



Gurteen Gazette

September 2022

Principal's Welcome- August '22

This upcoming academic year marks Gurteen's 'Diamond Anniversary'- as it is 75 years since 1947 we welcomed the very first group of students to the college. Gurteen Colleges history actually predates 1947, as for a few years a group of Methodist leaders and farmers from across Ireland had identified the need to take action and do something that would help preserve and enhance rural communities. Their big idea was to establish a college that would demonstrate best agricultural practice and provide the opportunity for young people to see that it was possible to create sustainable career and life in their rural communities.

Over the next seven and half decades, Gurteen has developed a reputation as one of Irelands premier agricultural Colleges. Gurteen is a true national College, indeed in the last four years Gurteen has enrolled students from all 26 counties, our alumni are active across the industry. If those associated with the first few years of Gurteen could today witness the extensive and close network of alumni, they would be very proud. A Gurteen education has always been valued and continues today to provide our students with the confidence knowledge and skills required to be successful. Of course, Gurteen has not delivered all that success in isolation, we work in close partnership our close association with Teagasc, the ETBs and TUS provides access to amazing support and vital funding.

As much as this year is about celebrating our past, there is much to celebrate about Gurteen's future too. From the number of students studying the Teagasc level 5 and 6 agriculture courses, our courses delivered in collaboration with the local etb, and our first group of level 8 Hons degree students starting their studies at Gurteen this year- thanks to our partnership with the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS).

The Gurteen governors and staff are ambitious to ensure we build upon the first 75 years success. Our reputation for great teaching, second-to-none workshops, our brilliant yard, our 1000-acre estate, our 250 cow dairy unit, 80 cow suckler unit, 450 ewe sheep flock, 115 acres of tillage; all provide amazing teaching resources. But more than that we are also custodians of significant areas of less productive land, with, native woodland, forestry, a lough and a significant are of bog, areas that have immense educational value. The existing facilities combine to offer a unique top class learning environment.



Photo taken on 11th October 1947- the official opening day of Gurteen College

-Jon Parry, Principal.



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In August we welcomed back some of our Level 6 Dairy and Drystock students to complete a sprayer course.



In July we were delighted to host a group from EAGALA for their training sessions!



Maria Keane is a distance student of Gurteen's, who in July won the FBD Dairy Student of the Year award! We're incredibly proud of Maria's success!

Course Update

It's hard to believe that time of year has come around again! Our fulltime level 5 students are due to begin their education at Gurteen in September. It's all hands-on deck preparing for their arrival. There are a lot of conversations about logistics but there is also a general buzz among the farm and education staff who are very much looking forward to meeting a new group. No two groups of students are the same. There is always a distinct dynamic that exists with each group that comes to the college. We love hearing about their backgrounds and why they chose to come to Gurteen. In some cases, there is a strong family tradition of attending college while in other cases, they have viewed other colleges and could see that what we have to offer will meet their educational needs.

We will also be welcoming back our level 6 Advanced students, the majority of whom did the Level 5 certificate in Agriculture in Gurteen last year. The level 6 advanced course is more heavily focused on teaching savvy farm management and good decision making, and so teachers are thinking about what kind of content will support that goal, challenge the students, and push them out of their comfort zones where possible. Teachers are thinking about the kinds of farm visits that would support their learning and guest speakers who might challenge how they view a certain type of farming practice. All-in-all, we are set to have an exciting year of full time Agricultural education at Gurteen!

Gurteen College offers a range of Part Time and Distance courses, all of which culminate in successful students receiving a Certificate in Agriculture allowing them to gain Trained Farmer status (Green Cert). Currently there are three, part time courses taking place at various times throughout the week. There are also three distance education courses being run where students do a lot more self-directed learning. The Part Time/ Distance model of education is only suitable for those ages 23 and above but is ideal for those who are in full time education or employment and are interested in gaining an agricultural qualification.

-Stephanie Scully, Assistant Principal



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Energy in Agriculture 2022

Energy in Agriculture - Energy and Farm business Show took place at the college on 19th July. The Energy and Farm Business show is a joint initiative between Teagasc, Tipperary County Council, IFA, Tipperary Energy Agency, Gurteen Agricultural College and Technological University Shannon (TUS). The event's main sponsor was the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD made the opening address to a large crowd in the Indoor Arena. The college hosted over 2500 people on the day with in excess of 50 trade exhibitions.

Our current L5 student Nicola McConn was on site to greet Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue TD. Nicola is from the TD's constituency and he was very grateful to be greeted with an accent from home. He made the closing address in the arena and met with exhibitors and members of the public.

