

SRUC Community

The SRUC Alumni & Friends Magazine

Issue 3 2019

Hog lines and deadlines

Olympic curler Cammy Smith

It's a wild life

Lynsey Mitchell and big cat rescue

Doddie's class act

Alumni tackle students in MND charity match

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 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? 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.

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Welcome

Welcome to the third edition of SRUC Community, the Alumni and Friends magazine. 'SRUCcess' is a term our new alumni will be familiar with from their graduation ceremonies. Indeed, there has been a lot of recent SRUCcess to celebrate. We have had some great achievements, most notably our collaboration with Aviagen, the consolidation of our relationship with the Moredun Research Institute, and our nominations for not one but two prestigious Times Higher Education Awards.

But as the world continues to evolve, we cannot afford to stand still and I am honoured to be leading this institution at such an exciting and transformative time in its long and distinguished history.

SRUC's new strategy details our vision to become a unique 21st century rural university. It sets out how we will achieve our mission to drive Scotland's rural economy and play a key role in addressing the major food and nutrition challenges facing our world. It is something in which we all have a role to play, especially alumni – as the practitioners, innovators and leaders of the industry.

As alumni and ambassadors of SRUC, wherever you are in the world, your passion and your ideas will continue to be very important as we develop our institution over the coming years.

Everyone had a similar story to tell – that no matter what they went on to do or what they achieved, their time at SRUC played a pivotal role in their development, not just as professionals, but as people.

I firmly believe that SRUC people are different. They have a guts and commitment that inspires them to make a difference, to drive forward their respective industries and make an impact.

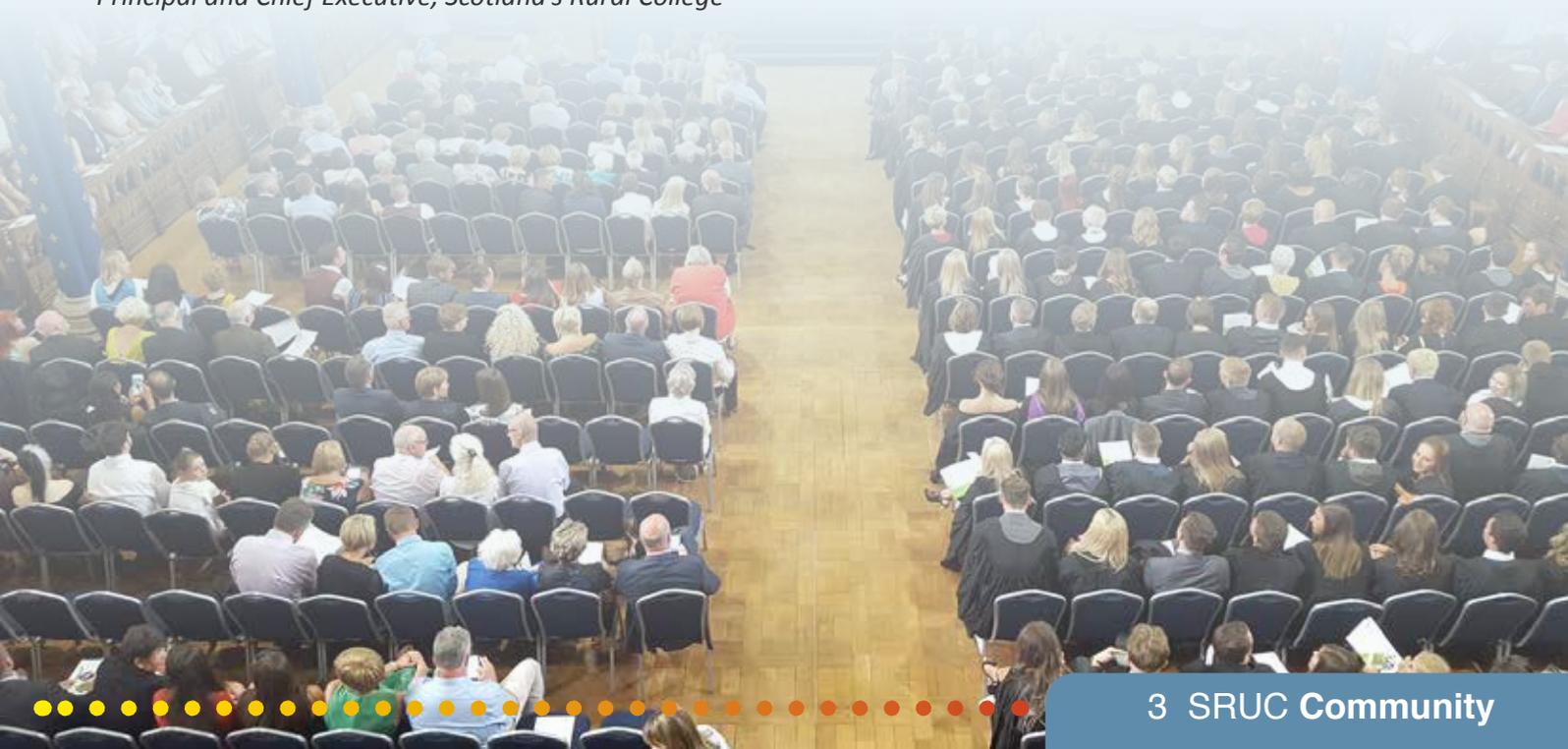
From our new graduates ready to make their own way in their chosen careers, to our retirees, I would ask you all to remember your SRUC alumni community and I hope you will remain connected as part of the SRUC family for lifelong education, training and friendship.

Be proud of the fact that you belong to a group of people doing brilliant things both here in Scotland and around the world.



Professor Wayne Powell BSc, MSc, PhD, DSc, FLSW, FRSE

Principal and Chief Executive, Scotland's Rural College

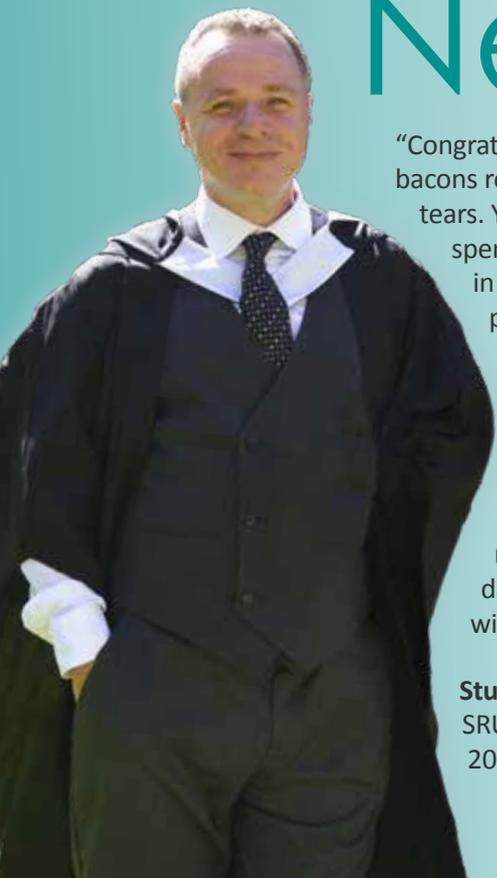


We warmly
welcome
you to the
SRUC
alumni
community

#SRUCcess



Welcome New Alumni



“Congratulations. You did it! All that hard work has finally paid off. You invested many late nights, bacons rolls (or hummus sandwiches) instant coffees and takeaway pizzas, even blood, sweat and tears. Yes, at times there were tears, but there are no regrets. We will never forget those hours spent in classrooms, in lecture theatres, out on the hills, in the meadows, in rivers (literally in rivers), and sometimes knee-deep, or even elbow-deep, in places best not mentioned in polite company.

