



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 71 – August 2010

Chairman's Report of the Year

It seems like only a few months since we were sat in the car park at Melton attempting an AGM against the roar of a rubbish sweeper. So I trust Hope will prove to be a very much better venue by kind permission of the Hope Valley Agricultural Society; meanwhile, time seems to have flown like a woody over a dry stone wall.

At the Melton AGM we were still troubled by our negotiations with RBST over the Hill Register and this indeed came to head when Philip Onions and I made yet another trip to Stoneleigh to try for what was clearly going to be the last time to operate a system which was acceptable to both RBST and ourselves. It was clear however that RBST had already made a decision to operate completely independently from ourselves - the breeders and flock keepers - and had already set in print rules for what they were calling a Hill Register. This involved the now usual inspection / dna testing regime, all to be paid for (and subjected to) by the Hill breeder.

This was not what we wanted and so the matter was reported to a WFWSS Committee meeting in February, where it was resolved that we operate, or rather continue with, our own register and that this be called the Register of Whitefaced Woodland sheep. I was unable to attend the meeting (due to calving difficulties) and it was chaired by Paul to whom I owe thanks and relief at such a positive outcome. And relief quite frankly that we are now quite autonomous from RBST who have in my view led us a merry dance over the last four or five years.

This is not to say we want to abandon CFB registering members. The CFB represents a conservation flock of our breed and a valuable source of genetically diverse stock for continued infusion into the more commercial flocks which are more usually found in a hill situation. We will continue to offer to work with RBST on the maintenance of the CFB flock and support RBST sponsored shows and sales wherever possible as we are again with Melton this year.

The February meeting saw members co-opted onto the committee thus adding strength and purpose. These are John Jones who has carried out the Woodland census for WFWSS; Jeff Dowey of Pikenaze Farm and the holder of the crown jewels amongst Woodland tups from what I have seen (other than those held by father-in-law Rider Howard of course); James Gill who continues to amaze us in the show ring and Philip Onions whose series of flock profiles continue to inform and enthral. Although five of the nine-person committee are CFB registering members, I had hoped to entice a dedicated CFBER onto the committee but those approached were, I think, finding the travel distance involved daunting. So if there are any members strongly committed to the continued success of CFB then please get in touch.

There have been some sad lapses of Woodland classes during the show season. Suffolk, Wayland and East of England have dropped classes due to lack of entries and so this month has Manifold.

On a better note, some new flocks have been formed this year, with contact with WFWSS usually made via the website and then telephone. Of the two I have been involved with, both were established from CFB registered stock and hopefully will remain so. Neither was a particularly commercial setup though, and it is in this area that we need to concentrate if we are to promote the breed numerically, with WFWSS registered stock if pure breeding is intended.

Of the website, this has enjoyed a recent boost after Philip and Rod have got together. The site offers a valuable tool for stock exchanges in the coming autumn season with scope to show photos of stock for sale, all at no cost to members.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make the journey to Hope. It's well worth the effort to see what is usually a really good turnout on the woody lines in a traditional show set in the woody heartland of the limestone central Peak District.

Rob Ford

Annual General Meeting

To be held in the Livestock Secretary's tent at Hope Showground on Monday 30 August at 1.30 pm. The full address is: Marsh Farm, Castleton Road, Hope, Hope Valley, Derbyshire S336RD.

AGM Agenda

1. Members present and apologies
2. Minutes of the 2009 AGM
3. Chairman's report of the year
4. Treasurer's report and Accounts
5. Election of officers
6. Reports from Feb 2010 Committee meeting:
 - (a) Register of Whitefaced Woodland Sheep
 - minor rules changes
 - selection of inspectors (and judges)
 - open day for inspector calibration
 - fees for registration
 - (b) Merchandising: calendar and mugs
 - (c) Census
7. Promotion
 - Society membership
 - display boards, leaflet, banner
 - website
 - flock profiles, breed history
 - wool
 - Farmers Guardian
 - Sheep North 2011
 - shows and sales
 - flock mentoring
 - dedicated meat outlet
8. 2011 AGM and Committee meetings
9. Any other business

Draft Minutes for 2009 were contained in Newsletter 68. If you need a copy, please ask Ann.

