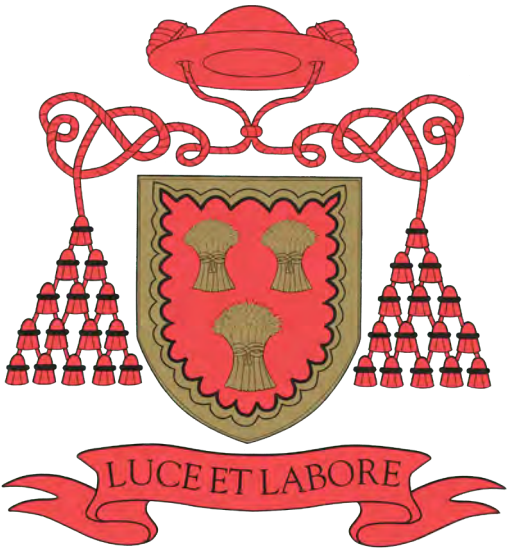



# Wye College Agricola Club

**Agricola Club Secretariat, 32 Mill Lane, Besthorpe, Attelborough, Norfolk NR17 2NL United Kingdom**

**Tel: 01953 455997**
**Email:** secretary@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk

**Journal Editor (retiring)**
John Walters
Email: akermans38@yahoo.co.uk

**Production Editor**
Marie Selwood

**With help from**
Francis Huntington
Siân Phelps
Jane Reynolds
Jane Walters

wyeagricolaclub.org.uk

# Contacts

| | |
|---|---|
| **UK** | All queries (including membership): James Trounce |
| | Tel: +44 (0)1953 455997 |
| | Email: secretary@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk |
| | Agricola Club Secretariat, 32 Mill Lane, Besthorpe, Attelborough, Norfolk NR17 2NL United Kingdom |
| **OVERSEAS** | Do get in touch with your named contact |
| **Australia** | Matthew Coleman, Parklands, 265 Thwaites Road, Yannathan, Victoria 3981 |
| | Email: matthew.coleman@ilc.gov.au |
| | Peter Darby, Box 308, Lyndoch, Barossa Valley, SA 5351 |
| | Email: petegaildarby@bigpond.com |
| | Helen Day, PO Box 193 Kapunda SA 5373 |
| | Email: thday@bigpond.com |
| | Robert Lewis, 21 Peters Road, Seville East, Victoria 3139 |
| | Email: robert.lewis2@programmed.com.au |
| **Botswana** | Motshwari Obopile. Dept of Agricultural Research, Pb 0033, Gaborone |
| **France** | Tom Hickman, La Chambre Blanche, Lezele en Plouye, Huelgoat, Bretagne 29690 |
| **Kenya** | James Hutchings, P O Box 1877 Naivasha |
| | Email: james@dogrock.net |
| **Malaw** | Stephen Carr, Private Bag 4, Zomba |
| | Email: scarr@sdnp.org.mw |
| **New Zealand** | John Varcoe, 154 Charles Road, Karaka, RD1 Papakura, 2580 Auckland |
| | Email: johnv@everythingdesign.co.nz |
| **Nigeria** | Christopher Akujuobi, Afribank Nigeria plc, N Chia Branch, 33 Hospital Road PMB 2002, Nchia-Eleone |
| **Southern Africa** | David Gooday, Lima Farm, PO Box 1288 Mbabane, H100 Swaziland |
| | Email: davidmalcolmgooday@gmail.com |
| **Uganda** | John Magnay, 17 Akii Bua Road, Nakasero, P O Box 32041, Kampala |
| | Email: johnmagnay@gmail.com |
| **USA** | Adrian Wadley, 1750 27th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94122 - 4210 |
| | Email: wadley@gmail.com |

*Photograph taken by Fiona Donnelly and posted on Our Place Wye*

# Contents

# President's message 2021

## Professor **David Leaver** (postgraduate 1964–67 and staff) – Agricola Club President.

May I once again offer a very warm welcome to the 2021 Journal. I am writing this in January amid the maelstrom of Covid and lockdown, Brexit impacts, climate change and the Trump saga, all of which have been at the centre of media output for almost 12 months. Much of this continues to impact negatively on many of us, and for most people it is a rather depressing January to start the year, but I hope by the time of Journal publication that we will be mostly through the pandemic. I hope, therefore, you will be cheered by the excellent contents of this year's Journal for which once again **John Walters** and his team deserve great credit, and many thanks to them from all of us.

I have just listened to the Radio 4 *Farming Today* (see page 209) programme that featured Wye College, arranged through **Chris Baines**. It presented a very honest reflection of Wye's history and the contributions it has made through its staff and alumni both in the UK and overseas. It was an excellent programme, and each contributor gave a telling view of the College's uniqueness and its influence on the lives and careers of its students.

I have also had plenty of time during this lockdown to reflect on the time I spent at Wye as a postgraduate student in the 1960s, the impact this had on me, and how it continues to influence my thoughts on all that is going on at present.

I found it extremely beneficial to have studied in Wye's collegiate environment where fellow students from this country and overseas were studying a range of subjects

across basic and applied sciences, economics and management, the environment and countryside management, with a close interrelationship across departments, disciplines and between students and staff. I remain convinced that, for many, this collegiate approach to learning provided many students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels with future opportunities and careers they may not have received in a larger university, although I fully accept that some students thrive better in small colleges and others develop better in larger city universities.

The impacts of the collegiate experience, both socially and academically, can be seen each year in the Journal where we hear about the wide range of careers and interests of the Wye College alumni, all of which highlights the importance of retaining diversity in

the different types of higher education institutions in the sector.

Unfortunately, in the 1990s and into the 2000s, a combination of factors led some of the rural and agriculturally-related colleges, including Wye College and Seale Hayne College, to merge with larger universities and subsequently be closed.

**The impacts of the collegiate experience, both socially and academically, can be seen each year in the Journal where we hear about the wide range of careers and interests of the Wye College alumni**

At that time, the downturn in applications nationally by students wishing to study agriculture and related subjects, and the increasing competitiveness in environmental subjects where Wye once had a lead, led to a struggle to sustain student numbers at a time when an increase was required just to stand still economically. Also, the rising cost of biological science teaching and research, with the emergence of molecular biology, was an additional factor putting a small college like Wye at increasing risk financially. The policy of Government then was to encourage mergers of small higher-education colleges with larger universities, and sadly that ultimately led to the tragedy of Wye being closed.

One of the main problems arising for such mergers is the difference in culture of small colleges and large universities. I was on the staff at Wye for the first two years after merger with Imperial College in 2000; it quickly became apparent that the main difference between the two institutions was in the culture of how they operated. Imperial was also a college, but it was a large institution and management did not encourage the same supportive, challenging but friendly collegiate approach that had been experienced previously by staff and students at Wye. The change of leadership that occurred at Imperial College following merger quickly led to a change in policy concerning the sustainability of Wye and its subsequent closure.

Today I also reflect on how the present crises relating to Covid and Brexit could have been addressed more effectively by one of Wye's great strengths in **management teaching**, and I think how many of the present decision-makers in Government would benefit from such training, especially in the simple basic necessities of business of having a vision, a strategy, a plan and an ability to deliver that plan. The adoption of these management skills, instead of the short-term, knee-jerk reaction decision-making we have continually experienced, would, I am sure, have left the country post-Covid in a much better place than it is now.

However, we are where we are and hopefully the Covid vaccines will allow the country to move forward once more, and it is important that we look ahead positively. So, may I wish all of you all the very best for 2021, and for the years ahead. Wye College may well be closed, but, as always, it is pleasing to see the fruits of its past work continuing through its alumni and through its past research innovations both in this country and overseas.

# Chair's report 2021

## Jane Reynolds (née Shackleton) (1973–76) – Agricola Club Chair.

*Greetings to all members.*

I believe I am not only the first lady Chair but also the first Rural Environmental Studies graduate to hold this position!

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to Dr **John Walters**, my predecessor, who was Chairman for eight years and who thankfully continues for now as Journal Editor. John held the Chair with an easy affability which made it a pleasure for the rest of the Committee and put us all at our ease. I can remember joining the Committee, probably well over 20 years ago now, and frankly feeling like a first year again, in awe of those in senior positions on the Committee! Thank you, John, for all you have done.

I think perhaps I should properly introduce myself to you all since only my cohort may remember me. Post-Wye, I briefly started training as a Land Agent with Smiths Gore in Staffordshire before succumbing to marital life in Kent with **Chris Reynolds** (Agric 1969–70). We still live in Pent Farm, Postling, only nine miles from Wye, where Chris has been Farm Manager and where we brought up our three children.

I restarted in the world of employment when all three were at school, initially freelancing as a Countryside Stewardship Adviser for 10 years or so, after which I retrained as a Garden Designer. I have only recently given that up to spend more time with our grandchildren, though Covid-19 has scuppered much of that for the time being!

So, here we are, still in the grip of a virulent pandemic which has meant that our last two Agricola Meetings have been held on Zoom and I have yet to Chair a meeting 'in the flesh'! However, the end may be within sight, and I write this on the day that the first vaccines are given to the elderly. It will be well over a year since it first began before we hopefully may be able to resume some sort of normality. Like so many of our membership, I count myself fortunate to live in beautiful countryside. However, my heart goes out to those who have been cruelly affected by this terrible virus.

Nevertheless, your Committee has been busy. The topic which crops up at every meeting and which provokes robust debate at the moment concerns the future of the College buildings. Paramount in our thinking is how a home for the Agricola Club and Wye Heritage can be assured within the College buildings. Wye Heritage was founded by **Francis** and **Lucy Huntington** (1961–64) and

is dedicated to preserving the unique history of Wye and the College.

Your Committee has adopted a neutral position in this debate but will continue to act as a conduit of information to our members, to keep you all informed of developments. I am sure this subject will be aired in much greater detail elsewhere in the Journal.

I very much hope that by this time next year, a planning decision will have been taken and that someone will start to develop and care for our cherished College buildings.

I would like to thank the rest of the Committee for their time and commitment to the Club, in particular the office holders – **Francis Huntington** who works tirelessly as Secretary and **Paul Webster**, out Treasurer, who oversees the Clubs' investments and keeps the Memorial Fund in order.

We have our re-arranged Agricola Dinner to look forward to which we hope to hold on 30 October 2021 in Wye. In the meantime, I hope you all stay safe and well and that by the end of 2021, Covid-19 will no longer dominate our lives.

# Cricket Week

25th JUNE.– 30th JUNE, 1954

*FRIDAY, 25th JUNE*
8.15 p.m.
*Music Society* – Concert

*SATURDAY, 26th JUNE*
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
*Rifle Club* – Shooting Contest
Wye Down
11.30 a.m.
*Cricket* – The College v. Agricola Club
2.30 p.m.
*Tennis* – The College v. Agricola Club (Men's Doubles)
The College v. Swanley Guild (Women's Doubles)
8.0 - 12.0 p.m.
A.C. & S.G. Dance at Withersdane

*SUNDAY, 27th JUNE*
12.0 noon
*Cricket* – The College v. Mr S.J. Goldsack's XI
2.30 p.m.
*Tennis* – The College v. Canterbury (Mixed)
8.15 p.m.
Debate with Fanatics
Swanley Hall

*MONDAY, 28th JUNE*
11.30 a.m.
*Tennis* – American Tournament
12.0 noon
*Cricket* – The College v. University College
8.0 p.m.
*Dramatic Society* – 'Charlie's Aunt'
8.15 p.m.
*Film* – 'On the Town'

*TUESDAY, 29th JUNE*
10.30 a.m.
Commemoration Service
11.30 a.m.
*Cricket* – The College v. C.E.M.
*Tennis* – Tournament Finals
2.0 p.m.
Treasure Hunt (Motorised)
6.30 p.m.
*Tennis* – The College v. S.C.R.
8.0 p.m.
*Dramatic Society* – 'Charlie's Aunt'

*WEDNESDAY, 30th JUNE*
2.30 p.m.
*Cricket* – The College v. Warden's XI
9.0 p.m.- 3.0 a.m.
Cricket Week Ball

EXHIBITIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM | Coldharbour Farm |
| ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY<br>Toys | Lecture Room G |
| COLLEGE ART EXHIBITION<br>Staff & Student Art | Zoology Laboratory |
| PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY<br>Boats – Spring – General | Botany Laboratory |
| SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY<br>Textiles | Lecture Room B |

*Cricket week was traditionally the post exams, final week of the summer term which was all fun and games, plays, dances, Commem Ball and pubs.*

# Editor's page

## John Walters (undergrad and postgrad 1964–70) – Journal Editor.

One of the interesting features in this year's edition is by Michael Payne (1978–81) who recounts past visits to the College by the Queen Mother. Immediately, I was reminded of my 1965/66 undergrad year when I was in a line-up to shake hands with her; I was part of the student union committee that was invited to meet her at a Withersdane gathering. I would have included the photographic evidence, but failed to locate it. And anyway, we it was already published in the Journal some years ago. Instead, I am exercising my editor's privilege and publishing a photo of me at my front door holding a handsome, framed wheatsheaf (below), presented to me by Francis, marking my stepping-down after eight years as chair. Jane Reynolds now has that role firmly in her grasp. The timing also coincides with this being my last edition as editor. I have hinted at it before, but now it's set in stone. Like many at my stage of life, I feel I am running low on time and, what I have available, I want to spread more thickly on family, grandchildren, friends, hobbies, garden and travel. It's time, anyway, for new blood, with newer/different ideas and a fresh approach. I started working on the Journal in 2001, when Jane Reynolds was editor, and I volunteered to help her (after consuming a few drinks at an Agricola Dinner, so I was full of bonhomie!). By the following year, I found myself holding the editor's baton, with Jane retaining the critical, but less intense, role as recipient of alumni news. That's how it remained for five years until another experienced journalist, Martin Rickatson (1994–97), took over as editor, supported by a small team, including myself. I'm not sure quite how it happened, but in 2014 I once again became editor, and so it has remained to the present day. In fairness to Martin, he was also holding down a full-time, journalist job at the same time.

In total, I have done 12 years at the 'coal face'. Another constant throughout that time has been our esteemed Club Secretary Francis. He too has stepped down this year but, unlike me, he has organised enough a replacement, James Trounce joins as Assistant Secretary. Good luck James; I also wish Jane R all the very best in her new role.

She has quite a challenge on her hands but with a great group supporting her.

Talking of James, I noticed that he lives near Attleborough, Norfolk which immediately conjures up 'Turkeys' to me, it being the epicentre of that segment of the poultry industry. Since, in a former life, I carried out my postgrad studies and then cut my journalistic teeth in and around the poultry business, it provides a link to something I was reading recently.

I happened to be searching for a particular photo in our Agricola archive and opened up the FIRST ever edition of the Agricola Journal, from 1901. Quite a paradox since this is MY last (I hope it's not THE last!). At that time, it was a twice-yearly publication (heaven forbid!). Of course, they did not have the benefit of Francis' digital newsletter to maintain the continuity of communication in the period between journals as we do.

Anyway, the point is that there was an article in there about poultry farming. Bearing in mind this was at the very beginning, some of the text really made me smile: '*… it would be hard to find a mania that more often attacks the otherwise sane, than that which produces an overwhelming desire to rush into poultry-farming*.'

And there were warnings: '*A poultry farmer must first of all be to a very considerable extent a farmer in the ordinary acceptance of the word. It is practicable to farm without poultry keeping as an adjunct, but it would not be practical to carry on a poultry producing concern without a considerable amount of every-day farming … A competent poultry man must have many qualities and is a difficult person to find. He has longer hours, must have more intelligence and skill than any ordinary farm hand, yet the wages …. are in no way commensurate with his qualifications. Such skilled labour has to be helped out as best it can by those troublesome pests, BOYS!*'

I got a real kick out of reading this piece. The author, in his final paragraph, fired out another warning to prospective start-up operations: '*I am as doubtful of its being in any way an Eldorado, except under very extraordinary circumstances, as I am sure that, as an adjunct to ordinary farming, poultry keeping may be made an additional source of income. The work is very hard, ten hours a day throughout the week and half Sundays is nothing out of the common.*'

Sound familiar to anyone?

As I take my leave as editor of this magnificent publication I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has played a part in making it such a success, not the least of whom are the individual contributors, both the regulars and the one-offs. It's your Journal and your words and stories that make it tick for all of us.

From the recent past, I would especially like to thank my Production Editor Marie Selwood who only joined the small team a few journals ago but has managed to raise the appearance and attractiveness of the final product to another level, in spite of the state of the material I delivered to her. Siân Phelps too has kept a tight reign on those all important contact details which means that most people, who want to, do get to see a copy, irrespective of how often they move and change addresses.

Thank you both and thank you all you members for your contributions, comments and feedback. It is really appreciated, just as the Journal is, I believe.

Finally, Geerings, our printers, have done us proud and feel just like part of the family!

# Secretary's report 2021

**Francis Huntington (1961–63) – Honorary Club Secretary.**

My report, once again, contains some repeat information; I make no apology as it is important that this section of the Journal reflects the regular stuff for which your Club Secretary is responsible.

## Change of Secretary

After 22 years as your Honorary Secretary, I have decided that I should step down in order to make way for someone a good deal younger. I alerted you, in last year's Journal, that we should look for a new Secretary and we are fortunate that **James Trounce** (1976–79) has volunteered his services and was welcomed onto the Committee at the 2020 AGM.

He is initially filling the post of Assistant Secretary, with a view to offering himself for election as Honorary Secretary at the 2021 AGM. I would like to offer James my personal thanks for stepping forward. James can be reached using this email: secretary@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk.

## 2020 Dinner – Covid19

Sadly, once we were into the first lockdown, it was inevitable that we had to cancel our 2020 Dinner and AGM which were to be have been held in Wye.

## 2021 Dinner and AGM – Saturday 30 October

We have agreed to hold the 2021 Dinner and AGM again in Wye and are expecting to welcome a significant number of members wanting to gather again. *(The booking form can be found in the green pages at the back of this Journal).*

This year we are particularly hoping to see those who graduated in 2001, 1991, 1981, 1971, 1961, 1951, or thereabouts. We, of course, extend a warm welcome to *all* alumni: whichever your year of graduation, you are encouraged to round up as many of your contemporaries as possible for an enjoyable trip down memory lane. Much has changed, but at the same time much remains the same.

## Club support for various ventures

In the recent past, the Club has financially supported Wye Heritage's Exhibitions. In 2019, we agreed to cover the fees of a part-time Wye Heritage Administrator for a period of two years, following on from Charles Course's generous funding of the first year of the appointment. This is a first step towards the two organisations working together more closely by sharing the services of the Club's Database Administrator (Siân Phelps). That is all working well, and this support has

been hugely appreciated by the Wye Heritage Committee. I have written a good deal more about Wye Heritage's activities in a separate article.

The Trustees of the Memorial Fund are continuing to respond to requests for help and support where those requests meet the Fund's objectives. See our Treasurer's report, the Memorial Fund accounts and the details of grants elsewhere in this Journal.

## Annual Journal

In the year that we were unable to meet, it was particularly welcome to receive our largest ever Journal in June to raise our spirits and to provide some 'lockdown' reading.

We all greatly appreciate John Walters' editorship and encouragement and his support of our contributors.

**Please note:** John is stepping down this year and we are looking for a volunteer to be a replacement editor.

## The Membership Database

We have done our best to keep the database as accurate as possible. This is the year that we only print emails and not the full address list. Which brings me to record that we have about 900 members for whom we do not have email addresses.

My thoughts are that there are probably many members who have just not got round to letting us know their current emails. Let's make 2021 the year when we enhance our ability to communicate with you by asking you all to look in the back of the Journal, check that your email address is there: if it is, is it correct? If it's not there, advise us.

WHY NOT DO THAT NOW?! Our Database Administrator will welcome being able to update your record: database@wyeagricolclub.org.uk.

Please be assured that the GDPR 2018 requirements and Club policy ensure that we will not pass your information to third parties.

## New members

We know that there are a substantial number of Wye College and Imperial College at Wye graduates, postgraduates and staff who, for one reason or another, have not joined the Club. We will continue to make an effort to recruit those who 'slipped through the net'. If you have friends, colleagues or contemporaries who are not members of the Club, do please encourage them to be in touch. If you email us, we can send you, or them, the application form and bank mandate electronically or, of course, a hard copy by mail.

## Website and e-newsletter

If you have not looked before, do check out www.wyeagricolaclub.org.uk. We are aware that the content and style could do with a revamp – I very much hope that can be achieved during 2021. A vital part of the revamp will be to include photographs of Wye College, its students and their activities down the years. Whilst many of you have furnished me with some great photos, I could do with more to evoke the Wye College of the past whilst we can still find and capture those extra special images. I do know that those of you who were at Wye in the 1970s have been sharing photographs on that cohorts' WhatsApp Group. Please also forward them to me: francis@lucyhuntington.co.uk for inclusion on the website.

## 'Lost' members

If you happen to notice that we have missed the death of a member it would be of great assistance if you could let us know of that

death so that our database is kept up to date, other members informed and an obituary published, if available.

A number of members have been extremely helpful in spotting lost members and putting us in touch. THANK YOU.

Thank you also to those of you who have persuaded your contemporaries to join the Club in recent years. Sadly, for some, their 'caution money', which could historically be commuted into 'life membership', was for various reasons unavailable! Whilst life membership is no longer on offer, we would welcome you as an annual member, which only costs £10 per annum via a standing order.

## Club merchandise and publications

The stocks of Club merchandise are now held in the Wye Heritage Centre and can be supplied by return; current prices, inclusive of postage and packing, are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ties | **£18.00** |
| Bow ties | **£22.50** |
| *The College at Wye – A Historical Guide* | **£10.00** |
| The Dennis Flaners print of front of College, limited edition (unframed) | **£20.00** |

Please make cheques payable to the 'Wye Heritage Centre' and send your request to admin@wyeheritage.org.uk.

## Contact

From 1 July 2021, James Trounce, our Assistant Secretary, will be dealing with Club correspondence:

**Email:** secretary@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk.

PLEASE CHECK AT THE BACK OF THE JOURNAL THAT WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT EMAIL. WE URGENTLY NEED THIS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOU – IF YOURS IS NOT LISTED OR NEEDS UPDATING, PLEASE SEND DETAILS TO:

database@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk.

# Wye College Agricola Club AGM

## Minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting held on Friday 30 October 2020 at 6.30pm. Meeting held online via video conferencing due to coronavirus situation.

**Present**

David Leaver (President and Chair), Sue Atkinson, Charles Course, Geoff Dixon, Berkeley Hill, Francis Huntington (Secretary), Jane Reynolds, Gary Saunders, John Walters, Chris Waters, Paul Webster (Treasurer) and 24 members

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting.

**1 Apologies for absence**

The Secretary had received apologies from Peter Johnson and Michael Payne.

**2 Minutes – confirm the Minutes of the 67th AGM published in the Journal**

It was resolved that the Minutes of the 67th AGM were a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

**3 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4 Chairman's Report**

The Committee Chairman, Jane Reynolds, thanked John Walters for his eight years as Chairman – Subsequently, John was presented with a College wheatsheaf in recognition of his service.

Regarding the College site, the owners, Telereal Trillium, did not yet have full planning permission; a planning inquiry was to be held on 28 January 2021. The WyeCRAG group had requested that the Club circulate details of their website, and that would be done in an upcoming newsletter. It was hoped that a solution could be found so that something could be done with the College buildings. The Chair stated that she felt it was important for the Committee take account of all members views but that the Committee should remain neutral and merely act as a conduit for information.

The Annual Dinner planned for 26 September had been cancelled, but plans were in hand for next year.

As well as thanking John Walters, the Chairman expressed her thanks to the Committee in general, and specifically the other officers, Francis Huntington (Secretary) and Paul Webster (Treasurer); also, David Simmons, who was standing down from Committee.

Member question – John Mansfield, on behalf of WyeCRAG, asked if the Committee had received the papers which had been forwarded; Jane Reynolds (Agricola Committee Chairman) confirmed receipt and stated that the Committee had agreed at its meeting earlier in the evening that details of the website would be circulated, but not the other papers.

**5 Secretary's Report**

The Secretary, Francis Huntington, referred Members to his report in the 2019–2020 Journal.

With reference to item 10 below, Committee membership, FH discussed the co-option of new Committee members.

James Trounce (1976–79) had come forward with a view to shadowing FH as Assistant Secretary, and gradually taking over the rôle. He gave a summary of his Wye background and career – Agricultural Chemistry at Wye with specific interest in soils, a career including 20 years at NIAB, currently at Easton College, Norfolk, where he would be finishing in August 2021.

Malcolm Alexander (1963–67) had also volunteered to join the Committee.

John Walters asked for suggestions of other people who might come forward to contribute to the Club.

**6 Treasurer's Report and to receive the Club accounts for 2019–2020**

The Treasurer, Paul Webster, presented the Club accounts.

Subscription income was around the same as last year.

There had been no Dinner or Hog Roast.

There was a notional deficit of c£10k, which was acceptable.

The main expenditure had been on the Journal.

The Club funds had largely withstood the stock market downturn

The accounts were accepted by the meeting (proposed John Mansfield, seconded Geoff Dixon).

**7 Memorial Fund – Trustees Report and Accounts 2019-2020**

The Treasurer stated that the Trustees had approved the accounts in a meeting earlier in the day.

The fund had c£6k to distribute; only one grant of £4k had been given this year, to the Tropical Agriculture Association.

Some of the Memorial Fund's investments had suffered in the current stock market uncertainty. The Trustees would therefore be arranging a meeting with their investment advisors to discuss the way forward, especially with regard to the Charifund holding.

**8 Appointment of Independent Examiners of the Accounts for 2020–2021**

The Treasurer again recommended that Chavereys be reappointed as they had served the Club well and each year, they deduct part of their bill as a contribution to the charity. Agreed.

**9 Journal Editor's Report**

John Walters reported that he was already at work on next year's Journal and had a good amount of material. All had been working well with the process. The Chairman thanked JW for his efforts.

**10 Elections**

Committee: 6 vacancies – Susan Atkinson, Berkeley Hill, Chris Waters and Paul Webster were due to retire in rotation, but were willing to stand again; James Trounce and Malcolm Alexander were proposed as new members.

All elected en bloc – proposed John Walters, seconded Jane Reynolds.

David Simmons was standing down from Committee, but might be available for co-option in the future.

Vice Presidents: No nominations had been received.

Honorary Membership: No nominations had been received.

The President thanked John for his years as Chairman and for his continuing role as Editor of the Journal, also Jane as

Chairman, Francis as Secretary and Paul as Treasurer for their excellent work on behalf of the Club.

**11 Future plans for Club events**

The 2020 Dinner on 26 September had been cancelled due to coronavirus, but Jane Reynolds reported that it was hoped to reconvene in Wye next year; suggested dates were 16 October or 30 October 2021, to be confirmed.

John Magnay reported that the '70's cohort' (c1972–79) were planning a summer event, possibly on the second Sunday in July.

**12 Report on Wye Heritage Centre**

Francis Huntington referred members to the report published in the Journal for a detailed account.

The Centre was unable to reopen due to Covid 19 restrictions, but it had been possible to bring together groups of six, observing guidelines, to work on cataloguing and scanning of archives, as well as housekeeping.

Most significantly, a new website had been created, with a blog section, including information about displays – www.wyeheritage.org.uk. The Chairman suggested the web address should be circulated to Agricola Club members. Chris Waters asked if FH would receive blog contributions – answer yes. Richard Longhurst also asked about contributions – Francis Huntington expanded on this question, indicating that he and the Journal Editor would agree the most suitable vehicle for contributions.

Wye Heritage were patiently awaiting the outcome of the planning appeal which will influence future plans.

**13 Update on the redevelopment of the Wye Campus**

Francis Huntington referred to the article in the Journal, which had been approved by the Committee.

Telereal Trillium were appealing over three developments, including the main College site, a public inquiry was due 28 January 2021; the main participants in this would be Telereal Trillium, Ashford Borough Council, Wye Parish Council and WyeCRAG (Wye College Regeneration Action Group).

Work was planned to start in November on 30–33 High Street, opposite College. John Mansfield thought that the site had been sold on; Francis Huntington explained that Telereal Trillium still owned the site.

Chris Baines and John Beath raised the issue of risk to the listed buildings and whether there was any support available.

WyeCRAG – Malcolm Alexander thought the Club should be more supportive of WyeCRAG, Chris Baines (as a Director of WyeCRAG) thought it was important for Agricola members to be kept informed. John Mansfield pointed out that the Heritage Centre would be incorporated in the proposals put forward by WyeCRAG. The Chairman stated that the Agricola Club was not there to support any particular development, but any requests should be addressed to the Committee. Jane Reynolds (Agricola Committee Chairman) confirmed the website information would be circulated to members.

**14 Any other business**

Malcolm Alexander wished to note the 90th birthday of Graham Milbourn.

# Wye College Agricola Club Dinner and AGM; Saturday 30 October 2021

**Schedule of Events**

## Lunch

We suggest that you might like to meet up with contemporaries at one of the Wye hostelries – please make your own arrangements

## 3.00pm–5.00pm

Wye Heritage Centre – Latin School, Wye College

Exhibition – History of the Club & plans for the new Heritage Centre

Tea/Coffee and Scones will be served in the Latin School until 5.00pm

## 5.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Agricola Club will commence in Wye School, Olantigh Road

## 6.45pm

**Pre-dinner drinks and canapés at Wye School, Olantigh Road**

A glass of sparkling wine and canapés will be offered, and a pay bar will be available throughout the evening.

## 7.30pm

**Dinner will be served at Wye School, Olantigh Road**

Some wine will be included on the tables and there will be a pay bar.

Please note that sadly for security reasons there will be no access to the College's Medieval and Edwardian buildings apart from the Latin School (Tea).

Parking will be available at the School.

# Wye College Agricola Club – Notice of Annual General Meeting

## Please note that the 69th Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 30 October 2021 in Wye School, Olantigh Road. Meeting starts promptly at 5.30 pm

The ability to hold this meeting will be dependent upon the prevailing Government restrictions at the end of October. Should it become impossible for this gathering to proceed, the meeting will be held remotely via 'Zoom' on Friday 15 October at 5pm.

### Agenda

1 **Apologies for absence**

2 **Minutes** – confirm the minutes of the 68th AGM published in the Journal.

3 **Matters arising**

4 **Chairman's Report**

5 **Secretary's Report**

6 **Treasurer's Report** – and to receive the Club accounts for 2020–2021

7 **Memorial Fund** – Trustees Report and Accounts 2020–2021

8 **Appointment of Independent Examiners of the Accounts for 2021–2022**

9 **Journal Editor's Report**

10 **Elections:**
Committee – there are four vacancies.
President – nominations to be received by the Secretary at least 14 days before the meeting: Professor Paul Webster has already been nominated.
Vice Presidents – nominations to be received by the Secretary at least 14 days before the meeting: Professor Graham Milbourn has already been nominated.
Honorary Membership – to receive and vote on the Committee's recommendations

11 **Future plans for Club events**

12 **Report on the Wye Heritage Centre**

13 **Update on the redevelopment of the College Campus**

14 **Any other business**

# The Wye Heritage Centre: 'Our past shapes our future'

**Karen Mitcalfe (Chair) and Francis Huntington (Hon Sec) of Wye Heritage Committee of Management review the year and look ahead to a potential move to new premises.**

Wye Heritage was launched in 2009 on the closure of the College, with the official opening of the Wye Heritage Centre in the Latin School on 15 October 2011. We celebrated the 10 years since our launch with a major exhibition in the summer of 2019 when we highlighted all that has been achieved and published this as a blogpost on the Wye Heritage website this last winter.

From the beginning, the Centre has been open to the general public on the first and third Saturday of each month. These Saturday morning openings have become very popular with a steady stream of visitors enjoying coffee and home-made cake and becoming immersed in the history and heritage of the village of Wye and Wye College. Until March 2020, the average Saturday visitor numbers had risen to 54 on each occasion when we opened.

Sadly, since March 2020, the Covid-19 restrictions have meant that we have not been able to open the Centre. We sincerely hope that during 2021 the vaccination programme and the reduction in the 'R' number will make it possible for us to reopen. However, it does seem likely that, whilst social distancing is in place, the number of people in the Centre will have to be strictly limited which almost certainly means that opening to the general public will have to be 'on-hold' for rather longer. We already have plans in place to open for cataloguing and digitising our collections whilst maintaining social distancing. We carried out an entirely successful risk assessment and one-day trial in September 2020; hence our confidence about our next move, once the Government's opening restrictions for heritage centres and museums are lifted.

## Regular displays

Each month we put together a new display highlighting a particular aspect of the life and times of the village of Wye and of the College. Recent displays have included: the Gordon Tucker diaries, written whilst he was at Wye Airfield during the First World War; Withersdane Hall and Gardens, to coincide with the change of ownership from Imperial College to the Italian University, NCIU; Wye at the start of the Second World War; a display of the historic maps of Wye; and the 10-year celebration of the work of Wye Heritage.

As soon as we were aware of the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions and the inability to open the Heritage Centre, we immediately turned our efforts towards completely redesigning our website and are committed to preparing regular blog posts to replace our displays in the Centre. We hope you enjoy our new offerings; do take a look at the site www.wyeheritage.org.uk and continue to follow us as we add more articles, many of which we are sure will interest you.

## Wye Heritage constitution

Since our inception, we have operated as a Members' Association but have been working towards gaining charitable status. This has been achieved and we are now a Registered Charity with the registration number: 1193580.

## The New Wye Heritage Centre

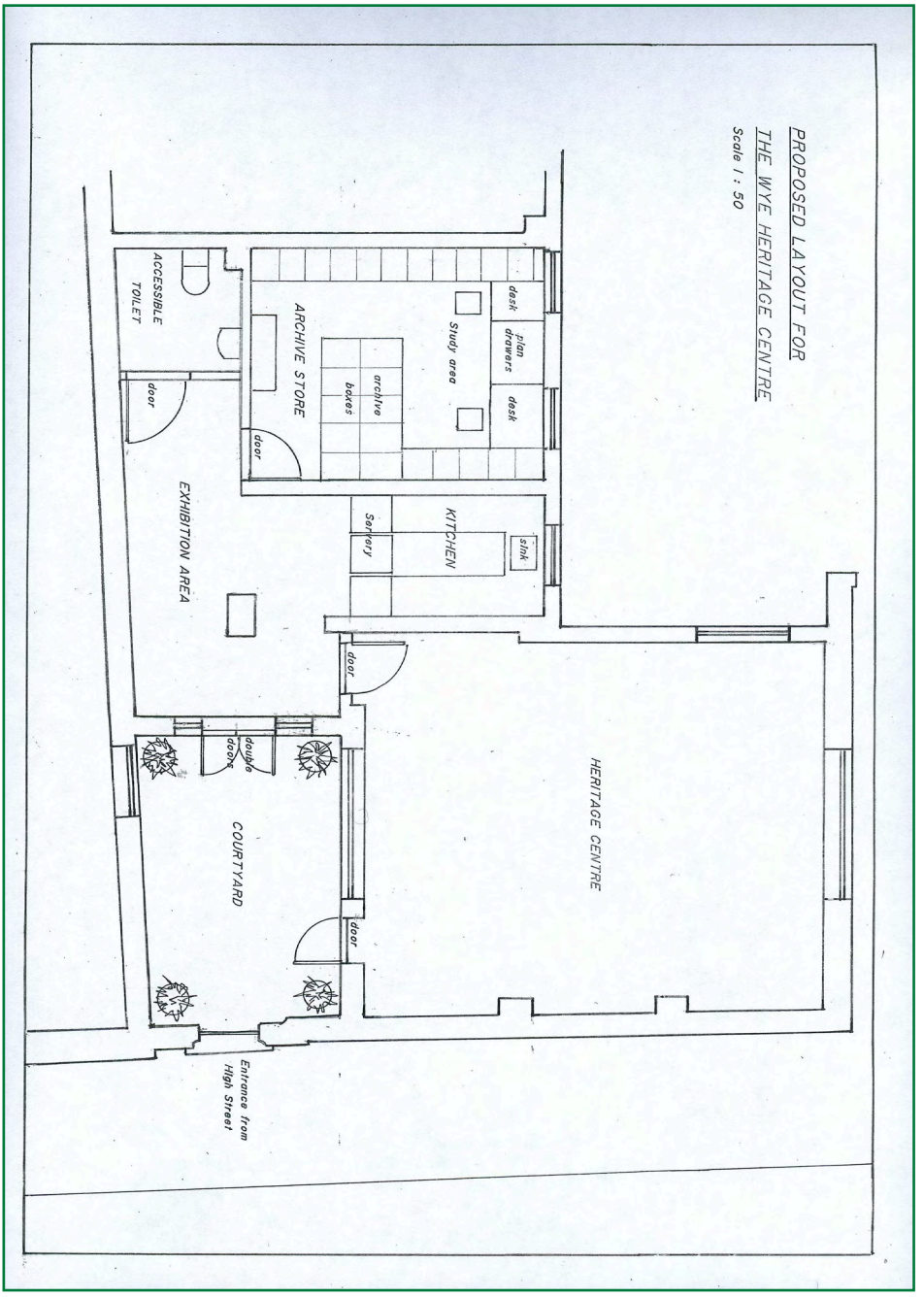
Over the past four years, we have reported on the progress being made by Telereal Trillium (TT), who purchased the College buildings in October 2015 and have been working on the tortuous process of obtaining planning permission to convert the Medieval and Edwardian buildings to 38 houses, flats and apartments with communal (residents) access to the Old Hall, Parlour, Inner Parlour, Jacobean Staircase, Chapel and Old Lecture Theatre.

The renovation plans include a dedicated space for Wye Heritage which, it has been agreed, will be available on a long lease at a peppercorn rent. Together we have developed the plans for the Centre to be based in the old JCR (adjacent to the Wheel Room) and the rooms behind. There will be an independent entrance on the High Street, a small courtyard, entrance foyer, a main exhibition room, kitchen and servery, an accessible toilet and a large archive store/study space.

*The layout drawing accompanying this article shows what is planned* (see opposite). This proposal will provide the long-term facilities to which we have been aspiring for the past 11 years in order to safeguard the history and heritage of the village of Wye and Wye College.

The TT plans are now to go ahead following the public inquiry. The layout drawing shows the 'shell' which we will be leasing. Over the next few months, we will be working with TT and its architects and project manager on the details for the Centre. In parallel, we will be embarking on the plans for 'fitting out' the Centre to the highest standards possible, utilising the latest techniques in museum and heritage centre layout and display.

We look forward to working with the Agricola Club Committee and the Club membership to deliver a Centre which displays the history and heritage of the College buildings and their varied uses, as well as capturing something of the College's ethos from 1892–2009. It is vital that all that was experienced and achieved in that period in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, food production and the environment is properly recorded and celebrated. Wye Heritage has set itself the task of delivering this.


PROPOSED LAYOUT FOR
THE WYE HERITAGE CENTRE
Scale 1 : 50
ACCESSIBLE TOILET
door
ARCHIVE STORE
door
desk
plan drawers
desk
Study area
archive boxes
EXHIBITION AREA
KITCHEN
Scullery
sink
door
HERITAGE CENTRE
double doors
COURTYARD
door
Entrance from High Street

# The redevelopment of the Wye College Campus

**Summarised by Francis Huntington (1961–64), Wye village resident, Agricola Club member and Honorary Secretary of Wye Heritage.**

In order to update Club members on the various parts of the former College Estate, I have set out the current 'state of play' for each site.

## Telereal Trillium

### The Main Campus

Telereal Trillium (TT) purchased the main Campus from Imperial College in 2015; in the interim they have submitted their master plan, including detailed plans for the renovation and repurposing of the Medieval and Edwardian buildings, plus two 'new build' houses.

TT has now received planning permission for 38 houses, flats and apartments within the Medieval and Edwardian buildings as residential accommodation following a Public Inquiry in January/February 2021. To allay concerns caused by recent communications, it is worth stressing that the Old Hall, Parlour, Inner Parlour, Jacobean Staircase, the Chapel and the Old Lecture Theatre, will NOT be converted to housing, but restored and used as communal areas for use by the residents. Once completed, there will be monthly tours of these buildings, open to the general public.

### Wolfson Student Hostel

TT have sold this property to a local builder with planning permission to demolish the hostel and replace it with a terrace of six houses – work is nearing completion.

### Squires Hostel

TT has been granted planning permission to convert Squires to four individual cottages with associated parking.

### Nos 30–32 High Street, Wolfson Lecture Theatre and Car Park

TT has now received planning permission to demolish the Wolfson Lecture Theatre, refurbish Nos 30–32 High Street and add three houses to create a total of six dwellings. Work has now started on the demolition and renovation phases of the project.

### ADAS site

As previously reported, this site has become derelict and has been progressively vandalised. During 2017, TT's contractors cleared the site of asbestos, glass and other debris and have boarded-up the remaining buildings to make them safe and secure. They have recently erected perimeter fencing. The conversion of the buildings from offices into approximately 50 flats had been prepared in outline, but TT has now submitted a plan for 20 houses on the site. As with the main campus, this application is now the subject of an appeal and public enquiry.

### Wye School

As previously reported, TT ha leased the Kempe Centre site, including the old hop garden, to 'Wye School', the new secondary school. Pupil numbers have reached their maximum. All the students are now accommodated in permanent buildings which include a very fine sports hall and assembly hall and the new multi-use games area (MUGA) which is in use.

Outside of school hours, the excellent sports and assembly halls and other facilities are

available for community use. A number of successful events have already been held there, including our own Club Dinner. It is anticipated that once Covid-19 restriction have been lifted, these assets will be a valuable addition to the village's resources.

### Occupation Road – formerly part of the College's Horticultural Department

TT has now submitted a planning application for a housing estate of 40 houses which is also the subject of a planning appeal and public enquiry.

## Imperial College land and property not sold to Telereal Trillium

As reported in last year's Journal, Imperial College continues to dispose of most of its property in Wye, including the farmland. The list below summarises the state of play at the point of going to press.

### Farmland

It is understood that the main block of farmland has been sold to the original tenant.

### Coldharbour

Coldharbour farmhouse, farm buildings, three bungalows and the adjacent land have now been sold. The new owner's plans have not been disclosed.

### Beagles Kennels

The kennels site has received planning permission for a domestic dwelling.

### Former pig, sheep and poultry units

These have all been sold. The new owners are in the process of submitting various planning proposals, some of which have been granted, some of which have been refused.

### Silks Farm

The parts of the site not in private ownership have been sold to a group who have lodged a planning application to convert the remaining farm buildings into further private housing.

### Withersdane

Following the Promis Clinic's withdrawal from the site, the buildings and gardens have been sold by Imperial College to a private Italian University by the name of Niccolo Cusano Italian University London (NCIUL). NCIUL has been granted the planning permissions that it needs to operate. Renovation is well under way and it is only the Covid-19 restrictions that have prevented the buildings from becoming fully occupied by NCIUL.

### Harwood House

This former housing for postgraduate families has been sold to a London-based developer who has submitted plans to reconfigure and add to the dwellings to make them a profitable investment to sell or lease. The current occupants are not having their leases renewed, or they have been served notices to vacate. The net result will be that these once 'affordable flats' will no longer fall into that category.

### The next 12 months

For many, any additional development in and around Wye is to be resisted; however, for others, including the author of this report, the imaginative repurposing of the College campus will open up new opportunities and benefits for a vibrant village with a history of constant change. The main problem identified by many residents, and the Parish Council, is that more activity will increase the pressure on the roads, the level crossing, the available parking and the sewage treatment. These pressures are widespread throughout the South East and other densely populated parts of the UK; creative solutions are vital and should have been properly explored many years ago.

# The Public Inquiry

**Journal Editor, John Walters, explains the background to the long-awaited Public Inquiry, which took place earlier this year, with much input from interested parties from not only the College, but also from the village and wider surrounding area.**

OK. So the public Inquiry about the development of the Wye College estate has taken place and the Inspector (who is appointed by the Secretary of State) has issued his conclusions. What was it all about and what was the outcome?

The starting point was when the current owners of the property – Telereal Trillium (TT) – submitted its development plans for the buildings. Now, as one can imagine, there is a whole range of building types involved, in varying states of repair and with a range of classification, much of them listed either Grade 1, Grade II*, Grade II, etc. Fundamentally, the reason an Inquiry was necessary is because Ashford Borough Council failed to give a decision within the prescribed time frame (so called Non-Determination).

So, the appellant (TT) requested the Planning Inspectorate to launch a Public Inquiry, which it did, announcing that it would commence on 28 January 2021 and run for a week until 5 February 2021. Interested parties were invited to apply for participation and the entire proceedings could be followed on the appropriate website on the Internet.

Full details about the Inquiry (including all submitted evidence and statements) are available from the Ashford Borough Council website: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/view-and-comment-on-applications/public-Inquiry-former-wye-college-appeals/.

All proceedings can be viewed as recordings on the PINS YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQqDetL1R5aRgbNm8PDViNw/.

In the following pages, you can read a selection of submissions to the Inspector by Agricola members and others interested parties.

The contributors to this section of the Journal are:

- Professor Chris Baines
- Kit Wedd
- Wye Alumni (whose response letter is reproduced in its original format)
- Francis Huntington
- Sally Leaver
- Professor John Mansfield

We also bring you the outome and a summary of the Public Inquiry.

# Interested Parties Submission by Professor Chris Baines, 2 February 2021

**Chris Baines (1965–68), an expert in environmental and planning matters, explained his concerns about the proposals for the former College buildings to the Public Inquiry.**

My name is Chris Baines, and I studied horticulture at Wye College in the late 1960s. I grew up in Sheffield, live in Wolverhampton, and I have worked all over the world. I believe passionately that the village of Wye is very special, and it deserves the best of care and conservation. That is at the essence of what I want to say.

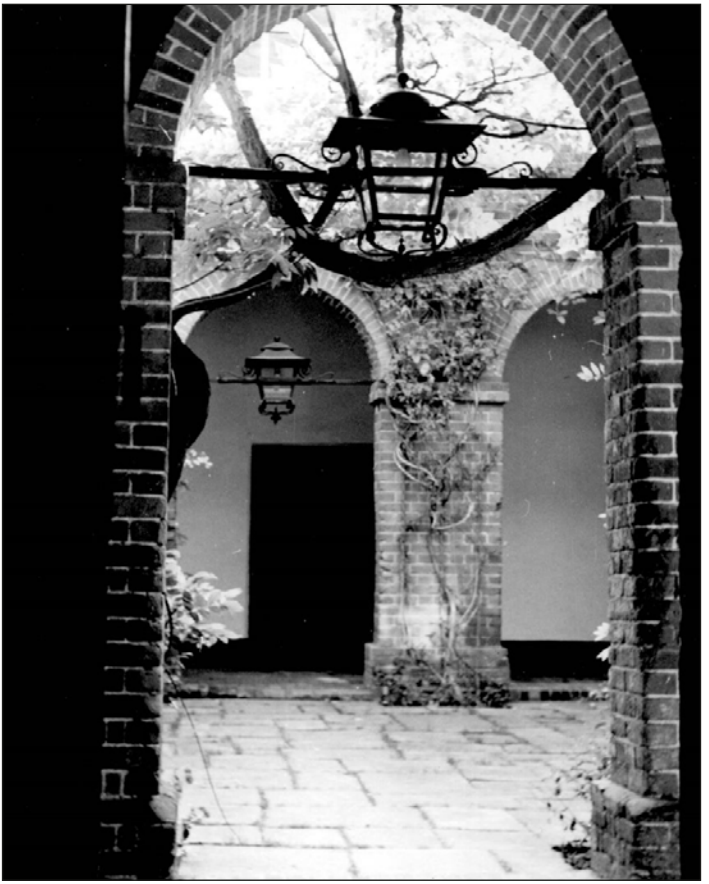
## Communal values

Wye College has an influence way beyond the boundaries of the village. In the past month I have been in touch with more than 1,000 College alumni, and so far, almost 200 of them have responded personally with messages of support. I encourage the inspector to listen to the edition of *On Your Farm*, which was broadcast on Sunday 31 January on BBC Radio 4. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000rv53) It gives a clear sense of the scale of Wye's communal values. As Kit Wedd emphasised in her evidence (page 26), this is a critically important aspect of Planning Policy Guidance, and particularly in the case of Wye and its ancient College.

## Academic legacy

The buildings and the landscape we are dealing with here are very special indeed, but so is the worldwide community of interest, and in the case of Wye College the scale and significance of that community is

*Aerial view of the College campus with Wye church just visible on the left of the picture. The largest quad is the Agricola, then the Middle and the Cloister. The smaller ones above are the West and North Quads.*



*The Middle Quad: photo courtesy of Mike Jackson.*

really remarkable. Among the alumni, there is an ex-director of the Royal Horticultural Society and a current Government Minister in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA. The great garden writer Christopher Lloyd was a student and a teacher at Wye, and the John Nix Farm Pocket Book, known as the '*Farmer's Bible*', has been published annually for more than 50 years. There are Wye graduates in more than 70 different countries, with many of them running major centres of agricultural teaching and food production all across Africa, Asia and North America.

Research was always a hallmark of Wye College. As examples, it was here that hormone weedkillers were developed; where a hop, *Brewers Gold*, was bred in the 1920s, and *Brewers Gold* is still the basis for brewing worldwide. A particular favourite of mine is the small, scented cyclamen that are in every flower shop and garden centre at this time of year. The perfume was achieved through a breeding programme in the glasshouse where I used to suffer my tutorials. Wye's contributions to the world are legion.

## Very recent history

In recent years Wye has been very badly served – particularly by Imperial College, by Ashford Borough Council and by Historic England – and there are a great many of us urging you to redress that balance, reject these appeals and encourage the owners to work with us now to achieve the very best of possible outcomes.

## Personal credentials: built environment

I would now like to address several aspects of the appeal. I am a landscape architect, and I work as an environmental adviser to industry and government. I have served as a trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. I have been President of the Association for Environment Conscious Building (https://www.aecb.net/) for almost 30 years, and I am an adviser to the National Trust. I currently sit on two Ministerial Round Tables, helping central Government to shape the future of planning.

### Appeal A, Kemp's College

The original heart of Wye College is a compact group of listed buildings of the very highest order. It is on the site of a scheduled ancient monument, in a conservation area and well within the boundary of a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In theory it could hardly enjoy more protection. It was established in 1447 by an Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal John Kemp, who was born about a mile from Wye, at Olantigh. That was precisely the time that King Henry VI was establishing Eton College in Windsor, and King's College Cambridge. Now, for the first time in its very long history, Wye College is threatened with loss of public access and loss of physical integrity. That should be unthinkable.

### Appeal A, Edwardian campus

The Edwardian courtyard campus is also very important, and its current state of inaccessibility and neglect is tragic. With great skill, I believe that it could provide

*The Library: photo courtesy of Mike Jackson.*

wonderful homes for people, but there are far too many aspects of this current scheme that do not do it justice, and the talk of community access is misleading for what seems almost certain to be a gated community.

# Wye's contributions to the world are legion

As one example, you will recall Kit Wedd (page 26) singing the praises of the central dining room, with its magnificent timber beams. On Telereal's website, where they offer the development for sale, they use that dining room as their opening image, displayed in all its glory – but their development proposals actually show the space partitioned across the middle and converted into two semi-detached dwellings, destroying the splendour of the space for ever. A skilled and sensitive designer could do very much better than that.

### The College and village inter-relationship

A particularly important aspect of this planning consideration is the very long history of an intimate relationship between the College and the local village. That would have been true four hundred years ago, when local boys were being taught there, and it was certainly true in my day.

Of course, Wye College employed a great many village residents, but it was more than that. In my three years as an undergraduate I ran the College folk club, and I organised folk concerts in the Wheel Room, a part of Kemp's College. These were always attended by staff, students ***and*** people from the rest of village. I also spent one year on the Wye Village Fete committee, alongside the village elders. There was always a free flow between town and gown.

### Appeals B and C

If I can now move on briefly to comment on **appeals B and C**. Both these so-called brown field sites lie in the heart of the Kent Downs AONB, a landscape designation that affords the highest level of protection, on precisely the same level as our National Parks. The two sites also sit close to the entrance to Wye for travellers from Canterbury.

## Personal credentials: landscape

Professionally, I have a good deal to do with such special landscapes. I am the patron of the Countryside Management Association, (https://countrysidemanagement.org.uk/) a national Vice President of the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/), and I chair a Stakeholder Advisory Group for the National Grid, with a £500 million budget to spend protecting and enhancing the visual quality of AONBs and National Parks.

### Intrusion into the designated landscape

I believe that both Scheme B and Scheme C are inappropriate intrusions into the protected rural landscape. Site B would clearly extend the boundary of the village, and Site C would be a wholly new housing development, well beyond the walkability of Wye. The clear direction of travel for the country's most highly valued landscapes, re-emphasised by the current Secretary of State within recent weeks, is for *more* protection, not less. Site C in particular, offers an opportunity to restore the brownfield land to green, and to repair one small corner of the Kent Downs AONB.

### Appropriateness of this housing design

If the eventual fate of site B and site C is for one or both of them to be built on, then again it is undoubtedly possible to achieve

far more appropriate results. Neither of the current schemes is worthy of a place in an AONB, close to such a historic and characterful settlement as the village of Wye. I have worked with housebuilders and developers all my adult life. I established and then judged the *Green Leaf Housing Awards* for the New Homes Marketing Board for 15 years, seeking out and celebrating the best that commercial housebuilders, large and small, had to offer. In fact, the Stonegate retirement development off Wye's Bridge Street was an early award winner and is well worth visiting for inspiration.

**There was always a free flow between town and gown**

I am a strong advocate of new housing so long as it is the right housing in the right place, and skilfully designed. Wye and the Kent Downs AONB deserve so much better than this roll-out of suburbia. Wye is a dream location with a great sense of place and personality. In my view all three of these applications are unnecessarily damaging, and I hope the appeals will be refused.

## The WyeCRAG scheme for Kemp's College

Finally, I would like to return to the alternative proposal presented by WyeCRAG for Kemp's College. To a speculative city developer such as Telereal Trillium, the idea of a sensitively restored group of historic buildings having a sustainable future as a community asset may seem fanciful, but I am confident that, in the right hands, funding would be available through the lottery, through charitable philanthropy and through the Wye College alumni too. Telereal is part of the Pears development group, and they themselves have a charitable foundation with an annual turnover of more than 20 million pounds. Their Trust takes pride in focusing on ***education*** and ***community empowerment***. This seems particularly ironic.

## Positive prospects through partnership

Kemp's College sits beside the Pilgrim's Way – surely one of the oldest long-distance footpaths in Christendom. It is an hour by train from London and a 20-minute drive from the Channel Tunnel. It has a powerful aura of rich human history and the pastoral English Countryside. It is a day's walk from Canterbury Cathedral and close to some of the finest gardens in England. There is every reason to believe it can become a destination of international appeal – far, far too important to be ruined by second-rate redevelopment.

I believe the next chapter in Wye's 570-year history as a centre of learning could lie in its development as a source of information and inspiration for visitors from around the world. That would depend on the passion and knowledge that the community is demonstrating now. Surely that passion deserves to be fostered through the planning process and harnessed by the site owners for mutual benefit, now and on into the future.

