



# JOHN EDGAR TRUST

## Winter Newsletter 2006 / 2007



John Edgar

### First Impressions

*Ian Ashbridge reflects on the Course so far*

Few of us knew quite what to expect from the first week of the course. But by the end of the Cirencester leg, we'd all learnt a great deal about each other – and ourselves.

A consistent comment among the Scholars was the depth and breadth of experience and knowledge in the group, expertly drawn by the course selectors from a much larger applicant list.

This was clearest for me when, with Dr James Jones, we got stuck in to that well-known recreational activity, partial and break-even business budgeting.

The slot immediately after lunch probably wasn't ideal for this gargantuan topic, and while I struggled with some of it, a quick word with other Scholars over coffee was enough to help me put it into context. Such was the sound common sense – and patience – among our group.

#### Revelations

Twelve farmers, farm managers, entrepreneurs, technical specialists and – God help us – agri-journalists might have proved a pretty sceptical bunch. After all, we're all pretty independent-minded, self-reliant people. So most of us were fairly circumspect as to how much of our personalities could be revealed from 200 multiple-

choice questions. How wrong we were...

One by one, the college's human resources manager Jean Buckland took us through our thinking, interacting and coping styles. Just from 200 questions. But for good measure, Jean had mapped out how we would react in team situations and which roles we would best adopt.

also a great pleasure to meet Angela Burry and many of the Trustees. The enormous value of the JET course is a worthy testament to John Edgar.

#### Time & Context

A few things really stand out for me after our week at RAC. Time – we never have enough of it and can't get it back when it's gone. We need to be ruthless in our time management.

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JET in action at Cirencester

So the message was clear – never play cards against Jean...

#### Thanks

There isn't room to thank everyone here. But an impressive line-up of enthusiastic speakers, a packed programme to cover and a lot of learning was backed up by huge hospitality from the college and seemingly inexhaustible energy of Prof John Alliston and Dr James Jones. I know I speak for all the Scholars when I offer our thanks to all who were involved with the first JET week. It was

Context is important. A better understanding of WTO negotiations, deals and agendas explains some of the motives behind Brussels' edicts.

Psychometric testing revealed our strengths. Now, we have to learn to play to them in our lives and careers.

And land agents are hustlers at table football.

*Ian Ashbridge is deputy business editor at Farmers Weekly and a 2006 JET scholar*

*You are invited....*

**to a dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel Stockbridge**

On January 17th or March 14th 2007

*Come and enjoy an evening with your JET contemporaries and this year's Scholars*

More details on page 2 and on the website

# Alumni Reunion at Allenford Farm

## Julian Harbottle recalls a memorable day in May

The bi-annual alumni visit for the John Edgar Memorial Trust took place on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006 when approximately 50 past and potential scholars journeyed into deepest Hampshire. The day was hosted by Rob Shepherd at Allenford Farm and focused on the practical interaction between agri-environmental policy and profitable farming. Dr James Jones from the Royal Agricultural College was instrumental in arranging the day having used Allenford as a case study for his own research.

### Birds and Farming

The Trust was also delighted to have Dr Sue Armstrong-Brown as the keynote speaker with very able support from James Jones and Rob Shepherd. Dr Armstrong-Brown is the Chief Agricultural Policy adviser for the RSPB and gave a very erudite and informative talk on how current and emerging agri-policy is interacting with the work and objectives of the RSPB. Dr Armstrong-Brown acknowledged that many in the audience were likely to be inherently suspicious of the RSPB and challenged the delegates to engage with her organisation. She also dealt robustly with some punchy questions from the floor after the presentations.

### Research

Following Dr Armstrong-Brown, James Jones and Rob Shepherd gave their presentations. Dr Jones commented on his research at Allenford and gave some practical examples of when agri-environmental funding had and had not been profitable. Rob Shepherd followed with an amusing and entertaining talk on the results of Dr

Jones' research and his own philosophy into the management of his farm.

### Lunch...and later

The delegates were then treated to probably the finest lunch ever served in the history of John Edgar alumni

The Trust has organised a number of excellent farm visits over recent years with outstanding speakers at forward-thinking businesses. The success of the 2006 trip to Allenford will mean that the Organising Committee have yet another challenge to raise the bar even higher.



Rob Shepherd, James Jones & Alumni at Allenford

visits which meant stirring the faithful from the post-feast slump was trickier than usual as we headed out on the farm tour. Allenford is located in an idyllic part of Hampshire and it looked its best in the early spring sunshine. The two trailers made a number of stops where the double act of Messrs Jones and Shepherd commented on individual points of interest. Of particular interest were the extensive pig buildings as well as cattle fattening feed lot. Rob's innovative and enthusiastic approach to his farm was abundantly clear together with his attention to detail.