Agenda item 5

Current Officers are: Rob Ford (Chairman), Paul Dixon (Vice Chairman), Rachel Godschalk (Secretary & Membership), Karen Dowey (Treasurer). All are eligible and have agreed to stand again. There have been no other nominations.

The following members were co-opted to the Committee during the year: Ann Godschalk (September 2009), Jeff Dowey, James Gill, John Jones, Philip Onions (all February 2010).

Subscriptions for 2010-11

Annual subscriptions are due
on 1 September at £10

Please either pay at the AGM at Hope, or send your cheque to the Membership Secretary, Rachel Godschalk, at the address on the back page.

Treasurer's Report & Accounts

Opening balance	£2129.08
Income:	
37 yearly & 2 life members	<u>£484.50</u>
Expenses:	
Guardian advert	£147.91
Census form and post, and sponsor Manifold Show	£ 29.50
Show rosettes and postage	£ 20.65
Newsletters and publicity	£ 91.56
Tenset Registration program	£199.00
Overdue account	£ 57.34
Melton Mowbray breed stand	£ 50.00
Society mugs	<u>£210.08</u>
Total expenses	£806.76
End balance	£1806.82

Overall, I think we have done quite a bit for the Society. It now has its own banner to go round at the shows, and definitely stands out. The mugs are selling fast and the money is replacing what came out of expenses plus a little more. We are thinking about possibly designing some T-shirts for more publicity for the breed. There is also the calendar to look forward to for next year. Thanks to all the Woodland breeders for their support.

Karen Dowey

Woodland Calendar

Because of the weather and other [highly technical!] reasons, we didn't manage to display and select photos for the proposed calendar at the Great Yorkshire Show. **This will now happen at the Hope Show.** If you are going to be there, please bring any suitable photos with you (either in printed form, or on a lap top or storage device). If you can't get to Hope, then please e-mail or post to Ann Godschalk asap. Thank you.

Our new Whitefaced Woodland mugs will be available at the Hope Show and at Bretton Mill at £5 each.

Dairy Event and Livestock Show

RBST asks us to remind you of their National Show and Native Breeds Exhibition at the Dairy Event and Livestock Show. The new venue is at the National Exhibition Centre Birmingham, on 7 and 8 September. Competitive classes and displays are aimed to "reach out to the broader farming community with the message that there is a place for native and rare breeds in today's agricultural world."

Show results

Royal Norfolk Show – 30 June-1 July

Judge: John Maxwell - 3 competitors
Aged ram: Jo Taylor
Shearling ram: Caroline Lewsey
Ram lamb: Caroline Lewsey
Aged ewe: Caroline Lewsey
Shearling ewe: Jo Taylor
Ewe lamb: Caroline Lewsey
Champion: Jo Taylor's aged ram
Reserve Champion: Jo Taylor's shearling ewe

Great Yorkshire Show – 13-15 July

Judge: James Gill - 7 competitors
Aged ram: Rider Howard
Shearling ram: Rider Howard
Ram lamb: Karen Dowe
Aged ewe: Karey Dowe
Shearling ewe: Karen Dowe
Ewe lamb: Karen Dowe
Champion: Rider Howard's shearling ram
Reserve Champion: Karen's shearling ewe
The Fleece class was won by Ric Halsall

Insufficient entries meant that Woodland classes at the Manifold Show were cancelled.

Qualifiers for the Champion of Champions at the Hope Show on 30 August are therefore:

From the Honley Show: James Gill's aged ewe and shearling ewe.
From Harden Moss Sheep Show: John Cottrill's shearling ewe and Paul Thorp's shearling ram.
From the Royal Norfolk Show: Jo Taylor's aged ram and shearling ewe
From the Great Yorkshire Show: Rider Howard's shearling ram and Karen Dowe's shearling ewe.
Also Champions and Reserve Champions from the Mottram and Hope Shows

At the **Three Counties Show at Malvern**, Mr D J Price's Whitefaced Woodland was Champion in the Hill Breeds class.

