



Kent County Show announces Special Guests

June 2015

The Kent County Show is delighted that the IOD Kent (Institute of Directors) will be launching the start of the 86th Annual Show with their Breakfast. Sponsored by Rural Plc (Kent) and initiative demonstrating the real value of the food and farming sector in the county.

The guest speaker will be Adam Henson from BBC Countryfile who is often referred to as the nation's favourite farmer. Adam was born on Bemborough Farm, where he now presents some of the Countryfile programme. At the time, it was the first farm in the UK to open as an attraction for visitors and his father Joe Henson, ran it to pay to pay for the growing collection of rare breeds.

Adam gained an HND in Agriculture at Seale-Hayne Agricultural College in Newton Abbot, Devon, where he met his business partner and friend, Duncan Andrews and together then now run the 1,600 acres.

He first appeared on television in 2001, and has since worked on BBC Radio 4's On Your Farm and Farming Today. He was also the joint presenter with Kate Humble, of Lambing Live. Adam is often a guest presenter and contributor to a number of farming programmes both on the television and radio. His experience as a working farmer has given him access to address some of the major issues surrounding farming and food production.

The Breakfast which starts at 7am will also see a presentation from Rural Plc and displays from Visit Kent, Produced Kent, Locate in Kent and Kent Farmers Markets. Members and non-members are welcome to the breakfast which includes full entry to the Show. Details can be obtained by telephoning Lesley Bennett on 01795 435918.

The Kent County Agricultural Society are also pleased to welcome a number of high profile farming guests to the Show on Friday 10th July. Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Lords Spokesman for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He is responsible for all Defra business in the House of Lords. His remit includes; biosecurity strategy, commercial projects, landscape and climate change adaptation. Prior to his appointment, Lord Gardiner was Director of Political Affairs at the Countryside Alliance between 1995 and 2004 and Deputy Chief Executive between 2004 and 2010. He is also a partner in a family farm.

He will be joined on an official walk-round with Guy Smith, NFU Vice-President. Guy farms a mixed and diversified family farm in north-east Essex where he had the pleasure to be able to gain a listing in The Guinness Book of Records as the driest farm in the country.

Henry Robinson, President, CLA will also be involved in an official walk-around with The Lord Colgrain. Henry Robinson describes himself as “very much a practical and hands-on farmer”. He has managed farmland since 1978, and currently farms 1,000 acres in Gloucestershire on which he grows wheat and oilseed rape.

Richard Percy, Chairman of NFU Mutual, has farmed in Hertfordshire for over 30 years. Richard also manages an arable livestock farm in Buckinghamshire and is Director of Apsey Development Limited. He is currently a member of the DEFRA "Resilience Summit Working Group" whose aim is to advise the Secretary of State on Farming business resilience.

The final guest for the day is Baroness Byford a regular supporter of the Kent County Show. On leaving school Hazel Byford attended Northamptonshire Agricultural College, and then became a poultry farmer, for many years supplying parent stock to Thornber's, the firm that was for decades the best name in the sale of day-old chicks. In Parliament Lady Byford's knowledge of

agriculture informed her work as opposition spokesman for MAFF (the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) and then for DEFRA. It has also made her a natural choice as Patron for organizations such as the National Farm Attractions Network and the Institute of the Agricultural Secretaries and Administrators. Her standing in the world of agriculture is also reflected in her election in 2007 as President of the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers and her election in March of this year to the Court of the Worshipful Company of Farmers. She was the founding president of LEAF, the acronym of 'Linking Environment and Farming'.

Kevin Attwood, Kent County Agricultural Society Chairman said "To have this group of guests for our opening day is outstanding. Farming in Kent contributes a large amount of income to the county and having some of the most important figures in the farming world visit will give us an opportunity to highlight the hard work from our agricultural community".

Tom Dyke Hart will be the guest speaker for the Chairman's Official Lunch at the Kent County Show on Saturday 11th July. It was under difficult circumstances that Tom gained international prominence. Tom and his travelling companion, Paul Winder were kidnapped in the Columbian jungle on a plant hunting expedition that culminated in tragic circumstances.

Tom lives in Kent with his family and helps garden and landscape the ancestral home - the 15th century Lullingstone Castle. His passion for botany took him all over the world but it was in 2000 that his mission to find a rare orchid took him deep in to the Colombian Jungle, an inhospitable place home to violent local guerillas. Tom had met another intrepid explorer in Mexico and the two had decided to travel down to the area known as 'The Darien Gap' a dangerous place abandoned by all to warring guerrilla factions.

He told the Daily Mail in an interview in 2014 "For all I knew, my life was going to end in a hail of bullets that day. As it turned out, my ordeal was barely better than death: ten months a prisoner, beaten, sometimes starved and threatened that each day would be my last".

The two men were kidnapped at gunpoint on 16th March and were regularly threatened with execution during this nine month ordeal. However, whilst in captivity Tom spent much of his time dreaming of creating a garden containing plants collected from all corners of the world, to be housed within the two-acre walled garden at his home. Since his release, Tom's experiences have been the subject of two television documentaries, and a best-selling book 'The Cloud Garden' published in 2003, described as 'A True Story of Adventure, Survival, and Extreme Horticulture'. Tom has also been instrumental in two documentaries about his home, produced by KEO Films for BBC2; 'Save Lullingstone Castle' and 'Return to Lullingstone Castle'.

Tom also took part in a film entitled 'A Dangerous Obsession' directed by Andrew Palmer this film took place only a few months after his release. The film details Tom's journey to search for plants in Papua on the tropical island of New Guinea, one of the remotest jungles on the planet. Papua is thought by experts to contain the richest concentration of plant life in the world; this programme follows Tom through Papua, on his obsessive search to find the orchids, despite the ever-present threat of being kidnapped once again.

Tickets are available to purchase for the Chairman's lunch for £50.00, plus cost of members entrance pass. The luncheon will begin with a drinks reception at 12.15pm in the Maidstone Exhibition Hall followed by lunch at 1.00pm, which will be made with locally sourced produce.

ENDS

The online ticket system is now open to purchase discounted tickets for the 2015 Show. With a whole host of entertainment lined up, incredible equine competitions, livestock classes, lots of food and drink stands and specialist areas, the Kent County Show is an exciting and wonderful day out. A family ticket will cost £41 in advance or £48 when bought at the gate. The family ticket entitles 2 adults and 2 children aged between 5 and 15 a full day entrance. Children under 5 go free and parking is free. Adult tickets are £18.50 in advance and £22 on the gate, concessions are £13 when bought online and £15 on the gate. Child ticket is £5 in advance and £6 on the gate.

The Kent County Show starts at 8am and stays open until 6pm although there is no rush to leave as some of the food stands stay open later. The Show has over 120 different activities, workshops, displays and competitions which run throughout the day and are often repeated daily.

For more information and images contact Lucy Hegarty, Show Manager
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Kent County Show – 10, 11, 12 July 2015

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