



Plumpton College

# Student Newsletter

January 2011

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## Message from the Principal

Welcome to the students mid-year newsletter. In this we try to keep you up-to-date with activities around the College both generally and in individual departments.

I hope that your time at College is being both enjoyable and worthwhile for you. I appreciate that the weather hasn't been great at the end of last term and for some it was a struggle to get to College. By the time you read this the nights will be 'drawing out' a bit and spring and summer will only be just round the corner.

It is very important to us that you find your time at Plumpton worthwhile. If there are any issues that you wish to discuss about your course, your future career or anything else that might be bothering you please do contact your course tutor, your relevant Head of Department, Student Services or make an appointment to see me.

We want this newsletter to be as relevant and useful to you as possible so please let us have your views on what you would like to see included in future editions. Contact [valerie.raynor@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:valerie.raynor@plumpton.ac.uk)

Please pass this newsletter onto parents/guardians/partners if you feel they would be interested.

*Des Lambert*  
Principal

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## Important dates for 2010/11:

### Open Day: Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011

This will be held on 14<sup>th</sup> May from 10am until 5pm. All students are involved and it can be a great day for showing off the College and your department to visitors. We often get over 10,000 people attending. If you get the opportunity, please publicise this event to your friends, family and everyone else who knows you!!

### Summer Ball: Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**Awards Ceremony: Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011**  
This is an important occasion when we recognise the achievement of all students on all courses attending the College. For those of you who haven't been here before it is held in a large marquee on the College lawns and invitations are sent to immediate

family, VIPs and sponsors. All students are expected to attend this important occasion.

### College photo Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2011

Please remember to attend. It takes a bit of organising but it is well worth the effort.

### FE term dates 2011:

Spring term: 4<sup>th</sup> January – 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
Study week: 21<sup>st</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011  
Summer term: 26<sup>th</sup> April – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011

### HE term dates 2011:

Spring term: 4<sup>th</sup> January – 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
Reading weeks: 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011  
Summer term: 26<sup>th</sup> April – 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

- **Driving and road safety**

Please take a lot of care driving around the campus and stick to the speed limits and the rules as to where cars are allowed. There are often a lot of people and animals about and it is very important that traffic goes slowly. I appreciate that the speed bumps are quite severe but if you go over them slowly, which is what you are supposed to do, they are OK.

Please also take care if you drive to and from the College especially if on two wheels. At this time of year roads can be slippery and there are a lot of potholes about. Don't drive too fast - it is better to be told off for being late than to have an accident!

- **Sponsoring Students**

We have several students across the College who take part in outside sports and activities and events, often at a national level. We try to help these students financially. We have Guy Franklin who is competing at a national level at skeet shooting, Tom French who is competing at athletics, Bradley Matthews and Katie Love who we help with their biking competition activities, and James Mitchell. James is competing in the 2011 British equine eventing circuit, with his first competition on 24<sup>th</sup> March at Tweseldown jumping 3ft 7' tracks. If he has time he will also be entering some "Tetrathalons" (Running, Swimming, Shooting, & Cross country riding). Any student who is competing in activities and who would like an albeit small amount of financial help to do so do let me know.

- **Work with Schools**

The College does a lot of work with schools for pupils of all ages. The College's Children's Rural Education Centre situated behind the farm office is host during the spring and summer to several thousand, largely primary school children who attend the College estate to look at agriculture, flora and fauna, woods and trees, horticulture etc. We are proud of our links with FACE (Farming and Countryside Education) in providing this activity.

## **News from Departments**

- **Resources/Buildings Developments**

The summer holidays are traditionally the time when any significant upgrades and improvements to College buildings can be carried out. Students returning to the animal care and wine departments will remember that work started on the addition of a first floor set of rooms above the animal care classrooms and common room at the end of the last academic year. The deadline the builders were working towards was to have the ground floor classrooms and common room reinstated by the first week in September and the upstairs areas completed by the end of that month. Much of the original ceilings within the ground floor areas had to be removed to enable the various services to what would be the new upstairs areas to be installed. Having removed the original roof from this building it left the internal surfaces exposed to the elements whilst the new first floor decking was installed. The weather was kind to us and the high risk strategy paid off with less down-time sheeting up the building which meant that the tight time schedule could be followed.

