

## Caernarfon Hill Farming Event

**June 12<sup>th</sup> 2025, Hafod y Llan, Beddgelert**

Set in the stunning surroundings of Snowdonia, Hafod y Llan, Beddgelert, provided an exceptional backdrop for the very successful Hill Farming Event. It took place on Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup> and was organised as part of Caernarfon's fundraising efforts for the 2025 Royal Welsh Show.

It proved to be a vibrant and well-supported celebration of upland farming and rural life in Wales. The large crowds from across Wales and the North East, despite a mixed weather forecast, demonstrated the strength of interest in the hill farming sector.

The 1,800-hectare farm, extending from the valley floor to the summit of Yr Wyddfa, is home to three hefted flocks of Welsh Mountain sheep, a small herd of pedigree Welsh Black cattle, renewable energy schemes, and tourism enterprises. They all attracted considerable interest from visitors.

The fields and farm buildings were filled with more than 120 trade stands and exhibitors from all over the UK. It offered visitors the opportunity to engage with local producers, national agricultural businesses, and industry organisations. The standard of exhibits was extremely high, with the Texel Society awarded Best Trade Stand on the day for their outstanding presentation and engagement.

The event featured a full programme of attractions, including machinery demonstrations, sheepdog trials, forestry displays, and practical insights into sustainable upland farming. Food and agriculture were brought together through live cooking demonstrations and a Welsh food market that showcased some of the finest local produce, which proved popular throughout the day.

Chairman of the organising committee, Bedwyr Jones of Gwastadanas, said: "As a committee, we felt the hill farming sector was vitally important to this county, and several years had passed since there had been an event focused on the uplands.

"There was interest from all parts of the UK, and some people remembered a similar event held at Hafod y Llan in 1996. We were delighted that Mr Richard Williams, who was the previous host, agreed to serve as our President for the day."

One of the major highlights, organised by Rhodri Manod Owen, was the Intercollege Young Farmer Competition. It brought together teams of three from seven Further Education colleges across Wales.

Competitors were tested on a wide range of practical and technical skills, including stockjudging of Welsh Black cattle and sheep, sheep shearing, fencing, quad bike handling,

and industry-related assessments. The competition was keenly contested, and the winners were announced during the event, celebrating the next generation of hill farming talent.

Sheepdog demonstrations, led by the Welsh Sheepdog Society alongside Gwyndaf Evans of Pentrefoelas and Bryn Davies of Bryneglwys, were a firm favourite with visitors. Throughout the day, spectators enjoyed watching skilled handlers and dogs working together, highlighting the discipline and tradition central to upland sheep farming.

A series of guest speakers added further value. Professor Prysor Williams spoke on carbon developments and the effectiveness of upland systems in meat production. Dan Jones shared insights into farming practices overseas and Giles Hunt outlined future leasing plans for National Trust farms.

Reflecting on the day, Glynwen Davies, secretary of the organising committee, added: “We were extremely fortunate to host the event at Hafod y Llan, a truly spectacular location at the foot of Yr Wyddfa.

“Visitors greatly enjoyed seeing livestock grazing the higher slopes, whether through guided walks or by exploring the farm and trade stands at their own pace. We were also privileged to have the support of some of the county’s leading agricultural businesses and food producers.

“It was wonderful to see people engaging in discussions on a wide range of agricultural topics, catching up with old friends, and enjoying high-quality local food. The strong support from our sponsors and trade stand holders made all the organisation and hard work worthwhile.

“As a committee, we are extremely grateful for their continued support, which played a vital role in the success of the event.”

With strong attendance, excellent exhibitor support, and a warm community atmosphere, the Hill Farming Event at Hafod y Llan was widely regarded as a memorable and successful day. It celebrated the resilience, innovation, and future of Wales’s hill farming communities.

**Glynwen Davies**

## CARAS

### **Edward Griffith ARAgS**

*Edward Griffith was made an Associate in February 2025 for his submission 'A high level of competence in Beef and Sheep Production.'*

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for the honour of being appointed an Associate of the Royal Agricultural Societies.

