

# SRUC Community

The SRUC Alumni & Friends Magazine

## *All-time high*

Robert Reid on what it takes  
to be a world champion



## *The Beekeeper of Stalag 383*

SRUC archives unearth  
pioneering prisoner of war

## *Life's a Beechgrove*

Television's Kirsty Wilson



Issue 4 2019



SRUC



SRUC  
ALUMNI



# SRUC in numbers

## Stay connected

If you studied or worked at SRUC, SAC (North, West and East of Scotland Agricultural Colleges), Barony College, Elmwood College, or Oatridge College - we welcome you to the SRUC Alumni & Friends Community.

It's free to join, so stay in touch to:

- Keep up to date with SRUC news
- Promote your business
- Reconnect with classmates
- Find out about job opportunities
- Get invites to SRUC events

Update your details at [www.sruc.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/alumni) or fill in your details on the tear-off strip at the back of this magazine.

## Tell us your stories!

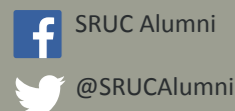
Do you have a story to share? Have you launched a new business? Do you have an amazing reunion planned? Got an idea your alumni community might be able to help with? We are always delighted to hear from SRUC alumni and find out what people are up to.

## Contact

Julie van den Driesche  
Advancement Manager  
[alumni@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@sruc.ac.uk)

[www.sruc.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/alumni)  
SRUC, King's Buildings, West Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH9 3JG  
T: 0131 535 4488

Designed by SRUC Communications  
Printed on environmentally sound recycled paper from sustainable sources.  
Cover image: Colin McMaster/McKlein



# 650

## Students graduated on one day in summer 2019

What a day!  
Page 4

# >50

## Number of countries SRUC Research, Teaching and Consulting collaborates with.

Making a Difference  
Page 14



## The Beekeeper of Stalag 383

Page 16

## World Rally Champion 2001



Best in the world  
Page 6

# 2,800

## SRUC milkshakes sampled at RHS 2019

A year in pictures  
Page 8



## Life's a Beechgrove

Page 10



# 3

## Brand new podcasts recorded by SRUC alumni



# £20,000

## of new bursaries awarded in 2019



Page 18



# 172km

## The distance SRUC staff jogged, swam and kayaked to support RSABI

SRUCcess at the Great Glen Challenge  
Page 19

## The Revolution is Rural

Page 20

## SRUCcess breeds success

Page 22

# 35%

## of SRUC students are over 21

Change Your Path  
Page 12

Welcome to the fourth issue of SRUC Community, the alumni and friends magazine.



In this edition, we've got stories about rally drivers, gardening television presenters, entrepreneurs, even a beekeeping prisoner of war. These alumni have more than SRUC in common. They are passionate, gutsy, determined and willing to take risks.

These people reflect who we are as an organisation. This is a hugely exciting time for SRUC as we position ourselves to take on the big challenges facing society. Our plans to create an enterprise university at the heart of the natural economy are moving at pace and our alumni have a key role to play in our future.

Each and every one of our alumni is part of Scotland's, and the world's, future. Many of the global challenges we face, including feeding a growing population nutritiously and climate change, are at the heart of what we do at SRUC. Our collaborative and collegiate approach is key to securing our future.

So I encourage you to join us on this journey and share your successes with us.

*Wayne Powell*

Professor Wayne Powell  
Principal and Chief Executive,  
Scotland's Rural College

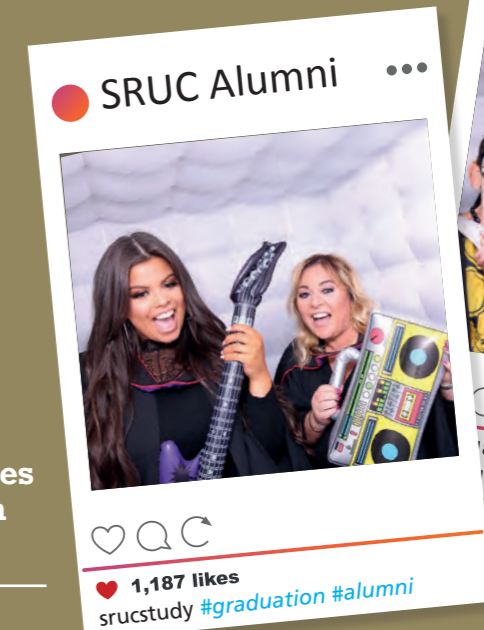


**M**ore than 700 students from across all SRUC's campuses celebrated their success at two graduation ceremonies on 5 July 2019 in the grand surroundings of Bute Hall, University of Glasgow.

