



# HARPER LIFE

The annual publication for alumni  
of Harper Adams University



MARKING  
THE CENTENARY  
OF THE  
HARPER ADAMS  
CLUB

Inside this edition

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November 2020

# Welcome

I hope that this update finds you safe and well.

2020 has been a year none of us will ever forget. But, amid the undoubtable challenges we have all faced, what has been evident in abundance has been the Harper Spirit. I have been reminded time and again of the strength of our community; impressed by the determined attitudes of our students, staff and supporters; and continue to be thankful for the skills of the individuals, teams and networks who have enabled core activities to continue to support our educational and research activities over the last year.

Since March, my academic colleagues have delivered a broad range of teaching in face to face small group sessions and via the internet, using new methods of delivery and new technology; learning with every step and adapting to ensure that we continue to provide high quality courses for our students.

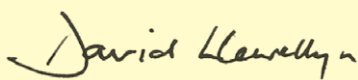
Our student support teams have helped students locked down on campus, travelling to and from their home countries, returning to university in September and isolating to protect those around them, while also ensuring that everyone had the shelter, sustenance and mental health support required to comply with the restrictions placed upon us.

In October, our Development Trust, which you can read more about on pages 5-7, held its first virtual Scholarships Fair, using an online platform to connect our students with sponsors and employers seeking to nurture fresh talent. Building upon that success, the November Careers Fair, which usually brings around 130 employers to our campus for the annual physical event, was also delivered virtually – and hailed as a triumph by all involved.

Unfortunately, we did not feel we could do justice to the annual Graduation Ceremony by moving it online. We know our students and graduates want to be together, to celebrate each other's achievements and unite for the big send-off. So, to the Class of 2020, we look forward to 2021, when we plan to invite you back to celebrate in style. You had a difficult end to your student journey and, no doubt, a tricky start in your working career. Please remember that we are still here to support you.

As the front cover of this publication reflects, November 30th marks the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Harper Adams Club, and a year of celebrations lies ahead – you can read more about this and how you can get involved on the following pages.

I am grateful to all of you – our former students – for your contributions to the continued success of Harper Adams University. Whether you have played a part in promoting our courses, employed one of our placement students or graduates, volunteered your time to mentor or lecture to students, sat on a committee or trust board, donated via the Development Trust or shared your career story to inspire the next generation, your Harper Spirit continues to shine.



Dr David Llewellyn, Vice-Chancellor

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Alumni relations sit within the Marketing and Communications team at Harper Adams University. Your contact within the team is Gemma Payne, who is happy to receive news updates, contact information updates and enquiries for the wider university. Email [alumni@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@harper-adams.ac.uk)

# NEWS FROM THE HARPER ADAMS CLUB

## — HARPER ADAMS CLUB CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS 2021

On 30th November 1920 around forty former students met at the Grand Hotel in Birmingham for the first official gathering of the Harper Adams Club in the aftermath of the last worldwide pandemic. We were not, of course, able to mark the anniversary this November but we would love, when it is possible, to celebrate the centenary of the inaugural meeting at Harper in July 1921, captured by the image below.

## — WE NEED YOUR HELP TO CELEBRATE!

The essence of The Harper Adams Club can be crystallised as the bringing together of the sense of spirit, community and friendship felt by past and present students alike, which so often becomes lifelong and gets stronger long after studies are complete.

We feel this is something to celebrate and we are appealing to anyone who may be interested in joining a Centenary Celebration Planning Committee to contact us. We do not envisage this being very onerous, as we would make use of technology to overcome geographical barriers, but would like input and ideas from as many as possible to help make the plans a success.

If you would like to help with planning, (thank you to those who have already volunteered – we'll be in touch soon) or have any suggestions on how to celebrate the Harper Adams Club Centenary please send an email to: [theharperadamsclub@gmail.com](mailto:theharperadamsclub@gmail.com) We look forward to hearing you. You can use the same address to contact members of the Club Committee or to share any items of interest.

Over the last hundred years the roles and activities of The Club have continuously evolved and have included numerous social and sporting events, reunions at shows, fundraising, further education for alumni on best practice and supporting the production of the Harper Life journal combining news from alumni and Harper itself.

Club members have also been able to support the institution with careers advice, placement and scholarship provision and in a recent survey on reasons for studying at Harper Adams it is clear that word of mouth recommendations from Club members, with fond memories of their time spent at Harper, still have a massive positive impact on recruitment.



# NEWS FROM THE HARPER ADAMS CLUB

## — 2020 ALUMNI DINNER

The Alumni Dinner this year was cancelled due to the pandemic so, with fingers crossed, we are planning an even bigger event next year to cover the Golden Reunions (1970/1971 starters), Silver Reunions (1995/1996 starters) and the 10 year Reunions (2010/2011 starters). We hope to announce the date soon. However everyone is welcome. Including the Millennial starters (2000) who will be celebrating 21 years since starting at Harper.

More details will be sent out early 2021, when hopefully it will become clearer whether such events can go ahead.

## — REGIONAL EVENTS

It is also hoped that the Club will be re-introducing regional events when it is safe to do so. We already have a volunteer from Scotland.

If anyone would like to volunteer for their area, please contact us. Some support can be offered such as electronic mailouts and promotion via Facebook page and Newsletters. Send us an email:

**theharperadamsclub@gmail.com**

## — HARPER ADAMS CLUB CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS 2020/2021

Again, our plans for a dinner on 30th November 2020 to celebrate the Harper Adams Club Centenary have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

It is hoped that the Club will hold a celebration at Harper in July 2021.

## — HARPER ADAMS CLUB SCHOLARS 2019/2020

There were a record 99 applications for the Harper Adams Club scholarships offered this year and it was a privilege to interview an impressive 17 shortlisted candidates, of which seven benefited.

First class Bioveterinary Science graduate Elin Cunningham (MSc Entomology) was awarded the prestigious Postgraduate Scholarship. Elin's Master's research project is studying the respiratory and gastrointestinal nematodes of the re introduced Red Billed Cough population in Jersey. Elin is very active on Harper social media and in local schools, talking about her MSc studies, other wildlife and birds, and the values of a rural campus and varieties in student life.

The Final Year Scholar was a student of understated high calibre, Sian Williamson (BSc (Hons) Business Management and Marketing), whose confidence has developed during her time at Harper, leading to a successful placement at Mornflake. Hockey enthusiast Sian has also been SU RAG officer and course representative.

The Extended Foundation Degree Scholarship went to Rachel Cornthwaite (BSc (Hons) Agriculture with Farm Business Management) from a Cumbrian stock farming background with an interest in agronomy, who aspires to be a farm business consultant.

The inaugural Animal and Veterinary Sciences Scholarship, established to recognise the relative lack of scholarship opportunities in these subject areas, was won by engaging 2nd year student Imogene Munns (BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing). Imogene's amazing passion shone through, describing the family atmosphere at Harper and her plans to become a large animal head nurse and mentor to nurses of the future.

A discretionary President's Scholarship was awarded to Sophie Purbrick (BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare) who, following her placement at Chester Zoo, has been invited to present research on elephant sleep behaviour. Two further President's Awards were made to Hua Ying Baker, a thought provoking BSc (Hons) Automotive Engineering (Off Highway) final year student who can envisage owning a private vehicle in 25 years becoming a thing of the past for many and EFD graduate Kelly Billington (BEng Mechanical Engineering) who aspires to a career in aerospace and chose Harper for the course's practical nature.



## A chance reunion for poultry alumni



### 1954 – 1956 poultry students.

*Far left photo:* Anne Emmerson (Stubbs) and Anne Walker (Millar). *Left photo:* Maggie Powell (Teague) and Don Walls. The two Anne's were meeting up in Alnwick, and by chance, Maggie and Don were meeting for lunch on the same day! *M Teague.*

# Cultivating Excellence

## — The Harper Adams Development Trust —

The Harper Adams University Development Trust directly connects companies, alumni and motivated benefactors with the mission of Harper – either through the provision of scholarships of individual students across our portfolio of specialist courses or through philanthropic investment in University infrastructure and buildings.

### Introducing: **DORIS TAYLOR, Head of Development** **Harper Adams University Development Trust**

Following a successful career in sales, I held a range of fundraising positions within the independent school and charity sectors, raising funds for scholarships, annual funds and leading a major capital appeal. I joined Harper Adams University in 2018 as the Development Trust's Head of Development.

