



**BORDER UNION AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY
LUNCHEON, FRIDAY 21ST FEBRUARY 2020
AWARD RECIPIENTS BIOGRAPHIES**

RFS & RHS LONG SERVICE AWARDS

FORD & ETAL

NEIL EDMONDSON

Neil grew up on the Ford & Etal Estate. His father came to Ford & Etal Farms as shepherd but then became dairyman and tenant farmer at Ford Hill Dairy, in Ford Village.

Neil started work in the Estate Sawmill in 1988, some two years after it was relocated to its present site. The old sawmill is now the site of the Heatherslaw Light Railway – a spot that attracts more than 28,000 visitors annually – rather more than the stobs, posts and rails that were once produced there!

In his spare time, his hobby (if that is the right word for it) is his flock of Texel sheep, continuing the long-standing family connection with sheep and shepherding. He is a regular exhibitor at the Border Union Show, among others, and he sells his high-quality Texels at the Ram Sales.

His wife Debbie was, for a time, Private Secretary to the late Society President, and great supporter of these events, the late Duke of Roxburghe.

Described as ‘a first-class worker, a dependable, reliable member of the team’, Neil’s contributions are much valued and appreciated.

Neil completed 31 years’ service with Ford and Etal Estates at the end of 2019 and receives a Certificate of Long Service from the Royal Forestry Society.



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NEIL MOLE

Neil Mole was born and brought up at Ford & Etal and is at least the third generation of his family to have worked and lived there. He started work in the Gardens at Ford & Etal at the age of 16, in 1978, working with his father and, two years later, with his younger brother Gordon. They had 20 happy years working together. Sadly, Gordon died in 2001.

Neil took over from his father as Head Gardener in 2004 – a post that he still holds.

Neil is a keen pigeon fancier and racer and his birds regularly compete in, and win, long-distance races with starting points extending to the near continent.

He and his wife Heather have two grown up daughters, Amy and Fearn. Fearn will be well known to many of you here as she works in the Office of Society Accountants, Rennie Welsh.

Neil is noted as being very loyal and dependable person who takes great pride in his work and in the gardens and grounds of Ford & Etal – a visible tribute to his skill and dedication.

Neil completed 41 years of service with the Joicey family and Ford & Etal Estates in 2019 and receives a Medal from the Royal Horticultural Society.



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RHASS

ANDREW THOMS

Andrew spent his early years in the South of England, learning a great deal of his farming practice, and attending Agricultural College, there.

He came to work as a tractorman for AP Innes, Ltd at Windywalls, near Kelso in May 1988. During the next 30 years he has learned and adapted to some dramatic changes in technology in agricultural machinery and techniques. For example, when he started, the gap for crop tramlines was about 12 metres, now it is 24. In 1988, Computers were rare on farms let alone on tractors!

Andrew is fond of outdoor sports, in particular canoeing both on the Tweed and in the sea off Berwick. He also enjoys running and, occasionally horse riding. He has learned the art of Taekwondo and has reached the level of Black Dan, second grade.

All the patience and mind control that he has learned through Taekwondo would have been fully challenged when he bought a second-hand Massey Ferguson 135 which he completely stripped down, restored and reassembled. He now takes it to Shows and Vintage Tractor Rallies.

Andrew is married to Anne and they have one daughter, Emma.

Noted as a very conscientious worker, able to put his mind to any new challenge, Andrew, after 30 years at Windywalls today receives an RHASS Silver Medal.



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RHASS

KENNETH ANDERSON

Kenneth or Kenny as he is known, is a Gala Water man. He started work as a shepherd with the Weir's at Cortleferry in 1986.

His work there, both on the hill and in parks, involves Blackfaces, Greyfaces, Suffolk Crosses and Texels. If pushed, Kenny would admit that his favourites are the Suffolks.

Over the years more and more technology has been introduced into working with sheep – whether that be quad bikes, new medicines and treatments, pregnancy scanning or new handling techniques. However, all would agree that none of these are a substitute for the knowledge and skills of a good shepherd.

Kenny is a keen Carpet Bowler and is well-known in the village halls in the local area, attending matches and competitions – and winning the odd trophy.

Kenny lives with his partner, Lesley, on the farm.

