



Cotswold Sheep Society Newsletter

Registered Charity No. 1013326

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Council Officers

Chairman – Mr Bob Palmer

Vice Chairman – Mrs Yvonne Froehlich

Secretary – Mrs Lucinda Foster

Treasurer, Registrar – Mrs Lynne Parkes

Council Members

Mrs Judy Wilkie, Mrs Margaret Pursch, Mrs Kate Kay,
Mr Robin Leach, Mr Derek Cross, Mr Richard Mumford, Mr Thomas Jackson

Editors: Norman Kay and Sandra Rath



Rob Harvey Long, who won the interbreed wool championship at Sheep 2008, displays his crystal bowl award

October 2008 edition

Rob Harvey Long is a very successful producer of wool from his Cotswold flock. At Sheep 2008 he scored a remarkable 99 points out of a possible 100 for his fleece and won the Interbreed fleece competition. Here he writes about Cotswold wool, and draws a conclusion that some may find controversial. The article leads us into 2009 - the year of the natural fibre.

SOME THOUGHTS ON WOOL

I joined the Cotswold Sheep Society in 1996. Besides the sheep being such friendly docile creatures, with their attractive top knot, (or dreadlocks as my family called them), I was most attracted to them because of their wonderful lustrous wool.

Learning about their long and fabled history added to my sense of admiration and great liking for these animals. I was really surprised to find in a Wool Board booklet about British sheep that the Cotswold fleece was suitable for “bunting”!!!

Somehow, somewhere, something has gone wrong. When I go to the shows and see our sheep looking so good with their magnificent fleeces, I feel we are underselling our unique product.

If you look down any line in any class at the shows, you will be sure to find maybe 6/8 different types of fleece Evidence I would suggest of some judicious cross breeding with sheep from other breeds down the years since the Society was reformed in the 1970's, And perhaps this has happened over many centuries as breeders have strived to improve their flocks. I have never seen so many variations of wool in any other pure bred sheep.

Who is to say what the perfect Cotswold fleece should be like? We all have our own preferences. I personally like it to be as crimped and lustrous as possible with a good length and as wide a staple as possible. Others I am sure may feel differently. I shall never forget the wonderful fleeces shown by Shaun and Lyn Gibbings, and the quality and type of fleece they regularly produced were the type I have strived for.

I feel our history alone demands that we do more to produce the finest wool we can, and I am sure if we all try hard together, and get our selective breeding right, our wool can regain it's previous position as the best wool in England

At the Member's Open Day in May, I outlined my ideas of what I would like to do with my wool. I intend to get it spun and it will then be made in to a range of clothing, such as Woolly Hats, Scarves, Baby's booties, Gloves, Jumpers, Throws, Fabrics, and we will be marketing the range through exclusive Boutiques in London. We will seek permission to use the Society's unique Cotswold Wool logo on every item, and if this venture proves successful, other members will be invited to contribute their wool for spinning.

It may be that we might require special dispensation from the British Wool Marketing Board to deal with our wool in this way, but from the enquiries I have made this should not be a problem.

One thing I must mention is that the wool has always to be presented to the spinners/weavers in a good uncontaminated condition. If we want to re-build our reputation for the best wool in England, then it must always be presented well.

One thing we never see at our Shows is Cotswold classes with sheep in full wool. I think this is a great shame, as the general public don't really get the chance to see our sheep in full wool, at their very best. I always see Wensleydale and Lincoln sheep in full wool at all the earlier shows in the year, and if they can do it why not us ?

In order to get any wool on our sheep for the early "wool on the hoof" classes, we need to shear them as early as possible in the year, and I really don't feel that shearing in January is doing our sheep any favours. I can remember seeing photos of Cotswold classes at the Bath and West shows where our sheep were shown in full wool in June.

Most Members shear around April or May, and I think it is not possible to judge in the Summer what the wool will be like the following Spring with so little to see.

With the oil prices so high now, and perhaps staying high for the foreseeable future, I think there will soon be a great demand for

wool, such a natural sustainable product, and if we plan now we can be ready for it, and once again our wool can take pride of place in British wool production at the quality end of the market. If quantities allow, we can also get wool spun ready for knitting and sell this over the Internet or at Shows.

I feel it is important to promote our wool at every opportunity, and if Council agreed, we could hold a Cotswold Wool Promotion in conjunction with our Cotswold Show at Cirencester next year. We can arrange shearing of sheep, spinning, (I have spoken to some spinners guilds and they are enthusiastic about giving demonstrations, knitting, dyeing and weaving, all showing the complete sequence of producing wonderful fabrics from our wool).

I will be pleased to hear from any members who might be interested or have any ideas with regard to any items mentioned

Rob Harvey Long

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A yearling ewe of Rob Harvey Long shown in full wool.

