

# SRUC Community

The SRUC Alumni & Friends Magazine

Issue 2 2017

## A passion for Food & Drink

Alumni cooking up a storm

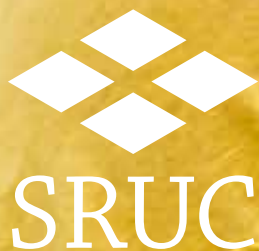
## Going for Gold

Olympic Alumni hopefuls

## Love Your Garden, Love SRUC

Spotlight on Frances Tophill

*and much more*





## 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**
- **Make the most of alumni benefits & discounts**
- **Promote your business**
- **Keep in touch with friends**
- **Find out about job opportunities**
- **Get invites to SRUC events**
- **Organise a reunion**

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.

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SRUC Alumni



@SRUCAlumni

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# Welcome

to the second edition of SRUC Community, the Alumni and Friends magazine.

**This year SRUC launched its new strategy, setting out the direction it will take to better serve Scotland's rural communities and economy.**

To fulfil this potential and realise our ambition we need confidence, imagination and creativity, together with a willingness to change the way we work, operate and think as a sustainable institution. This is at the heart of our strategy and involves everyone at, and with a stake in, SRUC.

I have been delighted with the level of engagement with our new strategy following its launch in April. I sincerely thank all those who took the time to attend a discussion meeting and/or send in their feedback.

Around 900 colleagues, students and stakeholders, including alumni and former staff, attended the 21 meetings we held across the country, while nearly 250 additional written communications were submitted. The range of views expressed was diverse and inspiring.

Our key drivers to make this all happen lies in the 5 "I"s: integration; international; industry-facing; innovation for impact; and inspiring.

I think you will see many of these "I" themes running through SRUC Community.

The Alumni Team is always keen to hear from our alumni and friends, so please do get in touch with them, update them with your reunions and stories, to help create an inspiring alumni community.

**Professor Wayne Powell**

*Principal and  
Chief Executive  
Scotland's Rural College*



**New  
jobs  
website!**

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## Summer Graduation

In July the SRUC Class of 2017's graduation ceremony took place in Bute Hall at the University of Glasgow. Despite the Scottish 'summer' weather, graduates enjoyed the traditional procession around the quad, followed by champagne.

Awards and prize giving ceremonies also took place at SRUC's Barony, Oatridge and

Elmwood campuses. In Barony students and families were treated to a remarkable guest speaker, Katy Cropper. Katy made history in 1990 to become the first woman to win 'One Man and his dog'. Having struggled through school with dyslexia, Katy has gone on to be one of the most successful dog trainers in the UK and inspired the students with some solid words of advice:

*"I believe if you have a passion and you want to do it, don't let anyone stop you, follow your dreams and hold onto those dreams."*

Winter graduation will take place in November for SRUC's HNC and HND graduands.







# Welcome new Alumni!





# Alumni showcased at the Royal Highland Show

At the 2017 Royal Highland Show members of the alumni community contributed to SRUC's "Integration" farmers' cart display. The display showcased SRUC's contribution to the success of the Scottish rural economy through Education, Research and Consulting. Visitors were able to sample fresh fruits with free-range cream and delicious toppings, or oatcakes topped with chutneys, jams and curds. They also browsed through books written by our alumni and learned out about some of SRUC's influential research projects.

We are very grateful to the following alumni who helped make the Integration display a success.



**Frances Tophill**  
(Horticulture with Plantsmanship, Edinburgh, 2013),  
co-presenter on ITV's Love Your Garden, supplied her books First-time Gardener and The Container Gardener.



**Prof Gerald Wiener**  
(Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1947)  
attended the SRUC stakeholders' event with his wife Margaret Dunlop, who wrote his fascinating biography "Goodbye Berlin" which was on display.



**Tracey, Aylett, Steven and Stuart Roan (all SRUC alumni)**  
from Roan's Dairy, supplied their free-range cream and milk. The BBC's 'This Farming Life' team filmed Tracey and Aylett for the second series at SRUC's Pavilion.



**Eilidh MacPherson**  
(Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1989)  
donated her book "300 Farmers of Scotland" for the stand, which visitors from across Scotland enjoyed looking through (and spotting their friends and neighbours).





**John Sinclair (Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1989)**, manager of Craigie's Farm supplied products from The Jam Kitchen. John is the Chief Steward of Scotland's Larder Live, so was very busy over the weekend.



**Bill Gray (Agriculture, Auchincruive, 1986)**, manager of Prestonhall Farms, one of the Lothian Monitor Farms where SRUC Research is conducting research on the crucial role of pollinators on farms.



**Jill Brown (Rural Business Management, Aberdeen, 2008)** recently launched Avva Scottish Gin which was on display. Jill was busy at her Avva stall in RHS17's Scotland's Larder Live.



**(Leisure & Recreation Management, Auchincruive, 2002)**, manager of Castleton Farm Shop in Aberdeenshire. Anna supplied vinegars, toppings and tart jellies that were developed with the assistance of SAC Consulting Food & Drink.



**Lochy Porter (Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1990)** Director of Angus Soft Fruits supplied strawberries, raspberries and brambleberries that kept our visitors coming back for more.



**Graeme Jarron (Agriculture, Aberdeen, 1999).** Another SAC Consulting Food & Drink client, Graeme supplied bottles of his award-winning Ogilvy Spirits Scottish Potato Vodka.



