

# Study Agriculture at Reaseheath

Exciting news from Reaseheath's  
**Agriculture** department!



## Industry focused, career ready

**Level 3 award winners**

James Tipton, Jess Turner,  
Owen Powell, Beth Witter

# Celebrating college awards

This summer we celebrated the success of 108 agriculture students who completed Further Education (FE) courses and are either starting or already working in farming and food production, or progressing to degree level. We're delighted that 95% of you passed your course this year!

Some of you received individual awards at our Presentation of Awards including Level 2 Technical Certificate in Agriculture students Will Preece, Ben McKenzie, Oliver Bill, Thomas Platt and Madelyn Sanderson; Level 3 Advanced Technical Diploma in Agriculture (Agri/Food) James Pennington; Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Agriculture (Arable) James Tipton; Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Agriculture (Livestock) Lorna Preece, Owen Powell and Beth Witter, and Level 3 Tech Bacc Jess Turner.



Will Preece, Oliver Bill and Madelyn Sanderson with Course Manager Louise Guy



James Pennington and James Tipton

All students were invited on stage for personal congratulations and received a well deserved round of applause before joining family members in a marquee on the front lawn.

## Land-based & Environment Learner Awards

We were also delighted when Cerys Fairclough, a former Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Agriculture student, was crowned Overall Learner of the Year and also scooped the Agriculture Best Learner award in the Lantra / Landex Land-based & Environment Learner Awards.

This glittering event, which was attended by Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries, Mark Spencer MP, celebrity farmer Adam Henson and more than 200 guests, celebrated successful young people who have progressed in land-based industries such as agriculture and was held on Reaseheath's campus.

The awards attracted over 120 nominations from colleges, universities and training companies across England and Northern Ireland, so Cerys' achievement in taking the top title was fantastic! Five other former students put forward by Reaseheath were also category winners. [\(Read more about Cerys on Page 6\)](#)



Adam Henson and Cerys Fairclough

## Cutting edge investment

We've invested millions of pounds in advanced on-farm technology to keep us at the forefront of the industry. This investment - the result of Institute of Technology and T Level funding - has opened up a huge area of new opportunities and specialist equipment for practical experience which is more broad-based than that offered by most other land-based colleges.



New equipment waiting for you this Autumn includes:

- Two top of the range John Deere R Series tractors and two New Holland T Series tractors
- Two Claas rear mounted disc mowers and one Claas front mounted disc mower
- Kuhn Tedder and Krone twin rotor rake
- Kuhn 4 + 1 plough
- Kuhn Espro 4 metre minimal tillage (min-till) drill
- Amazone Fertiliser spreader with Isobus technologies and variable rate application
- Bunning low loader manure spreader with weigh cells
- Dalbo hydraulic rollers, one flat and one Cambridge
- Sumo flatlift subsoiler
- Two new Kramer telehandlers
- NC 3000 gallon vacuum tanker with trailing shoe application

- Strautman forage wagon
- Mastek umbilical slurry system with Spreadwise remote controlled pump
- Three Honda quad bikes
- Kuhn Optimer 4 metre disc harrows
- Amazone sprayer

All agriculture students receive training on the correct use of equipment and there will be opportunities to help with fieldwork including mowing, tedding, ploughing, rolling, sub soiling and drainage. New students without prior experience will be introduced to basic skills such as driving, hitching and farm health and safety using our Tenstar tractor and machinery simulators, and will be fully supported by tutors.

## Coming soon:

### Automated cattle feeding system

A Lely Vector Smart Feeding System is being installed to run alongside our robotic milking system, ensuring that we continue to operate at the forefront of green digital technology. The feeding system delivers tailor-made rations for each cow, with the results being sent to our dairy data centre for discussion and classroom learning.

Thanks to this new investment and our strong partnership with Lely, the dairy herd will be as fully automated as possible - a future proofed, hands-free herd at the forefront of technology.

### Arable data centre

Currently under construction, this ground breaking centre is supported by laboratories for forage, slurry and water analysis. Lab based technical systems will enable you to test livestock feeds such as maize and grass silage for nutrient value, and then use the data to design livestock feed rations for our cows. This outstanding onsite facility will hugely enhance continuity of learning for agriculture students at all levels.

