The 2017 Nuffield International Triennial Conference shone a two-week spotlight on British farming, food and rural enterprise, with a programme of visits and events to showcase the very ‘Best of British’ in farming, food, technology and our diversified rural landscape.

Running from the 3rd to 15th June 2017, the programme began with seven Themed Days of visits to pioneering farms, diversified rural enterprises and thriving agri-food businesses.

These were followed by a further three days of focused sector Field Tours intended to whet the appetite of enthusiasts who were keen to learn more from our industry leaders in the fields of arable, dairy, beef, horticulture and sustainable farming.

As a part of the 2017 Triennial experience, a high profile Conference Day – entitled ‘Farming Fit For Food’ - was also held on 8th June, to explore how farming, in partnership with the food industry, could rise to the challenge of changing food and dietary requirements.

**CONFERENCE JOURNEYED NORTH**

Carrying a headline theme of ‘Small Island: Big Ideas’, the 2017 Conference began its seven day journey in the south of England at the mansion house hotel known as Wokefield Park Estate.

Following a two-day programme of themed visits, with a heritage tour option provided, the Conference moved progressively north, staying at the Crowne Plaza in Stratford-upon-Avon for two nights and then at the East Midlands conference centre, Nottingham, also for two nights.

The fourth leg of the Conference Week was based in York, at the centrally located Park Inn, where delegates stayed for three nights, culminating in the Triennial Gala Dinner at the British Railway Museum, on Sunday, 11th June.
Monday, 12th June, marked the start of the Post-Conference Technical Field Tours and the chance to explore one of five industry sectors in different parts of the UK. Alternatively, delegates said their farewells, packed their bags and begin the journey home.

Caption: Listening, learning and laughter on the 2017 UK Nuffield Triennial Themed Days and Field Tours.

SEVEN THEMED DAYS

Seven days with seven key themes – Science and Sustainability, Great British Food, Rural Enterprise and Modern Day Estates, World Class Innovation, The Power of Renewables, Iconic Hills and Uplands, and Family Owned: Family Run – provided the framework of the Triennial conference week. Each day was run by a different Nuffield scholar, offered visit choices on each of the days, along with a heritage tour option on some of the days.

Fine dining was the ‘order of the day’ throughout the week, with some magnificent venues - including the National Motor Museum, Fountains Abbey, The Merchant Taylors Hall in York and National Railway Museum – adding to the culinary experience. A chance to sample some of the best food and drink that England has to offer – including Packington Free Range chicken, award winning Long Clawson cheeses and Hook Norton ales and beers – was also provided.
Amongst the very many highlights during the week were visits to Thatchers Cider, Yeo Valley, Overbury Estate, JCB, Mercer Farming, Severn Trent Water, Lindum Turf, JSR Farms and grafting small family farms in the remote Yorkshire Dales farming under the constraints of the National Trust.

Immense thanks and congratulations go to the scholar Day Organisers – William Waterfield, Nick Green, Jake Freestone, Roger Mercer, Steve Ward, Dorothy Fairburn and Stephen Fell – for putting on such special visits.

**FIVE SECTOR FIELD TOURS**

Located in all corners of the country - and run by scholars with specialist industry and local knowledge – these more focused technical tours gave delegates the chance to explore issues at the ‘industry coal face’ and to dig much deeper into an area of personal interest.

The varied programmes provided also took delegates to national farming shows, to demonstration and research stations, as well as to visit local sights of historical interest in the region.

Amongst the many highlights were visits to Guy Trehane’s Hampreston Herd in Dorset, the fourth generation Worth Farms in Lincolnshire, Major David Walters champion Scottish Charolais herd, Nic and George Snell’s Certainly Wood enterprise in Herefordshire and the Allerton Project at Loddington, Leicestershire.