I am a beef and sheep farmer and farm with my family between the villages of Abersoch and Mynytho on the Llyn Peninsula. I came home to farm in 1980 when I was twenty-one years old. Two years later my parents made me a partner. I was given the opportunity to bring new ideas to the business and I am grateful to them to this day for their support.

I married Jackie in 1988 and we had five children. Four of them have flown the nest, but Ellis, our eldest son, farms with us. Ellis is now a partner and has three children of his own with his wife, Cain.

In 1999 I travelled to the United States to see herds of Stabiliser cattle. At the time we had 110 Limousin x suckler cows, which were crossed with Charolais bulls. Most of the calves were finished on farm with some sold as forward stores.

Following the trip, I decided to set up a closed herd of Stabiliser cattle and today we have 140 recorded pure Stabiliser cows. We sell a few breeding bulls as well as a number of in-calf heifers. The remaining calves will either be kept as replacements or finished on farm.

We have an early lambing flock of 1,180 Suffolk x mule ewes with all their lambs being finished on farm. Every year we purchase around 340 ewe lambs as replacements.

I have shared a lot of information with others and over the years we have held various meetings on the farm. We also served as a red meat demonstration farm for Farming Connect.

I am a member of Llanengan Community Council and I am also extremely proud to be on the Llyn and Eifionydd Farmers committee that has raised so much money towards various good causes.

## CARAS

### **Kevin James Thomas ARAgS**

*Kevin Thomas was made an Associate in August 2024 for his submission 'Charolais Expanding Horizons.'*

Firstly, I would like to give thanks from the bottom of my heart for this special honour.

Having left school and gained my carpentry qualification, I decided to venture into farming in 1988. Farming had always been a dream of mine and although I had no previous experience of rearing beef cattle, seeing Charolais cattle at the Royal Welsh Show took my fancy.

So, I bought two young heifers as a hobby alongside my daily work and set up the Moelfre Herd after renting some land in the Capel Iwan area of Carmarthenshire. I knew from the very beginning that purchasing good quality pedigree stock as a foundation for the herd was essential.

My goal was quality rather than quantity and I had the opportunity to purchase and learn from first class breeders across Britain and from France. The herd has now developed and includes more than a hundred head, consisting of suckler cattle, young bulls, heifers and calves. We have also had considerable success over the years, exhibiting and adjudicating at shows across the country and selling stock at auctions as far afield as Scotland and from our own farmyard.

I am extremely proud of the many connections that I have fostered and the support that I have received through my involvement with the British Charolais Society. I look forward to seeing the breed go from strength to strength.

## **Dai Jones Llanilar Memorial Award**

**Winner: Elen Gwen Williams**

### **My Journey to the Dai Jones Llanilar Memorial Award**

My project, *Calon Cefn Gwlad*, tells the story of shearing, such a big part of our lives and community in Dyffryn Clwyd. It's a great honour to be able to do this as the first person to win an award in the name of Dai Jones.

It follows the people behind the scenes, the shearing, the volunteers, the families and the characters who make these events so special. It's about more than just a competition, it's about pride, generosity and the heart of the countryside.

I was brought up on a family farm, where farming and community went hand in hand. From working on different farms to being part of Young Farmers and local events, I grew up seeing how important it is that we look after each other in rural Wales. It's not just through work, but through friendship, having fun and pulling together when it matters.

My biggest influence was my older brother, Elgan. He was a brilliant young farmer who absolutely loved the industry and the life that came with it. We lost Elgan far too young, and ever since then I've carried him with me in everything I do. Winning the Dai Jones Llanilar Memorial Award in his memory is something I will always be incredibly proud of.

