



RNAS REVIEW

August 2020

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Royal Northern Countryside Live

A Family Day Out at Mackie's of Scotland, Westertown

After taking the difficult decision to cancel this year's RNAS Countryside Live event due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the society is now looking forward to making the rescheduled event one to remember.

The event will now take place on the new dates of Sunday, May 30, and Monday, May 31, 2021, at Westertown, Rothienorman, by kind permission of the Mackie family.

"The society is extremely grateful to event hosts, Mackie's of Scotland, and everyone involved, from suppliers and sponsors to stand holders and volunteers, for their understanding and cooperation in these uncertain times," said RNAS board member and event chairman, Louise Mutch.

"Our aim is to promote farming, food production and the countryside, and we hope this event will be an enjoyable day out for families, particularly after such a difficult time."

Jimmy Dick is 2020/21 president

He's well-known across the Aberdeenshire community for farming, landscaping and entertaining audiences, and now he's at the helm of one of the country's most respected agricultural societies, the Royal Northern Agricultural Society.

Jimmy Dick from Northton Farm, Cullerlie, Echt, has been a director on the board for the past six years and took over the reins as president at the society's virtual AGM held with its office bearers last month.

Mr Dick originally hails from Kipperoch Farm, Dumbarton, and established his successful landscape maintenance business Grass Guzzlers, 30 years ago.

The business provides a service to commercial and residential sectors in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

At home on the farm, Jimmy, along with wife Gwen, and their family, farm 45 suckler cows and run a small arable enterprise.

"It is a real honour to become president of such a well-respected society, having working with such a great bunch of people over the past six years," said Mr Dick.

"I am starting off my role in an unusual year but it is my ambition to get the society back to normality and bring smiles back to everyone's faces."

Over the one-year term, Mr Dick will be supported by senior vice-president Billy Stewart, Bomakelloch, Drummur, Keith, and junior vice-president Alan Cumming, Newells Farm, Oldmeldrum.



Jimmy Dick

A message from outgoing president Keith Walker

It was a privilege when Rodney Blackhall called me to consider being the next junior vice president of the RNAS society.

The last three years have flown past and I would like to thank Rodney and all my fellow directors for their support, encouragement and trust in leading the society into its 175th year.

Our society had another busy year of events and competitions including our final summer activity which was the panel evening and the student interviews to select the recipients of the 2019 awards.

This has always been one of my favourite highlights of the last three years and it is always very difficult to single out one individual for an award as all nominations are of such a high caliber and have made a huge impact on north east agriculture. With regards to students, it is encouraging to see the enthusiasm and energy shown by all.

The ever-popular RNAS awards lunch was held in November and saw 265 individuals attend the event.

It is always a pleasure for the society to recognize the outstanding contribution and achievements of those within our industry which highlights our strong sense of commitment and spirit within our agricultural community.

We ended the year with the judging of the annual growing turnip competition which attracted an entry of 25 crops of turnips, as well as a new class of fodder beet which saw seven crops compete in the competition. Thanks, must go

to Sandy Duguid of Murray Duguid seed merchants for his continued sponsorship.

RNAS are pleased to support the Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI). The group does so much to raise awareness of farming, food and the countryside to pupils and teachers across the north east.

We wish Alison Johnston well in her new post as project officer.

The Royal Northern Spring Show, held in association with ANM Group, took place on Wednesday, February 26 at Thainstone, and perhaps may be the only live agricultural show of 2020. The weather on the day was cold but dry and we had a huge crowd keeping old and new trade stands busy.

The show is not the success it is without the dedication of the exhibitors, sponsors, helpers, directors and friends of the society who continually support the show year on year and of course ANM Group for all their help in the days leading up to the show and on the day itself.



Stuart Garrett (right), of Serco NorthLink Ferries - sponsor of the Exhibition Cattle at the Spring Show - presenting the trophy to winner, Craig Robertson, of J Robertson & Co, Newton of Logierait, Pitlochry.



Outgoing president, Keith Walker

The carcass evening held at Scotbeef, Inverurie, on the following night, was also well attended and a big thank you to directors and Scotbeef staff for the smooth running of the event, our judge John Davidson, and of course our sponsor Grampian Steel.

My year as president has been one of two halves – pre-Coronavirus and now living under its shadow.

Sadly, Countryside Live was one of the first casualties in the summer events calendar to be cancelled due to COVID-19, followed by our trophy evening, Good Farming Practice competition and last year's winner's open evening at Grays Farm, Portsoy.

I would like to finish with a big thank you to my vice presidents Jimmy Dick and Billy Stewart, for their help, support and many laughs over the past year, also to Alison Argo for all the hard work and effort she puts in - much of it unseen behind the scenes.

Although I feel as if I leave my year as president only having done half a job, I am glad to report that the society remains in a financially strong position and plans to carry on the important work it does throughout the year.

I wish the society all the best for this its 175th anniversary year and good luck to its new president, Mr Jimmy Dick.

Eddie steps down as RNAS director and press officer

Well-known agricultural journalist and editor of Farm North East, Eddie Gillanders, has stood down as a director and press officer of the Royal Northern Agricultural Society.

