

WES JOHNSON

Principal of
Newton Rigg
College,
Penrith



Local agricultural supplier continues its programme of backing students

Youngsters get helping hand from scholarships



Support: Newton Rigg students who received scholarship prizes visiting Carrs Billington's head office at Rosehill in Carlisle recently. Pictured with them are, from left, regional branch manager Ian Powley, Wes Johnson and Rae Tomlinson

Local agricultural supplier Carrs Billington has backed a group of students to the tune of £4,500. Eight students at Newton Rigg College were given encouragement and support by the Carlisle-based company in the form of scholarships. Carrs Billington have provided scholarships to Newton Rigg students for the past five years. The students, who are studying on a range of courses, were presented with their scholarship prizes during a visit to Carrs Billington's head office

BY MAUREEN HODGES

at Rosehill, from managing director Rae Tomlinson. Afterwards they enjoyed a guided tour of the Carlisle operation. Campus principal Wes Johnson said: "Throughout my time as principal, the college has enjoyed an excellent working relationship with Carrs Billington through their scholarships, work placements, joint large-scale events and as a future employer of our students. "Their ongoing support for the college and our students is

much appreciated and valued. "Newton Rigg is committed to ensuring our graduates are work-ready individuals. "Our relationship with employers and industry partners such as Carrs Billington is essential in shaping the effective learning journey of our young people." The successful students were Hannah Richardson, Ebony Telford, Laura Elliott and Matthew Clark, all studying L3 agriculture; Jack Depledge and Hannes McNeill studying L3 countryside management; and Paul Bennett and Andrew

Hewat on the L3 land-based technology programme. Mr Tomlinson said: "Carrs Billington Agriculture is delighted to continue to be involved with Newton Rigg College. "We value the partnership and close links with students and staff alike. "The scholarship scheme is another way of investing in the future of farming that is so crucial to us. "The students are our prospective customers and employees and custodians of British farming."

Win place on gamekeeping weekend

Teenagers are being given a shot at the traditional craft of gamekeeping. The opportunity to get a taste of what it is like to be a gamekeeper in the 21st century is being offered by Newton Rigg College, near Penrith. Youngsters, aged between 14 and 16, can enter a competition to win a place on a two-day, all-inclusive 'gamekeeping experience'. Held in June, the experience will include an opportunity to find out about the practical aspects of gamekeeping. It will involve visiting a pheasant-rearing facility and the college's grouse moor above Shap, shotgun safety, clay pigeon shooting, deer stalking and air rifle shooting. To be in with a chance of winning a place on the weekend, entrants are required to write no more than 200 words about why they want to participate.



Facilities: Youngsters will have a variety of experiences, including a visit to college's grouse moor above Shap

Entries can be emailed to gamekeeping@newtonrigg.ac.uk or sent by post to Gamekeeping Experience, Newton Rigg College, Penrith, CA11 0AH. They must be received by Monday, April 24. Judging, by a panel of Newton

Rigg College staff, will take place before Friday, April 28. There are 14 places available and the experience weekend takes place from Friday, June 2 to Sunday, June 4. All winners will be notified by Friday, May 5.

Students take event's reins

A group of students are managing an equine event as part of their course. A showjumping competition will be held at Newton Rigg College on Sunday, May 7, as part of the students' event management module. Level 3 students on the horse management study programme have included a small cross-country course to run alongside the showjumping event. This will be weather-dependent. The showjumping clear round will begin at 9am. From 10am onwards, there will be classes from 55cm to 105cm. The competition is for horses, ponies and riders of all abilities and ages. Entries can be taken on the day. For details, email chloe.walker@newtonrigg.ac.uk or telephone 01768 893642 / 07967 594685.

The results say it all

Despite growing up on a farm, muddy boots are not for Brian Richardson. Instead, the managing director of H&H has agribusiness running through his veins – and it is this that has helped him turn the company into the largest mart business in the UK

Brian Richardson discovered quite early on in life while growing up on a dairy farm in West Yorkshire that he did not have the practical skills needed for farming, but he did have a talent for numbers. After college he got a job on a management training scheme with G Morrell & Sons, an agribusiness in Harrogate covering different sectors. After four years there he moved to the JSR Farming Group and it was his time there that had a profound influence on Mr Richardson.

