



LIFE BEYOND THE MILITARY –  
OUTDOORS

## RXW32

By Anna Baker Cresswell

Our last Rural Week of 2019 in early December was an action packed 5 days – we had a full house of 10 HighGrounders including a Group Captain, a Commander and a Gurkha Major and our furthest traveller drove all the way from Durham!

Jemma who joins us as our new Rural Business Improvement Manager in January 2020 joined us to find out more about Rural Weeks, and we were also delighted to welcome our Chairman, John Kerner one of our Trustees, Catriona Spiller from The Soldiers' Charity and Tim Lever to Bicton during our hectic week.

Pete Boorn was Course Manager, and it was brilliant to welcome back [Pen Farthing](#) from [Nowzad](#) and [Jamie Ranson](#) from [Langore Tree Services](#) our excellent evening speakers.

Our HighGrounders were as always a varied group of individuals whose common denominators were that they were all either serving or a veteran, and wanted to learn more about employment and vocational opportunities in the land-based sector.

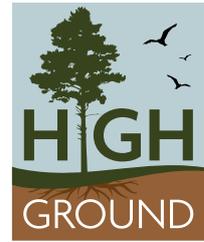
Chris Shepherd's programme included the usual Archery 'icebreaker' on the Monday morning, followed by visits to the College Farm and then [Clinton Devon Estates](#) to learn about Forestry from our good friend John Wilding. Then it was back to Bicton for an excellent presentation by Steve Ensell from [BALI](#) about the many and varied routes into the Landscaping industry.

Tuesday's visits included seeing Aaron at [RSPB](#), Josh from [Forestry England](#) and Terry at [Exminster Golf Centre](#) before heading back to Bicton for an Introduction to Horticulture by Andre.

Our busy week continued on Wednesday with Introduction to Agricultural Engineering and Construction Plant and a chance to test drive some big diggers; Tom Garner's excellent Introduction to Deer Management and Gamekeeping and a visit to Nick and his team at [The Outdoors Group](#) before heading to meet Rob at [Devon Riding](#) and learn about opportunities in the Equine industry which surprised several of our HighGrounders – who knew about gallops maintenance and building stables..??!!

Huge thanks to Debbie at [South Yeo Farm West](#) for all her hospitality, to Matt and Kirsty at [Hi-Line](#) Nadine and to Robert for his excellent Estate Management presentation which brought the programme together, and last but not least, to Phil Sampson from [Sampson Hall](#) for his motivational way to end the week on Friday morning, discussing self-employment.

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As always we are hugely grateful to our funders who make Rural Weeks possible, and it was great that Catriona from [ABF The Soldiers' Charity](#) was able to spend the day at Bicton and meet some of the Army veterans who have benefited from ABF's generous funding of the Rural Weeks programme in 2019.

Last word goes to one of our HighGrounders who left the Army in 2015. After our follow-up call once he had had time to reflect on his week, he said;

“Despite my ups & downs over the last 12 months I can say that attending the Rural Week has given me some positive direction to begin to follow and regain my footing in an unfamiliar environment.”

You can see the pictures from our Rural Weeks [here](#).

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