

# Young Farmers Ambassadors

## Scottish Region

Newsletter

May 2015

**Grand Raffle – First prize £100, tickets are now available from the Secretary – all proceeds raised go towards supporting the exchange movement**

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### Going to the Royal Highland Show?

YFA Scotland invite all present and past YFA Members to a Drinks Reception



Upstairs at the Young Farmers Centre **Friday 19 June at 6.00 pm – see you there ☺**

### Chairman's Blog – Andrew Baird



As you will have noticed you have a new Chairman for the year. Thanks to Dicky for all the hard work he's put in the past years. For those who don't know me, I'm from Bankfoot JAC in Perthshire. Thanks to SAYFC and YFA, I've managed to take part in several exchanges! It started off in 2010, going to Wales to see if I liked it. The two weeks flew by and I had a great time meeting new people. I had caught the bug and went to Northern Ireland in 2011, the Spring Seminar in Budapest, Hungary in 2012 and the European Rally to Wales last year. Still looking for bigger challenge further afield, I'm off to Colorado at the end of June for 2 months ☺ Our AGM was held at Carnbo, keeping the

afternoon format to attract more people, especially those from further away. It was great to see the presentations from the recent Exchangees and to see just how much they all enjoyed their trips. The first main event on the YFA calendar is our annual **Drinks Reception** at the YF Centre on **19 June**. Growing in popularity it is becoming a great social event with people catching up and reminiscing about their travels and meeting the 2015 Incoming Exchangees. Thanks again to SAYFC for the venue and continued support of this event and also to Elaine for her hard work obtaining some sponsored supplies.

However, before that we have the Incoming Exchangees Away Day on 10 June, with a planned route to the Kelpies, Falkirk Wheel and Riverside Museum, Glasgow, helpers always needed, so if you are free that day, please contact Elaine. We really do appreciate those who support our events, but it is noticeable that there are less of the newer members getting involved. Always remember that YFA give generously to support the new Exchangees every year, so why not come and support us in return. Indeed if you can think of any fund raising ideas, please get in touch.

**Andrew**

### **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM of the Young Farmers Ambassadors Scottish Region was held on Sunday 15 March, 2015 at Carnbo Village Hall. Starting off in the early afternoon with a light lunch provided by Dicky & Harold, with a rolling presentation of photos from exchange trips, YFA & IFYE Events. The Office Bearers and Committee elected are:

**Chairman:** Andrew Baird (Wales 2010, Ulster 2011, Spring Seminar 2012, Euro Rally 2014, Colorado 2015)

**Vice Chairman:** Neil Brims (Kansas 2013)

**Secretary:** Elaine Meikle (USA 1990)

**Treasurer & Newsletter Editor:** Mary Turner (Switzerland 1977)

**Contact Member for IFYE:** Paul Fraser (Finland 2011)

**Ex Officio:** Richard Wilson (European Rally 2006)

### **Representatives to YFA National Executive:**

David Stevenson & Elaine Meikle

**Committee:** Following a decision agreed at the 2014 AGM, all the outgoing Exchangees are automatically elected on to the Committee for a two year period. In addition, the following were elected:

Harold Greer (Canada 1988); Marion MacPherson (Sweden 1981);

After the formalities were over, the following gave us an insight into their recent trips:

**From 2014:** Jennifer Jones – New Zealand; Libby Stewart - Canada; Kim Taylor - Montana; Stephen Currie – Norway; Anna Sloan – Switzerland; Meghan Bremner & Beth Massie – Ireland; European Rally in Wales – Andrew Baird and Leanne Walker

**From 2013 –** George Muirhead – Tasmania; Ruari Box – Canada; Neil Brims - Kansas

**Thanks to all for their presentations and making us wish we could do it all again! We look forward to seeing presentations from those who could not make it, next year!**



### **OUTGOING EXCHANGEES 2015**

The Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs held interviews in February 2015. This year's lucky members selected to represent Scotland are as follows:

Murray Stephen (Turriff)	New Zealand
Gillian Stewart (Strathearn)	Canada
Andrew Baird (Bankfoot)	Colorado
Katie Punler (Halkirk)	Kansas
Rachel Matheson (Inver Ross)	Montana
Louisa Thomson (Strathearn)	Austria
Neil Ritchie (West Renfrew)	Ireland
Lorna Edward (Keith)	Ulster
Caroline Hamilton (Avondale)	Ulster
Laura Ann Logan (Beith)	Wales
Karen McKinnon (Tiree)	Wales
Marelle Marshall (Mid Deeside)	European
Fiona Parkin (Carlisle)	Rally - Austria
Sarah Jane Urquhart (SSS)	European
Kimberley Webster (Vale of Alford)	Rally
Annie Bryson (Avondale)	Autumn Seminar – Slovenia
Gillian Rankin (SSS)	Autumn Seminar

## Elaine's trip down memory lane



Twenty five years ago today I hadn't been on a plane, hadn't been away from my family for more than 2 weeks and had never travelled alone – oh how that was all about to change!