The role of the Harper Adams University Development Trust is to directly connect companies, alumni and other benefactors with the University's mission of providing 'Higher education and research for the delivery of a sustainable food chain and rural economy' – either through the provision of scholarships for individual students or through philanthropic investment in University infrastructure and buildings.

In my day-to-day work I help to bring this aim to life by working closely with our industry partners and individual benefactors to accommodate their specific motivations and requirements. This can be incredibly varied from working with an employer who wishes to secure the succession within their organisation, applying to Charitable Trusts for scholarship funds



or capital grants for buildings, to advising individual benefactors on ways to support the University and our students, helping them to achieve the most impact in an area which matters to them. It is this variety of my role and the different levels of relationships that really appeal to me – also, coming from a farming family

myself, I have a good understanding of the sector's challenges. However, what truly drives me is to support young, passionate talent at the start of their careers, to see them grow in confidence and knowledge, which will lead to a successful career in an ever more important industry. I head up a small team and am supported by the Development Trust Chairman and our board of Trustees, and together we work hard to increase our network of the University's supporters.

We have been able to grow the Scholarship and Capital Programme in the last couple of years and many Harper Alumni have contributed to this success, either as donors or employers, and I therefore would like to thank you all for the support you have given to our students, it is hugely appreciated!

If you have any ideas to support the university or to find out more about opportunities to donate, please contact Doris Taylor, Head of Development, Development Trust.

Telephone **01952 815095** / Email **DevelopmentTrust@harper-adams.ac.uk**

Read on to meet some of the trustees and learn why they volunteer their time to the cause —

# WHAT THE TRUSTEES SAY

## SIMON JONES



With a passion for everything agricultural, I naturally found my way to Harper Adams and enrolled in September 1996, at the tender age of 19.

I had been through a couple of particularly tough years and wasn't expecting much from my time there. I began to study BSc Agriculture but within a month or two something didn't feel quite right.

A chance encounter with a rather eccentric Senior Lecturer changed all that, and I was encouraged to transfer to the fantastic but often overlooked Rural Environmental Protection degree. After four incredible years I left the Edgmond campus with a tear in my eye, a new life and a whole new family of friends.

Following a brief spell in consultancy, I was easily tempted back to Harper in order to deliver new reach-out activity. My role expanded, I became the Placement Manager for the Countryside and Environment courses and took on some lecturing duties.

In 2005 I left the comfort of Harper to take on a whole new challenge, developing a thriving leisure and tourism business in South Nottinghamshire.

As an active supporter of the Harper Adams Club for the last 20 years I have served as Club President twice (2006 – 2008 and 2014 – 2016). I have been involved with awarding student Scholarships since 2003 and was elected to the Development Trust Board in 2015. I started the popular 'Grow Your Own Business' event at Harper, the awarding of the Harper Spirit Prize and I deliver an annual presentation, providing support for students on applying for scholarships.

In my spare time I love tackling mountain sports. I am a keen snowboarder, skier, mountain climber and trail runner. This year I have been training to compete in one of the world's most challenging and toughest endurance events in the Himalayas, like everything else this year, sadly it was cancelled. I believe Harper students acquire a very special quality, they never fail to impress me with their ingenuity, determination, practicality and spirit.

Harper gave me the confidence to 'have a go', I am grateful for that and proud to still be part of something incredibly special.

## PETER WARD

As an alumnus, I am particularly delighted to serve with the constant development enabled by charitable contribution to the University and by the continued support and encouragement for our students with the Scholarship Scheme.

The Harper leadership, who are renowned for distinction with applied academic development, probably had a sense of inspiration in inviting several people from a wide base of achievement who are keen to gift their experience as trustees.

It was interesting to talk with the head of education for my livery in London, the Company of Farmers, who told me that Harper people in agriculture, both in training and further in career, were splendid with integrity and with their attitude to work achievement.

Our undergraduates must surely note the importance of reputation for the prospects of the entire community team.



## CLIVE GURNEY CHAIRMAN



I was born with a passion of caring for animals and the countryside.

My time as a student at Harper Adams proved to be a life changing experience that provided me with many of the answers to make my dreams come true: Knowledge, Confidence and the Ability to make things happen.

I can honestly say that I have enjoyed everyday of my agricultural career and feel content that despite the highs and lows of life, I have fulfilled all of my life expectations.

I have made a difference- encouraging our beloved agricultural community to be a more efficient and environmentally caring industry.

It has been a great pleasure to be able to say thank you, serving as a governor at Harper for eight years and to work on the Development Trust helping to support students and facilitate projects at the University.

Mr Gurney, a graduate of Harper Adams, farms a 400-acre dairy unit and 200-acre arable unit in Wigmore, Herefordshire, and was a member of the Board of Governors 2002 – 2010. He has also been awarded a Fellowship of Harper Adams.

He has held a number of positions in the farming sector, including Chairman of the Cheshire Grassland Society and the Cheshire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and has served as Chairman of the Herefordshire Grassland Society, Herefordshire Agricultural Society.

## CLARKE WILLIS MBE, FRAgS

I was at Harper from 1971 to 1974 on the second intake of HND (Agri) and enjoyed both the learning and social life and made lifelong friends. I joined the Harper Adams University Development Trust in March 2015 and my term finishes in March 2023.

I first heard about the Development Trust in 2010. Anglia Farmers attended the annual Careers Fair and took two Harper placement students each year. Supporting them in their early years at Harper, during their placement year and in some cases their final year with a job offer when they graduated seemed a natural progression and worked extremely well.

As Alumni who have a great careers in the industry, we owe it to the next generation to support them in their formative years. Encouraging your company to offer a scholarship not only is good for your company profile but it encourages future talent into our industry.

Clarke is a Director of the Norfolk Food Enterprise Park which is developing major processing and support facilities for the AgriFood supply chain in the Eastern region, and was CEO of Anglia Farmers, the £250m agricultural input supply co-operative for 15 years until his “retirement” in June 2017.

His career also encompassed Board roles at British Sugar plc, Dengie Crops and Dalgety Agriculture. He was awarded an MBE in 2016 for Services to Agriculture and awarded Fellowship of Royal Agricultural Societies in 2019.



## MATTHEW BLAKEN

**REALM 1995 – 1999. Director of DJ&P Newland Rennie with 7 offices in Gloucestershire, Somerset and South East Wales.**

I have always maintained regular contact with the REALM team having employed over 25 placement, graduates and apprentices and our current surveying team having 8 excellent graduates. I was inspired by the work of the Development Trust team and have seen how it has helped graduates in their final year, both financially and professionally.

As a former Harper scholar at the Oxford Farming Conference, I am also aware of how such opportunities help provide reassurance that graduates can and will make an impact in their chosen industry. I am honoured to be a Trustee and rewarded by being part of the exemplary work of the University and its students but equally by the connections with industry sponsors and other members of the Trust team which continues to demonstrate to me, how positively Harper is viewed in the business world.





# REVIEW OF THE YEAR at Harper Adams

There is no doubt that 2020 has brought challenges of an unprecedented nature and scale. But that doesn't mean we haven't also had cause for pride and celebration within the Harper community. Here are just a few highlights from the past 12 months —

## March 2020



For the third year in a row, the 2020 QS World University Subject Rankings named Harper Adams as a top university for employability. Comparing the

performance of 13,138 individual university programmes taken by students at 1,368 universities, our employer reputation continues to excel in the Agriculture and Forestry table.

Harper Adams rose to prominence in the employer reputation indicator in the 2018 rankings and continues to hold its place in the rankings, demonstrating the value of our strong and extensive links with industry with a top rating in the UK and a world class performance in the measure for agriculture and forestry employer reputation.

## May 2020

The Hands Free Farm (HFF) team successfully drilled a cover crop as the first major operation for the project in the late Spring.

Beginning the second year of a three-year long project, HFF follows the award-winning Hands Free Hectare (HFHa) feasibility study which was the first in the world to plant, tend and harvest a crop without a driver in the seat or agronomists on the ground.

The drilling provided a useful learning process; it highlighted system successes and will offer data to analyse the drilling performance when the crop emerges aiding future mapping. The team continues to be ambitious for their next trial.



## April 2020

Careers within the food sector continue to evolve to support the demands of an ever-growing population.

Recognising the expertise taught in the BSc (Hons) Food Technology and Product Development and the BSc (Hons) Food Technology with Nutrition degree courses in light of the challenges presented, the pathways have been accredited by the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST).

