

Unique precast underground cave proves the perfect environment for award-winning cheese

Working with MJ Fry Engineering of Martinstown in Dorset, Milbury Systems (an FP McCann company) has created an underground 'cave' near Dorchester to store and mature cheese. Designed and manufactured at Milbury's Gloucester plant, 67 prestressed Vertical Cantilever (VC) panels and 38 solid prestressed roof panels made up the bulk of the construction, together with the necessary ancillaries and panel foundation rebar needed to complete the project

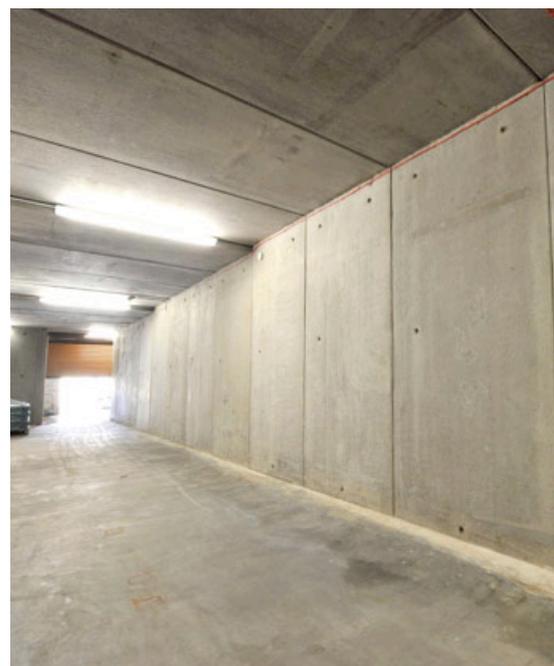


The 'cave' was installed after MJ Fry Engineering had completed substantial groundworks, excavating a hole in the side of a hill that was deep enough to accommodate a 3 metre effective internal wall height, with an additional 3 to 4 metres of soil / backfill on the external top. This was integral to the design, to allow for an additional surcharge load from a light duty tractor which mows the grass on the top of the soil fill.

The client, Ford Farm, an award winning cheese manufacturer, is now using the cave to store and mature cheese. Some of the joints in the prestressed panels have been left unsealed to allow for nominal ingress of water into the cave; this assists in the maturing process of the cheese stored within it.

A cheese matured in the cave has already won its Dorset producers a top industry award. A return to traditional cheese making methods saw Ford Farm's Traditional Farmhouse Cheddar crowned Supreme Champion at the International Cheese Awards.

The prestressed, man-made cave – along with the famous Wookey Hole natural caves – provide a fantastic environment for the maturing of Ford Farm cheese due to its constant humidity and all year round temperature which results in the cheese taking on a deliciously distinctive flavour.



Site: Ford Farm, Ashley Chase Estate, Litton Cheney, Dorchester
Contractor: MJ Fry Engineering (Martinstown, Dorset)
Client: Ford Farm
Products Supplied: 67 prestressed Vertical Cantilever (VC) panels and 38 solid prestressed roof panels