The **Ryedale Show** was held on 27 July at Kirby Moorside, on the edge of the North York Moors. Woodlands were entered as Rare Breeds, but on the day, there were enough to be given three classes of their own (rams, ewes and gimmer lambs). Ian Sleighthome was the Judge with Ron Foster as Steward. Pam Crosby took first place in both the ewe and ram classes, with Dave and Debbie Wardell second in the ram class, and Judith Hawkhead third. (Judith also showed the Champion Manx Loaghtan.) There were seven Woodland competitors. We should certainly try to get official Whitefaced Woodland classes at the Ryedale Show in 2011 and include it as a qualifier for the Championship.



The ram class at Ryedale Show [Photo: D Wardell]

Woodies in the Fog

As we climbed out of Macclesfield on the Buxton road, a thick curtain of fog engulfed us; it had been foggy since we'd left home, but as the mild humid air reached the remains of the Christmas snows on the hills, it became so dense you could taste it!

I had wanted to visit Neville Belfield's flock over the Christmas holidays, so both my children could come with me, but we'd been snowed in from 20th December until a week into the new term, to anything but 4x4 tractors and quad bikes and according to "Sally Traffic" on the radio, the road at the *Cat and Fiddle* had also been shut, so we'd had to leave it.



Neville Belfield bought that tup of James Gill's at the Bretton Mill sale – the record breaking one – and I had been raving to my children James and Katie all about it for some time and James had seen this tup's seven-month old ram lamb when we'd profiled James Gill's flock earlier, so he was expecting a giant of a sheep.

"It's big then?" Katie asked with her usual understatement. "Bigger even than our Woodies?" "Oh yes" James replied. "It's going to be head and shoulders above all the other sheep! Wait and see! We'll see it a mile off!"

“Well he was certainly bigger than the other tups at Bretton Mill, when I saw him last!” I agreed.

So we all eagerly jumped into Neville’s link box for the tractor ride up the hillside to see this goliath of the Woody world, striding down through a flock of presumably awestruck ewes, quaking and cringing at his thunderous passing.

Now please don’t misunderstand me, we were anything but disappointed, it’s just that, at first this special tup was hard to see, not because there was anything wrong with him – far from it – it was just that *all* the sheep were so big!

“My God!” Katie exclaimed, “Look at all of them! They’re huge!” [*We couldn’t possibly print what James said!*] This is now the fifth flock, including mine, that I have profiled and I have been keeping woodies for a while now, and seen many sold at

sales, but I have never quite experienced the awe that I felt as such a big flock of excellent, giant sheep came quietly and calmly up to us to get a bit of hay on that freezing hillside today! Now these were *real* sheep, as a neighbour of mine would say.

Neville’s Prize Winning Tup



The Belfield Flock

Flock Profile 5

23/1/2010

Name of Breeder: Mr Neville Belfield

Contact Details: 69 London Road, Macclesfield

Telephone: 01625 425426

Flock Details: Some Hill Registered, but most not registered.

Size of Flock: Large

[Small 1 - 20, Medium 21 - 50, Large 51 - 100, Major Flock 101 +]



Breeding Policy

Since Neville’s semi retirement he only keeps 80 Woodies, “just to keep my hand in” so he has been able to concentrate on keeping only the best ewes. He chooses only the biggest sheep, regardless of all else, and then he starts to consider their other features. In the tup, first he starts with the head “Everything follows through from the head” he told me, “I don’t want the horns either too tight to the head, nor flying away. Then I want good, broad shoulders. That’s not normal in Woodies, so it is an important point to look for. They need good deep bodies too. They have to stand well, that can be another weakness in Woodies. Then they have to be good in the mouth, too many of them are overshot. You have to check their mouths.”

“Do you check all their mouths?” I ask. “Even the ewes?”

“Oh yes, I never buy any sheep without checking its mouth!” he tells me. “They need good deep jackets too, not too close, but they mustn’t part down the middle! You wouldn’t like it if someone cut down the back of your jacket on a cold wet day would you?”

Neville only keeps six male lambs entire each year. He chooses the lambs at birth, which is a really difficult thing to do in my experience. So I asked how he can tell what a tup is going to look like when it’s born.