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

With Rob Harvey Long's permission we shared his article with Max and Christine Crossman in the USA. Max is President of the North American equivalent to our Society. Here is their response on the subject of Cotswold wool.

On the subject of Cotswold fleeces and what they should be like there appears to be no one answer. The responses we received when discussing the subject with long wool breeders varied from the fleece should be coarse with large open curls all the way to extremely fine with just waviness and no distinct curls. We have just competed in one of the largest Cotswold shows in the U.S. and in the show ring we saw the entire spectrum. The animals with the least characteristic fleeces (little or no curl) were winning and the more classic fleeces were in the middle and bottom of the classes. However, in the fleece judging classes (shorn fleece) the classic fleeces with medium curl and lock width of an inch or more at the base of the lock at the skin surface won both the white purebred and the hand spinning fleeces, against all other white long wool luster breeds.

When we talk to breeders who generate a significant amount of income from their fleeces the emphasis is on curls medium to fine and lots of luster. The primary use of fleeces in the U.S. is the craft market and hand spinners. Without distinct curls the craft people have no interest.

When we talk about the variation of fleeces in the Cotswold breed we have no evidence here to verify whether in past times they were ever more consistence in type than they now are. In one old livestock book from the 1800's the Cotswolds were mentioned and because they were so common back at that time it was stated that no detailed description needed to be made of the breed. There is little description other than long staple length, lustrous and heavy shearing.

On our farm we started with a ram with a uniform but coarse fleece and two ewes - one with a coarse large open curl and one with a finer tighter curl to the fleece. We

have not had a goal of producing either type of fleece to the exclusion of the other. We have come to the decision of not particularly liking the very fine fleeces which approach a Border Leicester fleece. We do, however, want our fleeces to be distinctly Cotswold in character. Despite having no set goal we have seen great variety in our fleeces and a tendency toward finer fleeces. We had been told with our first sheep that there would be no predictability in fleeces type as we began our breeding program and now many years later find this to be very true. Although the fleece type may vary all Cotswold fleeces with proper characteristics must in our opinion have curl and strong lock formation with lots of crimp and as much luster as it can muster.

In discussing Cotswold fleece and the variations of type a friend and fellow Cotswold producer it was pointed out that for modern day breeders the wool is not the first priority when selecting breeding stock. Conformational soundness is usually the top concern - then the fleece. Supposing that you selected on fleece alone and let conformation faults take a back seat over time you might have a very consistent fleece flock but many unsound sheep. I do not know of anyone here who selects with a first priority on fleece alone. It would be an interesting experiment. We also tend to cull less and keep a sheep that might be mediocre because they are rare and an average sheep might with the right mating produce something much better. There may be a tendency here for very large sheep not to have the best fleece type, but they will win in the show ring. What we may need is for more emphasis to be placed on the fleece quality in the show ring and maybe quality and consistence will follow. Our standard allows 70% of the score to be on the conformation and 30% to be on the fleece quality. We often feel here that the 30% on fleece does not get its due.

Max and Christine Crossman- Ewetopia Farm

COUNCIL CORNER

Secretary Lucinda Foster
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The Society has decided to print in the newsletter a brief outline of what the Council is discussing at its meetings. Currently this includes:

Winter Social – Saturday 29th November 2008 at Aldsworth Village Hall

**** AN IMPORTANT DATE FOR YOUR DIARY ****

All members, family and friends are most warmly invited to the Society's Winter Social which is always enormous fun and a great way to catch up with other members in a very relaxed atmosphere. Please find enclosed a copy of the Winter Social form which needs to be completed and returned to Mrs Y Froehlich by Friday 21st November.

**** Please could you let the Secretary know by email if you wish to only receive the newsletter via email ****

Ram Registration fees:

Following the members' recommendations at the AGM the Council discussed the ram registration fees at the Council meeting and it was unanimously agreed that the ram registration fees should be retrospectively reverted to the original amounts which were:

Year of Birth - £10

Year after birth - £15

The Council does feel that it is very important for members to only register worthy rams.

FLOCK BOOK ADVERTISING

The Society annually publishes the Flock Book; it is an essential reference for anyone interested in Cotswold Sheep. It is distributed to all existing members of the Society and to new members as they join each year. For a modest sum you can promote your stock to all these people, plus support the Society, by placing an advertisement in this year's Flock Book. The rates are:

Quarter Page	£15
Half Page	£25
Full Page	£40

Photographs can be added to the half and full page adverts, this will incur an additional fee of £20. If you would like to place an advert in this year's publication please contact: Lucinda Foster, Secretary on 01285 851197. Assistance is available to any who needs it. The closing date for entry into the next Flock Book is the **1st December 2008**.

