

# Society NEWS



**Read about our local food heroes on pages 16-17**

Learn more about our new partnership with the GWCT Allerton Research Project

We catch up with a local young farmer to hear how YFC have adjusted in recent months

A welcome from Harper Adams  
Vice-Chancellor, David Llewellyn



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## Welcome to the autumn/winter 2020 edition of the Society News

Well, 2020 is proving to be a very different year to the one we all expected, 'lockdown' due to the pandemic, partial release and now the very real threat of a second spike with further restrictions. I have to applaud the ingenuity, resilience and adaptability of all the showground staff, who have adapted brilliantly to new methods of working, social distancing, working from home and furlough where appropriate.

The events business has been devastated with a drastically reduced programme of commercial events and the cancellation of all our major summer shows, including the Festival of Hunting, Equifest and Just Dogs Live. Regretfully, we have had to make some tough decisions to streamline the business with several redundancies. We have however been able to help the NHS by hosting a Testing Centre on the south car park and lighting up the Arena in blue on Thursday evenings as a thank you to our wonderful carers.

Jason Lunn, our Venue Director has a seat on the national panel advising the government on safe ways for the event industry to re-open. Following some intense negotiating we are justifiably proud of being the first site in the country to be sanctioned by National Health England and Peterborough City Council to run a large 'Covid secure' outside event with 'Motor Homes', closely followed by 'Truckfest'. We had hoped to be given the go-ahead in October to proceed with large-scale inside events. However, the recent restrictions meant we are unable to hold this year's East of England Farming Conference.

We recognise that this is a very challenging time for the agricultural industry and see our role as providing

support, guidance and education. After a particularly difficult year and a poor harvest, farming is entering a transition period of its own as the Basic Payment Scheme is phased out and we prepare to leave the European Union. The emphasis of central government support is changing to positive support for the environment as the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) is introduced and phased in to be fully operational by late 2024. In the interim, it is expected that the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) Scheme will bridge the gap to support farm incomes and encourage change to soil and wildlife-friendly management.

The sale of the showground will provide the Society with funding and focus to reposition our approach, to offer genuine help to farmers and growers to tackle these challenges, embrace innovations and move businesses forward in different ways. We are continuing to forge links with the fledgling new University in Peterborough with the delivery of their agri-related courses. We are also engaging with businesses and charities with similar aims to investigate whether collaboration could be beneficial to extend and support our charitable objectives.

Our Kids Country team has been busy in lockdown reimagining the offering, creating virtual video presentations for lockdown learning, closely linked to the key stage 1&2 curriculum and developing a school's outreach service.

Within the imposed restrictions, our Marshal Papworth team has provided support and counselling to our overseas students completing their Masters courses. Lockdown has given us time to re-establish links



with our alumni; elsewhere in this edition is the remarkable story of Paul Opio who is making a real difference to the sustainability of livestock production in East Africa. His Marshal Papworth scholarship together with the opportunity to visit and study in the UK has certainly helped him on his successful journey. We wish all our overseas students success as they complete their studies and return to careers in their own countries.

With the background of a poor harvest and as further restrictions are announced it's even more important to be aware and challenge where our food comes from, its quality and its traceability; British farming is renowned throughout the world for our standards of husbandry, quality of product and innovation. It is beholden on us all to back British farming, look out for the Red Tractor logo and buy British whenever we can.

**Richard Bramley**  
Chairman,  
East of England Agricultural Society

**As we are faced with ever changing advice on operating events and have cancelled our Autumn and Winter programme of Society events, shows, dinners and conferences, please keep checking our website and social media channels for the latest news.**

**You can also keep up to date by signing up to our monthly e-newsletters. We do not share your data with external third parties and you can unsubscribe at any time.**

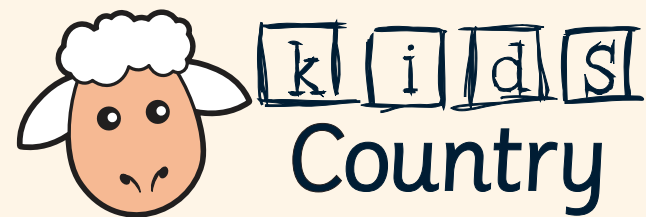
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 East of England Agricultural Society





## #LockdownLearning

The Kids Country team has supported on-line learning since the end of March, creating learning resources in place of its usual 'real-time' educational programme for use in schools and home learning.

We know families have been using the website during the school holiday and tailored our resources, around healthy eating and seasonal veg. By bringing this to the forefront; we are helping our farming communities by drawing attention to locally-produced food, and encouraging people to try new products and local outlets.

Supported by our amazing strong network of farmers, food and agricultural companies, we are continuing weekly online themes to help families learn more about where

their food, such as salads, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, come from.

Looking ahead for an exciting autumn term, our online schooling resources will include:

● **September:** Launch our 2021 programme to schools. Supporting LEAF Open Farm Sunday theme of Autumn Apples with new resources on our website.

● **October:** It's all about pumpkins and interactive activities from 'seed to super pumpkin'. Delivering educational video sessions and activity sheets for the Cub and Beaver groups. Including a new competition and for the first time Kids Country embroidered badges as prizes.



Welland Academy  
@WellandAcad

Children in our bubbles this morning are really interested in seeing how sausages are made thanks to @KidsCountryUK live event online. Can't wait to actually visit again next year!



Boston St Mary's  
@Bostonstmarys

KS1 Key workers have spent some time taking part on the virtual food & farming day! Lots of fun had and we've learnt lots of new things. The animals and tractors have been our favourite parts.  
#artwork #painting @KidsCountryUK

## Magnificent Minibeast Shortbread

There are many variations of this recipe.

**INGREDIENTS - Shortbread**  
250gm / 9oz Plain flour  
75gm / 3oz Caster sugar  
175gm / 6oz Butter

**TOP**  
Dried fruit / Sultanas  
Cherries / Icing sugar  
Food colouring or jam,  
lemon curd mixed into icing  
sugar and melted chocolate.