“You are now part of the SRUC Alumni Community, and with that position comes a duty and a responsibility to enhance the world, and to leave this rare jewel called planet Earth in a better condition than which we found it.

“While cleverness and innovation will continue to bring us great things, what the world needs most today is kindness and compassion, for without those qualities, light turns to darkness, and everything else is lost. Carry that understanding with you, and together we will build a better world for everyone and everything we share it with.”

Stuart Mackenzie

SRUC's Student Association president

2018 SRUC Graduation Ceremony, Bute Hall, University of Glasgow.



Celebrating SRUCcess

Aimee Budge: Agricultural Student of the Year at the 2018 British Farming Awards

An SRUC alumna has described the “amazing feeling” of being named Agricultural Student of the Year at the 2018 British Farming Awards.

Aimee Budge, who gained a degree in Agriculture from SRUC’s Aberdeen campus in May 2018, saw off stiff competition from four other students across the UK at the ceremony, held at the National Conference Centre in Birmingham.

Following the death of their father, Bryden, in an accident in 2014, Aimee and older sister Kirsty took on the running of Bigton Farm on Shetland. In 2018 they were awarded a BBC Countryfile Farming Heroes Award in recognition of their hard work.

“It’s an absolutely amazing feeling to have won,” said Aimee. “Young people should definitely get involved in agriculture and there are so many interested in it. There are so many opportunities to be had and I want to thank so much all the people that have supported me. I have had so much fun and learned so much at Scotland’s Rural College and I am humbled to have won this award. It really has been a rollercoaster!”

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Craig Livingstone: Farmer of the Year at the Farmers Weekly Awards 2018

Aimee’s award follows another SRUC alumnus, Craig Livingstone, being named Farmer of the Year by Farmers Weekly in October 2018.

Craig studied BSc Agriculture, and graduated from SRUC’s Edinburgh campus in 2006. Following his graduation he took up a role as a farm manager, and then went on to become an agronomist for several years. For the last three years he has managed the Lockerley Estate in Hampshire.

Craig impressed judges by turning around an arable farming business to great success in a relatively short space of time: “It is clear that Craig has worked incredibly hard to have achieved so much in the past three years. The results on farm are testament to his focus and attention to detail.”



Did
You know?

SRUC alumni are eligible
for up to 15% discount on
SRUC Postgraduate courses.
www.sruc.ac.uk/pgdiscount

Hog lines and deadlines

Cammy Smith is running late for his interview with SRUC Community, but the Olympic curler has a good excuse. “Sorry about that,” says the 25-year-old after arriving at Stirling Sports Village, “we had a cow calving just as we were leaving.”

It’s hard to imagine the likes of Usain Bolt having to contend with the birth of livestock, but juggling work commitments with sport is the reality for Cammy and his team-mates – a curling team made up entirely of former SRUC students.

At least three nights a week, a day of hard graft on the farm is followed by a two-hour practice session in Stirling or Perth.

And tonight is even more of a struggle, as Cammy and his brother Kyle, along with skip Glen Muirhead, are still jetlagged after two weeks in Canada, where they celebrated their first Tour win since their all-SRUC line-up was assembled at the start of the season.

Together with Glen’s brother Thomas, Team Glen Muirhead beat fellow British Curling programme athletes Team Paterson in Penticton, boasting a 100 per cent record while reaching the knock-out stages.

Travelling the world to take part in tournaments in the likes of North America, Asia and Scandinavia can be tiring, but studying Agriculture at SRUC’s Edinburgh campus gave Cammy and his team-mates the ability to multitask.

“In 2015, during my second year, we were competing at the European Championships in Denmark and I had to do a livestock management essay between games,” he says. “It wasn’t much fun, but I got through it and I passed, so that was the main thing.”

“There were numerous times when I had to ask if I could change dates or do different papers because I was out of the country,” added Cammy’s older brother Kyle, 26.

Bill Dingwall, the recently retired SRUC lecturer who headed up the Agriculture programme in Edinburgh, was particularly accommodating.

“After third year I spoke to Bill and told him we could be selected to go to the Olympics and that I didn’t think I could do my Honours year, but that I really wanted to,” said Cammy. “Bill suggested I do it over two years so I could juggle time to go the Olympics if I got selected.



“It makes me very proud to be part of an all-SRUC curling team.”



“When I got the call-up, it was on the night of the last dance at college and I was getting changed into my kilt. Unfortunately I wasn’t allowed to tell anyone!”

Although the team, which was skippered by Kyle in PyeongChang, missed out on a spot on the podium, the “unforgettable experience” has made them all the more determined to capture a medal next time round.

“The highlight of my career was when we got to represent Team GB at the Olympics,” says Kyle. “That was definitely a career high, something I’d always dreamt of. We’re working towards 2022 in Beijing and with some luck we’ll get there too.”

Curling, which Kyle describes as “chess on ice”, runs in both families.

David Smith and Gordon Muirhead – the respective fathers of Cammy and Kyle and Glen and Thomas – are both former world champions, while Glen and Thomas’s sister Eve memorably led Team GB to a bronze medal at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

“I idolised my dad and that’s how I got into curling,” says Glen, 29. “It’s not so bad now we’ve all gone our separate ways but, when we were all living in the one house, curling would be the only topic of conversation around the dinner table. And it would generally be about where we went wrong!”

“It makes me very proud to be part of an all-SRUC curling team. What I enjoyed most about my time there was meeting like-minded people – farmers from different backgrounds and different farming operations. A lot of my best friends now come from SRUC. If I lived again I would be back there in an instant. Those people will stay with me forever and I’m very grateful that I got the opportunity to study there.”





It's a wildlife

Although sanctioned by the government, the hunting industry in South Africa preys upon people who would never dream of supporting or participating in blood sports. Animal Care alumna Lynsey Mitchell warns eco-tourists and volunteers about unethical captive animal programmes.

Lynsey Mitchell has always known she wanted a career working with animals. Studying Animal Care at Elmwood was her first step in making her dream a reality. She was impressed by the sheer variety of animals she worked with in her studies, from hamsters and rabbits to horses and cows.

“I got lot from working with people as well – communicating and co-operating with my fellow students and tutors. My best memories are definitely working with the horses. I’d never ridden before I came to Elmwood and by the time I left I was comfortable leading and riding horses and working with large animals.”

Lynsey, who lives in Fife, gained her NC in Animal Care in 2008. Her studies gave her the confidence to take up a volunteering position in a facility in South Africa working with, what she was led to believe were, orphaned and rejected lion cubs.

“They needed people, who paid the facility to volunteer, to raise the cubs. I bottle-fed the cubs and played with them and helped raise them. I went back two years later to the same facility to volunteer again.”

It was after this that Lynsey learned that the facility was actually involved in ‘canned hunting’, where lions are intensively bred,



removed from their mothers and hand-raised by humans. These tame adult lions are then killed for sport by people willing to pay thousands of dollars.

