



BICTON
COLLEGE

Cultivate

Staff, student and alumni news from Bicton College

VISIT BICTON'S VERY
own Animal Zone!

Safety in
THE SKIES

TAKING LIFE
by the reins



Bicton College

Set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Bicton College includes a historic Georgian mansion, a commercial farm, exceptional animal care facilities, a world-class engineering and heavy plant machinery workshop, a walled garden, and an arboretum, along with around 500 acres of historic parkland.



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Welcome

**WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF
our new *Cultivate* magazine.**

Within these pages, you'll find some of the most exciting news and stories from our staff, students and alumni across Bicton College.

You'll discover the amazing heights our students have reached – both inside and out of the classroom – as well as the ways in which we are providing exciting new opportunities in Devon.

Make sure to read our interview with alumnus Tom Pointon, who spends his days launching jets and helicopters with the Royal Navy, and meet lecturer Lucy Harwood, whose career has come full circle after being a student at Bicton.

We also have articles on Bicton's amazing Animal Zone – a fully licenced zoo facility onsite, with opportunities to visit throughout the year – as well as tips from our Gardening and Floristry staff on how to make the perfect bouquet, and more alumni adventures.



Whether you're a former student, curious about studying with us, or just love your local community, you'll find stories to inspire and surprise you.

**Ed Parrish
Principal
Bicton College**

**Are you a former student? Do you have an exciting story to share?
Contact us on marketing@cornwall.ac.uk and let us know!**

Taking

LIFE BY THE REINS

DARCY GOODWIN-FIELD STUDIED Equine Management & Science at Bicton College. Now, she's a junior coach at one of the UK's leading equestrian training and international competition centres.

She teaches students ranging between five and 85 at Wellington Riding, an iconic location that hosts high level events such as the Wellington International Festival of Dressage.

We caught up with Darcy to see how her qualification helped her to gain a position at such a prestigious place, and how the knowledge gained in her studies applies day-to-day.

What made you choose to study at Bicton College?

I chose to study at Bicton College for a few reasons. First of all, knowing that I could get the same outcome as going to sixth form – studying what I loved, without having to do A Levels – was a game changer for me. Secondly, when I looked at potential colleges, Bicton

seemed like the one with the most experience-based opportunities.

What made you want to study Equine Management & Science?

The opportunities that come with the course, along with the brilliant facilities, and an equine team with an abundance of industry experience, means that the course has everything to support students, whatever their goal.

What was the most important thing you learned on your course?