The accreditation highlights that we offer programmes that are of a nationally recognised standard and which prepare students for their future in the industry.

April also saw the appointment of Lydia Arnold, Harper Adams' first female professor.

As Professor of Learning and Teaching, her focus is within eLearning provision and leadership of academic development while also working as a course leader for PgC in Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education. Having worked at the university for eleven years, she hopes her appointment will inspire other talented women to become professors.



## June 2020

Harper Adams remained the UK's highest-ranking modern university in the Complete University Guide, showcasing excellence in teaching and importance of the subjects on offer. Graduates play a vital role in supplying the nation's food and developing technologies in support of that effort, along with managing our land and natural resources to maintain high standards of animal welfare.

By teaching the next generation of talent, with a wealth of innovative and future focused alumni alongside them, we hope to continue supporting students with excellent teaching and facilities that highlight degrees that matter to the world.



## July 2020

Both job prospects and employability of Harper Adams alumni were noted in July, seeing the benefits of our industry contacts and successful placement years.

The Graduate Outcomes survey highlighted that an outstanding 98.8 percent of graduates were in work or further study, followed by winning the Gold award for Job Prospects at the Whatuni Student Choice Awards (WUSCAs).

**98.8%**  
graduate  
employment



## September 2020

In late September The University's Chancellor, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, visited the Hands Free Farm Project.



## September 2020

Research to identify key factors affecting farmers' attitudes and beliefs towards farm crime, its prevention, the police and their insurers, has resulted in the University being short-listed for the Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community award in the Times Higher Education Awards 2020. Known as the Oscars of Higher Education, Dr Kreseda Smith's (pictured right) research prompted a concerted outreach effort by the University's Rural Security Research Group and is helping to shed light on the affect rural crime work has on communities.

Harper Adams continues as UK's top-rated modern university for a fifth year according to The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021. Ranking 131 institutions, the guide ranked Harper Adams 8th in the overall league, remaining the only post-1992 institution to have ever made it into the Times Top 30. Vice-Chancellor, Dr David Llewellyn said: "It is a remarkable achievement to be placed in the top 30 universities in the Guide and to be the highest-ranked modern university in the UK for the fifth year in a row.

Our top ten performance in teaching quality and student experience marks us out as a leading specialist university, where strong industry ties and the opportunity to undertake an industrial placement as part of our course will stand graduates in good stead when embarking on their careers. Our staff and students work hard to provide an outstanding educational environment at Harper Adams, and we are delighted that this has been recognised, once again, in the 2021 Good University Guide."



## October 2020

The UK's newest vet school welcomed its first students to the Harper Adams campus in October, beginning their five-year programme of study toward a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery (BVetMS) qualification. The veterinary students have now made their homes at Keele University and Harper Adams University, the partners behind the new Harper & Keele Vet School.

Head of School, Professor Matt Jones, said: "We're confident that the diverse group of students joining us have already demonstrated that they will rise to the challenges and grasp the opportunity that they will face to be true innovators. We'll work together with them to create a great vet school to complement those already established."





## LITTLE GREY FERGIE TAKES UP RESIDENCE ON CAMPUS, IN FITTING TRIBUTE TO HARPER ADAMS STALWART

A vintage tractor first handed to a long-standing university supporter's family in the 1950s has taken up residence at Harper Adams.

The TEK20 Ferguson, better known as The Little Grey Fergie, was presented more than 60 years ago

to the family of the late Mr Tony Burgess during a ceremony at the Savoy Hotel. Now the family have presented it, on loan, to the university Mr Burgess volunteered his time to tirelessly for decades.

Mr Burgess was Chairman of the Harper Adams University Development Trust prior to his passing in 2018, but had also previously served on the University Board of Governors.

The Development Trust flourished under his

leadership. He joined the trust in 2004 and guided its rise. The value of the scholarships and sponsorship secured by the trust has risen from £17,500 in 2006 to more than half a million now.

Throughout his career in accountancy, Mr Burgess maintained a direct interest in farming through managing his own arable farm in Ellerton, Shropshire. Piers Burgess, his younger son, said: "My father was passionate about the continuing education of young people in agriculture and dedicated much of his life to ensuring that young people were able to access scholarships and support through his work as the Chairman of the University's Development Trust."

"Loaning his Little Grey Fergie to the university to enable students both the educational and historic benefits of the machine is a fitting tribute to him."

"The tractor has served our family well as a working machine, but also brought us much happiness, as my father, and his grandchildren, have all loved the Little Grey Fergie. We couldn't be happier with its new home."

Parmjit Chima, Head of Engineering at Harper Adams, said "The Little Grey Fergie was at the forefront of the farming mechanisation revolution, we are delighted to have received the loan of the tractor to the University, both to educate the new generation of engineers and to carry out useful jobs around the campus. The Burgess Fergie has already been a big hit with the new and returning engineering students and members of staff, alike."

The Ferguson TE20 model was revered the world over. Designed by Harry Ferguson and manufactured from 1946 until 1956, it was seen as a major advance in tractor design with the lightweight design, versatility, small size and manoeuvrability. Harry Ferguson's innovative hydraulic three-point hitch system, which was pioneered on the grey Fergie, became an international standard for tractors of all makes and sizes, and is still in place today. The Ferguson TE20 played a large part in bringing mechanisation to farming and in many parts of the world, was the first tractor that allowed farmers to move from the draft horse and manual labour. Across the world, the tractor remains a popular collector's item, and is still in regular use in everyday farming.

*Top: TEK20 Ferguson, better known as The Little Grey Fergie Tractor at Harper Adams University.*

*Left: The late Mr Tony Burgess.*



# Lewys Jones awarded Harper Cymry/ Royal Welsh Agricultural Society Student Award 2020

Agriculture with Mechanisation graduate, Lewys Jones, has been awarded the prestigious Harper Cymry/Royal Welsh Agricultural Society Student Award 2020.

Established in 1999, by the late Bill Ratcliffe, a Harper Adams Fellow and founder of the Harper Cymry alumni association, the award is open to final year undergraduate students who have been a resident in Wales for five or more years, have actively contributed to the Harper Cymru student society and made a positive, active contribution to the broader student community and are deemed a promising future ambassador for Harper Adams University. The recipient also needs to have a good academic record. The award winner receives a cash prize, but also membership to the exclusive Future Farmers of Wales, non-political body of young farmers prepared to discuss and express views, concerns and ideas for the future of farming and rural life in Wales.

“Winning the Harper Cymry/Royal Welsh Agricultural Society Student Award 2020 is a privilege, a huge achievement and a great way to finish my time at Harper,” said Lewys, who recently has just completed his studies at Harper Adams University, gaining a 2:1 degree. He has a long-standing family relationship with the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, both in supporting the society and competing at the show.

Lewys’s career ambition is to progress in his family agricultural contracting business, and to use the skills he has learned throughout his degree to help to grow the business.

“I work on maintaining machines and am keen to put thoughts and ideas down on paper to resolve customer and machine needs.”

“I am continuously developing working skills, knowledge and expertise furthering my professional development.”

“We are continuing to see a lot of changes in the area because of the current marketplace, however, I plan to progress with the continual gradual growth of the business, looking to customer requirements as a guideline, while concurrently establishing our own farming enterprise” he said.

“My time at Harper Adams has been an unforgettable experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment. I have gained invaluable work experiences and gathered useful industry contacts. Following an unusual year for us all, my time at Harper got cut short but I have gained experiences and made friends for life, which I will carry with me forever and for that I’d like to thank Harper, with the added bonus of a BSc (Hons) Degree in Agriculture with Mechanisation in tow.”

“I would encourage students to join the Harper Cymru Society since it is a great way of socialising and making friends with your fellow Welsh associates in an English university, which can be very helpful. I will be joining the Harper Cymru Alumni to keep in touch.

Finally, I’d like to thank the university’s Development Trust staff for doing an excellent job and for helping me gain scholarships throughout my time at Harper.”

The Royal Welsh Agricultural Society is proud to support this Award which recognises the outstanding potential of the next generation. Lewys was due to be presented with his award at the Royal Welsh Show, however, due to Covid-19 the show was cancelled and separate arrangements will be made.