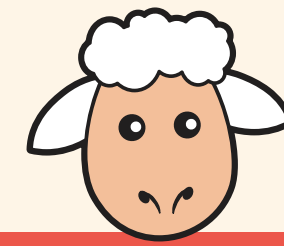
### METHOD

- 1 Heat oven 160°/325°. Grease baking tray
- 2 Mix flour, sugar, and rub in butter until fine breadcrumbs
- 3 Use fingers to form a dough, turn onto floured surface make sausage shape
- 4 Cut in half, then cut each half into 5 pieces
- 5 Now make your 10 minibeasts. Rest in fridge for 20 mins
- 6 Bake for 15/20 minutes
- 7 Cool on a wire rack and be creative with your decoration
- 8 Serve and enjoy!

MARRIAGE'S  
THE MASTER MILLERS



Always ask for an adult's permission before cooking in the kitchen



## Virtual Food and Farming Day Competition

With an overwhelming response of competition entries, Fatima from Welland Academy, Peterborough, and April from St Gilberts C of E Primary School, Stamford, went on to respectively win the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Virtual Food and Farming Day Schools' Competition.



Replacing the much loved 'Design a Farm' competition at the annual education event at the East of England Showground, this year's online event saw Kids Country ask schools to send in pieces of creative work to describe what they enjoyed the most about the 2020 event. The winners both secured £150 towards the cost of travel to the Food and Farming Day 2021.

## Successful first Virtual Food & Farming Day

Undeterred by the global pandemic, the Kids Country team of Sandra and Anna ensured Friday 3rd July was still a huge field to fork educational day for children streaming the Virtual Food & Farming Day directly into homes and some classrooms during lockdown. There was huge support from all our usual educators and businesses in the sector still wanting to be involved and support the day in a digital manner. Whilst we know replacing the real-life Kids Country experience we achieve every July on the Showground was a challenge, this was an amazing alternative to be able to continue our educational work. The day itself achieved plenty of print coverage and radio interviews promoting what we do all year round. Across the various social media channels of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram it enabled us to reach

a wider geographical audience than usual. The virtual format centred around replicating the 12 zones on the showground but this year on the Kids Country website with a newly created online area of 85 new educational videos and over 110 new work sheets which could be downloaded. The content was streamed at various timed points through the morning, giving children/parents/teachers the option and control of how best to consume and interact with. We had over 900 schools join in and almost 10,000 browsers online during the day. One of the most popular elements of the day was the Farming poem by American poet Bonnie Mohr and read by some of our local farmers, food producers and volunteers that support Kids Country including National Farmers Union (NFU), Albert



Bartlett, Alan Bartlett and Son, G's Fresh and Ladies in Pigs. Encapsulating both the hard work that goes into producing the food that we eat and also the vision of the Kids Country initiative, this poem can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/siANRZcUnTc>

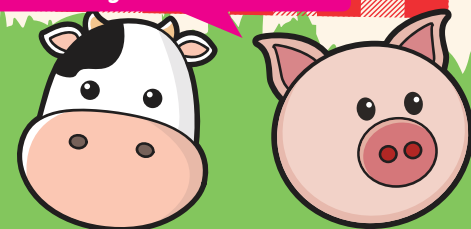
The longer term benefit is that as a consequence of having to adapt to being unable to host a live event is that we have created an invaluable 'evergreen' archive of content and video that has a shelf life way beyond the virtual day. Make sure to take a look at the Kids Country website.

f @KidsCountryUK

t @KidsCountryUK

in Kids Country UK

ig kidscountryuk





## Outcome triumph for Marshal Papworth Alumni

Whilst summer 2020 has not been its usual mix of short-course scholarship visits, graduations and welcome meetings with the Masters scholars, we have taken the opportunity to catch up with our alumni and we share some of their news below.

Thank you to Paul Opio, from Nairobi, Kenya, who has updated us with his latest research and development on sustainable livestock production in Eastern Africa through his work with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. This will not only make livestock production more sustainable but also provide new jobs for young people in the communities. This is an amazing outcome for the Marshal Papworth Fund with one of our alumni facilitating real change at a national level.

Meanwhile, the class of 2019 is doing us proud. After graduating from the Marshal Papworth short course at

Harper Adams University 12 months ago, Joseph Adonna and his colleague and fellow graduate Owen Atindana have wasted no time in putting their new skills to use. They have helped to plant 24,000 tree seedlings in the Kassena Nankana Municipal and West Districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana.



Joseph and Owen from the class of 2019

To read the full story from Paul, Joseph and Owen, visit our website at [www.marshalpapworth.com/category/news](http://www.marshalpapworth.com/category/news) where you will also find all our latest updates.

## Agricultural development scholar helps 1,000 young people out of poverty in Sierra Leone

Leaving Sierra Leone in 2016, Samuel studied for his Masters in Agriculture and Development with a scholarship at the University of Reading, using his studies to set up an agricultural company to help bring young people in Sierra Leone out of poverty through sustainable farming.

"My Marshal Papworth scholarship opened a window of opportunity to visit different agricultural production sites and factories as supplementary visits to my studies, which definitely inspired and challenged me to translate those examples into workable solutions in Sierra Leone."

Following his studies and these experiences in the UK, Samuel has been able to set up The Nedemiah Development Project to address

chronic poverty in Sierra Leone and the surrounding countries. The organisation is designed to support 1,000 young people and their families to get out of poverty through skill development, job creation and entrepreneurial development.



Samuel, Marshal Papworth Alumni

## Marshal Papworth Scholar completes Horticulture MSc

Danisa Matebesi is celebrating the successful completion of his MSc in Crop Production (Horticulture). An experienced lecturer, Danisa teaches transferable skills and specialist knowledge to horticulture teachers in Zimbabwe.

Danisa studied at Writtle University College (WUC) from 2019 to 2020, with the support of the Marshal Papworth Fund. Sandra Lauridsen, Marshal Papworth's Fund Coordinator, said: "This year has been a challenging year for all of our MSc students, but they have done us all proud with their resilience and commitment to making the most of their Marshal Papworth scholarship and have a real impact on the lives of their communities when they return home.