“I thought I was doing a good thing. The lions loved and trusted us,” explained Lynsey. “I was incredibly upset, and decided I wanted to do something about it.”



Lynsey travelled to Florida to do an internship with Big Cat Rescue. She learned how to care for animals who had been rescued from canned hunting, the pet industry, the fur trade and circuses.

Lynsey then returned to South Africa, where she found an organisation called Panthera Africa, which is located in the Western Cape.

“I originally went for three months, but ended up staying for two and a half years as a staff member. They rescue animals from canned hunting and the breeding farms. I helped rescue animals and took care of them, and I looked after volunteers. It was the best experience of my life so far.”



Lynsey is passionate about telling others of her experience, so that well-meaning tourists and volunteers aren’t caught in the same trap she was.





“The most important thing is to do your research and try your very best to make sure the place you are visiting, or volunteering, and spending your money at, really has the animals’ best interests at heart. Take note of the practices the facility lets you do. If they allow hands-on interaction with wild animals; if they do any captive breeding of wild animals; or if they sell, buy or trade any wild animals, then they are not considered a true sanctuary.

“Facilities that allow any of these activities to take place will often lie about where their animals end up - telling guests and volunteers that the animals will be released into the wild, or protected reserves. This is impossible for many reasons, including the fact that the animals are too used to humans, and they are often heavily inbred which makes them incapable of living independently. Do not believe the lies - be sure to support the true sanctuaries who really need your help.”

Lynsey has recently returned to Fife, and is still working with animals – but now with dogs, rather than large cats.

“I’ve just started as a trainee dog trainer with Guide Dogs for the Blind. It’s very different from big cats but something I’m very excited about. I couldn’t have done any of it without studying at Elmwood.”

For more information on Panthera Africa visit www.pantherafrica.com

Life in The Forest

There are lots of things to remember when starring in a television documentary, but perhaps the most important is switching off your radio mic when going to the bathroom.

Lyndy Renwick completed her HD in Countryside Management in 1999 at SRUC’s Ayr campus. She now works as the Community and Communications Manager for Forest Enterprise Scotland.

Lyndy starred in the BBC documentary *The Forest*. Aired in 2018, the series reveals the hidden world of Galloway Forest, the country’s largest afforested area. In it, Lyndy investigates an illegally built fishing hut on a live harvesting site that needs to be demolished.

“Filming wasn’t as traumatic as I thought it would be. The camera folks made you feel very comfortable and were good fun to be with. There were many hours of filming to make the series, nothing was staged. You would be surprised the number of folk who ask that!

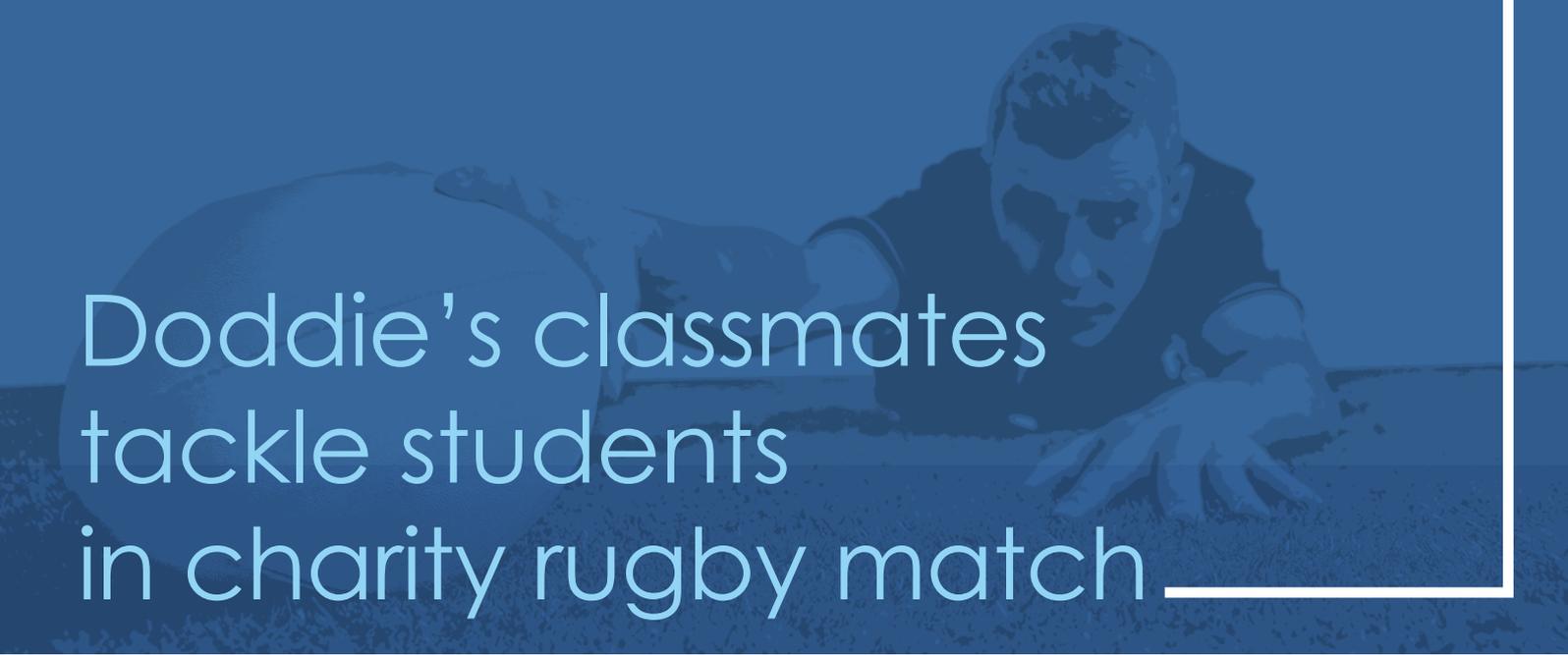
“It was generally one person with a camera who just followed you all day. The worst bit was being ‘mic’d up’, you have no idea the number of times I forgot about that, especially when you went for the toilet! They can hear you but you can’t hear them.”

A lot of Lyndy’s time in her role is focussed on working in East Ayrshire in the coalfields. Here she collaborates with partners with the aim of turning the coalfields area into a go-to visitor destination.

“What I love most about my job is the variety of different areas that I get involved in, the idea that you are helping to create something long term and using the public estate for the wider public to get something out of it.

“*The Forest* has been great for Galloway as the number of visitors have increased to the area. However, folk recognising you on the street – not so good.”





Doddie's classmates tackle students in charity rugby match

Nearly £10,500 was raised for Doddie Weir's MND charity in a special rugby match in April, that saw the 'old boys' of Scotland's Rural College enjoy a convincing win over SRUC's Edinburgh Agrics student team.

David Ireland, one of the Scotland legend's former classmates, was among the try-scorers in a 19-7 victory for the alumni team, which

was coached by SRUC Business Manager Gavin Hill and included guest appearances from Doddie's brother Chris and 17-year-old son Hamish.

Alumni captain Steven Mitchell, who runs the famous Buffalo Farm in Fife and starred in the second series of BBC's *This Farming Life*, also got on the scoresheet. The Edinburgh Agrics were captained by Ian Carlisle, a third-year student from Dumfries.

