

The RABDF/Dairy Crest Dairy Student of the Year 2012 title is up for grabs. We've had a chat with the previous winners to see what they have been up to since winning the Award.

1. Which college or university did you attend? Which subject did you study? When did you graduate?

Richard Young, 2011 Winner: Agriculture with honours in Animal Production Science at Newcastle University. Graduated in July 2011 with first class honours. Also received the Godfrey Turnbull Award, Royal Agricultural Society of England Award and Royal Yorkshire Agricultural Society Award.



Philip Dunn, 2010 Winner: Newcastle University, BSc Agriculture with Hons in Farm Business Management. Graduated 2010 with 1st class honours.

Winner: The University of Brighton, studying at Plumpton College, FdSc Agriculture. Graduated 2010.



Luke Thompson, 2009 Winner: The University of Brighton, studying at Plumpton College, FdSc Agriculture. Graduated 2010.



Oliver Hall, 2008 Winner: Royal Agricultural College, BSc Hons Agriculture (Animal Management). Graduated 2008.

2. What positions have you taken up since winning the RABDF/Dairy Crest Dairy Student of the Year Award?

Richard Young: Since winning the Award I have taken a position as farm manager at Norbrook's pharmaceutical research farm, Ballyedmond Castle Farms, in Northern Ireland.

Philip Dunn: Since winning the award and finishing my studies I have entered the family farming partnership and taken responsibility for the day to day management of the dairy herd, as well as formulating a long-term expansion strategy for the unit.

Luke Thompson: Currently working in West Sussex as an assistant herd manager. I'm planning to travel to America and/or New Zealand when I have the cash behind me, to look at the different countries' farming systems.

Oliver Hall: After college I returned home to the family dairy farm in West Yorkshire and took over the management, implementing a change in dairy farming policy from a whole farm approach. In January 2010, I set up a business called Evolution Farming Ltd with fellow dairy farmer, Tom Rawson. It works in harmony with our own respective and existing family partnerships and is estab-

lishing a new 700 cow unit in Lincolnshire. We also have our own consultancy business, Evolution Dairy Herd Management, which focuses on all areas on dairy farming with particular reference to milk from forage.

3. How has the Award helped you?

Richard Young: As well as being a great asset on my C.V., the Dairy Student Award has provided me with many contacts throughout the dairy industry in the UK. Participating in the competition has also been a great opportunity to use and improve my interview skills and thoroughly test my knowledge of the UK dairy industry. It was also a chance to discuss future opportunities available to the industry and how best to turn these into practical solutions for problems faced by both farmers and processors alike.

Philip Dunn: It has helped to raise my profile within the industry and provided many opportunities which would not have been otherwise available. I have had various offers of consultancy work for example, which I may choose to pursue alongside the development of my own dairy business. The Award process itself was an incredibly interesting and useful experience, helping to develop confidence and strategic thinking.

Luke Thompson: The award gave me greater confidence to speak up, including at forage society meetings and farm walks. It has opened up doors for me to progress further and faster than any qualification I have gained.

Oliver Hall: It was beneficial in getting me known in the industry. And funnily enough I now supply milk to Dairy Crest from our new farm in Lincolnshire!

4. Why would you encourage other students to enter the Award?

Richard Young: I would encourage any student to enter the award as it gives a unique opportunity to win a nationally renowned prize and to prove to yourself and others that you are the best in your field.

Philip Dunn: I would encourage anyone who is passionate about a career in the dairy industry to enter. The contacts I have made are second to none, and the award is highly recognised by prospective employers. The judging process also enables candidates to gain an insight into the industry beyond the farm gate.

Luke Thompson: The award is recognised by many farmers, companies and people in high places as an almost guarantee that the winner is a hard working individual, who works towards difficult goals and most importantly can overcome and solve problems.

Oliver Hall: It was good to be formally interviewed because this tends not to happen a lot in the dairy sector which comprises mainly family businesses. It was also a good challenge.