RBST: Mrs Y Froehlich has kindly offered to be the Society RBST Representative.

The Gloucestershire Breed Sale: It was agreed that the Sale was a total disaster and it was discussed at length. The Council's Representatives will attend a meeting with Voyce Pullin in October and report back to the Council in January 2009 as to what is being proposed for next year; but it was understood that it would certainly not be in the same format as for this year, and it was likely to be a Rare Breeds Sale which the Society could be part of. Other venues including Melton Mowbray and Stoneleigh are being looked into.

Chelford Sale: It is intended to hold a Cotswold Sheep Evening on the eve of next year's Chelford Sale. Although open to all members, it is hoped that those residing further north will make a special effort to attend this event.

Flock Advisor: The Council are currently looking into ways of introducing a Flock Advisor/s. It was felt that it may be better to have several Flock Advisors in the different areas of the Society in order to keep costs down.

Flock Registration system: It was unanimously agreed that the Society should purchase the Grassroots Flock registration system which means that members can register their own sheep on line and have access to all the associated information directly online. This will cost the Society a one off fee of £150 plus VAT and then £20

plus VAT per month.

Wool: Mr R Harvey Long has been to see the Natural Fibre Company who are showing interest in using some of the Cotswold wool and he is also going to see the Cotswold Weavers with Mr R Palmer and Mr R Mumford in October 2008.

Task and Finish Groups: Mr R Palmer wishes to set up some task and finish groups at the next Council meeting which will involve a sub committee of members working together in a certain area and each group will ultimately be the responsibility of a Council member. Mr R Palmer asked the Council members to come to the next meeting with some suggestions on what these groups should cover. It was pointed out that all sub committee groups would have no casting vote and must not enter into any contracts on behalf of the Society.

Next Education Day: Mr D Cross has kindly offered to hold a “Wool Session Day” at his farm in Wyck Rissington in April 2009.

Newark & Nottinghamshire Agricultural Society had written to say they were offering Breed Society free covered buildings to promote their business at The Tractor & Heritage Show to be held on 8th and 9th November. For further information please contact: Claire Izard on 0870 2241035 or email: Claire@newarkshowground.com.

Judges: The following members are currently CSS Judges; Mr R Boodle, Mr T Jackson, Mr R Palmer, Mrs C Cunningham, Mr A Lyons, Mr S Parkes, Mrs E Henson, Mr R Mumford, Miss D Stanhope and Mr P Froehlich.

The Frank Williams Trophy Nominations: Nominations had been received for Mr A Lyons, Miss D Stanhope, Mr N Kay and Mrs S Rath and for Mrs L Parkes. The results will be given at The Winter Social.

New members: A warm welcome is extended to; Mr A Reynolds, Mr P Hill, Mr and Mrs S Bevis and Mrs L Cressey all of whom have joined the Society recently.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2008

The last 12 months have been a difficult and challenging year. Foot and Mouth Disease struck once again, this time, on the very eve of an abandoned 2007 Sale. Moreton Show, our National Show, was also unable to take place. Problems were further compounded by the arrival of Blue Tongue to the UK. With its new set of movement restrictions and subsequently vaccination requirements.

For me it was also a year of appraisal and planning. The 1st 20 years of the Cotswold Sheep Society was one of survival. The 2nd 20 years was establishing foundations for the future. The next 20 years will be building on those foundations. Deciding exactly how and what we build is the biggest task we face currently.

Whilst Members may not be aware, there has been a lot of work done to try to ensure we make correct decisions. The Members Day held in May was very useful. Not only did it get Members together, discussing the common passion; it allowed me to assess their opinions, understand their expectations and gauge their resolve. Additionally

there have been other meetings of Council and Officers throughout the year. Following which **3 key objectives** for the Society have been set:

- i) **A simple and measurable target of success.** Currently there are around 115 members actively keeping sheep. The target is, to increase that number to 200 by 2012. An increase in active membership will achieve two things; bring new blood to the Society and at the same time increase sheep numbers.
- ii) **Increase the overall involvement of members.** Getting Members involved with a specific task. This process has already begun. Sandra Rath and Norman Kay – Newsletter, Thomas Jackson – Trade Marks, and Paul Froehlich – Website www.cotswoldsheepsociety.co.uk, an important free, fast, flexible interactive way of communication. I intend to take that much further. At the next Council Meeting, Council Members will be appointed portfolios. One of those posts will include responsibility for holding Regional members days, outside of our Cotswold Hills heartland.
- iii) **Move from being a breed which is production driven to one which is market driven.** The core to this is identifying our target markets and utilising the cache of name “Cotswold”. By channelling our marketing effort into wool we have something that the membership can focus on. To kick start this I plan to introduce an annual “Wool Users” competition for this next academic year. Young, enthusiastic textile students will be invited to enter. Free wool will be made available for them to use a creatively as possible. The results will be judged and awards made at Moreton Show 2009.