Around 250 gathered at Peffermill Playing Fields in Edinburgh for the game, which was followed by an auction of rugby memorabilia.

Doddie gained the first of his 61 Scotland caps against Argentina in 1990 while studying for an HND in Agriculture at SRUC's Edinburgh campus.



Last year, he revealed that he had motor neurone disease (MND) and set up the My Name's 5 Doddie Foundation to raise money for research and to provide grants to people living with the condition.

After the match, Doddie addressed current and former SRUC students and thanked them for their "tremendous" efforts and contribution to his charity.

Among the principal sponsors of the match were Agri-EPI Centre, Agrimetrics and Dropkick Murphy's, all of which donated £500 to the cause, while the University of Edinburgh provided free use of the Peffermill pitch and facilities.

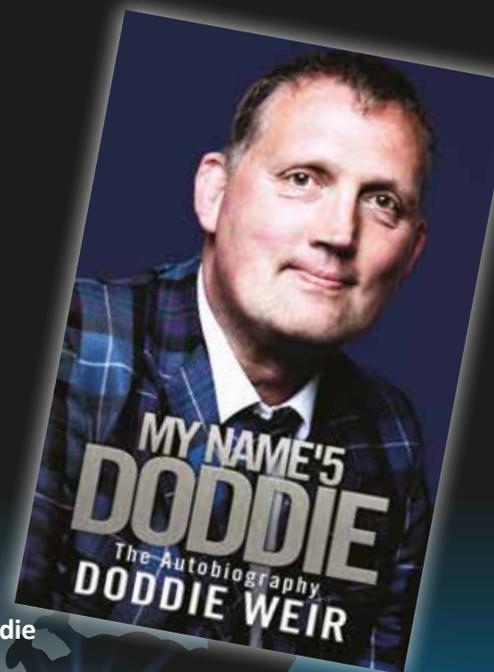
More than £1,600 was raised during a lively post-match auction called by SRUC student Tommy Fairbairn, a former auctioneer. A top price of £400 was paid for a signed bottle of Doddie's Dram whisky, while SRUC Principal Wayne Powell placed a successful bid for a signed Welsh rugby ball.

Prof Powell said: "I'd like to thank everyone who helped to organise this truly memorable match and those who gave so generously to such a worthy cause. This was a brilliant occasion for everyone connected with Scotland's Rural College and we were delighted to welcome Doddie along to Peffermill to cheer on his fellow alumni to a convincing win. Not only was the standard of rugby extremely high on both sides, but it was a great chance for people to catch up with a few familiar faces and reminisce about their time at SRUC."

My Name's DODDIE

Doddie Weir's autobiography is a brilliant, emotional and compelling read: a celebration of a remarkable life experienced with the glass very much half full from one of our best-loved sporting icons. Packed with anecdotes and laughter from his playing career and a life well lived, it's also the poignant story of the challenges Doddie now faces following his MND diagnosis.

To order your copy, visit blackandwhitepublishing.com/Doddie



Doddie Weir, centre, with – from left to right – SRUC alumni players Chris Weir, David Ireland, Hamish Dykes and Hamish Weir at Peffermill



‘Marmite’ Joyce spreading the word

“Some people find me a wee bit Marmite – you either love what I do or hate it.”

Joyce Campbell, the Scottish Sheep Farmer of the Year in 2015, surely doesn't have too many people hating her social media depictions of life on her Armadale farm in Sutherland, situated in the stunning Highland countryside between John O'Groats and Cape Wrath. She became a social media star in 2015, after posting stunning drone footage of her sheep being herded, which went viral with more than four million views.

Joyce's family have been running the 5,822 acre hill farm since 1962. They now have 820 pure-bred North Country Cheviot Hill ewes, around 50 tups, 255

ewe hogg replacements and 25 suckler cows.

We caught up with Joyce when she was keynote speaker at the 2018 Women In Agriculture event.

“When I was younger we would always be out helping on the farm, and I probably got a bit sick of it. When I left school I said ‘I'm not going to be a farmer’ so I went to the local mainstream source of employment, which was the atomic energy base down the road. I lasted about six months and thought there is no way I can do this for the rest of my life.”

The realisation that farming was actually a good choice inspired Joyce to apply to SRUC at Auchincruive, where she undertook a National Diploma of Agriculture, graduating in 1990.

“I made lifelong friends there,” she says. “I was probably quite lazy at school, but was inspired at SRUC.”

As with many farms, diversification plays an important part of Joyce's business, with extra income being generated from a holiday cottage, sporting let, wind farm returns, eggs from her free-range hens and a range of merchandise spun off from her success on social media, including calendars, hats and Christmas cards.

Farm diversification is a modern aspect of farming. Even so, ‘social media merchandise’ is perhaps not an income stream that most farmers would consider. “That's why some might find me a wee bit Marmite,” explains Joyce.

Joyce has become a strong voice for the industry on social media, and she works hard to get her message about buying Scottish produce out globally. She recalls the moment when her first post went viral.

“I remember going to the hill to tend to the sheep and I came back and I had 99 friend requests. I phoned my sister asking, ‘What I am going to do?’ And she said ‘Are you going to keep moaning about people not eating Scottish lamb or are you actually going to do something about it?’”

For Joyce this was the turning point. She decided to take all the friend requests from all over the world and engage with consumers. It was this ambition that helped her win AgriScot's first Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year award in 2015.





Photos - Joyce Campbell

“It’s about taking your challenges and making them into your strengths and I’ve tried to do this on social media. A rough day at lambing time - you would take pictures of pretty bad weather and show it how it is and say, ‘Well this is sheep being reared in weather like this, and they can survive.’”

Joyce is a passionate brand ambassador for Scotch Lamb PGI, a stamp that ensures animals have been bred and raised on assured Scottish farms that have adopted best practice, including animal welfare and natural production methods. Using social media has ensured Joyce can spread her message to the widest possible audience.



“Social media has a far reach. It’s easy to speak to local farmers, but it’s not so easy to talk to people in large numbers. I always have a camera on my back to capture moments that I can share with the public.”

Her message is simple: buying Scottish lamb and beef helps support Scottish rural communities. This in turn benefits the tourists when they visit and can see a healthy and vibrant local community.

“Tell the people on social media, that if they look for our product they are making a difference, they are keeping lights on in remote parts of Scotland. If you can be brave enough to go into the supermarkets and tell them to stock local produce, that makes a big difference.”

Joyce encourages other people in the sector to tell their stories, and get the message across to consumers to support the Scottish rural sector, because everyone has a story to tell.

“If you didn’t have a heart for what you did, you wouldn’t be doing it. Do your social media posts, keep it light, don’t overthink it. The most important thing is to tell your story.”

Joyce’s advice to people who want to get involved in social media but feel they lack the technical skills is to seek help from those around you. It was her niece and nephew who helped shape Joyce’s social media presence. “Listening to them changed my life,” she explains.

According to Joyce, being genuine is the key to social media success: “When you say it from the heart, people will get it.”

Joyce’s dedication to promoting Scotland’s rural enterprises has led her to become one of the most influential women in the farming sector. Now a co-chair of the Women in Agriculture taskforce for Scotland, she is encouraging women to take ownership and be empowered.

