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Challenge of Rural Leadership



*A report on the Challenge of Rural
Leadership Course*

*The Worshipful Company of Farmers and
Duchy College*

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The Challenge of Rural Leadership



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1) This was a valuable course to do in another country. I met many new people, was exposed to issues and attitudes with which I was not familiar and I could leave the farm behind and “get on the balcony”.
- 2) Leadership is not about the biggest, loudest person standing up the front giving orders. Good leaders use a number of traits to achieve desired outcomes.
- 3) Problems that have been seen and dealt with before (tame problems) are best dealt with by management. Problems that require quick decisive action (critical problems) are best dealt with by commanding. New problems that have never been dealt with before (wicked problems) are best dealt with by leadership.
- 4) It is important to gain an understanding of traits of traditionalists (born 1900-1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), generation X (1965-1980) and millenials (1981-1999z) in order to manage or lead them in a way that is sympathetic to their values.
- 5) The divide between traditional UK growers who are used to subsidies and those who know they must deal on a global stage is widening substantially in the UK.
- 6) Supermarkets in the UK play a huge role in dictating prices and conditions to growers. Some growers are trying to hold onto their own brands in order to make it more difficult for supermarkets to delist their products.
- 7) It is difficult to gauge the future demand for organic products in the UK. Some speakers talked about large potential gains in markets but when the whole market was considered it was still a small percentage.
- 8) There is a need for farmers in the UK to effectively use the media to portray to their fellow citizens they are a valuable asset to the country.

INTRODUCTION

The Challenge of Rural Leadership (CRL) is an intense course that uses both theory and practise to give participants a succinct overview of leadership. It uses case studies, field trips and lectures to highlight different levels and roles of leadership, particularly in rural environments.

The course is run by The Worshipful Company of Farmers in association with Duchy College. Previously, the Seale Hayne Faculty collaborated with the Worshipful Company of Farmers to present the course, however this role moved to Duchy College on closure of the Seale Hayne Faculty earlier in 2005.

The course and accommodation took place at the Passage House Hotel, Newton Abbot, Devon. The Course Director is Richard Soffe who works at Duchy College.

This report has been written as a requirement of the Australian Nuffield Farming Scholars Association. I hope it may also be useful for those who are considering doing the course in the future as well as it being a reference for myself.

COURSE CONTEXT

Who would want to be a farmer in the UK at the moment? Who would want to be an Australian woolgrower? The answer to both these questions is that many people want to be involved in agriculture for a variety of reasons. Australian woolgrowers and UK farmers generally are facing challenging conditions at the moment. However, before we throw our arms up in despair it must not be forgotten that businesses across the world have challenges; it is not unique to agriculture.

The Challenge of Rural Leadership course successfully broke into components/factors that are important in a successful business, focusing on management and leadership. It personally gave me hope and confidence that with thinking, passion and sound leadership, the Australian wool industry can be turned around. The answers are out there we just have to find them and have the desire to find them.

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COURSE PARTICIPANTS

There were seventeen participants. Fourteen were from the UK; five dedicated farmers, two National Farmers Union (NFU) advisors, one accountant, two land agents, two agribusiness consultants, one horticulturalist and one environmental consultant. There were three international students, two Australians (myself and an extension officer who works for Duchy College) and one German who is an agronomist for an English company in the Czech Republic.

The skills and backgrounds of the participants was a huge contributor to the success of the course. Everyone was very willing to learn from each other and I believe that the international students all contributed positively to the group and similarly we learnt much about agriculture in the UK and EU from the local participants.



* *Richard Faircloth was so diligently doing his washing that he missed this unofficial group photo of 2005 course participants! Also note the number of female participants – apparently this is quite a turn around from previous years.*

COURSE STRUCTURE

The topics and lectures covered in the course were as follows:

- Introduction and Welcome
- Strategic case study, Alvis Brothers
- Organic Philosophy
- Rural Business Structure
- Agribusiness Management
- Farming Down Under
- Creative Thinking
- The Print Media
- HSBC Public Lecture
- Grain Marketing
- The EU seminar
- Lloyd Maunder Marketing
- Marketplace business simulation
- Building a Brand – The Black Farmer
- Strategic Management
- Military Leadership
- What is Leadership?
- Music as a Metaphor – Buckfast Abbey
- Gene Technology
- Generational Leadership
- Drama Therapy
- Using media – TV and Radio
- Staying Alive
- Course Evaluation Presentation
- Gala Dinner

