

Nuffield Notes

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Canada 

A Glimpse at Global Ag



Steve in Aussie Land

All Nuffield scholars from around the world are expected to participate in the Global Focus Conference, which was held in Australia in late February. Steve Larocque, our Canadian Scholar, wrote about the conference and subsequent tour in his weekly electronic newsletter "Beyond Agronomy News" I have borrowed snippets and photos from his writings, but if you want the whole story contact him at his website www.beyondagronomy.com

The opening two day conference was spent discussing the role of Australian crop research, emissions trading, bio-technology and trade barriers issues. With 46 people from all over the world it was a productive environment for spawning new ideas.

After the conference there was an action packed week of farm and industry tours in Australia. They visited growers who produce and market fruits, veggies, dairy, sheep, hogs, almonds, pistachios, brine shrimp, bio-diesel, fertilizers and compost. The trip continued to open their eyes to the diversity of agriculture business and the innovative people involved in it.

Ten members of the group moved on to sunny California. The group spent five days in the San Joaquin



Cilantro and Mustard for seed California

Valley near Fresno including the Sacramento and the Napa Valley. During the tour they visited several progressive farmers, the California Dept. of Ag and Food, The California Farm Bureau, and the Dept. of Pesticide Regulations. The words "economies of scale" and "diversity" come to mind when Steve reflects of Californian agriculture.

Next stop Mexico City. They traveled passed miles of open landfill sites and a river of raw sewage through heavy smog, dust, and traffic, to visit local farmers. The challenges facing a Mexican producer include: a qualified labour shortage, as they compete with factories on wages; profitability; and thirdly government intervention.

When tortillas prices skyrocketed in Mexico, the government capped corn prices, forcing farmers to sell below the cost of production. Meanwhile the processors and retailers hiked their prices and raked in heavy profits.

Adios sunshine and hello winter! They had arrived in snowy southwestern Ontario. While there they visited farms that produced tobacco, shitake mushrooms, corn, beans, dairy and shared some wonderful down-home hospitality.

On the way to Brazil they made a pit stop in Washington DC. For three days they were immersed in meetings with top gun bureaucrats. Arriving in Sao Paulo they visited EMBRAPA, their equivalent of Ag Canada, and enjoyed a barbeque at the Australian Embassy. They traveled inland to southern and central Brazil looking at soybean and tomato farms and investigating the production of ethanol.

Steve trip was cut short at this point as he headed home for a family emergency, but the rest of the group traveled on the England to look and learn about agriculture within the European Union.



Pedro eagerly shows his no-till fields near Toluca

“A Whole Island Experience”

By Jack Rigby

This past June Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland hosted the International Conference. There were one hundred and ninety-two participants from all of the Nuffield countries. Canada was well represented with twenty-two in attendance.



Group learning history of DunLuce Castle, in Antrim

The pre-conference tour started in Belfast and traveled north to the Giant Causeway and then we made our way south to Dublin and then Kilkenny where the actual conference took place. The post conference tour traveled south west to Killarney and toured around the Ring of Kerry before making our way back to Dublin. Co-chairman Campbell Tweed gave an excellent running commentary as we traveled through both Northern Ireland and the Republic. He has a wealth of knowledge about both areas and has a good way of expressing himself, which was very entertaining and educational.



Canadian Leprechauns
Dayle Bowman and Joan Linnell

Our hosts did an excellent job of showing us the sights of their beautiful countryside and showcasing their diverse agriculture. One of the highlights was visiting the farm of James & Attracta McCarthy. James was the first

Nuffield Scholar (1996) from the Republic of Ireland. It was interesting to hear of his successful career in agriculture; how he built up his farming operation in Ireland and then his expansion into a dairy operation in the United States and now his new farming project in Argentina. It was a pleasure to hear Jim speak with so much passion and enthusiasm about agriculture and Nuffield.

Karen Daynard Newest Scholar

We welcome Karen Daynard of Guelph Ontario, our 2008 scholar, to the Nuffield family. Karen is a creative, animated individual with an extensive background in marketing and communications for agricultural and rural related businesses and organizations.



Karen is a masters graduate from University of Guelph and alumni of Ontario's Advanced Agricultural Leadership program. As owner of KD Communications she continues her involvement in agriculture. She specializes in developing innovative, cost-effective marketing and communication plans. Her clients have been both provincial and national, with a focus on agricultural related enterprises. She enjoys the challenge and satisfaction of working with medium-sized companies with modest budgets, where she can utilize her creativity and flexibility to see a project through to completion.

Her field of interest for her Nuffield study is to look for methods to reverse the trend for declining enrolment in agricultural studies across Canadian universities. Karen has an appreciation for the reality that the agricultural industry is having trouble finding qualified people to fill vacant positions and that career councillors have little knowledge or resources to give students who may be interested. She feels we need to look for new opportunities to communicate the vast number of careers available in the fields of food, environment, health and economy.

Nuffield Canada Conference

Thurs. Nov. 26 through Sat. Nov. 28
Greenwood Inn, Winnipeg

Banquet Speaker
Barbara Cote-Stephanyshyn

Annual General Meeting
Scholar Presentations
Eric Ritchie and Harold Perry

See attached flyer for details and to register

Friends, Fun and Fellowship

In the East ---- By Jack Rigby

There was a very good turnout for the Ontario summer picnic hosted by Scholar Dan Cornwell (1985) and Megan. After a heavy rain storm the sky cleared and we enjoyed a sunny afternoon of fun and fellowship and a potluck dinner topped off with delicious steaks barbequed to perfection by Dan.

