



Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

A Royal Agricultural Society of Scotland Award



Attributes of enterprising rural businesses

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Table of Contents

1	Executive summary	1
2	Introduction	2
3	Who am I?	3
4	Personal dilemma	4
5	What Is entrepreneurship?	5
6	Who did I meet?	6
7	Bite-size entrepreneurship	7
8	Where have I been?	8
8a	United Kingdom	8
8b	Republic of Ireland	9
8c	USA	10
8d	China	13
8e	Australia	16
8f	New Zealand	17
9	What sets the best apart?	19
9a	Motivation	20
9b	Outlook	21
9c	Business skills	24
9d	Leadership	25
10	What impairs entrepreneurial thinking?	27
10a	Lack of succession planning	27
10b	Lack of compulsion	27
10c	Lack of business mentality	28
10d	Lack of support	28
10e	Lack of people skills	28
10f	Lack of time	28
10g	Lack of focus	29
10h	Lack of perspective	29
10i	Lack of education	29
10j	Lack of capital	29
11	How to encourage entrepreneurship?	30
11a	Cultural change	31
11b	Financial incentives	31
11c	Start young	32
11d	Youth organisations	32
11e	Enterprise schooling	33
11f	Lifelong learning	34
11g	Leadership courses	35
11h	Wealth Creation Course	36
11i	Peer support	36
11j	Discussion groups	37
11k	Role models	38

11l	Social entrepreneurship	38
12	Putting learning into action	40
12a	Change the conversation	41
12b	Use the right carrot	41
12c	Sow the early seeds	42
12d	Prepared minds	42
12e	The right people around you	43
12f	Business minds in a social setting	43
13	Key lessons learned	45
14	Nuffield reflections	50
15	Acknowledgments	51
16	Appendix A – Study diary	52

Disclaimer

The views in this report are entirely my own and do not represent the views of The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, or my sponsors The Royal Highland Agricultural Society for Scotland.

1. Executive summary

My study was inspired by a personal desire to be more professional as a business person, and by my perception that many businesses in the wider agricultural industry could be more enterprising in expanding or diversifying their business activities.

I am a dairy farmer, so the emphasis of my study was weighted towards the dairy industry. I wanted to understand what people in similar circumstances to me had done to develop both themselves and their businesses. My travels took me to Ireland, the USA, China, Australia and New Zealand. I was therefore able to assess differences in cultural attitudes to business between these countries and the UK.

The focus of my investigation was entrepreneurship. This I viewed in its broadest sense. It involved the ability to recognise potential opportunities, but must also be aligned with the capabilities to exploit them.

On my travels I tried to visit and learn from as many enterprising business people as I could. In doing so I tried to identify what it was about them that made them successful. I found it useful to break these characteristics down into four headings.

The first two characteristics I have called **motivation** and **outlook**. These encapsulate the internal drive mechanisms of the individuals and their ability to recognise opportunities. The other attributes I called **business skills** and **leadership**, and I felt these were conducive to the individuals' capabilities to successfully drive their businesses. Using these headings I established the key learning points from the individuals I met and interviewed.

Any mechanisms to encourage entrepreneurial thinking, I felt, had not only to help cultivate these desirable traits I identified in the people I interviewed, but should also seek to mitigate various factors that I saw as impairing people's ability to progress their businesses. Positive measures had to inspire confidence and enhance people's abilities to minimise and cope with risk. The ultimate goal was to instil a 'can do' agricultural business culture.

I considered and discussed various means to encourage entrepreneurship that I came across in my travels. These included financial incentives, youth and adult training programs, peer support mechanisms, and I concluded by looking at entrepreneurship in a social context.

I developed action points in relation to these areas. None of the measures identified were radically new or game-changing. Changing culture was a long-term play and required more diligent application of much that we already have at our disposal. The industry required inspiring leadership that was prepared to challenge inbuilt negativity.

I conclude my report by discussing the impact of my study on my personal and business development. To do so I consider my personal circumstances against the best characteristics I had identified in the enterprising people I met.

2. Introduction

I cannot overstate how fortunate I feel to have been given the opportunity to undertake a Nuffield Scholarship. My study has been a fascinating and stimulating personal journey. This report gives me the chance to capture for posterity much that I have seen and learned.

It can be difficult to appreciate and objectively assess the impact of such an experience. Sometimes you need to go back to the beginning and think about how things looked from there.

I have therefore started by copying below my original application to Nuffield in November 2009. This sets out my initial rationale and objectives and provides a basis to reflect on my learning and experience of the last 18 months.

My original application to the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust in November 2009

Proposed Study Title : Attributes of Enterprising Rural Businesses

Study Rationale:

I have gained considerable satisfaction from my achievements within my core farming enterprise. However, as a businessman, I have to be prepared to critically appraise whether I am making best use of the physical, financial and human resources available to me. As we progress our motivations evolve. Increasingly I am drawn towards more entrepreneurial business activities. This, however, creates various personal and business dilemmas. As an industry I feel we need to be more enterprising, whether that is through adding value to what we produce or diversifying our business interests. It is questionable, though, whether the culture or acumen exists to support this.

Study Objectives:

To understand how highly successful business people think and operate. What motivates them? What are their attitudes towards risk and reward? How do they identify, assess and exploit business opportunities? How do they resource and develop their businesses? Compare and contrast attitudes towards business and entrepreneurial activities in different regions and countries. What can be learned that might facilitate greater enterprise amongst UK rural businesses?

Personal Study Goals:

I am seeking a fresh challenge and to further broaden my perspective on life. I want to gain inspiration and seek out fresh ideas and business approaches. By networking with stimulating people I believe I can become more professional and focused in my own business activities.

Wider Industry Goals:

I would like to act as a change agent or facilitator to help others benefit from my learning and experience. My involvement with discussion groups, particularly the Planning to Succeed network, provides an ideal platform for this. I have valuable contacts in the Enterprise networks and can help shape and promote rural enterprise initiatives. I have benefited considerably from their support, and they are always keen to trumpet evidence of their success.

3. Who Am I?

It is appropriate to paint a picture of my background, since it is important to set the context of my study and the basis for the rationale and objectives described above. I am currently 46 (45 at the time of my Scholarship) so clearly very grateful for the last-gasp opportunity to be involved with Nuffield. I am a dairy farmer. My wife Joyce and I have three children; Christine (21), Carolyn (19) and Ross (16). We live at Nether Affleck Farm, near Lanark in the beautiful Clyde Valley of Scotland.

I have been very fortunate that my father was, and still is, forward thinking, and passed on decision making responsibility to myself and my brother from a relatively early age. I have therefore been a partner in the family business virtually all of my working life. Throughout that period the business has been perpetually on the front foot. We have worked towards a well-defined goal of developing two dairy units with the capacity to operate independently and profitably.



The result of our endeavours is a business milking around 340 cows on two modern dairy units covering 180 ha. We have consistently performed in the top quartile of the industry in terms of profitability. The units operate in tandem, sharing cows, machinery and a good team of full time and relief staff. The cows are mainly cross-bred, autumn block calved and run on a largely forage-based system. The synergies and efficiencies achieved from operating the business in this fashion, at present, tempers any desire to divide the business and “do our own thing”.

Before returning to the business, I took a Degree in Agriculture at Edinburgh University (1985). Much more recently (2005) I gained a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) at Strathclyde University’s Graduate School of Business. I have always been a strong supporter of farmer cooperation and, as well as my core business, I am involved in an advisory capacity with the dairy cooperative First Milk, I am on the Scottish Advisory Board for the NFU Mutual insurance company, and I have recently been appointed to the Board of the dairy farmer levy body DairyCo.

I therefore have a broad set of interests at different levels in the agricultural industry, for example:

- dairy production
- cooperative milk marketing
- dairy research and knowledge transfer
- board governance structures
- renewable energy

This report focuses on entrepreneurial business activities, but my Nuffield Scholarship allowed me to explore and expand my knowledge on all of these aspects. Indeed, for me, they are all pieces of the same picture.

4. Personal dilemma?

At the heart of my Nuffield study is a dilemma regarding where my personal and business motivations should take me. At the centre of that debate is a mix of personal, family and business issues which I feel I need to resolve.

Taking a step away from the business has allowed me the time and space to take an outward and holistic view and to reference it against all that I have seen around the world.

I could work within the framework of the existing business for the next 20 years and there would be no shame to it. We have a fundamentally sound and progressive business. But the reality is that I would not be fulfilled by that and I have a desire to challenge myself further.

I gain considerable stimulation from my roles outside the business. Indeed my appointment to the Board of DairyCo has added an extra dimension to my Nuffield study, particularly in relation to how to facilitate a more business focused perspective within the dairy industry.

It could be argued that my study has an unnecessary bias towards a dairy farming context. That however is the reality of where I am coming from. I wanted to understand what people in similar circumstances to me had done to develop themselves and their businesses.

My Nuffield experience has been an opportunity to analyse and challenge my personal situation. As such it has been very much an exercise in self-awareness. It has forced me to ask some searching questions of myself.

5. What is entrepreneurship?

The study proposal above is broad to say the least. I set out with a view that this was not a thesis whereby I was setting out to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Instead I viewed it more as an adventure, in which I didn't really know where it would take me. It was in a *"you don't know what you don't know"* spirit. I wanted my perspective to be broadened and I wanted my preconceptions challenged, so I felt it would be wrong to put too narrow a set of parameters on the scope of my investigation.

My study was about entrepreneurship. But again I chose not to be too prescriptive or constrictive as to what that meant to me for the purpose of my study. I came across many definitions of the term entrepreneurship. The one that best captured the broad essence I sought, I came by in the USA:

"Entrepreneurs perceive new opportunities and create and grow ventures around such opportunities". (Markley, Macke and Luther)

This was sufficiently loose as to not constrain my study, but at the same time encapsulated the two key elements of entrepreneurship.

- Firstly there was the ability to recognise potential opportunities.
- This had then to be followed with the capacity to create and grow a business venture based on that.

6. Who did I meet?

In my Nuffield interview I had been asked how I would identify the type of people I wanted to study. This question caught me off-guard at the time, as it was a point I hadn't properly considered.

In actual fact this identification did not prove in any way difficult. The type of individuals I sought stand out from the crowd. If asked, any of us could easily propose a handful of prominent people in our area who are growing their businesses and thinking innovatively. These were the people I wanted to speak to.

As well as practical business people, I made a point of seeking out academics and advisers in the field of rural entrepreneurship who could provide me with cutting edge theoretical thinking in this area. I also found it valuable to interview agricultural lenders, as they were able to give an insight into cultural attitudes to debt and business performance.

As well as interviews and practical observation, I have done a substantial amount of background research into entrepreneurship. I have not however drawn heavily on that in this report. To my mind Nuffield is not about literature reviews, but is about the experience and the people, and what I learned from them. It is the essence of this I have tried to capture in this report.

In the course of my foreign travels alone I interviewed around 100 people. Appendix A gives an outline of the people I met in each of the countries I visited. In keeping with my loose research methodology I did not follow a defined interview process or fixed line of questioning. I had areas that I set out to explore, but each interview was allowed to take its own direction. In this way subjects and points of interest emerged that potentially would not have done so had I pursued my own agenda single-mindedly.

I recognise that my observations are derived from meeting people in an interview situation or over a relatively short time frame, and as such have limitations. That said, I believe that my Nuffield experience has developed my abilities to connect quickly with people, and has heightened my perceptiveness to understand what makes them tick.

7. Bite size entrepreneurship

The all-encompassing nature of entrepreneurship as a subject, combined with my wish to keep my study as broad as possible, clearly presents considerable challenges in refining and presenting my findings. I have therefore attempted to break the subject down into a logical sequence. This provided a framework to analyse the information I collected during my study.

My analysis and report therefore draws widely, but not deeply, from the people and perspectives I came across. I have backed up my discussion with quotations from people I met that were particularly insightful and relevant within each section of the analysis.



- I have chosen to firstly give a brief overview of my Nuffield experience. In so doing I hope to give a flavour of the cultures of the countries I visited and some of the aspects most significant to my study.
- I then look at what it was about the enterprising people I met that set them apart and what I felt was behind their ability to drive their businesses? To do so I have tried to break these into four key areas of competence.
- It seemed relevant then to briefly examine what I viewed as the most common impediments to entrepreneurial thinking.
- I then go on to highlight and discuss some of the means I came across that can potentially encourage greater enterprise within a rural setting.
- This leads me to consider the implications of my findings in challenging my personal situation.

8. Where have I been?

In this section I hope to give a brief flavour of the countries I visited and my perceptions of my experience. I stress the word 'perceptions' and I try to be as aware as I can be of my personal baggage and the limitations this places on my frame of vision. That said, I tried to approach my study with as open a perspective as possible, and I made every effort, through talking to people and visiting museums and cultural events, to grasp the essence of each country.

Several common themes emerged in my travels. I was struck by the fact that similar issues were prominent in people's concerns; issues such as agricultural viability, encouraging the next generation, environmental sustainability and welfare regulation. Different countries were at different points on these journeys, but all were unquestionably heading in the same direction. It was enlightening how different cultures perceived and responded to these challenges.

I can't overstate the importance of culture on the attitudes I found towards entrepreneurial activities. Culture seems a pervasive power that hugely shapes and constrains people's thinking. It was at times difficult to define and, I was told, even more difficult to change. When I raised the issue of culture with interviewees they generally framed their responses in a historical context. Ethnic or religious background was fundamental to culture, as were specific or symbolic points in history that had shaped the prevailing psyche.

It is dangerous to generalise about any country and I encountered significant regional variations in culture. I will try however to give my take on the countries within my study.