# Arrivals and departures —



## ABIGAIL RETIRES AFTER 30 YEARS

In August 2020, we said farewell to Dr Abigail Hind, who retired after making a significant contribution to the university over almost thirty years. Abigail joined Harper Adams in 1990, following experience in the agricultural marketing sector. Lecturing in agri-business, Abigail began to take an interest in course management, later developing her career by completing her PhD part time at Aberystwyth while continuing to teach on campus. In 2000, she was seconded to the post of Head of Educational Development and Quality Assurance for two years before taking on the position full time. Within this role she helped Harper Adams to flourish, and contributed to

many successes, including the development of the Aspire Centre, one of the projects she most enjoyed working on during her time with the University.

Abigail became a QAA auditor in 2010 and Academic Registrar in 2012, before acquiring the title of Director of Academic Services and Academic Registrar to represent the full breadth of her Department's activities. Having been in this role for seven years, there are countless moments that highlight her contribution to the institution. However, most significantly, she has been key in maintaining the happiness and success of our students who enjoy their time at Harper Adams.

As a member of the Senior Management team, Abigail worked closely with those striving to help the University provide the very best educational experience for its students. Dr David Llewellyn, Vice-Chancellor of Harper Adams, commented: "Abigail has played a hugely important role in the University over many years and in a variety of posts. The senior team will miss her contribution to our work, and we wish her all the very best for a long and happy retirement."

## SIMON RETIRES AFTER NEARLY THREE DECADES

Simon Keeble retired in October 2020 after nearly three decades lecturing for, and a lengthy period managing, the land and property management degrees.

Described as a "cornerstone" of the REALM degree, Simon is expected to return when celebrations are possible, for a proper send-off from Harper.



## FAREWELL FOLLOWED BY AN HONOUR FOR CARWYN

Carwyn Ellis retired as head of the Animals Department in late 2019 and was subsequently honoured by AMTRA for his Outstanding Contribution.

Phil Sketchley, Chairman of Amtra said: "It gives me great pleasure to present the award this year for Outstanding Contribution to the Industry...he has made many years contribution and service to the AMTRA council as an observer, and has undoubtedly been pivotal in making the SQP and RAMA sector work and has had the respect from all involved in this sector and indeed the government bodies that control us.

"With over 30 years of contributions to the sector, Carwyn helped train the very first candidates in 1985/86 to gain their Suitably Qualified Person (SQP) status and has importantly since then helped manage the transition to a prescription only based model in 2005 after the launch of the then new VMR.

"He's made a major influence and contribution to our sector and brought about the introduction of an approved CPD programme and also brought in the modular system of examinations which supported the introductions of the companion animal qualification, the vet nurse qualification and more recently moving us to level 5 for farm RAMAs" Phil continued.

Carwyn retired from his post as Head of Animal Welfare, Production and Veterinary Science last year, but continues his links with Harper Adams University as a visiting lecturer.

## NEW DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR

Harper Adams University has welcomed sustainable livestock systems expert, Professor Michael Lee, to the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Lee will undertake a wide range of duties overseeing the academic activities of the university as well as deputising for the Vice-Chancellor, Dr David Llewellyn. Announcing the appointment, Dr Llewellyn said: "I am delighted to welcome Michael to the University. His experience and expertise will be invaluable as we move ahead with the delivery of our new strategic plan. Michael is joining us at a time when the UK's agricultural system is going through a major transition, and his contribution to our work will help strengthen the support we can provide to the industry, through education and research, in the years ahead." Professor Lee added:

"I am very excited and honoured to be joining Harper Adams University at a vital time for UK agriculture. The growth at Harper Adams University has been truly phenomenal, not only in terms of its student intake and campus development but also its stature. Investment in critical areas of growth for sustainable agriculture in terms of precision Ag and artificial intelligence, agricultural engineering, environmental policy and land use, food and veterinary science (including One-Health, as exemplified by the Covid-19 pandemic) are inspirational.

"At the global level, to tackle these issues, we need the best research and the best minds to re-develop agricultural practices towards sustainable food production and environmental protection. Furthermore, Brexit and Covid-19 have increased the need to reshape our food systems, supporting industry and rural communities at a regional and national level.

"Harper Adams University is perfectly positioned to address these challenges as the UK's leading agricultural, land-based and rural higher education institution with a clear mission and vision to lead, through exciting recent investment in capabilities, facilities and research areas. But, to Harper Adams' greatest credit, which has positioned it more than most for the challenges ahead, is its relationship with industry and the community it serves.

"The decision to be a leading advocate of the four-year bachelor's degree programme with a year in placement has entwined industrial research and collaboration within the very fabric of the University. This has seen benefits not only in terms of impact driven research but also in student employability, satisfaction and, crucially, recruitment and retention of excellent students. "I look forward to taking the next step of Harper Adams' exciting journey to deliver people with the skills to tackle our greatest challenge of sustainably feeding a growing population and ensuring planetary health for future generations."

Professor Michael Lee has dedicated his career to defining the role of sustainable livestock systems in securing global food security at the same time as protecting environmental health, for the sake of people and the planet.



*Above: Professor Michael Lee.*

## PHILIP TAKES THE REINS OF VETERINARY HEALTH AND ANIMAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT

Harper Adams University is proud to have appointed Dr Philip Robinson as the Head of its new Veterinary Health and Animal Sciences Department.

Dr Robinson brings a wealth of knowledge and experience as a veterinarian, researcher and academic leader. Raised on a beef suckler farm in Co. Antrim, the Broughshane man is a former pupil of Ballymena Academy and graduate of the University of Glasgow, University of London and Durham University.

Shortly after he first joined Harper Adams University as a Senior Lecturer in 2015, he became the first ever RCVS Recognised Specialist in State Veterinary Medicine, before going on to promotion as Principal Lecturer in Farm Animal Health and Welfare. Having taken a short break from the Shropshire University to work as a Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Public Health at the University of Glasgow, Dr Robinson returned to Harper Adams in September – just as it launched the UK's ninth vet school, in partnership with Keele University.

He will work alongside the vet school leadership team to ensure veterinary nursing, veterinary physiotherapy and veterinary medicine students train together and develop the professional networks they will need in practice.



Dr Robinson said: "I am honoured to be leading the new Department of Veterinary Health and Animal Sciences at an exciting time in the development of Harper Adams University. The opening of the new Veterinary Education Centre as part of the Harper and Keele Veterinary School offers fantastic new facilities and equipment for training veterinary

nursing and veterinary physiotherapy students from my department. Additionally, there are excellent opportunities for inter-professional education and research collaboration between all of the different disciplines in animal health and welfare represented at the university."

# YOUR NEWS

## **Khaldoun Ali** **MSc Entomology** **2015 – 2016**

I joined the University of Saskatchewan as a doctoral student after I finished my MSc at Harper Adams University with a high Distinction. Throughout my PhD work, I have been engaged in research projects attempting to elucidate the mechanisms of weed seed predation in agro-ecosystems.

In fact, this is a novel avenue of biocontrol research covering fundamental aspects of plant-insect ecology. The depth and novelty of this research endeavour placed me among the few researchers in the world who are studying the ecological mechanism of plant-insect interactions at deep and detailed levels. More importantly, the quality of the work I was able to produce, in addition to some major breakthroughs I was able to make, brought me nine substantial awards so far.

I also received honours, fellowships, and professional memberships from numerous institutions across the globe.

I am now writing up my thesis, and will be taking up a post-doctoral fellowship position here in Canada after I graduate. After that, I would like to seek a professorship, and establish an academic career path that contributes more to biology in general and to insect-plant ecology in particular.

## **Jeff White**

After Harper I eventually ended up in the military with an – unverified record – as being the oldest Officer Cadet to go through Sandhurst!

I still have the scars to prove it!

## **Frances Cooper** **REALM** **2006 – 2010**

I graduated from Harper Adams (REALM) back in 2010 and have recently written a piece for an Australian blog on my take of farming in Central Australia and how I think the knowledge I gained from my degree can be applied in Central Australian beef farming as well as in the UK.

I'm not sure if it is of interest to you but I thought it may be nice for you to see what a member of Harper Adams alumni is up to now and that everything learnt at Harper can be transferred anywhere in the world.

## **John Tsikata** **Dip Poultry** **1998**

Worked in the Poultry industry for five years. In 1993 life changes has taken me into a Nursing Career.

Now a Senior Nurse in the Prison Service with accolade of leadership awards for my skills.

Married with six children. Like to share this life experience because my time in Harper has not been in vain.

It has given me good grounding, shaped up my life and taught me how successful one can be if you take your career seriously.

