

Lee Pritchard OFC 2019 Scholar Report.

I was lucky enough to be chosen as a scholar by NFYFC for the 2019 Oxford Farming Conference. It was an honour to be chosen as a scholar and represent the YFC movement at the biggest farming conference in Great Britain. I would like to express my thanks to my sponsors through the movement, The Worshipful Company of Farmers. I will take this experience with me through the future of my farming career and value the networking I have done as second to none.

When applying for the scholarship I didn't 100% know what to expect from the conference, but knew what I wanted to gain from it. That being to gain knowledge from other like minded farmers and industry leaders. To make the experience of meeting so many new faces easier we attended a Scholarship insight day back in November 2018 at the Mc.Donalds distribution centre in Manchester. We had the warmest of welcome from Sally Williams scholarship programme leader and also Alice Willet McDonalds UK Agriculture consultant and everyone else involved. It was definitely an excellent way to network with fellow scholars before the conference.

At the conference we heard many excellent speakers, from politicians to farmers from near and far some of my favourite speakers were Minette Batters and Sir Lockwood Smith Matthew Smith. We learnt about the new technology that eventually will affect every one of our businesses and I think it is something we should all embrace and it will help us run our businesses more effectively and efficiently.

The theme of the conference was 'A world of opportunity' and after hearing many interesting and successful speakers it becomes obvious that a no deal situation will be a disaster but with the right deal I am confident we do have a prosperous future in agriculture, and as the next generation it is vital we work hard to secure this future.

I attended a couple of fringe events and was even fortunate enough to have the 'big guys' listen to me when I briefly spoke at the YFC fringe event. This for me was an honour on its own representing a movement which I

consider close to me! The YFC fringe event opened my eyes to realising just how bright our future is when you seen how full the room was and not of just young but older people too, wanting to see the younger generation getting on. I also attended the AHDB fringe event which was another interesting meeting where future post brexit marketing was discussed.

The post debate supper was about my favourite event, we sat in the gallery looking over Guy Smith setting the motion 'This house believes the country would be better served if farmers focused on profits rather than public goods'. Hilary McGrady was speaking against the motion. It was a very good debate with some strong points made from both sides of the house. The outcome was the house agreed with a majority voting for the motion. I voted with the majority believing that as public good is important, but profit for business is too and public good would be better served if farmers were more profitable.

During the busy three days myself and fellow scholar Amy Payton were able to catch up with members from The Worshipful Company of Farmers who we will be ever grateful to for this opportunity to attend the OFC19. We met with Christopher Day and Rosemary Carne who were lovely to speak to and it was nice to discuss what we enjoyed about the conference so far and what we were hoping to gain from the experience. This was obvious to me that I wanted to meet like minded farmers who are trying to steer their business through an uncertain time and get the best out of his networking opportunity.

A message I have taken from this experience is that we are certainly at a very uncertain time in our agricultural careers, but we must make our industry thrive and push government to help our great industry grow and educate our nation on how important our industry is to Great Britain. We as a nation rely on agriculture in so many ways on a daily basis and so it`s important we all make our voices heard, that`s the message I brought home from the conference.

Anyone wanting to go along to the conference I would strongly recommend you apply for the amazing opportunity given to YFC members by the Worshipful Company of Farmers and use it to steer your own careers and businesses forward to the bright future I`m confident we all have.

Lee Prichard
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