8a. United Kingdom

My assessment of the UK is that there are significant variations in the enterprising spirit between businesses and regions. I used my Nuffield year as an opportunity to network and get to know as many UK Scholars as I could. In that time I have come across many fantastic businesses run by tremendously motivated and talented individuals. The positivity I have come across at Nuffield Conferences and the Nuffield Dairy and Business groups make me realise it will be a challenge for me to advance entrepreneurial thinking amongst UK Nuffield Scholars.

Nuffield Scholars are not typical however, and my study was inspired by my feeling that there was a lack of a can-do spirit amongst many UK agricultural businesses. I know from my experience with the dairy cooperative First Milk that there are a lot of businesses that are stagnating. I found it frustrating how many people were happy to complain about the milk price or blame the cooperative or supermarkets, but appeared unwilling to ask what they themselves could change or do better. I would even go so far as to assert that there is a cultural psyche in many areas that positively discourages people from attempting to be enterprising.

I feel I should be upfront and say that I have never been comfortable with agricultural subsidies. Nothing I have seen during my study has changed that view. I believe they have a significant adverse impact on entrepreneurial culture. They diminish the impetus to innovate, they protect inefficiency and therefore reduce business fluidity. Subsidy values become capitalised in the value of land and assets and therefore create a high cost of entry for new or expanding businesses.

"Subsidies may help the first generation, but the next generation has to buy them". Tom Johnston (USA)

Decoupling of support from production through the Single Farm Payment system was intended to encourage a more market orientated mentality, but this has generally not been borne out by reality. Often subsidies skew people's focus and I could cite many examples of people whose primary driver is to farm the subsidy system. On a deeper level I believe subsidies create a kind of guilt complex within the agricultural industry that damages our ability to establish healthy relationships with our customers and consumers.

In general in the UK there is a focus on commodity food production and relatively few businesses interface with consumers or consider value-adding possibilities beyond the farm gate. We are fortunate to have a concentrated and largely wealthy population on our doorstep. These are sophisticated consumers with a range of buying preferences and this offers significant potential to add value or market to specific customer segments. A significant factor within the UK grocery sector, however, is the dominance of major retailers, and this arguably has a detrimental effect on the flow of information and the level of trust within food supply chains.

Interestingly, even within Scotland, there are quite distinct regional variations in cultural attitudes amongst agricultural businesses towards business development. In my immediate area, Lanarkshire, for example, many agricultural businesses have not moved forward in recent times. By comparison areas like Aberdeenshire and South West Scotland have many more dynamic businesses and have seen significant expansion.

I believe to some extent the type of farming has an impact. In arable regions such as Aberdeenshire the seasonal nature of the work patterns creates slack periods where perhaps people have underused resources and more time to consider alternative opportunities than do individuals in more tying dairy and livestock farming systems. Arguably also, the volatility of cereal commodity prices has driven many to spread their exposure to risk.

Business models also have an impact. In a dairy context for example, Lanarkshire businesses are traditionally owner-occupied, perhaps smaller units, with individuals generally milking their own cows. By comparison, in the South West, businesses are larger, perhaps more tenanted, but certainly much more inclined to employ others to do the herd management.

Succession is of huge significance in business development. Certainly by comparison with most of the countries I visited, family roots in the UK very often run deep. Sometimes many generations have farmed the same land. This creates an emotional tie and baggage which can prevent individuals from taking decisions based largely on business criteria.

8b. Republic of Ireland : 22-25 August 2010

My visit to Ireland was relatively brief and served as a kind of dry run for the travels that were to follow. The individuals I visited were unquestionably not representative of the general farming population so my observations should therefore be viewed in that context. Furthermore, I have to declare a genuine respect for the pragmatism of the Irish and an appreciation of their sense of humour. The issue that stood out was undoubtedly the impact of the burst in the property bubble that followed the boom 'Celtic Tiger' years. This was even more pronounced as the main purpose of my visit was to meet the leading lights in the 'Wealth Creation' course. It was incredible to see ghost housing estates and sobering to see the impact of the downturn on individuals, businesses and the

economy. I was grateful for the honesty of interviewees in telling what were in some cases painful stories. It was extremely valuable for me to see the potential pitfalls of entrepreneurship.

In the agricultural context, the Irish appear to see milk production as one of their core competences and have set ambitious growth targets as milk quotas are being phased out. I could see the basis for this assertion. I was impressed by the focus and simplicity of their farming systems. With their reliable climate and their ability to grow and utilise grass they can compete with most countries in the world on cost of production. I was even impressed by the standard of the agricultural media and the extent to which it encouraged a business focus.

Various structural and cultural factors are however working against their ability to be world beaters. Family succession practices have led to fragmented land ownership structures which make it difficult for progressive businesses to expand and create sufficient area of grazing platform to sustain significant cow numbers. As well as that, and in contrast to the individuals I met, I was told that there is still a formidable undercurrent of conservatism amongst many Irish farming businesses that might not readily embrace forward thinking practices.

8c. United States of America : 6- 20 September 2010

The US is such a vast country with so much diversity that a two week, two centred, trip cannot begin to do it justice. My first week centred on Columbia, Missouri, where the Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship is based at the University of Missouri. I visited academics, university extension officers, and businesses and communities they work with. Missouri is very much 'Middle America', traditional corn and soya cropping country. It was interesting to see and feel the culture and understand the issues of predominantly rural communities.

My second week was based in Pennsylvania, which gave a fascinating contrast. This area is much more metropolitan with a large percentage of the US population within a three hour drive. Lancaster County, where I was based, is real Amish country so it was illuminating to see the impact of ethnicity and religion on enterprise and business attitudes.

My time in Pennsylvania allowed me to build on contacts I had established during our Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference which was based in Washington and Gettysburg. This had been a tremendous experience and had given us the best possible launch-pad for our Nuffield travels. My week was predominantly dairy-biased and I visited a host of enterprising units and leading lights within the dairy industry.

I have to confess that I was more taken with the US than I even expected to be. I found a genuine welcome and friendliness and, despite being a dour Scotsman and therefore unused to such genial behaviour, I did not find the 'have a nice day' culture to be fake. The US does not have a Nuffield pedigree so I did find some initial reserve, but on the whole I found it easy to establish a rapport with people and they could not have been more open and helpful.

That said, there were some things that I found slightly disconcerting. I felt Americans were incredibly patriotic. While this is to be admired, it did concern me that this is combined with, in my opinion, a lack of self-awareness as a nation, and a lack of perspective on the world. Their news had a very local



A classic Amish homestead in Lancaster County

bias and a large proportion of the population has never travelled beyond their own borders. If any country would benefit from a Nuffield program it is the US. I was also troubled by extremes of their political system. There was no apparent middle ground. The media lacked any political objectivity or analysis. Rather they pedalled tabloid-like propaganda for one political persuasion or another. Added to this was the prominence of religion in US society. You could not travel any distance without coming across churches of various persuasions. My first hire car was tuned to a 24/7 religious radio station. Many of the people I interviewed thanked God for their success. I felt a slight unease with the lack of pragmatism or flexibility in many peoples' views and beliefs.

I was struck by the contrast in attitudes to production agriculture between the US and Europe. Both regions benefit from significant subsidy support, but the emphasis was starkly different. The head of the US Rural Policy Research Institute perhaps best encapsulated it:

"The EU has become so preoccupied with environmental and public good issues that it is jeopardising its competitiveness. The US by contrast, if it keeps on its current path, will produce itself to a desert." Chuck Fluhart

This is best exemplified by the contrast in attitudes to Genetic Modification technologies. US producers could not reconcile our situation. *"How are we going to feed the world without GM?"* was a standard response. We have fallen 10 years behind them in the use of this technology. However, I would say that the US are around 10 years behind us in many environmental and welfare issues. I could see signs though that these issues are quickly moving up the agenda and are beginning to impact on farming practices.



A typical large-scale US dairy barn

US milk producers were highly output driven. A typical system involved high yielding Holstein cows, year-round calving, 365 day housing, high infrastructure costs, intensive foreign labour input and big machines. Many farmers I visited looked like they were on a treadmill. I heard so many times “*we work so hard*”. A recent period of low milk price had significantly eroded the equity, and the morale, of many businesses.

In terms of entrepreneurship, many interviewees asserted that the US has very much a ‘can-do’ culture. Certainly, unlike the UK, there seems to be no stigma attached to failure in business endeavour. One of my key reasons for visiting the US was to look at the impact of US government initiatives to encourage rural enterprise. As I will discuss more fully later, the US were more sophisticated in their view of entrepreneurship as a means to rural sustainability and development.

The United States Department of Agriculture had a plethora of grants and incentives aimed at encouraging business development. Business advice was available free of charge through the University Extension services. I was envious of this link between academic work and practical application. However, many of the business people I met appeared to take this for granted, and uptake of these extension services and the value that businesses placed upon them was patchy.

8d. China : 18 – 28 October 2010



China's clash of cultures

The picture above encapsulates China for me. It captures the tensions in a country that is modernising and changing at a faster pace than any in the world, but still has one foot firmly rooted in its subsistence past.

I visited China as part of a group of eight Nuffield Scholars. Going as a group allowed us greater access and helped to justify interpreters and a more extensive travel plan than we could have achieved alone. It also let us bounce ideas around regarding what we had seen or learned from meetings, especially helpful as China is a country of such complexity and contradictions. Even so, I felt we were only really scratching at the surface.

My first experience in China quickly brought it home to me that this was an alien culture that didn't play by our rules. Tired after a long flight, I arrived at a very wet Beijing Airport, only for it to take so long to progress through the system that I did not make my connection to Zeng Zhou where we were all meeting up. With adrenalin levels elevated, my first realisation was that almost no-one spoke my language. The second challenge was to assess whether those offering help and advice truly had my interests at heart. This was a modern China. I had all the best communication technology at hand, but I still ended up on a stressful taxi ride in Beijing with a fractious driver who could not comprehend a change in destination. The situation was resolved, but it was as near as I felt to being out of my depth during my Nuffield travels. This was a sharp realisation that I was the outsider and I had to learn quickly how things worked.

It struck me that China has huge challenges and contradictions. Its authorities are constantly performing a balancing act. On one hand they want to encourage enterprise, while on the other still restrain civil liberties. They have huge modernisation and urban growth, but still around 80% of the population are effectively peasant farmers. They need the resources to feed a growing economy and population, but that growth is damaging and depleting their own resources. It was put to us that in the last 20 years China has changed more than any country in the world, but that the Government is determined that this change is very much at its own pace.

We spent 10 days in China and in that time travelled fairly extensively, ranging from Hoh Hot in Inner Mongolia to Guangzhou in the South. Overall we were left with a feeling that to some extent we were only being shown what they wanted us to see. Keeping up a front seemed very important to the Chinese. That said, we were told there is much more freedom and openness than there once was. China is undoubtedly becoming more westernised and this is being accelerated by commercialisation and technological advances. The extent of building work was incredible and the Beijing Olympics had left a significant legacy. We were told that China of 10 years ago was a very different place and anyone visiting then must have faced many more challenges than we did. Despite all the modernity and change I still had the feeling that there was an ancient culture underneath.

On the face of things people seemed accepting of what the Government dictated. Pollution, for example, was an acceptable price for progress. I found I learned a huge amount from talking to our interpreters. They did not have an agenda and therefore could give a feel for the real China and how people lived and worked. It was interesting to hear about, for example, the education system, social change, the legacy of Communism and how people were dealing with the shift to Capitalist ideals. Our visits to the wet markets, where people buy their daily provisions, and to the peasant village where Sarite, one of our interpreters, grew up, were both mind-blowing and humbling experiences. It was such an alien culture to us. Factors such as the food, the lack of cleanliness, the toilets, all stretched our experiences. For me the key was to try to see things through their eyes and not to judge from our own perspective. It was illuminating to watch the differing extent to which individuals in our group were able to do that.

Speaking to the business men and entrepreneurs doing business in China was extremely helpful. China is going to be such a significant feature in all our futures that it is important to understand the challenges and the rules of engagement. Everything depended on understanding the mind-set and culture. Clearly business is conducted on Chinese terms and by western standards some practices would be regarded as dubious at best. It was important to know the levers and the potential pitfalls.

The cultural challenges of dealing with China are perhaps best exemplified by the experience of the New Zealand dairy cooperative Fonterra. Fonterra is understandably drawn to China by its enormous market potential based on an increased desire for western diets. Fonterra's milk processing interests in China became embroiled in the melamine milk contamination scandal. Fonterra highlighted the malpractice to the authorities, but were left scarred by the experience, in particular how it was swept under the carpet until after the Beijing Olympics. Fonterra initially withdrew completely from China, but have been drawn back again, unable to resist the potential. Having endured the previous steep learning curve, they are this time starting at the production end to try to ensure the integrity of raw material.



Our visit to Sarite's family's village



Wet market shopping – pick your fish

8e. Australia : 20 November-5 December 2010

My time in Australia was based in the state of Victoria so it would be unwise to extrapolate my experience to represent the whole vast territory of Australia. I was told that Melbourne, where I was based, is a much quainter and slower-paced city than Sydney for example. That said, there appeared less regional variation in Australia than most countries. Certainly by comparison with the UK, there seemed to be much less distinction in accents from one part of the country to another. This was put down to their mix of ethnic backgrounds and the relatively short historical timeframe.

Australians assert that their entrepreneurial spirit stems from the early settlers and their sense of exploration and adventure in breaking in the new continent. It seems plausible that anyone who was prepared to undertake the perilous journey half way round the world in search of a better life would be genetically more predisposed to endeavour than those who stayed in the homelands. People talked of the number of generations between them and the first settlers. I was told with pride stories of how these forefathers had to be innovative to tame and cultivate the virgin land.

The extremes of the environment, in particular the impact of drought, have also had an impact on entrepreneurial spirit. Australians seemed to take pride in their resilience and their ability to deal with environmental extremes. Difficult periods often caused a shake-out and created opportunities for people to progress on the farming ladder. However in the most recent severe drought the Government offered interest rate relief which, while a help to many in the short term, was seen by some as protecting inefficiency and reducing the fluidity of land transfer.

