Shooting Stars

THREE GAMEKEEPING students from Borders College have made a clean sweep at the ‘Young Gamekeeper of the Year – Sporting Clays’ competition at Scone Palace. Struan Brodie, from Jedburgh, won first prize in the British Association of Shooting and Conservation event with fellow students Gregor Bell, from Heriot, and Russell Dodd, from Bathgate, taking second and third places respectively.

The first year Gamekeeping students had to compete against fifteen of the top students from across Scotland, and ultimately came out as the top three.

Struan at Scone Palace
Alan Tweedie, Course Tutor, said, “I knew we were in with a good chance of winning something, as these three lads are our top guns”.

Russell Dodd, Struan Brodie and Gregor Bell

Animal Care student raises money for Arthursheil Rescue Centre

BORDERS COLLEGE student Shonagh Elliot is currently studying on the BTEC Animal Care course and has raised the great sum of £338.50 after recently running a half marathon. The money will be donated to the Arthursheil Rescue Centre where she is on work placement as part of her course. The centre looks after animals that are strays, which owners can no longer look after or that need further training to allow them to be re-homed. The centre also provides information and advice to new owners.

Shonagh said, “It was a very satisfactory feeling being able to raise money and help out this particular charity” - well done Shonagh for showing such commitment and citizenship.

Can we move it? YES WE CAN!!

Students from the Borders College Introduction to Landbased course assisted in the clear up of several large branches from the gardens of Craw Wood, Tweedbank Care Home.

The snowy weather had damaged one of the old Scots Pine trees, so the willing workers cut, raked and moved the branches from the lawn, leaving it safe to use once again.

Both staff and residents were delighted to get back into the garden.

A resident giving students sweets as a thank you
Scottish Natural Heritage
Best Practice Guidance Day for Deer Practitioners

BOTH THE NC and HNC gamekeeping students recently attended an excellent one-day training course at Drumlanrig Castle, courtesy of Buccleuch Estates. The training was to compliment the recently published Best Practice Guides available for all that work in the field of deer management.

Unfortunately, the weather was atrocious but it did not dampen the students’ enthusiasm to gain as much experience as they could from this excellent training day. The team gleaned excellent information and lots of good practical advice from the assembled experts. The students attended various sessions, including deer welfare, carcass handling, butchering and the impact of deer on their environment. The training was very interactive and the group discussions and questions were extremely informative. The students saw, at first hand, the dangers of badly maintained firearms and how important the use of highly trained dogs can be to deer managers. The practical demonstration of the dog handler was enjoyed by all the students, as it was a masterclass between man and his best friend.

This event is one the annual highlights in the gamekeeping students’ year and we would all like to take this opportunity to thank all the SNH staff who braved the elements to produce this wonderful training day.

New Honda ATV Arrives at Newtown

THERE WAS excitement at Newtown at the arrival of a new Honda ATV, all the students gathered around the new bike as Lloyds salesman, Steven Grigor gave the delivery demonstration outlining the controls and safety features as required by Health and Safety law.

Level 1 Agricultural Students and Rural Mechanics used the new ATV on practical lessons and found the electric gear change fairly easy to use and that the handling over all types of obstacles was a lot better than the old ATV.

As part of the lesson, students had to compare the new Honda ATV and the older Honda ATV and list any differences and changes to specification, listing advantages and disadvantages between the two.

The ATV will be a valuable teaching resource, used for all courses at Newtown, keeping the equipment current and to industry standards; this is important for both training requirements and important for students to be trained on current specification equipment.
Horse Care Students Visit the London International Horse Show at Olympia and Beat the Snow!

THURSDAY MORNING saw an early start for Horse Care students, as they left the Newtown St Boswells campus at 6.30am to travel to the London International Horse Show at Olympia. After a long journey, they all arrived safely at the Holland Park youth hostel, where they were staying, before walking the short distance to Olympia.

The students were truly amazed, with show-jumping, a parade of British equestrian medal winners from the World Equestrian Games, an exciting Kennel Club-sponsored dog jumping display which had everyone cheering and Ukrainian Cossacks, who showed such skill with horseback stunts while galloping around the arena that the crowd were on the edge of their seats. The Shetland Pony Grand National had the audience cheering, as the small ponies sped over fences, overtaking on corners. The Duchess of Cornwall attended the Thursday evening performance and presented prizes and rosettes. The first half finished with a fantastic musical ride of the Household Cavalry. Our students were impressed by the moves and discipline shown by the horses and riders, and can’t wait to practise when next at Dryden Riding Centre.