Having been fortunate to have been accepted for the SAYFC International Programme, I was the 1990 Exchangee going to the United States of America and being hosted by their 4-H Organisation in the states of North Dakota and Pennsylvania – two very different areas in history, environment and agricultural but equally as welcoming as I was to find out. There's so much I could say about my trip and I know that everyone who has been on an exchange feels the same way so I've picked out a few of the highlights from my time in the US.

I flew out of Glasgow heading for 4 weeks of touring before starting my exchange proper and took in the sights & sounds of Memphis, Nashville, New Orleans, San Jose, San Francisco, Sacramento and Salt Lake City before arriving at the 4-H headquarters in Washington DC for the briefing weekend at which all Exchangees coming into the USA that year were present.

A few history lessons were included as well as learning about the 4-H organisation and we were given full details of our host families and travelling arrangements. On the last day of the briefing, I woke up to find that I had full blown chicken pox and an emergency host family had to be found as my planned hosts hadn't had chicken pox and I was still in the infectious stage – what a start to my exchange! On the plus side, my extra host was a pharmacist who provided me with a mixture that I put in the bath and soaked in – it smelled a bit like porridge and wasn't the most pleasant but it worked a treat to take the heat and itch out of the pox!

During my exchange I was hosted by 7 families – as well as my extra hosts there were 2 families on pig / arable farms, 1 dairy farm, 1 beef / arable farm, an undertaker and a host family whose mum worked for the Seeing Eye - having been a life-long supporter of the Guide Dogs for the Blind in Scotland, this family was quite special for me. I wasn't aware that one of my families were undertakers until the night I arrived and I saw loads of cars parked and people

going in the front door – I thought they'd arranged a welcome party for me but fortunately I didn't comment on this and as we went in the back door, my host mum explained they were having a wake and what their jobs were! This made for some very interesting conversations over the next few days! There was a broad age range as well – one family were a young couple with four children under 10 and another were retired with grown up children and grandchildren - all of the families opened their homes in welcome and introduced me to their lifestyle, their friends and took me to see the sights in their local areas. I learnt to square-dance (fairly successfully), tried to teach a square dance club to do the Gay Gordons (not so successful), cheered on the kids at little-league baseball (the ref was definitely biased!), enjoyed tail-gaiting before Penn State football games and realised that standing up after consuming 5 long island iced teas isn't as easy as it sounds!



In addition to time with my host families I enjoyed a 4-H Ambassadors weekend and week long, Japanese Intercultural Camp. The "Ambies" weekend was an orientation course where newly elected ambassadors in the state attended along with experienced ambassadors and 4H programmes were discussed – the ambassadors are a bit like the YFC club leaders as they give support to local clubs as well as promoting the 4H organisation in general. I am delighted to say that I am an honorary North Dakota 4-H Ambassador having been "initiated" during this weekend. While I have been sworn to secrecy about the time-honoured tradition of initiation, I am relieved to say that it wasn't anything like the hazing that gets reported nowadays.

The Japanese Intercultural Camp was a fun-filled and educational week where 17 Japanese youngsters and their 4H host brothers and sisters exchanged ideas and cultural skills through workshops and activities. The main aim of the camp was to encourage communication with or without a common language - giving a travel talk via a Japanese interpreter was quite a learning experience for Ensio (Finland), Dietmar (Germany) and I.

As I was in the States for nearly 6 months I got the chance to enjoy some of their biggest celebrations – 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Hallowe'en and Thanksgiving which all had plenty of revelries and have given me some dodgy photographs as well as great memories.