### Thanks

On behalf of the Organising Committee I would like to thank Rob Shepherd and James Jones for their efforts in putting the day together as well as Graham Webb from the Royal Agricultural College for the seamless administration.

*Julian Harbottle, Chairman of the Organising Committee, is a former JET Scholar and is Associate Director (Land & Property) at Savills*

## Dinner Details

**Wednesday, 17th January 2007**

**Speaker: Duncan Sinclair**

Agriculture Manager at Waitrose, formerly with MLC

**JET Groups 1989 - 2005**



**Wednesday 14th March 2007**

**Speaker: Charlie Flindt**

Journalist, Farmer at Hinton Ampner

**JET Groups 1970 - 1988**

*at The Grosvenor Hotel, Stockbridge at 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm. Price: £25, cheques payable to "John Edgar Trust"  
To book, contact Christopher Langford (see page 4) if you haven't heard from your year's Representative.*

# Class of 2006/7

Congratulations to these twelve people who received a John Edgar Award this year, and who attended the first week-long module at the Royal Agricultural College in November.

They provided their own photographs.....

 <p><b>Ian Ashbridge</b> Agricultural journalist for Farmers Weekly and fwi.co.uk, specialising in business and financial coverage</p>	<p><b>Nick Down</b> Manager for Velcourt of 550 acre arable unit near Salisbury</p> 
 <p><b>Robin Blatchford</b> Manages 1000 acre family arable and beef farm near Shaftesbury</p>	<p><b>Anne Gow</b> Established and now manages Farmer Gow's activity farm at Appleton, Oxford.</p> 
 <p><b>Matthew Bowe</b> Arable manager for Sentry Farms on a 1200 acre estate in Suffolk</p>	<p><b>David Jones</b> Farm manager on a 900ha arable farm in Oxfordshire</p> 
 <p><b>Jim Brown</b> Involved in 500 acre arable farm in West Berkshire producing bird and animal feeds using home-grown and imported ingredients</p>	<p><b>Oliver Lee</b> Until recently with the Meat &amp; Livestock Commission and now a Business Consultant with Andersons, based at Melton Mowbray</p> 
 <p><b>Simon Butler</b> Assistant manager on 1200 acre diversified arable family farm near Alton.</p>	<p><b>John Read</b> Rural chartered surveyor with Dreweatt Neate in Newbury</p> 
 <p><b>Dan Dines</b> Runs his own business providing arable consultancy to farmer clients in Wiltshire and Dorset</p>	<p><b>Simon Wells</b> Assistant farm manager looking after three Estates on the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire</p> 

# Adrian Cannon

## JET Scholar & "Farm Manager of the Year"

Congratulations to Adrian Cannon who recently was winner of the prestigious McCormick Farm Manager of the Year Award in the fiercely-contested competition organised by the Farmers' Weekly.

Adrian, who was a John Edgar Scholar in 2002-3 and attended the first course to be tutored by John Alliston and James Jones is Estate Manager of Great Tew Farms near Chipping Norton.

According to the judges' citation, Adrian is "committed, passionate, with clear vision and excellent business management and technical ability, technical, environmental and leadership qualities and faultless business management and a passion for being the best. He has shown how the traditional agricultural and sporting estate can thrive in 2006."

### Restructuring

He has restructured the business, building on the conventional mixed-farm foundations (1900 acres of arable, 850 acres of grassland, suckler cows and sheep), reducing

labour and machinery costs, harnessing new technology and developing new enterprises.



Adrian Cannon with Fiona Bruce  
(and the Award)

Under his leadership the farm has embarked on a large and remunerative quarrying enterprise, extracting brown and blue vein ironstone which is in demand from architects, builders and planners. The farm also hosts the Great Tew Horse Trials and a music festival in support of the Countryside Alliance, and runs a simulated grouse shoot.

### Achievement

Adrian is a firm believer in the empowerment of his farm staff, achieved through a programme of training and personal development. Not content with his John Edgar Award, he is now studying for an MSc in rural property management.

Adrian says "Achieving this Award is the pinnacle of my career so far. The John Edgar course gave me the confidence to enter and to win. In particular it taught me to manage upwards as well as downwards, and gave me the ability to persuade the estate owners what needed to be done."

### Another Winner

Congratulations too to Andrew Foot of Bookham Farm, Dorchester who was a colleague of Adrian's on the 2002-3 JET Course. Andrew was one of two runners-up for the Countryside Farmer of the Year Award.

*Acknowledgements to Farmers' Weekly for information and the photograph*

## The Organising Committee

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## Email Addresses



Please persuade your computer to send Christopher Langford your email address

Postal charges continue to creep up, but we want to keep in touch

**Do it NOW!**

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