Danisa said: "The MSc Crop Production (Horticulture) at Writtle University College is unique in that it covers the whole latitude of issues in the horticulture value chain from a global perspective. I thank the East of England Agricultural Society's Marshal Papworth Scholarship Fund for making it possible for me to access this specialised learning."



Danisa with his certificate

## Harper Adams University Vice-Chancellor appointed Society President



This work supports Harper Adams in its role as a leading provider of highly skilled people for the agri-food industry. Our educational activities have continued unabated during the Coronavirus crisis, though it has taken an enormous effort by our staff to move much of our teaching and assessment online, work through various elements of Government guidance and keep our farming operations on track. Nonetheless, our academic year has started, and as well as welcoming new and returning students we have been joined by our first intake to the veterinary school we have launched in collaboration with Keele University.

During my early career in higher education, I held several posts in London universities. I joined Harper Adams in 1998, was appointed Principal in September 2009 and became the founding Vice-Chancellor of Harper Adams University in 2012. I am a Fellow of the Institution of Agricultural Engineers and of the Royal Agricultural Societies. Amongst other appointments, I have previously served as a board member of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, and the land-based qualifications awarding body, LANTRA. I am a member of the group leading the current national Agri-Skills Initiative.

I am delighted to be taking on the role of President of the Society, whilst recognising that, as a result of the pandemic, it too has been dealing with a difficult operating environment in recent months. Despite the considerable disruption, the Society's work in education, in promoting agricultural knowledge-sharing and innovation, together with the development of its future vision,

all demonstrate a capacity to adapt and deliver in some of the most difficult circumstances we have seen for many years.

That adaptability and determination to support those who farm, produce our food and manage the natural environment has been at the heart of agricultural societies across the UK for many generations. Their work brings these sectors together, connects them with the wider public and inspires future generations to pursue careers in fields of vital importance to the economy and wider society. There is a natural affinity in the work of my University with the Society, not least because of the emphasis we both place on working with young people. I therefore hope that the connections we already have will be strengthened by my Presidency, a role that I am greatly honoured to be taking on. And that it will not be too long before we can meet in person.

**Dr David Llewellyn**  
Vice-Chancellor, Harper Adams University

"So when I was at Harper, the student numbers were around 600 compared to over 5,000 now. I started on the straight Agriculture degree and then took the marketing option in the last 4 terms. We were the first ones through this option. One of the great things about Harper was the practical and experience-driven emphasis. We had to do a pre-college year on a farm and then for my industrial placement year, I worked at Waitrose HQ in the fresh produce buying office and even managed 3 months in the States working for M&S. The practical emphasis was such an important part to connect academic studies with the real world, whether it was the field crop walks on a Friday afternoon in the first year or a group marketing project for Aga Rayburn in our final year. Many memorable experiences and challenges and an invaluable network of friends and alumni."

— James Parrish, Society Trustee

"In addition to being tutored by industry experts, the structure of my course at Harper Adams and the placement year provided me with valuable industry experience, giving me an edge above others when applying for graduate positions"

— Amelia Rome, Class of 2019 and Cultiv8 member

"My placement year was my favourite part of Harper. I spent six months in the Netherlands doing a research project for Friesland Campina and then I worked for Corkers Crisps in Ely. It was such a valuable year for my development."

— James Burton, Class of 2019 and Society staff





# Searching for wins

Phil Jarvis, Head of Farming at the Allerton Project, the GWCT's research and demonstration farm.

British agriculture faces some big challenges in addition to Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, let's start with the big issue around climate, weather and greenhouse gases. Then look at biodiversity and environmental enhancement and finish on the crucial component of a financially-sustainable food production model in these fast-moving times.

First, let me introduce the GWCT Allerton Project and the work we are doing to both 'search for' and 'research' some winning formulas to address those challenges. The project aims have been threefold: to look at productive farming and wildlife enhanced landscapes; research these interactions; and disseminate our findings to interested parties.

The project came to fruition in 1992. The executors of Lady Allerton's estate, with great foresight, established an entity, which at the time could have been described as a little left field. Now, nearly 30 years later it is central to the thought processes of modern-day agriculturalists and environmentalists.



### Climate, weather and greenhouse gases

The planet is getting warmer, weather events seem to be more extreme and some of our food production methods are under deeper scrutiny from an inquiring society. Man-made fertilisers, plant protection products, a major success story over the past

50 years, now require a re-design so that we might encompass them into a new 'healthy and more harmonious' landscape over the next 25 years. The previously hidden costs of such production systems are going to need to be addressed as UK farmers look to build more climate and weather resilience into their farming systems.



Using agri-environment schemes to enhance biodiversity and protect water



The greenhouse gas and carbon story can be both a hindrance and an opportunity for land managers. A negative, when all farm inputs come under further examination and outputs also have an environmental footprint attached to them. However, an opportunity is beginning to develop

as carbon sequestration in trees and soil begins to garner attention and perhaps give rise to a worthwhile financial income.

Our work at the Allerton Project combines greenhouse gas studies on both arable and pastureland. Can we

develop a mixed farming system that helps build soil resilience through soil carbon, fertility and has a financial model relevant to modern-day production systems? Our cultivation trials are producing real farm data previously only modelled or done in laboratory conditions.

