

Glenside's new manager right at home

AFTER many years spent working on a number of large sheep and beef stations around New Zealand, Taratahi's new Glenside manager Gerald Cox recently found himself turning a full circle by returning to live in Wairarapa.



New Glenside manager Gerald Cox feels right at home working back in the Wairarapa

Gerald started his role at Glenside at the end of May this year, at a time when the Wairarapa region was reeling in the after effects of last summer's drought. Although the drought had officially broken, Gerald said starting his new position under these circumstances was a reminder of the unpredictable nature of farming.

According to Gerald, Glenside is an extremely valuable property for several reasons, not least of which are the conditions to which Taratahi students are exposed. The property is situated off Longbush Road, east of Masterton, in the Gladstone district.

"We run up into the Maungaraki hills which have been described as some of the best farming land in the North Island. We've got good limestone soil on a lot of the farm, which usually means good stock health, and generally farming should be productive. On the other hand, we do have to deal with the extremes here. We get serious cold southerlies, gale force nor'westers and we get the dry. Trying to put two good seasons back to back is near impossible. So that means you have to take every bit of experience you can get: if you can farm here, you can farm anywhere. And that's what makes this place extra valuable for our students."

Gerald came to the job at Glenside after gaining plenty of years experience in similar roles across the country. Although he grew up in Upper Hutt, he had never considered himself a "city boy" and during his younger years spent most of his spare weekends at a friend's farm in Wairarapa. His tie with Wairarapa continued when he became a student at Rathkeale College and he said his time there reinforced his desire to seek a career as a farmer.

"In those days most of the students at Rathkeale were farmer's sons. That meant most of my mates came from farms so I also got to spend quite a lot of time on the land with those guys during the holidays," Gerald said.

"My uncles were also farmers and my father had an Agricultural degree from Lincoln University so I guess you could say there was a background there."

Ninety five percent of Taratahi students have secured jobs even before they have graduated.



After finishing school, Gerald went straight to work for a stud breeder on a farm in Culverden, North Canterbury. Other than completing a Diploma in Farm Management at Lincoln University, the rest of his time has been spent gathering experience, eventually in managerial roles, on a number of North and South Island sheep and beef stations. He has also accumulated experience working with deer.

When he first saw the Glenside role advertised, Gerald said the position appealed to him for a number of reasons. At the time he was working on a large station out of Waipukurau but both he and his wife, Dinah, had been hoping to move closer to their parents, who live in Martinborough and Blenheim respectively. They had also been considering schooling prospects for their children and Wairarapa seemed a logical move.

However location was not the only draw card for Gerald to go to Glenside. In the latter part of his career leading up to his appointment at Glenside, Gerald had often been responsible for managing several young staff, sometimes overseeing up to eight shepherds. He felt he could transpose this experience onto his role at Taratahi.

"I've often had several shepherds working for me at once, of all ages and experience. I really enjoy being able to bring these people from a point where they are pretty much novices to where they become confident shepherds. So teaching students at Taratahi really appealed."

Gerald said times have changed greatly since he first went straight out onto a farm as a school leaver: these days there is a lot more competition and potential employers have much higher expectations of their staff.

"Anyone wanting to get into farming has to come here, or somewhere like here, to get a good start. You can't just get a job straight out of school. Most of our students will have a good understanding when they're done, especially when they complete Level 4," Gerald said.

"In two years these students know all about the fundamentals involved in farming. They get a broad range of experience and learn things that a lot of cadet farms miss out".

In addition to the satisfaction gained by seeing students develop their skills, Gerald said he can identify with many of his students' backgrounds.

"Because of my city origins I can see where a lot of these kids are coming from. Some students get out here with limited agricultural experience. Helping them improve their skills to become more confident and setting them on a path towards a farming career is one of the real highlights of this job."

Now into his fourth month as Manager at Glenside, Gerald's biggest focus is the upcoming lambing season, which has just begun and should be in full swing by the end of August. He said despite tough conditions leading up to mating season, his colleagues had made a few "big calls", including making substantial cuts to stock numbers, and this seems to have paid off with impressive scan results of 185 percent.

"We've still got a way to go but at this stage things are looking relatively promising."