Was the last 12 months a success? The answer is, yes and no. There have been many successes and advancements. The website is up and running, albeit needing much more refinement. Show classes good despite the plethora of restrictions placed on us by DEFRA. One outstanding success was Rob Harvey-Long’s champion fleece at Sheep 2008. That in itself was no mean feat; it was done with a score of 99/100!

On other fronts we undoubtedly could have done more. This year’s breed sale at Cirencester was a disaster. But, thankfully, most sellers have now found buyers. I know what we have to do, and with the support of the new Council and Membership we will go a long way towards achieving our objectives over the next 12 months.

To conclude – “The Annual Backslapping”. Until now I had wrongly regarded this as a somewhat needless civility of AGM’s. However when you actually do the job of Chairman, as I have for the last year, you soon realise how impossible that task would be without the dedicated help and assistance of so many people. So, I would like to formally thank Lucinda Foster, Lynne Parkes, Derek and Maggie Cross, Richard Mumford, Thomas Jackson, Pat Quinn, and all Council Members for their invaluable help during this year. Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you, on behalf of all the Membership, to Judy Wilkie, who after 9 years tireless service is standing down from Council.

R J Palmer

10th August 2008

2008 ROYAL SHOW- Paul Froehlich

I was lucky enough to judge the Cotswolds at the Royal Show this year and in spite of all the negative things that are said about the Royal, the Cotswolds not only put up a good entry, the quality was outstanding, and certainly up to the standard you would expect to see at this prestigious event. There were only 4 exhibitors but they managed to fill all the classes, far better than many of the so called main commercial breeds.

I can't profess to be a wool expert but I do know that the Cotswold has always produced a wide range of quality lustre wool with the main thing, as a lay man, is to produce a fleece of similar quality and type throughout, that was what I was looking for in the fleece. As a long time commercial sheep farmer I like good conformation with well fleshed backs and legs, but not excessively fat. I also like to see a leg in each corner with good dark pigmentation and straight movement. A good mouth is essential

The senior Ram class was won by Bob Palmer with his outstanding ram, I have not seen a senior ram of this quality for a long time, he is everything a good Cotswold tup should be with an outstanding fleece.

The Shearling Ram class was won by Davina Stanhope with the most awesome shearling ram I have ever seen, it was a delight to go over him. He just got better the more I examined him.

Both lamb classes were ok but not the best I have seen with Davina Stanhope winning both the ram lamb and ewe lamb classes. It has not been the best sort of year for lambs and it showed. They were ok but I have seen better.

Derek Cross took first and second with his two delightful ewes in the senior ewe class. These were just what you think of when you conjure up a picture of Cotswold Sheep, big, majestic, lovely wool and really dark pigmentation, that is the hardest bit to get right without going over the top. I have always felt that breeding spots where you want them and not where you don't is an art form and to be commended.

Steve Parkes won the shearling ewe class with a remarkable ewe, she had a top line you could put spirit level on and of course he knows better than most how to show it off.

The group of 3 proved to be the best group class I have ever judged, with all 4 exhibitors displaying fantastic top quality sheep. Any one of the 4 would have been a worthy winner but I eventually settled on Bob Palmer's group with Steve Parkes taking the reserve spot. It was the fleeces on Bob's that swung it but it has to be said that Steve's were a bit special.

The Breed championship. I have to admit that as the afternoon wore on I started to look forward to and dread the final choice in equal measure. As the six exhibits started to line up in a semi-circle around the ring, quite by chance the 2 main contenders finished up on opposite sides facing each other.

This class was always going to be about these 2 and they knew it, as somehow they finished up out of line with the rest facing each other. I had the job of picking the one

I felt was for me the best. The truth is, on this occasion, you could not get it wrong, I still smile to myself just thinking about them. One immaculate with the arrogance of youth and a mirror to check every staple was just perfect, you expected a waiter to be waiting in the wings with a glass of pink Champaign. The other just big, bold, without a care in the world, and would pour his own Guinness.

I like my breed champion to be outstanding in his class, I will always give it to an outstanding younger animal over a mediocre older one. But here I had 2 contenders for the title. I had a shearling ram that just oozed class and potential, and a big ram that was the real deal and in a class of his own.

In the end I decided that it was potential verses a done deal. I have been around sheep long enough to know that potential is one thing achieving it is another, I went for the done deal, time will decide the other.