To learn more visit [gwct.org.uk/allerton](http://gwct.org.uk/allerton)

It is estimated that 90% is due to earthworm activity

Earthworms have been found to improve crop yields by up to 25%

More than 16 worms per spade-full is linked with improved crop yields

At the Allerton Project we've found earthworm numbers nearly doubled in our direct drilled trials

Earthworms enrich the soil with soil microbial organisms, as more are found in the soil that has passed through their gut, than in the soil they eat

Earthworms have three function groups:

- Surface dwellers, called Epigeic, which eat organic matter on the surface of soil, and don't form burrows
- Soil dwellers, called Endogeic, which make horizontal burrows and eat soil
- Deep burrowers, called Anecic, which make deep vertical burrows and drag litter down into them



**Biodiversity and the environment**

Many commentators and studies have shown a reduction in the diversity and abundance of our plant and animals kingdoms. However, many landowners have used agri-environment schemes to enhance their ‘on-farm’ biodiversity and protect water, soil and air. At the Allerton Project, our next venture into Countryside Stewardship looks to share more land rather than spare it where previously we have looked at 100% wildlife habitats. In come herbal and fallow leys, lower input cereals and unharvested headlands. We are looking to the next generation of Integrated Crop Management, with specific habitats for ‘crop pest predators’. This combined with more rotational and crop diversity aims to move away from crops that just exploit the soils’ store of nutrition whilst building a better soil biome.

*Balanced solutions and signposts will be crucial in the future*

As a society, we aspire to feed growing populations whilst reducing the environmental footprint, a flashback to ‘sustainable intensification’. In pursuing this objective, UK agriculture needs to come up with a model which combines increased efficiency, a functioning marketplace along with well-managed and targeted support on the journey to new restorative agricultural production systems. Not investing in agricultural production can lead to someone else’s environment being exploited for the UK’s benefit in a drive for cheaper food policy.

**Financial impacts under scrutiny**

Within the Project’s trials and demonstrations, we always look at the financial impact of cultivations, rotations and regenerative approaches. The ability to produce profitable returns is key to providing environmental stewardship. Populations are beginning to demand and expect higher UK production standards linked to better welfare and ecological approaches, but it comes

at a price. A race to the bottom on food prices and environmental support is not going to solve these challenges. This nicely returns us to Brexit and the implications of the trading environment that UK growers will be exposed to. The rhetoric is well woven around double standards and level playing fields. As such, agriculture and environmental legislation, trade talks and commissions must be joined up. UK Government must show global leadership to avoid a financial cliff edge here and a biodiversity free fall for the planet. The whole process is not made any easier when the COVID-19 pandemic has led to understandable indecision which is never good for business planning.

What is clear is that the Allerton Project will continue to search for balanced solutions and signposts, based on practical farmland research translated into knowledge for practical farmers and growers. We are delighted to join forces with the East of England Agricultural Society to deliver such an approach to a wider audience.

**Free training courses for Society members**

The East of England Agricultural Society is pleased to announce it will be partnering with the GWCT Allerton Project over the next year with a number of initiatives including delivering various Society member and Cultiv8 talks and opportunities for group visits to their research farm at Loddington. There will also be a number of free places for

Society members to complete some GWCT Allerton Project led online training courses on Regenerative Agriculture, Clean Air, Water and Soil, IPM and Pollinators and Agri-Schemes for the future. If you are interested in hearing more about these courses please email [membership@eastofengland.org.uk](mailto:membership@eastofengland.org.uk)



# Success for local YFC chairman

**Grace Millbank, the current Chairman of Oundle Young Farmers recently won the National Federation of Young Farmer’s Clubs Senior Member of the Year. She tells us what was involved...**

Members’ contribution to, and knowledge of NFYFC, is the core of the competition. County and area rounds preceded the National. The first two rounds were live interviews but the final was over Zoom – such is the world we live in! It has been a great honour to win this award for an organisation I am so passionate about.

I encourage all young people, from a rural background, to get involved with Young Farmers, a fantastic organisation which has given me so much fun and added so much to my CV! I have been lucky enough to travel with NFYFC, which is an opportunity many don’t realise is available to YFC members. I spent six weeks in rural Montana, USA where I helped with haymaking, cattle herding and combining. Connie Reeves, also an Oundle YFC member was due to travel to Slovenia in summer 2020 as part of the NFYFC travel programme. There’s a wide variety of trips available to members all around the world, full details on the travel section of the NFYFC website.

Oundle Young Farmers Club is a local branch of the NFYFC which across England and Wales has around 23,000 members. The National Federation caters for members aged 10–26, and

in Northamptonshire, we encourage members up to 30 years old to be involved. Clubs are supported by past members, but most of the work and organisation is conducted by current members which keeps ideas fresh and relevant to our generation!

As with all aspects of life, Covid-19 means our way of operating has changed. As a youth organisation, we are currently allowed to meet in small groups and we intend to start meeting at the beginning of October. Traditionally the club has met weekly on Wednesday evenings, but to accommodate the encouraged use of outdoor meetings we will be holding more meetings on a Sunday afternoon. We hope to continue our varied programme which includes (but is most definitely not limited to):

- Stockjudging
- Bowling/Ice Skating/Trampolining
- Charity Fundraising
- Tug of War
- Pub socials/Parties/Dinner Dances/Balls
- Tours of local businesses and farms
- YFC sports and dance competitions
- YFC cookery and baking competitions
- Training such as emergency first aid and farm safety



Grace receiving her award

**contact Oundle Young Farmers:**  
Email: [Oundleyfc@gmail.com](mailto:Oundleyfc@gmail.com)  
Facebook: Oundle Young Farmers  
Instagram: @oundleyoungfarmers

**If your YFC group is in the East of England area and you would like it to be featured in Society News please get in touch with us.**



Grace exploring Montana on horseback





## Queen Mother's Handwriting Awards



Due to the pandemic, this year's awards had to be adapted, in what has been a very surreal year for us all. The judges recognised that lockdown restrictions caused difficulties for home entries and therefore thought some relaxation of the rules was appropriate.

We are delighted to be able to announce the placings for this year's awards.



**Class 1: 1st place** – Isla Jones-Frost  
Isla Jones-Frost



**Class 3: 1st place** – Soraia Jorge  
Soraia Jorge

**Class 1:** 1st place – Isla Jones-Frost, Southill Lower School; 2nd place – Mehreen Ahmed, Bromet Primary School; 3rd place – Alice White, Mandeville Primary School.

**Class 2:** 1st place – Sadie Taylor, Sheepy Magna CE Primary School; 2nd place – Austin Banville, Hockliffe Lower School; Joint 3rd place – Deetya Acharya, Danemill Primary School and Ryan Morley, Eye CE Primary School

**Class 3:** 1st place – Soraia Jorge, Simon Balle All Through School; 2nd place – Tendai Wright-Nyamandi, Prince William School; 3rd Place – Anonymous, The Hewett Academy.

