



Interns at ORC, past and present

ORC has run an Intern Programme since 2010. To date, we have hosted 34 students from a range of countries including the USA, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium. Their gender balance is a little skewed with 28 of the interns being female and only 6 male. They have worked across all of our research and information programmes, while undertaking their own projects, living on site and getting stuck in on the staff allotment. We hear from a selection of interns, past and present, on what the interning experience has meant for them.

The programme was initiated as part of the TransAtlantic Partnership (TAP) project with The College of Atlantic (COA), USA and The University of Kassel, Germany. In the first year we took three students from COA. One returned to the US for personal reasons, soon after arriving, but the remaining two (Stephen Wagner – see opposite) and Natalie Barnett quickly became part of the team and we learned a lot about how to work with interns and what to expect. The following year was a planning year with a single intern from COA (Polly McAdam) coming to ORC during the summer of 2011. We used this time to plan though and in 2012 we hosted 11 students from the EU. Since then we have reduced the numbers to a more manageable level and have hosted about half a dozen students each year split between the spring/summer and summer/autumn periods.

As an organisation and as individuals we have gained hugely from working with these intelligent, inquisitive and engaging young people. They challenge and inspire us in equal measures and from the feedback we get from them they gain as much from us. If you are interested in interning with ORC the basic information is in the box below.

ORC's intern programme

We operate an intern/student's programme linked to our research programmes and projects and it operates in one of three ways:

1. Funded intern positions that are advertised as paid employment above (if there are none advertised we do not currently have any funded internships available).
2. Interns who have secured their own funding under other programmes i.e. Erasmus+, bursaries etc.
3. Graduate or postgraduate students spending time as part of their course undertaking a research project at ORC.

If you meet one of these criteria and are interested in interning or undertaking research as part of a degree with us please contact Dr Bruce Pearce: bruce.p@organicresearchcentre.com.

Present interns

Charlotte Kling

I am a Masters student of Organic Agriculture at HNE Eberswalde in Germany. My project is on 'Shade tolerant sward mixtures for poultry agroforestry systems,' as part of Agforward, a large European project. I have learnt about the whole process and pitfalls of project work from planning, ground preparation, sowing, field assessments, data analysis to report writing. I structure the days and weeks myself, working independently, though I can always get support when needed. I appreciate the value of good teamwork at ORC, be it motivating me to do my project or through nice chats over lunch after Monday's fitness class. In addition I have certainly improved my MacGyver skills by using available tools and equipment to fence chickens out of plots or make a quadrat for plant assessments. Thus my internship at ORC provides a good balance between days at the desk and practical work that I can also find in ORC's organic vegetable garden.

Andrea Tosoroni

I came to ORC after graduating (Bachelor in Agricultural Science) from the Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona in Italy, for an Erasmus Traineeship post-graduation project. That was thanks to one of my professors that knew ORC. I came here because of my deep interest in organic agriculture and joined the Crops team to learn as much as possible about the projects they are involved with. Thanks to ORC, I've discovered what it means to work on a research project, gaining many skills that weren't taught at University. After almost two months here I can definitely say that it is very challenging and stimulating to work here and it will be very useful for me in the future.

Jessica Bach

I'm 21 years old and studying for a Bachelor's degree in Geocology at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in south-west Germany. It's part of my university course to do a three-month internship. This is funded through the ERASMUS+ foundation. I found out about ORC on the internet. My projects are mainly to do with hedges. One task is to take microclimate measurements. I go outside to the hedges and measure, for example, air temperature and compare the data from the cut and uncut hedge plots. I also help doing vegetation surveys and putting out pitfall traps for invertebrates. Every week I have to check if I captured some and then identify them with a microscope and a key. I also assist with the dormice project and go out check the boxes. It's very varied work which never gets boring. You learn something new every day. I also enjoy staying in the farmhouse with the other interns.