Within the Australian dairy industry I saw evidence of increased risk aversion. Nearly all of the farmers I visited had in the past used New Zealand grazing techniques and had, for example, plate meter-measured their grass regularly. Not one still did. Weather extremes had meant that they had developed a habit of substituting by feeding grain. The type of cow they were breeding was changing and they were increasingly using US Holstein genetics. For a country with such exposure to the world market I felt there were dangers in this production focused route. I also saw some troubling parallels with the UK in how their milk market was structured and with the declining support for cooperative milk marketing.

I saw a fair degree of farm business diversification on my Australian leg. Being based in Victoria, with the populations of Melbourne and Sydney within reasonable access, there were potentially more opportunities than in some of the more Outback regions. Overall I felt that Australia still appeared to be a land of opportunity. Property appeared cheaper than in other parts of the world that I visited, and people I met described there being relatively few impediments if you were really prepared to be enterprising and energetic.

See picture on next page showing Shaw River water buffalo in South West Victoria

8f. New Zealand : 5-20 December 2010

In my two weeks in New Zealand I covered a lot of ground and saw most areas of the country. For me the most striking thing was the sheer beauty of the landscape. As a Scot I felt very much at home, particularly on the South Island where there is a strong historical connection and a Presbyterian, conservative feel about the place. I can understand why some people find New Zealand slightly retro. There is a safe, family focused, outdoor-loving feel to it, which I must admit I appreciated.



Shaw River water buffalo in South West Victoria – real mozzarella cheese

It was stressed to me that two highly significant economic traumas shaped New Zealand business culture. The first in the 1970s was the UK joining the EEC and effectively closing its doors to many New Zealand exports. This made the New Zealanders realise the precariousness of their marketing and forced businesses to cooperate and to go out and seek other world market opportunities. The second was the abolishment of subsidies in the 1980s. This has been the major driver in shaping individual business mind sets. As was said to me, *“this sorts out the men from the boys”*. Those who can’t cut it quickly exit, creating opportunities for those with the desire and ability to drive ahead.

There was without doubt a high degree of profit focus amongst New Zealand business people. There seemed a ruthlessness about them in terms of their understanding of, and focus upon, the key areas that drive their business. This is helped by the fact that they have very much a farming blueprint based on low-cost grass-based systems. Some would argue that this ruthlessness extends to their management of cows, and I did see some practices that would not be acceptable at home. However welfare and environmental accountability are nevertheless increasingly impacting on their management practices.

The sharemilking system which allows driven individuals to progressively build up their capital, firstly through ownership of cows, then eventually into land, has been a real strength of New Zealand dairying. This progression path instils a single-mindedness and purposefulness in business succession. It also creates fluidity, and individuals appear happy to up-sticks and move farm or buy and sell whole herds of cows with none of the emotional attachment or family baggage we encounter in the UK.

The lack of capital gains tax has been a significant enabler in allowing individuals to build up business capital. I found the New Zealanders' attitude to risk incredible. I came across many examples of individuals who had built up very substantial businesses from humble beginnings through their willingness to take on debt by continually leveraging against increases in the value of their assets. The high values of land that this system has encouraged are however putting considerable pressure on the sharemilking system, and perhaps ironically many of these successful individuals were not supporting the system that had allowed them to get to where they are.

The effective monopoly position of Fonterra is a huge asset for New Zealand dairying. Fonterra is not perfect, it has its issues and detractors, but it is a very significant marketing vehicle and an example of how a small country can have an influence on global marketing if it is prepared to cooperate and to be ambitious and professional.

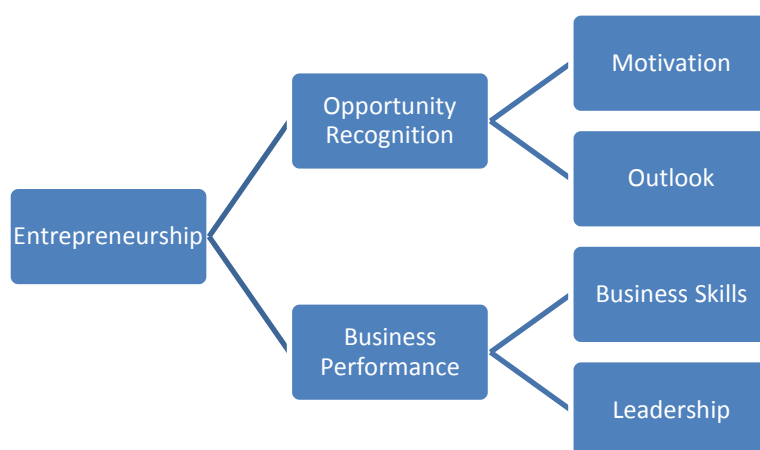
You would have to say the New Zealanders have a strong self-belief and an acute competitive nature. They have the moral high ground due to their lack of subsidies and an unshakable belief in their production system. Because of their remoteness they are much more inclined to travel and have a more outward focus than possibly we have. It is perhaps paradoxical then, that they can have a lack of self-awareness in dealing with other regions of the world, which can impair their ability to fit in.



Dairy New Zealand style

9. What sets the best apart?

Through my study I identified a whole host of characteristics and traits that stood out and which appeared to surface time and time again in the successful people I met. In analysing these I found it useful to distil these key characteristics into four headline areas. I recognise though that this is highly subjective, and that there are considerable overlaps.



The first two characteristics I have called **motivation** and **outlook**. These encompass the internal drive mechanisms of the individuals and their ability to recognise opportunities.

“Opportunities come to the prepared mind” Lynaire Ryan (NZ)

I feel this quote perhaps encapsulates the mind-set behind many of the entrepreneurs I met. Lynaire argued that business opportunities do not happen by accident. They happen because someone is predisposed to possibilities and can therefore see the favourable conditions that create a particular opening.

The other two headings cover individuals’ capabilities within their business environment. The first I have called **business skills** and the second, which I believe is of particular importance, **leadership**.

“Business success is more about execution than inspiration”. Brian Debtweiler (USA)

It is one thing to identify a market opportunity. It is quite another to actually develop it to a successful business outcome.

9a. Motivation

"Goals are the fuel that powers success in life". Con Hurley (ROI)



When asked what motivated them, respondents came up with a variety of reasons for their business drive. In truth this was a fairly challenging aspect to explore as not only is it a deeply personal issue, it is also a complex one. People highlighted multiple aspirations, and motivations changed with different stages of their business and personal lives.

Significantly, I feel, many of the most successful individuals highlighted 'necessity' as their initial business driver.

"I was driven by need not greed" Ian Urquart (AUS)

Others were absolutely up-front in declaring that money was their chief motivation. However, they were in the minority, though it may be that others felt uncomfortable in admitting that they were money-driven. For many, ownership of tangible assets was important. Chief amongst these was land. Aligned to this, servicing and repaying debt, though obviously not an initiating motive, was certainly seen by many as a big on-going driving factor.

Diversification was in some instances motivated by risk aversion and a desire to reduce exposure to volatility. Les Keeper, a New Zealander who had built up a significant portfolio of dairy farms, was moving much of his assets out of dairying and into commercial property in Queenstown. He argued that he was motivated by "*fear*" of losing what he had already built up.

Not surprisingly, family aspects featured significantly. Endeavour was often driven by the desire to create opportunities for family members to grow and find their own place within the business. For others, quality time with their family was central to their aspirations and business choices.

Some respondents were somewhat vague in describing their inner drivers. They cited the need for a challenge, or just the enjoyment and satisfaction of what they do. Some were determined to be their own boss. Others talked about a need to prove themselves, or to be respected, but sometimes were not readily able to describe what that looked like to them. Occasionally during an interview it would occur to me that motivations were at play other than those that had been articulated to me.

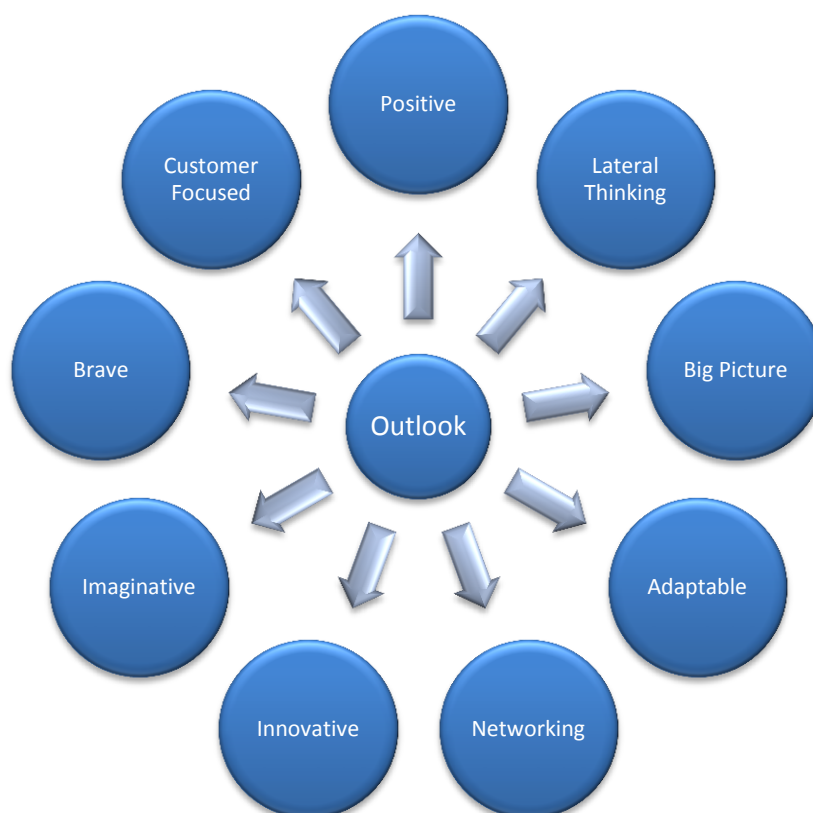
The most focused individuals were very clear in visualising and verbalising their goals. They were pro-active and even talked about envisaging the end-game, where they ultimately wanted to be. This gave them clarity of purpose and action. As lower needs or aspirations were achieved, increasingly more social drivers come to the ascendency. Indeed, some cited more benevolent aspirations, for example the desire to make a difference or to leave a positive legacy.

From the above it is clear that it is difficult to draw any specific conclusions as to what motivated these successful people. Different people in different situations at different times have different drivers. Most had multiple goals. What was clear to me was that almost unanimously they had an inner energy that continually pushed them forward. As one goal was achieved, ambition drove them to set another higher target. Outwardly this manifested itself as a passion that stamped itself on their businesses.

“Entrepreneurship is emotional. The best businesses have a personality that drives them”
Garry Mottershead (CHINA)

9b. Outlook

“Attitude is of paramount importance in helping us achieve our goals in life, fulfilling our needs and enabling us to live happy and meaningful lives” Con Hurley (ROI)



Not surprisingly, as successful individuals, most of the people I met had an outward confidence about them. Many stood out for their courage in having a go at things regardless of how that might be perceived by others. They thrived on their ability to think laterally and to move in the opposite direction from the crowd.

One striking aspect of my study was that many of the most dynamic individuals were first generation farmers. They were not encumbered by the constraints of previous generations and were able to think beyond established norms.

It may be stating the obvious to suggest that a positive perspective on life was a prerequisite for entrepreneurial activity. One person described it as an innate optimism.

“Everything will be all right in the end, and if it isn’t, it isn’t the end” Sarah Elliot (NZ)

This also displays the ability to not become hung up on past failures or disappointments, a key characteristic highlighted by many. Most interviewees demonstrated an ability to see the bigger picture. The most effective appeared able to create the time and space to analyse their own businesses.

“Work on your business not in it” Nuffield Business Group (UK)

Many were well-read, and perhaps as a result saw the potential impact of wider social trends. Interviews often strayed into areas such as political developments or technological innovations, and the opportunities these might generate.

““Under natural selection, it’s not the strongest animals that thrive, but the one’s most adaptable to change. It’s the same with businesses” Gary Mottershead (CHINA)

Many were well abreast of things going on in their locality and therefore alive to any potential opportunities.

“Change is inevitable, success is optional” Dick Waybright (USA)

The need to network and mix with like-minded people was stressed to me many times. Some encouraged me to mix outside agricultural circles to broaden my perspective. Others advocated business mentors to challenge and stimulate.

“If you mix with the best guys it challenges your thinking and raises the bar. You just don’t hear the negativity any more” Lynaire Ryan (NZ)

One of the catch phrases from our Contemporary Scholars Conference in Washington was *“adapt, innovate and overcome”*, and this came back to me often in my travels. Many people described how a business idea had surfaced from overcoming a particular problem they themselves had experienced. They then realised that the problem was not unique to them and that perhaps there was a business opportunity based around the skills and knowledge they had developed.

Others, particularly grass-based dairy operators, focused on deploying the competences they had established with one unit to then replicate this business model time and again. Some, mostly

Nuffields, as you might expect, highlighted their ability to cross-fertilise ideas from different parts of the world as the basis for their success.

The people I met who I would describe as serial entrepreneurs were outstandingly imaginative. Their minds were constantly tuned in to any potential opportunities and they talked about having *“more ideas than time”*.

Time was clearly the scarcest resource, and many people I visited described themselves as “constantly on the go”. Some had established a satisfactory work-life balance by being clear in setting aside family time. There were many, however, who were immersed in their businesses and seemed to thrive on pressure.

An integral part of entrepreneurship is risk. However, few of the people I met described themselves as particularly risk-takers.

“Entrepreneurs are not risk takers, but calculators” Ian Elliot (NZ)

However, they did not appear to over analyse. Many demonstrated a capacity to quickly assess opportunities and even highlighted the need for intuition.

