



BBM Youth Support Agriculture Award



Isabella Nolan

This report presents my six month trip around the United Kingdom and Ireland, visiting various farms and points of interest. This experience, that was made possible by BBM Youth Support, has helped to expand my knowledge and broaden my view on the Agricultural Industry around the world.

***Agriculture Award 2014/15
Tocal Agricultural College
CB Alexander Campus
Paterson***

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Places Visited	
Map.....	4
East Anglia, Suffolk and Norfolk	5-7
Manor Farm, Normanton Le Heath, Leicestershire	8- 9
Travels	10-12
Stock Gaylard Estate, Sturminster Newton, Dorset	13-16
Langdon Barton Farm, Plymouth, Devon	17
Little Dart Raffe, Witheridge, Devon	18
Horsham, West Sussex	19
Travels Continued	19-20
Recommendations	21
Conclusion	22
References	22

Introduction

My name is Isabella Nolan. I grew up in the Blue Mountains area of NSW. Pursuing a career in Agriculture became a passion of mine when I studied Agriculture at high school and began work at a horse riding stable.

In 2013 I studied a Certificate III in Agriculture and continued onto study a Certificate IV and Diploma in Agriculture in 2014 at Tocal Agricultural College in the Hunter Valley area of NSW. Tocal appealed to me because of the beautiful area that it is situated in as well as the fact that it is a fully functioning farm running 500 head of Brangus cattle, a 200 head dairy and breeds its own Australian Stock Horses.

I did not hesitate when applications for the 2014/15 BBM Youth Support Scholarship to travel to the UK were handed out towards the end of my final year at Tocal. I could not believe that other students were not interested in even applying for the chance to travel overseas to experience agriculture in other parts of the world. About 2 months after handing in my application I received news that another student in my class had been sent a letter of congratulations from BBM about the scholarship and of course I was very happy for her, however, thought that my chances of receiving the same opportunity had quickly come to an end. I went down to the shop at college where our mail was delivered to and sure enough there was a letter from BBM with my name on it. Before opening the letter I prepared myself for the disappointment I was about to read of, however, once opening the envelope I was faced with some very surprising and exciting news. I too was off on the trip of a lifetime to the United Kingdom in 2015.

Having never left Australia before there was a lot of preparation to do before this trip would become a reality. I had to organise my passport, travel insurance and flights but my biggest concern was what was I going to do, where was I going to go and who was I going to stay with? I am lucky enough to have a cousin who lives in the county of Suffolk, so she was going to be my base, however, she runs a pub, which was awesome but didn't really help me in terms of finding Agricultural contacts. I was given the email address of last year's awardee which was very useful because she was able to send me contact details of people she had met on her travels, as well as very helpful tips and tricks she learnt along the way.

To make the most of my trip, between visiting farms I also wanted to do some travel on my own to see the beautiful sites that the UK and Ireland has to offer and also to visit a friend of mine who lives in Germany.

May 14th 2015 rolled around and my family and I travelled to Sydney airport. At that stage, I think I was more excited about the fact that I was getting to miss out on a Blue Mountains winter than anything else. The 24 hour flight ahead was quite a daunting thought.

Places Visited

The map below shows the locations I visited while travelling around the UK. The black circles show the farms and agricultural shows I visited and the red stars are towns and cities I stayed in between farm visits.



(Map of the United Kingdom and Ireland Counties)

East Anglia 15th May - 9th June + 17th June - 13th July

I spent the first few weeks of my trip settling into English life in the area of East Anglia. This is located in the East of England and is made up of the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. I have a cousin, Laura, who had moved from Australia, with her husband Lawrence, to a small village outside of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, two years ago. Laura and Lawrence bought and renovated a typical small English pub. They have two little children. During my stay there I got to meet many of the local farmers and they shared with me an insight of what day-to-day life is like on a British farm. Being an arable area most of them grow crops, are seasonal contractors, or drive lorries (trucks) carting grain and sugar beet. A few of them also have pigs, which live in sheds all year round, and small herds of cattle.

