

YOUNG FARMERS AMBASSADORS

SCOTTISH REGION

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2019



CONTENTS

Chairman's blog	1
AGM & Photo Presentation	1
Colin Mckinnon's trip to Colorado	2/4
UK YFA Reunion - Aberdeen	4/8
More highlights from 2018 IFYE Events	8/10
Dates for your Diary and Bits and Pieces	10

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CHAIRMAN'S BLOG

Happy New Year to everyone and hope you all had a good Christmas. It's been quiet on the YFA front lately other than the UK Reunion which we hosted at the Altens Hotel, Aberdeen in October. I was fortunate to be part of the organising team, so it was good to have an insight of what was involved in organising an event like this. It was good to see some new faces and meet up with the old ones. It was a bit disappointing not to see any new people from Scotland attend, but hopefully we will manage to get some to future reunions, **Andrew**



YFA AGM & Photo Presentation 2019 – Sunday 10 March – will be held at the Carnbo Hall, Carnbo, Kinross – starting off at 1.00 pm with a light lunch. There has been a marked decline in numbers supporting this event. The AGM is only part of it, there will be a chance to meet the newer exchangees, as they give their highlights from their trips. Those heading off this year will also be there and it is so beneficial to give these lucky people some tips on what to expect and who better to do that than members of YFA! Please support the event and encourage others to join. It's a nice way to spend a few hours.



Colin Mckinnon – Colorado 2018

Colorado 4H State Conference

After a long trip from Scotland, and a rough night’s sleep, it was an early start to meet all the other IFYEs from England, Wales, Ireland, Germany, Austria and France. During the three days, we did presentations to 4H kids and compared the difference between young farmers organisations and 4H. The 4H kids were all very interested and asked lots of questions, even Trump! We attended the 4H grand banquet and dance, and all the IFYEs were announced on stage and given a certificate as part of our participation on the programme. As the legal drinking age is 21 in America and 4H runs up till 18-19, going to a dance with no bar and nothing but water to drink was strange, but very surprisingly enough, the kids still loved it. Trying to learn how to swing dance was a highlight, but probably very painful to watch for anyone who witnessed it!

Then my first real taste of American farming, and to be honest I was blown away. Quail Ridge Dairy, just outside Fort Morgan was a 6,000 cow Holstein dairy farm with a 60 aside parlour, all cows housed inside with an outside walking area and bedded on dried manure. Add on to this a £2m purpose-built farm workshop, 3-400 calf igloos, semi-trucks used for feeding and also slurry spreading, a near fully Hispanic workforce and thousands of acres of irrigated farm land growing Alfalfa grass and corn, it really opened my eyes to American farming!



Now that I had a chance to settle in, Curt started to put me to work. A man with many projects on the go, he had decided to buy a pool he found locally and we prepped the ground for the base and assembled the pool. Hard work done, it was a case of leaving it to fill, which managed to take a full day. But after the pool finally being built, the realisation set in, a foot in height difference from either side meant draining roughly 3000 gallons of water back out, dismantling, re-levelling the base and starting again! Second time around was much more successful and so worth it to lie in a pool in 30 plus degree heat!

Christensen Family

The Christensen family were my first host family. Based just outside Fort Morgan, they were a former farming family, still living close to the farm. Michelle and Curt my host parents had 5 children and another 7 grandchildren, but only one daughter, Kali living at home. A family very heavily involved with the Church and God (Church of Nazarene) and also very strong Republican supporters, it was an interesting insight into American religion and politics. Although strong in their beliefs I never once felt they were forced upon me, rather they would like to discuss different matters of religion and politics, intrigued to hear my opinions on how it compared to Scotland, and of course my perception of Trump.

One of the most memorable days with Michelle and Curt came when they took me up into the Rocky Mountains to Estes Park. An hours-drive, and we were well up into the mountains, driving to the summit at 12,000 feet along a single-track road while seeing some amazing snowy mountains and wildlife along the way. As we arrived back home, a new experience – meeting the 7 grandchildren as well as their parents. So pretty much every 4th July, the whole family descended on Curt and Michelle’s house, to enjoy the day together as a family.

First a tour of Fort Morgan and the surrounding area, before heading to the family home about 5 miles out, a 3-acre plot surrounded by corn and wheat fields with great views. Back into town and I got my first introduction to the Church group as they were setting up their annual fundraising fireworks tent (yes that is correct, a Church group selling fireworks) in a local supermarket car park!



