



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 80 - July 2012

Chairman's Ramblings

Dear All

The wonderful weather has still failed to change the mild winter we are still paying for. Honley Show washed out, Harden Moss washed out, North Yorkshire Show washed out. When will we see any sheep shown this year? I have not heard the forecast for next week but hope all is well for the Great Yorkshire.

Since our last newsletter, members Jill and Paul have had their wedding and are presently honeymooning in Canada. Congratulations and all the best for your futures.

The only show I think that has braved the weather was the Royal Norfolk. Chareen and Dennis took the plunge and travelled down not knowing what to expect and came home with numerous trophies. The Champion was a Ram purchased at the Bretton Sale. This is an incentive for more travellers; let's have a convoy from the North next year. When I judged at the Norfolk on two occasions I was made very welcome by all. Let the people down South see the best of our sheep!

I hope to see you at the Great Yorkshire, otherwise at Bretton Mill. Yours. Paul

The Chairman wrote this a day or two before the Yorkshire Show. We all know now that it, too, was washed out, but Woodland classes did take place. Results are on page 5.

The Hope Show will be held on August Bank Holiday Monday 27th of August. The Livestock Schedule and entry forms can be downloaded from the website www.hopelivestockshow.org.uk and the main show website www.hopeshow.org.uk. Closing date for entries is 13 August

I would be pleased to reply to any enquiries that your members may have about attending the show, if they would like to email me on livestock@hopelivestockshow.org.uk
Hope Morris, Livestock Secretary

View from the Hill (incorporating Woody Weather)

No silage, certainly no hay, no shearing until the only clear day Sunday just gone and then extending into the dark, no pasture topping (ie: thistle clearance) no muck spreading and no hardly anything outdoors except stock checking – fly strike, head dermatitis (caused by thistle pricks I reckon, but easily treated with surgical swab type fluid from the chemists), wormy ends etc. “Why do we bother?” I asked my better half after shearing. “I didn’t know you did!” she quickly quipped back.

Anyway, looking forward to the next round of shows, if any are still likely to carry on, with nearly all having been cancelled thus far but full marks to the all female cast at the Royal Norfolk with our best judge I reckon Tessa Wigham having a difficult task, I would imagine, sorting the best out from entries by eastern counties breed stalwarts Caroline Lewsey and Jo Taylor and new comer (to Norfolk) Chareen Kaye. Thanks to Chareen for making the great trek east and congratulations in taking the top prize home and we look forward to seeing Chareen’s aged tup at Hope in the Champion of Champions. As I have said before, the prizes are very generous as is, according to Tessa, the hospitality afforded to judges. The Ryedale show is *definitely still on* despite rumours to the contrary (check show website nearer the date though – 31 July).

I think we are putting our efforts into supporting the show and sale at Skipton this year, rather than Melton as in previous years as Melton hasn’t been well supported by breeders. But with the Skipton date being only five days after Hope Show, this will mean that stock can’t be entered into both because of the 6-day rule.

Off now to check my sucklers - they at least really do appreciate all this long wet grass.
Best regards, Rob Ford

Harold Hodgson – Life under Kinder

It was a mizzle filled winter's day in late winter of 2012 when I went to visit Harold and Dorothy in their warm comfortable new home. Harold's eyes twinkled as he recounted tales of farming life from before the war to this day. This then is an article based on those reminiscences and as it is full of interesting accounts that have great relevance to the history not only of Harold and Dorothy but to the whole of farming in the High Peak, during the twentieth century and to the core of the Woodland breed itself.

Harold Hodgson was born in 1929 at Hill House Farm under Kinder Scout. His father had taken on the tenancy of Hill House in 1927 and Harold in his turn took over the farm in 1965, where he lived with his sister, Dorothy, right up until Christmas 2011, when Dorothy's ill health forced them both into a retirement home in Chapel on the Frith.

Hill House Farm (at its peak) had about 176 acres of in-bye land and they shared the grazing on Kinder with their landlords and another farm. In those days they got up to about 1,100 sheep and a small herd of suckler cows. They mainly kept three breeds of sheep, Lonks, Gritstones and Woodlands. Harold has always kept Woodlands, the local native breed, and he had a flock of about one hundred pure-bred sheep for many years, but this dwindled to about 60 in later years. He became a popular and respected breeder and show judge and has had a huge influence on other breeders and the breed itself throughout his life.

