



LIFE BEYOND THE MILITARY –
OUTDOORS

RXW36

By Anna Baker Cresswell

Our first Rural Week of 2022 at [Bicton](#) in late March was truly, unbelievably, wall to wall sunshine all week.

Team HighGround consisted of Anna, Pete our Welfare Support and Tim our Rural Employment Manager and we were joined by serving personnel and veterans from the Royal Navy, Army and RAF.

HighGround's newest Trustee Jason Holt spent Monday at Bicton to find out what goes on during Rural Weeks before being joined by Ian our Chairman on Tuesday for a Trustees Meeting sadly decimated by Covid, so our first attempt at a blended meeting for which we thank Bicton's IT guru Ed..!

On Monday Chris Shepherd who has run the timetable at Bicton since we delivered our first Rural Week way back in 2017, had organised an Archery session after the induction process was completed to give our HighGrounders the opportunity to get to know each other, and this was followed by a visit to Pete and Di Wastenage at Tidwell Barton as an introduction to dairy farming and Agriculture.

This was followed by a visit to Lord Clinton's estate [Clinton Devon Estates](#) to meet John Wilding to learn about the many and varied opportunities in the Forestry sector before a return to Bicton for Steve Ensell's excellent presentation given on behalf of [BALI](#), the British Association of Landscape Industries which described opportunities in the Landscaping industry and how to access them.

An early start on Tuesday began with a visit to meet Toby Taylor at the [RSPB](#) reserve to learn about his role as a Ranger before heading to Haldon Forest Park to meet Josh and Gregg who explained the role of the Forestry Commission [RSPB](#), and its many employment opportunities.

Next was a real treat – a visit to Exeter races! [The Jockey Club](#) [Careers in Racing](#).

Back to the College after a day in the sunshine to learn about Construction Plant and Engineering from Andy Daw, before our evening speaker Sam Eames joined us to talk about his transition from the Irish Guards to setting up his own business; [Eames Horticulture](#).

Another early start on Wednesday took our HighGrounders to [Killerton House](#) near Exeter to meet Karl and learn about the National Trust and then Tom Garner on the Clinton Devon estate talked about his role as a Wildlife Ranger.

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Everyone enjoyed the Forest School visit hosted by Neil and Emilia from [The Outdoors Group](#) and then it was time to head back to Bicton for a plant operation practical with Steve and some Bicton students before Dave Wright, an Army veteran now working on the [Crown Estate](#) in Windsor Great Park gave an excellent Zoom presentation about his transition and how he got to Windsor as our evening speaker – we look forward to welcoming you to Bicton in person Dave!

Our final day of visits (still in bright sunshine under blue skies) on Thursday took in Debbie at [South Yeo Farm West](#) to learn about Smallholding before Sir Harry Studholme welcomed everyone to Perridge Estate to learn about the realities of running an estate.

It was great to see Matt and Kirsty from [Hi-Line](#) again when they delivered another fantastic presentation about Arboriculture and how military skills and experience map so well into it before Ian from [Bowler Oakfield](#) rounded off our visits and presentations with an overview of estate management and the various routes in.

Phil from [Sampson Hall](#) delivered another inspiring and motivational session on Friday morning to complete our Rural Week and our grateful thanks to all who presented, hosted and gave so freely of their time, knowledge and experience during the week.

We thank Bicton for their brilliant hospitality and Greenwich Hospital and the RAF Benevolent Fund for their support to make the week possible.

Last word goes to David who left the Royal Navy as Commander Warfare after 30 years' service:

A well balanced week with great presenters organised by an inclusive, happy and friendly team – brilliant!

For more information about HighGround's services please contact Anna Baker Cresswell
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