“Oh it’s very hard,” he agreed. “You can’t always get it right. I know who the tup is of course, then I’m very careful which ewes I breed from, they have to be perfect...well as near perfect as I can get – none of them is absolutely perfect – so I select the very best. Then out of the six that I’ve kept entire, I’ll probably only keep a couple. The ones that aren’t good enough go to the butchers with all the wethers.” This year however he has kept more tup lambs.

Neville has two tups, the one mentioned above and one out of one that he bred himself. He explained that he sold this tup’s father, because he was “surplus to requirements”, but bought back this tup as soon as he saw it. The difference between the two he has is very small, but there was a huge difference in what he paid for them both! Neville only keeps tups for two breeding seasons, to stop inbreeding.



Neville’s Two Tups Feed Together The prize-winning tup is on the left, but almost as big is the one that he’s bred himself, in the middle of the picture.

Alongside the breeding of pure Whitefaced Woodlands, Neville did put Texel tups on to some of his poorer ewes. Neville is very keen to promote this cross; it does produce an exceptional animal.

“The Woodland and Texel are made for each other,” he preaches to the converted. “There’s nothing quite like it! It’s much better than the mule!”

Marketing Policy

Neville’s daughter farms with his Woody Texel cross ewes, which produce superb fat lambs. He puts shearlings to the Beltex and then older ewes to Texels. Fat lambs from this cross go through Chelford auction. Neville sometimes sells some ewes through the Bretton Mill sale, along with some ewe lambs and a spare tup or two – look out for the champion tup in a couple of year’s time if we’re lucky! He did sell all of his WW wethers through a local butcher from Christmas to Easter, until this year when he just sent them all as stores.

Showing Achievements

Neville told me that he never really had time to show sheep except when he was selling them, but he modestly told me that he has won at Bretton Mill a couple of times and once at the HPLS ram sale!

Farm Details:

Year Started Farming Here: 1965

Size of farm: Group C

[Group A 1 - 20 ha, B 21 - 50 ha, C 51 – 100 ha, D 101 - 500, E 501 - 1000 ha, F 1000 +ha]

Land classification: LFA

Farm Type: sheep

Other Breeds of Livestock kept:

Sheep: Texels

Just One of Many Belfield Ewes note the strong, straight back and deep body



Description of Farm:

Neville's farm is a typical modern farm; the farmhouse has been sold and some land is rented off and Neville rents in other land – it's all very complicated, as these things tend to be! The relevant bit to the Woodies is that they are presently kept on a large block of steep hill land about a thousand feet up. It is fertile though, compared with other land that I've seen. The land is free draining with a number of scattered trees and high stonewalls topped with neat wall-top wire. "That's more to keep the walkers and sledges out than the sheep in!" Neville confides. "You should have seen it last week; the field was covered with tracks! I wouldn't mind, but they climb over the walls and knock them down!" I totally sympathise as walker after walker marches past us on the road above, chattering loudly and gawping at the farmers feeding the sheep!



The Woodies are kept on a large block of steep land

Management All the sheep are drenched for worms and fluke twice a year, once just before tugging and again pre-lambing. Lambs are wormed twice, once at shearing and once before weaning. All the sheep are in the Heptavac-P system, starting with two injections, six weeks apart, then annual boosters. This year all the sheep have had Foot-Vax too; he used to do them every year and it worked very well. The sheep get Crovect and copper in mid-winter. Neville has not dipped for ten years, but he has no experience of Scab here; it should be noted that the field that they were in was within high walls onto highways, with no other sheep in direct contact to Neville's.

let go about seventeen days later. The ewes are only brought in if there is a problem; last year that meant that just five or six ewes were ever brought in. They lamb about 150 – 160%. There is an odd problem with foxes occasionally taking lambs, but it takes a brave or desperate fox to try and take a lamb from one of these sheep!

The ewes have run with the new tup from the 10th of December to lamb in May, when there is plenty of daylight to allow lambing outside. The second tup was

In the worst weather Neville feeds hay, he puts Rumivite blocks out from a couple of weeks before tugging to the 10th of February, then he feeds a about 1 lb of 18% protein cake a head, per day until lambing. All the sheep looked very fit the day we visited and it had been very poor weather for a month!

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