Cneifio Cyflym Hiraethog has shown how events built around shearing can bring people together, raise vital money for charities, and give everyone something to look forward to. Since 2017 we've raised nearly £20,000 for causes close to people's hearts, from the Welsh Air Ambulance to children's hospitals, mental health charities and local funds. It shows just how powerful rural communities can be when they work together.

I've been lucky to take opportunities as they've come, whether that's working with S4C, speaking on Radio Cymru, or through my work with the DPJ Foundation raising awareness of mental health in farming. You never know where one chance might lead and this award is proof of that.

Dai Jones had a gift for telling rural stories honestly and warmly. His life and work is an inspiration and I can't wait to work with the S4C team to bring *Calon Cefn Gwlad* to life.

## **2025 Dr Emrys Evans Award**

### **Winner: Sion Eilir Roberts, St Asaph, Denbighshire**

It was an enormous honour to win the Dr Emrys Evans Award and one of the highlights of my career so far. It symbolises the journey that I've been on as a livestock auctioneer in Wales, particularly at the Livestock Market in St Asaph.

I regularly attended livestock markets from a very young age. I watched the sales process and it fostered a strong desire to become an auctioneer. My journey started with a Young Farmers Club competition, which gave me valuable experience and increased my confidence.

I had the opportunity to start working as a part-time auctioneer at Welshpool Livestock Market in 2017, soon after graduating with a degree in Agriculture from Aberystwyth University. Then, in 2018, I joined the company on a full-time basis, selling cull ewes and prime lambs every week.

In November 2020, I was appointed senior auctioneer at St Asaph Market in the Vale of Clwyd. This was a major step in my career and meant that I was responsible for overseeing the weekly sale of prime lambs and store lambs.

It is a competitive environment, with strong markets close by, and so fostering close relationships with both sellers and buyers is essential. I'm proud to have maintained the excellent reputation of the lamb yard, whilst successfully attracting new sellers from far and wide and forging local connections.

I re-established the cattle section at the market in 2021 and since then we have sold more than 11,000 prime cattle, 9,000 store cattle and 900 cows and calves. I also set up new sales for breeding sheep and we have now sold in excess of 20,000 breeding ewes and ewe lambs.

It has been a great advantage to be a Welsh speaker, helping to foster strong relationships as I have visited local farms. I look forward to continuing to contribute to the development of Welsh Agriculture in the coming years.

I'm extremely grateful to the partners at Jones Peckover for trusting me to run their market. It's a responsibility that I really appreciate and I'm very proud to have the opportunity.

## **2025 Farm Buildings and Works Competition**

**Winner: Sion Edwards & Megan Roberts, Bodlondeb, Sarn Bach, Pwllheli**

### **Siop y Pentre, Sarn Bach (Abersoch Farm Shop)**

It was an immense honour for us to receive this award from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society at the Royal Welsh Show.

It was in recognition of our transforming old farm buildings into a small shop and café. The aim was to cater for a primarily rural community, but to also capitalise on the bustling tourism industry during the busiest times of the year.

Farming is my life. I have been farming independently here at home from a very young age. Bodlondeb has been the family home since 1908, but it's a very small farm and therefore it was impossible to make a living from farming alone.

I have a mixed farm, with 300 sheep, about 25 breeding cows with calves at foot and a few store cows. I own about 20 acres of land, but rent another 120 acres or so. I spent over 20 years working for a local agricultural trade company and enjoyed that period immensely.

So, I went for it and set up a new venture. I am now farming as well as running a café/village shop venture, all with my daughter, Megan's, assistance and enthusiasm. We converted the old cowsheds into a small shop and café and opened our doors in the Spring of 2021.

Our fundamental principles were to ensure that we would offer authenticity, with high quality local produce, Welsh goods and homemade delicacies. We employ local staff, including a number of students over the holiday periods. We must praise the community of Llŷn and Eifionydd and express our thanks. The support has been truly overwhelming.

It wasn't long before it became apparent that we needed to broaden our horizons. We opened an extension during the Spring of 2025. Y Sied features a substantial sized room for catering tables and a bar at one end.