Also in attendance was Pippa Hackett, Senator & Minister of State for land use and biodiversity, as Tim Cullinan, President of IFA and numerous TD's and local politicians.

Panel discussions were once again mediated by RTE's Damien O'Reilly and he was delighted to return to the college for the event and the hospitality which he has grown used to getting! No doubt we will be seeing him again in the not too distant future.

The day was packed full of talks, demonstrations, and discussion on all things sustainable. It was a great day for the college - the yard looked fantastic and the campus was abuzz with people and media. Having such high profile people on site attracted both print and television media as well as Tipp FM who were here all day. The college made the most of the media to raise awareness of the great education we provide to students as well as the superb Energy technologies and innovations in use throughout the college and farm.

-Maura Campbell, Hospitality Coordinator

Charlie McConalogue pictured with the Gurteen College team, and Donegal student Nicola McConn.





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Farm Update

The summer has been very pleasant but not without its challenges. The high temperatures and sunshine have led to a very good and record-early cereals harvest. Silage was harvested in good weather and yields were not exceptional but were fine considering the dry conditions. Grass growth has been slow and that has led to us feeding many of the silage bales we made over the summer, and we even opened the silage pits in August. That being said, we have plenty of silage stocks and we feel there is no need to worry yet. Livestock have been doing well and look very content in the sunshine.

The price of inputs still remains extremely high; however, the great milk price is doing much to offset these increased production costs. Our policy of a 3-year rotational hedge cutting plan is having its effects, it's now clear to see the hedges are getting higher and wider with less of a manicured look and more of a wild look to them. This in turn is providing many natural habitats for our diverse local wildlife, As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations we are currently preparing ground to sow 75 trees.

The TUS butterfly survey and the peat soil carbon research conducted by Johnstown Castle continue and we look forward to seeing some interesting data from both.

-Ken Flynn, Farm Manager.

(Right) With our new students taking most the attention- we can't forget the new arrivals in our drystock enterprise!



(Left) Our Pedigree Holstein-Friesian herd enjoying the sunshine.



Winter Barley was harvested in mid-July.



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TUS degree course starting soon!

We are delighted to announce that our latest venture to co-deliver the Agricultural Science and Sustainability degree program with TUS will go live from 5th September with the first intake of students happening that week.

The course is designed to give graduates the knowledge and skills to work in the Agri-food sector. Most importantly, they will be equipped to understand and manage the relationship between agriculture and the environment and socio-economic sustainability. The course will also fulfil the requirement for Trained Farmer Status (Green Cert). Students will spend semester 2 of year 1 and semester 1 of year 2 on the Gurteen College campus. We are extremely excited by this new development as it will offer students who choose to do the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture a progression route to third level without having to transfer to another college if that is their wish. Sincere thanks to all the Gurteen staff who went above and beyond to bring the course to fruition.

For more information on the course, please visit <https://lit.ie/courses/lc465> or contact us today to ask any questions!



Behind-the-scenes photo from when TUS were onsite doing promotional filming for our new degree course!



Photo taken from the official signing event for the new Level 8 Hons Degree, run in partnership with Gurteen College, and the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS)



Gurteen Clothing and Merchandise

We're very excited to announce that we now have an **online shop**, hosted by O'Neills! If you would like to own some Gurteen branded clothing, you can buy it online and have it delivered straight to your door. You can get hoodies, jackets, gilets, and bags all with the Gurteen Crest on. Go to **oneills.com** and click on **Clubs & Education** and search up **Gurteen College**.



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Butterflies of Gurteen College

In the May edition of the Gazette, Farm Manager Ken Flynn mentioned the butterfly monitoring and habitat survey that are underway. It is my pleasure to tell you some more about this work.

Every ten days or so from April to September, I'm walking the same route through part of the main farm. The numbers and types of each butterfly are recorded. It has been a joy to walk the farm on fine days, observing the highlights and changes over the months. As well as being beautiful creatures, butterflies are valuable indicators giving us information about the status of biodiversity and the wider environment. A farm habitat survey is also being conducted, which will produce a map of the farm using the standard habitat classification scheme for Ireland. There is other exciting work on biodiversity too - ecologists William Crowley and George F. Smith completed a survey around Lough Nahinch. The main farm is being used as a site for the Irish Pollinator Monitoring Scheme and a bird survey will be conducted.

The knowledge gained provides a baseline of environmental information for the farm. It is a valuable learning resource for the College's educational activities, including the new degree in Agricultural Science and Sustainability with TUS. It is already clear that the College has a rich resource of habitats and wildlife coexisting with the farming activities.