Davina Stanhope's shearling ram



Bob Palmer's senior ram

Stroud Show – Saturday 19 July 2008

Judge: Robert Boodle
Wool judge: Sue Stevenson

Ram

1st. Davina Stanhope
2nd. Davina Stanhope
3rd. Kate & Norman Kay
4th. Mr. D. Cross

ewe

1st. Davina Stanhope
2nd. Mr. R. Harvey Long
3rd. Davina Stanhope
4th. Kate & Norman Kay

Senior

1st. Davina Stanhope
2nd. Mr. R. Harvey Long
3rd. Davina Stanhope
4th. Kate & Norman Kay

Shearling ewe

1st. Mr. S. Parkes
2nd. Davina Stanhope
3rd. Davina Stanhope
4th. Kate & Norman Kay

Ram Lamb

- 1st. Davina Stanhope
- 2nd. Kate & Norman Kay
- 3rd. Mr. S. Parkes
- 4th. Mr. D. Cross

Ewe Lamb

- 1st. Kate & Norman Kay
- 2nd. Mr. D. Cross
- 3rd. Mr. R. Harvey Long
- 4th. Davina Stanhope

Group of Three

- 1st. Kate & Norman Kay
- 2nd. Davina Stanhope
- 3rd. Mr. S. Parkes
- 4th. Mr. D. Cross

Breed Champion Davina Stanhope with ram Tingewick Hogan

Reserve breed champion Mr. S. Parkes with his shearling ewe

And many congratulations to Rob Harvey Long in the longwool wool classes. He took first, second and third places in the fleece class, and also first in the wool on the hoof class.

Well done to everybody

Cotswold Sheep Society Summer Show

Cirencester Park. Sunday 6th July 2008

Judge: Mr. Richard Mumford.

Wool Judge: Mr. David Jones.

Senior Ram

- 1st. P. and Y. Froehlich.
- 2nd. Ms. D. Stanhope.
- 3rd. Mrs. K. Kay
- 4th. Mr. J.N. Cater.
- 5th. P. and Y. Froehlich.
- 6th. Mr. D. Cross.

Ram Lamb.

- 1st. Mrs. K. Kay.
- 2nd. Ms. D. Stanhope.
- 3rd. Mr. J.N. Cater.
- 4th. Miss A. Field.
- 5th. P. and Y. Froehlich.
- 6th. Mr. J.N. Cater

Shearling ewe.

- 1st. R.J. and N. Palmer.
- 2nd. Mrs. K. Kay.
- 3rd. Ms. D. Stanhope.
- 4th. Mr. J.N. Cater.
- 5th. Mr. D. Cross.
- 6th. Mr. D. Cross.

Shearling Ram

- 1st. Ms. D. Stanhope
- 2nd. Mr. J.N. Cater.
- 3rd. P. and Y. Froehlich.
- 4th. P. and Y. Froehlich.
- 5th. Mr. J.N. Cater
- 6th. Mr. D. Gauld.

Senior ewe.

- 1st. R.J. and N. Palmer.
- 2nd. Mrs. K. Kay.
- 3rd. R.J. and N. Palmer.
- 4th. Ms. D. Stanhope.
- 5th. Mr. J.N. Cater.
- 6th. Mr. D. Cross.

Ewe lamb.

- 1st. Ms. D. Stanhope.
- 2nd. Mrs. K. Kay.
- 3rd. Mr. R. Harvey Long.
- 4th. P. and Y. Froehlich.
- 5th. Miss A. Field.
- 6th. Mr. J.N. Cater

Group of Three

- 1st. P. and Y. Froehlich.

Breed champion: Bob Palmer with his senior Radway ewe.

Reserve breed champion: Norman and Kate Kay with their ram lamb Middlewick Blizzard.

Wool on the hoof: 1st Bob Palmer, Reserve Paul and Yvonne Froehlich

Fleece Class: 1st. 2nd. 3rd. Rob Harvey Long

The Calcot Shield for breed champion: Bob Palmer

The Millennium Rose Bowl for best senior: Bob Palmer

The Millennium Cup for best shearling: Bob Palmer

The Merlins Trophy for wool on the hoof: Bob Palmer

The Pensham Trophy for best opposite sex: Norman and Kate Kay

The Millennium Salver for best lamb: Norman and Kate Kay

Berkeley Show 25th August 2008

Judge: Thomas Jackson.

Senior Ram (8 forward)

- 1st. Yvonne Froehlich
- 2nd. Davina Stanhope
- 3rd. Derek Rashley and Shelagh Tooze

Shearling Ram (6 forward)

- 1st. Davina Stanhope
- 2nd. Davina Stanhope
- 3rd. Yvonne Froehlich

Ram Lamb (6 forward)

- 1st. Yvonne Froehlich
- 2nd. Davina Stanhope
- 3rd. Davina Stanhope

Senior Ewe (8 forward)

- 1st. Davina Stanhope
- 2nd. Kate and Norman Kay
- 3rd. Yvonne Froehlich



Davina and Yvonne with the Champion and reserve champion

Shearling ewe (7 forward)

1st. Davina Stanhope
 2nd. Kate and Norman Kay
 3rd. Steven Parkes

Ewe Lamb (8 forward)

1st. Davina Stanhope
 2nd. Kate and Norman Kay
 3rd. Yvonne Froehlich

Champion:

Davina Stanhope's senior ewe C9905 Tingewick Bryony.

