



Gurteen Gazette

March 2021



How will we reflect on the “Covid years” in the future? On a personal level the biggest impact has been on my family – not being able to visit elderly parents in the UK, and our daughter not having the opportunity to attend her University graduation ceremony has been difficult. But this is nothing compared to the challenges I believe young people have faced – not being able to meet friends, go to parties and, have the normal Gurteen experience of face-to-face learning. On professional level our biggest challenge has been to keep going. My colleagues have been remarkable, finding new ways of working and keeping everyone safe, whilst maintaining the high standards of husbandry and education everyone expects from Gurteen.



The class of 2020-21 is incredible – each and every student has had to adapt to new ways of studying and finding ways to stay in touch with friends and classmates as all classes were fully online during the spring term. Teachers have worked tirelessly to keep students engaged in their courses, finding new and imaginative ways of delivering online education. Over the next few weeks, we look forward to welcoming students back on campus to complete practical skills training and assessment.

The Gurteen College Vision has never been more appropriate “*Learning and working together to enhance life in rural communities*”.

-Jon Parry
Principal of Gurteen College

Virtual Showcase 2021

On March 10th we hosted a Virtual Showcase across all our social media pages! 12 hours of content including videos from both level 5 and 6 students, and videos from teachers and staff such as Richard Hamilton and Melissa White We also had a variety of FAQ posts which aimed to answer the most frequent questions. We’re super happy with how the day went, and glad to see so many of you tuned into to enjoy some of our videos- over 18 thousand of you on Facebook alone!

However, if you missed anything or would simply like to re-watch any of the videos we premiered no worries! All our videos are available to watch whenever on our YouTube page *Gurteen College*.

Equally though, you can keep up with all that goes on at Gurteen by following us on our other social media platforms! We’re on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as @GurteenCollege



[Facebook.com/GurteenCollege](https://www.facebook.com/GurteenCollege)



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Alumni Spotlight- Dorothy Ryan-Purcell

"My name is Dorothy, and I was a student in Gurteen from September 1980 to June 1981. I attained a National Certificate in Agriculture. Having grown up on a farm outside Nenagh, I always had an interest in farming and my parents suggested I go to Gurteen Agricultural College to learn the correct way to farm - even though I thought I knew everything there was to know! OMG it was only after the course started that I realised how little I knew.

The one lecturer I will never forget is the late Hugo Perdue. He was incredible. I have used his 'acrostic' on many occasions... let me explain. In his class one day he was teaching us about the temperatures of horses, cows, pigs, and sheep:

Horse 100 - 101°F, Cow 101 - 102, Pig 102 - 103, Sheep 103 - 104

and he said the best way to remember is to put the first letter of each animal into a sentence (and in the same order as above) and the sentence he gave us was: "How Can Perdue Spout" -I've never forgotten it! Mr. Perdue taught us Veterinary science. I have a great love for animals, so it was no surprise that Mr. Perdue's classes and David Polden's classes were my favourite - the latter teaching animal husbandry.

On a less studious note, in my year we witnessed the blossoming of the romance between David Polden and Susan Nicholson (student '80-'81) who were married a couple of years later! I enjoyed everything about Gurteen. We did 50% practical and 50% in the lecture hall. In my year, there were 13 girls and 56 chaps. The two dormitories were divided by a frosted-glass door affectionately known as The Berlin Wall. Many a trip was had down to The Glue Pot in Ballingarry! After I left Gurteen, I farmed my parents dairy farm for seven years, until I got married in 1988."



Kevin Halvey



Daire Comerford

Staff Updates

Despite the times, things are always changing and so we're happy to welcome new faces onto our excellent staff team; Daire Comerford, Kevin Halvey and Anne Marie Dohney!

Daire Comerford has joined the team of Gurteen farm staff. Daire brings bundles of great ideas, enthusiasm, and determination to her role in our dairy unit, as an ex-student of Gurteen Daire knows how important it is for our students to get hands on practical learning.

Kevin Halvey has joined the teaching team as an additional tutor delivering the adult green cert courses as demand for the part time and distance education courses continues to grow. Kevin is a native of Longford and has previously taught at a number of Teagasc centres.

Anne Marie Dohney has stepped into role of teacher and placement officer, whilst Joe Daly takes a break from work. Anne Marie has been working as a part time contract teacher at Gurteen for the last two years, and previously ran "Celtic Connections" a New Zealand based business hosting and placing Irish students on farms across NZ.



