

Young Farmers' Ambassadors

Scottish Region

Newsletter January 2025

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Chairman's Blog



Good afternoon from a very Sunny Brunt Ice Shelf. So much so that a science project got the all clear to start their 42km drive today, to complete some ice-core drilling near to naturally occurring propagating cracks in the iceshelf. The aim is to try and understand how ice splits apart and analyse the historical atmospheric gases trapped within the ice once they are shipped back to the UK. As with most years the group of people here are incredible, like the IFYE group, but a work version of it. I continue to be one of the station technicians to help support the critical science being studied here. Below are some photos to give you an idea of the 2024-25 season. Welcome to Halley International Airport!





It was so good to see many of you throughout 2024 whether at the show, in Germany or in Wales. I am delighted that the SAYFC are steadily pushing forward exchange trips and study trips –

things were not looking good for a year or two. I cannot thank enough the subsequent SAYFC travel committees during and since with their hard work and commitment to offering the Young Farmers of today a chance to see and learn about the world. We have all been places and done things in our lives that we can look back to the ‘good old times’! We must be there as a group to help support the new and long-standing members, that we are so keen to have, to make the good old times of tomorrow, today! On a personal note, I am fortunate in this crazy world that I can say this, you can have all the fancy things in life but YFA continues to be a leveller, it is the friendships and relationships made that really matter.

I wish you an awesome year ahead and hopefully either see you again or meet you for the first time.

Neil

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67th UK YFA Reunion Weekend 2024

Just over 100 people headed to the Ramada Hotel, Wrexham on 25 October for the UK YFA weekend. From the get go, we kicked off with the fancy dress themed night of “football” and fun games to get us into the spirit of the weekend. Over the next two days there were lots of interesting visits as well as time to catch up with friends and make new ones. A big thank you to Welsh YFA for all their hard work! Here are some of the highlights from some of the Scots:

**James Law and Caroline Robertson:
A memorable farm tour at Rhug Estate**

James & I had the pleasure of enjoying a fantastic farm tour around [Rhug Estate](#) with their very knowledgeable farm manager Emyr Owen , and what an incredible experience it was. Known for its commitment to organic farming and sustainability, Rhug is a prime example of how a working estate can balance tradition and innovation.

The trailer tour took us on a journey through the estate, showcasing their impressive poultry, buffalo, sheep, and deer operations. It was fascinating to learn about the care and dedication that goes into raising these animals and how it all contributes to the estate’s award-winning organic produce.



As it was close to Halloween, we watched families enjoying the festive pumpkin-picking patch—a wonderful feature that adds a touch of seasonal fun and brings the local community together.

The estate’s innovation does not stop at farming. Rhug is also embracing sustainability in new ways with its latest venture: skincare. Their skincare products use natural ingredients inspired by the land, showcasing yet another way they are maximizing the potential of their estate.

We also learned that Rhug’s electric vehicle charging points are the busiest in Wales and the second busiest in the UK—a true testament to their forward-thinking approach to sustainability.

After the tour, we were treated to their famous buffalo burgers for lunch. They were absolutely delicious and showcased the high-quality produce that Rhug Estate is known for. Their farm shop is also a must-visit, brimming with organic meats, seasonal goods, and delightful local products.

The visit was not just educational but deeply inspiring, giving us new ideas to bring to Alvie & Dalraddy Estates. We highly recommend a visit to Rhug if you are ever in Wales. Whether it is their incredible tours, amazing produce, or dedication to sustainability, there is so much to experience and admire.

Alan Duncan: Wonderful food, the camaraderie, and the well organised programme. Some of the visits with passionate explanations, like the founder of the abattoir and the bell ringer at St Giles Cathedral, they both had put their lives into their passion. Thanks to Welsh YFA.



We were especially inspired to hear how Rhug’s owner Lord Newborough personally worked hard to promote their estate’s beef, pounding the streets of London to build relationships with top restaurants. Today, their premium organic beef is proudly featured in some of London’s finest establishments—a testament to their dedication and vision.





On top of the tower



David Stevenson (Steedsy): Great hotel, bar, and craic, but missed the Grouse Shoot!