While I did write plenty of letters home, I also had a hand-held tape recorder which I used all the time – not just a verbal diary of my own thoughts but getting random people to record messages for me to send back home which so many people I met were willing to do! A Scottish accent and a kilt get you a long way in the USA – and one lady did tell me that my English was very good ☺

At the end of November it was back to Washington DC for a de-brief weekend and not only catch-up with all the exchangees to USA but also meeting up with the USA delegates who had been on outgoing exchange trips that year. This was a really fun couple of days sharing experiences and I got to spend some time with Amy Youngs who had been the USA exchangee to Scotland and my family had hosted her before I came out on my own trip.



I flew back to California for a few days chilling out and have to admit that by the time December 10<sup>th</sup> arrived, I was ready for home – there were a couple of times during my exchange that I got homesick and while I still love travelling, I am always glad to come back home to Scotland.

One of the most treasured things for me has been being able to introduce my family to a couple of my host mums who have been to Scotland since my exchange (Ida Mae in 2001 and Christine in 2006) – I wish they'd all been able to visit☺. It was so good to be able to return their hospitality and I know my parents were delighted to meet some of the people they'd heard me talk about so often and who had taken care of their "little girl" while she was so many miles away from home.

I'm sure that as the next few months progress I'll be boring my family and friends with tales of – "this time 25 years ago I was doing .....". I also know that they'll indulge me

because of the incredible experience I was so fortunate to have. I was then, am now and always will be grateful to SAYFC and YFA for their support and giving me the chance to take part in the International Programme – not only has it given me lifelong memories, it's also given me some amazing friends ☺

#### **Elaine Meikle – YFA Secretary**

### **In 2014, there's no place like Kansas for Ross Mair**

I was one of three fortunate Scots to be selected for the 2014 IFYE Exchange Program to America. I travelled to my destination state of Kansas to stay with two different host families for a total of six weeks, preceded by the 2014 IFYE Orientation in Reno, Nevada.

Although I work in the construction industry I come from a farming background and am currently a National Council Member of the Scottish Association of Young Farmers (SAYFC). I was hoping the trip could not only be a great travelling experience to visit real America but also would provide an opportunity to learn from the American equivalent of SAYFC – The 4-H, and The Future Farmers of America (FFA).

This report details the overall structure of the trip, detailing just some of the highlights and the experiences gained from being involved in such a program.

The Program was lead with four days of Orientation in Reno, Nevada. All 2014 incoming exchangees and US outgoing exchangees were met by a team of US hosts and the four days were formed using seminars, presentations and workshops to educate in world cultures, travelling tips and generally how to make the most of the Program. The US IFYE Conference was also being held over the same four days and was integrated with our orientation, so we had the chance to take part in a number of IFYE ceremonies and socialize with a number of Americans who had been past IFYE's throughout the globe.

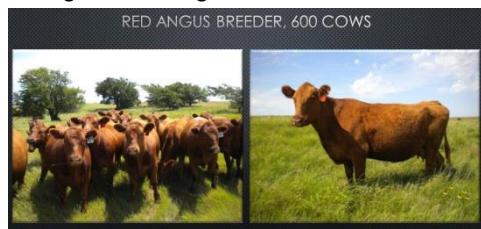
OFFICIAL CEREMONIES & CHARITY AUCTION

The highlights of the orientation were undoubtedly the people I got to meet and socialize with. From old to young

The highlights of the orientation were undoubtedly the people I got to meet and socialise with, all age groups from all around the world. A huge number of cultural differences were present at every event but the overall noticeable

thing was that whatever reason they had found themselves on the trip or the organisation they came from, we all tended to want the same thing out of the trip – to experience another culture and take back experiences to their own organisations, and overall just to have a good time.

I was met at Wichita Airport by my first host mother, Mary Ann Kniebel. The family live on a red Angus Beef farm on the outskirts of White City. Mary Ann and her husband Kevin have two children of similar age to me. Their daughter Cassie works for Elanco two states away, and their son Clay is a Geology student at Kansas State University. I was their first Exchangee and this was my first host family, so we were both nervous, but luckily we seemed to click in no time at all it felt like I had known them for years! The three week stay I had here was a mix of visits to local towns and attractions, renovating a house, a handful of good parties but mainly some real life Kansas style farming and ranching.



A mix of cattle and working the land, the whole trip was a real insight into the working of a Kansas farm. The theories, work practice and intended outcomes were remarkably similar to ours at home. Even the outlook and the land in the region I found really quite similar to home which I wasn't expecting. The huge difference being the climate, and the fact the crops and animals were obviously suited to their warm dry climate. The scale of the operation was maybe a little different to what I was used to from home though, the Kniebel family farmed 2500acres, plus the same again in pasture, spanning a total of 25miles. Of course, I was given the chance to don my new hat and boots and take a horse out at a friend's farm to learn what real ranching was all about.