"I worked with someone called John Rhymer and he was one of my mentors over the years," Mr Richardson, 56, says. "He made me a director of the business when I was just 26 and I was given a lot of responsibility." While with the group, he became the managing director of JSR Healthbred, an internationally renowned pig genetics business. "After 15 years there, I went on to run two farming co-operatives, which were both in Lincolnshire and then I came here," he says. "I met the directors and there was a very clear understanding of the potential in the business and the people in the business and stakeholders in the business. "The staff were also very aware of the rural and farming community, and, after running two co-ops, I was keen on that." Another experience which stimulated his interest in H&H was the fact that, in 1998, he was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship – funding provided to individuals which allows them to research topics of interest in farming, food, horticulture or rural sectors. This allowed him to travel in both Europe and Australasia to see a variety of different ways in which agriculture can be run. "I am not a 'muddy boots' person in terms of farming, but I did get a real feel for working with farmers," he says. "My whole career has been agriculture-based and I see myself as an agribusiness person." Mr Richardson has been chief executive of H&H Group since 2008. When he arrived at H&H, the company employed about 160 people and since his arrival that has almost doubled to about 300. This has happened through both



organic expansion and the takeover of other businesses. He says: "My first impression was that it was a very traditional business with a lot of people doing a very good job. "There was a very solid business in place and it has been my job to develop that." The group's results from the last six months of 2016, published in March, would suggest he has done just that. An increased turnover of £7.9m represents a rise of 11 per cent over the same period in 2015, up from £7.1m. Profits before tax are also up to £805,000 from £340,000. The

group's average share price has risen from £26.48 to £27.85 for the same period in 2015. One of the biggest issues Mr Richardson has addressed is making sure that H&H does not limit itself just to Cumbria but also has interests in other parts of the north of England and southern Scotland. He is also keen to build on H&H's already strong reputation with its customers. "We have a great team of staff and a big group of stakeholders – 25,000 customers – and I think it is about delivering an effective business to them and to develop as required."

Brian Richardson: "My first impression was that it was a very traditional business with a lot of people doing a very good job" STUART WALKER

By David Hall

NFU North West Regional Director

Agriculture must be central to any Brexit negotiations

As I sit and write this piece for *Farmer*, a letter signed by Prime Minister Theresa May, which will start the process of the UK leaving the EU, is winging its way to Brussels. Since the referendum last June, we have been in limbo, with lots of talk but no action. We have seen legal challenges, votes in Parliament and the Lords, different politicians giving their views on the issue and marches by various groups. Although the triggering of Article 50 is a time of uncertainty, we need to approach this in a positive way and make sure that agriculture is at the centre of the negotiations. It is widely recognised that farming is the sector which will be impacted most by the decision to leave the EU. However, what does not seem to be recognised is what agriculture delivers for the economy. For instance, many politicians point towards big firms such as BAE Systems and say we need to make sure we protect and invest in them. Collectively, agri-food is worth £108 billion gross value added (GVA), which measures the value of goods and services produced. This is 7.2 per cent of the total UK GVA and is bigger than car and aerospace manufacturing combined. On top of that, agri-food employs 13.6 per cent of all employees in the UK. These are the positive messages we need to get across during the next two years. With the right deal on trade and the right regulatory and policy framework in support of that, we can deliver even more. The NFU has published the first of a series of reports setting out its vision for the future of farming. The paper covers the key issues that will impact on British farming and that must be addressed now the Government has triggered Article 50. The report details the framework being proposed and consists of three 'cornerstones': productivity measures and business resilience; volatility mitigation measures and management tools; and environmental measures. The vision explains what the NFU believes is needed for a thriving farming sector post-Brexit and outlines the approach Government and industry must take to support UK agriculture once the UK has left the EU. British farming delivers on every level. In monetary value, for every £1 invested in farm support, farming delivers £7.40 back to the UK economy. We now need to shape a policy that promotes competitive, profitable and progressive farm businesses that can continue to produce adequate supplies of British food that the public enjoys and trusts. ■ The NFU's Vision for the Future of Farming can be found on www.nfuonline.com.

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Wes Johnson

Artisan cheese producers eye up Hong Kong

A selection of speciality cheeses from Britain have been served up for the first time to chefs, dairy buyers and local media at a tasting session in Hong Kong.

Around 65 people attended the event, organised by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) to promote a range of artisan and premium cheeses already available in Hong Kong as well as some new selections.