After the interval, where they visited the array of shops to buy last minute Christmas presents, the excellent show jumping was followed by the “Christmas finale”, an extravaganza with excerpts from the “War Horse” and, as a highlight, Santa on his sleigh, complete with snow and carol singing.

The next morning, they left London for the journey home. In spite of hold-ups, due to snow and accidents, they managed to get home safely just ahead of the snow, which saw the M6 closed until Saturday morning and left traffic stranded on the motorway.

Horticultural Students Help Border General Hospital Patients

FIFTEEN HORTICULTURAL students from Borders College recently visited the dementia unit at the Borders General Hospital, to give their garden an autumn make-over. The gardens are designed to allow patients a safe and secure area to walk around and enjoy. Our students were involved in pruning a range of trees, shrubs and perennial plants, edging the lawns and planting a range of sensory plants in the raised beds, including herbs and winter bedding plants. The charge nurse, Cindy McLeish, commented by saying “thank you so much for the wonderful job you and the students did on our ward garden, it has been much admired and will continue to give enjoyment to our patients whilst they are in hospital”.

The horticultural students hope to make a regular appearance at the hospital garden as part of their community projects, which also include working alongside Melrose in Bloom, Newtown Primary School and helping to maintain and develop the College Campuses.
Introduction to Landbased Industries

OUR INTRO group have been out and about gaining new experiences and learning about our local area. They have had many visits, to Dawyck Gardens to see tree species, Stobo Kirk and Dava to see hill forts, which are steeped in legends of Merlin. They had a guided ranger walk.

They showed students evidence of round houses and explained how these tribes would have lived. Between outings, Intros have also been working. The group helped secure a protective cover over the summer house at Ravenswood for restoration. They have been pruning and brashing, beating at pheasants, assisting with animal care, strimming and learning to drive tractors.

Once again this winter, Intros are working with the Tweed Foundation, collecting data from trout and salmon at fish traps - very cold on the fingers.

We were fortunate to have Christopher Bole, the Borders Council archaeologist, accompany us up the Eildons and talk about the Dark Ages and the Selgovae tribe. Christopher once more.

This Landbased course has been very hands on, and will continue to give learning experiences for students wishing to work outdoors.

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Hawick High School Landbased Group

THE BORDERS College-Hawick High School Link continues to thrive, with another large group undertaking the Landbased course. Thirteen pupils enrolled on this year's course and have proved to be another hardworking group. The pupils are working towards a Rural Skills qualification, which includes forestry and farming skills.

Over the last few years, the Hawick group have taken part in several community projects, including work in Wilton Lodge Park, the Roond Close Project and snow clearing duties in Frank Scott Court. This year, the group have already come to the aid of the Robertson Show Society by helping set up and dismantle their annual show. This work included erecting marquees, setting up staging and loading several trailers with sheep pens and seating.

The group have also transported and sorted equipment for both the Teviothead Show and Wilton Church Fete. Their current project has been to erect a new wooden fence around the Abundant Life Church in Burnfoot. This has been a very challenging project and they have had to go through the whole process, from estimating the materials required to build the fence. The work has been made more difficult due to the uneven ground and concrete foundations of the old wall. Rural Mechanics and Agriculture Students have also helped in the work by dismantling the previous fence. These projects ensure that Borders College and Hawick High School students give something to the Local Community and raise the profile of this unique partnership.

Vintage Ploughing Championships

BORDERS COLLEGE Landbased Department had a trade stand at the recent European Vintage and Five Nations Ploughing Championships at Upper Nisbet near Jedburgh. The College got involved through its close connections with Bobby Douglas, who was awarded the first ‘Fellow of the Lanbased Dept’ in 2009.

Bobby organised borders College Students to plough land at Copland, Ancrum, and raised £150.00, which was donated to the Ploughing Championship Committee to help stage the event.

The stand was manned by Stuart Nimmo, Dave Black, Paul Freeland-Cook and Andrew Johnson, and created a lot of interest in the College. Several people expressed an interest in some of the courses on offer and one young lad signed up to join the MA Scheme.