The winners of each class received an engraved pen kindly provided by A.T Cross Company, all places received a certificate to mark their achievements.

## Society Zooms into your home

With the lack of physical events taking place, the Society hopped onto the Zoom bandwagon to reach out to our members from late summer by launching a series of evening talks.

Ian Gould from Oakbank Game & Conservation Ltd was our first speaker exploring the benefits of cover crops into a rotation. Three weeks later we were joined by Phil Jarvis and Professor Chris Stoute from the GWCT Allerton Research Project, which commenced the new partnership between the Allerton Research Project and the Society exploring the history behind the site at Loddington and their



practical approach to climate-friendly farming. Further talks with the GWCT are planned through the Autumn.

All of our talks are available online including our latest talk all about diversification with Tom Arthey from Arthey Associates by putting the following link in your search engine... [www.eastofengland.org.uk/all-events/our-evening-zoom-talks/](http://www.eastofengland.org.uk/all-events/our-evening-zoom-talks/)

## R.A.B.I. Supporting Farming Families

### Christmas cards available now

Throughout lockdown, R.A.B.I. continued to support the farming sector; quickly adjusting its processes and working methods, despite being unable to make home visits.

Here in East Anglia R.A.B.I. has helped over 101 beneficiaries including 25 new enquiries. Over £130,000 has gone to farmers and their families since the beginning of this year.

R.A.B.I. Welfare Officer Caroline Harrison explained: "Despite not being able to visit in person, maintaining a level of human contact is important. Some of the people I call are very lonely and tell me it's comforting to receive a call from a voice they know. Even if they do not need my help, they appreciate a chat, and the fact that someone is thinking of them."

The impact of the virus for the charity has been felt in fundraising which will return to traditional ways as soon as it is safe to do so. Right now, RABI is exploring new ways to raise money virtually, watch this space.

R.A.B.I. Christmas Cards and 2021 Calendars are on sale, you can download the order form at [www.rabi.org.uk/want-to-help/christmas-cards-calendars/](http://www.rabi.org.uk/want-to-help/christmas-cards-calendars/)

**CALL THE R.A.B.I. FREEPHONE HELPLINE ON 0808 281 9490**

## 'Kiss the ground'

This interesting documentary released on the streaming site, Netflix. 'Kiss the ground' looks into the regenerative agriculture movement in the United States with a large focus on soil health. You can stream the documentary now on Netflix or learn more about it by visiting [www.kisstheground.com](http://www.kisstheground.com)



## CULTIV

Our committee members plan to restart Cultiv8 in the new year with exciting, engaging speakers plus visits. We will, of course, be following all Covid-19 guidelines.

If you know anyone interested in joining us they don't have to be a Society member to attend one of our events to find out more in the first instance and then can join. Please encourage them to join in or get in touch with James at [jburtont@eastofengland.org.uk](mailto:jburtont@eastofengland.org.uk)



## The first virtual LEAF Open Farm Sunday

On Sunday 20 September, LEAF launched its first virtual Open Farm Sunday across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The day featured a range of talks streaming live from the likes of G's Fresh, an Arla dairy farm in Dorset and even a talk on pineapple and papaya farming in Ghana.

Our Kids Country team did a great job in producing a range of educational content including facts, activities and recipes all about apples which can still be found on the website [www.kids-country.co.uk](http://www.kids-country.co.uk)



## East of England Farming Conference 2020 Cancelled

In early October, we had to cancel this year's Farming Conference due to the ongoing pandemic. Although the showground has been at the forefront of reopening the events industry with a successful Truckfest event seeing over 12,000 people in two days, the launch date for indoor events being pushed back has made it impossible to hold this year's event.

"It is a decision taken with deep regret, especially given our outstanding line-up of speakers together with the strong support from sponsors and trade stands," said Tom Martin, chairman of the Conference's organising committee.



The organising committee is now turning its attention to next year and aims to hold a conference on 11 November 2021.

## Covid-19 information for farmers, landowners and rural businesses

To stay up to date with the latest news that is impacting the agricultural sector, visit the Government website under the Covid-19 'Guidance and Support' section which features regular updates affecting agriculture.

## Trustee becomes Reverend

Geoff Dodgson, a long-standing member of the Society and a Trustee for some years was ordained by the Bishop of Ely in the Cathedral on 26 September. Geoff has been involved in rural ministry for many years and is currently the Chaplain to the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists and about to become Chaplain to the Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers. He will serve as a curate in the Papworth Team of 15 rural parishes between Cambridge and St Neots.



**Our outgoing President the Right Reverend Stephen Conway the Bishop of Ely**

It was all the more auspicious Geoff was ordained by the Right Reverend Stephen Conway the Bishop of Ely, who has been President of the East of England Agricultural Society for the last two years.

We are indebted to the Bishop's unwavering support and hands on approach throughout his tenure as President. He was such a stalwart with all our initiatives, which we are so thankful of. The connection is not entirely lost with the Society as we are happy that he still remains Patron of the Marshal Papworth Fund.



# Experience with Cover Crops in 2020

In farming terms, 2020 has been a pretty formidable opponent. Too wet followed by too dry meant that many acres of arable land were not planted with combinable crops. But this left a window of opportunity to try something different. Many farmers took the vacant land and planted a cover crop to try and improve the soil health. So, what have we learned from this unexpectedly large area through the summer months?

The feedback that we have received has been universally positive, with farmers commenting on a wide range of benefits that they have noticed for both their soils and the wider environment. From exceptional root structure and soil penetration to vast populations of pollinators using the flowering crops until late summer. With the absence of large areas of oilseed rape, the fields full of phacelia, buckwheat, oil radish and even sunflowers were a vital resource of pollen and nectar.

