

RXW17

By Anna Baker Cresswell

Our final Rural Week of 2017 at Bickton College began on a balmy December Sunday and apart from a couple of showers midweek, we were bathed in Devon sunshine throughout – we must be doing something right!

We had 7 HighGrounders from the Army and the RAF for RXW17, although it was very disappointing that 3 veterans were, at the very last minute, unable to join us for what turned into a brilliant week summed up by one HighGrounder: “Great banter, Great dits.”

Nev Nixon joined us again as Course Manager and we welcomed 2 new presenters, Daniel Cameron from the National Trust and Tim Weston from the www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk who gave us a fantastic Introduction to Gamekeeping and Shoot Management – seriously inspirational and a very fine ambassador for his sport.

The HighGrounders who joined us for RXW17 were interested in learning about Fishing, Forestry, Utility Surveying, Horse Logging, Care Farming and starting a vineyard in Sicily.

They were all either in resettlement or a veteran, but what brought them all together at Bickton was their military service and their desire to look forwards, into the landbased sector. We asked them to bring an open mind, and by Friday, some had changed their minds, and others had spent the week having their decision confirmed – great outcomes both ways.

Huge thanks as always to our evening speakers Nev Nixon, Tom Garner and Lee Kimber who shared their wisdom and experience about their transitions and what they have done next. What makes it even more special is when we welcome back Rural Week alumni like Lee who has since gone on to start their own business www.facebook.com/Wellington-Forest-School-365435483832323 - truly HighGround in action.

We went back to the Sir Walter Raleigh in East Budleigh for our last night social, and it was lovely to meet Shane from www.treesandscenes.co.uk - another great contact for our ever-expanding network!

You can see our Rural Week in pictures using this link <https://www.flickr.com/photos/highgrounduk/sets/72157691299619035> and a huge thank-you to all the wonderful staff and presenters at Bickton who made our Rural Week so enjoyable and to everyone from our outside organisations for giving their precious time and knowledge so generously.

Quote of the week:

“There has been a wide variety of exposures to various vocations throughout the week and really broadened my vision in relation to opportunities

vocationally and voluntary within the outdoors and land-based sectors. It's been fantastic, from a planning, supportive and overall professional delivery, with a relaxed approach. Thank you. The business planning presentation gave me a good re-affirmation of my own skills and abilities."

WO2. Royal Artillery veteran. Left 2011.