# John Kemp's Chantry College at Wye by Kit Wedd

**Kit Wedd's contribution to the inquiry was this sensitive summary of the College's history and its deep and enduring connection with village life and the surrounding countryside.**

*The author, Kit Wedd, is the Director of Spurstone Heritage Ltd, a consultancy that provides independent advice on conservation and development of historic sites and buildings.*

The village of Wye was among the largest 20% of settlements recorded in Domesday (1086), with a church, four mills and 143 households. It grew into a thriving market town and a religious and administrative centre with jurisdiction over a large part of Kent. The crossroads of Bridge Street and Church Street still marks the medieval heart of the village and individual burgage plots remain easy to discern, running back from the jostling housefronts that line those streets. Some fine eighteenth-century houses — and polite Georgian fronts added to earlier houses — attest to a later period of prosperity, when Wye was admired as 'a neat well-built town'. It remains a desirable place to live, with an active local community passionately interested in its history and wellbeing.

What distinguishes Wye from many other similarly prosperous villages in the south-east of England is the presence of the Agricultural College, which turned it into 'a miniature university town'. At the heart of the historic College campus in the angle of High Street and Olantigh Road is a complex of medieval buildings of great rarity and outstanding significance: the College of St Gregory and St Martin at Wye. Official designation as a scheduled monument and listed buildings (the Cloister Quad and Latin School at Grade I, the Wheel House at Grade II*) recognises the significance of Wye College, but it is also cherished by residents and Agricultural College alumni as a beloved local landmark and a place of continuous education that has served both villagers and incomers for over 560 years.

## The origins of Wye College

In February 1432 Cardinal Archbishop John Kemp (or Kempe; 1380–1453) obtained from the 11-year-old King Henry VI a licence to found a college for secular (i.e. property-

owning) priests in the parish of Wye. Battle Abbey owned the land and benefices that Kemp needed in order to build and endow his new college; negotiations with the Abbot over their transfer were protracted, so it was not until 1447 that Wye College was officially founded, with an endowment of nearly 1,000 acres.

Its patron, 'the ablest administrator of his time', held high office for more than three decades. Bishop of London, Archbishop of York (and later of Canterbury), Kemp was a trusted adviser to both Henry V and Henry VI, Keeper of the Privy Seal, and a patient negotiator of international treaties. This successful, well-travelled and sophisticated statesman was born into a landowning family in Olantigh and retained an affectionate attachment to Wye parish throughout his long life. He is believed to have particularly relished his diplomatic roles — which included negotiating the settlement with France following Henry V's victory at Agincourt — because they gave him a convenient excuse for frequent visits to his birthplace *en route* to France.

A medieval college was a community of people living under the same rules or engaged in a common (usually religious) endeavour. The founding statutes of Wye College provided for 11 members to live, eat and worship together: a Provost, six Fellows in holy orders, two Clerks and two Choristers.

They were required to perform three main religious and educational duties. First, they had to fulfil the principal purpose of a chantry college, which was to conduct requiem masses. The medieval church encouraged the belief that maintaining almost continuous intercessory prayer could shorten the time spent by souls in purgatory and hasten their eventual entry into Heaven. The priests and choristers would thus have been fully employed in praying for the repose of the souls of the founder and his family.

*The window in the College Chapel depicting John Kemp. The image is a modern (1948) interpretation of a portrayal of Kemp in medieval glass at York Minster.*

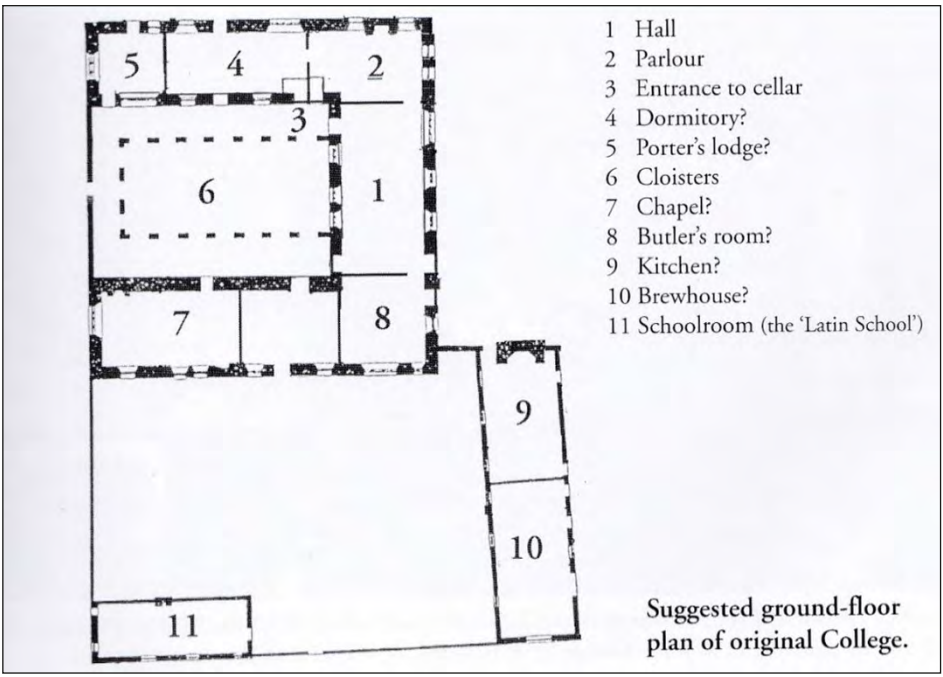
Second, one Fellow was required to serve as the parish priest. When they relinquished their property in Wye the Benedictines of Battle also ceased to provide a vicar for the parish, so responsibility for this passed to Wye College. This may explain why little evidence remains of any early chapel that might have existed within the college. Church and college shared the same dedication, to Saints Gregory and Martin, and with the church so near, its repair and beautification ordered by Kemp alongside the construction of his


*Detail of Michael Moon's Map of Wye, 1746.*

college, and services there conducted by one of the college Fellows, there was perhaps little incentive to provide another dedicated place of worship within the college precincts.

## Church and college shared the same dedication, to Saints Gregory and Martin

The third purpose of the college was to provide free education in grammar and Latin to parishioners' children — or at least to their sons, girls being then excluded from formal education. In the fifteenth century it was common for chantry colleges to provide educational facilities in this way, and in some cases the school acquired greater prominence than the religious foundation it was originally attached to. In 1440, for example, Henry VI founded Eton College with accommodation for 'twenty-five poor and indigent scholars'; these 'King's Scholars' were expected to progress to King's College Cambridge, which Henry founded in the following year. (It is tempting to wonder whether the 19-year-old monarch, aware of Kemp's plans for something along similar lines, felt a certain satisfaction in establishing his own more ambitious educational foundations before his middle-aged adviser had managed to lay the first stone at Wye.)




*The presumed layout of the medieval college (from Burnham 2007, page 5) .*

In the founding statutes of 1448, Kemp specified that the 'maister of gramer' had to be a master or member of Oxford or Cambridge. Within Wye College, he was to rank second only to the Provost. If he was in holy orders he could become a Fellow of the college, and be entitled to sit next to the Provost at mealtimes. He should be '*diligently intent in techyng, that shall frely teche withoutin anything takyn of hem all thos what wol come to his techyng*'. Although for most of its history the school had a good reputation and was led by able Masters, it never attained the success and fame of its contemporary, Eton. The grammar school and the charity schools that followed it produced few distinguished alumni; the most notable old boy was the prolific Victorian journalist Alaric Alexander Watts (1797–1864), who spent two happy years as a pupil at Wye. Nonetheless, the schools were a mainstay of village life for generations of Wye families over 445 years, and their successor schools still thrive.

## The form and layout of Kemp's College

The form and layout of Wye College followed monastic and university convention. The centrepiece of the building was the Hall, where members of the college, their household and guests would meet to eat and socialise. This was built on a north-south axis, with a cross-wing at each end; the churchyard wall to the west completed the quadrangle. As originally built, a timber cloister with penthouse (or pentice) above ran round the internal elevations of the quad.


*Detail of the Ordinance Survey map ,1876*

The Hall is an impressively large space under an exposed oak roof constructed of trusses with tall octagonal crown posts on moulded tie beams. There have been alterations, including the addition of a stone fireplace and oak wainscot panelling in the early seventeenth century, a bay window in the east wall at the end of the nineteenth century and a new timber partition to the screens passage at the south end in the twentieth century, but the fifteenth-century fabric and the essential character of a medieval great hall are well preserved.

The service wing to the south was reached by crossing the screens passage. It originally contained lodgings for college servants as well as the pantry and buttery, where food and drink were arranged ready for serving forth into the Hall. It was conveniently placed to receive supplies from the bakehouse and brewery, which were in a detached building (the Wheel House) to the south-east. The kitchen and brewery fires would have been kept burning almost continuously to provide the college with bread and ale in industrial quantities, so it was usual for these functions to be housed separately, to minimise the risk of fire spreading to the main building.

The parlour wing attached to the north of the Hall contained the private domestic quarters of members of the college. The Parlour on the ground floor was a common room for the Provost and Fellows, which guests or senior members of the household might enter by invitation. Upstairs were the Solar and Dormitory. The Solar was a living room or study reserved for the Provost and his intimates. The Dormitory was a shared space, although cubicles with timber partitions might be introduced to provide a degree of privacy for individual occupants.

Everyone who lived or worked within the medieval college would have understood the strict hierarchy of spaces and uses, and the degrees of privacy that applied to each part of the building. The hierarchy was reinforced by the scale and elaboration of the architecture: the Hall had the highest

roof with the most decorative timberwork, and within that roof the beam over the dais at the north end was crenellated, to denote the higher status of this part of the room.

## The Latin School

The free grammar school was housed in the small detached building, still known as the Latin School, that stands south-west of the Cloister Quad. The schoolroom was built at the same time as the rest of Kemp's college and was originally a single, unheated rectangular room built of flint with stone dressings and with a door at each end. The west door opened onto the churchyard and was connected to the Cloister Quad doorway by a path along the eastern edge of the churchyard.

There is a fireplace with a stone chimneypiece similar to others of early seventeenth-century date in the main College. This might have been introduced to make the schoolroom less chilly, or brought in later from another part of the College; it is unlikely to be in its original location, because the north wall that supports it is part of a brick outshot that was added to the schoolroom in 1903. This outshot might have replaced an earlier structure but the commonly accepted story is that it was built to widen the schoolroom — then being used as a College common room — so that it could accommodate a full-size billiards table.

## Post-Dissolution

On 19 January 1545 the College and its property were expropriated by the Crown. Two years later, Henry VIII permitted their sale to Sir Walter Buckler, private secretary to Queen Catherine Parr, with the proviso that '*[Bucler] and his heirs should at all times provide and maintain a sufficient*

*The Latin School from the south-west, with the south range of Kemp's College behind.*

*Cloister Quad: Hall (east) elevation with brick chimney of 1610 against stonework of 1447.*

*Cloister Quad: west interior elevation with door to churchyard*

*Two of the 'Ancient Britons' (Imperial College)*

**Their survival as a near-complete set is incredibly rare, and it is hoped that they will be reinstated on the stair in due course**

*Schoolmaster capable of teaching boys and young lads in the art of Grammar, without fee or reward, in this parish*.' Bucler paid the Crown £200 for the college and its possessions.

For the next 160 years the college was a private dwelling-house held by a succession of owners. The occupant in 1610 was Thomas Twysden, who introduced various domestic comforts, including fireplaces with chimneys and stone chimneypieces. The grandest of these is the fireplace on the west wall of the Hall, which superseded an earlier hearth in the centre of the floor. The Latin School chimneypiece has mouldings and a decorative frieze similar to those of the Parlour chimneypiece, so is presumably also one of Twysden's improvements.

Elaborate joinery was another feature of the Jacobean interiors: the panelling in the Parlour and the timber stair in the north wing date from the period of Twysden's ownership. The stair was originally embellished with half-life-size mythological figures — the 'Ancient Britons' — on the

*The Jacobean Stair*

newels. These sculptures are now on display in the minstrels' gallery of the Hall and in the Latin School. Their survival as a near-complete set is incredibly rare, and it is hoped that they will be reinstated on the stair in due course.

Later owners of Wye College included the poet Anne, Countess of Winchilsea (1661–1720) and her husband Heneage Finch (1657–1726), who rusticated there from 1690 to 1708 to escape anti-Jacobite persecution at the court of William and Mary.

A chimney fire inspired Winchilsea to write the mock-heroic *Apology for my fearfull temper … upon the firing of my chimney At Wye College March 25th 1702*, in which she describes rousing her household from sleep to deal with the conflagration. Happily, the fire, if not her ladyship's temper, was quickly contained.

## The Charity Schools

The private owners of Wye College remained responsible for hiring the schoolmaster and ensuring the continued operation of the grammar school. The school appears to have been suspended for a short time at the very end of the sixteenth century but was back in operation by 1623. However, in 1627 the Crown took over the estate for a time in order to ensure the original conditions were being met.

In 1713 the College was acquired by Sir George Wheeler, who gave it to the Boys' and Girls' Charity Schools endowed by his aunt, Lady Joanna Thornhill. The schools had superseded the grammar school and had been occupying part of the College since 1708.

From 1726 the trustees of the Lady Joanna Thornhill Charity carried out a major

*Jacobean panelling and fireplace in the Parlour*

campaign of alterations to accommodate growing numbers of pupils. Changes introduced in the 1730s included the rebuilding of the timber arcade in the Cloister Quad in brick, with upper rooms lit by timber sash windows.

The south range became the Schoolmaster's house, while the Schoolmistress and her female charges occupied the Parlour wing. The stone wall enclosing the south garden was built in 1735 and the Latin School was partly refaced in red brick in about 1740.

The schools went through cycles of greater and lesser prosperity according to the energy and acumen of successive masters. In 1762, Lady Joanna Thornhill's School entered its most prosperous period, with 40 boarders and over 100 day pupils.

Later periods of success led to further building work: in 1849 the Wheel Room was reconstructed to accommodate the girls' school, enabling the boys' school to take over the Parlour as an extra classroom.

## The Agricultural College

In 1892 the schools moved out to new premises in Bridge Street and Church Street, and the newly established Kent and Surrey County Councils together bought the College buildings with the intention of establishing a new agricultural College. Having purchased the property for £1,000, the Councils spent a further £18,000 on refurbishments and extensions over the next two years.

The buildings of Kemp's College were allocated new uses: the south wing became the Principal's house, the Hall became the refectory, the Parlour became the library, and the first-floor rooms in Cloister Quad

*Wye College viewed from the tower of the parish church*

became study-bedrooms for the students. A Brighton-based architect, Paul Ball Chambers, designed an L-shaped extension around the Wheel House to house the kitchens for the refectory. He added two wings north of Cloister Quad, the north-east one containing the Lecture Theatre. He also introduced bay windows in the east wall of the Hall and Parlour, presumably to bring more light into these ancient rooms.

The South Eastern Agricultural College (SEAC) received its first intake of 14 students in November 1894. It grew rapidly: the campus quadrupled in size between 1901 and 1914. Eventually the historic (pre-1954) campus occupied all the land between High Street, Olantigh Road, the churchyard and the public footpath from the churchyard to Olantigh Road.

## The medieval influence on later buildings

The age, rarity and architectural quality of Kemp's chantry college was recognised by the Victorian and Edwardian architects commissioned by SEAC, who responded to the medieval buildings with tact and sensitivity. Chambers used a version of Tudor Gothic architecture for the bays he added to the ancient Hall and Parlour and gave his new lecture theatre stone windows with Gothic tracery. For the elevation of his new extension overlooking the churchyard, however, he chose materials and details that reflected the later phases of the College, with stone mullion-and-transom casement windows on the ground floor and timber sashes above.

The four quads completed between 1901 and 1914 were designed by the eminent architect Thomas Edward Collcutt (1840–

1924), at first working alone and from 1906 in partnership with Stanley Hinge Hamp (1877–1968). Collcutt had made his name in London with large-scale, occasionally bombastic, landmark buildings such as the Imperial Institute in Kensington. At Wye, however, he expressed a gentler side of his architectural personality and followed Arts and Crafts principles, using traditional materials to reinterpret medieval and vernacular buildings.

**Having purchased the property for £1,000, the Councils spent a further £18,000 on refurbishments and extensions over the next two years**

His designs for the completion of West Quad and North Quad echo the proportions, materials and detail of the earlier buildings. They continue the inherited fenestration of stone casements on the ground floor with timber sashes above, establishing an appropriately domestic character in this part of the campus. The northern part of the wall overlooking the churchyard (1901) is one of Collcutt's more modest interventions but shows him at his most sensitive, working at a larger scale but using the same stone, brick and tile that Kemp used in 1447 and Chambers in 1892, and completing the elevation in perfect harmony with the earlier phases.

Collcutt and Hamp completed the main quad (Agricola Quad) in 1914 with the south (entrance) range on the High Street, which wrapped round to join the east wing on Olantigh Road. The interior elevations of the quad suggest an architectural progression over time, with a masterful reimagining of the lost timber cloister of Kemp's college on the south and west sides and a Tudor palace to the north and east. The materials, details and workmanship of the Edwardian buildings are of particularly high quality, reflecting Collcutt's deep understanding of local materials and building techniques.

The medieval architecture continued to influence the design of buildings within the historic campus into the middle of the twentieth century. The Dining Hall was added in 1953, replacing an earlier, smaller gym by Collcutt. The architect was Thomas Winder Harrisson (1904–80).

Any architect commissioned to build a new refectory on a site facing and barely 20 metres away from the extraordinary medieval Hall of Kemp's college, would have felt challenged to produce something of equivalent dignity, and Harrisson rose to the occasion. The exterior elevations of his Dining Hall complete the east elevation of Middle Quad and the west elevation of Agricola Quad in a mannerly fashion, with stone mullion-and-transom windows that continue the Tudoresque theme previously established by Chambers and Collcutt for these spaces.

Inside, however, is an impressive modern interpretation of a medieval Great Hall, with the scale and grandeur required for such a high-status interior. The exposed roof of English oak explicitly continues the tradition of the medieval hall, but the hammerbeam structure is more sophisticated than the crown-post trusses found in the principal interiors of Kemp's college. Even the positioning of the dais for high-status diners, nearest to the private space of the Principal's house, reflects the traditional arrangement and hierarchy of such spaces.

Harrisson's Dining Hall is all the more impressive for having been achieved with such high-quality materials and craftsmanship in a period of post-war restrictions, when materials and building skills were in short supply. It was the last major building to be completed within the historic campus; from the 1960s onwards, most of the new Agricultural College buildings north of the historic campus would be designed in contemporary architectural styles.

Wye Agricultural College became part of Imperial College, University of London, in 2000; the campus was closed in 2008 and finally sold (excluding Withersdane Hall) to Telereal Trillium (TT) in 2015.

## Communal significance

The completeness of the medieval college at Wye is remarkable. All the component parts survive: Hall, domestic and service wings, and the separate bakehouse-brewery. The historic plan form and circulation are largely preserved, and much fifteenth-century fabric remains. Historic England have advised that 'This group of buildings is of outstanding significance for its architectural interest and for the ways in which its rare and unusually well-preserved fabric illustrates the arrangement and use of a fifteenth-century chantry college.'

However, to really understand what the historic campus and particularly the medieval buildings of Wye College mean to local residents and alumni is more than a matter of identifying the age of the built fabric. It requires a recognition of what the heritage profession calls 'communal significance' — that is, the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The Cloister Quad, Wheel House and Latin School were conceived and built as one foundation, indivisible for domestic, social, religious and educational purposes. They have been together, physically and in terms of function and access, ever since. The Scheduled Monument designation confirms that 'the buildings of the original college foundation — the Old Latin School, the cloister quadrangle and the Wheel Room — have remained in use as educational establishments almost continuously since their foundation.'

## The completeness of the medieval college at Wye is remarkable

Kemp's College was never an enclosed monastic order. Its members were permitted to own property (which implies worldly responsibilities outside the confines of the College) and served the community as parish priests and grammar school masters. They would have employed local people as domestic staff, used local trades and services, and had tenants in the properties owned by the college.

Besides these economic influences, spiritual, educational and social activities of the college over more than five centuries have profoundly affected the Wye community. Published histories repeatedly emphasise how the schools and Agricultural College were embedded in the social and cultural life of the village. By custom and tradition the College provided venues for meetings, weddings and other events that were central to the lives of local residents. The Latin School particularly was used for public lectures and township meetings. Cloister Quad has memorials to staff and students who died in both World Wars. Until the

Agricultural College closed, it shared its facilities generously with local residents, and allowed them informal use of its gardens and green spaces, which fostered a sense of proprietorial pride in local people.

## The site today

After the College closed, the Latin School was leased to Wye Heritage by Imperial College and this use is currently permitted to continue by TT. Apart from this, the site has been unoccupied since the Agricultural College moved out. It is now enclosed by perimeter fences and hoardings, and there is on-site security. This has not prevented occasional vandalism and theft. In September 2020 lack of maintenance was evident, in peeling paintwork and signs of water damage.

At the time of writing the outcome of a Public Inquiry into a proposed redevelopment of the Agricultural College is awaited. Some of the Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the historic campus might lend themselves readily to conversion into housing. However, the scheme includes conversion of the medieval buildings of Kemp's College into three private dwellings, with public access to only a few spaces that it would be too difficult for the developer to convert. That access would be very limited, and strictly controlled by site managers. It is to be hoped that the eventual judgment will protect the medieval Wye College from unsympathetic development, honour the memory of Thomas Kemp and preserve the essence of the precious legacy he left to his beloved birthplace.

*The college viewed from the churchyard.*

**APPEAL A: APP/E2205/W/20/3259450 Former Wye College, Wye, Ashford**

**Wye College Alumni response to the WyeCRAG Scheme**

Relating to: the Complex of Listed Buildings on the High Street / Olantigh Road, previously used for a combination of teaching and student residential accommodation for Wye College.

**Introduction**

We write as a group of Wye College alumni and former staff. On 15th January 2021, a number of us met online to hear proposals from the Wye College Regeneration Group (WyeCRAG) for the re-development of the historic centre of the former College. The WyeCRAG plans differ markedly from those submitted for planning approval by the development company, Telereal Trillium. We were impressed by WyeCRAG's concept of keeping the most historic buildings as a publicly accessible resource and open for community use. In this way, the site's social and educational *raison d'être*, that has existed for 570 years, would be re-instated. We therefore found the WyeCRAG case compelling and wish to add our support to their proposals.

We would like to expand on the following points:

**1. Background and delays**

We were dismayed by the original decision to close the College in 2005 and so soon after it was acquired by Imperial College, London. Subsequent events led to the cancellation of the original Imperial College plan and then to a regrettable 15-year hiatus that is still with us. Wye and Hinxhill Parish Council, the people the Council represents and a great many who live well beyond the parish boundary, deserve better. Wye and Hinxhill was one of the first councils to prepare a Village Design Statement and one worthy of the special conservation status of the older College buildings. More recently the council completed a Neighbourhood Development Plan of the kind specifically intended by central government to be used as a planning tool. Policy 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan is especially relevant to the historic college buildings that are our major concern, viz *"Applications proposing unsympathetic designs which fail to respect the connections between people and places, or are inappropriate to its location, landscape or biodiversity considerations, will be refused."* This accords well with the principle, that where possible, historic places such as Wye College should be treated as a publicly shared resource to be managed with respect for the significance of place and history. The College has been integrated with the village for centuries and we believe this connection should be built upon rather than closed to the community by private ownership.

**2. The Tradition of Education**

Each of us has our own personal recollections of our time at Wye but our objection to the conversion of this magnificent heritage into private homes is not just a matter of pure sentiment. These listed buildings have been at the heart of communal life for almost 600 years and we feel strongly that this privilege should be available for many future generations. The recent huge rise of interest in adult education indicates that the facilities included in the WyeCRAG plan would be in demand by organisations offering tuition, specialised meetings, conferences and workshops. The success of West Dean in West Sussex as a centre for the Arts is a notable example of what can be achieved (https://www.westdean.org.uk/).

**3. International Reputation**

Many hundreds of Wye College's overseas students have taken home formal London University qualifications and many revisit Wye on a regular basis. Four hundred and seventy-five of them from 67 countries think sufficiently highly of their *alma mater* to be members of the alumni association, the Agricola Club. Their numerous contributions to the annual Agricola Club Journal testify to their wide-ranging influence on the development of agriculture and horticulture worldwide. Clearly, they still look to Wye for inspiration and opportunity. Some could well use the educational facilities described by WyeCRAG for future international meetings. Others will be concerned about the fate of the institution to which they owe much.

We fear that Wye College's reputation, and that of our country as a whole, will suffer if overseas alumni were to find that the best we can do, after so much prevarication, is to break up the most architecturally and historically notable parts into privately-owned dwellings. Like those from the UK, overseas alumni will be dismayed at the loss of a locally, nationally and internationally significant asset that could no longer be put to public use or be properly appreciated by interested visitors and tourists. They will also lament the severing of the link between the former Wye College and its long tradition of public education. As guardians of similar institutions in their own countries, they will see this as a poor example and one low in inspirational value. The WyeCRAG proposals address many of these concerns and we commend them to you without reservation.

Judy Rossiter, BSc, PhD

Michael B Jackson, BSc, MSc, DPhil, DSc, FCIHort, FRSB

Malcolm Alexander, BSc, FCCA

On behalf of:
Glenn Allison, BSc
Prof. Brian Alloway, BSc, PhD
Mo Brown, BSc
Richard Brown, BSc
Tom Bryson, BSc, MA
Rob Callaby, BSc
Neill Enstock, BSc, MPhil, DMS
Harry D Franks, BSc, DTA
Malcolm Harrison, BSc
Patrick Haworth, BSc, MSc.
John G. Killick, BSc
Richard D Long, BSc, DMS
Robin Lowe, BSc, PhD
Prof. Graham M Milbourn, BSc, PhD
George W Noble, BSc
Karen Noble, BSc
Malcolm Ogilvy, BSc, MSc
Sally S. Osgerby, BSc
Prof. Roger G Packham, BSc, MSc, MEd, PhD
John Walters, BSc, PhD

## A personal statement from **Francis Huntington** (1961–64 and Staff) in support of TT

*This is a personal statement in support of the appellant, Telereal Trillium, and I am confining my remarks to Appeal A.*

My name is Francis Huntington, I am a resident of the village of Wye; graduate of Wye College, a former member of the academic staff of Wye College and co-founder of Wye Heritage, a charity launched in 2009 to embark on safeguarding and displaying the history and heritage of Wye College and the Village of Wye and to provide a 'home' for the archives of the former Wye College, the Wye College Agricola Club, the Wye Historical Society and other Wye village-based organisations. The Wye Heritage Centre has been successfully achieving this over the last 10 years.

My support of the appellant derives from the relationship built up with them, since 2015, in order to maintain the use of the Latin School as the Wye Heritage Centre, and to develop the planned move into the new Wye Heritage Centre in a part of the Edwardian buildings.

Wye Heritage has worked closely with Telereal Trillium to plan this new facility which will permanently house the archives of the organisations previously mentioned and to display regularly changing exhibitions on the history and heritage of Wye Village and Wye College; much has been achieved over the past 10 years. The appellant's plans show the new Wye Heritage Centre, accessed off the High Street and which comprise an entrance foyer and reception area, the main exhibition room, kitchenette and servery, an archive store and study room, and an accessible toilet. Wye Heritage considers that these facilities, whilst modest in size, to be both affordable and will, of course, be available to the whole Wye community, its visitors and the alumni of the former College. The affordability and sustainability is in part, the function of the offer by Telereal Trillium of a long lease at a peppercorn rent.

Wye Heritage has also assisted Telereal Trillium in identifying and cataloguing the fixtures and fittings throughout the buildings.

It is my observation that since 2006, when Imperial College announced its withdrawal from Wye, that a large number of proposals for regeneration and repurposing of the buildings have been promoted; however, in my opinion, none of them have proved to be credible, viable or deliverable.

I am **hugely** encouraged that the appellant has produced a viable and deliverable **way forward**. The safeguarding of the unique architecture and atmosphere of the College is to be achieved via a sensitive restoration and repurposing of the historic buildings, enabled by the revenue generated by the sale of the planned 40 houses, flats and apartments.

Further, I believe that the controlled public access being proposed by the appellant is both practical and deliverable and will accommodate the reasonable needs of the Wye community and the general public, to experience the unique architecture and ambience of the College.

# WyeCRAGS's vision: An open-access, Cultural and Community Centre

**Sally Leaver (Hon Agricola Member) offered the Public Inquiry an alternative re-generation plan for the listed buildings.**

I am Dr Sally Leaver; I am one of the founder members of WyeCRAG and, since its incorporation as a Community Interest Company, one of the directors. I lived in Wye in the 1960s, when I worked at the College Farm, returning to live in the village again in the 1980s. I now live nearby on the North Downs. I have an MBA in public-sector management and a Social Science doctorate. I worked as a registered social-work manager in inner city London, then as a management consultant.

Before I talk about the benefits to the community of the alternative WyeCRAG proposal, I want to quickly address the former public access to the College.

## Access

It has been said that little public access to the College was normally possible over the past 60 years. Based on my nearly 60 years knowledge and experience of Wye and Wye College, I cannot agree.

The College was never closed to the public. There was open access through the main front entrance, and at the back through the gate leading off the public footpath. The community walked in through both.

A great many of the College staff lived in Wye and students lodged with them in their homes. There was a lot of coming and going to and from the community. The relationship between the College and the Wye Community was symbiotic. Visitors in the buildings were always accepted as part of the package of a learning institution, never thought of as suspicious.

When Imperial took over, they introduced a Hospitality arm, printing a glossy brochure advertising bookings for dinners, weddings and meetings with catering. This was becoming popular and public presence in the College was increasing when they closed it.

## Community benefits

WyeCRAG's alternative plan for regeneration of the Grade I and II* listed buildings as a year-round, open-access, cultural and community centre will not only benefit the Wye Community, but the College alumni, the locality, county, country and overseas visitors. It preserves Wye's heritage assets in a respectful, and creative manner, giving due diligence to its architectural significance and historic 570 years, mindful of the legacy we need to hand on to future generations.

Our Business Plan took two years to research. This covered:

- digesting published reports and guidelines on the Community Business Market and Heritage Regeneration;
- making detailed analysis of existing schemes and business plans, and their fund-raising strategies;
- based on the Neighbourhood Plan proposal for a Community Centre on this site, undertaking a needs assessment to determine the gaps that could be filled and

*Detail of the Middle Quad: photo courtesy of Mike Jackson.*

- consulting the Visit Kent's Annual Business Barometer statistics to inform our demand and supply analysis

This plan is not a 'pie in the sky wish list'. It was drawn up with financiers and accountants. Our consultee feedback considers it to be plausible; it meets the National Lottery Heritage Funding outcomes and, importantly, maintains the continuum of the College Founder's intentions that it should benefit the Wye Community.

Wye is a village with a growing population and limited available community space. The Wye Centre will provide an additional, year-round, open public base and forum, to be developed and managed by the Community for the Community, from which it will benefit in the following social, educational, and economic ways:

Wye Centre will provide social cohesion, relief from social isolation, health promotion, support and occupation.

Wye residents will be able to meet, relax, eat, read, receive advice, join activities and entertainment, attend markets and hire rooms for private events.

Groups and societies and the Parish Council, likewise, will be able to store archives and book spaces for events, talks, hold public meetings, and run film nights, benefiting from the use of the tiered lecture theatre.

Wye is a creative and aspiring community; the problem will **NOT** be what to put on offer educationally, but what to **LEAVE OUT.**

Wye residents will have an enlarged public library, particularly benefiting children, a living 'History of Wye Museum' with reference archives, the option to join a range of classes and courses, attend lectures, take part in Masterclasses and go on organised tours to learn more about the local environment and visit places of interest.

The Wye Historical and Heritage Societies will be able to design information for interactive technology in the museum, set up exhibitions and coordinate tours and lectures and, importantly, store their archives for consultation.

Economically, due to the combination of its extraordinary listed buildings and artefacts, and its colourful historic past, the Wye Centre and its activities will have niche market value.

The Centre will create both direct and indirect employment and volunteering opportunities. The increase in visitors will lead to development of new businesses in Wye and boost existing local businesses.

Its flexibility for multi-site bookings makes it ideally suited for events, concerts, dinners, weddings, art shows and the outdoor antique and craft markets etc. The large brick wine cellar, for wine tasting sessions, will also be a unique attraction, popular with visitors and beneficial to local providers. The close access to public transport, motorway and the channel terminal is an additional asset.

Of particular significance to visitors will be the as yet 'unrecognised', nationally important, Jacobean Staircase. Once authentically restored to its original colours, with statues replaced, this will be a major attraction, as is the case for other historic houses with staircases of comparative importance such as Knole and Blickling.

I would like to digress at this point to stress importance of these College heritage assets to the Wye Community, particularly the statues which gained notoriety when Imperial first sold them, then were 'ordered' to buy them back by Ashford Borough Council. Dr Lee Prosser, a Curator of the Royal Palaces, and a Jacobean Staircase specialist, wrote a report on the staircase, which was once brightly coloured. To aid research into this, he suggested the names of two of the country's leading paint experts to analyse and identify the colours and patterning. The village united to fund these researchers and their reports. Twenty-one village societies and business raised the money, including such various groups as the WI, Flying Horse Pub, Church Choir, Tennis Club, Garage, Organic Farm and Bell Ringers.

The Wye Community values these statues. It is therefore of great concern that the experts' paint reports are being ignored by ABC and Historic England whose intention it is to choose the decoration themselves.

## Finally

The population of Wye is put at 2,500, serving a wider population of nearly 9,000. WyeCRAG's plan provides benefit for this number, as well as to the wider public, and provides optimum value for the site by being open year-round. It will provide stewardship for the historic Grade I/II* listed buildings of Wye College as a community asset. It is a viable alternative to the Appellant's planning application for this site which benefits just four households, with no public access, only four hours per month escorted visits to specified heritage areas and one public open day per annum.

It is hard, Sir, for us to reconcile the dedication and devotion that has gone into the years of Wye College with, firstly, the exploitation by Imperial for the benefit of South Kensington, who at least kept on a skeleton maintenance staff, and a low level of heating in the listed buildings; and now developers with no heritage investment, already advertising the site for onward sale.

# Professor John Mansfield, Wye resident and former Wye College lecturer

**Professor Mansfield made a submission to the Inquiry in his capacity as resident of the village and long-standing former member of staff of the College.**

I live in Wye and worked at Wye College, lecturing and carrying out research there for almost 30 years before the site was closed and my group was relocated to Imperial College, London. I am a member of the Agricola Club. I was editor in chief of the Wye Neighbourhood Development Plan, working closely with Mr Tony Shoults, former parish Council chairman.

I would like to comment on each of the sites that are the subjects of this Inquiry, covering the planning process, community access to the most important College buildings and the alternative proposal put forward by WyeCRAG. My wife Maggie and I have sent in written comments but I would like to add to these, particularly concerning the historic College buildings.

## Planning Process

The overarching issue that links all of these sites is the need for guidance in the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to be followed. This plan was adopted as policy by ABC before the application for planning permission for Appeal Site A was submitted and incorporated into ABC's local plan. The recent White Paper (Proposal 9) highlights the value of Neighbourhood Plans and their increasing significance for local planning.

When we were preparing the NP, we had tremendous encouragement and help from members of ABC's planning department. Indeed, one key section of the plan was included specifically after recommendation by Simon Cole (currently head of planning policy) and that was:

> *'Piecemeal development should not come forward for sites within WYE3.'*

This statement backs up the Neighbourhood Plan Policy WNP6 for mixed development which emphasises the need for an acceptable Masterplan to be prepared for WYE3, as follows:

> *'Policy WNP6 Mixed Development proposals for the WYE3 site should deliver a mix of uses, including education, business, community infrastructure and some housing. Given the scale of the site in relation to the village, such development should be delivered in a phased manner in accordance with a masterplan that has been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Ashford Borough Council.'*

This policy confirms that an acceptable Masterplan is essential for the assessment of the overall impact of developments on WYE3.

I am encouraged to see that the current planning officer, Lesley Westphal, has taken full notice of the Neighbourhood Plan when commenting on the ADAS and North of Occupation Rd sites that are part of this Inquiry. Quite rightly, the Planning

Officer points out that the proposals for these two sites represent poorly designed over-development in sensitive areas. They also threaten the concept of Wye as a walkable village that was developed in the Neighbourhood Plan and strongly supported by the plan's Examiner.

Regrettably, the guidance in the Neighbourhood Plan seems to have been ignored when dealing with the Old Campus. The harmful conversion of the most historic elements of this site into residences and its treatment as a piecemeal, individual planning application makes no sense if the Neighbourhood Plan policies carry the weight they are afforded through the NPPF.

It is my opinion that one of the main reasons behind the need for this Inquiry was the Planning Officer's inaccurate and misleading report as presented to the ABC planning committee when they considered the application for listed building consent in June 2018. There were three critical errors –

1. The Neighbourhood Development Plan was not given its proper status when considering development on WYE3.
2. The lack of genuine consultation with the community over the TT application and also their Masterplan was completely overlooked. In reality, as Tony Shoults has described, there was no attempt to follow, or take account of, the required iterative process. Like other individuals who attended the public exhibition of draft proposals, I registered to be notified by email about further developments. I subsequently received an email link to the first proposals and then notification about the planning application for the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site – since then, no further details; nothing has been received.
3. The planning officer himself appears to have been misled by a very poor report from English Heritage that failed to point out the potential harm to the interior of the historic buildings through the proposed chopping up of historic components of the site. I have read the submissions by Mr Fidgett of Union 4 Planning concerning the importance of linking the Latin School to Unit 18 to maximise Group Listed Value; but this assertion completely ignores the loss of Group Listed Value caused by separating Unit 18 from the Cloister Quad, to which it has been intimately linked for over 570 years and with which it shares Listing Particulars. The Latin School has a completely separate Listing Description.

During preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, we had to respond to all comments received on the early drafts. One comment on the proposals for the Grade I site in the Neighbourhood Plan was received from English Heritage, written by one Robert Loyd in 2015, and this wholeheartedly supported the proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan for development of a community centre in part of the campus site. I will quote …

> *'We note the requirement of Policy WNP 11 to provide new use for the medieval … buildings of Wye College, as a community centre. We strongly support the identification of this as an appropriate use that is least likely to result in the internal subdivision of listed buildings, which could potentially result in harm to their significance. This also helps to ensure that the buildings will continue to be enjoyed as heritage assets by the community, providing a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment as supported by the National Planning Policy Framework.'*

I find it hard to understand why Historic England, as it is now, failed to refer to their earlier comments when the listed building consent for the damaging conversions proposed by TT were under discussion.

## Community Access and the WyeCRAG proposals

Like English Heritage in 2015, I am a strong supporter of the alternative, exciting proposals for community use of this site, initially as put forward by the Parish Council in the Neighbourhood Plan and now in more detail by the WyeCRAG group.

While I was working at Wye College, I was privileged to be able to use the Grade I and Grade 2* listed buildings every day for meetings, seminars and lectures. The College was at the heart of events that included the local community, providing employment and social interactions. The rooms in the College were frequently used by the local community for concerts, dinners, meetings and exhibitions. There was substantial interaction with the village on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, **I have always considered that the Grade I buildings were so exceptional that they provide an unrivalled opportunity to be developed as a study centre**, equivalent to many National Trust properties but adding that extra dimension of continuing education. The evolution of the Wye campus is a fascinating and perhaps unique example of the expansion, change and developing use of an educational site that started life as a Chantry College.

Imagine relocation of the local library to such a historic centre of education; interactive displays in a Museum of Wye located in the Solar and providing exhibition and archive space for organisations like Wye Heritage and the Wye Historical Society, reached by the magnificent Jacobean staircase with its ancient Britons statues; exhibitions in the Cloistered Quad and Old Hall; refreshments in the Wheelroom café and the Latin School gardens, dinners in the Parlours and tasting visits to the medieval wine cellars. There will be opportunities and space for masterclasses, summer schools, and a North Downs Study Centre – all supported by accommodation on site.

**I have always considered that the Grade I buildings were so exceptional that they provide an unrivalled opportunity to be developed as a study centre**

Historic buildings can be interesting to look at but become hugely more significant if they are still in use by the community for their original purpose. A Cathedral that does not hold services loses its reason for being there. TT's plans offer to restructure historic buildings that will just be there to be stared at, but put to almost no community use. A hugely important staircase that leads according to their plans, to – nowhere at all!

This Inquiry has generated the opportunity for the WyeCRAG proposals to be given full consideration. We now have a clear vision of what should be achieved on the historic site with the development of the sustainable Wye College Centre. An opportunity to go beyond the community access that was

already dynamic when the College was open. An opportunity to create a lasting legacy. **WyeCRAG proposes a College for the community, run by the community**.

Clearly, conversion of the Grade l College buildings to a private residential complex does not achieve any of the goals for the conservation of heritage outlined in the NPPF which places emphasis on:

> *'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'*

In conclusion, this Inquiry is not like a referendum – we will not be able to think again and change our minds in a few years' time. Saving the buildings and creating the community centre is a NOW OR NEVER OPPORTUNITY.

There are significant and obvious errors in the planning process that have led us to this Inquiry. Community access and understanding of the Grade l buildings must be increased, not suppressed. Levelling up must be accessible to all – we must not fail future generations by allowing the residential development of the Grade I buildings to go ahead.

Similarly, we must not allow development on any parts of WYE3 without a proper Masterplan that is accepted by and beneficial to all parties.

*From the archives: back in 1968, the late HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visited the College and showed particular interest in touring the science labs. He always exhibited a keen interest in technical/ scientific matters. The student on the left is Jane Pike (neé Nye, 1958–61). Photo by kind permission of the Kent Messenger Group.*

# The outcome: a summary of the Public Inquiry

## Compiled by **Professor John Mansfield**, a Wye local resident and former staff member at the College.

The results of the planning inspectorate Inquiry were announced on 6 April 2021. The Inspector's report runs to 50 pages. The three appeals against non-determination on three sites – A) The Campus; B) Occupation Rd (glasshouse complex) and C) ADAS – were all discussed at the same Inquiry. The Parish Council opposed each development; Ashford Borough Council supported the final proposals for Site A but opposed B and C, and WyeCRAG was focused solely on opposition to plans for Site A.

The main issues addressed by the Inspector were:

- whether the proposals would provide a suitable location for housing and community uses and whether the provision for community uses would be adequate, having regard to the provisions of the development plan;
- the effect of the proposals on the historic environment; and
- the effect of the proposals on the Stodmarsh nature conservation sites.

Following detailed assessments the Inspector allowed appeal A, but dismissed the appeals on the other sites.

The final decision on site A, the Grade I and Grade II College buildings, was as follows:

'**Decision – Appeal A**

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of former College buildings, with associated restoration and alterations to buildings, demolition of later structures and rebuilding, to provide 38 dwellings and community space; together with provision of two new dwellings, parking courts with car barns, cycle storage and refuse stores on land to the north of the retained buildings and associated landscaping; and change to parking arrangements for Squires Cottages (Change of Use from College residential accommodation back to 4 individual dwellings approved under Reference 16/00893/AS) at Former Wye College Buildings, High Street, Wye, Ashford TN25 2AL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 17/00567/AS, dated 7 April 2017, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.'

The appeals relating to sites B and C were not turned down because of any fault in design, housing numbers, failure to follow guidance in the Neighbourhood Plan or impact on the AONB, but because of potential impact on the nutrient status of the River Stour and its effect on the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve (this lies to the East of Canterbury). The developers had proposed 40 houses on the Occupation Rd site (B) and 20 houses on the ADAS site (C).

**In my opinion, overall, this is a pretty disastrous outcome for supporters of WyeCRAG and for the Parish Council.**

The report describes the rationale behind

the Inspector's decisions that were based on relevant planning law and, in particular, key sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is clear that he has weighed up conflicting evidence very carefully and, unfortunately, seems to have come down in favour of the developer in nearly all cases.

Of particular significance to the Old College site is NPPF 193 which states:

> '193. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'

Some important statements from the report, dealing with specific topics, follow with some key points italicised:

## Community use

> '31. Local residents drew attention to the level of demand for space to accommodate the activities of community groups in Wye and to the loss of other spaces used by such groups. The point was made that the Heritage Centre is one of many groups in the village. However, I consider that the proposed community space would be an improvement on the existing situation. Whilst I appreciate that some residents would like to see more space devoted to community use, Neighbourhood Plan Policy WNP11(e) does not specify the amount of community space to be provided. *The planning system is generally concerned with land uses rather than the identity of individuals or organisations that may use a particular building or space.*'

> '62. Heritage England's *Conservation Principles* suggests that the communal value of a heritage asset includes the way a place figures in the collective experience. The concept of communal value is pertinent here because of the close association between the college and the village of Wye. That association goes back over centuries because of the charitable schools that once provided education for the local community. At the Inquiry, local residents described how the life of the agricultural college was entwined with the economic, social and community life of the village in many ways. Aspects of this close relationship included the use of spaces within the college for community activities. There was, it seems, little restriction on the ability of the general public to walk through the college and use facilities within it. It is clear from the representations that I have heard and read that the former agricultural college figures in the collective experience such that it is, for many local residents, an important aspect of their sense of community and local distinctiveness.'

> '87. It seems that there was little restriction on the ability of the general public to walk through the agricultural college and use facilities within it. However, that ability came to an end when the college closed. As long as the buildings remain vacant it seems unlikely that there will be any ability for the public to gain access. The proposals include public access to the quadrangles, cloisters and important rooms on one day per month, with the chapel available for public worship for four services per

month and an annual heritage open day.'

'88. It is understandable that those who were familiar with the college when it was functioning would prefer to see a much greater level of public access. However, there is no policy or legal requirement for the landowner to replicate the former arrangements. Indeed, there is no general obligation on an owner of a heritage asset to grant any public rights of access to it. HE* advised that the provision of occasional public access to key historic features would represent a heritage benefit. I share that view and *I consider that the proposed arrangements for public access to key features of the complex should be regarded as a heritage benefit.*'

'81. *I consider that the appeal scheme would secure new uses that are likely to lead to the investment needed for the long-term conservation of the listed buildings.* Having regard to the high level of significance attributable to these buildings, and the scale and complexity of the group of buildings that is in need of reuse, I regard this as a heritage benefit to which significant weight should be attached.'

## The WyeCRAG proposals were carefully considered:

'96. 'WyeCRAG put forward an alternative scheme which, it was suggested, would involve less harm to the listed buildings and would therefore represent the optimum viable use. WyeCRAG argued that the appeal scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the listed buildings, would not represent the optimum viable use and, consequently, would be contrary to paragraph 196 of the Framework.'

'97. Whilst I have identified some harm to each of the listed buildings, in each case I have found that the harm would be outweighed by greater heritage benefits. For the reasons given above, I do not think paragraph 196 is applicable. However, even if paragraph 196 was applicable, it does not require demonstration of optimum viable use in every case. Optimum viable use is to be considered "*where appropriate*". In my view, it would not be appropriate to require the appellant to demonstrate optimum viable use in the circumstances of this case where heritage benefits would decisively outweigh heritage harms.'

'98. In any event, I do not think it has been shown that the WyeCRAG scheme would result in less harm to the listed buildings. It is an illustrative concept sketch rather than a fully developed scheme, so cannot be compared directly with the appeal scheme. Even so, on the basis of the information before the Inquiry, I consider that WyeCRAG's evidence understated the level of intervention in the historic fabric that would be likely to be required in practice to support the mix of uses proposed. In summary, *whilst I have taken account of the WyeCRAG scheme, it does not alter my conclusions on the appeal scheme*.'

## HE* – Heritage England

'102. I conclude that the appeal scheme would preserve the listed buildings that would be directly affected and would support their long-term conservation. Bearing in mind the high level of significance attributable to these buildings, great weight should be attached to their conservation. There

would be no harm to the setting or the significance of the Church of St Gregory and St Martin. There would be no harm to the character or the appearance of the Wye Conservation Area.'

## Lack of an adopted Masterplan

In para 36, the Inspector has this comment on the lack of an adopted Masterplan:

> *'Whilst I consider that the absence of an adopted masterplan is a material disadvantage, I do not agree with the characterisation of the appeal proposals as* "piecemeal"*. The appellant has sought to engage with the masterplan approach. Importantly, the pattern of development that is emerging on the ground appears to me to be broadly consistent with the WNP (neighbourhood Plan).*

Concerning the Parish Council's approach, the absence of an adopted masterplan would be likely to delay necessary development of the WYE3 site for an indefinite period. In my view, that approach would not be consistent with the Framework (NPPF). I consider that the absence of an adopted masterplan should be regarded as a material conflict with part of WNP6 which should be weighed in the balance together with other planning policies and other material considerations. Having regard to all the above matters, I attach moderate weight to that conflict."

## The Inspector's final summary for Site A

> '39. I conclude that the site is a suitable location for housing and community use and that the proposed community use would accord with the development plan. The proposals would accord with WNP6 insofar as that policy seeks residential and community uses as part of a mixed use development of the WYE3 site. They would accord with WNP11(e) insofar as the positive reuse of the listed buildings at the former Wye College would be achieved with residential and community use.'

## Some final (personal) thoughts

Overall, the Inspector has adopted a 'net gain' approach to heritage. In essence, he decides that exposing the beams, providing some communal space but limited community access, and above all, ensuring the future of the listed fabric outweighs the heritage harms, resulting in a net heritage gain, to which he then gives great weight under NPPF para 193 (see above). The effect of the Inspector's approach is to have special regard (i.e. give great weight to) the desirability of preserving the building only, but not to have special regard (give great weight) to the desirability of preserving any features of special historic interest, such as the overall community coherence and institutional character of the building. Historic interactions with the community have, in fact, largely been ignored.

Whether or not his approach is fully justified would need to be challenged in a judicial review but the outcome of such a review would be finely balanced.

We believe that Telereal Trillium has informed ABC that work on the campus site should start within the next three months. Wye will expand considerably over the next few years. The structure of historic buildings will be preserved but not the scale of community interaction that we all remember. One wonders if the village infrastructure will cope satisfactorily with the scale of development proposed.

# College closure: the finances

## A personal communication on the financial aspects relating to Wye College and its merger with Imperial College from Professor John Prescott, Principal of Wye College, 1988–2000.

The initial formal meetings of the Governing Body of Wye College, following my appointment, involved specific consideration of the responsibilities and personal liabilities of Governors in the event of the College becoming financially non-viable. I recall that at each Governing Body meeting for some time thereafter, the Principal of the University of London formally asked me as Principal of Wye College to confirm that the College could continue as a 'going concern'. At the end of my first year in office, we had a deficit of £300,000 on a turnover of £6 million.

So, with the enthusiastic commitment of staff at every level and the full support of Governors, we set about developing an academic and estate strategy, with transparent costing of income and expenditure to support innovation in teaching and research. This involved almost continuous restructuring of staff and facilities.

Over the 10 years, 1988–1998, we achieved

*A typical Wye scene: students walking and talking in the College's iconic Quad*

an operating surplus only once, in 1992/93, and operating deficits in each of the other nine years with, overall, just less than £1.5 million in accrued losses. One Governor, from industry, described our attempt to innovate with so little capital as 'trying to make bricks without straw'. However, by the end of this period, the College's turnover had doubled to well over £12 million per annum and the recurrent operating deficits had been funded largely by judicious capital transfers, concurrent with the development of the College estate, including raising £0.5 million in a BESSA scheme.

**The funding of the new LRC was *not* a source of financial difficulty leading to the need for the merger**

Over the decade, the estate strategy started with the completion of the Wolfson Lecture Theatre and then included the completion of four new Halls of Residence (Dunstan Skilbeck Hall, the two Sunley Halls and Edward Partridge House). They were needed to house the increasing number of students which peaked at around 900 in 1994/96. These developments attracted substantial charitable funding that was primed by sale of the peripheral domestic properties in the village. The domestic properties sold had previously been used for student accommodation.

Lecture rooms, laboratories and offices were also improved and extended, including the Carr Lecture Theatre, Wolfson Laboratory, Top Hat Office Extension and refurbishment of the offices for Economics and Business Management. This increased the value of the College estate by £2 million and then, in 1997, by a further £3.5 million with the completion of the new Learning Resource Centre (LRC) and its IT equipment costing £0.5 million. In addition, a further £2 million was raised and invested in establishing 50 postgraduate courses which were completed for delivery by distance learning.

Charitable funding supported part of the cost of these developments. Building the LRC was primed through the sale of the Principal's House and surrounding arable land in Brook (and the free transfer of the Barn, Oast and collection to the Agricultural Museum Trust), and the sale of James Wyllie House, the Limes, Thornleigh and of the Old Vicarage Car park for housing development. These sales made significant contributions from the College's own resources of £1.75 million to add to a capital grant from HEFCE of £0.75 million.

As a consequence of this development, the College's tangible assets were valued in 1996/97 at over £15 million and outstanding capital liabilities were consolidated into a 15-year loan of £1.85 million; of this, £1.5 million related to the LRC and £0.35 million to Student Hall of Residence. The College Estate strategy had realised on peripheral assets and concentrated investment on purpose-designed facilities. The new state of the art LRC doubled student use of literature and online facilities and provided a new academic heart to the College. Income from research grants and contracts reached £2.37 million in 1997/98.

The funding of the new LRC was *not* a source of financial difficulty leading to the need for the merger. However, protracted delays in securing planning permission for the former Student Car Park and its sale for housing did significantly interrupt cash flow for some months and precipitated the early sale of

Court Lodge and the surrounding farmland. The sale of the former car park in the centre of the village was only completed after the College had secured a court order to remove squatters from James Wyllie House and the access to the site.

## Most significantly, Sir Ronald Oxburgh left Imperial College a few months after the merger

This reflects the unpleasant nature of the opposition to the College's plans for these 15 terraced houses. In 1988–89, the Parish Council had frustrated an earlier attempt at joint development of Brice's Orchard for the accommodation of 40 single and 20 married students, and starter-homes for 28 families to meet local needs, with 30 houses for private sale.

This precipitated acute awareness by Governors of the potential consequences of our continuing financial difficulties on the fragile operating position of the College.

Governors were mindful of their statutory and long-term responsibilities in relation to the protection of the mission of Wye College, the rights and duties associated with students and staff and the conservation of the public assets. There were concerns as to whether the College could continue to be financially viable as an autonomous College of the University of London and protect its academic mission.

Three alternatives were considered; within the University of London, Imperial College (i), already a partner in Natural Resources International Ltd at Chatham, and outside the University of London, the Universities of Kent (ii) and Greenwich (iii).

After due deliberation, the Governing Body and academic staff considered that the vision set out by Sir Ronald Oxburgh, Rector of Imperial, was both timely and convincing and that a merger with Imperial offered the best option available. Heads of Agreement were signed and after an interim period of two years, the Royal Charter of the College was revoked and the merger took place on 31 June 2000.