**Gregor Mackintosh (Agriculture, Aberdeen, 2018).** Gregor supplied his Mackintosh of Glendaveny extra virgin cold pressed rapeseed oil. Gregor previously worked with SAC Consulting Food & Drink to develop his business.



**Jim Shanks (Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1998)** supplied his Sweetelle baby plum tomatoes, the only commercially grown tomatoes in Scotland-energy efficient and eco-friendly (and delicious).



# MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE



**One million people live in rural Scotland. SRUC teamed with Support in Mind Scotland (SiMS) to shine a light on rural people who are experiencing mental ill health.**

Professor Sarah Skerratt, Director of SRUC's Rural Policy Centre, explained, *"We were aware that our understanding of rural mental health was patchy and largely anecdotal. By partnering with the charity SiMS, that has outreach in rural Scotland, our survey was designed specifically for those experiencing mental ill health so they could tell us what life is like for them."*

SRUC alumni were invited to take part in the survey via the @SRUCAlumni Facebook and Twitter pages. Hundreds of people shared their thoughts and feelings, expressing their views in the anonymous survey as to what needs to change in mental health services and highlighting key policy issues.

*"If I was to say what the one take-home message is, it would be this: that people want to create ways to connect before their personal crises occur, preferably in non-clinical settings and ideally in their locality. There's a real emphasis, from the islands in the north and west, to the mainland areas in the south, on talking and connecting being essential in helping to address isolation that comes with rural living,"* said Professor Skerratt.

This collaboration between SRUC and SiMS has led to the setting up of the National Rural Mental Health Forum, which was launched formally in March 2017. It has the support of both the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, Fergus Ewing MSP and the Minister for Mental Health, Maureen Watt MSP. The Forum is committed to making rural Scotland a thriving, healthy place to live, by influencing Government policy and conducting ground-breaking research. More than 30 organisations belong to the Forum, many with expertise in tackling mental health issues and reach to all parts of rural Scotland.

Jim Hume, an SRUC alumnus (Agriculture, 1984, Edinburgh), SRUC Board member, and former MSP, is the convener of the national Forum.

*"The research findings from the rural mental health survey now give us the evidence to help us tackle mental ill health in rural Scotland,"* said Mr Hume.

*"Mental ill health can be prevented and can be treated, especially with early intervention. The Forum and its members are keen to take action by raising awareness in rural communities and normalising talking about mental ill health."*



**"The hope is that this research will mean more people will have the opportunity to speak and be heard, which will lead to change throughout rural Scotland"**

*Professor Sarah Skerratt*



**"We know that one in four Scots suffer mental ill health at some point in their lives, and now we know that tackling mental ill health in rural Scotland has its own challenges."**

*Jim Hume*



For more information, visit [www.ruralwellbeing.org](http://www.ruralwellbeing.org)



## KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

- Mental ill health is experienced equally by men and women
- **67% of respondents experience depression**
- **22% have suicidal thoughts and feelings**
- **12% described self-harming behaviour, the majority of which were under 24 years of age**
- Rural transport and communications create stress and barriers for those seeking help
- **Low population numbers can make it difficult to set up anonymous support groups**

**Respondents of the rural mental health survey carried out by SRUC and SiMS**

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS

SRUC joined the Black Dog Campaign in 2016. The Black Dog campaign aims to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness

and encourages people to seek help early, rather than suffering in silence.



As part of Black Dog, SRUC students are able to call a helpline on **0300 304 7000** from **4:30pm to 10:30pm** every evening.

SRUC Student Association representatives and SRUC staff are also trained in getting students the support they need across all aspects of student life.

**[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)**

**Need help now?**  
**0300 111 4166**

**RSABI is a Scottish charity providing practical support and financial assistance to individuals and families across agriculture and the land-based industries.**

**SRUC is proud to be a Corporate Supporter of RSABI.**

**The RSABI Helpline (0300 111 4166) operates from 7am to 11pm every day of the year and is open to those from across the agricultural sector.**

**[www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk)**



## New jobs website!

A new webpage on the SRUC Alumni & Friends website contains information about employment opportunities.

We know that the number one priority for new graduates is help in finding a job, and we are often contacted by companies who would like to interview SRUC graduates for roles. So we created this webpage.

If you're looking for a new role, or looking for a new recruit, check out the new page: **[www.sruc.ac.uk/alumnijobs](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/alumnijobs)**





# Gardening Scotland 2017

## There's been a murder!

SRUC's Garden Design students excelled themselves with their creativity and imagination as their mysterious "murder garden" won a Gold Award at Gardening Scotland.

The Tudor-themed show garden "Hortus Homicida" was designed and created by 2nd year students at SRUC Edinburgh and was competing with seven gardens showcasing the very best of Scottish garden design.

The garden commemorates the 450th anniversary of one of Scotland's most infamous unresolved crimes: the murder of Lord Darnley, the husband of Mary Queen of Scots.

Hortus Homicida created a romanticised version of a monastic garden to represent where Lord Darnley's body was found. Students used native breeds that would have been around at the time and plants with specific meanings to emphasise the story behind their garden.

To bring the display to life students dressed in historic outfits to present the garden and guide people through



an interactive Cluedo-like game giving them a chance to try to solve the mystery. Preparation for the garden even included a visit to the University of Edinburgh's Anatomical Museum to see Lord Darnley's skull.