Reserve Champion:

Yvonne Forehlich's ram lamb C10620 Bramble Orlando

Results from other shows

It is always pleasing to learn of the successes by our members when they show Cotswold sheep at other and local shows.

Jean Hearn with her Darley Moor flock in Derbyshire tell us of the successes she has achieved at the local Ashover and Hope Shows. Her four year old ram Snowstorm was champion ram at the Ashover Show, and at the Hope Show the fleece from Snowstorm was given 98 out of a possible 100 points to win the show's fleece competition and the BWMB Crimea Farm Cup together with the show shield.

And Davina Stanhope's senior ewe C9897 Tingewick Niamh gained the female championship and reserve Other Longwool championship at the Monouthshire Show. Norman and Kate Kay's ram lamb Middlewick Blizzard also took the reserve male championship".

We have heard elsewhere about Rob Harvey Long and Pat Fraser. Well done everybody.



Jean Hearn and Snowstorm

OUR FLOCKS

Pat is a member who lives in Snowdonia in North Wales and keeps Galway sheep as well as Cotswolds. Here she writes about her thought provoking experiences with keeping Cotswold sheep.

Glan Gors Flock.

If anyone thinks Cotswolds are the 'be all and end' of all sheep breeds, do not read any further!

I live high up in the Snowdonia mountain range and tried to keep Cotswolds. I failed!

Cotswold sheep are easy and away my favourite sheep. However, I can only keep about half a dozen because of the preferential treatment they have to have to survive up here. The horizontal wind and rain are the biggest, but not the only problem for the sheep here. The wind is so strong it parts the fleece and puts rain directly on to the skin. Consequently, if no shelter is provided, thriving just doesn't happen. Also the 'laid back' nature of the sheep means it won't forage for itself. They just stand in the shelter until I fill the feed trough; when finished they go straight back in.

Ravens and foxes are also a problem, the biggest of the two being ravens. Owing to the government's conservation and ecological schemes farmers are no longer allowed to keep sheep

- on the hills in winter;
- not keep so many sheep;
- not allowed to leave dead sheep.

This is to make the hills look pretty for walkers and tourists!

However the consequence of this is no wild life, only ravens and foxes. The ravens here have killed curlews, cuckoos (one is all I have seen this year); usually we see and hear numerous hen harriers, kestrels, peregrines; we also had a kite for a while until it was chased off. Magpies and buzzard – I personally saw ravens chase and kill three buzzards over a two day period in the spring. Now they have taken to killing sheep – there is nothing else.

Three ravens come off the tops as soon as the sky starts to lighten; they look for a sheep sleeping against a wall (which most do, as they like something against their back). Two ravens will land on the sheep's head; the minute she opens her eyes they are pecked out and the one on the wall calls the rest down off the crag. Anywhere between twenty and forty come down; within the hour all that is left is fleece and bones.

Foxes are another problem. Mind you, I solved that one by getting a couple of llamas. Do not think it is a myth about llamas protecting sheep. They really do the job well! I can't go in the field that they are in with a dog – they would kill it.

I lamb very late in the year – April and May – so that the sheep that summer on the mountain are already above me and it gives the ravens a wider choice of menu. As a consequence I generally lamb outside because the weather's good. When a sheep

lambs in the llamas' field they stand on either side of the ewe facing outwards, and God help any raven, fox or walker that even shows an interest in the lambs. The two former from experience know better than to go in the field; the latter knows better (for a minute), but soon change their minds when they see a llama coming at them with neck outstretched, ears back and teeth bared. Please note – only one – the other one stays guarding the sheep and lamb. I can honestly say I have not lost a lamb to a fox since they arrived. My neighbour reckons to have lost about 35 lambs to foxes last year, which makes the economics of keeping two llamas very sensible, plus they are very easy on the eye.

Pat Fraser.
Glan Gors Flock.

And our congratulations to Pat, whose senior Cotswold ewe took the female reserve longwool championship at the Royal Welsh Show this summer.

COTSWOLD SHEEP IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY - part 1

Now, by the generous courtesy of Henry Elwes of Colesbourne Park near Cheltenham we have the notes of his great grandfather, Henry John Elwes FRS who raised Cotswolds in 1879 and thereafter. These notes are a real treasure. They give a fascinating insight into sheep farming and life at that time, and give some clues as to the decline in popularity of Cotswold sheep. This most interesting article will be continued in January's issue of the newsletter. Mr. Elwes accompanied these notes with the attached letter.