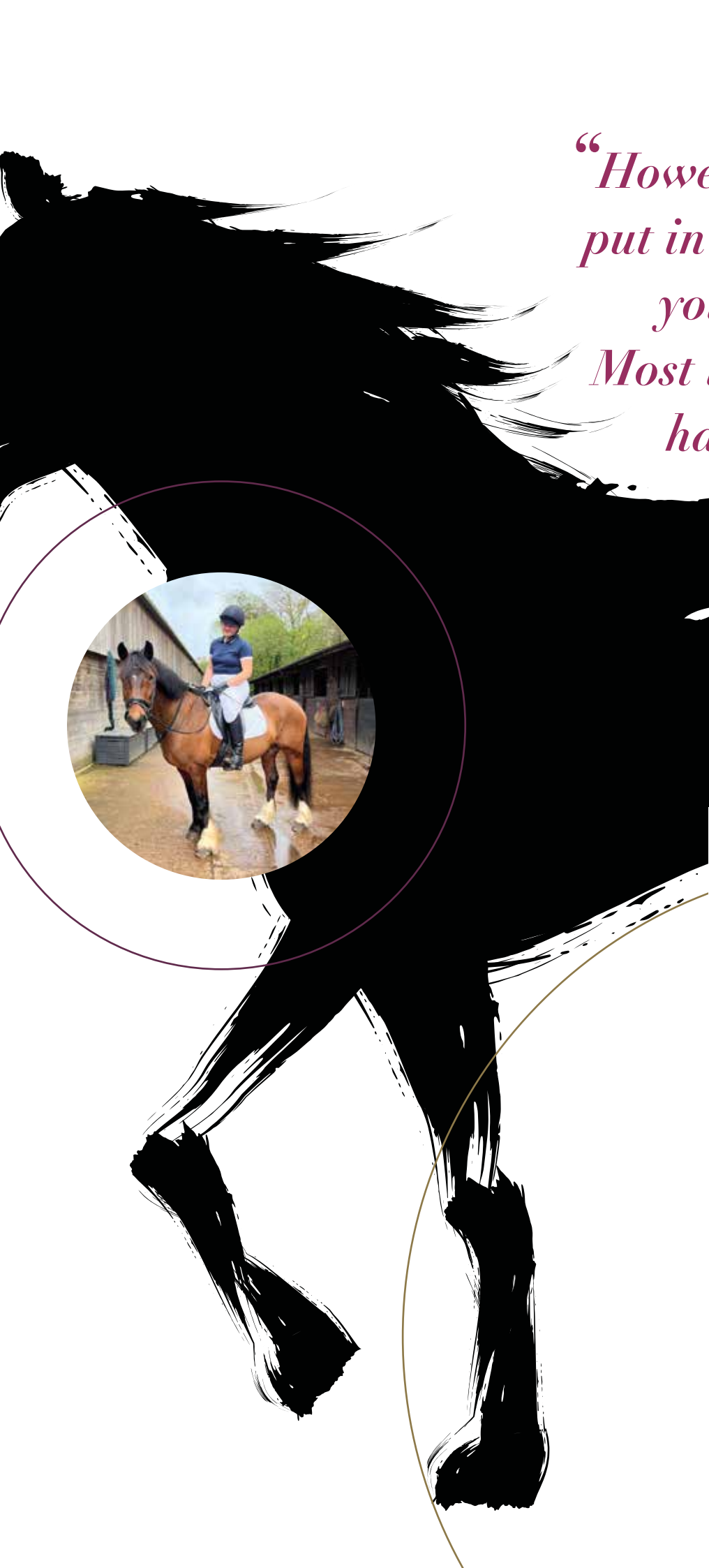
In the equine industry, it's vital that you surround yourself with a good

group of people who will push you, support you, and encourage you. It's essential to have help, as the industry is hard going.

What was your favourite part of the course?

I really enjoyed being part of the Elite Riding Academy. The Academy offered weekly lessons at Bicton Arena, opportunities to ride at the Devon County Show and put on displays during college open days, as well as going off site for National Schools Equestrian Association competitions.





“However much you put in is how much you get out. Most importantly, have fun!”

What is your current role?

I am a junior coach at Wellington Riding. This includes maintaining the welfare of our 70 horses and teaching a variety of lessons to people aged between five and 85!

I adore my job. Getting to see the progression and joy that a lesson can bring to someone is unmatched. My job has highlighted the importance of taking time to step back and appreciate the little things – I've learnt that everyone has different goals and a different learning pace.

Have your studies come in useful in your work?

I use the knowledge and skills learned during my course at Bicton in my job every day. This includes basic horse first aid, health and safety in the yard, and horse anatomy.

Would you recommend studying at Bicton College?

I would highly recommend studying at Bicton. The staff are happy to help you reach your goals, while ensuring that learning is fun and interactive.

If you are thinking of studying Equine Management & Science, then my advice would be to take every opportunity you can; however much you put in is how much you get out. Most importantly, have fun!

Blowing

THE STARTING WHISTLE



New coaching course coming to Bicton

WE'RE EXCITED TO BE BRINGING a new course in sports coaching to Bicton from September 2026.

The NCFE Diploma in Sport & Physical Activity (Sports Coaching) will provide students with a practical route into sport and fitness careers, while studying in Bicton's stunning surroundings.

"Bicton offers a setting that you simply cannot replicate in a standard college environment," said Dougie Wright, Assistant Principal at Bicton College. "This new course builds on our strong outdoor education provision and gives students the opportunity to develop coaching skills in a truly hands-on and inspiring environment."

Set within Bicton's extensive grounds, the course will see students training and coaching across open fields, delivering practical sessions and working within gym and fitness environments. Alongside this, learners will develop their understanding of sport science, performance and training.