I’ll be perfectly honest I really didn’t know what to expect from the 4th of July, and never realised how seriously Americans take it! The whole family headed down to the

local town of Brush for a huge parade, involving youth groups, businesses, and also the emergency services, who were all honoured and hailed as heroes for their service to the local community; a real feeling of patriotism from the American people. Add to this the kindness shown to all the local kids with gifts and candy and it really was a day for everyone to enjoy. Since Curt retired from the farm, he had regularly drove a Semi truck for a local Custom Harvesting team. So, I got the chance to head out with Curt back to Quail Ridge Dairy for 3rd cut Alfalfa hay. We joined a team of 10 other trucks, chasing 2 Claas 980 foragers that were clearing over 600 acres a day. Once again it just showed me the scale of American farming, and the differences between ourselves in Scotland. My day was topped off with being let loose with the Peterbilt truck and the 20-tonne trailer in the field, just slightly different from the wee toys I'm used to playing with at home!

Greeley Stampede

While we had been at the state conference all the IFYEs had agreed it would be great to meet up again before we all left, so we headed to the Greeley Stampede for my first ever rodeo. It was great to meet up with everyone again, and to hear how much everyone was enjoying their exchanges. I guess the rodeo itself started off as expected, a few cold beers, some BBQed food and country music in the background, the real cowboy feel! Then the rodeo actually started, pro horse and bull riding, calf roping and amazing to see. The night ended with live bands and chatting with the other IFYEs about the memories we had made.

Johnston Family

The Johnston family were my second hosts, from the small town of Grover in Weld County. If I use the term "living out in the sticks" I don't think anyone would argue with me. Totally different to the heavily farmed and irrigated area of Fort Morgan, Windy Ridge farm where the Johnston's called home was surrounded by grass pasture in sandy soils. With very little waterways or irrigation they could not heavily stock the farm, they had around 100 cows for their 1000 acres, along with around 40 Boer meat goats, sheep, chickens, geese, rabbits and 7 dogs. I met Deonna at the state conference and she was one of 3 siblings, along with brother Jayde and sister Lyndee. Deonna had been an IFYE in 2017 to both France and Germany which really helped as she knew exactly what it was like to be away from home. Deonna's parents Donny and Rita were really down to earth folks, Donny worked in the local school as well as running the farm while Rita was a computer software developer working from home.

Deonna was a very keen hiker, and the day she picked me up we headed for a short hike up the Devils Ridge Back at the base of the Rockies, it was worth the scorching heat just for the views along the way! This was the first of

many hiking trips with Deonna in scorching heat but amazing scenery.



Having lived on a farm at home all my life it was nice to be back to waking up on a farm again and helping at the Johnston's with day to day farm life. From feeding animals or helping Donny with his fencing projects, it was like reliving a piece of my childhood that I'd forgotten about. One aspect that was new to me though, was the goats. I'd never handled or worked with goats before, even helping them prepare and compete in the Weld County Boer Goat show. I must add though washing down 6 smelly goats pushed my comfort zone, but to see them cleaned and ready to show, was worth it!



The highlight of my time with the Johnston's and possibly the whole exchange was our road trip to New Orleans, an epic week-long trip covering over 3,000 miles and 11 states, I got to travel through the heartland of America. Deonna and Lyndee had organised this trip after being invited to the International Moose Convention by their uncle who was being inducted in as the Chief Superintendent of the Moose. We left the farm at 4.30 am and drove through Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa and finally to St Louis where we stopped for the night. Deonna was going to be studying in St Louis soon, so we did a quick tour of the area, including her University and accommodation and the highlight of St Louis was getting to go up the Arch. It's a huge structure higher than the Empire State Building, with amazing views over St Louis and Missouri in both directions.

Our short stay in St Louis was over and into the night we drove, passing through Arkansas, Tennessee, and finally Louisiana till we reached New Orleans at 7 am! Not wanting to miss out on the delights the city had to offer,

we were back up at midday and toured the French quarter. That night we got to experience the crazy nightlife of New Orleans and Bourbon Street, bars for miles, street performers at every corner and just a sea of people, it's the kind of place you have to go see it yourself to believe it! After a very late night, and with a few sore heads in the morning, we all made an appearance at Uncle Harry's initiation into the Moose, at the New Orleans Convention Centre. Later on, we finished our evening with a jazz cruise on a steam paddle boat along the Mississippi river, a night I'll never forget.