We offer a friendly and welcoming service and quality produce. Our evening meals have received favourable support. Various parties have visited - local societies, funeral teas, weddings, etc.

'Without a doubt, receiving the award from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society has been a huge boost and we appreciate it very much. The support and praise that were bestowed upon us during this time was incredible.

It has been an honour. Thank you very much.

## Cwm Senni

What I shall describe here is not merely a legend, but rather a remarkable chapter in the history of one small community that was forced to fight for its existence for ten years between 1963 and 1972.

Lest the Senni Valley become another Epynt was the thrust of the campaign. Tryweryn's sad experience was still raw, when the Senni Valley faced exactly the same fate.

In July 1963, the Western Mail revealed that the Cardiff Corporation was still eyeing the Senni Valley as a suitable place to build a reservoir. When the Usk River Authority announced a comprehensive plan to supply water to the citizens and the industries of South East Wales, several plans were under consideration.

One of these was to dam the River Usk above Brecon and it was the authorities' first choice. It was the opposition of powerful landowners, along with the county council that put an end to the proposal.

The Senni Valley was, therefore, the next target. From that point on, a black cloud fell over the area. The people of the Senni Valley were on their own, as the county council accepted the Secretary of State's ruling. He allowed tests in the Senni Valley, even though he admitted that he had never been there!

On September 29<sup>th</sup> 1963, the Cwm Senni Defence Committee was formed in the old schoolhouse, and from then until May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1972, this was the battle's headquarters. The committee's first step was to agree on one basic, unwavering goal.

The unanimous decision was that officers of the Usk River Authority should not set one foot on their land. The committee's leadership, namely the Chair, Jonathan Davies, Y Brychgoed, the Secretary, my father Glyn Powell, and the Treasurer, Tom Jones, Beiliau, were tasked with maintaining the initial consensus and with leading their community.

There was a heated turmoil locally. It had to be curbed by adopting a strategy that emphasized non violent, non partisan and apolitical means. Officers of the Usk River Authority were busy behind closed doors.

They decided on the cunning strategy of undermining local unity by targeting only the four farmers who had land on the site of the dam. This was to put a divide between them and their neighbours.

Over a period of ten years, every possible means was utilised to prevent the Usk River Authority from executing its plan. If you had come for a walk through the Senni Valley during the campaign, you would have seen some rather strange goings on.

Each gate was tied and locked, with barbed wire over each one. It was very interesting to note how many signs there were warning people against venturing into fields because of the bulls!

Each household was issued with a whistle to raise the alarm if they saw a stranger in the Valley and a World War II siren was hidden in a holly tree. Jane Pritchard, Tŷ Canol's, duty was to raise the alarm in an emergency. Then everyone would assemble in the old school.

Every opportunity was taken to use the media and the Senni Valley was often seen on television and in the press. There was even an article in American Newsweek on 06/04/1970 under the headline, 'How Green Was My Valley'.

The River Authority had to get permission to bore on the land and on May 1st 1968, the blow came. It was a letter 'requesting' permission to carry out tests at the four farms, Cefnfedw Isaf, Cefnfedw Ganol (my home), Y Brychgoed and Beillau.

After the second letter, came the threat from the River Authority to take the case to a Court of Law. The residents of the Senni Valley had many a sleepless night ahead of the public hearing at Brecon Magistrates' Court.

To ease concerns and inspire the community, a parade was organised through Brecon under the banner of S.O.S. [Save Our Senni]. Protesting was a wholly unfamiliar experience for the inhabitants of the valley and they had to endure the scornful stares of the townspeople.

After two attempts, the River Authority was able to obtain permission to conduct tests in the Senni Valley. As a compromise was not possible, the inhabitants of the Valley remained on tenterhooks before the hour of reckoning came.

The River Authority announced that it had set a date, August 5th 1970. A welcome party was there to receive them and, when the machines appeared in the distance, the siren sounded. In no time at all, the community gathered at Brychgoed farm. Supporters flocked from the surrounding areas to swell the ranks of the 'home army'.