Again, it’s hats off to the scholar organisers of the Field Tours - Guy Trehane, Tom Bradshaw, Robert Parker, Heather Wildman, Margaret Herbert, Stephen Briggs and William Waterfield – who put together some superb and very memorable programmes of visits and social events.
Caption: Famous faces, facts about our food and future foods produced with the help of farmers were all a part of the ‘Farming Fit For Food’ Conference programme which drew a record attendance.
Gaining a far better understanding of how consumers’ changing food and nutritional needs will impact on farming and the food industries was at the heart of the Triennial Conference Day, held at the East Midlands Conference Centre.

Its focus, in particular, was to respond to the rising consumer interest in healthy food options, coupled with the simultaneous rise in diet-related public health issues such as diabetes and obesity, which already costs the NHS £5.2 billion each year and is the third biggest social burden globally.

Conference Chairman, Stephen Fell, was joined by the energetic and very able BBC Countryfile presenter, broadcaster and journalist, Tom Heap, who presided over a very dynamic and thought-provoking day which was able to shed light on some of the key health issues, and demonstrate to farmers and the food chain how they might work together to find solutions to the current health crisis.

Leading by example, the ‘eating more healthier’ theme was even extended to the conference coffee breaks, where the usual sugar-laden cakes and biscuits were replaced by an innovative range of fresh and more wholesome vegetable-based snacks.

PACKED PROGRAMME

Farming Fit For Food was supported by senior academics, public health representatives and farming industry experts from all areas of the supply chain. They included Professor Susan Jebb, Dr Tina Barsby and Jane Bennett, who together provided insights into population health, advances in plant breeding and integrating the supply chain to drive the market.

**Professor Michael Winter OBE, Exeter University** - ‘Securing farming's role in the health agenda’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgOByr8edB8&t=4s

Michael explored how farming’s role in the health agenda can be secured; concluding that a renewed emphasis on the nutritional quality of crops and working closely with the health sector, opinion leaders and consumers is needed.

**Caroline Drummond MBE, LEAF CEO** - ‘Healthy food and farming – Fit for the future’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZcVatUt6g

Against a back drop of the contrast between what we should be eating and what is being produced, Caroline explored how farming, food and behaviour can be changed to ensure fitness for the future – citing examples of LEAF activity along the way.

**Dr Tina Barsby, CEO NAIB** - ‘A revolution in plant breeding’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJapY3SyhFY

Exploring how plant breeding is undergoing a revolution, underpinned by genome science, Tina considered whether the opportunities will be held back by difficulties of bringing new varieties to market.

**Susan Jebb OBE, Professor of Diet and Population Health, Oxford University** - ‘Who is responsible for what we eat?’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3FsIKIXLMY

With diet the leading cause of ill health in the UK, Susan Jebb explored the reasons for the increase in diet-related diseases and growing inequality in health, what can be done to change this and whose responsibility this is; concluding everyone must contribute.
Jane Bennett, CEO TasFoods Ltd - ‘Integrating the supply chain to drive the market’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFvjEAPpmkg&t=6s
Jane followed the journey to supplying the end user with a product benefit they value, from commercial innovation to agricultural production and emphasised the importance of farmers engaging in the supply chain to be part of this innovation.

Duncan Farrington, Farrington’s Mellow Yellow - ‘Delivering health benefits from commodity crops’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anDW-lBlk1s
Predicting that interest in gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, environmentally-friendly and nutritious plant-sourced food will continue to grow, Duncan suggested that farmers and food manufacturers should work with other industry specialists to develop options for consumers; thereby playing a vital role in public health.

Matt Swain, Nuffield scholar - ‘The death of low-fat’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxTpps6MaZA
Arguing that fat has no significant impact on mortality, Matt suggested carbohydrates are the likely culprit and suggested the de-demonization of saturated fat can be positive for agriculture as a whole.

Steven Evans, AHDB Consumer Insight Analyst - ‘Health through the eyes of the consumer’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mty9QA0Hx78
Steven picked out key factors in the consumer landscape impacting food choices, with a focus on health and shared key opportunities for ways the industry can meet the health needs of the modern consumer.