The idea behind the garden came from student Heath Urquhart who left

his farm in New Zealand in 2015 to study horticulture at SRUC.

*"We are thrilled to have won the top prize possible!" said Heath. "It has been an amazing week building the garden and seeing our ideas come to life. It has*

*been a great team effort and we have all learnt a huge amount from the process.*

*"We want to use the garden to teach people about a moment that changed Scottish history and Gardening Scotland was a great platform for us with over 30,000 visitors."*



SRUC Elmwood NC Horticulture students also had a successful Gardening Scotland, winning a Silver Gilt for their 'Garden Without Boundaries'. The 1.5 square metre garden is inspired by the small urban garden spaces people in Scotland have on their properties, and how they can be harnessed to be functional, sociable and also wildlife-friendly.



# SRUC alumni at Gardening Scotland



**Amie Routledge** completed her HND Garden Design at SRUC Edinburgh in 2016 and set up '**AJR Greenspace**' that summer. AJR Greenspace provides a fresh approach to landscaping in Edinburgh, throughout Scotland and the wider UK. From sketch ideas and masterplans to comprehensive detailed design, planting design and project monitoring services, Amie brings a unique approach to the gardening world.



**Jenna Stuart** graduated from SRUC with an honours degree in Garden and Greenspace Design in 2015. Jenna started her own nursery '**Clan Horticulture**' that same year with her now fiancé Matthew Lowe, who also graduated from SRUC with an honours degree in Horticulture. The couple are passionate about making gardens up to date with the latest trends, using sustainable methods to create plant stock that will stand the test of time.



**Lynn Hill** studied Garden Design at SRUC Edinburgh where she was awarded the Ian Anderson Prize for Outstanding Garden Design Student in 2013. Lynn started her business, '**Lynn Hill Garden Design**', around the same time. Lynn's "Tangible Garden" won Best New Show Garden and the Silver Gilt medal. This was the first ever show garden designed by Lynn. The aim of the garden was to inspire people to think creatively about the garden as an extension of the home. Lynn's show garden was featured on BBC's Beechgrove Garden, which was filmed at the event.

Scotland's Rural College  
**Horticulture and Garden Design**  
courses at Glasgow Botanic Gardens



**New for 2017!**  
HNC Horticulture  
& HNC Garden  
Design courses

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

SRUC is a charity registered in Scotland: SC003712



# Alumni in the Spotlight

## The Roan Family Fresher than the Udders



Roan's Dairy is a sixth generation family run dairy farm at Barnbarroch Farm just outside Dalbeattie. The Roan family: Steven & Tracey, and Stuart & Aylett are all SRUC alumni: Agriculture for Steven (Auchincruive 2001), Stuart (Auchincruive 1999) and Aylett (Oatridge 1999); and Rural Recreation and Tourism Management for Tracey (Auchincruive 2004).

The Roans starred in the second series of BBC Two's "This Farming Life", a programme which follows farming families to provide an insightful look at modern farming in Scotland.

Stuart Roan, founder of the business, had always wanted to sell milk direct to the customer. Late 2015 was the turning point with milk prices hitting an all-time low, the Roans realised they needed to do something different to secure their future and for the next generation.

*"Using our different skills gained at SRUC, we knew that we could work together,"* said Tracey.

*"Since our September 2015 launch we are seeing a great demand for our free range milk and cream. We now have more than 1000 doorstep customers across Dumfries & Galloway and provide fresh milk to more than 80 trade customers. From listening to our customers and working in partnership with other local food producers we now deliver free range eggs and locally made yoghurts."*

*"Our milk is from our grass fed, free range cows and this is something that we are very passionate about and our customers tell us they can taste the difference! We don't just sell our milk but we sell our story and that's what people like about us."*

*"Despite the udder chaos we saw an opportunity to expand our business further and now have a mobile 'Udder Milkshake Bar'. We launched it at last year's Dumfries Agricultural Show. We sold more than 800 freshly made milkshakes with our own milk in one day! This aspect of the business has grown rapidly and we are a regular feature at many local events and festivals."*

## Frances Tophill Love Your Garden



Frances graduated from SRUC with her Bachelor of Science in Horticulture with Plantsmanship in 2013. It was during her studies with SRUC that she interviewed for her role on ITV's "Love Your Garden" alongside Alan Titchmarsh. In 2016, Frances also joined BBC's "Gardeners' World" and is a regular presenter on the show.

*"There were a few options open to me, but Edinburgh won my heart when I was looking at where to study, because it's such an amazing, fun city,"* said Frances. *"I was really taken by Edinburgh, with its lovely long nights and when you see the Meadows come into flower in the summer, or the frosty winters. It really is just beautiful."*

*"The opportunity for me to audition for ITV's 'Love Your Garden' actually came through SRUC. We all got an email from the ITV team saying they were recruiting and we were invited to London to interview for the role. I was with my classmates in a pub beforehand joking around about it. When we got to the interview at Capel Manor and had to present in front of a camera, we all came away saying, 'That was so hard!' The interview made us all realise how difficult presenting is when you've never done it before. My classmates were really happy for me when I got the role."*

*"My first book 'The First-time Gardener' (Kyle Books, 2015) is a very general, practical book for people just getting started and explains about garden design, and how to build and maintain a backyard garden. The second book, 'The Container Gardener' (Kyle Books, 2017) is based around outdoor growing in containers. It's for anyone really, but does encourage the younger generation to think 'I can do this' and get into gardening."*

*"As Alumni we carry responsibility and don't lift the ladder away to stop others climbing."*  
Gareth



# SRUC's alumni are shining a spotlight on rural industries across the UK.

## Steven Mitchell The Buffalo Farm



Steven graduated with a BSc in Agriculture in 2001, and went on to set up Scotland's largest water buffalo farm in Fife. Steven also stars in the second series of BBC Two's "This Farming Life", which follows Steven's trials and tribulations of managing a herd of unpredictable water buffalo.