It was time to begin the journey home, so back in the car and headed into Texas to start the journey back to Colorado – trip of a lifetime.

Sadly, my time in Colorado finally came to an end, after meeting so many inspirational people and seeing so many amazing sights. So, thanks to the many people who helped with the exchange, including the funding from YFA – I can safely say it was a life changing trip for me!

Colin Mckinnon, Lower Nithsdale YFC



UK YFA Reunion

It was Scotland's turn to host the Reunion and this took place at the **Aberdeen Altens Hotel** from **26 – 29 October, 2018**. The organising team, with Meg Findlay as Chair, Elaine Meikle as Secretary and Elaine Mowat as Treasurer prepared an interesting and fun packed weekend for the 137 guests who came over the course of the weekend. The Team arrived on Thursday to prepare for the weekend's events



The organising team, minus Fiona Ewen – sporting the QMS Scotch Lamb T-shirts. Friday night kicked off with a buffet dinner with the fancy dress theme of **Roaring Twenties, it produced some creative costumes, with Meg & Elaine and Fiona really getting into the spirit of things!**





Sadly, John Cromie from Northern Ireland passed away a few short weeks after the event. Dressed up for the part, Fiona & John have been stalwarts of the YFA movement for many years.



Keeping things going, we danced on into the night with Un1que Disco. Adding to the fun, Neil and Andrew got a few games going – musical hats and knees, and this really helped to break the ice



Saturday, and it was group photo time, managing to get the photo done with the sun shining, but rather chilly winds! Then it was off on the trips:

Bus Group Leader Elaine Mowat –

I and 40 of our YFA guests took the bus to visit **Marshall Trailers** at Bucksburn. We were met by Charles Marshall and his son David. The format of the visit was a tour through the manufacturing facility. I was in the group that had David as our guide. David is passionate in improving productivity through the automation of processes, reducing waste and increasing the use of technology. Our tour of the facility started with the raw material - the steel, how this is cut, folded and welded. Then adding the chassis and on to the paint shop where you can have your trailer painted in any colour. Gone are the days that the only colour a Marshall's trailer comes in is red. You can have a trailer to match the colour of your tractor if you are prepared to pay! A great morning was spent and the visit was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



Lunch was at Hatton of Fintray Hall - soup, sweet, tea and cakes. All home made by Meg's sister Jean and her family. A wee fundraiser for Meg's great niece, Keira, who will be representing Girlguiding Gordon in Finland in 2019.

Back on the bus to Bridge of Don to meet Dave Stokes who gave us a guided walking tour of **Old Aberdeen**. The start point was Brig o' Balgownie, then we followed the path along the River Don to Seaton Park and St Machar's Cathedral. Then into Old Aberdeen with our tour ending at Elphinstone Hall and King's College Chapel. Dave gave us an insight into Aberdeen then and now. The autumn colours and the granite buildings on that sunny day were beautiful.

Bus Group Leaders Andrew Baird and Neil Brims, here's Neil's take on the day –

Castleton Fruit Farm - it was a very impressive setup and watching the optical grader sorting the blueberries was really cool, can't believe how many acres they have under tunnel. The geographical location allows them to pick blueberries later than anywhere else in the northern hemisphere.

East Coast Vinery - it was interesting to see behind the scenes of a feed company from whom I buy animal feed. It seems that the bosses are very proactive and open to modern improvements, the amount of feed that they move was staggering.

Bus Group Leader Fiona Ewen took her group to the Gordon Highlanders Museum, where they saw the 200-year history from Napoleonic Wars to the Cold War. Also, a visit to the Maritime Museum, which tells the story of Aberdeen's long relationship with the sea.

