

15 miles from Cotteswold Dairy is the beautiful Taynton Court Farm, near Newent home to the third generation of the Griffiths Family. Tilly Heron is studying Agriculture at Hartbury College and has lived in one of the farm cottages all her life with her family as her father Alec is the Herds Manager at the farm. She is used to helping out on the farm and is passionate about all aspects of farming. Tilly recently helped out at Countryfile live with the Cotteswold Dairy team and was a natural talking to customers and making milkshakes. She also did butter making and grass seeding at her local village show highlighting the importance of buying local and supporting farmers. It was great being shown around the farm by Tilly and Jack with their enthusiasm for farming in the next generation. With social media Tilly is great at promoting the Dairy with her interactions and making milk something to be proud of!

Sue Bradley recently wrote this article for the GL magazine and we have been kindly given permission to credit this next piece of the article to: GL Weekend magazine published by The Gloucester Citizen and The Gloucestershire Echo.

Young farmer Jack Griffiths has been creating a new dairy herd at a time when many farmers are selling up. Sue Bradley discovers why.

There's no doubting the affection that Jack Griffiths has for his Jersey girls.

In the space of six months the 23-year-old farmer has built a 250-strong herd of brown Channel Island cattle from scratch, travelling as far as Yorkshire, Newquay, Carmarthen and High Wycombe in search of the animals.

On a bright autumn's day the sight of these pretty Jersey cows grazing a quiet valley in Taynton, near Newent, is little short of a pastoral idyll; while at closer quarters their friendly, docile and inquisitive natures make them even more endearing.

Yet to Jack this new herd represents much more than an aesthetically pleasing addition to the countryside.

These animals, and specifically the creamy milk they produce, are providing him with a future at Taynton Court Farm, which has belonged to his family since the 1950s.

Now run as a partnership comprising his dad, James; mum, Gill and Jack, and employing six full time workers and a further 10 relief staff, the dairy enterprise primarily revolves around a 750-strong dairy herd of black and white Friesian-cross cattle, each of which produces 9,000 litres of milk a year that's sold to Tewkesbury-based Cotteswold Dairy.

Jack can't remember a time in his childhood when he wasn't helping out on the farm, and, after leaving Thomas Rich's School in Gloucester, he studied agriculture management at Reading University, during which time he spent a year on a placement managing a farm in New Zealand.

Once he had completed his degree, he secured a farm management job and was about to leave Gloucestershire when he learned about an opportunity to rent an adjacent property.

The additional land meant the family would have the space to expand their enterprise, but they knew there was no point adding to their existing conventional dairy herd as there was no market for what they would produce.



In time, however, Jack learned about the growing demand for butterfat-rich milk from Channel Islands cattle, particularly as a result of Cotteswold's plans to expand its Upper Norton range of cultured products, such as Greek-style yoghurt, clotted cream and crème fraiche, and realised this represented an ideal opportunity to make his mark.

"I love the thought of a challenge," laughs Jack. "I think this comes from my dad, who started off with 120 cows on 150 acres and now has built it up to 1,000 animals, including the Jerseys, on 1,000 acres and is now very well known in the farming world.

"The thing Jersey cattle is that none of the herds in the UK are that large – the average is probably around 100 animals - so I had to go to several places to build up our numbers, sometimes picking up as few as five at a time. In five to six months we went from having no Jerseys to one of the largest herds of that breed in the UK.

"As well as looking for good, healthy animals, I wanted to make sure they were pure Jerseys, which meant they would be smaller. The benefit of this is that they can go out earlier stay out longer because they tread the ground less than a heavier animal. They have to be low maintenance and look after themselves to an extent."

Jack operates a system of New Zealand-style block grazing for the Jerseys and calves them from February to mid-April, a period when he and his herd manager are kept particularly busy.

"We've had to get them used to eating grass virtually all year round," he explains. "In New Zealand I became familiar with the idea of intensive rotational grazing and it's working well. The cows are milked twice a day up until September, after which they're milked once a day."

Farming, and the long hours involved, has always been a way of life for Jack but there was never a guarantee that he would be able to join the family enterprise after leaving college.

"I didn't know where I would end up," laughs Jack, who has been a member of Westbury on Severn Young Farmers' Club since he was 11.

"I actually had a job lined up when I left university but then the neighbouring farm came up for rent and it was too good an opportunity to miss.

"I went to Cotteswold to ask about the possibility of producing extra milk at a time when the dairy industry was on its knees, and the managing director George Workman mentioned that they were buying in Channel Island milk.

"From there I went on to set up the new herd, which included organising finance from the bank, and during that time the milk price crashed by 40%. The Channel Island milk from the Jerseys receives a small premium but we hope it will increase in time.

"Setting up a new milking herd is a massive risk, but I'm in this for the long game and these girls are really efficient and produce a premium product.

"To me it's fantastic to have a sense of continuity for our family farm."