Steven is no stranger to shining a spotlight on the industry. Last year he was featured on BBC's "Landward", which talked about his farm and his near-death experience with a buffalo. Paul Hollywood interviewed Steven on his BBC show "Pies and Puds" where people blind tasted buffalo vs beef. He was also on the BBC series "This Little Farmer Went to Market", which followed the successful launch of this buffalo meat at local farmers' markets, and the Channel 4 series "Tricky Business", which profiled young entrepreneurs.

It was during his travels to Australia, following graduation, that he got the idea to farm water buffalo in Scotland. "I worked there for two years," said Steven. "On returning to the family farm I wanted to establish a business which complemented the pork and bacon processing of my uncle. Having seen water buffalo in Australia, I purchased 100 cattle. When the herd arrived in Clentrie, half the village came to look!"

Steven has also previously featured on an episode of Gordon Ramsay's "The F Word" on Channel 4. Viewers saw Steven and Gordon produce the first mozzarella from his herd.

"Steven is a hard-working, innovative young farmer," said Gordon. "By using his agricultural knowledge and skills learnt at SRUC, and his eye for enterprise, he has gone on to become a successful businessman."

ities to help others up the ladder,  
p others reaching your heights."

Gareth Austin

## Gareth Austin Success by the spade



Gareth is an outgoing advocate for his industry and SRUC. His gardening radio show is on BBC Radio Foyle every Friday, he works with community gardening groups, conducts workshops, he teaches, grows artisan produce, writes a newspaper column, and advises on horticulture projects - plus more!

Gareth completed his HNC Landscape Management in Oatridge in 2000. He then graduated from his Masters in Organic Farming, a distance learning course run by SRUC Aberdeen, in summer 2017.

"After my Landscape Management course in Oatridge, I went to work in Ireland, advancing my career in garden centres over the next eight years. Alongside I was growing a career in local radio and press as a gardening columnist," said Gareth.

"I closed our garden centre after the recession of 2008, and went into teaching, delivering City & Guilds Horticulture courses in the local technical college. I worked with many community groups and schools building and maintaining community and school gardens.

"I was attracted to SRUC's PgDip/MSc in Organic Farming, to learn more about the science behind organic agriculture. Being distance learning, I could also retain my teaching job.

"As part of the course I made contact with a local commercial grower of field vegetables who wanted to develop a direct sales strategy. After developing a marketing plan for the enterprise, it turned into part-time employment (I was still teaching full-time, studying, and being a parent). This developed and now we have a joint organic vegetable venture.

"My thesis work was focused on tillage farming. As a result of the growing trials and the relationship I built with one farmer, I also have a joint venture producing organic produce there too. And yes, I still have a full-time teaching job!

"For distance learning students the entertainment provided in Aberdeen was crucial in the development of our class friendships when we got to meet up. From the ceilidhs to the barbecues, 'menu roulette' at Davy's Brucksburn Chipper, memorable sessions in Irish bars, pole dancing in near empty nightclubs and hurried exits from pool halls - all were brilliant."



# How SRUC IS PRESERVING SCOTLAND'S SIGNIFICANT SITES



People have been living in Scotland for over 10,000 years, and farming for the last 6,000 years. Scotland's Rural College is not only an important part of the country's rural educational heritage, but also actively works, through its Education, Consulting and Research teams, to preserve Scotland's rural archaeological sites.

## EDUCATION: COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT

SRUC's Countryside Management courses run from HNC to the only degree course of its kind in Scotland. Historical geography, archaeology and cultural heritage are important components of the countryside management degree. The course is designed to educate the next generation of site managers, reserve wardens, land management consultants and specialists in species and habitat conservation.

*"We aim to provide graduates with the knowledge to identify important heritage features on sites, and develop the skills to make appropriate management decisions to preserve these features,"* said Cath Seeds, Countryside Management Lecturer.

'Hands-on' site visits and projects give students the opportunity to implement their skills.

## CONSULTING: UNEARTHING SITES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

SAC Consulting, SRUC's consulting arm, also contribute to the management of Scotland's important archaeological sites. Part of the team's remit is to undertake Environmental Impact Assessments on areas of proposed development requiring planning consent, to assess the likelihood of environmental effects. Included in this assessment, is a consideration of archaeology and cultural heritage.

Five years ago, a complete Pictish linear barrow cemetery was discovered during work carried out by SAC Consulting for a proposed poultry unit on a farm at Meigle, Blairgowrie.

*"A discovery like this is extremely rare, and would not have occurred if not for the Environmental Impact Assessment,"* said Malcolm Sharp, Senior Environmental Consultant with SAC Consulting. *"Whilst there have been a few modern excavations, this was the first to be completely excavated and sampled and is of national importance."*

## RESEARCH: ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

SRUC's Research Farms are also a rich source of archaeological sites.