When the Heads of Agreement was signed with Imperial College in October 1998, Wye College's 15-year loan for £1.85 million was converted into a £2.6 million loan from Imperial, the increase to cover the transition period. Over this same period, prior to merger, voluntary severance agreements were made with 25 academic and 17 non-academic staff; that is, a quarter of the academic and 15% of the support staff. The cost of these severance payments was met by the HEFCE after merger.

Most significantly, Sir Ronald Oxburgh left Imperial College a few months after the merger. Regrettably, Imperial College failed to implement the Oxburgh Vision and sustain the mission of Wye College for which they took responsibility at merger.

Specifically, they adopted a policy of increasing A-level entry standards for undergraduates from 16 to 24 points (BBB). But whilst raising entry requirements, they failed to include Wye Campus degrees in the Imperial Prospectus in 2000 and confused the identity of Wye's outstandingly successful Business Management Degrees under Applied Natural Science in the UCCA listing. As a consequence, the undergraduate entry decreased by 75% from 170 in 1998 to 42 in 2001 with an annual loss of £1.5 million in core income.

With projected losses we are told of £1.8 million per year by 2006, Imperial announced the closure of all Applied Agricultural Science teaching and research at Wye in 2004. This, even though, following the appointment of Professor Jeff Waage in 2001, he had successfully reinvigorated undergraduate student recruitment, with UK applicants expected to have A-levels of BBB. Soon thereafter, Imperial College decided not to continue support for undergraduate degrees in Business Management at Wye, in spite of the national and international academic success of these degrees and their robust financial prospects.

**Wye is remembered as a small, friendly, caring community and these attributes are valued no less by today's graduates than those of the early post-war vintage**

The decision was made to transfer the Applied Business Management degree and the academic staff supporting it to the Business School of the University of Kent. But, unfortunately, in spite of adopting appropriate transitional arrangements with Imperial, the University of Kent was unable to attract a viable intake to the degree and it was closed.

The Distance Learning Programme transferred to School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) when Imperial left the University of London and is the only part of the mission of Wye to survive. Thanks to the early initiative of Professor Ian Carruthers, the distance learning opportunities for postgraduates that he and his colleagues pioneered still continue in strength, internationally, under the auspices of SOAS and the University of London.

Over the 12 years that I was Principal, it was my great pleasure and privilege to be part of this community of students and staff working together that was Wye College. In my view, the quality of student life at Wye was well sustained over the years as confirmed by a Survey of Student Careers by Ruth Gasson (1994)* who stated: 'Wye is remembered as a small, friendly, caring community and these attributes are valued no less by today's graduates than those of the early post-war vintage.' The concluding comments of the Reporting Assessor on our Teaching Quality in 1998 were: 'I think most of us would give our right arms to be a student here because of the overall sense of community, perhaps above all else. It also leads to it being an excellent learning environment and an excellent environment to be a student.'

Let us be glad for what we all shared.

**A Record of the Factors Leading to and the Consequences of the Merger of Wye College University of London with Imperial College and the Postscript by Professor David Leaver** published by the Wye College Agricola Club in 2010 provides the detailed record of these matters.

*'A Survey of Student Careers' by Ruth Gasson (1994) *Agricola Club Journal* of that year.

# Skilbeck's Model – why and how it could not survive

**Professor Geoffrey R Dixon (1962–68, Student and Staff) – with an additional comment from Professor John H Prescott, former Principal (1988-2000).**

The model that Dunstan Skilbeck devised for the resurgent Wye College, Faculty of Agriculture & Horticulture of the University of London, was designed as a means for educating undergraduates, and to some extent postgraduates, as future cadres of independently minded, thoughtful achievers and practitioners, capable of reaching high echelons in rural economies at home and abroad.

**Despite much criticism from 'educationalists', the Oxbridge system still delivers world-class research, education and outreach**

The success of his model can be judged by the numbers of Wye graduates who have reached and survived in careers which have delivered business and academic success. Even amongst the most recent cohorts, who left Wye in the 1990s, are individuals who bear the hallmarks of 'Skilbeck's Model'.

The model was based on his version of an Oxbridge college. Despite much criticism from 'educationalists', the Oxbridge system still delivers world-class research, education and outreach. Every league table of university ratings places Oxford and Cambridge as two outstanding successes.

When I entered Wye as an undergrad, in 1962, we were still part of the favoured 4–5% of the school population awarded higher education. Freshers on their first night were given a taste of the Wye ethos; a formal dinner with mandatory gowns, developing the collegiate culture; afterwards, Skilbeck lectured:

> *'We take in a large first year of which we expect to shed at least 20% at the end of year one; you will each have a Director of Studies who will guide reading for a degree; you will be mentored by a series of subject tutors in the second and third years and you will meet me, fully gowned, for "Handshakes" at the end of each term.'*

In summary, his message was: you are a fortunate few, which will become fewer, with the privilege of entering a small, academic community centred on the science and practice of agriculture and horticulture. Degrees followed the then London University format of being syllabus-based, with year one leading to an Intermediate Degree bringing together several related basic sciences.

Skilbeck's model had matured and thrived since 1947, making Wye one of the most prestigious providers of higher education in agriculture and horticulture, both nationally

and internationally. Subsequent events, mostly out the College's control, would lead up to its eventual demise; Wye did not possess the centuries of collegiate clout or accumulated wealth which has sustained and still does, the existence of Oxford and Cambridge's colleges.

What were at least some of these forces?

## 1960s

- The expansion of higher education, Robbins Report, advent of the University Central Admissions System (UCAS), increasing and liberalising higher education.
- The modularisation of London University degrees, removing requirements for an holistic and integrated understanding of the disciplines.
- The shifting student culture; from about 1965, attitudes of students altered, probably fired, at least in part, by the Anti-Vietnam War movement in the USA. Students worldwide became more vocal and demanded liberalisation, aided by 'pop culture', drugs, the pill, free-expression; students became disinclined towards the structured system.

## 1970s

- The economic downturn, oil crisis, strikes, three-day week, resulting in a much-reduced market for graduates and reduced higher-education funding.
- While the chemical revolution expanded in agriculture and horticulture, the seeds of change were signalled by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*; voices sounded warning bells that agricultural productivity at any price was damaging the environment. This produced a divergence of opinion as to how food should be produced, starting to open up a gap between urban and rural opinions.
- The career market for agriculturists became reduced and more circumscribed in what was available; no longer could graduates simply expect a well-remunerated career.
- Anthony Barber's budgets leading, firstly, to the 'Barber Boom', followed by rampant inflation and price and wage controls which slashed public spending, reduced educational and research spending and job prospects;

**Students worldwide became more vocal and demanded liberalisation**

- Joining the Common Market should have increased finance for research projects, but this was inhibited by the Treasury's attitude that gaining grants from Europe was simply recycling British money and actually more costly, with resultant disbenefits for British researchers.
- Failure of modernisation by the agricultural industry which had an in-built political aversion toward 'co-operatives', which the Europeans used as a means of easing finance out of Brussels; farming and growing lagged behind Europe in modernisation with inevitable impact on attitudes towards higher education in agriculture and horticulture.
- The Universities Grants Commission closed Cambridge and Glasgow Departments of Agriculture, a move which signalled things to come.

## 1980s

- The economic downturn intensified and was met with 'near market cuts'; any research which was directly beneficial, especially towards agriculture, lost its funding; research stations and university departments started closing.
- Removing local authority control of the county agricultural colleges, which had provided sound further education courses of a practical nature, resulted in a raft of new, higher education providers intent on challenging existing institutions like Wye College for student applicants; effectively, there was aggressive bidding 'war' for students;
- Modularisation of both further and higher education courses, with rigid structuring of teaching and learning processes, student outcomes, instruments of assessments, awards of pass and merit qualifications, education in all sectors, became micro-managed, driven by philosophies coming from academic departments of education initiated first by the Munn and Dunning Report.
- The Department of Industry took control of higher education from the Department of Education; higher education began being driven as a job-orientated process and as a means of taking unemployed youngsters off the unemployment totals.
- Research funding provision changed dramatically; the Agricultural Research Council became the Biological and Biotechnological Science Research Council (BBSRC) which had no interest in financing any work with even the slightest potential for supporting agriculture; on one very notable September evening, a representative of BBSRC told the Conference of Agricultural Professors that unless their work involved studies of 'molecular biology' there would be no research funding.
- Research Assessment Exercises were started which identified the leading, high-quality research centres (in actual fact, the top half dozen or so which were already there) and shifted funding further towards their efforts; Wye College simply did not have the depth of science effort required.

**Companies gained the intellectual property 'on the cheap', with the loss of career opportunities**

- The determination that there is an endless supply of foodstuffs simply waiting for delivery into the UK, so there is no need whatsoever to provide financial support for home production; hence employment was limited.
- Increasing aversion towards 'agriculture' as a subject, hence massive declines in student applications.
- Privatisation of advisory services which blocked the opportunities for training in cadres of agronomists; and the selling-off of 'profitable' parts of research such that private (foreign) companies gained the intellectual property 'on the cheap', with the loss of career opportunities.

## 1990s

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) closed its postgraduate support funding, effectively shutting

down the supply of people with research experience combined with intimate knowledge of agricultural practice who had progressed as the future academic and industry leaders; this had been a major source of funding for home-based, MSc and PhD students.

- Increasingly, education both in the higher and further sectors, became rampantly bureaucratic and politicised with vastly increased reporting of outcomes and statistics which simply reduced teaching times and capacities for student contact; course hours became circumscribed, opportunities for practical experience and industry involvement disappeared; as a result, huge amounts of time and energy were spent on administering education as opposed to delivering it.

## Change helped me teach my students of all levels, support the horticultural industry, undertake research in plant sciences and create jobs

- Expansion of the number of degree-awarding institutions and the volume of subjects for which degrees are awarded; the intention of at least 50% of the population holding a first degree; inception of foundation degrees which were largely converted higher national diplomas; and topping-up to honours degrees.
- Amalgamation of the Environment Department and MAFF into the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which diminished the role of 'agriculture' still further, reducing inclinations towards it as a career path.
- Budget accounting systems imposed by the Treasury which required estimations of replacement costs into the balance sheet; organisations and projects were deemed unprofitable unless facilities replacement could be covered (Comprehensive Net Expenditure), adding a layer of cost accounting which helped render Wye College, apparently, uneconomic.

Despite the tone of the above, these changes were not all for the worse. There is no doubt that an increasingly well-educated population, alongside active and successful research efforts, increase the wealth of nations and their abilities for providing a social fabric which supports all members of the population. These changes provided educational opportunities for increasingly larger numbers of the population and introduced public scrutiny of the manner by which tax-payers' money is used. Throughout my career, I was party to much of what was happening; it was impossible not to be drawn into it. Change helped me teach my students of all levels, support the horticultural industry, undertake research in plant sciences and create jobs.

Sitting outside the College and returning as External Examiner and, for a short while, as a teacher, it was possible to gauge the impact of these events on the 'Skilbeck Model'. That 'Model' was unashamedly 'elitist' which, when he formulated it, was applauded. But within a generation of Wye College re-opening after World War II, it became increasingly unsustainable. My thesis is

that many of the social and political changes worked against the 'Skilbeck Model' and that, as society changed, it became almost inevitable that Wye College would have to change. But, because of its small size and isolated location that was, to say the least, difficult and, in reality, impossible.

The regrettable outcome is that the direction of change, ultimately and inevitably, forced Wye College to look for alternative models. The one chosen ended in closure with all the distress that has caused to several thousand who are its alumni.

## Postcript

*One of the Skilbeck features that survived into the mid-1960s was the wearing of gowns at formal waiter/waitress-served evening meals in the dining hall, with the Prin and his academic staff seated at high table. But as Geoff indicates, student attitudes worldwide altered dramatically in the 'swinging sixties' and Wye was not immune. Within a short space of time, and as a result of well-organised, polite, student protest, the practice of wearing gowns was abandoned and the evening meal switched to self-service. There is no doubt in my mind that we lost something quite special at that time. But it was inevitable.*

**John Walters** *(1964–70)*

## Afterword

As someone who has worked in a succession of Universities and both AFRC and BBSRC Research over this 40-year period, I consider Geoff's paper is an excellent and balanced account of the external policies impacting on Universities over this time.

The ultimate closure of Wye College arose as a consequence of these effects after a decade in which the College had used a combination of resources in its built estate to fund academic development to survive; the decision to merge with another university was taken by an experienced, robust and independent Governing Body, frustrated by the opposition of the representatives of the local community to reasonable development.

The attached Commentary amplifies this perspective on the merger and is based on my Principal's Reports 1988–2000 and notes I made in 2010.

**John Prescott**

# News of members

**Births, marriages, deaths and general updates, followed by some obituaries.**

## Deaths

**Clement George Finch, MC** (1936–39) died on 19 January 2014, aged 95. He had been on our 'Lost list' until **John Kingsley-Pallant** (1960–63), a fellow resident in Little Shelford, noticed his name and was able to supply a *Telegraph* obituary along with some reflections of his own. *See Obituaries.*

**Dorothy Pelham** (1937–39). We were recently informed that Dorothy died a few years ago.

**Anne Kendrick** (née **Morkill**, 1940–43) died in April 2019 aged 97. *See Obituaries.*

**Dr Daphne Prue** (née **Vince**, c.1943–45) attended the Swanley College. She died on 28 November 2019, aged 93.

**Jean Belger** (née **Dunt**, 1943–46). We were recently informed by her daughter Helen that Jean, who graduated with a degree in horticulture, died a couple of years ago. She wrote: 'Horticulture gave her life-long enjoyment. I have found her graduation gown and, I presume, the Wye College pale yellow-edged graduation hood, which I wondered would be of use to anyone?' (*Francis has accepted these items for the Heritage Centre.*)

**Marjorie Dillingham** (née **Ingram**, 1943–46) died recently. She was amongst the few who started their degrees at Swanley College and then graduated from Wye College.

**Daphne Chapman** (née **De Whalley**, 1945–1948) died during March 2021. Apparently, she had originally expected to go to Swanley but because of the bombing there she was enrolled at Wye. Her brother **Clare de Whalley** (1955–58) provided the information.

**Muriel Johnston** (née Alder, 1946–49) died on 13 October 2020.

**Michael Madan-Mayers** (1950–53) died on 9 February 2021, aged 91. His wife Stephanie pre-deceased him. He leaves their children Caroline, Spencer, Jasper, Jessica and the late Harriet.

**Michael Way** (1950–53): His daughter Alix Way informed us that Michael had died on 5 January 2021 after a number of weeks in hospital.

**Derek A Green** (1953–54) died 23 March 2021. We were informed by his daughter Teri Green.

**Brian Lovelidge** (1953–56) died in November 2019 at the age of 85. *See Obituaries.*

**Dr Ian Emmerson Currah** (1959–62) died in January 2020. *See Obituaries.*

**Peter Alan Charles Thompson** (1955–60). *See Obituaries.*

**John B May** (1956–59) died in October 2017. We were informed by his widow Tandi Clausen-May.

**Dr James Patrick Langlands** (1956–59) died at home in Armidale, NSW, Australia on 10 February 2020 aged 82 years. The following message was intended for his colleagues and was sent by family friend Kylie Alcorn: 'He was much loved, spending every Christmas with my family and a wise counsel to myself personally since childhood. In my youth he guided my parents, encouraging them to provide me with a good education for which I will be forever grateful. The Wye College Agricola Club Journal appeared in his mail and it is from the pages of this that they had our contact details.'

**David Jestyn Evans** (1957–60) died on 8 April 2020 whilst undergoing a heart valve replacement operation. He was 81. He leaves his wife Christine and son Gilbert. In a message to inform colleagues, **Gordon Rae** (1957–60) wrote: 'We all have very fond memories of David as a student at Wye and his lively participation in and support of our reunions.'

**Keith Virgo** (1959–62) died in January 2021 from a Covid-19 infection following heart surgery. *See Obituaries.*

**Jeremy Selby** (1963–66) died at the end of April, 2021 on the family farm in Zambia after a short battle with melanoma. According to a message from son Angus sent to Paul Webster: 'He was buried under some huge Msasa trees below Mum's garden, overlooking the Lunsemfwa river and facing his beloved sunrise. It is where the crowned eagles nest and where the monkeys plan their raid's on Mum's vegetable patch. It is a beautiful spot, and he will be happy there. We then gave him a good, old-fashioned send-off via plenty of whisky with all his local mates. He would have liked that. We have been blown away by the support of the local community and the inflow of messages from all over the world – a mark of the man he was and the many lives he impacted and inspired: young and old; black and white; women and men. He loved Wye and he really loved his Wye mates – a lifelong set, evidenced by the regular stories and references to yourself (Paul) and the rest of the Wye circle.' *See Obituaries.*

**Barry Potter** (1965–68) See 'Tribute' in *Obituaries*.

**Charles (Charlie) Royds** (1966–69) died peacefully on Friday 22 January 2021 at West End Farm after a short illness: 'Airline pilot, farmer, builder, intrepid adventurer and lover of people, he lived life to the full! A family funeral has taken place and a Memorial BBQ is planned in the summer. Donations, if desired, to Macmillan Midhurst. He will be greatly missed by all his friends and family but is no doubt once again flying the big blue skies looking down on us all.'

**Doug Roberts** (1967–71) died on 3 August 2020 aged 73. Just before he died he penned an article for the Journal – *see page 108.*

**Stan Burrage** (1967 and Staff) died in January 2021. *See Obituaries*.

**Kevin Witherby** (1970–73): *see Obituaries*.

**Gerald Cousens** (1973–76) died last year at the age of 66. *See Obituaries*.

**Gill Mellor** (née **Duckworth**, 1978–81) died at the end of November 2020 after a long battle with cancer.

**Sarah Scott** (née Richardson, 1985–88) died in 2016. Although previously reported, a new eulogy from her husband Alister can be found under *Obituaries*.

**Angela N Bates** (1956–58) died Dec 2019: notified by executor, Anne Oliver.

**Prof Edward Alan Bevan** (staff) died 2015: notified by daughter-in-law Sally Bevan.

**Robert V Blandy** (1948–51) died 2020(?) (Journal returned with unsigned letter saying he had died).

**Roger Anthony Chesher** (1968–71) died 2020: notified by wife Ros.

**Dr G A Hide** (1957–60) died December 2020: notified by daughter, Liz Hide.

**Mrs P Hide** (neé Godden, 1957–60) died 2003: notified by daughter, Liz Hide.

**Dr Michael R Shipway** (1961–65) died February 2020, suffering from Parkinson's and dementia:- notified by wife Yvonne.

**Ken W Tullis** (1964–67) died January 2019: notified by John Beath (1966-1968).

**Richard Pearce** (1989-93) died in May 2021. *See Obituaries*.

# News of members

## 1930s

### Sent in by Alison Rose Gordon's daughter Marion Mair:

My mother, **Alison Rose Gordon**, born 1910, went to Swanley in the 1930s.

She had a degree in Botany from St Andrews University, then went to Laurie's Landscape Gardeners in Dundee (now the site of Dundee Botanics), took a boat from Dundee to London and started at Swanley.

Afterwards, she returned to St Andrews and set up her own landscape business, which took her to WW2; she got married and drove ambulances for Leuchars, near St Andrews. After the war, they lived abroad until about 1959, then came back to look after Inverewe Gardens for the NTS, until about 1961. Finally, they returned to St Andrews.'

## 1940s

### Dr Bernhardine Schmitz-Stapper (née Hardt, 1949/50):

Bernhardine studied in the UK and attended the College in 1949. She now lives in Nettetal in the Lower Rhine region of West Germany. Unfortunately, these days Bernhardine can no longer read the newspaper or the *Wye Journal*. She thanked us for sending her the interesting information for many years, asked us to stop sending the journal, then bade us farewell. The information was sent by her niece Joanna Hardt.

*We offer our deepest sympathy for B's plight. Perhaps she will accept the suggestion made by Francis for Joanna to use the digital version, either to read to her from it and /or to check if there was any improvement in visibility. Sometimes the back lighting of computer screens can enhance visibility for people with impaired vision –Ed.*

## 1950s

### Olive Aburrow (née Hall, 1950–53) has checked in to say:

I have lived a hermit-like existence for the past 10 months. I forget what the outside world looks like!

### Murray Mylechreest (1955–58) wrote, somewhat belatedly:

Murray told us that he was awarded a PhD by Reading University in 1983! His doctorate was for research on the horticulturalist Thomas Andrew Knight (1759–1838), who was the second President of the Royal Horticultural Society from 1811 until his death. Mr Knight introduced controlled pollination in plant breeding.

Coincidentally, Murray also detailed the practice of 'Showing the Wheatsheaf' (*below*) that was introduced during his time at Wye: 'It is very simple,' he explained, 'a gold-coloured, metal wheatsheaf was hung on the corridor side of our study bedrooms

to indicate that 'studying' was in progress and hence it requested that the occupant be left undisturbed. Apparently, this was accepted by all and used appropriately.'

He went on to say that he still has his wheatsheaf as a treasured memento, and it hangs on the wall in his study. He raised the question: 'I wonder how many of these are still in the ownership of Agricola members?' and added, 'It was pleasing to see the silver wheatsheaf brooches that were presented for the Wye awards in the 2019–20 *Journal* as it reminded me of the custom of "Showing the Wheatsheaf".'

*For me, the coincidence is that I was recently presented with one of these wheatsheaves as a parting gift for my eight years as Club Chairman (see below). I had never seen one before and was unaware of their intended use, until I read Murray's explanation.*

*Mind you, thinking back to the behaviour of my lot of 'pals' in the era of the 1960s and 'free love', if they saw one of those hanging on my door, I dread to think what they would have, firstly, concluded and, secondly, done next!* – ***John Walters***


## Tim Threadgold (1954–57) wrote:

Thanks very much for alerting me to Radio 4's *On Your Farm* item on 'Wye College and its Legacy'. I would never have heard it otherwise. I thought it was a nicely balanced programme, though it could have emphasised **Professor Louis Wain**'s really important work on selective herbicides and touched on hop research (being in Kent). Imperial College got off lightly, without reference to their dislike of Wye's applied research, downgrading their overall research rating, or their role in failing to maintain student numbers. I told my extended family that it was essential listening.

**Responses:**

*Daughter 1* – Really interesting, and I'd forgotten how good radio can transport you; I was in Kent!

*Son-in-law* – Excellent piece on Wye College, sounds amazing.

*Granddaughter* – Just listened while I ate my lunch. Really enjoyed it! Fascinating how people from all around the world came to study there.

*Daughter 2* – Very interesting, sounded wonderful – disappointed you weren't on Dad!

The programme had contributions from individuals from the mid 1960s onwards. In the 1950s there were only Agriculture and Horticulture courses. The Farm Management, Rural Environmental Studies courses etc. came later. There were very few foreign students then. A proportion of graduates went to work abroad as Development Officers in African colonies (to avoid National Service?).

It was interesting to see the front entrance of the College on the computer screen. The

first-floor window to the left of the entrance was Graham Thomas's room and then **Peter Siggers**' (1954–57). My room and **Frank Thompson**'s (1954–57) were on the other side of the corridor facing the quadrangle. We all stayed put for two years, but certainly Frank and I moved to larger rooms further into the college for the third year.

*Here's a coincidence; the wheatsheaf again –JW.*

I have copied **Francis Huntingdon** into this as I am forwarding to him a 1954 blazer badge and a 1955 brass wheatsheaf (bought at cost) for possible inclusion in the archives. If you don't want them, bin them. I also have a complete set of Agricola Club journals from 1958, but I guess you are well supplied with those. The idea of the wheatsheaf was to hang it on your door if you didn't want to be disturbed, but it didn't really catch on. In our day there were no locks on doors. If you weren't bothered, you left the door ajar, otherwise you closed it. I am afraid my wheatsheaf is heavily tarnished as I drilled it to fit on my car alongside the AA badge.

**1960s**

## Sally Osgerby (1962–66) wrote:

I have been meaning to tell you how much I have enjoyed the last few journals. Thank you so much for soldiering on. They really are tremendous.

Roger (Packham) has asked us to give you some news, but there never seems to be anything of interest. He suggested Brexit, but it is early days and we do not yet know how things will work out on the farm. We know that a huge proportion of our vining peas have been exported, frozen, to Europe. They are unlikely now to take them at our price, so what will we grow instead?

I have decided to tell you about farm security! Not a gripping subject, but hey ho! We live in an isolated, remote corner of the Humber Estuary. One USP for thieves is its proximity to the port. We were recruited to the local Farm Watch and receive regular emails with tales of what has gone from where. Our main problem is that the farmyard rarely has anyone in it.

People are away working in field, with shed doors left open. The tied cottages have been knocked down or sold off to town workers who have no interest in comings and goings, About eight years ago we fitted a metal detector to a tree at the end of our drive which sent a wireless signal to an alarm in the house and to a siren in the farmyard. Anything metal crossing the beam from the tree, set off the alarm. The 'ding dong' goes in the house, and I can hear the siren in the yard if I am round the back in the veg garden or picking fruit. The whole system cost under £300. It alerts me to go and investigate who the visitor is. In the middle of a wet winter night this can be a nuisance, but I never bother to get dressed. We have recently had a lot of false alarms and we put it down to snails.

We moved here in 1990 and there were no snails at all in the garden. We now have masses (climate change?). Also, in 1990 we didn't use many fungicides as the pollution from the West Riding of Yorks was dumped on our patch.

Soon after that, the efforts to prevent air pollution proved successful and we now have clean air, need fungicides and watch lichens grow on tree trunks, which are now covered in snails.

In autumn 2020, Morrisons encouraged us to put up cameras as they are worried about the 'antis' interfering with their pig production. The cameras have been great. Now I do not have to rush out every time the 'ding dong

goes'; I just look at the video on my phone to see what is going on. It records any motion, and we have watched deer, hares, etc, as well as two foxes that we did not realise we had. One weekday afternoon in November, when no staff were about, a greyhound trotted through the yard, soon to be followed by a man on foot. I am enjoying our latest experience of farm security!

Again, many thanks & best wishes.

## John Killick (1963–66) wrote to Roger Packham (1963–66):

Many thanks once again for organising the meeting. It was great to see everyone and hear their news. My surprise, as a Zoom novice, has been how relatively intimate the meetings are. This makes for a most agreeable atmosphere. We look forward to a possible 'meeting' after Easter and then hopefully we will be vaccinated and able to attend in person in September.

Many thanks also for the video of your project in India. I think I told you that, after 'retirement' in 2004, I was involved in setting up a flower (Chrysanthemum) breeding program in Tamil Nadu and spent some eight years travelling several times a year to India and then continued the program in Kenya for a few more years. I am pleased to report that the results are now being marketed in many countries of the world including Europe, Colombia and Japan.

I really enjoyed my time working with a major German plant breeder, in a joint venture with an Indian company, working mainly on vegetable crop-breeding. My experience in the early days in the Canary Islands proved invaluable for the conditions in India, with poor (but rapidly improving) infrastructure and unskilled manual labour. However, I did find the level and ambition of the qualified staff impressive. In all, a thoroughly cultural-enriching experience.

I am still active here in the Canary Islands, assisting some ex-employees to develop a business supplying local flower producers with young plants. We use a Dutch supplier to collate the unrooted material and airfreight to Gran Canaria where we root and supply on a weekly programmed basis. With the latest restrictions of many phytosanitary products, we are currently reintroducing steam sterilization, both for flower growers and also extensive banana, potato and salad crops.

Wishing everyone a safe and healthy journey through 2021.

## Roger Packham (1963–66) is currently living in Australia:

Roger was asked to give us some news. He found that there never seemed to be anything of interest.

### Harry Franks (1963–66), following one of the 'Packham-inspired' zoom calls, wrote to Roger:

I meant to mention *Physionet* in my 3-minute slot. Some of the gang will know of it but, for others, we collect discarded wheelchairs and 50-plus other types of assistive devices' (politically correct term), and send them all over the world (27 countries so far). In October, we notched up dispatch of our 100th 40ft container. I attach our latest newsletter. Just two weeks ago we sent a container to India but not to Roger's neck of the woods. This was all paediatric gear.

I won't go on but if any of you have contacts in this field, anywhere in the world, and identify a need please get in touch. Supply is virtually unlimited and the equipment is free, though the recipients have to come up with freight and distribution costs when it arrives.

**Then Robin Low (1963–66) wrote to Roger:**

The subject of mistletoe came up in conversation, and I felt sure that there are Australian species. However, I did not know how I knew until we were clearing the Christmas cards today. On a card from Keith Hutton is a painting of Box mistletoe reproduced from a painting by Keith's partner Jacque Herrmann. An online search then listed a whole raft of Australian species. Apparently, the Melbourne local authorities are even 'infecting' amenity trees because your mistletoes are so much prettier than our single European one and in addition they are key providers of nectar, pollen and fruit for your birds and small animals. Here endeth the lesson! Thanks, Roger. just looked at your video – could have done with a little more technical detail. Will discuss next year when we are hopefully back in Australia.

**Malcolm Harrison (1963–66) also wrote to Roger:**

It has been an odd year which should have started with a visit to Lanzarote in March, but we cancelled and went to Norfolk (where else!?) instead. Our allotment and garden were put into tip-top order, with a good harvest of fruit and veg, and we have since worked through 30+ years of accumulated stuff in our loft, etc.

From July onwards, when allowed to do so, we had holidays in our caravan, where we are fully self-contained, to North Yorkshire, nearby Rutland and also to Malvern and Wiltshire, from where we met up with our two sons, their families and our three grandchildren, which was lovely. We are also volunteers for FCN (the Farming Community Network) and have had several cases involving farming families reluctant to make wills, linked to dysfunctional family relationships. The ultimate situation was when one farmer, after a lot of encouragement to do so, signed his Will on Saturday and died on Sunday!

This year Kath and I will be celebrating our Golden Wedding Anniversary!'

## Glen Allison (1960–63) has written his autobiography:

He told Jane Reynolds that he would like to put a resumé of it in the Journal.

*We gave him two weeks, which he said was more than enough. He then said he doesn't like using email and prefers to write – hearts sank! So, we said if he really didn't want to send it electronically then it had better be sent to Jane and she will do the donkey work!*

## Professor Chris Baines (1964–67) emailed to report:

*The Living Thames* won the Scientific and Educational Award in the World Independent Cinema Awards!

*An article about the film appeared in last year's Journal (pages 89–91) and Chris has reported receiving a number of positive comments from Agricola members.*

## Bob North (1969–72) has been putting in the energy and the miles for charity lately:

My Duathlon effort in Sardinia in 2018 raised in excess of £25,000 for 'Big Change'. Last year, I Strived again for Big Change and their project partners. The challenge involved a hike, run, cycle, swim and triathlon – I took on the cycle route through the mountains of Romney Marsh! and .... visited four Woolpack pubs en route!

Every penny raised goes direct to the charities which support children and teachers in the UK. I will match fund £ for £ the first £500 of

*Bob North stopped for a short break at the front of his old alma mater*

donations and, if possible, do another 100km in South Africa next later in the year!

The key reason we STRIVE together is to support all young people to thrive through Big Change. Every pound raised on the 2020 challenge went directly towards supporting 10 pioneering projects through Big Change's Emergent Needs Fund – responding to the urgent needs of young people, parents and teachers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst also laying the foundations for long-term positive change for the next generation.

**1970s**

## David Caffall (1970–73) provides a news round-up:

*Having been 'volunteered' to submit an obituary for* **Kevin Witherby** (*see page 96*), **David Caffall** thought it might be rather apt to give news of others of similar vintage. So here he goes:

**David Bolton** (1970–74) has just finished his year as Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers, but with the extent of activities sadly curtailed due to the Covid restrictions.

He recalled: 'It is nearly 50 years since the WCF awarded me their Gold Medal. I had a viva at the college farm the morning after my final exam. Nursing a sore head, I was asked just two questions. The first was about bracken control. I waffled. The second was 'How big is an Aberdeen Angus?' Having no idea, I took a wild guess and replied 'Huge!' How wrong could one be? I struggle to imagine how even more inept the other contenders could have been!

David is still very active – farm business consultancy; Chairman of Norwich Rowing Club, etc. I attended his Installation as WCF Master as the guest of **Geoff Dodgson** (1970–73) who, upon deciding to scale back his Agricultural PR business, subsequently embarked upon a new, 60-hour per week commitment – as a Church of England Curate working in 15 rural parishes in SW Cambridgeshire, as well as serving as

*David Bolton was Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers in 2020.*

*Geoff and Rosemary Dodgson (1970–73): Geoff was ordained by the Bishop of Ely in September 2020.*

Chaplain to the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists. He was ordained the Reverend Geoff Dodgson by the Bishop of Ely in September. His wife **Rosemary** (née **Monger**) continues to produce superb artwork, including detailed botanical studies. (*Check out her work at* www.flowerpainter.me.uk. I have had a peep at it – *it's beautiful and very skilfully done! – Editor*)

**Richard Angood** (1970–73 – former *enfant terrible*!) and his wife **Margaret** (née **German**) (*below*) continue to farm in the Fens, near Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. Richard is our Shoot Captain (all wild birds) and continues to trot out all the old excuses – terrible breeding season, predators etc. Margaret has become a proficient sheepdog handler, having run a commercial flock for many years.

And **David Caffall** continues:

Last year I spent a very pleasant weekend with **Mary Stevenson** (née **Whiting**, 1970–73) and husband John. They have made a superb job of restoring a grade 2 listed former Post Office in west Herefordshire, and both are very active in their local church.

I retired from Agri-politics last year, having been in at the formation of the Agricultural Industries Confederation since the early noughties. The AIC works in support of the supply industry in a similar manner to the way in which the NFU represents farmers. Believe me, the united voice of the entire agricultural industry is a mere whisper compared to the influence and muscular power of the single interest environmental groups. Ignore this at your peril, active farmers and growers!

Kevin Mills also worked part time for AIC in Scotland, having previously been MD of Frontier Agriculture's Scottish business. Nowadays, he co-owns his village pub – surely an aspiration of us all?

For decades, I have been friends with Sarah Gray (née Smithers) and her late husband Colin. Sarah was a secretary in the Countryside Planning Unit from 1972 to 1974, where she met and subsequently married Colin, who was doing an MPhil. Sadly Colin died in 2017, but Sarah continues to live in East Kent and is still in contact with a number of Wye contemporaries. This resulted in an invitation to a socially-distanced lunch at the house of Alan and **Pam** (née **Fenton**,1966–69) **Rogers** in Old Wives Lees. Was it necessary to be anxious about lunching with a former Withersdane Warden and a member of staff, a mere 47 years after graduating? Of course, not … and indeed the meal was one of the highlights of my year. They are such a delight to interact with. Alan retains his deliciously dry sense of humour, tolerated (just) by Pam. But don't mention 'Imperial College' – you might end up in the soup – literally!

**Louise Olivia Beaton** (née **Virgo**, 1975–78) was awarded an OBE in this year's New Year's Honours list. She is a Trustee of Action with Communities in Rural England and this is to acknowledge her voluntary service to rural communities.

### 1980s

## Barbara Marshall (1984–87) wrote:

It's been a few years (probably decades!) since I've been in touch and as I've just discovered the website, albeit belatedly, I figured I'd email with my contact details. I now live in Colorado so am copying the Agricola Club USA representative to offer my services.

I was an Agricultural Economics graduate (I actually started as an RES but changed at the end of my first year and was able to move straight into the second year of Ag Economics).

I moved here for work three years ago, courtesy of HP Inc. which 'imported' me from Montreal, Canada, where I'd spent nine years. I even became a passport-bearing Canadian citizen but after seven years, I hit a wall – I couldn't stand the winters any longer. It took me two years to devise an escape plan and although some might think Colorado is no better than Montreal in winter, believe me when I say everything is relative! Although my Ag Econ-related career was short-lived – I was at Louis Dreyfus Trading from 1987 to 1990 – I have kept one foot in the natural world and now live on five acres in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. I've exchanged pigs and cattle for deer, elk, bear and mountain lion sightings – and am loving it!

Thanks for all you do, keeping the Agricola Club alive. Once I retire – hopefully in a

couple of years – I'd be interested in helping out. In the meantime, I'm happy to help with any US-related activities.

Hope you've all stayed safe and well in this strange year. Merry Christmas!

## Robert Bullard (1985–86):

Robert (*above*) has been a trainer in business/non-fiction writing skills since 2003. His training has been used by clients such as the European Commission, World Trade Organization and Oxford University (for whom he runs six courses every year).

Robert is also a book coach; a copyeditor and proof-reader; and a copywriter, helping clients with websites/blogs, reports, newsletters. Previously, he wrote features for two British national newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*.

He lives in Oxford and is a member of several professional writing groups such as Writers in Oxford (which he has chaired from 2015 to 2020), and the Chartered Institute of Editors and Proof-readers.

*For details of his latest book, see page 227.*

## Ben Smith (1988–91) wrote:

Can it really be 30 years since my cohort graduated? Following Wye, I worked for ADAS for a year before being attracted by the bright, flashing lights of the fire service.

*From left to right: Richard Champion, RES, Dave Pettitt, ABM, Ben Smith, RES, Andrew Bygrave, AgEcon (all 1988–91).*

*Sarah Field's cohort of first-year Animal Science students in the summer of 1989: front row Ben Sturgeon, Susanna (?), Sarah Tiller (now Field), Hilary Naughton (now Kelly) and Tim Perring (or Perrin?). Do you recognise yourself or your friends? If so, let us know!*

I joined Hampshire Fire and Rescue and have just left on reaching the dizzying age of fifty-five – that's 55 folks!

I served all around the county and spent the last 10 years alternating between station command and the training centre. I was able to reflect on my time studying RES when I managed a number of stations in the New Forest and in one of my roles as an environmental protection officer; I always knew that RES degree would come in useful!

I have twin daughters studying for their A levels (whatever they look like this year) and who hope to take up places at Warwick (History) and Imperial (Medicine).

Amongst many others, I keep in regular contact with Richard (1988–91) and Janet Champion (née Birchall, 1989–92), Dave and Clare Pettitt (née Moscrop, 1988–91), Andrew 'Baggy' Bygrave, and Neil (1989–92) and Jenny Jones (née Burlace, 1988–91). We try to meet up regularly and maintain some Wye traditions, as can be seen in the photo taken before the world went mad.

I was lucky enough to complete a PGCE some years ago and have just taken up a new role as a learning support assistant at a secondary school in Winchester. I've yet to decide if it is much different from managing firefighters!

With all best wishes to all members.

## Sarah Field (née Tiller,1988–91) wrote:

I very much enjoyed this year's Club journal, particularly the piece about the College Choral Society. I have very fond memories of my time as a member of this group and it sparked a love of choral music that has continued since then although, unfortunately, we have all been a bit short of singing this year! I clearly remember the performance of Messiah where half the

*The entire Animal Science Department of 1989: according to Sarah, staff members (seated in the second row) include Dr Dodds, Dr Schofield ('had to scribble really fast to keep up in those lectures'), Dr Clarke ('always referred us to the "slim volume" on organic chemistry that he wrote), Dr Garroway, Jean Ingram ('Auntie Jean who gave us glucose tablets before exams'), Dr Hodges and Dr Davis. Can you add any more names to faces?*

sopranos disappeared (1989, I think) and the performance of *Carmina Burana* (possibly spring, 1990). As an alto, I remember being deafened by the timpani that we were standing behind!

Like many others, I'm sure, I have been sorting through an accumulation of stuff this year and came across the attached photos which were taken in Summer 1989 when I was in my first year of Animal Sciences. One is, I think, the undergraduate animal science cohort with the five first-years at the front. I think the other is the wider department including many of the staff. I wasn't sure if you might be interested in them for the Journal? Whilst I could name the first years and a few of the staff, you would need to put out a call for the others …

Since I graduated, I have put my degree to good use teaching and managing in the land-based college sector at Writtle and Moulton. I have also worked with a UK Vet School consortium, promoting more diverse entry into veterinary science and medicine. I am now part of the faculty administration team at the local university, having decided that the increasing stress and pressure in the further education sector is not good for your health!

Congratulations on another excellent Journal.

*The late Ted Pilkington (right) was Head Gardener at Wye for 22 years: here Ted is clearly taking some time out at Christmas. You can see a photo of him in his professional role on page 204, showing the Queen Mother the Quad garden that was created in her honour.*

# Letters and emails

**Feedback on last year's bumper journal, memories and observations and much, much more.**

## John Hosking (1950–53) wrote:

*John*

Just a note to congratulate you on another excellent bumper *Agricola Club Journal* – and I have no negative comments to make about the quality of the photographs this time! It is wonderful to see how well 'the spirit of Wye' is still thriving; you and your editorial colleagues can take much of the credit for that.

I hope you and Jane are managing to survive lockdown reasonably well.

All good wishes

**John**

P.S. Thanks for including the details of my book; I was greatly relieved to get it published before the Corona crisis.

## Rev David Gooday (1957–61) wrote from Estwatini (formerly Swaziland):

*Dear John*

*Wye* 2019–2020 arrived a few days ago! Goodness knows how long it took to get, here but it was probably some months! Wonderful collection of stories and information and greatly appreciated! What a great picture of the Crown!

I was fascinated and delighted to see that there was a Wye College Choral Society! During my time, we had a choir which was conducted by the then Organist from Canterbury Cathedral (who on one occasion invited me up to the organ loft! – he told me that the organ had to be a fraction of a second in front of the choir's entry!). There was also a very small group of us who got together from time to time to sing madrigals. We only ever 'performed' in public on one occasion. The Prin (Dunstan Skilbeck) received a letter from the Worshipful Company of Gardeners asking him if there were some singers who could entertain the members of the Company at a meeting of theirs in London in late 1958 or early 1959. We agreed to go and sing three or four madrigals (including 'The Silver Swan'!). I received a letter from their Clerk, Mr. F N Steiner, which said *inter alia*: 'The Master and Warden feel that we are very much indebted to you for coming so far and entertaining us so well.'

He also sent a copy of a pamphlet about the Gardener's Company, which states: 'The existence of a Gardener's Company in that square mile known as the City of London may sound incongruous. Yet, in the heart of the Bank of England – in the very centre of the City – is a garden. This is symbolic. The Bank of England has grown from small beginnings into the world's banking house, but commercial grandeur has not been allowed to smother this relic of its past. The garden remains as a treasured reminder to soften the harsher outlines of material success. It goes on to talk about:

> *The 83 guilds which survive today (ie 1959) are reminders of a medieval economy. The urge for mankind to combine in groups with others of similar interests is a natural instinct. A reminder of the powerful force in guild organisation is seen today in the predominantly pious note of the companies' mottoes. For*

*instance, the motto of the Gardener's Company is:* ***"In the sweat of thy brows shalt thou eate thy bread."'***

I was unable to find a website for the Worshipful Company, but their address is (or was!) 85 London Wall, London EC2. How about approaching the Worshipful Company to propose a merger between them and the Wye College Agricola Club?

On a totally different matter, could you please change my entries in the address lists etc taking account of the changed name of the country where I live. What was Swaziland is now 'Eswatini'. Maybe leave 'Swaziland' in parenthesis because the new name is not universally known!

I have co-authored a book called *Sowing Good Seed: Teaching Agriculture in Schools: The Swaziland (Eswatini) Experience – Context, Relevance and the Curriculum in a Developing Country* (2019) ISBN 9781796902440. Available from Amazon. Published by dstewart@peregrinipress.com.

The back cover of the book says:

> *This book is based on the thesis which Father David Gooday wrote and presented to the Institute of Education at London University. We hope to show that it is a success story because these pupils, who while at school underwent the training devised by the School Agriculture Panel, have benefited greatly from that experience. Whatever direction their careers may have taken, the youngsters who underwent the training which we devised have developed in many and various careers. Those boys and girls, now mature men and women, are approaching retirement and are able to look back on their working life in order to draw mature conclusions about their initial training.'*

**David**

*The 2020 packaging headache!*

## Pat Davidson (1961 64) wrote:

*Dear Sian*

Your eternal optimism came to fruition and a very dog-eared copy of the *Journal* reached me just after Christmas! Relations between Australia and New Zealand are not good at present, but I didn't think they would go to such lengths as interfering with our mail!!

I'm afraid I may be too late to stop another copy being sent to me – If so, I'm very sorry. However, it was such a good read that a duplicate is fine.

After editing the social section for several years in the 1980s, I know how difficult it is to get copy each year from members but hopefully they will be inspired by last year's issue. My only news is that I moved last year and now feel that I have really come home, surrounded by orchards and vineyards and with the Moutere hop growing area only ten minutes away. Paradise indeed!

All good wishes to everyone on the committee.

**Pat**

## Richard Boston (1962-66) wrote:

*Dear John*

It is always a pleasure to receive the Journal.

This year's appears to be a bumper edition, but I was lucky to receive it as the envelope was torn to pieces suggesting that it was not strong enough for the contents.

The note regretting the lack of the environmentally friendly wrapper had survived by some fluke.

I only mention this should there be a lengthy delay in the new wrapper.

Best wishes

**Richard**

*Thanks for the heads-up Richard. We are now on the case! – Ed*

## Gill Bond (1964–67)

*Hi John*

Well done to you and Marie in getting the journal out so quickly, and a bumper size! I'm looking forward to reading it.

My attention was taken by the photo on page 69 of students using corrugated iron sheeting as a toboggan. I remember joining in that activity in the mid-sixties – must have been quite the most dangerous thing I have ever done in my life!

Thank you for the award on page 11. Very much appreciated, although it's history now.

I hope you are all keeping well, and I'm sure your garden looks magnificent.

Regards

**Gill**

## Peter Johnson (1965–68)

'Flabbergasted by my wayward encounter with **Paul Ambrose** (RES, 1973–76), I offer the following':

*Sir*

The Journal rises to a higher, even more enjoyable plane each year as the distance from Imperial's clutches increases. It is widely admired, being unique, among a very much wider readership than just alumni; this is not a fluke. A very great deal revolves around you, Ed, and without your considerable effort – aided by your wife – those long gone from Wye would have little by way of reminder of remarkable days and a place. You have done remarkably well to gain other assistants, but I feel that we must extend this Journal's life beyond the time we can expect you to do the task. **It would be the greatest sadness if what you have built up was not carried forward. I write in the hope that a new editor might volunteer to use your skills to take it to further heights. With the ease of modern communications, residence for the editor close to Wye is no longer a pre-requisite – just love and enthusiasm coupled with a lesser accumulation of years will see us continue successfully. Will anyone dare to offer to follow you?**

**Peter**

*Nice words Peter. Thank you. But what I really need is a volunteer to take over and your challenge 'Will anyone dare …?' doesn't help!! – Ed*

*PS At least he has learnt how to address me after all these years – Sir!*

## Prof Geoff Dixon (1962–68) wrote:

*Dear John & Francis*

Excellent Journal, just arrived! Lucy's piece on Withersdane Hall is especially pleasing; would you pass on my appreciation - my home for three years! We could do with a similar piece charting the planning and

development of that wonderful garden – my haven in times of need. Will all be read in some detail. It is incredible how well the Journal is standing up despite the ruination of the College. Fantastic achievement John and much appreciated – congratulations.

Regards

**Geoff**

P.S.I suggest Lucy puts her 'Hall and Garden' pieces in the *Journal of Garden History* to reach a wider audience!!

## Sally Festing (1957–60) wrote:

*Dear John*

Many thanks for the weighty Journal, the moon (and later, a rainbow) hovering over what had become a forgotten world.

I now have names for some of the faces like that of George Pegg on my college photograph, whose image was so strong.

Had you noticed a preponderance of rugger-players among the men who feature? Something to do with team spirit?*

Good for you that page 1 caught up with these 'uncertain times'.

I wrote something for the next edition to dig out if it's still wanted later on.

With all best wishes

**Sally**

*PS Harriet's email is now harrietfesting@gmail.com. You have her correct address, and she looks forward to receiving the journal.*

**Sally, that preponderance of 'rugger players among the men who feature' is probably more to do with the fact that I am one of them! – Ed*

## John Lampitt (1953–56) wrote:

*Hello John*

Before I start on this subject [he was preparing an Obituary], I just wanted to say how greatly I have appreciated your huge undertaking of the Wye Journal. It is an annual source of joy to read it … and it was only when I got myself volunteered to write an Obit that I realised the magnitude of the work involved!!

**John**

## Sue Atkinson (1983–86) wrote:

*Hello John*

Well done on a superb journal. I was sorry to read that David Hodges had died. I remember attending many of his lectures. I was also interested in the article about the Northbournes. My daughters attended summer music school at Northbourne Park School for many years and we have very fond memories of the school. I also picked up a member of staff from Wye College who wanted to visit my fieldwork at Betteshanger Colliery from Northbourne Park School, where he had been working. I have a feeling it was Tom Wright, but I could be wrong as I always muddled two peoples' names up.

Best wishes

**Sue**

## Andrew Blake (1964–67) – part of an amazing vintage!

*Good evening, John*

Great journal. I've just reached your Betteshanger piece. It's of particular interest to me because, when I was at Canterbury Cathedral Choir School in the 1950s, I once played the school there at cricket – and I even took a wicket! Immediately after leaving Wye I kept in touch with Howard Carr (godfather to my elder son), and I visited him a couple of times when he was living in a cottage in the woods on the estate. I eventually lost touch with him, but tracked him down again recently. He lives up north, although I can't recall where and can't find

my email correspondence with him. He's not an Agricola Club member, but I can let you have his email address if you wish. I also have some pics of him.

Take care.

**Andrew**

## Malcolm Ogilvy (1963–66) wrote:

*Hi John*

Congratulations on publication of yet another quality edition. Just arrived yesterday, so only had the chance to skim through so far, but I look forward to reading in detail from a very wide range of subjects. Delighted to see you published the article by Philip de Jonge which is so apposite to present times.

Slightly less pleased you attributed the suggestion to **Malcolm Alexander** (1963–67). We were contemporaries, but that's about the end of similarities *(Oops! I agree; one of you was pretty good looking! Sorry about that – Ed).*

However, knowing him well, I'm sure Malcolm won't object to being associated with such a well-written, erudite article. Also pleased to see the citation for **Gilly** (**Bond**, 1964–67), richly deserved I'm sure. She has helped me from time to time on a number of publication matters and always delivered to the highest professional standards.

The journal arrived yesterday which by coincidence was the date of the annual reunion lunch in Huntington that **Mo** and **Richard Brown** (1964–67 & 1963–66, respectively) have been organising for our cohort for several years. Sadly, cancelled this year of course but will, I'm sure, be reinstated in 2021 and might be worthy of a note in Wye.

Have been in self-imposed, total lockdown isolation but no hardship on a farm with spring calving and a large garden to keep us occupied, plus a great delivery service from local small retailers – how lucky we are. But we ventured out a couple of weeks ago for a trip to Dorset to collect a new border collie from a farm near **John Virgin** (1964–67), and called to see him en route. In good form with his beautiful herd of pedigree South Devon cattle and continuing as an independent crop advisor, so rightly classified as essential work.

All the best

Malcolm ~~Alexander~~ Ogilvy!!

PS I applaud the plan to have recyclable mailing wrap, but grade of paper used this year not strong enough – journal about to escape from torn corners when arrived. Manilla better, but more expensive.

*I know; bit of a bummer. The answer might be to produce a slimmer Journal. We used to use manilla – at least they were brown – but it burst out of that. – Ed*

## Michael Payne (1878–81) wrote:

*Dear John*

Attached is another picture from yesterday showing the Union Flag flying where the Italian flag had been as in your *Journal* picture.

Whilst writing I must congratulate you on yet another fantastic publication. So far I have only 'dipped and dived' as it is such a voluminous tome. Under your editorship it appears to have grown and grown and is now more of a read than it was even when Wye College was still in existence! Well done.

Best wishes

**Michael Payne**

# Obituaries

**In these pages, we celebrate the lives of Anne Kendrick (née Morkill, 1940–43), Brian Lovelidge (1953–56); George Finch (1936–39), Gerald Cousens (1973–76), Ian Emerson Currah (1959–62), Keith Virgo (1959–62), Richard Pearce (1989-93), Kevin Witherby (1970–73), Stan Burrage (staff from 1967), Peter Thompson (1955–60), Barry Potter (1965–68) and Jeremy Selby (1963–66).**

## Anne Kendrick, MBE (née Morkill, 1940–43)

*An active member of the RHS Council, winner of the coveted Vetch Memorial Medal and founder of a bursary scheme that has, to date, benefited 6,000 children.*

Anne Kendrick, who facilitated projects that benefited many thousands of people, died on 20 April 2020 aged 97.

Anne was born in Yorkshire but grew up in Malaya, Devon, and the Republic of Ireland. Following horticultural training at Wye, she worked as a head gardener in Hampshire and in London with a landscape architect.

In 1950, Anne married Hugh Kendrick. A visit they made to the Kirstenbosch National Botanic Gardens, near Cape Town, South Africa, inspired her to found a schoolroom at Birmingham Botanical Gardens where she was a committee member for 26 years and the first President of the Friends of the Gardens (1974). Anne Kendrick was a member of the RHS Council (1981–1985) and in 1994 received an RHS Veitch Memorial Medal.

Amongst other many and varied achievements are being a magistrate for 30 years, restoring the gardens at Castle Bromwich Hall, Birmingham (for which she was awarded an MBE in 2000) and helping set up what is now Plant Heritage.

*In a long and varied life, Anne's achievements included being awarded an MBE for restoring the gardens at Castle Bromwich Hall. And a trust fund in memory of her late husband, Hugh Kendrick, has funded thousands of garden visits for children in the West Midlands.*

Anne became Vice-President of the National Association for Environmental Education in 2012, donating her late husband's charitable trust fund to support school visits to gardens. To date the Hugh Kendrick bursary scheme has benefited almost 6,000 children in the West Midlands.

## Brian Lovelidge (1953–56)

*Brian's daughter Lisa has sent this tribute to her father, gifted sportsman and award-winning journalist.*

Brian Lovelidge's main lifetime achievements were in sport and in his career as a freelance farm journalist, which included winning the National Farmers' Union-sponsored Horticultural Writer of the Year award a number of times. He was born on 2 October 1934 in Maidstone, Kent, and had three elder and two younger sisters and a younger brother. He was old enough to remember events of the Second World War such as German bombing raids, the Battle of Britain, VI's (Doodlebugs or buzz bombs), many of which landed in and around Maidstone, and VII's – one of the first landing on Bunyard's Nursery less than a mile from his home – and sleeping at night during the Blitz in a Morrison air-raid shelter in his garden.

In 1945, he won a scholarship to Maidstone Grammar School where he did well academically and excelled at sport. He was awarded 1st XV colours and was the school's discus champion, holding the record for many years. However, the highlight of his

*Brian (far right) was Victor Ludorum in athletics in his second and third years at Wye.*

school athletic career was winning the Kent Schools' intermediate and senior discus events in 1951 and 1952, breaking the record in both, the former by nearly 20ft. In both years he represented Kent schools in the England Schools athletic championships.

While at school he developed an interest in farming which was the third most popular career choice for students at the time. He gained a place at Wye College, London University's agricultural faculty, graduating with a BSc (Agric) in 1956. During his practical year (1952), he worked on a fruit, pig and arable farm near Mereworth, Kent, and joined Maidstone Rugby Club, playing for the 1st XV (at the age of 18) which at the time was the second best team in South East England, after Blackheath.

