



Gurteen Gazette

July 2023

Principals Welcome

Congratulations to all the students who completed their courses in 2023, we are very proud to welcome you into the Gurteen alumni. We wish every student well as they leave Gurteen and start the next chapter of their story, do keep in touch - you may be leaving Gurteen but you will always be part of our community.

Gurteen has a different sound around the campus during the summer months. Gone are the student cars and familiar sounds of coffee and lunch breaks when students relax and enjoy 'the chat' with each other. These sounds are replaced by the hushed tones of teachers busily working to get all the corrections completed and results entered. On our farm the 'bleating and baaing' of over 800 sheep all vying to be top of their class could be heard across the fields as we hosted the national "Sheep 23" show. In July these sounds will be replaced by the buzz of the Energy and Farm Diversification show.

Perhaps the most exciting sound to be heard at Gurteen this summer is the joyful sound of horses in the stable yard- as we make the final preparations to launch our new equine courses.

The final sound I hear most evenings through the summer is that of cuckoos calling - the biodiversity at Gurteen always fills me with joy, from the beautiful orchids found at Lough Nahinch, the magnificent trees offering shade to the stock at Trench farm, the wonderful hedgerows and the fabulous otter that inhabits the watercourse running through the farm.

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



Lecturer Mark Keenan returning from the Royal Highland Show with a group of Level 6 students.



Some of the spectacular sheep on display and competing at this year's SHEEP 2023 show!



A shot of the elusive otter which has been spotted on our farm.

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all our social media pages!**

@GurteenCollege





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Equine Courses Return to Gurteen

After 7 years without horses on our farm, and equine students on our campus, we're delighted to announce the return of equine courses to Gurteen College! We can't wait to have the chatter of equine students filling our halls once more.

Starting this September, we will be running two full-time Level 5 equine courses- a Level 5 Certificate in Horsemanship/Equitation and a Level 5 Certificate in Stud Management. These courses are being run with support from Laois and Offaly ETB, and we're incredibly grateful for their support in getting these courses up and running.

To this point, we're looking to loan some horses for use on these courses. So, if you or anyone you may know has a horse which might be suitable we'd be interested in hearing more.

We're looking for horses which are over 14.2HH and between 5-15 years old. These horses need to be jumping at least 90cms to 1m, and be capable of doing a dressage test at prelim/novice level, plus have some cross-country experience. If you think that you have a horse which may be suitable, please email a description of your horse, including it's age, experience and temperament along with some photos/videos to Stephanie Scully at sscully@gurteencollege.ie. If you want some more info, feel free to give us a call, we'd love to chat!



Equine Courses return to Gurteen! We're super excited to have them back- and hope you are too!

Sheep 23

On June 17th we hosted this year's SHEEP 2023 show- the first time this show has happened in nearly 5 years! It was fantastic to see so many people from across Ireland at this event, as well as over 800 pedigree sheep and 50 different commercial exhibits.

This fantastic day also featured a number of demonstrations, from cookery, butchery and shearing right up to amazing displays within the young shepherd's contest.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the event as successful as it was- and we hope you guys had as much fun as we did!



A fantastic turn out for Sheep 2023, with people from across Ireland coming together for all thing's sheep!

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Course Updates

We are at the end of the academic year and the teachers on our full-time courses are looking forward to the pace slowing down and an opportunity to take some time off work. There are, of course, a number of part time and distance courses that do not take any breaks over the summer and so these courses and the co-ordination of them is on-going. Overall, the academic year has been busy but rewarding to see students meet their potential and make new connections and just generally grow into confident, friendly, good human. Of course, there has been some low points but I think, it was at these times that the community spirit of the college really shone through.

The full time Level 5 students returned from their placements on Monday 24th April. Placement went very well for all students. The Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture course delivery ended Friday 26th May. Since that time the teachers have been working hard to ensure that all exams, skills and assignments are marked! In general, it looks like a good year for results at the college with the vast majority of students doing very well on the course.

The Level 6 Advanced Dairy and Drystock students returned from 16 weeks of placement on Monday 15th May. The placement period went very well with students returning from placement having had a very worthwhile experience witnessing a system of farming that they otherwise would not have had a chance to see. Upon their return, students took part in a lot of project-based classes where any outstanding assignments were completed along with some outstanding theory classes and exams. The Level 6 Advanced Crops and Machinery students returned from placement for 1 week on Tuesday 6th June. The week of their return was used to ensure all projects were completed and to finish some outstanding exams.

It's very important to us that the Level 6 students are supported in their ambitions to progress on to further education or go into the workforce and so all students are given to opportunity to meet with a career's guidance councillor and/or their course tutor should they wish to do so. The teachers here are also very experienced with helping students complete any applications and so there is support on a number of fronts.



Level 5 students learning valuable sheep shearing skills and assisting with the job alongside George Graham.



This year's Level 5 PPD events included such antics as three-legged races, tug-o-war, wellie throwing, and pool contests!

These events are organized and run by the Level 5 Students as part of their Personal Effectiveness module.