Laura introduced me to one of the local girls, Emma, who comes from a farming background. Her father and uncle own an Agricultural Contract Hauling company, as well as running their own farm and managing an estate. Emma took me out to have a look around their property and it was here that I first realised just how small English farms are. Standing in one spot we were able to view her entire 150acre farm. On an Australian scale this would be tiny, however, over there it is the average size.

In Australia, our sugar comes from a tall, tropical grass, resembling Bamboo, called Sugarcane. Requiring lots of sunlight, moisture and warmer temperatures it is grown in Queensland and Northern New South Wales. It generally takes 9-16 months to grow or even up to 24 months in the cooler climate of NSW. It cannot be harvested when it is wet so harvest happens between June and November in the drier months. The sugar is made in the leaves through photosynthesis. Due to its temperate climate, Britain cannot grow Sugarcane. Instead their sugar comes from a large, brown root crop similar to Parsnip, called Sugar beet. East Anglia is known for producing Sugar beet, due to its flat landscape, fertile soil and ideal climate. The sugar is made in the root, containing up to 17% sugar. During the months of September through to February the sugar content is at its highest and therefore this is when the campaign (harvest) happens. Emma was the first person to introduce me to Sugar beet and explained that when they harvest the beet, first the leaves are harvested and used as animal feed or are ploughed back into the soil as natural fertiliser. The roots are harvested and cleaned, removing any soil before being transported to the factory. Whether from sugar beets or sugarcane, the end product is the same. It has the same nutritional value, composition and wholesomeness.

Whilst in East Anglia I visited the Suffolk County Agricultural Show and the Norfolk County Agricultural Show. I went to the Suffolk Show as a visitor but thoroughly enjoyed looking around and comparing it to Australian Agricultural Shows. I attended the Norfolk Show with a friend who showed her Connemara Stallion in the Horse Show. This gave me a different perspective and it was very interesting to see “behind the scenes” of a horse show and to see the many different types of British Ponies.

Having a strong interest in horses I was keen to do some English style riding. I got talking to a lady named Ruth at the pub one day and she invited me to go down to her farm and meet her three horses. As her daughters had moved away for college, the horses were not being ridden so she said I could go down and ride them whenever I wanted to. From the riding style, the tack and the limited space we had to go riding, it was very different to what I was used to but still loads of fun.

I also got the opportunity to do two day trips into London and one up to Cambridge which I absolutely loved. London is a big, busy city with so much to see and do and Cambridge is just beautiful. There is so much history there and so many stories to be told, especially in the colleges of Cambridge. It made me realise just how young Australia really is. I also visited a small town in Suffolk called Lavenham. It is a beautiful small, medieval village full of tudor style houses and buildings that are on such a lean they look as though they should have fallen over years ago.



(The Swan Inn. Laura and Lawrence's pub in Lawshall)



(Sugar beet crop at Emma's farm)



(Ropa Maus, Self-propelled Sugar beet cleaning loader)



(Emma's pigs in the shed)



(A field of Barley in Lawshall)



(Sheepdog trials at Suffolk County Agricultural Show)



(Riding Toby through the streets and fields of Lawshall)



(Sworders Real Estate Agents, Lavenham)



(My cousin and I outside Big Ben)

Manor Farm, Leicestershire 9th - 16th June

On the 9th June, my cousin drove me up to Leicestershire, about 2 hours from Lawshall, where I would spend the next week with the Livesey family. This was a contact that I had been given by Amy (last year's awardee). She told me that they ran a mushroom farm and had pedigree Hereford cattle. This appealed to me because I had never had anything to do with mushroom farming before, nor had I much experience showing cattle.

On arrival at "Manor Farm", Tim Livesey, the owner, was home on his lunch break. He greeted me and showed me up to my room on the third floor of this big, beautiful brick home. We then jumped in his Land Rover and he took me up to "Yew Tree Farm" which is where their cattle are kept. Here I met Darragh, an Irish man who is in charge of looking after the cattle. Working under Darragh was fun, however, very challenging because he has such a strong Irish accent I couldn't understand a word he said. We spent the next few days busy getting ready for the "Three Counties Agricultural Show" which is held in Worcestershire. We also put their flock of 200 sheep through a foot bath and then the Livesey's gave me a tour around the mushroom farm.