“Don’t override your gut feelings, you will regret it”. Bill Macleod (NZ)

Certainly I did not see any elaborate business plans on my travels. It was very much an activist, ‘think on your feet’ attitude.

“If you think it’s a good idea then go for it, but be prepared to cut it if it’s not going anywhere” Ian Urquart (AUS)

Innovation and entrepreneurship go hand in hand and there is clearly an onus to move quickly to exploit new ideas.

*“While other people are thinking about it we are paying off the assets”.
Noah Kreider (USA)*

It was also highlighted to me that there are dangers in being first to the market.

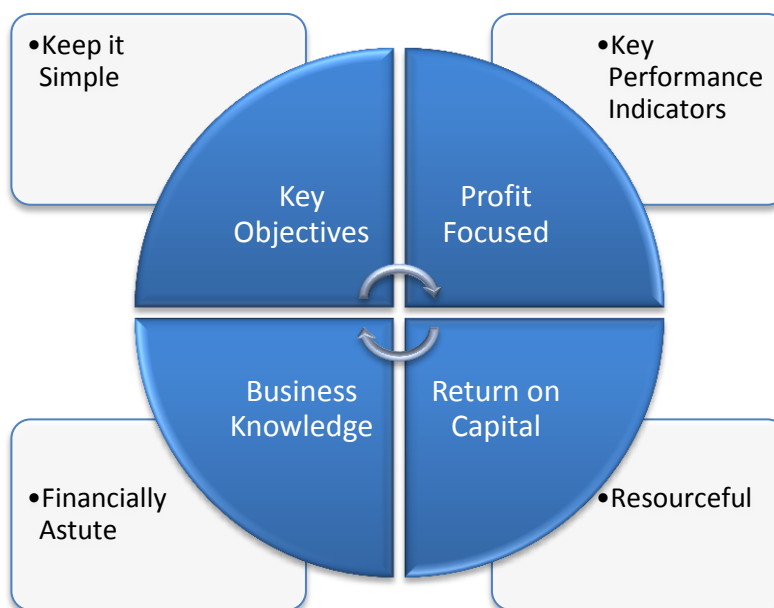
“Pioneers get shot by Indians”. Andrew Watters (NZ)

Andrew argued that entrepreneurship was just as much about taking existing business models and adapting them in a way that better serves customer needs. It was emphasised to me that serving the wants of the customer should be primary and overriding.

“It’s all about solving customers’ problems for them. The mistake is often that people have started a business that suits them, in a place that suits them” Jane Bennet (AUS)

9c. Business skills

"If your business is generating cash anything is possible, if not then nothing is" Michael Murphy (ROI)



The importance of a strong core business was stressed to me on many occasions. It was argued that good business people will generally be successful no matter what they turn their hand to. Conversely if you are not making any money at what you are currently doing, is there any reason to believe that you will do so if you expand or diversify into other areas?

The most successful people displayed a real understanding of their business. Their personal and business objectives were aligned. They kept their business models simple, and they were single-minded in describing what the critical success factors for their businesses were and the key performance indicators they measured.

The term “*profit focused*” became a byword in my study.

"If you are production focused, production doesn't change, but profit does. If you are profit focused, production can change, but profit doesn't" Rob Dent (AUS)

People's focus was generally on the resource that constrained them most. My thinking was probably most challenged by the investor-type attitude of some, in particular by their focus on return on capital. When capital was the chief constraint, people were incredibly resourceful in its sourcing and deployment. They were not preoccupied with asset ownership and in many cases developed business structures that either leveraged existing resources or employed other people's capital. For example, Tom Rawson, a fellow UK Nuffield Scholar and dairy entrepreneur, not only employs other people's fixed assets in contract farming arrangements, but also leverages working capital through various cow leasing arrangements.

Not surprisingly, most interviewees clearly knew their way around a set of financial accounts and had a firm handle on intrinsic business principles. In many cases this did not stem from a formal business education but was more instinctive. Some of the most effective individuals had previously

had professional careers outside agriculture. Many, however, highlighted business courses they had undertaken, often later in their career, as having a significant impact on their abilities and confidence.

"The business course made me much more customer orientated and more realistic about what might be viable to market" Bob Reid (AUS)

9d. Leadership

"Businesses are all about people and relationships" James Su Hao (CHINA)



In terms of expanding or diversifying a business, the area of people skills emerged to me as the key business competence. It is impossible to be everywhere and do everything. To expand or broaden business capacity we need to be able to delegate.

Almost without exception the people I met appeared decisive and knew their own minds. In some cases they had defined their values, vision and mission within their business. The aspirations they set were relevant and achievable, and created inspiration and direction for all those involved in their business.

The most effective individuals had a keen self-awareness and could articulate their key competences within their business. They stressed the importance of building a team around them and employing the best people to complement their skills.

"Understand what you enjoy, and what you are good at, and employ others to make up for your own deficiencies". Gary Mottershead (CHINA)

Most people demonstrated a genuine commitment and tenacity. They were confident, but very few could have been described as arrogant, and most displayed a genuine humility. They came across as authentic and in most cases did not over-egg themselves, but were quick to recognise the contribution of others.

"Good people attract the best people" Rob Henry (AUS)

The ability to motivate people appeared a fundamental capacity. Many described themselves as “people” people, who thrived in a social environment. They stressed the need to understand what makes people tick, and many highlighted softer elements of personnel management over tangible or financial rewards.

“People need to feel their contribution is valued and trust you to look after their interests.” Mike O’Connor (NZ)

Different people had different leadership styles. Some advocated leading from the front and setting the standard. Others argued that the most effective leaders were invisible and able to sit in the background and allow others to assume autonomy and responsibility. Several drew the analogy of a sports team with everyone understanding their position and being motivated towards the same goal. Indeed, sport was seen as an ideal breeding ground for developing a business ethos.

“There is no difference between a successful entrepreneur and the manager of a sports team” David Deacon (NZ)

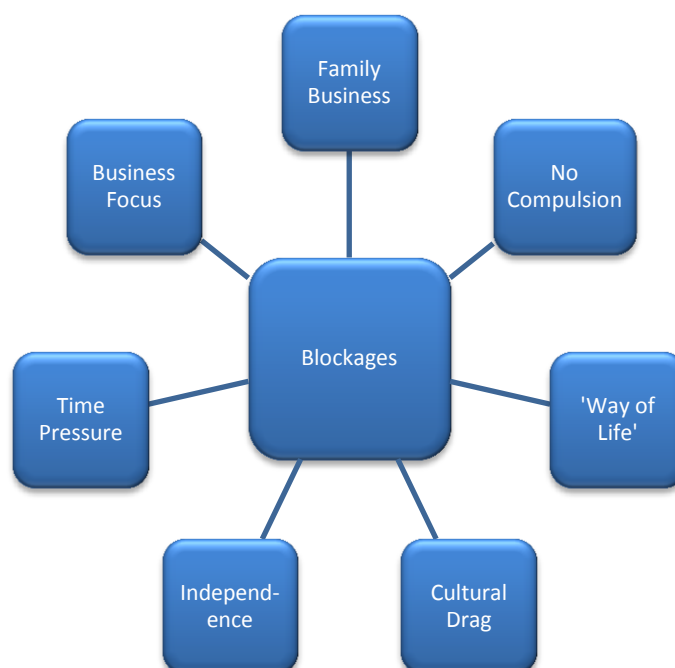
I think the number of strong husband and wife teams I came across on my travels is of particular significance. Very often they brought different, if not contrasting, skills to the table, but were very much on the same page in terms of the journey they were on. Indeed it was put to me that the attitude of females within a family unit had a big influence on business’s progression.

“Women are the biggest conduit for change” Jane Bennet (AUS)

People skills, I believe, also extend to developing fertile relationships with other business stakeholders. Customers are arguably foremost. It was put to me that people do business with people they can relate to and get on with. The most successful business diversifications I visited espoused customer empathy and the importance of a good buying experience. Many were pro-active in cultivating favourable consumer perceptions of food production systems.

10. What impairs entrepreneurial thinking?

In considering how to encourage entrepreneurial thinking I feel it is appropriate to reflect not only on desirable traits, but also to highlight some of the factors that I perceive as impairing people's ability to expand or diversify their businesses.



10a. Lack of succession planning

Family businesses and their succession can create significant barriers to business endeavour. It was put to me that *“decision makers are there only by accident of birth”* (Lynaire Ryan, NZ), and therefore may lack the requisite skills. Decision making responsibility is often not transferred at an age or in a manner that allows the next generations the freedom to develop their business capabilities. There are also issues of family expectations and potential aversion to putting the family silver at risk through speculative ventures. Often there can be an inability to generate sufficient agreement or coherence to take decisive business steps.

10b. Lack of compulsion

In many instances people lack the ambition to develop their businesses. They are content as they are and are not driven to extend themselves. If a core business is performing well then there may be a sound argument for not putting that at risk by taking on other ventures that might stretch resources or compromise business focus. Even where businesses are perhaps not performing, subsidies or outside income can mitigate the need to look to alternative income generating opportunities. However, businesses that stand still, even for a short period, tend to quickly lose competitive edge and can find it difficult to recover from the inertia.

10c. Lack of business mentality

I must admit I get frustrated when people talk of farming as *“a way of life”*. I recognise there are particular commitments and ties associated with, for example, caring for animals or living at your place of work. My gripe is when the term ‘way of life’ is used to justify a sub-standard business mind-set.

When, for example, loss making businesses stubbornly or blindly continue to trade when business logic would suggest that they should look to other uses for their assets. I accept that not everyone is monetarily driven, but it distorts normal economic forces, and does a disservice to other more progressively-minded businesses, when decision making is not based on sound business rationale.

10d. Lack of support

Cultural influences, I believe, can be the most insidious barriers to innovation and endeavour. These can be more prevalent in a rural setting where there is a lack of anonymity. I had it described to me as *“the tall poppy syndrome”* or *“crabs in a barrel”*, a negative, envy-driven culture in which people don’t want to see others succeed. This can be subtle and might manifest itself as a perceived lack of encouragement from family, friends or community. It creates a lack of confidence or a fear of failure. Often people just don’t want to stand out from the crowd or be seen to be getting above their station. Dr David Kohl at our Contemporary Scholars Conference argued that *“40% of the population think that the world owes them something. You don’t want to have anything to do with these people”*.

10e. Lack of people skills

Farmers are used to being their own boss and very often work physically themselves. Many either don’t have the self-awareness, or just don’t want the hassle of dealing with staff or members of the public.

*“As you expand you go from managing cows to managing people.
That requires a very different skillset”. Planning to Succeed Group (UK)*

This independence also extends to our ability to cooperate and collaborate. The UK does not have the cooperative culture of many of the countries I visited, and I believe this is a significant impediment towards realising potential business opportunities.

10f. Lack of time

Time, as I have already mentioned, is everyone’s scarcest resource. But time can be outsourced. The obstacle is therefore the willingness to pass on responsibility or to pay for that resource. This is therefore tied to the issue of people skills. The *“no one can do it like I do”* attitude is a major constraint within many businesses. This is also aligned to time management skills. There are significant variations in people’s self-discipline and capabilities to prioritise tasks.

10g. Lack of focus

I believe in many instances agricultural business people are motivated by the wrong things. One theme that permeated my whole study was the issue of production focus versus profit focus. My journey exposed me to a spectrum of production systems and business attitudes. There is no doubt that the production orientated route seems more exciting, and it is in the interest of many who make their living from supplying the agricultural industry to tempt us down this route. The evidence from my study was convincing; the businesses which were dynamic and were delivering a quality of life had a single-minded focus on profitability.

10h. Lack of perspective

Though modern technology unquestionably opens up new possibilities, physical remoteness from viable markets can still work against many forms of rural diversification. Every bit as significant however, is the lack of exposure to potential opportunities. Too few people in agriculture are able to step back from the daily operation of their business to assess where they are and consider ways of doing things differently. Rarely are they able to reflect on customer expectations or experience the world through consumers' eyes. This is often necessary to generate the spark of imagination that might translate into a potential business opportunity.

10i. Lack of education

In many instances there is a lack of the required business skills. While education is not necessarily a prerequisite to entrepreneurial capabilities, I would contend that in most cases it is beneficial. I see too many young people joining agriculture without any higher education, often because it is the easiest route. Even those who do undertake college education often do not build further on that through their working life. There is a lack of recognition of the benefit of continually developing business skills and capabilities.

10j. Lack of capital

In the current economic climate the sourcing of finance is arguably an impediment to growing businesses. However, UK agriculture is by many standards under-leveraged in terms of debt-to-asset ratios. This infers a risk adversity amongst either business owners or lenders. Without doubt many agricultural businesses have a relatively low risk tolerance. While banks in the past have generally been happy to lend where there is asset cover, in the current climate there is now greater emphasis on business performance. Arguably however, if other elements of a business case are compelling enough, capital, from whatever source, should not be a show stopper.

11. How to encourage entrepreneurship?



This takes us into the realms of the debate about whether entrepreneurs are born or whether they can be created. Some argue that individuals are either naturally enterprising or they are not. The weight of evidence from my travels would however suggest that entrepreneurial thinking can, to some extent at least, be cultivated.

I accept that many of the organisations I visited had a vested interest in making that argument. However, many of the successful business people I met talked of aspects that had helped them along the way, or that they saw as highly beneficial in advancing an enterprising activity.

Drawing from the previous two chapters, I believe any worthwhile measures to develop enterprise activity must either encourage the development of some of the positive attributes I saw in the individuals I met, or must attempt to mitigate the impediments I have highlighted above. To return to my original definition, they must encourage individuals to see potential opportunities and/or create the capabilities to successfully exploit them.