Known as 'a good sheep man, happy to be left to work by himself', Kenny is never happier than when he is working with his sheep – as we see today – he's not here!!

Having completed 32 years of Service with the Weir's at Cortleferry, Kenny today receives an RHASS Silver Medal, which will be accepted by his son, Stuart.



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RHASS

WILLIAM HILL

William, or Willie as he is universally known, is Oxton born and bred. His father drove for Campbells of Oxton and Willie often accompanied him – having to be lifted into the cab as he was too small to climb in himself. It was no surprise when he joined the company too in 1985

He trained as an HGV driver, but with the added specialism of handling Livestock; - cattle, sheep, but mostly pigs. His motto is to treat all loads, whatever it is, with respect.

Willie's first lorry was an ERF – noise, dust, fumes and big oil leaks, today, after many vehicle advances, he has a weakness for Dafs.

He has faced many challenges in his career. He has loaded bags from elevators, loaded bales from front end loaders driven by 'auld herds',- a terrifying thought -, loaded wool sheets, rolled up wooden battens rested against the side of his lorry and even loaded sheep from a seafront Hotel at Kings Lynn!

In his spare time Willie enjoys collecting model livestock haulage trucks.

He and his partner Karen live in Oxton.

He is described as hard working and reliable and whose effort, commitment and loyalty is much appreciated.

After 34 years working in livestock haulage for J & G Campbell of Oxton, Willie today receives an RHASS Silver Medal.



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RHASS

COLIN ANDERSON

Colin grew up and started work at Grindon, straight from school in February 1985. He works there with his father, George.

He attended Kirklee Hall Agricultural College, Ponteland, on a day-release basis. But he learned his ploughing skills from his father, something he put to the test at Ploughing Matches when he was younger. More recently, he has turned the job of making round bales into an art form and Colin's bales have achieved fame locally.

His tractor of choice is a John Deere

In his youth he was a keen footballer and starred for Lowick FC. He was known as the Brian Robson of the team and was famed for his killer left foot. He still plays a bit of veterans' football. However, it is not all fun as he is a loyal Sunderland fan.

He is married to Joanne, a schoolteacher, and has two children, Max & Georgie and lives in Tweedmouth.

Described as 'in his father's mould, skilled, reliable and very hard working'

Colin, after 35 years of service with AT Barr at Grindon, today receives the RHAS Silver Medal.



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RHASS

BRIAN HOPE

Brian, a local lad who grew up at Crailing Tofts, left school on a June Friday in 1979 and started work at Crailinghall the following Monday, working for Squadron Leader Balean. When the Barbour family took over the farm in 1992, Brian stayed on, progressing from tractorman to also carrying out all the combining and mastering all the digital technology involved in operating modern agricultural machinery.

He remains a tractor head at heart though and a committed John Deere man – though he has had recent flirtations with a Valtra.

Brian knows the lie of the Crailinghall lands like the back of his hand and this knowledge, built up over the years, is never better used than when put to use keeping the drainage flowing.

Brian is married to Katrina and they have two grown up daughters, Emma and Lucy. He enjoys the outdoors and keeping fit and all the positives that it brings. In recent years, he has taken up Mountain Biking. However, it's not unusual to see him with the odd gravel rash or two after he has fallen off!

Described as a friendly, helpful and trusted member of the team, Brian can turn his hand to any job on the farm.

He receives today the RHASS Silver Gilt Medal recognising 40 years of service at Crailinghall.



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RHASS

GEORGE SKELDON

George was born at Crailing Tofts, eldest son of Dod & Liz, and has lived there all his life. His father, Dod, was Farm Steward and was himself awarded an RHASS medal for 42 years of service on the farm.

George started work at Crailing Tofts as a general farm worker in 1979 as soon as he left school. A year later, Mike Dagg came home from school to start work and the two of them have worked together ever since – they make a good team.

George has done just about every job on the farm and nowadays spends much of his time on a forklift in the steading. He counts every potato box into the stores and counts them out again when he loads the lorries. Apparently, he never gets his numbers wrong.

Romantically, he met his wife of over 30 years, Sandra, in the tattie field at Crailing Tofts, where she was working her stent while he was emptying her tattie baskets. Their son, Clark, currently playing Rugby to a high standard in Australia, is planning to return to Jedforest next season – following in the footsteps of his late uncle, Graham.