TOPIC EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Michael Dart, from The Worshipful Company of Farmers gave us a very warm welcome. He explained to us the history of Worshipful Companies. They have existed in England since the 15th Century. Their role was similar to a modern quality assurance scheme. For example, if you were a member of the Worshipful Company of Candlestickmakers, then the purchaser of your candlesticks could be confident in the quality of that piece. The Worshipful Company of Farmers came into existence about 50 years ago. It is restricted to 300 members. They play an important role in funding many of the participants of the course. Many thanks to Richard Soffe, who secured some funding from the Worshipful Company of Farmers to part fund the course fee for the participating Australian/NZ Nuffield scholar.



STRATEGIC CASE STUDY – ALVIS BROTHERS

Aim: the group to present to Alvis Brothers a 5 Year Strategic Branding Plan for the Cheese Business.

Alvis Bros Ltd produce 3000 tonnes of cheese annually, 2000 tonnes is organic. They milk 1000 cows and produce 30,000 pigs annually. It is a true family business with two generations actively involved in parts of the business, in addition to some outsiders (Nick Green - Pig and Farm Operations Director - is a recent English Nuffield Scholar). Their objective is “profit with integrity”. They are category managers of organic cheese for Sainsbury’s (a large English supermarket chain). They are unsure about the role of their own brand Lye Cross, and asked our group to make recommendations about their organic cheese and branding future.

We visited the farm and were presented with detailed information about the business including the latest financial figures. We also had a comprehensive tour of the cheese making, storage and packing facilities.

Back at the hotel our group did a SWOT on the business. From this we identified areas where the business could improve. We further broke into six groups to analyse and propose future actions. The groups looked at financial analysis, market analysis, market development, maximising use of the plant, education strategy and brand development. Our recommendations were formally presented to John Alvis and Nick Green later in the week.

While it was interesting to look at a farming business and enterprise that was not familiar, the most valuable aspect for me was about people management within our group. Logistically, I was extremely impressed at the way the 17 people in the group worked together quickly and efficiently to identify the issues, divide the workload and expertise, and put together a very professional and useful presentation to Alvis Brothers.

“ORGANIC PHILOSOPHY”, DAVID WILLIAMS (DUCHY FARMS)

David Williams manages “Highgrove”, a Duchy farm for Prince Charles. Highgrove is 1850 acres and produces crops (wheat, oats, beans, barley and rye), sheep, beef, dairy and vegetables. They supply vegetable boxes to locals and hope to expand this business. They are also interested in rare breeds of pigs and cattle. The Duchy label is well known in the UK and that greatly assists its marketing options. It would be interesting to know how the business would go if they were not aligned with such a successful brand.

RURAL BUSINESS STRUCTURE, MATT LOBLEY, EXETER UNIVERSITY

Matt provided us with research explaining why English farmers do or do not make change and why they are involved with agriculture. The results highlight the huge challenge English agriculture has ahead.

There are three types of land managers; embracers/exploiters, reactors/adapters and resisters. In a case study of 6 regions in England the main drivers of farm restructuring were;

- 61% farm finances and economics
- 16% farm household factors
- 8% animal disease
- 10% other (CAP reform, changing consumer demands)

These results are somewhat surprising considering the scale of foot and mouth in 2001. The reliance of subsidies has affected the mindset of some growers. One grower said, "We will wait for the government to tell us what we will do in the future".

Some of the ways growers have looked to increase their income are:

- 1) Converting farm buildings into accommodation
- 2) Opening farm shops and selling vegetable boxes

UK farmers have lost the social standing they enjoyed 30 years ago (I suspect this is the same in Australia). Farmers, medical professionals and vets have the highest rate of suicide in the UK. There is public sympathy however many growers don't realise this.

What will Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform mean in the UK?

The most recent CAP reform is the introduction of the single farm payment (SFP). This means growers will not be paid subsidies for production rather they will be paid one amount depending on the size of their farm. It is thought that this will have a complex range of impacts that will affect people differently depending on their stage of life. If a farmer has a likely successor (son or daughter) they are much more likely to hang onto their farm. The SFP may well slow down much needed agricultural change as it will give farmers enough money to exist. However, it may stimulate diversification as people move away from crops that were previously only profitable due to subsidies (eg sugar beet). Considering the uncertainty of agriculture in the UK at the moment, it would seem likely that some farmers would be willing to leave the industry. However, considering what they have been through in the last few years it is amazing so many are resisting. It is an interesting question, "What will it take to get people out of agriculture?"