*"Up here at Kirkton & Auchtertyre Research Farms we have shed-loads of archaeology. We weave its existence into most talks we give to groups visiting the farms, highlighting*



In second year students visit the Isles of Mull and Ulva, giving them the opportunity to examine historical landscape features like run rig farming systems.

*the thousands of years of history that livestock farming has on the site,"* explains Professor Davy McCracken, Head of SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre. *"We are keen to have more archaeological work done on the farms – we've been in contact with an archaeologist, who runs training courses in digs, to use SRUC farms as a focus for her courses."*



Countryside Management students conduct archaeological digs to support the Cree Valley Community Woodland project, where they were involved in exposing an old farmstead, at Knockman Wood, Newton Stewart.





Countryside Management students help a local landowner and the Whithorn Trust on an experimental archaeological project to reconstruct an iron aged roundhouse. Part of the project involved hazel coppicing on a local estate and historical crafts.



Excavation of the Pictish linear barrow cemetery revealed graves and barrow ditches. Skeletal material was recovered from four of the graves. The bodies had been laid out with their heads to the west. No other grave goods were found, but sufficient material remained to allow some analysis and dating.

*(Photo credit: AOC Archaeology)*



## Craibstone Oral History Project – Alumni & Friends needed!

To mark Scotland's "2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology" SRUC Aberdeen is undertaking an exciting new project to capture stories and accounts of student and work life on the Craibstone Estate.

*"The aim is to record interviews with former students and staff on their experience studying at, or working for, SRUC and its predecessors,"* said Ross Wilson, Library Assistant at SRUC Aberdeen.

*"The recordings will preserve historical data which at present has no outlet within SRUC. Ideally we would add these to our library catalogue for staff and student access."*

The excellent contributions to the SRUC Alumni e-newsletter from former students show that the experience of our alumni and former staff is indeed valuable and worth preserving for future generations.

If the project is successful, there are plans to expand the project to cover all of SRUC's campuses.

Interested alumni and former staff are encouraged to get in touch with Ross on **01224 711057**

**Ross.Wilson@sruc.ac.uk**



*Agriculture and Horticulture are areas of study that spring to mind when people talk about SRUC. However, the food chain doesn't stop there. SRUC is producing some of the finest new cooking talent in Scotland, and is helping to get exciting new products onto the shelves.*

**I**n Scotland the tourism industry employs more than 200,000 people, making it one of the largest areas of employment. Food and Drink is Scotland's best performing sector worth around £15bn annually. Last year food and drink exports were worth £5.5bn to the country.

Hospitality and cookery are essential parts of this industry and SRUC courses meet this need. Students receive training in all aspects of the catering and hospitality sectors, from front of house to the cheffing skills required in top restaurant kitchens; and also have the opportunity to learn from SAC Consulting Food & Drink consultants who work directly with Scotland's food and drink sector.

"Many of our Cookery alumni have gone on to find employment in prestigious hotels and restaurants, while others now run their own establishments," said Vicki Munro, Leader of the Hospitality Programme.

Vicki recently received a special commendation at a national industry award ceremony, for using her extensive industry links to arrange guest speakers, visits, work experience and commercial activities for students.

Students learn their trade in a modern training kitchen, producing a fine dining experience in the SRUC Elmwood 'Themes Restaurant', which opens its doors to the public Wednesdays to Fridays during term time. "Alumni and friends are more than welcome to book a table to support our students, and have exceptional food at the same time!" said Vicki. "Themes Restaurant has a commanding view over the beautiful rural Cupar landscape. Keep an eye on our facebook page for booking details."

Vicki and her team also work with SRUC colleagues in the SAC Consulting Food & Drink team on product development projects. This integrated approach benefits Hospitality students. "We use these projects as case studies - giving students a first-hand understanding of how companies combine their fresh produce and ideas, to develop products for the supermarket shelves," said Vicki.

SAC Consulting Food & Drink is proud of its experience and works with clients to help build their businesses. The team members use their industry backgrounds to deliver a wide range of client services including providing marketing and business growth advice, developing unique food products, and helping launch new brands.

Many alumni-run businesses have worked with the SAC Consulting Food & Drink team to bring their products to market. Several alumni Food & Drink clients contributed to our "Integration Farmers Cart" at the Royal Highland Show, providing produce for visitors to sample (pages 6-7), including: Anna Mitchell's Castleton Farm Shop fruit coulis, syrups and tart jellies; Graeme Jarron's Ogilvy Scottish Potato Vodka; and Gregor Mackintosh's Mackintosh of Glendaveny cold pressed rapeseed oils.





# A passion for food & drink

## Euan Welsh

(HND Professional Cookery, Elmwood, 2017)

Restaurant Andrew Fairlie, Scotland's only restaurant with two Michelin stars, ranked eighth in 2018's Good Food Guide, has recently welcomed its new commis chef to the team. Euan Welsh completed his Hospitality studies at SRUC Elmwood in summer 2017, and is loving his new role.