Bus Group Leaders June Will and Mary Turner – those going to Peterhead Prison Museum were dropped off first, and **Mary** led that group. HM Convict Prison Peterhead was officially opened in 1888 and it only closed its doors to prisoners in 2013! Alex our guide gave us an excellent tour, and an insight into what life was like for the prisoners and the wardens who worked there. Being a retired policeman and having a father who had been a prison warden, he had unique stories to tell. This included the infamous Johnny Ramensky, a Scottish serial criminal, who after his release from Peterhead in 1943, trained as a Commando, where he used his safe blowing skills in many missions during the second World War. Unfortunately, after the war, he was in and out of prison once more and indeed spent 40 of his 67 years in prison! We saw the prison cells,

communal area, kitchens and learned more about the prison roof top riot when Warden Jackie Stuart was held hostage for 5 days in 1987. He was beaten and stabbed, but survived and indeed has written a book – Jackie was at the Gift shop signing his book. In its day, Peterhead Prison was a top security prison where many of the country's worst criminals were locked away.



June – heading for Peterhead on quite a chilly October day dressed for the outdoors, expecting a walking tour of the harbour, we got a pleasant surprise when local celebrity, **Jimmy Buchan** of the Trawlermen TV series informed us that he had managed to organise a tour of one of the Pelagic fishing vessels docked in the harbour. Knowing very little about fishing, I wasn't all that excited about this but it was certainly quite something to see. Skipper William Buchan gave us a very informative tour of his vessel 'Kings Cross' & an insight into how tough life as a fisher really is. Now don't get me wrong, this vessel was far from a tin can, given that it cost £25m & was only 4 years old. Its sleeping quarters were similar to the cabins some of the IFYEs had paid a small fortune for in the Alaskan cruise I was told! There was a cinema room & the bridge (control room) was something I could have only imagined to be in the star ship enterprise! But life as a fisher wouldn't be easy, spending weeks at a time at sea wouldn't always be pleasant so a little luxury when time allows, is appreciated by these men. The vessel was very well looked after by the crew, it was spotless inside & out, no outdoor shoes are allowed in the living quarters so it was shoe covers or stocking soles for us.



Having finished our tour of the boat, we headed to the harbour control tower, a smaller version of what can be found at airports, where the comings & goings of the harbour were explained to us.

We joined the other group at the Mission café for lunch, before doing our own thing around the town in the afternoon. In fact, as we were able to get an afternoon visit of the prison, several of us took advantage of that.



Saturday evening kicked off with a Drinks reception – for a change it was sampling local Gins – going down very nicely thank you! Formal Dinner came next – beginning with the piping in of the Haggis and the address done by Cameron Ewen



Our Guest Speaker was **Colin Slessor** a well-known auctioneer in the North East, as well as appearing in the farming documentary series The Mart. Dancing to the Last Resort Band helped to dance off the wonderful meal and a wee break to Roll the £1 for a bottle of malt whisky and the auction of a bottle of malt whisky, all for the Friends of Anchor Charity, which raised £251!



Sunday, and we started with a short Church service ably taken by **David Paterson**. Living in Lockerbie, David had a poignant theme to his sermon, that of the Lockerbie tragedy 30 years ago. Regional Meetings & National AGM followed. **Three members from USA 1960 – Dennis Thompson, Fiona Cromie and Bill Morris** met up for the first time since their exchange.



Sunday afternoon - a chance to try Curling, and **Fiona Ewen** organised this activity and this is her report on the event

I decided to organise a try and taster session of Curling at the Reunion and what a response I got! Originally, I booked 2 lanes to enable about 16 people to go, thinking that would probably be about it! However, we ended up with an amazing 53 people wanting to go and try which was just fantastic!

I got more ice and we all set off on the Sunday afternoon to the fantastic venue of Curl Aberdeen for our tuition, a first experience for many, of this brilliant sport. We had 3 great coaches, two from Curl Aberdeen and our own **Sandra MacIver**, along with helper **David Paterson** who told everyone about the safety issues before venturing onto the slippery, cold ice. We had all ages, from some of the youngest to some of the oldest who were at the Reunion.



All those involved had a great experience with some really taking to it like a “duck to water” while some of the older people were a bit cautious and frightened of falling on the ice. Everyone got a taste of what it was like and those that really enjoyed it, got quite competitive and got a taster of a small game at the end. Everyone returned safely in one piece to the hotel with a few aches and pains but nothing serious!!

All in all, it was most enjoyable with great feedback from everyone and it is just a shame that there are not more curling rinks in other parts of the UK, to let more people take up this fantastic and sociable sport!



Neil took several people to try out trampolining – he thought it brought out the inner child in all of them!