The new first floor area is joined through to the existing Wine Studies building and has matching external cladding to give the complete building a much more integrated appearance. The upstairs area is being used for classrooms but also houses the College's research department.

Car parking on the College campus has become an increasing problem over the years as the number of students enrolled increases. We are trying to maximize the use of the existing areas by hard surfacing them and white lining the areas to get maximum vehicle numbers parked. Parking close to the main buildings will not be an option for everyone but there are spaces available on the sports field designated area when the hard surface areas are all full. We also need to spread out courses a little bit more so that we have more activity on a Friday and Monday.

We fully aware of the issues with the need for better external lighting in some areas, however, our geographic location is such

that light pollution is a very significant issue and there is regular representation from the locality about the level of external lighting which we already have. Getting planning permission for additional lighting is very difficult.

Students who attend the Plumpton site may not be aware that the College has recently acquired a new site at Stanmer Park on the outskirts of Brighton. This largely horticultural centre was previously managed by City College until August of last year. During the summer there was much activity at the site by the maintenance team in preparation for new and returning students in September. The majority of the work involved the cladding of the existing 'portacabins' and decoration of same both inside and out.

- **Foundation Learning and Learner Support**

It has been an excellent first term. Rural Pathways learners' have been involved in a broad range of activities across the College, assisting with the grape harvest, working with the pigs, working on the Edible Garden Project at Brighton University, participating in the Plumpton shoots and taking part in Sport/Outdoor Education activities organised for them by students following a Foundation Degree in Outdoor Education. Students have also participated in work experience sessions in and around the College. Richard Dawe also worked on the farm over the Christmas period.

Everyone worked so well when we were hosts for the day to a group from Newick House School and we had a lovely message from them to say how much they enjoyed it. Thank you to all students and staff involved.

Learners have been on a number of visits to various local places of interest, including Raystede, The Booth Museum, Newhaven Harbour, Drusilla's, The Alfriston Clergy House and Brighton Museum for the Sound and Music and Planet Earth exhibitions.

Andy Blake, Programme Leader for Rural Pathways, has been nominated for an award by Amaze, a local organization in Brighton and Hove. Amaze gives information, advice and support to parents of children with special needs and disabilities, working to

empower parents to help their children live fully socially included lives.

**Personal message to our learners:** Well done to all of you! You have all worked hard towards your goals and should be proud of your achievements so far. We are looking forward to the Spring Term.

- **Student Voice**

We hope that you are having an enjoyable and rewarding time at College so far. To help us find out more about your time here you will have completed at least one survey by now. You should also have had a meeting and some feedback from your Course Leader about what you and your colleagues have said you like and dislike about the course. What you say in the course surveys is really important to us and we do our best to make changes to the College based on what you have said.

Your colleagues who are course reps have also attended a Course Reps meeting where they had the opportunity to discuss issues that affect all students with colleagues from other courses. They have had the notes from that meeting and they should provide you with some feedback in what was discussed. Please ask them to feed back to you if you have not heard from them already.

If there are things that you are unhappy with about your time at College then it is important that you let us know, whether it is an academic or wider student services matter. Speak to your Course Leader in the first instance or you can always contact me, Richard Pemble, Quality Development Manager, ([richard.pemble@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:richard.pemble@plumpton.ac.uk)) or ask Reception to see if I am available in my office. Alternatively, especially if it is a residential or student services matter, then contact student services. The most important thing is that you contact someone!

- **Student Services**

Thankfully the big freeze cleared in time for the Snow Ball which, as normal was a sell-out and enjoyed by all who attended. Our next big event will be the Summer Ball on 15<sup>th</sup> June and tickets for this will go on sale after the College's Open Day on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011. Please remember to buy your tickets as early as possible; we only have 350

tickets and these will be exclusively for current students.

In September we introduced boxing as a sport for College students – this has been a real success and so we will be continuing these sessions every Wednesday; please check the information screens for details. We will also be introducing badminton coaching one evening per week - this will be open to all students and is a good opportunity to get some professional sports coaching.

Many students have used the College Counsellor as a way to overcome issues that are affecting life as a student. This service is free and open to all students – please contact your tutor if you wish to access it.