The morning ceremony involved HNC and HND graduands, while in the afternoon ceremony degree students received their awards. It was the first time for SRUC that both ceremonies have been held on the same day.



“**ConGRADulations** and a very warm welcome to all our new Alumni!”



“**The champagne flowed, canapes (and strawberry tarts) were eaten... and the photobooth provided plenty of opportunities for graduands to let their hair down with their families and friends!**”

*What a Day!*



# Best in the world

by Tom Maxwell

**W**e all know a front seat driver – the ones who sit there and dispense advice on slowing down here or taking a left there.

**It's advice most of us could do without, but it would be difficult to argue if the person sitting next to you was Robert Reid – the former co-driver who guided Richard Burns to the World Rally Championship in 2001.**

In a famous clip broadcast on *Top Gear* following Burns' untimely death just three years later, Burns holds the former SRUC student's hand aloft as they speed across the finishing line in their Subaru Impreza, yelling the words "you're the best in the world!"

"Winning the World Championship was the best feeling ever," says Robert, "but I wasn't able to properly enjoy it until we were in the bar afterwards."

"Although the competitive aspect had finished, in rallying you've not finished the actual event until you get to the last time control, which was back in Cardiff."

"We'd finished runners-up the two previous years so, while Richard was outside kissing the bonnet and hugging his dad, I was just sitting in the car, double-checking the times."

Following the Rally of Great Britain, Burns and Reid finished the World Championship two points ahead of 1995 champions Colin McRae and fellow Scotsman Derek Ringer. To date, Burns and McRae remain the only British drivers to have held the World Rally crown.

Among the "surreal" things to follow their success was Robert lending his voice to various video games, including the highly regarded simulator Richard Burns Rally which, thanks to open sourcing, is now being enjoyed by a new generation of gamers.

"Celtic accents tend to be more melodic," says Robert. "From the second I started speaking, Richard pretty much knew what the instruction was going to be. It was a bit like James Alexander Gordon reading the football results – you'd know your team had won, lost or drawn before you heard the actual score just by the tone of his voice. If an English co-driver ever had to fill in for me, Richard admitted he couldn't understand them as well because their delivery was more monotone."

Robert likens the challenge of being a co-driver to "three-dimensional noughts and crosses while being thrown about inside a rally car at 100mph".

Hard to believe, then, that as a child, he couldn't go five miles without being car sick.

"It's something you learn to get over," he says, "plus adrenaline

helps to mask a lot of those type of things. Today, I'd struggle to read a newspaper if someone was driving me down the motorway."

Robert was "smitten" with rallying from the age of nine. Accompanying his father on a drive round the family farm in Perthshire, they chanced upon a rally taking place in Craigvinean Forest.

"I badgered dad to stop so we could go and have a look and then point-blank refused to leave until the very last car had gone, which was several hours later."

"My bedroom was getting done up at the farmhouse and I insisted on rally car wallpaper, which stayed there until my brother Graham moved into the farmhouse just a few years ago."

**“ We were driving Land Rovers and tractors as soon as we could reach the pedals ”**

"My great aunt had an old Triumph Toledo that we used to rag round the hill at all sorts of angles. We never rolled it, but I think it had an excursion into a fence at one point."

Although clearly talented behind the wheel, Robert opted for the co-driving route into rallying. Being a driver would mean providing his own high-spec car, and his Ford Escort didn't quite cut the mustard.

During his early days of competition and working on the farm in the 1980s, he also gained an HND in Agriculture at SRUC's Edinburgh campus.

"I was mostly rallying at weekends so it didn't really interfere with my studies," he says. "It was a really good experience, especially in the days before social media. If I hadn't gone to SRUC, growing that social and business network would've been really difficult."

Robert's life changed forever at the age of 24, following a meeting with a talented teenage driver named Richard Burns during the Peugeot Challenge in Wales.

"Richard won the event and I got speaking to him afterwards."

"We clicked fairly quickly in terms of a shared vision and dream."

"He said, 'what's your ambition in the sport?' I said I wanted to be world champion and he said 'so do I.'"

The Scot and the Englishman joined forces the following year, winning the Wydean Stages Rally in spectacular fashion.

It wasn't long before bigger opportunities started to come their way and, in 1993, they secured the British Rally Championship.

But, just two years after the high of winning the World Championship in 2001, pictured below, came the devastating news that Richard had a brain tumour. He died in November 2005, at the age of just 34.

"It was massively painful," says Robert. "I still look at the way it unfolded in complete shock. I had to support him as much as I could through his battle so, for me, the decision to also stop was a really easy one."

"His initial prognosis was 14 weeks, but he lived nearly two years. Hopefully myself and a few others who were close to him helped make that time as good as it could be."

