



RECORD

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The President writes

My thanks to David Rath and the entire Council for their work with the association over the past twelve months.

The Agricultural Science Association has a number of key issues facing it over the coming year. The most important of which is that of its identity and function in the changing educational and work environment. One of the key changes in the past year has been the integration of the Faculty of Agri-Food and the Environment in UCD into the College of Life Sciences.

Increasingly we have more applied scientists such as geneticists, microbiologists and biochemists working as professionals in agriculture. This has raised questions regarding the membership of the ASA. The organisation will bring forward proposals and invite submissions from current members on this issue before advancing. In this review, the possibility of a change in the name of the organisation may also be considered to reflect the widening arena in which agricultural scientists are active.

Another issue of importance facing the organisation is maintaining the link with HR departments of all major agri-businesses, to ensure the profile and knowledge of the Agricultural Science degree is maintained and advanced. There is a danger of our members becoming 'typecast' as traditional Agronomists – if this happens it will weaken our role and input to agri-food policy. In reality, Agricultural Science graduates are highly adaptable and functional due to their scientific and broad based business and professional qualifications. The ASA will continue its endeavors to ensure that the qualifications of our members are promoted and valued by the wider business community and government organisations.

To help connect companies seeking Agricultural Science graduates with our large membership base, the ASA Careers Service was launched earlier this year. The initiative has been a resounding success with nearly 100 jobs advertised to date on our on-line careers directory. I would encourage all members interested to ensure that we have your current email address so that you can receive notification of the opportunities available.

ASA is also endeavoring to develop further its European connections through CEDIA, the European association of agronomists (www.cedia.com). The objective is to have a similar level of qualification (level 8 degree) such as our own BAgrSc, applied throughout the EU and harmonise qualification standards in accordance with the Bologna accord. This would provide more opportunities for our graduates to travel and work and ensure equal access to EU Commission contracts.

In the rapidly changing environment that agriculture finds itself in, the ASA is committed to punching above its weight, delivering member services and ensuring that our voice is heard both nationally and internationally.

The ASA will pursue the important topics that affect members by lobbying on the major issues. We will continue to lobby the Department of Agriculture and Food on the Prescription Only Medicines issue as well as making submissions on the revised Nitrates Directive, REPS and other issues of interest to the association as they arise.

To facilitate the work of the association and more rapidly advance our aims four sub-committees have been created. These are: Administration and Finance, Marketing and Communications, Member Services, and Science and Policy. The committees comprise council members and external expertise where required.

James Fitzgerald

ASA President 2005/2006



James graduated from UCD in 1989 with a BAgrSc qualification in General Agriculture. He started his working career with a farm input supply business in Co. Laois, returning to his native Roscommon to take over the family farm when his parents retired in 1994. He established his own agricultural consultancy business in 1995 and runs a successful REPS planning agency covering the counties of Roscommon, Mayo and Galway. He is also involved in Nutrient Management Planning for industrial and Public Service organisations. James has served on the council of the ASA since 2001.

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Strengthening of Agricultural Science at UCD

By Professor Maurice Boland*

On his appointment as president in January 2004, Dr Hugh Brady instigated a thorough review of all aspects of academic life at UCD. The objective was to position UCD as the top research university in Ireland and amongst the top 30 universities in Europe. The subsequent restructuring from 11 Faculties and 90 Departments into 5 Colleges and 35 Schools came into effect on 1st September 2005.

Restructuring

The Departments in the Faculty of Agri-Food and the Environment have been located into three Schools. Staff from Food Science, Animal Science, Crop Production, Agribusiness and Bio-Systems Engineering have joined with those from Veterinary Medicine to form the School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine. Staff from Environmental Resource Management, Horticulture, Forestry and Rural Development have joined with Botany and Zoology to form the School of Biological and Environmental Science. Both of these Schools are within the College of Life Sciences which also includes the School of Medicine and Medical Science, and School of Chemistry and Chemical Biology among others. Staff associated with Landscape Architecture have joined the School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering in the College of Engineering, Mathematical and Physical Sciences.

New Curriculum

A second major change has been the introduction of a modularised and semesterised curriculum - UCD Horizons, for all first year students entering in 2005. This was not a major change for staff or students in our former Faculty as we had been essentially semesterised for a number of years, with most courses examined at the end of the semester they were taken in. However, there is now a greater degree of choice; students have the option of taking elective courses outside of their immediate area of study. This will provide a broader educational experience and should be beneficial



for the students; students can also spend a semester abroad during the undergraduate years.

BAgrSc Programme Strengthened

The BAgrSc degree programme is strong and will benefit from the formation of the new schools; new courses will be developed in future that will further enhance the learning experience. Applications to the BAgrSc programme increased for 2005 following an awareness campaign in schools. The launch of €200,000 worth of industry sponsored scholarships will also help raise awareness of the benefits of a broad Agricultural Science education to 2006 entrants.