Level 6 students completing a sprayer course gaining valuable hands-on experience!



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Course Update; continued

The first year of the Ag. Science and Sustainability Degree is now complete. Exam boards took place on Tuesday 6th June. The group had a very enjoyable first year. Having done a focus group with them on their last week at Gurteen, I got extremely positive feedback with some very helpful suggestions on how we could enhance the course going forward. Each and every student confirmed that they were glad to have chosen the course. The second year of the course will hopefully see some past Level 6 Advanced Certificate Graduates joining the group. This is hugely positive as it demonstrates our ambition to provide a clear route to higher education for all learners joining our level 5 Certificate in Agriculture. The second year of the courses sees students spending all of Semester 1 on the Gurteen campus with all subjects being delivered by Gurteen College hired teachers.

There are currently two Distance Education courses and one-Part Time course in progress. One distance and one-part time course will be due for completion in December 2023. The distance course has site visits once per month on a Friday and the part time course have a class every Monday from 6:30-9:30. The other distance course had an induction on Saturday 18th May. This group will progress through the course for approximately 18 months, coming to the college on site visits on a Saturday once per month. We're also running 2 Sustainable Certificate in Agriculture Course. These students progress through the course for almost 52 consecutive weeks. We are very grateful for the support from Laois/Offaly ETB. These courses are fully funded which includes the provision of all PPE gear, laptops for those who need one for the duration of the course and funding provided for any additional "add on modules" the students wish to do such as Chainsaw Operations, ATV or Mechanical Pesticide Application.

-Dr Stephanie Scully, Assistant Principal

Teagasc Peat Soils Project

In mid-May we welcomed academics and researchers from across Ireland and Europe to Gurteen College for the Teagasc Workshop on Grassland Peat Agriculture. It was a fascinating day of learning and improving our knowledge and understanding of how vital peatland is within agriculture.

A superb day of making new connections and strengthening our appreciation of how lucky we are to have such a vast diversity of soils here on our farm.



Attendees at the Teagasc workshop on Grassland Peat Agriculture listening to a talk on the Eddy Covariance Flux Tower.

The tower provides accurate, long-term information on the carbon dynamics of the peatland we have on our farm.



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Student Placement- Ellen Feery

Hi! My name is Ellen Feery; I'm from Tyrrellspass in Co. Westmeath and I've just completed my Level 6 in Dairy Herd Management.

As part of the level 6 we have to complete 16 weeks of work placement. I was lucky enough to be able to complete my Placement in New Zealand thanks to Anne-Marie, our placement officer in Gurteen. I spent the whole 16 weeks living and working on a 1500 cow dairy farm in Methven, Mid Canterbury in New Zealand.

Coming from an educational point of view the best part of placement for me was learning to hoof pare on my own and being able to identify and diagnose any problems that may present in a cow's hoof. The most memorable part of placement for me would have to be Paddy's weekend I spend in Queenstown. All the other ag students in the same position as me were in Queenstown that weekend and I made many friends, with whom I was then able to go and get tours of their farms after. I do think placement is an important part of the course. Like most, I learn better by seeing and doing rather than being in a classroom and reading from a book, so over placement I learned much more than I ever could have learned sitting in a classroom.

One piece of advice I would give anyone who's even thinking of doing an international placement would be go for it! I was beyond nervous for weeks leading up to leading up the trip, doubting myself wondering, should I? But looking back now I wouldn't change it for the world. I've made friends who will last a lifetime and memories I'll carry to the grave. Being such a home bird, the homesickness was awful but the support I received from Anne-Marie, the farm staff, and just other students helped me get through the harder days. I do plan on returning to NZ someday to do a calving/breeding and a contracting season, the opportunities are endless over there and couldn't recommend it more to anyone thinking of going!

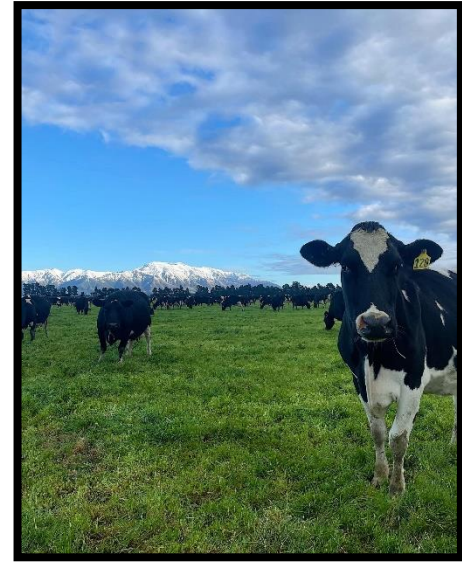
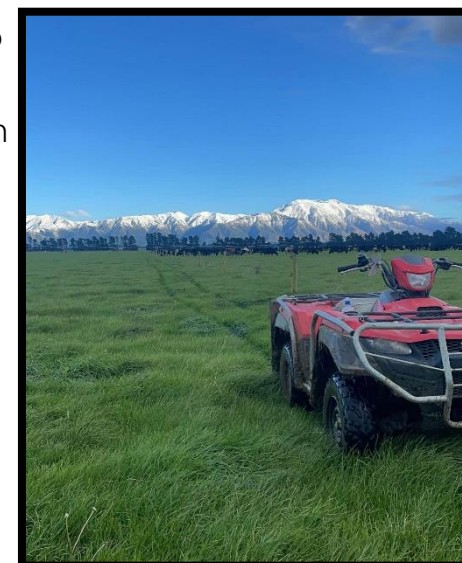


Photo provided by Ellen showcasing some of the livestock on the farm in New Zealand where she was on placement.



