



JOHN EDGAR TRUST

Winter 2019 Newsletter

A welcome from the new chairman



Welcome to the Winter edition of the JET newsletter. With a new decade comes change and I would like to introduce myself as the new chairman of the JET committee.

I completed the JET course in 2014 – 2015 and since then have returned to the family business procuring and selling real, fresh cut Christmas trees to the trade and consumers.

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to act as chairman for such an important cause and hope that my experience will drive JET forwards and by working with the trustees and all involved in the Trust we can engage more young people in agriculture.

Finally, I would like to pass on my thanks to Dick Hall for his tireless work and the improvements he has made during his time as chairman. Although Dick has stepped down as chairman, he will still be on the committee and a trustee and we are grateful to him for his continued involvement.

George Hood, Chairman of JET Organising Committee





This field is huge, but how do I make it interesting?

By David Jones

In 2006 I nervously travelled to The Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester. Day one, hour one, activity one 'stand up and say who you are, what you do and why you are excited to start this John Edgar Trust course'? Although I have often got plenty to say, I was not confident standing up and talking to groups of people. The following year I attended a conference in Cambridge with 500 people. A speaker took to the stage and spoke well, clearly, concisely and was interesting. I thought 'one day I want to be like that'.

In 2008, I moved to a new job as the farm manager for The Morley Agricultural Foundation (www.tmaf.co.uk) in Norfolk. The farm is owned by the charity, which host and funds agricultural research and education. We work with organisations like NIAB, BBRO, BASF, Agrovista and John Innes Centre. We also help support agricultural education projects including PHD students, short courses for farmers and host visits for schools. The role requires me to talk to a great range of people about the farm and farming in general. When I started we had a primary school group due to visit and I remember thinking 'what am I going to tell them?' It is difficult to talk about hectares, tonnes of wheat, 200hp tractors etc. to 7 year olds. You tend to get lots of blank faces!

That day taught me to consider my audience and relate what I do to something they maybe more familiar with. This makes the message more accessible! For example, in a square metre of a wheat crop. I would plant 300 seeds in September and then the following August harvest 1kg of wheat, which is enough for 1 large loaf of bread. When I use props to illustrate this all of a sudden a field of wheat becomes interesting. I talk about growing OSR to make oil that makes McDonald's chips, then the field becomes REALLY important! I gain their attention by talking about something that influences their everyday life and how we as farmers play a role in that – like growing the wheat for their bread so they can have toast in the morning!

In 2011, I attended a communication skills training course thanks to the John Forrest Award (www.tmaf.co.uk/return-on-communication-skills-training-course-investment).

This further inspired me to develop my skills using props to make the visits more memorable. With Green Shoots Productions (www.green-shoots.org) we applied for funding from two charities to make a collection of films to share our ideas and help others improve their talks and visits and ensure they are informative and memorable. Anyone can watch the films and say 'I could do that' and nearly copy them word for word.



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www.johndedgartrust.org.uk



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We hope the films will inspire those running farm visits and talks to compile their own memorable facts and props and develop their own stories that illustrate what they do. We have chosen a range of crops and farm enterprises to show what is possible. The films have been used more widely than we ever thought. They are being used by schools to show what farming is all about. Every year the local high school shows the films as part of a geography lesson. This makes my children blush as their friends think their Dad is a film star! We are proud to say the films now have international recognition! A friend of mine travelled to a farm in Kenya where the locals recited word perfect the 'Wheat is Wonderful' film. Even when I have parcels delivered by TNT the driver talks about our films and how he sits and watches them with his young son. To be able to introduce new groups of people to what the industry does and how important a role it has to play is so rewarding and was worth taking a step into the communication unknown all those years ago!

Agriculture has a great story to tell, so please make use of the films and encourage others to use them and spread the word about UK food production.



The funding to produce these short films was granted by charity and as such all resources are available to everyone.

All the films produced thanks to the support of the charities, can be accessed via the website:

www.farmingismagic.co.uk



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Life after the JET Course



By Sarah Symes

I look back at the John Edgar Trust course with fond memories, much was learnt in such a short space of time. Highlights included who showed personality traits of an axe murderer and who needs to reevaluate their social media privacy settings! Joking aside it has stood me in good stead since. Much has happened since 2016/2017; the most relevant to the course being that I have become a partner in Hampshire Arable Systems, who I work for. For them to place their confidence in me means a great deal and confidence is something I struggle with in all aspects of life. I was recommended the course by a fellow JET alumni with a matter of a few days before the closing deadline for applications. With it being May and me being an agronomist my instant reaction was “ah nuts to it for this year I will apply next time round when I have more time”. I often find the action of putting one foot in front the other promotes brain activity so while out field walking the following day I gave myself a good talking to and decided to write an application that evening and thank goodness I did!

Working in groups for the case studies wasn't something I was used to. At work I spend a lot of time on my own and most communication is one to one. However, becoming a partner has resulted in me contributing to a team where there are now 3 of us and so team work and group communication are skills learnt on the JET course and will now come into their own. Hearing everyone else's opinions and ideas was refreshing and will help me navigate important business decisions to come.

A large part of the course was presenting, something I historically spent days worrying about. Now I can stand up comfortably in front of 25 grumpy farmers at a time who are only in attendance for the free food and present the current years' NRoSO course for a couple of hours. Public speaking was something I was fearful of and is a large part of the JET course. The ability to present and speak in public is the single most valuable skill I have learnt and progressed in thanks to JET.

I am also involved in decision making on my parent's farm on the Isle of Wight. Visiting several case studies really got me thinking and I came away with some ideas to put into place from staff management to diversification.

As a whole I couldn't recommend the course highly enough, it helps you to develop not only your agricultural and business skills, but also helps you to grow as a person and builds confidence. I have already been lining up potential new delegates for the next course and feel privileged to be a part of the alumni.



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JET – Diary Dates

JET QUIZ

The biennial JET quiz will be held on **Friday 13th March 2020** at Itchen Abbas Village Hall, SO21 1BQ
Arrival from 19:00 for a 19:30 start
Teams of 6 (to Inc. 1 JET alumni)
£20/head to include a ploughmans. Cash bar on the evening

To book a place please contact the quiz committee via:

Email: quiz@johnedgartrust.org.uk

Phone: Philip Arkell - 07719 217833

Farm Walk

This year's JET reunion and farm walk will be held on **21st May 2020** and will kindly be hosted by George Rees, South Lynch Farm, Winchester.
Further details including booking information will be published in the spring edition of the JET newsletter.

Course Application deadlines

Applications for the next JET course are being invited.

Applications must be received by **8th June 2020** with interviews being held on **2nd July 2020** at RAU.

For more information head to the JET website.



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JET in photos

The course of 2019



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