30th June, 2008

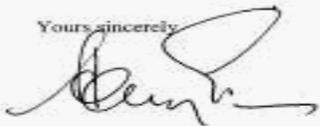
Dear Norman

I enclose a few pages from my great grandfathers farming notebook which refer to his early experiences with Cotswold Sheep. He started farming the Estate in 1878/9 when there was a very serious run of bad weather and low prices which forced most of the Estate tenants to give up farming. The tenants were permitted to stay in the farmhouses rent free so long as they kept the gardens tidy!

As far as I know these notes, which were typed up some years ago, have never been released to anyone else and I think that they should remain in the archives of the Cotswold Sheep Society and not be used for profit.

If you use the notes in your journal I would be pleased to have a couple of copies for our records.

Yours sincerely



HWG Elwes

Norman Kay Esq



Farming Notes by Henry John Elwes FRS

I cannot now state the exact loss of my first year's farming, but I remember that Little Colesborne and Staple farms alone showed a loss of £700 and paid no rent. I then began to realise that the poorest and worst fields could not be kept under plough. I engaged in 1878 an excellent farm bailiff who had been for many years on a hill farm in the neighbourhood which received the first prize for good management from the Royal Agricultural Society.

In 1879 I engaged a young Scotch man/named Simpson who had been selected to manage the Royal Agricultural College farm at Cirencester and who was not only a very good judge of stock but also a first rate worker. But I did not rely on their judgment alone and by watching the operations and methods of such good farmers as Russell Swanwick at Cirencester, Mr.Hulbert at North Cerney and attending market sales and shows in the neighbourhood, gradually got up a very good flock of Cotswold sheep which were then almost the only sheep kept in the district. I soon realised that sheep must be the main stay of Cotswold hill farming as they had been from time immemorial.

At that time there were many ram sales held in the month of August by celebrated breeders such as Robert Garne at Aldsworth, William Lane at Broadfield and W.Fletcher of Shipton. Forty, fifty and up to a hundred pounds were common prices for the best Cotswold rams in those days, and as I had a most excellent shepherd, I always took him with me to these sales and learnt a great deal from him. My father had tried Shropshire sheep, but they did not thrive on our poor land, and their death rate in some seasons was so much than among the Cotswolds that I got rid of them by degrees. I studied the crossing experiments which were being made with sheep by Professor Robert Wallace at the R.A.College and on one occasion bought the lambs of ten different crosses by a Cotswold ram in order to feed them out. to maturity and see how they matured and which did best. It was an interesting deal as owing to the great variety in the size and value of the different crosses one could not price them alike. I agreed with Prof. Wallace who knew more about sheep and their management than any professor I ever met, that, if we could not agree, we should write down our respective valuations on a piece of paper and ask Mr.Swanwick who was present to write down his valuation and take the mean of the three prices as the. value. I, after sorting them into three classes put down 34/- each. Wallace put down 36/- and Swanwick without knowing these figures put down 35/-. This was what I call a really satisfactory proof that we all agreed as to the fair value .

I wrote a paper on crossbred sheep some years later in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society in which I went into the question of crossing by Cotswold rams, my object being to make a better market for the pure bred rams, the demand for which had begun to fall off as their large size, coarse wool and excess of fat on the back were qualities going out of fashion, and though at first attempts at ram breeding were successful, the popularity of the x breed gradually diminished as it has continued to do ever since.

I did not go in for showing, except on two or three occasions at Smithfield and this only because my father who had criticised some of Mr. Hulbert's prize sheep was told by him to show better ones if he could.

I went over to Broadfield where I asked my dear old friend William Lane, one of the best farmers of the old school that I ever knew, to pick me out a ram for the purpose. He showed me an immense x. In 1919 I did not find a single Cotswold ram at the September ram fair at Cirencester. Oxford Downs have now almost everywhere taken their place. A Sheep called Jumbo, then seven years old, which having served for five years in Mr. Lane's and other crack flocks retained his shape and vigour in an unusual degree. I hired him for £30.0/-for the season. I put him to seventy of my best ewes which produced a hundred and twenty lambs the next year. I did them as well as I could, and my old shepherd had carte blanche as to their food for, as he said, though quality and breeding will always tell, yet the preparation of sheep for a show is very much of a stuffing match. Knowing as he did how much long woolled lambs suffer from heat in July and August we determined on a plan to get ahead of our competitors by shearing in June the lambs selected for show, and the effect was so good that when they went to Smithfield show in December they were not recognised as lambs until the judges had examined their teeth, and were actually heavier than Southdown wethers a

year older. I won the breed cup with this pen which weighed 5 cwt 2 quarters at ten months old and was well pleased with my first venture in the show yard.

