



THE APPRENTICE

GETTING WORK EXPERIENCE ON FARM IS A GREAT WAY TO GET INTO THE INDUSTRY. **ORLA MCILDUFF** SPEAKS TO WILL BINNERSLEY ABOUT HIS TIME WORKING AT STOCKS FARM IN WORCESTERSHIRE

NFU Horticulture Board Chairman Ali Capper is unlike Alan Sugar in more ways than one, especially as Will Binnersley has only ever heard her say “You’re hired” rather than “You’re fired”. Will, who’s 18, completed his A-Levels last year and went to work on Ali’s farm almost immediately.

Although he didn’t grow up on a farm, Will has always had a strong connection with the industry. “My grandfather used to have a farm in Ross-on-Wye, and after speaking to my mum about what to do on my gap year, working at Ali’s farm seemed like something I’d be interested in. Initially, it was just a few weeks of preparing for the apple harvest but then a place became available to work the hop harvest so I stayed on.”

On top of learning about the ins and outs of what it takes to keep a farm

running, Will learnt about production processes, and said: “I’ve actually learnt a lot about how the farm machinery works, especially the hops machine, which is quite cool. I’ve drank beer before, but I’d never seen a hop or how they’re harvested prior to working here,” said Will. Growing hops can be seen as a bit niche for UK agriculture,

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but it was one of the earliest crops to have a mechanised harvest, and the machine at Ali’s farm works just as well today as it did in the 1960s when it was first installed. However, it takes a lot of maintenance, and this is where Will and more experienced farm colleagues come to the fore.

The main output of Ali’s farm is horticulture, so, seasonal workers from abroad make up an important part of her workforce. Communicating with colleagues from different countries has been a steep learning curve for Will. He said: “I’ve had to learn to work in a team where my colleagues don’t always understand what I’m saying and I know now how to interact well with colleagues and clients in general.”

Prior to being employed on the farm, Will’s work experience had been mostly working within his dad’s business with classic cars, which is a very different industry altogether. He said: “It’s been interesting to see the contrast of both businesses, which have different agendas and achieve them in different ways.”

Will hopes to go to university in Bristol in 2019, but working on the farm has given him food for thought about where his career may take him. “I think I want to study Business and Management. Working here has allowed me to see a bit more about how a business is run on a day-to-day basis. I’ve worked quite closely with the farm manager George since I’ve been here and it’s been so interesting. He looks after the people on the farm, and watching him figure

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE
Ali’s top tips for aspiring farm apprentices

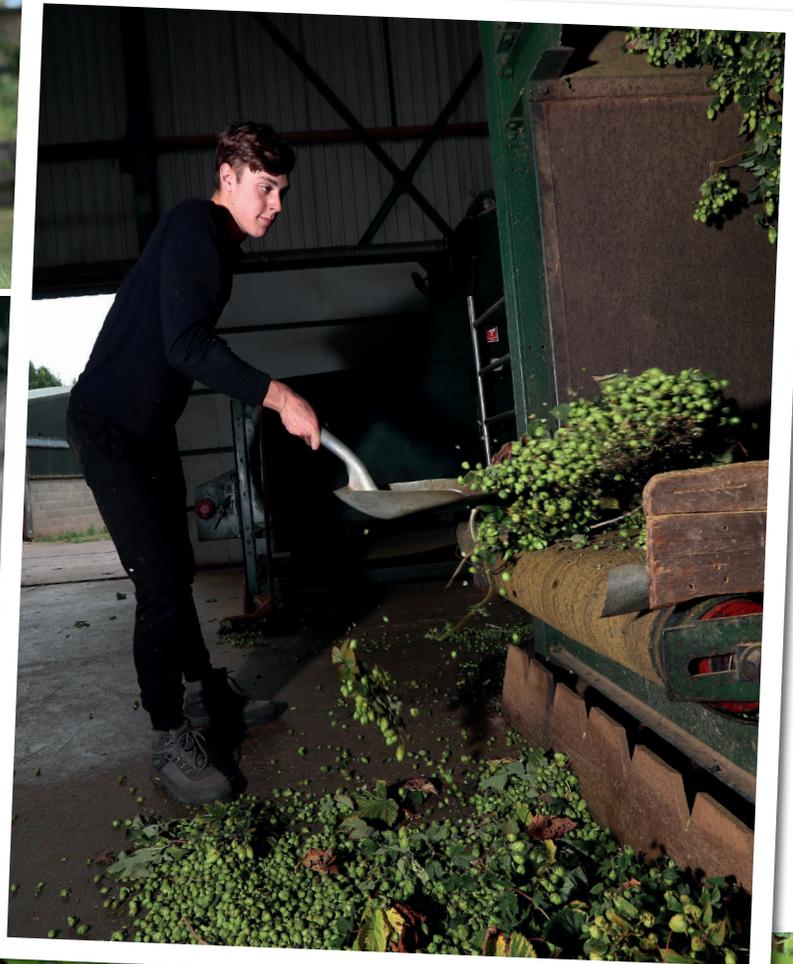
RELIABILITY
Be committed to your job

ATTITUDE
Come in smiling each day

FLEXIBILITY
At least try each job you’re tasked with

PUNCTUALITY
Don’t be late for work





out how to motivate them with a language barrier has been fascinating. There are a few people recruited back each year, but mostly it's a new intake, which means showing everyone the ropes from basics – not an easy job.”

So what advice would Will give to other teenagers who've recently left school but aren't quite sure what they want to do? “I'd definitely tell them to go and get some experience on a farm. I've been trying to encourage my mates to do the same as me but they're just all too lazy!”

WHAT ALI SAYS ABOUT WILL:

“Will approached us before his A-levels were over, knowing that he was going to take a year out and wanted to earn some money. Initially we said there's definitely work for the summer months and the harvest, and since then he's decided he'd like to study business at university so we're keen to get him involved in some of the office side of the job as much as possible, plus expose him to some NFU and other industry work I do.

“It's all about attitude and reliability when it comes to taking on employees. He's been so versatile and happy to switch between different job roles on the farm, from summer pruning to apple thinning, securing tree guards on trees, picking apples and helping with the hop harvest. He's absolutely demonstrated the right attitude and he always comes in with a smile on his face. Very importantly, he's always here on time and because of the extreme heat last summer, we had to ask him to work strange hours such as starting work at 5am. That's a super attitude for a teenager to possess.”#SF