The date happened to coincide with the National Eisteddfod in Ammanford and a host of young people came to support the residents. Some 200 protesters sat on the road, with the bravest among them lying under the wheels of the trucks.

Through the long hours of that day, the 200 in the ranks stood motionless. Leaving that evening, the River Authority declared that they would return to exercise the right, given by the court.

The second attack was thrust upon the valley unannounced in the early hours of the morning. It seemed as if all of the Defence Committee's plans were coming apart at the seams, but the community was not ready to give up the fight and succumb to the insults and the ridicule.

The protesters managed to have one up once again and the authority had to leave the site before the end of the day. The scene at Brychgoed that day was truly dramatic.

Although there were 12 police officers there, they could only stand and listen, as there was no commotion or violence. The River Authority was not allowed to use the yard at Brychgoed to unload the machinery and so were forced to leave.

There were now discussions held at the highest level about the whole issue of water resources and the need to reform the existing regime. The Defence Committee continued to debate and nag and, with the support of both Members of Parliament, they succeeded in scuppering the plans of the Usk River Authority.

The community's tactic of peaceful protest meant the community was able to attract even the sceptics. The national report approving other methods of ensuring a water supply was a fatal blow to the River Authority and this was its swan song.

Suddenly and completely unexpectedly, the River Authority announced that it was abandoning its plans. David was victorious in his battle against Goliath! A Cymanfa Ganu was held at Brychgoed Chapel to give thanks. The long battle had had an emotional and psychological impact on the inhabitants, but the victory ensured a livelihood for them and for future generations.

That's how things happened, and we are still here, 'yma o hyd', despite everyone and everything. Today, the Senni Valley is known for the quality of its stock and agriculture and the younger generation farm successfully on its slopes. Above all, the Welsh language has regained its standing here and the future is completely secure in the hands of the current inhabitants.

As a result of Senni's campaign, there has not been another attempt to drown a valley in the whole of Wales. It is clear that the force of resistance deployed by the people of the Senni Valley has had a strong influence.

When it comes to fully recording the phase of history, this episode will be among one of the most significant of our nation.

## **Long Service Award**

### **Ifan Roberts**

I was very honoured and grateful to receive a long-service medal from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society.

I started milking by hand 66 years ago and vividly remember with astonishment the first machine milker being installed. Farming has changed so very much over the years!

I was brought up in Bontnewydd near Caernarfon and left school at 15 in 1960. I was employed part time for the first summer in a plant nursery, before being fortunate to gain full employment with Robert Jones at Cwm Prysor, Trawsfynydd.

There I began by milking Welsh Black cows. I was also tending sheep and chickens, which I particularly enjoyed. Robert and Mair Jones purchased a farm in Caernarfon, and moved with their five children at the end of February 1963.

I well remember the time as it coincided with the snow and bitter cold. It meant clearing snow drifts and carrying water to livestock was a never ending daily chore. Moving back to the place of my upbringing allowed me to reconnect with school friends. The local Young Farmers club was a hive of activity and attending the church meant so much to me through faith.

The Welsh Blacks gave way to Friesians, changing to Holsteins who appeared to produce oceans of milk compared to the cows I started with! In 1969, the pipeline bucket system with churns was replaced with a 5/10 herringbone parlour and bulk milk tank.

Farming never stands still, there is always the adoption of new technology and methods of production. You can imagine my amazement, as one who'd started milking with a bucket and stool, seeing the installation of a rotary parlour with all the bells and flashing coloured lights.

I thank the Lord for all his grace, Mrs Mair Jones for all her love and care, and to have been made to feel part of the family at Hendy these past 66 years.

## Obituary

### **J. Andrew M. Jones BA (Hons), FRAgS**

1954 – 2025

For Andrew Jones, known as Andrew Felindre, the Royal Welsh Show was the marker point of every year: events were always spoken of as happening either before or after 'The Show'.