-Kevin Healion, Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), Thurles campus



A Common Blue Butterfly spotted onsite.



A Green Hairstreak butterfly, spotted over at Lough Nahinch



A Cryptic Wood White butterfly spotted onsite.

(Right) Peacock butterfly, spotted on the main college farm





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Staff Spotlight- Richard and Mike

92 years collective service – and still going strong. Mike and Richard really do represent every teacher at Gurteen, yes they teach and assess farm skills, they make sure every student at Gurteen has the opportunity to work with the college dairy cows, or safely operate one of our farms modern tractors. But much more than that they embody what is so special about Gurteen, the sheer pride and dedication they exhibit to the College and the amazing professional support and guidance they give to every single student that passes through Gurteen.

Richard came to Gurteen in 1973 as student and never left, having completed two years of study took a job on the Gurteen farm, and then as dairy technician Richard has given Gurteen 47 years of dedicated service.

Mike join the Gurteen staff as machinery technician in 1976 having just completed his studied at Mountbellew and Pallaskenry Colleges. Mike has given Gurteen 46 years of dedicated service.



The earliest staff photo containing both Richard and Mike is this one, from 1977/78, where Richard and Mike have been circled!

Mike Cogavin- staff from 1976 to present.

'I started working at the college way back in August of 1976, and throughout the years there have been many good memories. Notably, the staff that I have worked with and the friendships I've made.

For me, the biggest change this college has undergone over the 46 years I've been here is what a wide range of courses we can now offer students. From our full-time courses, part time and distance courses, right up to our brand new degree course with TUS.

The vast increase in the farm size and the modernisation of infrastructure in the farmyard has also been incredible to see.

What makes Gurteen so special in my eyes is our ethos. It encourages young people to develop as individuals, become competent and excel in their chosen farming careers.'



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Richard Hamilton 1973/1975 Student, 1975/present Staff.

'Well it all started back in the 1970's when I always had an interest in farming, as I was brought up on a small mixed farm in North Co. Dublin. (a cow for the house, a few cattle, corn, potatoes/vegetable and a poultry unit run by my mother) so I had an understanding of different enterprises as most people had at the time. We have since moved in the early eighties to a bigger farm in Co. Carlow where my younger brother (Peter, who also came to Gurteen) is farming along with my mother at Beef and Tillage. Obviously, the farm then was not big enough to sustain everybody, so I looked at getting an education in farming and making a career of it away from home.

Gurteen College was always the College of choice, so I came as a student in 1973 and did the Certificate in Farming Course covering all enterprises as we had to at that time including horticulture and poultry. At that time Gurteen was one of two Colleges (out of eleven) offering a specialised Dairy course, so I was fortunate to get a place on that course which really kicked off my career in Dairy Farming. When I had completed my Dairy Course I was offered a job to manage the Dairy Unit and later became assistant farm manager at the College, I managed the Dairy Unit for thirty eight years, during those years I was also involved in transferring my knowledge and teaching practical skills to students, this I am still doing presently along with other jobs around the yard, showing groups etc. around the College, keeping the boilers going especially the hot water for the kitchen (no hot water no grub). Over all the years that I have been in Gurteen there have been vast changes and development in the yard and the college, very few of the original yard buildings are still standing today, the only ones that have not been knocked or changed are Connor's workshop, part of the old, old dairy unit, loft/piggery area and the beef unit/slatted house built in 1974 now converted into equine stables and cattle/cow accommodation and some storage area for straw.

Another big change over the years is that Gurteen has had to change and develop new courses to keep up with the requirements of the ever-changing world of Agriculture. (Big changes from picking brussel sprouts by hand or hoeing sugar beet by hand, but still they were mighty times for a bit of comradery) even going forward from today we are still developing courses and linking up with other organisations to build the profile of Gurteen, which in turn is having to develop the college side of the campus. One of my fondest memories of Gurteen is the joy of working with fellow staff both inside in the college and outside in the yard and making friends for life, the same can be said of students over the years, I constantly meet past students from years ago and the recent past and the same question is, how is Gurteen and what changes are there in the college. I sometimes even hear of things that happened in the College that particular year of the student but could never get the truth of who was responsible when they were there as students, it makes interesting listening sometimes.

What makes Gurteen special for education is the fact staff and students work together to achieve their goals in life, by getting to know and trust the staff for advice is important for students. Living and working with fellow students makes them rely on that not all people are of the same temperament or personality.

We are celebrating 75 years of farming education this year and no matter where you go or who you meet up with around the country in the farming community, they will have heard of Gurteen, after all it is in the centre of Ireland.