Jessica Bach, Charlotte Kling and Andrea Tosoroni at FAI Farms



Past interns

Steve Wagner

I was an intern at ORC in the spring of 2010, whilst at the College of Atlantic in Maine. Besides a love of cider and English footpaths, ORC also gave me a memorable lesson in the value in working across disciplines and diverse perspectives to arrive at creative solutions for complex problems. My experience exploring policy solutions to expanding the commercial use of ORC's composite-cross wheat populations was, looking back, the foundation for my current career in food law. Since my time at ORC, while obtaining my undergraduate and law degrees, I explored the intersection of law and sustainable farming, including stints at Slow Food USA (Brooklyn, NY), Center for Food Safety (San Francisco, CA), and Maine Farmland Trust (Belfast, Maine). I am now an attorney at BCM Environmental & Land Law, PLLC, where I practise environmental law, land use law, government relations, and food law.



Mary Crossland

I graduated in Environmental Science before undertaking a three-month internship with ORC in 2013. I first heard about the programme after meeting the lovely Dr. Jo Smith, Principal Agroecology Researcher at ORC, and was inspired to apply. During my internship I was responsible for producing a literature review on the 'Ecosystem Service Provision by Hedgerows in Northern Europe' under the hedgerow woodfuel project TWECOM. The internship also gave me an opportunity to gain skills and confidence in fieldwork activities, from botanical identification to hedgerow surveys, and to attend a project meeting in Germany. My time at ORC certainly benefited my career. I joined the Elm Farm research team as an agroforestry researcher between 2014 and 2015 and I am now an MSc Agroforestry student at Bangor University.



Vincent Delobel

I was an intern at ORC from February to June 2014, during my MSc in Development and Rural Innovation at Wageningen University (The Netherlands). I worked mainly on participatory research approaches and agroforestry but I also helped out with many other projects covering grass management, wheat breeding, pig feeding, farm sustainability assessment, etc. I really enjoyed working with ORC and meeting so many colleagues. Since then, I took over our family organic farm and I am milking 75 goats. We make raw milk cheeses of various kinds (soft, camembert, feta, hard) that I sell on a weekly market in Tournai (closest town) and to restaurants, farm shops, consumer associations, etc. Our goats are served home-grown flattened spelt-triticale-oats-rye-peas-vetches twice a day, during milking. They graze diverse leys on sunny days and receive hay all year round.



Back on the farm, I'm always experimenting... Maybe I've got the ORC bug? We planted hedges for browsing that include worm-killing species around permanent pastures as well as a mini-Wakelyns agroforestry system on one arable field. We constructed a direct-drilling cereal driller and are trying some reduced-tillage methods. We do trials on wheat populations (CCPs) in partnership with a university, multiplying old wheat varieties with Réseau Semences Paysannes.

Cathy Bouffartigue

I was born on a little farm in Southern France and studied agronomy and agroecology before coming to the ORC in 2013 to carry out my Masters thesis. I was working with Jo Smith and Sally Westaway on the Co-free (Innovative strategies for copper-free low input and organic farming systems) project and the aim of my thesis was to compare the functional biodiversity of insects trapped in pan-traps and of the flora in an agroforestry system compared to an apple orchard. I reinforced my skills in ecology, agroforestry, English and climbing. After travelling in South America, I started a PhD last September, on participatory breeding of trees and co-design of agroforestry systems with a focus on chestnut in Ariège (South-West of France). I recently met up with Sally and Jo at the EURAF conference (see p14). I would say that my stay at the ORC was very positive, from a professional and a personal point of view.



Daria Erić

I am in the final year of my Master of Science in Organic Farming at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. I was an intern at ORC between June and September 2014. I was involved in a variety of activities, but what I draw from this experience is the trust that staff give to their interns, who are truly integral parts of the team. I liked to work alongside other interns with diverse backgrounds, interests and experiences, as well as to meet other like-minded people at ORC's events. I loved the team that I worked with and I found everyone really supportive and engaging. My internship went by so quickly because the experience was very positive and I think that it is a crucial part of securing post-graduation employment. Overall, interning with the ORC - good for the environment and educational, fun and rewarding for me!



Erika Gurinova

I came to ORC from Slovakia, in February 2014, for a 3-month Erasmus internship, working mainly on agroforestry and cover crops. I undertook soil and biomass sampling, made a soil sampling protocol and worked on a leaflet helping farmers to test their own cover crop mixtures. I recall with gratitude all ORC's staff for their goodwill and professional attitude. Now, I am involved in the EU pesticide authorisation process at the Water Research Institute in Bratislava, but still dream about having a thriving agroforestry farm somewhere in Slovakia.

