

Once in a Lifetime

Georgina Mayhew, October 2013

My bedroom is spotless. This isn't the norm – it has been my own personal procrastination against starting to write this because that would mean that I was really leaving... speaking of, is that a disorganised sock drawer there I see? Couldn't possibly wait.

A Fresh Start

I started my internship at Church Farm on Monday 11th March, in the hopes of gaining some knowledge about sustainable, high-welfare farming as part of my degree in Zoology. Though I had previously worked on farms, I had never been part of a system so large that was able to produce food for so many people and in such a range of ways.

In my first weeks at Church Farm I tried my hand in every area I possibly could. I worked with horticulture and livestock, assisted during our extended lambing season, and at weekends I was responsible for looking after the 700 egg-laying chickens in our orchard (and yes, I did re-enact my own budget rendition of 'Fly Away Home').



After my initial couple of weeks at the farm I started working in the café and store, which was not only lots of fun but I thought it really helped make my experience more whole. I felt proud selling our products to customers because I knew where they had come from and the time and care that had gone into producing them.

"You're tired? Try having 16 babies in the space of a week, then tell me you're tired."

Once I had decided that my strongest interests within the farm were with livestock and Rural Care, a project run within the farm that supports co-farmers with learning disabilities and difficulties, my internship settled and it was time for a new challenge. And so when someone was needed to take care of the 13 lambs we currently had in home field, I jumped at the chance!

It was mayhem. Within 4 days of taking on the orphaned lambs I had been handed 2 newborns, one of which had been born that morning. The week that followed involved sleepless nights as the newborn lambs stayed in my caravan and bleeted at me every 3-4 hours for bottle feeds. Those animals took up any free time I had around my already hectic work patterns, but seeing them grow bigger and stronger by the day made it all worth it.

This experience with the lambs has been a large contribution to me hoping to apply for graduate veterinary medicine next year.

A Last Thought

In a place where interns constantly come and go, I admit it's easy to feel to feel insignificant and somewhat disposable. But on reflection I think you can ever be part of a progression as big as this. Creating a better future for ourselves and generations to come is not a battle that can be fought alone, but to know that you can work alongside others that feel as passionately as you at making a change is very special. That is probably the most important lesson that I learnt from my time at Church Farm.

Now that it is finally time for me to go home, the feelings are very mixed. I am excited to return to university and put into practice the knowledge and skills I have developed over the past year, both academic and personal, but there is also a great feeling of sadness. I have met some incredible people during my stay, and saying goodbye to my fellow interns, the co-farmers and staff on the farm will be very difficult. They have seen me at my best and my worst and have accepted me in all respects, and that is something very refreshing to have found and won't be forgotten.



Love,
Georgina x