### Practical fieldwork

To ensure you gain a good practical grounding in fieldwork,



we've taken on a new parcel of land to expand our cropping acreage. Typically we grow winter and spring wheat, barley and peas along with maize and grass silage, as well as a range of cover crops and herbal leys which are used to feed our cattle. Cover crops support our strategy for carbon reduction and soil preservation.

Final year arable students will have the chance to oversee a section of the farm's arable crops, making key management decisions and handling the machinery operations needed to establish and maintain the crops.



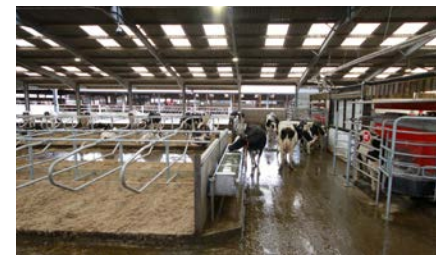
## Livestock

There are several exciting new livestock developments on the horizon for the farm, all designed to offer you the broadest agricultural experience possible.

This autumn we'll be restocking the commercial sheep flock. This will include a small pedigree flock providing you with a valuable comparison and learning experience in areas such as pedigree genomics and showing. Third year beef and sheep students will actively manage the flock, making key decisions during breeding, lambing and lamb sales.

To support the livestock management, we're introducing a new Tepar sheep handling system equipped with auto-shedding, automatic dosing, and weighing capabilities. Additionally, our herd of 260 dairy cattle, our beef cattle and our replacement dairy youngstock will benefit from a new IAE cattle handling system, featuring automatic weighing.

The bull unit at Old Hall Farm is being re-integrated into Reaseheath's farm operations, offering more chances to conduct commercial feed trials and track live weight gains and feed conversion ratios for a variety of beef animals. Plans are also in place to reintroduce a number of pigs, including traditional breeds, to ensure you



get as comprehensive experience as possible.

Our livestock enterprises play a crucial role in the college's Field to Fork initiative, which forms a key part of our agri-food strategy. All agriculture students will have access to a wide range of campus resources which showcase the full supply chain from primary production to processing, packaging and sales. This includes opportunities to work in our on-site butchery facilities under the guidance of Master Butcher Gary Evans.

You can also see our vertical farm in operation, which is the largest of any educational institution in the UK.



## Work placements

Work placements form a key part of your course whichever level you are studying, and many of you return with great stories of the experiences you've enjoyed. Some of you have even been offered full-time employment after you've finished your course!

Here's what some recent Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma students got up to.

**Cerys Fairclough** spent an extended work placement with the Wynnstay Group, working within their hardware team, and was offered a permanent position as National Hardware Sales Co-ordinator. Her role includes supporting stores and sales reps with technical knowledge, liaising with suppliers, discussing farmers' needs and helping to find solutions.



She is also studying part-time for a business degree at the University of South Wales and developing her own breeding flock of Blue Faced Leicester sheep.

**Rose Geggie** spent a year's placement on a beef and sheep farm in north Yorkshire, looking after 1,500 Swaledale sheep and 300 beef cattle used for conservation grazing.



Despite having a non-farming background, Rose has become an accomplished shepherdess, tractor driver and sheepdog trainer and intends to work her way up the farming career ladder.

**Sam Vose** was introduced to big scale farming during his work placement with potato growers. W T Banks and Co., the UK's biggest single supplier for Walkers crisps. This forward thinking company, which harvests 19,000 tonnes of potatoes annually, uses satellite technology for field mapping and fertiliser application, and gathers the crop with a self propelled potato harvester.



After completing his course, Sam spent six months in Australia combining on a 60,000 acre arable farm and is now back working full time with W T Banks as a potato digger. He fancies Canada next.

## Study tours and day trips

This year, final year Level 3 Extended Technical Diploma in Agriculture students enjoyed a five day study tour to Ireland which took in a trip to the Gouldin Angus and Hereford pedigree bull breeding centre in Tralee and onto a neighbouring farm using a grazing robotic milking system.