Lovely afternoon to take a walk along the coast, so close to the hotel – wrapped up warmly, it was a brilliant day for it!



Sunday dinner then entertainment from the **SC & T Youth Music Initiative** and **Jimmy Dick & Ellie Robertson** - and here they are as **Sonny & Cher!!**



Money raised from the Church collection and Grouse shoot totalling £720 was split between The Archie Foundation and Marie Curie



The Reunion Committee really enjoyed organising the event, and for those from the North East, it was special to hold it in their part of the country. The very generous sponsorship we received, made it possible to give a value weekend. Lots of lovely feedback so thanks to all for coming and making it the success that it was. 😊

More Memories from Summer and Autumn 2018 from IFYE events - firstly from Elaine Meikle -

Q - What do Northern Ireland and Alaska have in common? A - IFYEs!

In 2018 I was lucky to be able to attend both the **60th European IFYE Conference in Northern Ireland** and the **11th World IFYE Conference** which was part of an Alaskan Cruise. Both beautiful parts of the world with food and friendship a-plenty.

The organising committee for Northern Ireland pulled out all the stops to ensure a fabulously entertaining week in July full of workshops, visits, local activities and crafts with music, dancing and the most hilarious wedding I've ever been fortunate enough to attend! My visits included a fascinating insight into the Battle of Jutland on HMS Caroline; the last remaining British First World War light cruiser in service, and she is the last survivor of the Battle of Jutland still afloat. It could be considered ironic that the people who took on the duty of defending our country and way of life had such small quarters in comparison to those enjoying a leisure break on the huge cruise liner docked nearby that day! A country full of history, the day spent in Derry was a definite highlight of the week for me. Our group's guide, when taking the Derry Walls tour, offered a very candid and personal perspective which was different to anything which I'd heard before. On a more relaxed note the Irish coffee making and folk singing was met with great enthusiasm - some for the coffee, some for the singing. Some might say the coffee helped the singing!



It felt like only a few days later when meeting up with some folks again for the **World Conference** in September. I thought the cruise was a great way to meet IFYEs I hadn't met before as well as other random people from around the world. Although there weren't too many IFYE specific activities, the US team arranged some great getting-to-know-you activities around the cruise schedule - our group for the silly selfie scavenger hunt was uproarious :)

For such a "young" country, the USA has an intriguing history and Alaska has been on my bucket list for years. With Russian, Indian and gold rush influences, the contrasting ports stopped at offered something for

everyone or you could go further afield to embrace the wildlife, landscapes and glaciers. What wasn't to enjoy? For me it was White Pass & Yukon Route railway, dog-sledding, Alaskan Huskie puppies, totem heritage and the ghost & good time girls tour (which was funny and sad in equal measure). I didn't get the chance to go into the State Capitol building in Juneau to ask if where their 4 pieces of moon rock were - just have to go again! **Elaine**



Now from Meg Findlay - there were so many highlights at the **European IFYE Conference in Northern Ireland**, that it's difficult to select one favourite. For one of the visits, I opted to go to Broughgammon Farm, Ballycastle where the Cole family run a goat farm. We split into 2 groups and were shown round by father & son who explained the history to how they started the farm in 2011, when they noted that most male kid goats born in the dairy industry were put down at birth. They felt that this was a waste, so they decided to rear them for goat meat.

They started taking buck kids at a week old, feeding them up inside until they are at least 5 months old and weighing between 25-30 kg. They are reared in groups of 5 for the first week until they are strong enough to be fed milk replacers. Then they are put into pens of 25 until they are 6 weeks old, being fed on haylage, lamb creep feed and gradually weaning them off milk. At about 8 weeks they are fed lamb pellets and are moved to a big barn with plenty of fresh straw and space to "frolic, play games or escape as the case may be!"



We had a look at their own on-site artisan butchery, a farm shop and run cookery, butchery & wild game classes. They also have a very successful on-line meat-box delivery business - we tasted some of their own rose veal salami, which was so delicious, it's definitely worth having a look at their website if you like goat meat, rose veal or salami!!

The idea of a cruise has never really appealed to me, but when we found that the **World IFYE Conference** was to be a cruise from Vancouver to Alaska, I jumped at the chance! We set sail from Vancouver on a wet and misty day, but this didn't spoil our excitement at meeting up with around 280 IFYEs from all over the world. It was great to renew old friendships with some of the IFYEs who had attended the World Conference in Thailand 5 years before.