School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine

This School is one of the largest Schools in the College of Life Sciences and supports the indigenous agri-food and animal health industries in Ireland by educating students to become industry leaders and by conducting world class, cutting edge research. The School is a centre of expertise in the sciences underpinning the safety of the food chain, food quality, animal health and welfare and public health and also provides education and innovation for the companion and sport animal sector.

The Agricultural Science graduates of the future will continue to provide leadership, innovation and information to act as leaders for a dynamic industry that will continue to evolve in the years ahead.

* Professor Maurice Boland is Head of the School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine, he is also a member of the Governing Authority of UCD.

Ten Scholarships valued at €20,000 each launched to mark UCD 150

The UCD BAgrSc Programme in association with ten national/international companies has launched a scholarship programme with total funding of €200,000, as part of UCD's 150th anniversary celebrations.

€20,000 Scholarship

The scholarships valued at €20,000 will be awarded to the student who enters each of the BAgrSc degree programmes with the highest mark in a specified Leaving Certificate Examination subject. €5,000 per year will be available to the student to fund their education over the four years of the degree. The scholarships will be open to students who enter the BAgrSc programme in September 2006.

Industry Funded

Each scholarship is being fully supported by a leading company/organisation from the relevant sector. As well as financially supporting the student, the

company will have the opportunity to host that student for a period of time as part of the Professional Work Experience (PWE) module of their degree.

The companies supporting the scholarships are:

Alltech Ireland, Bord Bia, Bord na Mona, Dawn Meats, Devenish Nutrition, Green Belt, Keenan, Kerry Ingredients, Murray Landscape Architects and SAP Nursery/Landscape.

Through this initiative and as a direct result of the generous sponsorship from leading companies and organisations, the benefits of a broad science based degree in Agricultural Science and related areas will be highlighted to a wider section of secondary level students.

For information on the BAgrSc scholarship programme contact the Programme Office on (01) 716 7194 or see www.ucd.ie/lagandvet

CAO Code	Degree Programme	Specified Leaving Certificate subject that scholarship will be awarded in	Sponsor
DN010	Agricultural Science (Omnibus Entry)	Agricultural Science	Richard Keenan & Co.
DN040	Food Science	Biology	Kerry Ingredients
DN041	Landscape Architecture	Art	Murray & Associates Landscape Architects
DN042	Forestry	Mathematics	Green Belt
DN043	Food and Agribusiness Management	Business	Bord Bia
DN044	Applied Environmental Sciences	Geography	Bord na Mona
DN045	Animal and Crop Production	Agricultural Science	Dawn Meats
DN046	Animal Science	Biology	Devenish Nutrition
DN047	Engineering Technology	Mathematics	Alltech Ireland
DN048	Horticulture, Landscape & Sportsturf Management	Biology	SAP Nursery/Landscape

Clover – An Amazing Graze

Michael White is a Teagasc Dairy Adviser based in Thurles, co. Tipperary. He was the 2004 winner of the ASA/AIB Bursary Award. This award sponsored Michael to travel to Scotland to study the use of clover in pastures. Below he outlines the findings of his studies.

I visited Scotland for a week at the end of October 2005 to examine the use of Clover in their pastures. I was fortunate to meet up with Seamus Donnelly, Senior Consultant, and David Keiley, Consultant, both with the Scottish Agricultural College based Advisory Service in the Stranraer and Dumfries region of Southern Scotland. There is a strong emphasis on organic farming in this region; a farming system which may assume a greater importance in Ireland in the future with the introduction of REPS 3, the Single Farm Payments and the Nitrates Directive. From the Scottish experience both red and white clover would play an important role in this scenario. This report will examine clover in an organic farming context.

Benefits of Grass/Clover Swards Compared to Grass Swards

Grass/clover swards can produce similar dry matter yield as a grass sward receiving 200 kg of fertilizer nitrogen per hectare. They maintain high digestibility over a longer period than grass leading to improved intakes. Such swards give up to 10% higher liveweight

gain in cattle, 20% more milk from dairy cows and 25% higher liveweight gain in sheep. The forage enhances lean meat gain and milk protein content and contains more minerals, in particular magnesium, thereby reducing the risk of animal health problems associated with mineral deficiency. There is evidence of reduced nitrogen loss to the environment and clover gives rise to greater biodiversity in swards.

Clover Sowing on Organic Farms

Clover is mainly sown on organic farms in Scotland by firstly ploughing and sowing a silage mix of red clover/Italian Ryegrass/peas and barley. In the second year the red clover and Italian Ryegrass is cut for silage. In the third year this area is then ploughed again and a permanent grass/white clover mixture is sown to last for 5 years. This rotation is repeated on an ongoing basis.

The use of chemical weed killers is not tolerated in organic farming. This eliminates the use of glyphosate products for burn off and the use of weedkillers in undersown newly established

clover reseeds. In Scotland they have tried to overcome this problem in two ways. Firstly, they control docks by topping a number of times before flowering. Secondly, they use scratcher type tined harrows such as the Einbock and Optico machines, to tear out weeds like chickweed in new reseeds.