The mushroom farm was much bigger than I was expecting and unlike anything I have ever seen before. The Livesey brothers have been growing mushrooms for over 50 years and take great pride in being the UK's number one grower of Exotic Mushrooms; they have a very diverse range of Exotic Mushrooms. The mushrooms are grown in large sheds with controlled environments. Some varieties are grown in special plastic bottles, all of which are cleaned and re-used. Other varieties are grown in blocks made up of sawdust, millet grain and bran which are enclosed in a plastic bag, creating the perfect, warm and moist environment for mushrooms to germinate. The Livesey's use these blocks as bedding for their cattle.



(Plastic bottles growing
Oyster Mushrooms)



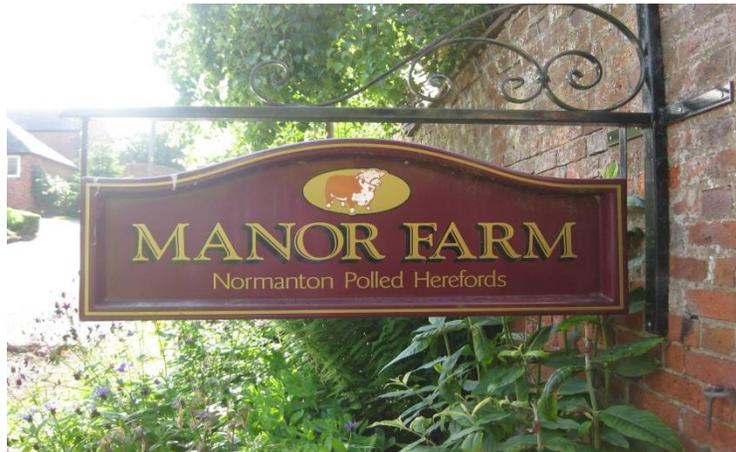
(Maitake Mushrooms growing in blocks)

I was one of four people to attend the "Three Counties Agricultural Show" with the Livesey family as part of their showteam. Having never showed cattle before it was an eye opening experience. Coming from working on a property in Australia where it was very dangerous to get in the same yard as our bulls, to having a bull tied up, are washed, blow dried, clipped, brushed, sprayed and led around a ring with 10 other bulls was hard for me to comprehend. I had witnessed it many times before at other shows but actually being a part of the showteam was a whole different story. I ran into Amy (last year's awardee) and Madi (this year's other awardee) which was really nice to see familiar faces and hear the Australian accent again. Madi introduced me to Angus and Joy Cottey who invited me to visit their farm in Devon. I was also introduced to many other cattle breeders and farmers who were all interested in what I was doing in the UK

and said I was more than welcome to visit them at a later date.

We had a successful weekend winning a few classes with both the bull and heifer we had taken to the show, including 'Breed Champion'. Since leaving the Livesey family they have been very successful this year at shows with their cattle including winning '2015 Hereford – Champion of Europe' with “Normanton 1 Lionel”, and are currently in the running for 'Champion Hereford of the World'.

After my week with the Livesey's I had to return to my cousin's pub for 1 month for family reasons.



(Sign out the front of Manor Farm)



(Darragh with 'Hereford – Champion of Europe', “Normanton 1 Lionel”)

Travels 13th July - 20th August

The next 6 weeks I spent travelling through Northern England, into Scotland, over to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and finally into Wales. During this time I saw numerous amazing sites, met so many lovely people and learnt a huge amount about the history of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and also about myself.

My trip started on the north east coast of England, in Northumberland. I went to Alnwick Castle, which appears in the first two Harry Potter movies and also in Downton Abbey; visited the thousands of very cute Puffins on the Farne Islands; and finished at Bamburgh Castle, one of the largest inhabited castles in England.

