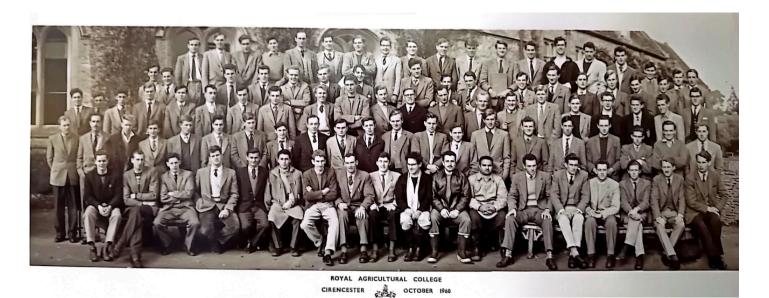


RAC/RAU Alumni Class Notes



1960's



CLASS OF 1963, PETROS YIASSEMIDES, NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN AGRICULTURE (NDA)

Recalling a special memory as narrated to and written by his daughter, Diamando Yiassemides:

Late in the spring of my final year at the Royal College, in 1963, the College porter came to find me. I had no class at that time so it was not difficult for him to locate me in one of the common areas of the College. "The royal postman is looking for you", he said.

Somewhat puzzled, I obeyed and followed the porter at the entrance, where a uniformed man asked me whether I was Petros Yiassemides. I replied positively, but still he asked for my ID. Then he handed me an invitation. "You are invited to Buckingham Palace", he said, leaving me wondering, with the invitation at hand. The Queen was inviting me to the Palace's Gardens, on the occasion of Commonwealth Day. I was the chosen one – well, in fact one of the two chosen ones – amongst Cypriot college students studying in the UK at that time. When my classmates found out that the royal postman came looking for me, they were in awe. It was my moment!

On that big summer day, the taxi driver in London had asked me "Where to, sir?" only for me to reply "Buckingham Palace". Upon approaching the area, him thinking that I was referring to somewhere around the Palace, asked again: "Where exactly?", only for me to respond to his surprise "I don't know which gate". He stopped the car. "Are you joking?" – but no, I was not joking! I showed him the invitation. We approached the Palace's gate and presented the invitation to the royal guard, who let the taxi inside, only for the driver to drop me off to one of the most memorable occasions of my life.

In the photograph, Petros is at the bottom row, 8th from the right, with moustache, leather coat and rubber boots.





180TH ANNIVERSARY 2025 OF 'THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL' (RAC/RAU): ARVORUM CULTUS PECORUMQUE RECOLLECTIONS BY JOHN WIBBERLEY

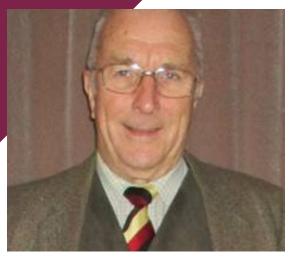
I first set eyes on the RAC in autumn 1963 when learning to drive. The Morris Minor bounded SW up and down along the undulating Fosse Way. A rugby game was in progress as we went up the main stairs to meet the then Principal, Frank Garner. I subsequently attended the University of Reading from 1965 where I met and married my wife Jane – telling her as we passed the RAC en route up the A417 for our honeymoon in 1969: "I'd love to work there one day." It was seven years later – after agricultural education work in Yorkshire, Berkshire and Nigeria – that I joined the RAC Staff Team in 1976, being interviewed by the late Vic Hughes and Jim Lockhart, with approval by Neil ('Harry') Jacobs the Bursar & Vice-Principal. (The then Principal, Sir Emrys Jones, was away in Norfolk). During my interview, my wife Jane was picking blackberries around the Rugby pitch with our two sons, then aged 5 and 3. Taken on a tour of the campus by Vic Hughes, we met the ever-cheerful late Bill Heatherington (entomologist) and the place was instantly endeared to our boys by them being hoisted into glossy machines in the Machinery Wing by Vic Hughes! I asked Jim Lockhart (who had served at RAC since 1946) and was then Head of Agriculture: "What is your advice on joining the RAC Team?" His reply was typically succinct and wise: "Don't miss Coffee" – the morning break for coffee or tea was heralded by a bell in the quadrangle at 10.30 a.m. The Senior Common Room (SCR) was where all lecturing staff congregated, shared news and could be found by their personal tutees who could make appointments with them for later in the day. Each student had a personal tutor and the tutorial system was key to delivery of the educational experience of the RAC. Incidentally, for my first decade there (1976-86) I had not a single memo and e-mails were unknown: everything was 'face-to-face' communication. In the SCR, the Farms Director could be found at 7.30 a.m. after his tour of our farms, and gave an update on our current farming realities! Profitable sensitive land management was vital to all curricula.

