



# JOHN EDGAR TRUST

## Spring Newsletter 2008



John Edgar

### JET Course Again in November New Scholars Wanted

Later this year the John Edgar Trust will once again be running its prestigious Management Development Course. The tutorial team will be led by Professor John Alliston and Dr. James Jones of the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, and the course will follow the well-proven format of a 5-day session at Cirencester in November followed by "Hampshire" modules in January and March 2009 at the Grosvenor Hotel, Stockbridge.

All the arrangements are in place (see page 4 for the important dates). All we need now are the 12 forward-looking people who will become 2008 JET Scholars and for this we rely very much on the help of JET alumni and the many friends of JET to put the word around and persuade suitable would-be Scholars to come forward.

Although arable farming has seen a long-overdue upturn in fortunes, the livestock sector remains in the doldrums. With the general economic downturn the diversified enterprises which form part of so many rural businesses will need skilful management to see them thrive through difficult times ahead.

So please do a favour to someone, it might be a neighbour, a colleague or a friend, who is involved in some way in rural business. Tell them about the JET Course which remains entirely **free of charge**, invite them to the Reunion in May if you like, and get them to apply.



Professor Alliston and Scholars on a study visit last year (!)

This Management Development Course will arm its participants with the skills to meet these challenges. The 2006/07 Scholars tell us on page 3 how they have benefited.

Further details of the Course and an application form are available on the website [www.johnedgartrust.org.uk](http://www.johnedgartrust.org.uk). Do it now.....then remind them again later. Entries finally close on May 23rd

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#### You are invited....

to a  
**Point-to-Point  
"Bumper" Race**

in aid of the  
**John Edgar Trust**

At Barbary Castle, Marlborough

On Saturday April 5th at 11.30am



More details on page 2  
and on the website

### JET Reunion & Seminar on Thursday, May 8th "Linking Producer, Consumer & Customer"

For the biennial JET reunion and seminar on Thursday May 8th we are delighted to be visiting **Barfoots of Botley's** Little Abshot Farm, Titchfield near Fareham. This highly successful family business was built up from small beginnings on a County Council small holding by Peter Barfoot, and the company now employs over

200 people. Based in Chichester, the business grows, processes, packs and sells semi-exotic fresh



Bumblebee strip at Barfoots'

vegetables to UK retailers and food service companies and is Europe's largest processor and packer of fresh sweetcorn products. Little Abshot Farm has been a LEAF Demonstration Farm since 1998.

The theme for the day is "Linking Producer, Consumer and Customer"

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## Point-to-Pointing for JET on April 5th

### Your support is needed at Barbary, riding or as a spectator

To raise funds for the JET on behalf of the scholars of 06/07, Simon Wells has organised a "bumper" point-to-point to be run at Barbury Castle, Marlborough at 11.30am on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April prior to the Tedworth Hunt point-to-point that afternoon. Much to his own surprise, Simon has volunteered to take part. He writes:

The scholars of 06/07 were discussing fund raising events and after a few beers I had the brainwave of "why not hold a charity race?" Having been bought up around horses and once been a very keen rider attending various pony club activities I then thought "Why not enter myself?!"

So after asking Mr Nigel Bunter for permission to use his Barbury Racecourse my idea began to progress. In January I telephoned my good friend James Richardson who trains point-to-point horses as a profession and asked

him 'Would you let me ride one of your horses in this event?' His first question was 'When did you last ride a horse?' After a long silence I revealed 'About 20 years!' James just laughed, but once he realised just how serious I was I have been spending my weekends learning to ride very flighty racehorses.



As the day ever gets closer the butterflies are starting to appear but I am definitely taking part, have been on a fairly strict diet and am now concentrating on getting fitter. I don't think anyone who does not ride realises how fit, athletic and probably most of all 'MAD', a professional jockey has to be.