DID YOU KNOW:

- **Glenside is one of two sheep and beef properties under Taratahi's management. Between the two farms and a dairy unit, Taratahi's students have access to close to 7,000 hectares of land where they can develop their skills and build up experience working towards qualifications in agriculture (specialising in sheep and beef or dairy).**
- **In addition to sheep and beef properties, Taratahi's campus is situated in the middle of an operational dairy unit at East Taratahi, close to Masterton. The unit milks close to 700 cows and has all the facilities required to bring students to a level where they are prepared and competent to head out into the workforce on completion of their training.**

Big plans afoot to celebrate Taratahi's 90th anniversary

NEXT year Taratahi will arrive at an historical milestone as it reaches its 90th year of existence - and we are not going to let this event pass by unnoticed!

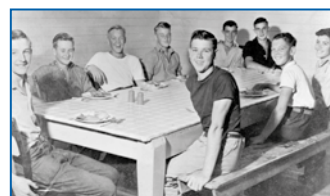
Plans are already in place to hold a 90th Anniversary Reunion celebration over the weekend of 20 and 21 June 2009. These dates fall a week after the 2009 Mystery Creek Fieldays, opening up a perfect opportunity for people to continue down from Waikato and have a complete agricultural experience over 10 days.

At the date of the reunion, Taratahi students will be a week away from finishing their first semester which means there will be ample opportunity to show off their skills and refresh former students on course content

at Taratahi, as well as introduce them to the more recent and modern aspects of our training centre.

As at August 2008 the order of events over the 90th Anniversary Reunion weekend is reaching complete confirmation. At this stage the plan is for registrations to take place at Taratahi from 9 - 10am on Saturday 20 June. Then from 10 - 12 noon the centre will be open for farm tours and demonstrations (as well as trips down memory lane). Light snacks and a drink will be served in the campus recreation centre at midday followed by further tours at Taratahi in the afternoon.

We also hope to offer farm visits to our Glenside property in the afternoon. That evening reunion members will be treated



With origins dating back to 1919, next year Taratahi will celebrate 90 years of agricultural training for New Zealand.

to a buffet dinner at Masterton's Copthorne Solway Park Hotel. The current plan is that speeches will take place over dinner, which will be followed by an "Old Farmers Competition" and a dance.

Following the reunion celebration evening, and for those not having to head away the

next morning, Sunday offers an opportunity for those interested to visit Glenburn station where they will have an opportunity to discover the coastal property "close up" and enjoy a BBQ lunch. Costs for all activities over the reunion weekend are yet to be confirmed.

We have already received considerable interest from people wanting to attend our 90th Anniversary Reunion celebrations. Therefore, as we have a limit of 200 places for this event, we're encouraging people to register early to ensure they don't miss out.

If you would like to attend our 90th Anniversary Reunion celebrations, please email alumni@taratahi.ac.nz or call us to request a registration form: **0800 TARATAHI**

About our students

TARATAHI'S history dates back almost 90 years making us one of New Zealand's oldest agricultural training establishments. Obviously a lot has changed since the early days, not only in the farming sector but also socially within the New Zealand community. Taratahi is proud to be keeping up with these changes and we have some interesting statistics to support this development.

Back in 1919, when the centre was first established, the student body was made up of soldiers returning from World War One. After the Second World War, Taratahi continued operating as part of a rehabilitation scheme for ex-soldiers until 1951 when Taratahi Trustees decided to carry out extensive improvements. This enabled Taratahi to offer a broader range of activities and created the base for a farm training facility not targeting ex-soldiers this time but young people between the ages of 16 and 20 years old. For the next three decades all Taratahi students were young men.

But then at the beginning of the 1980s Taratahi starting receiving its first enrolment enquiries from potential female students. Then in 1981, when two suitable enrolments were received, the first female students were accepted for the then-six month agricultural course.

Since that date Taratahi has had a steady stream of female students graduate and go on to successful careers in agriculture.

We are pleased to report that at the beginning of this year the female contingent of full-time students made up 30 percent of total enrolments. Our students also represent a cross section of New Zealand (and occasionally international) students from a variety of backgrounds. This attribute was summed up well by recent Taratahi graduate Sarah Poppleton, who went straight from training into a position as herd assistant at a dairy farm in Fielding.