George's main hobbies are following Rugby, Jedforest in particular, and Bowling.

George has worked closely with the next generation of Dags Jimmy & Sarah, as they came home to work. They would freely admit that George has taught them a great deal about the farm and the way it works. In a recent staff review his main complaint was that Sarah kept stealing chocolate out of his piece bag.

For the honour of being here today, he passed up the chance to go on Jimmy's stag do in Rome – there might be a bit of Rugby involved too. However, I'm sure there will be a few drinks here this afternoon. Apparently, on works night's out, he can see most others under the table!

It was noted that 'he is very important to all the family and a massive part of Crailing Tofts.

Today he receives a Royal Highland Agricultural Society Silver Gilt Medal recognising 40 years of service.



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RHASS

ROBERT JOHNSTONE

Robert, to give him his Sunday name, or as everyone knows him, James or JJ, belongs to the Castle Douglas area and started work there aged 16 with James Neil & Son on the mixed arable and livestock farm, Boreland of Balmaghie in 1979. While his main job was tractorman, he was also involved in all the other work of the farm. His creative talents came to the fore, not only on the farm but also as prop maker for the Castle Douglas Theatre Group.

When the Neil's moved to Runningburn in 2009, JJ came with them. In a classic piece of farm diversification, Runningburn, as well as functioning as an arable farm, was developed as a wedding venue – with JJ and his creative talents fully involved. He is described as 'the man on the ground making everything happen'

His many skills are fully put to the test 'If something needs built or organised or sourced, then JJ is our go-to man. We can't imagine not having him here sorting everything out'.

He and his wife Sadie are very proud of their family. Their son Craig, following a Degree in Engineering, works for a firm involved with the Railways. Their daughter, Sarah, has recently set up her own business designing, manufacturing and selling equestrian clothing.

JJ has completed 41 years of service with James Neil & Son and today receives a RHASS Silver Gilt Medal.



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RHASS

BRIAN WILSON

Brian started his working career with a local Blacksmith, George Stenhouse & Sons, Linton when he left school. He moved to Kelso Tractors in 1977 to work as an Engineer. It was a busy time for him as he got married in the same week as he started the new job. Talk about stress!

When Kelso Tractors were taken over by Lloyd in 1993, Brian remained with the company

Though he can turn his hand to most things, Brian is a specialist in Grimme potato machinery and New Holland Combines. He is very well known in the local area and well respected for his knowledge and skills as an engineer. His efforts to keep the wheels of agriculture turning, requiring long hours of work, - dealing with crises at crucial times of the year, are much appreciated. Indeed, many farmers ask for him by name when needing help.

Brian is married to Elizabeth and they have two daughters, Lynn & Gillian.

Brian's main hobby is his work, but in his rare moments of spare time he likes nothing better than a walk in the Borders countryside and, more recently, he has devoted more time to his garden.

It is said of him that Brian is a credit to himself and an asset to Lloyd, Ltd and that he will be sorely missed when he does finally decide to hang up his gloves.

Brian has completed 42 years of service with Kelso Tractors and later Lloyd and today receives an RHASS Silver Gilt medal.



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RHASS

ALAN HENDERSON

Alan Henderson, known as Doze to his friends, is a Lauder man. He was asked if he had spent all his life in Lauder, His reply was 'No yet'. His father worked for Campbells of Oxton and, in 1970, Alan joined the firm too.

In the early years a friend and poet rhymed

*Strong arms, backs and perseverance were required
To get these old Gardner engines turning and fired
Sitting in noise, fumes and auld diesel reek
Not a job for the lazy, the mild or the meek*

*Many started with decks that were wooden and ramps hung on chains
Paying the price with sair banes, sair joints an bad back pains.*

Since then he must have transported millions of animals, sheep, cattle but mostly pigs, around the country. Loading and transporting them safely and humanely requires special skills and Alan has them in abundance.

Alan is fond of his lorries. Currently he is driving a Renault, or, as he prefers to call it a French Bedford!

He is particularly proud of his new deck which has internal lifts. This means no more crawling in among the animals and the mess, up and down ramps designed for much smaller four-legged creatures. Nowadays the hardest job is pressing the remote control!