I continued up into Scotland where I stayed in Edinburgh, Inverness, South Laggan, Glencoe and Glasgow. Staying in hostels along the way was a new experience for me. To begin with I was very scared, always kept my bag locked and very close by me, hated sharing dirty bathrooms with males and females, cooking in a small kitchen with about 5 other people at the same time, and having noisy people come into the room and turn the light on at all hours of the night. After staying in a few hostels, instead of focusing on all the negative aspects of backpacker-life I tried my hardest to enjoy it, and in the end I grew to love it. I met so many “cool” people and heard loads of funny, exciting, terrifying and unbelievable stories from people that were travelling, holidaying, working, or trying to run away from reality.

Being June, it was the height of their summer, although out the window I could have sworn it was the middle of winter. While hiking through the fog, rain, wind and cold temperatures in the Highlands of Scotland I got talking to the receptionist at the Youth Hostel in which I was staying. I told him my reasons for being in the UK and he invited me out to his parent's place. They live in the mountains above the village of Glencoe and have a shepherd who lives next door and looks after their sheep. I met Sandy the shepherd and he told me all about what it is like to farm sheep in the Highlands of Scotland; the struggles they face during the winter months and at shearing time. He took me for a drive up to their yards/shearing shed. It was significantly different to an Australian set of sheep yards and shearing shed. The shearing board was a small platform mounted on wheels and folded up in order to be towed behind a vehicle. They really struggle to dry the sheep before shearing. Their shed is not big enough to house their whole flock so shearing can sometimes take weeks and weeks. It's more hassle than what it's worth. The sheep have very coarse wool which is not worth much at all.

On the 29th July, I flew from Glasgow, (Scotland), to Belfast, (Northern Ireland), and spent the next 3 weeks adventuring through Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. I was disappointed that I was not able to arrange any farm experience in Ireland because the country is just beautiful and there are large amounts of Agricultural land. However, Ireland was by far my favourite place in all of my travels. With its rugged coastline, emerald green farmland, stately homes, brightly painted pubs, Guinness, Whiskey, tumbledown stonewalls, traditions, beliefs, history, Gaeltacht (Irish language), and most importantly, the craic (a term used to express good times, connection, conversation and occasionally excuse drunken, flirty behaviour), I believe a visit to Ireland should be on everyone's Bucket List.

From Ireland, I very reluctantly flew over to Cardiff, Wales. Nothing against Wales, I just didn't want to leave Ireland. I had limited time in Wales because I was due at my next farm on the 21st

August. Consequently I only spent one night in Cardiff before catching the train up to the Snowdonia National Park in northern Wales. I stayed in a small village called Llanberis (pronounced Clanberis) and spent three days hiking through the fog.



(Alnwick Castle, Northumberland)



(Puffin, Farne Islands, Northumberland)



(Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh, Scotland)



(Glencoe, Highlands of Scotland)



(Scottish Shearing Shed)

(Scottish Highland Sheep)



(Kylemore Abbey, Ireland)



(Galway Bay, Ireland)



(Snowdonia National Park, Wales)



(The Cliffs of Moher, Ireland)

Stock Gaylard, Sturminster Newton, Dorset 21st Aug - 5th Sept

I spent the next 2 weeks on a traditional country estate in the south of England. "Stock Gaylard" is approximately 1800 acres, with around 300 acres of predominantly oak woodland, 80 acres of common land and an enclosed 80 acre deer park. The 3 storey, Georgian style house is believed to be built around 1714; (56 years before Captain James Cook discovered Australia). The Langmead family have called "Stock Gaylard" home for the past 10 years when Josie inherited it after the passing of her step-father, Mr. Yeatman. Andy has been running the estate ever since.

Every year, on the last weekend in August, they hold an 'Oak Fair' which includes over 200 exhibitors, demonstrators and store holders, showcasing everything from unique handmade chopping boards to furniture, as well as Heavy Horse Loggers, a Falcon display, Axemen and the children's favourite, The Great Big Tree Climbing Co. This year we had more than 7500 visitors over the course of the bank holiday weekend.