Absolutely central to encouraging endeavour, I believe, is the issue of confidence. Arguably a deficiency of confidence permeates many of the entrepreneurial blockages I have highlighted above. Uncertainty and risk are factors of life, but are inevitably heightened in entrepreneurial ventures. The reality is that it is easier to stay within our comfort zone than it is to stick our neck out and attempt something new. Any measures that might encourage more enterprising thinking, I feel, must instil confidence, either by equipping individuals with abilities that reduce risks, or with the mentality to mitigate the stress associated with taking risks.

continued on next page

11a. Cultural change

I believe the end-goal should be a shift in agricultural business culture. The objective of many of the tools I will discuss is to instil and embed more of a “*have a go*” or “*can do*” spirit, where risk-taking is encouraged or normalised. However, cultural change is difficult. It cannot be conferred by decree. It requires what some called a “*bottom-up*” change process. The most effective measures facilitate people to establish their own solutions and develop enduring structures and networks. An analogy used was that of sowing individual seeds and cultivating them to grow out towards one another. Eventually they will cover the ground.

“Entrepreneur” has not been a readily used word in our vocabulary. This struck me when Marnie Dobson, one of my Nuffield peers, introduced herself as an entrepreneur at our first Nuffield meeting. Indeed she is, but I had not heard anyone from the agricultural community describe themselves in this way before. Indeed, arguably too few farmers would even describe themselves as business people. Entrepreneur is an evocative word with many positive connotations. The way we use language, and the symbolism that is attached to that, can be potent in promoting a more expansive business culture. I believe we need to change the tone of the conversations we have within the agricultural industry, and in so doing transmit a more positive and outward perspective.

Television programs like ‘The Dragon’s Den’ or ‘The Apprentice’ are arguably making the notion of entrepreneurship more accessible. It has also given inspiration to a broader section of the population and an idea of the requirements of a viable business proposition. I believe however there is a danger that people perceive an entrepreneur as some kind of all-powerful charismatic mogul like Richard Branson or Alan Sugar. Entrepreneurs come in all shapes and sizes. My contention is that there is an entrepreneurial seed in most of us. It just needs favourable conditions to grow.

Supporting that assertion, there is an incredible number of bestselling books on the subject of entrepreneurship. Many of these are self-help or route-maps to success, so clearly there is a fascination with this area. I must confess that I personally have derived value from reading some of these, particularly entrepreneurs’ biographies. I wonder, however, how many of these publications are on bookshelves in farm offices? Unfortunately many of us do not get past reading the pile of farming magazines that falls through our door.

For that reason I believe the agricultural media are an important route towards changing business attitudes. Michael Murphy built strong relationships with the Irish Farmers Journal when he set about convincing Irish dairy farmers of the merits of adopting New Zealand grazing techniques. Some UK journals, for example Farm Business, take a very positive stance in highlighting expansive and entrepreneurial business attitudes. Others, unfortunately, perpetuate an old-fashioned dependency culture. These magazines are highly influential and if we are to change cultural thinking we need to engage with them and ply them with more positive perspectives and inspiring stories to tell.

11b. Financial incentives

As I stated earlier, I have an inbuilt aversion to subsidies. The business mentality that I encountered in New Zealand reinforced my belief that support measures ultimately do more harm than good. The reality however is that we have them, and there is little EU political appetite to radically disband existing support. We can only make the best of the system we have.

There is evidence that more targeted support schemes can have a positive impact on

enterprise activity. The renewables sector is probably the best demonstration of how, if the carrot is big enough, an industry can quickly be led. Interest in this sector is driven by Feed-in-Tariffs and arguably is as much about subsidy farming as it is entrepreneurial. Nonetheless it has generated a huge amount of interest and has brought to the surface a degree of enterprising spirit in many farming businesses that was not previously evident.

The United States Department for Agriculture promotes a whole raft of incentives and initiatives to support and encourage business enterprise. It was argued that these did have a significant impact on business investment, but care was needed that the inducement was sensible and well thought through. The example of the US biofuels sector highlighted how markets can very easily be overplayed and create repercussions for other sectors.

In terms of EU agricultural support I have a preference for moving subsidies towards Pillar 2 as opposed to Pillar 1. In Scotland, for example, this takes the form of the Scottish Rural Development Programme. Instead of giving subsidies for the sake of it, this is a competitive scheme that targets grant support at those who can put forward the most compelling propositions. Support has been targeted for example at under 40s, or at specific environmental or value-adding proposals.

The system is not perfect and in the early days too much funding was siphoned off to too few projects. Inevitably there are unintended consequences when individuals become focused on playing the system rather than concentrating on the fundamentals of their businesses. Also, the compliance and qualifying hoops that must be jumped through can 'gold-plate' projects and potentially deter genuine applicants.

On balance however, I believe this type of system is possibly the 'least-bad' way of support. The figures involved are sufficient to have a significant impact on businesses. It potentially sets businesses on the front foot and encourages a more professional assessment and planning. There is evidence for example that the targeting of support at under 40s is encouraging more proactive business succession planning.

11c. Start young

Everywhere I went, young people were seen as everyone's greatest asset, and as such were central to their concerns and actions. To change cultural mind-set required shaping young people's thinking at an early and malleable stage. When we are young we see work as being associated with specific jobs or professions. Entrepreneurship does not fit neatly within this view of the world. By putting personal enterprise forward as a career option at an early stage it cultivates the idea that it is possible to take greater personal control and responsibility for shaping our own destiny.

11d. Youth organisations

The need to encourage young people to remain in and contribute to their communities was central to US rural development policies. I visited a community development program in Brookfield, North Missouri. The lead organiser Becky Cleveland made a big play of the need to "*make it cool to live rural*". The 4H organisation was a central plank of this community initiative and the focus was on leadership, entrepreneurship and citizenship.

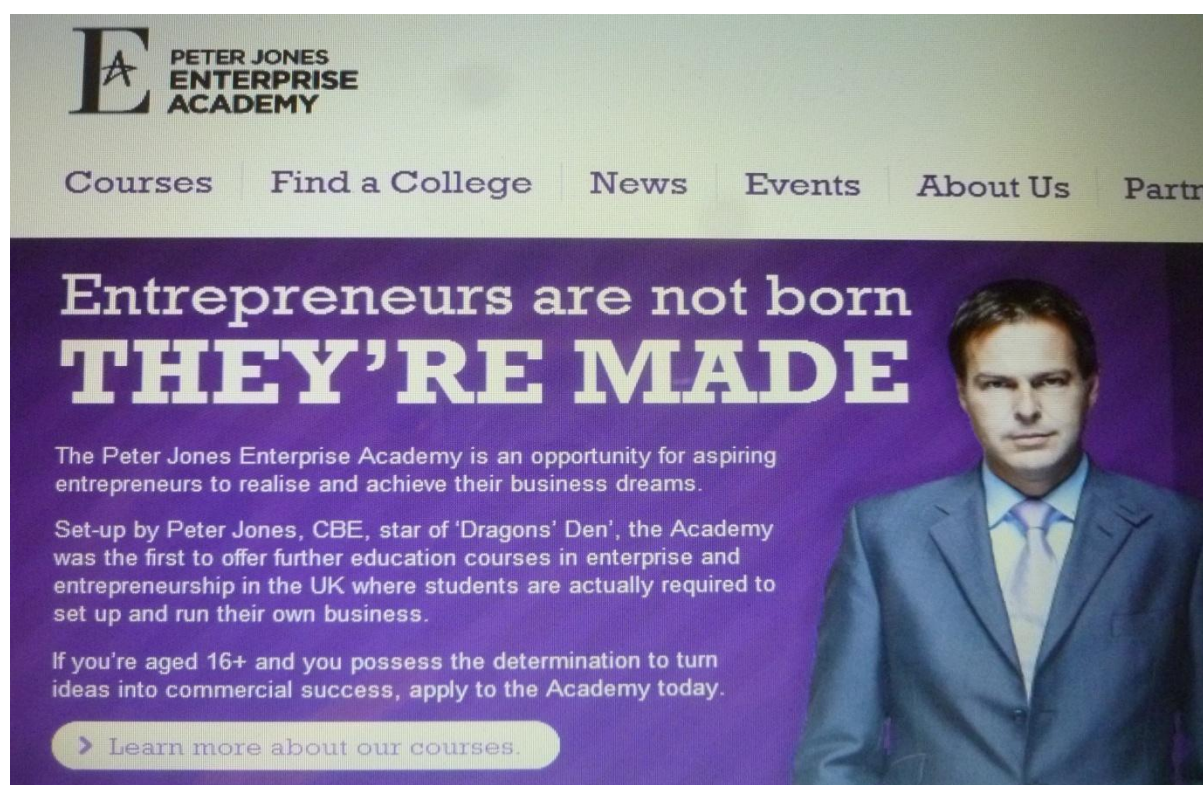
The 4H network at first looks comparable to the UK's Young Farmers movement. However on closer inspection it is very different. The Young Farmers is an organisation run by youth for youth. 4H, by comparison, is actually under the remit of the extension services and is therefore an organisation run by government-paid staff for the benefit of youth.

Young Farmers Clubs have increasingly tended towards a more social than educational role. 4H appeared more disciplined, and focused much more on personal skill development. During our Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference we were hugely impressed with the communication skills of a group of young fruit growers who talked to us. It transpired that they had received tuition in public speaking through their 4H activities.

Various initiatives were being used in Brookfield to encourage the local youth to act entrepreneurially and to think well of their home community. The 4H had reopened a local grocery store and had developed a weekend coffee shop. On graduation from high school the youth were given a personalised mail box to encourage them to come back home. A DVD had also been produced that highlighted significant local figures and entrepreneurs who had returned to the community after graduating. Clearly the hope was that these would provide inspiring role models.

11e. Enterprise schooling

At the Nuffield Dairy Group I came across a very enterprising young man named David Tavernor, son of UK Nuffield Scholar Roly Tavernor. Before going to University he was taking a year-long BTEC Diploma in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship at the National Enterprise Academy (www.thenea.org). This Academy was established by Peter Jones, an entrepreneur and one of the stars of *Dragons' Den*, and is aimed at *"equipping future generations of entrepreneurs with the skills and mind-set to run their own business."* From initial establishment in 2009 the course is now covered in 17 colleges.



The National Enterprise Academy homepage

As well as typical academic business teaching there is a sizeable element of more hands-on and experiential teaching. 'Enterprise Wednesdays' involve bringing in external speakers and tutors, typically from a practical business background, to give inspiration and pass on their expertise and experience. The course involves a four week placement with high profile companies and gives participants experience of setting up business ventures. The ethos is around developing a broad range of 'life-skills' and confidence that will serve them in any business environment.

Students come from a range of backgrounds. Selection criteria are weighted towards characteristics like attitude and ambition and an interest in business. Interestingly, around 50% of students have shown some element of business endeavour before joining the course. David Tavernor himself has established his own company selling football shirts via the internet, and hopes this will help to support his University studies (<http://soccertops.vistastudios.co.uk/>).

David and the course he has taken are exceptional. However, I do see my own children getting significant exposure to entrepreneurial encouragement, for example through school Youth Enterprise competitions. I have also been extremely impressed by the standard of the school Business Studies curriculum, and I feel my children have a much better grounding in business principles certainly than I had at their age.

My study also raised a debate in my mind about the influence of educational system on entrepreneurial culture. I do not have experience of private education; however a significant proportion of the enterprising people I met, both in the UK and in the Southern Hemisphere, have been through this system. Some argued that this had been beneficial to their business outlook. I recognise that this is a contentious area; however, if private education perhaps instils a greater self-confidence and networking capabilities, then it is realistic to conclude that it might therefore positively impact on subsequent enterprising spirit.

Experience and education go hand in hand. I found on my travels that there was general belief in the need for young people to work elsewhere before returning to a family business setting. Rhys Williams, one of my Nuffield peers and an outstanding people-manager, seeks out the best students from agricultural colleges and arranges work experience for them in New Zealand. He believes this gives them the best grounding in grassland and business principles. Another 2010 Scholar, Kevin Beaty, spent time in New Zealand at a relatively tender age and he argues that this transformed his business perspective.

The cultural support and role models we experience can set our aspirations from an early age. As one New Zealander put it, *"we were brought up to believe we could achieve anything we wanted. That has a profound effect on your self-belief"* (Sarah Elliot). As I grew up I was always told *"you only get out of life what you put into it"*, and I believe that has had a significant influence on my work ethic. I feel we need to sow positive seeds at an early age, and hope that they grow strong before they are challenged by the weeds of cultural negativity.

11f. Life-long learning

Regardless of our educational or experiential background, no-one is ever the finished article. Many of the entrepreneurs I met talked about learning on their feet and continually developing skills as they go along. Many talked of training programmes that they or their staff had undertaken to address particular skill deficiencies. Others talked about more general business or entrepreneurial education, and some even credited these with providing the spark that had ignited their business idea.

Often there seemed to be more value in such courses when they are taken at a more mature age. People tend to apply themselves better and learning could be related to previous experience. Similarly there appeared to be a greater appreciation and diligence when individuals or businesses were required to make a financial contribution to the course.

As you might expect from my educational background, I am a big advocate. I found my MBA hugely stimulating and challenging and it pushed me to consider myself, my business and the agricultural industry from a different level. By learning alongside people from a host of backgrounds I feel I have developed a greater self-awareness and confidence. I accept that not everyone would want, or be able, to make this level of commitment. There are, however, so many courses and means of delivery available that, if the desire is there, something can be found that fits the need.

At an industry level we need to be better at recognising the value of skills and education. Agriculture needs to attract the best people if it is to prosper. The best people, however, need to see a path of progression. The beauty of the sharemilking system in New Zealand is that it not only gives people a clearly defined goal structure, but also equips them with the necessary skills along the way. Through my association with DairyCo, I see the seeds being sown of a Continual Professional Development and Skills Recognition Programme within the dairy industry. This scheme is very much needed, but will need much support and impulsion to establish the critical mass and credibility it requires.