Before the War, Harold recalled, the moors were mainly kept clear of most sheep, this was because the landlords wanted the land almost exclusively for grouse shooting. But food shortage during the war and just after meant that there was a need to repopulate the moors with sheep. Of course under recent governments the environmental movement is once again moving towards limiting moorland grazing as I pointed out to him.

'Aye,' Harold smiled behind wise, sharp eyes, 'but it'll all happen again! There'll be some other crisis one day and we'll need the food and they'll bring the sheep back to the moors again!'

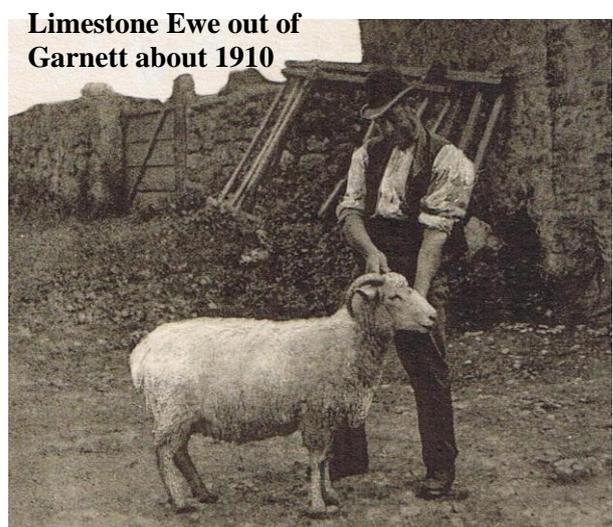
'We used to keep our sheep out on the hill all year round, only bringing them into the In-bye land for lambing and at tupping time. We had to do that to keep the various breeds apart for tupping you see. We used to have some of the neighbours' sheep coming over to the sunny side

of the hill too. The trouble was they wouldn't go back again!'

Harold thinks it was this drive to clear the moors of sheep that really started the decline of the Woodland. We talked about the history of the breed and later while discussing the Penistone breed and its relationship with the Woodland (which were once two separate breeds), Harold suddenly came up with a very interesting story, but as it is related to this, I shall recount it here.

'Ah well that all started back in about 1854 when the breach loading shotgun came to the fore,' Harold told me. 'The breach loading shotgun was a lot quicker to load than the muzzle loaded gun that went before. The moor owners wanted the moors for grouse shooting because now a really good shot could get four birds from one covey as the grouse hurtled over at up to 60 miles an hour, firing first one gun and then getting a loaded gun from his loader. This was much more efficient than the muzzle loaded gun had ever been and shooting grouse really took off as a pastime of the upper classes.'

'So the owners made the tenants take their sheep off the moors and a lot of sheep from the Woodlands were sent to the annual sheep fair at Penistone, where the locals bought them for themselves. That's where the Penistone came from. It was really a Woodland, crossed onto their bigger local sheep. The Penistone was a much taller, rougher animal than the Woodland, which were smaller and more meaty – if you know what I mean?'



Perhaps we should mention here that the Lonk and Gritstone breeds are both very closely related to the Woodland too. The Lonk in particular is believed to be derived from crossing both the Westmorland Limestone and the Woodland onto the local black faced heath sheep of Lancashire.



Lonk ewes out of Milburn 1924: note tufts on heads

Many writers subscribe to the theory that the Westmorland Limestone was in truth a 'sister' breed to the Woodland, but evidence to support this is hard to come by, as the Limestone died out in 1914 at the start of the First World War. I have long held the view that Limestones from Westmorland may well have been traded south and ended up being crossed with other breeds and that it was perhaps through this movement that we have had some Limestone genes get into the Woodland. Several writers have over the years talked of the movement south each year of stock from Scotland to Westmorland, from Westmorland to Lancashire and from Lancashire to Cheshire and Derbyshire. Amongst these are Fairy, Holt, Garnett and Ryder.

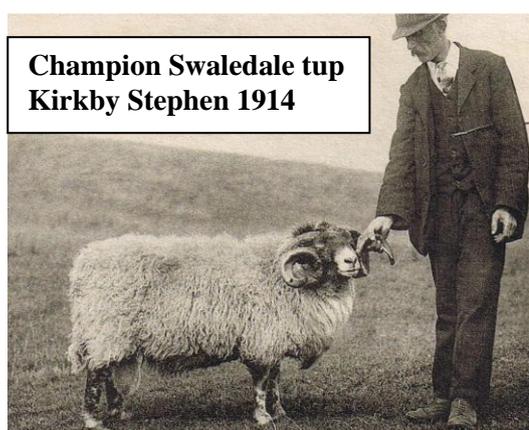
But there is little hard evidence that Westmorland Limestones were brought to the High Peak. So the hairs on my neck began to stand up when Harold started to tell of how local farmers used to travel every year up to Kirkby Stephen to buy sheep.