The relationship between environmentalists and farmers in the UK is interesting. In the 1980's, farmers and environmentalist didn't get on but now environmentalists say they want to compensate the farmers for looking after the land. Agro-environment schemes will always continue but SFP will go. In the future many UK farmers may be seen as land managers rather than food producers simply because of the difficulties they will have competing on a world stage.

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AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT, BILL ALLEN, THOMAS VALLEY PIGS

Thomas Valley started in the 1980's and its members sell 10% of all pigs sold in England. The Allen's have 3000 sows, 170 milking cows, and 450 sheep. Bill Allen is obviously a good people manager. He states that their success has been the result of;

- 1) committed staff
- 2) good communication
- 3) focused management (spend time on important things)

Bill believes that they are good at growing pigs therefore they have purposely not diversified. The UK pig industry has never been subsidised and although it not is a great position at present (the Danish and Americans are very good pig growers), it is better than many other agricultural industries in the UK.

Legislation is an issue to the pork industry. Bill tells the story that it costs his business 80,000 pounds per year to incinerate dead animals and then bury the ash. He argues why not just bury the bodies in the first place!

Bill is very down to earth and unpretentious. He is an accountant by trade but does much of his work on the back of envelopes. He says "do as you say" or else people will lose confidence in you (this applies to banks as well).

FARMING DOWN UNDER, SARAH ACKLAND AND CAMERON TONKIN

Cameron (another ex NSW Agriculture district agronomist now working for Duchy College) gave general facts about Australian agriculture. All of the British course participants except one had been to Australia and some had worked on farms, so the level of discussion quickly moved beyond basics. The most topical discussion was regarding the branding of supermarket products. Cameron's photos highlighted that in Australia we are much more patriotic with branding through using Australian flags and slogans. In England, the major focus is on price. They do have the "red tractor" which indicates made in the UK but it is not a widely recognised brand.

I then presented "Apsley Park" as a case study to the group. The group was very interested in seeing the woollen garments I had (mainly Ice Breaker) and many were astounded that it was all 100% wool. They still think the wool is only good for big heavy jumpers. The major difference between our farm and their systems was the scale and the lack of subsidies.

Following are extracts from emails I have been sent by participants since the course;

- 1) *Had to drop you a line to tell you that I found our local outdoor clothing & camping store stocks Icebreaker clothes! I've invested in a base layer T shirt to take on my skiing holiday at the end of January - last time I went to the Alps it was minus 15 degrees at times so I'll put it to the test and report back in due course.... Maybe I'll be buying Tasmanian base layers in the not too distant future??*
- 2) *You'll be amused to hear that having been influenced by you I have bought all my family merino wool long sleeved t-shirts for Christmas to keep them warm this winter... I hope they like them!*

3) Sarah, I saw some merino wool tops in a shop called Gap. There was a special sign saying "merino wool" in the area where they were displayed. It looks like your market is developing.

CREATIVE THINKING, PETER REDSTONE, ROCOMBE CONSULTING

I really enjoyed this session, as Peter was a very passionate and entertaining speaker. The majority of his session was about de Bono's hats, with which I was already familiar. However, it was a good refresher and provided the group a good platform to interpret and appreciate ideas and points of view from other members of the group.

THE PRINT MEDIA, CAROL TREWIN, WESTERN MORNING NEWS

We went to Plymouth for this session. It started with a discussion about press releases – what to do and not to do. Basically it should be one page or less, font 12-14, contain authors contact details and shouldn't have spelling or basic grammar mistakes. They recommend ringing the person to whom the press release is being sent to warn them it is coming. It shouldn't be forgotten that most press releases end up in the bin. However, papers need stories and good press releases can be very powerful to get your message across.

We then had a tour of the Western Morning News printing facility. This is a very stressful environment as deadlines are so important and time is always squeezed. The technology in both computers and machinery at this site was amazing. Surprisingly, many people also worked at the facility mainly in the packaging area doing very mundane jobs.

HSBC LECTURE, TIM BENNETT, NATIONAL FARMERS UNION (NFU) PRESIDENT.

This was a public lecture aimed at farmers. It really highlighted the difference between those who realise UK agriculture is part of a global world and those that believe the government owes them everything (usually those in the tweed!).

