



JOHN EDGAR TRUST

Summer 2020 Newsletter

A welcome from the chairman

Welcome to the Summer edition of the JET newsletter.

Since our last newsletter we have seen unprecedented changes not just in the industry and the UK, but globally as a result of the Covid pandemic. Whilst the pandemic has threatened lives and stretched our NHS to its limits, it has also provided a stark reminder of those industries that are crucial to our basic way of life.

I believe that during this crisis agriculture has been able to prove its worth by continuing to provide the highest quality produce in a timely manner to ensure that the general public continued to have access to fresh food. Like many key sectors, agriculture has also been able to provide jobs to those furloughed or made redundant during these difficult times. This brings with it not only additional work force to our industry, but the chance to engage with the public on a different level to show them all about UK agriculture.

I would like to wish everyone good health and a good harvest.

George Hood, Current Chairman of JET Organising Committee





The show will go on...in 2021

JET Course Update

As many of you will now be aware, the JET committee with the support of the Trustees, took the difficult decision to postpone the JET course planned for 2020.

With the increasing threat Covid-19 posed and the government restrictions in place, the committee felt that the most sensible option to ensure the safety and well-being of course delegates, tutors, organisers and visiting speakers was to postpone the course until 2021.

It is hoped that by running the course in 2021, the course delegates will receive the full benefit of the course without the challenge of restrictions and social distancing measures.

Therefore, the course due to commence in December 2020 has now been postponed for a year. The new course will run from December 2021 to February 2022.

Applications for the new course will open in May 2021, but we would ask that anyone interested in applying for the course contact Elizabeth Badger via email (elizabeth.badger@Rau.ac.uk) with an 'expression of interest'.

We would ask you to keep any potential applicants in mind that you feel would benefit from the course and encourage them to apply or send an expression of interest.

We understand that this will come as a disappointment to potential candidates, but we thank you for your understanding during this highly challenging time.



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A vintage year?

By Philip Arkell



A year ago I returned to the UK from a three year stint abroad in Dubai. I had taken an opportunity to try my hand at something other than agriculture – it wasn't a mistake, because I appreciate our industry much more now than before I left for Dubai.

Nobody could have envisaged what this agricultural year could have brought; a very wet and mild winter, followed by an exceedingly dry period with some late frosts thrown in for good measure! Oh and a global pandemic, which has caused an unprecedented interruption to our lives and businesses.

Coronavirus will have meant many things to different people. The risk to vulnerable lives and indeed the loss of life is, of course, very difficult and painful. The damage to businesses in nearly all sectors is brutal. The JET course has always encouraged entrepreneurial spirit and diversification with many of our scholars businesses including elements of hospitality and leisure; a sector particularly badly hit by the continuing pandemic.

However, much of our industry continues as normal. For those of us not involved with the practical side of farming, offices have been abandoned for home working and this combined with childcare has tested even the best jugglers! For many it has proved challenging, but short of driving to Barnard Castle, most have managed to keep businesses afloat whilst looking after and educating the next generation. This resilience and drive to keep going is fundamental to the continued success of agriculture in so many ways.

Many have struggled to adapt to the isolated environment we now find ourselves in thanks to the pandemic. However, farming and JET have an ability to bring people together in one of the most self-isolating of all industries. Whilst the sharing of food and drink is currently a thing of the past, the farming industry has embraced technology and come up with novel ways of continuing social interaction on a virtual level from zoom meetings with your consultant to Friday night young farmer virtual quizzes. Cereals has embraced the challenges and this year will see the first Virtual Cereals event – a benefit not only to those regular attendees, but also those limited by distance – finally a chance to attend if not in person! Red Tractor have also adapted to the 'new normal' much to many people's dismay!



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With the advent of online meeting platforms it is amazing to see how people and businesses can adapt relatively quickly.

However, these options are not without their problems and it highlights a huge challenge we still face in rural areas – lack of connectivity and substandard internet speeds.

