



Cotswold Sheep Society Newsletter

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19 Elm Grove, Ebrington, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire GL55 6PE
Tel.: 01386 593663

info@cotswoldsheepsociety.co.uk www.cotswoldsheepsociety.co.uk

Council Officers

Chairman – The Hon. Mrs A. Reid Vice-Chairman – Miss D. Stanhope
Secretary - Ms. S. Furlong Treasurer- Mrs. L. Parkes

Council Members

Mr. D. Cross, Mrs. C. Cunningham, Mr. N Hatch, Mr. R. Mumford,
Mr. S. Parkes, Mrs. M. Pursch, Mr. J. Webb, and Mrs. S. Webb

Editor

Mr. J. Flanders

This Newsletter is independently edited and readers should be aware that the views expressed within its pages do not necessarily reflect the views held by Council.



It's that time of year again

EDITORIAL

John Flanders

This edition of the Newsletter, generally, has as its emphasis on looking after sheep in poor weather, particularly in the wet. There are other articles, which hopefully will be of interest, including the pre-lambing list of equipment has been included to cater for those new members who are lambing for the first time.

Richard Broad of the RBST discusses the changing pattern of Cotswold sheep ownership and the implications it could have for the future. As a breed Cotswolds are not alone in this decline; as many members are aware we also have a very small flock of Teeswater sheep and the fall in their ewe numbers is concerning for the Teeswater Sheep Breeders Association, particularly as there are nearly half the number of Teeswater sheep compared with the Cotswolds. Despite this, other breeds are bucking the trend.

Carol Bateman has written a most enjoyable article on her flock and it is good to have another contributor from Wales.

Also in this edition Richard Mumford has shared his experiences of crossing Cotswold sheep and it should be read in conjunction with those by Pat Quinn and Steve Parkes in the previous Newsletter.

To date this year will see two departures from the Cotswold Sheep Society team in that Robert Boodle stands down as President and I shall be retiring at the end of the year as Newsletter Editor. In parting Robert has penned his final article as President in which he reflects upon a number of interesting points.

Recently, the poor weather has been in the news, particularly the Somerset Levels and Kate Elliot has provided an insight to living there.

Finally, may I wish everyone a rather belated Happy New Year and for those that show, may your walls be filled with red rosettes, but more importantly may the weather improve, and the summer be long and warm.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Robert Boodle

This will be my last year as President as we now work on a three year cycle.

It is very different from the past when the President was there for at least a decade. I believe when I joined the Society that post was held by Lord Vesty, the owner of the Stowell Park Estate. There had always been a small flock on the estate and they were kept separate from the rest of the commercial ewes. Genetically they were an offshoot of the Garne flock at Aldsworth, when even they needed a new ram the only place to go was Aldsworth.

This continued after the Garne flock was sold. The farm manager, Ian Smith, an excellent judge of stock, would come and choose one from the Colbourne flock, which, of course all originated from the Garne flock.

Later, Billy Garne was appointed Life President and it was decided then that the appointment of President should last for three years and the Vice President would then take up the post.

As I have said before it is an honour that comes with age, but also it is bestowed on a member who has contributed a great deal to the Society. Our Vice President, Judy Wilkie, has, and is, an enormous help to the Society and I am very confident that she will fill the post admirably when she takes over from me at the AGM this summer.

Show societies seem to be getting their requests for judges almost a year in advance; already I have been booked for the Three Counties this year and as the summer show season will soon be upon us, I wish you all the best of luck for the coming year.

LIFE ON THE LEVELS

Kate Elliott

(As at mid-February)

Not for nothing is Somerset the land of the summer people. I think it must be now much as it was in the Stone Age when the natives pretty much hibernated all winter. When I first moved here people said, 'How lovely! The sheep will grow well in such a mild climate.' Little did they know. It wasn't long before I realised that to survive here as a sheep you had to be very tough indeed. In fact, while my first choice if I were buying sheep would be those off the Isle of Coll, Somerset wouldn't

be far down the list.

