



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 79 - Spring 2012

Chairman's Message

Welcome All. More ramblings from the Chairman. Hope the weather is good wherever you may be. It feels like Spring has come early and hardly any winter. Hope the weather stays like this for lambing.

The committee met on Saturday 25th February and various matters were discussed. The main item I felt was the appointment of an Honorary President for the Society. Subject to his approval, the unanimous vote was for Harold Hodgson; I have written to him and am awaiting his reply I think this is an opportunity to honour a man who has always been a keen breeder of WFW sheep all his life. Unfortunately due to health reasons Harold dispersed his flock at Bretton last year, when many breeders took this opportunity to buy this man's lifetime's work. I hope all members approve of our action.

I have the pleasure to attend the wedding in May of Paul and Jill and on behalf of myself and all in the Society wish them well for the future. (No presents please but donations in lieu for the honeymoon trip of a lifetime, it says on the invitation). Hope the fund does well!

No date for the AGM has been fixed, but the venue is at the home of the Illingworth family, whom we thank for their offer. I hope the date will not clash this year with my sailing! There is a suggestion that the 2013 AGM could take place in Co Durham, so we can have a farm walk with Ann & Rachel.

Not a lot more to say. Happy lambing. See you soon.

Paul

Editor's Bleat

I apologise that this Newsletter is later than intended. Production problems caught up with a move, lambing and a few technical details. (I'm still not sure if it will print, or if I can locate members' e-mail addresses!) However, we are now installed in a caravan outside our front door at Plover Hall – see back page for full details.

View from the Hill

Just a few words of encouragement to check out the entry cut off date for the Royal Norfolk Show and to please get some Woodland entries forward. The Norfolk is a prestigious affair and a great promotional opportunity for our breed. The prizes are very generous too!

Another event which deserves support is the RBST's flock day on 21 April. I'll be there on behalf of WFWSS with some of my CFB sheep (lambled ewes and an aged tup). What a daft time of year to hold such an event when most of us will be still in the middle of lambing.

I mentioned this time last year about the difficulty of tagging new born lambs to accurately fix their pedigree as near to lambing as possible, without using the cumbersome and injurious large EID tags and that I would experiment using numbered mini Ketchum type metal crimp on tags like the ones we used to use and still can on cattle. These mini tags can be sequentially numbered using the last 2 or 3 digits of your ID tags. Here's a photo of new born with tag. In this example I haven't left space for growth but apart from that they have worked fine and can be left in or cut with scissors when applying the EIDs later. You get an applicator when ordering. Be careful not to squeeze too hard as it's rather easy to squash the tag flat. They penetrate easily and I haven't had much of a problem with site infection. You get them from Ketchum of course.

Best regards, Rob Ford



A tribute to Jim Thornley

from two of his friends

It is with much sadness that we report the passing of Jim Thornley on 11th January, only months after burying his beloved wife Mary (on 18 August last year). He will be missed by his family, friends and the farming community. He died in the same house in which he was born, on Ollerbrook Farm, in Edale.

Jim had a great passion for sheep, in particular his Whitefaced Woodland sheep, of which he was very proud. He was chairman of Edale and Hayfield Sheep Keepers Association for many years and judged sheep, wool and shearing at a variety of shows. He was widely recognised and well respected for his knowledge, skills and expertise.

To those who didn't really know him, he could come across as quite blunt. But a spade was a spade with Jim, who did have a good sense of humour. His passion was his farming, which was all he ever wanted to do in life. He loved his hill breeds of sheep, in particular the White Faced Woodland, for which he was an acclaimed and fair judge.

His death is a sad loss to the sheep keeping community. It marks the end of an era, with the passing of a longstanding breeder and an established flock from their native hills.

Stock selection workshop

Because of my tardiness, the application date for this workshop has passed – but it may still be worth contacting RBST if you are interested. Ed.

RBST is hosting a day workshop for all CFB breeds at Rugby Farmers Mart, Stoneleigh Park, on 21st April. It is aimed at both new and experienced sheep keepers to help choose the right stock, and will include a Judging and Showing workshop to give novice keepers the confidence to show their sheep.

The WFWSS in the person of Rob Ford will be demonstrating the points to look for in a Woodland, focussed particularly on card grading and breed description. The cost will be £20 per person (non RBST members £30) to include lunch. Apply to RBST for further details - conservation@rbst.org.uk or 024 7669 6551.