Here in Newbury, we have been lucky enough to take on a decent sized plot for growing salads and vegetables. I have been heartened by the huge interest passers by have shown and I can only hope that the hard work pays off and maybe we can earn some reward from the revival in 'localism'. I was once told 'adversity creates opportunities' and I believe that this pandemic will create opportunities for the agricultural industry to reconnect with their customers and boost the 'buy local' trend.

Juggling sprinkler systems, a one year old and a number of farming businesses is testing at times, but the rewards from our industry are worth it. As part of my childcare duties the little one has come on plenty of BPS visits with me and nothing has been more enjoyable than having him with me to enjoy some of the best views across the South East and mainly in the sunshine! It has been positive to see so many people embracing the opportunity to exercise in the countryside during lockdown and I hope that many have a new appreciation for the natural landscapes and wildlife we are lucky to have in this country. However, with this boost in popularity comes public access issues and whilst it is easy to want to 'shut the gate' altogether perhaps we should look to capitalise on this renewed interest and learn to work with the general public to educate and inform.

Looking forwards, it is hard to imagine things returning to what we know as normal, it will be a slow and steady process. I hope that people continue to enjoy their local countryside in the way they have over the last 3 months and they continue to ask questions and engage with the rural community. Our farmers showcase the best of British food and farming and it would be nice to see a reconnect between communities. I hope that the next 6 months are fractionally less challenging than the first 6 months and that 2021 offers some vintage qualities!



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5 Minutes with.....

Chris Padfield

Chris Padfield is one of the new JET course tutors and we asked him for 5 minutes of his time to tell us a bit more about himself!

Chris runs a 4th generation family farm on the Gloucestershire / Worcestershire border. It is a 400 Ha mixed farm consisting of a beef fattening joint venture and a combinable crops enterprise. There is also an HLS scheme currently running on the farm, which is central to the family's focus on creating successful wildlife habitats around the enterprises on farm. Integrating nature and farming to produce a sustainable and viable business is one of the key aims of the family. In addition to the farming activities the business also boasts a range of successful diversification projects including offices, workshops, container storage and grain storage for other business (the current capacity for this enterprise is 17,000 tonnes of grain).

After completing his degree at Newcastle University, Chris worked abroad in Ghana, Guinea Bissau and France. On his return he worked for Hartpury College, Gloucestershire mainly assessing NVQ qualifications and during this time achieved a PGCE. Following this Chris set up a small training company, which offers training services, mainly LANTRA and City and Guilds qualifications, aimed at the land-based skills sector.

Chris was accepted for the John Edgar Programme in 2008/2009, the Worshipful Company of Farmers Business Management course in 2013 and was granted a Nuffield Scholarship , which he conducted in 2015/2016. Building on his interest in rural training and upskilling, his Nuffield focused on farm staff training and development.

Despite the range of commitments which call on Chris' time, he still finds time to enjoy his other interests in life: riding motorbikes (particularly off road) and drinking whisky. Although not a great combination a recent biking trip to Islay managed to encompass the best of both worlds!

We would like to welcome Chris to his new position and thank him for his contributions to the course. He brings a wealth of knowledge and a wide range of skills to the JET programme and we feel confident that the delegates will gain a lot from Chris' involvement with future JET courses.



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JET – Diary Dates & Information

Watch this space!!

The JET website has been undergoing a make over and the new look website will be launched shortly! It is hoped the overhaul will give the website a fresh look enabling users to easily access the information they need!

Farm Walk

Following the outbreak of Coronavirus the committee took the difficult decision to postpone the JET reunion and farm walk for 2020. It is hoped that the farm walk can be rescheduled for 2021, when normal business will hopefully have resumed.

Further details will be published in the New Year.

Course Application deadlines

Applications for the next JET course have been postponed until 2021.

Applications will be invited from May 2021

Further information on application submission deadlines will be made available later in the year.



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