*"It's been absolutely incredible. I didn't expect to be here from coming straight out of college. My nerves were very high at the beginning - getting used to the way we work, and then for me to be creating Andrew Fairlie's signature smoked lobster dish!"*

Euan began with the team in the Larder section, working on cold starters and some of the main course plates. He then focused on the smoked lobster dish. *"It was amazing to be working on the lobster dish, as it's so renowned. I remember sampling it at the Scottish Chefs Conference that I attended as a student in 2015, so it was quite an honour to have that as my focus."*

Euan works in a team of 12 chefs, headed by Chef Stephen McLaughlin, who runs the kitchen. *"The team here is fantastic. Even though the standard is exceptionally high, the atmosphere in the kitchen is relaxed and everyone is really supportive, it's a strong team. It's a 12 hour shift, but it goes so fast as it's really enjoyable."*

Euan has wanted to become a chef since he was young. *"I lived in Italy for a few years growing up, and food was such a big thing in my life. My mum was a professional chef for most of her life, so I grew up baking and cooking with her, and I always knew it was what I wanted to do."*

Euan's training at SRUC has greatly influenced his achievements. *"I would not be here if it wasn't for SRUC. Through four years of college, it wasn't just the skills I learnt, which were really important, but it was character building and helped me develop on a personal level to give me the confidence to work in a restaurant like this."*

*"Vicki Munro was such an inspirational teacher. She is so supportive and knows so much about the industry and just wants her students to do well. The rest of the teaching staff are amazing too: Wullie, Roz and Mark, everyone helped me to progress."*

With such a remarkable start to his career, what does the future hold for Euan?

*"I had work experience in Dubai a few years back and really enjoyed it, I'd love to work somewhere like Dubai or Australia one day. But being here now is incredible, and I'd be happy to stay for as long as I could!"*



# Reunions



## Class of 1986, BSc Agrics (Edinburgh)

Vicky, James, Christine, Kate and John organised an evening in Pollock Halls, Edinburgh, in November 2016. Classmates came from all over Scotland as well as England, Wales, Northern Ireland, France and Australia to celebrate their 30th year reunion. Vicky recalled her time in the Peter Wilson Building fondly, albeit with some drama: *"I was President of the Agricultural Society in 1986. I got hauled in before Prof Peter Wilson and Prof Colin Whittemore a few times, to go into bat for all the naughty partying Agric boys after an incident at the Minto Hotel. It made the local papers!"*



## Class of 1960, SDA (WoSAC)

Edward and Barbara McLaren, from the Class of '60, got in touch with a photo of their Melbourne reunion in November 2016. The group of 13 alumni came together from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Scotland and England.

Most alumni involved are still in regular contact and this was their third reunion in 50 years! After two meet-ups in the UK (Auchincruive and the Lake District) they decided to head Down Under. The group assembled in the prestigious Australia Club in Melbourne before enjoying a three-day varied programme of farm and city visits led by alumnus Neil Clark.



## Professional Golf Reunion

In March SRUC Elmwood teed up the first Professional Golf reunion at Elmwood Golf, which they plan to hold annually. It was well attended with just over 60 Pro Golf alumni and current students. The event was organised and run by the HND Pro Golf class as part of their event management coursework. A shotgun comp was held, as well as a closest to the hole competition, using hickory clubs, on the 9th.



## Class of 1977 ND Agriculture (Craibstone)

The Class of '77 met for their 40th year reunion in May.

*"Kyrsten Black, Assistant Principal, gave us an update on SRUC Craibstone followed by a visit to Mackie and Hunter halls,"* said reunion organiser Alasdair Brodie. *"The 18 alumni loved seeing their old rooms and reminiscing. We had a visit to Norvite's Oil Pressing facility at Blackbog, Oldmeldrum, then lunch at alumnus Charlie Bruce's farm shop at King Edward. The Bruce family did us proud and all undercover! Our day was rounded off with Pat Edwards (ex-lecturer) giving us his tales as Craibstone warden, followed by each student giving a five-minute update from the past 40 years."*



# Strolls down memory lane

Do you have a  
reunion planned?  
Get in touch to see  
how we can help  
[www.sruc.ac.uk/reunions](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/reunions)

## Class of 1966/67, Farm Secretarial / Domestic Rural Management (Craibstone)

The Class of '66/'67 celebrated their 50th year reunion at Jury's Inn Airport Hotel, Dyce, in June.

*"What a fabulous gathering this was. Once we all recognised each other we all talked and laughed our way through the event,"* said reunion organiser Pat Robb.



## Class of 1967, Agriculture (Edinburgh)

A three day get together was held in June to celebrate the Class of '67's 50th year reunion. Alumni reunited from across the globe. The group stayed at the Peebles Hydro, and had tours of the Peter Wilson Building, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Bush House and Langhill Farm.

*"What a super reunion we all had. It was great to see everyone after 50 years and to get to know everyone again at their present age!"* said Glennis Allan.

*"Even just walking along the corridor in the Peter Wilson Building and sitting in one of the lecture theatres in the company of our alumni created a warm glow of feeling 50 years younger,"* said reunion organiser Alan Mair. The group were joined on the Wednesday by their former lecturer Dr Cunningham. *"He thoroughly enjoyed himself and entertained us over afternoon tea. He even wanted to break open his present to give us all a wee dram."*



## Class of 1962, BSc Agriculture (Edinburgh)

The Class of '62 met in Scone for their 55th year reunion.

