



In association with the
East of Scotland Grassland Society



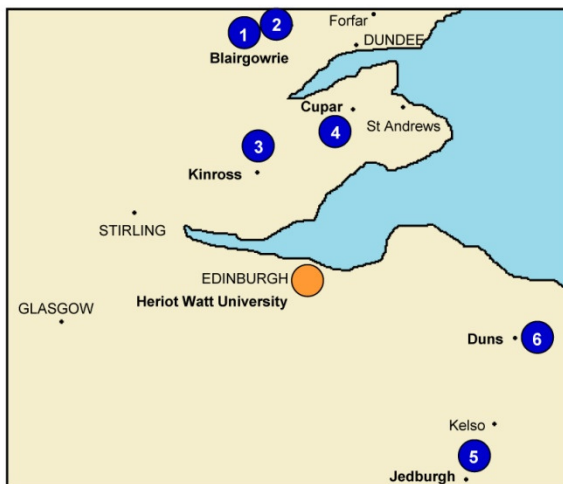
WATSON SEEDS

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THE BRITISH GRASSLAND SOCIETY SUMMER MEETING 2010



East of Scotland July 4th - 7th



Farm visit **1** The McGowans, Incheoch, Blairgowrie

Farm visit **2** The Alexanders, Mains of Mause, Blairgowrie

Farm visit **3** The Lawries, Cuthill Towers, Kinross

Farm visit **4** The Whitefords, Hilltarvit Mains, Cupar

Farm visit **5** The McDonalds, Kelloe Mains, Duns

Farm visit **6** The Neills, Upper Nisbett, Jedburgh

Sunday 4th July Evening

BGS Annual General Meeting followed by a welcome from Ian Whiteford and a talk on Scottish Agriculture by Andrew Arbuckle, ex-farmer, ex-Member of Scottish Parliament and journalist.

Monday 5th July am – Farm Tour

Hosted by Neil McGowan and his wife Debbie, who run the farm with father Findlay his wife Judy and their daughter Clare. They also have two full-time employees.

Background

Situated where the river Isla falls over the Highland fault line, leaving 'bonnie' Glenisla for the fertile Strathmore, Incheoch is an upland livestock and cropping farm. The McGowan's have focussed on individual animal performance through improved genetics of cattle and sheep. This, coupled with management aimed at easy care systems in a biosecure environment, produces high levels of return from commercial flocks and herds that back up pedigree sales of Simmental and Luining cattle and Texel and Lleyn sheep. Farm altitudes range from 400 to 600ft above sea level.

Why are we visiting?

The focus of the visit is on the sheep enterprises, which includes a nucleus flock of 300 Lleys, 60 Texels and 360 commercial Lley and cross ewes. Most of the Lleys are bred pure with high demand for females. Those not meeting the grade are crossed with the Texel along with the cross ewes. Most ewes are lambed in May outside on grass and birth data is recorded for Signet and easy care traits.

Discussion points

- Beef from grass – controlling costs through breeding and genetics
- Efficient ewes – how we're going about identifying those that are working hardest
- Rams
- Over-sowing permanent pasture
- Red clover silage and lamb finishing.

Monday 5th July pm – Farm Tour

Hosted by Peter Alexander. He and his wife Pat started farming in 1967 and they are now joined by son Murray, and they are assisted by six full-time employees and a student.

Background

Mains of Mause forms the hub of a farming enterprise situated near Blairgowrie in the Strathmore area. Farm altitudes range from 200-3000ft with Mains of Mause at 650ft above sea level.

Why are we visiting?

Predominantly to see how the challenges to profitability are being met on a large suckler cow beef enterprise, based on home-produced fodder, including silage cereals and this year there are 24ha (60 acres) of home-grown beans. We will also see how you can make grass conservation as silage and mechanised feeding stack up when you have to pay for labour.

Discussion points

- Economies of scale
- The optimum mix of enterprises
- Reducing labour costs and increasing feed efficiency
- More productive grass.

Alternative Tour

Depart Heriot Watt for visits in north Perthshire, including Glamis Castle, ancestral home of the Queen Mother and then Cairn O'Mohr Winery.

Monday Evening

Scotland celebration dinner and Ceilidh

Tuesday 6th July am – Farm Tour

Arthur and Susan Lawrie run the farm business together with family members James, David, Sarah and Emma who help out part-time. Full time employees are Adrian and Shirley Coll, so it is very much a family-based enterprise.

Background

The Lawrie Family have lived and farmed at Cuthill Towers for 55 years. In 2002, the old stone farm steading was sold for development and a new unit housing 240 dairy cows was built on a centrally located greenfield site within the farm, 120ha (300 acres) of arable land has recently been rented six miles away, allowing feed production and youngstock wintering.