Met good friends on my course and still kept in touch with them, Harper Adams will ever remain one of my alumni.

## **David Pearce** **1958**

I retired 20 years ago and now my only connection with the poultry industry is two Warren hens in our back garden, busy laying two eggs most days.

My third great grandchild arrived this morning. I still have many happy memories of two years at Harper and the NIPH, and the friendships built up in that time (1958 – 1960).

## **Emma Abbott** **BSc (Hons) Countryside & Environmental Management** **2011 – 2015**

Since graduating from Harper, I started my career at Severn Trent as a ranger at Carsington Water. In late 2015, I moved roles within the business to become an Agricultural Advisor, assisting farmers and land owners to make farm infrastructure and land management improvements to improve the water quality of their catchment area.

In 2017, I applied for the role of Agricultural Team Manager at Severn Trent and now manage the team of Agricultural Advisors.

The team cover 44 priority catchment areas across the Severn Trent region, working with thousands of farmers through our catchment management programme including the Severn Trent Environmental Protection Scheme (STEPS) and the Farm to Tap scheme which focuses on working with farmers to help mitigate the impact from pesticides and other run off from agricultural land on water quality.

Since graduating from Harper, I have returned a couple of times to complete professional qualifications and training, most recently I completed the BASIS Soil and Water course which was very interesting. It was great to see a few familiar faces walking around and how the campus has developed.

### **Eileen Clark** **1965 –**

Anne Smith and I, now both veteran poultry students, were about to go to Croatia in March, which we cancelled when Covid-19 started.

Lockdown has exposed many different aspects of life! Being retired and involved in volunteering in Carlisle and our Wetheral Village, the cut-off immediately made me aware of the need to survive! After getting first things first: e.g. acquiring 'slots' for food supplies and achieving click and collect, my life settled into daily walk routines and gardening.

The hot weeks in May made planting and socialising with tea parties in the garden most enjoyable.

I now miss being involved in driving for Meals on Wheels in town and the normally busy village life of Flower Shows, Village Fetes, and the like. I took great delight in ringing our Church Bells 75 times (at least) to celebrate VE Day.

### **Guy Izzett** **Dip Poultry** **1962 – 1963**

After returning to Zimbabwe I worked in poultry for several years and had my own poultry farm for a few years 'till squeezed out by the big multi-nationals.

I moved from Zimbabwe to Australia and worked in ag-chemicals for several years until I realised there was a better way.

I became self-employed for 20 years, supplying an IPM service to the orchard industry. Now retired in Perth and not aware of any ex-Harper students in Western Australia.

I still consider my two years at Harper as perhaps the best most productive two years of my life.

### **John Ward** **1961 – 1963**

Staggering how much has changed since my student days!

I met Elizabeth Sunderland (1962 – 1964), a poultry student, and we married in 1973. Two daughters later and one grandson, we both live in Warkworth, Northumberland which is amazing. We were both reared, educated and worked mostly in our native Yorkshire.

I spent most of my working life in the Animal Feed and Animal Health Industries, retiring in 2003 after many years with Pfizer Limited.

We have visited Harper since on many occasions and I was proud to be largely responsible for placing the brass plaque behind the "new" doors at the front of the original main building. A group of us formed the Yorkshire Harper Adams Association in the 70s and on its winding down we donated the remaining funds to the College and hence the provision of the doors.

I have been reassured that the plaque is still in place and hope it will survive for many years to come.

It's now several years since we attended the reunions but hope we can conjure up a significant event to return. Unfortunately quite a few of our original group are no longer able to attend and Northumberland to Shropshire return is a sizeable mileage but I think we could do it – so maybe one day we will meet up and admire the new Harper and thank the old one for shaping both our lives.

### **Mark Noble** **1999 –**

Having worked at Pensthorpe Natural Park, a progressive nature reserve in North Norfolk owned by the founder of Jordan's Cereal, Bill Jordan and his wife, Deb, for 16 years, including running the three companies based from the estate for the last 8 years, I've now moved into my first year running a predominantly tourism-focused consultancy company.

I left Pensthorpe in February and was asked to become a Trustee of the Charity based there and more recently Company Secretary. I still work for Bill and Deb privately but was also asked to join Blue Sky Leisure, a large tourism business in the county, as a Non Exec Director.

I am also acting Operations Manager at Jordan's Mill overseeing the day-to-day operations whilst establishing a new management team to continue turning the business around.

Outside of work, I've competed my qualifications to be a Practitioner in Life Coaching, Neuro Linguistic Programming and clinical hypnosis and my level 3 in ILM. I've been beating on the same shoot for 13 years working my Lab-x dogs.

2010 saw me project manage my greatest achievement, which was the demolition and rebuild of my family home. Aside from that, it's travel including long weekends away in my VW camper van with my partner Lauren and her two lovely children.

Becoming self-employed has allowed me to start finding a good work/life balance and time for the things in my life that are really important.

### **Chris Greenaway 2007 –**

I married Imogen Goatman (now Mrs Greenaway) who was a Harper graduate in 2013, in 2015 near Chepstow. We now have two little girls Lillie 3 1/2 and Naomi 1 1/2.

I manage a 4,000 acre combinable business in Gloucestershire for Richard Beldam Farms and have, over the past five years, gained FACTS, BASIS (I was nominated for the Barry Orme award after being nominated as best in my class), Plant Protection Award, John Edgar Trust course and I am currently part way through the AHDB PMDS 20 (Professional Management Development Scheme) course to be completed in November 2020.

Imogen worked for Dunns of Long Sutton as a transport manager amongst other roles before giving up to become a full time mum for the time being. She is ambitious enough to go back to work in the agricultural industry long term. We are doing well and are very happy.

### **Richard Kenyon 1971**

Carol and I are back in the UK once again. I have returned to the small country estate that I managed from 2007 – 2011, when we returned to NZ. The opportunity came up to return and bring the property back in to some order. It was all rather disappointing to see the neglect when I arrived but, of course, the position would not have been open to me if everything was fine.

We are likely to return to NZ in 2021 and in theory 'retire'.

### **Simon Stokes, BSc Agric Technology, 1985 – 1989 and Nicola Stokes (nee Munden), HND Agric, 1985 – 1988**

Having met in our first year, both freshers in Boughey Hall, we are pleased to have celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary in May 2020. We married soon after leaving, in 1990, and have been living, farming and raising our three boys in East Devon ever since.

In 2004 we moved all of eight miles, having bought a derelict smallholding near Sidmouth. We are still knocking the place into shape and have the usual menagerie of smallholding animals plus a small flock of Romney sheep.

Nic is also very keen on her horses and competitive dressage. For the past 30 years we have been heavily involved in caravans and camping, originally as a farm diversification, and we still own and run a caravan storage business near our home.



*Simon Stokes (1985-89), standing at what is now the site of the Bamford Library.*

He writes: "Myself in front of our Harper rowing trailer prior to a regatta, probably 1986. A student nicknamed 'Brock' wanted to start a rowing club whilst at Harper and a few of us were persuaded to sign up. We trained at the Pengwern Rowing Club in Shrewsbury and did a few regattas."

After an absence, rowing is again popular among Harper Adams students now, who again train at Pengwern in Shrewsbury and compete throughout the country when they can.



*Students on my BSc Agric Tech course in 1989 – Simon Stokes.*



**Deborah Wright**  
**MSc Plant Pathology**  
**2016 – 2017**

After graduating from my Masters in Plant Pathology in 2017 I worked several years as an agronomist and research technician for Bayer Crop Science, Stockbridge Technology Centre and ADAS.

In September 2019 I moved to Harpenden to work for Rothamsted Research as a field experimentation technician where I assist on a variety of crop trials and other research.

**Simon North**  
**1995 –**

Recently moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and working as the Agronomy Technical Lead for Cargill Agricultural Supply Chain North America.

**John Burrows**  
**1943**

When I was at Harper only one student (Frank Bennison) had a car!  
 I'm one of the old guys.

**Paul Williams**  
**1964 –**

After Harper joined the Milk Marketing Board as a field officer 1968 – 1973. Married in 1971. Two children and four grandchildren later, we celebrate our golden wedding anniversary next year!

Joined Unigate in 1973 as farms adviser for 1,200 dairy farms in Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire.

Started own business in 1983 – Wessex Dairy Hygiene – clue is in the name. Still doing it!