I found Tim Bennett's paper to be very open minded and focused on the future of UK agriculture. Obviously some in the audience thought the NFU has lost the plot and don't care about farmers. The NFU are in a difficult position as many of their members don't want to acknowledge the changes that are occurring in subsidies. However the NFU realises that if they take the line of the traditional farmer then their relevance in the global or EU scale will become nil.

Interestingly, members of our group thought that Tim's paper did not discuss anything that they had not heard before and that he could have done a better job at answering growers concerns.



GRAIN MARKETING, GRAHAM LACY, CENTAUR GRAIN

Centaur Grain has 2000 member/shareholders and markets 1.5 million tonne of grain. They are paid a fee rather than a profit incentive as they are interested in longer term contracts rather than short term gain. Graham commented that 10-20% of UK wheat growers cannot be making money at today's prices.

Most of this talk was about starch, ethanol and biodiesel. Europe's traditional self made energy (mainly oil) will run out by 2030 therefore they should be interested in biodiesel. The main reason you would put a plant in the UK is for security of supply – most of the time it could be made more cheaply elsewhere. 14% less oil can be extracted from on-farm biodiesel plants verses a commercial plant.

PRESSURE GROUPS, JOHN CALLAGHAM AND ROLAND BONNEY,

John works for the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and Roland works for the Food Animal Initiative (FAI). John's work focuses on public awareness, humane slaughter training and practical on-farm improvement in animal enterprises in Latin America and Asia.

The FAI was set up in 1998 by farmers in recognition of the fact that commercially robust alternative systems, that significantly raise animal welfare standards, tackle environmental concerns and address issues of human health, can and do exist. The objectives of FAI are:

- 1) To develop sustainable farm systems that provide discernable benefits to animal welfare, the environment and human health.
- 2) To demonstrate the success of these systems through practical and commercial application.
- 3) To breed animals that are fit for their environment.

Roland commented to me that if he had some spare time he would love to market wool as he thinks wool is grown in a sustainable manner with respect to the environmental and animal welfare. He has worked on sheep farms in South and Western Australia which give his comments more credibility. Nice that someone has something good to say about wool – maybe Australian growers can learn from this!

THE EU POLICY, BRIAN GARDNER, FOOD POLICY INTERNATIONAL

Brian's talk was factual and full of acronyms. Fortunately his presentation notes were comprehensive. Perhaps a difficult topic considering the background of the participants. Some found his talk boring as they has heard it all before, I found it difficult to follow mainly due to the acronyms and the fact that it was completely new information. However, next time this topic is discussed I will be in a much better position to question and discuss, as the first serious exposure to EU agricultural policy is probably the hardest.

LLOYD MAUNDER

Lloyd Maunder is an innovative lamb and chicken processing business that has recently been seriously exposed to the pressures of the competitive world of supermarkets.

Only a few months ago their lamb products were delisted from Sainsbury's. This was a huge shock to management for two reasons. Firstly, their company was set up in 1898 at a similar time to Sainsbury's and the gentlemen involved were friends. Secondly, Lloyd Maunder had not failed to meet performance and standard requirements of Sainsbury's. In summary, 107 years of business and meeting specifications is no guarantee of a future relationship with a supermarket.

In reality, being a product manager for one of the supermarkets is an extremely stressful job and consequently staff turnover is high. Personality differences are probably likely at times, therefore businesses that rely heavily on the supermarkets need to put considerable effort into people and contract management. One way to reduce the risk of being delisted is to use branding to tie links between your product and a supermarket. (Note that this is one reason why the supermarkets want their own brands to be used now).

The company has been very innovative with its chicken range. They have four classes of chicken;

- 1) Organic chicken (Soil Association Organic Standard)
- 2) West Country Free Range (endorsed by Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group - FWAG)
- 3) Corn Fed Chicken (endorsed by RSPCA)
- 4) Classic Chicken (reared to British assured chicken production standards – the red tractor symbol)

They have a traceability system whereby a consumer can type the bar code into their web page to find out what West Country farm produced the bird and what stockman was responsible. (Their promotional literature is excellent www.lloydmaunder.co.uk).

This was a fabulous field trip and many lessons about doing business could be learnt from the Maunders. Their openness greatly enhanced the trip and was appreciated by the group.