His hobby is closely related to his work, as he has a keen interest in vintage machinery and vehicles and is a regular at Vintage Shows around the Country.

Alan is married to Valma and is a devoted grandfather.

Hard working and reliable, Alan is happy to keep working, he loves the job. His enormous contribution to the company is greatly valued and appreciated.

After 49 years working for J & G Campbell of Oxton, Alan today receives an RHASS Silver Gilt Medal.



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RHASS

GEORGE ANDERSON

George grew up on, and started his working life at, Fenwick Granary farm, working for the Davidsons. He started work at Grindon, working for AT Barr & Company in December 1968. He started work as a tractorman and rose to become farm foreman.

His start at Grindon was not all that auspicious, however, because when he went to view the place, he found his tractor in hundreds of pieces, spread around a shed – apparently, it was being repaired!

George is a very skilled ploughman and has won trophies throughout the Borders and Northumberland. Another special job of his in earlier years, was rolling the silage pit – a potentially dangerous job requiring great skill.

George has seen many changes over the years, but perhaps the biggest would be, in the early years having 20 people employed at Grindon at Harvest time and the fishermen coming off the River Tweed to help as well; today there is George and his son Colin.

George is a keen Country music fan and attends the Country Club in Berwick every week during the season.

His wife Alison has worked in the farmhouse Grindon for the same time as George and still does. They have two sons, Colin and Stuart and three grandchildren.

Alison has great difficulty getting George away from the farm for breaks and visits and often says that ‘George views a day away from Grindon as a day wasted.

Noted as ‘someone who loves his work, can always be counted on to do a first-class job’

George after 51 years of service at Grindon with AT Barr & Company today receives an RHASS Gold Medal.



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RHASS

ALEXANDER THOMPSON

Alexander Thompson, universally known as Curnie, is a Gala Water man. He started work with the Weir's at Cortleferry in 1967 and is still working there.

Throughout his long working life, he has been a tractorman - he is particularly fond of John Deere's. The changes that have occurred in tractors over the years, in size, in power, in machinery pulled, and in the technology used, have been immense.

It is a great tribute to him that he has risen to all these new challenges.

He has two sons, Andrew and Colin and lives with his wife Mary in Earlston.

He is a highly skilled ploughman and has competed both locally and in national championships and won the digger class at the Scottish Championship on three occasions. He is in great demand nowadays, as a judge at Ploughing Matches. He is also a keen Speedway fan, supporting Berwick Bandits.

He is, perhaps, best summed by the phrase 'he does it right'

In 1997 Alexander was awarded an RHASS Silver Medal for 30 years of service, something his father and grandfather achieved before him. Today, after 51 years with the Weir's at Cortleferry, he receives an RHASS Gold Medal.



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FORD & ETAL ESTATE

SPECIAL AWARD

JAMES MOLE & Son NEIL

James or Jimmy Mole was born on Ford & Etal Estate. His father, Bob, was the last full-time rabbit catcher employed there. After a short stint working at Hay Farm, Jimmy became a Gardener on the Estate in 1962 and, later, Head Gardener.

In 2004, Jimmy handed over the reins as Head Gardener to his son, Neil, – but he didn't stop working. Indeed, he continues to work in the Gardens to this day, at the grand old age of 81. Mind you, he declares that 'he's never done a day's work in his life - you can't call working in the Gardens & Grounds of Ford & Etal Estates work – it is much too special!

Like Neil, he was a keen pigeon fancier and racer, but he is perhaps best known across the Borders and North Northumberland as a judge at Flower Shows – he has judged at virtually all of them – and he remains in great demand in this role today. He is a great servant to the local community and in 2013 was awarded the BEM for services to the community in Ford, Northumberland.

Jimmy was awarded a medal by the Royal Horticultural Society for 40 years of service and a further bar on achieving 50 years. At the end of 2019 he completed 57 years working on the Estate.

This year, Jimmy's 58 years and son Neil's 42 years produce a combined total of 100 years working for the Joicey family on Ford & Etal Estate.

In recognition of this remarkable achievement, a joint certificate will be presented, on behalf of the Joicey family and Ford & Etal Estate, to Jimmy and his son Neil.