One of the lambs which was fed for this show but not sent was sold to the butcher in Cirencester at ten pence a pound, and the dressed carcass weighed 132 pounds, making £5.10/- in addition to the fleece. Such weights of course are worse than useless from a consumer's point of view, and I have always looked on the system of overfeeding both sheep, pigs and cattle for show as most wasteful and in the case of breeding stock very injurious. But if you breed for sale you must follow the fashion, as so many purchasers are attracted by size and fat and pay dearly for their refusal to buy animals which are only in good breeding condition. I remember a good instance of this at Cirencester ram fair where both my shepherd, my bailiff and myself fancied a Cotswold ram very much, and I tried to buy him. Mr. Sam Fowler, a good judge of sheep and a ram breeder, also fancied him and ran me up to thirty guineas which was as much as I thought he was worth. Neither of us liked to be beat and I went on to forty guineas, on which Fowler said forty two, at which price he got him. A week or so afterwards the ram was dead.

In those days it was the custom to sell our wool which in the sixties was usually considered to pay the rent of a Cotswold farm, to dealers or agents who bought for the staplers at Bradford who sorted and sold it to the manufacturers. When wool was at 60/- to 62/- per tod (28 pounds) Sam Fowler refused this top price, as he always thought his own wool was worth a little more than his neighbours'. Prices fell the next year and continued to fall steadily until about 1891 when the lowest point reached was something like 15/- to 16/- a tod for Cotswold wool. Fowler who was at that time a rich man held his clip year after year, hoping for a rise and refused to accept any offers. At last he had as I was told and believe eighteen years wool in stock, much of it so much damaged by long keeping that no one would buy it, and what he lost by it no one but himself knows, but such men were not uncommon in those days. I knew a farmer who kept a beanrick unthreshed for eight years, in which time the rats had nearly eaten up all the corn.

When the Lower and Upper Cubberley farms were both in hand, as well as Southbury, Hilcot, Penhill and Rapsgate, my farming operations were very extensive and occupied a great deal of my time in looking after them. I used to ride over from Preston where I then lived before breakfast once or twice every week and combine a day's hunting with a day's farming. I used to have an annual sale in October of lambs, draft ewes, rams, store cattle and when there was enough, several ricks of old oats. At first and until the continual fall in prices coupled with either very wet or as in 1887 and 1893 very dry seasons made farming less and less profitable or in bad seasons more and more unprofitable these sales used to realise two to three thousand pounds, and my object was to rear and sell in good store condition as many store stock as possible for I found that fattening rarely paid its cost on such poor land as this.

To be continued ...

SHEEP FOR SALE

Paul Froehlich now keeps an up to date list of sheep for sale on the Cotswold Sheep website:

www.cotswoldsheepsociety.co.uk

Anyone looking to buy sheep should refer to the website.

If you have sheep for sale, please contact Paul at info@cotswoldsheepsociety.co.uk
Or by phone, 01926 650098.

DID YOU KNOW?

Witney blankets , which were made for centuries at Witney in Oxfordshire, were originally made from local wool from Cotswolds sheep.

In the middle ages the word blanket described a general white woollen broadcloth which had many uses, but as it was warm and water repellent was often used for overcoats.

The first fulling mill at Witney was recorded in the year 1223, and there was a woollen weaving and blanket making industry there until 2002.

Sandra Rath

DOUBLE TAGGING - a reminder

It is now time to think about tagging this year's lambs that are intended to be kept. If the lambs were born after the 11th of January they will need to be double tagged with identical UK tags which are unique to that animal.

If you need to replace a tag you can use either an identical tag or your next available UK tag. If the lamb is not on its original holding you must replace the lost or damaged tag with a red R tag.

Single tagged sheep should now have a lost or damaged tag replaced with either an identical tag or your next tag. If it is not on its original holding a red R tag must be used.

All replacement tags must be cross referenced in your holding register (supplied earlier this year).

Sandra Rath

FROM THE EDITORS

Articles Wanted

Would you like to join the debates currently ongoing in the newsletter, or would you like to start another one?

Do you have an interesting article that you would like to contribute to future editions of the newsletter? If so contact either of us at the telephone numbers or Email addresses below.

We would love to hear about your flock with a few words and a picture, or your views on the future of the breed or anything else about your sheep that you would like to share with us.

Thanks

We would like to thank everyone that has contributed towards this edition of the newsletter, with a special thank you to Henry Elwes for the most interesting notes from his great grandfather.

Newsletter in Colour

This newsletter is available as a PDF file, so if you would like to receive a copy in full colour, rather than black and white, please contact Lucinda or Norman with your Email address.

Views in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the editors or the Society.

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Norman and Sandra