Key Issues Encountered on Organic Farms

- Docks are controlled by regular ploughing and topping.
- Bloat was not a problem on the farms visited.
- Most farmers agreed there was a need for further research to develop more productive and persistent varieties, particularly of red clover, that start growth earlier in the spring.
- The red clover/Italian Ryegrass/barley and peas silage provided an excellent forage.
- All farmers interviewed agreed that clover is a cheap source of nitrogen for at least five years and is very complementary to a grass sward especially where chemical nitrogen cannot be used.
- Farmers believed that a derogation for organic farmers

to use glyphosate products (a recognized safe product) would be a vital aid to both control docks and eliminate ploughing by direct drilling of clover/grass mixtures.

- Need for researchers to quantify the economics of clover/grass based systems versus conventional grass swards for all enterprises.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the Scottish experience of the use of clovers in organic farming situations will compliment the invaluable research being carried out by Dr. James Humphries, Teagasc Moorepark on white clover oversowing in Ireland.

In conclusion, I give an apt quote from our Scottish colleagues:-

Set backs can occur despite your best endeavors. Drought, extreme rainfall, harsh winters, slug and pest damage all contribute to the fluctuating clover content. Regular oversowing with new clover seed can help to counteract such fluctuations and ensure a more consistent contribution from the clover component of the sward.

2005 ASA/AIB Travel Bursary Winner Announced



Grace is pictured with David Rath, AIB, Sponsors of the Bursary and James Fitzgerald, ASA President.

Grace O'Gorman, a graduate student in the UCD School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine has been announced as this year's winner of the ASA/AIB Travel Bursary. Grace is currently completing her PhD in the area of animal health and in particular the mechanisms of tolerance to disease in African cattle populations. Her aim is to use the African cattle disease model as a means to implement cutting edge genomic technologies to diseases that affect Irish farm animals.

The bursary, which is worth €6,000, will enable Grace to attend two relevant conferences, collaborate with leading animal sciences and to learn new ways of analyzing data that arise from animal health research.

CLA and Omega 3 – The Milk Wonders

Many of the farmers I spoke to on organic systems were very upbeat about the future of organic milk price for the following reasons:-

- Dinky's – (double income no kids yet) Young couples in which both partners earn substantial incomes tend to spend it on high quality health conscious foods like organic milk and organic milk products.
- Recent research has indicated organic milk may be higher in certain nutrients like Omega 3 and Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA).
- Organic cows are often fed higher levels of red clover as this research shows than non-organic cows. This, researchers state, may explain the higher Omega 3 fatty acid in organic milk. Omega 3 is essential for maintaining a healthy heart.
- Other studies have shown that organic milk is higher in Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA) than ordinary milk, because organic cows eat higher levels of grass, hay, red clover and silage rather than concentrates. CLA is believed to boost immune function and reduce the growth of tumours.

Case Study 1



Michael white discussing the quality of his red clover forage mix with farmer Leo Petrucci

Leo Petrucci is an organic dairy, drystock and tillage farmer based at Stone Kirk, Stranraer. He milks 160 spring calving Ayrshire x Holstein cows. These are compact cows weighing about 450 kgs, yielding 5,800 litres per cow annually, on 700 kgs concentrates each. Milk quota is one million litres and the farm extends to 140 ha of which 80 ha is owned and 58 ha is rented. Leo receives a £0.05 (€0.073) litre premium for his organic milk. His dairy feed costs £235 per ton (€343) for organic versus £135 (€197) per ton for conventional ration.

The silage used is an excellent mix of peas/barley/red clover and Italian Ryegrass which gives a yield of 35 tons per ha. In the second year the red clover/Italian Ryegrass silage is cut and the aftermath grazed. While in the third year of the rotation he ploughs and sows a permanent grass mixture containing 20% white clover.

Leo's farm is free draining, yet being situated in South West Scotland turnout date is usually well into March each year. He would like to see earlier varieties of white clover and more persistent varieties of red clover being bred.

For Leo clover is an ideal source of cheap nitrogen. It is very complementary to highly productive grass swards and is a high quality feed. His dock control policy is several toppings in the growing season combined with rotational ploughing.

Case study 2



Michael White with Keith Currie examining his excellent take of newly reseeded pasture containing white clover

Keith Currie an organic suckler and sheep farmer based near Newtown Stewart in South West Scotland. He owns 160 ha of good land and also has 200 ha of hill land. He carries 170 suckler cows and finishes their progeny to beef as well as 300 breeding ewes. Each year 40 ha of a 20% red clover and 80% Italian Ryegrass mixture is drilled for silage with the Einbock Drill, on ploughed ground.

Prior to going organic, Keith sprayed all the old sward with glyphosate and used a Moore Uni-drill to sow this mixture without ploughing. He would like to see a derogation on the use of glyphosate for organic farmers in order to reduce the cost of ploughing.