On arrival at "Stock Gaylard" I was introduced to the Langmead family and the team of 17 people I would be working with and staying with over the next 2 weeks. We renamed Stock House the "Langmead Hostel" as the team of workers consisted of English, Kiwis, Kenyans and an Australian. I was given a grand tour of the property which included a visit to St Barnabas Church and the many campsites they have across the estate. With 3 Yurt sites, a Sawpit Wagon, Shepherd's Hut and a Garden Cottage, if it's a family "glamping" holiday you're after, or a romantic getaway for 2, Stock has it all. We then went for a drive around some of the conservation ground, oak woodlands and common land.

In the UK they have large amounts of land that is known as "common". This means that it is owned collectively by a number of people, or it is owned by one person, but many others have traditional rights, such as to graze their livestock, collect firewood, or cut turf for fuel. In Andy's case their common is owned by Andy. He owns a section of common land meaning he is only allowed to graze a select number of cattle upon it and only at certain times of the year. For the rest of the year, other farmers have the right to graze their livestock there. This does not bother Andy much as he only has a small herd of about 30 Belted Galloway cattle and a mob of 200 Poll Dorset Ewes.

Andy and Josie also own another property called "Higher Houghton" which is in Winterbourne Houghton, about 30 minutes from Stock. They have an on-site manager who runs the Livery Yard (horse stables) and takes care of their Pheasants (game birds). They also grow Wheat, Barley and Rapeseed at Houghton, and all of their fields are surrounded by conservation land.

With over 1 million British people participating every year in either game shooting, clay shooting, or target shooting it has become a competitive sport and social event all across Britain. Before the domestication of animals and agriculture, hunting and gathering was a crucial part of survival. Today it is more for recreation. The main hunting and shooting season begins on 1st October and continues through until February 1st. The shooting of game birds, in particular Pheasants, is undertaken on estates such as Stock Gaylard. Up until 2005, fox hunting on horseback with hounds used to be very popular, but new laws that year made it illegal in all parts of the UK except for Northern Ireland.

The days following the grand tour of the estate involved setting up for the oak fair. The team of 17 worked tirelessly to pull together a fantastic weekend. The endless list of tasks included

pegging out the fair site and car park, cleaning up the fallen branches, making signs, putting up marquees, constructing footpaths, bridges, cleaning the church, drawing maps, and most importantly erecting a bar, etc. Josie did a wonderful job of feeding the troops! On the eve of the fair we had 27 people for dinner in Josie and Andy's dining room. Lucky they have a very big house. The week following the fair was much quieter and a whole lot less stressful. The few team members left did a great job of packing everything away ready to do it all again next year.

I got chatting to Fiona, the accountant at Stock, and she invited me to visit her dairy. She runs a herd of around 100 milkers on a robotic dairy. As this was something I had never seen before I found it very interesting. The cows all wear an electronic collar that is scanned every time they present themselves to be milked. This then tells the machine which cow it is and records any information the collar has detected since the cow was last milked. Together the electronic collars, the robot, and T4C (Time for Cows) computer program, measure and record the cows health, production, milk quality and cow activity. This can inform the farmer of a range of issues from health problems, if a cow hasn't come in over the past 12-24 hours, or a rise in activity (i.e. she is on heat), etc. If there is ever a major problem with the robot, an alert will be sent to the computer and also to a list of phone numbers such as the farmer and the workers.

Fiona and her husband installed two 'Lely Astronaut Robots' at their farm and this was a very expensive exercise, however, it has meant that they are both able to work full time jobs. Their 18 year old son, George stays at the farm during the day to make sure everything is running properly and to feed the cows and calves and to take care of any other on-farm jobs.