"What I really like about Taratahi is that it doesn't matter whether you are a beginner or not, whether you are a girl or a boy, whatever your background: the staff at Taratahi will give you all the time in the world to learn and develop your skills."

Taratahi graduate Sarah Poppleton

Keeping busy after hours

STUDENTS come to Taratahi from a range of backgrounds, farming and non-farming, urban and rural. However despite their differences, every student on a residential course is met with the same opportunities once they arrive, both during and outside training hours.

Over the years Taratahi has developed a number of extra-curricular activities to support students outside working hours. At our campus we offer a swimming pool, computer room, snooker, Sky TV, several common lounge rooms and a gym/indoor basketball court.

Taratahi's location is another big bonus for our students. Wairarapa has a wide range of outdoor and sporting activities with bush, tramping, hunting and fishing all within one hour's drive from campus. Our closest town, Masterton, has a good sized town centre with shopping to cater for most needs and we are only one hour from Palmerston North and Wellington by car.

To add to these benefits, our staff also encourage a number of other extra-curricular activities, often involving the staff themselves. A staff versus student basketball league proved extremely popular with both sides and according to students provided a great platform for them to get to know their tutors in a different context. This year Taratahi also held a cricket match and plans are in place to further develop student versus teacher activities.

"Once they get out there, many of our students are going to be working 12 hour days – let's face it, that can be the norm – so they have to be strong and fit." Taratahi tutor Murray Clarkson

A number of our students join rugby teams during the winter months, depending on which Wairarapa teams have a colt (16 to 18 year old) division. This year Taratahi students played for East Coast and Greytown clubs, and players travelled regularly to Manawatu to compete in a wider pool of colt teams.



Taratahi student Ben Davey

In addition to these opportunities, one staff member has made an extra effort to motivate students by encouraging them to take part in various fitness regimes at a Masterton gym. For the past five months tutor Murray Clarkson has been driving students into Masterton up to three nights a week to undertake fitness training at the local CLM gym.

Using techniques and motivation made popular through the fitness programme "Body For Life", Murray has created a support group named the "Taratahi Transformers". On Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings between 6 and

8 pm, Murray drives groups of up to 18 students to the gym. He has his own fitness routine there too and said the challenge to meet his own goals while the students work towards theirs makes the gym sessions even more committed.

"When you make a commitment to this sort of thing, you have to support yourself with people who won't let you fall by the wayside, and the students create a great support team."

Murray said all the students that join him at the gym love what they get to do, which is more than just weight training. A large swimming complex with spa pool, hydro slide and lane pool are also available to students as is a combat room and cardio classes.

"There is a real social aspect to it too. They get off campus, improve their fitness, have a ball in the heated pools. It's good for everyone," Murray said.

"The important thing here too is that during the day these students are working hard to gain knowledge and experience for a career in agriculture. Once they get out there, many of them are going to be working 12 hour days – let's face it, that can be the norm – so they have to be strong and fit."

Murray said he will keep taking students to the gym for as long as they are keen. He is more motivated to reach his own fitness goals having the students around and feels privileged to offer support in return, during what is often the students' first year away from home or a boarding hostel situation.

Campus redevelopment

TARATAHI prides itself on being able to offer students modern learning equipment and facilities, and not only as part of their training. To this end, we are in the initial stages of a campus redevelopment that includes an overhaul of our student hostels.

Taratahi views the planned redevelopment as an opportunity to strengthen its operation on a number of levels. It has been acknowledged that campus design can play a big role in reinforcing a strong vocational and aspirational message not just to our students but also stakeholders and business partners.

The redevelopment will involve refurbishment of the entire Taratahi campus including lecture rooms, recreational

facilities and administration offices. A recent survey showed students enjoy hostel life and their accommodation will also be a focus in the upgrade.

Business Development Manager at Taratahi, Stephen Carr, said accommodation is obviously an integral part of the experience for most students and Taratahi is pleased to be able to act on student suggestions in this area of redevelopment.