Grazing pastures are drilled in with an 80% Perennial Ryegrass mixture and 20% white clover. The premium he obtains for his organic beef of £0.40/kg (€0.58) and £0.30/kg (€0.44) for lamb he feels is not sufficient to generate a reasonable level of profit. Stock take longer to reach the same weight for age as non-organic livestock and organically grown ration is very expensive up to £240 (€350) per ton.

However, if he were to revert to conventional farming in the future, he is now convinced he would still place a huge reliance on clover.

Footnote

My sincere thanks to the ASA, the sponsors AIB and the bursary judges for making this study trip possible. This article is a summary of the main report which contains farm case studies.

The 2005 ASA National Conference, 'The Agri-Food Industry – a Roadmap to Success', was held on Friday 23rd September in the Mount Wolseley Hilton Resort in Tullow, Co. Carlow. The conference was well attended by those working in all aspects of the agri-food industry. Below we highlight some of the key points raised by the impressive range of speakers who presented.

Ireland Can Benefit From Big Lift in World Food Demand

World population growth, changing patterns of consumption and increased purchasing power all point to a massive increase in world food demand, which must have a positive impact on Irish farming and food production over the next decade, stated David Rath, ASA President in his opening remarks.

He went on to say that we are facing a revolution in demand for livestock products over the coming 10-15 years. In the developing countries, we will see billions of people diversifying from primarily starch-based diets into increased amounts of meat and milk.

"It will take 60 million extra beef cattle, 200 million extra sheep and 30 million more cows to meet the increased food demand in the developing world over the next 15 years. While countries in South America will be the major direct beneficiaries of this increased demand, there is likely to be lower

exports from these countries to Europe, thus resulting in greater opportunities for Irish exports of meat and milk to Europe and the middle East," said David.

While the structure of farming will continue to evolve, committed producers should look to the future with confidence. However, the conditions under which they operate, including the regulatory framework, must not be a barrier to competitiveness.

EU Farm Policy a Misallocation of Resources?

In a vivid illustration of the differences between Ireland and the UK on the future direction of the CAP, Sir Richard Packer, a former Permanent Secretary of the UK Ministry of Agriculture, told the conference that the UK regards the CAP as a misallocation of resources, which leads to a reduction in Europe's economic performance.

"The CAP inhibits economic development elsewhere in



Minister Mary Coughlan TD opening the ASA National Conference.

the world and encourages environmental degradation," he said.

The former top UK civil servant also said the imbalance between the UK contribution to EU funds and its receipts in EU funding combined with the unpopularity of the CAP globally are further manifestations of British discontent with the policy.

"As economies grow, the relative importance of agriculture diminishes. The interests of British agriculture occupy a low place in the thinking of British governments. As the Irish economy continues to grow, I wonder will Irish governments react similarly," he said.

Professor Alan Matthews of Trinity College told the conference that

success in the current WTO talks would add pressure to further reform the CAP in the second half of this decade.

"While the latest CAP reforms have resulted in decoupling of most farm payments from production, farmers still benefit from considerable market price support. In a new WTO agreement, this support would be vulnerable," he said.

He also warned that the benefits for developing countries from further liberalisation of world food trade would be very skewed. While middle-income countries with competitive agricultural sectors, such as Brazil, will benefit, many poorer developing countries in Africa and elsewhere could lose out because they are net importers of food or because



At the ASA Golf awards prior to the Annual Banquet are Brendan Stafford and Paddy Horgan, ACC Bank, sponsor of the ASA Golf prize.



Pictured at the opening of the ASA Conference were Tom Moran, Secretary General Department of Agriculture and Food, Sir Richard Packer, Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Agriculture and Food, Prof Alan Mathews, TCD and David Rath, President ASA.

the benefits of preferential access to EU and other rich country markets will be eroded. Professor Matthews said that a successful outcome to the current WTO talks is by no means guaranteed. However, failure to reach agreement would not eliminate future pressure on the CAP.

Anti-Competitive Regulation in Agriculture and Food

Unnecessary anti-competitive measures are putting the Irish agriculture and food industry at a significant disadvantage relative to our EU counterparts, according to Alan Dukes, Chairman of the 2015 AgriVision Committee.

Addressing the conference, Alan Dukes said current policy is creating unnecessary competitive penalties for the Irish agri-food sector. One glaring example is the approach to rationalisation in the meat processing sector where the Irish domestic market of some four million consumers seems to be regarded as the whole market.

“This ignores the fact that Irish products have to compete on global markets and products from elsewhere in that global market are present on Irish retail shelves as choices for the Irish consumer.”

“We are also now seeing an approach by our government to the sale and use of veterinary medicines which is significantly more restrictive than the regimes in force in other EU member states.”