BUSINESS SIMULATION – STEVE FISHER & ROB WILLIAMS

In groups of three we were asked to run eight financial quarters of a new computer business using a computer business simulation model. We had to decide factors such as; what were our goals within the business, what type of computer we would sell, where we would have offices in the world, where would the computers be built, the frequency, content and amount of advertising, whether to invest in market research, amount and type of staff training etc. Each quarter the program would calculate how successful your business had been so you could learn from your mistakes before tackling the next quarter. While our performance wasn't great (the honour of the lowest score went to the group of accountants!!) we certainly had a lot of fun and gained a quick appreciation of the many factors that must be considered when running a global business. However, while many complex decisions were needed many of the better decisions we made were based on good interpretation of data and common sense.

THE BLACK FARMER – WILFRED EMMANUAL JONES

Wilfred was born in Jamaica and his family (of 11) moved to Birmingham when he was young. He dropped out of school, was ousted from the army, worked in catering and then secured his break working for the BBC Food & Drink show. He then set up his own marketing company and worked with discovery brands such as Kettle Chips and Plymouth Gin.

In 1997 he bought a 30 acre farm in the south west of England and his neighbours referred to his as 'The Black Farmer'. He saw this as a great marketing tool and set up The Black Farmer brand selling high quality pork sausages. He wanted his brand to have a personality, be opinionated, be direct and have a social conscience (he wanted to help, change or contribute to society). The reason he choose sausages was he loves the English breakfast but had seen a marked deterioration in the quality of sausages. He left some samples for us to try and the sausages were very good. Wilfred says that "Consumers are not fools, the product must be good".

Wilfred believes marketing is about courage and boldness. He says we live in a society where people want hope. Find out what is unique about you and then communicate it. In his promotional video he gives a lady a sample of sausage and she starts to talk about the importance of world peace – the product was a sausage however, the story of the sausage was the key to its marketing success. Supermarket brands can only deal on price but there is no emotional connection to the product – this is how he believes his products can compete in supermarkets.

The Black Farmer web site is fabulous (www.theblackfarmer.com). If your local supermarket doesn't stock Black Farmer sausages there is a page that links to all the supermarkets in the UK asking them to stock the sausages.

Wilfred uses the media very effectively. His scrapbook of articles in the last year is about 2 inches thick. He has also started a program that allows disadvantaged kids to spend time on his farm. This has allowed even greater media coverage of his business.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT – STEVE FISHER

Steve loves to make you think and is not shy to express his frustration when you do not think!! Consequently this session was rather dynamic and thought provoking. Steve provided structure to the topic of leadership.

We started the session writing down all the traits that we thought make a good leader; (in no order) clear vision, self confident, empathy towards others, good strategic thinker, knowledgeable in the area, approachable in manner, willing to communicate including listening, resilient when things are tough, knows how to leave a situation behind, open minded, inspirational, powerful in presence, peace maker, objective, motivator, consistent, sense of humour, challenging outlook, know yourself, delegate responsibilities, decisive, have charisma, trustworthy/integrity, supportive, brave, disciplined, enthusiastic, reliable, good time manager.....

Steve believes that these are only tools that leaders can use rather than being traits that make a good leader. He says that there are three traits that are common to good leaders:

- 1) have the ability to rise above the situation (the helicopter factor)
- 2) good communicator
- 3) IQ (doesn't need to be really high but a bit above average)

We had an interesting discussion about defining who is a good leader. Many leaders may be determined to be good leaders because the people around them say so. Maybe they did one good thing and many bad things yet they are still remembered as a good leader.

We then proceeded to do a number of personality tests. This was very interesting to me as I have not done such tests before and was surprised at some of the results. These tools are useful as they make you think about where your strengths are and how you can work with others to bring the best out in everyone. At times these exercises were not a pleasant experience however we spend so little time in our everyday lives with self reflection that I think this session will be of value to me for a long time to come.

Keith Grint provided one answer to the difference between management, leadership and commanding. He provided a way to deal with specific problems depending on the type of problem that is faced.

1) Tame Problems;

These problems have been seen and dealt with before. Management has a role in handling these problems. Heart surgery is an example – plenty of people in the world have had heart surgery. Management needs to organise who will do the surgery, when, how much it will cost but it is not a new problem.

2) Wicked Problems;

These problems are new problems that have not been dealt with before. Leadership is required to deal with these problems. Global warming is an example of a wicked problem. The leader will not know the answer rather will set up a platform to allow the people to come up with the answer.