We have now had three winters of relentless rain. Because we had a decent summer we are not as wet as we were last year, but we are rapidly approaching that stage. I live on the northern edge of the Levels, where the Mendips meet the low ground. I don't know what it's like in the extreme south, round Westonzoyland, but I have been in the middle section between Mark and Glastonbury.

Of the areas I have seen, we are probably the worst. We, after all, have to contend with the run-off from the Mendips and, unlike the central Levels, we are on almost impermeable clay which floodwater takes weeks to drain through.

We get quite blasé because we *know* the houses are not going to flood, at least until most of the rest of England has. We are in a Drainage Board area, which means that there are wide and deep main rhynes round the houses, although minor rhynes drain most of the countryside. Last year, the water in the main rhyne at the bottoms of our gardens came to within six inches of the top, but no further.

The land is another matter, though. The Environment Agency (which seems to have taken over day-to-day management from the Drainage Boards) has spent about the last nine months zooming round the countryside and rushing into fields to dig holes like a demented puppy. I have no idea what they are doing, but it doesn't seem to be helping. The main rhynes and the rivers are fine – the River Brue and the River Axe get pumped out twice a day at ebb tide. The main problem is the culverts, which nobody seems to be doing anything about. Apart from the A and B roads, of which there are not a great many, most of our roads are single track with passing places or where you can pass with a bit of a squeeze. A lot of them are ancient causeways with a main rhyne on one side and a minor one on the other. So, depending on the time of day, you can drive down the road with an empty rhyne on one side and one overflowing the road on the other, because the connecting pipes and culverts haven't been cleared out for years.

Nobody is clearing the side drains on the main roads either, so with every shower of rain the roads all flood. And the edges of the minor roads are being eroded and undercut, to the extent that a Landrover in front of a friend's car did the usual squeeze past another car, fell into a hole it couldn't see and broke its axle.

Some of the minor roads are now splitting open down the middle. Nobody is going to resurface them, but just patch them up, so over the next few years they'll just get worse and worse. They are patching the potholes on the main roads about every

couple of months now, but the patches come out.

All the cattle have now been in for a week. Terribly late, and those that were left out looked dreadful. For some reason I can't fathom some people have been buying Swaledales to raise here. I can't think of any ground less suitable. Some have been here now since they arrived as ewe lambs 18 months ago. They have hardly grown and they have hardly had their feet out of water since they arrived. They have tidemarks of sodden fleece half-way up them and look thoroughly miserable. They have no hay and no supplementary feed, even though the grass here is little more than green water. The livestock further south are in much better shape, because the fields that still have them are at least dry underfoot and the grass has got some goodness in it. As I write this I am looking across the road at a field of winter wheat that has germinated about 30%.

Most of our prevailing winds are westerlies, straight down the Bristol Channel, and we can cope with those. We get lots of them and most of our houses were built end-on to them. Two nights ago, however, we had a south-westerly, long feared by trawlermen as the worst of all. We hadn't had one for about 10 years and it was a good one. The rain bathtubbed or monsooned down for over 15 hours, leaving yet more lakes everywhere. I understand we are to get another gale tonight, but at least that's forecast to be another westerly. The odd thing is that the fields that are flooding this year are not the same as those that were underwater last year. And still people come into the local garden centre saying, 'The gardens need it.' Are they mad?

THE CELTIC FLOCK

Carol Bateman

It has come as a surprise that this is my tenth year with the Cotswold flock. The time has past quickly but my love for the breed is stronger than ever!

Efrem and I live on a smallholding in mid Wales. Both with a background in farming, I was brought up on a traditional hill farm and Efrem too spent his teenage years studying agriculture at college and living on his grandparents farm.

We met during our teens and the buzz of showing hit me when I first helped Efrem show his grandparents' red poll cattle at the Royal Welsh. From this beginning we eventually moved to a rented property with ground and Efrem bought his first flock.