Mark, Fiona's husband, works as a Cattle Nutritionist for Duffield's, which is an animal feed producing company. I spent one day with Mark which consisted of four on-farm visits where all the farmers were very happy to meet me and hear my story and showed me around their dairies. This was a great way for me to see some more of the English countryside and also ask Mark millions of questions about cattle nutrition. Three of the four farms we visited had Lely Robot systems similar to the one Mark has at home. Some of the cows were kept in large sheds all-year-round while others had constant access to fields. Mark said to me "You're going to get the wrong idea about dairies in England. We don't have robots." It just so happened that on that day he had to visit three robotic dairies. He also took me back to his office which was in Yeovil, Somerset. Here I sat in on a meeting with Mark's boss, the manager of the Duffield's South West Division, and Patrick Charlton, the European Vice President of Alltech (UK) Ltd. Mark had told me he was going to have this meeting but I was not expecting to be sitting in on it. This took me way out of my comfort zone but was a great experience to witness how these meetings go and listen to the conversation they were having. Once the meeting was over Mark showed me his office and ran me through the computer system he uses to develop cattle feed rations. By this stage I was so overwhelmed by information, but I tried to take in as much as I could. There is so much science and maths behind one simple cattle ration. On top of this, Mark is given specific requirements from each farmer that he supplies which makes it 10 times more difficult. He then sends his ration off to the factory which happens to be just across the car park from his office, so he took me for a tour around the factory explaining how the rations come together before being collected by a lorry (truck) and then delivered to each farmer. For dairy cows alone, Duffield's produce 5 base feeds, and these do not include calf feeds, heifer feeds or all the unique diets that Mark has to make rations for.

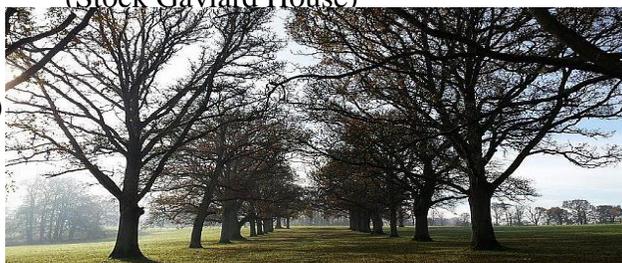
Previous generations of Yeatman's (the original owners of Stock Gaylard) became bankrupt, and as a way of getting out of debt, they leased-off sections of the estate to other farmers. These are known as 'tenant farmers'. These tenant farmers lease the land to run it as a smaller, profitable farm. Back when these tenant agreements were first signed, the law was that they had a right to stay on the property for three generations, as long as they didn't go bankrupt. This means that there are three tenant farmers on Stock Gaylard, all of which are dairy farmers. I got the opportunity to spend a day on one of these farms.

In England, tens of thousands of cows are killed every year because of Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB). bTB affects the lungs and lymph nodes of ruminants. This disease can be transmitted to humans through dairy products, however, cases of this happening these days are very rare because of pasteurisation. This disease is spread from cattle to badgers and badgers to cattle. An outbreak of bTB can contribute to significant economic consequences as a result of reduced milk yields, culling of herds and restrictions on meat exports from affected areas. The South West of England is heavily affected by bTB. Dorset is one of the “Hotspots” for bTB, meaning that farmers in this area must test their cattle once every year and pre-movement. Stuart, one of the tenant farmers was testing while I was on Stock and asked if I could go and help record the information. Farmers must get a vet in to conduct the test and every beast must be tested.



(Stock Gaylard House)

(Oak Avenue)



(A yurt site)



(Deer Park)



(A few of the boys trying on the scarecrow outfits)



(The Three Boars Bar)



(Andy's Belted Galloways)



(Oak Avenue at the Oak Fair)



(Lely Astronaut Robot)



(Lely Astronaut Robot)



(Farm visit with Mark)



(Clearing trees for Oak Fair)

Langdon Barton Farm, Plymouth, Devon 6th - 8th Sept

“Langdon Barton” is a 300 acre mixed farm that has been in the Andrews family since 1903. It used to be a part of “Langdon Court” which was a large 16th century estate situated just outside Plymouth within walking distance to Wembury Cove. The estate has since been split up and parts were sold off. The original Manor House has been converted into a hotel, restaurant and wedding venue. The Andrews main business is a Livery Yard but they also have 3 holiday cottages they rent out, a small herd of Charolais cattle, approximately 100 sheep, and grow wheat and barley for stock feed and bedding.

While I was at Langdon Barton they were almost finished harvesting the wheat. My job was to transport the straw from the field back to the shed. I also helped with the day-to-day duties of the Livery Yard. Ali Andrews had been out riding the day I arrived and her horse slipped over on the road so he had some cuts on his knees that we had to dress twice every day.