*"We had a very pleasant evening at Murrayshall Hotel,"* said reunion organiser John Percival. *"We started reuniting once in every 20 years in 1982, then every 10, and now we are down to every five years. Fourteen of us graduated in 1962, but we are now sadly reduced to 10."*



## Class of 1977, Agriculture (Auchincruive)

The 40th year reunion for the Class of '77 took place at the German Bar during the Royal Highland Show. What goes on at reunion, stays at reunion!





# SRUC SPORTS:

## ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

### Winter Olympic hopefuls

80% of the recently announced Team GB Men's Curling Team are SRUC alumni/students. Team Smith will be making their Winter Olympic debut in Pyeongchang in South Korea in February 2018.

Team Smith consists of:

- **Skip:** Kyle Smith (BSc Agriculture, Edinburgh, 2014)
  - **Third:** Thomas Muirhead (BSc Agriculture, Edinburgh, 2015)
  - **Second:** Kyle Waddell (no SRUC connection)
  - **Lead:** Cameron Smith (current 4th year Agriculture student, Edinburgh)
  - **Alternate:** Glen Muirhead (BSc Agriculture, Edinburgh, 2011)
- Kyle and Cameron are brothers as are Glen and Thomas.



Team Smith demonstrated their talent on tour in Canada this year, becoming the first British men's team ever to reach a Grand Slam final. A strong start to this season saw them win the OCT Oakville Classic before reaching the knock-out stages at both the Stu Sells and Red Deer Classic in Canada, which helped them accumulate their ranking points to become the leading British men's team. They finished their season with a win over world number one ranked Team Edin (Sweden) in the final of the European Masters.

The Olympic team will build up to the Winter Olympics by training at the new National Curling Academy in Stirling as well as attending competitions across Europe, North America and Asia.

### Robbie Simpson (Countryside Management, 2014, Aberdeen)

#### World class Marathon & Trail runner

*"Persevere and believe and you will get to where you want to be."*



After only switching from trail running to the marathon in the winter of 2016, Robbie was the second Briton to cross the finish line at the 2017 London marathon, clocking an impressive time of 2.15.04. The 25-year-old Scot believes he could have gone faster and feels he has another ten years in the sport of long distance running.

Robbie's accomplishment at the London marathon has put him on the radar for the Commonwealth Games in April 2018. However, selection and places will be competitive, with Scottish Athletics only sending 20 athletes across all disciplines.

Robbie has a long list of palmares in trail running, including a bronze medal at the World Trail Championships in 2015. Having spent years training off road and feeling most at home amongst nature, Robbie decided to apply his off-road fitness to a new discipline.

But it has not all been smooth running. After his London Marathon effort, Robbie was selected for Team GB for the 2017 World Athletic Championships, but had to withdraw due to a calf injury. *"Looking back I think I actually went too hard over the winter months and slightly over trained myself, which is why I've had injury issues now."*

Robbie attributes part of his running success to the long training runs around SRUC Aberdeen campus, when he was a student.

*"A lot of the training I did around campus in Aberdeen while I was studying was pretty amateur at the time, but it was ground work that really paid off. Looking back I was so far off where I wanted to be, but year after year I've persisted and kept pushing through. Persevere and believe and you will get to where you want to be."*



## Samantha Martin

Samantha Martin, SRUC Barony Veterinary Nursing student, represented Scotland on her horse 'Torchwood' at the prestigious National Schools Equestrian Association Championships last year. Samantha is now competing in British Eventing, which encompasses dressage, cross-country and show jumping. Her proudest moment in dressage was when she was the highest placed individual in the Nations Cup, as well as winning her dressage class when she was riding for SRUC. On her success, Samantha says, *"Don't let disappointing results set you back, take it forward and train to improve on the parts that didn't go well."*



## Genevieve Whitson

If you're organising a reunion or signing up to the alumni community, you're likely to talk to Genevieve Whitson. When not in the SRUC alumni office, you'll see Gen on her bike across Scotland's roads. Gen is the current Scottish National Road Series champion (and was last year too). She's just completed her best ever international season, which included racing in Canada, Belgium, and the Netherlands. She also had several top ten finishes in the Women's National Road series.

Through her cycling career, Gen has competed in four world championships and ten world cups, across three disciplines (road, mountainbike, and cyclocross). She's ridden professionally with one European team. And Gen's not done with burning rubber yet!



We were saddened to hear alumnus Doddie Weir (Agriculture, 1992, Edinburgh), a former British and Irish Lion who earned 61 caps for Scotland, was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) earlier this year. Doddie has thrown himself into fundraising in the hope of finding a cure for MND and supporting other patients.

**'Doddie Weir's Discretionary Trust'** was recently founded to support the welfare of Doddie and his family and raise awareness of this currently incurable disease. [www.doddieweir5trust.co.uk](http://www.doddieweir5trust.co.uk)



### How can SRUC alumni help?

**Simon Hogg, farmer in Kelso, the Borders, donated his voice to Speak Unique, a project aiming to give voices back to people with degenerative diseases, like MND, who use communication devices.**

Simon studied Agriculture at SRUC (then SAC) in Edinburgh from 1997 to 2000. After some travel, he worked for SAC Consulting for five years, before returning to the family farm in 2009, to take over for his father, David Hogg. David had MND and sadly passed away that same year.