For a number of years we showed the Poll Dorsets and then I felt that I wanted my own breed. I didn't want a commercial breed, I had grown up with them and I wanted something different. For many years I had walked the sheep lines at the various agricultural shows and I fell in love with the wonderful forelock, soft silky curly fleece and presence of the Cotswolds or the Bob Marley sheep as my friends say.

My flock at present is made up of five breeding ewes, two ewes enjoying retirement and a gentle giant stock ram. I began with two ewe lambs from the Tingewick flock. They did me proud with Tabitha winning the female longwool championship at the Royal Welsh. Tabitha is still with me at the tender age of 10 and is going strong. Over the years I have visited many shows from the Smallholders, Royal Three Counties, Royal Welsh and Monmouth taking a small team of Cotswolds with me each time. My proudest moment with this small Cotswold flock was when I won the Supreme Longwool championship in Monmouth show in 2012 with a yearling that I bred. There is nothing more special than showing something you have bred, fed and prepared yourself.

The Cotswolds are known to cause a stir when taken to the local market, with many comments from the buyer such as, "What's this funny ole breed then?!?!?". But when the local butcher tells you that it is a wonderful carcass you know you are doing something right. As they say "never judge a sheep by its cover".

This breed may eat me out of house and home, they may push me over the trough with eagerness when feeding, they may roll in the straw just before showing but their affection, mothering skills, growth ability and gentle nature make them a breed that I aim to keep and show for many years to come.

With a wish to help the Cotswold Society I am about to take on the responsibility of maintaining the Cotswold website and Facebook pages. If you have any interesting Cotswold sheep news, recipes or pictures, then please forward to them to me for inclusion on these sites. My email address is cazef@btinternet.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Angela Reid

After editing the CSS newsletter since October 2009, John Flanders has taken the decision to retire to allow him more time for other projects. Council would like to take this opportunity to thank John for his professionalism and hard work. He has

been responsible for producing extremely interesting and informative newsletters and the Society is very grateful.

The Society is now looking for someone to take over from John. You do not have to have previous experience of editing, but a basic familiarity with a desktop publishing programme would be useful, though not essential. You might find it helpful to contact John (tel. 01545 590438 or info@hendraveancotswolds.co.uk) to discuss what is involved with producing the current newsletter – however be aware that the format of the Newsletter can change somewhat as each new editor brings with them their own ideas. If you would be interested in taking on the Newsletter please contact the Secretary who will be delighted to hear from you.

LAMBING LIST & HYGIENE

This list is intended to serve as a reminder of the equipment that may be needed at lambing time and it is particularly aimed at those new members who have not kept sheep before.

Equipment

- 1 Prolapse harness – just in case
- 2 Powdered Colostrum – if ewe has none of her own
- 3 Powdered Ewe Milk – Some lambs may need topping up
- 4 Stomach tubing equipment – Use it or lose them
- 5 Antibiotic – long acting
- 6 Dry cow tubes – for drying off the ewe in the event of the only lamb dying
- 7 Calcium boroglucomate – in the event of twin lamb disease
- 8 Liquid tonic supplement
- 9 New teats and feeding bottles for topping up odd lambs
- 10 Castration rings & pliers
- 11 Vet strength iodine for dressing navels
- 12 Pliers and some form of ear tag so lambs can be identified until electronic tags are applied
- 13 Spray markers for numbering ewes and lambs
- 14 Latex gloves – useful for cleaning the rear end of lambs
- 15 Water buckets for lambing pens
- 16 Troughs for lambing/ nursery pen
- 17 Spare light bulbs and torch batteries

Hygiene checklist

- 1 Thoroughly disinfect all accommodation before the start of lambing, pressure washing the sides and floors of the pens with a good quality detergent before spraying them with a broad spectrum disinfectant.
- 2 Isolate sick ewes and lambs in specially prepared pens well away from the healthy flock and tend them last to minimise cross-infection dangers.
- 3 Wear clean overalls, dip boots before entering the shed and wash hands with bacterial soap before and after examining ewes and lambs or assisting with lambing.
- 4 Keep a bucket of disinfectant on hand at all times to routinely disinfect all lambing equipment, water bowls, teats and milk dispensers, refreshing it regularly.
- 5 Muck out pens frequently, replenish them with fresh bedding generously and disinfect exposed surfaces at least daily.