“Another example is the application of rules relating to health benefit claims allowed for certain food products, which are more restrictive in Ireland than in other EU states, with the exception of the UK. It appears that our rules require that products widely held to be beneficial to health cannot be so described unless they are mixed with other health-beneficial products. For example, fruit products widely held to be ‘good for you’ cannot be so labelled unless they are combined with vegetable products which are also ‘good for you,’” said Dukes.



Sean Gaule, Dept. of Agriculture and Food, Dr Jim O’Grady, retired ex IAWS and Prof Maurice Boland, Head of UCD School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine.

He went on to say that these anti-competitive measures are at odds with one of the key recommendations in the Agri Vision 2015 report, which stated that ‘the regulatory environment in Ireland must be such that it provides the necessary safeguards and transparencies, while avoiding unnecessary costs and excessive bureaucracy’.

“Every producer, processor and retailer of food in Ireland is involved in global competition, even where

they are not involved in exports. All markets for farm-based products are now global markets. The current World Trade Organisation talks make that abundantly clear.”

“This means that neither the Competition Authority nor the Government can any longer look at competition policy and competitiveness purely on the basis of national market segments. It is now time to stop the unnecessary restriction of our competitive capacity,” he concluded.

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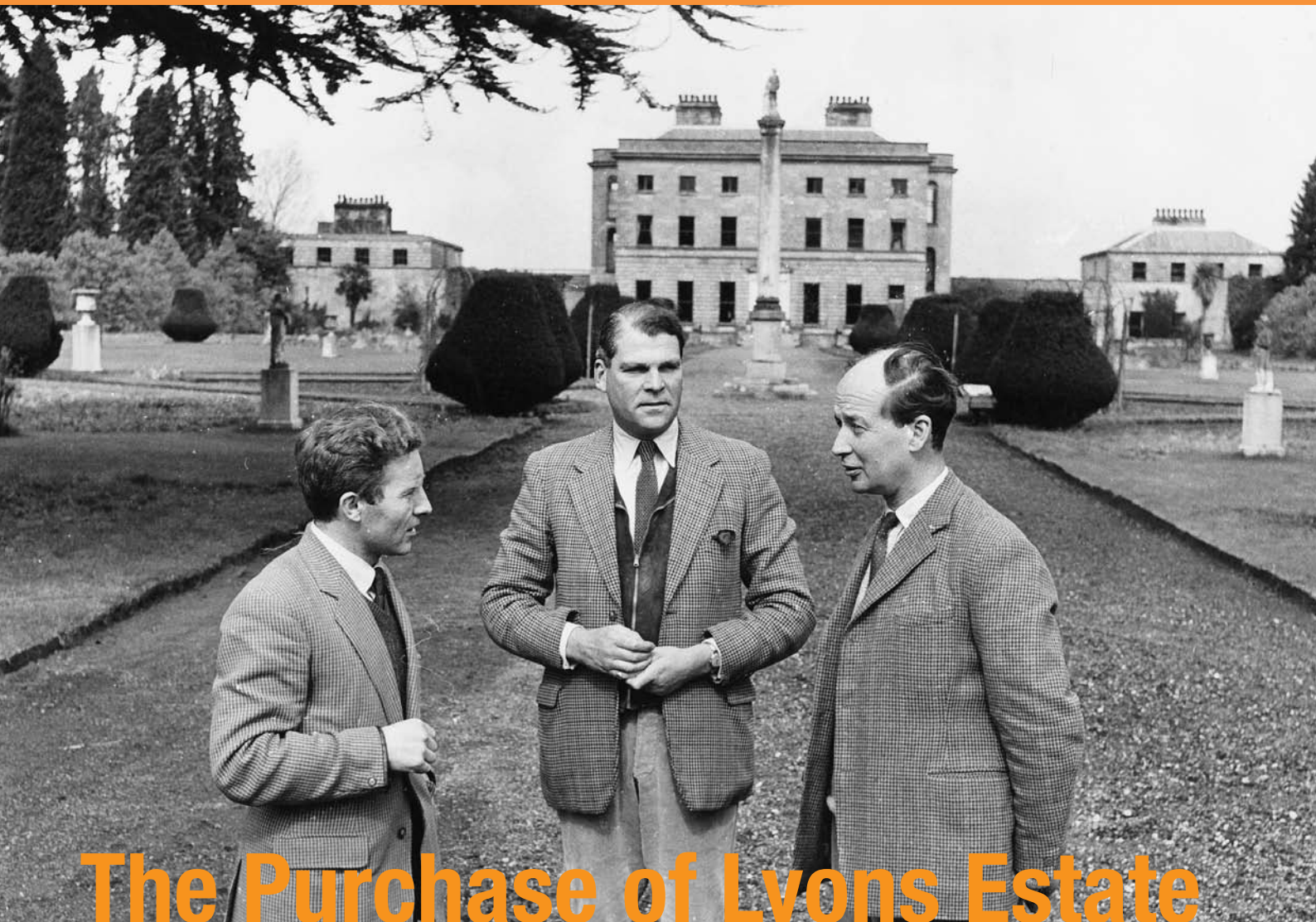


Golf Programme



The ASA also appreciates the generosity of the following companies and organisations whose support has contributed to the staging of the 2005 conference:

Agtel Communications, Dawn Farm Foods, Department of Agriculture and Food, Enterprise Ireland, ESB, Grassland Fertilisers, IFAC Accountants, Irish Dairy Board, Irish Farmers’ Association, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Polythene Agri, Keenan, Kerry Group, KPMG, Monsanto, Shell Ireland, Tegral, Tipperary Mineral Water.