"We'd worked together for 12 years and, the day he died, I lost my colleague, my best

friend and my career in one fell swoop and it took me a few years to get over that."

Keen to pass his experience on to young drivers, Robert later served as Performance Director of Motorsport UK from 2008 to 2015.

He was also Performance Manager of the FIA's (world motorsport's governing body) Young Driver Excellence Academy as well as Vice-President of the World Rally Championship Commission.

Today, among other things, he serves as President of the FIA's Closed Road Commission.

"It's a bad translation from the French," he laughs, "but we essentially look at all aspects of rally safety."

As if that wasn't enough, he's also recently become a drone pilot.

More than 16 years after stepping out of a rally car, Robert Reid has no intention of slowing down.



Photograph: Fraser Band

Photograph: Motorsport Images

# A year in pictures

There's never a dull day at SRUC (well hardly ever!). Here are just some of the highlights since the previous edition of 'SRUC Community'.



**Sara-Jayne Strachan** - a professional cookery student at SRUC Elmwood – preparing her rabbit haggis bon bons for the final of the 2019 Game Chef of the Year competition.



Two of our postgraduate Chinese students, **Li Ningyi** and **Wang Lingyi**, met up with cute Midlothian piglets to mark the start of the Chinese Year of the Pig.



Among the VIPS visiting the SRUC stand at the Royal Highland Show was Scotland's First Minister, **Nicola Sturgeon**, seen here wearing the Mavic drone headset with SRUC student ambassador **Harry Kamilaris**.



Bird watchers **Gus Routledge**, who is in his final year at SRUC's Aberdeen campus, and **Simon Ritchie**, a Countryside Management alumnus, appeared on BBC's Autumnwatch with presenter Michaela Strachan, looking for rare geese amongst migrating birds near Montrose.



**Andrew Stuart**, a student golfer at Elmwood, took home gold in the Individual Stroke Play event at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi.



**Jay Rayner**, celebrity food critic, was at Elmwood, where the judging for the Scotland Food and Drink Awards was held, and popped in to see how some of our hospitality students were doing.



Students and animals celebrated the opening of a new £350,000 animal care unit for creatures – great and small – at Craibstone.



Horticulture and Garden Design students **Will Ross**, **Rachel Elliot** and **Simon Drozdek** harvesting pumpkins from the allotment at SRUC's Oatridge campus in West Lothian, with the help of their Hallowe'en scarecrow.

# Life's a Beechgrove

by Rosie Free

**B**eechgrove Garden's newest addition Kirsty Wilson shares more than just a passion for plants with the BBC's longest-running gardening presenter Jim McColl – both of them are graduates of SRUC.

Kirsty studied Horticulture with Plantsmanship, graduating with a first class honours degree in 2013 – and the prize for best dissertation.

The course is delivered by SRUC in partnership with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), with classes and practical work carried out in both places.

"It was the only place in the UK where you could gain a degree in horticulture with teaching from a world-renowned botanic garden," says Kirsty.

"The course really prepares you for going into the world of horticulture – it teaches you how to grow, maintain and identify plants and design future horticultural spaces."

**“ I have recently returned from my first botanical expedition to China to collect wild plant material. ”**

After graduation, Kirsty worked for HRH Prince Charles as a production horticulturist in his garden at Highgrove.

She then undertook an international traineeship at America's top public garden, Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania, before returning to Scotland to work as a glasshouse supervisor at St Andrews Botanic Garden.

Last year she came full-circle, when she was appointed as Herbaceous Supervisor at RBGE, where she is responsible for the team looking after various areas in the garden, including the famous 165m-long herbaceous border, the Queen Mother's memorial garden and Chinese Hillside.

She also completed a Diploma in Garden Design from RBGE and won a gold medal, Best in Show and People's Choice award for her first show garden – The Coffee Garden – at Gardening Scotland.

"I have probably one of the best jobs in the world," she said. "I work in an internationally renowned botanic garden engaging people with plants and developing areas for the future."

"I am also planning my first botanical expedition to China where I will be collecting wild plant material."

Kirsty's love of plants started from a young age.

"When I was about 14, I begged my dad for a veg patch and used my mother's greenhouse," she says. "I have always been an outdoors kid – and passionate about plants and horticulture."

Her advice to current students is to take up every opportunity open to them and to travel the world using horticultural bursaries.

As for herself, she wants to continue being highly professional in her field, inspiring people to grow plants, connect with nature and have a positive impact on the world.



## Flower Farmer

While studying Horticulture at SRUC, Rosie Burgon was adamant that the modules on running your business were not relevant to her as she was never going to start her own. Fast forward six years and Rosie is in her third season growing professional-standard cut flowers for the wholesale market in Glasgow, with plans to supply the whole of Scotland in the future.