“Bicton offers a setting that you simply cannot replicate in a standard college environment.”

DOUGIE WRIGHT, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



The diploma combines theoretical study, including anatomy and physiology and fitness testing, with practical learning focused on technical and tactical awareness. This balance is designed to prepare students for both further study and the demands of the workplace.



Our outstanding facilities

There is no other campus like Bicton. As well as being home to Grade I listed parkland, lakes and woodland, we also have a range of sporting facilities, including a fitness suite, a four-court sports hall, football pitches, an extensive equine yard and an orienteering course. We even have a golf putting green and a swing studio, along with a full-time golf professional on site.

With so many resources available, we have everything students need to apply new skills and knowledge to real-world conditions, and build confidence through practical experience.

Want to find out more about our new Sports Coaching course?

Head to our website for more details



Glorious GRADUATES



TRURO CATHEDRAL IS THE stunning setting for our annual graduation ceremony. This November, more than 250 students celebrated their academic success in style, cheered on by their friends and family.

Graduates from Cornwall College University Centre at the Eden Project, Cornwall College University Centre Newquay, Duchy College, Bicton College, Falmouth Marine School, The Golf Education Partnership and Cornwall College University Centre, came together to mark their achievements.

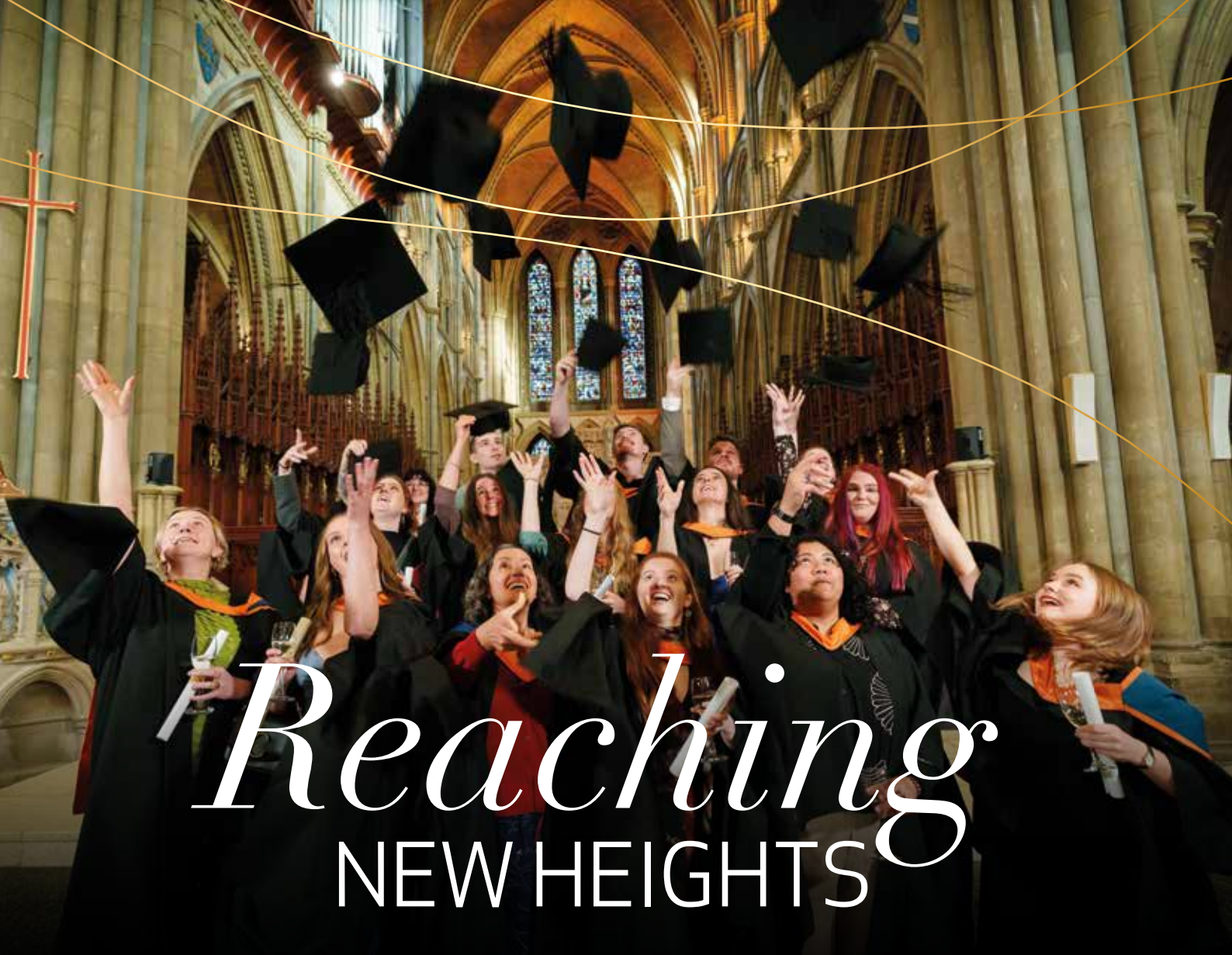
Rob Bosworth, CEO of Cornwall College Group (CCG), praised graduates on their achievement:

“Earning a degree is never easy, and each of our graduates has shown remarkable resilience, determination and passion to reach this moment.”

ROB BOSWORTH, CEO OF CORNWALL COLLEGE GROUP



“Throughout their studies, they’ve overcome challenges, balanced commitments and developed skills that will serve them for life. The expertise they’ve gained through our university centres across Cornwall will now help them make their mark on the world, as professionals, innovators and leaders in their communities.”



Reaching NEW HEIGHTS

CORNWALL COLLEGE GROUP HAS BEEN GRANTED FULL BACHELOR'S DEGREE AWARDING POWERS by the Office for Students (OfS), enhancing opportunities and supporting regional growth.

This means that the College will now be able to design and deliver its own degrees, extending its current foundation degree awarding powers. This new status allows us to build programmes that are employer-led, industry-aligned, and directly tailored to the needs of local communities and businesses.

The OfS report highlighted the College's strong student partnership, and impressive performance review processes for staff, along with a significant engagement with industry. They

were particularly impressed with how experts actively help to shape teaching, learning and assessments, while students benefit from field work and placements that increase their employability.

high-quality, career-focused degrees that directly respond to the skills needed now and in the future across Cornwall's industries.

"This opens up incredible opportunities for people in

"This is an exciting milestone for higher education in Cornwall."

**DR JENNIE JORDAN, HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
AT CORNWALL COLLEGE GROUP**

Dr Jennie Jordan, Head of Higher Education at CCG, said: "This is an exciting milestone for higher education in Cornwall.

"Achieving full degree awarding powers marks a major step forward. It means we can create

Cornwall to access higher education locally, gain qualifications aligned with real career pathways and contribute to the growth and success of our region."

1000



years

OF TRANSFORMING LIVES

WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE BEEN transforming lives, powering skills and enriching our communities for 100 years across the Cornwall College Group.

“We celebrate the places our campuses are based in, and the differences that make them unique, ensuring that our curriculum reflects and helps drive this energy.”

ROB BOSWORTH, CEO OF CORNWALL COLLEGE GROUP

Place

We are deeply rooted in the communities we serve. This means that we work hand in hand with local people and partners to make sure that we're providing the right courses to support local growth and productivity, as well as driving ambition and opportunities for our students.

“We celebrate the places our campuses are based in, and the differences that make them unique, ensuring that our curriculum reflects and helps drive this energy.”

Rob Bosworth, Chief Executive Officer at Cornwall College Group

People

Our success is only possible with the help of our dedicated staff members and partners, including local authorities, employers, universities and community organisations.

Within our colleges, we are investing in professional development, and promoting flexible and inclusive working practices to make sure our staff are highly trained and motivated to help students reach their full potential.

In the local community, we're building strong relationships to ensure that we're providing world-class education and teaching real, practical skills that will benefit both learners and their future employers.

Provision

We believe that education should provide people with the skills they need to succeed in the future. The courses we provide are driven by demand, helping to fill skills gaps in the local area, from agriculture and countryside management to military and protective services. In order to support these courses, we hire experienced staff to teach in industry-standard facilities, and provide students with plenty of real-world work experiences to prepare them for the next steps into careers or further study.