(Langdon Barton Hotel)



(Driving the tractor through the paddocks with a view of Wembury Cove)



(Livery Yard)



(Harvesting wheat)



(Tying down the straw bales)



(The front end loader and baler)

Little Dart Raffe, Witheridge, Devon 9th - 20th Sept

Angus and Joy Cottey own an 83 acre property in Witheridge. They run a small herd of pedigree Red Ruby Devon Cattle including 19 breeding cows, 13 steers and heifers and 1 bull but due to health issues the Cotteys have made the tough decision to sell their farm, machinery and cattle. This will give them time to enjoy retirement and to go travelling. I met the Cotteys through Madi, the other 2015 awardee. She spent a few months with them over the showing season.

They were having the sale of the machinery and cattle on Friday 11th September so I spent the first couple of days working with a team of three blokes they had hired to give them a hand washing all the cattle and cleaning up the machinery. On the morning of the sale everyone was a bit stressed trying to get everything set up and Angus and Joy were both very nervous. They had a very successful sale with the top cow selling for £2500 (Aus \$5125) and £3000 (Aus \$6150) for their bull. They also managed to sell all of their machinery.

The days following the sale I spent helping Angus clean up the yards and loading cattle as buyers came to pick them up. They haven't managed to sell the farm yet so it is still on the market, however they have booked flights to Australia to arrive in time for the 2016 Sydney Royal Easter Show. They also took me to Stone Henge on our way into London.



(Sunrise on the morning of the sale)



(The cows ready to be sold)



(The buyers watching the auction)



(Stone Henge)

Horsham, West Sussex 17th - 24th Sept

Through Andy and Josie Langmead, the owners of "Stock Gaylard", I met their nephew Jamie and his partner Josie, who is a small animal vet. She runs her own clinic in Horsham. They invited me to spend a few days staying with them so I could go to the clinic with Josie.

Veterinary work was something I had never been exposed to before. Behind the doors of a vet consultation room, they are very busy places, with 4 vets and 8 vet nurses working at any one time. There wasn't much I was allowed to do but I really enjoyed just watching all the different tasks of the workers. I was allowed to watch a Bitch Spayed (desexing a female dog) and the removal of a lump from another dog. Also they were scanning the hips of a Boerboel, which is also known as a South African Mastiff; probably the biggest dog I have ever seen. They had to give him aesthetic so they could scan his hips but because he weighed about 75kgs the girls really struggled to move him once he was asleep and was snoring like an old man. He kept us all entertained for some hours. Sadly there was three euthanasia's; two dogs and a chicken.

Jamie's mother Mary, introduced me to the world of 'Ploughing Matches'. A ploughing match is a contest between people where they are each given a section of a field to plough. There are usually horse-drawn competitions and tractor competitions. Points are awarded for the straightness and neatness of the furrows. They also have hedgerowing, gundog trials, cattle parading, hound parade, clay shooting competitions, ferret racing etc. We attended the West Grinstead and District Ploughing and Agricultural Society Ploughing Match.

Travels Continued 25th Sept - 24th November

From Horsham I went to Oxford, Bath, and then London. I spent one and a half weeks exploring these cities, and then flew over to Germany where I would stay with a friend of mine. I had 10 days with her and her family. They took me to Berlin and Cologne. I found Germany a very interesting, beautiful country and nothing like I had expected. There is so much history in Berlin about WWII and the Berlin Wall.

After my time in Germany I flew back over to Edinburgh and caught the train to Keswick, Cumbria which is the Lake District of England. It is a beautiful area especially in Autumn. It reminded me a bit of the landscape and cool, foggy weather of the highlands of Scotland. I went hiking around the Lakes District for one week before returning to my cousin Laura's pub in Suffolk for my final month in the UK. This time at the pub was again very fortuitous as it enabled me to help Lawrence keep the pub working smoothly while Laura flew home to attend the funeral of her brother (my cousin), Alexander. He was only 32 and died after a heroic battle with cancer.