3) Critical problems

These problems require quick decisive action in commander style. Those first on the scene of a train crash would use this type of problem solving. There is little time for discussion about the problem. Keith believes Margaret Thatcher and George Bush lead in this way and is why they not have dealt with wicked problems particularly well.

Management;

People may not comply because your argument is logical – they may comply for a number of other reasons. Humans are rationalising creatures' not rational creatures. Remember, if you win an argument it means that someone else loses.

If you want people to change don't make it hard for them (eg don't rush them). Similarly if you make life difficult you can affect their actions (eg reducing the number of tablets in a Disprin packet has reduced the number of Disprin caused suicides).

Command;

Power is consequential – people only become powerful if you do what they ask. Power is a possession otherwise you wouldn't be able to lose this power. Reward and punishment systems help the top person keep power. If you take away responsibility from someone they will be more likely to follow. The classic example is the electric shock experiment in the USA in the 60's. In a command based system if someone nods their head when talking to the boss what does the nodding head mean? Yes you are right boss or yes I want to keep my job boss! Similarly, the higher you move up the employment hierarchy the less honest the feedback is likely to be.

Leadership;

Use positive deviance – for example how do some families in malnourished areas survive and others don't? They deviate from the norm and can you replicate this?

- a) Don't assume you have the answer
- b) Identify the conventional wisdom that is causing the problem
- c) Identify and analyse positive deviants
- d) Enable self adopting behaviour (don't teach new knowledge in a class room)
- e) Track results and publicise them

The golden bridge – if you don't want to fight someone you have to give them a way out so they can save face.

Creation of an identity is important to make people follow (Osama bin Laden) – heroes and martyrs are important here.

The irony of leadership – not knowing what to do is NOT weak

What do I have to say to make you change your mind – if they say nothing then end the argument as you are wasting your time.

MILITARY LEADERSHIP - COLONEL BRYAN WATTERS

Colonel Watters is a quietly spoken man who has had experiences most of us cannot comprehend. One of his most recent jobs was to help organise and train the Iraq police force.

The UK army currently has soldiers in the Falklands, Balkans, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Kabul and Iraq. It has 277,418 personnel, an annual budget of 23.6 billion pounds (2.5% of GDP) and 10 billion pounds are spent on procurement of equipment.

Command, Leadership and Management;

Commanders are not leaders until their position has been ratified by those they lead.

Leadership is visionary; it is the projection of personality and character to inspire the team to achieve the desired outcome.

Management is about the allocation and control of resources to achieve objectives.

Colonel Watters offered the group a choice of two case studies – Iraq and the Balkans. We chose Iraq and were spoilt with fantastic photos of Iraq, including palaces, the people and the streets. It was explained to us the importance in understanding the culture of the people in Iraq and how this should influence military strategies. In western society we honour highly, law enforcement and family, the Iraqis honour God and family first. The western world must think very carefully before they assume what those from other countries want and need.

MUSIC AS A METAPHOR - MARTYN WARREN

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This session involved our newly assembled choir singing with some “proper” singers at Buckfast Abbey. Buckfast Abbey is a fully functioning monastery that makes a lot of money through tourism. After our singing session we waited in the Abbey in complete silence and darkness for about 15 minutes for the monks to assemble and perform their nightly chant. This was serious and not for the benefit of tourists. It was a very calming and majestic experience.

GENE TECHNOLOGY – MICK FULLER (UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH)

Mick gave a logical, easy to understand and fair assessment of genetically modified organisms (GMO’s). He was very convincing that the science of GMO’s is a logical progression that should be embraced not feared. After further discussions with the group it was decided that those who considered themselves “anti GM” were in fact against profit and power loving multinationals rather than the science. When discussing GMO technology we should take care to establish exactly what we are discussing!

GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP – RICHARD SOFFE & MARK STONE

Richard and Mark’s talk added another dimension to management and leadership – the differences in values between the generations. This linked nicely with Colonel Watters theme about understanding cultural differences between societies. I have included the notes that were in the presentation as I thought they were concise and interesting.