At college he played for the 1st XV (and East Kent) and was Victor Ludorum in athletics in his second and third years. He was also in the squash team despite never having played the game before going to college. In his final year (1956), he was a member of the college team that won the London University seven-a-side competition. In the final, they beat King's College by five tries to nil, quite an achievement considering that King's was a much larger college than Wye.

After graduating, he did two years' national service, including one year in Cyprus on internal security duties at the height of the EOKA terrorist campaign during which 371 members of the armed forces, mostly national servicemen, were killed. He was a member of his regiment's shooting, squash, rugby and athletic teams.

Following his retirement from rugby in 1969, he began long-distance running and joined Medway Athletic Club (later Maidstone and Medway AC). During his 25-year running career, he completed five marathons, including London in 1982, around 75 half-marathons and some 400 shorter road and cross-country races. Upon retirement from competitive running, he was made an honorary life member of the Club.

**The highlight of his school athletic career was winning the Kent Schools' intermediate and senior discus events in 1951 and 1952, breaking the record in both**

His career in farm journalism began immediately after finishing his national service in October 1958. For the first four years or so he worked alongside his mentor, Edgar Phillips, a well-respected freelancer. In March 1963, he branched out on his own and in the same month married Jillian. During his 50-year plus career he wrote regularly for virtually all of the national agricultural and horticultural journals and provided a press publicity service for numerous companies including most of the international agrochemical manufacturers. He won the NFU-sponsored best horticultural journalist award on a number of occasions. After semi-retiring in 2000 he concentrated on writing about horticultural production, mainly fruit.

Brian died in November 2019. His wife pre-deceased him in 2017. He leaves his daughter Lisa who gained a PhD at Cambridge University and is a self-employed medical communications consultant.

## George Finch (1936–39)

*George Finch was a gunner officer awarded an MC for bravely sounding out enemy positions. He died in 2014, but he has been on our 'Lost members' list for a few years until we received this report recently.*

George Finch, who died, aged 95, on 14 January 2014, was a gunner officer in the Second World War and awarded an MC in 1945; he subsequently worked as an agronomist at Cambridge.

In April 1945, Finch was serving with 4th (Durham) Survey Regiment RA (4 SR) in command of a Sound Ranging Troop. Their role was to locate enemy guns by establishing a number of microphones on a surveyed base line facing the enemy and measuring the difference in time between the bang being heard in each. On 21 April, near Verden, Germany, his Division came under heavy shelling and mortar fire. He was ordered to move his troop under cover of darkness and find a new base from which they could give much needed support. The situation was so precarious, however, that the Commander RA tried to prevent him from reconnoitring on the flanks.

Finch, however, realised that unless microphones were positioned there, rapid and accurate location of enemy batteries would be impossible. At great personal risk, he sited the flank microphones under machine-gun and small-arms fire. As a result, 31 hostile batteries were successfully identified and engaged by the Counter Battery units. Finch's courage, leadership and skill were recognised by the award of an MC. The citation stated that he had given outstanding service throughout the entire campaign in Western Europe.

Clement George Finch was born at Watford, Hertfordshire, and educated at Haileybury.

In 1936 he went up to Wye College, where he gained a degree in Horticulture. Finch joined the Army in September 1939 and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in July 1940 with a posting to the 4th (Durham) Survey Regiment, a gun-locating unit.

In October, he accompanied his regiment to Egypt and, after two months near Cairo, his battery was ordered to go to Eritrea. After the Battle of Keren and the successful end of the East African campaign, he embarked for Port Said, Egypt, and served in Tobruk throughout the siege by the Axis forces.

A spell in Syria was followed by a return to Egypt to take part in the Battle of El Alamein. 4 SR was the only survey regiment in the Eighth Army and covered the long front from the Mediterranean to the Quattra Depression. Finch took part in the advance to Tunisia and the invasion of Sicily. At Messina, he operated from a base set up to locate German guns firing from Italy across the straits. He returned to England with his regiment in December 1943.

In June 1944, he embarked at Harwich in a landing craft and was among the first

contingent of 50th Northumbrian Division to land in Normandy, setting foot on Gold Beach on D-Day plus one. He saw hard fighting in France and in the Ardennes before finishing the war at Bremen. An unpleasant final task was guarding the Sandbostel concentration camp. Typhus was rife in the camp and the doctors had given orders that no one be allowed to escape for fear of spreading the disease.

After the war, Finch was demobilised. He was a horticultural officer at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB), Cambridge, from 1946 to 1950. He then spent two years as a horticulturalist to the Government of Cyrenaica, Libya. Goats munching their way through precious trial crops three times hastened his departure, and he returned to NIAB as their vegetable trials officer. Here, he was head of the Seed Production Branch from 1965 to 1974. His last appointment was that of technical liaison officer at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food, Cambridge. He retired in 1981 and settled at Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire, where he gardened and listened to jazz. He enjoyed travel (in particular visits to French vineyards) and as a younger man had been an accomplished sailor.

He had married Thea Royds in 1945. She predeceased him, and he is survived by their three sons and a daughter.

This Obituary first appeared in 'The Telegraph' in 2014 and was brought to our attention by **John Kingsley-Pallant** (1960-63) who wrote his own tribute:

*'I noticed that **Clement George Finch** (1936–39) is listed as a lost member.*

*George died on 19 January 2014 aged 95 and had been a resident of Little Shelford since joining NIAB in Cambridge after his war service. I first met George in 1981 or 1982 at a drinks party when I recognised an Agricola Club tie on the far side of the room. George was always immaculately turned out and his tie showed signs of frequent wear! Although I knew him for over 30 years, he rarely talked about the war, and I did not know that he had been awarded the MC until a few months before his death. He was both a very accomplished person and modest with it.*

*George always kept a good cellar, and any casual visitor was always assured of a glass of The Wine Society's white burgundy. His drinks parties often featured quintessential examples of wines from the lesser regions of France where he sourced his supplies from growers whom he knew. In later years, when he could not drive to France, he would join an Arblaster & Clark wine tour by coach. George spoke excellent French having honed his language skills at the negotiating table in Brussels concerning seeds legislation on our entry to the Common Market.*

*He was a great gardener, and his garden was always a joy to behold. He served the 'Horti' over many years. He was also a churchwarden at St Mary's, Great Shelford, for many years and, as his coffin was carried out of the church, there was a rousing 'Three Cheers' and standing ovation. He was a much-loved member of the community.'*

## Gerald Cousens (1973–76)

*The following tribute was written by his contemporary at Wye and his life-long friend* ***Clive Scown*** *(1973–76).*

I first met Gerald at Wye College in the autumn of 1973 where our lifelong friendship began. We had much in common, through farming and field sports, shooting in particular. I also enjoyed his wry sense of humour which I subsequently discovered was widespread and well-practised in Suffolk. An extremely able student throughout our three years, he earned his BSc in Agriculture with upper second-class honours with, what seemed to most of his contemporaries, consummate ease. He was blessed with a first-class brain and an amazing ability to retain facts accurately. While most of us would attend lectures and come away with reams of illegible notes, Gerald would invariably depart with a single sheet of paper, having condensed an hour's session to one page of relevant notes, in his immaculately neat hand-writing. He had an uncanny ability to assimilate the facts and sort out the chaff from the buck wheat … is the politest way I can put it!

*Gerald was blessed with a first-class brain and an amazing ability to retain facts accurately.*

When not complying with the minimum amount of academic work, he fully enjoyed all that college life had to offer … shooting, beating, beagling, squash and watching rugby, in descending order of priority. Not only was he an able student, but he was also an outstanding shot and a very capable squash player, notwithstanding a damaged back which compromised his mobility considerably and ruled out rugby as an option he would otherwise have pursued. (I once asked him how he had become so

proficient a squash player, knowing he lacked a court at Valley Farm. 'Sparrow control!' he replied, explaining that it was the only way he could keep their numbers down in the grain store!).

His painful back left Gerald with a distinctive profile, somewhat stooped from the vertical and easy to spot from a distance. Being unable to run without discomfort, he could invariably be found in the beagling field sitting on his shooting stick at the highest vantage point, rotating lazily as the hare (and the bulk of the exhausted field) circled him.

**As a purist, he despised rugby league and one-day cricket as vulgar distortions of the real games and gave them short shrift!**

Following Wye, Gerald surprised everybody by swiftly marrying Fiona, who became his life-long companion and indefatigable supporter. I say surprised because throughout his time at Wye, he showed not the faintest interest in pursuing the fairer sex, and I know Fiona to be the sole love of his life. Wholly committed to farming and family life, they wasted little time in taking over business at Valley Farm in Coddenham, near Ipswich; subsequently, their boys James and David, completed their idyll.

Arable farming was clearly Gerald's calling from the outset and he approached it with great self-assurance and confidence. He did not require legions of advisers, for the most part relying on his own husbandry and skill as an agronomist. Nor did he retain an army of staff – from cultivations to harvest and all between, he accomplished everything himself. He was also well-ahead of his time in farming sympathetically with nature, long before all of the agri-environmental schemes became both widespread and fashionable. Indeed, he won the Silver Lapwing award recognising such achievements long before most had even heard of it. Much hedgerow, field margin and woodland work was undertaken to improve prospects for flora, fauna and, in particular, his home farm shoot, which regularly produced 100 bird/days for purely wild pheasants, of the highest possible standards, season after season.

When not improving his farm, Gerald relaxed with a few favourite pastimes. His day invariably started with the *Daily Telegraph*, and he was always well-briefed about developments (both national and international) well beyond Coddenham. He loved to watch certain carefully selected sporting activities, test match cricket and rugby union, in particular. As a purist, he despised rugby league and one-day cricket as vulgar distortions of the real games and gave them short shrift! When there was no sport worth watching, he devoted his time to his vegetable garden and was able to grow many excellent crops, especially asparagus.

In summary, I shall remember Gerald as an undemonstrative, self-assured and confident friend who did not suffer fools gladly. Often taciturn, when he did speak it was always a well-informed observation and invariably right – he seldom got his facts wrong. A generous and good-natured host, he had to endure much poor health during the latter part of his life but seldom complained and bore his misfortunes with great stoicism. He will be greatly missed by many who valued his friendship.

## Dr Ian Emerson Currah (1959–62)

*A tribute to her late husband who died in January 2020, written by Dr Lesley Currah (1956–61).*

Ian was born in 1936 to William and Lily Currah in Ashford, Kent, and his early years were spent at Willesborough, an eastern suburb of Ashford on the edge of the town. His family had a mixed farm, and he used to reminisce about how his mother ran the milk round, and his father, a veteran of both Salonika and the front in France in the First World War, took part as a member of the Observer Corps in watching out for aircraft during the Second World War. His young son was allowed to visit the observation post with him and witnessed many aerial conflicts over Kent during the Battle of Britain and later. He and his friends were keen collectors of shrapnel and remains of munitions (including live ones … great fun to experiment with!). His cousin Peter remembers when their gang climbed into a crashed German plane and soon found themselves surrounded – by a herd of curious bullocks! Ian led them to safety while playing noisy blasts through a large segment of copper tubing which he had pulled out of the wreckage.

At the age of 11, Ian was sent to Bethany boarding school near Goudhurst; he left, aged 16, not having distinguished himself academically. Then followed a couple of years of rapid learning about the practicalities of farming, as a labourer for a neighbour, Mr Batt of Sevington. Ian often revisited this period in his life and had many stories about it, including the hardships of lifting mangolds and chopping them up during the winter, learning to drive a tractor and the various accidents that befell him before he mastered it. He always praised Mr Batt and his son Wilf for all that they taught him.

I think it was quite painful for us both in recent years to see the lovely Kentish farmland that we knew so well disappearing under by-passes, motorway junctions, giant warehouses and lorry parks.

In 1954, it was call-up time, and Ian started three years of National Service in the RAF. He chose to serve for three years so as to have the chance of living and travelling abroad, a rare opportunity for most Britons in that era of strict exchange controls. Ian was trained as an office clerk and learned touch typing, a skill which he found most useful in his later academic career. He served in large RAF stations in West Germany and explored Europe by train with his service pals.

On leaving the RAF in 1957, Ian decided

that family farming was not for him, and made the decision that he would aim to study agricultural science. He spent two years at Folkestone Tech to catch up on his missing science education and began a course for an Agriculture degree at Wye College in 1959, at the comparatively mature age of 23. There we met while I was working for an MSc in Horticultural Science (later abandoned for raising a family instead!).

Ian and I married early in 1961, and our daughter Ellen was born in December. At first, we lived in a rented house in Wye with lodgers to help us to pay for it. We got to know some interesting people while living there: for example, Ibrahim Ayed from Sudan and Alex Heyns from Stellenbosch, South Africa, were both lodgers with us at one time. I wonder that we all survived the cold winter of 1962–63 in that chilly cottage!

Ian obtained his degree in 1962 and began working on short-term contracts for Batchelors frozen foods, based in Ashford, for the Hop Department, and on the family farm, while job hunting.

In early 1963, Ian was offered a post with the Department of Agriculture for Scotland at a station near Edinburgh, training as a potato crop inspector. Ian liked his Scots colleagues, but I knew very few people up there apart from Mrs Ede, a friend from Wye days, who was most kind to us. Our daughter Allison was born that summer. But, even in summer, we found it too expensive to live in Edinburgh and fled back to stay with Ian's parents in the large farmhouse at Court Lodge, Willesborough, in September 1963. Ian's new job was with Ditton Lab at East Malling where he worked until October 1966. He took part in research on potato storage investigations involving various gases, and I remember how proud he was when he and his colleagues constructed their own gas chromatograph from lab equipment: it looked a bit Heath Robinson, but it worked!

While at Ditton Laboratory, Ian trained on the job in research methods and how to report experimental work. He set up and ran experiments on the use of gases in potato storage on farms in Scotland as part of his work for the Lab. But there was no chance of getting taken on to do a PhD, which was one of his ambitions at that time. We decided that a radical move was needed.

In summer 1966, Ian was accepted for a job in Tanzania, East Africa, partly funded by the UK Ministry of Overseas Development and partly by the local Ministry of Agriculture. We sailed out on the *Kenya Castle* in October 1966 and stayed in East Africa, based at Ilonga, near Kilosa, until early in 1969. Ian worked in agronomy, looking after a series of experiments on tropical crops (all new to him) across the central region of the country, and reported the work regularly to the Ministry. There was plenty of travel on the dirt roads in the office Land Rovers, interrupted by frequent punctures. Regular reports had to be produced, and they were circulated among all the research and extension establishments. When **Alan Smith** (1960–63) arrived at Ilonga in 1967 to start work as a Horticultural Research Officer, I was lucky enough to find part-time work with him, on local terms, and started a programme to investigate vegetable growing with successional sowings over a period of 18 months.

This was a most enjoyable and formative period in our lives. We learned a fantastic amount in a short time, including Swahili at a basic level. We enjoyed owning our first family car and travelled around to visit and camp in game parks in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. One of Ian's achievements was to

construct, from two sheets of marine ply, a dinghy, which we sailed on a lake at a friend's sisal estate, enjoying getting close to the weaver birds, kingfishers and darters out on the peaceful water.

In 1969, we sent the two young children home by air to their grandparents, and we enjoyed a tour of East African countries and game parks before returning home to Kent. Ian had accepted a job to pursue vegetable agronomy at the National Vegetable Research Station, Wellesbourne, with Dr Peter Salter. They got on well. The family bought a house in Stratford-upon Avon, using Ian's 'gratuity' from his African job as the deposit: it had literally made our fortunes. He worked at NVRS from 1969 to 1978, obtaining a PhD degree in 1975 for his studies on plant spacing. He was also involved in the development of fluid drilling of germinated seeds, including its commercial spin-offs. He learned a lot about computing from its early days, when punched cards were used to input data. His touch-typing skill was a great asset, especially once research leaders were issued with their own personal computers.

Ian became restless with the life of a scientific officer in government service, and thought the future looked rather boring. In 1978, he decided to leave rather than to continue a career at NVRS. He had ambitions to succeed as an inventor and patented a gadget to enable gardeners to sow a line of germinated seeds held in a gel, the 'Linaflo' system. He raised enough funding to have some of these manufactured, but he did not have the resources for a marketing campaign, and the invention never took off. So, he had to find another source of income. From early in the 1980s, he began to work as a teacher of IT topics, including BTech courses, at the Stratford College of Further Education (I went to Texas Tech University as a post-doc for 18 months, in 1986–87).

At the college, Ian was employed full-time by 1988 and he clearly enjoyed the classroom teaching. He always made great efforts to 'repair' the deficiencies left in individual students by a school education. For example, he would go to great lengths to teach them to turn up on time for lectures and to explain what they were doing in plain English: valuable qualities when hunting for a job! He took a very practical approach to putting over the topics and tried to make sure that everyone received the tuition they needed. But when he was asked to take on more and more administrative work, it got too much, and he took early retirement when that was offered in 1993. A brain operation in 1996 put him out of action for a while, but eventually he made a full recovery.

At home, Ian got busy having our sagging, 1930s garage converted into a hi-tech office space for two. He continued to study computing advances, to learn programming languages and to take on new projects, purely for entertainment, throughout his retirement. He was a keen reader of the *New Scientist* every week and enjoyed studying the new findings in cosmology and quantum science. In the 2000s, he spent quite a lot of time entering data for the benefit of accessible computer programmes such as N-Able, then being developed at the renamed HRI (Horticulture Research International, now part of Warwick University). His amusements included cycling, travel, croquet and socialising with friends. After 9/11, his urge to travel by air left him: Ian was a bit too impatient to put up with three-hour delays at airports. From then on, we limited our travels together to holidays in England, exploring the south coast and Norfolk in the 2000s, except for a memorable sailing holiday that we spent in Friesland – and reached by trains and ferries

– with some of the family, including our grandson Ben.

In 2015 we decided that it was time to look for a bungalow. I had arthritis and was finding our stairs too much, and I knew I ought to give up my allotment. We needed a change of scene. Ian was keen to get back to the coast: he had really missed living near the sea for the whole time (46 years) that we were in the Midlands. We found a large house and garden in Littlestone, Kent, which we both liked as soon as we saw it.

We were already in our late seventies by the time we made this decision, and it took a big effort to sort out the rubbish of years and get ourselves ready for the move. But by October 2015, we were ready to leave Stratford-upon-Avon. Ian loved living here immediately, and, on most days with good weather, he cycled to the coast path to watch the waves and enjoy a brisk ride along the sea wall. We both knew that our energy levels were starting to go down and that maybe we would not stay here for much longer. At the same time, we reconnected with friends such as **Brian** (1956–62) and **Rosslyn** (1956–59) **Howard** who we were amazed to find living in the next road in Littlestone, and with Ian's band of cousins, with whom he had grown up in the 1940s. I joined several music groups and made many friends among the players.

It is very sad that Ian had to leave us so soon: he died with no warning, as a result of a sudden leak in an abdominal aortic aneurism. His sudden death, in January 2020, was a tremendous shock to all of us. For me, he was wonderful company for 59 years. He gave me lots of support when I wanted to develop my interest in music, taking me to lessons and rehearsals without complaint for years on end. Whenever my health gave problems, he was there to help me and, if necessary, to take over all the cooking and the housework. I much admired his ability to follow up on his own interests and to doggedly keep on going until he made the needed technical breakthroughs. He had very good judgement of other people. He was not impressed by what people said about themselves; he judged them by their actions and behaviour. He always gave an honest assessment if you asked his opinion. Many of our tastes matched, neither was interested in sport but we liked entertaining our friends, similar TV programmes, reading, photography, good food and drink. But we also had other, completely differing interests and were able to pursue them.

It is now 12 months since Ian died, and we have received many tributes and reminiscences from the friends he made over the years. It is clear now that he always had a strong impulse to pass on what he knew, and several people remarked on how helpful he had been to them early in their careers, when they were struggling to master new topics and a new environment. Ian retained his curiosity well into his eighties and was preparing to incorporate his second Raspberry Pi into his computing system. We miss his laughter, his stories and his enjoyment of anything ridiculous, as well as his whole very individual personality and his forward-looking approach to life.

## Keith Virgo (1959–62)

*One of Keith's college contemporaries,* ***Mike Macklin****, captures the essence of this widely travelled, hugely positive and popular scientist who focused his energies on natural resource management and had a love of India and Sri Lanka (and cricket, a passion he shared with his wife Sandy).*

Keith was from West Humble, a village near Dorking, and attended Bedford School before coming to Wye in 1959. He arrived in an Austin 7 'Chummy' convertible, so small that the steering wheel had to be folded up to get in and out. But that car served him and student friends well over three years and knew its own way to regular pubs and Saturday night party venues.

Keith will be remembered by his fellow students for his enthusiasm and dedication for any activities he embarked upon and which were always accompanied by cheerfulness and a ready smile. He was also an effective organiser, and these attributes continued with him throughout his career. At Wye, he enjoyed his cricket and in winter months would follow the college beagle pack across the Kent countryside that he loved. **George Gwyer** (1959–62) reminded me of the evening pub survey conducted with Keith before our finals, whereby all hostelries within 10 miles of Wye were 'scientifically' evaluated for their ambiance, beer quality and welcome, intended as a useful guide to future student generations.

He built up a close group of long-lasting Wye friends who have met regularly until his passing. A group reunion of surviving friends of the same Wye vintage, including **Mike Fuller**, **William Cropper**, **George Gwye**r and myself, was planned at the Farmers Club last October, but sadly postponed until 2021 because of Covid restrictions. We will, however, still meet when allowed to raise a glass in the memory of an old friend.

A main interest of Keith's at Wye was soil and natural resource management and, after graduating at Wye, he joined his Wye tutor Peter Akew at Aberdeen University to do an MSc in soil science followed by a diploma in agricultural engineering at Silsoe. He then joined Hunting Technical Services in Boreham Wood, linking up with another Wye compatriot **Colin Dickerson** (deceased); they both worked together in Southern Sudan before taking up positions with the Canadian Soil Survey for a year or so. Helle Dickerson remembers fondly their years working together at Huntings and the time they were neighbours and close family friends in Elstree. I also recall Keith's conversations about his visits to the Dickerson's lovely home in Rome.

A most significant event of this period was Keith's meeting Sandy, then a Huntings'

cartographer, who would later become his wife. Keith was best man at my wedding in Ireland in 1967, accompanied by Sandy. After a very alcoholic reception, fuelled by a copious supply of Irish whiskey, the best man proposed and promptly collapsed, so it was a memorable engagement!

Keith worked at Huntings for some 15 years, from 1964, and then with WS Atkins from 1980 to 2001, followed by private consultancies until 2006. He had exceptionally broad and worldwide work experiences, focused on many aspects of soil and land resource and catchment management. During his time with Huntings, assignments included Bahrain, Niger, China, Ivory Coast, Thailand, Somalia, Afghanistan, Swaziland and the Tigre province of Ethiopia, then and still a political hotspot. In Swaziland, Tom Boyd worked on the Imbuluzi Basin study where Keith was the team leader and notes that he was a superb soil and land capability specialist and program organiser.

Keith was soon married to Sandy, with Colin Dickerson serving as the best man. They had two daughters, Fiona and Bridget, to whom Keith was devoted, and they established a family home at Pettetts Farm near Newmarket, with a flock of Shetland sheep mostly managed by Sandy as Keith travelled frequently. Subsequently, four cherished grandchildren arrived though, sadly, the youngest Thulsi was a babe when Keith passed so never got to know him.

With WC Atkins, Keith continued his globe-trotting lifestyle including short-term assignments in Algeria, Liberia, Nigeria, Mexico, Oman etc. Latterly, he undertook longer term positions in Nepal as the Natural Resource Adviser on the Khosi Hills Rural Development project, followed in 1992 by a three-year posting as project manager of the Doon Valley Watershed Management Project in the Indian Himalayan state of Uttaranchal. Keith soon became immersed in India and loved it, as did his family. Doon Valley was populated by poor, small farm communities and it was this poverty that spawned Keith's idea of initiating rural tourism as a means to improve farm family incomes.

Initially tested in project area villages, this modest beginning grew into Village Ways, a tourism company extending through many states in India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal with linkages to several African and European countries – a truly remarkable initiative.

Whilst in India, Keith could not escape the ubiquitous 1959–1962 Wye diaspora as he overlapped with Tony Smith (dec) and myself, both of us working in New Delhi at

*Keith Virgo (centre) with some of his 1959–62 Wye Friends at the Farmers' Club in 2001. George Gwyer and Mike Fuller are on his right, with Mike Macklin and John English to his left.*

the time. My Delhi house was on the airport side of the city and proved very convenient for early morning and late flights, and Keith was a frequent welcome guest.

In semi-retirement from 2001, Keith continued his work as Director of Village Ways Ltd and was influential in its promotion and expansion. Consultancy work continued, especially for the Asian Development Bank in Sri Lanka where he undertook many project completion and evaluation reports. This was fortuitous as both Keith and Sandy thoroughly enjoyed Sri Lanka and were sometimes able to adjust visits to coincide with cricket test matches, which was a shared passion. Keith had been involved with the Tropical Agricultural Association* (TAA) for several years and became its chairman in 2010. He approached this responsibility in his usual way, with cheerful enthusiasm, dedication and exceptional organizational skills; attributes recognised 60 years earlier when a young Wye student. He was instrumental in broadening TAA international coverage, especially in South Asia, and in securing TAA as an influential, dynamic and relevant group.

I am sure that the Agricola Club family express their condolences to Sandy and all the family on their loss; they can rest assured that in his extraordinary travels and career, Keith touched and assisted a great number of people.

** Keith was recently awarded the TAA'S Award of Merit, just as he went into Hospital.*

## Richard Pearce (1989-93)

*Richard died aged 76 in May 2021. He had a rich and extraordinary life encompassing three vocations: farmer, development economist and, in his last 20 years, psychotherapist, the profession he most cherished.*

Richard's practice in Bath was called the Quiet Space and services were in great demand. Alongside this, he was active within the Society of Existential Analysis, writing numerous papers, especially on the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre on psychotherapy.

Richard was born in Barrow Gurney in Somerset, the son of farmers. After leaving school, he worked for 10 years on the family dairy farm and then studied agricultural economics at Reading University graduating with a First in 1971.

He followed this with a Master's in development economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies and began lecturing at Reading University and at Wye. Here, he was pioneer in the early 1990s in creating an internet distance learning course in agricultural and rural development. In 1991 he went to Rome to work at the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation, as a development economist working on trade, agricultural commodities and developing countries.

In 1994, looking for a change of direction, he embarked on training as a counsellor. He qualified at Kent College, Canterbury, and in 2004 started working full time as a student counsellor at the University of Bristol. This was followed in 2008 by training in psychotherapy at the University of Sheffield which led to him opening a highly successful practice in Bath. In 2019 he was diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer. He is survived by his wife Usha and their children Maya and Kiran and his two sisters Diana and Vivienne.

*Source: Obituaries,* The Guardian *5 May 2021.*

## Kevin Witherby (1970–73)

*A fond appreciation, composed by friend and contemporary at Wye,* ***David Caffall****.*

Wye was always well-known for the characters that emerged from the undergraduate intake. Movie-star good looks; eccentric dress; distinctive modes of transport – all these and more ensured standing out from the crowd.

Kevin represented none of the above but gained instant and lasting recognition with his South Devon accent (and vocabulary) which would remain familiar to the early 1970s students for decades to come. He quickly formed a firm (and subsequently lifelong) friendship with two Totnes exports, the **Hoey twins** – **Chris** and **Peter**. This tripartite alliance ensured that the more rumbustious aspects of South West culture – dialect and devotion to dairy farming – were famously represented in lecture theatres, Wheel Room bar, Wye Hill cafe and just about everywhere else.

For Chris and Peter, the accent was an optional theatrical prop, but for Kevin it was permanent – and it not merely survived but flourished throughout almost 50 years of subsequent living in the Herefordshire/ Shropshire area.

Although Kevin revelled in the adopted persona of country bumpkin, this masked a keen brain, and his subsequent success in forging lasting business relationships with farmers was based upon an admirable sense of right and wrong, reinforced by a colossal work ethic and a wickedly sardonic sense of humour. He never aspired to office-bound farm trading or business management but leaves a legacy in the affection of many farmers in the Welsh Marches.

Some of Kevin's contemporaries have shared their Wye memories of him with me. **Sue** (1970–73) and **Dick Quan-Taylor** (1969–71) recall Kevin leading a raid on Withersdane

*Keith was a deeply sensitive man with an admirable sense of right and wrong who was universally popular. He leaves a legacy in the affection of many farmers in the Welsh Marches.*

and receiving a bombardment of silage 'juice'. **Bob Berry** (1970–73) remembers the 'Devon Bull's' unselfish and reliable performances in the second row of the College's 1st XV rugby team – and his leading the singing on the bus after away matches.

## Legend has it that no rumen reflux occurred, and that the 'Principal Performer' slept like a baby afterwards!

The stand-out memory, however, is of Kevin's consumption of *21 pints* of brown ale (some accounts claim 22!) on his 21st birthday – 9 May 1972. The event started at lunchtime in the King's Head and reached a dramatic and triumphal climax in the Wheel Room bar shortly before closing time. Legend has it that no rumen reflux occurred, and that the 'Principal Performer' slept like a baby afterwards!

Such stories, however, should not be allowed to overshadow a less superficial appreciation of this kind and gentle soul. Beneath a gruff exterior lay a deeply sensitive man who was universally popular. Kevin enjoyed a full and busy life after Wye and for many years was a 'Character' at Ludlow Rugby Club. His role as the Baby Jesus in their Nativity play has passed into local legend. In later years, he became passionate about shooting and was rarely seen without a spaniel by his side and the inevitable cigarette, either in his mouth, or in hand if he wished to reinforce a particular verbal point.

Kevin bought a house in Bishops Castle in 1992, and it was there that he met the 'Lady of his Dreams'. Tragically, Dorne died just a few short years after they became partners. Happily, though, Dorne's children by a previous marriage became like a family to him, and they and her grandchildren were at his side throughout his second and final battle with cancer of the intestine, which robbed us of his company all too soon.

Just before his final illness, Kevin had been planning a dinner party for his Wye friends and partners. His guest list included **Sue** and **Dick Quan-Taylor**, **Bob Berry**, **Chris** and **Peter Hoey**, **Steve Langdon**, **Sarah Stride** (née **Foster**), **Andy Patmore**, **Dorothy Fairburn**, and **Ann Caffall** (née **Hargreaves**). Of these Wye friends (all of them 1970–73 vintage), corona virus restrictions meant that only Sue, Dick and Bob were permitted to attend the funeral at Bishops Castle on 22 December 2020.

We are hoping that an appropriate event will take place in the Bishops Castle area in due course, but sadly without its much-loved host. I can confidently predict, however, that glasses will be raised in memory of a fine man – and a very special friend.

## Stan Burrage (staff 1967–97)

*Stan Burrage had a rich and varied career in agriculture and horticulture and supervised many postgraduates during his time at Wye. After taking early retirement, he set up a thriving business with his wife Sheila, who has written this account of his life.*

Stan was born in Oxford, the youngest of five children, where he spent his childhood and teenage years. In his mid-teens, problems with a hip injury (possibly sustained playing cricket, or possibly a disease of the hip-bone) resulted in him spending several months in hospital with his leg in plaster. This interruption in his education, and the fact that he was walking with crutches, meant that he did not leave school to work in Morris's factory like his older brother, but returned to school to gain enough O-levels to enter the sixth form to study Maths, Applied Maths and Physics.

At about this time, he had developed an interest in growing plants (his mother was a keen gardener), and he successfully grafted four different varieties of apple onto one tree. To further his interest in plants, he decided to do A-level Biology, for which he attended the girl's grammar school as these subjects were not available at his school.

After A-levels, he applied and was accepted to study Horticulture at Nottingham University, provided that he did a year's practical experience and gained an A-level pass in Chemistry. In September 1957, he started his first year at Sutton Bonington, the agricultural and horticultural faculty of Nottingham University. Three years later, after a lot of work along with playing an active role in student life, he graduated with a first-class degree. At this time, he also became engaged to Sheila, his girlfriend throughout the three years of undergraduate study.

His main interest was still in plant pathology, particularly diseases in fruit trees, and he spent the following year studying for a Diploma at Imperial College, at their field station at Silwood Park, near Ascot.

Sheila and Stan were married in 1961, and he gained a place back at Sutton Bonnington to work for a PhD. In addition to his interest in plant diseases, he had also developed an interest in climate change, particularly the microclimate around plants; this formed the basis of his thesis.

Then followed a post-doctoral year in the Hydrology Department at the University of California in Davis, not far from Sacramento. This furthered his interest in the climate and

in water use and conservation. The couple enjoyed travelling widely in the Western Coast states. But, while in the USA, Stan was offered a lectureship in the Horticultural Department at Wye College and, in 1966, they returned to the UK. They lived in Wye for five years and had three daughters. In 1971 they moved to a larger house in Hastingleigh.

During his time at Wye, Stan continued with his research and supervised many postgraduates, mainly from overseas. His love of travelling continued and each year he spent two or three weeks lecturing or giving advice in many countries - Czechoslovakia, Crete, Egypt, Bhutan, Malaysia, as well as in the EU.

For his research at Wye, he needed instruments that were not of standard design or readily available. Ever the problem-solver, he taught himself electronics. Over the years, starting with automatic weather stations, he developed and improved portable instruments for measuring carbon dioxide, oxygen, pH, relative humidity and conductivity.

Stan took early retirement from College and started his own business, with Sheila in charge of finances. His instruments attracted the interest of mushroom growers and glasshouse nurseries and, for 15 years, he supplied growers and research institutes all over the world, not only with portable analysers but also larger, built-in control systems. These could have presented a problem, as portable instruments could easily be returned for repair or servicing, but permanent installations could not. Luckily, this never became an issue, apart from one mushroom-grower in Montana, USA.

On this occasion, the couple decided to take a trip to solve the problem. They flew to Seattle, hiring a car to drive overland to Montana, where, after thorough checking, Stan's equipment proved to be fine: the grower's electrician had wired the system up incorrectly! From there on, they had an enjoyable holiday through Montana and Idaho, including a memorable, 70-mile jet boat trip up the Snake river, visiting a few National Parks and staying with friends in California before returning home.

The business finished trading in 2015 and not long after that Stan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia: his short-term memory was failing him, and sadly he could no longer remember the wonderful holidays and travels with his family, nor the trips made after they left home along with so many memories of 50 happy years living in the caring community of Hastingleigh.

A gentle, loving, and much-loved grandfather, father and husband, Stan will be sadly missed.

***Editor's extras:***

*Whilst living in south-east London for my first job, I was persuaded by my rugby club mates to form a team to play against the College. We were run ragged by the students; I had totally underestimated their strength. So, instead, knowing there was a cricket team who used the pitch behind the Bowl Inn at Hastingleigh, I got together XI men and boys, still from the rugby club, who claimed to play the game of cricket. As a result, we got to know Stan and his men and made repeat visits over a number of seasons. We still weren't very good, but we had some lovely days out, enjoyable evenings and faced Stan's fierce bowling on numerous occasions. He was a fine host and party to giving us many treasured memories!*

## Peter Alan Charles Thompson (Wye, 1955–60)

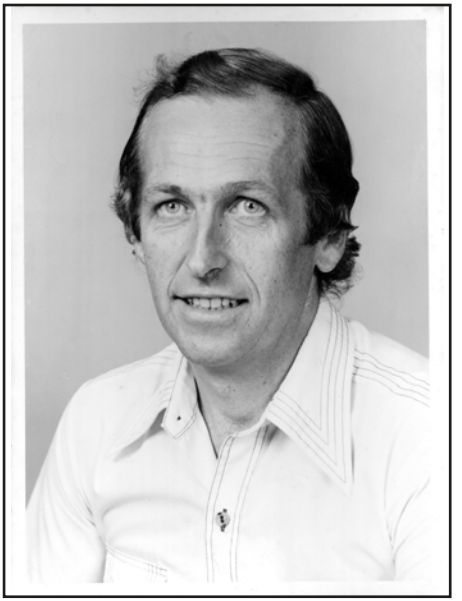
*Peter Thompson was born in Kent, and studied Agriculture to Masters level at Wye, specialising in poultry. Much of his career in was spent in Australia, running a successful plant production company with this wife, Sheila, who sent this account of his life and work. He is fondly remembered for his work ethic, kindness and wry sense of humour.*

Peter was born in West Wickham in 1936, the youngest of three children, with two older sisters, Mary and Pat. He attended high school in Beckenham, Kent, before studying Agriculture at Wye College. Peter's family had been involved in the insurance industry, but he had a passion for the country, and Wye proved to be an ideal choice for him.

Peter commenced his course in 1955 and enjoyed College life to its fullest. He supported the notorious Wye College Rugby Club and their many raids on Withersdane, the girls' hall of residence. Perhaps the most outstanding of those raids was the night on which the girls' beds were 'stolen' and hung on the wires of the nearby hop field.

While at Wye, Peter met Renata (Rennie) Garas, who later became Vice President of the Students Union; the pair were married soon after graduation in 1960. They then returned to Wye, and Peter completed his Masters in Poultry Science, jokingly referred to by his children as a Masters in 'chickenology'!

He then secured various poultry management jobs around England, which meant that he and Rennie moved regularly with their young sons, Miles and Bruce. His last job before leaving England was managing a company, National Poultry Tests, in Godalming, Surrey. This involved the early computerisation, recording and publishing of data which resulted from tests on a range of poultry breeds from the



major suppliers. Peter quickly became adept at the use of computers; he had a very bright mind and a natural ability to rise to challenges, whether academic or practical.

**Peter completed his Masters in Poultry Science, jokingly referred to by his children as a Masters in 'chickenology'!**

During this period Peter attended a World Poultry Congress in Australia. He liked the country and travelled around meeting up with poultry industry people and Wye Agricola Club members.

In 1973, Peter married **Sheila Stephens** (1955–59) whose husband, Julian Buchanan, also a Wye College graduate, had died

suddenly three years earlier. Soon after their marriage, Sheila and Peter moved to Australia, with Sheila's three children, Duncan, Helen and Douglas Buchanan. One of Peter's contacts, the owner of Barters Enterprises, interviewed him in London and offered him a job to set up, and manage their large egg production farm on the outskirts of Canberra. Peter took on this job with his usual energy and enthusiasm. Within a short time, he was overseeing the construction of the first building of what became a massive rural enterprise.

At the end of that year, Peter was offered a position of Information Officer with CSIRO Crops and Pastures Division in Brisbane. It was an offer too good to refuse; the position suited Peter's quick mind and practical approach.

While Peter was working at CSIRO, Sheila had begun a production plant nursery. Peter continued with CSIRO until the plant business grew to the point where it needed his full-time attention. His energy and ability to make things happen meant that large orders were taken for the new Domestic Airport, the Gateway Bridge and several tourist resorts which mushroomed in Queensland in the 1980s. He took a keen interest in the Nursery Industry Association and was active in collating plants, from all areas of Australia, for the 1984 Liverpool Garden Festival. It was the first time such a large volume of plants had been shipped out of Australia. Peter and Sheila coordinated both the Australian Government's outdoor garden and the Queensland Government's indoor display at the Festival.

In 1977, their daughter, Emma Clare, was born. She, with the other children, earned their pocket money by helping in the nursery; a true family business.

One of Peter's CSIRO friends, Dr **Bill Silvey** (1960–63), wrote this on hearing of Peter's death: 'The minute I met Peter, in 1974, I felt an ambient kindred spirit lurking about us. He had a cheeky grin, an English nose, mischievous blue eyes and a dry, but wicked sense of humour.' Bill continues that they then discovered that they had both once 'walked the quadrangles of Wye College'.

In his role at CSIRO, Peter promoted the scientific research findings of the division to sponsors, farmers, politicians and fellow colleagues. According to Bill, 'Peter did that with zest through his creative flair for merging complex science into artistic displays that provoked all readers' and viewers' senses into comprehension. What a guy!'

Peter will be remembered for his natural ability to manage any situation. Faced with having to arrange flowers for his younger son's wedding in France, he calmly stepped up and did a great job, untrained! He will also be remembered for his incredible work ethic as well as his kindness, wry sense of humour and, at times, his elusive persona.

*Vale,* Peter, you will always be very fondly remembered.

## Barry Potter (Wye, 1965 –68)

*A tribute by a friend from college days* **Angela Wray** *(née* **Harrison***, 1965–68).*

When I look back on my days at Wye, inevitably my dear friend Barry is there in my memories; sadly, he died in May 2020, and leaves a huge gap in the lives of his family, and friends.

At Wye, his attire was always distinctive; a pale green jersey, very tatty, black corduroy trousers and gym shoes. He always carried a pruning knife, useful for various tasks including slicing up the cheese in the Sunday rations at Withersdane. He was always involved in college life in some way. Whether it was singing at the folk club with **Peter Wright** (1965–68) playing lead guitar – 'Shoals of Herring' being his main offering. He once entertained an audience of female students by demonstrating how he shaved using his cut-throat razor, when making money during a charity week.

## He used to tell me that 'anyone can do anything'

He was always gently teasing the lovely Irish ladies who looked after us at Withersdane; but it was obvious that they had a great affection for 'Mr Potter'. One thing I was incredibly grateful to him for was his demonstrating to me, after a hair-raising ride down to college as a passenger on the

*Barry with his wife Kate.*

back of a motorbike, that *I should never, ever ride on one again*!

After Wye, our paths diverged. Barry worked briefly for a London council in the Parks Department before joining the teaching staff at Writtle. When he moved up to Yorkshire, to Askham Bryan College, we met up once more as we were farming in North Yorkshire – a sad tale of how self-sufficiency can get a bit out of hand resulting in a herd of Jersey Cows. Barry and his new wife Kate often used to come to the farm. He used to tell me that 'anyone can do anything'. I did rather doubt this and, when he marched up to a very mean-spirited and man-hating heifer of ours at milking time with a cluster in his hands, my heart sank! It seemed prudent not to worry him about the prospect of his decapitation. All was well, Barry proved his point and the little beast behaved perfectly.

Barry had so many enthusiastic interests in his life. He engaged in the Territorial Army, the Royal Anglians, and then the Yorkshire Volunteers, and he was a very keen beekeeper. Whilst a lecturer at Askham Bryan, his interests were mainly turf and orchards, especially in conserving old apple varieties, and these were continued after he had left.

Barry undertook many voluntary conservation projects and worked with many groups. He leaves his wife Kate, son James, and two grandchildren and I am sure that his passion for interests and projects will be continued in the future.

## Jeremy Francis Howard Selby (1963–66)

*Jeremy was born 1945 and died in 2021. His son Angus (Wye, 1993–96) sent this tribute from the family.*

Jeremy's Shona name was Gondo (The Eagle) because there was very little that didn't catch his eye. This attention to detail, combined with a hands-on approach, gave his ideas the substance to make stuff happen. He was a producer, a builder, a creator, a teacher and an adventurer. He was also an exceptional people-person, a dedicated family man and a community stalwart who lived by the simple mantra of 'work hard play hard'. He hated fuss and he hated faff. He loved simplicity, action, delivery. This was a life well-lived, and he left deep footprints, within and beyond the farming communities that he called home. His sharp wit, versatile sense of humour, energy, generosity and optimism will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Jeremy (also known as 'Jomo', 'Jem', 'Jerome' and 'Jerry') was born in Kenya in 1945 and educated at Kenton College in Nairobi and then Marlborough in the UK before going up to Wye for his Agriculture degree. He didn't enjoy Marlborough with all its hierarchies, rules and features of establishment, but he loved Wye where he made many lifelong friends and, among other things, established a reputation for a swift yard of ale.

*Jeremy leaving for Wye in 1962 or 1963.*

*Jeremy and Janet in 1972.*

On leaving Wye he joined the Rhodesian Civil Service in 1967 as a Conservation and Extension (CONEX) officer, initially based in Bromley specialising in conservation agriculture in the Communal and African Purchase Areas of Mashonaland East. His agronomy was purist, grounded in technical soil science and disease management, and this foundation would underpin the very different chapters of his farming career over the following decades.

In 1971 he married Janet Fairlie, who he'd met on the hockey pitch in Marandellas, and in 1974 they took over Delvillewood Farm in Concession, more commonly known as Zanadu. It was a difficult farm with tricky soils and not much infrastructure to start with, but with careful attention and investment over many years eventually found its balance. Although tobacco was the core programme initially and 'the generator that capitalised the farm', Jeremy always wanted the farm to shift towards irrigated double-cropping of wheat and soya. As a proponent of irrigation and a pioneer of minimum-tillage, he gradually improved the organic matter and soil structure to impressive levels. Once the cropping programme had transitioned, they started to diversify and vertically integrate by milling the wheat, baking the flour and running a feedlot and butchery alongside. Passion fruit, mange tout, citrus and a series of fishing lodges on the big dam completed a busy mix of enterprises. Janet, known as Kanyuchi (The Bee), managed the admin and the finances and together they were an effective team.

Jeremy's practical skills and perfectionist nature were exhibited in other ways too. He was the Rhodesian Ploughing Champion in the mid-1970s before back trouble brought his competition days to an end. He was a 'hands-on' farmer who delighted in getting dirt under his fingernails, either in the soil or with a piece of machinery. On occasions this backfired like the time he got his right hand caught in the auger of a maize sheller, which nearly cost him his life and left him with his signature 'clawed' finger.

Jeremy also developed a series of remarkable bonds with his pets over the years. His

labrador Rikki was a fully paid-up member of the Marandellas Club and would politely collect his packet of biltong from the bar before retiring to a quiet corner to enjoy it. During the bush war on 'call up' near Nyamapanda, he rescued Sheba, an Alsatian cross, and secretly smuggled her out on the army lorry. Sheba's devotion and loyalty to Jeremy became the stuff of legend in the local community. There was Arnold the African Grey Parrot who bit everyone, except Jeremy, and was famous for telling polite neighbours to "F*** Off" before squawking with delight. Dog Dog would ride precariously at high speed on the fuel tank of the motorbike demonstrating an astonishing sense of balance. And most recently, there was Jock, Jeremy's over-protective Jack Russell in Zambia who kept vigil by his bedside to the end.

Despite his many strong traits, Jeremy wasn't flawless and would be the first to acknowledge this. He could be dismissive, forceful, stubborn, provocative, even belligerent but never for long. He could also be blunt especially if a gesture of diplomacy was missed or rejected. He would give people the benefit of the doubt once or twice but then had little patience thereafter. He didn't suffer fools easily and was deeply sceptical of inheritors who would have to doubly prove themselves to gain his respect. If you crossed him, it was a long road back to regain any trust.

Fishing was a central thread of Jeremy's life. His formative experiences of deep-sea fishing off the Kenyan coast and flyfishing up in the foothills of Mt Kenya with 'Pop MacNamara', his maternal Grandfather, instilled a deep love of the sport. Even the bush war couldn't curb this passion. He would often fish the remote Gaerezi or the Pungwe with a couple of friends; one keeping armed lookout from an elevated position while the other two focused on the trout. Any opportunity to chase fish was welcome, and family holidays usually had a piscatorial theme: Mauritius; Mozambique; Watamu; Ireland; Scotland; Kariba on his boat *Diana*; Inyanga and the lower Zambezi. He taught countless people to cast a fly and as a gifted and patient instructor often succeeded in creating lifelong converts. As the years went by it became apparent that it wasn't the fish that counted as much as the friends, the places and the ritual.

*Jeremy, Mick, Angus and Janet at Mick's graduation at Wye in 1989*

His other favourite ritual was safari, usually by landcruiser. And it didn't matter whether the trip was for two days or two months, the landcruiser would be packed to the brim. For emergencies he would always carry leggen (inner tube), thambo (string) and a roll of wire with which he could fix almost anything. He was a constant architect of the next adventure: The Eastern Highlands (but always off the beaten track); the Lower Zambezi hunting camps; Gona Re Zhou; Nacala; Gorongosa; Inhasorro; Zanzibar by rail; Cape Town via tumbleweed country; and in 2017 more than 9000 km over two months through Namibia and Botswana. Even the week before his death he was on safari up at Shiwa-Ngandu and Kapisha Springs, a place he loved, among special friends and family. And in typical fashion he was planning a new safari to the Nyika plateau on the Zambian side.

Family came first, always, and he recognised the importance of time spent with them. Jeremy was adored by the whole clan, as a much-loved son, brother, nephew, godson, husband, father, uncle, godfather and 'Grampops'. He always had a new game, or a new project, or a new gadget and a wonderful 'glass half full' ability to turn even the most mundane and arduous of tasks into something fun, interesting and enjoyable. He was full of energy and an early riser maintaining that 'a missed sunrise is a missed day'. He would often burn the candle at both ends and probably helped to establish the perspective that 5am is when legends are either waking up or going to bed.

*Conservation farming in Zimbabwe in 2017*

He and Janet ploughed everything back into the farm. It was an anchor for the family, but it was also their passion and their pension. And it was social security for 200 farmworkers and their families, many of whom had been on the farm for generations and for whom Jeremy felt a great deal of responsibility. And he genuinely believed (perhaps naively) in the post-independence dream of Zimbabwe. So, in 2002, after being forced off the farm at gun point, despite court orders and despite strong local community support, Jeremy was shocked and distraught. He never really got over losing Zanadu, but rather came to terms with it through his Kipling-type stoicism and the belief that one day sanity and/or justice would prevail. He

also instinctively looked forward, so when the family decided on Plan B and moved up to Zambia to start again from scratch, Jeremy seized the opportunity with typical enthusiasm.

He and Janet moved up to Mkushi in 2004 and set up a tented camp on the banks of the Lunsemfwa river for two very wet rainy seasons whilst building houses and clearing land. Jeremy was also central to assessing and addressing the many soil and irrigation issues on the initial CENAFARMS footprint. Contours, erosion, drainage, vetiver grass and soil chemistry – all his old CONEX skills were back in high demand across the community. Mkushi was booming and the challenges of supplies, breakdowns, torrential rain, centipedes, malaria and black mambas in camp were much easier to deal with than Zanu PF.

And then in 2010 his old Wye and Kenya chums **Peter Aagaard** (1965–68) and Glenn Allison persuaded him to join Conservation Farming and set up a Mkushi district programme. Over the next five years, Jeremy trained and mentored thousands of small-holder farmers from Kapiri all the way up to Chintamukulu where he took on a unique project, rehabilitating poachers into farmers. He was dedicated and generous with his advice but never patronising or overwhelming. Again, his sense of humour played a key role in the successful roll-out. He introduced a 'worst crop of the year' competition which the community adopted with great enthusiasm and much hilarity. His humour transcended age, race and gender. His best small-scale farmers were always women, and he celebrated that loudly and persistently and mercilessly pulled the legs of his male farmers. Many of his closest friends in Mkushi were younger farmers who welcomed his experience and insight as well as his endearing style and naughty jokes.

Technically, his approach was thoughtful too. Rather than simply replicate his experience and methods from Zim, he was careful to adapt his approach to the local soils, rainfall and crop disease profiles in Mkushi or indeed the specific regions further north. His trial plots caught the eye of Norwegian researchers and in recent years biochar, wood vinegar, cassava and all manner of sustainable farming experiments kept him busy and engaged. Zambia and Jeremy adopted each other easily and willingly and this allowed him some golden years on a farm with his grandchildren in a community that valued, respected and appreciated him. After the Zim debacle, he was always deeply grateful to Zambia and its people for their welcome.

By the end, like one of his beloved landcruisers, he was covered in scratches, bumps, dents and dust with more panel beating and more miles on the clock than most – but still keen for the next escapade. And with these battle scars came an endless supply of amusing stories and incredible adventures. Ironically, it was decades of exposure to the African sun that finally caught up – melanoma – but he accepted this fate and remained cheerful, upbeat and grateful to the end.

Jeremy was buried in a beautiful spot on the farm in Zambia under some big Msasa trees, overlooking the Lunsemfwa river, facing the sunrise. It is where the Crowned Eagles nest and where the monkeys plan their raids on Janet's vegetable garden. An African to the core, now resting in his beloved African soil. He is survived by Janet; his two sons Gus and **Mick** (1996–99); and five grandchildren: William; Hugo; Tilly; Paddy and Jomo.

# A thirst for knowledge and a fascination for dairy cattle

**The late Doug Roberts (1966–71) cut his farm-manager teeth on the College farm which helped him later thrive with his own dairy herd. Sadly, he died soon after this article was written.**

*Doug wrote: Editor, Congratulations on another fascinating edition of The Journal. I have never sent a contribution before but two items in this edition sparked some memories. These items link together and reflect an important part of my life*.

**Mike Boddington's** (1966–72) reference to **Bruce Parker** (1967–70) stirred some memories.

Bruce and I started our time as undergraduates at Wye in 1967, both enrolling for an Agriculture degree. I met Bruce on the squash courts. We were both keen on the game, and, when the squash team was short of players, we slotted in. I suspect the away matches were less popular with team regulars. But, I had some 'wheels', and Bruce could read a map.

## On results day, Bruce and I had long faces as the results were not to our liking. Botany was my downfall

We were the first intake to Wye under the course unit system. Unless one achieved two units in the first year, the only way to continue on the degree course was to re-sit, a year later. The 1967 intake of undergraduates was Wye's largest to date; approximately 20% of us did not make the grade and were out. Several of us were keen to try again, Bruce and I included.

It was with great expectation that we 're-sitters' gathered at the beginning of the following summer term, being allowed to be part of the College and attend any lectures we wished. Undoubtedly, the College was keen to help.

On results day, Bruce and I had long faces as the results were not to our liking. Botany was my downfall; however, by some good fortune, Dr George Pegg, himself a botanist, had taken over as my Director of Studies. How sad I was to read his obituary in last

year's journal but, nevertheless, so pleased to read of his achievements in the field of Botany with a Professorship at Reading University along the way. **Geoff Allanson** (1981, Staff) of the economics department was my original Director of Studies, but, whilst I was out of College, he had 'escaped' to the West Indies for a year's lecturing.

## Bruce and I saw each other over the intervening years as I always enjoyed his 'free-thinking' ideas

I thought that Dr Pegg would have a kind 'shoulder to cry on'. As soon as I walked into his office, he congratulated me on my success. I quickly explained that the noticeboard did not concur. He was surprised. As I suspected, he was keen to help me and suggested that I return to his office shortly whilst he made some enquires. He tried not to raise my hopes, but I was sure that he was on my side.

On returning to his office, he could only agree that the College noticeboard was correct. He suggested to me that I plead my case with Prof Selman who he knew was in the office next door. He informed me that Selman would be present at an Academic Board meeting later that day.

So, I plucked up courage to knock on Prof Selman's door. Once again, I received a friendly welcome from someone that I had never met, only having viewed this revered gentleman at the front of the lecture hall. Later that day, I received communication that the College would allow me back to continue my degree. But I never did get my course unit in botany. In discussion with Prof Selman, I enthused about all that Wye could offer me and in return I would work hard to achieve a degree. Wye College kept its part of the bargain and so did I; success all round.

What I failed to mention to Prof Selman was that I had met a young lady, **Valerie Roberts** (née **Long**, 1967–1970) in the first year on whom I was rather sweet; 53 years later she is sweeter still!