- **Horticulture and Floristry**

During the autumn term the College's 2010 sponsored Hampton Court garden was partially rebuilt at a local hospice. During the next few months we will complete the finishing touches with this. The College regularly exhibits at Hampton Court.

Well done to Stephanie Cooper who has won a Medal of Excellence for Floristry (Level 3 Diploma in Floristry) for her coursework last year! Congratulations to the Level 3 Floristry students who took second place in a nationwide inter-college competition held at Covent Garden flower market in the autumn. During recent months bespoke full-cost courses have increased in popularity with an emphasis on Health and Safety and machinery in particular, whilst many trainees working in the horticultural industry were trained in the work place under the over arching "work-based" banner.

We continue to develop our strong links with industry lead bodies and were very pleased to earn the accolade of *Greenkeeping Quality Assured Centre* as granted by the Greenkeeping Training Committee.

A look forward to the start of 2011 brings huge potential for horticulture provisions at Plumpton. Our newly acquired out-centre at Stanmer on the outskirts of Brighton will continue to provide existing full-time courses for the amateur gardener in particular along with a growing range of part-time courses.

Funding from the South of England Show Society has allowed the horticultural department to organise a trip for level 3 students to the Keukenof gardens and bulb fields in Holland this spring.

We are very proud that Stephanie Willoughby our staff leader for Floristry continues in her role as a Floristry World Skills Judge. She will be mentoring the British contestant later in the year.

As the cold weather and the winter comes to an end students from the horticultural department will be spending the usual amount of time making the grounds look as well laid out and presentable as they normally do. The grounds always look very good and are frequently commented on by visitors - please respect their efforts.

- **Environmental and Land-based Studies Diploma**

In September 2009 twenty nine students joined us from eleven schools from across the county to study for the new broad qualification. Launched two years ago, it gives students an opportunity to study all aspects of the land based industries from ecology through to agriculture and forestry, and gain an award equivalent to up to seven GCSEs. This is the only course which combines the science of the natural environment with learning about how farms and other land-based businesses work alongside looking at energy usage and sustainability. It has been an educational adventure for the staff as well as the students. Students get to spend time on the College's extensive estate and last year trips were organised to places such as Wisley and Rye Harbour Nature Reserve where they planted out Marsh Mallow plants (*althaea officinalis*) which they had grown from seed in support of a National Project (only three sites nationally) which is attempting to encourage the population growth of the rare Marsh Mallow Moth (*hydraecia osseola hucherardi*) a priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

In September 2010 we were joined by a forty-five students from across the region. This increase in numbers 'bucks the trend' of some of the other 14-19 Diploma qualifications launched nationally and so we are now proud to be working with seventy-five students from schools in East Sussex,

West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove. We would also like to thank the support of our 'hub' schools who are sharing the delivery in either a smaller or larger way (Oathall, Ringmer, Longhill, Claverham, and Beacon). They in turn have benefitted in that a successful £5m bid has meant that the 'hub' schools and the College will see the introduction of new 3D learning technology, improvement of the Virtual Learning Environment and sustainable multi-purpose creative learning centres which will enable Land Based education to reach more learners.

We are now recruiting for September 2011, so if you know of students interested in a qualification which will help to prepare them for work and careers in what will surely be a growth area of environmental management and monitoring as well as filling the skills shortage which exists within the land based sector, let me know.

- **Sport (Outdoor Education)**

Just before Christmas the department was privileged to be visited by Jo Gambi who has visited the North and South poles and climbed the '7 Summits' (the highest peak on each of the seven continents), and Dave Manby an internationally renowned expedition kayaker who has lead a number of very challenging first descents of various rivers around the world.

The beginning of the term has proved to be very busy for the Outdoor Education department and students have completed another successful ski trip. The department had a stand at the Outdoors Show in London and the ergo trainer generated a lot of interest. All the students that didn't go on the ski trip had the opportunity to visit the Show and this proved to be a very enjoyable day. There are a number of other exciting plans and expeditions planned in the near future which you will be able to learn more about in the near future. Level 2 Diploma and year 2 Level 3 Diploma students will be very busy between now and Easter as they need to have all their work submitted before they head off on their various exciting work placements.