Liz Miller: We had a great weekend reunion, as always, the accommodation, the company and the food were all superb – even the weather played ball! My highlight was “The Red-Carpet Experience” on Saturday evening, when I was called out to accept a certificate celebrating 55 years since taking part in the six-month exchange visit to the USA. How can it be 55 years? I remember the exchange as though it was more like 25 years ago, but then again, it was the start of many years of happy travels around the globe. Thank you to Young Farmers, YFA and IFYE for creating the opportunities.



Mary Turner: What wonderful weather we had on Saturday, and for my visit to **Erddig and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct**. Erddig comprises over 1,200 acres of parkland, Erddig Hall and gardens all dating back to early 1700s. For 240 years it was owned by various members of the Yorke family, until in 1973, it was saved from dereliction when it was taken over by the National Trust. It took four years to fully restore and what a wonderful job they have done.



Seeing original kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms with period furniture as well as paintings and photos of various generations of the Yorke family. However, it was interesting to see the story of the relationship they had with their servants. There is a large collection of portraits and photos of servants, with details of their job and when they worked there. This certainly portrayed the feeling that the servants were highly thought of. With an 18th century Walled-garden, and rows of different plants, it would be a sea of colour in the summer months. There were also former workshops, smithy and stables exhibiting the tools of the day.



After lunch, a short journey away to the **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct**, opened in 1805, it is a marvellous feat of engineering by Thomas Telford. Walking along the aqueduct affords beautiful views of the countryside as well as seeing that is well used today



Of course, there is always fun in the evenings, from Andrew showing off his football skills to some room parties.... Rounding off a great weekend with brilliant company



More memories from the European IFYE Conference at Cloppenburg, Germany:

Paul Fraser: I stayed in this area of Germany with IFYE friends ten years earlier and they took me down to the conference in the south by car. I remember thinking it would be a pleasant place to live in the north with a decent climate in the summer, not too cold in winter and nice and flat to cycle around.

The difference this time with the conference being there meant I learnt a lot more about farming and the land. It was pointed out that the soils are sandy and not very fertile so it was a poor agricultural area which could only support livestock before artificial fertilisers became available. Today the land is very sought after and is so expensive that it is sold by the square metre, a figure of 20 Euro per m2 was mentioned (200,000 Euros per Ha).

We visited a sheep farm where they had an agreement to graze the dykes in return for keeping them managed. However, it was heartbreaking for this farmer at the time because they were losing many sheep with Bluetongue. We were shown around by the owner's brother because he was away looking for affected sheep that afternoon. It was an enjoyable week with glorious weather and interesting tours.



Alan Duncan: What a wonderful week of camaraderie, weather, and programme. The ship building yard stands out! The German IFYE Group organising everything to a tee, to make it so enjoyable and memorable. So, we are all indebted and due them, a hearty, cheerful heads up!



Meg Findlay: One of the highlights for me was a visit to the **German Emigration Centre** at Bremerhaven, which is a museum that not only tells history, but turns it into an impressive, multi-media and sensory experience for children and adults.



Over 7.2 million people made the life-changing decision to board one of the emigration ships bound for the New World from Bremerhaven. The seaside city was one of Germany's busiest ports of emigration during the 19th and 20th centuries. To this day, Bremerhaven is home to citizens from over 160 nations.

Walking through the museum was fascinating, as it was so true-to-life. At the start of the tour, we walked into a dark space which replicated the dock area where people were waiting to board a ship to take them to their new lives. It was quite an emotional experience, as the figurines seemed so life-like and – just imagining how they must have felt leaving their homeland and setting off on what must have been a daunting experience as they braved the Atlantic to reach the shores of New York.

Following the footsteps of these emigrants, we “boarded” the ship, and walked through the various areas. It was clear that there was quite a contrast for the passengers in the different classes of travel. Fine dining for those in 1st class, but very cramped conditions for those in the lower classes.

It was great to browse through drawers telling stories of some of these intrepid travellers and what happened to them in the end. You could spend hours just stopping at all the media stations and gleaning more information about this important part of history.

At the end of the tour, it was lovely to stop for a coffee with some old friends!



At the end of July, 4 members of SAYFC set off to **Estonia for the Rural Youth Rally 2024**. The team of **April Forbes (Nairn), Ellis Kinloch (Loch Lomond), Vicky Haddow (Lesmahagow) and Andrew McMillan (Bute)** were led by **National Chair, Ally Brunton (East Fife)**. They were successfully selected after an application and interview process.