“The challenge is getting more women in agriculture to have the confidence to stand up and say, ‘You know what, I want to go for that head position’, instead of taking a back seat.”

The Women in Agriculture taskforce also includes SRUC’s Principal and Chief Executive, Professor Wayne Powell, who has a key focus within the taskforce on training and education. The taskforce is also co-chaired by Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity.

Joyce feels that women need to support each other more, and understand how key they are in farming business.

“Not everyone gets their hands dirty. There are so many different things to making farming better and successful. Women need to be supportive, support each other, and take pride in what they do.

“Gin does sometimes help too.”

And on that note, what more can we say? Pass the Marmite, please.



Out of the blue

James Herriot was familiar with all manner of creatures great and small, but even the varied experience of the world's most famous vet couldn't compare with that of Dr Andrew Brownlow.

Now accustomed to carrying out post-mortems on 30-tonne whales, the man in charge of the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme (SMASS) recalls with pride the day he saved a little girl's hamster.

"It was newly born and about the size of a thumbnail," he says. "This little girl came into the vet practice in Fife. She'd been handling the hamster and

"When I was first offered the marine pathology job back in 2008, I said there were two things they needed to know about me: One, I'm not a pathologist, and two, I don't know anything about marine animals," said Dr Brownlow. "So, I learned on the job. Mammals are remarkably similar, be they the size of a hamster or a sperm whale and diseases work through populations in reasonably predictable ways. Now, ten

It is part of the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme, and provides "a systematic and co-ordinated approach" to the surveillance of Scotland's marine species by collating, analysing and reporting data of all whales, dolphins and porpoises (collectively known as cetaceans), seals, marine turtles and basking sharks that strand on Scotland's 10,000-plus miles of coastline.



dropped it. It had broken its leg but I'm delighted to say we managed to save it."

Originally from Lancaster, the trained vet describes himself as a marine pathologist, although you won't find any certificates saying as much on the wall of his Inverness office.

years down the line I sometimes call myself a marine animal pathologist, but I've no bit of paper to say that. None of us working in this field do, we are specialists largely based on experience."

Part of SRUC and funded through Marine Scotland, SMASS has been in operation since 1992.

Showing he's picked up some of the lingo after so many years living north of the Border, Dr Brownlow describes marine biology as "a complex and cryptic beastie".

"I remember my first post-mortem on a very large sperm whale that had been found just outside Inverness," he says. "I was just amazed at the size of the animal and its whole physicality. We literally had to dig through this animal to see what had happened to it. To do a post-mortem on something that big was utterly intriguing."

One of Dr Brownlow's biggest – in every sense of the word – challenges came in 2018, during the two-day on-site necropsy of a 45ft-long sperm whale on Monifieth Beach.

To make things more problematic, the sub-adult male had washed up on a stretch of Angus shoreline on a Ministry of Defence firing range, with the necropsy and disposal operation having to take place during a live fire exercise. As the animal was stranded a



few hundred metres off the beach, the SMASS team were also up against the rising tide of the Firth of Tay.

“Undertaking a post-mortem on something that size was obviously logistically challenging, and many thanks were due to the disposal team who were so competent with their machinery that they were able to use a 22-tonne digger like a dissecting scalpel,” Dr Brownlow explains.

“As a result, in addition to a range of visceral samples, we were able to get a sample of brain tissue. I think it was the first time in the UK that we’ve been able to remove the head – itself something slightly larger than a transit van – during a sperm whale necropsy.”

As SMASS’s first full-time member of staff, Dr Brownlow brought a PhD in epidemiology – in other words, looking at the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases – “into the mix”.

Such is the team’s reputation that everyone from the producers of Blue Planet to journalists at National Geographic have sought their expertise.

“The team is brilliant and has very diverse and complementary skill sets,” says Dr Brownlow. “Nick Davison has 30 years’ experience as a bacteriologist and we’re very lucky that he decided to move to Scotland. Mariel ten Doeschate has a brilliant, qualitative mathematical mind and the newest member of the team, Ellie MacLennan, co-ordinates the Scottish Entanglement Alliance.

“She’s from Skye, from a fishing background and has a degree in International Marine Environmental Consultancy and is able to have some very difficult conversations with the industry.”

The SMASS team also has at its disposal a network of “whale detectives” – trained volunteers that help with the identification, recovery, storage and transport of stranded animals throughout Scotland.

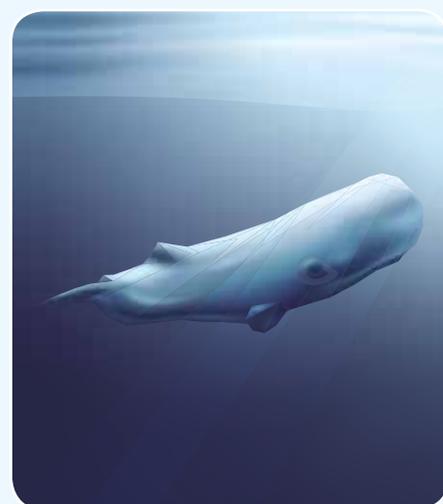


“The next few years is likely to very busy for our team,” says Dr Brownlow. “The impacts of human activity on the marine environment are becoming more evident and capturing the public imagination – just look at the issue of plastic pollution.

Such is the team’s reputation that everyone from the producers of Blue Planet to journalists at National Geographic have sought their expertise.



“The work SMASS undertakes helps build our understanding of these threats and pressures, and hopefully assists in developing ways to better protect both our marine wildlife and the ‘blue economy’ which relies on a healthy and productive ocean.



“One of most immediate challenges is the upcoming loss of our facilities in Inverness, and it is hoped we will be able to secure sufficient organisational support to ensure we can continue our work while a new base is located.”

And as these animals face ever greater challenges, the team is in the process of developing an app to make it easier for members of the public to report strandings.

“Watch this space,” says Dr Brownlow. “It’s going to be pretty cool.”

To find out more about SMASS, visit www.strandings.org

Future of golf to the fore

Sustainability of the golf sector explored
at Alumni event in St Andrews

SRUC returned to the “Home of Golf” to bring together its expertise in the rural and land-based sector with the latest innovations in golf management.

SRUC Golf Management alumni, who are now managing top-ranked clubs around the world, were joined in St Andrews by guest speakers, a panel of experts, as well as SRUC’s current Golf Management students, to explore current directions in redesign aimed at improving the participation, enjoyment and profitability of the game.

Looking to the Future: Redesigning for a Sustainable Golf Management Sector, sponsored by Double A Trading Ltd and John Deere Ltd, was held at the Old Course Hotel on the same day as the 2018 Ryder Cup teed off in Paris.

Speakers included Stuart McColm, General Manager at Castle Stuart Golf Links, who talked to delegates about redesign at his own course, where they

are working to ensure all visitors leave after a good day of golf.

“If the game of golf is going to remain popular and grow in participation, it has to be fun to play. Course design, course set up and quality of playing surfaces are critically important to get right,” said Stuart.

Also speaking at the event was Scott Macpherson, Golf Architect & Author, who added, “It’s easy to make golf courses hard, and hard to make golf courses fun.”

Scott also discussed the benefits of course renovation, using detailed cost-saving analysis from bunker renovation projects he had managed.