"Obviously, with many students spending close to a year living in these facilities, this is an important aspect of their lives," Stephen said.

"We are happy to be able to include this amongst other changes as we position ourselves for growth and new

training opportunities."

Features of the campus redevelopment include more self-contained accommodation with a focus on quality, modern, functional, and pleasurable improvements. Taratahi also wants to take the opportunity to place an emphasis on environmentally friendly design with cost-effective build and careful thought to on-going maintenance costs.

"We obviously can't make changes like this every year so we are paying close attention to future-proofing current redevelopment plans, ensuring all the changes we make now will still be functional, impressive and cost effective in the years to come," Stephen said.

Taratahi dairy update

Taratahi's residential campus is located in the middle of our fully equipped dairy unit. In keeping with agricultural trends, we offer our students first hand knowledge in all aspects of modern dairy management. Dairy manager David Tanner updates us on the latest developments as Taratahi continues ahead with the spring calving season.

ALMOST all regions in New Zealand were affected by last summer's drought and Taratahi was not an exception. The long dry spell affected our ability to irrigate and therefore impacted negatively on our average pasture cover. However we managed to make up for this with the use of supplementary feed, mainly in the form of Palm Kernel, after calculating feasible returns (obviously feed costs were greatly increased for the season given the conditions). As a result of taking these measures we were eventually only 88kgMS short of our target production for the year. It is also important to note that by the end of the season our focus was on cow condition and average pasture cover – we could have held the cows one more day and met the target but decided it was more important to address these other measures.

In spite of the severity of the summer drought, we have had significant rain every month since April. The farm is currently in good condition for the time of the year and pasture cover is at our target of 2300kgDM/ha. Good growth rates over winter (the result of productive ground temperature and moisture levels) have helped in this area. This level of cover sets us up well for target



Dairy manager David Tanner

cover through August and we hope growth rates will continue in this positive trend. As always, we will be making every effort to minimise pasture damage throughout this period.

During the winter months most of our cows spent time grazing on properties away from Taratahi. Some were sent up to Takapau, others to a property next to Taratahi and a proportion spent time at our Glenside property.

The planned start of calving was August 4 at which stage we had already calved about 35 cows. Most heifers were mated to a Jersey bull and the remainder to an Angus. Currently we are busy bringing in our heifer replacement calves to be raised in a purpose built shed where they are fed on milk, meal and straw. The calves will be raised this way for eight weeks before going outside, where they will then have further access to meal and straw and then weaned when they reach 100kg liveweight.

Good news following the last few months' milking is that production through the winter was slightly ahead of target. This was the result of a combination of good pasture cover and milking late-calving cows longer.

Lambing scan success

DRASTIC measures taken nearing the end of last summer's drought seem to have paid off for two Taratahi sheep properties, as farmers across the country trickle into this year's lambing season.

Initial reports from within the agricultural industry in Wairarapa have recorded that measures taken in response to two years of severe drought have brought about an average ewe reduction of 11 percent from 2006 to 2008. Taratahi took this one step further and reduced its mixed age and two-tooth ewes by 12 percent and as a result now looks set to achieve a relatively impressive lambing percentage.

Glenburn Station manager Paul Crick said the severity of droughts over the past two years has called for severe action on the ground. Although cutting breeding ewe numbers by 12 percent was a big move, Paul reports pre-lambing scans revealed a decrease of only 2.5 percent in potential lambs to be born, "or a 185 percent scanning potential for 2008".

"In spite of the fact that breeding ewe numbers have been reduced over the last couple of years, between 2006 and 2008 our lambing potential has only decreased by 2 ½ percent. That means scanning has gone up each year," Paul said.

"I believe we've got these results because we've been proactive in monitoring our ewes to be mated, given that we had suffered a drought two years in a row. This meant that our ewes were mated with an average weight of 59 kgs for two-tooth and 62 kgs for mixed age ewes. We have also monitored the tail end of our ewes and culled any poor performers, rather than try to carry them through".

"Following the dry seasons we have experienced over the last couple of years, management needs to be approached from a number of angles: we had to do more than just cull. Timing is essential, not carrying too many stock units during a drought and prioritising feeding. It is also important to monitor animal health. And at the end of the day you definitely can't underestimate fertile genetics," Paul said.