The Rally theme for this year was **'Care to stay, dare to change'**, with the main aim being to improve the entrepreneurial mindset and skills of the delegates. There were 16 countries represented from member organisations of RYE, so a great opportunity to find out about different cultures. Here is what they all had to say on their week in Estonia:

"The week was jam packed with a variety of workshops, seminars, excursions, and activities that challenged you to think differently and encouraged you to get involved. Each day was split around 4 seminars, some self- reflection time and then evening activities. They were designed so that people from different countries could collaborate and communicate their thoughts and opinions about the various circumstances presented by entrepreneurship. One of the workshops involved included a "human library" in which some of the delegates volunteered to tell the rest of the participants

about their own personal entrepreneurial experiences. This was a good exercise that allowed us to hear from a variety of different people and a great chance to gain a wider understanding of the challenges that young people from other rural areas face. Another of the workshops involved delegates being mixed into teams from other countries and given a business problem, a location of the business and a random object. The task was to challenge yourself to think outside of the box and resolve the issue with what you had in front of you. The team's solution was then presented to the rest of the participants in differing forms such as presentations, acting and singing. With such a broad set of nations taking part in the rally this year, we were able to think critically, creatively, and innovatively. The many seminars opened our eyes to how we, as individuals, could foster entrepreneurial competencies in our own home nations and make a change for the better."

Andrew McMillan

"Where do you start with the international buffet... As a team we sourced the best Scotland had to offer by asking for donations and purchasing Scottish produce from our local areas. From Shortbread from Crystals Loch Lomond, Gin from The Isle of Bute, Whisky from Nairn (insert distillery), fudge from Gardiner's Fudge and of course the finest Tunnock's goods which all travelled surprisingly well. We cannot thank the companies who donated enough. Our table went down well with participants. Many flocked to sample some Scotch Whisky and Bute Gin which went down especially well with the clientele, we even bagged a few repeat customers. The fudge and shortbread provided the perfect palette cleanser after a shot of your preferred beverage. The Tunnock's Tea Cakes were new to many. The indulgent mallow centre and biscuit base went down a treat with a whole box being finished by the end of the night.



On to the other nations, we headed to sample their goods.... Some good and some bad! From tinned fish to potent spirits, cured meat to baked beans, there was something for everyone. Our team divided head first into the opportunity to sample goods from across the 15 European Nations which you would not typically pick up at the supermarket. The night was a great start to the rally giving teams the chance to mingle amongst each-others cultural delicacies, creating a socialable and exciting atmosphere for our second night in Estonia."

Vicky Haddow

"During our recent trip to Estonia, we had the opportunity to explore various rural businesses. We visited a smallholding farm, a handicraft and wellness centre, and a crop farm, each offering distinct insights into the local agricultural. Our first stop was at a smallholding farm, where the farmers maintained the farm alongside their full-time jobs. The farm housed a small herd of sheep, goats, and Dexter cattle. What stood out most at this farm was their use of Great Pyrenees dogs as flock guardians. Unlike the Border Collies commonly used in Scotland for herding, these dogs lived with the

flock in the field, offering protection rather than gathering or moving the animals. This unique method of flock management was particularly fascinating as it showcased a different approach to animal husbandry. Next, we visited a handicraft and wellness centre, a beautifully renovated old farm turned into a relaxation retreat. Guests at the retreat were invited to stay on the premises, where they could immerse themselves in weaving scarves, towels, carpets, and other artisanal items. The centre offered a full experience of rural life, with fresh, home-cooked meals prepared daily for the guests. The combination of traditional crafts and wellness activities provided a unique blend of relaxation and creativity, allowing visitors to reconnect with nature and themselves.

Our final visit was to a crop farm, where we observed a wide array of crops and plants being cultivated. This farm focused on a diverse range of vegetables, including asparagus, turnips, and hemp. During our discussion with the farmers, it became clear that crop rotation was a key factor in the success of their harvests this year. An intriguing aspect of this farm was their collaborative approach to machinery ownership. Instead of purchasing their own equipment, they partnered with two neighbouring farms to share the costs of machinery. This cooperative strategy was based on the size of each farm, with each contributing a set amount toward machinery and repairs. They also adhered to a rule where the first crops planted were the first to be harvested, which helped maintain harmony and efficiency among the partners."