- **Business Training**

Are you considering running your own business when you leave College, or at some time in the future? If so, you may be interested in the range of short courses Business Training provides to support the land-based sector. We also regularly host meetings and seminars for rural organisations in the Sussex Rural Business Centre (SRBC). Many events are open to students and you are very welcome to attend. Some events are free and others are often offered at a discount to students. For example, equine students may be interested in the regular evening talks by Cliffe Veterinary Group – please contact Rachel Clement, Head of Equine, if you would like to attend.

Subject to the funding being confirmed, during the Summer Term, **1066 Enterprise** will be offering a one-day **Start Up workshop** for those of you with a specific business idea. The workshop, which is free, will help you develop a business plan and start you on your way to success.

There is a list of forthcoming events on the board in the SRBC reception and if you would like to come along please either contact your Head of Department or email [don.cranfield@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:don.cranfield@plumpton.ac.uk)

- **Equine**

This year we have a good variety of horses at Plumpton to cater for the needs of all levels of rider, such as Max a 17.2hh Irish draught and Barnaby a 14hh Russian Cob. We have purchased a 2 year old mare called Pinky, who will be used in the young stock training units; and we have a Shetland pony called Rosie, who is used by the RDA and for students with disabilities.

The Shire horse provision has developed over the last year. Magnum and Dick, entered seven competitions all over the south and east of England. They competed at the South of England, New Forest and Kent County shows. The highlights of the year was when Dick won the Agriculture turnout class at Chertsey Agricultural Show and Hollie Harvey came 5<sup>th</sup> on Magnum in the ridden Shire class at the East of England Show, Peterborough. They were placed in many other competitions. Big thanks go out

to the staff and the many students who gave up their time to train and compete the Shires such as Anne-Marie Harvey, Lauren Spicer and Tom Jackson.

Plumpton continues to run successful competitions at weekends and the annual show in May was a great success. Congratulations go to the show team of second year National Diploma students and their tutor Kate Fuller. The 2010 Christmas show was well attended and a great success, due to the hard work of the students. We would encourage you to get as much competition experience as possible to improve your riding so speak to Neil the yard manager and see if you can borrow a College horse to ride in this year shows. The annual show will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011 and you have the opportunity to take part in the Dressage show on 5<sup>th</sup> February and Showing show on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

Congratulations go to the first year University of Brighton equine team who competed at an eventing competition in Southampton on 12<sup>th</sup> January. The team of Catherine Housman, Michelle McCallum, Emily Meyer and Hayley Reece came second in the team competition, with Hayley gaining 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the individual section.

The BHS UKCC Level 1 coaching qualification was a success last year with all students who entered passing this qualification. This year the plan is to encourage students to take the Level 1 qualification by February 2011 and then progress onto the UKCC Level 2 qualification. Any student who wants to take a BHS qualification should contact Emma Adams for details of this year's exams.

Staff and students have taken part in a research study commissioned by the BHS in to the health benefits of participating in horse riding, to establish whether horse riding could be classed as a moderate intensity activity. This involved taking part in a VO2 Max test, which involved a graded exercise test on a stationary exercise machine in the sports science labs at Eastbourne and then riding in a forty-five minute session, whilst wearing a rather attractive mask! The results of this study will follow shortly and be included in the next news letter.

We welcome the following new members of staff, Rachel Clement, Head of department (maternity cover) Michelle Johnston, HE programme leader, instructor Lisa Baker and Neil Lindsay-Stewart as yard manager. All the staff team welcome you to Plumpton and we know that if you work hard and stay focused that you will get a great deal of experience and happy memories from your time here.

- **Animal Care**

It has been a busy year so far for the Animal Care department, with students studying a wide range of courses. We have welcomed the largest number of students ever to Animal Care, from 14-16yr learners from Sussex schools, through to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students on the Foundation Degree in Veterinary Nursing who have just completed a year out in practice.

Animal Care students have visited different animal collections including London Zoo, and Drusilla's Park. Groups also went to the Natural History Museum in London and the Arundel Wetland Centre. We have also been visited by Trevor Weeks from Wildlife Rescue and Ambulance Service and by Amanda Millar from the Sussex Bat Group (accompanied by some sleepy bats). Staff and students were treated to a fantastic display and talk from Xtreme Falconry.