Held at the On Dining restaurant in Central Hong Kong, the tasting session was presented by noted cheese master Jeremy Evrard.

Experts from AHDB say the event was a huge success as they look to target the growing market.

AHDB senior export manager Lucy Randolph said: "Hong Kong is an important market for us."

"It is wealthy and appreciates high quality cheeses."

"Hong Kong buyers currently tend to be more knowledgeable regarding French, Italian or Swiss cheeses due to the marketing investment these countries have made over a long time."

"We started our trade development programme recently, but we are keen to make our mark in this competitive market where quality food from Britain is welcome. Importantly, export marketing needs a sustained effort."

"We are delighted with this first success. The event will contribute to our aim of growing our share of dairy imports in Hong Kong."

Beefing up the environment

Farmers join forces with local Woodland Trust

BY MAUREEN HODGES

An environmentally-friendly farming business has teamed up with one of Cumbria's best-known green groups.

The Horned Beef Company, based in Lindale, near Grange-over-Sands, is working on a project with the Cumbria Woodland Trust which will see the firm give some of its land over to trees.

The business, which aims to provide quality beef using greener farming methods, was set up by husband and wife team David and Bekka Corrie-Close.

It comprises a 70-strong herd of pedigree cattle, including Shetlands and longhorn, over 500 acres.

The owners come from backgrounds in the environmental and conservation sectors and are excited about this new project.

Mr Corrie-Close said: "Our farm is all about sustainability - farming with nature and trying to improve the environment across our holding."

As well as the obvious environmental benefits from planting more trees, he said the extra



Green approach: Bekka and David Corrie-Close, of the Horned Beef Company

trees, once fully grown, would give the livestock more places to shelter in hot weather or heavy rain.

Other groups involved in the project include the Lake District National Park, which has provided some funding, and Grange Outdoor Nature Club.

The trees will be planted on two acres of the farm's land.

"There will be a big impact on the fields," Mr Corrie-Close said. "We will be excluding livestock from certain areas while we are planting."

The Horned Beef Company was set up in 2015 and was funded in an unusual way - with investors putting up £1,000 and receiving a dividend each year in beef.

Mr Corrie-Close added: "We're trying to sell the beef ourselves in hot weather or heavy rain. Because we realised from an early stage that a lot of farming is very marginal in business terms."

"We need to make the maximum amount of profit per head of animal, and one way to do that is to sell direct to the end consumer rather than having anyone else in the supply chain."

"There's an awful lot more that farming could do to improve the countryside and that's what drives us - working closely with organisations and individuals to improve it visually, for wildlife and the quality of the landscape."

"There's going to come a point pretty soon that the way most people farm doesn't make any sense - it doesn't make any sense financially, it doesn't make any sense for the future, it's unsustainable."

"The way we are choosing to farm is low input. We don't have a £100,000 tractor that uses a litre of diesel every two seconds; we try to do things in a very green, low-carbon way."

"That applies to every decision we make on the farm, which means we do a lot of hard work by hand rather than using machines to do it."

"It may be the slower decision to make, but we're confident that what we're doing is the future of farming in locations, like the Lake District, where it can be hard to farm."

"The whole enterprise at Gatelands Farm is family-run, but it is

Dairy producer taps into valuable restaurant market for otherwise worthless calves

County veal at top tables

BY MAUREEN HODGES

Dairy farmer Andrew Barraclough is adding value to his milk cheque by selling rose veal calves to top-end London restaurants.

But when Andrew started out there was no market for male calves, and the UK demand for veal was met by imports.

"At the time of starting the business, veal calves had no value. We had to go out and find a market for them," said Andrew, 48.

Not to be beaten, Andrew built a solid relationship with Lake District Farmers, a wholesale butcher supplying into the London market.

"It was then we started establishing a name for ourselves in the city," said Andrew.

And this led to veal from the family farm, at Morland near Penrith, being served as the main course of a four-course banquet for the BBC's Great British Menu.

British chef Mark Froydenlund, who cooked the meat on the show, regularly uses the veal from Andrew's Gatelands Farm in Marcus Wareing's two-Michelin-starred London restaurant, Marcus at The Berkeley Hotel, where he is head chef.