Ellis Kinloch

"The European rally 2024, what an opportunity! I applied to take part in the European rally knowing not much about it but the trip most definitely exceeded all expectations, a week full of interactive learning, meeting many new people and most of all good fun. I have come home from the rally with a much broader understanding of entrepreneurship in the rural sector, and all factors involved in starting/

running a business. Alongside the learning sessions we spent evenings in a social setting learning all about Estonia's culture as well as other nations who attended the rally, foods, drinks, and dances.

After a week of learning Estonia's rural culture, we spent our final day in Estonia's capital city, Tallinn. Estonia's farmland and Tallinn may seem worlds apart, yet they are interconnected. The produce from the rural farms often finds its way into Tallinn's vibrant markets in the busy streets. The city centre filled with stalls of fruit fresh and meats. I cannot recommend the European rally enough; it really was a once in a lifetime experience! I have come home with new ideas and it has given me the confidence to travel further afield in the future."

April Forbes

"As the team leader for Scotland I had the opportunity to attend the Rural Youth Europe General Assembly. SAYFC are a member organisation so are entitled to a vote on any proposals and in the election of the new Committee. I found it very interesting to see the same common themes coming up amongst the other member nations. Rural Youth are facing the same challenges all over Europe. We must make sure our voice is heard, and it was great to hear that RYE now have new offices in Brussels, and are engaging well on future policy. I think overall the European rally is difficult to describe. 5 members from all over Scotland, that did not really know each other that well, travelling to Estonia to meet strangers from a variety of different countries. To then leaving a week later having made genuine friends for life from all over Europe. What an experience! I have to say a big thanks to the rest of team Scotland, they were amazing. They fully embraced the rally and everything it had to offer, and represented SAYFC brilliantly."

Ally Brunton

Koffee in Kenmore was hosted in September by Kirstie Black and her mother, Bridget, to help raise funds and awareness of cancer for MacMillan. Like many families who have lost loved ones to the disease, they wanted to offer their support by way of holding a coffee morning for MacMillan and it raised over £2,100. A few YFA members were there to support this very worthwhile cause.



Sadly, there have been several deaths to report:
John Rendall – Canada 1971
Netta Howie (Smith) – Canadas 1963
Margaret Morton (Steven) – Canada 1959

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The YFA AGM will be held on Sunday 23 March, 2025 in the Pitlochry Dam Meeting Room at 1.00 pm – more details to follow
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Spring Event – Saturday 12 April from 2.00 pm to Sunday 13 April at 2.00 pm
Venue: Kincaig Community Hall, Kincaig, Kingussie, PH21 1NB: check out their website
Programme: to see the presentations from the 2024 group, however, we want to show those new to YFA, that their exchange trip is just the start of their travel adventures. Lots of fun activities planned over the 24 hours.
Facilities: kitchen - we plan to make the meals; sleeping accommodation on the floor with showers and toilets - you do not, of course, need to stay overnight, that is up to you, you can check out other accommodation in the Aviemore area.

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YFA Zoom Night – Sunday 18 May, when we will be inviting those celebrating certain anniversaries since their exchange, and, of course, it will be open to all current members. More details to follow, but please put it in your diary, it has been an entertaining evening in the past
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Drinks Reception – Friday 20 June – to be held in the Young Farmers Centre, more details to follow, but please put it in your diary... and order your Highland Show entrance ticket!
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UK YFA Reunion, the next one, will be held at the Silver Birch Hotel, Omagh, Northern Ireland, from the 24 – 27 October, 2025. Invitations will come out in the summer, but in the meantime, please put a note of the dates in your diary



Here is the calendar of events for the next couple of years:

- 2025** – Castle Head, Grange over Sands, Cumbria, England – 2 – 8 August – registration opens 1 February 2025. Website not live yet but enquiries to IFYE2025@yahoo.com
- 2026** – Estonia
- 2027** – Switzerland

YFA MEMBERSHIP

A new year, and most of you pay by Standing Order, however, if you don't, please get in touch to pay this year's subscription - membership costs £10 per annum.

CONTACT US:



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