Anne Marie Dohney



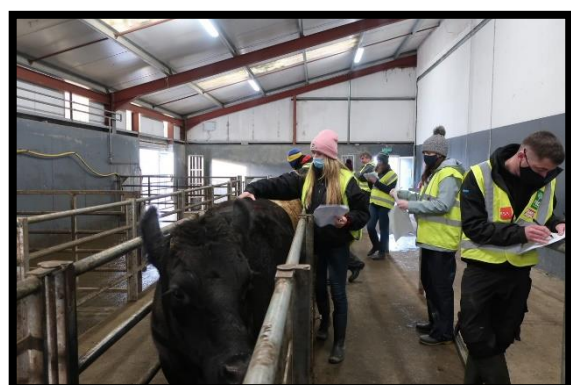
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Farm Enterprise Update:

During COVID Gurteen farm was faced with many challenges that we had never dealt with before, but the farm still performed to a level everyone is proud of. This was due to the diligence and commitment of the farm staff.

Dairy cows will finish calving in early April, all calved cows are out grazing by day and night with lots of grass in front of them. The sheep have finished lambing with great results, the March born lambs are growing by the day and the first of the January born lambs have been sold at market. Suckler cows are calving away with top quality calves hitting the ground, the beef sheds are starting to empty with younger stock going out to grass and older stock going to the factory. Our winter sown crops of barley, oats and wheat are all growing well, and we have completed sowing our spring barley and looking ahead to sowing the fodder beet in the next number of weeks. The willow harvest was completed in March and the harvested willow is drying in the store. Our attention will soon be on fertilising our silage ground and preparing for the first cut. With a renewed focus on biodiversity, we are allowing our hedgerows to grow and expand as well as planting some new hedgerows.

**-Ken Flynn
Farm Manager**



Course updates

Despite the various setbacks throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, Gurteen staff and students have rallied. We have responded to the various challenges through excellent teamwork and unbridled spirit.

The delivery methods for all courses this academic year have followed a blended learning approach. Blended learning is essentially based on delivering some content that is suitable for online delivery while also complementing that with on-site visits to the college to do activities that will reinforce learning and complement the content delivered online.

All full-time students are currently out on placement which has been a resounding success. Both students and their host farmers have responded to the challenges of placement in a creative and practical way. There are reports of many host farmers going above and beyond to accommodate students through repurposing areas of the farmyard to accommodate canteen facilities.

**-Dr Stephanie Scully
Assistant Principal**



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Governor profile

Robert Armitage is a current Governor of Gurteen, having been on the board for 10 years. He farms within Borrisokane, in partnership with his 2 brothers and son. They farm 220 cows, and 70 suckler cows.

However, Robert's history with Gurteen is greater than first meets the eye! He attended the college in 1982 for a year, before going on to work as a member of staff for a year. As well as this though, his grandfather Edward Armitage is one of the founders of our College. With such a strong family connection, the college is a point of great pride for Robert.

Having been connected to the college for majority of his life, Robert recalls some of the grander changes the college has gone through. In his time the college has expanded the amount of ground owned, including Sopwell, as well as the improvement of infrastructure through the development of the yard, the new cubicle shed, the new parlour, etc. The variety of courses Gurteen offer is another point of pride for Robert. He's proud of the range of practical skills students are taught, and that they're given the practical experience of farming- it's something he hopes will continue for a very long time!



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Are you a Gurteen Alumni?

At Gurteen we're proud of all of our past students, and where life has taken them. If you have your own stories to tell and would like to be included in the next *Gurteen Gazette* then contact us today with your story!

We'd love to hear from you and catch up.

Email: mparry@gurteencollege.ie



Liffey Mills and Gurteen College

Liffey mills are fuelling Gurteen cows today to produce higher solids and enhanced fertility, this relationship goes back more than 60 years to when Robert Grove was farm manager, Oscar Loane was principal, and the late Richard Liffey senior and Junior traded out of Shinrone. This partnership has endured many changes over the years and is something we at Liffey mills are keen to foster and grow.

Gurteen Branded Clothing

We're pleased to announce that we're selling Gurteen branded clothing! Stripy woolly hats, with the Gurteen crest and name, as well as jackets in grey, black and navy. If you're interested and would like to own a Gurteen branded jacket or hat, get in contact! We'd love to help you show your Gurteen Pride.

Email: mparry@gurteencollege.ie to find out more.