The group, who were led by Course Manager Sally Beresford, also visited the Moorepark Research Centre in Cork, where trials are held on the effect of grazing systems on cows and their milk, and toured the Smethwick brewery to follow the route of the barley and the history of the brewing family. Other highlights were a factory tour of the Keenan feeding wagons and a talk on the new In Touch Controller that assists farmers to accurately feed their cattle.

A visit to Philip Jones' award winning cattle on the east coast in Gorey followed, while the final day was spent travelling back to Dublin for a tour of the famous Guinness factory to again see the route of the barley and history of the business and their barrels.

Additionally, all students have been out on farm visits to specialist producers, feed mills and the Genus bull stud at Ruthin.



Bidlea Dairy's successful ice cream parlour and farm shop selling local produce provided a popular example of farm diversification!

Student groups also attended LAMMA, the Cheshire Ploughing Match and the Royal Cheshire Show and participated in Reaseheath Lambing Weekends.

## Industry input

Farm forums give you the chance to listen and pose questions to industry professionals on a variety of relevant topics such as legislation, environmental issues and government policies.

This year you heard from the NFU Yellow Wellies Farm Safety Campaign and the RABDF Women in Dairy discussion group among others, and we have a new programme planned for the upcoming year.

Also, some of you quizzed National Farmers' Union (NFU) Vice President Rachel Hallos when she paid us a visit to find out more about the skills training we offer in the areas of food, farming and environmental protection.



## Social life

We listened to you during the last academic year and have made changes to timetables so you can enjoy more time on enrichment activities such as our career ready, social learning and social life programmes.

Our thriving Farmers' Society, led by T Level student Oli Wilson, is also growing from strength to strength and offers lots of opportunities for you to enjoy the company of other like-minded students. In fact, the success of the club has been so outstanding that Oli was presented with the EC Collins Trophy for being the student to make the best contribution to college life at our Presentation of Awards - a tremendous accolade as this is a cross college award.



## Taking time out

T Level Agriculture students took time away from their studies to chat about their mental wellbeing and learn about the support available for farming communities at a Big Farming Tea Break.

The event was part of a nationwide initiative to bring farmers and growers together to share their worries and to encourage them to focus on the positive aspects of British farming and food production.



# University Centre Reaseheath

Foundation Degree in Sustainable Agriculture undergraduates have enjoyed activities which allow them to widen their experience and knowledge of dairy herd and livestock management.

## British Cattle Breeders Conference 2024

Undergraduates learned how cattle breeding is being revolutionised for a more sustainable future by attending the British Cattle Breeders Conference.

This year the main focus was on sustainability and included presentations on carbon output, the use of genetics and the amazing technology on the horizon.



## Cow signals training day

Dairy herd management undergraduates completed CowSignals® training, a simple and practical approach which aims to improve cow welfare, leading to increased income through higher milk yields and a longer cow lifetime.

The training scheme, which is used globally and is offered to students and farmers through Reaseheath, enables herd managers to recognise early signs of disease and to begin treatment.

The training was provided by Gro-Agri Ltd and hosted by Larkton Hall Cheese in Malpas, an Italian style cheese and dairy ice cream producer. The programme included a presentation on locomotion scoring from agriculture alumnus Andy Hill.



## Farm visits

Agriculture undergraduates have widened their practical experience and knowledge by visiting farms with different management systems, such as a block calving system which also maximises the use of home grown forage.

They have also studied a 1,000 cow milking unit, and have been hands-on, carrying out genomic testing on some of Reaseheath's own dairy herd. This highlights changes in genes with potential to cause health problems.



# Farm Management Team

We've welcomed new and returning members onto our farm management team, each with a wealth of industry experience and professional expertise to share with you.

## Farm Manager Chris Chambers

A hugely experienced farm manager, Chris has spent much of the past 26 years on international contracts within the dairy and arable sectors. He has managed multinational teams in Russia, Pakistan, Sudan, Serbia and Sweden while remaining a partner in his family's farming business on the Isle of Wight.