Our first stop was in Ketchikan, which boasts the largest number of totem poles in Alaska, a collection that includes recently carved poles and some that are more than 100 years old.



We then wandered along Creek Street, where loggers, miners, fishermen and other locals went to misbehave at Dolly's House back in the town's lawless years!

Next stop was Juneau which has been the capital of Alaska since 1906, when the government at the time was moved from Sitka. Juneau is unusual among US capitals in that there are no roads connecting the city to the rest of Alaska or to the rest of North America (although ferry service is available for cars). The absence of a road network is due to the extremely rugged terrain surrounding the city.

Our last visit was Skagway, where it really felt like the Wild West. The tourist trade is a big part of their business, and they certainly put on a great show – especially in the Red Onion Saloon! I opted to take the White Pass & Yukon trip that day – I'm so glad I did, as it certainly opened our eyes as to how challenging it was for those people who travelled to the Yukon in the search of gold.

However, for me – the outstanding highlight of the week was when we sailed into Glacier Bay. What we experienced there was something I'll never forget. It

was absolutely stunning. Very cold, but so still and calm, we remained there for a few hours, taking in the magnificence of the glacier, watching the calving's and just appreciating the beauty and variety of the impressive colours. Someone said – you don't need a camera here – what we've seen will always remain in our memories for ever. So true! **Meg**



Grand Raffle Winners

Congratulations to all our winners and thanks must go to members and firms who donated prizes as well as everyone for helping raise a **total of £592!**

£100 – Kirsten Miller; **£50** – Gayle Allan; **£25** – Emily Dawson; **£30 Tin Co Voucher** – Alison Spencer; **£20 Tesco Gift Card** – J Bremner; **£15 Boots Gift Voucher** – Aaron Dawson; **Child's Boiler Suit** – Tom Greer; **Body Warmer** – Billy Ross; **Bottles of Whisky** – Liz Miller, Alison Spencer, Elaine Meikle, Andrew Baird, A Craig, Jane Telford, Sarah Dalgliesh; **Bottles of Gin** – Lindsay Girvan, M. A H Saad, M McIntosh; **Other spirits & Wine** – Elaine Meikle, Lena Duncan; **Sophie Woodward, Alistair Paterson, Ian Beck, Linda Allan; 6 cans Brew Dog Beer each** – Meg Findlay, Shannon Dykes, Tom Bruce, Mary Turner, June Will, Stuart Cosgrove, Tom Bruce, Jack Bowman; **Brew Dog Glass & Beer** – Harold Greer; **T-shirts** – Tom Fairly, Paul McGregor, William Houston; **Bag of Bulbs** – Andrew Graham; **Chocolate & Address Book** – Eilidh Will, **Photo-holder, Candle & Drinks Bottle** – Jane Renton; **Toiletry Sets** – Jan Beck & E Bremner

YFA MEMBERSHIP: 2019 memberships now due - £10 per year which can be paid by standing order or £150 for lifetime membership - please get in touch for more payment details

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Drinks @ the Highland 2019



Will be held on Friday 21 June - note it in your diary now, as it's an evening not to be missed - more to follow

UK YFA Reunion Weekend 2019

25th–28th October 2019 **Holiday Inn, Newport, Wales.**

Details and costs will be released next summer, but in the meantime, please put the dates in your diary.



Future IFYE Events

Austrian Ski Weekend at Saalbach from 1 – 3 March – if interested contact Neil Brims or Katie Punler

61st European IFYE Conference 12 – 18 August, 2019

This year it will be held at **Tonheim Folkehøyskole, Hamar, Norway** which is 80 miles north of Oslo. At least 50 people from the UK, including 22 Scots have already registered. There are now less than 40 places left and closing date to register is 29 March - have a look at the website for more information:

<https://ifye2019.wordpress.com/>

2020 – Myerscough College, Preston England, from 8 – 15 August – more details to follow

2021 – Sweden

2022 - Finland

2022 – Austria – this will be a World Conference



to Patricia Scott (Austria 2014) engaged to Robert Ramsay; Stuart Jamieson (Norway 2008 & Euro Rally 2012 married Christine Struthers (Euro Rally 2013)



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