

Professional

The Douglas Bomford Trust



From L - R: RAU’s Felicity Crotty, David O’Connor and Chris Frazer, with Olena Melnyk (SNAU), Nick August (DBT), Mark Horton (RAU) and Major Ben Unwin (Kings’s Royal Hussars) on Salisbury Plain

A Conflict of Interest

Secretary Alan Plom reports on the Trust’s recent involvement in a far-reaching international project:

In response to a request from the Royal Agricultural University (RAU), the Douglas Bomford Trust is supporting an environmental monitoring and remediation project in Ukraine, by sponsoring travel and equipment together with advice from our Chairman Nick August (a local farmer, user and consultant in cutting-edge technology associated with precision farming).

This research will help to alleviate the significant damage to large areas of productive agricultural land impacted (in more ways than one!) by extensive shelling and bombing, missiles and land mines spread

around a country 2.5x the size of Great Britain. The damage to soil is obviously extensive and, not surprisingly, contamination is yet to be assessed.

RAU has worked closely with its ‘twinned’ academic institution in Ukraine – the Sumy National Agrarian University (SNAU) - to urgently develop remote sensing and soil chemistry sampling protocols, and to train Ukrainian non-combatants to identify soil pollution and collect pertinent data on which to base environmental remediation decisions.

RAU’s Statement on Ukraine

In response to the war in Ukraine, RAU vowed to “stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. As the ‘bread basket of Europe’, the people of Ukraine share the same passionate commitment as us to farming and to the land – they are our kith and kin in spirit.”



Following an initial virtual seminar between SNAU and RAU staff, and specialists from geospatial and environmental companies last year, the Trust funded Ukrainian Professor Olena Melnyk's travel to the UK, to develop research protocols at RAU.

Whilst in the UK, she also held meetings in Westminster with DEFRA and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. RAU also gave a presentation to Lord Benyon and HALO (a global network of universities and start-ups enabling partnerships with industry).

Ground survey equipment

In addition to travel costs, the Trust has sponsored ground survey equipment (including drones and software) required for the pilot research on three impacted farms. The equipment and proposed

procedures, were trialled by the RAU/SUMY team on Salisbury Plain, helped by others from outside RAU, including Nicholas Mellor (interested in forensic archaeology and founder of a company exploring how the fusion of aerial surveys and advances in augmented reality can be used to protect endangered world heritage sites) and retired Rear Admiral Anthony Rix.

They were accompanied by our own 'Action Man', Trust Chair, Nick August. My vision of Nick and the research team dodging Challenger tanks appearing on the skyline was not far off, as the artillery trundled close by while the RAU Team were waiting for clearance to fly their drones!

This made #WorldSoilDay even more poignant for all involved. As Nick observed: "Imagine coming over from Ukraine and ending up on a military training ground with Challenger battle tanks, Apache helicopters and C17s flying overhead, Ukrainian and British forces charging around, while analysing soil in shell craters at 2C. Home from home!" Ukrainian people are wholeheartedly committed and made of strong stuff though, and we salute them too.

The first phase of this vital project will be completed with the data and samples collected being analysed in UK by RAU and ARUP Geospatial. RAU staff are giving their time and lab costs free of charge, as part of their contribution to the project.

The
DOUGLAS BOMFORD
SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING Trust



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www.dbt.org.uk

or contact the Secretary Alan Plom via:

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