Amazing views, and a fantastic opportunity for Ellen to experience agriculture and life in an entirely new continent!



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75th Celebration- June 25th

On June 25th we welcomed friends from across Ireland to join us for an ecumenical service celebrating 75 years since this college's founding.

With alumni from as far back as 1954 attending it was a wonderful day of recounting old, fond memories of Gurteen College in the past, as well as celebrating the future and all the opportunities it will bring!

With features from Mr Tom Wilson, the Lay Leader of the Methodist church in Ireland and Ms Gillian Kingston, the Vice President on the World Methodist Council alongside members from our board of Governors and Trustees it was a wonderful day of community- one we're excited to rekindle at the next anniversary!



College chaplain Steven Foster delivering his opening greeting to all who attended the 75th celebratory service.

Words from our College chaplain

Part of Gurteen's 75th anniversary year has been to give thanks for the conviction, courage and determination of those early leaders who brought Gurteen into existence. This is also a time to recognize all who have worked hard, many through difficult times, to make the college a success in the various decades since.

The era that we are in now, or indeed that Gurteen will be in at its centenary, may seem a world away from 1947, but our determination is built on the same foundations: The Methodist Church's view of making God's love known to all in society in practical ways and that people would be able to thrive well in rural Ireland. Our celebration contains a recognition that Gurteen's leaders now and into the future continue to address the 21st Century realities head on, with positivity and love for all in rural society.

-Steven Foster, College chaplain



A spectacular turnout to the ecumenical service honouring 75 years of Gurteen- a wonderful chance to reminisce and celebrate our history.



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Photo from a successful willow harvest back in March.



Dairy cows out grazing after a busy calving period!



Winter Wheat growing well after recovering from pesky crows!

Farm Update

The last time I sat down to write for the Gurteen Gazette, I was thinking the winter will soon end, but the winter seemed to drag on and when spring finally arrived it felt very short, and we were almost instantly into hot dry summer weather. We were starting to get very worried about the drought situation, ground was hard, and grass was burning up, but then came relief in the form of thunderstorms and heavy showers, everything greened up again and the growth returned. We made our first cut of silage about 10 days later than planned due to the long winter and initially slow growth rates.

All our livestock are out grazing and performing well, we will shortly be drawing to a close of breeding season in the dairy herd and we're looking forward to scanning and seeing our results. Our lamb sales continue, and our beef cattle are all performing. We harvested our willow in early March, and we were delighted with the yield, we engaged with a new contractor from Meath, and we were delighted with the professional efficient service provided. Spring crops struggled a little with the hot dry conditions, but our winter crops are looking great, even the winter wheat that was badly damaged by crows made a great recovery, we look forward to harvest kicking off very shortly. Our new fleet of John Deere tractors continue to perform well and having GPS auto steer is making life that little bit easier and making our output that bit more efficient.

We recently hosted Sheep 23 the national sheep event, this went very well and all involved were delighted with the entire event. There were many different breeds of sheep on display as well as the latest techniques and technologies. Preparations are underway for the next event that we will host, the Energy and Farm Diversification Show on Thursday the 20th of July.

-Ken Flynn, Farm Manager



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Progress on new buildings

As the number of courses we offer continues to grow, and as such the number of students on our campus continues to rise, the need for more classrooms grows greater!

Gurteen College has applied for planning permission to build a bespoke teaching block, providing 6 modern bright classrooms. Once planning is granted the next challenge is to secure the required capital funding, with many politicians actively engaged in supporting the proposal.

Keep your eyes peeled for future updates on this exciting plan! We can't wait to hopefully start building soon.



3D render of the proposed new teaching block.

Energy and Farm Diversification Show 2023

On Thursday July 20th we will be hosting this year's Energy and Farm Diversification Show! This free event is open to all interested parties and will feature talks from a range of experts across the industry.

The show is set to feature over 90+ speakers across more than 30 different talks, as well as featuring live demonstrations!

Currently announced for the day are speakers such as Charlie McConalogue- TD, Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Professor Aoife Foley- Professor at Queen's University Belfast, and former EPA research fellow; Stan Lalor- director of Knowledge Transfer at Teagasc; and Thomas Duffy- Vice President of the European Council of Young Farmers.

To view the full range of content and guest speakers, visit the show's website at www.energyandfarmdiversificationshow.com



www.EnergyAndFarmDiversificationShow.com