The race is called a bumper, which means it will be held on a steeplechase track, but no obstacles will be jumped. The distance is 1½ miles, one complete circuit of the track. There is still room for further entries, but you must obviously have a horse to ride and be an experienced rider. We are grateful to Mr Bunter and the Tedworth Hunt and to Knight Frank for their sponsorship.

**Please come to Barbary on April 5<sup>th</sup>**

Contact: [simon-wells@templefarm.com](mailto:simon-wells@templefarm.com)

## Fundraising

### A topic which never goes away

The Trust continues to have to cope with increasing cost in order to deliver the course on a biennial basis. In broad terms and subject to market conditions, the income from the Trust's investments generates around £15,000 pa in income which, over a two year cycle comes to £30,000. At an average cost of £40,000 to deliver the course, we need to raise around £10,000 over each cycle to continue as planned.

The easy route for the Trustees would be to eat into the Trust's capital to make up the shortfall but this would result in the investment income reducing over time thus placing more reliance on donations to fund the course. Ultimately, this is not sustainable particularly given the volatile nature of financial markets.

I hope it is easy to understand from the message above how important fundraising is for the long term survival of JET. We have had an incredible response from the alumni over the



drive to covenant donations. Over 20% of the alumni now contribute to the Trust in this way meaning that we can claim an additional 20% tax relief on each pound. I would urge those who have not been able to donate in this way to consider doing so – covenant forms can be downloaded from the website at [www.johnedgartrust.co.uk](http://www.johnedgartrust.co.uk). Any donation, however large or small,

will be hugely appreciated and will genuinely contribute to the long term survival of the Trust and the management development scheme.

If you are in a position to contribute, but would like more details, please contact Katherine Parker on 01489 877988 or by email at [keparker@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:keparker@globalnet.co.uk)

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

*Reunion (Continued from page 1)*

and, in addition to Peter Barfoot who will welcome us and tell us the story of the company, the speakers at the morning's seminar are Nathan Dellicott, Barfoots' Farms Director, and Caroline Drummond who is well known as the Chief Executive of LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming). We also expect to have on the platform a buyer from Waitrose to explore "Relationships between the Customer and the Producer".

As always, there will be an opportunity for discussion, a leisurely lunch with time to catch up with other JET alumni and friends, and a farm tour.

**John Alliston says "Do not miss this opportunity to hear about a huge success story."**

Read more on [www.barfoots.co.uk](http://www.barfoots.co.uk)

See the enclosed leaflet or the JET website for details.

The cost is £25 per person, and the closing date for applications is Friday April 26th.

Please come, and invite friends and potential JET Scholars

## Comments from the Class of 2006/7

	<p><b>Ian Ashbridge</b> Farmers Weekly journalist</p> <p><i>"The content of the course is complemented by the experiences of the scholars, and offers a fresh perspective on the business of farming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."</i></p>
	<p><b>Robin Blatchford</b> Arable &amp; beef farmer, Shaftesbury</p> <p><i>"It has provided me with some very useful contacts, and has given me more confidence and weight during family discussions, to begin restructuring our own business."</i></p>
	<p><b>Matthew Bowe</b> Arable Manager, Sentry Farms in Suffolk</p> <p><i>"The JET course taught me to be more considered in my decision making. This has made me more organised and less prone to rash choices which I think must make me a better manager."</i></p>
	<p><b>Jim Brown</b> Berkshire farmer producing bird and animal feeds</p> <p><i>"Since the JET course I have further developed our new biological culture company which is based on the farm, developing new products and applications."</i></p>
	<p><b>Simon Butler</b> Assistant manager, diversified family farm, Alton</p> <p><i>"I'm trying to improve on my general management skills and put time keeping lessons learnt into practice"</i></p>
	<p><b>Dan Dines</b> Independent Arable Consultant, Wilts &amp; Dorset</p> <p><i>"The course has given me a greater breadth of knowledge which has proved useful in more 'general' discussions with clients, and has also given me contacts so more in depth advice can be sought."</i></p>
	<p><b>Nick Down</b> Arable manager, Velcourt, Salisbury</p> <p><i>"The JET Course has greatly enhanced my confidence in tackling the challenges that face the modern day food producer. I have met a group of people that will remain friends for the rest of my career."</i></p>
	<p><b>Anne Gow</b> Founder / manager, Farmer Gow's activity farm, Appleton, Oxon</p> <p><i>"The JET course has given me the confidence and understanding to purchase my own site for my business – and plan its future development. We opened at Longcot Road, Fernham in January"</i></p>
	<p><b>David Jones</b> Farm manager, Oxfordshire</p> <p><i>"The JET course has built my confidence and refreshed my appetite for my career. I now look at rural industries with a new light and realise much more is possible."</i></p>
	<p><b>Oliver Lee</b> Business consultant, Andersons, Melton Mowbray</p> <p><i>"I have found the knowledge that I acquired invaluable as I go about my daily work".</i></p>
	<p><b>John Read</b> Chartered Surveyor, Dreweatt Neate, Newbury</p> <p><i>"The insight we gained of a number of rural businesses, many run by past scholars, has left a lasting impression and has assisted me in my day-to-day work."</i></p>
	<p><b>Simon Wells</b> Assistant farm manager, Marlborough</p> <p><i>"The course has been very beneficial to me in all aspects of management and profitable farming."</i></p>