Charles Spence, Oxford Professor of Experimental Psychology - ‘Gastrophysics: Getting sensory with our food’ - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePguEqCJ7
Charles Spence explored how ‘the pleasures of the table reside mainly in the mind, not the mouth’ and that the way food is described, presented and experienced affects the way it is perceived.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

Professor Michael Winter - Securing farming’s role in the health agenda
Caroline Drummond MBE - Healthy food and farming - fit for the future
Dr Tina Barsby - The changing opportunities for plant breeding
Professor Susan Jebb - Who is responsible for what we eat?
Jane Bennett - Integrating the supply chain to drive the market
Duncan Farrington - Delivering health benefits from commodity crops
Matt Swain - The death of low-fat
Steven Evans - Consumer focus: Health through the eyes of the consumer
Charles Spence - Gastrophysics: Getting sensory with our food

The conference concluded with an industry panel – of Guy Smith (NFU), Russ Carrington (Pasture-Fed Livestock Association), Duncan Williamson (WWF-UK Food Policy Manager) and David Northcroft (Berry Gardens) – who each gave their personal views on the topic of ‘Adding value for the farmer through the health agenda’.
TRIENNIAL FEEDBACK

The feedback from Triennial delegates has been overwhelmingly positive. Overall, delegates had found the programme both stimulating and extremely enjoyable. There had been something for everyone.

Being able to offer a variety of attendance options - from a single day to two full weeks - together with a choice of visits on each of the days, proved to be very popular with delegates.

Moving the programme to different parts of the country, providing some great social events to balance the business visits and mixing it up with some special dinners in some quite magnificent locations, were also part of the winning formula.

There was a genuine appreciation of the calibre of farms and businesses that were included in the Themed Day programme, with delegates reporting some standout visits to farmers who were at the very top of their game, many of whom were Nuffield scholars.

These high standards were carried over into the second week of jam-packed Field Tours which featured some equally exceptional farms and farming personalities which, in themselves, led to some truly memorable encounters. Delegates were also treated to some good old-fashioned local hospitality and many clearly thrived on the smaller group dynamics.

One delegate described the Beef Tour as: “Outstanding - a holiday, a party, a learning experience on steroids”. A delegate on the Dairy Tour commented: “It was brilliant and carried on the quality of the first week. It was also great to be in a smaller group for a while and get to know people a little better.”

The Conference Day, held at the EMCC, was also a great triumph. Ticket sales had escalated to a record-breaking 510 delegates by close of bookings, making the Triennial Conference Day, together with the Conference Dinner, the largest ticketed UK Nuffield event in history!

It was highly commended for tackling an outward looking and hard-hitting food and health-related topic which had universal appeal, and for bringing together an exciting mix of world-renowned experts in nutrition, obesity and sustainability.
A TRIENNIAL LEGACY

Caption: “All things Triennial” have been captured in first Nuffield Triennial video, produced with the help of AHDB. They invited delegates to express their “inner film-maker” by taking smart ‘phone footage that best represented their experience of a Nuffield Triennial and enter this footage into a video competition. Go to the NuffieldUK YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TNiMvmBagc) to view the video.

Summing up, Nuffield UK can be truly proud of hosting a very successful, inspiring and well managed 2017 Triennial.

Overall, the Triennial provided a valuable platform for raising the profile of Nuffield. It delivered superb advertising for the Nuffield brand and also gave great exposure for Triennial sponsors.

The Conference Day in particular caught the imagination of the farming and food industries, and has raised the awareness of Nuffield across much wider audiences, including food chain and food nutrition.

In material terms, the 2017 Triennial generated some excellent press coverage, in both print and social media, a series of valuable and challenging food and farming papers, a Triennial legacy video and a series of photo libraries as a lasting record of ‘people and places’.

On top of all this, we must also thank the 2017 Triennial for the part it has played in re-energizing the Nuffield International alumni. Like Triennials before it, scores of friendships were rekindled or renewed over the course of the two week programme, and the success of the event - in engaging scholars who hitherto had not taken part in a Triennial - has helped build new scholar networks and friendships, both locally and globally.

