



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025

Principals Welcome

Spring is a wonderful time – a time to look forward with optimism. The horses enjoy a well-deserved break in the turnout paddocks, the January-born lambs continue to thrive under the watchful eye of attentive ewes, the calf house is brimming with new life, the snowdrops welcome visitors as they enter our driveway, and our students continue to grow in confidence, their optimism and belief in a positive future is truly infectious!

That infectious optimism is clearly evident each Friday morning as Gurteen welcomes a group of adult learners from St Cronan's in Roscrea. This group enjoys driving the tractor simulators and learning all about farm safety – but what they really love is being part of the Gurteen student community and having dinner in the canteen with all the other students.

As February progresses, our campus slowly becomes quieter as many of our students' groups head out of College for a period of work experience. The students on the Agricultural Science & Sustainability degree remain our only constant presence during this term. That slow reduction in student activity is abruptly reversed in March when the canteen is again humming with excited conversation as we welcome the TUS Veterinary Nurse degree students for a residential month-long experience working with our large animals.

Some readers may remember my comments from the November issue of the Gazette when I joked about names of storms and how they could easily be a Gurteen class roll call "Met Eireann decreed the 2024/5 storms will be called Ashley, Bert, Conall, Darragh, Éowyn, Floris, Gerben, Hugo, Izzy, James" at the time we had no idea just how memorable Éowyn would prove to be... On 31st January as the storm winds slowed and colleagues ventured out into the farmyard and campus, the power of nature was evident for all to see – a hole in the roof of Gurteen House, veteran trees including Oak, Ash, Scots Pine, and Horse Chestnut lying forlorn, across roads and fields. One uprooted Lime, in particular caught the attention of everyone... the tree that was planted in 1969 by President Eamon de Valera to mark the official opening of the 'new college building' The damage to this historic tree ultimately featured on the front pages of local newspapers!

I hope you enjoy reading the Gazette, please do share it with friends and neighbours – better still encourage them to share their contact details with us.

-Principal Jon Parry



The farm is getting busier and busier with all the new lambs and calves!



At Graduation in November, students from St. Cronan's were awarded certificates celebrating their involvement at Gurteen.



The remains of Eamon de Valera's tree.

Want more frequent

updates? Follow us on all our

social media pages!

@GurteenCollege





Gurteen Gazette

March 2025



Congratulations to James for coming first place in the Welding competition!

Macra Inter-College Day 2025

Every Year a team of twelve Level 5 Agriculture students take part in the annual inter-college's competition, competing in a range of events against students from the other agricultural colleges to see who comes out on top!

This year's event took place down in Co. Cork at Clonakilty Agricultural College and contests included indoor soccer, tractor operation, fencing, stock judging, welding, problem-solving, and more! Our students made us proud and put in a fantastic showing, despite it being the wettest of days, and came away with the amazing result of third place overall out of the 8 teams.

A special congratulations to student James Weston from Co. Laois who claimed first place in the welding competition, and to Kate Kehoe, Emily Needham, and Sam Macbeth for coming first in the team challenge!

The Gurteen College team, pictured below, consisted of; Luke Walsh, Malachy Fisher, Jonathan Clegg, Kate Kehoe, Eoin Coffey, James Weston, Sam Macbeth, Luke Ray, Bobby Ryan, Jack Noone, Emily Needham, and David Dixon.



Students Bobby Ryan, Luke Ray and Emily Needham looking smart for their Technology presentation.

Apply now for September 2025!

Applications for all our full-time level 5, are now open! You can apply via the Teagasc website directly, or through our own website, ready for September 2025.

Our next college Open Day will be May 9th 2025, and we'd love to see you there! Come get a guided tour of the college campus, and our farm and equine facilities to see whether we're the college for you.

Call (067)21282

Email: info@gurteencollege.ie

Website: www.gurteencollege.ie





Gurteen Gazette

March 2025

Equine Course Updates

It's that time of year again, all of our Level 5 and 6 Equine students have gone out on placement for 8 weeks and will return in April after gaining valuable, hands-on experience working on equine yards.