When the rains fell hard in August, the cover cropped land handled the excess water with aplomb. A number of farmers commented on how the

water infiltrated very well compared to what they expected, plus the water entering their ditches was clean and not a muddy brown. This moisture was also retained better in the soil, for use when it is needed.

The PR value of these crops was not lost on the public either, particularly through lockdown, when may footpaths and cycleways were much busier than normal. These flowering crops generated a lot of positive discussions to show how farmers are considering their environmental footprint for the future.

From Oakbank's point of view, we have seen real benefits from multi-species crops as opposed to simple two- or three-way combinations. The ground cover, nutrient cycling and pollinator benefits appear to be significantly better with more diversity, but we will pay close attention to how the next crops fare too. It is essential that the benefits are not accompanied by lower yields or problems such as slugs increasing. This is not the experience in other more established areas, where cover crop use is increasing significantly.



If you missed our first evening webinar with Ian Gould from Oakbank, you can find the talk on our website by putting the following link into your search bar... [www.eastofengland.org.uk/all-events/our-evening-zoom-talks/](http://www.eastofengland.org.uk/all-events/our-evening-zoom-talks/)

## THE COUNTRY FOOD TRUST

# The Country Food Trust has produced 1.6 million meals for people in food poverty By Clemmie Gleeson

When Tim Woodward left his investment banking career and moved from London to Somerset he already had another challenge lined up. A former client and owner of a shooting estate had recognised there was excess production in the game meat market. He asked Tim to investigate whether this could be used to feed people in need.

Tim quickly discovered that food banks and charities were frequently short of protein and that much of the food being donated was not very nutritious. He was certain that game meat could indeed help rectify that.

Some of the organisations which cater for large number of people are set up to prepare and cook food and therefore can receive, store and use pallets of meat. In those cases, the Trust buys meat from game dealers and delivers it to charities that can cook it.

"However, most food banks and other charities handling food out don't have freezers or refrigeration. They need ready meals," explains Tim.

With help from chef Tim Maddams the Country Food Trust developed two ready meals 'The Country Curry' and 'The Country Casserole'. These are provided in individual pouches that can be stored at room temperature.

The meals are produced by a third-party business and delivered to food banks and other organisations via larger charities which specialise in redistribution including Fair Share, The Felix Project, Trussell Trust and UK Harvest.

"We send them pallets of meals and they split them out. We also have 50 of our ambassadors around the country who can take a pallet each and store it before delivering smaller quantities to local organisations."

"Game meat is still the focus but during the Covid-19 lockdown the Trust also bought ducks, turkeys and chickens," he adds. "As a lot of restaurants closed suddenly their suppliers were left with lots of meat. This was the right time to get food out so we delivered a much wider range of protein."

The Trust is expecting a difficult time ahead with fundraising. Usually, it would hold fundraising efforts in the summer, an appeal during the shooting season and ambassadors hold fundraising dinners too. With Covid restrictions it is unclear whether any of these events will be possible so it will be reliant on the generosity of organisations and individuals.

"For every pound donated, 92 pence is spent on food," says Tim.



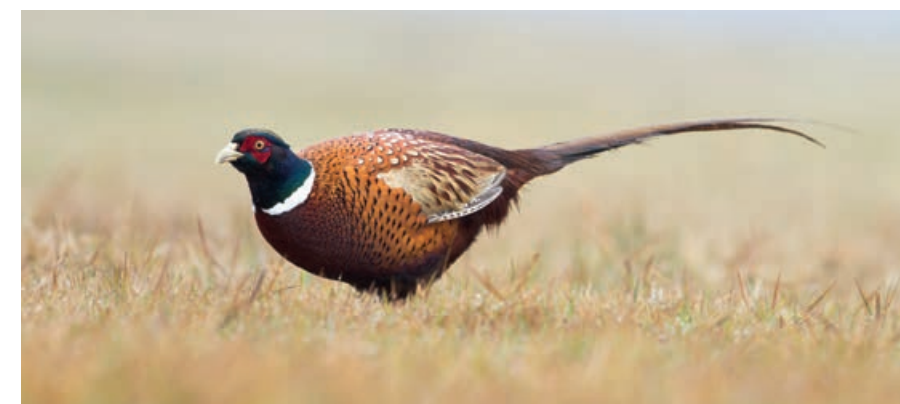
Tim Woodward CEO of the Country Food Trust

With 1.6 million meals produced to date, the Trust has far exceeded its target of 1 million by the end of 2020.

"However, this country has a significant poverty problem which is only going to get worse. I am very proud of what we have achieved but there is still a lot of work to do."

The East of England Agricultural Society is pleased to be working and supporting the Country Food Trust and looks forward to helping them in alleviating people in food poverty. They are also the official charity of The Game Fair, taking place on 23-25 July 2021 at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

To learn more about the Country Food Trust, visit [www.thecountryfoodtrust.org](http://www.thecountryfoodtrust.org)  
Facebook: @thecountryfoodtrust  
Twitter: @CountryFoodTr  
Instagram: @thecountryfoodtrust





# Woburn Country Foods

Fifty years of farming and working with the Society was ideal preparation for Andrew Davies to face Covid-19.

I have faced many natural disasters throughout my career from drought, Foot and Mouth, etc, which helped prepare me to face Covid-19. My time with the Society had shown the importance of bringing on the next generation. As a result, I had built a young, hardworking and committed management team at Woburn Country Foods who, I had confidence, could handle any situation. However, this pandemic has one major difference...FEAR. Fear for the safety of our staff, their families, our customers and ourselves. This was something I had not experienced before and as I was approaching my 70th birthday, my young team parked me firmly out of the firing line as they dug in.

Many will remember the bulk-buying of toilet paper! We experienced this with all our products as customers left with arms full of food. Sales for the week before lockdown were the same as we experience at Christmas, but without the three months of organisation.



Plans were put in place for staff to work safely. All with high-risk dependents were furloughed and teams were created in separate rooms with staggered break times to minimise contact. It was a testing time, but everyone soon settled into the new system.