Roll on the next Triennial in 2020 in New Zealand, when those special Nuffield alliances can once again be reignited.
For all photo libraries - Themed Days, Field Tours, Conference Day and Dinner – please go to the NuffieldUK Flickr channel.

Themed Days - https://www.flickr.com/photos/nuffielduk/sets/72157684979083995
Field Tours – https://www.flickr.com/photos/nuffielduk/sets/7215768326795641
Conference Dinner - https://www.flickr.com/photos/nuffielduk/sets/72157682964778570

2017 TRIENNIAL ORGANISING TEAM

From left: Roger Mercer (Chairman), Tony Evans (Finance/Logistics), Stephen Fell (Farming Fit For Food Conference Day Chair & Host), Julie Mate (PR/Communications/E-Comms), Claire Eggleston (Secretary), Andrew Scoley (Field Tours), Bill Young (Conference Week) and Mike Vacher (Farming Fit For Food Conference Day).

OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

We are hugely indebted to our sponsors and supporters for their generous contributions towards the 2017 Nuffield Triennial.

Thanks go to the generosity of over 50 sponsors and also to the dedication of the Triennial Chairman, Roger Mercer, in driving such a very successful sponsorship campaign.

One of the key objectives of the 2017 Triennial organising team was to secure sponsorship for a number of assisted places, specifically to enable younger delegates to attend and ‘experience a Triennial’ for the first time. In total, the sponsorship was able to fund the places over 62 younger delegates, including all of the 2017 Global Focus Programme scholars.

Surplus funds have been split equally between Nuffield UK and Nuffield International, with the express wish that it should be used for a similar purpose: to provide financial support for new and younger scholars enabling them play a part in future Nuffield Triennials and other international events.

Special thanks

Our special thanks go to our primary sponsor, AHDB, for generously supporting the Triennial. They gave their time, support and resources to the event - including direct sponsorship, promotional work, a commissioned conference paper and speaker, a legacy video and AHDB visitor support on many of the Themed and Field Tour days.
Our thanks also go to Cranswick for sponsoring the Gala Dinner and to Frontier Agriculture, as our Conference Day Sponsor.

Our 11 Sector Sponsors – JCB, Agrovista, Knights, GLW Feeds, Andersons, Fisher German, Anglia Farmers, Waitrose, Saffery Champness, SAI Global and Alan & Anne Beckett - were some of the first to pledge their support to the Triennial. They gave us a firm foundation and the confidence to push ahead with our ambitious plans. Thank you.

Our Day Sponsors and Supporters represent all of our other valued support - providing funds, in-kind assistance, hospitality, transport, or fabulous locally-sourced food and drink for delegates to dine on throughout the two weeks of the event. Again, thank you for your contributions.

Mention must also be reserved for our two national farming magazines for their invaluable media support of the Triennial and of Nuffield UK. Your editorial support is greatly appreciated and valued.

Nuffield scholars

And, finally, to all of the voluntary contributions from Nuffield scholars who have given up their time to help with the 2017 Triennial - as a host, as a day organiser, as a speaker, as a committee member, as a tour leader, or in any other capacity: Thank you and thank you for making this 2017 Nuffield Triennial happen. You know who you are!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

“I would like to thank all of you - delegates, hosts, sponsors and the scores of volunteers - for helping to make the 2017 Triennial such a very successful and truly memorable event.

“I must also thank the organising team who have, over the last few years, put together an extraordinary programme of 60 visits and experiences. They have done an amazing job. We all get out of Nuffield what we put into it and everyone contributed in a huge way to help make it a success. I thank you all for getting so fully engaged.

“Overall, the event was extremely well attended. We averaged between 180 and 205 delegates on each of the Themed Days and a record-breaking 510 delegates attended the Conference Day at the East Midlands Conference Centre. All of the Technical Field Tours were also well attended, with group sizes ranging from 15 to 60.

“I hope that our 2017 Triennial delivered what you were looking for - and that you did indeed find it inspiring, enriching and fulfilling.

“On behalf of the organising team and myself, we look forward to meeting up with you again at the next Triennial in New Zealand.”

Roger Mercer, 2017 Triennial Chairman