The place was convivial and coherent. One of the key 'face-to-face' encounters for me was at Coffee time on a Wednesday morning in autumn 1977 with Vic Hughes (then Vice-Principal and Farms Director) who asked me: "What are you doing this afternoon, John?" (students being on sport on Wednesday afternoons). I replied: "I'm going beagling to get to know new tutees, and to see some fodder crops – I'm starting lectures on those on Thursday morning". - "Good" said Vic, "Come to a pub lunch first at The Snooty Fox, Tetbury - one o'clock; I think you'll be interested!" I was indeed interested because the place was full of farmers all wanting to know how to grow winter barley; it was the start of the Cirencester Cereal Study Group which became the Cotswold Arable Study Group, now coming up to its 47th Harvest, which I coordinated in its first 12 years, and still attend when I can. Another such Wednesday morning Coffee-time encounter with Vic Hughes (by then RAC Principal) came in 1987 when he asked: "What are you doing this afternoon, John?" I replied, "I'm measuring some of the wheat crops that I'm monitoring" – Vic replied: "Good. Can you be back at my office by 3.00 p.m. – I met the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bath on the train from Paddington last night and we are taking tea at 4 pm with him to discuss doing a degree course with them – we should be able to hammer something out between 4 and 5 pm." We went, and we did – it ran from autumn 1988.

I also began voluntary lectures on tropical agriculture in evenings by request from some students and had 100-120 attending ('They'll all be away at the pub', said the sceptics!) Having been an adjunct Professor at the University of Guelph, Canada (second oldest to RAC in the Commonwealth – established 1874), and having visited Lincoln College, NZ in 1986 (third oldest – from 1878), we set up a degree in International Agriculture that could be started at any one of the three institutions, as well as student links between them.

Some old students and other people were saddened by the dropping of 'College' in favour of 'University' but I guess that now — being funded by the public sector since 2001 — students who search on the worldwide web for 'Agriculture' + 'University' would not otherwise reach us — and our rivals at Harper Adams have done so too! In fairness, the RAU has been pursuing research and postgraduate teaching for many years now.





John Wibberley PhD, NSch, FRAgS, FIAgrM was appointed Lecturer in Crop Husbandry in 1976, promoted to Senior Lecturer, then Principal Lecturer, and finally Head of Agriculture. When his sons reached 16 and 18, he gave twelve months' notice, recommended John Alliston as successor, and set up his own business to pursue charitable work at home & overseas – especially in Africa - as well as business assignments. He was appointed Visiting Fellow by Principal Vic Hughes, CBE, FRAgS in 1989 until 1999, when he was appointed (by the then RAC Principal Professor Barry Dent) as Visiting Professor (Comparative Agriculture & Rural Extension)1999-2021, when he became Professor Emeritus of Agriculture under RAU Vice-Chancellor Professor Joanna Price.

John remains a trustee of Sir Emrys Jones Memorial Trust. He is Visiting Professor (Comparative Agriculture & Rural Extension) University of Reading School of Agriculture, Policy & Development, & pursues reduced activities at home & overseas.



CLASS OF 1965, STUART NEWTON, AGRICULTURE

Stuart now lives in North Vancouver, Canada. He was a secondary school teacher (English Lit/Lang) for most of his working life and attended postgrad at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. This includes teaching in West London for twenty years. Since retirement, he now writes full-time including poetry, fiction and non-fiction... with 15 books published in his name. Here is an excerpt from Stuart's writings, titled `Farm College':

Going to the farm college, down on the Cotswolds, was quite different to farm work or farm life. We (men only back then) simply attended lectures on things like