SAFETY IN *the skies*

Launching a naval career

AS A NAVAL AIRMAN AIRCRAFT handler in the Royal Navy, a lot rests on Tom Pointon's shoulders. He is not only responsible for the launching and recovery of helicopters and jets aboard the new Queen Elizabeth Class twin aircraft carriers, but he's also trained as a firefighter - ready to act in the face of fires, crashes and other emergencies.

What helped him train for such a demanding career, was studying the Military & Protective Services (MaPS) course at Bicton College.

Tom said: "Joining the military was always something that I wanted to do, and choosing the MaPS course allowed me to gain more knowledge and experience, as well as increase my fitness, before leaving for Basic Training."

Tom found studying invaluable, learning and developing skills that he uses every single day in the Royal Navy.

He said: "I use the skills that I learnt and developed at Bicton College every day in my job, as communication and teamwork are a critical part of being an aircraft handler."

"I enjoy my job very much, knowing that I can launch and recover the Royal Navy's latest aviation capabilities and having the training to rescue and recover aircraft when situations go wrong is a very rewarding feeling."





“The most important thing that I learnt on this course would be what I learnt about myself. I undertook multiple different challenges that tested me to my limit pushing me both mentally and physically.”

Photo: Chris Sellars © Crown copyright 2025

Aside from learning practical skills, the MaPS course helped Tom to learn more about himself, and what he was truly capable of.

He said: “The most important thing that I learnt on this course is what I learnt about myself. During my time at the College, I undertook multiple different challenges that tested me to my limit – ones that I didn’t believe I’d be able to undertake – pushing me both mentally and physically.”

The support that Tom received during the course, along with the unique insight into life in the armed forces, was instrumental to his success.

Tom said: “During my two years at Bicton College, I felt very supported. This was not only by my course instructors, who undertake every activity with you, but also by the support staff at the College, who supported and guided me throughout my course.

“Overall, my experience at Bicton College on the military course was something I will never forget. You will make friends for life, who all have the same passions and interests as you.

“I was given the opportunities to undertake different charity event challenges, multiple different visits and working opportunities

with local emergency services and military personnel, which allowed me to gain knowledge and experience that I still use to this day in the Royal Navy.”

Did you know that Bicton College has its very own licenced zoo?

THE ANIMAL ZONE, WHICH INCLUDES an aquatic house, exotics house, rodent house, primate house and poultry area, is home to more than 130 species of animals including alpacas, rhea, rabbits, Egyptian fruit bats, Burmese pythons and blue phased iguanas, along with rare breed poultry and sheep.



Real-world learning for future animal professionals

The Animal Zone is an invaluable educational facility where animal management students gain real-world, hands-on experience, participating in daily, industry-relevant husbandry, cleaning, and feeding, immersing themselves in professional practices.

Supported by a team of passionate experts, students develop the confidence and skills to care for animals in environments that prioritise health, welfare and conservation allowing them to go on into careers in kennels and catteries, pet shops, and rescue centres or the opportunity to progress further to become animal nutritionists, zoologists, behaviourists or conservationists.



A day in the life: Junior Keeper Experience

The Junior Keeper Experience Days give avid animal lovers aged 10 and up the opportunity to go into the Animal Zone and experience a day in the life of a zookeeper with the knowledge animal management team.

Designed and developed with industry leads, the Junior Keeper Experience Days at Bicton College are one of the most comprehensive educational zoo experiences in the southwest.

The Junior Keeper Experience Days provide practical experience of feeding, cleaning, training and husbandry maintenance for wide variety of animals and provides a detailed understanding of the day-to-day operations within a zoo.





INSIDE THE

Animal Zone



Opening the doors to the community

As well as the Junior Keeper Experience Days, the College also open the Animal Zone doors to the local community to during their Animal Zone open days.

Open days are ticketed events, welcoming all to see the amazing animal exhibitions, interact with the amazing educational staff and experience public displays curated by impressive student groups.

Scan the code to find out more



COMING FULL
Circle





LUCY HARWOOD WAS WORKING in the administration office of a local agricultural contractor, surrounded by heavy machinery, when she realised that she'd rather be in the driving seat than stuck in the office.