Needless to say, Bruce and I saw each other over the intervening years as I always enjoyed his 'free-thinking' ideas and a pint with him was always good fun. Luck was certainly on my side, but perhaps it was those unique qualities of Wye College, which **Mike Boddington** wrote about last year, that I was able to tap into. Inspirational people with a friendly demeanour ensuring that big is not always best.

Perhaps perseverance is a quality that Bruce and I required … and possessed!

Allow me to express some further thoughts.

## A month of unlimited travel on a Greyhound bus all for $33

The one advantage of a year out was three long vacs. My objective for the long vacs was to gain practical farming experience. My father and grandfather had both spent careers in the Royal Navy. My interest in farming came from holidays with an uncle with whom I stayed when my father was on a ship for two-and-half-years in the mid-fifties.

During my first long vac I travelled with **Mike Walker** (1966–69) to Canada. I worked on a dairy farm west of Toronto and after two months met up with Mike in Edmonton. Via


Vancouver Island, we travelled down the west coast to San Francisco and back up to Boston via Salt Lake City, Yellowstone, Chicago and Niagara Falls – a month of unlimited travel on a Greyhound bus all for $33. Mike and Brenda are still good friends.

Being less ambitious, my second long vac involved spending a month 'rouging' seed potatoes and erecting a barn on a farm north of Dundee. The 'bothy' I stayed in had a spare room and I contacted **Bill Fletcher** (1967–70) to enquire if he was available for a week's golf. I had a very positive response and we played, amongst others, the championship courses of the east coast; St Andrews, Carnoustie and Gleneagles, all on a student ticket. My vac was completed with a month's hop picking for the Calcutts in Kent. My wife **Val** and **Sue Bruce-Miller** (née **Anthony** 1967–71) did all the cooking for us few Wye students, plus a group from Oxford university. I remember **Neil Bruce-Miller** (1967–71) and **Sandy Johnson** (1967–1970) also being with us. Sandy sadly died a few years later in a riding accident in Australia. Sue and Neil retired to New Zealand, but their eldest son lives not far from us so we have had the pleasure of meeting up each summer for the last few years.

A final vac saw me travel back to America in the company of **Joe Youdan** (1967–70). Joe travelled south to Dallas whilst I spent a month on a family dairy farm in Kansas and a month on the US Naval Academy dairy farm near Baltimore. **Sam Kent** (1970–73) followed me there a year later.

Well, my time as an undergraduate at Wye was coming to an end and it was time to find a job. Amongst jobs that I applied for was one that particularly appealed when a job specification appeared on the College noticeboard asking for applications for the two-year post of assistant farm manager on the College farm.

After much thought I applied, the rationale being that if I could crack the Krebs cycle with Dr Flood and econometrics with John Lingard, it must be worth a go. Having survived an interview panel of Professor Holmes, John Nix, Charlie Garland and **Francis Huntington** (1961–64), the then-farm manager, I was offered the job. How delighted I was to be spending two more years at Wye.

## I was itching to get my overalls on ... wellies were already on! A vital article of clothing on any farm in West Cornwall

I followed on from **John Youngs** (1966–69), a very able farmer and a delightful person who hailed from a well-respected farming family in Suffolk – a hard act to follow. Under the tutelage of Francis, I soon got involved, and when Francis was awarded a Nuffield scholarship, the opportunity of more experience came my way. I recall attending a meeting of the Farm Panel when **Bernard Sparks**, Hortic Department, taught me my first lesson in negotiating skills. Bernard explained to me the tactics. At the end of the meeting, he had the approval for the purchase of his steam-driven plough – so preferential to noxious gases wafting down Olantigh road; the Farm Panel couldn't possibly disagree with that.

During my time on the College farm, Val and I got married in Guernsey where Val's father was responsible for the telephones of Guernsey and Alderney. **Bob Howard** (1968–71) came over as my best man. He was married to Gay before his arrival at Wye. Bob and I played many a game of golf at Ashford with **Dave Godsmark** (1968–71) making up a three-ball. The last time I met Dave was on the fine links at Formby golf club for an NFU golf day. Bob and Gay moved to New Zealand, Gay's home. We still keep in touch, and Bob visits when he is in the UK. He enjoys the New Zealand farming and has acquired a healthy local twang.

Val worked for **Dr Bob Campling** (Staff 1965) in the Animal House, helping postgrad students with the practical aspects of their studies. We were fortunate to start married life in Shirley and **Tom Wright**'s (College 1949–52; Staff 1978–90) cottage in Brook.

Two happy years on the farm seemed to pass all too quickly. I thank Francis for all his help and understanding towards a 'raw' recruit who had so much to learn. Francis had such a stressful position to fill with so many 'masters' to serve. Hard work was one solution that I could help with.

Whilst I was fairly convinced that practical farming was my career of choice, an advert from BOCM Silcock caught my eye – a 'Cattle Sales Specialist' in West Cornwall at twice the salary that I was currently receiving sounded attractive. I applied and got the job.

Suddenly its 1973 and the Russians are on the Chicago Exchange buying wheat. Virtually overnight, the price of wheat in the UK had gone from £35 a ton to £70 a ton! Forgive me if I exaggerate, but that is what it seemed like to the livestock farmers and merchants of West Cornwall. BOCM got the blame as the price of 'Red Label' rose week by week. My sales manager and technical manager were very supportive as I was on a steep learning curve. Visiting farms everyday was at times a galling experience when all I wished was to have a go myself! I was itching to get my overalls on ... wellies were already

on! A vital article of clothing on any farm in West Cornwall!

It happened one evening after a damp day of continuous drizzle that, out of the blue, my uncle's farming partner phoned to tell me that the farm foreman had given in his notice to start up a business of his own and would I care to take up the position. Val and I jumped at the chance!

With our young son, we travelled up to North East Essex just in time for silage making. That was forty-five years ago. Silage making was a collaborative operation and our neighbour taught me so much, especially about dairy farming, as it was the dairy that attracted me to Thorpe Park Farm.

**Dairy cows have fascinated me all my working life, from the first time I walked into the cowshed where I did my year's practical before Wye**

Val and I had two more children, a boy **James Roberts** (Wye 1994–97) and a girl, Mary. After work placements in Australia and America, James came back to help on the farm and is now a partner in the business and the 'boss' (when Val is not around!). We have developed a working relationship which gives us so much pleasure; we realise how lucky we are to be working with James. In the background this has enabled us to retain a farm staff keen to progress the business. James' wife, Annis, has helped us computerise the accounts, incorporating 'Making Tax Digital'. Readers with small businesses will understand.

Our thirst for knowledge has always been a driver to attain a place in the top 10% of dairy farms.

Whilst we have managed to develop and grow the dairy unit, most of my dairying colleagues have abandoned the task. In Essex, we are now down to only five dairy farms of any size. When one considers how many Scottish families came down to Essex in the thirties, specifically to have an income from milk plus, the fact that Essex had many County Council farms and we are close to the largest market in the country and on a heavy clay soil suited to grass – what a turnaround!

Sadly, I have chaired the demise of the Grassland Society, the local NFU milk committee and overseen the merger of other discussion groups in order to keep them going. **John Torrance** (1990–93) now chairs our East Anglian NFU Milk Committee, as well as developing a large successful dairy operation alongside the M25.

I often look back to the Wye days when Bruce and I must have had determination a-plenty to attain degrees. A determination that has seen the farm survive through Milk Quotas, the demise of the Milk Marketing Board, BSE, Foot and Mouth, continual inspection for Farm Assurance, Single Farm Payment and Set-Aside, the failure of Dairy Farmers of Britain, a hurricane and the 'Beast from the East'.

Without irrigation, there is never much grass here after mid-June; early cuts of quality Italian ryegrass must be used to fill the silage bunker. The drought of 1976 was an early lesson for me. We adapted our calving pattern to an all-autumn regime, getting a better price as a bonus.

Dairy cows have fascinated me all my working life, from the first time I walked into the cowshed where I did my year's practical

before Wye. I still get a thrill from seeing the amazing selection of dairy products on the supermarket shelf and to think that we are contributing in some small way. I have never dimmed in my conviction of the nutritional qualities of dairy and, gladly, others in the community are now thinking likewise.

I am glad to have worked in an industry where there has often been a cash surplus at the end of the year. Ancillary industries are always keen to invest where there is some money. New dairying ideas have always been a challenge and now, with sexed-semen and genomic testing, we are still trying to breed the perfect dairy cow.

Val and I were at Wye when the Rural and Environmental Sciences (RES) degree was introduced: once again, a small College moving with the times. Little did we realise the influence that Professor **Chris Baines** (1966–69) would have on environmental ideas for the British Isles. We have been involved with a lot of the environmental schemes that we have thought relevant to this farm – the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme, Essex Coast ESA, ELS and Countryside Stewardship, for example. The principle that we adopted was to farm intensively within the field boundary and let nature take over on the outside. However, a livestock farm within an 'arable desert' does encourage a diverse wildlife.

*(Editor, I have written quite enough. If you think that this contribution would be of any interest please do not hesitate to wield the 'editor's knife'. Whilst I found Botany tough at Wye, at school it was English language with which I struggled, as you can tell! – Rubbish! I haven't touched it ... well, not much – Ed*)

*Wye High Street: the site of the old Wolfson Lecture Theatre. The office buildings across the road from College are being renovated to include four houses and two more in the old carpark.*

# How Wye College shaped my days

**Sally Festing (1957–60) takes us back to the Wye of the 1950s where she met her husband Michael (1955–60); one of their daughters, Harriet (1984–87), is also an alumnus (and a past editor of this Journal).**

What had I done? The day of my interview, I entered the little gate that led into the orchards on the road to Withersdane – and wondered. It was 1956 and, looking back, I realise how immeasurably Wye has influenced my life. Not only scenically, or through interaction with contemporaries, but with staff who chose to tuck themselves away in an idyllic rural, church-observing community when they might have been competing in the big world. What a rare place it was!

Applying to Wye was my mother's idea. She reckoned there was scope for me in growing plants to run a hanging-basket business. Something I actually did for a short period. At school, like many girls, I was keen on English, but my other passion was for plants. Only two or three of us chose botany and zoology for A-level, and when the head mistress suggested it was 'unladylike' for a girl to study horticulture, my future was determined! The year before Wye I lived in Cambridge, so I didn't miss out on May Balls, and a student introduced me to TS Eliot! Mother wanted me to take a secretarial course 'to have something to fall back on'. Shorthand turned out useful, and typing has been a boon. But

*Sally's graduation in 1960*

the six-month course swallowed a lot of what was officially my 'year's practical'.

The 'Prin' took a lenient view of this because he was an old pal of the zoology don with whom I managed a month or so replanting strawberries. There was more than one Dunstan Skilbeck – beneath the genial, ex-public-school toff was a man not only of bonhomie but of wide interests. At my yearly end of term chat, he would turn from a query about my absence from Hortic practicals to my interest in *Four Quartets*.

## Mother wanted me to take a secretarial course 'to have something to fall back on'

I was very fond of 'Schim'. I remember playing scrabble in her tasteful home – the sharp mind and humour that underlay her self-effacing manner. Wilkie's implacable calm almost lured me to 'Fruit', as did Bunny Harrison and his young, fair-haired accomplice, with Botany, and Schim with bugs. There was also an excellent dark-haired Geology lecturer in whose name we hung in our house, for many years, geological maps of the UK, and Prof Miles' weekly Garden History that twinned arts and sciences in a way that definitely chimed.

The old College buildings were as unforgettable as the village, tucked beneath the Crown on the North Downs. For three years, we enjoyed the little chalk flora – vetches and spider orchids – up on the hillside. Withersdane Hall's beautifully manicured demonstration gardens were a delight. The building too, had its internal swagger maintained by the industrious Mr Flanaghan's polished floors and his wife's housekeeping. I couldn't easily forget the village, a model of archetypal 'Englishness' with its butcher, bakers and the café for mid-morning camaraderie. There were cow-filled walks by the railway line and runs to Brook.

Light-hearted flirtations in the first term were spontaneous and fun. I played in a lacrosse team captained by **Sue Gwynn** (1955–58), wrote pieces for *Cardinal*, and morphed into 'Patty' in JM Barrie's *Quality Street*. Hops and dances were spice, and there was a London excursion on the back of **David Gooday**'s (1957–61) motorcycle to sing madrigals for the Worshipful Company of Gardeners. But I'd met **Mike** (now **Michael**) at Rennie (Marion) Garas' 'fresher' party, and by the end of the year we'd teamed up. He stayed on to do a Masters in Poultry Science while I finished my degree. Summers together, we dead-headed dahlias on an island in Lake Constance; the next year it was dead-heading at Stotters Carnation nursery somewhere in the southern counties. 'Revision' meant working in the old Library until 9pm, when we'd quick-march to the King's Head.

On 14 November, 1959, we rose early to find Michael's little Hillman had been dragged into a field. A huge white bow was tied round the bonnet and inside a distraught hen flustered amid bales of hay. In hindsight, it was amusing; at the time, I cried! Our banns had been read at St Gregory & St Martin parish church, and once we'd cleared up, we headed for a Cambridge wedding. Doubtless, we'd have got round to it in the end. We'd been living over a butcher's shop in the High Street and saw no reason why we shouldn't cohabitate, but Wye hadn't quite caught up with freedoms of the 1960s, and some reckoned it was more seemly to wed. Wye was *wholly* responsible!

*Sally on Scolthead Island with her closest Wye friend Rennie Garras*

Both lots of parents took exception to the match. It was all a little stressful, and their disapproval saw us escaping the country within weeks of finals. Michael got a transitional job in Canada before being accepted for a PhD in Ames, Iowa, where their statistician was a pupil of his hero, RA Fisher. So that's where we went.

Four years in the USA Midwest saw us with two children Alice and Simon. I worked as an Avon saleswoman, then as secretary to a Prof of Civil Engineering (thanks to my secretarial course), both on the University campus. Our holiday freedom was incredible. With little preparation, we'd drive out and camp in the Rockies – something we missed a good deal after the thud of return to the UK. In Ludlow, Michael worked as a geneticist with Dale Turkeys, while I taught children through LAMDA grades of verse-speaking after taking relevant exams, and our third child, **Harriet**, completed the family. But it wasn't long before we moved to South London where Michael was offered a job as part of the Medical Research Council's (MRC) Laboratory Animal Centre.

Michael's school (Dartington Hall) had a farm; he enjoyed working on it so much that he went to Wye wanting to be a farmer. But his father didn't have a farm to pass on, and the combination of genetics and statistics he took

in Iowa proved a winning start to a far more academic life with the MRC – two hundred scientific papers reached a climax with his last for *Nature* at the age of 83! (it *was* hard work). Meantime, my Wye degree equipped me to teach science, which is what I did at first because it fitted in with a young family. I enjoyed teaching, though perhaps not the staff-rooms of secondary schools. Somewhere though, I've always been a word-person and an evening class in journalism sparked a decade of wide-ranging articles for local papers, airline magazines, anywhere from *The Guardian* and the RHS *The Garden* to *Country Life* and *The Countryman*, with regular pieces in the *Times Ed*, and *Higher Educational Supplements*.

## *The Story of Lavender* (1982, 1989) is still selling!

All over Europe – whilst Michael participated in and attended conferences and I accompanied him in my journalistic capacity – we'd extend our expertise. In Stockholm, for instance, I wrote about a furniture-making firm (my paternal grandfather, Charles Richter, founded Bath Cabinet Makers).

Garden pieces outnumbered others. While still students, we lived for a term close to Rennie and **Pete Thompson** (1955–60) on Olantigh Road. School teaching had morphed into taking Adult Education classes at WEA venues for London and Surrey University extra-mural panels. Rennie and I became ardent members of the Garden History Society whose meetings took us to their conferences abroad. This fuelled hugely enjoyable classes year after year, with their own excursions to places like Kew and Painshill.

Rennie was our closest Wye friend. She lived in Guildford, where she'd row me on the river with her two boys. When Pete left her for Sheila, Rennie would bring Miles and Bruce each summer to camp in the Norfolk garden. She tried to teach me to paint, and we'd mess about in boats. Later, I stayed with her in Greenwich, talking long into the night. By then, she was part of Geoffrey Jellicoes's landscape team working at Sutton Place.

Rennie's far-too-early death leaves us several of her water-colour paintings and, happily, contact with both sons, one of whom is to stay with us this September. **John** and Audrey **McInerney** (1957–60) were simultaneously in Iowa, where we'd picnic together. We've shared dinner with **Clare** and Rosemary **de Walley** (1955–58) in Grimston, near King's Lynn, stayed with 'Larky' (**Joy Larcombe**, 1954–57) and Don in County Cork (it was Larky who suggested I write this piece), and met up after many moons with Doreen (Maitre) now Miller, in Dorset while buying a rowboat. For a while, we saw Mike Upcott through René, and **Sue Everitt** (1955–58) still turns up annually when she arrives from Cambridge at her Norfolk home with large numbers of progeny.

Childhood holidays in North Norfolk may help explain a lifelong impulse to explore links between people, art and landscape, and journalism led to my first book about Norfolk, *Fisherman* (David & Charles, 1977). My second and third, however, came out of Wye. *The Story of Lavender* (1982, 1989) is still selling! The biography of *Gertrude Jekyll* (1991) sold here and in the US before I moved into fine art with a biography of *Barbara Hepworth: A Life of Forms* (Viking/Penguin,1995).

Like North Norfolk and my love for plants, poetry goes back to childhood, and after six books, it developed despite, rather than because of, Wye. A sixth poem collection appearing in 2021 suggests a fair

dedication. One early poem, published in a Methuen Anthology for children, was called 'Sunflowers'; the contributor's notes contain the phrase 'Harriet … says her mother is very keen on gardens and gardening.'

Alice, our artist, died from breast cancer in 2002 and both living children went into environment-related work. Harriet once said it was because we insisted on growing a patch of nettles in a corner of the garden for butterflies. Harriet went to Wye where she met her first husband, Sivalingam Vasanthakumat, known as Kumar, when he was taking an MA. The couple lived in Wye long after leaving, so our association with the College had a second flowering. My granddaughters went to school in Wye, so we were back and forth over the years. Harriet even edited the Agricola Club Journal.

While continuing her work as an environmentalist, most recently as the Founder and CEO of the non-profit Anthropocene Alliance, Harriet moved with her second, art-history professor husband, to an Eco house they built in central Florida. Her last email to me ran: 'Now we know what the rainy season is really like in Florida. The spider lilies have embraced it, the grasses look grateful, the mosquitoes are everywhere! We have Tufted Titmice at the feeder and a Nuthatch on our snag. Two egrets visited the pond yesterday, but I scared them away by pulling the curtains.'

*Thank you, Wye.*

*A Wye women's lacrosse team of the 1950s: can anyone help with names and a specific date?*

*A Wye men's hockey team of the 1950s: names and dates please?*

*The Poultry Boys and Girls: graduates on the Eric Maddison poultry MSc – but who and when?*

# From Wye to the NT via the CLA … and back

**Dorothy Fairburn MBE (1970–73) retired from her role as CLA's Director North this spring. In an interview for *The Farmers Guardian*, published on16 April 2021, she spoke about her life and career in the countryside, her Nuffield scholarship on suicide in the farming community and her plans for retirement. This is her story.**

**Ed – This article was sent to me by Alan Rogers. He in turn received it from **David Caffall** (1970–73) who was forwarded it by **Richard Angood** (1970–73) – apparently formerly known as 'NoGood' before he married Margaret (née German 1971–74) and became a respectable Fen farmer.*

After 40 years working in the rural economy, Dorothy Fairburn has decided to retire from her role as CLA's director of the north. Her love of the countryside and British agriculture in particular has been unwavering since her childhood, spent on her family farm near Helmsley, on the North York Moors. It was a mixed farm tenanted from a local estate and, growing up alongside two brothers and two sisters, Dorothy says there was never any shortage of willing helpers on-farm.

Later, her eldest brother took on the family holding, while her other brother took another tenancy on the estate.

Meanwhile, Dorothy went on to Wye College to study for a degree in agriculture – an obvious choice for her. She says:

> *At that stage, back in the 1970s, there weren't a lot of women in agriculture and there was only one other woman on my course.*
>
> *Agriculture still had the image of requiring a lot of muscle. It was unlikely anyone would have employed a female farm manager then. The change in the number of women at the top of farming businesses in my lifetime has been tremendous.*

After graduating from Wye, Dorothy worked as an agricultural economist for the CLA in its London head office for a short while.

> *But I wanted to come back to Yorkshire,'* she says. *So I decided the combination of my degree and what I had learned at the CLA meant becoming a land agent was an obvious next step.'*

She secured a job with Savills and worked towards her land agent qualifications.

> *It was quite hard work doing my qualifications by correspondence course, but a really good introduction and I dealt with a lot of excellent farmers in East Yorkshire, so I learned a lot.*

Her next step was a role for the National Trust, looking after some 12,140 hectares (30,000 acres) of land and its tenant farms, mainly in the Dales and the North York Moors. Dorothy said it was brilliant.

> *The National Trust's work overall saw some great improvements to the landscape and nature conservation, and I had to balance this with viable farming businesses. These are living landscapes, not museums.*

*After 40 years working in the rural economy, Dorothy is planning to catch-up with friends and family, pay more attention to her vegetable plot, and do more walking and sailing. She is also looking forward to some extended trips abroad.*

> *I had the joy of working with many different experts. For example, I would find myself out on a hillside with someone who knew everything about butterflies. It was a great learning experience. I love working with people who are experts and very enthusiastic.*

## Agriculture still had the image of requiring a lot of muscle. It was unlikely anyone would have employed a female farm manager then

One particular highlight was working with Graham Watson, who generously gifted his 2,023ha (5,000-acre) estate in Upper Wharfedale to the National Trust. She also particularly enjoyed finding tenants for National Trust holdings It was a real challenge to find the right tenant with the right approach and, according to Dorothy, 'when it works well, it is really satisfying'.

During this time, Dorothy also completed a Nuffield scholarship about suicide in the farming community.

> *Stress and suicide have almost become mainstream topics now, but back then Nuffield was taking a big step. People weren't talking about it. I didn't have any special knowledge about it. I was just curious.*

Her studies took her to New Zealand and France. She says:

> *The thing which had changed most in my life was the public view of farmers. When I grew up, farmers were respected members of society. In the 1980s and 1990s, they were criticised for taking out hedges and using chemicals. In France that wasn't the case; they still loved their farmers.*

Dorothy spent about 16 years with the National Trust before a reorganisation prompted her to look at opportunities elsewhere.

*A job with the CLA in Yorkshire came up where I would be my own boss. It was the right job at the right time for me. Some people might be surprised that I worked for the CLA when I came from a tenant farmer background. When the landlord–tenant system works well, it is excellent, with the landlord benefitting from long-term capital growth and the tenant able to make best use of his working capital. There needs to be respect and balance on both sides.*

The new role was much more political, said Dorothy. Her remit included advising members, working with people from other organisations and lobbying on behalf of landowners.

*Getting farmers' and landowners' perspectives across was all about building relationships with other stakeholders. I think the challenge was that there is a limitless amount of time you can spend on promoting landowners' views, but you have to recognise that you can only do what you can do.*

*It was very comfortable having my own patch where I knew lots of people, but then in 2012 the CLA had a reorganisation, and I became director for the whole of the north of England.*

Taking on Lancashire, Cumbria and the North East of England, in addition to Yorkshire, meant recruiting a team to fulfil the role across the region. She reflects:

*Throughout my career, it has been the people who have made it so enjoyable. There were members who volunteered for branch committees, they put in a lot of time on behalf of the CLA. There were those you got to know really well and worked closely with and some of the stakeholders I worked with too.*

Another joy of her CLA role was the continuous change and challenge, says Dorothy, who was awarded the MBE for services to rural affairs in 2011. She pinpoints the foot-and-mouth disease crisis as particularly memorable.

*It was the most awful time, but all the farming organisations worked really well together to create a united effort and we really made a difference to people's lives.*

## Stress and suicide have almost become mainstream topics now, but back then Nuffield was taking a big step. People weren't talking about it

More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has posed a new set of challenges.

While not being able to meet with people in person has been hard, Dorothy and her CLA colleagues have managed to find a new way of working from home, and she has appreciated certain aspects, like not having to travel for meetings as much and learning to use Zoom for video calls.

At the time of writing, the CLA was in the process of recruiting Dorothy's successor for the Director North role. She anticipates that the person who takes on the role will have a challenging time with Brexit, the changes in the Basic Payment Scheme and introduction of the Environmental Land Management scheme.

But she says that she is rather envious.

> *It is such an interesting time for agricultural politics. I think the industry is going to face some hard times, but there are also really exciting opportunities for people.*
>
> *We have got to go into this with a positive mindset and look for how to adapt and change farming systems to make the most of it.*

As she approaches retirement, Dorothy hopes to be able to catch up with friends and family, particularly a new grand-niece whom she is yet to meet. She plans to make the most of her vegetable plot at home, sailing with friends and walking on the North York Moors and beyond. In the longer term, she hopes it will be possible to travel and visit friends in Europe and Australia without the constraints of holiday entitlements.

Despite the adventures ahead, Dorothy believes she will maintain her interest in the industry she has enjoyed working in so much for the past 40 years. 'I will most certainly continue to follow agricultural policy,' she says.

And whilst she will not miss the paperwork and emails which have become an all too familiar part of her role, she will definitely miss her colleagues.

> *I have thoroughly enjoyed more than 20 years working at this tremendous organisation and take great pride in the passionate commitment of staff, who, despite all the current challenges, are continuously working to represent and champion our members' interests in rural areas, both locally as well as with Westminster politicians.*
>
> *I will certainly miss so many valued colleagues and members.*

*Seagulls following a tractor in fields near Wye: a familiar sight for generations.*

# A life in four Acts

**After Chris Mathias left Wye in 1968, he inherited a family farm, but this didn't lead to a settled existence in the UK. Instead, he spent the next 50 years on the move.**

I left Wye in 1968 with a BSc in Agriculture and a Postgraduate Diploma in Farm Business Administration (Dip FBA). However, I still remember, after all these years, walking away from the College as a helicopter flew low over the village with the Queen Mother on board, en route to the end-of-year festivities at Withersdane. Unfortunately, just before I took my Dip FBA exams, my grandfather died and very unexpectedly left his 110-ha farm to me. I therefore fully expected to spend my life farming – but it was not to be my sole occupation.

Before settling down to work, five of us spent about two months in the Atlas Mountains and surrounding area in Morocco. The team consisted of fellow students, namely **Rosemary Atkins** (née **Hinge**, 1964–68), **Judith Oakes** (née **Agate**, 1967–70), **Peter Goodchild** (1965–68), **Quentin Farmar Bowers** (1965–68) and myself.

We have kept in touch ever since, as I have also done with fellow undergraduates such as David Morris, Ron McLaren, Clive Landshoff, **Caroline Cook** (née **Edwards**) and fellow postgraduates Alan Wilkinson and **John Beath**

*A welcome spring sight – a field of oilseed rape with church spire in the distance near Chris's home.*

(1966–68), with whom I shared an office. I never achieved the heights obtained by some of my illustrious contemporaries but suspect I have had a more interesting time than some. Lots of detail has had to be omitted, but hopefully the following will give a flavour.

## Professional time

Upon return, I started to work on the farm but, after a relatively short period, I went down for about a week every month with what seemed like severe flu. I was told by the doctor that I had a fairly slow-working thyroid and, as she did not want to put me on thyroid pills, I should seriously think about not undertaking physical work. It must have been pre-ordained because about three weeks later, Lugg and Gould in Warwick advertised for agricultural management consultants; so, I applied and, thanks to a reference from the late John Nix, got a job, initially in their farm planning section. However, after a few months I was called in by my director who said that I would be going down to advise farmers in the South East and that was the real start of my professional career.

**I still remember walking away from the College as a helicopter flew low over the village with the Queen Mother on board, en route to the end-of-year festivities at Withersdane**

My patch was East Sussex and Kent and, on the whole, the standard of farming was way above the national average, particularly in

*Cows grazing in the Warwickshire fields.*

Thanet. The other challenge I had was the sheer range of enterprises on my client's farms, ranging from beef and dairy, through to arable and intensive vegetables, to top and soft fruit and hops. I was saved by the fact that I was able to refer clients to ADAS's free technical service if there was anything I did not know. I, therefore, concentrated on providing business advice. After about three years of this, I came to the conclusion that I could not see myself doing it for the rest of my life and, just at that time, was recalled back to headquarters to run the farm planning section. For various reasons, I kept some south-eastern clients and had a very few Midlands-based clients.

After a short while, the company brought in a new director to develop our 'beyond the farmgate' activities, which appealed to me, so I applied to join his team and, much to my surprise, was accepted. This was the start of several years of dealing with senior management in well-known agricultural companies, cooperatives, marketing boards, Food from Britain and supermarkets. My new director covered the marketing side of things (and I learned a lot from him) while I covered the financial aspects. Over time, the division grew in size and, when my director retired, there was a bit of an internal competition for my services, so I ended up doing a variety of things like benefit–cost analyses for flood alleviation schemes on major rivers such as the Severn and Thames.

Nothing stays the same. Suddenly, a new director was appointed. By this time, it was getting harder and harder to win 'beyond the farm gate' work because senior management in the industry was either getting better qualified, or more experienced.

So, my new boss and I sat down to discuss where 'we go from here'. His main interest was in the environment, and as I had just won our first contract with MAFF on a policy evaluation job, it was decided to split the division into two; one part covering the environment and the other policy.

Thus began an 18-year spell for me as leader of a small team bidding for and winning nearly 30 policy evaluations from MAFF and the Department of the Environment (DoE). As far as MAFF was concerned, the projects fell into three categories:

(i) Is policy 'x' working?

(ii) What would happen if policy 'y' was introduced?

(iii) Can the objectives of policy 'z' be achieved at less cost to the nation?

**The standard of farming was way above the national average, particularly in Thanet**

The latter was the most common type of project and usually involved a very large-scale survey, followed by analysis of results and the drawing of conclusions, Over the years, we must have saved the nation many millions in costs. Work for the DoE covered everything from nitrate pollution and water quality to pesticide usage. We were extremely lucky to keep winning this work, and with it I was able to keep the team members very highly occupied. In fact, many of our recommendations are still in operation today.

I never actually met a minister face-to-face in the UK but heard all about them from their Permanent Secretaries. Our DoE and flood alleviation benefit–cost work led to me being employed as advisor to the Rural Land Use Group (RLUG) of the Environment Agency.

I really enjoyed this role; the basic contract was for 30 days a year, there was no set work programme, but I would get a phone call and be expected to turn up to provide advice on all sorts of issues. I was most impressed with the members of the RLUG because, although they were all engineers, each one knew an awful lot about their particular agricultural/environmental subject.

At this time, we shared an office with our overseas company ULG Consultants Ltd (ULG). Out of the blue one day, a member approached me about an EU contract they were bidding for which involved raising an identification mission to visit the Former Soviet Union (FSU). The latter had recently collapsed, and the mission could use my CV. My initial reaction was 'no' because I had hardly any overseas experience (although I had been project economist on one or two jobs, just to help them out of a hole). Eventually, he came back to me and 'pleaded' to use my CV. My response then was, 'OK, if you want to lose the job!'

Much to my surprise I was up near Aberdeen a few weeks later, presenting our bid for a job up there, when a phone call came in saying that I had been selected. This was the very beginning of the next significant stage of my career.

So, two technical people and two Russian-speaking diplomats went out for about three weeks and during that time covered all the FSU countries, either by visiting them ourselves or meeting delegations. I must admit that the rural economy and food supply/storage/processing/retailing industries were in a total mess. Upon our return, we wrote up a report to indicate where we thought the EU could provide technical assistance to help the rural economy. And we submitted it to the client.

Naively, perhaps, I thought that was that. But on the following Monday morning, my phone went asking if I could go out to Brussels. It was the beginning of a 10-month stint to help the EU establish a Technical Assistance unit to the Commonwealth of Independent

*Chris and Ernest, his interpreter, interviewing a farmer in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan as part of poverty alleviation project design.*

States (TACIS). At that stage, it was a bit like dealing with the wild west in the FSU because key personnel, or potential beneficiary organisations, kept disappearing. In fact, towards the end I was offered a longish-term contract but for various reasons declined it.

However, my experience of working with the UK Government and the EU was beginning to be recognised, and I started being included as a short-term 'expert' in various teams by our overseas sister company, while at the same time working for MAFF, the DoE and the Environment Agency. As you can imagine, life got a bit hectic. On one of these inputs in Kyrgyzstan, the Department for International Development (DFID) came through looking for projects. As a result, I ended up as leader of a small team introducing a pilot market information system. The collection and analysis of data was less of a problem compared with the lack of an effective national communication system. So, when approached to join the overseas company I thought, why not? The new company entered me into a competition held by the British Consultants Bureau, and I was fortunate enough to win the Consultant of the Year Award for this work.

About six months after joining, I became Director East with responsibility for the company's work in the FSU and Eastern Europe. The overseas market is very different from the UK, and it took me some time to adjust. Thus, started about 10 years of bidding to win and manage consultancy projects in these countries. I thought we were too reliant on winning work in one Central Asian country in particular so set about moving the emphasis of our focus westwards and ended up in Bulgaria and Romania.

When I joined ULG, it was a subsidiary of Northumbrian Water, but eventually the latter decided to divest itself of all non-water and sewage interests. We were one of the last companies to be sold, but I decided after a short time to resign from the new owner. I had already been working part-time for the World Bank on their supervision missions, so continued with them, again in Central Asia. Unlike consultancy, senior minsters and government officials did tend to listen to you more intently because you represented authority and money. So, for a total of 14 years, I worked on projects ranging from the provision of rural advisory services, marketing, credit schemes, etc.

**It was a bit like dealing with the wild west because key personnel, or potential beneficiary organisations, kept disappearing**

In all cases, one provided senior civil servants with detailed work programmes for the next six months, reviewed their performance and repeated the exercise, At the end of each input, the team wrote an *aide memoire* which explained to government ministers what progress had been made and what improvements were required. A further objective was to demonstrate to governments that there are other ways of doing things. Then, in 2014, I came to what I thought was the end of my last mission, only later to receive an email asking me to go out to Tashkent, in Uzbekistan. When I got there and asked why, I was told that they had an education and training component in a project for which nothing had happened for about two years.

I explained that I had no experience in either to which they just said, 'We know as we have your CV.' I was then asked to review the situation and do whatever I thought was best. To cut a long story short, I dropped the education component as there was not enough money and we introduced a training programme that was in direct competition with the Government's own scheme. A training and contracting system had to be devised, and we started with three subjects. At the end, there were about 12 subjects in the training programme, at three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced.

When the money ran out, very nearly 70,000 people had attended the training sessions, so you felt that some good had been achieved. When this had finished, the Global Environment Fund wanted to put in money to develop the use of sustainable energy and, much to my surprise, I was asked to take part. I hasten to add, not on the technical side but to provide training in investment by individual business. We then designed a project and kicked off but, because no actual sources of renewable energy came into being, the training component concentrated on the principles of investment decisions and the types of sustainable energy that would become available. About 5,000 people attended these training courses after which I was told that my services were no longer required. So, three years ago, I decided to hang up my boots.

## Working environment

As you would expect the working environment in the UK was fairly straightforward, whereas in the FSU it was initially a bit like the wild west because, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, former republics had to learn from scratch about how to run an economy and what facilities were required. I had many experiences, both good and bad.

One example of the latter was when I was on the UK side I ended up as team leader on an EU food aid assessment mission to Central Asia, in which we visited each country and

*Chris's travels took him to many places, even as far as Tashkent, in Uzbekistan*

held meetings with their ministers. One day we were due to fly down to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, in a small Yak 40 aircraft. It was heavily overloaded with both people and luggage (there was no normal check-in procedure in those days), and the pilot refused to take off until some people left the plane. Eventually, he fought his way over the luggage, down the gangway, muttering to himself. We took off and you could feel him fighting to keep he plane in the sky. About halfway through the flight, the EU representative, who spoke fluent Russian, informed me that one of the people who was standing at the back had pulled a gun on the pilot and said 'Go'. When we arrived in Dushanbe, I got off the plane straight into a media posse and had to give a press conference. Needless to say, I was not in the mood.

Initially, you could not transfer money electronically, and I was asked to carry out about $40,000 to Kyrgyzstan, via Almaty (you could not fly direct to Bishkek in those days). I was advised by our accountant to always declare currency, otherwise you could end up in prison if they found it. So, I declared it, but the Kazakh customs officer then insisted that he count it all out.

We got his boss, and it was agreed he would count the sealed packs, which he did. After that, I put them in my suitcase and locked it. However, on turning round all I could see was this mass of faces pressed up against the plate glass windows watching. I got through to the waiting hall, but there was no driver.

You could imagine the local's reaction because the money probably represented a lifetime's income. So, they encircled me, and I went and stood under the strongest light I could find. They kept circling but over time departed one by one until there was one person remaining who got more and more menacing. Finally, my driver arrived, and I have never experienced such a feeling of relief in my life. On another occasion, I was asked to prepare a policy matrix for a country, before the rest of the World Bank team arrived. Because agriculture represented such an important part of the economy, I set aside the whole day to interview the Minister of Agriculture. However, I was out in less than 10 minutes because the minister did not know what a policy was!

**One of the people who was standing at the back had pulled a gun on the pilot and said 'Go'**

But it was not all bad. On another occasion, we were preparing a project in Kyrgyzstan, for DFID, on how to improve rural livelihoods and family income in selected areas. Unusually, I was a short-term project economist. We spent a month up in remote villages in the mountains interviewing residents and sleeping on their floors. This experience gave us a very good insight into the problems they were facing, but the thing I remember most is the friendliness of all the Kyrgyz we met and the fact that they had to put up with so much, usually with a smile on their face. Interviewing people who lived in abject poverty was also a humbling experience.

## Personal time

After I decided to go for a job, the trustees let my grandfather's farm, but it deteriorated rapidly and, in the end, the tenants left. By his time, I was married with one child and another on the way. We decided that it was probably best if we moved in ourselves. I

remember walking around thinking 'What do I do with the place?' because there was no way the farm could make enough money to both bring up a family and improve itself. I did not want to sell it because it was in a nice place, had a lot of potential and anyone with money could make something of it if they invested. On the other hand, if Lynn (my wife) could not stick the house, because it was in a really bad condition, I would have no real option but to sell.

In the end she stuck it and I kept on with my job to make ends meet. We tried for two years to farm it, using contractors, but they never really turned up at the right time (the situation is much different today). So that we did not have to spend most nights on the telephone getting people to come, we decided to form a partnership with the individual whom we thought was the best contractor. He preferred to rent the land, but we said no because we wanted to be involved with the management of the farm. This, plus the fact that we had recently acquired a very senior bank manager, and the fact that Lynn had had a farm secretarial business before we married, and my FBA experience meant that, over a long time, we managed to bring the place up to scratch. Because there were always more important investments to be made, once the house was liveable in, it took second place – so, it has taken 40 years to bring it up to a comfortable standard. Unfortunately, in view of its age (built in 1670) it is now listed.

## Summary

In summary, my time after Wye can be divided into four main phases: farm management, 'beyond the farm gate', policy evaluation and international development. I like to think my activities have impacted upon a lot of people's lives both in the UK and overseas. On a personal front, we now have two married sons and five grandchildren.

*Chris and his wife Lynn in Harrods Coffee shop: picture by Alan Wilkinson*

# Reflections on a career in applied research

**Stephen Moss (1969-1972) sums it all up as a 'fortunate life' but is highly critical of the current scenario of 'too much knowledge, not enough application'.**

It is often said that everyone remembers the registration number of their first vehicle (AKO 29B, 90cc Honda motorcycle) but, now that I am at 'the other end of my personal timeline', to put it in modern crap-speak, other events seem more pertinent. Namely, when one is first asked 'Would that be a senior ticket, sir?' (Stockholm Harbour ferry, 27 June 2009, age 58!) and the first time someone offers you their seat on the London Underground (returning from People's Vote rally, 9 December 2018, aged 68). I suspect similar occasions are etched in the grey matter of many members 'of a certain age' (*Good heavens! If I don't get a move on and publish this journal early, he will be 70 before the article appears – Editor!*).

I thought I really ought to get round to writing a long-planned, and long put-off, contribution. But what to write? Having just turned 70 (*I'm too late! – Ed.*), I thought a few 'reflections' might be appropriate.

*Stephen Moss (1969–72) on the David Brown 950 tractor he drove on his practical year prior to starting at Wye. Photo taken in 2016 on a re-visit to the farm.*

## The practical year

Not coming from an agricultural background – both my parents were teachers – I was required to spend a year gaining practical farming experience prior to starting at Wye. I did this on a 450-acre (pre-ha days) mixed farm near Weston-Super-Mare with a 100-cow milking herd, beef enterprises, a sheep flock and some arable, mainly cereals. This was undoubtedly the hardest year's physical work I have ever done. Up at 6am to help milk the cows and working 12 hours as a minimum, and up to 10pm in summer. And all for £4 a week!

**Would that be a senior ticket, sir?' (Stockholm Harbour ferry, 27 June 2009, age 58!)**

The plus side was that it was very good experience, as my farm notebook testifies. I note it was graded A in every assessment category, and I hope the Wye Heritage Centre might be interested in having it. Even if I say so myself, it is a remarkably detailed record of life on a mixed farm in the late 1960s, complete with maps, diagrams, photos, daily diary etc. All hand-written, of course. (*Yes please! – Ed*).

## Life at Wye

The Agriculture Hons degree course at Wye was comprehensive, although the individual course units were rather variable in their demands on students' time. It was a good base on which to build a research career and certain things have stayed with me ever since. For example, whenever anyone talks about the 'Law of Diminishing Returns' I have a Pavlovian reaction, instilled by Prof Wibberley, to say 'You mean the Law of Diminishing MARGINAL Returns?', as he used to write on the blackboard. I have many happy memories of my time at Wye.

## My career in research

After Wye, I spent two years as a nematologist at Rothamsted, studying control of potato-cyst nematode by the recently commercialised nematicides aldicarb ('Temik') and oxamyl ('Vydate'). Conducting numerous field trials across East Anglia and Lancashire was good experience, but I found nematodes rather boring, to be honest.

Weeds sounded much more interesting, so I moved to the Weed Research Organisation (WRO) near Oxford in 1975 to study the response of black-grass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*) to changes in tillage systems. The power of the internet means I can still find the original job advert in *New Scientist*, dated 22 August 1974. Rather to my surprise, I note that the research was meant to include volunteer cereals and *Poa* spp. That never happened – clearly, I need another lifetime for that research.

Following the announcement of the closure of WRO, I got married, moved house and transferred to Long Ashton Research Station (LARS) – 1985 was an eventful year! Having academic status within the University of Bristol while at LARS meant that I had the opportunity to gain a PhD on the basis of my published research on black-grass. I always imagine that those who have slaved away for three years to produce a traditional thesis think this a rather 'sneaky' way of obtaining a PhD (*I **certainly** do! **And** he was being paid! – Ed*).

In 1990, I was 'required', along with three colleagues, to move back to Rothamsted for reasons that remain unclear to this day. In retrospect, the timing of this move was perfect, as house prices in Harpenden were 'relatively' depressed (never happened since) and our two

children had yet to start school. So, I ended up in an office at Rothamsted close to the one I vacated in 1975. I had come full circle.

**It has been said that 'knowledge without application is wasted', and I fully agree with that sentiment**

I never would have imagined that I'd be conducting research on black-grass for over 45 years, producing 251 journal publications, book chapters, conference papers and technical reports and contributing to over 350 articles in the popular farming press along the way. It wasn't that I ignored other weeds, but black-grass was the major problem so that is where research money was focused. And getting research money became key to survival, as many other scientists know only too well.

## Reflections on the current status of applied agricultural research in the UK

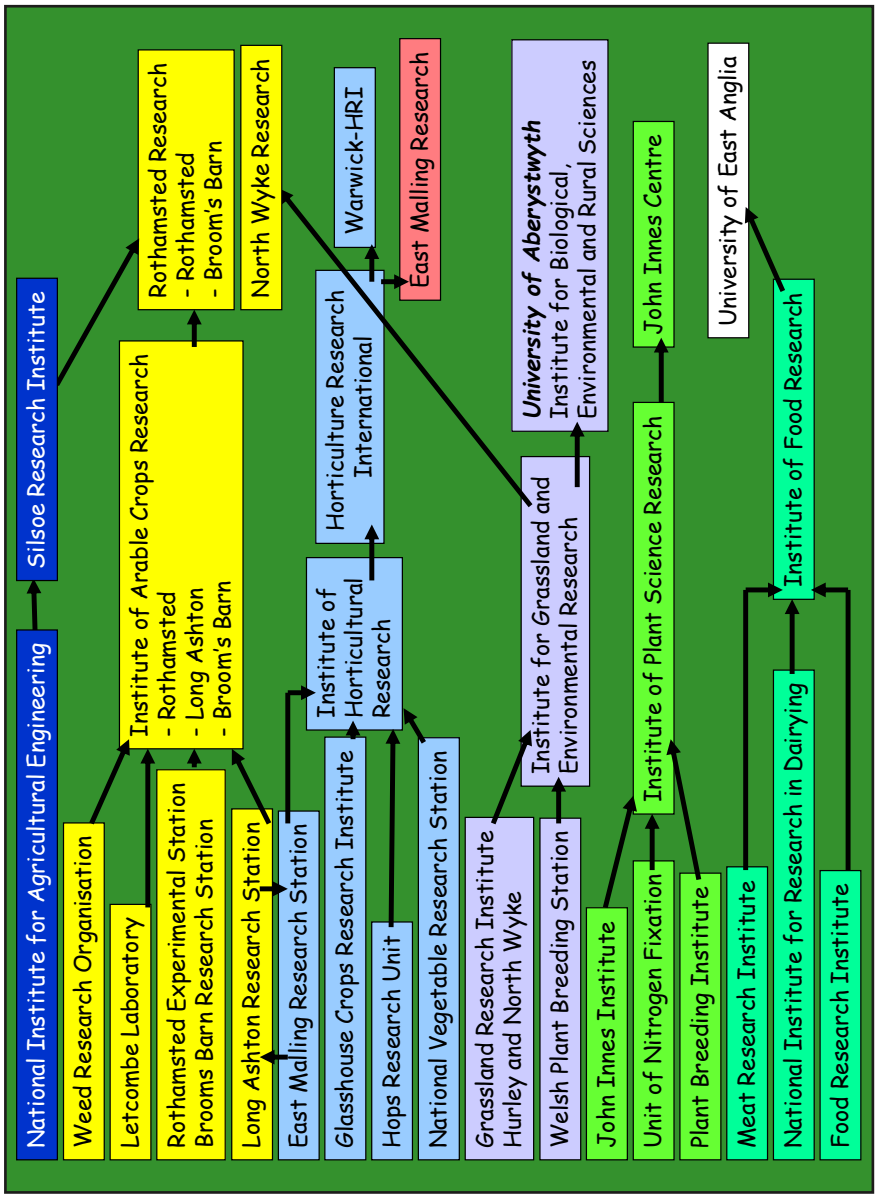
I accept that what I have set out above is a very negative appraisal, but there is now, unquestionably, far less applied research in the UK than there was in the past. Of course, there is still some excellent applied research going on – just not enough of it. The diagram highlights the catastrophic loss of agricultural research establishments in England since the late 1970s. In addition, there were 22 ADAS Experimental Husbandry Farms (EHFs) and units in 1988; now all gone. I don't think many younger people in the agricultural industry realise how much applied research capacity we have lost since the late 1970s, especially that which could be termed 'independent' or 'non-commercial'.

A particular issue has been the growing imbalance in resources allocated to basic compared with applied research. Basic research is important, of course, and we have a good track record in the UK – in a *Nature* article published 10 years ago (Vol 480, 22/29 Dec 2011, page 428), the UK was ranked third in the world (after USA and China) for the number of scientific research papers published.

It has been said that 'knowledge without application is wasted', and I fully agree with that sentiment in reference to an applied subject like agriculture. 'Too much knowledge, not enough application', is a concise summary of the problem.

Applied agricultural research has seen a disproportionate decline in support, as highlighted by the Taylor Review in 2010 (*Science for a New Age of Agriculture*), which stated: 'However, there is now widespread agreement that the focus of research funding and the accompanying mechanisms of reward and career opportunity have tilted the balance of agricultural science towards basic research and away from applied. This can severely compromise the translation of research into commercial practice.' Our club President, Professor David Leaver, came to similar conclusions in his 2010 Report for RASE *Practice with Science and Agriculture: The Need to Re-invigorate this Partnership*. I have literally dozens of examples of similar views.

Has the situation improved, 19 years later? Sadly not, in my view. Over £100 million has been spent on four Agri-Tech Centres, but I am yet to be convinced that they will deliver as much at the practical level as might reasonably have been expected. One farmer summarised the outputs from one of their showcase meeting as 'impressive rather than useful'.




*The decline in number of agricultural research institutions in England during a 30-year period from 1978 to 2008. Compiled by Professor Ian Crute, former Director of Rothamsted Research.*

Perhaps a shift in how researchers are evaluated would advance applied agricultural research as much as anything. Initiatives to improve how the outputs of scientific research are evaluated, such as DORA, the 2012 San Francisco *Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA website https://sfdora.org) must be applauded. This aims to reduce the emphasis on journal impact factors by encouraging the use of a broader range of metrics for assessing the quality of research. Despite an impressive range of signatories, including BBSRC, MRC and many leading universities, there is little evidence of success so far. Personally, I think the situation has actually got worse since 2012, not better.

**I may be addicted to black-grass, with no hope of remission, but it has been a good weed to me**

So, what's to be done? It seems highly unlikely that funding agencies and universities will willingly allocate a greater proportion of resources to applied agricultural research. The Government could force them to do so, but there are so many vested interests that this is unlikely. AHDB have funded some good applied research over the years, but their resources are limited and in no way can compensate for the research capacity we have lost. More on-farm experimentation would help, and some farmers and organisations are actively involved in promoting this self-help concept. At present this approach is rather 'piecemeal', and better coordination is needed if it is going to benefit the industry as a whole. The Defra Policy paper (Sept 2018) 'Health and Harmony: The Future for Food, Farming and the Environment in a Green Brexit – Policy Statement' makes the right noises, pledging financial support for, 'industry-led research syndicates, with groups of farmers coming together to deliver practical solutions and commission research projects with academia that improve the translation of R&D onto farms'. Quite what this all means in practice, we will have to wait and see, but it will require good coordination and AHDB are well placed to act in this role. So, a glimmer of hope here.

## Postscript about a 'good weed'

I left Rothamsted in 2016 and now operate independently as Stephen Moss Consulting – still largely working on black-grass. I may be addicted to black-grass, with no hope of remission, but it has been a good weed to me, supporting the old saying, 'one man's meat is another man's poison'. But I do have other interests. I have an 'award-winning' allotment and this morning sent off a vitriolic email arguing strongly against the proposal of making the local sites 'Organic'. I also go out walking, often with other Rothamsted retirees, including **Peter Lutman** (Wye 1965–68), a weed colleague for over 40 years.

At a personal level, I am extremely grateful that my research career started when it did. I was a member of both the largest plant nematology group and the largest weed research institution in the world, sadly both long gone. My research interests allowed me to visit numerous countries including Australia, New Zealand, North America, Israel and Iran, as well as most in Europe. I survived decades of repeated cuts in funding and closure of facilities and enjoyed an uninterrupted research career of over 40 years. I even ended up with a good index-linked pension. I am very fortunate.

# '… And they're off!'

**A field full of runners and riders who took the equine route after leaving Wye. In this special 'Life After Wye' feature, William Derby (1989–92),** Sally Iggulden **(1994–97),** Lucy McFarlane **(1973–76), Richard Phipps** (1964–67), Mike Perkins **(1967–68) and Keith Ottesen (1988–91) tell their own stories, while editor John Walters recounts Bob Davies' (1964–67) journey.**

## After Wye: what I did with my life around horse racing

**William Derby (1989–92)**

Horse racing has played a big part in William Derby's life before, during and after his highly enjoyable time at Wye (Agricultural Economics 1989–92). While at College, he supplemented his grant income by riding out for local jumps trainer Tom Kemp who trained in nearby village Mersham, before the construction of the M20 and compulsory purchase bulldozed the yard!

*William in the York Parade Ring*

After graduating, William moved to Cambridge to join PwC's (then Coopers & Lybrand) Racing and Bloodstock Unit servicing the many studs and stables in Newmarket and the surrounding area. Following qualifying as a chartered accountant and several years on assignments for PwC, William joined Ascot Racecourse, initially as Head of Accounts and then latterly as Commercial Director. His time at Ascot coincided with the modernisation of the track and preparation of the royal racecourse ahead of its £200m redevelopment of the grandstands. During this time, William undertook a year-long executive education programme at Harvard Business School in Boston as well as travelling extensively to overseas racing jurisdictions. Then, in 2003, he was appointed Chief Executive and Clerk of the Course at York Racecourse where he has remained ever since.

York Racecourse is within a mile of the city centre and in normal times welcomes over 350,000 racegoers for its 18-day race season. York's flagship Ebor Festival in August attracts some of the best horses in

the world to the Knavesmire. Indeed, flat-racing's best horses such as Sea The Stars, Frankel and Stradivarius have all won at the track, and York's best race, the Juddmonte International, was ranked the best race in the world in 2015.

**William currently lives with his wife and two daughters (and, of course, a retired racehorse!)**

During William's time at York, the racecourse has invested over £50m in new grandstands and facilities and, in 2009, undertook one of the biggest and most comprehensive drainage and irrigation schemes ever undertaken on a British racecourse. In 2005, he helped stage 'Royal Ascot at York' – the only time the Royal Meeting has left Berkshire – and a year later, York staged the St Leger.

York has been voted UK Racecourse of the Year in the past four successive seasons by the Racegoers Club and is the reigning Racecourse of the Year from the Racehorse Owners Association (the first time 'the belts have been united'!).

In addition to racing, York normally hosts up to 700 non-racing events, from conferences to weddings and exhibitions. In 2014, the racecourse staged the start of the Grand Depart of the Tour de France in front of 30,000 cycling fans. In 2019, a different set of 30,000, more elderly, fans attended a Rod Stewart concert at the track! The Racecourse also operates a budget hotel, 180 stables and occupies 200 acres of public land. In addition, it cultivates all its own flowers and plants from its in-house nursery. William's role has involved being a director of the company that commercialises and sells racing's media rights – with digital, terrestrial and international broadcast deals of the pictures we see on our television screens.

William currently lives with his wife and two daughters (and, of course, a retired racehorse!) in a refurbished farmhouse on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park.

Reflecting on his time at Wye and afterwards, William says: 'Wye is in my DNA and I could not do my role today without the grounding and education I got during those wonderful three years in Kent. I loved my time there and have many lifelong friends, from my time at college and Sally, Keith and Bob who regularly catch up on college news at racecourse conferences! I am in the fortunate position of doing a job I thoroughly enjoy and that challenges me every day; plus, at the centre of our business is the thoroughbred – an animal that has been a lifelong obsession!'