Chris has already completed one temporary stint with us and was delighted to be invited back.

He says: "I'm a big believer in knowledge transfer between generations and I want the farm to deliver a quality student experience. I'm looking forward to helping to implement the immediate and future plans for the farm, including expansion of the dairy and beef enterprises and to supporting Reaseheath's 'Field to Fork' initiative.

"I'm delighted to have joined a team which is so enthusiastic and committed to taking these plans forward."



## Livestock Manager Jez Belfield

Jez has 30 years of experience in dairy herd management. He has spent much of his career working with high yielding pedigree cows in intensive or semi intensive systems but also has experience of New Zealand-type extensive systems.

Prior to his move to Reaseheath Jez was herd manager of 450 high yielding Holstein cows on a farm near Shrewsbury. Although he has worked widely across the UK, this is his first college based job.

Jez joined us in late July and has been getting acquainted with our youngstock unit, where we typically have between 100 and 150 home reared youngstock which will become dairy herd replacements or join our 'Field to Fork' beef herd. He also oversees our sheep flock.

He says: "I was recommended for this job because I'm a good people person with a sense of humour. I'm looking forward to working with the students and passing on the experience I've gained. The facilities here are very practical, modern and progressive, and there are strong genetics within the herd."



## Dairy Herd Manager Pyper Marshall

Pyper completed her Foundation Degree in Sustainable Agriculture with Dairy Herd Management at UCR and continues to study on a 'top up' year to gain a full BSc, alongside training for her new role.

Cows are her passion and she has experience of managing a dairy herd along with the knowledge and practical skills she gained on her degree. She's already begun to share her knowledge and enthusiasm with students as they accompany her while she's on duty in the dairy unit.

Pyper says: "I am enjoying working with staff members who have such a wealth of experience. I'm looking forward to trialling new management techniques and to evaluating the result over the next 12 months."

## T Level in Agriculture Course Manager Dave Shardlow

A former Reaseheath agriculture student, Dave had an early career in cattle genetics, working for Genus as a Reproductive Management System (RMS) technician and for Cogent as a sales area manager.

He returned to Reaseheath in 2016 as an instructor / lecturer, worked on the college farm during Covid and then became a skills coach and lecturer for a further two and a half years before joining the John Bownes tractor dealership.

Dave returns to our teaching team in August, ready to begin



the new academic year, and will be a familiar face to some of the T Level students who he has taught previously.

He says: "I missed working with the students and animals and I'm very eager to get back into teaching. I'm passionate about sharing my experience and knowledge with the next generation of farmers and food producers and I enjoy using the modern technology which is available in so many areas of the industry."



# A final word from past students

“ Throughout my six years at Reaseheath I was encouraged to develop my own ideas, further my knowledge and work independently. Although I have a non-farming background, I'm passionate about dairy cows and their welfare and this was encouraged throughout my studies.



I now work for Bimeda Animal Health a global leader in animal health and veterinary pharmaceuticals, as a Ruminant Nutrition Specialist. I feel I'm making a difference for both cows and farmers.

## Connor Smith

- Level 3 Diploma in Agriculture 2016
- Foundation Degree in Agriculture 2018
- BSc (Hons) Agricultural Business Management 2019
- MSc Ruminant Nutrition (Harper Adams University) 2021

“ It's been my ambition for many years to visit New Zealand and learn more about the calf rearing systems there. I'm particularly interested in disease management in the pre-weaning to post-weaning stages.



I'll be spending a month visiting 20 farms with different units, breeds and feed systems, consulting with vets and shadowing feed reps. I'm very interested in scientific evidence surrounding nutrition and medication and I'm hoping that my research will help Cheshire farmers to improve health and welfare, lower mortality, decrease medication and maximise profits.

## Emma Pendlebury

- Level 3 Diploma in Agriculture 2020
- Co-manager of a contract calf rearing unit
- Recipient, John Platt Travel Scholarship  
[www.reaseheath.ac.uk/john-platt-scholarship](http://www.reaseheath.ac.uk/john-platt-scholarship)

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