Traditionalists (1900-1945)

- they believe in hard work and respect for leaders and institutions
- they recognise chains-of-command and value consistency and continuity in organisational culture
- they care about status and recognition
- they prefer structured formal workplace organisations
- they value job security, are loyal and have the experience and networks of contacts this brings
- they worry that they are lacking cutting-edge skills in an automated, fast-paced, youth-oriented culture
- they are less driven by individual needs and wants, being happy to contribute to the accomplishment of common goals
- have lived through periods of unemployment and economic depression and appreciate having a job
- they do not seek constant individual feedback but listen to and obey those in authority

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

- as part of the largest generation, they have had to compete hard for jobs and promotion
- they are sensitive to organisational culture and understand its politics
- they seek to build successful careers that offer challenges, satisfaction, fulfilment along with status and financial rewards
- they will change jobs to find better opportunities
- they wish to work hard and play by the rules at work while being willing to be more liberal and informal in their private life
- they fear being passed over by those with higher technological skills and requiring lower salaries

- grew up in a relatively affluent, opportunity-rich world supported by Traditionalist parents doing everything possible to provide what they were denied.
- they are more educated, idealistic and optimistic; seeking solutions to the world's problems as well as their own

Generation X (1965-1980)

- technologically immersed - for work / home
- sceptical of traditions / institutions
- self reliant with few heroes
- distrust formal and political – want straight talk
- hard working / ambitious, but also a private life
- want more casual work environments and fun
- want constant feedback and offer upward feedback
- want autonomy and camaraderie, not hierarchy
- want to hear about the organisations future not its past
- they do not like showing respect for elders
- includes almost equal numbers of working men and women
- now moving into leadership positions - the falling birth-rate has provided some Xer career acceleration
- seek training and coaching but may not depend on the organisation for it
- more concerned with career than job

Millenials (1981-1999z)

- have instant access to information through mobiles and computers and have grown up alongside the internet
- understand and appreciate diversity
- oppose command and favour collaborative situations
- demand flexibility in all things
- prepared to move up/down/sideways, don't all want to be managers
- used to being busy and need feedback, training, support
- concerned about personal safety, but feel empowered to take positive action when things go wrong
- difficult to bully and seek to contribute from an early stage
- started working early, while in education
- expect to have multiple career changes in their lifetime
- seek work that is meaningful for themselves / clients and is enjoyable
- find tangible rewards attractive to fund busy lives but also value intangibles including the ability to work in peer teams, having bosses they can relate to, and participation in work decisions
- less driven by the desire to accomplishing amazing things

DRAMA THERAPY – RACHEL VOWLES, NORTHCOTT THEATRE EXETER

This session was a light relief and did a good job at bonding the group. I believe we should have had two drama sessions, one at the start of each week so that the group dynamics remained flexible for longer. I learnt some new fun team building activities that I have already used with a farmer group namely “The Chicken Game”.

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RADIO AND TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

It is one thing to talk about what you should and shouldn't do in a radio or TV interview but it is another thing to have the camera and lights in your face while being asked tricky questions. This session gave us the opportunity to experience the "real" thing without going to air. Our interviewers were not kind to us rather they tried to trick or sidetrack us. I am grateful to those that wore some serious criticism in this session as it gave us all the option to learn. It also caused our group to bond further and the support offered was fantastic.

This session reinforced to me that the media is not the enemy as long as you do your homework and are well informed. In fact, like in Australia, UK farmers do not help their image by having tweed coated old men whinging about the lack of subsidies featured in the newspaper. If we present professional and interesting good news stories to the media, they are likely to be very pleased and we need them to help change the image of agriculture.



SUMMARY PRESENTATION/EVALUATION AND THE GALA DINNER

The group presented a summary of the course to members of The Worshipful Company of Farmers. This was very well received. In fact it was said to be the best presentation in the 10 years that the course has been running!

In the evening we all dressed up and joined Master and Lady Plumb (Lord Plumb is the current Master of the WCF), other WCF members and lecturers for a presentation dinner. It was a fun night and I found many of the formalities rather entertaining. I have learnt that the port must only ever be passed to the left!

CONCLUSION

On the 28th December 2005 the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the population of the world on this day was 6,487,804,551. In the whole scheme of things what does one Australian Nuffield Scholar visiting the UK to do a Challenge of Rural Leadership Course contribute to the world today? Not much at this point in time, so one may question what is the point.

However, maybe the simplistic relationship between cause and effect isn't always the best way of looking at things. You don't send someone to university to develop a product, you send them to develop skills that they will chose to use in a way that may result in something amazing. It is not a sure thing, but what is a sure thing is without that training there would be little chance the product can be developed. I view this course in the same way. I can't say categorically exactly what will be the outcomes of me attending the course. Rather I can say the skills I have gained may enhance the contribution I make to Australian agriculture in the future.