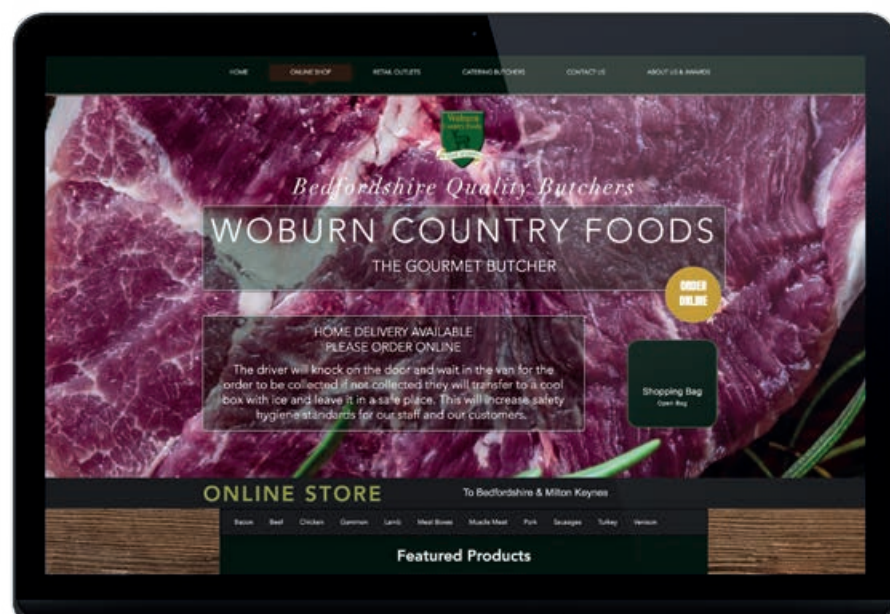
Then we had to look at the impact on the business. Overnight we lost 65% of sales as catering customers closed down.

## How were we to survive?

Fortunately, we had been developing an online offering which was averaging eight orders a week. With supermarkets completely overwhelmed, our orders soared to 80 a day keeping our team of catering butchers gainfully employed. Over 2,000 deliveries were made to vulnerable households during lockdown. Orders reduced as things began to open up, but then we had 'Eat Out to Help Out' which caused more chaos as our supply chain struggled to keep up with the sudden surge in demand. It proved a tremendous boost to our catering customers after lockdown.

Our four retail outlets and all our wholesale customers have seen a dramatic increase in sales which helped to reduce the impact from lost catering sales. I hope the wonderful service these local shops provided for the community will not be forgotten when things return to 'normal'.

Through very careful management the business has prospered and is in a good place to meet any new challenge in these uncertain times. Today's young generation often get a bad press, but I have to say I have been impressed and humbled by my team's selfless commitment to meeting the demands of our customers. They have met every challenge with a cheerful and determined attitude which has made me incredibly proud of the team at Woburn Country Foods.



ROUNDWOOD  
LONDON DRY GIN



# From gin to sanitiser, how the pandemic affected Roundwood Gin

We caught up with Emily Robertson, founder of Roundwood Gin to hear how they have adapted their business over the recent months.

## Tell us how Roundwood Gin came about?

After graduating from university, I started my career as a software engineer but pretty soon the desk-life, long commute and feeling like a tiny piece of the puzzle got me craving variety and the need to do something for myself. After MANY months of planning, it was on the sofa one evening that Rupert and I registered the company and took the first steps towards setting up our distillery.

We wanted to build a brand that reflected our rural Cambridgeshire surroundings. With the distillery based one side of Wennington wood and our home the other, we are always going around the wood, hence the name Roundwood.

It was 18 months before we launched our gin in May 2018 and it was a very steep learning curve. We renovated a crumbly barn into our distillery, started building our brand, crafted our botanical blend, took delivery of our beautiful copper still from Germany and sold out of our first two batches pre-sale!

## How have you adapted and changed during the lockdown?

Initially our normal business operations took a pretty big hit. Around 80% of our typical annual revenue is made from sales to trade (pubs/bars, wine merchants, shops) combined with events throughout the year. After a couple of days of panic we sat down to evaluate our options. We immediately reduced our outgoings and cut running costs wherever possible, which included furloughing staff.

Then one evening, we received around 15 emails enquiring about hand sanitiser. It had been on the news that other distilleries were starting production, so I investigated if we could. We had access to the high

strength alcohol required so it seemed like a no-brainer. But it was only when the Government relaxed restrictions regarding the payment of duty on this alcohol that it really became viable. Since launching the hand sanitiser on the website, things really went nuts and it hasn't really stopped. It became clear that people, I had assumed would have easy-access to the stuff, did not. So, we started supplying in bulk, for free, to key essential services in our community. Online sales enabled us to do this whilst also sourcing ingredients to keep making more!

Definitely not a product we'd planned to launch in 2020, but whilst the demand is still there and we're able to, we'll keep going. Producing hand sanitiser has probably saved our potentially fragile business, and has enabled us to supply hundreds of litres to those who need it. To date this has included; GP surgeries, care homes, local councils, care workers, nurses, charities, prisons and schools.



Rupert Waters and Emily Robertson

## When will people be able to come and visit the distillery again?

Until March we were running our popular Gin Discovery Sessions from the distillery. These are group evenings, booked in advance, where we tell our Roundwood story and explain what makes our gin so special. We give an overview of how our copper still works, including some of the complexities involved in production before looking at our botanicals and different gin styles (with plenty of tasters). We are currently waiting to see how the next couple of months pan out, but hope to reopen bookings, possibly for a slightly different experience soon.

## Any future plans for the Roundwood?

It's such an uncertain time for all businesses across all industries, so it is really difficult to make predictions about where things will be in a few months or next year, but we have felt so much love from people locally wanting to support our small business. We have always focused on supplying independent stockists with our gin and I hope people will continue to shop with small local businesses going forwards. I think we can say that nothing this year has quite gone to 'plan'. Our goals and projects have had to evolved so quickly. I feel extremely grateful that our business has survived recent months and for now we take each day as it comes.