*"Speak Unique need Scottish regional accents, especially from men. So I came up to Edinburgh to the Anne Rowling Clinic to donate my voice, in memory of my father. It's easy enough to do, you just read out sentences in a sound booth for just under an hour. Your voice is recorded and banked, and could be there for somebody, with MND or another degenerative disease, that needs it."*

Information on Speak Unique can be found on the website [www.speakunique.org](http://www.speakunique.org)





# A lifetime of teaching Agriculture



**B**ill Dingwall, Agriculture Lecturer and Team Leader, has received the Principal's Lifetime in Teaching Award from SRUC. He was presented with his prize during the College's graduation ceremony in July.

**As well as guiding and encouraging countless young would-be farmers and others wishing to work in the rural sector, Bill provides invaluable support to staff - especially the Alumni & Friends team!**

*"One of his key strengths is the way he maintains industry links through visits and study tours," said close colleague and SRUC alumna Linda Whillans. "Bill has always aimed to get a wide range of researchers in front of students and is adept at finding ways to make researchers and the level of their presentations accessible for his students."*

After completing his PhD with the widely respected Professor John Robinson at the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen, Bill joined the East of Scotland College of Agriculture in 1982 as a Sheep Specialist. His role combined research, consulting and education, which was the norm at that time and something SRUC is redeveloping for more modern challenges. He began teaching Agriculture at Edinburgh in the mid 80s, and has been the course organiser for a number of years.

*"I'll always remember Bill's first lecture on a Thursday when he said, 'Right, who was out last night?' Half of us had our hands up thinking 'oh no we're going to be in trouble for being a bit hungover' and the other half didn't have their hands up. Bill looked around and said, 'Well, that's not good enough... we need everyone out enjoying themselves on a Wednesday night. I don't mind if I have to ply you with Irn Bru and bacon rolls to keep you going, as long as you're here on a Thursday morning'. It was a great work-hard/play-hard ethos that he set for us."*

**Simon Hogg (Agriculture, 2000), Borders farmer**

*"Bill must have just started his career at Kings Buildings when I was studying my HND, not sure if that makes me feel old or not! It is certainly not a vocation that many would choose, however Bill's nature made him well suited to his job. His laid back and unflappable demeanour made him very approachable to students. You could always count on Bill to bring what he taught in the lecture theatre to life by making sure that students were exposed to real-life examples of success."*

**John Sinclair (Agriculture, 1989), Owner/Manager Craigie's Farm Deli & Cafe**

*"Bill was a great teacher - very knowledgeable, patient and helpful, and it is thanks to him that I now have a job at SRUC. He arranged a summer work experience placement at the CT Unit for me in Summer 2004 and I'm still there 13 years later! I've always been grateful for all his help."*

**Claire Anderson (Agriculture 2004), SRUC Technician, Animal & Veterinary Sciences**



# SRUC Alumni & Friends

Supporting today's students through the SRUC Trust

Generosity from our alumni and friends supports students facing financial difficulty; encourages students to further study; promotes research excellence; and enhances the student experience.



## SRUC Trust supporting students

In 2016/17  
**£124,000**  
was awarded  
to the following  
areas

5%

Going  
Further  
bursaries

11%

Paid  
student  
work  
placement

12%

Educational  
trips &  
exchanges

16%

Centenary  
Bursaries

56%

Research  
projects

Donate

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

One of the fantastic student exchanges that takes place at SRUC is with the University of Arkansas. Thanks to generous alumni and friends donations through the SRUC Trust, students can apply for part-funding to help make this experience affordable.



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

SRUC students Callum Morrison and Michele Quarta completed the 10-week exchange programme last year. During this time they both worked hard on field work for their Honours projects.

Callum, Agricultural Science student based at SRUC Ayr, was looking at the effect of long-term management practices in double cropping systems of soybean and wheat on the populations of the root knot nematode.

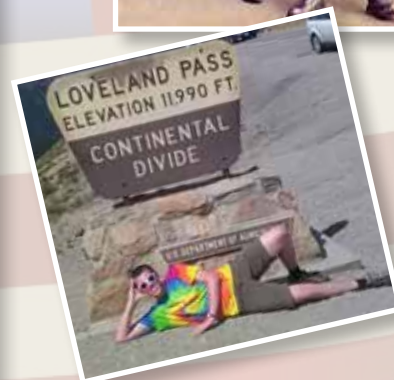
Michele, Environmental Protection student at SRUC Edinburgh, gathered data about the impact of agricultural practices on biological nitrogen fixation.

The two students stayed in Fayetteville, just a 20-minute walk from the University. "The area is more commonly known as 'Fayettechill'," said Michele. "Due to the laid back lifestyle!"

"It was one of the best experiences of my life," said Callum, who used the experience to visit 12 different states and travelling as far as Canada. "It was a real education to learn about different ways of living – like meeting a Mennonite community – some of whom still had traditions from generations ago."

"We would both encourage all SRUC students to consider a summer internship – not just from an academic perspective, but for the chance to see the world, meet new people and take on new challenges," said Michele.

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





www.sruc.ac.uk/alumni

## **15% alumni discount for Postgraduate courses**

The postgraduate awards eligible for the discount are those awarded through the University of Glasgow:

- Agricultural Professional Practice
- Applied Poultry Science
- Countryside Management
- Organic Farming

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



*Scotland's Rural College*

*Leading the way in Agriculture and Rural Research, Education and Consulting*

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"Spaniel" by Judith Hogg (Agriculture, 2014, Edinburgh); joint winner of the SRUC 2017 photo competition.