The Purchase of Lyons Estate

Hours after the purchase of the property by UCD were Tom Raftery, Captain Robinson of Lyons Estate and Mr Wynn the previous owner of the estate.

Many of the members of the Agricultural Science Association have had the privilege of teaching and practical sessions at Lyons Estate, however most will have little knowledge of the estate's purchase. Tom Raftery, Emeritus Professor of Agriculture at UCC, was centrally involved in the purchase of Lyons and below recounts this important episode in the life of the former Faculty of Agriculture in UCD.

On the 10th of April 1962, UCD purchased Lyons Estate, a 1,300 acre estate with a fine Georgian residence, designed by the renowned Cork born architect, Richard Morrison – without consulting the senior academics in the Faculty.

At that time I was a junior assistant in the Department of Farm Management headed up by the late Professor J.B. Ruane. The Faculty was based in the Albert College, Glasnevin. The land attached to the college was increasingly being

surrounded by new housing estates making operations, with livestock in particular, difficult. Professor Ruane aimed to get a suitable farm for teaching and research purposes near the city, however it looked for a long time that this could not be achieved.

Early in 1962, Professor Ruane, embarked on a 5 month study tour of New Zealand, Australia and the U.S.A. He left me in charge of the farms and his lecture schedule, a responsibility I accepted but did not welcome.

He had scarcely departed when two things happened – firstly an outbreak of a serious exotic disease in cattle, in one of the farmyards and in the midst of that crisis Lyons estate came on the market. The former was important because it brought me into contact with senior administrators in UCD and at the same time exacerbated tensions with other colleagues in the Department.

The disease in question was mucosal disease or Texas Fever

and it resulted in the emergency slaughter of all the cattle in that yard by the Department of Agriculture. Those in the adjacent fields were purchased for slaughter by Frank Quinn of Irish Meat Packers – including those which were part of an experiment by a much annoyed senior colleague. The whole affair was managed without the newspapers getting hold of the story. But this chance encounter with Frank Quinn was to later prove of crucial importance in the purchase of Lyons Estate.

Class of 1965 reunion



Class reunion 1965, from l to r Peadar Murphy, Dermot Ruane, Garry Leonard, Bill O'Brien, Frank Kennedy, William Costelloe, Larry Tallon and Michael Hennerty. The reunion took place at the Annual Banquet on Thursday 22nd September 2005.

Lyons Sale

In the midst of all this crisis I was told by the late Dr. Henry Kennedy, secretary of IAOS of the sale of Lyons Estate, "That's what you need for the Faculty and don't let it go" he admonished me." I approached the estate agents Jackson Stops, where I got very little information other than the phone number of Lyons. Clearly I did not look like a credible purchaser.

I was fortunate to get an appointment with the President of UCD, Professor Tierney to whom I explained both the problem and opportunity. He told me "go out young man and examine it, and bring me back a report within two weeks and keep your mouth shut, not a word to anyone." This left me in a situation where I could not seek advice from more experienced staff in the Faculty.

I contacted the agent in Lyons Estate – Captain Robinson, and succeeded in gaining access to examine it. I was in communication by telegram and letter with Professor Ruane who expressed both misgivings and confidence in me in various letters. He advised me to contact the Department of Agriculture as the Department

would be expected to foot the bill. He nominated Mr. Dan Hoctor, Assistant Secretary and Mr. John Beatty, Chief livestock inspector. They viewed the farm but were less than enthusiastic. Their reservations – which they had also communicated to Professor Ruane were dispelled by Professor Tierney and a decision was made to purchase the estate. The decision was made without any involvement by or consultation with the senior people in the Faculty, for whose use the Estate was being purchased.

The Land Commission and Auction

In those days the Land Commission were active in the purchase and division of large estates. I was told by an agricultural advisor in the area that they were under strong political pressure to purchase and divide the estate. I met the land commission official who was in charge to explain the case for UCD to purchase the estate. I need not have worried – he was greatly relieved to avoid the difficult task of dividing the estate into 50 acre farms.

But there was another potential obstacle – the aforementioned Frank Quinn expressed an interest to me in purchasing the estate for his firms operations. He took on board my arguments about the requirements of the Faculty for good teaching and research facilities and withdrew as a contender to purchase the farm. On the day of the auction there were just 2 bids the first was for £95,000. The second of £100,000 by Professor Purcell of the UCD Governing Authority secured the estate for the university.