11g. Leadership courses

In many of the countries I visited and many of the circles I mixed in I came across individuals who had undertaken Rural Leadership Programs. Having participated in one myself, I was struck by the

"It was like taking the blinkers off - how it broadened your industry perspective"
Andy Terrell (USA)

similarity in objectives, content and delivery across the Globe. In the US I spoke to both participants and facilitators of these programs. Almost unanimously they spoke of the value of these courses.

"Leaders don't wait for others to develop them, they get on and do it themselves"
Dairy Australia AGM Breakfast

It was evident that leadership program graduates were assuming greater responsibility in shaping the future of rural economic development. Arguably, those who partake in these programs are the low hanging fruit of the industry and have an appetite to challenge themselves and make a wider contribution.

"It is better to pull up the front than to try to push up the average" Lynaire Ryan (NZ)

It was put to me however, that encouraging the best to get better was the most effective way to affect industry change.

The Scottish Rural Leadership Programme is sponsored by Scottish Enterprise. Through them, and J D Dunbar, who played a huge part in organising our Contemporary Scholars Conference and who I visited in Pennsylvania, I found myself talking at a US Rural Leadership Conference which took place in Scotland. Through this I made useful contacts and hosted the New York Leadership Program at my farm when they visited Scotland as part of their program. There was a genuine strength and energy

in this network and it was evident to me that Scottish Enterprise had drawn from the experience of other countries internationally in creating their own programme.

The program I participated in covered many areas such as rural development, political influence, media training, as well as deeper interpersonal skills. Perhaps the stand-out feature was one-to-one sessions with a life coach. This was deeply personal and dealt with areas such as goal setting and understanding our underlying issues and drivers. Everyone found this valuable, but for some people it had an enormous, even life-changing, impact. Leadership skills are relevant to every part of our personal and business lives. This reinforced to me that self-awareness plays such a big part in that.

11h. Wealth Creation Course

Prior to my Nuffield study, some of the most driven individuals I had come across, it transpired, had undertaken a Wealth Creation course that originated in Ireland. The purpose of my visit to Ireland was therefore to gain an understanding of what was behind this mythical course. Through my study I was fortunate enough to spend some fascinating time with Michael Murphy, Conn Hurley, and later in New Zealand with Lynnaire Ryan, who between them developed these courses. I also got some valued insight from former participants.

This course also covered many of the softer skills I have seen in Leadership courses. One significant aspect, I felt, was that couples were encouraged to participate, thereby keeping everyone on the same journey. The stand-out feature for me however, was the overt investor's mentality that it appeared to have instilled in participants. I was blown away by their attitude towards leveraging assets and capital growth, and by what many had gone on to achieve. Some had built up very substantial farming enterprises, while others had invested heavily outwith agriculture, most notably in property. Not surprisingly considering the prevailing economic climate, some have come quite dramatically unstuck, and this was a stark lesson in risk management.

Again, many of the participants would have been ripe and receptive for this type of business coaching, but nonetheless this course clearly pressed some very effective buttons to encourage the drive and entrepreneurship that ensued. I think a significant element may be that the coaches themselves were credible and walked the walk as well as talking the talk. There also seemed to be a strong element of competition between graduates. Indeed, it was subsequently put to me that the Wealth Creation course had created monsters, people who would walk over anyone to achieve their goals. It struck me that many business courses would happily settle for being half as successful.

11i. Peer support

One of the most enduring legacies of the type of courses discussed above is that they create positive and self-sustaining peer group *networks*. So many of the people I met on my travels stressed the need to mix with the right people. Innovative people spark ideas off each other. People draw confidence from mixing with positive people. Success breeds success.

Discussion groups

New Zealanders were the pioneers of discussion groups as a mechanism for agricultural business learning. Through their culture of cooperation and openness participants in these groups put themselves and their business performance up for scrutiny before their peers in a 'figures up on the wall' benchmarking approach. These groups are generally tight-knit and through time develop a high

degree of trust and mutual support. Good facilitators are key and are often replaced periodically to keep the format and ideas fresh.

Ireland has also adopted a discussion group format and participants can be promoted or relegated within a hierarchical system depending on their perceived contribution to the groups. I visited members of the Blackwater Dairy Discussion Group, probably the premier group in Ireland, and saw evidence of the constructive criticism dealt out and its motivational impact on participants.



A New Zealand discussion group

It is now well recognised that this discussion group format is one of the most effective knowledge transfer vehicles. Despite this it has been frustratingly challenging to develop in the UK. I have personally been involved in several groups, with varying degrees of satisfaction. None, I have to say, has been successful in achieving the forthright benchmarking that is the hallmark of the most driven and focused groups. There is reluctance amongst many to share information or divulge financial performance figures. I believe, in most instances, this stems more from a lack of willingness to challenge themselves than from a desire to protect competitive advantage.

Probably the most successful group I have been involved with has been developed through a Scottish Enterprise sponsored initiative called "Planning to Succeed". Scottish Enterprise deserves credit for its efforts in this area. It has provided seed funding for a host of groups in various sectors of the rural economy. My study has allowed me to appreciate more closely its role in rural development. The objective is not to focus on technical aspects, but instead to encourage a more professional business outlook.

11k. Role models

One of the most remarkable features of the successful people I met was their willingness to share their knowledge to help others. Michael Murphy, for example, specifically aims to set a significant proportion of his time aside to assist others free of charge.

Role models like Michael Murphy can have a powerful influence. I find there is nothing more convincing and inspiring than actually seeing tangible evidence of success and understanding how it was achieved. Perhaps it motivates the competitive streak in me - *"if they can do it why can't I?"*

This positive influence can be taken to another level through coaching or mentoring. To be challenged and stimulated regularly on a one-to-one basis by someone you respect and who has a wealth of business experience will undoubtedly focus the mind and raise the bar.

In Pennsylvania I was impressed by the use of "Profit Teams", where expert knowledge from, for example, a business's vet, nutritionist, breeding adviser, bank manager and accountant were all brought together as a facilitated group to collectively address a business's performance and development. Participants saw considerable value in the cohesive sharing of responsibility.

The extent and structure of the US extension services was very impressive. Enterprise initiatives I saw sought to provide support services to communities or start-up companies. These could take the form of providing technical assistance, specialist advice or counselling. In some cases it was about providing appropriate facilities or incubator units. In Australia there was a focus on business clusters, where the principle was to bring complementary businesses from different parts of a supply chain together so that they might develop reciprocal and self-sustaining relationships.

11l. Social entrepreneurship

There was recognition throughout my travels that many traditional agricultural business models were becoming increasingly unsustainable. In the US the concept of entrepreneurship as the business model for the future was much more developed than anywhere else I visited.

The Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI), based in Columbia, Missouri, hosts the Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship. The latter highlighted to me that 80% of US family farm income was from off-farm sources. The inference of this was that farmers needed vibrant rural economies rather than the other way around. It was also stressed to me that economic viability could not be isolated from either social wellbeing or environmental sustainability. The future, they argued, required much more diverse and differentiated business models. It was felt however that agricultural businesses had the resourcefulness to capitalise on this.

"Entrepreneurship is the answer and smart agriculturalists will lead the way" Chuck Fluharty (USA)

Before undertaking this study I had barely heard of the term "social entrepreneurship". This seemed to some extent an oxymoron. The community initiative in Brookfield was probably the first tangible example that I encountered. The motivation and drive for this program was for a greater good, and most of those involved did not directly stand to gain financially from the exercise. Indeed, in the US, programs such as "Energising Entrepreneurs" specifically aimed at encouraging enterprise at a community level. Private entrepreneurs were the vehicle, but it required proactive support from the community and civic leaders in particular.

More recently, and closer to home, I came across a local bus transport initiative run as a not-for-profit public-private initiative in which two leading local farmers were prominent on the Board. Of the 2009 UK Nuffield Scholars, Jim Shanks is working on a community wind turbine project and Ian Tremaine was involved in a community garden experiment. There are potential frustrations for an entrepreneurial personality in driving consensus and working alongside what can be a bureaucratic public-sector mentality. However, the entrepreneurial ability to marshal resources and motivate action is often the very thing these settings require.

The more benevolent element to entrepreneurship is something that is increasingly coming to the fore, particularly in the prevailing environment of financial constraint. There are increasingly examples of individuals, who perhaps have established their credibility through private endeavours, turning their skills to the benefit of others in society. As I saw in the motivations of the people I met, as we progress in life benevolent aspirations become increasingly important. I believe that to a greater or lesser extent we all have a desire to give something back. Entrepreneurship for many could be the most appropriate vehicle, and a way to more closely engage agriculturalists with broader society.

12. Putting learning into action

To my mind Nuffield is about positivity and drive, a determination to make a difference. The credibility that comes with the Nuffield brand is in itself an enabler towards making a positive impact. However, the tie also comes with responsibility. It is important that I use the stage that Nuffield provides to seize the moment and back up my learning with action. I therefore conclude this section by highlighting the responsibilities that I see for myself, and the wider industry, in encouraging a more entrepreneurial culture.

Cultural Change	Change the Conversation
Financial Incentives	Use the right carrot
Start Young	Sow the early seeds
Life-long Learning	Prepared minds
Peer Support	The right people around you
Social Entrepreneurship	Business minds in a social setting

Looking at the key areas for development I have discussed above I have to say I feel a hint of disappointment that I have not unearthed any silver bullets that I could see radically transforming attitudes to enterprise within UK agricultural businesses. If I am honest however, I don't really think the world works in a quick-fix way. Particularly when the goal is to mould cultural thinking, it is inevitably going to be a long-term play.

Most of the instruments I have highlighted are in fact already practised to some extent in the UK. Much of what I believe needs doing is not sexy or headline-grabbing. In many instances positive change will require doing many things better, or doing some things much more often, or perhaps with more conviction. In other cases it is about the industry taking greater ownership of its own destiny. To return to my horticultural analogy, it is about fertilising the green shoots that are already there.

My appointment to the Board of DairyCo potentially gives me a platform and a mandate to take action in many of the areas I have highlighted above. The ethos of DairyCo is about the dairy industry taking responsibility for its own issues and helping dairy farmers be more professional at what they do. I see this as very much congruent with my study.

The DairyCo role has very much focused my thinking on how you connect with individuals in a positive and motivational way. In many cases this is very challenging. I believe it is important not to

preach. It is about finding the right buttons that engage and stimulate different types of people. To be credible, I feel it is important to be able and prepared to lead by example.

Leadership inevitably involves putting yourself in the firing line, in the certain knowledge that there are plenty of people of a less positive persuasion who are more than happy to see you trip up or to shoot you down. That goes with the territory and it is important to have conviction and passion for taking the industry forward and not be deterred by negativity.

12a. Change the conversation

I appreciate that the farming unions have an important role to play, but the very nature of what they do perpetuates a negativity that can become insidious. The dairy industry has arguably reached a stage where it can't see beyond its own propaganda. We need to break out of that cycle and give people inspiration and direction.

To do that we need to accentuate the positives. The cup is half full not half empty. There are people making very significant profits within our industry. They are expanding vigorously and adding value in their businesses. We shouldn't be wary of highlighting that. We need case studies on these business people to elevate them as role models. We need to celebrate success.

I believe we need to up-skill the language we use. I highlighted earlier the symbolism of talking about being entrepreneurs. To more generally instil a business mentality we need to get better at talking about terms like profit, return on capital, net worth. The more we talk about them, the more normalised they become, and the more people will actually think about them.

On a more personal level, creating a profile for myself has never really been in my nature, or indeed been culturally encouraged. As I discussed earlier, the media are a significant vehicle in shaping perceptions and attitudes. My study has made me appreciate that to encourage a more positive mind-set within the industry I need to be much more pro-active in engaging with the agricultural press. If I am going to capitalise on the opportunity that Nuffield has given me I need to demonstrate the courage of my convictions.

12b. Use the right carrot

The devolved governments in the UK have shown much more receptiveness to agricultural issues than at a UK level. Close to home, the Scottish Government has shown an aptitude to listen and, where applicable, provide targeted support. I see a downside to this in that there is potentially a danger of perpetuating a culture of dependency over one of self-determination. That said, many of the measures they have introduced have been about building sustainability and resilience.

A significant stream of work that they have carried out was chaired by Brian Pack and looked at addressing the best means to support agriculture in the future. It attempted to address issues like encouraging new entrants and promoting a subsidy system that encouraged more economic activity and fluidity within rural communities. This was very much about finding the right carrot. The self-interest and protectionism that this enquiry surfaced within the agricultural industry was unedifying. We need industry leaders who are prepared to see the bigger picture, and grasp the nettles for the long term good of the industry.

Another interesting Government-inspired body is the Rural Development Council. This is a broadly based rural think-tank that has been charged at looking at sustainable economic growth. Much of

what it proposes has a strong thread of entrepreneurialism through it. The Scottish Government is also very supportive of the renewable energy sector and this sector is running with a 'gold-rush' mentality at the moment. It is important that high level support for these kinds of initiatives is sensible and matched with joined-up thinking at all levels of the system.

Where there are opportunities to have the ear of Government, I need to be prepared to sit before them with a sound and compelling message. That message will be that support should be directed in ways that promote the positive business thinking and practices I have seen through my study.

12c. Sow the early seeds

I am not saying this because of who my sponsors are, but organisations like the Royal Highland Educational Trust do sterling work in connecting young children with agriculture. They implant positive images of farming at a tender age. This is an organisation I will definitely be working more with in future.

In terms of shaping entrepreneurial thinking my feeling is that teenage years are highly significant. Most teenagers don't tend to think about business. They have plenty of other interests and understandably so. To connect with them I believe we need to work through mediums that work for them. 'The Dragons' Den' star Peter Jones has clearly done that with his entrepreneurial studies course. Internet based computer games offer scope to develop, for example, interactive enterprise games. This is straying outwith my comfort zone, but it is the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that I believe is required.