My second host family were a young couple, Trent and Emily and their baby daughter Parker. A complete contrast to my first host family but again a great host. Emily is heavily involved with the IFYE Programme and has been on numerous exchanges and hosted a number of people from around the globe. Trent is an Agricultural teacher and FFA advisor. As a teacher Trent was off on his summer break, so the majority of my time was spent with him doing various projects round their house, FFA events, as well as training sessions for his job. Again living the real life of an American.

Trent's role as an FFA advisor, the equivalent of a club leader at SAYFC, provided the opportunity I wanted to learn how FFA worked and the events they were accustomed to. I visited a number of local county fairs and agri based events that were all associated with the FFA, as well as visiting workshops and seeing past projects Trent and his FFA class had been involved with



The Page family were also a very sporty family which suited me perfectly and some of the highlights of the whole trip were the Kansas sports we managed to get along to including their Pro Soccer team and Minor League Baseball team. Our sporting activities didn't stop there though and as Trent was a K-state water skier it would have been rude not to get me out on the water at his family home.



Trent's brother Ryan was also playing host to an exchange I'd met at Orientation so a lot of time was spent with them. It was good to get a good team of us together and as it was his brothers first time at being host it helped them too. We had numerous trips and visits with them but the most interesting was without doubt a trip to a genetics lab where Ryan kept goats semen, and they were in the stages of developing a technique for goat embryo transfer.



Food and Drink without doubt warrants its own section as the food and drink I experienced was not only on the whole phenomenal but a pivotal part of the entire trip. It was an ice breaker, a social event, a topic for debate, and a challenge to make. How I didn't come back 100kilo heavier I will never know. Without doubt, the discovery of real American pie is a huge highlight of the trip! But I was in Kansas, and staying at a beef farm. Mexican favourites and BBQ's were the go to method of cooking. It put our measly

efforts to shame. Seasoned steaks, never the same cut twice, burgers to kill for, a range of sides and salads to put most places in the UK to shame. I was treated well when it came to food. I certainly enjoyed the habits of BBQ's and socialising over food. The 'Real America' was depicted in its great food and drink along with great company! When the time came, I didn't want to return home. The memories are now having to be lived through my Kansas related t-shirts, ties and cowboy boots, but they certainly won't be forgotten any time soon!



Since my return from my trip I have continued contact with both my hosts and a number of others I met along the way. The trip gave such a network of contacts from all over the globe. The whole trip has opened up so many doors and opportunities, the actual travel seems to be just the beginning, and I can only encourage any other Young Farmer to get involved with a truly magnificent programme.

#### Ross Mair – Exchangee to Kansas 2014



To the following :

**Marianne (Barron – Australia 2005) & Martin Sheed a son Alexander; George (Canada 1992) & Kirsty Irving a daughter Katie; Jane Lawson (Eire 2004) engaged to Charles Hamilton**

**Maxine Garson ( Wales 2003 & Rally 2004) now Mrs Scott; Alison Miller (USA – Colorado 2010) married Alexander Wilson; and finally to Lizzie McJannet from Ayr YFC and European Rally 2012 who is National YFC Member of the Year 2015**

The following Death has been reported:  
Mary Henry (Martin) – Canada 1955



#### Gordonstoun School, Elgin, Scotland – 2015

**From 15 – 22 August** - now less than 3 months to go until we welcome members to the 57<sup>th</sup> European IFYE Conference! We have been working on this project for 3 years now and we have been able to put together a programme which we feel represents Scotland, showing off our fantastic scenery, industry and showcasing our fine food and drink. It is a full, varied and fun packed programme which will include distillery & farm visits, castles, mountain biking, walking and a cruise on Loch Ness and lots more besides. Evenings will be filled with fun and laughter, Fancy Dress Party, Hog Roast, Ceilidhs, Burns Night and Farewell Party. Don't worry, there will still be plenty of time to relax and enjoy the company of 18 nations! If you have wondered what goes on at a typical IFYE Conference here's a link to a Youtube clip. It was put together in 2013 by Hilde from Norway:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCKJByREyg8&feature=youtu.be>