veterinary science, soil chemistry, surveying and accounting – then at end of term we took exams like all colleges. In the meantime, we enjoyed ourselves in different ways with sports, drinking at pubs in town and each term there was a fancy 'ball' going all night long, open to respectable guests and ladies. There were 'pranks' too, all the time: clever and outrageous, daring and imaginative - requiring lots of patience from the college admin. These young students were very quick to rouse-up and make fun of things or people. One stunt I remember; how a student's bed had been removed from his room and tied to a roof chimney. After it remained a few days, he was finally seen occupying the bed one morning, replete with bedding and newspaper – still high up on the roof! In our chemistry class, one-or-two students made clucking sounds like a chicken, when the lecture became a little boring or tedious. Finally, the lecturer said something a bit foolish, when he should not have responded — "Well, gentlemen sorry, this is not a poultry class; so I will have to forcefully eject the creature next time" — thinking he averted some embarrassment and came out on top of things. But a day-or-two later came repeated chicken sounds and our lecturer began another response he thought clever, to admonish – "gentlemen, sorry, but you make a very poor chicken sound; unless it's getting strangled, choked or dispatched somehow"! But the clucking continued, the offensive distraction did not abate; because it was a real chicken this time, parading between the rows of desks and the offending students folding-up a cloth sack under their desk. It was confounding for all of us and our teacher left alone for a while, to continue about 'pod soils' and the make-up of 'dark loams'. He appeared to take the mischief without overreacting; though he was still disliked for his handle-bar moustache and stiff demeanour. He passed our test that week, but never taken to heart by us.



In the picture left to right - David's brother Nigel Challis and his wife Denise Challis, David's sister Diana Challis, David Challis and wife Anne Challis, David's sister Hilary Warner (nee Challis) and husband Graham Warner.

CLASS OF 1965 & 1967, DAVID CHALLIS, DIPLOMA OF AGRICULTURE AND ADVANCED FARM MANAGEMENT

David was on campus to revisit memories and reminisce about what it used to be. His lovely wife Anne Challis had organised a surprise for his 80th birthday and got together close family members for the celebration. David Challis is one of 5 siblings and 4 of them with partners came together for this memorable occasion. He stayed on campus for a couple nights and enjoyed a lovely campus tour and sit down meal with his family. David studied the National Diploma of Agriculture course in 1965 and went on to further study the Advanced Farm Management Course in 1967. He was also Chapel Steward and Secretary of the Student Union during his time at the RAC.

1970's



CLASS OF 1970, DOUG LIMBURN, NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN AGRICULTURE

In June, Doug returned for a visit to the RAU. From September 1983, Doug served as the managing director for Robertson Agrochemicals Ltd in Fearn Ross-shire. The company became the leading provider of agronomy services in the area and also opened up a branch in Aberdeenshire. Eventually, the company became a part of the Procam group. Doug remained MD until Autumn 2011 when he retired after almost 30 years in charge. Since retirement, Doug and his wife have moved to Herefordshire where they still live.



CLASS OF 1972, GORONWY 'TOM' ROBERTS, DIPLOMA IN RURAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Tom spent many years employed as a Chartered Surveyor, before taking early retirement to pursue farming. Following an an injury on his farm, Tom has recently written his autobiography which contains a chapter about his time as a student at the RAC. In particular, he has included a part dealing with his third-year project, after Eysey Manor Farm was acquired on an agricultural tenancy by the College. His autobiography is titled 'The Journey' in English or 'YDaith' in Welsh.





CLASS OF 1977, JOHN BOWDEN, HND IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

John has recently retired after running independent Land Rover specialists Gumtree 4x4 for 43 years and has become even more active as a trustee for Rhino Ark UK as well as entering the Kenyan Rhino Charge event again this year. See www.rhinoark.org for more!

1980's



CLASS OF 1987, RACHEL COATES, RURAL ESTATE MANAGMENT

Rachel is the Show Director of the Great Yorkshire Show (GYS). Day-to-day, her duties can be anything from doing media interviews to promote the Show, to guiding different sections of the Show. She and her team put in a great deal of thought into the content of GYS to make sure they keep it relevant to farmers and the general public. A few years ago, they introduced the Innovation Zone, which goes from strength to strength, showcasing new ideas in agriculture. This year, they had a new Machinery Demonstration Area. Furthermore, Rachel and her family have shown dairy cattle at GYS for about 20 years.



CLASS OF 1989, JUAN DE PORRES, ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Juan currently runs Marqués de los Ríos, a family-owned brand specialising in the export of high-quality food products, with a particular focus on premium Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO). These oils are produced from carefully cultivated family groves in the south of Spain. He is seen here displaying his excellent extra virgin olive oil at a Speciality Fine Food Fair.





CLASS OF 2000, CHARLES HOWIE, MSC SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

CLASS OF 2006, PHAM HUYNH THANH VAN, MASTER OF SUSTAINBLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr Howie returned to An Giang University earlier this year in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. He first visited the region in 1999 and based his MSc dissertation on this experience - and later his PhD (London, 2011). He started work in An Giang University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, in 2001 writing the delta's first curriculum in rural development. Many of the people on that team worked with Dr Howie again this year and by now most have doctorates!