In total we had 20 people in attendance 11 of these being Scholars. The award for being the oldest Scholar present went to Mac Sprowl (1953) & Joyce. Grant Ketcheson (1970) & Gayle received the award for traveling the furthest distance. Brian Ellsworth (1966) & Jane - The best salad award goes to Jane. Howard Cornwell (1969) & Olive- the shortest distance traveled award (next door). Also in attendance were Jim Rickard (1972) & Mary, Meredith Robb (1973), Jack Rigby (1994) & Donna, Jim Clark (1998) & Ruth, Carolyn Fuerth (1999) & Rick and Mark Wales (2003).



Megan (l) and Jane (r) making famous Caesar salad

And in the West ----- By Wally Doerksen

The western summer picnic was hosted by Doug and Evelyn Visser. Their farm on the banks of the North Saskatchewan was a perfect setting for an afternoon of touring, chatting and admiring the forest which they use for trail rides for schools. Many of us had seen the marketing part of Doug's operation and now we saw the growing part. Doug and Evelyn have a daughter who is involved in the farming operation and she looks after City Farm which involves people coming out to the farm to learn about farming and see animals and vegetables first hand. Of course there are games and music and we saw people having just a fine time. What a good way to promote the farming community. Also it was interesting to note the many changes on the farm since I was last there some ten years ago. I remember Doug struggling to think which way he should go with his operation and it is good to see how things are turning out. Scholars present were: Joe Linnell, Norm Janssen, Ian McPhadden, Rod Bradshaw, Neil Reed, Doug and I.



Baby Ava Comes Home

for good on Tuesday September 23rd. Ava is now 7.5 pounds, has a few scars from several operations but otherwise a healthy and happy baby.

Now that I'm home I can focus on my next set of travels which will take me to the UK, New Zealand, United States and Australia. Just to be trendy like my colleagues, I've changed my topic from studying precision agriculture to interviewing the world record holders for grain yield. My goal is to learn about the philosophies, climate and management practices that create world record yields. I'd like to understand how to increase crop production from a both an agronomic and economic standpoint as well as a philosophic standpoint where the future lies in producing more food on less land.

As for my Nuffield experience so far, I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed the relationships I've built with my fellow Scholars. I've had James Parsons from New Zealand, Murray Scholz, Sam Archer and Simon Tiller from Australia come out to visit us already. I truly look forward to the years ahead and my next set of travels. What an experience so far!"

Scholar Steve is Up to the Challenge

Steve Larocque, one our current Nuffield scholars was over half way through his Global Focus Tour, when he received an urgent call to return home. His wife Vanessa had gone into labour three months early. As Steve tells it:

"I'm in the middle of Brazil, I don't speak the language, my wife is in labour a world away, nothing's open and my communication options are limited. However, who doesn't like a challenge?"

I finally made it home in time for the arrival of Ava Christine Larocque on March 28th. Ava was born a day shy of 25 weeks gestation, weighed 1.6 lbs and was 31 cm (12") long. She was admitted to the NICU where we lived for 4 months and then moved to the Children's Hospital where they lived for another 2 months. I brought my little family home

Editors Note: Thanks to everyone who shared pictures and wrote stories for this newsletter. It won't happen without your support. Look for Greg Braun's Tour report in the winter edition.

President's Message

The International Conference in Ireland in June was a tremendous occasion. There were some great individual farm stories and Jim McCarthy was certainly one of them. He started a farm in Argentina and Harold Perry wrote a brief note in the last newsletter about visiting it when he was in Argentina. The contrast between farming in the two countries is quite striking. While land and inputs are obviously cheaper in Argentina, Ireland has whole farm subsidies that make up for that. Regardless it was the McCarthy model of building the very best farm that he could with people and passion, whatever the country that was really attractive. The conference was a great highlight with topnotch speakers including several other farmers who farmed in several countries. It was also great to connect with people I spent time with when I did my scholarship in 1989, including the Frenchman and one of the Aussies that I traveled with. The food was splendid and I was thoroughly surprised at the Irish idea of a BBQ. It means that there are 6 different kinds of meat and a few salads. It gives "meatatarian" a whole new definition.

It was certainly good to have 13 Canadian scholars in attendance and most of their wives. Les, Sinc, and I had plenty of time for conversation while cooling our heels in airports and perhaps some of the ideas discussed there will reap fruition. I was also duly impressed with Jim Halford when he explained something of note to the group touring Walter Furlongs' mill. There was an issue to be

discussed, and someone said Jim might have some wisdom on the topic and Jim held court for a while. Way to go Jim!

The public relations venture has not turned out as expected. While the articles written were very good, the uptake was not. To my knowledge only the article on Jim Halford was published. If anyone else has seen one beside that please let me know. The executive will consider this and perhaps there will be another proposal on the table at the AGM.

I had the good fortune of meeting with Greg Braun and Simon Tiller from Australia as Simon came to visit Greg in Manitoba. Simon talked with enthusiasm about the new marketing situation in Australia regarding wheat. It had been my intention to spend a half day prior to the AGM to consider this and what it might mean for Canada, but the expected officer of the AWB that was to be in Canada is not. Thus we will look for other people to fill this role or change the topic.

I will conclude with a quote from Jim McCarthy: "You are only as good as your people and your passion." I would like to apply that to us as Canadian Nuffield and have us take stock what our abilities are and how to use them to our best advantage. Passion is not something that comes from the outside, but it wells up within us, from what we have seen and experienced. So, Nuffielders in Canada rise up and share your passion and your abilities!

Wally Doerksen

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Membership Form

Return with \$100 cheque payable to **Nuffield Canada** for your 2008 membership
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