RBST WATCHLIST

Richard Broad - RBST

Each year the RBST publish The Watchlist. This gives all the breeds of the various species we help to look after a category based on registered breeding females bred pure. The Cotswold slipped from Category 5 in 2010 to Category 4 at present; this is due to the decreasing numbers of females in the breeding flocks. The figures the RBST use are based on numbers of registrations of ewe lambs over a three year period averaged. We are looking at a ewe population of around 1150 females, but at this level the loss of a couple of big flocks or the lack of new flocks being started would give cause for concern.

The RBST has seen a decrease in the populations of nearly all equine breeds and most of the pigs too. With sheep we have seen a couple of breeds move up a category but we have also had another new breed on the list. So last year saw the Border Leicester come into Category 5, this year we see the Devon Closewool moved down to Category 5.

One of the most worrying issues is the number of native breeds of Longwool on the RBST Watchlist. It seems their use in the past as sires of large lean lambs, and crossbred breeding ewes, has been lost. Firstly to the Border Leicester, a breed known as the Great Improver, which has now been superseded by the Bluefaced Leicester. It seems that the Longwool breed societies have to put their thinking caps

on to try and promote their breeds to new keepers and get a place in present day agriculture.

SHEEP IN WET WEATHER

Courtesy of The National Sheep Association

“In the latest edition of SAC Consulting’s Sheep and Beef News, Sheep Specialist John Vipond remind us of the problems feeding concentrate from troughs can have in wet weather. He gives an example of farmer James Climie, who has used a poly sheet under the feed troughs to keep sheep, troughs and feed clean. John reports: “He used an old 30m by 16m silage sheet. The 550 gauge sheet was folded in three layers and cut to the same length as the feed troughs, around 14 feet wide by 70 feet long and kept down every six feet with concrete blocks. Feeding lambs preferred to lie on the sheet rather than wet ground. It kept clean due to a slope of one in 20.

Footrot may be worse this year as milder temperatures favour its survival on pasture and scald increases with continuously wet feet. Footbath with 3% formalin and stand inside on dry concrete for an hour. Sort feet out before housing if possible, as Formalin treatment then back to strawed pen does not work.

With the mild weather sheep are getting good supplies of grass and on sheltered farms, where they are at low stocking rates, are in good condition. Check condition scores early enough to have time to make adjustments before lambing. Over-fat ewes are slower to take hard feed, particularly gimmers, so take advantage of any cold spells or snow to get them used to a bit of concentrate even if it’s not needed. This training will be valuable if weather breaks down closer to lambing and you need to step feed up quickly. Fit triplet-bearing ewes can be kept outside if there is grass available rather than housing them. Increase concentrate feeding to 0.5kg/day by lambing when they can be housed. Keeping them outside reduces feed costs and risk of a prolapse.”

THE COTSWOLD AS A CROSS

Richard Mumford

My first two Cotswold rams that I bred were exchanged at ABRO (Animal Breeding Research Organisation) in Stone in Staffordshire. They were doing an experiment to

ascertain large breeds of sheep and wanted to use a Cotswold. I exchanged my two ram lambs for a Texel pure bred ram lamb. The ram lambs came back onto the market a year or so later and Mrs. Pat Quinn bought one of them. Texels were making a lot of money at that time, so I was lucky to get hold of this one, which I crossed both onto Cotswold ewes and also onto the next cross, which was a Cotswold crossed with a Black Face ram. I went up in my old Citroen Safari estate car to Dumfriesshire and bought a Black Face ram from an exhibitor at the Ayrshire Show. He was a grand fellow, I think he was probably two or three years old and we drove all the way down home again with his horns tied to each back door handle to stop him moving, but he could lie down of course. He produced some very nice lengthy Cotswold lambs, which we then bred the females with the Texel, which produced a very nice, fairly large carcass without virtually any fat. The abattoir was most surprised with the size of the lambs with no fat on their back. I ran this experiment for several years until the Black Face ram died.