This initial spark led Lucy to enrol on a course in Agriculture at Bicton College in September 2020. She also set herself a goal to drive every piece of agricultural machinery she could. Now, aged just 23, Lucy has nearly completed this goal, with only an HGV left on the list.

From the start, Lucy embraced the College's residential opportunities, fully immersing herself in the experience. Then, came a turning point, when Lucy noticed students from the Military and Protective Services (MaPS) course taking part in dog handling sessions. Curious, she found herself drawn into an entirely new direction, and chose to transfer to the MaPS course at Bicton.

Lucy showed great potential during her studies, and was encouraged to consider a career in education. With the support of her lecturers, she completed a teacher training course, and gained a role as a teaching assistant at a school in North Devon.

Now, Lucy has come full circle, returning to Bicton as a Study Programme Manager for Agriculture and Countryside. As part of her role, she's responsible for overseeing the curriculum, teaching and engagement of Level 1 learners studying at Bicton College.

Day-to-day Lucy acts as course tutor, being the go-to person for all students

studying the Level 1 Agriculture programme. She is responsible for designing the way that lessons will be delivered and ensuring that every student has an exciting and stimulating course that infuses them with passion and excitement to lead them onto the next steps of their career.

Lucy said: "I always had such a strong connection with Bicton College that returning to work here just felt like I was coming home."

Even now, Lucy's thirst for knowledge continues, as she balances her role at Bicton with a master's degree in Animal Welfare Legislation. This course will help to inform her curriculum programming, and benefit Bicton students too.

"I always had such a strong connection with Bicton College that returning to work here just felt like I was coming home."



GROW
YOUR
OWN

bouquet

There's something special about stepping outside with a pair of scissors or secateurs, and bringing the garden indoors, especially when the flowers you grow are doing good as well as looking beautiful.

With a sunny spot and a handful of well-chosen plants, you can grow bouquets that feel natural, seasonal, and full of life, while also supporting bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

These plants are easy to grow, lovely to arrange, and genuinely valuable to pollinators:

Aquilegia vulgaris (Columbine)

– soft, nodding flowers that add movement and elegance

Leucanthemum vulgare (Oxeye daisy) – fresh, cheerful blooms that bring structure and brightness

Papaver rhoeas & Papaver somniferum (Poppies) – bold colour, silky petals, and rich pollen for bees

Centaurea cyanus (Cornflower) – a clear blue every bouquet needs, loved by bees and butterflies

Achillea ptarmica (Sneezewort) – delicate white clusters that soften stronger colours

Agrostemma githago (Corncockle)

– tall and airy, with an effortless meadow feel

Limonium vulgare (Sea lavender) – light, papery texture that lasts well when cut

Top tip

Most of these flowers prefer sun and simple conditions. Just avoid over-feeding and sow in small batches during spring to give you flowers for longer. You might find that things begin to self-seed, creating a truly wild garden!



1 Prepare
Strip leaves from the lower 15cm of each stem and trim to around 30cm. Lay flowers out by type so they're easy to grab.

2 Start
Hold a sturdy piece of foliage in your non-dominant hand as the anchor stem.



3 Create the spiral
Add stems one by one at a 45-degree angle, turning the posy slightly as you go. Keep adding flowers and foliage in the same direction until the shape looks balanced. If it doesn't feel right, put it down and start again.



Make your own FLORAL ARRANGEMENT

WE SPOKE TO OUR FLORISTRY and Horticulture staff to learn how to make - and even grow the flowers for - the perfect spring posy:

Flowers and tools

Spring flowers such as iris, daffodils, tulips and hyacinth, with filler flowers and foliage. You'll need sharp scissors, garden twine, and a jug or vase.



4 Tie and trim
Secure the stems with a 50cm length of twine where your hand has been holding them. Trim the ends evenly so the posy sits neatly in the jug.