A key aim of her flower farm business, Scottish Cut Flowers, is to reduce the environmental impact of importing, as well as growing blooms and foliage for florists and the public without using herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, fertilisers or preservatives. Rosie's farm is based between a Victorian walled garden and poly tunnel on Tayside with mild temperatures, high rainfall and long summer days creating lush, healthy plants.

Reflecting on her time at SRUC, and in particular the business aspects of her course, Rosie says, "Luckily some of the information stuck with me -

now I just wished I had paid slightly more attention!"



# Change your path

From wards to woods, hedge funds to hedgehogs, pharmacology to farm ecology and from Budgets to Budgies, countless students have changed their path, by returning to learning to pursue a career they love and are passionate about.

*“Find a job you love and you will never work another day in your life.”*

Confucius, the wise Chinese philosopher makes that sound easy but it’s the reality for only a few. Many of us are in a job just to pay the mortgage and bills. In a recent YouGov poll, only 17 percent of people in Britain said they loved their job.



## Catherine Devaney

Moving house from Edinburgh to Fife was the beginning of Catherine’s journey from life as a professional lawyer to a whole new adventure in the world of food. After studying Professional Cookery at Elmwood as a mature student, Catherine has established her own event catering business, writes a regular food column for *The Courier* and runs a food blog *A Kitchen in Fife*. “I am very excited about the future. None of this would have been possible without the tuition, support and encouragement of the hospitality team at SRUC.”



## Polly Elliot-Pyle

Having had aspirations of being the next David Attenborough in her younger years, various life events led Insurance Broker Polly to reflect on what she wanted from her career and the decision to follow her childhood dream by enrolling on the Applied Animal Science course at SRUC’s Edinburgh campus. Despite some of the challenges of being a student again, Polly couldn’t be happier. “I feel like I’ve got direction again. The work I am putting in is for my future and my career, and there is nothing more satisfying.”



## Katie Dubarry

Disillusionment with her career as a beauty therapist led Katie into studying Agriculture at SRUC, despite having little experience in the area. “I wanted to learn about how we can live more sustainably, how we produce the things we do and how we consume things... all of these thought processes combined into an interest in farming and the ways people work the land,” says Katie. After starting out with the National Certificate in Agriculture, Katie was hooked and has recently completed her BSc Honours degree. “My studies have helped me discover new ways of thinking about how we can influence what is happening in the world on quite major levels.”



## Jenny Paterson

Being made redundant from an office job caused Jenny to ponder what she wanted out of any future career. A chance reading of a magazine article led her to Africa to work as a conservation volunteer for six weeks, which in turn ignited a strong desire to pursue a career in conservation. In pursuit of this, Jenny undertook the Countryside Management course at Elmwood, before landing a much-coveted place on Forestry and Land Scotland’s apprenticeship scheme. Following nearly four years in that role, Jenny landed her ultimate dream job as Conservation Manager for the grounds of Cameron House and the Carrick golf course at Loch Lomond, where she is responsible for 400 acres of woodland and wetland. “I absolutely love my job and I feel honoured to be a guardian of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.”



## Peter Arnott

Following the untimely death of his mother, Peter began to question his successful, but ultimately unfulfilling, career in IT project management. This led to the brave decision to return to formal education at Elmwood studying for the HND in Professional Golf. Peter feels that the course provided a firm foundation on which to turn his love of the game into a new career. “Education gives you a good grounding and, in time, relationships and opportunities emerge.” Peter has since completed BSc and MSc degrees, has established his own golf coaching business in Edinburgh and contributed to a book about golf coaching, to be published by Routledge Books, where he describes his experience of putting theory into practice.

## Dairy innovation investment

Investment of up to £8 million in a new Dairy and Research Innovation Centre at Barony has recently been announced by the Borderlands partnership. The Centre will work with industry and academics to reduce the time it takes for research and technology to be applied within commercial dairies and the supply chain. There will be a focus on testing new products, technologies and production systems, as well as looking at how to deliver carbon neutral farming solutions.



## Rat tickling

Did you know that rats emit high pitched vocalisations – akin to laughter – when they are happy? Researchers at SRUC are using this to measure rats’ ‘enjoyment’ of tickling. The international study has found that rats exposed to an odour while being tickled emitted more vocalisations when subsequently exposed to the same smell without being tickled. “This suggests that the odour is now able to produce a positive emotional state in the rats and has a number of potential applications, including the use of positive odour conditioning to ameliorate stress in domestic animals. For example, if an animal has to go through a stressful procedure, it could be presented with an odour that it had previously associated with a pleasant context,” explained Alistair Lawrence, Professor of Animal Behaviour and Welfare at SRUC.