## From Wye to Beverley

### Sally Iggulden (ABM, 1994–97)

It was whilst studying Agricultural Business Management at Wye that my love of horseracing – that would eventually become my career – was truly secured. The locals still held strong memories of the old track at Wye where parts of the stand were still visible. Occasionally, economics seminars were swapped for trips to Kempton Park Racecourse, a slightly more sober experience than the infamous champagne breakfast at the now defunct Folkestone Racecourse. The then Head Groundsman of Folkestone, Chris Stickells, is now the Clerk of the Course at Ascot and is yet to get over that early morning visit by Wye students!

*Sally is now Chief Exec at Beverley Racecourse*

On completion of my degree, I initially joined Ascot Racecourse before enjoying a spell at The Sporting Life. A happy two years followed at the Racecourse Association, based at Ascot, before I headed up north to take over as Chief Executive and Clerk of the Course at Beverley Racecourse, becoming the first female to infiltrate seniority at a Yorkshire Racecourse! How times have changed!

I have incredibly fond memories of my time at Wye, and on joining Beverley, was delighted that the retiring Chief Executive John Cleverly had a well-thumbed Nix Pocket Book in his ancient desk drawer!

I have now served 20 years at Beverley, overseeing many changes along the way. I became one of the founders and original Board Members of Racing TV, which today is one of the major forces in sporting media rights distribution. Beverley Racecourse is a strong, independent racecourse that leads the way amongst smaller tracks and feedback suggests that our motto of 'Time Well Spent' is suitably accurate. Yorkshire resilience has been needed in 2020 with racing taking place behind closed doors for the entire season, and we look to the future with hope for a strong recovery, at which stage the doors are always open to Agricola Club members!


*The Grandstand at Wye Racecourse – the racecourse opened in 1849 and closed in June 1975.*

## Still riding after all these years ...

### Lucy McFarlane (1973–76)

In my first year at Wye, reading Rural Environment Studies, a group of us used to rise very early to ride out for a local racehorse trainer. I am sure none of us would have made the same effort to attend early lectures, which might explain our unspectacular academic achievements.

Gaining equestrian contacts in the area led on to hunting horses for local owners to qualify for point-to-pointing and exercising horses to be used for battle re-enactments.

**I made my debut without ever jumping a chase fence as the horse refused to practise!**

After graduation, I did work in a few race-yards in an effort to eliminate the racing obsession, but I never really succeeded. My participation in racing has remained on a strictly amateur basis ever since.

Whilst developing a small farming enterprise, I finally had the opportunity to fulfil my ambition to race ride. Access to gallops was limited in those days, so training was restricted to cantering along roadside verges or between rows of orchard trees in the Vale of Evesham, hazardous to say the least. I made my debut without ever jumping a chase fence as the horse refused to practise! This would not be possible today as you have to demonstrate a level of competency before you are allowed to line up at the start.

After some years and several horses later, I eventually won my first point-to-point and gained a mention in the national racing press, as I fell off after the finish line due to an over-enthusiastic wave of jubilation! I continued to have great fun in the sport and bred, trained, owned and rode a few more winners.


*Lucy and Northern Quay at United Pack point to point about 1999. Lucy is still riding competitively after taking up eventing age 60!*

Since a move to the wild United Hunt country on the Welsh Borders, I have assisted with the administration of the annual point-to-point. For the past 25 years, I have fulfilled the role of either Secretary or Entries Secretary. I have now retired from the post but have been pleased to be able to contribute to a sport which has given me so much enjoyment.

## A life with horses

### Richard Phipps (1964-67)

I was brought up on a farm in South Wales. There were, of course, ponies and horses there. Some of my earliest childhood memories are of saddles and bridles and hay nets and talk of horses around the supper table. My mother's family bred Welsh Mountain ponies, some of which were sold to America and Canada, while my father's side were more interested in racing, especially National Hunt.

Although I don't remember it, at the age of three I won my first 1st prize in the show ring in a leading-rein class on one of my grandfather's Welsh Mountain ponies. I moved on to children's riding classes and then to gymkhana, which was great fun. In time, I began riding my own horse in point-to-point steeple chases before I started, and during, my course at Wye.

In one Easter vacation, I went for a day out with my parents to the South Pembroke Point-to-Point. Even though I had no arranged rides that day, I decided to put my saddle in just in case I was offered one; which I was. The owner said that his horse was a good jumper but was not yet fit and therefore suggested an easy race.

We were in the fourth race, and I mounted First Sea Lord in the paddock and cantered down to the start of the three-mile course. The Starter called all 12 horses into line, dropped the flag, and at that very moment I felt Sea Lord wince; but then we were off. After two miles we were still going well but getting tired. However, coming into the last fence we were lying second. We crashed through the fence and the next thing I knew I was in the arms of a very attractive girl who said, 'Don't worry, stay still; I am a nurse.'

But that is another story. I apologised to the owner for not pulling up Sea Lord before the last fence. He said that he was, in fact, delighted as Sea Lord had refused to start

*Richard was just three years old when he won 1st prize in the show ring.*

*Richard's mother's family bred Welsh Mountain ponies on their farm in South Wales.*

for anyone in the previous six months! He went on to say that he wished he had sold him when he had had the chance. My father needed little persuasion, so we bought him and he was delivered to our farmyard the following day.

## Sea Lord cracked the egg with his parrot jaw and ate it, shell and all

On arrival, I walked him from the horse box into his stable and watched as he went straight to the manger and started eating some oats that I had put there earlier. Not a nervous horse, I thought, but I also noticed that he was slightly parrot-jawed, which is a slight overhang of the upper mandible.

The following morning, I was in his stable when a chicken flew in over the door, clucked her way to the manger and laid an egg; clucking proudly, she immediately left. During this time, neither Sea Lord nor I had moved. However, as soon as the hen left, Sea Lord went to the manger, cracked the egg with his parrot jaw and ate it, shell and all. I thought, 'This horse is going to be quite a character.' Later the same day, I saddled him up and went out into the 20-acre farm field. After about five minutes he just stopped in the middle of the field and refused to move. A couple of minutes later, he decided to move on. This game of 'who was going to be in charge?' occurred on another three occasions in the field before we got back to the stable.

The next afternoon we went into the same field, and he stopped in exactly the same places. On day three, I wore dummy spurs and when he stopped in the same spot as he had done previously, I nudged him in the ribs and he jumped forward about six feet. Next day, when out riding around the farm, I crossed a shallow stream but when we came to recross the same stream at the same point he refused. We were there for at least half an hour before I finally got him to cross. At that point, we both knew who was in charge.

## I thought, 'This horse is going to be quite a character'

First Sea Lord had an interesting background. He was classically bred, by Supreme Court out of Naval Patrol, and was initially owned by Lord Rosebery. He finished second in a Derby Trial for two-year-olds. He was an absolute picture book thoroughbred but was relatively small and, as such, was thought not to be an Epsom Derby contender. So, he was sold and eventually found his way into the illegal pony-racing circuit otherwise known as 'flapping'.

I learnt about this darker side of his career one day when I was with the Llangeinor hounds. One of the other riders, looking at my mount, said 'Isn't that Sailor? It looks like the horse that was taken to Scotland to race against Rogers, the Scottish Champion.' Apparently, Sailor (First Sea Lord) won easily. This should not have been a surprise when you look at his breeding.

After a lazy summer on good pasture which he really enjoyed, we brought him back to his stable. Exercise started. It was slow, relaxed and in open countryside. We started hunting with the Llangeinor Hounds to qualify for point-to-points. His fitness increased and by the time we returned to a point-to-point course he was in superb condition. Never having won, he was eligible for the maiden race. The bookmakers had First Sea Lord a rank outsider at 25 to 1, and it was at this price we backed him to win. We felt we had a great chance.

## He was sold and eventually found his way into the illegal pony-racing circuit otherwise known as 'flapping'

However, as the starter called us into line, the horse next to us kicked First Sea Lord in the ribs and several of us turned away from the start line. At that moment, the starter dropped the white flag to start the race. We were left 30 lengths behind the main field. Not an auspicious start, but during the three-mile race we worked our way steadily through the field and managed to finish third. But a big disappointment and money lost to the bookmakers.

There is, however, a happier ending to the story. The following week, we went to another point-to-point and won the maiden race by a distance. But (and there is always a but) the price with the bookmakers had been cut from 25 to1 to even money. Just before I left to work in Africa, his racing career came to an abrupt end when he broke some blood vessels in his nose.

However, he made a lovely and much-admired recreational horse for a lady in the Cotswolds.

## The auctioneer

**Mike Perkins sharpened his ag economics skills amongst a great bunch of postgrads at Wye in 1967/68 and utilised his gregarious skills at Market Rasen Racecourse. He sends best wishes to all.**

Having been asked by Peter Johnson to write a few words about my experiences as a postgraduate at Wye College in 1967–68, it seems a strange co-incidence that I should be doing so on the day I'm due to have my corona virus vaccination and very close to my becoming an octogenarian!

The agricultural economics department at that time had several esteemed lecturers headed by Professor Wibberley and including **Ian Read, John Nix**, the junior but bright **Paul Webster** and several visiting sages like Derek Chapman, a super bloke, well known to me from my College of Estate Management days in London.

The small number of course members provided a cross-section of the farming community together with several recently qualified undergraduates, all providing invaluable input to a very well-organised one-year course. Those elders in the field included a bank manager, a typical but delightful London/Canterbury-based land agent, an agricultural consultant recently returned from overseas, and yours truly; I was meant to be an agricultural surveyor but had spent my early formative years becoming a livestock auctioneer and assisting in the running of Market Rasen Racecourse, shadowing the revered Victor Lucas, a partner in my firm and well-known as the person who put Market Rasen Racecourse on the map post-World War II. He also travelled the country attending race meetings in order to auction the winners of Selling Plates at flat and national hunt meetings. I, together with his son, John, carried on this auction work, with Towcester Racecourse being one of my responsibilities.

I remember using my Towcester Racecourse official's badge to get into Wye Racecourse to watch several race meetings and admire the brave jockeys, including a **Bob Davies**, a Wye College student, who later rode Lucius to win the Grand National and ended up being known as 'Mr Ludlow Racecourse' which he managed for many years.

*Market Rasen Racecourse – put 'on the map' by Victor Lucas – where Mike worked.*

Four of us course members shared the staff wing at Stowting Rectory during our stay. The property was owned by the Australian film-actor Vincent Ball, a great bloke who figures in a number of films including *A Town Like Alice* and *Where Eagles Dare* and also the odd television drama. His second home was the Gate Inn at Stelling Minnis, near Canterbury, a hostelry which holds many happy memories. *(Sadly, now closed but once a legend, especially on Sunday lunchtimes! – Ed.)*

During the Christmas break of 1967/68, I requested an extra two weeks' holiday in order to visit my brother in Rhodesia in return for a promise to provide a paper on the beef industry in that country. Somewhere in the archives of the college is my dissertation, now hopelessly out of date of course!

I think that I was perhaps the only person on the course near to failure, primarily on account of my stand-off argument with a member of the oral assessment committee; I later found out that he was a leading member of the newly formed Meat and Livestock Commission which encouraged the sale of red meat to the wholesale market as opposed to using local auction marts. Obviously, a red rag to a bull to yours truly, a livestock auctioneer.

I also remember the use of computers for the first time. As now, I could never get to grips with them. My secretary will be pleased to confirm!

My time at Wye was enhanced by the many friends I made and my enjoyment of playing hockey on several occasions both for the college and the local club of the Marden Russets. Halcyon days indeed.

It goes without saying that I was saddened by the closure of such a fine educational establishment. How was this allowed to happen?

## A much-travelled Clerk of the Course

### Keith Ottesen (1988-91)

Keith's most recent role in the racing scene has been Clerk of the Course at Newbury, a position he was appointed to in 2018. He shadowed the previous incumbent, Richard Osgood, through the remaining fixtures of that year then took over fully in January 2019.

But this was by no means his first racecourse role. In fact, its worth starting at the beginning. As a boy growing up, there were always horses around at home and he did show-jumping and eventing when he was young. From that he 'developed a huge interest in horse racing and the thoroughbred'. After Wye, he went to work for a couple of small breeders and would produce their horses for yearling sales.

A spell at the National Stud on a stud management course was followed by an assignment at the Head family's stud in Normandy prior to joining Michael Bell at Newmarket as assistant trainer. After a couple of years, he was off the USA to work for Christophe Clement, a thoroughbred trainer on the East Coast.

Always working in and around racecourses sparked his interest in the role of clerk of the course. In 2003, he was taken on at Uttoxeter; seven years later his base became Chepstow and at the same time he looked after Hereford until it closed temporarily at the end of 2012.

Never one to let the turf grow under his feet, Keith then took on Bath for a season before adding Worcester, followed by Flos Las with Chepstow. The final straight, before joining Newbury, was a short spell at Windsor in 2017.

## Champion Jockey 'two-and-a-half' times

**In horse racing circles, Bob Davies (1964–67) is probably best remembered as the jockey of Lucius, winner of the Grand National in 1978 and, arguably, one of the best 'spare' rides in history.**

In the absence of his stable jockey, David Goulding – who had injured his back in a fall at Wetherby five days before the National – Greystoke trainer Gordon W Richards offered the ride on Lucius to Ron Barry; Barry declined, on the grounds that he had already agreed to ride Forest King, trained by Ken Hogg, but put in a good word for Davies – and the rest, as they say, in history. In a rough-and-tumble race, Davies and Lucius tackled the leader, Sebastien, passing the Elbow and, in a pulsating finish, held on to win by half a length and a neck.

Bob rode the first of his 912 winners under National Hunt Rules, Ellen's Pleasure, at Newton Abbott in April 1966 and enjoyed a stellar career, during which he became Champion Jockey three times. On the first occasion, in 1968/69 – the season in which he won the Challenge Cup at the Cheltenham Festival on Specify, trained by Denis Rayson – he shared the jockeys' title with Terry Biddlecombe, on 77 winners apiece. The following season, in which he won the Imperial Cup on Solomon II, trained by David Barons, Davies won the jockeys' title outright, with 91 winners, and did so again in 1971/72, with 89 winners.

In the latter years of his career, aside from the Grand National, Davies also won the Grand Annual Chase on Dulwich, trained by Colin Davies, in 1976, and the Gainsborough Chase and the Great Yorkshire Chase on Tragus, trained by David Morley, in 1981.

Bob known to many as 'Mr Ludlow' having fulfilled a variety of roles at the Shropshire course for around 35 years, stepped down from his role as General Manager, Company Secretary and Clerk of the Course at the independent track at the age of 72. It is recorded that, when he left, Ludlow was firmly established as a racecourse, making the most of what it has, and a real favourite of owners, trainers and jockeys for providing consistently high levels of prize-money for a course of its size.

As a former champion jockey 'two and a half times' – he shared the title with Terry Biddlecombe in 1968/69 – and a Grand National winner, he also had a seemingly everlasting presence in racing, having had his first ride in a point-to-point aged 14.

'I was born and raised in the area and think the first time I came to Ludlow was when I was about ten and my dad Eric ran a mare in a hunter chase in the 1950s,' he said. 'I feel


*Bob Davies winning on Lucius in a tight five-horse finish at Aintree in the Grand National in 1976*

lucky as I've been involved in a hobby of mine for all my working life.'

Having quit the saddle in 1982 after partnering 912 winners in a stellar career, Davies worked as a pundit with Julian Wilson and returned home to farm. But shortly after that he was approached by Ludlow director John Williams to replace retiring clerk of the course Major John Moon.

'From 1986 there was a period when I was company secretary, general manager and clerk of the course at Ludlow, clerk of the course at Bangor and assistant clerk of the course and secretary at Hereford,' he said. 'Up until Simon joined, I did everything at Ludlow with my wife Dorcas, who has done all the accounts.'

## Editor's note

Two things come immediately to mind when I think about Bob. First was at college on a morning he was due to ride, I think at the Wye racecourse, later that day. He would put on a polythene 'sweat' suit and play squash at pace in order to lose the required weight. I occasionally partnered him in this torture! The other is much later, when I saw in the paper that he had a ride in the Grand National on a horse called Lucius. That was too much! We had just christened our second baby Lucy! So, I rushed to the nearest bookmakers and splashed a whole £5 note on a win bet! Later that day I was rolling in it; a winner at 14 to1; 70 fresh greenbacks in my pocket. Thank you Bob, my old friend! *(Incidentally, I have never bet on the horses since, feeling that this event probably used up my luck – Ed)*

# In praise of Tesco's crisps

## A crunching tribute to the lowly spud from Professor **Geoff Dixon (1962–68 & Staff).**

I really like crisps. In spite of my wife Jane's exhortations, I eat quite a lot of them and consider myself a bit of a connoisseur. And I think that the crunchiest, tastiest crisps by far are Tesco finest Crinkle-Cut, Lightly Sea-salted Crisps.

You may wonder why I am telling you this. Well, in 2015 the Agricola Club summer get-together was held at Hook Farm in Hampshire where **Richard Janaway** (1965–68) and his sons Gavin, Andrew and Duncan (1990–93, 1996–99, respectively) run one of the largest potato-growing set-ups in the country (see 2015–16 *Wye Journal*). We had an excellent meal in the clean and tidy potato store, and it was clear that the growing of the spuds is only half the challenge. Getting them into and out of store and keeping their quality whilst there is just as important.


Tesco give quite a bit of info on their packets of crisps including variety and, on virtually all the crisp packets that I open, it says: 'Grower: Gavin Janaway'. They are excellent. Thank you!

As an after-thought: I started on a packet of crisps a week or so ago, and they certainly tasted not as good as usual. I said to Jane, 'Seems Mr Janaway has slipped up a bit.' Then I looked at the packet; different grower!

# A presidential putsch

**After failing to even be nominated for the presidency of the Wye Student Guild, David Bennett (1953–56) achieved his presidential ambitions much later in the early environmental movement in Australia.**

In our second year at Wye (1952) I put my hand up for the presidency of the Student Guild. But none of my colleagues would take it seriously. One outcome was that, on a study tour, having lunch on the foreshore at Margate, and after making a heart-warming speech, I was threatened to be thrown into the sea! I was lucky that my 'friends' did not persist, as the ebbing tide exposed the large metal spikes of our coastal defences, just where they had chosen for my dunking! My attempts at the presidency failed when none of my 'friends' would sign my nomination paper! What follows is the story of another putsch, this time involving an organisation called Greening Australia (GA).

## The Greening Australia project

GA is an idea formulated by the Australian Nurserymen's Association and the Institute of Foresters to persuade the Australian government to take tree planting more seriously. It arose out of the International Year of the Tree (1982). The meagre financial provisions from the government were for each state to be allocated AU$20,000 (£11,000) and provide $60,000 (£30,000) for the national body to be used to promote tree planting. There was additional equivalent funding for what was called the National Tree Program, in some states this came under GA.

I became involved in GA in 1985 when a work colleague persuaded me to become the State Chairman of GA in Western Australia (GAWA). At that time GAWA employed one 'greeny' on an inadequate salary to do promotions. So, firstly we had to find more money, some of which came from the state government. Subsequently we made friends with Alcoa of Australia, a company that was mining in the hills just behind Perth,[1] and also accessed various other grants.

**After making a heart-warming speech, I was threatened to be thrown into the sea!**

Very shortly thereafter I was invited to a national meeting of GA in King's Cross.[2] On meeting the national president, a barrister from Brisbane, I asked what were the voting rights of those present. He gulped and said that they had not been decided! By the time the meeting was over I had been elected National Vice President, and after two years became National President!

[1] Peter Askew, our geology lecturer, would have marvelled at the horizon of the mine sites: the alumina rich A horizon was 20–30 meters deep!

[2] As you all know, Kings Cross is Sydney's red-light district.

## David Bennett – National President

For a mainly British audience there are three issues that are worth highlighting.

Firstly, whereas the British have only in recent years been involved in devolution, since 1900 Australia has been a reluctant federation of states.[3] Victoria had a Garden State Committee and was unwilling to combine that with GA; Queensland had illegally used some 'work-for-the dole' money, which had to be sorted out; and New South Wales (NSW) had a couple of greenies who thought reading nursery books to kindergarten pupils was justification for getting a GA salary. So, problems in each state had to be resolved. In addition, the national organisation had a secretary/treasurer who ran off with a big proportion of our funds!

**There are significant pains – one is called 'The Midnight Horror'**

Secondly, running an Australian national organisation involves a lot of travel, especially if you live in Western Australia (WA). It is like trying to run the UK from Tel Aviv. There are significant pains – one is called 'The Midnight Horror', a flight that leaves Perth at Midnight and gets you to an Eastern States capital at 5:30 am, often for an important meeting at 9am! This was particularly bad during the two years of my presidency because both commercial pilots and air traffic controllers held strikes. More later.

Thirdly during that time, it was relatively easy to meet with and lobby both state and federal ministers (1992–97, no longer). I met with significant numbers of both, sometimes with good outcomes. But there were plenty that led nowhere.

By the end of my two years, most of the state problems had been resolved and a significant number of trees were being planted. The culmination of all this was a meeting at Wentworth, where the Darling River meets the Murray, close to the border of NSW, South Australia and Victoria, where the Prime Minister, accompanied by the premiers of these three adjoining states inaugurated the 'Decade of Landcare'. The outcome for GA was an increase in funding to one million dollars per year for the decade!

**The national organisation had a secretary/treasurer who ran off with a big proportion of our funds!**

There was much to be done. We had a meeting of the Board in Adelaide, the

*As one of his many presidential tasks here is David presenting the ABC Tree Award in Tasmania*

[3] Especially by WA, that at one time ran a failed referendum for secession.

*The Prime Minister and three Premiers, with wives, planting a ceremonial tree at Wentworth*

highlight of which was a talk by Peter Edwards who had had a lot of experience with voluntary conservation movements. He warned us that political adventurers would become a serious problem. I told the meeting that, due to our changed status, I was prepared to serve as President for another year.

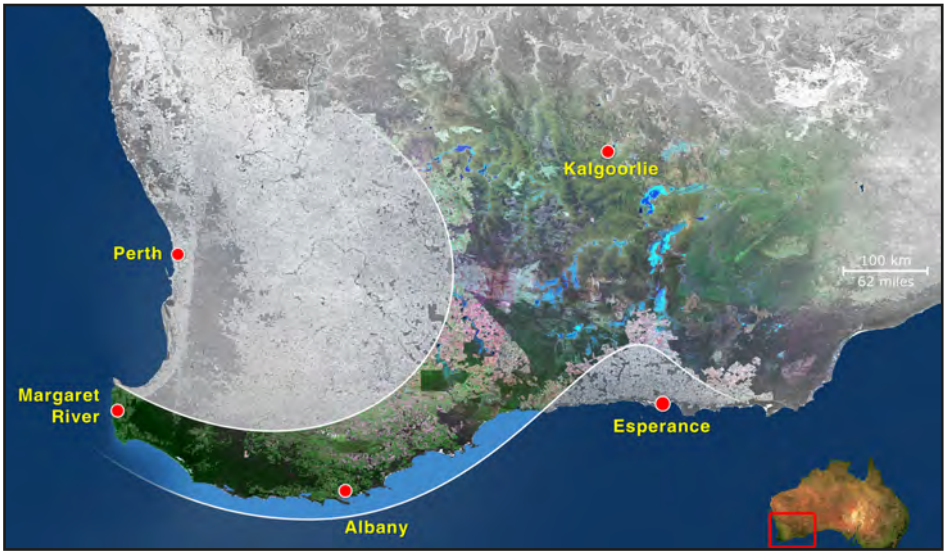
**I kept my distance, despite various awards that they wanted to pile onto me**

There was another air traffic controllers' strike when we were to hold our annual general meeting, so we had a national phone hook-up. When it came to the results of the elections, I found that the people to whom I had sent my nomination paper had done the same as my 'friends' at Wye and not filled in the nomination form!

## Life after politics

What to do next? I decided that I did not want to have anything to do with the 'political adventurers' who had taken over the organisation. All positions were 'honourable', that is unpaid. At the time I was trying to earn a living being an environmental consultant, and there were plenty more organisations in which to pursue my conservation ambitions. So, I kept my distance, despite various awards that they wanted to pile onto me.

Shortly after the new Board was installed, the President, presumably with the assent of the Board, sacked the civil servant who was the chief executive officer, moved from the Northern Territory to Canberra and took the CEO job and salary. I gather that there were some other bad times until the carpet-baggers were removed. But sometime later




GA blossomed,[4] combining tree planting with enhanced nature conservation and Aboriginal culture. In 2019 it had an income of AU$31.2m (£17m).

These days I help an organisation called 'Gondwana Link' [5] whose plan is to establish a bush corridor between the forests of the southwest and the deserts of the centre (see above). GA is a partner in this project. I also have a plan for a natural burial somewhere in Gondwana Link.

[4] See Year in review 2020 - Greening Australia

[5] Gondwana is the name of the old continent that gave rise to most of the continents of the Southern Hemisphere.

# My romance with the Field Marshall

**Professor Berkeley Hill (Staff 1970–2005) reveals a passion that was kindled whilst he was a lad and clearly still burns bright.**

I was as just an impressionable schoolboy when I first encountered the Field Marshall.

I was cycling home from school on the outskirts of Swindon when this legend was seen, looking a bit forlorn and down-at-heal, on the forecourt of an agricultural merchant dealership. In the traditional dark-green livery, the Field Marshall had an aura of solidarity, eccentricity and a slight whiff of diesel.

Thus began an affair that lasted until after I was married a decade or more later and had moved to join the staff of Wye College as a young lecturer. I am happy now to acknowledge this relationship in a completely open way. I hope former students in my economics classes will not be shocked. But for those alumni looking for scandal, I must point out that this Field Marshall was not an elderly senior army officer, but a machine – sorry to disappoint.

Some background information is necessary. My parents were not farmers (dad made poultry-houses and, later, garden sheds), but two of his brothers were. We lived in a Victorian family house belonging to my grandparents who ran a steam sawmill, blacksmith's forge and wagon-making business from the site. An uncle who also lived in the same house was a farmer, though in a very modest way. Uncle Howard had served in France during the First World War in the trenches, and after demobilisation became a small-holder. His tiny herd of dairy cows, never more than six, was housed and milked in a disused brick kiln, with 16 acres of pasture rented nearby. For more than 50 years, the twice-daily, slow and stately procession of these six cows (or their successors) from brick kiln to field and back again, along a short section of the main Swindon-to-Oxford road, became a point of 'interest' to drivers of cars and lorries. That was especially true for the former who were liable to have their gleaming bodywork splattered by the excrement that the cows seemed to enjoy depositing in just the places from which the lorries' wheels could most effectively splash it to head height. Despite the potential for accidents, no animals were ever harmed by the traffic.

## The Field Marshall would be so much better than the Fordson! So strong and so reliable!

Uncle Howard already had a tractor – a bad-tempered, Standard Fordson that usually refused to start. Howard held a driving licence for all types of vehicle as the result of a catastrophic fire at the records office of Wiltshire County Council. To fill the gap, new licences were dished out freely to anyone who was prepared to claim that they had ever driven, with few questions asked. But Howard, who had ridden a motorcycle in his army days, never actually drove anything after 1920, certainly not his tractor. Instead, he relied on others. As a 15-year old nephew, I was happy to provide the driving skills when off the public road; on the road, other family

members were persuaded to occupy the driving seat and steer the short distance to the field, though with me actually operating the clutch, gears, brake and throttle! But the Field Marshall would be so much better than the Fordson! So strong and so reliable!

## As a 15-year old nephew, I was happy to provide the driving skills when off the public road

The repeated litany of the virtues of the Field Marshall eventually worked on Uncle Howard (he was an intelligent and well-read man, and had been awarded a county scholarship to attend the grammar school in Swindon, though he left early in order to avoid Saturday lessons). The machinery merchant accepted his offer of £35 (it was a long time ago) and the Field Marshall was delivered. The rather grainy picture (left) shows it, me and my father soon after (in about 1959).

For readers not familiar with this make of tractor some details may be of interest:

- Marshall was a firm that had been making steam engines since about 1850, and their nineteenth-century style of engineering was still going strong in the mid-1940s when 'my' Field Marshall tractor was made. Every component was four-times the weight it needed to be, even the leavers to lock the differential and operate the throttle. This also meant that things could be taken apart easily with big spanners and reassembled without losing bits. In some ways, the Field Marshall was the missing link in the evolution between steam power and the modern tractor.
- The engine was an enormous single-cylinder horizontal two-stroke diesel, which consumed surprisingly little fuel. Torque was vast, helped by a big exposed flywheel on the right side. There was almost nothing to go wrong. At tick-over, the whole machine rocked backwards and forwards and was reputedly a good cure for constipation if the driver suffered that way!
- It had a three-speed gearbox (dead slow, very slow, and slowish walking pace), the gear lever seeming to have come straight from a steam engine. Changes of gear while on the move were severely discouraged by the mechanism.
- The clutch was combined with a pulley on the tractor's left flank (opposite the flywheel) for a belt to drive a threshing machine or saw. If this stuck, a tap with a sledge hammer might be needed to free it and allow a gear to be engaged.

- There was no foot-brake, only a huge hand-brake that operated on the transmission (I never found out how or where because it always worked).
- The steering-wheel was large and had to be because of the great effort needed to change direction.
- Ours had a hand clutch that allowed you to put it in reverse, stand on the ground behind the tractor and back up to trailers accurately, though what would have happened if an accident had taken place and you'd slipped does not bear thinking about!
- The exhaust pipe (more of a smoke stack, actually) gave out a characteristic bopping sound and accumulated lumps of carbon that occasionally had to be emptied.
- It had no electrics, no lights, no hydraulics, no PTO and was only good for two purposes – pulling things (slowly) and driving belts.

My first task the next day was to start it. We soon learned a routine, almost a religious ritual, which was followed for the next 15 years. First, find a strong assistant – the starting handle was big enough for two people, but they had to be prepared to work in unison. It fitted into the side flywheel which had a cable running to a decompression valve which enabled the wheel to turn three times, building up speed, before compression set in. Second, find some crinkly cardboard (the sort Amazon boxes are now made from), tear off one layer and fold tightly, inserting it into a holder that could be unscrewed from the cylinder head. Third, get some matches, light the folded cardboard, blow it out so that the remains glowed, screw the holder back into the cylinder head, swing the starter handle with all the might of two people to get the momentum up, and – it started! Almost always! (The cardboard was a cheap alternative to the treated papers that Marshalls sold, but it worked because of the glue, and we never experimented with the optional use of blank, 12-bore cartridges as this was thought far too dangerous.)

This magnificent Field Marshall, built with cathedral-like proportions, was extremely reliable for farm work (mainly pulling trailers), and its torque coped easily with driving our six-foot pit saw (used with a rack) for cutting up trees. The big-end rattled if the revs were too high, so this limited engine speed, but it never got any worse. Occasionally, air got into the injector pump if it had not been started for a long period, but bleeding it was simple.

## What would have happened if an accident had taken place and you'd slipped does not bear thinking about!

Because no one at home had the inclination or strength to start it, after I went to university, in 1962, the Field Marshall tended to be used only during my vacations. After 1970, when marriage and a move to a lectureship at Wye College meant that visits to Swindon were rare, the Field Marshall was shamefully neglected. Uncle Howard acquired a grey Ferguson, with an electric starter and hydraulics, for powering the saw via its PTO shaft, though its lack of torque compared with the green giant soon became apparent. Big trees could not be tackled any more. By the mid-1970s Field Marshalls were becoming collectors' pieces. Eventually, a

*Could Berkeley's tractor be the inspiration and form the basis of this magnificently restored machine? Photo by Andy Dingley – Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0*

persistent caller who knew of this tractor purchased it from my Uncle Howard, for several times the price he had paid for it more than 15 years before.

It is rare for a machine to gain my affections, but the endurability, simplicity, reliability, and capability of this Field Marshall did. It had real character. Could 'my' tractor be the basis of the magnificently restored example in the photograph above? Maybe. If not, I hope you are still going strong, old soldier.

# Life's greatest pleasure – flourishing fauna and fabulous flora?

**Professor Peter Newell (1959–62) waxes lyrical about the wildflowers and amazing wild animals that abound in his adopted home region of south-west France.**

I write this from the relative peace and tranquillity of south-west France, New Aquitaine, where this year, as for everywhere else, life has been most unusual, with a global pandemic, lockdowns and movement restrictions. I have the strong impression that the situation has been better handled in this part of France than in the UK. The local regional administration allowed the very carefully controlled opening of the local DIY stores very early on during the quarantining period; this enabled people confined to their houses and gardens to progress renovations, DIY projects and gardening and so experience productive outcomes from what might have been a period of boredom.

All the supermarkets remained well-stocked, and we had no important shortages. We had to carry a written authorisation when out shopping, which was fairly strictly enforced and specified the reason to be away from home.

I have just finished reading the important and influential book *Wilding* by Isabella Tree (published by Parador 2018). It makes a strong case for changes in the way we manage farmland, so that our activities enhance biodiversity and maximise the environmental services that the farm can provide to the local ecosystem. I can strongly recommend this book to all who read this Journal. As Isabella Tree describes, taking a farm out of the current agricultural model is neither easy nor cost free. There are clear limits on what will be allowed as reintroductions of lost components of the supposed former ecosystem in any 'wilding' proposal in the UK; wolves 'No', but probably reavers, after the success of the Otter River experiment in Devon.

Both wolves and bears have been introduced into several areas on mainland Europe,

*Peter and his wife, Nicole.*

*Peter's garden has colonies of tongue orchids*

including the Pyrenees. One of the benefits of an enhanced biodiversity is that the landscape becomes much more interesting to both residents and occasional visitors, such as walkers and tourists. I am lucky to live near the boundary of the Perigord Vert Natural Park. This comprises a large area of protected land on a granite base, with acid soils, forestry and extensive agriculture with grass-fed cattle farms and forestry industries. Many species of animals and plants are found here which are either absent, or very rare, in the UK. We have large numbers of pine martens, wild boar and red squirrels. We also have our rare birds and I have seen just one Montague's harrier and one black woodpecker over the last 20 years, but I always keep my eyes open for more sightings. During the lockdown, we had a diverse and interesting list of birds at our garden feeders, including an exotic escapee, a lorikeet or close relative thereof.

Horticulturally, our garden has colonies of both spotted and tongue orchids. Nearby, we have the impressive spikes of lizard orchids, as well as carpets of spotted and tongue orchids on the local golf course. Many people take an interest in the bird fauna and having hoopoes, green woodpeckers and collared doves as regular visitors in the garden, as well as the biannual migrations of cranes overhead in the spring and autumn, gives us an extra dimension.

This spring, my attention was drawn to scrabbling noises from underneath part of my roof which turned out to be chicks in a little owl's nest. The parents were very

*The spikes of lizard orchids are a familiar sight in nearby countryside.*

*A peregrine falcon hovers in search of its next meal – will it be pigeon again?*

protective and flew intimidatory, and noisy, sorties against our cat as it walked on the balcony below the nest. Not far away we can regularly see hen harriers and the patches of pigeon feathers which decorate some of the lanes which are evidence of the work of a nearby pair of peregrine falcons.

Many of our patches of woodland are dominated by robinia trees which are favoured by golden orioles, who remain impressively camouflaged in their branches. Butterflies are quite common here, both in the garden and locally on our nearby higher ground. I have seen black-veined whites in the garden this year, a species that has been extinct in the UK for many years. We have a variety of fritillaries, both pearl-bordered and silver-washed, and at least two swallow-tails, along with purple emperors as well as a wide variety of commoner species, such as marbled whites, gatekeepers, meadow browns, several species of blue, orange tips, brimstones, white admirals, red admirals, commas, etc.

So, in my view, increasing the biodiversity of the countryside is an admirable goal with many benefits at the ecosystem level but which also contribute to the wellbeing of the entire community. For me, what greater pleasure can there be than seeing unusual and interesting plants and animals in their natural habitat?

# Fruit-growing on the edge of the Weald

**Over a pub lunch, following a tour of Philip Charlton's (1962–65) fruit farm in Kent, John Walters encouraged him to do a write-up for the journal. Here it is, in a (large) nutshell.**

George was my grandfather; he had two sons, both of whom served in the last war. He owned a 6.5-acre smallholding, Postley Farm, a mile from the centre of Maidstone, and rented a further 5 acres next to it. The holding consisted of apples and pears with some pigs and chickens. George also travelled the country buying apples and cherries to sell to the wholesale markets.

The business – George Charlton & Sons – was established in 1946, but the two sons did not get on too well and decided to split; the eldest was given a 40-acre fruit farm, and Harold, my father, was left to run the smallholding. He kept the business name and continued to fatten pigs, produce eggs and grow and buy fruit.

At the time apples, which were mainly cookers, were picked into shoulder-slung picking bags and put into bushel boxes for packing. This was before refrigerated storage, so they were stored loose, in straw clamps,

*Phil (right) shows John around the farm*

*Apples galore!*

either in barns or on the ground outside. The trees were of a size requiring ladders to be used, and the planting distances could be as much as 30 feet square. Tree spraying was by horse-drawn, petrol-driven pump-mounted tanks and using hand lances. The farm's first mechanised tractor was a small Ransom caterpillar followed, eventually, by a grey Ferguson. This enabled pto-driven, trailed sprayers to be added to the operation.

## He kept the business name and continued to fatten pigs, produce eggs and grow and buy fruit

In the late 1950s, a small pack-house and two 50-ton cold stores were built on half an acre. In 1960, father expanded by renting a 29-acre top fruit farm nearby and, a few years later, the storage capacity was extended to 300 tons. He had also established a contract with Heinz to supply apples for their baby-food products. Apple varieties required by Heinz were Worcester, Charles Ross, Laxton's Superb and Rivals. They were delivered by our own transport to the Heinz factories in Wigan, a round-trip in excess of 500 miles, eventually aided by the opening of the M1 Motorway. Other varieties, both grown and bought, were sold on the wholesale markets in London.

I left for Wye College in 1962, following a year's practical on a farm near Sittingbourne. Two years later, my father sold the smallholding for housing which had already taken up the 5 acres of rented ground, but he retained the half-acre of pack-house and stores. I left Wye in 1965 after three years working hard (sometimes) and playing hard (always). During this time, I had met and

*The strawberry side of the business*

become engaged to Beryl who was a student at nearby Nonington PE College. We married in 1966, and I then joined my father in the business.

## At the time apples … were picked into shoulder-slung picking bags and put into bushel boxes for packing

In 1968, our son Sean was born, and, in the same year, I purchased a 28-acre fruit farm, Rumwood Green Farm (RGF) at Langley, near Maidstone, which had a house, one small 50-ton cold store and grew a mixture of apples, pears, cherries and strawberries. In the meantime, my father had generously made his entire business over to me. We continued the Heinz contract for a few more years until a new buyer appeared (he was also ex-Wye, but I cannot recall his name). Heinz wanted Golden Delicious which did not fit into our operation, so we decided to pack that job in. I reduced the strawberry acreage to two and continued growing and buying apples, mainly Bramleys, and pears for the wholesale market.

In the 1970s, picking buckets replaced the bags. Dwarf rootstocks, such as M9, were now allowing progressively more intensive orchard systems (1000 trees/acre and eliminating the use of ladders). With the advent of tractor-mounted forklifts for orchard work and forklifts for loading and unloading stores, the boxes were replaced by bulk bins. Ours hold about 320kg and at present are made locally by the British Legion.

*Modern tractors and forklifts make a huge difference ...*

In 1971, our second son David was born.

Father retired in about 1980. By then we were using a marketing agent who introduced us to the world of supermarkets. We had also joined a growers' group, Mid Kent Growers Ltd. In the mid-1970s we 'moved' our packhouse and cold stores to Langley and rented out Postley Farm packhouse and stores for business use. The 1980s were a bit of a consolidation phase but, when recession hit in the 1990s, we called time on the half-acre site at Postley and sold it for housing. Partly as a means of keeping our small staff occupied until the top fruit season, we continued to grow strawberries on the ground using straw bedding. Stocking rate was at 10,000 plants per acre, and the picking season lasted about five weeks from the beginning of July. The main varieties were Cambridge Favourite and Red Gauntlet, and we sold the produce in Brighton Market.

Sean, on leaving school, took a fruit-growing course at Hadlow College, Kent, where he showed a particular interest in strawberry production. He did two years' practical during a sandwich course which he experienced on a nearby fruit farm growing both top fruit and strawberries. On leaving college, he went tree pruning in the winter months, eventually running his own pruning business, and then developed the strawberry enterprise from a start of a couple of acres at RGF. He rented some local pieces of land for strawberry production and supplemented his income pruning and working on other farms during the fruit harvest. He joined the business full-time in 1995 and took over the running of the farm a few years later. At about the same time, his wife, Linda, joined us as farm secretary operating from a small room in our house and also took on the role of secretary of Mid Kent Growers for a number of years.

Strawberry production was initially on polythene ridges using fleece or lay-flat polythene for cover against frost or bringing forward production. Later, we went with

poly-tunnels and eventually table-top production which we have to this day. We use coir substrate as a growing medium and irrigation is by trickle-system into individual coir bags and controlled by computer systems. Nutrients are supplied through the same system. Planting is now at 21,600 plants per acre.

In 2018, we planted 30 acres using Cravo (trade name) tunnels from Canada at a cost of £5 million. The first in the country, the tunnels are built of a sturdier metal framework, permanently covered with stronger polythene. Ventilation is automatic, including the opening and retraction of the roof by the use of sensors. The sensors monitor air conditions and rain and react accordingly. This saves the use of manual labour for venting. This stronger structure can withstand winds of 70mph. The other tunnels are susceptible to storm damage from winds in excess of 50mph. On two successive Februarys in the past we have sustained damage to tunnels at an uninsurable cost of £500k and £250K, respectively.

Harvested strawberries are transported from the farms to RGF and put through blast chillers to rapidly cool the fruit to 5$^{0}$C, prior to packing, to improve the shelf life.

Current strawberry production is on 250 acres, spread over five sites all within a three-mile radius of RGF, our main site. A further 50 acres is to be planted under poly-tunnels for the coming 2021 season. There was further expansion in 2020 with the purchase of a company in Norfolk growing strawberries under glass and poly-tunnels. The main variety we grow is Murano and to a lesser extent Majestic, both of which are 'ever-bearers' that flower continually throughout the year and crop from mid-May to the end of October. The plants are


*... but the farm still relies on a sizeable workforce to get the job done.*

*The apple-dipping process*

replaced after one or two years and the bags every two years.

Apple production is spread over seven farms within a five-mile radius of our main base at Rumwood. The trees are now planted on ridges and supported on a post-and-wire system with each tree secured on bamboo canes to a height of three metres. The planting is 3.5m x 0.7m, which is approximately 1500 trees per acre.

Once picked, the apples are placed in controlled atmosphere (CA) stores and kept under a regime that is dependent upon the variety and quality. Oxygen is extracted naturally or with the aid of nitrogen generators to as low as 1%; C02 levels are controlled by carbon-scrubbers. Regimes vary according to variety and length of storage required. All is controlled by computer, both either on or off site. The main variety is Gala; others are Rubens and Kentish Kiss (Magic Star on the continent). Gala, as an example, is usually marketed over a period from harvesting to the end of May. When the stores are opened the apples are put over a semi-robotic grader which can grade them for colour and blemishes and pre-size them (or the third-party pears) prior to being sent for packing.

## Snow has to be knocked off poly-tunnels in February in the middle of the night

Over the past 25 years, Sean has built up the business to where it is today. He has been aided by an excellent team of staff, and we pride ourselves on continuing to run the company in a family business environment. At present, we farm a total of 1,100 acres on 11 sites locally, plus the sites in Norfolk. Eight hundred acres (7 sites) are owned and 300 acres (4 sites) have long-term leases. There are 650 field-acres of apples, including 150 that were planted during the winter of 2019/2020; cherries cover 30 acres.

Then we have 70 acres fallow and 100 acres made up of roads, reservoirs, houses, yards, buildings, woodland and hedges. Buildings and office space at 'headquarters' cover some 235,000ft2.

Annual strawberry production to date is 6,000 tons, with apples at 6,500 tons and cherries 200 tons.

## Contrary to what some politicians believe, robots and automation for harvesting fruit is a long way off

There are two pack-houses at RGF, one for top fruit and the other soft fruit. The latter consists of seven packing lines, including two specifically for third-party blueberries. Each line costs between £700,000 and £1million, and we fill 102 million packs a year with them.

The top fruit pack-house consists of five prepacking lines for over-wrapping, poly-bagging or loose apples and pears. Expansion is programmed for 2021, including with semi-robotic line-feeders. The pack-houses operate all year with an annual throughput of approximately 20,000 tons. In addition to handling all our own produce, we pack third-party UK apples, as well as imported apples, plums, nectarines, peaches, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries and rhubarb.

Our main customers include Sainsbury, Tesco, M&S, Co-op, Iceland, Asda, Aldi, Lidl and the wholesale market. We employ between 700 and 1400 staff, depending on the time of year, of which 300 to 400 are employed in the pack-houses. The majority are from Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and the Ukraine. There is accommodation on site for 1500, including mobile homes and houses, as well as on-site offices for ourselves and marketing agents.

We have dedicated teams for estate management, caravan maintenance and welfare for the workforce and a large workshop to maintain the 60 tractors and telehandlers, diggers, buses and minibuses, cars and vans. Then there are in-house agronomists for strawberries, IT and accounts departments, a health and safety officer, plus a wages staff.

## We employ between 700 and 1400 staff, depending on the time of year

We continue to be members of Mid Kent Growers producer organisation (PO) of which I was chairman for 11 years. Sean is chairman of the soft fruit PO, namely Mockbeggar Ltd.

Looking back over the years, there have been tremendous changes in our industry. Some fruit farms have disappeared or been taken over by larger firms. This expansion of larger companies has been driven partly by the demands of supermarkets and the availability of labour from mainly Eastern Europe. Investments have also been made possible using the grants available from the EU through the POs and very low interest rates in general.

Our major concern for the future is the availability of labour. Contrary to what some politicians believe, robots and automation for harvesting fruit is a long way off, so the industry is very dependent on manual

labour. The availability and willingness of indigenous labour is not evident.

The advantage of on-site labour is especially relevant to strawberry production, for example, when snow has to be knocked off poly-tunnels in February in the middle of the night, or during harvesting when starting time is at 5am in the summer months, or to cover night-shifts in the pack-houses at peak times. Brexit will no doubt send us some problems although the government is relenting on some issues such as the SAWS (Seasonal Agriculture Workers Scheme) which was set up before freedom of movement came into being and may now be reinstated in some form or other. Without access to this labour, I think it is safe to say that our industry would collapse.

We employ between 700 and 1400 staff, depending on the time of year,

Like most businesses we are on the receiving end of various audits including the Red Tractor, BRC (British Retail Consortium) for pack-houses and unannounced visits by supermarkets covering most aspects, including ethical audits. The demands of the supermarkets on quality place increasing problems upon us, including the withdrawal or dilution of many good pest and disease control chemicals. We do use biological controls where possible under IPM (Integrated Pest Management).

As for the future, we have to remain optimistic and hope our industry survives the ups and downs similar to how it has done in the past. More important is the hope that there will be young people interested in fruit growing as a career.


*It's all in the name!*

# Forty years of urban wildlife

**Professor Chris Baines (1966–69) celebrates an anniversary of the UK environmental movement, part of a global green space revolution.**

The year 2020 marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of the urban wildlife movement in the UK. This is something that has been a focus for much of my work since leaving Wye back in 1969. Studying horticulture in the late 1960s taught me the technology for killing things. Wildlife on the doorstep was generally defined as a weed, a pest or a disease, and definitely not something to be encouraged. By the mid-1970s, I had become determined to try and counter that attitude and in 1979 I actually managed to sneak my way on to BBC *Gardeners' World*, creating something I called the rich habitat garden. Presenter Peter Seabrook was mortified, but it struck a chord with his viewers.

The idea of nature in the city had actually been pioneered as a concept by the landscape architect Ian McHarg of Pennsylvania State University. His book *Design with Nature* was published the year I left Wye, but the concept of urban wildlife didn't really take off in the UK until the mid-1970s, when a critical piece of research was commissioned by the UK government's Nature Conservancy Council. A wonderful amateur naturalist by the name of Bunny Teagle was invited to carry out a 'quick and dirty' ecological survey of Birmingham and the Black Country. He spent six weeks through the summer of 1976 travelling around on double-decker buses, and whenever he spotted an interesting-looking, wild, green space he would leap off the bus, squeeze through a fence and explore.

Bunny Teagle came to the conclusion that the post-industrial landscape of the Black

*Black country rail and canal corridor*

*Abandoned quarries (left) and wild cemeteries (overleaf) were among the sites that Bunny Teagle discovered in his ecological survey of Birmingham and the Black Country.*

**He 'discovered' a mosaic of wild pockets of greenspace**

Country was an ecological treasure trove. He quickly recognised the irony that a landscape previously assumed by almost everyone to be polluted, derelict and damaged had actually been spared the pressures of the agricultural chemical revolution. In short, he 'discovered' a mosaic of wild pockets of greenspace, laced together by a network of unpolluted canals and old overgrown railway lines and interspersed with neglected cemeteries, abandoned quarries and mature Victorian parks. This was a landscape familiar to local communities, imaginatively adopted and adapted by neighbouring kids, dog walkers and courting couples, but almost entirely overlooked by the mainstream nature conservation movement.

The results of this survey were published in a report entitled *The Endless Village* and it appeared at a time when I was looking for a new direction. I had spent several years working in the Middle East and I was also teaching landscape architecture, but I was increasingly interested in urban communities in the UK and the role that nature on the doorstep could play in enriching lives.

1979 marked a new political era. The Thatcher government inherited high unemployment and a good deal of social unrest. That created two opportunities for me and many others. Firstly, I was invited to advise on a government initiative called the Priority Estates Project. The aim was to encourage communities in difficult-to-let housing areas to rebuild their self-esteem and then to take much more responsibility for their own circumstances. I found myself working on problem housing estates in Liverpool, Bolton, Newcastle, Wolverhampton and London, and using horticulture as a tool for engaging and empowering local people. This work was far from glamorous, but at the end of the infamous Brixton riots, when the whole urban area had been trashed, no one

had touched the sunflowers I had grown with the kids in the Tulse Hill Nature Garden.

The very high unemployment of those early Thatcher years spawned at least one positive unintended consequence. Temporary employment schemes were launched to provide training and jobs for young people. In 1980, I joined a small group of West Midlands enthusiasts – a couple of teachers, a planner or two, some keen amateur naturalists and one or two social activists from Friends of the Earth – to form the UK's very first Urban Wildlife Group. Whilst most of us were 30-somethings with established careers - Jeremy Purseglove (MSc 1971 -72) was one of the gang – the government's jobs programme enabled us to employ dozens of teenagers and 20-something graduates. Within months, the Urban Wildlife Group had a staff of 40, with more qualified ecologists than all the West Midlands local authorities put together. As a consequence, we were able to develop ambitious programmes for site surveys, schoolyard enhancement, wildflower and tree production and environmental education. We secured secondments into local authority parks departments and challenged the region's politicians to take urban nature conservation seriously.

That early Thatcher era had a profound impact on the whole UK environmental movement. Until then, organisations such as the county wildlife trusts, the RSPB, National Trust and others were relatively tiny, had little influence and were largely run by retirees, many of them with a military background. The Government employment schemes of the early 1980s empowered and professionalised the UK's Green Movement and now, 40 years later, a great many of the top jobs in those organisations are occupied by 60-somethings who launched their careers that way.

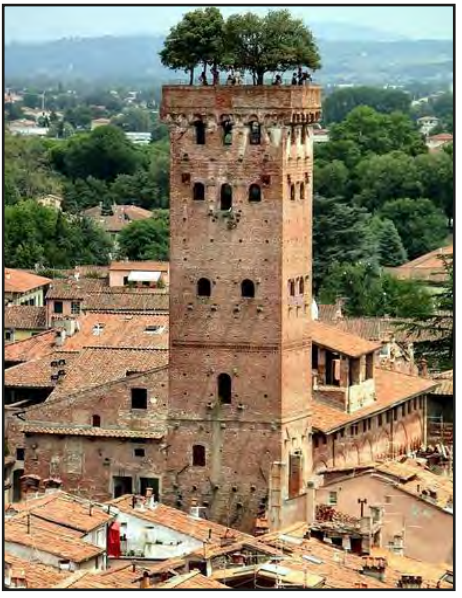
*The Bosco Verticale in Milan*

## Urban nature conservation has firmly taken root

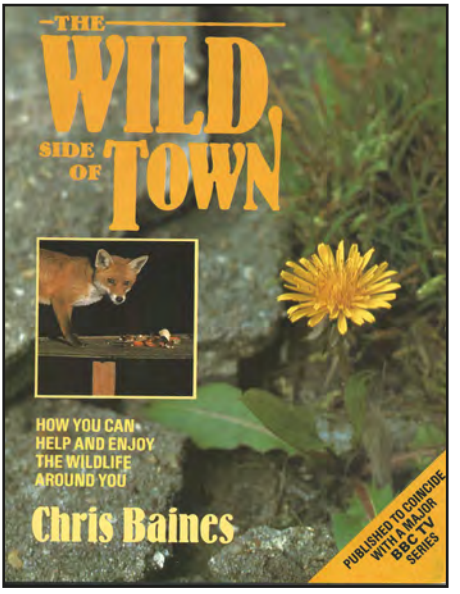
*Chris's wildlife garden in Wolverhampton*

On a grander physical scale, the conversion of the redundant Barnes reservoirs into the London Wetland Centre has been a triumphant demonstration of the scope for new habitat creation in a city setting. Urban rivers such as the Tyne and the Thames have been brought back to life. Green roofs and green walls have become relatively commonplace in new urban developments, and many of the city parks that were once sterile green deserts have embraced nature and now celebrate its importance for local people. This has been a global greenspace revolution, too. From the Highline that snakes its way along the redundant railway track above the streets of New York, to the working Rietvlei wetlands of downtown Cape Town, and from the ecological parks of Amsterdam to the spectacular hanging gardens of Milan and Singapore, urban nature conservation has firmly taken root.

The link to public health and wellbeing has been widely recognised. Important academic studies in the 1990s provided empirical evidence that access to living landscapes can bring significant physical and mental health benefits. Medics showed that there was measurable stress relief within three to four minutes of escape into natural green surroundings. In 2020, the public and politicians really took that whole idea to heart. Throughout the spring there was constant reference in the media to the pleasure of birdsong, the stimulus of seasonal change and the sheer joy of discovering that the natural world could help us cope with the corona virus. Since almost 90% of people in our crowded islands live in and around towns, for almost everyone this was an urban wildlife epiphany. So, in the 40th-anniversary year for urban nature conservation, the big black cloud of Covid-19 had a silver lining.



*The Lucca tree tower*




*Chris's book, published in 1986*

# Come with me to Madras – Oh, it's by car, by the way!

**Peter Siggers (1954–57) decided to make his journey back to work in India just that little bit more interesting and took a couple of friends for company. And he was only half an hour late arriving!**

Back in 1961, at the end of his first home leave from his posting in Madras, Peter decided to return overland in his new 2.4L saloon Jaguar. He enlisted two companions for the trip to share the costs. The plan was to use hotels just once a week, while the other nights would be under canvas.