As a main commentator with Gwynne Davies in the Sheep Section, he prepared meticulously to ensure he was fully familiar with each breed of sheep and their owners. He relished meeting people and had a remarkable ability to recall the details of their lives, families and flocks.

Andrew's first experience behind the microphone was in 1988, when the late Charles Arch invited him to prepare and present information on the Sheep Train. This was an initiative in which every sheep breed was represented on trailers travelling around the main ring. It led to many years of commentating at the Winter Fair and he continued to lend his voice and expertise to the Summer Show until very recently.

A respected judge, he felt it a privilege to judge the Llanwenog classes, the supreme pairs championship and the George Hughes ram lamb and ewe lamb championships at the Royal Welsh Show. He also judged at numerous local and regional shows. He considered it an honour to have been awarded the John Gittins Memorial Award in 2007, for his service to the sheep industry, and made an Honorary Life Governor of the Society in 2021.

After studying History and Welsh History at Aberystwyth University and completing his teacher training, Andrew returned to the family farm, Felindre Uchaf, Cwmann. The improvement and management of the dairy and sheep enterprise remained his lifelong focus and he took great pride in seeing his son Tomos take over the running of the farm.

On his return home, Andrew helped establish the Agricultural Discussion Group and Cylch Cinio in Lampeter. He deepened his agricultural interests by writing regular articles in *The Sheep Farmer* magazine and later served as Chairman of NSA Cymru/Wales and was a stalwart of the NSA Wales & Borders Ram Sale Committee.

His love of Welsh history, culture and language found expression in the many articles he wrote for *Y Cymro* and as an early director of the magazine *Golwg*. Andrew had a talent for impersonating people and took part in many concerts, TV and radio programmes, as well as various acting roles on S4C.

Andrew was delighted to learn of Gethin Havard's election as President of the 2026 Show and offered him his warmest congratulations and best wishes. Andrew's contribution to the Royal Welsh and to the wider agricultural community will be long remembered, and his voice, knowledge and warmth leave a lasting legacy.

A devoted family man, Andrew enjoyed the steadfast support of his wife, Pat. He was immensely proud of her and of his three sons, Owain, Morgan and Tomos, and of their families. He is greatly missed by them all.

## Obituary

**Dilwyn James 29.05.1949 – 01.12.2025**

Dilwyn was a man with his roots firmly in his local community, and the old traditional Welsh way of life was always important to him. He was always willing to lend a helping hand to his community and had time for friends in need.

He was well known as a butcher and dealer, but his true love was farming and he maintained his passion for agriculture until the end of his life. He left school at 16 years of age and his father, the entrepreneur Dewi James (who had higher ambitions than farming for his son) bought a shop for him – a butchery in Cardigan. But that was only the beginning.

The business prospered to include an abattoir in the town centre, where Theatre Mwldan stands today. Then came another outlet in Newcastle Emlyn, together with a butcher's shop. The company further developed a new abattoir on the Pentood Industrial Estate at Cardigan and opened a second shop at the other end of the town.

However, despite the long hours involved in this, Dilwyn still managed to find time to work on the Family Farm at Oernant.

Nurturing young talent was close to his heart, and he taught members of local YFCs the many skills required for stock judging and assessing carcasses. He would always support local farmers and livestock marts.

Dilwyn was proud to be recognised as one of the principal buyers at both Cardigan and Newcastle Emlyn Marts, as was his father before him. He'd attend the various local Christmas marts, as well as the Winter Fair at Llanellwedd, where, from the very start, he purchased cattle and continued to do so over many years. He'd also had the honour of judging there on several occasions, as well as adjudicating the Supreme Championship twice.

He was true to his Christian faith, and was a Deacon and Treasurer of Penybryn Baptist Chapel. He was a highly respected elocutionist and an entertaining story teller, in particular about the local community's characters. He had an exceptional memory, and was an excellent mathematician.