'Had your father always done this?' I asked. 'Oh aye,' he replied as though everyone knew that, 'we always used to go up and buy wether lambs of about a year old and bring them south to fatten them up. And we used to go to Clitheroe in Lancashire every year too.'

This then is an interesting traditional behaviour. Many modern farming practices are deeply rooted in an unwritten traditional history. Of course Harold's father was not buying Limestones as they were already extinct by his day, and he was buying wethers anyway. But one must ask why? The answer is clear and one many farmers will follow today – they were buying sheep from further up the hill (so to speak) to get hardy animals

to bring down to lower levels where they would consequently do well and thrive. So if this farm were doing it with wethers, then other farms would do it with breeding sheep for the same reason.

If the Hodgsons were not buying Westmorland Limestones directly, by going to Clitheroe and buying Lonks, they were definitely bringing in Limestone genes, because the Lonk is a comparatively new breed and according to Garnett, was developed from the Limestone in the first place. Furthermore the Limestone was used to improve several breeds local to Kirkby Stephen and this picture of a Swaledale (another breed heavily influenced by early additions of Limestone blood) shows the typical top knot associated with the Limestone at the time.



**Champion Swaledale tup
Kirkby Stephen 1914**

'How did you get there before the war?' I asked. 'Well we used to take a bus into town and then get the train, north,' Harold replied, 'from Hayfield station.'

'Didn't you take the bus all the way to Clitheroe?' Dorothy asked.

'Oh aye, we'd go on the bus to Clitheroe.'

'So how did you get the sheep home?' I asked. 'Not on the same bus?'

Harold laughed. 'Well we wouldn't book a wagon unless we knew we had bought some sheep. 'We used to fetch sheep back from Clitheroe in a wagon, we'd fetch Woodlands home from Derwent in a cattle trailer (we had one by the time I took over from my father in 1965) but we used to fetch sheep home from Kirkby Stephen on the train. When we got to Hayfield station, we'd close the gates onto the road and unload the wagons onto the platform. We often had two wagon loads of sheep. The porters used to grumble about all the sheep muck that we'd leave behind on the platform. Then when we had them all unloaded, we'd open the gates onto the road and walk the sheep up the hill the last two miles to the farm.'

'Two miles isn't so far,' I agreed, 'We often walk ours home five miles from Kirkby Lonsdale, but

we follow them with a trailer, because you always get one or two go off their legs at some point don't you? What did you do about that? Follow them with a horse and cart and load them into that?'

'Oh no, we carried sheep shears with us and if a hogg went off its legs we'd shear it there and then, and we'd have a sharp knife too, so we'd trim its feet and then put it over the wall onto the fell. Then we'd roll up the fleece tightly and put a rope around it and carry that home over our backs and come back for the wether a lot later on, by then it would have filled out a bit on the grass. Sometimes we wouldn't see it again till shearing time when we gathered the fell.'

'One year we had a real problem with some hoggs we brought back from the other side of Kinder, I think they had vitamin D deficiency, anyway we had a few lie down in the road and go all stiff. So we sheared them and trimmed their feet and put them over the wall onto the fell to grow on. They always did well on the moor. We'd fatten them over the winter and shear them the following summer and if they still weren't fat enough then we could turn them out again for another winter and sell them the following year. In those days we'd keep wethers until they had all their teeth and it wasn't uncommon to keep wethers up to six years. To keep the sheep, as we turned them onto the fell, we'd punch some holes in a bucket and light a fire in it and heat up a horn iron and horn brand them before we turned them free.'

'What sort of lambs did you buy in Kirkby Stephen?' I asked.

'Well they were mainly Swaledales, some Scotties and a few Herdwicks,' he replied. 'We always had some Woodlands on the farm, but when I took over I set about building up a pure flock. So if anyone was selling some draft ewes I would go along to the sale to check them out. I got my best original stock from Mr Ollershaw's sale out of Derwent. It was called Ash Farm I think. Then we got some from Mr Elliot in Derwent too.' This makes Harold's foundation stock true Woodlands as opposed to Penistones.

'So what were you looking for when you selected Woodlands?'