Photograph: Shimpei Ishiyama, Michael Brecht

## Making a Difference

SRUC research covers a surprisingly wide range of subject areas taking place both here in Scotland and with partners all over the world.



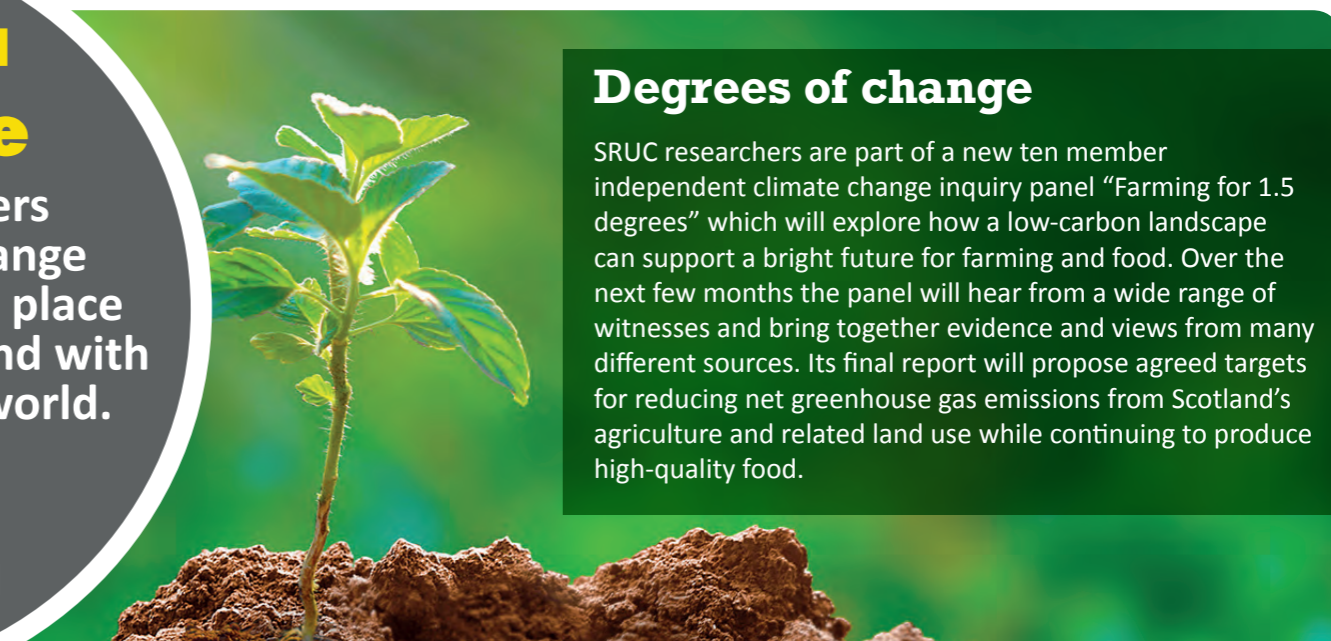
## £260k to tackle colombian green growth

SRUC is involved in two collaborative research projects in Colombia, a country which faces the dual challenge of climate change and overcoming a 50-year legacy of rural guerrilla warfare. The first focusses on developing heat-tolerant bean varieties for future climate change scenarios. The second project is looking at scaling up silvopastoral systems for beef farmers, which increase overall productivity and long-term income through the simultaneous production of tree crops, forage and livestock. SRUC researchers are providing economic and behavioural modelling expertise in order to understand farmers’ perceptions of risk and their preferences for different crop traits.



## Degrees of change

SRUC researchers are part of a new ten member independent climate change inquiry panel “Farming for 1.5 degrees” which will explore how a low-carbon landscape can support a bright future for farming and food. Over the next few months the panel will hear from a wide range of witnesses and bring together evidence and views from many different sources. Its final report will propose agreed targets for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions from Scotland’s agriculture and related land use while continuing to produce high-quality food.



## Not so lonely islands

The Scottish islands are often regarded as places where population is ageing and in decline, with younger islanders leaving for education and employment opportunities elsewhere. However, recent evidence suggests that, on some islands, the tide may be turning, with young people increasingly choosing to stay, return or relocate to island homes. SRUC’s Dr Jane Atterton, who is working on the Islands Revival project, led by the James Hutton Institute, said: “Most ‘official’ statistics point to ongoing population decline in many of Scotland’s islands and remote rural areas. However, we need to take account of local evidence which suggests that some places are experiencing population growth, in order to ensure that our policy and practice responses recognise the different trends in different places.” The aim of the work is to bring forward recommendations regarding how policy can best support island repopulation.