At Taratahi's second sheep and beef property, Glenside, new manager Gerald Cox, who started his role in May this year just after the drought broke, said Paul and Glenside tutor Shane Preston had had to make some "big calls" earlier this year in deciding to cut stock numbers. But the risks seem to be paying off at this point in the season.

"De-stocking, getting rid of the store stock to protect the breeding animals— they're pretty heavy decisions to make when you consider these animals should be your main source of income. But these guys obviously did something right because now we have a good store of grass coming into lambing," he said. However Gerald did agree that success doesn't boil down to one specific factor. He said genetics in combination with cutting stock numbers seem to have been the key to relatively high scanning results.

Taratahi's lambing season has now begun and will be in full swing by September.

"Following the dry seasons we have experienced over the last couple of years, management needs to be approached from a number of angles: we had to do more than just cull."

Glenburn Station manager Paul Crick



2008 Taratahi student Tegan Marshall

A graduate story—Chris Keech



Chris Keech graduated from Taratahi in 2001 with a National Certificate in Agriculture Level 4 (Dairy). He went straight into a job after graduating and has spent the majority of his time working for PPCS (now Silver Fern Farms). Starting out in Quality Control, Chris is now a stock buyer in Otorohanga. He tells us about his experience at Taratahi.

"One of the great things about training at Taratahi is that I had a job straight away when I left. The qualification that I got definitely made me more employable and definitely helped me get to where I am now. People can look at my CV and they see I've got solid training. It really helps.

After graduating from Taratahi in 2001, Chris Keech followed his dream and became a stock buyer

"One of the highlights of being at Taratahi was the tutors. They really knew what they were doing, were just good guys and not too controlling. They got on with the job and showed you what to do.

"Even though I came from a farming background before going to Taratahi I think it was really beneficial to get some outside training. Parents can be set in their ways as far as farming is concerned but at Taratahi I learned a new way of doing things. I got solid training not only in dairy but in a broad range of farming activities. I would definitely recommend Taratahi to anyone who is serious about a career in agriculture."

Taratahi Alumni and Friends (TAF)

GIVEN the success of our students, the respect that many of them gain within the agricultural sector, and the fact that many students create lifelong friendships during their time at Taratahi, we are currently in the process of creating the comprehensive Taratahi Alumni and Friends (TAF) group.

The purpose of this group is most importantly to capture past students and friends of Taratahi. We hope that having a record of these people will enable not just social networking, catching up with old friends, but also valuable business and professional contacts.

One of the visions for TAF is that by contacting former students who are now working successfully in the field, we will also be able to facilitate graduate employment opportunities.

Our goal is to keep the cycle of skilled graduates turning by placing newly qualified students in work environments where they learn from our older graduates. We would also like to develop a mentoring programme between graduates and students.

Another aim of TAF is to help us draw on the knowledge and skill of graduates by inviting them to be guest speakers in the classroom or even at events, where they could represent Taratahi from a different perspective—that of a professional in the field.

In addition to these goals, we can't look past the fact that our 90th Anniversary Reunion celebrations are happening in June next year. TAF will enable us to cast our net wide to catch as many former students as possible.

We have already managed to recruit a good number of people to join TAF over the past year. By advertising through various publications, as well as spreading the word at events such as the National Fielddays, we now have a good base for TAF and expect the numbers will only keep growing.

If you are interested in becoming a member of TAF please email us at alumni@taratahi.ac.nz

We're on the web!
www.taratahi.ac.nz

Taratahi UK exchange 2008

FOR THE past five years Taratahi has offered its Level Four students an opportunity to visit England on an educational and cultural exchange with Walford North Shropshire College. This year eight students and two tutors spent three weeks overseas, travelling not only to Walford but managing to fit in a few other sights along the way.



Taratahi students on their way to the Young Farmers Dance

Taratahi's Education Manager Stephen Hannam was joined by Level Four Course Coordinator Dick Tredwell in overseeing the students on their travels. Stephen said this year's trip was both successful and popular with the students, and provided an excellent opportunity for them to experience agricultural operations from an entirely new perspective.