In the rural context specifically, the Young Farmers movement is hugely important in developing life-skills. While I was impressed by the US 4H movement, I don't think that culturally young people in this country would accept its formality and imposed structure. In the UK I feel enterprise initiatives needs to be more subtle and perhaps take the form of Young Farmer enterprise competitions, or a business focused travel bursary or work placement. The return on the cost of a plane ticket could be substantial.

I am soon to host a stock-judging competition for our local regional Young Farmers association. As part of the evening I have arranged for DairyCo to sponsor the side competitions. The thinking is to instil more of a business focus by highlighting the strength of relationship between profit and milk from forage and cow longevity, and to counter the natural youthful desires for high yielding show-type cows.

The most significant thing we can do to give young people the best start is by being positive role models. It is important to show them what they can achieve, and to demonstrate that they should have confidence in themselves and challenge established norms and negativity. I will use my Nuffield platform to put that message across at every opportunity.

12d. Prepared minds

I have to applaud the work that is going on through Scottish Enterprise in building capabilities in the rural economy. I have been a significant beneficiary of that work and I do not miss an opportunity to communicate the value I have derived from initiatives like Planning to Succeed and the Rural Leadership programme. It is crucial in the current financial climate that those holding the purse strings understand the value and the return they are getting for their commitment. Through my

study I have developed a greater appreciation of the people and mechanisms behind these programmes and I am sure that the skills and knowledge I have developed through Nuffield will be deployed to help enhance these programmes.

Having experienced and appreciated the benefits of firstly the Rural Leadership course and now the Nuffield program, it is important that I do all I can to convey the value of these programs to other potential candidates. The commitment and challenge that these programmes represent can seem daunting, and it is important that those who demonstrate the latent aptitude see beyond this and realise the potential payback for themselves, their businesses and the rural economy.

The Wealth Creation Course, which I was so impressed with, has not been run for a number of years. I sense there is an appetite amongst many of the more progressively minded agricultural operators for this type of business coaching. I intend to use the contacts I have developed through my Nuffield travels to enquire whether or how this course could be redeveloped.

As I mentioned earlier, there are plans afoot for a Continuous Professional Development program within the dairy sector. I do not underestimate the challenges of establishing such a scheme. It will certainly have my full support and I hope the positive thinkers within our industry will rally behind the cause.

12e. The right people around you

As part of my role with DairyCo and through the Scottish Enterprise's Planning to Succeed network I have considerable involvement, and I suppose influence, with discussion groups. This is an ideal forum to spread the kind of thinking that has developed through this report. I'm sure I will find myself speaking to groups about my Nuffield experience and what I have taken from it.

In the UK dairy sector the discussion group format is at a critical point in its development. It has passed the development phase, but is struggling to kick on to the benchmarking stage where most of the value lies. DairyCo has developed a benchmarking tool which standardises the costings comparison process. As I have a foot in both camps, it is important that I use my knowledge and influence to help promote this and develop this format to its potential.

Key to optimising the value of these initiatives is for the participants to be more proactive, and to take greater ownership and responsibility for long-term group development. There also needs to be more connectivity and networking between different groups to create the spread and ground cover in entrepreneurial thinking. This is an agenda I am actively pursuing.

The Planning to Succeed group of which I am a member has just enlisted Nuffield Scholar Matthew Currie as facilitator. This will take the degree of challenge and stimulation to another level, and I look forward to working with Mathew to see what we can achieve.

12f. Business minds in a social setting

Social entrepreneurship is relatively new on my radar, so I do not profess to have any well-formed route maps to the way ahead. It is not until you come across tangible examples of the concept that it truly registers and generates the thought processes. Perhaps, therefore, the first element to develop this notion within rural areas is to make a greater effort to seek out and highlight some of the best examples and practitioners.

As with any other type of entrepreneurship, it first requires the ability to recognise the opportunity, or more typically in social settings, the need. That involves genuinely understanding the circumstances of the environment in question. My understanding of poor examples of social entrepreneurship is when the enterprise is driven by the entrepreneurs' needs and wants and not those of the community.

In personal terms, this is one for the future. It goes back to the concept of prepared minds. I have seen it, I understand it, and I believe I probably have the skills to contribute. If and when the time and the circumstances are right it is something I am positively predisposed to.

13. Key lessons learned

I need to ask myself what I have taken from my study and how it has helped shape my thoughts for the future. I believe I have gained a huge amount from the experience and my association with Nuffield. I cannot claim to have had a 'eureka' moment, or a profound life-changing episode during my travels. I feel though, it has been another stage and a further progression for me as a businessman and as a person.

13a. Business development

One of the original goals of my study was to challenge myself more intensely from a business perspective and ask myself some searching questions about my strategic direction. Without doubt my study has certainly done that. I have used the framework that I established earlier to demonstrate the kind of questions it has raised in my mind.

13a.i Motivation

Key lesson

"The most focused individuals were very clear in visualising and verbalising their goals. They were proactive and even talked about envisaging the end-game, where they ultimately wanted to be. This gave them clarity of purpose and action."

Question - Am I focused enough about what motivates me and what I want to achieve?

I must admit that I have found it much harder to be definitive about my key motivations than I thought it would be, and certainly than it should be. This is deep personal stuff that goes to the very core of who we are and who we want to be. In conducting this exercise it struck me also that motivations and goals were not the same thing. Goals seemed to be specific aspirations or manifestations of motivations. Motivations themselves seemed to be deeper and more primitive.

I would always have argued that I am reasonably self-aware. However, as I found in looking at the motivations of others, this is a complex picture. Different things motivate me and I have had various goals at different levels in my life. Below, as an example, are the aspirations I set out for myself in my Nuffield application in 2009.

Goals for the next five years?

- *Continued expansion of the dairy enterprise. Improve efficiency, especially in area of grassland utilisation. Look to develop potential contract farming arrangements.*
- *Develop a wind energy generation project consisting of two 800 kw turbines.*
- *Seek other potential investment or business opportunities.*

- *Further develop my involvement with organisations such as DairyCo, NFU Mutual etc.*
- *Travel and broaden my horizons.*

Can I really do justice to all of these aspirations? During a hugely stimulating evening in an Irish pub with Conn Hurley, he challenged me to write down my top ten motivations, and then to rank them in order of their importance to me. This was excruciatingly difficult to do. His argument was that I had to understand the key things that were important to my future satisfaction and happiness, and that these should unequivocally be where my main efforts need to be focused.

Certainly I become most stressed when I feel I am not doing justice to myself or to the goals I have set myself. More and more opportunities are coming my way. Each represents more demand on my time and my energies. They require me to make more and more choices and compromises. If I am not proactive and clear in my own mind about where I am going and what I want to achieve I will potentially make the wrong choices or, possibly worse, make no choices at all.

It is imperative therefore that I set out what I want my world to look like in 10 years' time. This will highlight the things I need to do to achieve my ambitions, and set targets around when I need to achieve them. Just as importantly, it is likely to highlight the things I should not do.

13a.ii Outlook

Key Lesson

"The need to network and mix with like-minded people was stressed to me many times. Some encouraged me to mix outside agricultural circles to broaden my perspective. Others advocated business mentors to challenge and stimulate".

Question – Have I the right people around me to stretch my thinking?

I am not a natural networker. I have long recognised it as a personal weakness. I am not socially driven and need to consciously make the effort to broaden my circle. I believe we are drawn towards people who view the world in a similar perspective to our own and to some extent I have struggled to find that. That is the huge attraction of Nuffield for me and why I believe I feel so comfortable within this network.

My association with Nuffield has been hugely beneficial to my aspiration to improve the efficiency of grass utilisation in my dairy business. My peer group contains some of the top players in terms of grass-based milk production in the UK and I have learned a great deal from them at a time when I was highly receptive to that message. The Nuffield Dairy Group has been stimulating and enjoyable and has introduced me to some of the best operators in UK dairying. This group constantly challenges and inspires my business thinking and its annual study tour is an absolute must in my diary.

Of particular strength to me has been my association with Tom Rawson and Wallace Hendrie. There are considerable similarities between Wallace's business issues and my own and Wallace sees many things in a similar vein to me. Like Wallace, I employed Tom on a consultancy basis to help us to establish the necessary ground rules and discipline during our first year on a rotational paddock grazing system. Tom's personal entrepreneurial drive and focus have been inspirational. We are now both Board members for DairyCo and we have developed a candid mutual respect. In these guys I now have friends and confidantes who understand where I am coming from and with whom I can bounce ideas off.

I believe to take things to the next level, and to achieve the personal focus that I have identified as deficient above, I need to consider a business mentor. This was something that emerged strongly on my travels. More recently, Tom Rawson and another friend from my MBA days have started to work with mentors. Both speak highly of the value this brings to their strategic thinking. I need to give some serious consideration to the type of mentor and the type of challenge I am looking for.

13a.iii Business Skills

Key Lesson

"People's focus was generally on the resource that constrained them most. My thinking was probably most stretched and challenged by the investor-type attitude of some, in particular by their focus on return on capital. When capital was the chief constraint, people were incredibly resourceful in its sourcing and deployment. They were not hung up on asset ownership and in many cases developed business structures that either leveraged existing resources or employed other people's capital."

Question - Am I focused enough on return on capital?

Significantly, capital has not been a major constraint on our business. Our strategy in recent years has been one of steady expansion. We have invested significantly, but it has been growth within our own skin. We have not pushed the boat out too far or taken on excessive amounts of debt.

I have always been profit focused and I believe I understand the fundamentals that drive the bottom line for my business. The changes we have made through better forage utilisation have driven our profitability to new levels and our business could stand comparison with most in the industry.

We therefore have a scenario of a profitable business with a healthy balance sheet and considerable credibility with the bank manager. Many of the examples I have seen through my study have made me ask myself whether I am making best use of that net worth. Return on capital has certainly not been a benchmark to which I have given too much consideration. Should we therefore be leveraging our balance sheet much more aggressively to grow our business or to develop other investment avenues?

There are opportunities that may profitably deploy this borrowing headroom without impacting on the operation of our core dairy business. We have already invested a significant amount in pursuing a wind turbine enterprise. Frustratingly, this is proving

problematic to get through planning and may come to nothing. If this endeavour is unsuccessful, and it won't be for want of trying if that is the case, this will be a loss we will have to take. I am determined not to beat myself up about this. In terms of risk versus potential rewards I still see it as a venture worth pursuing.

I am however mindful of two salutary quotations from Michael Murphy in Ireland: *"Only invest where you understand and only gamble what you are prepared to lose"* and *"If you don't know your meat, make sure you know your butcher really well"*. I will continue to look at other investment opportunities, but they must be in areas that we are comfortable with, or with people that we trust.

13a.iv Leadership

Key Lesson

"Almost without exception the people I met appeared decisive and knew their own minds. In some cases they had defined their values, vision and mission within their business. The aspirations they set were relevant and achievable, and created inspiration and direction for all those involved in their business."

The most effective individuals had a keen self-awareness and could articulate their key competences within their business. They stressed the importance of building a team around them and employing the best people to complement their skills."

Question – Does everyone else understand the journey I am on and do they want to go there too?

Like many family businesses we very rarely sit round the table to have a structured discussion about strategic direction. Family politics and personalities can make it difficult to establish the processes and professionalism that we know we should. There is a tendency for consensus to evolve over time or strategic direction to be shaped by external events or forces. My study has made me appreciate that if we are to take our business to another level we will need to be more systematic in forming our strategic direction.

That process will involve all of us having to be open-minded and laying our cards on the table. That will involve others in the business doing the same soul searching regarding their motivations and goals as I discussed earlier. Amongst the business partners there is a diversity of personalities. Sometimes this is healthy and at other times destructive. Some of the businesses I visited used an external facilitator to chair these types of discussions and I can see considerable value in that. We need to establish how, or even whether, we realise our needs and ambitions within the structure of our business.

We have a good team of people working with us; people we get on well with and enjoy working with, which I believe is very important. If I am honest I have to question whether we are under-utilising their potential. In a similar vein to the above we don't have regular team meetings to review where we are, where we are going next and how we can be better at what we do. I feel we need to be better at encouraging the team to develop their skills and empowering them by involving them more in decision making.

My study was a chance to step back and allow others to take more responsibility. It was unfortunate that it coincided with one of the coldest spells of weather in living memory, which meant that their time was spent dealing with the constant need to keep the wheels turning. It certainly did not allow them to appreciate the joys of operating the business without me.

The question still remains, if I want to develop other interests and enterprises, am I too committed day to day with the core business? Again, my greatest stress stems from stretching myself too thinly. There are cultural and family expectations at play here which I need to challenge and resolve. At the point of finalising this report there are changes afoot around personnel within the business. This creates some challenges and uncertainty, but at the same time presents an opportunity to address some of these underlying issues.

13b. Personal Development

Sometimes when you look back at things it seems they were just meant to be. That is how I view Nuffield. When I came across Nuffield I was already involved with the governance of the milk cooperative First Milk. I progressed to the Board of the business, and with the commitment that required I had put aside my aspirations to do a Nuffield. I then lost an election for my local area position which effectively removed me from my position on the First Milk Board. Quite obviously that came as a huge blow. However, the very day that happened I was in touch with John Stones to register my interest in a Nuffield Scholarship.

I now look back on that event as probably the best thing that ever happened to me. It was as though I had made the wrong choice and some higher power had put me on the right path before it was too late. The positivity of Nuffield was the perfect antidote to the negativity that had brought about my election defeat, and my experience of the last 18 months has gone a long way towards exorcising that ghost.

My study has helped me develop my capabilities to make the kind of contribution I would like to. It has given me a broader perspective on life and enhanced my ability to step back and view the bigger picture. The value of having developed a network of friends and contacts around the world is immeasurable. Having tested myself and extended my boundaries I feel much more confident to take on fresh challenges.