We have welcomed new staff members to the department: Holly Hackney has joined Animal Care whilst Emily Robinson is on maternity leave, and Sarah Woodward and Diana White have moved from being veterinary nurses in practice to join us as lecturers. Meanwhile, in the unit there are two new arrivals, Derek and Nelly who are sun parakeet or sun conures who we are hoping may become a breeding pair.

- **Forestry and Arboriculture**

The Forestry and Arboriculture Department continues to grow in student numbers, members of staff and premises.

Dr Kevin Warwick left the department after fourteen years of service. He has re-located to Lincolnshire where his wife has taken up a senior post at Riseholme College which is part of the University of Lincoln. We understand Kevin has been approached to

write a couple of Forestry books so keep an eye on the bookshelves.

Hugh Morris has joined to replace Kevin and is here in a full time capacity. Hugh will mainly teach on HE courses. He originally comes from Westport in the Republic of Ireland and for the last three years has been Arboricultural Officer with Test Valley Council in Hampshire.

David Saunders has now joined the Forestry Department. David has been looking after the Woodland Enterprise site at Flimwell for many years and he was instrumental in setting this up. He is employed part time and will be doing some teaching and research and maintaining links with Flimwell. He was also actively involved in Woodnet and will continue in this role.

The department has invested a considerable amount of money this year in replacing and increasing the stock of Tree Climbing Equipment to ensure we comply with LOLER legislation and a member of staff has attended a LOLER inspector's course.

For the first time we are running a separate cohort of First Diploma students at our specially constructed workshop complex at Flimwell which is now finished. Those students are taking a very active role in the management of the woodland down there under the watchful eye of Gavin Nevett. There are already visible differences around the Woodland Enterprise Centre and car parking area. We are increasing the number of courses available over there and we are hoping to run more full time programmes from the centre as well as the College increases its involvement with running the Woodland Enterprise Centre.

Another Land Rover has been purchased, bringing the total in the Forestry fleet to four.

We have recruited well to all full time programmes this year and hope this trend will continue in the years to come. The outlook for employment in the Forestry industry looks better than it has for many years with the increasing interest in wood fuel and coppice management coming back into vogue. The Arboriculture sector continues to be a buoyant industry in spite of the stark economic conditions which have beset the country over the last year to

eighteen months; so it's not all doom and gloom. Here's hoping for a prosperous 2011.

- **Engineering and Metalsmithing**

It is now ten months since the Engineering department moved into the new buildings. The months have seen a continual improvement in facilities, learner experiences and capabilities. The new students who joined us this year are reaping the benefits of the investment in state of the art workshops, equipment and machinery.

We are now using the Qualifications Credit Framework units, and, for the engineering students, we have started with intensive three-week unit sessions followed by a work experience break of one week. The feedback from the students is good and all seem to be enjoying the faster paced teaching. We've also seen the students coming in to College on their week breaks and catching up with work and building up their own practical skills.

Now that we have more room, we've been able to use more of the training equipment that was in storage. Students are able to work on their projects without disturbance and in better conditions. The College has invested heavily in IT equipment and there are now two lecture rooms fully supported with computers for students, alongside the interactive whiteboards in each classroom. We're also hosting the exemplar project of video teaching and conferencing in the MM4 classroom.

The rather aging fleet of tractors is on its way to an upgrade. Last September we obtained a used Massey Ferguson 5455 to replace the Massey Ferguson 290 that has been transferred to the out-centre at Flimwell. We have also just ordered two New Holland T5040 tractors to replace the two New Holland TS90s and the New Holland TS115 will be replaced by a John Deere 6430.

This academic year has seen a large number of students needing to undergo Forklift Truck training. We now have our own in-house trainer, Richard Killner, who is running a short intensive course to achieve the requirements needed to gain NPTC qualifications. The advantage is that Richard is now able to cater for students who need to spend more time in training. So far each

student has undergone their training with keen enthusiasm and all students have been successful in assessment. Congratulations to them, and the very best of luck for those to come!

