

Newsletter

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AGRICULTURE

Autumn 2008

Farming on the other side of the world!

Jamie McCoy is a third year Agriculture degree student from King's Lynn, Norfolk who is completing her work experience year in New Zealand.

In July 2007 Jamie arrived in the Waikato at the dairy farm of former Aber. student, Gaynor Tierney and her husband Colm. She has been in regular contact by e-mail throughout and is having a whale of a time. Here are some extracts:- Hi—The farm is going great – set farm records last week for volume of milk. Grass growth rates doubled over the last week according to my plate meter readings. Managed to go on a shareholders day at the local Fonterra

factory, where our milk goes - that factory makes milk powder and processes 7 million litres of milk per day! (Aug 2007). I have taken on a job assisting the AI technician for a couple of hours after milking each day. It is definitely showing me differing quality farms throughout the same district - the difference is HUGE! (Oct 2007). Just a quick email to say that I'm still alive! I am still with Gaynor at the moment with the possibility for me to go down to Taranaki to a sheep and beef station before Christmas - perhaps this farm work isn't too bad! (Dec 2007). Holidaying – canoeing, glacier walking, hiking, horse-trekking and rodeo visits! Visited a few South Island farms including the largest privately owned station in NZ (Mount Linton, managed by ex-Aber student

Ceri Lewis)- they were shearing with a 12 stand shed - amazing and sheep everywhere! (Feb 2008) Sun is shining, and am hoping for a helicopter ride this week with the man spraying off some scrub at the top station! Luckily I have booked and paid for my flights home otherwise I would be considering not coming! Will be arriving home 31st Aug, after 3 months in Australia doing a bit of WWOOFing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) for my board and lodging. Am looking forward to seeing Aber again! (Mar 2008) **Jamie**



Man of many parts

Hefin Williams lives on an upland sheep and suckler farm near the town of Machynlleth, Montgomeryshire and graduated in Agriculture with Countryside Management in 2005. Currently, his occupation could best be described as a full-time research student, part-time lecturer and a weekend farmer (if such a thing exists). His academic work has two main objectives:- The development and provision of teaching in Welsh; Research into the role of climate change on Bovine Tuberculosis (BTB) distribution for his PhD thesis.



Mechanisation Staff at IBERS assessing the latest CLAAS technology during a field study trip in May 2008.

IBERS ABERYSTWYTH

Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

List of Courses

BSc Honours

- Agriculture
- Agriculture with Animal Science
- Agriculture with Countryside Management
- Agriculture with Marketing
- Agriculture with Business Studies
- Organic Agriculture (1 year top up)

Foundation Degree

- Agriculture

HND

- Agriculture
- Agriculture with Business
- Agriculture and Countryside Conservation

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IBERS creates a new opportunity

Professor Wayne Powell has been appointed Director of the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) at Aberystwyth University. IBERS



Aberystwyth has been formed following the merger of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER) with the University's Institutes of Biological Sciences and Rural Sciences. Speaking of his appointment Professor Powell asserted his commitment to help IBERS become a "national asset with global impact".

Selecting rams for easy care



Trials which looked at different sets of terminal rams found huge variations in their easy care attributes.

Hybu Cig Cymru says the results of the study, carried out by the Institute of Rural Science (IRS), demonstrated the need for commercial farmers to source performance-recorded sires. IRS researchers have been following 702 Suffolk cross lambs produced by three sire groups - traditional Suffolks, High Index Suffolks and New Zealand Suffolks. At an open day at Morfa Mawr, one of the Institute's farms, 80 farmers heard the lambs' easy care performance varied not just between the three groups, but also between individual rams.

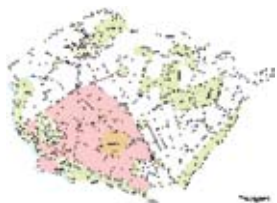
New Zealand lambs tended to be lighter at birth and therefore were the easiest to

lamb - they were also lighter at eight weeks of age compared with the UK Suffolk groups. Crucially, the variation between individual sires for vigour - judged on the ability to stand up - and suckling, was far greater than the variation between groups of sires.

The next phase of the trials will examine general ease of management, followed by slaughter analysis. Prys Morgan, HCC's industry development manager, added: "Recorded sires have real benefits in increasing the performance of a flock. The project has shown how farmers need to choose their sire to meet their individual farm requirements."

Organic milk flows from the Institute's farms

Organic milk production is now up and running at the University's 112 cow Ty Gwyn herd at Trawsgoed with cows on the way to producing 5,500 litres per cow in their first lactation.



Deian Evans, who graduated in Agriculture at the Institute in 2007, was appointed as herdsman in the spring and has quickly settled into his new role. Although from a conventional dairying background, Deian is convinced of the potential of organic milk production and firmly believes that excellent stockmanship and total commitment is the key to success. The aim is to expand to a

herd of 130 low maintenance, long-lasting cows. These Holstein/Friesian, Channel Island and Continental bloodlines will become increasingly self-sufficient in feed and fodder. Currently 22 hectares of cereals and cereal/legume mixtures are grown at Ty Gwyn and the combination of crimped grain and whole-crops will increase milk output to 6,000 litres per cow. The organic herd runs alongside two conventional herds of 250 and 150 cows respectively at Trawsgoed and Frondeg, highlighting the benefit to students of three distinct approaches to milk production and providing an invaluable research resource for staff and students alike.

Minister Update

"My first year as the Minister for Rural Affairs was busy, full of excitement and responsibility."



Following the 'baptism of fire' while leading Wales's response to the Foot and Mouth outbreak, I've tried to break new ground as a Minister in relation to TB control and marketing initiatives. The last year was also full of new experiences, which included attending meetings of European Agriculture Minister as part of the United Kingdom Delegation. On a Welsh level, many important matters will need to be dealt with in the coming months and I look forward to continue working with various groups to improve life in Rural Wales." (Elin Jones is a former student of AU)

From field to fork

The Institute's farms are increasingly becoming the source of food offered to students, staff, visitors and the general public by the University's Hospitality Services. On a weekly basis throughout the winter, a beef animal from the Institute's farms has been slaughtered at a local abattoir and butchered on the premises before being prepared by chefs at several venues on campus to much demand and popular acclaim. Dr Huw McConochie, University Farms Manager explained that 'This has allowed us to begin

the process of getting far closer to our consumers, significantly reducing food miles and providing customers at the University's restaurants with high quality meat of local provenance. The feedback to date has been exceedingly positive and, in due course, we will extend the current arrangement to include home produced lamb as it comes into season. This year we have also planted potatoes which will supply the University's Hospitality Services and we will look into the logistics of growing and supplying an extended range

of commodities in due course. My hope is that we can supply the wider community of Aberystwyth and its surroundings with produce in time and I have no doubt that this will serve as an invaluable means of opening students' eyes to the possibilities and the specific demands of direct marketing.'

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