We have a number of different types of equine yards that the students have gone to for placement such as; stud yards, riding schools, therapeutic riding centres, racing yards, show jumping yards, sales yards, trekking centres, livery yards, and eventing yards. Our hosts are absolutely wonderful and we greatly appreciate all their help with placement in addition to agreeing to share their industry experience with our students for 2 months!

The Horses are enjoying a well-deserved break whilst the students are on placement, they have been seen rolling in the sunshine (the little bit that we did have!) and enjoying their time out in the paddocks.

With our students out on placement things do not slow down! With the arrival of the TUS Vet Nurses we're back to it, sharing our Equine knowledge with them throughout their month-long stint here at Gurteen College.

Looking ahead there's lots planned for both our level 5 and level 6 Equine students once they return from their placements, including some industry visits, guest speakers coming in to speak about different areas of the industry, and demonstrations from different aspects of the competition sector of the industry.

On top of all of that, students will be hard at work getting ready for their exams in show jumping, dressage and cross-country!

-Naomi Ruane, Equine Course Coordinator



In January the students took a trip to the Farriery School in Co. Kildare.



Level 5 students have been busy getting to grips with their cross-country riding.



Level 6 students organised and hosted an equine massage demonstration, as part of their leadership module.



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025



Naoise Stafford is a Level 5 Agriculture student whose talents extend far beyond that of farming.

Naoise Stafford- Farmer, Student, Kettlebell Champion.

My name is Naoise Stafford. I come from a beef and sheep farm in County Kildare. I chose to come and study at Gurteen as I've always had a love for farming and would love a future in agriculture!

I first started lifting kettlebells because my Mam joined the local club in our town. Since then, I have lifted for Ireland for the last 6 years. I've won 6 World Championships and 2 European Championships. Through competing, I've travelled to 7 different countries and I've set two world records!

In the future I hope to continue to represent Ireland while also farming alongside my Mam and Grandad.



Agri-Aware Farm Walk and Talk 2025

At the end of February, we welcomed over 300 students from 12 different secondary schools, all of whom are studying Ag Science at Leaving Cert, to Gurteen for the annual Agri-Aware Farm Walk and Talk.

It's always a fantastic day where we get to talk about a variety of agricultural topics including Dairy Enterprises, Sustainability and Biodiversity, Machinery Safety, Renewable Energy and so much more.

It was so great to meet all the students and their teachers, and we hope they had as fun a day as we did- despite the wet weather!



It's always a great day when we host the Agri-Aware Farm Walk and Talk event.



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025

Agriculture Course Updates

The style and pace of learning changes on our full-time agriculture courses as we move through Spring term. The days are lengthening, and with this increase in daylight the anticipation and excitement in our students also grows as the start of work placement comes into view. The placement period benefits everyone, it gives our students the chance to put into practice all their college-based learning and combine it with the wisdom of the host farmers. The host farmers get to benefit from the enthusiasm of the youthful students, and the teachers take the opportunity to complete the corrections interspersed with trips to monitor student progress on the host farms.

I want to take this opportunity to personally thank each and every one of the host farmers for their invaluable contribution to our courses.

Level 5 Agriculture:

The level 5 Certificate in Agriculture is progressing very well since their return from the Christmas break. They've been kept very busy, with the time-tabled theory and skills lessons, supplemented by a number of special events such as the recent Farm Safety event (which included a visit from the Garda tractor!), the Active Consent workshops, and the Macra challenges day.

All the students are now on an 8-week farm placement and they are required to complete a placement diary whilst on the farm. This document is a core part of the module assessment, but it also acts as prompt, encouraging the students to really think about the host farm and the work they are performing.



Students getting a great look at the renowned Garda Tractor.



Level 6 students listening to a talk from agri-lloyd as part of their ruminant Nutrition module.

Level 6 Agriculture:

The second-year agriculture students taking the Advanced Certificate in Dairy Herd Management or Advanced Certificate in Drystock Herd Management complete a longer 16-week period of farm placement.

This extended period of placement provides an ideal opportunity for the students to really look "under the bonnet" of their chosen enterprise, and gain insight into herd management.