The First Diploma students have had two visits, one to a potato farm in Kent and another to Cirrus Laser in Burgess Hill. They are also enjoying the intensive unit sessions and are all (mostly) up to date with their work. The students are now servicing the tractor fleet, and have taken on Phil Hart's sheep shearing trailers as a refurbishment project.

The Subsidiary/Extended Diploma Land-Based Technology students have been busy this term covering Health and Safety, workshop skills and engine technology and repair. The units involved engine repair where the students took seven scrapped Land Rover engines and repaired six of them back to running order. The students are now having fun with their evening projects, building a machine for off-road work powered by a 100cc two stroke engine.

The Second Year LBT students are doing well, all of them are working at Merit or Distinction level under the firm guiding hands of Pete Wood and Dave Cottingham. Their current project is the winter services of the farm combine and forage harvester. They are working under the guidance of the farm team and learning a wide range of practical skills. The same project last year produced excellent results for the farm and they were pleased with the performance of the machines.

Metalsmithing students are progressing well. The students are producing some excellent work and their gate to the entrance of the quad by the new West Wing is admired by many people. They are now working on their next commission, a display outside the Library.

- **Agriculture, Countryside, Game Keeping**

This academic year has started very well with some of the highest numbers of students we have seen enrolling in agriculture and game management programmes. Students all seem to have settled in well and are already making names

for themselves by their contributions to College and the wider industry. Students from the game management programmes have received a prestigious accolade being finalists in this year's *Purdey Awards*. The award presentations were held in Mayfair in London where the College was highly commended on its contribution to improving wildlife habitats with a special mention to Neil and James Bianchi and the game management students who run the shoot, for their hard work in increasing the numbers of partridge and hare on the estate.

Environmental management students have also hit the headlines by once again taking part in the *National Small Mammal Survey* where for the second year running, they have recorded the largest number of harvest mice for any single location. This and other countryside activities are available to read in the new *Plumpton College Countryside Estate Guide* which staff and students have contributed to and gives a broad overview of all the countryside and conservation activities being undertaken on the College estate.

Agriculture students have also worked hard on the College farm especially during the recent bad weather, helping to develop their skills and resilience whilst milking through a "sub-zero" temporary parlour whilst the dairy unit refurbishments are under way. One section that has been completed is the new dairy cow housing which is very impressive and students have used this as an opportunity to assess its impact on improvements to cow comfort and welfare. One student has monitored the reduction in cattle feet problems and has already demonstrated a significant reduction since the new building has become operational. Students have also engaged themselves in other trial projects such as crop establishment and calf rearing trials. We are now looking forward to an early spring when students will be making a variety of study tours including one to the SIMA machinery show in Paris early next month. We will also have entries into the *RABDF Dairy student of the Year* competition where Plumpton has had a winner in recent years and the Foundation Degree students will be entering a team in the *Farm Business Planner competition* later this month, we wish them every success in this event.

- **Farm**

The dairy unit on the farm is currently going through a re-build. The new cow cubicle building has been completed with the cows moved in just before the snow arrived. The cows seem very happy and content with their new set up. The building can house 350 cows and feeding arrangements are a vast improvement on previous buildings. The old calf house has been pulled down and a new larger one is in the process of being erected. The dairy parlour has been taken down and the frame work for the new parlour is currently going up. The cows are currently being milked through a temporary milking bail, which has been a big challenge in the recent cold weather. We are looking forward to seeing the stages of the new buildings being constructed and look forward to the final completion, with new classrooms, offices and food processing facilities.

Lambing time is fast approaching and we are getting ourselves prepared for this busy time. The early lambing flock has been scanned with good results.

In December we had success at the Hailsham Fatstock Show with our pigs taking first and second place.

- **Higher Education**

The Foundation Degree and BSc degree programmes that the College provide in association with the University of Brighton are an important part of the College's provision and it is encouraging to see the high numbers that we currently have. We are very aware though that there are difficulties ahead in terms of changes in Government policy with HE and this will bring challenges but it will also bring opportunities.

We have new staff teaching on HE programmes: welcome to Dr Belinda Kemp who has recently completed her PhD in New Zealand, to Debbie Glass who joins the Research Group and to Hugh Morris who joins the Forestry Department.