Walford offers training in similar fields as Taratahi. However, in keeping with life in Britain, most work is conducted on a more intensive scale. The college has 490 acres and milks around 200 cows. They also grow wheat and manage around 300 ewes. Having become familiar with much larger operations accessed through Taratahi (including around 7000 hectares of land, close to 700 milking cows, and more than 30,000 stock units within the sheep and beef sector), Stephen said his students had plenty to appreciate.

"What we really try to do with this trip is to get students experiencing something different. For instance they got to see indoor beef-feeding operations, where cattle are fed up to weights of 650kgs at only 12 months of age. In New Zealand we struggle to get to that kind of weight within two years," Stephen said.

"In that type of operation they are getting a lot more meat versus waste. The yield of the beast is a lot higher. They're worth £1230 at 11 months and 23 days – that's pretty impressive and really interesting for the students to see."

Stephen said it was interesting for the exchange group to observe an operation where most stock (both cattle and sheep) spend the majority of their time indoors. Cattle at Walford spend around seven months of the year indoors and the remaining five outside (sheep about five inside and seven out).

Apparently the fact that these animals spend much of their time in close proximity to people (through feeding and general indoor care) means they are relatively docile and pampered when compared to New Zealand stock.

"One thing that was interesting for us all to experience was the fact that nutritionists play a very large role in farming in England. Not common practice in New Zealand but over there every farm has a nutritionist of some sort and they usually come in on a monthly basis to formulate rations and alter the mix between protein and carbohydrate.

"Certainly the benefits of this practice are pretty obvious. We saw a Jersey farm doing as good as New Zealand Friesians, and there were definitely more solids in the milk they were producing."

Stephen said another big difference for the students to witness was the lambing beat. In England this is often a 24 hour, seven day a week task. If there is ever possibility for complications to arise during a birth, a veterinarian will be called in immediately, often resulting in a caesarean delivery.



Shearing from a mobile unit

Further farming experience for the Taratahi students included witnessing shearers working from mobile shearing units, taking part in a fencing project, and using a 'Manitou' to feed out.

While there was a lot of serious learning to be done in England, part of the Taratahi trip was also dedicated to experiencing the cultural aspects of life in Britain. They attended the Walford ball, where Taratahi students managed to scrub up and match the black tie/ball dress attire of the locals. They visited local agricultural shows, toured castles, and went to the seaside.

"One night we all went along to a Young Farmer's Dance. There were thousands of people there, so Young Farmers are still a very strong organisation over there. It was good to see," said Stephen.

The Taratahi group also managed to fit in a trip to the big lights of London for a day. And on their return journey they spent a night in Singapore for some rest and relaxation. In their three weeks the group had to absorb a great amount of information in respect to farming and agricultural practice, as well as cultural differences, on the other side of the world. They also found themselves exposed to a number of other interesting facets of life in England.

For instance TB poses a much greater threat in the UK than is does in New Zealand and during their trip the students were taken "badger watching". According to Stephen, there is currently a school of thought in England that badgers may in fact do less damage – that is, spread less TB – if they are left alone. It has been claimed that stressed badgers are more susceptible to getting TB.

Another interesting debate that was obvious to the touring group was the food miles issue and a push to "eat local".

"It was obvious there is a real push to eat locally, to cut down on the amount of miles accumulated by food before it reaches the plate. It is a nice idea but the reality is that you go to the supermarkets and look at the prices... most people are driven by price and are looking for value for money.

"Food miles are a middle- to upper-class choice. The situation still remains that, in the working class, food is still a price driven issue."

In summary of the 2008 Walford exchange, once again this trip proved to be a great success from both visitor and host perspectives. Stephen said his group made the most of the trip, learned a great deal about different farming practices, and worked well as a unit.

"The group mentality really helped. Everyone stuck together and supported each other. The trip was also good for Dick and myself as tutors: it was good to see the students in a different light and for them to get to know us in a different light as well."



Cattle at Walford spend the majority of their year indoors

Cornwall Road • R.D.7
Masterton • NEW ZEALAND
Phone: 0800 TARATAHI
Fax: 06 377 1106
Email: enquiries@taratahi.ac.nz