



When I left Hartpury College in June 2007, I took a farm workers position at the family's 900 acre mixed farm in Kent.

Summer 2007 began with the harvesting of oil seed rape, wheat, barley and oats. My duties included carting of cereals back to the home farm along with baling, carting and stacking of straw bales ready for winter use. I was given the responsibility of assisting seasonal labour with their daily tasks.

Once harvesting was completed it was time for cultivation and drilling of winter cereals. . There was no oil seed rape to be grown this year due to the rotation of the crops instead there was 104ha of winter barley, 20ha of spring barley and 120ha of winter wheat. My duties included minimal cultivation using a 6.6-meter 'Rabe' cultivator and driving a John Deere 8410 tractor. I also gained valuable experience in operating the farm's 5 meter Vaderstad Rapid drill.

The farms are extremely spread out and the movement of machinery needs to be done with optimal precision. During the Autumn to prolong the length of time that the stock are kept at pasture regular buffer feeding is needed. The farm also buys in store lambs that are used to fatten over winter and then sold to the on-farm butchery. I became involved with this over the Christmas period when the fieldwork had been completed. I helped with serving behind the counter of the Butchery and presenting a 'turkey tasting' event to both local retail and trade customers. The

Aberdeen Angus cross beef, which is naturally reared on the farm, is also sold through the butchery. The farm aims to finish at least 60 cattle a year and about 400 store lambs. On average one beast a week is sold having been transported to the local abattoir, hung for 21 days and then butchered on site.

Wintertime also meant the maintenance of farm machinery ready for the seasons ahead. Throughout my year I feel I have gained the most experience and improved a lot in general workshop practice, whether it be fabrication or maintenance on machinery, which has also help develop my problem solving skills.

February saw the start of calving the 60 single suckle herd. It was my responsibility to keep a careful watch, during the day and night, for any signs of a difficult calving and to deal with it. The basic welfare of the herd was down to me from the feeding to taking care of the new born calves as well as the tagging and the record keeping needed to apply for the new cattle passports. The herd was treated homoeopathically, which was an interesting new venture for me.

During the spring of 2008 I started spraying in earnest. The machine used was a 24 metre de-mount unit on a fastrac. I have now gained experience of applying a range of different pesticide materials over a large acreage. The farm is also experimenting with foliar micronutrients, which I have been very involved with. These are applied through the means of spraying at regular intervals of the crops growth stages to try and cut down on the amount of solid fertiliser used and is proving very successful. This carried through to the application of solid fertilizer during the growing season. Both these operations require great precision and accuracy as well as plenty of record keeping. My obligation was to carry out the operation then fill out a work-planning sheet and then enter the information into the farms computer using Farmade Multicrop software.

During the year considerable experience has been gained in particular enhancing my management skills as the farm works closely with another farming unit some 25 miles away. During the silage and maize cutting season I join up with their contracting team to carry out the buck raking/clamp operations, this requires great skill, speed and efficiency. It is also my duty to lease with the customer to make sure the job is being carried out to their satisfaction. This has developed my ability to communicate effectively and broaden my knowledge of logistical planning.

In October my next venture in life begins when I start at the Royal Agricultural College and thanks to the Bowyer Trust for financial assistance for this coming year.