“Golf course renovation can be beneficial in financial terms. Golf Clubs should be guided by a masterplan for long term decision making,” said Scott.

John Aherne, owner of Golfgraffix, showcased how new technology can improve communications in project management.

“IT and software can play a major role in supporting the communication process within golf clubs,” said John. “Communication is a 21st Century skill that modern managers need to excel at.”

“It’s fantastic that Looking to the Future was held in this ancient and inspiring location at the Old Course Hotel, to look at modern challenges and innovations for the golf industry,” said Ian Butcher, Golf Management Lecturer at SRUC’s Elmwood campus in Cupar. “The fact that it was held on the weekend of the Ryder Cup only added to the excitement of our alumni reuniting. We’re looking forward to holding the event again, to explore other areas impacting the future of the golf sector.”



For the Record

SRUC's archive project

From newspaper clippings outlining the Craibstone House fire of 1953, to class photos, maps, teaching equipment and even documents from the Women's Land Army, SRUC's Archive holds a great deal of historical material relating to the college and its predecessors.

In 2016 SRUC library staff began work collecting and collating historical material to form the basis of the archive, which is now accessible to the public.

"The historical book collection has found a new home at SRUC's Elmwood campus," explained Elaine Muir, Library Services Manager. "Shelving has been erected for the archive, and the archive's new website is now live."

Fire crews were hampered as the fire was well advanced by the time they arrived.

With documents dating as far back as the 1890s, SRUC's records are an excellent resource for researchers, staff and students of agriculture, horticulture and land sciences. They are also of significant value to family and local historians.

"Working in the archives can lead to unexpected and often dramatic discoveries," said Ross Wilson, SRUC Library Assistant. "This includes the startling newspaper images of the fire that destroyed Craibstone House on the 19th January 1953. Despite the best efforts of students, staff and the fire brigade the century-old building could not be saved. The plaque and large bay windows were recovered and used in the construction of what is now Mackie Hall on the Aberdeen Campus."

"The article in the Press and Journal details how fire crews were hampered as the fire was well advanced by the time they arrived," continued Ross. "There was a lack of water, hence



most of the building was destroyed. The building was the home of the Craibstone School of Rural Domestic Economy at the time. Some students were in their classrooms at the time the alarm was sounded around 4pm. Luckily no one was injured."

To donate any documents to the archive project, or to find out about how to access the archive, people should contact SRUC's library staff on archives@sruc.ac.uk or www.sruc.ac.uk/library



Image from the Press and Journal published January 20th 1953, showing staff and students outside the front of Craibstone House while fire crews attempt to put the fire out.

Beautiful Spaces

Lynn Hill studied Garden Design at SRUC Edinburgh. During her first year in 2013 she was awarded the Ian Anderson prize for best Garden Design student. She has since set up her own successful garden design business, worked on a Gold Medal garden at the Chelsea Flower show, taken out top accolades at Gardening Scotland, and has also become a Board Member of Gardening Scotland. We spoke to Lynn to find out how her passion, life skills and studies lead to her success.

“You can make a beautiful space, in a tiny wee space, even in Scotland when it’s raining.”

Lynn’s design style often focuses on outdoor living, creating usable alfresco spaces for her clients. “People tend to use their gardens differently now. From a designer’s point of view I don’t design many gardens for gardeners. I design for people who use their gardens as outdoor spaces, as extensions of their home.”

Lynn’s approach won her Best New Show Garden and the Silver Gilt medal in 2017, and Best in Show in 2018, at Gardening Scotland. Her flair and enthusiasm has led to her recently being invited to join the board of Gardening Scotland.

“There’s so many events going on south of the border but there is so much talent in Scotland and I don’t think it’s celebrated enough. That’s one of the reasons I put a lot into Gardening Scotland.

Lynn’s style is focussed on outdoor living, creating usable alfresco spaces for her clients.

“It’s 20 years of Gardening Scotland next year so I’m planning an anniversary garden. I’m going to keep it very much about outdoor living. My first garden ‘The Tangible Garden’, was about entertaining with friends and family. ‘The Garden Retreat’ was about how simply being in a garden space is good for you, even if you’re not gardening.”

Lynn came to garden design with a varied background, having worked as an art tutor and project manager in Community Education. After having her first child she decided she needed a career that had the flexibility to fit in with family life.

“Where I am now is a happy outcome,” said Lynn. “I absolutely love what I’m doing, but it was through necessity rather than by design. It was a case of – What am I good at? What do I love doing? How can I make this work?”

Lynn chose to study Garden Design at SRUC, because the flexibility of the course was hugely valuable to allow her to fit in study time around the busy life of a parent. “One of the most positive things about the course was that you were able to dip in. If I hadn’t been able to do the course part time then I wouldn’t be a garden designer now.”

After completing her HNC with Distinction, Lynn was offered the experience to work for renowned garden designer Juliet Sargeant at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2016. “I was so very close to finishing the HND, but Juliet’s offer to work with her was just too tempting!” It was during this time that Lynn set up her own business, Lynn Hill Garden Design.

“You can make a beautiful space, in a tiny wee space, even in Scotland when it’s raining.”



Her ability to utilise available resources, spot an opportunity and go for it has seen her business grow.

“What’s happened has been at a rate of knots I could not have imagined. It’s important to find what support there is around you. I tapped into resources such as Business Gateway, which was helpful. Part of this process was creating a business plan. Good business models really work and it’s important to be organised. But it’s equally important to be flexible. I was never going to write in my plan ‘Meet Juliet Sargeant and go and work at the Chelsea Flower Show’, I just didn’t see that coming. What I did was put myself out there, I threw myself to the wind and kept my eyes open for opportunities that suited me, and thought, ‘I can do this.’ The reality was that I did very little of the plans I made originally, but that was ok as it’s important to find out what works for you as you go along.”



Lynn draws on many of her life experiences and people skills to make her business a success, including her first class Honours degree in Community Education from the University of Edinburgh.

“Communication skills are vital. The amount of time that you actually spend designing is relatively small and you have to communicate with a wide range of people: clients, contractors, suppliers and even planning officials sometimes. All of whom have different perspectives and at times differing priorities which you have to manage as part of your business. As part of my degree I studied psychology and counselling skills. I never really realised how much I would use these in garden design. People are so emotionally attached to their gardens. To be able to understand where people are coming from and to be able to effectively communicate with them is so important.”

Like any new business venture there have been ups and downs. Lynn stresses having confidence and self belief is an important factor in business success.

“A lot of it’s about confidence. Even the most accomplished designer can have wobbles. I’m always pushing myself outside of my comfort zone and this is one of the reasons why I have a successful business. It can be quite scary, and I do have moments of ‘oh crikey, what am I doing?’ But it’s quite normal to have the occasional crisis of confidence, it’s how you deal with it that counts.

“There’s research into the reasons why small businesses fail, and way up the

top is that owners burn out, especially when they are self employed. You do sometimes hit a wall. This is when it’s best to strive to be kind to yourself, try not to take things too seriously and most of the time you can just ride it out.

“I say that for life in general: Do your best and be yourself.”

Connecting Your Future

SRUC



SRUC Alumni

Join the SRUC Alumni & Friends Community to:

- Get invites to alumni events
- Keep up to date with SRUC
- Make the most out of benefits
- Keep in touch with friends
- Find out about job opportunities

You must be joking!