"We are primarily dairy farmers, but we are also looking at other ways



Andrew Barraclough: 'We started establishing a name for ourselves'

LOUISE PORTER

Andrew's wife Angela who is in charge of calf-rearing.

"Running the veal business alongside the dairy business is not difficult," said Andrew.

"We are primarily dairy farmers, but we are also looking at other ways

we can make money. "A dairy farmer contemplating diversification should look at every aspect of their business."

"It's not going to be an overnight roaring success."

"The farmer needs to have the

labour and contractual business right.

"They need to research the market they've chosen and not be afraid to change their product from what they originally thought it should be to what the customer wants."

Tractor drivers compete in the new John Deere

John Deere and Michelin are once again hosting the European Drivers' Championship in June.

Sixteen tractor operators from all over Europe will prove their skills driving the new 6250R tractor at the Michelin test site in Clermont-Ferrand, France.

The competition is not only about speed, but also about the best and most efficient driving strategy.

Those who would like to take part should apply now at www.lightstronmart.com and then attract as many 'likes' as possible from their social media community.

The 16 candidates with the most likes will be invited to Michelin's technology centre and proving ground to represent their home country in the European Drivers' Championship.

The test site is one of the world's largest.

It has 19 test tracks with a total length of 41km (25.5 miles).

Eight new John Deere 6250R tractors equipped with the new CommandPRO joystick will be available for the competition.

Featuring a maximum output of 300hp, each tractor will be pulling a Joskin 29-tonne tandem-axle trailer, and all the machines will be equipped with Michelin tyres.

The 16 championship participants will be the first customers in the world to drive the new 6250R in real-life conditions.

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Couple show wildlife and farm business can co-exist

BY MAUREEN HODGES

Lake District hill farmers play their small part in the National Trust's national vision to bring nature 'back to the heart of our countryside'

Sam and Candida Hodgson are dyed-in-the-wool hill farmers, but their Lake District farm has special conservation value. And it has been their talent for combining nature conservation with a highly successful farming system that has helped them to win awards.

They captured the second David Arnold-Forster Trust Hill Farming Award and, earlier this year, won the National Trust's first Beatrix Potter Farming for Nature Award.

Bilberries, heather and juniper all flourish alongside the couple's flock of Herdwick sheep.

The 1,225-hectare beef and sheep Glencoyne Farm, on the shores of Ullswater, near Glenridding, has high conservation value. It includes three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

The land, set against the backdrop of Glencoyne dale, covers high fell and lake shore with flat, valley-floor meadows in between.

It provides a habitat for a diversity of plants and animals. Wildlife typical of woodland, grassland, flushes and mires are all found on the farm.

Sam, from a prominent local farming family, is well respected as a stockman and farmer and known for his single suckler Limousin cows and Swaledale sheep. Candida, who met Sam in Kentmere where she had arrived from Wiltshire to tend her parents' farm, runs a flock of



Compatible: Orchids and sheep exist side by side on Glencoyne Farm

white-faced woodland sheep.

The farm itself dates back to the 17th century, with Sam and Candida moving in to take on the trust tenancy in 1995.

They reintroduced Herdwicks nineteen years ago.

"You're a master of nothing on a hill farm, but you need to know masses. There are no text books about what to do," Sam is quoted as saying.

His first lambing saw him coming back from Ambleside Junior School when he spotted a yow with a big headed lamb. "I think I was six. I managed to catch it, behind a fence, and lamb it."

"This landscape, you know, is second to none; it's sublime. But a good sheep is even more sublime!

The highlight's walking into the shed and seeing that our favoured sheep has had probably the best lamb ever."

The National Trust recently announced it would be returning to its roots after admitting it had lost its way in its original pledge to help preserve wildlife for the public.

Under ambitious new plans, the conservation charity will create 25,000 hectares of new habitats by 2025 to reverse the dramatic slump in the numbers of some of the country's most-loved plants and animals, such as water voles, lapwings and curlews.

But Sam and Candida have already embraced projects designed to help Britain's wildlife.

"They have developed a fantastic farming business that, working with

our team on the ground, takes a sustaining approach to land management which means that natural processes and wildlife have a chance to flourish as part of a strong farming business," said a National Trust north region spokesperson.

The couple described their farm as a "working, living landscape".

"We'll be quite proud if there are lots of trees come up in the park when we're gone. It's the same with a stock of sheep: you'd like to pass on a good stock of sheep. There's no doubt, they go back to before Beatrix Potter, and if you can keep those bloodlines, well, it's history."