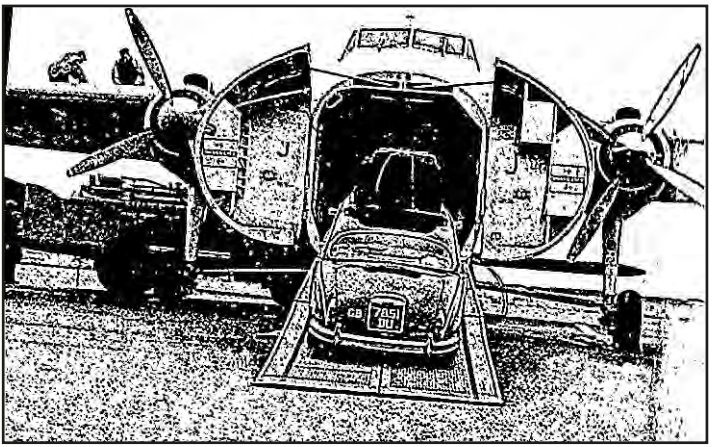
By the time all was loaded, the Jaguar was carrying an extra 1,500lb!

At the end of August, after collecting one of his companions at Piccadilly Circus, they drove down to Kent to fly from Lydd Airport to Ostend. They travelled through Germany to Austria and Yugoslavia with just a few mechanical hiccups. They enjoyed the Park Hotel in Istanbul and were impressed by the belly dancers! From there it was a straight 300-mile drive to Ankara, followed by a scenic drive to the Black Sea for two nights camping on the beach.

## By the time all was loaded, the Jaguar was carrying an extra 1,500lb!

The next leg of the journey was through the Bayburt mountains ascending 8,000 feet. The road to the Pakistan border was 2,000 miles of continuous gravel corrugations – they decided that the easiest way was to travel at a constant 60mph – which caused somewhat disastrous consequences!

In Tehran they were hosted by family friends while more serious car repairs were



*The overladen Jaguar is loaded onto a plane at Lydd.*

*The travellers saw amazing sights along the way – including beautiful mosques.*

eventually sorted out. Having heard that the Kyber Pass was all but impassable they had to take a southern route to Quetta.

## The next leg of the journey was through the Bayburt mountains ascending 8,000 feet

On the way, they enjoyed beautiful mosques with their blue mosaics, fascinating bazaars, together with the minarets and Mogul gardens, and the comparative lush greenery and prosperity of the city which is situated in an otherwise dusty and lifeless desert.

The crew continued East to the famous pistachio nut-growing area of Rafsanjani.

Thirty miles out, disaster hit – a broken rear axle casing. A few days were lost getting the car repaired. They were next heading for Bam, the last oasis before the 200-mile crossing of the 'desert of death'. On their way across the desert they struggled to repair a couple of punctures and then toppled into a sandy ditch. Sheltering from the sweltering heat in a workman's hut, they were eventually rescued by an army van which took them back for yet more repairs.

From Pakistan they continued on to India taking in Delhi to Agra – to sadly find the Taj Mahal gates closed. They had to contend with flash floods and a damaged radiator on their way to Hyderabad. From there the last leg of the journey was to Madras.

Peter was working on a deadline of 9.30am to be in his office.

Sadly, he was half an hour late! Not bad really after 9,133 miles taking 23 days.


*Apparently, the Jaguar survives and was last heard of in Calcutta!*

*Archimedes the tortoise, the College mascot, is introduced to the Queen Mother during her visit to Wye in 1958.*

# A 'Modern Farmer's Boy' updated in 1944

**(*Mind you, modern used here is a relative term! – Ed*)**

**During the recent lockdown, former Agricola Club President John Hosking (1950–53) came across a modern version of a Farmer's Boy, that had been sung at a gathering in Wiltshire, signed 'J.A.W., near Devizes', and reprinted in the Farmer and Stock-Breeder 26 January,1944. Here it is: I think we all know the tune:**

A city man sat at his desk,
Upon his face a frown,
'I really must make up my mind,
To go from London Town;
I'll buy a farm, there'll be no harm,
To show what I can do,
To plough and mow, to reap and sow,
And be a farmer's boy.'

The man had set behind yon hill
Across the dreary moor,
When in a glistening car, a man
Came to a lawyer's door.
'can you tell me, where e're there be
A farm that I can buy,
To plough and mow, and reap and sow,
And be a farmer's boy.'

The lawyer said, 'I've just the place,
So do no longer stay,
If you've the cash to make a splash,
Your farm will sure to pay.
So come today down Wiltshire way
And you will much enjoy
To plough and mow, to reap and sow
And be a farmer's boy.'

Without delay his permits came,
His crops grew thick and tall,
His profits made him blush with shame,
His barley most of all.
But profits are like promises,
They often fade away,
So farmers all, both great and small,
Be firm and have your say.

*(P.S. The original version was written in the 1800s by poet Robert Bloomfield who, coincidentally, also wrote 'On the banks of the Wye' (which I doubt if anyone has heard of since! – Ed)*.

# The plot thickens ...

**Aussie John Luckock (1964–67) was, supposedly, party to a heinous crime in 1968 ... or was he? What follows is correspondence sent by John to Peter Cooper (1964–67), berating him for 'blabbing' and publicly naming him as one of the perpetrators of a crime committed against Kent University over 50 years ago.***

*Dear Peter*

After nearly six years in the UK, from January 1963, I fled back to Australia in August 1968, fearful that the UK justice system might apprehend me for a misdemeanour that I had no part in planning and in which I was only a minor participant. Since then, for the past 52 years, I have lived in fear and trepidation that Interpol would one day knock on my door and present me with a summons.

My worst fears were realised this week when a parcel arrived from the UK. As you can see from the attached photo, clearly it had been interfered with and it seemed most likely that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), a close relative of MI5 (or is it 6?), was the party responsible, so I hid under the bed. Three days later, with nothing unusual happening, I have emerged, very late at night, to type this message to you.

Horror of horrors; I opened the parcel and read its contents to find that not only was my alleged crime fully described, making it exceptionally easy for the police to gather evidence; but worse still, I was **named**, and even worse, **my home and email addresses were included** in the mailed document. As a result, I have put this property on the market, divorced Lauraine, changed my name, email

*A taste of the Aussie lifestyle*

*For more background, see 'Wye', Volume XVIII, 10, 2019-20, p 100 'Breaking news! Age-old crime at Kent University solved after 55 years'

*John and Lauraine's wedding over 50 years ago. It was held at Littlebourne Church and Peter Cooper's parents were on the guest list (right).*

and phone and am looking for another bed to retreat beneath.

All because you blabbed!!!!

The only good part of this saga is that you have a remarkable memory for detail. I certainly remember the escapade but not nearly as much of the detail so thank you for bringing that back to me.

I enjoyed reading the latest edition of Wye and think that **John Walters** and others have done a marvellous job of assembling this publication which helps to keep memories of Wye alive. Sadly, as one correspondent wrote, it will all come to an end sometime, particularly as the much later student cohort seems not to be particularly engaged. However, the work of the WyeCRAG people seems sensible in seeking long-term recognition of the College and I am inclined to support them.

This has been the year of Covid, which has been more of an issue for you in the UK than for us in Australia, mainly because we, as an island, closed, our borders much sooner than your UK island managed to. Hotel quarantine worked well except in Victoria where a 'stuff-up' allowed the virus to escape from returning travellers into particular segments of the population. As a result, a second wave developed and generated around 700 new cases per day of community transmission in a state population of about 6 million, so not dissimilar to the rate in the UK. Unexpectedly, because we are supposed to be rule breakers, the community complied with some very strict rules and today (6 months later) we've achieved 28 days without any new cases or deaths, which is considered to be elimination of the virus. We are some way from normality but we are reasonably free of rules though very large gatherings, such the MCG test on Boxing Day and the Australian Open Tennis, will have much-reduced crowds.

*Peter Cooper's parents arriving at the church..*

Life for Lauraine and me through the above was reasonably easy as we do not live in Melbourne, though we have an apartment there that we barely saw for six months. The major loss was to international travel, so no getting together with son Nick and family in South Bucks or Ben and his family in Geneva where a new grandchild was born in March. We are very hopeful that a successful vaccine will be available for us to visit both countries next northern summer. Meanwhile, this winter my golf handicap went down to seventeen … but … it is starting to rise again. *(How unusual!– Ed.)*

Last July we celebrated 50 years of marriage, so we asked a silversmith friend to make us a work to commemorate this. His response was to ask us both to write our own obituaries so that he could know more about us; unusual, but it set us to work in the winter. The project expanded into an account of our lives for our grandchildren as they live far from us and are relatively young so know little about us. It is not for wider distribution, but I attach mine to fill in the gaps before and after Wye, should you be interested. I also attach a photo of your parents as they arrived for our wedding at Littlebourne church.

That is enough from me. I hope all is well with you in drizzly Dorset and that you have evaded COVID-type problems. We'll come your way when next we reach the UK but meanwhile keep well and keep in touch.

*Kind regards, John*

PS I have copied **Jon Llewellyn-Jones** on this email in the hope that he might make contact. After all, he was as guilty as you and me.

# The road not taken leads through trees and forests

**For Richard Longhurst (1966–69), from an FAO assignment 30 years ago to recent lockdown experiences, the value of trees is highlighted far beyond the timber they produce .**

Our highly esteemed Journal editor sends out calls for 'Life after Wye' and two years ago I met that request. But I do sometimes think about what might have happened had I not chosen to come to Wye. This exercise is known as 'the road not taken …' .

I was prompted to think this over a few years ago when I met the father of a neighbour who did follow the alternate road that I was considering at the time of coming to Wye. For me there had been a toss-up between studying at Wye or studying forestry at Bangor University. My reasoning not to take the Bangor road was concern about isolation – first, that Bangor itself seemed a rather remote part of the UK, and second that I would end up in a solitary career with only trees in forests for company.

Well, I have been proved wrong. Forests are more than trees and their products are more than timber! Just look how important forests have become in our world: in terms of biodiversity, climate change and encouraging virus-laden species to stay where they are, instead of coming into urban areas. I could not have been more mistaken to underestimate the close interaction between trees and people.

## The importance of 'social forestry'

My error in believing that forestry did not involve people and was only about trees was first driven home to me when, in the late 1980s, I carried out an assignment for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on food security and social forestry in Gujarat, India. This project showed that tree planting could support the diets of poor households and malnourished children, through supplementary sources of food, and support livelihoods through provision of grazing, fodder and shelter to livestock and the generation of rural employment. The forests also provided fuelwood for cooking and food preparation with valuable seasonal aspects to the availability of forest products.

## Forests are more than trees and their products are more than timber!

Trees were used as assets to raise funds and acted as cash crops like any other grown by farmers. But I do remember walking around plantations with forestry officers, armed with tape measures, who only wanted me to appreciate the girth of trees and judging timber as the sole benefit. I saw how the role of local people in accessing the benefits depended on how the project was governed. If you were poor, there was a problem in the delay in income flows while the crop came to harvest; and if trees had replaced annual

crops or grazing land, there was a net loss to the farmer in this period.

## Value of trees in lockdown

Most recently, my appreciation of trees has been generated by Covid lockdowns, gazing from back bedrooms and office windows. I realise this is a privilege, but this has introduced me to the idea of 'forest bathing'. I first learned about this following the sad passing of my brother-in-law four years ago. He was an environmental activist, and one of his greatest achievements was to secure Heritage Lottery funding to rehabilitate a local town park. When I was reading through tributes to him, I saw an appreciation from a commuter saying that, as a result of my brother-in-law's efforts, he was able to practise 'forest bathing' every morning when he crossed the town to go to work.

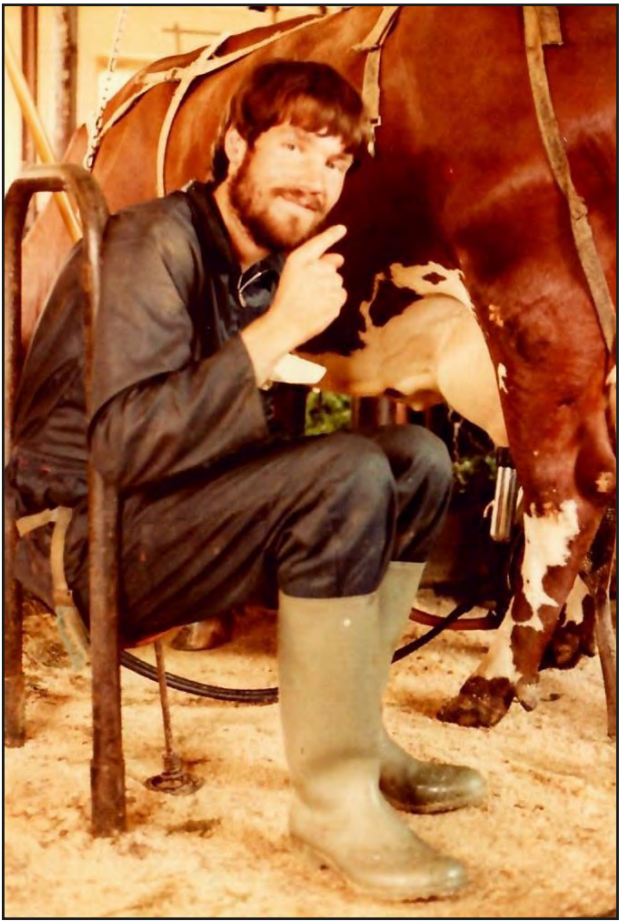
'Forest bathing' is drawn from the Japanese 'shinrin yoku', bathing in the forest atmosphere or taking in the forest through our senses. But there is more to this story. My brother-in-law's academic background was in marine biology at Bangor! In looking through his papers and photographs, I became very familiar with the joys of north Wales, Anglesey and Snowdonia. I think that the lovely, natural environment there would have dispelled any loneliness.

In the end, my two roads were the same: studying agriculture and forestry are both similar, with a focus on the significance of natural resources, the governance of an industry and interaction with a broad range of people. And my friend, who did take the path of Bangor and forestry? You should read the book about his life: Chris Yarrow, *Thirty Years in Wilderness Wood*, published by Matador, 2015. He took a fascinating road!

# Lost in Norway

**Jonathan Hall (1975–78) recalls his time at Wye – great pubs and magnificent beer – and the choices that saw him cross the North Sea and settle in Norway, land of Vikings, snow and mountains.**

I remember my days as a student at Wye College with enormous affection. In many ways I was actually an absolutely appallingly bad student, who paid far too little attention to what I ostensibly was there for – to learn about agriculture. Being at Wye was, for me, far too much about making new and exciting friends and having fun, which I managed quite well I think. Wye and it's environs was also a wonderful place to live, with a lot of great pubs and magnificent beer, which I thoroughly enjoyed. With hindsight I can see that these years were important years all the same. Amongst other things I was treasurer for the student union for a year, which probably taught me something about taking responsibility. Along the way I think I also learned something about making use of what little talent I might possess, and being part of the Christian Fellowship was important for the development of my personal faith. A splendid time!



*Jonathan in his early days on the dairy farm*

When I left Wye my focus was on dairy farming, and I probably had an ambition of one day owning my own farm, and having all kinds of fun planning the breeding and feed rations and the like. My first two jobs were as assistant farm manager on dairy firms, first near Swindon and then in Buckinghamshire. Part of the deal on the farm

outside Buckingham was that I had the run of a cottage, which I shared with two other fellow students from Wye days, **Mike Schofield** and **Martin Soar**. These were care free bachelor days, and most probably a kind of prolongation of student times. One of my fondest memories is of snow blowing in under the front door, and the noise the piping of the home-made central heating made. I remember shrinking most of Mike's and Martin's clothes in a second-hand washing machine with a dicky thermostat. I also recall Mike's cockerel, Geoffrey, who had the run of the house, and the New Zealander (Tony Desmond) who worked with me for a summer and called us 'Pink Poms'.

Whilst in the Buckingham area I got to know an Anglo-Swedish couple and their rather charming Swedish *au pair*. I discovered Scandinavia and thought that I might like to go there. I must have shared this thought with friends and relatives because I later received a telephone call from a Norwegian friend (living in Newcastle) offering to fix me a farm job in Norway for the summer in 1980. I jumped at the chance.

## The New Zealander who worked with me for a summer and called us 'Pink Poms'

My route to Norway was by ferry from Newcastle to Gothenburg (Göteborg) in Sweden, and from there to Oslo by train. I remember to this day how it felt to arrive in Gothenburg, and I think I can say that I fell in love with Scandinavia from day one.

I worked on a vegetable farm south-east of Oslo that summer. I had a great time, and a very sociable on as well. There were many

*Jonathan and Kristin with* ***Martin Soar*** *(1975–78) the best man*

other vegetable farms in the area, and in those days there were young people from all over Europe working there for the summer.

Towards the end of the three-month period I was to work in Norway, I was invited to a camp with a group of students from a Christian fellowship group in Oslo. I met the man who had invited me outside his place of work and waited for the bus to come. We got on board and sat down in front of two girls. To cut a long story short, he married the one, and I married the other.

The story is actually rather more complicated than that. Kristin and I got to know one another a little that weekend. We swear it can't have been looks that attracted us to one another. It rained continuously the whole weekend, and the camp site was a sea of mud.

## To cut a long story short, he married the one, and I married the other

I had thoughts of staying longer in Norway, but any dreams I might have had in that direction were rudely interrupted by a dramatic telephone call I received from England telling me that my father had collapsed on holiday and had been operated on for stomach cancer. I returned home to Newcastle, my father subsequently died after a few months' illness, and I stayed around a while to support my mother and my youngest sister who was still living at home at the time. Kristin and I wrote letters and visited one another, and in the summer of 1981 I was again working on a farm in Norway, this time as a herdsman. Kristin and I got engaged in August the same year, and I moved to Norway in January 1982. An agricultural degree in Norway was a five year affair in those days, approximating to an MSc. I sent my documents from Wye to the Agricultural University of Norway at Ås south of Oslo and was accepted as a student there. I took two years' curriculum compressed into about 15 months. I must admit to being a much more ardent student this time than I had been at Wye. I was, after all, mostly there to gain a qualification and open the doors to a career in Norway. I specialised in animal nutrition, and wrote a thesis on straw treatment, and I also worked as a research assistant at the same time.

I learned Norwegian rapidly and sat all my exams, bar one, in Norwegian, although I could have asked to write them in English. The only subject I took in English was Tropical Agriculture. Many of the students taking that course were from other countries and all the lectures were in English.

Kristin and I married in the summer of 1982, and in June 1983 we both embarked on new careers. Our first port of call was Narvik, about two-thirds of the way to the north cape. Kristin worked as a dentist in Narvik, and I was agricultural adviser in a neighbouring rural area (Ballangen).

# Betteshanger revisited

**Dr Sue Atkinson (1983–86) takes a trip down memory lane to the old colliery, the location for her postgraduate field research.**

When I emailed John to congratulate him on the superb 2019–2020 journal and to say how much I had enjoyed the article he had written about Northbourne, I didn't expect to be asked to write an article for the next edition – especially since the external examiner for my PhD commented that I have the ability to write about inconsequential matters as though they are of great importance: no change then!

I have many very fond memories of Northbourne Park School, mostly as my daughters attended summer music school there, but there is also a very tenuous link with the field work I undertook at Betteshanger Colliery as part of my PhD research. Here is a short trip down memory lane to Betteshanger Colliery, with a brief resumé of the scientific investigation and a light-hearted look at the trials and tribulations of a very inexperienced student's foray into fieldwork.

I studied Animal Science at Wye and my final year dissertation looked at the survival of pathogens in composted sewage. This was followed by an MSc in Biotechnology from the University of Durham, 1986–87, where I spent most of my time at ICI Billingham investigating novel microperoxidases. I returned to Wye in 1987 to carry out research into the use of composted sewage sludge to reclaim derelict land. It was a steep learning curve as up until then most of my university work had been laboratory-based, and I had no experience in running field trials. I had three field sites, two in the Canterbury area and my favourite site at Betteshanger Colliery.

The title of my PhD was 'Evaluation of the Use of Composted Sewage Sludge/Straw for

the Reclamation of Derelict Land'. Derelict land is typically deficient in nutrients, especially nitrogen and phosphorus, whilst lack of organic matter causes physical problems such as inability to retain water. Sewage sludges are rich in organic matter, nitrogen and phosphorus, and they give up their nutrients slowly, thus complementing the needs of derelict land; but they are unpleasant to work with. Between 1985 and 1990, the Southern Water sewage treatment plant in Canterbury composted the sewage sludge with straw by means of a forced-

aeration/static pile process; this process turned the malodorous and unpleasant-to-handle sludge into a relatively odour-free, friable compost, rich in organic matter and slow-release nutrients, ideal for use in ameliorating derelict land. My PhD was sponsored by Southern Water and NERC and I was supervised by Doctors Joe Lopez-Real and Peter Buckley.

The trial at Betteshanger Colliery spoil-site took place on one of the more sheltered areas of the tip where the shale was well-weathered and had a low pyrite content. Two sub-trials were established, looking at the effect of the compost on the establishment of a grass mixture and the growth of native broadleaved trees. The experimental layout for both was a randomised block design with four replicates.

The composted sewage sludge was applied at rates equivalent to 0, 32, 64 and 128 tonnes of dry solids/ha. It was applied as a layer to the grass plots and a tine plough was used to try to incorporate the compost into the spoil. Representative quadrats of herbage were collected from the grass plots at yearly intervals and dried to determine the dry matter yield. The results showed that the composted sewage sludge/straw had a very highly significant effect on the dry matter yield of the herbage, with yield increasing in proportion to the rate of compost application.

For the tree trial, four species of native broadleaved trees were used, and the compost was either spread over the surface of the plot or divided equally between the planting holes. The height and girth of the trees were measured at regular intervals. This trial was far less successful as, for a variety of reasons, many of the trees failed to thrive and had to be replaced the following year.

There was a rough trend indicating that the higher rates of compost application were actually detrimental to the establishment of the trees, but the trees planted in the lowest amount of compost grew more than the control trees. Putting the compost directly

*Sue on site in her marked-out area of grass plots at Betteshanger*

*Betteshanger Colliery which closed in 1989 was the last to work coal in Kent. It was also recognised as having some of the most militant workers in the business in its heyday. Sue was made extremely welcome during her project work. Now the site is an eco-park enjoyed by families of all ages.*

into the planting hole reduced the incidence of the trees socketing. The compost was found to have beneficial effects on the chemical, physical and biological properties of the shale and, although it increased the levels of some heavy metals, these were not detected in the foliage of the crops, suggesting that they were in a form not readily available for plant uptake.

The field trials were one of the more enjoyable aspects of my PhD, despite a lot of hard physical work and the fact that they lurched from one minor mishap to another. My first visit to Betteshanger was almost my last. Due to an unexpected problem, my supervisor was unable to take me to the colliery, so I had to make my own way from Wye which, as I didn't know the way, involved a tortuous journey around some narrow roads in the East Kent countryside. I had a self-guided tour of the colliery offices before discovering that I was in the wrong place; by the time I arrived at the spoil site, I was very late.

I was greeted by a group of men wearing suits, wellies, hard hats and fierce expressions, who berated me for my tardiness and not having a hard hat. However, as soon as I spoke revealing my Midlands accent, all was forgiven as that was where most of them had come from! In fact, permission to work at the colliery came from an office barely a mile from where I had grown up. I continued to make an impression by sinking, almost to the tops of my wellies, on a consolidated roadway and having to be dragged out – whilst they were explaining that I would be able to drive my car along the road in dry weather. True to form, a year later, I had to have my car towed out of the same area after trying to drive it through water which was a lot deeper that I thought.

When I set the field trial up, Betteshanger was still a working colliery. It was quite a bleak landscape and the wind seemed to

blow straight from Siberia. The first time I took a group of people out to help plant trees, the ground was so hard that the augur broke on the first planting hole and we had to resort to using pickaxes to break the ground. I also managed to break most of the rules I had been given, only to discover later that my transgressions were being watched on CCTV!

## I sprained my ankle hitching a lift (no mobile phones in those days) back to Southern Water

Despite all of this, I developed a good working relationship with the colliery, and I always felt welcome on site. The colliery workers were interested in my work and were often willing to lend a hand transporting equipment to my site for me, even though it sometimes involved a high-speed ride in a Land Rover around the spoil site, careering up and down some steep bunds and, on one occasion, a ride in one of the huge earth-moving machines. The mine ceased operation about a year into my trial, and I thought that I would have to abandon my experiments; but fortunately, I was given continued access to the site.

I remained involved with the place long after I had completed my PhD. I was invited to give talks about my field trial to environmental groups (including one led by Professor Tony Bradshaw from Liverpool University who had been my external examiner). I had several meetings with SEEDA (South-East England Development Agency) prior to the spoil site opening as a country park in 2007, and the pleasure of showing David Bellamy a display about my fieldwork. My trees are still there, and the last time I visited I noticed that bivouacs had been made among them and there was still a discernible difference between treatments on the plots of grass.

My field trial disasters weren't limited to Betteshanger. The biggest problem of all actually involved the compost provided by Southern Water as it had been stored very, badly leading to it becoming waterlogged, anaerobic and infected by weeds, which had a very detrimental effect on two of my three field trials. There were problems ordering sufficient trees for the trials and the batch of oak trees failed to thrive, including those which I had planted in a plot at Wye. Many of the remaining trees on my field sites were devoured by rabbits shortly after planting, which meant installation of costly, rabbit-proof fencing and the damaged trees being replaced.

Also, the lorry delivering the compost to one of the sites near Canterbury became stuck in the field as it was too heavy for the wet ground. The driver kindly shut his eyes, put his feet up and told me to sort it out; I sprained my ankle hitching a lift (no mobile phones in those days) back to Southern Water to arrange for the lorry to be towed out of the field. The posthole augur, freshly repaired from its mishap at Betteshanger, was broken when a tractor was reversed over it, so my team of loyal helpers had to dig holes manually. Additionally, one of the tractor drivers had a long journey back to Wye one evening as a tyre burst as he tried to navigate the narrow, hump-backed bridge at Sturry.

And so it went on. My second site in Canterbury was a landfill area which had been capped with a layer of heavy clay, perfect for getting the plough stuck! Other problems encountered involved my personal safety. A man arrived with a gun at one of

*Sue surveys her Westbere plot: a former landfill site, capped with heavy clay that needed ploughing*

my field sites, presumably to shoot rabbits, but as a young female working alone in the middle of nowhere (in the days before mobile phones), it was quite a worrying moment; as was being followed by another man around Canterbury city centre when I was on my way home from visiting my fieldwork. He just kept saying that he knew where I had been working. Sadly, Southern Water ceased their composting operation whilst I was writing my thesis, which made it all seem rather futile.

Life took a different turn after my PhD and I was a full-time mother to my three daughters for about 12 years. I had many interesting voluntary roles in that time, and I am still a governor at a primary school, a committee member of the Agricola Club, a volunteer to English Heritage, treasurer for a bell-ringing organisation, librarian for a symphonic wind band and mentor for young musicians in a brass band. During the corona virus pandemic, I have been delivering meals for Age Concern and volunteering at the local vaccination centre. I have been working as a peripatetic music teacher for over 12 years, teaching woodwind and brass at local primary schools and have been able to continue teaching throughout the pandemic using Zoom.

In case anyone is wondering about the link between Northbourne Park School and my PhD – I used to drive past it on my way from Wye to the colliery and I once gave a lift to one of the lecturers from Wye College, from the school to Betteshanger, as he wanted to see my work.

# The Latin School – a microcosm of Wye College

**This short article by Paul Burnham was first published in the Wye, Brook, Hinxhill and Boughton Aluph *Parish Magazine* in March 2021.**

In February 2021, there was a planning enquiry, conducted electronically, on plans for the conversion of the historic buildings of Wye College into a gated residential complex. Perhaps the saddest feature of the proposals was that the Latin School would become an outbuilding of one of the residential units, with no public access.

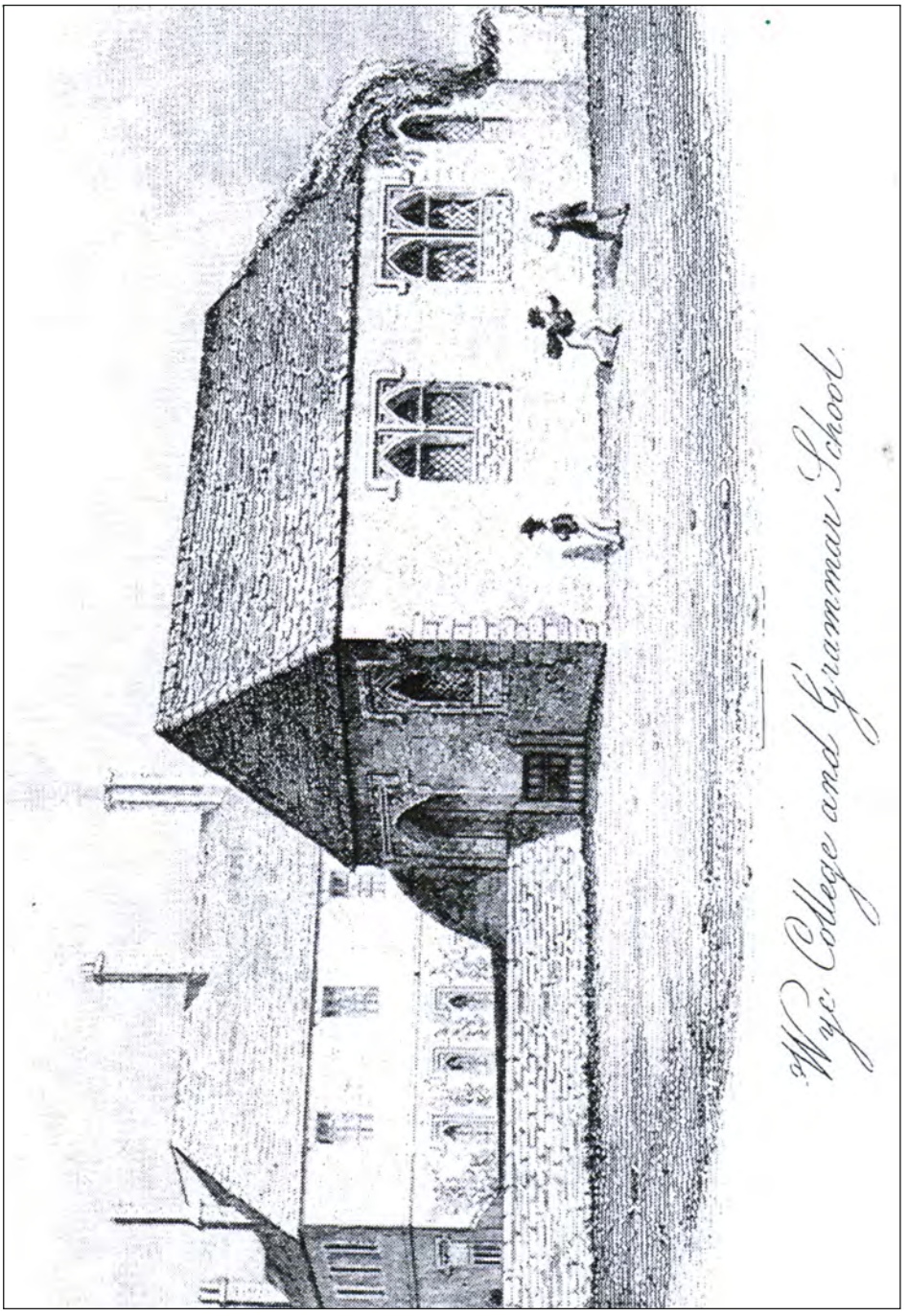
This was strongly contested by both the Parish Council and WyeCRAG, and we await the decision of the inspector.

The Latin School is a unique focus of the history of Wye College in one small building. It was built by Cardinal Kempe as the sumptuously fitted chapel for memorial masses for the founder. Until dissolution in 1544, boys were taught grammar in the Old Hall.

Poorly endowed, the school was transferred to the Chapel, now stripped of its altar, and hung in the balance until about 1600, when it was taken over by the Puritan Nicholls family, latterly the picturesquely named but very able Suretounonhie Nicholls. In 1662, it was taken in hand by the Finches of Eastwell, who appointed a series of competent Oxford graduate heads, who initiated the glory days of the Grammar School, with alumni such as Robert Plot FRS, who became Professor of Chemistry at Oxford University and the first Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, and Sir George Wheler DD, FRS, who travelled for three years in the Near East, making priceless drawings, including one of the Parthenon while intact, He bought the College buildings and left them in trust for educational purposes (now in jeopardy).

The last headmaster of eminence was also parish priest and died in 1812. Philip Parsons established a Sunday School, the oldest in England that still exists, and made a priceless record of monuments and stained glass in East Kent churches. Through the nineteenth century the underfunded Grammar School declined, and after 450 years of history the buildings were taken over by the Agricultural College, and the Latin School was converted into the Principal's billiard room. Its glory days were resumed in 1945, when it became a meeting room for the Academic Board and PhD examinations, and a royal retiring room for visits from the Queen Mother and Princess Anne. Finally, Imperial College allowed its use as a Heritage Centre, for which it has been a great success during the last 12 years.

**NB** *This article complements and adds another angle to the report on the Kemp's Chantry College at Wye, submitted to the Public Inquiry by Kit Wedd (page 26).*



*Wyc. College and Grammar School.*

# Frieda Schimmer, 100, still cooking

**This article by Barbara Butcher about one of the College's much-loved former lecturers was published in the *Kentish Express* on 14 March 2002. Frieda (staff 1945–62) passed away in 2004.**

One of the area's most remarkable residents is definitely Frieda Carver Schimmer.

The former Wye College lecturer is looking forward to tomorrow as it is her 100th birthday and she is proud to have reached this age in Jubilee year.

In her comfortable home in Orchard Drive, Wye, she retains a high degree of independence with some help from carers, but still does some of her own cooking.

Her Bavarian father was granted British nationality. The family lived in London where Frieda went to a school and then to Swanley Horticultural College, obtaining a horticultural certificate enabling her to study at Imperial College for a botany degree.

After four years doing research work, she returned to Swanley as a lecturer in plant pathology. In 1945 she arrived in Wye College as lecturer in plant pathology until she retired in 1962.

She was secretary of the old students' association for Swanley and Wye and hears from many of her former students in this country and overseas.

Until last September she did her own shopping. Now she has good neighbours to take care of this.

Although she is completely deaf, she has a hearing aid and is also a self-taught expert lip reader, who can hold an ordinary conversation with anyone. She can recall events right back to her early childhood days.

She watches little television, but is always interested in University Challenge on Monday, especially as Imperial College, London were finalists last year.

*Frieda on the eve of her 100th birthday.*

She has frequent telephone conversations with her nephew, John Church, son of writer Richard Church.

He is a diplomat and lives in Paris, but comes over to see her frequently and is organising her birthday celebrations to be held at Withersdane, Wye, on March 22. Among those present will be his French wife and nine grandchildren.

Frieda is a great reader, in spite of having had two cataract operations. She says: 'I read right through *The Times* every morning after my breakfast.'

There will certainly be a telegram from the Queen among the many congratulations, so well deserved by a very unique personality.

*This picture of Frieda (second from right) with some of her students was taken in 1955. Do you recognise any old friends or relatives, or do you have fond memories of Frieda's classes? We would love to know – Ed.*

# The 'Prin': Dunstan Skilbeck

**David Gooday (1967–71) sings the praises of the man who ran the College in his day.**

Many of us have feelings of respect, admiration and awe towards our headmaster, team captain, pastor or priest, or some other person in a position of authority. I was thinking the other day about whether I had ever held such a person in authority in that sort of regard. I can remember only one who fitted this description during my national service; that was the Regimental Sergeant-Major at Eaton Hall, the training centre for National Service officers. He was an Irishman of imposing appearance by the name of Lynch. He was accustomed to addressing recently arrived recruits by saying: 'While you are at this establishment, I will address you as "Sir", and you will address me as "Sir". The difference is – you mean it.'

After National Service, I went to Wye College. I first met the Principal, Dunstan Skilbeck, when I was 17 during my interview, accompanied by my parents. I particularly remember something he said to my father: 'It is good to find someone who speaks up!' My enthusiasm for becoming a student at Wye must have been obvious, and I have certainly never regretted it!

**I will address you as 'Sir', and you will address me as 'Sir'. The difference is – you mean it**

He was known as 'the Prin'. We had a song which described some of the activities at the College (see page 196):

*Wye Tug of War*

*The last time David Gooday saw the Prin he was in his seventies and on horseback*

Whenever I saw the Prin walking around the College, I was struck that he recognised me! Later on, I realised it must have been because we used to have an evening service in the College Chapel called 'Compline' which I often led, and he occasionally attended. And then he knew me because I used to sing Gilbert and Sullivan songs in our occasional concerts. On one occasion, after what must have been quite a lively night, I went up with a group of friends to Amage Farm sometime early in the morning. Amongst those gathered on the silage clamp was none other than the Prin himself, who asked me to sing a G&S song!

Then, there was the occasion when someone had put up a notice saying that nationalism was a good thing, and I had written a disagreement and stated that patriotism was good. Next time we met, The Prin pointed out the distinction between patriotism and nationalism!

In a later year, the Queen Mother was touring the College in her capacity as the 'Visitor', and I happened to be in a row of students, most of whom were foreign, that she was introduced to. She was very genial and, most unexpectedly because I don't think I was supposed to be there, she asked me if I enjoyed studying at Wye. It so happened that I had just failed some vital examinations and was at risk of being terminated, but as the Queen Mother was standing next to the Prin, I answered: "I wouldn't change it for anything!"

The last time I saw him was on a visit to Wye when I was on home leave from Tanzania. By

*'I'll give you 12-Oh, Green Grow the Rushes Oh*

*What is your 12-Oh?*

*12 for the hours of a Saturday night, and*

*11 for the hours of a weekday;*

*10 for the nerves of a dogfish;*

*9 for the Malling dwarfing stock, and*

*8 for the spores of an ascus;*

*7 for the years of a syllabus revision*

*6 for the legs of an insect*

*5 for the vitamins A to E, and*

*4 for the four departments*

*3, three professors ----*

*2 for the maids in The Old Fly bar, pouring out the beer ho ho,*

*And **1 for the Prin who's all alone and evermore shall be so.'***


this time, he was well into his seventies, if not more, and he was sitting on a horse, having just been out for a ride.

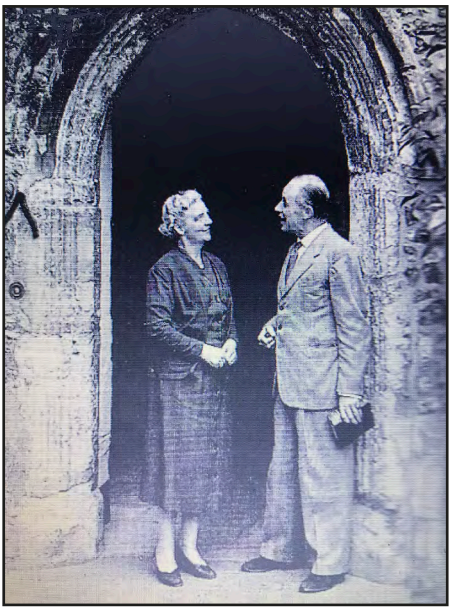
Tony Dye had the following recollections; he recalled the Prin's talk to freshers on their first day in College and thought he could be quite formidable whilst at the same time having an engaging manner which put you at ease. He remembers his interview after his failure to secure the necessary standard at the end of the first year Honours course, which had been interrupted by the death of his father. The Prin leaned toward him and said: 'Skilbeck will do his very best to persuade the Principal that you can return to do the General course.'

Tony also recalls meeting him in Zambia and discussing the possibility of a postgrad course; the Prin immediately suggested that he contact his old College, St Johns at Oxford, with a view to taking the Ag Econ Dip. He had a way of engendering enormous respect from a wide variety of people. A delightful

*The Prin with the late Duke of Edinburgh on Bonfire Night*

character – fear, wonder and respect – above all, geniality. It was said, by those who knew, that he kept the College going economically by employing few senior staff – and those we had were outstanding (Holmes, Miles and Wain to name but a few) – and more junior staff of great potential.

Alas, when he had gone, subsequent authorities were unable to keep the cost of running the College at a manageable level – there were 206 undergraduates in my time - too small! Selling out to Imperial College proved to be a total disaster. If only we had accepted an offer to join the University of Kent at Canterbury! Now we are left only with memories.



*The Prin with Sita Smyth*

# Wye College and the Rural Community Councils

**In this short article, Alan Rogers (postgrad 1967–68; Staff 1969–2002) recalls his long association with the RCCs and their special connection with the College.**


*Alan Rogers spent much of his life working alongside the RCCs.*

**Jo Buffey's** (1975–78) 'Life after Wye' piece in the last edition of the *Journal* mentioned that she had worked at various times for two Rural Community Councils (RCCs), Bedfordshire and North Yorkshire. This reminded me that she was not alone in working for an RCC – in fact, perhaps 20 or more Wye graduates worked for RCCs over the years, most with a degree background in Rural Environment Studies, but including at least two research students and a graduate from the MSc programme in Landscape Ecology, Design and Maintenance.

Rural Community Councils are county-based charities working with rural communities to improve livelihoods for rural people. They are involved in a wide range of activities, from fostering affordable housing to rural transport, from community planning to supporting social enterprise. Many people will know them for their support for village halls. I first got involved with the RCCs in the mid-1970s when I arranged courses at Wye for new RCC staff and subsequently got involved both at the local level and nationally.

2020 saw the centenary of the creation of the first RCC in Oxfordshire and this inspired me to recall the particular contribution which Wye graduates have made to the history of RCCs. To that end, I contacted a number of former students and so was able to bring together a collection of fascinating reminiscences. The report is far too big to include in the Journal but it is available to download through the good offices of Francis Huntington and the Wye Heritage Centre (see below).

The growth in interest in environmental issues from the mid-1960s led to several universities developing undergraduate courses, mainly under the heading of environmental science. At Wye, where the programme in Rural Environment Studies welcomed its first students in 1970, the approach was rather different. First, and

most obviously, the course had a clear rural focus, playing to Wye's strengths developed over many years. Second, there was a strong element of social science – economics, sociology, human geography etc – in the programme. These two emphases gave clear differentiation from the more purely science-focused degree programmes.

## The growth in interest in environmental issues from the mid-1960s led to several universities developing undergraduate courses, mainly under the heading of environmental science

This development at Wye coincided nationally with a real increase in interest in rural issues in the UK. It was a time of new policies, new research and new and changing organisations. For the Rural Community Councils, the significant development was the creation of the Community Initiative in the Countryside scheme from the early 1970s and the introduction of young, keen staff who would open up news areas of RCC work - and often challenge the ideas of older staff. The timing could not have been better!

The varied work of RCCs meant that their staff had to engage with all sorts of rural people – farmers and growers, retirees, newcomers, shopkeepers and other business people, environmental activists, old-established families etc. And the Wye graduates understood the nature of rural Britain and its people in the changed circumstances of the mid-twentieth century; and they had the skills to talk to them all on their own terms. The result? Upwards of 20 or more graduates worked in rewarding jobs for RCCs, especially in the 10 years or so from the mid-1970s. Some stayed for just a few years before going on to other careers, while a few stayed for much longer – a success story by any standards.

The stories of some of the Wye graduates who worked for the RCCs can be found on the website of the Wye Heritage Centre at: www.Wyeheritage.org.uk.

Those who provided their stories are Louise Beaton (née **Virgo**), **Jo Buffey**, James Derounian, David Emerson, David Francis, **Sarah Hann** (née England), Angela Henslow (née Wheeler), Sarah Howard, **Janet Law** (née **Ridge**), Rosemary Milton (née Scott-Miller), Alan Rogers, Neil Virgo (from Louise Beaton), **Hilary Winter** (née **Thomas**). Mention is also made of Colin Gray and Gerald Wibberley.

*(NB names in bold signify membership of the Agricola Club.)*

# An insider's view of pig-farming in East Yorkshire: then and now

**Responding to a clarion call sent by Roger Packham to his fellow-alumni, Sally Osgerby (née Davies, 1962–66) produced this lovely write-up for the Journal, virtually 31 years to the day since she and husband Mick moved into their first tenanted farm. Here it is, in a (large) nutshell.**

*Thinking about your request for 'more pig info' made me realise how much things have changed on our operation …*

We arrived at Shrubbery Farm on Lady Day 1990. Mick had been granted the tenancy of 450 acres on the Crown Commissioners' Sunk Island Estate. We were ecstatic to own our first tenanted Farm after 25 years in farm management. Sunk Island, on the north bank of the Humber estuary, had the best wheat-growing land in the world and Mick was a Grower (with a capital G), passionate about soil and plant growth. He was not a livestock man …

But the farm came with a 220-sow unit producing bacon pigs. This was typical for the area. Our neighbours had similar units and at that time the East Riding of Yorkshire was one of the most densely populated areas with pigs of anywhere in the country. However, it soon became clear to us that Margaret Beckett, the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, appeared more interested in the fact that more caravans were made in East Yorkshire than in the rest of the UK! That was a sign of the way things were going.

These East Yorkshire breeding/finishing units were closed herds, operating a system of farrowing 10 sows a week; weaning 10 sows each week with 100 piglets. These piglets were moved round four different houses as

*Over the years the farm has been a hive of activity as the pigs come and go.*

they grew, until they were the 100 bacon pigs that went down the drive that week.

It was relentless. Mick hated the routine – he was made to be in the middle of a large, windswept field. It was more my scene.

As everyone in the area had similar units, there was a great sense of community. The Holderness Pig Discussion Group met monthly and the pub was full to bursting with enthusiastic participants. The annual outing was a trip to a European pig fair – easier to access via North Sea Ferries than a train to Smithfield and much more fun!

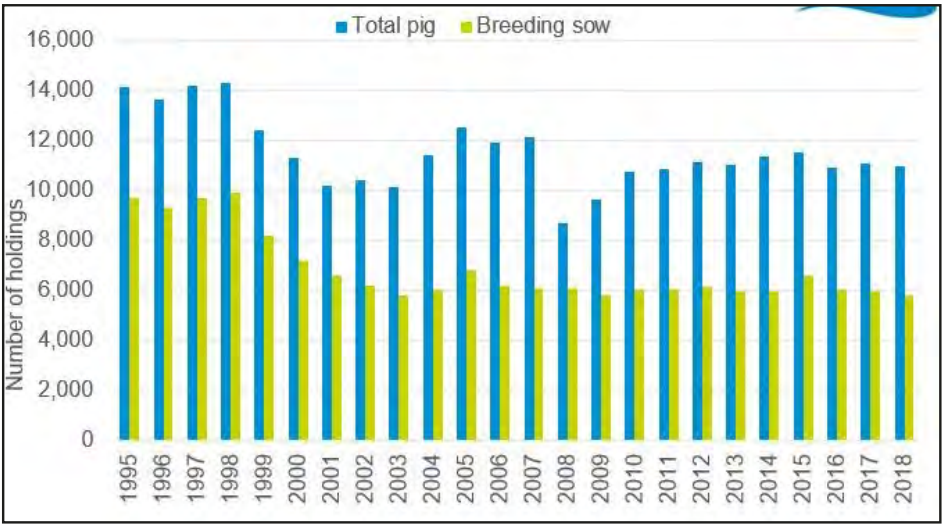
But cracks were beginning to appear in the pig industry as outside influences took their toll. Regulations from Brussels were increasing the cost of production. Supermarkets saw an advantage in publicising their support for farmers adhering to the new welfare-friendly systems. They failed to acknowledge that they were importing pig meat from countries with scant regard for the new regulations (using medications banned in the UK, misleading labelling etc.). Interestingly, the same arguments concerning un-level playing fields are being regurgitated today about Brexit.

The upshot was that we, and most of our neighbours, abandoned pig-keeping before the turn of the century. The number of sows in the UK almost halved and those remaining were concentrated in fewer, larger units. I have used the DEFRA June Returns Data to show how sow numbers in the UK have changed:

**Sow numbers**

| Year | Total breeding herd (000s) |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 777 |
| 2019 | 404 |

Breeders increased the size and efficiency of their units and were producing more pigs. So, bed-and-breakfast pig-keeping grew to fatten these pigs. The breeders found farmers who would give their pigs a bed and




*UK Holdings with pigs and sows (Source: Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board)*

*Wheat and barley straw has proved to be the best beddings for pigs in the b&b system.*

generally look after them until they reached the weight required. Most farmers with b&b units use straw-based systems, as this is an arable area, and the pig manure is returned to the land.

**It was tough when we dismantled our breeding/fattening unit in the late 1990s. It was as though the farm had lost its soul**

The table is taken from the AHDB data-base and shows that the number of holdings in the UK with sows has decreased, from over 9000 in 1995, to under 6000 in 2019. I have not been able to find b&b stats but would expect more holdings now to have fattening units only, compared to the breeder/finisher units common in the past.

We converted a redundant potato store into pens, with ad lib feeders and drinkers. It houses 500 pigs. We have tried various types of bedding, but wheat and barley straw is generally used although oilseed rape straw works well *(see photo above)*.

Like most b&b systems, it is 'all in all out'. This means the whole building is filled with pigs at one time, which helps control disease; (another disease precaution is a ban on pork products in 'pack ups' for anyone working on the unit). During the week after the building is emptied, it is power washed and disinfected before the next batch arrives. Throughput is about five batches a year.

The cash flow is pretty steady. We don't buy the pigs or the food; they belong to the breeder. Our contract is to take the pigs at 40kg and provide bedding, water and care. This involves looking at them every day and keeping them healthy. The main work load is weighing them to ensure we send out the weight of pig requested which is, presently,

between 120–135kg – a very different animal from the sophisticated 90kg baconer we sold in the 1990s. I could control a 90kg pig, but those over 100kg send me flying! We are paid so much per head for every pig sold.

A few years ago, we doubled up, putting up a new shed for 500 pigs.

It was tough when we dismantled our breeding/fattening unit in the late 1990s. It was as though the farm had lost its soul. I missed the lorries coming into the yard bringing feed or taking pigs. The constant demands of the phone ceased, but worse was the silence in the yard. The b&b pigs have restored the farm's heart, with the rumble of the feed lorry on Wednesday nights and the bang of the ramp as the transporter drops off the new intake (*see left*).


*Sally and Mick have bred pigs for over 30 years on the Sunk Island Estate in East Yorkshire.*

# HRH Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother visits Wye College: for the fourth and final time

**Michael D Payne (1978–81) gives the Royal appearance in 1980 the regal treatment and fills in some of the back stories of earlier visits.**

The 26th June 2020 marked the 40th anniversary of the fourth and final visit of Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother to Wye College. The anniversary of that occasion was an altogether much quieter affair, not simply than the day it marked, but also in that which had been planned. The lockdown imposed because of Covid-19 meant that the streets of Wye were deserted and the intended display at the Latin School, itself transformed into her robing room and where sherry had been taken in the garden four decades earlier, had to be postponed. This, then, is the story of that day in 1980 and the background to her visit.

*The Queen Mother visiting the garden created for her in the Quad with Head Gardener Ted Pilkington (right) and the late Tom Wright.*

## So began a succession of no less than four visits to Wye by the Queen Mother

It is well known that Wye has had royal connections and visits since Saxon times. These were perpetuated by Cardinal John Kemp and with visits by King Henry VI, notably in September 1451, when it is highly probable that he inspected Kemp's College of St Gregory & St Martin at Wye, which Henry himself had authorised some 20 years earlier and had then recently opened in 1447.

It was to be a further 500 years before another royal visit would come to pass. This was on 26 June 1951 for the Opening of the Hall of Residence at Withersdane by HRH Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, during the Annual Commemoration. The Earl of Athlone was himself Chancellor of London University, hence it was only natural that his successor in that role, HRH Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, should be invited to her

*The Queen Mother in her Chancellor's robes greeting the public in Wye.*

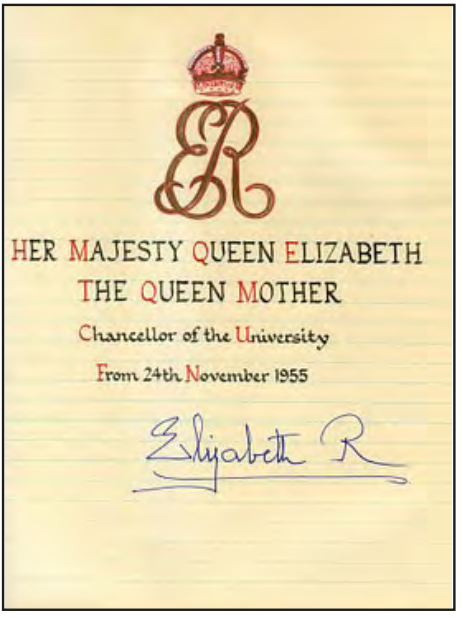
first Annual Commemoration Day at Wye on 1 July 1958. Indeed, HRH Princess Alice had remarked about the dynamic energy of the Principal of Wye College, and Dunstan Skilbeck was not one to let an opportunity like this pass him by!

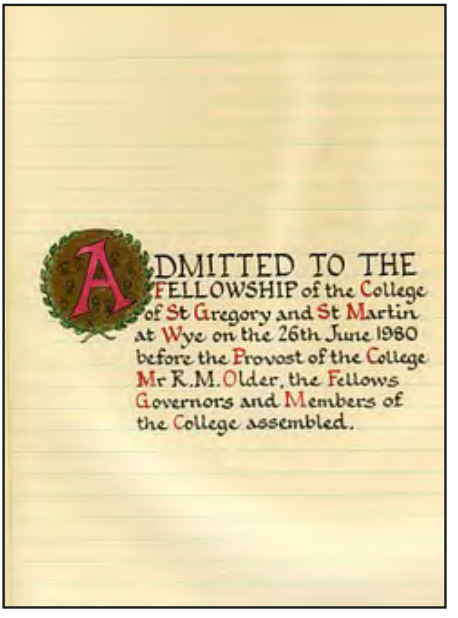
So began a succession of no less than four visits to Wye by the Queen Mother over the following decades. Her first was followed, seven years later, by one on 6 July 1965 when Dunstan Skilbeck was still in post as Principal. The third such visit, again for Commemoration Day, was on 28 June 1973, by which time Harry Darling had been appointed successor to Skilbeck. But it was her fourth and final visit on 26 June 1980, at the invitation of Principal Ian Lucas, that was to be perhaps her most triumphant, occurring as it did just 38 days before her own 80th birthday.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, Chancellor of the University, arrived by helicopter on the village green in rain which stopped as her car reached the Latin School gate. Back in 1958 she had arrived at Wye station by train and for her subsequent two visits, her helicopters had landed on Hollands Field at Withersdane (*bottom left in 1980*). The weather stayed dry for her procession to church together with that of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, whose presence added yet more dignity and colour.