Jim Smith - the Stand-up Farmer

Jim Smith is a tenant farmer and stand-up comedian from Perth, who has audiences up and down the country in stitches. As a student in Aberdeen, Jim also had his classmates laughing, when he started doing impressions of his SRUC lecturers.

“That was how I got into it, but never once did I think I wanted a career in stand-up.”

In 2018 Jim enjoyed a two-week sell-out comedy show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and has hit television screens with his comedic portrayals of Scottish farmers in BBC’s Scots Squad, Farm Diaries, The Farm, and even on panel shows such as Breaking the News.

Jim graduated with an Agriculture degree from SRUC’s Aberdeen campus in 1998. A shy lad in high school, where there were few other students from farming backgrounds, it wasn’t until he came to college that he started warming to comedy.

“As soon as I went to Craibstone, all your mates are into farming. Farming and tractors. Well, farming and tractors and girls. And beer.”

Jim’s passion for comedy developed when he started writing sketches for the Bankfoot JAC Young Farmers Cabaret, which is held each year at Perth Concert Hall.

The Perthshire Young Farmers then started to come together to put on pantomimes every few years, which saw Jim’s comedy really take off.

“The first year we bought in a script and we tried to localise it, but it wasn’t that funny. So the next year we said, ‘We’ll just write a script’, as I’d done a few sketches at this point, so I wrote a whole script for panto.”

Jim and his fellow Young Farmers were selling out pantos at the Birnam Institute across their three-night runs.

“It was brilliant fun. I did that up until I was 30 or so. I still write in it a couple of times and still help produce the Young Farmers cabaret.”

Even at this point, stand-up comedy was only ever a thought at the back of Jim’s mind. It was when he heard a group called the Desperate Fishwives, who had a series on Radio Scotland, that he was inspired to give stand-up a shot.

“The Desperate Fishwives was all Aberdeenshire and Doric. It was phenomenal. It was like a lightbulb going off in my head, I thought, ‘there’s someone on the radio doing stuff that I really get.’ So that inspired me.”



Jim on the set of BBC’s Scot Squad

“As soon as I went to Craibstone, all your mates are into farming. Farming and tractors. Well, farming and tractors and girls. And beer.”

Spurred on by a miserable, dreich day in 2012, Jim applied on The Stand Comedy Club website to do a short performance for a beginners’ night called Red Raw. After a couple of weeks he heard that he had his first stand-up gig.

“I can remember freaking out, that’s how it started - I went down to Glasgow for a five-minute slot and I got a real buzz from it.”



© BBC

The Farm, a three-part comedy series which can be viewed on the BBC iPlayer, is Jim’s latest comedy project. In it, he stars as the farmer, Jim Macdonald.

“That’s what I ultimately want to do, aim big, and get in for telly. I always thought a sitcom would be brilliant.”

Jim was approached by Chris Forbes, a comedian and actor, to write The Farm. Chris plays Donnie, Farmer

Jim’s loyal and sometimes mistreated sidekick, in the show.

“Chris didn’t actually know much about farming, but he was trying to think of an idea that’s original, because many sitcoms have been done in cities or in pubs.”

Jim and Chris combined their talents to create the new mockumentary portraying life on a Scottish farm.

“We want folk to watch it, thinking ‘is this real or not?’ So that’s why it’s not like a gag a minute. It’s to be quite natural.”

Jim is hoping The Farm gets the go-ahead for a full series.

“It’s something different and it might not appeal to mainstream Glasgow, but there’s still a couple of million folk live in rural Scotland. Look at the viewing figures of Countryfile, it gets eight million, it’s phenomenal, or This Farming Life, or The Mart. Folk are interested in farming, so if we can combine that with sending it up, it could be big.”

If you haven’t yet seen Jim live, he is planning a three-month tour of Scotland from May to July, gigging on Friday and Saturday nights, which allow him to look after the farm at home during the week.

“I’m trying to cover all the corners of Scotland. It’s going to be very much like my Fringe shows because I’m not going back to the Fringe this year. There’s a fair few folk yet to see my original stuff, so I may as well milk that a bit more.”

While Jim is helping a broad array of people to view the lighter side of farming, he doesn’t necessarily think you need a sense of humour to be a farmer.

“You’re better to have a really good business brain. I’ve worked with farmers that don’t have any sense of humour! But humour’s definitely beneficial for your mental health.”

Star students say goodbye to Bill

A group of approximately 100 distinguished alumni – including world champions, Olympians and company directors – paid tribute to a popular lecturer who has retired after 36 years at SRUC.

Dr Bill Dingwall, Agriculture Programme Leader at the Edinburgh campus, celebrated with college alumni at Craigie’s Farm Shop & Café in South Queensferry, which is run by SRUC alumnus John Sinclair (Class of 1989).

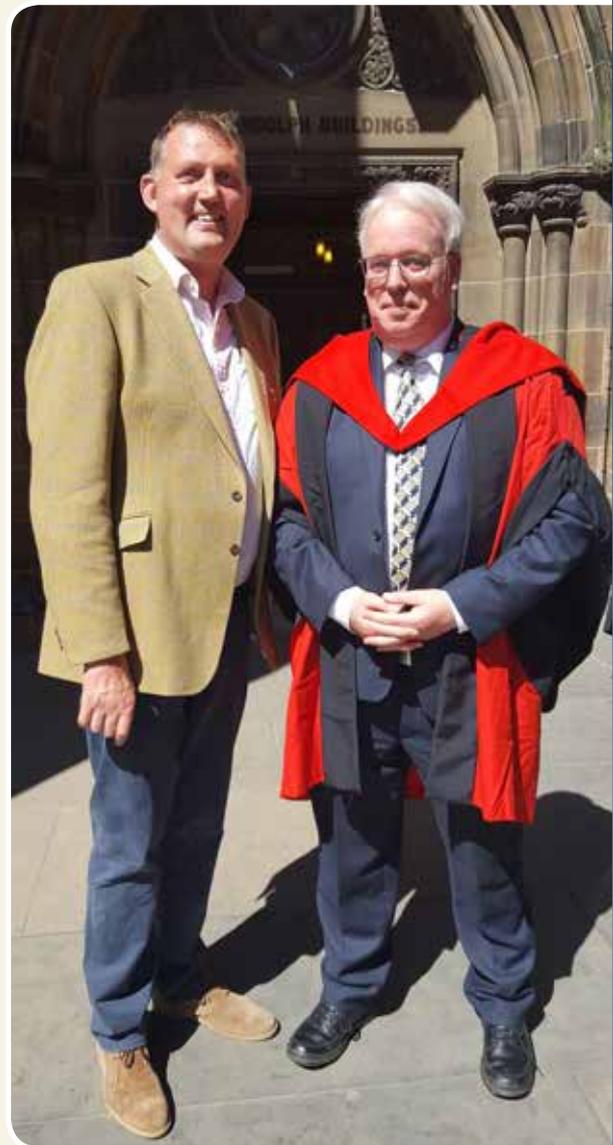
Other former students in attendance included Robert Reid – Richard Burns’s co-driver when he won the World Rally Championship in 2001; Olympic curlers Kyle and Cammy Smith and Glen and Thomas Muirhead; Steven Mitchell, who runs the famous Buffalo Farm in Fife; Penny Montgomerie, CEO of the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Club; and Sally Williams, a director of the Oxford Farming Conference.