The trust says it is very much at the start of this "exciting" journey in the Lakes.

"Obviously farmers are essential partners in this, and we'll be working very closely with our people and farm tenants, drawing on their experience and knowledge in coming months and years for the long-term future of nature and farming," a spokesperson said.

Under the trust's plans, all tenant farmers will be encouraged to create wildlife corridors, establish lowland wildflower meadows and wetlands, maintain hedgerows, improve water and soil quality, install ponds and plant new woodland.

An in-depth study last year found 56 per cent of species were in decline.

"Nature has been squeezed out to the margins for far too long," said Peter Nixon, director of land, landscape and nature at the National Trust. "We want to help bring it back to the heart of our countryside."

"Our charity was founded to protect our natural heritage and we believe we should be playing an active role in reviving it by doing what we can on our own land."

"Despite the battering it's taken, nature has an incredible ability to rejuvenate and revive if given the conditions to thrive."

"Birds such as the cuckoo, lapwing and curlew are part of the fabric of our rural heritage, but they've virtually disappeared from the countryside. We want to see them return to the fields, woods and meadows again, along with other wildlife which was once common and is now rare."

Once common species such as hedgehogs, natterjack toads, great crested newts, turtle doves and nightingales are facing alarming drops in numbers.

The National Trust owns almost 250,000 hectares of land, more than one per cent of land in the UK, and cares for 775 miles of coast.



Dedicated: Sam and Candida Hodgson describe their farm as a 'working, living landscape'

PICTURES: TONY GREENBANK

Slot-seeding and aeration provide grassland boost



Rejuvenated: New life can be brought into existing grass leys STUART WALKER

The two essential aspects of grassland management are sward productivity and effective soil structure.

Both can now be addressed with minimal disruption to harvesting and grazing by using the techniques of 'slot-seeding' and soil aeration.

New life can be brought into existing grass leys at half the cost of a full re-seed and with higher germination rates than over-seeding techniques.

Slot-seeding bolsters productivity and prolongs the life of a ley.

It ensures good contact between the seed and the soil with increased seedling vigour.

Depth control maximises seed germination while sheltering seedlings.

For farmers who have problems with compaction and waterlogging, or who are losing productivity through poorly performing roots, good aeration is vital.

Through programmes of planned aeration, more vigorous grassland growth can be achieved.

Effective aeration can release up to

25kg of nitrogen per hectare.

Aeration using the right machine at the right time not only improves soil structure, it also improves drainage by reducing water-logging with all the problems that creates.

Aeration increases the amount of air in the soil and the essential supply of oxygen to plant roots.

Increased air in the soil intensifies the activity of soil microbes which, in turn, increases the availability of soil nutrients - not only the nitrogen, potassium and phosphate contained within fertilisers, but also the naturally occurring trace elements and minerals in the soil which play such an important part in stock health.

As root growth is enhanced, grasses and plants are able to access more nutrients and grow more vigorously and productively.

Getting water into the ground improves drought tolerance and, at the same time, helps reduce soil surface run-off by getting through old soil pans.

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£800,000 for natural flood management

Farmers across Cumbria will benefit from a cash handout to develop flood management projects. A total of £800,000 has been awarded to groups across the north of England.

The funding, provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Natural England through the latest round of the Facilitation Fund, will be split between 12 groups located across river catchment areas in Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Northumberland, County Durham and Yorkshire.

The funding will allow the 218 group members to employ nature-based solutions for managing flooding across 61,000 hectares of land.

Schemes include restoring native woodland, creating more wet woodland, management of moorlands, restoration of river habitat and better soil management.

The groups will also join forces with the

National Trust, Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Rivers Trust to plant trees, create water meadows and restore rivers to their natural meanders.

The fund, which closed to applicants on February 15, has been run in response to flood action plans.

Martin Rogers, the NFU's flood management and access adviser, welcomed the fund, but stressed the money must be used to cover pressing issues for farmers, including the multiple permits and consents needed.

He added: "There must be continued recognition that natural flood management was one of many solutions outlined within the Cumbrian flood action plan.

"Farmers need assurances that the work they get involved in works alongside and in partnership with other measures such as more traditionally engineered structure, river maintenance and gravel removal where needed."

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