## Arena News

What a summer we've had (or not as the case may be). It's been a strange summer with the absence of shows onsite, however, the ground hasn't looked this good in years so there are some benefits.

It's a hard time for venues and event organisers. However, I am proud to share with you that the East of England has been at the forefront of re-opening events with safe (COVID Secure) planning. We are part of the Association of Event Venues (AEV) and have been part of the team developing plans for events restarting on a national basis.

The plans we have been involved in have been shared at the highest level with government, local authorities and Public Health England (PHE). It was due to the quality of these plans that

we were able to host the first official UK event authorised by PHE at the beginning of August (the Motorhome Sale Event). We have since followed up with Truckfest at the end of August and find ourselves being one of a handful of UK venues that have reopened in some way.

It has meant an incredible amount of scrutiny in our planning and rightly so. We need to be part of the solution in controlling the virus, not a contributor to the spread.

Our first two events were much smaller and outdoors only but they were a great success, opening safely with strict controls. If you are going to events expect to wear a mask at times, keep social distancing and have your details taken for track and trace purposes.

We held a successful Festival of Antiques at the start of October and we remain waiting for government advice on reopening indoor and conference events. For our outdoor events, we will do all we can to ensure the event opens as planned, safe and COVID Secure.

We still have the COVID Test Centre on site. This is staying through the winter so if you do need a test the NHS will most likely refer you to our site. Please book through the NHS as we don't have the details to book people in.

I wish you well and look forward to seeing you on-site soon!

Jason Lunn  
Venue Director



## CEO'S UPDATE

Once again, I am writing this update from home due to Covid-19 restrictions in what has surely been a most challenging year.



The wet end to 2019, equally wet start to 2020 and a delayed and wet harvest season has inevitably affected arable farmers' yield and quality of produce. Livestock farmers have, hopefully, fared a little better as forage crops were gathered during some much-needed sunshine and the grass is still growing strongly in late September.

A worrying trend is an escalation in agricultural crime including hare coursing, fly-tipping plus theft of equipment and livestock. My neighbours have had several ATVs stolen and one recently lost 150 ewes in a night. In response, local farmers have started adding coloured dye to the sheep dip making it harder to dispose of animals on the open market. The result fields being grazed by flocks in a myriad of rainbow colours adding an interesting dimension to the landscape. One wonders how a latter-day Turner, Constable or Gainsborough might interpret the scene?

Surprisingly, the sporting calendar has not been affected quite as badly. August 12th saw the grouse season open and here on the moors, several shoots have been held. Partridge and pheasant poults have been released very late this year as many shoot organisers were waiting to learn if the season would be cancelled completely.

One positive feature of the year, that I have noted, is an increased number of raptors area. We even had a very late brood of buzzard chicks nested high in a wooded area of the garden. I wondered if this was a consequence of reduced human disturbance during lockdown? However, people in greater numbers

than ever have been accessing and using the outdoors and enjoying the wonderful physical and mental health benefits of the British countryside whatever the weather.

This makes one appreciate just how fortunate we are to have such a fantastic resource. It hopefully serves as a reminder to everyone that farmers and landowners are stewards of a landscape forged through hard work of many, many generations.

It also reinforces the role of the Society in educating, informing, educating and influencing the choices that people make when selecting the food they buy, how to respect and care for nature and possibly for some, a career choice.

There are endless possibilities where we can contribute to the development of agriculture, rural sports and environmental improvements. Our challenge for 2021 and beyond is surely to build on and maximise the positive results that have already been highlighted in this issue. It is especially heart-warming to read of the difference made by Marshal Papworth fund alumni.

We are exceedingly privileged to be linked in a chain that dates back to 1797. The Board of Trustees and staff are continuing to forge a positive, exciting future for the East of England Agricultural Society. I hope to be able to report more on this soon, but in the meantime, I wish you all a healthy and happy season ahead.

Alistair Beattie  
Interim CEO

The Annual Report can be viewed on the Society's website via the following link: [www.eastofengland.org.uk/the-society/governance/](http://www.eastofengland.org.uk/the-society/governance/)

In this edition, we put James Burton from our agriculture office and content creator of Society News in the spotlight!

**How long have you been with the Society?**

I started working last summer in a marketing role after graduating from Harper Adams University with a degree in International Agri-Business. I am currently the only member of the agriculture office after seeing the department go from four to just me!



**Tell us a fun fact about you**

I am a MASSIVE Bruce Springsteen fan and I play the piano, guitar and Harpejji (a mix between a piano and a guitar). I also spent six months living in the Netherlands.

**What are your passions and hobbies?**

Keen follower of the Bedford Blues rugby club, the Cincinnati Bengals American football team and any form of cricket. Also, just started homebrewing beer and dream of my own microbrewery one day.

**How has work been during the pandemic?**

Manic! I was originally going on a two-month American road trip in April which sadly got cancelled. I was able to extend my time working with the Society although dropped this down to three days a week to help out on the family arable farm near Grafham Water. Whilst recruitment is ongoing in the department, with me being the 'team' I've taken on general admin, organising our webinars, the Society News, social media, marketing, Festival of Hunting website duties, organising the (now cancelled) Farming Conference and about 1,000 other things...

## Supporting your business through changing times

Our agriculture team consists of specialist lawyers, all from a farming background, with a deep understanding of the industry and the issues currently being faced. We are up to speed with the challenges caused by the pandemic and the proposed new agricultural legislation on the horizon.

We will be part of your team and support you through these challenging times.

We can offer you a dedicated point of contact to help with:

- Succession planning, Wills and Powers of Attorney
- Business structures, partnership matters and contract farming
- Employment issues, including government support schemes and redundancy
- Property matters, including promoting land for development
- Commercial and property disputes; and
- Health and safety

We are ranked as a leading Agricultural and Rural Estates team in the East of England; the Legal 500 says:

"Greenwoods [GRM] has a friendly and approachable practice, that is small enough to retain the personal feel, but large enough to offer wide-ranging advice."



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The membership group for young professionals  
working in the rural sector.

If you know anyone this could be suited to,  
please encourage them to join.

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