The College also helped set up the event and loaned College equipment for the weekend of the competition. This work and the fund raising was a great example of how the department can help local events such as this. Agricultural students entered the competition. Kevin Trotter from Hoselaw, near Kelso, was the youngest competitor taking part. Craig Connell from Wanton Walls, near Lauder, won the Reversible Ploughing title and was also the first Young Farmer in the competition.

Both lads have been helped on their way by our ‘Ploughing Guru’ Bobby Douglas.
Guid Day, Skippy

FORMER STUDENT Stuart Bruce gave a presentation to Rural Mechanic students on his working life, both in the UK and in Australia.

Stuart attended college at Hawick and Galashiels, doing a full time Motor Vehicle course. After completing the course he then got an apprenticeship at Sherriffs of Stow as an agricultural engineer, so he came back to Borders College at Duns as a day release student.

Stuart worked as a mechanic for Sherriffs and then was promoted to the sales department, where he worked until 2004.

As a hobby, Stuart was involved in motorsport, becoming Scottish auto test champion and competing in rallies and autocross.

Stuart decided, after much thought, to give up work for a time, travel the world and try to find employment to help pay his way.

Stuart comes from a farming background (his family farm at Bemersyde) so, while in Australia, he worked on a farm, doing some tractor driving and general farm work. The students were impressed by the size of the farm (44,000 acres) and the machinery used to work the land.

Stuart told the students that the farmer was also a racing driver and competed in a Porsche 911, which he asked Stuart to help mechanic with. This meant travelling all over Australia in a small plane to attend race meetings and help maintain the race car.

After the farm work came to an end, Stuart managed to get a job with the preparation company (http://www.autohaushamilton.com.au/aboutus.html) that built and looked after the Porsche that the farmer raced. This meant moving to Melbourne and having to apply for Australian citizenship, so he explained the procedure to the students, telling them about having to get sponsorship from an employer and having to complete a questionnaire about Australia and its history before being given Australian nationality, which means he now has dual nationality.

Stuart had some photographs from his travels, which he passed around, and answered student questions (there were a lot).

Stuart enjoyed the chance to speak to the Rural Mechanics and students enjoyed the presentation. It gave them an insight into what can be achieved after studying at Borders College. Look out Australia, here they come!!!

Lantra Learner of the Year Awards

BORDERS COLLEGE had another successful night at the 8th Annual Lantra Landbased Learner of the Year Awards at Crieff Hydro recently.

Craig Connell, who is studying the MA in Mixed Farming, was declared runner up in the Agricultural Learner of the Year award. Craig has had success at the awards in the past, and is the only candidate to have made this award ceremony on two separate occasions.

Fraser Mitchell, from Hawick, was nominated in the Landbased Curriculum Learner section. This was the third year in a row that a pupil from Hawick High School had made the final.

Fraser was delighted to receive a CARAS Scholarship, after being identified as a ‘potential future farmer’. The award was sponsored by the Royal Highland Agricultural Society of Scotland, and aims to promote Agriculture as a positive career choice. As well as a cheque to help finance Agriculture related training, Fraser will be assigned a ‘mentor’ to help him progress in the industry.

Both lads got the opportunity to meet Richard Lochhead, minister for the Environment, after the ceremony and were able to tell him about their studies at Borders College.
Scottish Borders Campus – High Mill Project

WE WERE recently asked to undertake a landscaping project next to the high mill, opposite Dale Street.

Students studying on SVQ level 3 Horticulture course were asked to come up with a design which would make the site more suitable for students to use.

The design the students came up with has two large circular raised beds placed in the middle of the site as a ‘centre piece’ and they were designed in the shape of cogs.

In the early stages of the project, students from the Building department assisted by building two round brick and mortar retaining walls, making the main bodies of the ‘cogs’. The brick cogs were then used to build a stone dyking that would go all the way around.

The raised bed cogs would double up as a communal seating area, and Welsh slate will be used to cap off the walls.

The finishing touch will come with the decorative gravel that will bring the whole site to life.

Although finishing the project has been delayed somewhat by adverse weather conditions, once it is finished it will be a very popular and valuable asset to the college community.