As much as anything else, Nuffield motivates me to raise the bar. I have a lot to do to justify the faith placed in me, and to live up to the Nuffield standards.

14. Nuffield reflections

The whole Nuffield experience has been hugely enjoyable and stimulating. It has been everything I hoped it would be and more. I was drawn to Nuffield by the positive outlook of the people I had come across and I find it such a shot in the arm to interact with people who do not gripe about anything, who seek opportunities and who take personal and collective responsibility. One aspect of Nuffield that I particularly appreciate is the desire from individuals to see, and celebrate, others' success.

The Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC) in Pennsylvania could not have been a better start to my year group's Nuffield experience. I think we all felt tremendously privileged by the reception we received and the effort that everyone made on our behalf. To come through the whole CSC experience you could not fail to 'get' what Nuffield was all about.

The CSC has created a cohesiveness that I think will endure. It was good to have a few days in London first to enable us UK scholars to bond as a group, but it was also tremendous to get to know our international colleagues. The various trips undertaken as groups such as to China, India, Cambodia and France will only reinforce friendships, and with Adam West as unofficial social convenor things look really good for a strong year group. I sincerely hope we have a full table at Nuffield Conferences for many years to come.

I could not have asked for my travels to have gone any better. There were times when it was challenging and when the pace caught up with me, but on the whole I found it an exhilarating experience. The people I met and stayed with could not have been more helpful and I look back on the experience with fond memories and considerable satisfaction.

Above all else Nuffield gives me a feeling of connection. I feel so comfortable and converse so easily in Nuffield company. I have found my involvement with the Dairy Study Group and the Business Group enormously inspiring and invigorating. I think David Stevens encapsulated it for me during the 2010 Dairy Study Tour in Cornwall when he said he thought I had found my spiritual home.

15. Acknowledgments

I would firstly like to take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank my sponsors The Royal Highland Agricultural Society of Scotland and Nuffield Scotland for their support. I hope I can justify their investment in me.

To everyone at Nuffield, I appreciate the faith they have placed in me. I would especially like to thank John Stones for his encouragement and support.

I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone who gave so freely of their time and hospitality during my travels. It will live long in my memory.

In particular I would like to thank those who played pivotal roles in my travels:

- ✓ In the US I have to specially thank Alan Bair, who organised my week in Pennsylvania. He introduced me to some fantastic people and he and Sally could not have been more helpful and welcoming.
- ✓ Kevin Beaty deserves huge praise for his organisation of the China tour. It was a big responsibility in a challenging country. We all gained so much from the experience.
- ✓ In Australia, I would like to express my appreciation to the Nuffield contacts and the Gardiner Foundation team, particularly Karen Delany. They did sterling work and pulled together some fascinating visits for me.
- ✓ During my New Zealand leg, Mandi McLeod and Desiree Reid deserve special gratitude, both for their incredible hospitality and their fulsome assistance with my study.

Above all I have to thank my family and staff who held the fort for me at home. While I was having the experience of a lifetime they were coping with one of the coldest spells of weather in living memory. I am profoundly grateful. Honest!

And a final special thanks to Joyce and the team for their support and encouragement. I couldn't have done it without you.

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Appendix A. – Study diary

Contemporary Scholars Conference : 6–14 March 2010

Washington DC

- 6th - Ice Hockey (Washington Capitals vs New York Rangers)
- 7th - Scholar introductions
Overview of US Agriculture, Bart Ruth and Hope Pjesky
Tour of Washington monuments
- 8th - Conference – Setting the Scene Globally
- Dr David M Kohl, Professor Emeritus, Virginia Tech
Bob Young, Chief Economist AFB
Robin Twyman, First Secretary, British Embassy
Alistair Polsen, Special Trade Envoy, NZ
James Su Hao, GM and Director, East Rock Ltd, China
Bill Cordingley, Rabobank
Ron Helinski, New West Technologies
Chris Delgado, Strategy and Policy Adviser, World Bank
Professor John Ikerd, Prof. Emeritus of Agricultural Economics
Ernest C. Shea, MD Natural Resource Solutions
Reception at Canadian Embassy

Gettysburg

- 9th - Tour of Gettysburg Battlefield
- Leadership Session based around battle strategy and generals
Abraham Lincoln impersonator
- 10th - Adams County
- Mason Dixon Dairy Farm – Dick Waybright
Young Fruit Growers Alliance discussion
Winery Visit
- 11th - Conference at PA Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg
- Russell Reading, Secretary, PA Department of Agriculture
Mario Castillo, Aegis Group
Judy Schwank, Dean of Agriculture, Delaware Valley College
Brian Snyder, PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture
Keith Eckel, Eckel Farms
April Cooper, Appealing Holsteins
JD Dunbar, PA RULE
Brook Duer, PA Dep of Ag. Chief Legal Counsel
Keith Hite, PA State Association of Township Supervisors
Anne Swanson, Chesapeake Bay Commission

Dr Jim Shortle, Penn State University
 Don McNutt, Lancaster Conservation District
 Dinner at the Governor's Residence

12th - Visit to New Holland Factory

Visit to Amish Farm, Sam and Susie Riehl
 Visit to mushroom farm, Berks County
 Evening at race meeting

13th - Group Tasks

Facilitator – Paul Ford
 Farewell dinner, JD Dunbar, Paul Ford, Russell Reading

14th - Depart for Washington

Republic of Ireland : 22 – 25 August 2010

22nd - Bill O'Keeffe, Clara, Co. Kilkenny Churchclara Friesians (Dairy farmer, Greyhound enterprise)

23rd - Michael Murphy, Conakilty, Co. Cork (Farmer and investor, Founder of Wealth Creation course)

23rd - Conn Hurley, Union Hall, West Cork – (Former editor of Irish Farming Journal, Life coach)

24th - Michael Scully, Conakilty, Co. Cork (Farmer, property investor, predominantly in Poland)

24th - Bill O'Keeffe, Conna, Co. Cork (progressive dairy farmer)

25th - Peter Baker, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary (diversified from dairy farming, former property investor)

25th - Brendan Muldowey, Clockjordan (formerly in banking sector, aspiring to establish own dairy unit)

United States of America : 6 – 20 September 2010

University of Missouri, Columbia

7th - Karen Dabson, Partner in OrgMent, Organisational Consultancy
 Professor Brian Dabson, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI)
 Professor Randy Westgren, McQuin Chair of Entrepreneurship

8th - Professor Tom Johnston, Director of RUPRI Analytic and Academic Programs

Sharon Gulick, Director of the University of Missouri Extension, Community Economic and Entrepreneurial Development (ExCEED)
 Professor Charles (Chuck) Fluharty, Director of RUPRI
 Jenn and Ken Muno, Goatsbeard Cheese (goat's cheese production)

9th – Brookfield Community Development Program
 Becky Cleveland - Executive Director
 Steve Henness – VISTA Program Coordinator, 4H Center for Youth Development

10th - Grasslands LLC , South Missouri (Largely New Zealand owned dairy operation)
 Gary Nolan, Dairy Operations Manager
 University of Missouri, Dairy Extension Farm Open Day
 Tony Finch, General Manager, Grasslands LLC

11th - Nial Murphy – Farm Manager, Grasslands LLC

Pennsylvania

12th - Alan Bair, Director, Dairy Industry Relations, PA Dairy Stakeholders

13th - Steve Graywood, Graywood Farms, Peach Bottom, PA (700 cows, Maryland Virginia Dairy Coop Director)

13th - Noah Kreider (1500 cows, milk retailing, 4.5 million laying hens)

14th - Roman Stotzfoos (250 cows, organic, tall grass grazing system, composting)

15th - Roy Hetrick, Hetrickdale Farms (1000 cow family business)
 William Leshner, Way Har Farms (150 cows, milk processing, farm shop and tea room)

16th - Duane Hetzler, Mooecho Farms (350 cows, grazing system, Director in various capacities)
 Gordon Hoover, Director, Eastern Milk Supply, Land of Lakes Coop

17th - Alfred Wanner (700 cows, Anaerobic digestion)
 Mid Atlantic Farm Credit
 Brian Detwiler, Special Assets Manager
 Keith Wills, Loan Officer
 Andrew Terrill, Agricultural Specialist

18th - Don Risser, Meadow Vista Farm (500 cows, Coop Director, premier costings practices)
 Luke Brubaker, Brubaker Farms (800 cows, renewable energy, political roles)
 Jean Lonie, Director of Communications, PA Department of Agriculture

19th - JD Dunbar, CEO The Pennsylvania Rural Leadership Program

China : 18-28 October 2010

19th - ZengZhou – Agricultural Convention
 Dairy processing and farm visit, Cultural Show

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- 20th - Hohhot, Inner Mongolia
Ille Dairy and farm visit
 - 21st - Sheep Breeding Station, Mongolian Museum
 - 22nd - Beijing
Model Township
James Su Hao, General manager and Director, East Rock Limited
Gary Mottershead, President, GCP Industrial Products
 - 23rd - Tourist visits. Great Wall, Forbidden Palace
 - 24th - Guangzhou
Benson, Assistant General Manager, Jin Toa Fresh Produce Logistics Co. Ltd (Fruit marketing)
Ben Quin, Zhongshan Jianyi Group (Various interests, beef imports etc)
 - 25th - Michael Chen, General Manager, Honmill International Ltd (Tarpaulin manufacture)
Teaching experience
 - 27th - Visit to Sarite's village, wet market, pig and duck farms.
 - 28th - Day in Hong Kong

Australia : 20 November – 5 December 2010

- 21st - Gardiner Foundation
Paul Ford, Chief Executive
Dr Karensa Delany, Manager, Innovation
- 21st - Dairy Australia
Steve Coates, Head of Research and Development and Knowledge Transfer
Jo Bills, Manager of Strategy and Knowledge
- 22nd - Max Jelbart, Leongatha, South Victoria, (large scale dairy, tea room)
Ross Svenson, Walkerville, South Victoria, (beef production, property speculation)
- 23rd - Paul Mumford, Won Wron, Victoria, (pedigree Jersey dairy herd)
Graeme Nicoll, Fish Creek, Victoria (grassland dairy production)
- 24th - Dairy Australia Farm Discussion Group
Ross Batten, (beef farmer, tarpaulin sale and hire company)
- 25th - Dairy Australia AGM and Breakfast Reception
Terry Hehir, Kyabram, Victoria (Organic dairy farmer, Chairman of True Organics and Nuffield Australia)
- 26th - Mulcahy Brothers, Kyabram, Victoria (large scale dairy production, milk processing, A2 milk)
Jim Geltch, Moama, NSW (tomato production, CEO Nuffield Australia)
- 27th - Roma Britnell, Wolsthorpe, Western Victoria (1st generation dairy farming)
- 28th - Professor Paul Collits, Chair of Enterprise Studies, RMIT Hamilton

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- Matt Reid, Cobdon, Western Victoria (recently established dairying enterprise)
 - 29th - Shaw River Buffalo, Port Fairy, Western Victoria (milking buffalo, Mozzarella cheese production)
Aussie Farmers Direct (on-line retailer, visit to new dairy processing site)
 - 29th - Ian Urquart (various interests, travel agencies)
 - 30th - Apostle Whey, Simpson, Western Victoria (dairy farming, diversified into cheese production)
Dairy Australia Large Herds farm meeting
Handspun Wool, Wendy Dennis (coloured wool marketing, Polworth breed)

Tasmania

- 1st Dec - Frank Knight, Hobart, TAS (family business, Aberdeen Angus cattle, irrigated crops)
- 2nd - Rob Henry, Cressy, TAS (exotic crops, oil extraction, composting)
- 3rd - Tas Global Seeds, Rob Dent and Bob Reid (breeding specialist forage seed varieties)
- 3rd - Ashgrove Cheese, Jane Bennet (cheese production and on-site retailing, milk processing)
- 4th - 40 Degrees south, Ziggy Parker (fish farming, ginseng production)

New Zealand : 5-20 December 2010

- 5th - Mandi McLeod, Pirongia (consultancy, particularly succession planning)
- 6th - Jim Van Der Poel, Te Awamuto (Director of Spectrum Dairies, Director of Fonterra)
Dairy NZ farm discussion meeting
- 7th - Ian Elliot, Tokoroa (dairy farms, kiwi fruit, Director of Prison Fellowship International and Liberty Genetics)
- 8th - Bill McLeod, Chairman of Ravenswood Fertiliser Cooperative
- 8th - Mike O'Connor, Te Awamuto (Managing Director of Spectrum Dairies)
- 9th - Dev and Joy Thomas, Rotorua (dairy Farm expansion)
- 10th - Andrew Watters, Ashhurst (partner in Myfarm, farm syndicate investments)
- 11th - Professor David Deacon, Massey University, Wellington
- 12th - Wayne and Sue Pamment, Kikakura (Sharemilking to ownership)
- 13th - Geoff and Julie Stephenson (Sharemilking to ownership)

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- 13th - Alan Pye, Christchurch (business empire, Dairy holding Ltd, Tasmanian and Australian farming business interests)
 - 14th - Lincoln University farm walk – Adrian Van Bysterveld
Linaire Ryan, Christchurch (Dairy NZ consultant, dairy farm investor, Wealth Creation course)
Desiree Reid, Temuka (dairy farming, Fonterra Shareholders Council)
 - 15th - Tom Lambie, Pleasant Point (Chancellor of Lincoln University, Chairman of Opuha Water Ltd)
 - 16th - Les Keeper, Queenstown (dairy enterprises, Commercial property investment)
 - 17th - Maurice Hardie, Otauta (Dairy Farming, Fonterra Board Member candidate)
 - 18th - Alan Hubbard, Timarua (financier and investor, recently bankrupted)
 - 19th - Ross Orr, Rangiora (diversified from farming, soil analytics, clothing retail)

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