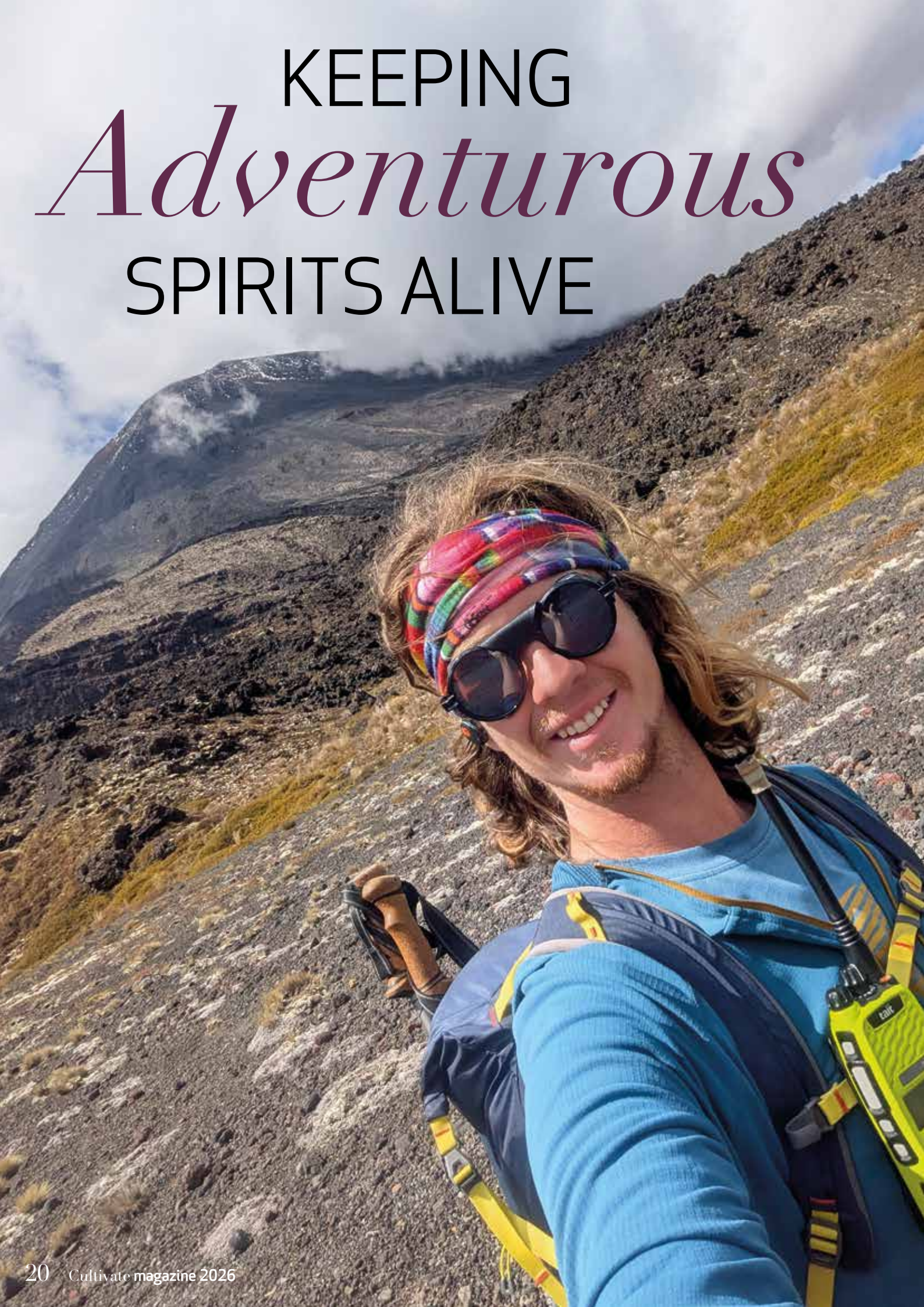
5 Enjoy
Place in water and enjoy your relaxed spring arrangement.



WATCH THE VIDEO, AND FOLLOW ALONG!



KEEPING
Adventurous
SPIRITS ALIVE





MATT PHILLIPS HAS BEEN AN OUTDOOR guide and expedition leader since 2012, leading adventures across some of the most remote and beautiful corners of our planet.

