

DBT Travel Award – Thank you Letter.

On behalf of the Harper Adams Engineering Society – Trip to Finland, visiting PONSSE & Valtra

Dear Douglas Bomford Trust and Trustees,

Introduction

A few months ago, I wrote to you asking for financial support in enabling a group of 6 engineers to attend a 2 night educational visit to Finland in August. The trip included 2 company visits, including PONSSE Forestry machinery and the Valtra tractor factory.

Attendees had the interest to learn about new machine technology of the forestry sector, as well as understanding 2 different factory types with a manufacturing plant vs a straight forward assembly plant. Grasping the latest releases and developments of both agricultural and forestry machinery were both key aspects. Engaging with manufacturers and building their personal networking skills is always a good aspect of the trips.

Following the success of the trip, I write to you now in thanks and admiration for all the support and kindness the trust and its trustees have shown society in our development and particularly in being a crucial enabler of trips such as these. On behalf of our members, particularly those who attended this trip, we would like to thank you for your support and to report the key happenings, learning and impact of this trip.

Note: I will structure this letter with headings based on the trust values served and build on these to provide more details.

Contents

Introduction	1
Trip Details and Trust Values Served	3
Research, Innovation and Education	3
Travel and Personal Development	3
Support, Collaboration and Networking.....	5
Final Thanks	5
Attendee list:.....	5

Trip Details and Trust Values Served

Research, Innovation and Education

A key objective for this trip was for attendees to learn and become increasingly aware of developing technologies, solutions and companies leading our agricultural and forestry systems and precision agriculture equipment. Such as that of the first company to implement „Cut to length“ Logs.

From the moment we arrived in Finland the vastness of forestry equipment and agricultural systems was clear. With a mindset of grasping as much knowledge as possible the attendees had created a list of questions for our hosts at the company visits including both cultural and topic related questions. With a small group of 6 we had an immense amount of exposure into both visits compared to that of a bigger group.

A highlight of the PONSSE visit included the test scorpions which we were able to observe working in the test area of the forestry. It was interesting to note that all production machines off the line are subject to 10 working hours in the test area prior to customer delivery. This is truly unique to the PONSSE company to remove teething issues of the machines.

The Valtra factory is unique in that it has fully customisable product lines including bespoke machinery for government and military use. We were subject to a top secret area where no photography could take place due to special projects being undertaken.

Travel and Personal Development

Students rarely get the chance to travel to other countries and experience different cultures and environments, yet alone experience the agricultural/engineering applications of them places. Only one of the six attendees had visited Finland prior to this trip.

Opportunity to meet with engineers and farmers from all over the world and see how engineering concepts vary between countries. Additionally, how each country has a domestic market which is often matched with similar manufactures in neighbouring countries yet also in some applications such a difference for the climates/soil types. Specific to Finland, the harsh climates and large water areas creates new challenges for the industry.

“I had visited Finland only recently before this trip to attend a work event. It was great to see more of the country and experience the culture of different towns and regions across Finland. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about new machinery including that of the forestry product which we would not have seen much of in the UK. The performance and effectiveness of the machinery was immense and it was great to see the machinery working in the test area” (Henry Lapworth)

Though all attendees spoke English and nobody was fluent in Finnish, the group engaged to the best ability to learn basic keywords and greetings in the local language.

“I've always had a passion for forestry machinery and I'm currently carrying out my placement year with a forestry company in the UK. To be able to experience the forestry equipment and practises in a foreign country is something that I was very grateful for” (Rob Weston)

"I have attended previous engineering society trips including that of the Agritechnica trip and I felt this was another great opportunity to increase my knowledge in a subject area that was limited from my previous experience. Both factories were interesting and the supply and demand in Finland is completely different to that of the UK. The culture was also fun to experience including some networking with employees" (Sam Withers-Lewis)

Many of the attendees realised a new interest in travelling to new places, learning about other cultures, and interacting with locals. I think we will see more students being excited to travel both in a personal capacity and as part of their careers.

Some more testimonials from the students follow below.

“I enjoyed the trip from both an educational side and the cultural side of a new country and language” (Charles Cooper)

“Finland is a beautiful country and it is always great to meet new people learn new skills and experience further cultural differences. I had great fun on the trip and thank you for the support” (Dom Neal)

Support, Collaboration and Networking

The attendees engaged with both locals and employees of the companies to experience and grasp cultural and industry learnings to the best of their ability. Experiencing two different industries of different product types was also interesting to understand the differences between customer needs and requirements in Finland and across the world.

The one evening involved a meal and drinks with Valtra employees where we experienced some social activities in the local town of Jyväskylä in central Finland.

Being global companies, we interacted with over 10 different nationalities and people from around the world. It was great to see peoples backgrounds and passions.

Final Thanks

We are forever grateful for the support from the Douglas Bomford Trust in all of our trips and activities. This specific trip allowed an immense knowledge bank to be accessed and experienced by six of our members. As mentioned the uniqueness of both factories we visited along with the cultural experience made for an excellent trip with lots of educational benefits for all attendees. The trip reinforced that international travel is key for personal development, networking and broadening the horizons of young engineers.

On behalf of all the attendees, society members and the wider university, thank you for your fantastic support on this and all the other contributions you make to our community.

Photos will be attached via email or sent via a share link.

A personal testimony :

“For me personally the trip was an incredible experience for both experiencing a new country a new industry and meeting new people with potentially future opportunities within my career. At Harper Adams university we learn different production styles and manufacturing factory types and on this trip we experienced both an assembly plant along with a manufacturing plant that both had complete different needs and different expectations from a customer point of view. Though my finish was not brilliant I can definitely agree Finland is a beautiful country and has great people. Thank you to all of those who provided the opportunities within this trip and those who supported like that of the Douglas Bomford trust. Thank you very much” (Rhodri Williams)

Attendee list:

1. Rhodri Williams – Lead Organiser
2. Henry Lapworth
3. Dom Neal
4. Sam Withers-Lewis
5. Rob Weston
6. Charles Cooper