When it came to leaving time it was 3 degrees outside and very wet all the time. I'd even seen some snow fall but not settle. I was excited to be returning to an Australian summer, however, after boarding my plane and sitting on the tarmac for 2 hours and then being informed at 11.30pm that my plane had technical difficulties and that it wouldn't be going anywhere, I thought I may never make it back to Australia. I was put up in a hotel for the night and they re-scheduled another plane to take off at 9.45pm the following night. It wasn't the best end to my trip, however it could have been much worse. After a long, fairly rough 24 hour flight touching down in Sydney was the best feeling ever!



(The horses at the ploughing match)



(A tractor at the Ploughing Match)



(Gun Dogs at the Ploughing Match)



(Me at the East Berlin Museum)



(Derwent Water, Cumbria)



(Christmas at The Swan Inn)



(Grassmere Lake, Cumbria)

Recommendations

As this was a once in a lifetime opportunity I would definitely recommend to future awardees making the most of every opportunity by spending as much time as possible over there, because believe me, the time flies! I went to the UK without much of a plan because I knew things were going to pop up unexpectedly and things weren't always going to go to plan. I never said no to any farming experience that would broaden my agricultural horizon. I tried to meet as many new people as possible and as a result have made some really great friends.

The hospitality, kindness and generosity of farmers, locals and fellow travellers that I experienced in the UK and Ireland was far beyond what I had hoped for. The families I stayed with were so welcoming and really made me feel at home. They all looked after me very well and were so willing to help expand my agricultural knowledge and experiences. They were very interested in learning how we do things in Australia and to compare the differences and similarities in farming practices and I hope that I have been able to broaden their horizons.

I would highly recommend visiting any of the places I was lucky enough to see or experience. It involved such a wide variety of enterprises; from mushrooms and showing cattle with the Livesey's, to horses and hauling straw in Plymouth; fair organisation and estate management at "Stock Gaylard" to selling cattle at the Cotteys; not to mention sheep farming in the Highlands of Scotland and a day in a vet clinic in Horsham.

I would definitely recommend travelling, especially alone. I believe it takes you out of your comfort zone, pushes you to do things you might not otherwise do, meet new people, explore, get lost, grow into a new person, appreciate what you have, and if you're staying in hostels while travelling, you definitely learn to appreciate your own bed and a clean shower!

A few tips that helped me along the way included:

- Always carry a diary and try to write in it every day, even the little things
- Take a rain coat everywhere; there is always a chance of rain
- Baby wipes; always have baby wipes
- Kindness opens all kinds of doors
- Choose your travel companions and accommodation carefully
- Eat where the locals eat
- Pack lightly; you'll always take more than you need
- Take a change of clothes in your carry-on in case your luggage gets lost
- Set yourself a budget
- Don't experience your trip through a camera; take a few photos but then put it away!

Conclusion

It is with great thanks to the tutors at Tocal Agriculture College who convinced me to apply for the BBM Agriculture Scholarship, that I have had the chance to experience this amazing opportunity. Also to BBM for supplying the scholarship, without this Youth Support I probably wouldn't have taken the opportunity to travel overseas to experience this vast and expanding industry on the other side of the world. This experience has definitely broadened my view on agriculture and different cultures, it has helped to expand my knowledge and experiences, it has opened me up to different ways of doing things, pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me to grow as a person.

I hope I have succeeded in painting an accurate picture of my incredible six months in the UK and Ireland; and brief visit to Germany. I couldn't recommend taking this opportunity to other young passionate people highly enough. The privilege of travelling to the other side of the world has really helped to strengthen my passion for this life-sustaining industry and I am so excited for my future career within the Agricultural industry and to grasp any other opportunities that come my way.

I have recently been successful in applying for a 2 year working visa to return to the UK early in 2016. This is a very exciting time for me because it means I will have another 2 years of exhilarating experiences and opportunities. I hope to be able to do some more travel through Europe, continue to expand my knowledge of the Agricultural Industry in the UK, and catch up with many of the fantastic people I met while I was over there this last six months.

I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the opportunity BBM Youth Support gave me. It has opened a world of endless opportunities for me. So thank you for your generosity and support, not only to me, but to the other awardees and future awardees that are given similar opportunities.

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