Last year saw the greatest number of Plumpton students graduate at the University of Brighton's award presentation, a very pleasing indication of our growing HE provision.

Our IQER Developmental Engagement in November went well and the reviewers were complementary about the students they met. IQER is the inspection process which HE as to 'go through'.

- **Wine**

Following on from a very successful 2009-10, we were delighted to see that student recruitment on the Wine courses met all our targets this September. Just as well, as the grape harvest was the largest we have ever had! Weather conditions in June were perfect for flowering and, in spite of a warm and rainy August, the grapes were in a pretty good shape by September. We are particularly looking forward to tasting the wines from the new plantations at Rock Lodge (Chardonnay and Acolon), which started to bear fruit this year.

Three new members of staff have recently joined the Department:

- First to join us was Dr Belinda Kemp, whose mission is to develop and promote research in the Wine Department. Belinda graduated from Plumpton (top HE student!) in 2006 then, after a very successful vintage at Nyetimber, moved to Lincoln in New Zealand to complete a PhD. Now she's back, organising research projects with partners such as Richard Marchal of Rheims University, who is making an in-depth study of grape pressing for the production of sparkling wine.
- Alistair Nesbitt was awarded the prize for the top BSc Viticulture and Oenology student in 2009 then completed an MSc (Research) at Brighton University. His job is to support Jo Cowderoy in the WineSkills project, particularly by developing workshops on sustainability issues. He is currently establishing national technical committees whose task will be to agree best practice for UK wine production. We wish him the best of luck!
- Another top Plumpton HE graduate to join the team is Andrew Atkinson, who completed the FdSc in Wine Production in 2010. Formerly working with Unilever, he will be using his prodigious IT skills to develop an on-line information resource for the UK wine industry. He only started in January; but watch this space!

Both Alistair and Andrew's positions are sponsored through the Wineskills project, which organised an excellent Masterclass in December on the Oregon sustainability scheme (LIVE). One of the guest speakers was Dr Patty Skinkis from Oregon State University, who then joined us on the biennial Wine Department study tour to Bordeaux. In spite of snowstorms (both in the UK and in Bordeaux), almost all of us made the trip and spent a wonderful 3 days visiting top quality vineyards and wineries and a large equipment show. One of the highlights of the tour was the first night; a delicious meal offered by Chateau de Sours (sponsors of wine research at Plumpton) with lots of wine and conviviality!

2011 should be another great year for the Wine Department at Plumpton, particularly with the development of two new Wine Business courses (The Wine Trade in Britain and the Foundation Diploma in Wine Business) and major growth in industry training (WineSkills) and research. We are also working hard to develop our reputation abroad. Last year, Tony Milanowski delivered a seminar in Sweden and Chris Foss made a presentation in Seattle (USA). This year the Department will be working hard to develop links with countries including Malta, South Korea and China, aiming to gain a truly international reputation in wine education, training and research for Plumpton College.

- **Plumpton College at Netherfield, Ivyland Farm**

It has been an excellent first term. With learners ranging from 13 – 19 years eagerly clambering out of the bus each morning, ready for the day ahead.

Within the first week learners were demonstrating their new found skills to the local community by assisting a neighbouring farmer and Sussex Police in rounding up ten wayward young steers that had decided to leave their field for pastures new. The rodeo started in a nearby wood and took in the local golf club and surrounding gardens. Sussex Police were amazed by the enthusiasm and response from eighteen learners and their tutors that they felt that a letter of thanks was in order.

Learners have also been involved in a broad range of activities across the five farms in and around Netherfield. They have assisted with housing the cattle for the winter months ahead, scanning the livestock and becoming very proud parents to a number of breeds of piglets at Homestead Farm. Our new small animal unit has proved to be a success with learners busily tending to the rabbits and guinea pigs to ensure that they are well cared for and healthy. During the snowy periods, learners ventured out to show their support with tasks on the farms. Students and staff are now looking forward to the spring term where they will be facing new challenges, attending agricultural shows and competitions within our new Young Farmers' Club starting shortly.

- **Equality of Opportunity**

We welcome the views of students on how we can promote equality, be more inclusive and help those with all types of disability. Contact either Richard Coombs at richard.coombs@plumpton.ac.uk or the Principal with your thoughts.