I also bought a pedigree Texel ewe and bred my own rams and also had the chance to buy a cheap well bred Texel ram from my neighbour when he was selling up. His first three Texels some years earlier cost him £13,000.

My next cross was a Cambridge ram, which is a big ram that has developed out of the Clun to give good multiple births. I think the breed was developed in Liverpool by a vet at the Vet School. He was a good ram, but didn't particularly produce any more multiple births in the Cotswolds.

Following that I bought some Merino from an ex-Leeds University lecturer at Hanley Swan by the Three Counties Showground. He had experimented with Merinos at Leeds and brought the flock with him when he came to Worcestershire. Very good fine wool, which was on an extremely wrinkly skin, making it very difficult for shearing and the shearers did not like them. However, the first Merino ram was an aged ram which I bought at a sale at Bemborough Farm; I crossed this with the pure bred Merinos and produced my own rams for the future. They certainly produced a very good, fine wool with both my Cotswold and Jacob sheep, winning a second at the Royal Show and, I think, a first with a Jacob cross. I still have one ewe which dates back to the Merino cross, it is a much lighter, looser and good fine wool/fleece.

Eventually however, to make management easier, I decided to get rid of all the non-Cotswold rams and ewes, but of the two crosses I thought were most useful to the Cotswold was the Merino and the Texel on a Cotswold Black Face.

WINTER SOCIAL

John Flanders

As last year the Winter Social was held at The Westwood Centre in Northleach. It was a most enjoyable evening and well attended. Following tradition members brought a wide array of dishes, while Richard Mumford carved the turkey with his usual skill.

After dinner Angela Reid (Chairman) thanked all those who had worked hard to make the night a success, including Frances and Margaret Pursch, Lynne Parkes, and Sam Furlong.

Neil Hatch led a discussion about ways of encouraging the use of the Society Trademarks, and members were encouraged to fill in a questionnaire, and return it to the Secretary. The responses will assist Council in future deliberations on the subject.

The evening ended with the raffle and as always thanks must go to all those members and guests who so generously provided the prizes.

During the evening the following trophies were presented by the President, Robert Boodle

The Champion Flock Slate (for scoring the most points at the Society show) – Miss D Stanhope with her Tingewick Flock

The Crook (for the Best Home Bred Sheep at the Society Show) – Miss D Stanhope.

The Frank Houlton Trophy (for the most points over eight shows – Miss D Stanhope

The Golden Fleece (awarded to the member whose fleeces win the most points over four shows) – Mr Rob Harvey Long.

The Frank Williams Trophy (for outstanding service to the Society) – Mr Adrian Loader.

Senior Young Handler – Emily Haines

Junior Young Handler – Ethan Furlong

Large Flock Competition (a bi-annual award for members with over 20 breeding ewes) – Mrs Pat Quinn

Small Flock Competition (a bi-annual award for members with less than 20 breeding ewes) – Mr Steve Parkes

Best New Flock – Mr and Mrs M Pettit

COUNCIL CORNER

- The Society Summer Show will take place this year as part of Andoversford Show on Sunday 13th July. This will be a wonderful opportunity for new members to give showing a go. The Show will be followed by a ‘Bring and Share’ lunch, and the AGM will take place in the afternoon. See further details elsewhere in the newsletter.
- Council nomination forms are included with this newsletter – they need to be returned to the Secretary by 14th May.
- After last year’s success The Fibreworks Festival, Chipping Norton, is happening again in the Town Hall on 24th May. We are attending for the second time, and shall be there with merchandise and (hopefully!) sheep. Anyone who is free to help with this popular event please contact the Secretary.
- Also on 24th May, there will be Cotswold sheep on display at The Farmer’s Market, North Parade, Oxford – do come along and support us if you’re in the area.
- We are extremely pleased to announce that Carol Bateman has kindly agreed to assist with the Society website and Facebook page. See further details elsewhere in the newsletter.
- We are also delighted to announce that Sherry Webb has agreed to be co-opted on to Council and we look forward very much to working with her.
- The Society will be attending Sheep 2014 at Malvern Showground on 30th July. The Society stand, along with sheep, will need supervising throughout the day, and any assistance will be gratefully received. Please contact the Secretary if you can help.
- We are now working on the 2013 Flock Book. Advertisements are an important way of reducing the costs of producing the Flock Book, and a great way to publicise a business or a flock. Would anyone wishing to advertise please contact the Secretary for costs and formats.