Using Steve Fisher's 3 points to a good leader;

Have the ability to rise above the situation. By studying in the UK rather than in Australia it is much easier to take a step back and evaluate what you are being taught. You don't know anyone else, they don't know you or your industry therefore you have few agendas. In this course I was not particularly vocal, partly because I was in a completely new world. This was a useful experience for me. There is value in taking the time to gather your thoughts. The course also taught me techniques to step back and evaluate a situation in a logical manner. I must confess that for much of the time I was in England I completely forgot about our farm! Upon my return I certainly became caught up in the daily issues but I now have a better understanding of the importance to take a step back and put things in perspective. I think I am easier to work with now! Also, my time in England was a good test run for 2006, when I will be away for much longer.

Be a good communicator. Time and time again we heard about the importance of good communication in business and life. You can have a good product, but if you can't communicate that to other people then you may not sell many, if you can't communicate well along the supply chain then you may find a few shocks ahead, if you have a great business but don't communicate with your family then you might end up growing old on your own.....The list is endless. In specific terms, the course taught me more about communication with the media. It also highlighted the importance of networking on a global scale and understanding personality types.

IQ - doesn't need to be really high but a bit above average. I'm not sure how the nurture/nature debate fits with IQ but I can say that this course certainly caused many of my sleeping brain cells to wake up. Many of the topics were thought provoking and challenging and certainly provided me with many ideas to think about.

The course is managed very professionally. All participants received a memory stick containing most of the speakers' presentations plus photos that had been taken throughout the course.

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THANK YOU

I would sincerely like to thank all of the other course participants. Everybody was so friendly and welcoming and judging from the number of emails flying between us all I'm sure we will remain in contact in the future.

I particularly want to thank Richard Soffe for all the advice and kindness he gave me. Richard's enthusiasm and drive is infectious and he is certainly not the elderly academic that I thought he may be!

Lastly, thank you to the Australian Nuffield Farming Scholars Association and the Worshipful Company of Farmers for their financial assistance. Experiences like this are not available to everyone and I feel very lucky to be given this opportunity.

GENERAL BUSINESS

FINANCE

From a financial perspective, our business contributed about AU\$5000 in course fees (this included all accommodation, food and tuition). The remaining \$2500 was paid by the Worshipful Company of Farmers. The Australian Nuffield Farming Scholars Association paid for my return airfare (about \$1500).

I understand that the WCF is willing to continue to offer this level of support to the attending Nuffield scholar however, Richard Soffe would be the one who could confirm this. My other expenses were the train trip from London to Exeter (about \$30 if booked at least one week in advance) and transport in London. Fortunately my sister lives in London so I had free board before and after the course. For those who do require accommodation in London, The Farmers Club can be used. The other potential major cost is to pay someone at home to do your work. In our case this was not really a problem as it was not a busy time and my parents could provide help. I think the contribution our business made financially was fair considering the contributions made by Nuffield Australia and the WCF.

HASSLES

I didn't face any major hassles with my time away. Possibly the biggest factor was the short time between being awarded the position on the course and going to the UK.

WHO WOULD THE COURSE SUIT?

I feel this course is best suited to someone who is happy to spend some time inside in a classroom environment and that isn't tired of doing courses. It is a long way to go for two weeks if your heart is not really in it and this course requires considerable energy. I didn't find much overlap with course material I have been exposed to recently, but if you have attended a number of general courses there is a chance that some of the material would not be new. My report and Andrew Johnson's (2004) should give future applicants a guide with respect to this issue. It shouldn't be forgotten though, that being in another country working with other young people is a fabulous experience in itself.

THE FUTURE

Challenge of Rural Leadership is enthusiastic to continue the relationship with Australian Nuffield. Richard Soffe asked me if I thought Nuffield would be interested in sending two scholars and secondly what procedure was used to select the scholar to attend. I couldn't answer these questions but told him I would forward them on. I think Richard plans to try to get some more overseas scholars (next year they have one from Denmark and maybe the USA?) in order to give the course more global relevance. I cannot really comment how this course compares to those offered in Australia, as I am not familiar with the Australian leadership courses.

For those that are interested there is the opportunity to gain 20 'M-level' credit points towards a PG Diploma/MSc Management by completing a post-course assignment. I am not sure if these points could be transferred to Australia. Due to time constraints I have chosen not to do the assignment.

CONTACTS

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