**A Harper wedding**  
**Alison Skea and Adam Patterson**

We are just so grateful to Harper Adams for bringing us together.

We met as we were both doing BEng Ag eng, then we were at placement at Claas, and we were in the same house in final year. We went on the ski trip together and have so many things in common, we are now living up in Angus.

I'm working at a factory and Adam is managing a farm as well as numerous engineering projects. Just can't wait to start the rest of our life together, it was a very limited ceremony with only 17 guests 2 of which were at Harper as well. Basically we owe so much to Harper, having made amazing friends and relationships for life.



*Photography by Graeme McInnes.*



**Owen Lloyd**

BEng Agriculture Engineering graduate, Owen Lloyd, has been named United Kingdom Lubricants Association (UKLA) Young Employee of the Year for his work at Morris Lubricants management.

This accolade adds to his success of achieving the UKLA Certificate of Lubricant Competence and a Diploma with the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply alongside his Harper Adams degree.

**Call for NDA 1961 – 1963 reunion – Tony Davison**

I was an NDA student at Harper Adams from 1961 to 1963. 2021 will be the diamond anniversary of starting at the college. I am in contact with Rod Gill and Geoff Allen from that time and it would be lovely if as many of our colleagues as possible could attend the reunion. Details to be shared in due course.

# Annual Harper Ireland Club Dinner



*Left to right: Chris Balfour, Pat O'Keeffe, Chris Scurfield and Dr David Llewellyn.*

Harper Adams University students from the island of Ireland were treated to some timely career advice and words of wisdom from their guest speaker at the annual Harper Ireland Club dinner.

Pat O'Keeffe, Corporate Affairs Director with Glanbia Ireland, shared experiences and lessons from his own personal journey since graduating from University College Dublin in 1996.

He recalled conversation with a careers guidance teacher in the early 1990s, who tried to dissuade him from pursuing a degree in agricultural science, being told "it's a sunset industry". His advice to the Harper Adams students was: "Seek lots of advice, but ultimately follow your own instincts and do what is right for you." Over the course of 17 very enjoyable years with the Irish Farmers Journal, Pat O'Keeffe visited dairy farms in 19 different countries. He said: "When the opportunity arose in 2015 to join Glanbia, I felt I had achieved all that I could achieve in the role and the time was right for a new challenge."

Pat O'Keeffe also encouraged the students to consider involvement in organisations linked to their profession. He enjoyed five years with the Agricultural Science Association, including a term as President. The dinner also saw MEng Agricultural Engineering student Lewis Hamilton, 23, from Armagh, County Armagh, presented with the President's Prize. This prize seeks to recognise students that have given their all to Harper Adams, Harper Ireland and the student community.

The Vice President's Cup, which is passed annually from chairman to chairman, was presented by Chris Scurfield (outgoing), 19, from Downpatrick, County Down, to Chris Balfour, 19, from Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, the new Harper Ireland Chairman for 2020/2021.

## ALUMNI BUSINESSES SPOTLIGHT —

**Gleneely Foods**  
[www.gleneelyfoods.com](http://www.gleneelyfoods.com)

**From Grace Ryan (nee Covitz) who, alongside her brother and fellow alumni, Michael Covitz, has diversified their family business.**

**What we've done:** Pivoted from supplying 100% to foodservice and hospitality to delivering gifts direct to consumers at home.

**Who we are:** We are a 30-year-old Irish second generation family-owned and run food business employing 15 people. Our business had been 100% reliant on supplying produce to foodservice and hospitality. Covid-19 had the potential to severely impact us. However, inspired by our parents Percy and Anne, who built the business from scratch, my brother Michael and I have endeavoured to remain positive and have recently launched an ecommerce business selling our delicious food produce direct to consumers nationwide by our own fleet of dedicated drivers.

Customers can order delicious, Irish produce, direct from us to gift to loved ones, or to reward hard-working employees. In turn we are also supporting some great contemporary as well as traditional luxury Irish food brands such as delicious Irish farmhouse cheeses, Bean and Goose Chocolate from Co. Wexford, On the Pigs Back Pates and Terrines from Cork, wine from Mitchell & Son Wine Merchants and a choice of handmade Cocktails from Bar 1661. Cheese, Chocolate and Cocktails have never tasted so good! (Minimum order for delivery = €40).

**Harper Adams ties, bow ties, cufflinks, pendants and more are now available to purchase online! Visit:**  
[store.harper-adams.ac.uk](http://store.harper-adams.ac.uk)

You can also use the store to make donations and re-order certificates – just visit the "alumni" section.



### Annabel's Deliciously British From Annabel Makin-Jones [www.annabelsdeliciouslybritish.co.uk/](http://www.annabelsdeliciouslybritish.co.uk/)

I studied Agri-food and Business at Harper Adams University, graduating in 2004 and I am now striving to ensure that my business is sustainable and does not compromise meeting the needs of future generations, and ultimately, my children.

As well as growing cereals on the farm, my key focus and enterprise is growing strawberries.

Having left Harper Adams in 2004, I have been working within the family business since, and with significant investment, our strawberry production has expanded and continues to do so.

We use a hydroponic system with drip irrigation to grow our strawberries, and we are always looking at new systems and plant varieties, to ensure continuous production of high quality fruit for 6 months of the year.

With recent additions to the Deliciously British range in the form of conserve and chutney, my business now has a year round product range.

Being a mother, coupled with my passion for the industry, I want to promote Agriculture and Food production, to ensure that the younger generation know and understand how food is produced and where it comes from.

The farming standards in the UK are stringent, but they ensure that our customers are assured that the food we produce, is responsibly produced and safe for consumption.

### The Modern Milkman [themodernmilkman.co.uk](http://themodernmilkman.co.uk)

Harper Adams alumnus, Paul White, has seen his start up business flourish over the last year. Graduating with a BSc (Hons) Rural Enterprise and Land Management degree in 2009, Paul has gone on to be The Modern Milkman, a member of the team of four that delivers in a contemporary way.

The co-owned company delivers plastic-free groceries and glass-bottled milk, delivering over 750,000 pints to over 10,000 customers' doorsteps across Pendle, Lancashire and are looking to expand in the coming months. Paul says:

"The idea was borne from David Attenborough's Blue Planet programme, which focused on the plight of plastic on our oceans.

"The response has been pretty staggering, we've been really taken aback by it. It's great to see so many people wanting to actually tackle this problem."

Alongside Thomas Shaw, Simon Mellin and Becky Hilton, Paul's team work in areas across the borough to deliver goods to expecting households. Although the business is still in its infancy, it is thriving, with an app having been developed to help manage deliveries.

The app will enable customers to order right up to 9:30pm the night before to have their groceries delivered by 7:30am the next morning.

### APC Achieve.com From Caroline Cavil

I did the REALM MSc, gained MRICS then FRICS and assess and chair final APC panels.

I had done some mentoring for prospective final APC candidates, many ex Harper, and been able to prepare them, but I also see many final candidates who are not prepared as best they can be, for a number of reasons, and thus **APCachieve.com** was born.

I am on Facebook and Twitter and offer a bespoke coaching service for prospective APC rural candidates to assist them to prepare a quality submission, and to be prepared for the final interview.



Have you considered further study?

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## Museum tour of agricultural importance

**I have taken a walking tour of Leicester Museum in the Leicester city centre (originally Roman Leicester city centre). I was much interested in the Lost World and Ancient Egypt which have agricultural importance.**

Archaeology is probably done by most farmers working on the land and the old and ancient artefacts are mostly ignored by them, except those who have academic interests in mind. Some old and antique household utensils may be found, these might be heavily scarred and even broken into pieces.

Someone who is creative and imaginative may draw a picture to re-construct the item and he may even re-construct a human or animal anatomy from the broken pieces of bones. Renovated things may make very interesting and entertaining simulation through the mediums of books, magazines and video film shows.

A farmer sees and learns a lot about science and plant and animals biology and anatomy which can be of great academic importance. He should keep a notebook and pen or mobile phone to write down his observations and also record on his mobile. Unwritten words and sounds give much more knowledge because not everything can be easily written down when one is working on the field and is experiencing challenging weather.