I want a cup that size”, says Murray Gillies from level 2 mixed farming

Lamma Residential, January 2011
• SVQ Mixed Farming Level 2 & 3
• NC Rural Mechanics

SVQ LEVEL 2 Agriculture and Rural Mechanic students recently visited the JCB Heavy Products LTD factory near Uttoxeter in Staffordshire. The factory constructs a range of machines, which include Teleporter forklifts, 3CX loaders and excavators.

The factory occupies a 50 acre site, which includes a seven acre manmade lake. The lake has a paved footpath around it, with several modern sculptures and a flock of black swans. The factory workers use the footpath at break times for fresh air and exercising. The area is also open to the public at weekends.

The students and staff had an early start, as they had to travel 230 miles early in the morning. The tour started with coffee and biscuits in the main conference room, and this was followed by a 20 minute film in the JCB cinema. The students and staff were then introduced to the tour guide and given a run down on the health and safety in the factory.

All who were going on the tour had to wear PPE, spectacles and ear defenders.

Our tour guide was called Ken and, like all other JCB guides, he was a retired long service factory floor worker, who knew all aspects of assembly line production of JCB units.

The tour took us right through the process, from the first sheet of steel to be cut to the hydraulic testing of each finished machine.

The tour ended at the main reception area, home to the JCB land speed car, which holds the record. The car is powered by two JCB diesel max engines and driven by RAF Pilot Andy Green. His first attempt broke the record as he clocked 328 mph.

The following day, he broke his own record and re-set it at 350 mph. He has remained unchallenged since August 2006.

Naturally, the students were very interested and impressed with the tour and asked a lot of questions.

Dave Black proposed a vote of thanks and Ken (the tour guide) thanked the students for being sensible and responsible during the tour, and asking plenty of searching questions, which is gratifying for him.

“I want a cup that size”, says Murray Gillies from level 2 mixed farming
Landscaping Students at Hopton Pond

A POND at a farm called Hopton, near Ancrum, had fallen into serious disrepair. It more closely resembled a hole in the ground filled with water than an actual pond. Its sediment level had raised its bed more than two feet, and it was overgrown in aquatic weeds and plants.

In its renovation, our first order of business was to rescue cuttings of the plants we thought were worth saving, as well as any amphibious pond life we might come across. Once we had stored our ‘samples’ in large containers filled with water, we used a pump to drain the water.

Once empty, we had the job of excavating the excess sediment from the bottom of the pond, creating a shelf on which we would build a small drystone dyke border, and also creating a slope into the pond, so wildlife could naturally introduce itself along with the rescued items we already had.

This was quite a lengthy process. Once we’d achieved our target depth, we set about putting in a proper liner. This was a butyl liner, strong and UV resistant. We first put in capillary matting, sand with a soft particle and terram matting, all to ensure our lining wouldn’t be torn (which can be an expensive mistake).

Laying the liner over the step we’d created for the dyke, we weighed it down with the decorative wall, all the stone for which was lying around the pond, which was convenient. The whole process took a couple of months, through freezing weather but, when we were finished, the pond looked very picturesque, and we were proud of our work. Further plans are being made to create horizons. Watch this space.

Motorsport at Borders College

Karting

Greg Halfpenny, a Rural Mechanic Student, won the junior karting championship this year. He also competed in his first senior race, and finished second.

The championship takes place at Raceland, Gladsmuir. In this championship, there are about 100 competitors taking part. Greg has been competing in the juniors category for a few years with great success, has won the championship twice and is always in the top three. Greg also competed in the British school karting championship in 2009, and finished in third place out of 1536 competitors.

An important part of the Rural Mechanic course is PLPs. Greg used the karting championship win as a goal to achieve.

Motocross

Mark Thomson, a Rural Mechanic student, has been riding motocross for about seven years, mostly riding at Duns motocross track, contesting the Borders Motocross Club championship. He rides a Yamaha YZ250 two stroke. He’s been racing for five years and last year, after pushing hard all year, he finished second in the adult C class. At the last race, on the 26th of September 2010, Mark ended the day second overall, after finishing second in races one and two and winning the last one. This was also the final round of the Scottish championship. Mark has been getting his bike ready for the up and coming season, which starts in March. He will be competing in the adult B class in the Scottish championship and, for the Borders championship, he will be competing in the adult A class. This year, he is hoping to win the club championship, and hopefully finish in the top five in the Scottish championship.