Want up-to-date SRUC research news as it happens?  
Sign up to our news feed: [www.sruc.ac.uk/news-updates](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/news-updates)



# The Beekeeper of STALAG 383

By Nick Drainey

**T**he long forgotten story of a beekeeping Scottish prisoner of war has been unearthed by researchers at SRUC.

Despite refusing to “slave” for Hitler and being forced to endure a bitter march across Europe after his capture, Company Sergeant Major James Hamilton Savage persuaded the Nazi guards in Stalag 383 to allow him to set up beehives behind the barbed wire fences.

His incredible story came to light after librarians discovered a record of the former Head of Beekeeping at the West of Scotland Agricultural College, now SRUC.



CSM Savage was captured and taken Prisoner of War in St Valery en Caux in northern France in 1940 after the 51st Highland Division were left behind following the Dunkirk evacuation. There followed a forced march across Europe to Poland, where he and hundreds of other NCOs refused to work for Hitler. They ended up being moved to Stalag 383 near Hohenfels in Bavaria, where his love of bees flourished.

In 1942 the Captive Drones Association was started by CSM Savage – he had first learned beekeeping from his father in Ayrshire but was able to get books through the Red Cross

His grandson, Trevor Pocknell, who lives in Northamptonshire says the Nazis “could have just shot him” when he refused to work for Hitler. “It ended up being 10s and then 100s of NCOs who the Germans just couldn’t get to slave for them. They completely refused and went through all sorts of ordeals – being chained up and thrown into prison but they wouldn’t change their minds. They ended up being put into Stalag 383 in Bavaria – a prisoner of war camp for NCOs who refused to work for the Germans.”

But they ended up keeping bees in the rather unusual camp. “They organised themselves very well – it has been called a barbed wire university because all sorts of education went on. They talked the Germans into providing things in exchange for cigarettes and items from their Red Cross parcels.



“My grandfather was taken out to meet a beekeeper in the neighbouring village of Hohenfels. The beekeeper wasn’t impressed to start with because granddad was a soldier but when he realised he was a knowledgeable beekeeper they got on like a house on fire. In fact, the German provided the first hive and bees.”

The first hive came from the village and his grandfather began making hives from Red Cross crates sent to the camp and when bees swarmed above the camp CSM Savage caught some to put in the subsequent hives.

“He would have learned from his father and he further educated himself because they were able to get books through the Red Cross and the YMCA. The British Beekeeping Association helped them in every way they could including in examinations - my grandfather was teaching the other beekeepers.”

## MEAGRE RATIONS

The prisoners, however, only got to taste a little of the honey with their meagre rations. Most of it stayed with the bees to help them survive winter and the PoWs gave some of their sugar rations to them as well. Rather than a source of food, beekeeping was something to keep them occupied, says Trevor, “It was keeping them interested in something rather than mulling over their situation. They were basically in there for the whole of the war.”

When war ended it was recorded that he hid in a coal heap with other

“ IT HAS BEEN CALLED A BARBED WIRE UNIVERSITY BECAUSE ALL SORTS OF EDUCATION WENT ON ”

PoWs, worried about reprisals from the Germans. “The Germans were running scared and they moved everyone out of the camp. The prisoners would have been worried about their fate.”

He left the military after the war and went to West of Scotland Agricultural College where he was employed as a lecturer in beekeeping, eventually becoming the Head of Beekeeping. His work there was informed by his experiences in Stalag 383. Trevor says “He not only learned these things, he developed new ways of separating queen bees and building hives. He passed that on to his students.”

Trevor said the wider family only became aware of the exploits of CSM Savage when he began researching them long after his death. “The reason I got into it is because my granddad did a brain dump of the family tree which my mum wrote on to a piece of paper. It is that piece of paper with granddad’s memories which is what started me. I found the odd error in his memory but largely he was correct – very clever man.”

Although he died in 1985, his grandson still has fond memories of him and says despite the horrors of war which he endured, particularly the capture at St Valery and cruel march across Europe, he was “soft spoken and never had an angry word”.

To find out more about SRUC’s Archives, please email [archives@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:archives@sruc.ac.uk)





## Alumni feature in new SRUC podcasts recorded at the Royal Highland Show

One of the highlights of the 2019 Royal Highland Show was the live recording of a series of podcasts, featuring SRUC alumni. The three episodes take a fresh look at some of the major issues facing modern Scottish agriculture and rural communities.

### Women in Agriculture

Explore the experience of women today in agriculture and the wider rural sector in this lively podcast debating gender balance and representation, with alumnae June Geyer and Sally Williams. June and Sally were joined by Heather Anderson.



