

THE CHALLENGE OF RURAL LEADERSHIP COURSE- 2 NOVEMBER TO 14 NOVEMBER

A fantastic life changing experience.

Course participant Matthias Hochrein from Germany, was full of praise for the course, "We had a number of lectures about strategic management and creative thinking. These new concepts gave us a way to identify problems, to step back and to look at them from a wider angle and to work out a way to find a practical solution."

"Before the course began, questions like, "What have I to expect from the next two weeks?" or "Is it possible to learn leadership?" or "Is leadership a skill you are born with?" were going around in my head. On the way back to the airport I asked myself the same questions again. Is the Challenge of Rural Leadership more than a course over two weeks? The answer is clear: yes it is. It's a fantastic experience. Is it one that changes our lives? Of course it is - it's just up to us to do it!"

The 13th annual Worshipful Company of Farmers' Challenge of Rural Leadership course took place in Devon in November. The two-week course, run by the Duchy College Rural Business School, is aimed at developing the skills required for successful leadership within the rural community and was an intensive, but enjoyable, learning experience for the 18 participants.

Speakers included MEP Neil Parish, who discussed the latest developments in EU agricultural policy; Jane King, Editor of the Farmers Weekly, who looked at the changing face of media; David Wilson, Farm Manager of Duchy Home Farm in Tetbury, who gave the organic perspective; Col. Bryan Watters who focussed on military leadership and Jeff Beer of the Worshipful Company of Farmers who gave the international perspective. Course highlights included sessions on gene technology from Prof Mick Fuller of the University of Plymouth and leadership management with Prof. Keith Grint. A presentation on the Nuffield Foundation was given by John Stones and Jeremy Tozer of the Centre of Leadership and Organisational Excellence led a practical session on leadership. The attendees also carried out a business case study, visited farm businesses and had a series of workshops on leadership and creative thinking.

As well as an intensive series of lectures, participants also visited the Northcott Theatre in Exeter to see Lord of the Flies, which was followed by a discussion about the role of leadership and the questions raised by the play. They also had the opportunity to try abseiling on Dartmoor. A visit to the ITV studios in Plymouth and the opportunity to practice both television and radio interview techniques, as well as guidance on preparing press releases, meant they learnt how to deliver messages to the media successfully, thereby educating the public on rural issues from an industry perspective.

The Master, Junior Warden and members of the Education Committee and Livery joined the course delegates on the final afternoon for the traditional 'wash-up' session. The course concluded with a Gala Dinner at which it was evident that great camaraderie and lifelong friendships had been forged at the 13th Course!

Gemma Eales - Duchy College Rural Business School.

532 words + 3 pictures