Over the past 40 years, Eddie has dedicated a huge amount of time and effort to the society, after being proposed onto the board by the late Tom Graham, then farm manager at Douneside and Eddie's former boss at North Eastern Farmers Ltd.

"I was sitting at the AGM one year in the late 1970s as agricultural editor of the Press & Journal, minding my own business and taking notes for my report for the paper, when the late Mr Graham got on his feet and proposed me for the board," said Eddie.

"Before long, I was writing press releases for the society although I don't think I was ever officially appointed press officer, it was almost by default – "Oh, Eddie will do it,".

Eddie also served as president in 1989-90 and was the one to suggest on-farm events, which have become a major feature for the society, along with the help of other board members and successive secretaries.

He was also the organiser of the annual visits to the Paris Show for the recipients of the apprenticeship awards and was usually acting as their chaperone, along with the president at the time.

In more recent years, Eddie was officially appointed press officer and relinquished his position on the board to allow an additional director to be appointed, although still attended board meetings throughout the year.



Eddie Gillanders in full flow at an on-farm event

"I have always enjoyed my association with the RNAS and it's great to see how the society has progressed and prospered over the years," he said.

"I am hugely appreciative of the support I have received from the successive presidents, board members and secretaries, who have made the job so rewarding and enjoyable during my time with the society."

Katrina Macarthur (pictured below) from Newton of Budgate, Cawdor, Nairn, will now take on the role of press officer and can be contacted via email: katrinamacarthur@outlook.com or on 07500 257247.



RNAS directors celebrate milestones

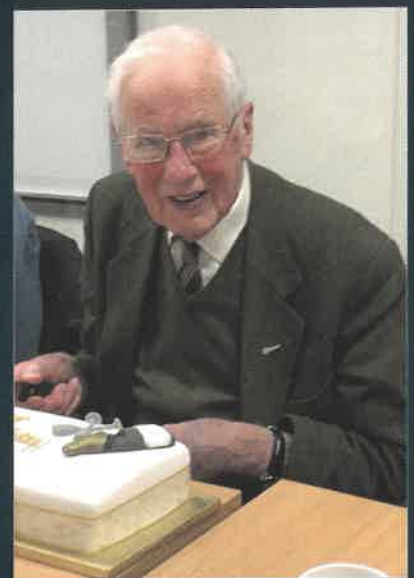
CONGRATULATIONS must go to two of the society's longest serving directors who celebrated milestones earlier in the year.

John Telfer, honorary president of RNAS, turned 90 in January when holidaying in New Zealand, where his daughter now lives.

The board of directors were delighted to join in on the celebrations on his return when they organised a birthday cake for him back in February at one of the society's meetings.

Honorary vice-president George Skinner and his wife Ruth from Strathorn, Pitcaple, Inverurie, recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on July 18.

The society sends its best wishes to John Telfer and Mr and Mrs Skinner.



John Telfer cuts the cake for his 90th birthday



Jenny Laing

Looking ahead RNAS future events

RNAS Awards Lunch at Jurys Inn, Aberdeen Airport on Friday, November 6, 2020 – TBC

RNAS Spring Show at Thainstone Agricultural Centre on Wednesday, February 24, 2021

RNAS 175th anniversary celebration on May 1, 2021

RNAS Countryside Live at Mackie's of Scotland on Sunday, May 30, 2021

RNAS Good Farming Practice open night – to be arranged in 2021.

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DIRECTOR'S BLOG

Jenny Laing, Kemnay

Well, if we could push the reset button on 2020, I am sure most of us would! None of us expected that the Royal Northern Spring Show would be the only show we would be able to attend this year. I remember looking twice at someone coming into the Thainstone the day before the Spring Show wearing a face mask – little did we know this would become the “new norm”.

Lockdown has been a weird time for everyone, but I am sure lots of us involved in agriculture feel very fortunate to have the “normal” routine of our work. I found myself in lockdown with two keyworker roles and wondering how folk were finding time to clear out back bedrooms, have immaculate gardens and learn a new skill.

I am an Occupational Therapist working in the community providing aids and adaptations to keep people safe and as independent as they can be in their own homes. Our service saw an increase in referrals as we tried to keep those with complex needs in the community and facilitated discharges from hospital as quickly as we could to clear space for the expected admissions. At weekends, evenings and during holidays, I enjoy helping out on my family's farm. Lockdown hit as spring work was coming into full swing, so with lambing, calving and arable work, there was always something to do and certainly no excuse to be bored!

As restrictions are lifting and we pray that there is no second wave, it's nice to start to think about the future and having events to look forward to

again. If restrictions are lifted, 2021 will be a busy year for RNAS with anniversary celebrations and Countryside Live alongside our usual events.

I was fortunate to be proposed as a director three years ago and have thoroughly enjoyed working with likeminded, committed and fun-loving directors, not only hosting events for the agricultural community but also the wider public.

One lesson I hope has been learnt from COVID-19 is that the need and importance of quality locally produced food and engaging with the general public is the way to promote this and disperse the myths that surround food production.

I look forward to Countryside Live being an event that we can really spread this message at and would encourage anyone who can give up even just a few hours to come along and help us educate and enthuse the general public in the amazing, quality food we produce in Scotland.

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