### The Climatarian

Climate change is the challenge of our lifetime. With a growing global population, what is the optimum diet for the planet? Alumni Laura Young (@LessWasteLaura) and David Nasser were joined by Pete Ritchie.



### The Rise of the Machines

Find out how Scotland is leading the way in the combination of technology and data to help improve efficiency in farming. Prof Eileen Wall and Dr Holly Ferguson were joined by alumnus Simon Gibson-Poole for this insightful podcast.



Hear them here [www.sruc.ac.uk/podcast](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/podcast)

Did you know?

15%

SRUC alumni are eligible for up to 15% discount on SRUC postgraduate courses.

[www.sruc.ac.uk/pgdiscount](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/pgdiscount)

Celebrating 50 YEARS

50

at Oatridge 1969 - 2019

The 2019/20 academic year marks 50 years of teaching at SRUC's Oatridge campus. Get in touch to go onto our mailing list to hear more about upcoming celebrations and to share your Oatridge stories with us

[alumni@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@sruc.ac.uk)



# Reaching their peak Great Glen Challenge



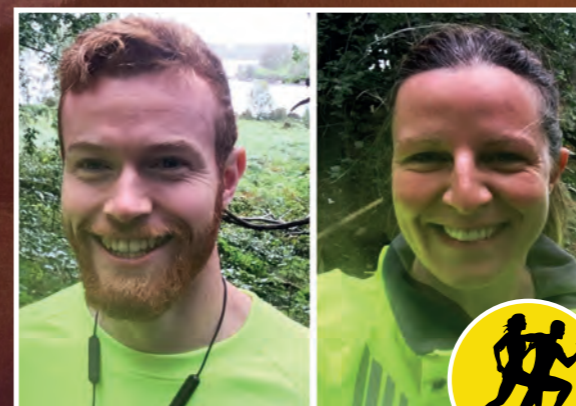
Bikers Rob Black (Team A) and Will Searle (Team B)



Kayakers Masters student Joanna Foubister (Team A) and alumnus Jack Munro (Team B)



Hikers Lorna MacPherson (Team A) and alumnus Calum Johnston (Team B)



Runners Seamus Murphy (Team A) and Karen Stewart (Team B)



On a dreich and windy Friday in August, staff from SAC Consulting - SRUC's provider of advice for land-based businesses in the rural economy - took part in the 2019 Great Glen Challenge at Fort Augustus in aid of RSABI (Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution). The Challenge is a rather gruelling four-part course consisting of a 46km mountain bike, 16km run, 6km kayak and 18km hike all in one day.

Colleagues from SAC Consulting offices across Scotland formed two teams - Team A(wesome) and Team B(rilliant) - and everyone successfully completed the event. Team A finished a gratifying 6th place on the leader board, while 13th was the lucky number for Team B.

The day was a huge success for RSABI raising over £40,000, highlighting the strength of the rural community when people come together to support each other.



RSABI provides emotional, practical and financial support for people across the Scottish agricultural sector. SRUC is proud to be a corporate supporter of the charity.

Background photograph: Chris Hoskins



Students Ross Dowens and Lucy Soeder feature in new videos focusing on Countryside Management and Environmental Resource Management, which have also been produced as part of the new suite of digital content.



# Haven't you heard? We don't follow the herd!

No two days at SRUC are the same. Certainly not for Rosie Free, SRUC Press Officer, who within weeks of joining the college, found herself in front of a filming crew.

"I was playing the part of a hillwalker who has their thermos snatched away by a young woman who wants to challenge stereotypes and get people thinking differently about rural careers," says Rosie.

Drones in flight, golfers in full swing, and horses leaping over jumps are among the stunning visuals featured in the new SRUC videos.

With the tagline 'The Revolution is Rural', the short film highlights SRUC's diverse range of courses at its campuses around the country, with subjects such as garden design, hospitality and animal care featuring alongside traditional subjects such as agriculture and land-based engineering. The film is part of a series of new videos which you will find on SRUC's YouTube channel page.

"SRUC is immensely proud of its agricultural heritage," says Caroline Bysh, SRUC's Director of Marketing, Digital

and Communications. "Our brilliant new digital content goes further to showcase other rewarding and diverse careers in the rural sector.

"This is a hugely exciting time for SRUC as we move towards becoming a unique, 21st-century rural enterprise university. These eye-catching new videos work to take our alumni with us on this journey, while also telling potential students what we do, and how they too can be part of the rural revolution."

**“ SRUC is excited for the future of rural Scotland and beyond ”**



**WIN DOUBLE PASSES TO THE ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW!**  
Join our social media revolution by sharing your photos of rural life from the traditional to the unexpected—to be in with the chance of winning one of two double passes to the 2020 Royal Highland Show.