For those more adventurous students, the 16-week period gives a great chance to live away from home and experience farming in a very different setting. Many choose to complete their placement in a different county, and a few choose a different country! No matter the location of the placement, our students will carry with them vivid memories for many years to come, and fond recollections of their host farm- perhaps even a tall tale or two!



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025



First Year degree students doing soil sampling and soil profiling during their first semester at Gurteen.



3rd Year student Kate O'Dea is currently on her professional work placement with ABP



Degree Course Updates

In December we bade farewell to our second year Agricultural Science and Sustainability students, as they've now completed their 2 semesters in Gurteen. They now complete the rest of their course in TUS with some visits to Gurteen along the way- and we'll look forward to seeing them!

Our 1st years arrived in January, and have settled in quickly to Gurteen life. They're enjoying the Agricultural modules and the experience of working on the Gurteen farm and getting a chance to enhance their driving skills with our simulators too. This Spring semester the students complete modules on Tillage, Forestry, Botany, and Peatlands & Soils. As well as their classes, students have had some great field trips around these modules which really expand their horizons.

Our 3rd year degree students have started their professional work placement this semester, and it's great to see them put into practice all the skills and knowledge they've developed in class. There are a variety of placements from Teagasc advisory, to AI companies, to Bord na Móna, to private advisory companies. It's a great opportunity for them to experience the industry, and make some good networks for the future.

Direct entry level applications are now open for the course for those looking to return to college, or change career direction you can now apply on tus.ie. Of course, those doing the Leaving Cert need to apply through the CAO system.

1st year students recently had a trip out to Germinal, where they received a guided tour of the factory.

-Anne Marie Doheny, Degree lecturer



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025



Our Dairy herd headed out for the first graze of 2025 on February 8th



January Lambing went smoothly- we're now ready for the next 360 ewes!



Our annual willow harvest went well, with a higher than usual yield.

Farm Update

For the most part, Winter was extremely kind to us. We were able to keep animals out grazing for longer than anticipated, which helped delay housing and the work that brings. Our 80 early lambers started on the 1st of January, and the lambing went very smoothly! With March starting, our mid-season flock are due with three hundred and sixty ewes in total ready to start- it's shaping up to be a busy month for our drystock team! Suckler cows have been calving away, putting some really nice calves on the ground. Cattle prices have been very good, which is a welcome source of income as the year starts to kick off.

The dairy team are now more than halfway through calving, with calf houses filling up fast we are doing some work to create more calf spaces. Work in the fields is starting to get going, we have been spreading slurry and this week we got the first of the protected urea spread. With more of the farm to do, we're hoping for more good weather to allow us to continue making progress. We're looking forward to getting back out into the crop fields to turn some soil and get some spring crops put in the ground as well.

Our current challenges with TB continue. After our initial test where 7 animals went down, we did blood tests where a further 20 animals tested positive. In January we had the first of our retests and we had one reactor, so we can only hope for the best as we wait for our next test at the start of April.

On a brighter note; we got our willow harvested in January, in good conditions, with a slightly higher-than-average yield. We look forward to seeing what the spring brings us.

-Ken Flynn, Farm Manager



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025



Before students went out on placement, Steven took a group out to the New Institute Snooker Club in Nenagh for a fun evening of snooker!



Students enjoying the Christmas festivities at the end of year



Before Christmas, students organised to have an evening out Ice Skating!

Words from Steven, our College Chaplain

What are your 'individual talents and strengths'? We could be a little shy in acknowledging them, but we will surely be able to come up with a bit of a list.

I come to the third part of our College Ethos...

Students will be encouraged to develop their individual talents and strengths and to develop those gifts to the best of their ability.

There are two things to be said about what we think we know now about our talents and strengths.

Firstly, we didn't always know that we had them. We had to discover them. And that discovery came about because we were given the safe spaces, loving environments and encouraging people who helped us to see them. We developed because we were given the opportunity to test our talents in settings that allowed us to do so. Often those settings were marked by a gentleness that made that process easy. At other times we faced unexpected challenges that ultimately brought something out of us.