The Nitrates Directive

Most readers will be aware that Ireland's proposal for the implementation of the Nitrates Directive was refused by the EU Commission. The ASA made a submission under the latest consultation process. The submission highlighted the need for correct nutrient management as the best way forward in meeting the requirement of the directive to prevent groundwater pollution. The issues of soil type and farming systems must be taken into account. It is considered that this is a better approach than insisting on the costly provision of facilities based on geographic location.

Prescription Only Medicines

The ASA have engaged in intensive lobbying of the Department of Agriculture and Food, on its own and in co-operation with other interested parties on the introduction of legislation which could have created a situation where animal medicines would only be available to farmers on prescription by a veterinary surgeon. The minister has deferred making a decision on the issue until late 2006. The ASA will continue to lobby to ensure that Irish farmers are not further burdened with costly regulation. The role of other professionals who are actively engaged with farmers on farm management issues must be considered.

A new Rural Environmental Protection Scheme

The Department of Agriculture and Food have made a call for submissions for REPS 4 – a new environmental protection scheme which will be devised over the coming months. The contribution of the REPS planners – the agricultural professionals, to the success of the various environmental schemes is well recognized. The ASA will aim to ensure that ASA members continue to have a significant input in ensuring that future schemes continue to deliver real environmental benefits and value for money for the funders of the scheme. A detailed submission is being prepared and the ASA will play a full part in the consultative process.

The Agrilink Pace Project



By Andrew Stewart, Agrilink Chairman and Project Officer

Agrilink is the umbrella committee linking the two main professional bodies dealing with agricultural graduates in Ireland, NIIAS in the North and ASA in the South. Its purpose is to undertake projects of mutual benefit to both organisations and to stimulate closer co-operation between them. Its latest initiative is the PACE project (Professional Agriculturalists' Continuing Education) funded principally by an Interreg grant. This has two main aims –

- (1) to identify the training needs of Professional Agriculturalists post CAP reform and
- (2) to develop an on-line CPD programme for use by members of both organisations.

Survey

Earlier in 2005 an in-depth survey of graduate training needs was undertaken with the help of a Belfast based e-learning company,

Aurion. The survey was conducted on-line among 112 graduates, roughly half worked in N.Ireland with the remainder in the 6 Southern counties bordering the North. The sample represented a broad spectrum of employment situations from government bodies to commercial businesses and is the first survey of its kind to be carried out in Ireland.

The key knowledge areas (KA's) associated with Professional Agriculturalists were first identified, namely, Livestock and Crop Production, Business Management, Rural Development, the Environment and Personal Skills. Each KA was further broken down into 7 to 10 key elements describing the expected knowledge necessary to be proficient in each area.

When asked to rate the KA's in order of priority, respondents rated Personal Skills and the Environment as the most important followed closely by Business Management. Livestock Production and Rural Development were regarded as less important while Crop Production was the least important.

Respondents were asked to indicate if they considered themselves to be "adequately trained", "in need of some training" or "needing comprehensive training". The main outcome of

the survey was to demonstrate a need for some training in all the KA's examined with only 8 to 25% of respondents claiming to be "adequately trained".

There was strong support expressed for continuing professional development, for the involvement of the professional bodies in this development and for formal accreditation of courses undertaken. More detailed analysis of the survey results is available on the ASA website along with a full description of the KA's used as a basis for the survey.

Proposed On-line Part-time MSc

Following circulation of the survey results to the two main universities in Ireland involved in agricultural undergraduate education, QUB and UCD, a working group was set up to explore the feasibility of developing and offering an on-line part-time post graduate MSc type degree. The course would consist of core modules plus a number of optional modules reflecting the training needs identified in the survey such as personal skills, the environment, rural development and the food chain. It would take two years to complete and would give participants a comprehensive up-to-date knowledge of current issues facing farming and the management of the countryside. The possibility of

graduates taking individual modules of particular relevance to them at certificate level rather than pursue the full degree course is also under consideration.

Education Joint Venture

This new venture is the first time the two universities, QUB and UCD have come together to consider offering a joint multi-core, on-line part-time course at post graduate level. However, developing such a course in a truly interactive manner is extremely expensive with estimated costs in the region of €750,000. It can only happen if we are successful in obtaining further sizeable funding from Interreg and support from the employers of graduates throughout Ireland. The most tangible way employers can ensure such a development takes place is through sponsorship and the provision of bursaries for their staff wanting to up-date their knowledge skills. In particular, we need letters of support from key players in the agricultural industry to accompany our application to Interreg in January 2006, offering sufficient bursaries to ensure a successful launch of the course in Autumn 2007.

Enquiries concerning these projects may be made by e-mail to astewart@fish.co.uk

Agrilink/Interreg Conference

“THE METAMORPHOSIS OF PROFESSIONALS IN AGRICULTURE”

Thursday, 23 February 2006, Armagh City Hotel, 9.00am to 4.30pm.