*Mansoor Ismail, 2011.*

# THE CROP DOCTOR OF THE VALE OF YORK

Harper Adams alumnus, Rob Daniel has put his degree knowledge to work in his role as agronomist with Agrii. Having graduated in 2010 from his BSc (Hons) Agriculture and Crop Management degree course, Rob has become known as the crop doctor of the vale of York. But how did he gain this reputation? Rob explained:

“I come from a family arable farm where my dad, two uncles and cousins all work. When I joined Harper Adams to study agriculture and crops, I was unsure of what I wanted to do after studying. It was a toss up between going back into farming and following the family business, or working in agronomy.

“During my time at Harper, I definitely swayed more towards the crop and arable elements of my studies. Although farming is part of this, understanding how to make the best of the full cycle, right from the soil through to the end product was something I was interested in pursuing.”



With this in mind, Rob began researching careers that would enable his theoretical interests to become practical working reality. He commented:

“This was when I started looking more into agronomy. I remember asking my mum about her thoughts and the first thing was that I would grow up to be a crop doctor!

“Despite this, agronomy encompasses a lot more than just growing crops. It’s also about monitoring through the season, working with farmers to maximise the profit of the crops that they are growing. It’s holistic management of land and crop.”

Of his role as an agronomist, Rob said: “Quite often some of the older generations refer to the agronomist as the chemical man but we really do go the full cycle from soil to finished crop.

“Much of what I do is a case of managing with our farmers what input they want to get out of their agronomist. While some may want us to be part of the whole process, others simply want us to be the chemical man. The great thing about chemicals now is that they are so specific to what we put them on – it’s not harmful to other crops or to other people using them.

“The industry is getting smarter, even in the last nine years I’ve been part of it – it’s amazing to see how far we’ve come.”

# IN MEMORIAM

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**John Usher**  
NDA  
1955 – 1957

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John was born in Shropshire where his father was an Agricultural Advisor with the County Council who joined NAAS at its inception in 1948.

John had great musical interests playing the grand piano at assemblies when at school in Shrewsbury. He also had a very good singing voice. He won a singing scholarship to Llandaff (Cardiff) Cathedral where he was a member of the choir. He attended Harper Adams from 1955 to 1957 and on achieving the NDA went on to Seale Hayne Agricultural College where he took the NDD course.

Following college he was employed on a farm for two years where he gained further practical experience. He joined NAAS as a trainee advisor at Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire in 1960 and three years later he was promoted to Agricultural Advisor in Somerset where he specialised in dairying. Subsequently he was transferred to Bakewell in Derbyshire. Towards the end of his career he specialised in aspects of agricultural policy.

In retirement his interests were gardening and walking in the Yorkshire Dales. He met his wife Doreen at a walking event. He also returned to singing, particularly with Sheffield Bach Choir and Leeds Festival Choir.

John was a popular best man at the marriage of Peter Chance (1953 – 1956) in 1963 and the marriage of Glyn Sneade (1956 – 1958) in 1965.

In total a life full of varied interests.

**John Hilderley**  
HND Agriculture  
1970 – 1973

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John Hilderley was a well-known and respected farmer from Creswell in Staffordshire who attended Harper from 1970 – 1973 as part of the HND group who, on leaving Harper, formed the Glee Club. He was an active and regular attendee at the Glee Club reunions and had a dry wit and unique sense of humour.

In 1972 he was part of a small group of students who took a piano round local town centres where they sang Old Time Music Hall songs to collect money for rag. The problem of how to move the piano from town to town was soon solved by John who commandeered his farm pick-up. As our singing efforts were sometimes on the fringe of legality we sometimes had to leave town rather suddenly and John was our very competent get-away driver.

It was while he was at Harper that John met Anne, (nee Clarke HND 1971 – 1974) who was to become his wife. Later, as John fell ill, Anne cared for him devotedly whilst John bore his illness with courage, fortitude and good humour. Our sympathies and thoughts are with Anne and the family at this sad time.

**Tara Quinn**  
Agri-food  
1994 – 1999

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Philippa Cox wrote to tell us that Tara Quinn sadly lost her long battle with cancer this year.

“Tara was a 1994 – 1999 agri-food student and a keen hockey girl. I am sure many have had stories of her”.

**Mike (MW) Stacey**  
NDA  
1961 – 1963

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Mike was probably the last 61 – 63 NDA intake still actively farming in Worcestershire. He had installed a fully automatic milking system and achieved considerable success with his cheeses.

He is survived by his wife, Diane and son Nick, now living in Broadway. *David Main.*

**Anthony Kilner Heathcote**  
National Diploma in Agriculture  
1949 – 1951

**President of the Harper Adams Club, 1970 – 1971**

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Mr Heathcote's son, Tim, wrote to us, saying how much his father enjoyed reading and sharing alumni newsletters.

“One of the more recent copies showed a photo of him and other then students attending the recently re-furnished library. This came as a surprise to me, as I thought he spent most of his time at College playing sport!”

**Rachel Lumley**  
BSc (Hons) Agriculture with  
Land Farm Management  
2006

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Tributes were paid during summer 2020 to Harper alumna Rachel Lumley, who died aged 37. Graduating from Harper Adams in 2006, Rachel went on to have an impactful career in the agricultural sector.

She was the founder of Love Lamb Week, an annual campaign promoting the benefits of eating lamb, and worked as an experienced wool handler and represented England at the World Shearing and Woolhandling Championships, held in New Zealand in 2017.



## John Aled Griffiths OBE retires from the British Egg Marketing Board Trust

After almost 40 years promoting, encouraging and supporting education, research and development work associated with the egg industry, Aled Griffiths OBE has retired from the British Egg Marketing Board (BEMB) Research and Education Trust.

Aled was first appointed to the BEMB Trust in 1981 as the NFU Poultry Representative. At that time the BEMB was very involved with the Poultry Husbandry Experimental Unit at Harper Adams Agricultural College and Aled was Chairman of the Unit from 1983-1992.

Aled was Chairman of the NFU Poultry Committee in 1985 and, when the Government abolished the Eggs Authority in 1986, he was instrumental in obtaining the residual income of the Eggs Authority for the BEMB Trust to support its research and education programme into projects related to eggs in the UK.

The British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) was formed to replace the Eggs Authority in 1985 and Aled became its Founder Chairman.

Having completed a Nuffield Farming Scholarship himself in 1974, Aled was actively involved with the interviews for the Nuffield Poultry Scholars as the BEMB Trust's Selector and, since 1984, he has had the pleasure of working alongside many of these Nuffield Scholars.

It has been incredibly rewarding for Aled to see the BEMB Trust's financial assistance enabling so many PhD candidates and research facilities continue sector-leading research across the UK.

Aled was born and bred in North Wales and graduated from Aberystwyth University College, before he and his late wife, Olwen, began farming on the Welsh border in Shropshire in 1955. The family later founded Oaklands Farm Eggs with sites across Shropshire, Wales and the UK.

During his illustrious career, Aled has been the recipient of numerous awards and accolades for his long-standing and distinguished service to the poultry industry in the UK, Europe and the world and in recognition of his commitment to innovation and sustainable stewardship of his land and farming business.

He was honoured with an OBE for his services to the poultry industry in 1993 and was made a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society in 1994 and awarded a Fellowship of Harper Adams University in 2009.

In 2018 he received both the egg industry's most prestigious and highest awards, the International Egg Commission's (IEC) Denis Wellstead Memorial Trophy for The International Egg Person of the Year, together with the Peter Kemp Award for Outstanding Contribution to the British Egg Industry.

Professor Peter Biggs was the Chairman of the BEMB Trust in the early days and he was the only trustee that was a scientist.

The other trustees were egg producers and the Chairman of the NFU National Poultry Committee.

During this time most of the trustees could understand the science, but from 2000 onwards the scientific research work has become much more complicated and it became imperative that scientists should be appointed to the BEMB Trust to explain and follow the research work that is being carried out today.

Aled commented that: "It has been very gratifying for me to look back over my 39 years working for the BEMB Trust and to see that of the 26 Nuffield Poultry Scholars that I was able to help to obtain their scholarships, 20 of them are still very actively working or associated with the poultry industry today.

I am delighted to be leaving the BEMB Trust in such good hands, with a great team representing egg producers, together with three eminent scientists, all under the guidance of such an excellent Chairman, Dr Martin Shirley CBE, and a very experienced, organised and dedicated Secretary, Alison Bone. Furthermore, with Investec taking good care of the investments, the BEMB Trust is in very good hands and long may it continue."

Aled was presented with a set of Welsh crystal whisky glasses and an inscribed crystal jug, thanking him for his 39 years of service.