# The Challenges of Change

## How would John Edgar have adapted?

When the colleagues of John Edgar agreed to form a trust to remember their friend and his vision, I wonder if they could have foreseen a change in agricultural fortunes as swift as we have seen, since my group of JET scholars left Stockbridge.

In the twelve months since March 2007, farmers have wondered at how quickly life can change.

In the space of a summer that will be remembered for the fear that the foot-and-mouth havoc of 2001 could be repeated, for unpredictable and devastating flash flooding that convinced many the climate really is changing, and for a new, mysterious threat – bluetongue – reaching our shores, wheat prices began to climb.

And climb they did. As my mobile phone buzzed with text message after text message from grain traders *Farmers Weekly* staff began searching record to see if these really were all-time highs. And they were.

Milk prices, too, suddenly caught fire. In a sector that has seen producer numbers drop from more than 33,000

in 20 years to fewer than 13,000 in 2008, farmers began to talk with optimism again.

And yet the beef and sheep sectors continue to suffer, although values strengthened in recent weeks. Similarly, finished lamb prices are on the climb, although still woefully short of a reasonable return. Fingers crossed.



Ian Ashbridge (& clipboard) at work

But what of those first trustees, gathering to launch JET, back in 1970? They were in an industry that talked of the green pound and the Common Market, grew wheats like Hobbit, Flanders and Maris Huntsman, and

enjoyed free ADAS advice. A few, in Hampshire particularly, were beginning to think about a new crop - oilseed rape – attractive at £150/t (£375/t as I write).

But they did have the foresight to know that life changes fast, and the speed of that change will only increase. **And that is why the skills the JET course seeks to equip people with are even more important each year.**

Here's how much things can change.

John Edgar was a farmer who, like his generation, had been encouraged to produce as much food as possible to feed a hungry nation. What might he make today of the competition for land from food and fuel crops? That food-producing land would be used to keep us westerners driving round in our big cars, while vast swathes of humanity continue to be undernourished? I wonder...

*Ian Ashbridge has recently been appointed Business, Land and Property Editor at Farmers Weekly. He has worked on a range of farming systems in the UK and New Zealand, and was a JET scholar in 2006-2007.*

## The Organising Committee

If you have any suggestions or need information, please contact one of the following:

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## Diary Dates



Course Applications Close	23/5/08
Selection Interviews	12/6/08
Cirencester Course	24-28/11/08
1 <sup>st</sup> Stockbridge Course	12-15/1/09
2 <sup>nd</sup> Stockbridge Course	10-13/3/09
Alumni Dinners (details to follow)	13/1/09 & 11/3/09

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