This conference will focus on the rapid changes facing professionals working in agriculture and how those responsible for graduate education and the professional bodies looking after the interests of graduates should and are responding to these changes.

For further details contact; Andrew Stewart - e-mail: astewart@fish.co.uk

ASA Careers Development Forum



Speakers at the 2005 ASA Career Development Forum (l-r) James Fitzgerald, President ASA, Mr. John Keegan – Operations Manager, Freshways Kerry, Dr. Eva Lewis – Nutritionist, Nutec, Ms. Fiona Power – Recruitment specialist, FBD, Mr. Gerry Looby – Director of Development, UCD.

The annual Career Development Forum was held on 8th November in the Irish Farm Centre. This was the second year the forum was held and again proved a huge success with over 75 delegates attending.

The background to the event is that many employers of Agricultural Science graduates have commented that the skills of BAgrSc graduates in applying for jobs and participating in interviews are poor. This is resulting in some instances of non-Agricultural Science graduates filling vacancies. The ASA set to tackle the issue through organising a Career Development Forum, the first of which was held in November 2004. This proved a huge success, particularly with final year students

of the degree and so it was decided to hold the event again this year.

Tips on CV Preparation

The 2005 event was split into two sessions. The first dealt with CV, cover letter preparation and interview skills. Fiona Power, Recruitment specialist with FBD, gave some important details in relation to writing a cover letter and CV that will help graduates stand out from the crowd - getting their foot in the door.

She outlined the importance of doing the basics right, such as proper positioning of addresses in your cover letter, proper spelling in your CV and leaving out irrelevant material. Heather Peppard, Business Manager with Greenvale Animal Feeds, followed to give some tips on preparing

for an interview, the interview itself and post interview analysis. In particular she outlined the different interviewing styles and again emphasised doing the basics right, such as dress sense, eye contact, and posture. She outlined some typical questions you might be asked and scenario situations you may be put in. Her sum up was "blow your own trumpet because nobody else will do it for you"!

Career Opportunities for Graduates

Session two comprised a panel of graduates, all between five and twenty five years graduated. John Keegan outlined his path in Food Science to become Operations Manager for Kerry Freshways. Dr Eva Lewis, a Nutritionist with Nutec spoke about a career with a PhD and how to make it

work for you. Justin McCarthy, Beef Editor for the Irish Farmers Journal, dealt with changing career direction. Gerry Looby, who is the current Director of Development in UCD and formally worked in the IT industry, spoke about a career away from agriculture and the opportunities that BAgrSc graduates may not always think about.

Many of those who attended the forum were final year students of the BAgrSc programme and the council of the ASA were very impressed with their attendance in such large numbers and the image of professionalism they gave on the night. The ASA would like to thank the speakers who gave of their time so willingly and the Farm Centre for the excellent facilities they provided.

50 years of golf



Michael Hassett, a former CAO in Offaly, has been one of the driving forces behind the organisation of the ASA Golfing Society for many years. This year marked his fiftieth year of involvement in the organisation of the Interservices competition in Tullamore Golf Club. To mark the occasion a presentation was made to Michael during this years competition. The photograph shows David Rath, ASA President making a presentation to Michael.

ASA Jobs Service

The ASA Careers Service for Graduates enables existing and potential employers of Agricultural Science graduates to target their employment vacancies to a highly qualified pool of professionals free of charge.

A large number of employers of graduates in both the Agri-Business and Services sector have already registered for this service.

For further information contact Rebecca Daly, Tel: 01 4603682, email: msasa@gofree.indigo.ie

ASA Golf Competition Winners

Interservices

- sponsored by Allied Irish Banks at Tullamore GC on Sept 1st

1st AIB Team

2nd Offaly Team

3rd Teagasc South Team

4th Vets Team

The individual prize-winners in this competition were

1st Dave Ryan, AIB,

2nd Pat Butterly, AIB

3rd Jonathan Cooney, Vets

Captain's Prize

Tullamore GC on June 23rd

1st Tony Leavy Ex Teagasc

2nd John O'Rourke DAF

3rd Eddie Walsh UCD

Presidents Prize - sponsored by AccBank

Mount Wolsely golf course, Thursday 22nd September 2005

1st Brendan Heneghan

2nd Paddy Horgan

3rd Liam McMenamin



The Teagasc South team which participated in the ASA Interservices competition in Tullamore. Left to right Christy Byrne, AIB Tullamore, Jerry O'Riordan, Michael Coady, Donal Mullane, Andy Cole, Eamon Deering, Eamon Dalton

New ASA Website Launched

Our new website is now up and running. As well as hosting the ASA Job Services vacancies you can also access proceedings from the 2005 National Conference and past conferences. We will also post our latest communication on policy issues on the site.

WWW.ASAIRELAND.IE

Date for your diary

**2006 ASA National Conference Friday
September 8th 2006 in Sligo**

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