We are hugely indebted to Gordonstoun School, and our many sponsors and funders that have helped us produce such an event at a very affordable Conference Fee of £420, you really do get an incredible amount for your money. Go to our **website** at [www.ifyescotland.co.uk](http://www.ifyescotland.co.uk) to find more details on the programme and location. **We have over 180 registered, and although our official closing date has passed, we are still open for registrations.** However, don't delay, if you enjoyed your exchange trip, however long ago that was, this event will surely bring it all back. Further details can also be had by emailing Marion at [ifyescotland2015@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ifyescotland2015@yahoo.co.uk) or Mary at [mary.turner2@btinternet.com](mailto:mary.turner2@btinternet.com) For those not on email, we can also post information – call Marion on 01236 760068/07974 778063 or Mary on 01505 614718/07817 166637. **We are a small organising team, and the nearer we get to the week, we will be seeking more help. So, again, get in touch.**

Facebook site for the Conference is as follows  
<https://www.facebook.com/ifye2015scotland>

Also check out the European IFYE website for news on IFYE  
<http://www.ifye.org/pages/europe/default.htm>



An open invitation is given to present and past members of YFA to join us at our **Drinks Reception at the Royal Highland Show on Friday 19 June, from 6.00 pm.**

A special mention is given to the undernoted Exchangees who are celebrating special years since their trip. We really hope that as many as possible can join us, it will be a great opportunity to renew old friendships. It will also give you a chance to meet the Incoming delegates from all over the world. **The event will be held upstairs at the Young Farmers Centre and although it is an open invitation, to assist us with the drinks order, it would be helpful if we can get as many responses back as possible.**

### **Anniversary of Exchange Trip: Roll of Honour**

1955 Ella Gilmour (Hamilton) and Helen Whiteford (Neilson)  
(60 yrs)

1965 Rosemary Dias(Dawson), David Presly, Ian Girvan, Anne Steel (Breckenridge); Crawford Edie; Nancy Gallacher (50 yrs) (Ronald), Alex Brown, Charles Duguid, Bruch Welch, Nan Fettes (Hogarth), Bruce Fettes, Andrew Dunlop

1975 Annie Shanks (Alexander), Jim Shanks, Hugh Kerr, Tom Purdie, Liz Renwick (Kay), Liz Davidson, Hugh MacIntosh, (40 yrs) Linda Roberts (Fraser), Margaret Brown (Wilson), William Lawrie, Andrew Lawson, Irene Letham (Anderson), Malcolm McDiarmid, Margaret Hyland (Davidson), Ella McLaren (McIntyre), Ian Brooke

1990 Hugh Jack, Rhona Orr (Anderson), Iain Fraser, Kenneth Braes, Una Deed (Hunter), Matthew Smith, Willie Barr, (25 yrs) Colin Ramsay, Elaine Meikle, Elaine Murray (Kirkland), Helen Russell (Maclean), Andrew Clarkson, John Harvie, Alison Ferahi (Logan), Claire Edgar (Girvan), Kathryn Smith (Brown), Sandy Farmer, George Gibb, Anne Mear (Jolly), Irving Beck

2005 Julie Briggs (Lowry), Fiona Alexander, Caroline McMiken, June Will (Forsyth), Marianne Sheed (Barron), James (10 yrs) Presley, Emma Jones (Fotheringham), Lizzie Baxter (Steel), Colin Dargie, Russell Gray, Elaine Anderson

#### Dates for your Diary

UK YFA Reunion - this will be held from 30 October to 2 November, 2015, in the Aberavon Beach Hotel, Swansea Bay – the invitation from the Welsh, should be out in a few months time, but in the meantime, put it in your diary!

Future European IFYE Conferences

23 – 30 July 2016 – Estonia

2017 – Switzerland

2018 – Northern Ireland (60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)



A note from the Editor - appreciate those who pass us bits and pieces for the Newsletter, but always looking for articles and your support, so get in touch ☺

#### **DON'T FORGET - £10 MEMBERSHIP**

**Subscriptions due for 2015 – this really is a plea to those who are still to pay their membership. The vast majority have set up a Standing Order, which really helps to keep YFA in business. We do provide generous donations to the outgoing Exchangees, and without the support of our members, we would not be in a position to continue the level of donation. This year our only other fund raiser is the Grand Raffle, so more and more we do depend on membership payments. It has been increasingly difficult to encourage the newer Exchangees to join and without their help and support the organisation will have no future. So PLEASE PAY YOUR SUBSCRIPTION. You can pay by Standing Order, online or cheque – all the details are on the attached Standing Order form.**