it in a very real and tangible way.

Due to unforeseen reasons, this two-man project became a solo mission. The proposal was slightly rewritten and I set out to rebuild the pens with the help of many hands in the form of afternoon activities and other school-related projects. In the demolition stage of the project it became apparent that what was initially thought to be something akin to replacing kitchen cabinets would be more like gutting and rewiring the kitchen as well as adding storage space. There was considerable rot as well as many examples of obviously unconventional carpentry. After several days of work that filled two fifteen-yard dumpsters, the farm elected to enlist the help of a local carpenter to handle the structural work required to save the barn. Since the carpenter would need materials, the farm team and I milled locust and pine beams from recently harvested Putney School trees. The carpenter, with the help of Farm Assistant Noah

Hoskins-Forsythe (a major player in the project's completion), tackled this structural work and we were able to begin building the pens.

The pens were built from Putney's own durable hardwood that had been milled in recent years. They were designed to be somewhat animal specific, to cater to the animals' needs as much as possible while still being relatively flexible. This flexibility was important because the farm has been known to change its animal line-up as well as the methods by which it raises animals. We rebuilt most of the existing pens and added two others, increasing the room available to animals and making the barn more presentable and visitor friendly. These new pens also cut down on the space available for the miscellaneous rubble, old equipment and whatnot that accumulates on farms.

Lastly, the pastures tied to the small animal barn were redesigned and a new fencing plan drawn up. This allows us to safely accommodate more of our animals outside and manage our pastoral resources more effectively. All of the improvements, as well as the reasons behind them, are on the Putney Wiki at <http://wiki.putneyschool.org>. Or come see it in person at any time. The farm always welcomes visitors—especially the strong-backed variety with a will to shovel.

As you can probably guess from the '07 tied to my name, all of this was enough to pass my exhibition and ultimately become another happy graduate of The Putney School. Since then I have been working on the farm. I am continuing to see improvements to the barn, including new wiring and a new system to manage run-off that used to pool up behind the barn. I hope that these improvements contribute to the tenure of the building in its current configuration. Or at least I hope that my work and the work of countless others can last another 30 years until the next eager student renovation.