THE SOCIETY SUMMER SHOW
&
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2014
Angela Reid

This year our Society Summer Show will take place as part of Andoversford Show, on 13th July. The show will be followed in the afternoon by the Annual General Meeting.

In the morning there will be a full range of Cotswold classes including Young and Junior Handler, and Novice classes. The Society Show is always a relaxed and friendly event providing the perfect opportunity for anyone who hasn't shown before, to dip their toes into the showing water. There will be fleece classes too, so do remember to keep an eye out for that perfect fleece when the shearers come! Entry forms will be included with the next newsletter.

Immediately after the show we will have a 'Bring and Share' lunch in the Society marquee. Please come along and join us. Council will provide the basics...cheese, some cold meat and bread. All you need to do is to bring along a dish to share.... maybe some pate, a salad, or a pudding, or indeed anything else that you think members might enjoy.

The AGM will then begin promptly at 2.30 pm.

Provisional Timetable:

9.30 Showing Classes begin.

1.00 'Bring and Share' lunch

2.30 Annual General Meeting

SHEEP FOR SALE/WANTED

This is a free service for buyers and sellers.

The list is constantly being updated, so please do contact the Secretary or check the web site if you wish to buy.

FOR SALE:

Mrs C Bateman, Cross Keys, Llywel, Brecon, Powys LD3 8RG

Tel. 01874 636549

HAS FOR SALE a ewe lamb - Celtic Lainey (out of Tingewick Corrigan and Celtic Lisa) and a ram lamb – Celtic Lisimba (out of Tingewick Corrigan and Celtic Lily)

Mr S Holmes, 11 Warneford Place, Moreton In Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 0LR

Tel. 07515 625852

HAS FOR SALE two April born, grass reared ewe lambs by Westcote Henry

Chipping Campden School, Cider Mill Lane, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire GL55 6HU

TEL. 01386 840216 (Geoff Carr)

E-MAIL GC@chippingcampden.gloucs.sch.uk

HAS FOR SALE a number of ewes of various ages

WANTED:

None

RAMS FOR HIRE:

Mr Steve Parkes, 47 King George's Field, Stow On The Wold, Gloucestershire

Tel. 01451 830461

HIRES OUT RAMS and members should contact him for further details.

DIRECTORY

This directory gives a list of members' products derived from pedigree Cotswold sheep and useful e-mail addresses/phone numbers. If anyone wants to be added to the list please let me know on 01545 590438. Cotswold cross products will be shown only in the Miscellaneous Section.

Meat

None

Skins

Lamb skins - **Steve Parkes** – 01451 830461

Woollen Goods

Knitting wool, body warmers, throws, scarves, cushions - **John Flanders** – 01545 590438; www.hendraveancotswolds.co.uk

Knitting wool – **Edna Powell** – 01453 883646

Miscellaneous

Sewing machine repairs, knitting wool – **Edna Powell** – 01453 883646

Rare breed pork – **Fiona Park** – 01558 669160

Boxed lamb, mutton, and BBQ packs – **Jonathan Brunyee** – 01451 844342;
www.conygreefarm.co.uk

E-mail Addresses/Phone Numbers

National Sheep Association – 01684 892661; www.nationalsheep.org.uk

Farming Connect Service Centre – 08456 000 813

www.wales.gov.uk/environmentandcountryside (Wales only)