Why are we visiting?

To visit an efficient family dairy farm achieving a high level of performance in a new modern dairy unit, which attempts to utilise the land through maximising the use of silages and whole-crop fodder, with minimum bought in fertiliser.

Discussion points:

- Funding progression by housing development
- Clover as a silage component, offering home-grown protein
- New facilities to reduce labour cost
- Ayrshire breeding.

Tuesday 6th July pm – Farm Tour

Ian and Margaret farm Hilltarvit Mains with their son John, who will lead our visit. The farm is run with full-time employee Dale and help from daughter Gillian at peak times. Ian has recently been ESGS chairman and is your BGS summer tour Chairman, while Margaret has organised the alternate tour.

Background

Hilltarvit Mains is a large arable/beef cattle/sheep farm just south of Cupar, overlooking the Howe of Fife. About 365ha (900 acres) of arable crops are grown and the 162ha (400 acres) of grassland includes 24ha (100 acres) of short term grass in an arable rotation. Altitude is 550-750 ft above sea level.

Why are we visiting?

To see how a family run arable farm can benefit from sheep and cattle enterprises within the one mixed commercial unit. Does grass stack up on the arable farm long term?

Discussion points

- The enterprise mix
- Reducing labour elements of animal enterprises
- More productive permanent grass
- Making the grass break pay.

Alternative Tour

Depart Heriot Watt for visits in the St Andrews area, including Wemyss Pottery and Folk Museum in Ceres, Anstruther Fisheries Museum and visit to a fine artisan cheese maker.

Tuesday Evening

Drinks reception in the James Watt Conference Centre sponsored by the South West Scotland Grassland Society and BGS 64th Annual Gala Dinner, Guest speaker: Alec Fleming, farmer's son and previously an auctioneer who is now an estate agent with Scotia Homes.

Wednesday 7th July am – Farm Tour

Our host is Robert McDonald whose father came to Kelloe Mains in the late 1930s as a tenant. The McDonald Partners bought Kelloe in 1958 and have added other land throughout the years.

Background

Kelloe Mains is a dairy farm in a predominantly arable area of the Scottish Borders - a reflection on Robert 's keen interest in milking cows. The farm runs to 1000ha (2500 acres) growing potatoes, oil seed rape, beans, wheat, barley and 142ha (350 acres), grass at an altitude of around 36m. Land holdings stretch over 10 miles all on arable ground.

Why are we visiting?

To see large scale east coast dairying with high yielding cows and an emphasis on high quality diets fed to high genetic merit cows, producing milk under modern efficient housing and milking systems. More grass is cut for silage than grazed. Contented cattle milk better and there has been a big investment with waterbeds in the cubicles. Cows are milked twice a day through a 40-point internal rotary parlour with automatic cow identification and the full Alpro system. The farm can store six months slurry and future plans include more cows, more silage and installing a 330KV windmill to reduce electricity costs

Discussion points

- Silage making and feeding issues
- Calf rearing and replacements
- Making the most from technology of milking and cattle handling
- Grass production for quality diets.

Wednesday 7th July pm – Farm Tour

Robert and Jacqueline and their sons Andrew (10) and Harry (8) are assisted by two full-time members of staff. At busy times of the year (e.g. silage and harvest), other family members and their staff help out.

Background

Upper Nisbet is a 338ha (836 acre) tenanted farm with land at 250-500ft above sea level on the Lothian Estate, near Jedburgh, in the Scottish Borders. Robert and Jacqueline took on the tenancy in May 2000, adding 61ha (151 acres) at Ploughlands in 2001 and 40ha (97 acres) in 2007 to total 440ha (1084 acres) plus 80ha (200 acres) of grass parks at Pirnie.

Why are we visiting?

The farm is well known through Neil winning Beef Farmer of the Year and with his involvement with the Royal Highland Educational Trust which gets school children onto farms. The focus is on beef production from home-grown feed.

Discussion points:

- Finishing cattle: are cereals cheaper than grass?
- Summer management of replacement heifers
- Cows and calves – replacement policy
- Reclaiming grassland from a boulder field, will it pay?

Alternative Tour

Depart Heriot Watt for a Blue Badge Guided tour of the magnificent city of Edinburgh, with time to enjoy the Botanic Gardens and have lunch and then travel south to Kelso to meet with Farm Tour delegates.

End of Summer Meeting Programme 2010

Note: Those booked for extra Dinner, Bed and Breakfast on Wednesday will dine at 6.30 in the self-service dining room.