Runners up will receive SRUC Alumni reusable coffee cups. Use the hashtag #TheRevolutionIsRural on Instagram and Twitter, so that we can see your entry, or post it directly to us on our SRUCAlumni Facebook page.



# SRUCcess breeds success

Our students are part of the future of Scotland's rural economy – from setting up thriving businesses in remote Scottish communities, to tackling issues such as the impact of climate change and how best to feed a growing global population.

At SRUC we are continually exploring how best to support our students to achieve their maximum potential. By actively developing a stronger alumni and friends community we have even more exciting opportunities to advance our students from the classroom through to their careers.

## Change your path bursaries



A number of mature students were offered a helping hand this year to return to study with a £1,000 bursary from SRUC. The bursary, aimed at those seeking a re-training opportunity or career change, was designed to offer financial support to help with the additional costs of fitting study into an already busy life.

“A significant proportion of SRUC’s students are mature students, and many of these are returning to study in the hope of making a career or lifestyle change,” says Marketing and Student Recruitment Manager Hannah D’Mellow. “We know that returning to study as a mature student presents a number of challenges, with finance being one of them. We have been able to award £20,000 of our new Change Your Path bursary in the first year of its launch – to help some students manage the transition.”

See page 12 for Change Your Path stories.

## GOLD for Student well being project



SRUC is continually looking at ways to enhance and improve the student experience. It was therefore gratifying that a student well being project that provides online round-the-clock guidance won the gold award in a recent national competition.

The online support package to encourage student wellbeing was named most inspirational project of the year by the National Association for Managers of Student Services (NAMSS) – a non-profit organisation providing support and professional development for those working with learners in education and training.

“This was our first attempt working in partnership with the Virtual Learning Environment Team to create an on-line learning resource that students can access at any time to educate, maintain and improve their well-being during challenging times throughout the academic year,” says Alison Boyle, Learner Engagement Manager.



Steven Mitchell Bill Dingwall

## Building an SRUC Alumni entrepreneur network



SRUC is excited to be establishing a new SRUC Alumni Entrepreneur Network, inspired by Bill Dingwall, former SRUC Agriculture Programme Leader, and alumnus Steven Mitchell.

Steven founded The Buffalo Farm in Fife in 2005. It has gone from strength to strength. His latest project is to become the first Scottish producer of buffalo mozzarella. In order to fund his new milk parlour and mozzarella factory, Steven ran a successful crowdfunding campaign with various levels of ‘Founders Club’ membership.

This in turn led Bill to propose the SRUC Alumni Entrepreneur Network. “In my retirement I want to do something of significance for the SRUC Alumni Community and combine this with supporting Steven’s buffalo mozzarella crowdfunding campaign,” says Bill.

Bill is part of Steven’s Executive Founders Club and will donate his Club rewards, which include catering services and produce, to the SRUC Alumni Community in order to hold an annual Alumni Entrepreneur Network prize-winners event.

The SRUC alumni entrepreneurs will be up for awards in categories such as: Best Overall Business; Best Innovation and Best Business Start-up, at an annual event held at Steven’s Boglily farm. Students will also benefit from a Dragon’s Den-style business pitching competition, allowing them to meet and discuss their ideas with the alumni entrepreneurs.

“The aim of the Alumni Entrepreneur Network is to encourage the sharing of experiences among members, and engagement with SRUC staff and students,” Bill adds.

Alumni and students who are part of the food and farming industries will be invited to take part in the new entrepreneur network in 2020. In the meantime, if you are a food or farming entrepreneur and are interested in receiving information about the new network, get in touch with the alumni team at [alumni@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@sruc.ac.uk)



## Students lead the way

A new student ambassador programme was launched across SRUC campuses in October 2019. In its first year 11 ambassadors have been recruited and it is envisaged that the numbers will grow in subsequent years. The ambassadors will meet with prospective students at Open Days as well as helping at major events such as the Royal Highland Show and Gardening Scotland.

“Student ambassadors are really important for SRUC,” explains Anouska Curzon, Marketing and Student Recruitment Officer. “They help us reach out to people on social media and engage with the public. In return, the ambassadors build their networks and get paid work experience while they’re at college. It’s a win-win situation.”



A person wearing a colorful striped sweater and a dark jacket is standing in a field of tall grass. The person's hands are clasped in front of them. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with a clear blue sky.

**THE  
REVOLUTION  
IS RURAL**

## **Why?**

**Because many of the key challenges facing today's world - climate change, sustainability, food security – can be solved through research and education in the rural sector, while also strengthening Scotland's future.**

**It's what we do.**