Entertainment came in the form of Jim Smith, another alumnus who is now better known as “the stand-up farmer”.

Originally from Crieff, Perthshire, Bill joined the Animal Production Advisory and Development Department of what was then the East of Scotland College of Agriculture as a Sheep Production Specialist Adviser in November 1982.

From the start of his career, Bill was involved in Education and in addition to the college’s HND course, he taught on the BSc Agriculture, MSc Animal Breeding and MSc Tropical Animal Production courses of the University of Edinburgh.

“Now that I’m retired, I intend to do some travelling, catching up with friends and family but also past research colleagues who are conveniently dispersed around Europe!”



When SAC (now SRUC) started its own Agriculture degree course in 1998, Bill was asked to take the role of year three tutor, moving to the King’s Buildings and becoming Programme Leader in 2002.

Bill was well known for organising a wide range of visits and study tours to demonstrate science in practice. His dedication to students was rewarded in the final year of his career with the Principal’s Lifetime Achievement award and the SRUCSA Edinburgh staff member of the year award.

Bill is particularly proud of his contribution to the development of genetic tools and reproductive technologies for the sheep industry, and specifically organising what was probably the first UK on farm auction sale of performance-recorded sheep in 1989.

Bill said: “It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces stretching back more than 30 years. SRUC is fortunate to have such talented alumni with many continuing to provide support in the education of the next generation, particularly through hosting farm visits.”

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

In 2017/18 £123,000 was awarded to the following areas



Student experiences: trips, exchanges, paid work placements



Bursaries and prizes



Research projects

Support for SRUC's future farmers



Charlotte Mortimer, a 21-year-old who grew up in the east of Ireland, is a second-year Agriculture student at SRUC's Ayr campus. Charlotte was awarded a bursary from the Gregor Thomas Royan Lamb Fund for Future Farmers.

Although Charlotte's grandparents were farmers in Scotland, she didn't grow up in a farming family. From a young age Charlotte had a passion for animals, which led to her interested in the equine industry, which is still a love of hers to this day.

"As I got older I decided that I wanted to get involved with agriculture," explained Charlotte.

This spurred Charlotte on to enrolling in her Agriculture degree course at SRUC, where she qualified for a bursary that was set up to commemorate Gregor Thomas Royan Lamb.

Gregor was only 16 when he died in September 2015. Over the course of his short life he realised many of his dreams despite not being from an immediate farming background.

He saved up his own money and bought his own sheep which he then went on to breed from. He dipped into the world of business and financially supported his passion by selling on his lambs commercially and privately. He also had his own chickens and last year successfully reared chicks which had been incubated in a local authority school.

Gregor's family set up the Fund for Future Farmers in his name, to help support other young students who, like Gregor, do not come from a farming background but have shown and demonstrated true commitment and passion for agriculture.

"This is something we know for certain Gregor would have approved of," said Gregor's mother, Gillian.

"The Gregor Lamb bursary has allowed me to undertake extra courses to learn skills that students who grew up on farms would already know," said Charlotte. "I've done a hoof-trimming course at SRUC Barony, and I'm also keen to do some chainsaw and telehandler courses."

As well as improving rural skills that will help Charlotte run her own farm, the Gregor Lamb bursary has helped her get involved with her local Young Farmers Club to make new friends and contacts in the farming community.

"The bursary has been crucial to what I've been able to do," explained Charlotte. "Studying takes a lot of time. So to have this financial security means I don't have to work as many extra shifts and now I can be an active member of my Young Farmers Club. I've also become the Ayr campus officer for the SRUC Student Association, which I wouldn't have even thought about doing if it wasn't for the bursary. I'm extremely grateful to the Lamb family."

For information on how to support students like Charlotte, please visit www.sruc.ac.uk/support

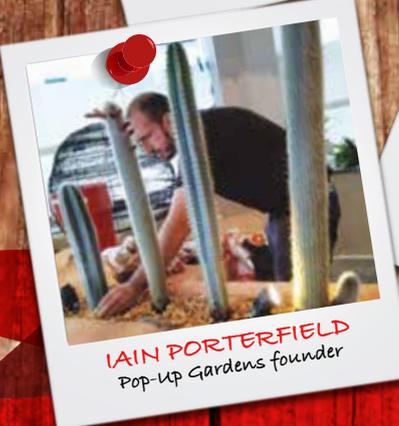


AILIDH REID
Visitor centre manager with the Islay Natural History Trust

SRUC alumni have been sharing photos of themselves at work. Studying at SRUC opens up all sorts of career opportunities.



CRAIG TREWERN
Restaurant manager at Around-food and drink @ cupar Golf Club



IAIN PORTERFIELD
Pop-Up Gardens founder



JENNY PATERSON
Resort conservation manager Cameron House and The Carriok



LISA HAYDON
Dog day care facility owner

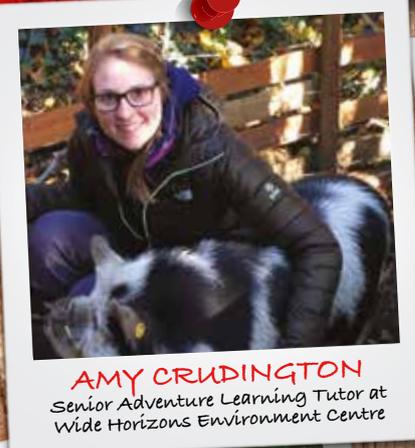


SARAH BEARCHELL
Science Communicator Sarah's Adventures in Science

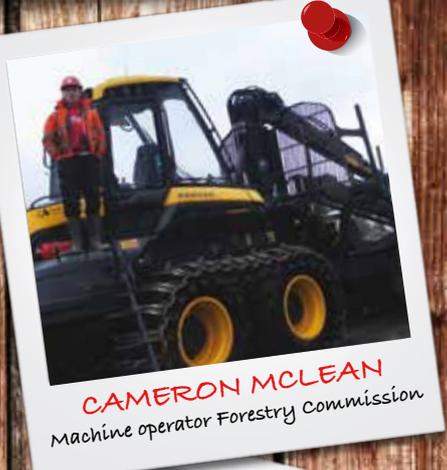
WWW.SRUC.AC.UK/STUDY



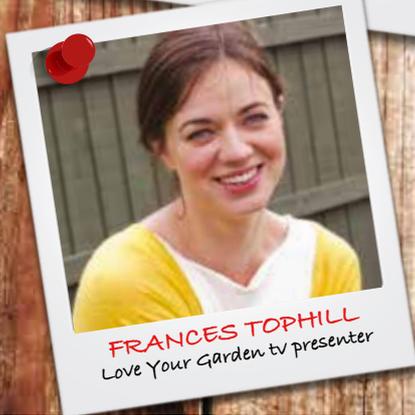
FINLAY MCINTYRE
Farm manager



AMY CRUDINGTON
Senior Adventure Learning Tutor at Wide Horizons Environment Centre



CAMERON MCLEAN
Machine operator Forestry Commission



FRANCES TOPHILL
Love Your Garden tv presenter



JO KING
Surveyor with ECUS Ecology



CALLUM MORRISON
Researcher at DL Seeds, Canada