# A future in aquaculture

Undertaking a placement year allows students to take a chance and try a career in a field they may never have thought of before. Such was the case for Harper Adams alumnus Neil Manchester who, when studying his agricultural technology degree, decided to take a chance in the field of aquaculture.

Coming from a background in dairy and sheep farming, Neil initially came to Harper Adams seeing the institution as “a good entry point into farm management”.

However, while studying, Neil realised that the cycles of sheep farming were not quite what he had anticipated and began to look for alternative career paths. Having only previous experience in pleasure angling, Neil took it upon himself to enter into a six month placement on a trout farm in Scotland at the start of his sandwich year. At the time, fish farming was in its infancy, pioneering for change in a field previously unexplored.

That six month period shaped Neil’s future career, seeing him return to Scotland upon the completion of his degree and enter into a growing industry. He said: “the developments have been an exciting adventure. In the 1990s I specialised in Atlantic salmon breeding and juvenile production, and that led to my company being bought by Hendrix Genetics in 2011 as their first venture into aquaculture.”

From there, Neil worked his way up the ranks, being appointed managing director of Hendrix, relocating to the headquarters in the Netherlands.

From this, Neil applied his agricultural knowledge to the development of the business, seeing how a demand for fish protein was rapidly increasing in relation to a decline in wild catch fish.

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Speaking about the potential of aquaculture, Neil said: “We are in the midst of an aquacultural revolution, taking technologies developed in agriculture over the last 50 years and applying it to fish species in the a much shortened period.

“Aquaculture has the potential to grow from 80 million tonnes annual production today to over 130 million tonnes by 2030, and offers the best solution to the growing protein gap as the world’s population increases. The earth’s surface is 71 per cent water, but it only generates 2 per cent of our food today. Technology in all aspects of aquaculture has developed hugely, and the opportunities to expand production in many hundreds of species in many regions of the world are numerous.

“We have developed breeding operations all over the world so I mix with diverse cultures every day, whether its salmon breeding in Scotland and Chile, trout breeding in USA, South America and Isle of Man, or shrimp breeding in Hawaii, Ecuador, Malaysia, India and Vietnam. Every day brings opportunity and growth, new connections and always something new to learn.”

This changing environment was everything Neil wanted from his degree and more, where the opportunities to pioneer change were not repeated year on year. Thus, his advice to current students is, “Don’t try and follow a blueprint, share your career based on your heart, not just your head.

An old shepherd once told me, ‘Live like you will die tomorrow, but farm like you will live forever’ and that’s what I strive to do.”

“Technology in all aspects of aquaculture has developed hugely, and the opportunities to expand production in many hundreds of species in many regions of the world are numerous”



# From County Down to South Island — Jenny's early career takes her around the globe

Harper Adams alumna, Jenny Martin, has had a diverse and exciting career path that has led her across the globe. From the family farm outside of Newtownards, County Down, to Singapore and New Zealand, Jenny has had a true taste of global farming.

The BSc Business Management with Marketing graduate grew up on her family's third generation beef and dairy farm where she developed her passion for farming. Wanting to make her passion a lifestyle choice, Jenny ventured to Harper Adams.

"My three years there were absolutely amazing," Jenny commented. She was later offered a scholarship to be a delegate at the 27th Commonwealth Agricultural Conference in Singapore.

Harper Adams supported her to join 274 representatives from 19 Commonwealth countries in a discussion around bridging the rural and urban divide. With the knowledge she gained in business management to understand the different communities in agriculture, Jenny was able to take her learning with her into the working world.

Working for The AF Group, Jenny flew out to bridge the gap between rural and urban, meeting a variety of different farmers. Jenny said: "My first stop was to Nui Friesians, which is a third generation dairy and beef farm ran by the Broderstons based in Taupo, which is in the middle of the North Island.

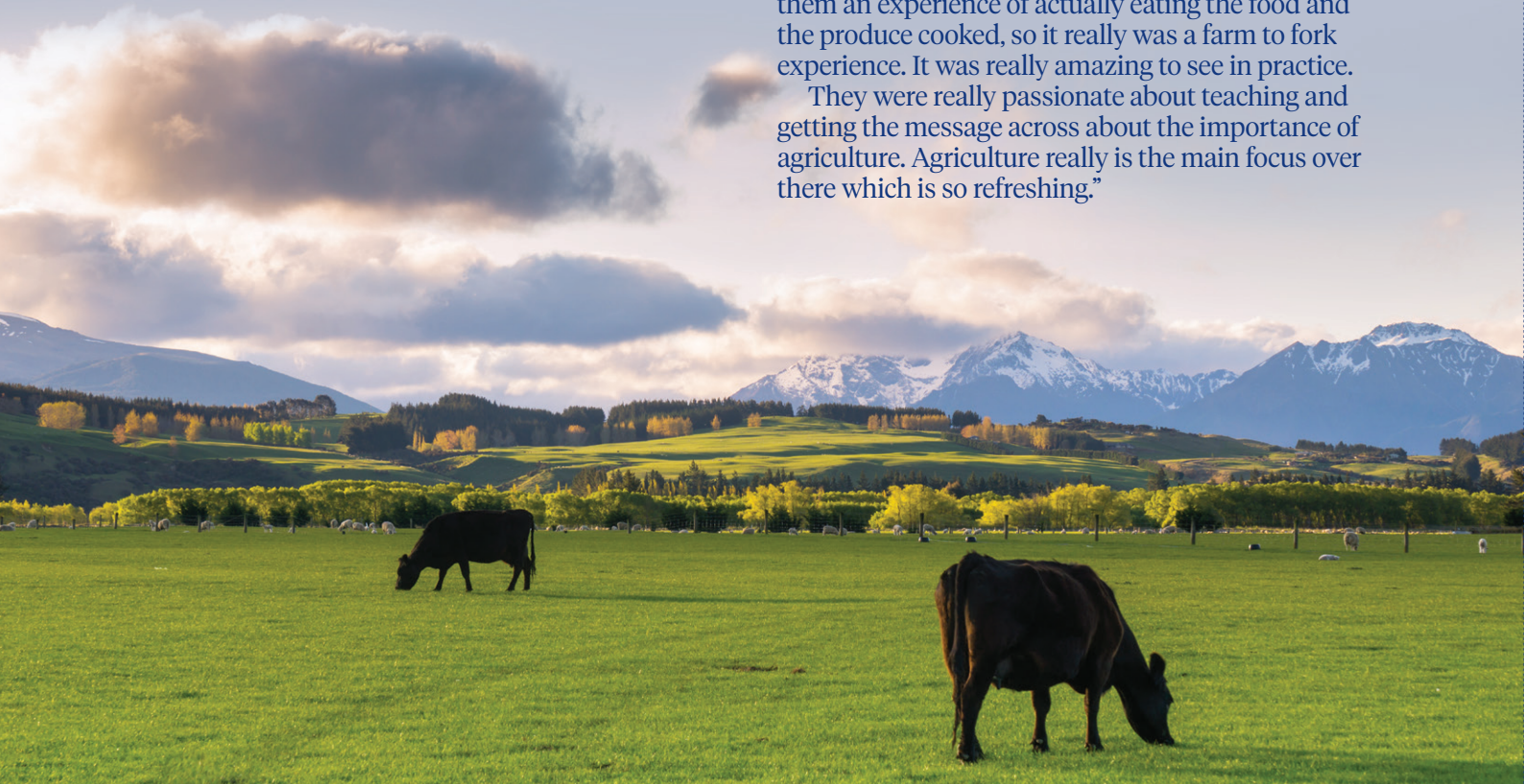
"Unlike the majority of dairy farms in New Zealand which are predominantly Jersey-Friesian based due to farmers wanting higher butter fat percentages, Nui Friesians was a Holstein-Friesian based system focusing on high milk volumes on low inputs."

Jenny then contrasted this farming experience with one on the South Island, working for Real Journeys, a company she likened to The National Trust.

She explained: "It's a Kiwi family-owned business that has seven different tourist locations based all over the South Island, making it New Zealand's largest tourism company. I was assistant manager so I had to oversee the whole operation.

"Our main aim was to educate visitors about New Zealand's produce and farming practices, and give them an experience of actually eating the food and the produce cooked, so it really was a farm to fork experience. It was really amazing to see in practice.

They were really passionate about teaching and getting the message across about the importance of agriculture. Agriculture really is the main focus over there which is so refreshing."



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