Secondly, however, we always need to be open to appreciating that we may have something new to learn - about ourselves! Those who are older or more experienced should never be complacent. For the Methodist Church and Trustees this understanding is rooted in another key word, 'individual.' An understanding that in the image of God, each one is wondrously unique and has talents and strengths that are particular and needed.

As a College we are driven to facilitate such a loving, nurturing, and imaginative environment where all can discover and develop in their own talents and strengths. For many reasons, not everybody has had easy settings in life to discover and have confidence in developing their gifts. So, it's crucial that we provide an excellent space. In any case, the opportunity and community that Gurteen offers makes it a special space.

-Steven Foster, College Chaplain



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025

Staff Updates

Last edition we welcomed Debbie and Niamh to the Gurteen staff team- but with the range of talented new staff members who have joined Gurteen this past year, it's time to meet two more! Read on to get to know Sinéad, an Agricultural teacher, and Jasmin, an Equine teacher!

Sinéad O'Sullivan

I'm Sinéad O'Sullivan, I come from a pedigree Holstein dairy farm in West Cork. Coming from a dairy farm, I've always had a keen interest in farming and especially showing our own pedigree stock. Being involved in showing from a young age helped grow my love for the animals and as I got older I found myself involved in various committees from my own local club in Cork, to now being the Chairperson of the National Young Members Association of the IHFA.

In 2019 I began my undergraduate in Agricultural Science majoring in Animal Science in UCD, in which I graduated in 2023. I then went on to complete my Masters in Agricultural Extension and Innovation with UCD in 2024.

My first few months at Gurteen have been wonderful! The staff have offered me their support and it has been an amazing experience so far! The atmosphere at the campus is extremely encouraging to both student and staff, I love creating discussions with the students, exchanging their experiences and learning from each other in the classroom.



Sinéad O'Sullivan has joined the Gurteen agriculture team as a lecturer.

Jasmin Goll has joined the Gurteen Equine team as a lecturer.



Jasmin Goll

I'm Jasmin Goll, originally from Germany, where I qualified with a Masters in Agricultural Biology. The day after my graduation, I moved to Ireland, nearly 18 years ago. My partner and I have built a stud farm, from the ground up in Co. Laois, where we stand sport horse stallions and breed top-quality show jumpers and eventers.

Growing up with horses, I've always had a strong passion for everything horse related and competed in dressage, show jumping and eventing. Working at Tinnakill House Stud for 16 years gave me invaluable experience in both the thoroughbred industry and general breeding practices.

Since starting at Gurteen I've found the atmosphere to be very supportive and inspiring. Of course, the students are amazing, too! It has been a pleasure to guide them and see them progress. Alongside teaching, I'm currently a part-time student at UCD, studying Equine Reproduction and Fertility. I find this area incredibly fascinating, and the knowledge I gain continues to deepen my understanding of equine breeding.



Gurteen Gazette

March 2025

Produced and Published by Molly Parry- Promotions and Social Media Officer



Two adult learners helping out with the January Lambing.



The 2025 Distance Learning Course kicked off at the end of January.



Learners on the LOETB programme completing a farm discussion group.

Distance and Part-Time Course Updates:

Gurteen College: Empowering the Future of Farming with Distance and Part-Time Courses

As well as our full-time courses, we're incredibly proud to offer a range of part-time and online courses to better suit those with a busy schedule! Currently, two groups of 15 students each are progressing well in their part-time programs funded by the LOETB, working towards a Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farming.

Further to the core farming skills, students enrolled in the part-time course receive crucial hands-on training in areas such as ATV training and mechanical pesticide training.

In addition to these successful part-time courses, we've recently launched a new and exciting Distance Learning course! With 34 students already enrolled, this course offers a blend of online learning and in-person practical learning, one day a month over a 14-month period. At the end of the program, students will also receive the Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farming, gaining the same benefits as those on the part-time course.

This new distance course represents a significant milestone for Gurteen College, as it expands its reach to career-focused individuals who may not be able to attend full-time education. Both programs are designed to accommodate those who wish to retrain or gain qualifications later in life. Whether they are school leavers or seasoned professionals seeking to upskill, this flexible approach to learning ensures that education remains accessible for all.

-Lenora Kane, Distance and Part-Time coordinator