One particular member of the team is Miss Pham Huynh Thanh Van. She came to RAC in 2005 and did her MSc in Rural Development. Now Dr Van, she is the vice dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Dr Howie also does volunteer work for a Scottish NGO in Malawi, trying to get modern agriculture going using lessons learned in Vietnam. Publications include: Dr Howie's review of Dairy Farming in the 21st Century: Global Ethics, Environment and Politics by Bruce A. Scholten (2023), published in volume 9 of Research in Globalisation volume 9; and in 2024, Dr Howie was a coauthor of Building Towards One Health: A Transdisciplinary Autoethnographic Approach to Understanding Perceptions of Sustainable Aquatic Foods in Vietnam.

In the photo; Dr Pham Huynh Thanh Van is pictured 5th from the left, and Dr Charles Howie is pictured 7th from the right.





(Photo credit to Fiona Crawford Horse and Dog Photographer)

CLASS OF 2011, ENID GRANT, BSC EQUINE STUDIES TOP-UP

Enid competed in the British Eventing Grassroots National Championships at Badminton this year in the BE100 class. She was the only rider from Northumberland, where she runs a livery stable, in this amateur class, and a first-time competitor. She was not placed, but completed the challenging crosscountry course in the second fastest time on her 9-year-old gelding, Copain Z.



CLASS OF 2013, TARA PUNTER, INTERNATIONAL EQUINE AND AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Tara is the Founder of The Best Coaching Company, and helps business owners build their brands, grow their companies and make money online. She is also a #1 best selling author and host of the Thrive in Life & Business podcast. She is about to re-brand to create a global movement to help more business owners create the life and business they dream of! You can find out more by visiting www.thebestcoachingcompany.com Instagram: @thebestcoachingcompany.com Instagram: @thebestcoachingcompany.com

CLASS OF 2018, HELEN SMITH, MSC APPLIED EQUINE SCIENCE

Helen is a Conservationist at Disney's Animal Kingdom and Brevard Zoo in Melbourne, Florida and she also volunteers at the Sea Turtle Preservation Society in Florida.







Maisie has been commissioned and selected to represent the British Army in Dressage.





CLASS OF 2019, BIZZA WALTERS, APPLIED FARM MANAGEMENT

In August, Bizza co-presented the BBCWM Farm Watch breakfast show special with Ed James, talking all things British Agriculture. Farmers Guardian also joined them on the show and they discussed topics from mental health to Clarkson's Farm to The Wurzels! Bizza said it was great to continue bridging that farmer/consumer gap, with some brilliant questions from listeners. She continues to share her farming experiences and highlight the 'round the clock' work of farmers that produce nutritious, sustainable, high welfare food for plates across the country.

2020's



CLASS OF 2021, FLORENTYNA ANDERSON, BLOODSTOCK & PERFORMANCE HORSE MANAGEMENT

After graduating, Florentyna went on to continue her career as a showjumping groom and worked for some of the world's top riders including 'Ben Maher' and 'Hughes Horse Stud'. She then decided to pursue her career in music, although she still has her showjumping horse, Henry, for fun! She is now a professional singer and has her first song coming out in September which is being used for the SKY TV Documentary 'Death of a Showjumper'.



CLASS OF 2022, ROBERT NOBLET-STONE, BSC RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT

Robert's current role is as an Assistant Estates Surveyor at The Duchy of Lancaster, based at Lancaster Castle. The Survey is a diverse mix of agricultural, commercial, residential and sporting tenancies along with commercial and amenity woodland.





CLASS OF 2023, PAUL VON WALDERSEE, MSC SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Paul won the European Farmer of the Year Award by the European landowner association for his work at www.zukunftmoor.de Pictured, Paul and Albert Grotenfelt, who handed Paul the certificate on the 13th of June in Stockholm during the European Landowner Organisation gathering.





CLASS OF 2024, NICHOLAS JONES, MSC CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Nicholas is now serving as a Conservation Officer at Waverley Borough Council. He recalls the time his course visited Woodchester Mansion and had a tour from a master stonemason. 'This was a particularly fascinating site and the stonemason was a wonderfully interesting and informative person to speak to, who was able to share so much knowledge from their career. As one of very few experts in the practice it was a great privilege to learn from him and for him to teach us the basics in a hands on lesson'. Nicholas still has the small rose he carved on this day!



CLASS OF 2024, EMILY DINNING, BSC INTERNATIONAL EQUINE AND AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Emily did her work placement at Bath Racecourse, and they offered her part-time work during her final year. After she graduated, she was offered a full-time position and is now a Business Co-ordinator at Bath Racecourse!