Growing up in the Southwest of England, he was surrounded by the wilds of Dartmoor, the rugged cliffs of Exmoor and the surfing beaches of the North Coast – the perfect environment for a child with an adventurous spirit.

As a self-confessed ‘professional child’, Bicton’s Outdoor Adventure course felt like the perfect way to help Matt pursue a career that would take him around the world, while still enjoying the hobbies he loved.

Matt said: “I enjoyed the hands-on and physical parts of the Outdoor Adventure course: being able to spend a day off site each week on the river, the moors or the ocean.”

Since leaving Bicton College, Matt has worked as a guide, a coach, a manager and an expedition leader – using the skills that Bicton College taught him.

Matt said: “Since leaving college I have adventured in 20 countries, and this has only been possible because of the experiences that I had at Bicton.

“I’ve worked as a jungle guide in Panama, where I took clients into a deep mangrove jungle, exploring nature and seeing crocodiles, jaguarundis, iguanas and parrots. I was also an expedition leader in Sri Lanka, guiding along the coast and rainforest rivers in this stunning country.”

Matt currently works in New Zealand, guiding canoe and mountain expeditions, where he leads people through the

“Since leaving college I have worked adventured in 20 countries, and this has only been possible because of the experiences that I had at Bicton.”

volcanic mountains of Tongariro National Park.

He said: “Guiding here in winter can involve ice axes, crampons and dealing with snow, ice and near zero visibility. But other days are calm, stunningly beautiful and it is just a magical place to be.”



News in brief

Stories from around our campus and communities

Stantyway Farm partnership

Students on our Progression Pathways courses have been participating in educational farm tours, gaining hands-on insights into daily farm operations and developing agricultural skills that are essential for careers in the land-based sector. This partnership provides valuable exposure to real-world farming practices, and helps students to understand the diverse skills required in modern agriculture.



Fiery fundraising

Bicton College is very proud to host a firewalk in aid of Devon Hospicecare. During this daring event, members of the public are guided by expert instructors to harness their inner power and safely take on the hot coals to raise funds for this important charity. The latest event in October raised more than £2,000 in total!



Testing strength and resilience on the Ten Tors

The Ten Tors is an intense physical challenge that requires teams to navigate routes across the northern half of Dartmoor, visiting 10 tors or checkpoints in just two days. Teams must be self-sufficient, carrying everything they need with them to spend the night on the moors. Our Military and Protective Services (MaPS) students have trained extensively for the event, developing their teamwork, resilience and determination, and pushing their limits in wet and windy conditions.

Bicton Home Farm fresh pork

We are now producing our very own range of pork products, including sausages and a range of cuts. Our students have been involved in the process from start to finish, from raising the pigs to packing and pricing orders. By keeping the whole process in-house – and by using a local abattoir, just 10 minutes away – the quality, welfare and flavour is guaranteed to be the very best.



Lifelong learning

WHETHER YOU WANT TO DEVELOP SKILLS, START A NEW HOBBY, improve your wellbeing, or even find inspiration for your next career move, we have a range of practical, flexible adult courses to suit you:

- Agricultural & Countryside Management
- Animal Management & Veterinary Nursing
- Arts & Media
- Business Skills
- Catering
- Children, Schools & Families
- Construction & Carpentry
- Engineering
- English & Maths
- Environmental Sustainability
- Equine
- Horticulture, Floristry & Arboriculture
- Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy
- Health, Social Care & Education
- Gardening
- Land-based Engineering & Technology
- Motor Vehicle
- Sports & Fitness

FIND OUT MORE →



Bicton College THROUGH THE YEARS

Bicton College has been providing specialist training and skills in a range of subjects for almost 80 years.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE MEMORIES of our beautiful campus through the years.

Dog grooming

Pamper your pooch at
Bicton College

From the tiniest toy poodle, to the largest Leonberger, your dogs will be in safe hands with our dedicated team of students, guided by experienced professional trainers.

Check out our website for the full list of treatments and prices.



Livery packages

Professional care
for your horse

Our stunning Bicton College campus includes facilities such as our solarium and horse walker, as well as the use of indoor and outdoor arenas and options for all year turnout.

Check out our website for the full list of packages and prices.