Multitalented and kind hearted, his was a life sadly cut too short.

## Obituary

### **Sulwyn Thomas**

One of Wales' most renowned broadcasters died in early December 2025. He was journalist and presenter, Sulwyn Thomas.

Sulwyn came to prominence through his radio programme 'Stondin Sulwyn', broadcast from the BBC studio in Swansea for twenty years. In addition to being a popular radio presenter, he was a familiar face on the television over the years, presenting Heddiw, Ffermio, Sioe Fach and Treialon Cŵn Defaid.

The Royal Welsh Show was one of the highlights of his calendar and he broadcast from there for 40 years. He loved to roam the show presenting the stories of the day, discussing hot topics and bringing it all to life on radio and television. Sulwyn worked diligently and enthusiastically to support the show every time it was Carmarthenshire's host year.

In addition to broadcasting, he was also active in his local community. He was a member of Priory Chapel, and involved with Radio Glangwili, Talking Newspaper and the Urdd. He was Chairman of the International and World Sheepdog Trials when they were held in Carmarthenshire.

Wales has lost a great Welshman and a friend to all who contributed so much in his community and the agricultural world.

He leaves his widow, Glenys, and two children, Owain and Branwen.

## **RWAS Awards**

**John V Jones**

### **Honorary Life Membership**

It's a privilege to have been made an Honorary Life Member of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society and I would like to thank the Society for the honour.

It's nice to have that recognition after more than forty years of service as a steward in the sheep section. I remember starting out stewarding the Texel sheep with Tecwyn Hughes and Richard Gardner Williams, also from Anglesey.

Back then, twenty sheep was a large class, but today there are at least 30 to 40 sheep in all the classes, including the native sheep breeds. The show has certainly developed. It's great to meet competitors, old and new, and to get to know them from year to year, along with the other stewards.

I hope that the show will continue to go from strength to strength and that I will be able to be a part of it for some time yet. It's so worthwhile and rewarding, so if someone asks you to steward – don't refuse, just enjoy it.

## **RWAS Nuffield Farming Scholarship Award 2023**

### **Winner: Gwion Parry**

Beef in the United Kingdom is not consistently delivering the eating experience consumers expect. Despite high welfare standards and strong production credentials, there remains a clear disconnect between how beef is produced, graded, and ultimately experienced on the plate.

At the centre of this issue is the EUROP grading system, which focuses on carcass yield—conformation, fat class, and weight—rather than the traits that define eating quality, such as marbling, tenderness, and flavour. As a result, producers are not rewarded for delivering the qualities that matter most to consumers.

In contrast, international systems such as Australia's Meat Standards Australia (MSA) and the USDA grading system in the United States are designed to predict and guarantee eating quality. These frameworks align the supply chain, incentivise consistency, and provide clear, trusted signals at the point of purchase.

Global comparisons highlight how effective this alignment can be. In Australia and the United States, beef is marketed with transparent grading, informative labelling, and practical cooking guidance, enabling consumers to make confident purchasing decisions and achieve consistent results. In South America, beef is culturally embedded and treated as a premium eating experience, with strong emphasis on presentation and enjoyment. By comparison, UK retail environments often present beef as a commodity, with limited differentiation and minimal information to guide consumers.

This lack of clarity undermines confidence. A single poor eating experience can deter repeat purchases for weeks—an unacceptable risk for a product that commands a premium price. Without measuring and rewarding the traits that drive eating quality, consistency cannot be achieved and consumer trust cannot be maintained.

The UK cannot compete on price alone in an increasingly competitive global market. Its strength lies in producing high-quality beef, but this must be supported by systems that recognise and promote eating quality. A shift towards grading that reflects consumer experience, combined with clearer labelling, stronger communication, and improved retail presentation, is essential.

By aligning production, grading, and marketing around eating quality, British beef can reinforce its position as a premium product—delivering consistency, building trust, and securing long-term demand.