'Good fleeces,' he replied as all breeders do. So as I always have to, I asked what he meant by a good fleece.

'Good quality wool without kemp, either white kemp or black kemp in the breach. As for pink noses, it didn't matter then, as far back as I can remember Woodlands always had blue noses. I don't like these sheep with pink noses, they aren't

as hardy as blue nosed Woodlands and they're often too big. We used to be trying to bring down the size of them. Butchers couldn't manage a big side of mutton across the counter. Those with pink noses were often bad on their feet too. Anyway they used to cross them with Dorsets in those days to try and bring the size of the sheep down.'

It should be noted that the Limestone was a much bigger sheep than the Dorset and according to Wallace the Limestone was crossed with the Dorset too for the same reason. We also need to remember that the Limestone died out in popularity in Northern Lancashire and Westmorland because they were pure white, pink nosed and bad on their feet on wet ground. That is why, according to Garnett, that they were crossed by the Victorians with the black faced sheep to make them hardier and better on their feet!

'Back in the 1930s the sheep job was down and out. Woodlands died out, they were too big compared with Swaledales and Gritstones. But there was a general lack of interest in sheep altogether. In the late 1940s the Woodland breed was nearly wiped out by several bad winters. They had to do something, so it wasn't just the Dorset that was introduced; all sorts of other breeds were also introduced quietly on different farms. One of the main things they were trying to do was bring the size down a bit. Who knows what went on, on the quiet?'

'During the war the Ministry of Food took over and they took all that we could produce, but after the war we were still buying store lambs to fatten, buying them in mid October and fattening them on the moor over winter. We still do today, but they buy stores to fatten over winter but want them away as the grass starts to grow again in the spring. I suppose it helps that winters are milder these days. In the past we'd wait till they'd had time to fill out a bit, and fetch them in to shear and if they were still too thin, we'd turn them out again. We used to put a Suffolk tup onto Woodlands. That was a good fat lamb. Sometimes you need that bit of fresh blood to make a good big lamb.'

'Did you ever try a Texel tup on your Woodlands Harold?' I asked, but one look of his face was enough to answer that. He shook his head slowly as if I'd said something really daft. 'So you never bothered with any of these modern continental breeds then?'

'No...' he replied with a chuckle; *what a daft question from the youth* shone out from behind his eyes. That put me in my place!

'I remember some Woodlands used to have a ginger face. There were ginger faced Woodlands going back as far as I can remember. Sometimes they had a single black spot too, on the face or leg. Just the one. It was really black, jet black. It was about that big [he made a circle with fore finger and thumb about the size of a 50p piece]. 'Only one?' I asked, 'that seems strange not one or two?'

'No absolutely only the one, strange really when you think about it,' he replied firmly.

'Do you ever remember them being grey faced?' I asked, but judging by his puzzled face I guess that he hadn't. Farey wrote that the Woodlands of Hope were often grey faced and Wallace and others have commented that the Penistone was often grey faced too.

'Well Woodlands would often throw a grey faced lamb when crossed with other breeds,' Harold replied. 'The pink nosed, white faced Woodland is relatively modern, back then they were all blue nosed or ginger faced.'

'When you were showing your Woodlands, what achievement are you most proud of?' I asked. Harold paused for a long moment as he thought through this.

'To be honest I don't have any single prize that stands out in my mind,' he replied. 'We used to horn brand all our lambs. That mark was there forever, unlike these modern ear tags. Anyone can change those you know; cut out the old one and put in a new one, you know. So these days you don't always know who bred the sheep in front of you. But back in my day, you only had to check out the horn brand, because that was with the sheep for life. So when a sheep that you'd bred came into the ring, you knew it was one of yours. When one that I bred won, I always felt very proud. Nowadays it doesn't seem to matter so much who bred the sheep; it's all about who owns it now. Anyone can buy a good sheep, but it takes a good breeder to breed one. So it was always great to see a sheep that you'd bred win in the ring.'

We moved on to talk about the Mass Trespass. 'Then in 1932 they had that 'Mass Trespass'. They came in to Hayfield station and they all marched up Kinder Hill. The gamekeepers tried to stop them, but it was no use. One keeper ended up in hospital and he died a bit later. Now they are all over the place like lice on a hedgehog. They say, "*the land belongs to the people*" – that's true – but I look after my bit!'