The service itself was notable for fine choral music directed by **Prof Berkeley Hill** (staff) and, as always, was the cornerstone of Commemoration. It began with a rousing rendition of Hubert Parry's Psalm 122, 'I was glad' by the choir, before all gathered in the Parish Church of St Gregory & St Martin at Wye sang the National Anthem. Later during the service, which was conducted by the College Chaplain, Canon David Marriott, 'Lord of beauty, thine the splendour' was sung to the tune of 'Westminster Abbey', followed by Psalm 84. The first lesson was read by the Provost, Mr Reg M Older, before the choir sang the anthem '*Expectans expectavi*', with the words of C H Sorley put to music by Charles Wood. The second lesson, read by the Vice-Chancellor, was followed by that timeless hymn, 'Come down, O Love divine'. The roof was raised for one final time before the Blessing with 'God of grace and God of glory' to the music of 'Heathlands'.

*The Queen's Mother's visit on 26 June 1980 in the very special year of her 80th birthday. She came at the invitation of the Principal Ian Lucas, just to her right in the photograph.*




*The Queen Mother was Chancellor of London University and a Fellow of Wye.*

*Archbishop Robert Runcie leads the procession to the church in 1980.*

Afterwards, Her Majesty was presented with the *Old Book of Wye* by the village and spoke to some of its most senior and junior citizens. Before lunch, on behalf of the College, she received from Mr Michael Nightingale her Coat of Arms carved in stone and fixed in the Middle Quadrangle. The bill of fare for the Commemoration Luncheon, itself held in College, included chilled honeydew melon, followed by fresh Scotch salmon served with assorted Wye salads and new Kent potatoes and a desert of Wye strawberries and cream, before being completed by coffee and petit fours. All was washed down with Vouvray, Cote du Rhone – Rosé and Port!

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, Chancellor of the University, had most graciously honoured the College by accepting an invitation to become a Fellow and to be installed on Commemoration Day itself. During the afternoon installation ceremony in the marquees at Withersdane, The Provost called upon the Principal of the College to present the Citation of Admittance of the Chancellor. After the Citation Address, the Provost admitted the Chancellor to the Fellowship and the Lord Northbourne welcomed the Chancellor into Fellowship. Her Majesty, as Chancellor and the newly admitted Fellow of Wye College, then addressed the Company. She was thanked by the Principal before all rose for the Chancellor's Procession to leave. Her Majesty was then shown the garden that had been created in her honour within the courtyard of Withersdane, entering it from near the doorway that in 1951 had been graced by Princess Alice. Afterwards Her Majesty had tea with a group of students before joining garden party guests on the lawn. The sun by now was bright and warm, but later when the helicopter was due to take off from Hollands Field, very black clouds gathered, and Her Majesty had no sooner left than there was a terrific deluge. The weather's timing had been impeccable throughout the day!

The final words regarding the occasion belong to Ian Lucas, the Principal, who described the pleasure of the Queen Mother's visit to Wye at the start of a whole summer of national festivities and formalities to mark her 80th birthday on 4 August that year:

> *'The day was one of people. Few formal presentations – posies from the children – sherry in the Latin School Garden – marmalade for Clarence House from the "Wooden Spoon" – the ever-helpful police – lunchtime laughter with Archbishop and Provost – finding the Lady-in-Waiting's student son – hats and introductions at the Garden Party – Her Majesty nearly lost among the guests – Sir Malcolm Gilliat (and ourselves) worried about impending rain – Queen Elizabeth not worried about*

*The Royal Standard flies over Withersdane hall during the Queen Mother's visit in 1980.*

*impending rain. A very full day at Royal request. A very happy and memorable day for Wye and all who shared it.'*

Mention must also be made of Dame Francis Campbell-Preston, née Frances Olivia Grenfell, who accompanied the Queen Mother as her lady-in-waiting that day. Coincidentally, her elder half-sister, Sybil Vera Grenfell had been Lady in Waiting to HRH Princess Alice between 1943 and 1945, just six years before the Countess of Athlone herself had attended Withersdane to open the new Hall of Residence.

Dame Frances was also Joyce Grenfell's sister-in-law and her late husband, Patrick Campbell-Preston, was in Colditz with Douglas Bader. Indeed, it was his fellow prisoner-of-war, none other than Sir Martin Gilliat KCVO MBE LLD, the Queen Mother's Private Secretary, that made all the arrangements for the day and who was also in attendance. Back in 1965, it had been Sir Martin who had asked Dame Frances to be a Woman of the Bedchamber, or lady-in-waiting, to the Queen Mother.

Furthermore, Grenfell Tower, built in 1974, was named after Grenfell Road, the Victorian street in which it stands. The street itself was named after another military Grenfell, Field Marshal Lord Grenfell (1841–1925), who had been Dame Frances's great-uncle. Her extensive connections do not end there; William Waldegrave, the former Conservative Cabinet Minister, is her nephew and moreover she had a son at Wye! Dame Frances is also to be congratulated having celebrated her 102nd Birthday in September 2020.

# On Your Farm – Wye College

**A brief summary of the BBC radio programme which shone a light on what has been great and what is now lost: *My advice is to tune in yourself, the details are at the end of the article – JW.***

Scheduled to coincide with the week that the Public Inquiry into the developer's plans for the college buildings and surrounding land took place, BBC's Radio 4 Saturday morning *On Your Farm* was given over to Wye College, its past glories and worldwide importance to agriculture and horticulture, and its legacy. In that regard, two colourful examples stick in the mind – *Brewers Gold* hops and highly fragrant cyclamen plants; both were bred 'over the road from the squash courts' and both are firmly established in their fields.

But there was much more to the radio programme than a couple of plants. The breadth of the education delivered at Wye and the life experiences gained there were brought vividly to life by some outstanding participants. But before they were allowed to speak, we were fed some impressive information about one or two of our more illustrious alumni. For example, who knew that the current Prime Minister of Mozambique, Carlos Agostinho do Rosario, had attended Wye (unfortunately, he did not join the Agricola Club!)? Or that Wye can claim four University Vice Chancellors, two Ministers of Agriculture, let alone the UK's current Environment Minister, **Rebecca Pow** (1979–82). She thought a particularly fun aspect of Wye was the 3:1 ratio of men to women. And were we all aware that students from over 40 different countries, outside of Europe, has been educated here? Maybe you were, but can you name them all?

That was all colourful and interesting background. We were led into the heart of

the programme by Professor **Chris Baines** (1966–69), who read horticulture at Wye and is an artist when it comes to 'mind-painting' the scenery and the environment. He even reminisced about the fact that, on arrival at Wye Station for his interview, back in the 1960s, the air was filled with the small of apple blossom. So typical of the guy to notice that when he was about to face the dreaded interview panel to secure his place and have somewhere to spend his £500 a year grant! Chris also recalled that the 1960s were a time of student revolution around the world; his contribution was organising revolutionary barn dances with girls from the PE College at 'nearby' Nonington.

**Professor Chris Baines (1966–69), who read horticulture at Wye and is an artist when it comes to 'mind-painting' the scenery and the environment**

He was later joined (on the radio) by Emeritus Professor Alan Buckwell (1965–68 and Staff), a well-known agricultural economist who touched on his time as a student and member of staff. Dr John Meadley (1965-68) who, post-Wye, founded the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association, added his memories; as did Emeritus Professor Syed Jalaludin who was a postgraduate student from Malaysia in the 1960s. When asked if it had been a culture shock arriving in England for the first time and entering this small, ancient college, he responded, 'Not at all. We all read Shakespeare at school.' He also recalled being more concerned that no keys were issued for the student's study/bedrooms in College and if you happened to oversleep, the lovely cleaning ladies would knock on the door and walk in to move you on.

In addition to the personnel inputs, other snippets were inserted like the BBC visit in 1958 when the accents of the interviewer and Dunstan Skilbeck, Principal, were of the 'cut-glass variety'. The programme also recalled the time when *Tomorrow's World* recorded an episode in 1974 that focused on Professor Louis Wain's work on herbicides and pesticides. There were references to removing bed-sheets to wear for a Druid event on the Crown and less auspicious aspects as the public became disenchanted with farming and more questioning about food sourcing, resulting eventually in a lack of students and a lack of funding.

**It's difficult to do the programme justice in the time I have available. Much better, if you did not listen in at the time, to pick it up on line (or get hold of a five-year-old to do it for you!) It will be available at least until the end of the year. It is really worth a listen.**

BBC Radio 4, *On Your Farm*, Wye College 31 January 2021 https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000rv53.

# College 'stirs' of the 60s and 70s

**By definition, these were acts expressly designed to cause controversy, or raise a disturbance, writes Editor John Walters. Rarely did they cause pain. At least once per year, a Stirrer was appointed whose duty it was to mastermind a good programme of exploits. The only item of office was a wooden spoon, a simple but essential bit of kit, never to be parted from the holder. Here is a selection of stirs, some of which have appeared in these pages before which but bear repeating; and are none the worse for it!**

Over the following pages, we are delighted to present some 'Stirs' of the late 1960s/ early 1970s, as related by some of the reprobates involved, some of whom featured in the first three photos in this article which were taken in July 1971, following graduation.

*Left to right:* ***Bob Miles*** *(aka 'Smiler'), the late Prof 'Willy' Holmes and* ***Mark Tinsley*** *– celebrating after results when Bob and Mark both received 1st Class Honours!*


*Left to right:* ***Roger Chesher***, ***Martin Hoskins***, ***Julia Hoskins*** *(née* ***Ball****)*, ***Timothy Skelton***, ***Mo Green***, ***Hilary Collins***, *'Spreader' (aka* ***David McCullagh****) celebrating outside the King's Head Hotel*

*Below left to right:* ***Martin Hoskins***, ***Julia Hoskins*** *(née* ***Ball****)*, ***Mark Tinsley***, ***Moira Frood*** *(née* ***Green****)*, ***Andrew Hodge*** *(aka 'Herbert')*, ***Hilary Major*** *(née* ***Collins****)*, ***David McCullagh*** *(aka 'Spreader')*

## The Medical Examination Stir

*As related by **Tim Skelton** (1968–71)*

I can recall in our second year inviting all male freshers for a medical. I was one of the doctors and **Nick Gardner** was the other. **Rex Walters** and **Henry Taylor** were the very responsible JCR volunteers guiding the unfortunates to their destination. They had very official looking clip-boards and wore their gowns and were most helpful.

We persuaded Sister to let us use her surgery for the stunt in the main halls of residence.

We were appropriately made up, white coats, stethoscopes, grey hair and access to all the examination equipment in the surgery. **Robert Montgomery**, who left Wye somewhat prematurely, was brought in as the 'Consultant' since his face was unknown to the Freshers.

Many students attended individually at their appointed time. Whilst some admitted after the event that they were suspicious, they just did not challenge the examination in case it was for real.

I remember starting the examinations initially fairly cautiously with just a few innocuous questions. However, as the scam appeared to be working and we grew in confidence, questions became more searching about personal lifestyle choices and examinations became more thorough, including asking for trousers to be dropped prior to coughing!

On reflection, I don't know how we got away with it. If we tried it today no doubt we would be locked up!

## Timmy the Mole Stir

*As related by **Robert Macaulay** (1967–70)*

Timmy the Mole was masterminded by **Johnny Cooke-Hurle** (1967–71), Stirrer for that term.

One Monday, a molehill appeared in the main quad, followed by increasing numbers over the next few days. **Bob Macaulay** recalls collecting molehill soil from the Wye Downs. There was concern amongst some of the College staff about the appearance of molehills and there was talk of worms laced with strychnine being put down, to no avail. Unfortunately, the journey over the weekend from the main quad to the second quad under the dining room, proved too much for Timmy. On the following Monday his final molehill was found in the next quad, accompanied aptly by a quotation from Scott's last message from the South Pole: 'We are in a very tight corner and I have doubts of pulling through …'. His death was marked by a moving procession through the full dining room accompanied by the tolling of a bell and conducted appropriately by the Bishop, alias **Peter Riches** whose father was Bishop of Lincoln. The whole dining room rose to their feet in silence as the funeral cortege passed through.

## The 'Window Decorators' Stir

***Chris Major** (1966–69) offers the following*

This was a 1968/69 event orchestrated by a group in their final year. They arrived at a neighbouring College in a decorators' van plus ladders and white suits to demonstrate a new window-cleaning product. They proceeded to paint what I suspect was whitewash with a bit of potassium permanganate added to make it more like Windolene on the window sections of ground floor laboratories and lecture rooms. **Bob Markillie** was Foreman. Those inside had to turn on lights as they were immersed in darkness. Apparently, they were satisfied with the explanation that, once the wonder cleaning product had dried, the workmen would return and 'buff' up the glass!

## The 'Explosive' Stir

***Martin Hoskins** (1968–71) recalls two Stirs*

The first concerned Will Partridge who occupied a room in D corridor. Will was into guns, black powder and anything that made a bang. He learnt that, if you mixed several chemicals in solution, you created the substance that was used in percussion toy guns. When this solution settled out and was dried the resulting powder would spark and detonate like a cap gun when you walked on it. Will decided he would make a bulk batch in a large jam jar. All went well until he decided he would centrifuge the mixture to speed up the settling process. He tied a length of baler twine around the neck of the jam jar and swung it round as fast as he could like a windmill. The result was a line of 'explosive' liquid along the length of D corridor's ceiling and floor. When the spilt liquid dried … yes, it worked and anyone walking up the corridor set off bangs and sparks much to everyone's entertainment. The crowning glory was next morning when Greta the cleaner used her electric polisher on the corridor floor! After a salvo of bangs from the polisher she screamed with fright, ran off and refused to use it again.

## Need a lift?

Secondly, although he had retired when we started, our year was the last intake admitted under the legendary **Dunstan Skilbeck** regime. Academic ability was not the only consideration when selecting new students!

Thinking of Mr Skilbeck reminds me of another stir which was before our time. I am not sure of all the details, but I understood that one of the lecturers' bicycle was hoisted up the flagpole at Withersdane, which didn't meet with approval from some of the staff. The bicycle had to be taken down and the culprits were invited to visit the 'Prin'. When they went to his office, he listened to the details. Legend has it that instead of the punishment they were expecting they were asked to put it back up the flagpole as he had not seen it! True? Makes for a good story anyway!

## The MGTF Stir

The second was at the expense of Spreader (nee **David McCullagh**). Spreader had a black MGTF, of which he was extremely proud (and protective). One afternoon after exams a large group of students were at the King's Head in the bar and spilling out into the street. Tim Skelton and I slipped over to the garage where the polished shiny TF was kept. And with the aid of a screwdriver, we started the car and slowly cruised down the road past the pub. We heard later that Spreader, who at that stage was enjoying his pint, was really excited to see another TF coming down the road, just like his! Suddenly panic set in as he realised that it was his, and I can still picture him running up the road after us not knowing whether to laugh or cry!

***Bob Miles** (1967–71) remembers another incident.*

There was a race, on a Sunday morning, back to Wye from Bob Montgomery's home in Thanet. We had at least a couple of cars and the police had noticed that there was a bit of racing going on and stopped the mid-race leader, **Martin Hoskins** (1968–71), half-way down the Chartham straight. A minute later Montgomery whizzes past, double declutching and flashing his lights . 'Do you know that driver' PC42 asked Martin who innocently replies to the policeman 'Yes – we are all students at Wye!'

## The VD Survey Stir

***Rex Walters** (1968-1973) recalls several Stirs*

I remember the VD survey undertaken in 1970 (I believe) for all Fresher men. They received a note in their pigeonholes saying that there had been a dramatic increase in STIs in all London colleges and that a survey of all gentlemen joining the College was necessary. They were requested to fill out a confidential questionnaire and asked to return it to Sister Austin Clarke. There was, surprisingly, a very good response and Sister said (with a big smile) that she could not let us view them as there were some very 'personal' disclosures.

John Pettit-Mills was a successful College Stirrer, although his reign was somewhat mired by the temporary loss of the spoon and of the windows to his room in A Block. JPM, during his Stirrer's speech to the JSR, suddenly realised that the spoon was suspended by baler twine from the rafters of the Old Lecture Theatre. Meanwhile, the A-block windows shared a similar fate in the Quiet Common Room.

His contemporaries will remember John for his consummate performances at formal dinners and his exploits in his car during Cricket Week on the lawns of Withersdane.

## The Wall Stir

At some time in the early 1970s, new fire regulations came in which required fire doors between each of the old college blocks – this curtailed the regular running, cycling and (on one occasion, motor bike) challenge for getting from Block A stairs to the end of E block in the shortest time. The student response was to organise the building of a wall between blocks C and D one night. The activity began at 11pm when bricks, mortar and tools were 'borrowed' from Maintenance. Building finished at about 2.30am, with remaining materials returned to Maintenance and a clear-up of a very large number of beer bottles. About 15 people were involved. Sadly, the mortar did not totally set overnight but the Maintenance Department were keep very busy most of the next day. I think Cliff Martindale smiled at that one!

## The Strange Noises in the Night Stir

One of my best memories involved locking the Assistant Warden (Neil Fisher) in the roof above A block. Above the 'old stairs' was a heavily padlocked door which gave entry to the roof space above much of the Old College. However, a group (including **David Banks**, **Mike Eastman**, **John Pettit-Mills** and myself) managed to gain entry through an old window by climbing a beam high above the stairs – a manoeuvre only to be attempted when sober! By entry to the attics we performed various juvenile tasks with eggs and feathers. One evening we placed a tape recorder above the warden's quarters (where Mr Fisher was courting his fiancée). This was on a timer and included a very loud *Je t'aime* (sung by Jane Birkin), and other orgiastic noises, which played in the middle of the night.

Next day, Fisher and a porter arrived at A block stairs with a large bunch of keys and entered the roof to investigate. Sadly, for them, we were then able to shut and re-padlock the door after them. We then cleared the area. After 10 minutes we could hear the porter and Fisher at the window asking for help. We kept out of the way for about 20 minutes listening to the increasingly desperate cries for help. After some initial threats from Mr Fisher, a constructive discussion took place, and

*Left to right:* ***Des Lambert, Joe Youdan, Robert Macaulay*** *and* ***Pete Smith, releasing Rob from the iron collar at the annual College ball***

they eventually secured their release. The next day all the locks were changed but the stirs continued – they never understood how we were able to gain entry. However, when JPM's windows were found above the Quiet Common Room, there was talk of a very heavy fine or rustication, so the pranks ended.

*How very immature…but, what happy days!! Rex*

## The 'Lost Spoon'

***Robert Macaulay*** *(1967–70) relates his inauguration as Stirrer*

Bruce Parker was the Stirrer elected by the MJCR in summer '68 and so was due to continue at the start of the autumn term. Unfortunately, the examiners decided to defer Bruce's status as an undergraduate for a year. As usual, this information only became known at the very end of term and when it became known, an unannounced, unofficial meeting of the MJCR was held in the garden of the Wye Hill Café, or so I was informed. At that unofficial meeting, I was apparently elected Stirrer for the rest of Bruce Parker's term. However, the emblem of office was never handed to me.

Because it was well known (and I suspect largely pre-planned) that the Stirrer was not going to be able to hand over the Spoon at the MJCR's meeting, early in the autumn term, I was very concerned about what was going to happen. The MJCR held a trial – a mockery of one in reality.

Unfortunately, my valid and valiant arguments, that I had not been properly appointed, because: a) the unofficial unannounced meeting of the MJCR lacked proper authority; and b) the emblem of the Stirrer was not given to me, were disregarded by the court.

The judge and jury were one and the same: the president of the JCR, **Chris Major** (1966–69) and the outgoing secretary of the MJCR, **Pete Smith** (1969–72). Knowing that I was facing an unknown but fearful fate, I imbibed rather more than was sensible and so probably did not plead as coherently

as I might have. But the power of the best advocate would have been of no avail; the verdict was pre-determined and the sentence harsh.

I had to wear a hinged iron collar, fabricated by **Ferris Whidborne** (1966–69), from which was suspended a dessert spoon and fastened by a large padlock. It had to be put on by the incoming secretary of the MJCR, **Des Lambert** (1967–70) by 8 o'clock am and had to stay in place till 10 pm from the meeting until the Beagle Hunt Ball a few weeks away. I pleaded for a degree of clemency, that I should not have to wear it whilst playing for the College Hockey team and that I should be able to take a shower or bath without it, but the court was implacable. I think I played about half a dozen matches wearing the spoon and, on the day of the Ball, I had to collect my then girl-friend from Ashford station with my appearance embellished by the collar. The attached photo of Des unlocking the collar at the Ball for the final time was published in the Kent Messenger. I think that he was nearly as relieved as me, for it would have been his doom to have to wear the collar, if I had been found not wearing the collar between the appointed hours.

## Was this a sign?

*An early Stir (more of a prank, really) submitted by Tim (but Tim who? … and what year?)*

An East Kent double-decker bus sits on the High Street opposite the College forecourt/ Wheel Room, whilst students try to remove the 'Old Flying Horse' pub sign from the roof. The old pub was described as 'nothing special' but it was very handy being close to the JCR! Soon afterwards, the pub closed, the college bought it and turned it into student accommodation.

# Michael Murray Tumblers

**Michael Payne (1978-81) shines a light on the extensive collection of silver beakers amassed during the 'reign' of the first post-War Principal.**

Dunstan Skilbeck, the first Principal after the Second World War, was responsible for instigating many of the traditions at Wye College that he had observed from his days at Oxford. For instance, to mark the quincentenary of its foundation in 1947 he had commissioned a mace from another Dunstan, the eminent Sussex silversmith Dunstan Pruden, who worked at Ditchling in Sussex.

It was not until some 10 years later, however, that the first of what was to become a sizeable collection of silver beakers was commissioned from another up-and-coming silversmith, Michael Murray. It is perhaps no coincidence that Dunstan Skilbeck gave the commission to Murray, as he had learnt the art of silversmithing in Dunstan Pruden's workshop in Sussex.

It appears clear, from an article written in the Journal, that at the outset Dunstan Skilbeck was visionary in his wish to build a collection of silver for his College: 'How pleasant it would be if over the years the College could eventually have a number of such tumblers for use by the students in Hall.' He went on to suggest that 'if any member of the Club or Guild should be interested, they should write directly to Mr Michael Murray, The Cottage, 5 Regent Square, London W.C.1, who would, I know, be pleased to submit suitable sketches and designs.'

Michael Murray had been born in 1923 and died in 2005. At the age of 15 he started a stained-glass apprenticeship at Eric Gill's community. He then moved on to learn book-binding at Letchworth Garden City before learning the trade of a silversmith

*Five mugs by Michael Murray*

in Ditchling. Murray then moved to London and studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts before opening his own workshop. His work was mainly ecclesiastical silver, including pieces for Coventry and Guildford Cathedrals, but his workshop also produced processional robes for the Coronation. His apprentices included William Phipps, George Grant, Richard Costain, his daughter Clare, and Sarah Jones. Later, in 1998, it was one of these apprentices, Sarah Jones, who held an exhibition of Murray's and his students' work entitled 'Goldensilver 60 Years a Smiting'.

The first commission for Wye to Michael Murray was from Dunstan Skilbeck himself and is an ox-eye tumbler dated 1957, with an applied garb. He presented it to the College to commemorate the first visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, the Chancellor, on the occasion of the Annual Commemoration in 1958. Such tumblers or beakers (often knowns as 'Tuns' and bearing a pair of loop handles or 'Ox-eyes') are traditionally used in Oxford Colleges. Murray made his in the traditional English tumbler shape, though, in Dunstan Skilbeck's own words 'it is in no way a reproduction, but rather a re-interpretation of an earlier form which is still in use in many of the Colleges of the older Universities. It was made by a young silversmith who is already becoming well-known and who has specialized in the designing and making of mugs and cups. It holds three quarters of a pint and can therefore comfortably accommodate a half-pint of beer!'

The following year, two further examples of beakers by Michael Murray followed; a second ox-eye tumbler and the first 'ogee-shaped' beaker without handles but with the applied garb. In 1960, Murray made two straight-sided pint mugs and another ogee beaker. More of the latter followed, in 1961, 1962 1964 and 1967, as well as one that certainly appears to be by Murray but is undated. Those of 1967 were the last pieces made by Michael Murray acquired by Wye College. That year, however, an ogee-shaped tumbler was made by Anthony Hawksley, a silversmith working in Oxford and who made pieces for Payne & Son, and which was later presented to Wye College. Then, in 1970, three Scottish beakers were made by Ronald Everett Crouch, bringing the total number to some 20 of these silver drinking vessels.

The story goes a full circle when in 2020 the original 1957 Wye ox-eye tumbler was recreated to mark the start of the second decade of Wye Heritage. The new 'Wye Ox Tun' bears the London Assay Office sponsor's mark of Payne & Son of Tunbridge Wells.

*The Wye Ox-tuns*

# Wye Rustics cricket 2020

**No real surprise that Covid put paid to a tour last year, but the Rustics did manage a late season match in Cambridgeshire. Dickon Turner (1982-85) gives the game his customary, in-depth analysis.**

## Thriplow Daffs v Wye Rustics – 12 September 2020

Corona-virus put paid to the traditional Wye Rustics' tour, but on a sunny September morning in South Cambridgeshire, a masked Rustic squad assembled outside The Green Man in tranquil Thriplow for a late season contest against the village 'Daffs'. Once suitably refreshed, the players stumbled up the road to the Cricket Meadow where Rustics took first knock in the 40-over contest.

Two seasoned warriors were sent out to open the innings and, for a fleeting moment, John Dinnis and Martin Hole appeared a solid pairing. However, a disagreement over the availability of a comfortable single resulted

*Above: Hole is run out while Dinnis chuckles in the background.*

*Right: Pool clips another delivery to the short leg side boundary*

*Left: umpires **Peter Holborn** and **Nigel Snape***

## Squire's application of saliva to the ball resulted in a severe reprimand from the umpires

in a breach of all social-distancing regulations as they ended up shoulder to shoulder at the same end. Hole was the one deemed run out, but they were still continuing their disagreement back at the pavilion when Dinnis played around a swinging delivery and was clean bowled.

From 7 for 2, Freddie Preston and Ryan Waldock survived clamorous appeals and saw off the opening bowlers, taking the score past 50 before falling in quick succession. With the innings in danger of faltering, Richard Pool and Tom 'Atko' Atkinson remained watchful as they became accustomed to the Thriplow track. The low slow bounce would not restrain Professor Pool's 'Go-Go Gadget' arms for long, and his extended reach started picking up half volleys and nonchalantly depositing them over the roadside hedge.

*Right: Dinnis, Pool and Atkinson at the tea break*

*Upton leaves the Lord Mayor's stumps in disarray*

Pool retired on 50, ending a 75-run partnership with Atko and paving the way for Jack Upton, Charlie Squire and Tom Care to bludgeon another 60 runs from the last 10 overs as Rustics closed on a promising 194 for 7.

It is not often that the Rustic bowlers can take aim at the presiding Lord Mayor of London, but at the fall of the first Daffs' wicket, William Russell strode to crease. Proving he was an accomplished batsman, his second scoring shot was a huge six which bounced on the tarmac of the Fowlmere Road and struck a cyclist. Fortunately, the PPE of the unsuspecting road-user deflected the blow and he peddled away untroubled.

Upton claimed the Lord Mayor's scalp for 27, but after 20 overs, the home side were pacing their innings perfectly at 97 for 2. Skipper Squire's application of saliva to the ball resulted in a severe reprimand from the umpires and a delay while his DNA was removed with antiseptic gel. The Rustics then dragged the game further into disrepute in a disgraceful display of unsporting miscalculation by allowing the match to resume with 12 fielders on the pitch. Hole had misunderstood the rotational fielding regulation and wandered onto the field of play without ensuring another Rustic had retreated behind the boundary. The resulting no-ball had significant consequences.

## The PPE of the unsuspecting road-user deflected the blow and he peddled away untroubled

On reaching a masterful 50, Thriplow's teenage opener, Sam Thain, was obliged to retire, and then is tempted his batting partner into a disdainful slog down the thankful throat of Weston. Care bagged a brace of wickets and, as the sun started sinking towards the stubble of the Cambridgeshire plains, the Rustic bowlers were locking down the wilting Daffs. Thriplow were teetering on 128 for 5 with just 12 overs left.

The home side's lower order batsmen were accustomed to the meagre bounce and the short boundaries of their intimate ground and, despite the rhythmical efforts of Rustics' death bowlers, Weston and Preston, Thriplow never lost touch. With 2 overs remaining, 15 runs were required for victory


*Scorers and spectators watch the concluding overs*

and Rustics were still favourites. A couple of boundaries later and the match swung dramatically towards the Daffs. Midway through the final over, the scores were level, and the throng of spectators were folding their deckchairs. But one dot ball followed another and the crowd were re-engaged as a tie beckoned with the prospect of a 'super over'. However, the final delivery was nudged into the covers, and a scampered single saw Thriplow triumphant in a thrilling match on a perfect late summer's evening.

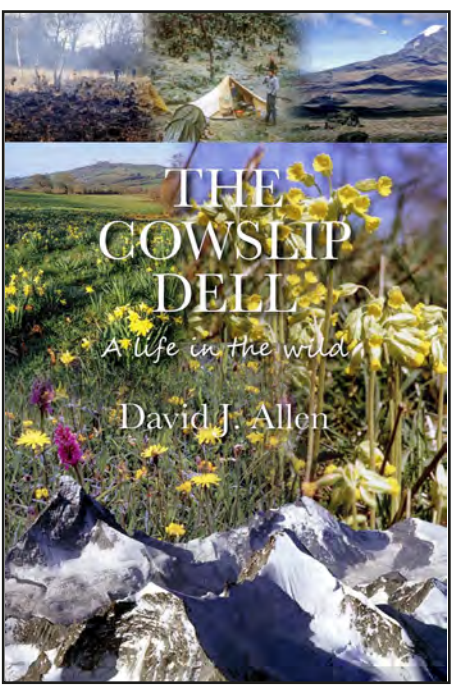
Hole's fielding indiscretion had cost the Rustics the match, but his fine was sufficient to fund The Green Man through the remainder of the Covid crisis. It only remained for Squire to treat the unfortunate locals to his bare-chested brilliance in downing a pint of cider. His astonishing personal best of 3 minutes 36 seconds, narrowly lost to the Daffs' champion by a mere 3½ minutes.

# *The Cowslip Dell: A Life in the Wild*

**Malcolm Alexander (1963–67) reviews David Allen's (1963–67) autobiographical book about his life as a naturalist.**

News of David's 'personal self-indulgent journey' came by way of a flyer from the author. The title relates to a treasured spot in east Devon, where cowslips once grew amongst green-winged orchids and where David's passion for plants was first born. The final chapter explains why this place was to become so significant to David in his choice of career and love of open space.

David and I were exact contemporaries at Wye (1963–67), sharing accommodation at Withersdane and enjoying competitive tennis and croquet. He has led an absorbing, if at times tumultuous, life since those enjoyable days at Wye. Our paths overlapped again in Malawi in the 1970s, when David was posted to Bunda College, where he also found time to become the Lilongwe squash champion.




## He has led an absorbing, if at times tumultuous, life since those enjoyable days at Wye

The book, with wholehearted forewords from two of David's contemporaries, Dr Jeremy Davis and Martin Gundry, is part memoir, part travelogue. After studying horticulture at Wye, David's career encompassed plant pathology and research across a range of tropical and sub-tropical environments, mainly in Africa. After two postgraduate degrees, gained at Exeter and Cambridge, he worked at a number of research institutes, agricultural colleges and universities, often concerned with improving the production of food crops, particularly grain legumes.

David's travels enable him to enthuse about a range of plant life, cultivated and growing wild in a range of ecological environments, often at altitude. Botanical discussions are interspersed with a dialogue covering David's many warm friendships and several marriages – I counted four – and frequent climbing expeditions.

It is perhaps not surprising that David became an intrepid traveller, having been conceived 'in Chungking … when the

Japanese were advancing across mainland China' but born in Guildford, the only child of parents in the diplomatic service. After early years in Washington DC, the boy, at nine, was sent to board at a prep school in Dorset, before proceeding to Bryanston. Although not an uncommon upbringing in the 1950s, particularly if your parents' career encompassed overseas postings, it must have been tough. This may explain why David can, at times, come across as initially shy, and sometimes rather single-minded, especially in his huge enthusiasm for plant and bug hunting.

**Botanical discussions are interspersed with a dialogue covering David's many warm friendships and several marriages – I counted four – and frequent climbing expeditions**

During David's time at Wye, his father was British Ambassador to Turkey, which allowed him to enjoy exciting summer vacations there with Wye friends, including climbing expeditions and absorbing local culture. This interest was to continue across Africa, where he talks knowledgeably about the ancient histories of northern Nigeria.

David's list of mountain achievements is impressive, starting in Snowdonia but expanding to the Alps and going on to many of the significant African summits. His mountaineering was not always successful, and he admits to sometimes being afflicted by altitude sickness. On his first ascent of Kilimanjaro, he had to turn back at Gillman's Point (5,684m), unable to walk round the crater rim to the summit, Uhuru Point – I can fully share his frustration!

There is an absorbing account of his expedition to the Ruwenzori mountains on the Uganda/Congo border, trekking through the infamous Bigo Bog, to gain superb views of the several peaks. Like the reviewer, David is excited by the European 'discovery' of this mountain range, first depicted in a remarkable map of Africa by Claudius Ptolemy in AD150, and first climbed in June 1906 by the Duke of Abruzzi and his companions.

David also made exciting trips to Mount Kenya and the Mulanje plateau in southern Malawi, where he crossed the Ruo gorge with some trepidation, recalling the account by Laurens van der Post (*Venture to the Interior*) of the young forestry officer swept away in a torrent. A tiny quibble: in Malawi, David talks of friends being 'PI'd', or becoming 'persona ingrata'; in fact, the term referred to being made a 'prohibited immigrant', often with only 48 hours to leave the country after some, possibly trivial, misdemeanour.

Following the end of his third marriage, David's life appears more settled. He had met Leonora in the Colombian city of Cali, when visiting the International Centre of Tropical Agriculture. They got together permanently in 1987, living in east Africa and marrying in Nairobi in April 1992. Soon after their return to the UK in the early 1990s, with his mother then in her nineties, they moved in with her at Higher Quantock in Stockland in east Devon. David recounts how Leo soon became involved in village life. At the post office, having introduced herself and her baby, she is asked 'Is David Allen still making babies?' His reputation had clearly travelled.

In Stockland, over the past 20 years, David has been closely involved in the management of 65 hectares of turbary, land once used by the community for cutting peat turf for fuel, for firewood and for grazing. Much of the land, which is within the Blackdown Hills AONB, is now under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement and biodiversity has been regained. He has also found time to write about the *Wildflowers of the East Devon Coast* and complete a book on the *Wildflowers and Common Trees of East Africa*.

There is plenty here to fascinate the reader, although it can be frustrating when David's friends do not get properly 'introduced' – they were most likely competent climbers or botanists – but this can leave the reader 'dangling', eager to know what happened to those who make these fleeting appearances on a mountain or at a research station.

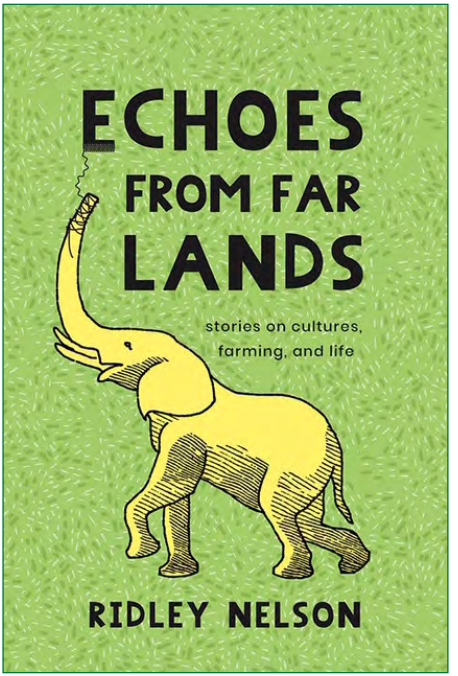
David has a captivating story to tell, so it's a pity that the presentation is marred by unprofessional typesetting and layout, coupled with insufficient editing and proof-reading. The reader could be assisted by the provision of a timeline and appendices on the various mountains and plant observations.

*David Allen on stage at Withersdane, second-year Review in 1965, with Chris Cartwright behind the curtains (Reviewer's album)*

*The Cowslip Dell* is available from Quantock Nature at £17 to include UK post/packing.

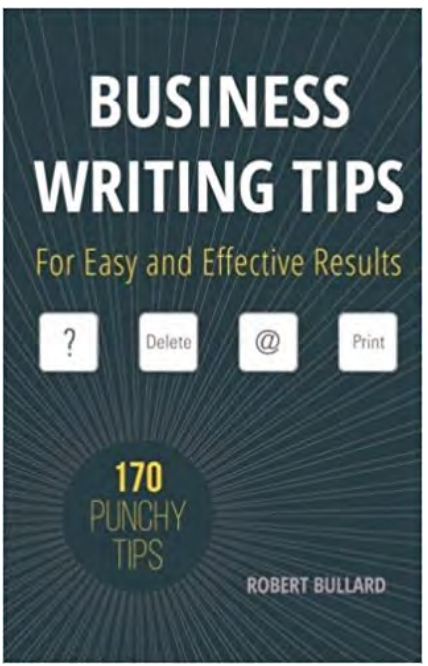
Contact leo@leoallen.plus.com.

## Echoes from Far Lands – Stories on Cultures, Farming and Life (2020) by Ridley Nelson (1961–65)




Echoes from Far Lands is incredibly funny in some parts and equally insightful in other parts. This book is definitely a 'must' for all UK agricultural graduates who have worked in Africa. For those who haven't even been to Africa, the stories would be mostly incomprehensible. Sadly, because Kent is not a 'far land', the author has omitted the Wye College chapter of his life. But there are hints of a misspent youth, as shared by many of us Wye graduates.

*Review by **Dr Rob Savory** (1957–61)*




## Business Writing and Tips: For Easy and Effective Results

***Robert Bullard** (1985–86) has been a trainer in business/non-fiction writing skills since 2003. His training has been used by clients such as the European Commission, World Trade Organization and Oxford University (for whom he runs six courses every year).*

Robert is also a book coach; a copyeditor and proofreader; and a copywriter, helping clients with websites/blogs, reports, newsletters. Previously, he wrote features for two British national newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph.*

He lives in Oxford (UK) and is a member of several professional writing groups such as Writers in Oxford (which he chaired 2015–20) and the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading.

'Writing is not easy', says Robert, 'but it is a skill that can be learnt,' he insists. And his book's 170 concise and practical tips will help anyone who wants guidance or ideas to boost their business or non-fiction writing.

Among the 17 topics covered (each topic/chapter has 10 helpful tips) are ones such as:

- learn how to write with ease and speed;
- discover the writing tricks of professional writers;
- find out ways to grab your readers' attention.

Also covered are how to improve – and increase the impact of – essential business communications such as websites, blogs, reports, case studies, and press releases.

Robert gives ideas for mastering your tone of voice, persuading target customers, and overcoming writing challenges such as writers' block. Other chapters can be dipped into as needed – on grammar, punctuation, editing and proofreading.

The book is full of eye-catching extras such as Key Learning Points and inspirational quotes. Each of the 17 chapters ends with writing exercises and suggestions for further reading. And an index has been added since publication, which is available from the author's website/blog.

*Business Writing and Tips* is published by Perfect Text and available on Amazon, priced £10.45 .

*So there is treasure at the end of the rainbow ...*

# Agricola Club Accounts

## Accountant's report for the year ended 31 July 2020

In accordance with the engagement letter dated 4 September 2019 we have compiled the financial statements of Wye College Agricola Club for the year ended 31 July 2020 which comprise the income and expenditure account, the balance sheet and the related notes from the accounting records and information and explanations you have given to us.

The financial statements have been compiled on the accounting basis set out in note 1 to the financial statements. The financial statements are not intended to achieve full compliance with the provisions of UK Generally Accounting Principles.

As a member firm of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at www.icaew.com/en/membership/regulations-standards-and-guidance.

This report is made solely to you, in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken solely to prepare for your approval, the financial information of Wye College Agricola Club and state those matters that we have agreed to state to you in this report in accordance with the guidance of ICAEW as detailed at icaew.com/compilation. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the members of Wye College Agricola Club for our work, or for this report.

You have approved the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2020 and have acknowledged your responsibility for them, for the appropriateness of the accounting basis and for providing all information and explanations necessary for their compilation.

We have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the financial statements.

B P Wilkinson FCA
Chavereys
Chartered accountants
Faversham
Date: 6 January 2021

### Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2020

**1 Accounting policies**

i) The club prepares accounts on an accruals basis, using UK Generally Accepted Accounting Principles as guidance.

ii) All income, except interest on investments, is derived from members or from sources outside the scope of Corporation Tax. As such the club is covered by Mutual Trading exemptions.

iii) The club elects to write off the income from 'lifetime membership' applicants in the year of application.

# Wye Agricola Club

## Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 July 2020

| | | 2020 | | *2019* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| **Income** | | | | |
| Sale of ties, prints etc. | | **82** | | *197* |
| Subscriptions | | **1,594** | | *1,617* |
| Donations | | **-** | | *2,000* |
| Annual dinner | | **-** | | *4,760* |
| Hog roast | | **-** | | *1,830* |
| Memorial Fund journal contribution | | **18,000** | | *16,000* |
| | | **19,676** | | *26,404* |
| **Expenditure** | | | | |
| Opening stock | **843** | | *271* | |
| Purchases of ties, etc. | **-** | | *722* | |
| Closing stock | **(780)** | | *(843)* | |
| | | **64** | | *150* |
| Annual dinner | **-** | | *5,096* | |
| Hog roast | **-** | | *1,628* | |
| Wye Journal | **26,597** | | *16,112* | |
| Website expenses | **166** | | *598* | |
| Meetings, expenses and secretarial | **2,178** | | *1,708* | |
| Wye Heritage donation | **-** | | *2,000* | |
| Insurance | **355** | | *349* | |
| Subscriptions TAA, Heritage | **145** | | - | |
| Accountancy | **312** | | *312* | |
| | | **29,753** | | *27,803* |
| | | 29,817 | | *27,953* |
| | | | | *(1,549)* |
| **Net deficit** | | (10,141) | | |

# Wye Agricola Club

## Balance sheet
## as at 31 July 2020

| | | 2020 | | *2019* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | £ | £ | *£* |
| **Current assets** | | | | |
| Lloyds Bank | 326 | | *10,564* | |
| Stocks | 780 | | *843* | |
| Debtors | 28 | | *28* | |
| Prepayments | 160 | | - | |
| | | **1,294** | | *11,435* |
| **Current liabilities** | | | | |
| Accruals | | **(300)** | | *(300)* |
| **Net assets** | | **994** | | *11,135* |
| **Accumulated funds** | | | | |
| Opening reserves | | **11,135** | | *12,684* |
| Deficit for the year | | **(10,141)** | | *(1,549)* |
| **Accumulated reserves** | | **994** | | *11,135* |

We approve the accounts set out on pages 2 to 4 disclosing a net deficit of £-10141 and we confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their purpose.

These accounts were approved on 30 October 2020.

**Prof J P G Webster**
**Treasurer**
(for and on behalf of the committee)

# Agricola Club Memorial Fund Accounts

## Accountant's report for the year ended 31 July 2020

In accordance with the engagement letter dated 3 September 2019 we have compiled the financial statements of Wye College Wye College Agricola Club Memorial Fund which comprise the income and expenditure account, the statement of assets and liabilities and the related notes from the accounting records and information and explanations

you have given to us.

The financial statements have been compiled on the accounting basis set out in note 1 to the financial statements. The financial statements are not intended to achieve full compliance with the provisions of UK Generally Accounting Principles.

As a member firm of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at www.icaew.com/en/membership/regulations-standards-and-guidance.

This report is made to you, in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken so that we might compile the financial statements that we have been engaged to compile, report to you that we have done so, and state those matters that we have agreed to state to you in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the members of Wye College Agricola Club Memorial Fund, for our work, or for this report.

You have approved the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2020 and have acknowledged your responsibility for them, for the appropriateness of the accounting basis and for providing all information and explanations necessary for their compilation.

We have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the financial statements.

B P Wilkinson FCA
Chavereys
Chartered accountants
Faversham
Date: 6 January 2021

**Notes to the accounts**
**for the year ended 31 July 2020**

1 **Accounting policies**

The charity elects to prepare accounts on an accruals basis. Investment assets are revalued to market value at the year end. Net gains and losses are recognised as movements on the retained surplus.

2 **Student/member awards**

The trustees actively seek suitable candidates with a view to satisfying the objects of the charity.

# Agricola Club Memorial Fund

## Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 July 2020

| | Note | | 2020 | | *2019* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| **Income** | | | | | |
| Dividends received | | **17,512** | | **18,176** | |
| Donations | | **-** | | **-** | |
| | | | **17,512** | | *18,176* |
| **Expenditure** | | | | | |
| Student / member awards | **2** | **4,000** | | 5,000 | |
| Support of Wye College Agricola Club | | **18,000** | | 16,000 | |
| Governance expenses | | **3,862** | | 3,917 | |
| | | | **(25,862)** | | *(24,917)* |
| **Net deficit for the year** | | | **(8,350)** | | *(6,742)* |
| **Retained surplus brought forward** | | | **506,219** | | *510,227* |
| | | | **497,869** | | *503,485* |
| Net decrease in value of investments | | | **(52,474)** | | *2,734* |
| **Retained surplus carried forward** | | | 445,395 | | *506,219* |

**All receipts are unrestricted funds**

## Statement of assets and liabilities as at 31 July 2020

| | | | 2020 | | *2019* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| **Cash funds** | | | | | |
| Current account | | | **3,489** | | *1,602* |
| Cash held by broker - Portfolio 1 | | | **4,404** | | *5,753* |
| Cash held by broker - Portfolio 1 | | | **2,591** | | *5,373* |
| **Investment assets** | | | | | |
| 4,104.00 | Charifund Income Units | | **51,201** | | *65,505* |
| **Portfolio 1** | | | | | |
| 846.42 | Rathbone Income Units | **5,930** | | *7,597* | |
| 4,497.70 | Artemis Income Fund Class R | **8,079** | | *10,146* | |
| 7,000.00 | Invesco monthly inc plus fund | **7,116** | | *7,334* | |
| 2,650.00 | Ninety One UK Total Return Fund A | **4,399** | | *6,321* | |
| 1,717.60 | IFSL Brooks Defensive Capital Class B Acc | **3,399** | | *3,561* | |
| 88.00 | Veritas Global Equity Income GBP Class A | **16,037** | | *18,167* | |
| 55.98 | Fidelity Cash W (inc) | **56** | | *121* | |
| 10,000.00 | Threadneedle High Yield Bond clas1 | **4,104** | | *4,269* | |
| 21,079.87 | ARC TIME Commercial Long Income D (Inc) | **22,028** | | *22,855* | |
| 1,746.00 | Aberforth Smaller Companies (ASL) | **14,370** | | *20,812* | |
| | | | **85,518** | | *101,183* |
| **Portfolio 2** | | | | | |
| 900.91 | Fidelity Asia A (Acc) | **14,108** | | *17,489* | |
| 27,500.00 | Janus Henderson UK Property | **26,337** | | *27,937* | |
| 17,176.63 | Invesco Monthly Income Plus Fund | **17,460** | | *17,996* | |
| 49,211.15 | M & G Global High Yield Bond X Class | **22,918** | | *24,251* | |
| 172.07 | Fidelity Cash W (inc) | **172** | | *212* | |
| 45,000.00 | Threadneedle High Yield Bond Class | **18,468** | | *19,211* | |
| 7,400.00 | Threadneedle UK Property Trust | **5,275** | | *5,850* | |
| 4,722.00 | Murray Income Trust (MUT) | **34,707** | | *39,854* | |
| 1,862.00 | Aberforth Smaller Companies (ASL) | **15,324** | | *22,195* | |
| 7,503.65 | Stewart investors Asia Pacific Leaders Class A | **54,677** | | *55,017* | |
| 22,484.83 | ARC TIME Commercial Long Income D (Inc) | **23,497** | | *24,378* | |
| 15,000.00 | ARC TIME Freehold Income Auth. H (Inc) | **32,756** | | *32,742* | |
| 16,445.79 | BNY Mellon Global Income (Inc) | **32,995** | | *40,171* | |
| | | | **298,693** | | *327,302* |
| **Less accruals** | | | | | |
| Accountancy | | **(500)** | | *(500)* | |
| | | | **(500)** | | *(500)* |
| | | | **445,395** | | *506,219* |

We approve the accounts set out on pages 2 to 5 disclosing a net deficit of £8350 and confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their purpose.
These accounts were approved by the trustees on 30 October 2020 .

**Prof J P G Webster,** Trustee **Mrs J D Reynolds,** Trustee

# Agricola Club Members' Lists

## Message from the Database Administrator, Siân Phelps

We try to keep our database as up to date as possible, so many thanks to those of you who have sent us your address and email updates in the last year. The full address list is not published this year (alternate years), but if you have any updates, please send them to the email address below.

Thank you also to those who have given us information about members on our 'Lost' list, so that we have been able to find them again, and also updated us on members who have passed away. In the latter case, we would always be pleased to include an obituary or notes of memories in the next edition of the Journal.

If you are able to update us about other members, please do so, or encourage them to contact us. We have had a few new members join this year after being contacted by friends!

We have picked up quite a few email addresses this year, but if you have not previously given us yours, please do so – then you will receive our email Newsletter, which will keep you more up to date with what's going on.

For all of the above, please contact me at the postal or email address below.

Best wishes to all

*Siân Phelps*

**Agricola Database Administrator**

**6 Scotton Street**

**Wye**

**Ashford Kent TN25 5B**

**database@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk**

# Reunion Dinner

**6.45pm for 7.30pm, Saturday 30 October 2021**

**Wye School, Olantigh Rd, Wye, Kent TN25 5EJ**

All the arrangements are in place and we look forward to welcoming you to Wye on 30 October 2021. As previously, we are targeting particular years: this time it is those who graduated in 2001, 1991, 1981, 1971, 1961, 1951. However, all years are, of course, welcome. In addition, if you arrived in Wye in one of these years you might also like to celebrate.

**Dress:** Black Tie or Lounge Suit.

To reserve a place please complete the booking form contained on page overleaf within the green pages at the back of this *Journal*. Please encourage your contemporaries to come, and we will seat you together.

## MENU

Melon Fan with a Summer Berry Coulis
or
Pear and Stilton Tart on a Bed of Mixed Leaves with Apple and Honey Spiced Balsamic
***
Breast of Chicken Chasseur
or
Poached Fillet of Salmon with Hollandaise sauce
***
Both mains served with hot new potatoes and seasonal vegetables
***
Chocolate and Orange Cheesecake
or
Blackberry and Apple Crumble and Cream
***
Tea, Coffee and Mints

# Wye College Agricola Club
## Annual Reunion and Dinner
### Saturday 30 October 2021

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Postcode _____ Tel no _____

Email address _____

Years of attendance at Wye College _____

Please reserve _____ places @£47 (inc VAT) per person £ _____

Please list full names for the seating plan _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there anyone else your party wish to be seated near?

_____

_____

*** See overleaf for menu choices and special dietary requirements. ***

**Menu options (please indicate numbers)**
**Starters:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Melon Fan | ☐ | Pear & Stilton Tart | ☐ |
| **Mains:** Chicken Chasseur | ☐ | Poached Salmon | ☐ |
| **Desserts:** Cheesecake | ☐ | Crumble | ☐ |

Please indicate any dietary requirements: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please return this form & your cheque payable to the 'Wye College Agricola Club' by 10 October 2021 to:

**Mrs Jane Reynolds**

**The Pent**

**Postling**

**Hythe**

**Kent CT21 4EY**

Any queries to info@janesgardendesign.com or 01303 862436.
You will be acknowledged by email (please write it clearly!), otherwise send an SAE.

# Wye College Agricola Club

## News please

Marriages, births, deaths, changes in career, or anything else of interest. Photos are welcome; please send via email or supply copy prints, since we cannot promise to return them.
**Copy deadline 15 January.**

Name_____Name at Wye_____

Address _____

_____

_____

Postcode _____ Tel no _____

Email address _____

Is this a new address? Yes ☐ No ☐

Current date _____ Years at Wye _____

*Do you live overseas? If so, would you be prepared to represent the Agricola Club in your country? This would involve advising any visiting members and occasionally sending us news.*

**News.** *Please email, or else write clearly or type.* _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Continue overleaf or add another sheet.
**Return this form to Mrs Jane Reynolds, The Pent, Postling, Hythe, Kent CT21 4EY**
info@janesgardendesign.com

# Wye College Agricola Club
## Application for membership

Surname/family name _____

Name at Wye _____

First names (s) _____

Permanent address _____

_____

_____

Postcode _____ Tel no _____

Email address _____

Applicant's academic details: graduate/MSc/PhD/staff (*please delete as appropriate*)

_____

Year of entry _____ Year of leaving _____

Degree course (dept if postgrad or staff) _____

**Declaration**
I offer myself for election to the Wye College Agricola Club and agree to abide by the Club Regulations (copy available from the Hon Sec or visit www.wyeagricolaclub.org.uk). I authorise the Club to publish my name and address and email in the *Wye Journal* and agree to pay the annual membership fee, currently £10 per annum, by standing order.

Signed _____ Date _____

On receipt of your signed application it will be placed before the Committee for acceptance. The Hon Sec will send you a standing order form to complete.

Please return this Application to: **James Trounce, Hon Sec, 32 Mill Lane, Besthorpe, Attelborough, Norfolk NR17 2NL.**
**Email: secretary@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk**

# Wye College Agricola Club
## Change of address or email

Please return this form before Christmas to **Siân Phelps, Database Administrator, 6 Scotton Street, Wye, Ashford Kent TN25 5BZ**
**Email: database@wyeagricolaclub.org.uk**

Surname/family name _____

Name at Wye _____

First names (s) _____

Permanent address _____

_____

_____

_____

Postcode _____ Tel no _____

Email address _____

Applicant's academic details: graduate/MSc/PhD/staff (*please delete as appropriate*)

_____

Years of attendance at Wye _____

Degree course (dept if postgrad or staff) _____

**Data Protection Act**
For many years we have published members' names, postal addresses and emails in the Wye journal. When you provide us with updated information we are now asking you to confirm that you give your permission for your contact information to be published in future Wye Journals and on the Club website.
I confirm that I give permission for my details to be published in the Wye Journal and to be accessible to members on the Club website.

Signed _____ Date _____

# Wye Heritage
## Our past shapes our future

Please support the work of the Wye Heritage Centre by becoming an annual member and help us to preserve the archives, photographs, artefacts, memories and ethos of the former Wye College. Now housed in the Latin School, Wye.
**Membership annual fee £10.**

Surname/family name _____

Name at Wye _____

First names (s) _____

Permanent address _____

_____

_____

_____

Postcode _____ Tel no _____

Email address _____

I agree to my details being held on the membership database.

Signed _____ Date _____

The current membership fee is £10.

Please enclose a cheque made out to Wye Heritage.We will then send you confirmation and a standing order for subsequent years.

**Please return to: Wye Heritage Office, Admin Office, Cumberland Court, 24 Church Street, Wye TN25 5BJ. Email: admin@wyeheritage.org.uk.**

# Notes