'Following the war we used to turn everything out on the moor most of the year, but we'd send some sheep to out winter near to Sheffield. All except the ewe lambs, which we kept back on the moor. We didn't send them because we lost too many. We didn't use to worm or fluke sheep in those days like we do now; we're always putting something or other down their throats. Dips have gone expensive too – we used to make dips from creosote and soft soap – can't do that anymore. They've gone expensive and they're too complex anyway. We used to dip just after shearing in June or July before returning everything up to the moor.'

'That was the only time of the year that we had all the sheep in together,' Dorothy added as way of explanation.

'Did you feed them on the moor during the winter?' I asked.

'No we would wait until the bad weather stopped and then make our way up there and prod at the snow drifts until we found any trapped sheep. In the 1940s we used to have a good dog called Jock. He could find trapped sheep that were still alive; he didn't bother with the dead ones. He'd paw at the snow and carry on until someone dug the sheep out.'

'Did you feed turnips to your sheep?'

'Aye, we fed turnips in the spring, swedes before lambing and mangels after.'

'Did you feed the sheep with silage? Round bales?'

'No, only hay,' Harold replied as if I were barmy. 'We only ever fed hay.'

'Didn't you used to chop turnips up for the sheep?' Dorothy asked.

'No we only ever chopped up hay and straw for the cows, that's all,' Harold replied.

'What sort of cows?'

'They were just milky types. We used to milk a handful of cows and take the milk around a few local cottages and houses,' Harold explained.

'Mum used to take milk up to the big house when the landlords were here for the shooting,'

Dorothy added. 'She had to have it there by 8.00am so they could use it for their breakfasts. She had to carry it up in quart sized milk cans and it was over a mile and a half up to the big house.'

The morning passed all too quickly and the managers of the home wanted the residents to come for their lunch, so I had to call it a day, but it was a great day and I enjoyed chatting with Harold and Dorothy very much.

Philip Onions

Show results

Royal Norfolk Show - Judge: Tessa Wigham
Aged or shearling ram: Chareen Kaye
Ram Lamb: Jo Taylor
Aged or shearling ewe: Chareen Kaye
Ewe lamb: Jo Taylor
Group of 3: Jo Taylor
Male Champion was Chareen's aged ram and Reserve, Jo Taylor's ram lamb. Female Champion was Chareen's ewe with lambs at foot, Reserve was Jo Taylor's shearling ewe. Overall Champion was Chareen's aged ram and Reserve, Jo's ram lamb. Caroline Lewsey won "Best sheep bred and forward by a Norfolk Breeder" and the many other special prizes were shared fairly equally by Jo and Chareen.

Great Yorkshire Show - Judge: Neville Belfield
Aged ram: C Campbell
Shearling ram: C Campbell
Ram lamb: P Crosby
Aged ewe: C Kaye
Shearling ewe: C Kaye
Ewe lamb: C Kaye
Champion male: P Crosby's ram lamb, Reserve: C. Campbell's aged ram; Champion female: C Kaye's aged ewe, Reserve her shearling ewe. Overall Champion was Chareen Kaye's aged ewe; Pam Crosby's ram lamb took Reserve. A fleece from Deirdre and Ric Halsall won the Whitefaced Woodland fleece class.

Stock for Sale and Wanted

Julie Beardwell has **shearling ewes for sale**. Nine are CFB registered, of various pedigrees. A further eight are from John Illingworth's Whitray flock. Phone: 01663 733570 (Whaley Bridge, High Peak)
In due course, she will be **looking to buy a dozen or so Woodland ewe lambs**.

News from Ruth Dalton, RBST Field Officer
An RBST Sheep Workshop was held at Stoneleigh on the 21st April, for beginners and experienced sheep keepers alike to learn more about a wide variety of sheep including the Combined Flock Book breeds. Whitefaced Woodlands were kindly provided by Stephen & Francine Burns (Southlea) and Helen and Chris Wray (Westfield). Avril Harrison and Pam Walker ran a breed seminar which was very well received by some enthusiastic attendees. Special rosettes, sponsored by RBST, for 'Best Home-Bred CFB Whitefaced Woodland' will be presented at five shows this year - Bilsdale, the Great Yorkshire Show, North Yorkshire County, Ryedale and Thornton-le-Dale.

2011 AGM minutes

Avril Harrison asks us to amend the Draft Minutes as circulated with Newsletter 78. She wishes to stress that Resolution 7 was proposed not just by her, but also by: Pam Crosby, David & Debbie Wardell, Helen & Chris Wray and Ric Halsall.

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