The High Moss Flock

Jill Falkingham and Paul Thorp have one of the most influential and important Whitefaced Woodland flocks around. There are few farms that I know of that have more Woodlands and their constant search for perfection has taken them to the top in the show ring on many occasions.



Jill proudly shows her ewe at the Great Yorkshire Show

Many of the top Woodland breeders have tups from Paul's flock and I would like to remind readers that Paul bred the record breaking tup that started these flock profiles off.

These flock profiles are not just about the sheep, they are also an opportunity to put the whole farm into context and learn something about the conditions that these sheep are reared under and also about the people behind the flock too.

So it is important to say that there can be very few flocks of any breed of sheep that are kept at such a high altitude and in such harsh conditions in England today. So these sheep aren't just well bred, they are hardy too.



This then is their Flock Profile

Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society



Jill and Paul Thorp

Flock profile 11

Date of Profile: 28/12/11

Contact Details

Name of Flock: The High Moss Flock

Name of Breeder: Jill and Paul Thorp

Address: Stott Hall, Rishworth, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 4QY

Telephone: 01422 823666

Mobile: 07712 232087 (Paul); 07730 402812

Email: jillyf1@fsmail.net

Flock Details:

Year Started Farming: mid 1990s

Year Flock Established: 2004

Size of Woodland Flock: Major

(Small 1-20, Medium 21-50, Large 51-100, Major 101+)

Flock History

Paul originally went to work part time for Ken Wild and part time for Rider Howard. When Mr Wild passed away, Paul managed to secure the tenancy of Stott Hall from Yorkshire Water. He took over Mr Wild's famous flock of Whitefaced Woodlands and was fortunate enough to get at least one tup from Rider Howard as well, amongst others.

Since then he has built up one of the biggest Whitefaced Woodland flocks in the country and today has around 500 Whitefaced Woodland and Woodland crosses as well as a show flock that he keeps on his family's land at Wild Boar Clough Farm, Hade Edge. This farm is still over 1000ft high and the tups come to Stott Farm for tugging, so even the show sheep are hardy hill sheep.

It's a hard life farming up on these moors and Paul and Jill see showing sheep as one of their main interests, so with bloodlines that go back to two of the most influential flocks in the country, they are well placed to breed some of the best Whitefaced Woodlands sheep around including the tup that still holds the record to this day for the highest price ever paid for a Whitefaced Woodland.



Taken on the open day, the one at the front left has a 'tight skin'

Breeding Policy

"Living up here, I think one of the most important things a sheep should have is a good jacket," Paul explained. It is important that we define exactly what he means, so for a while we discussed this subject in detail. What Paul is looking for is a tight, dense fleece that remains closed in high winds and sheds water easily.

He shyly admits that he doesn't mind a bit of kemp (that's the coarse, hair-like wool) because it stands up well to the elements. This kemp often makes a sheep hardier and is what Herdwick breeders in the Lakes have focused upon in making that breed particularly hardy. Of course wool manufacturers do not like kemp and so kempy fleeces are often much lower in value, off the sheep. But what good is that if the sheep is dead through hypothermia?

He then told me that the mouth is also important. We all know this; everything follows the mouth! So a sheep with a poor mouth will never do as well as a sheep with a good correct mouth.

Then Paul looks at the bone (legs and feet!).

"They have to be straight with some good strong bone – not too thick set as some people like, but not spindly and narrow either. Just enough to support a big strong sheep."

Jill is really into showing sheep too; apparently the two of them spend some time discussing the merits of sheep as they fit them into their breeding programme.

"We'll both stand back and take a good hard look at the whole sheep," Jill explained. "Paul prefers a tup with a broad masculine head, but I don't mind a sheep with a narrower head."

"Does size matter?" I ask.

“Well aye but its more the length and depth of the sheep that you want,” Paul explained. “You don’t want too much wind under it!” Beautifully put on a day like this! I immediately get an image of a sheep being blown off the hill onto the M62! “You don’t want one of these sheep that’s all leg! You need a good deep body on a ewe.”



Close to the ground, tight fleeced but with a bit of kemp, a typical commercial Stott Hall ewe.

Showing Achievements



Hope Show 2011

Paul’s best achievement in the show ring so far was probably with a homebred ewe that came second to the tup he’d also bred, shown and owned by James Gill at the Hope Show in 2009. This ewe also went on to win many other prizes for them. The tup, as mentioned before went on to become Champion of Champions and later sold for a breed record price to Neville Bellfield. Jill is very proud of her 2-year-old filly that came second in a huge class of ponies at the Great Yorkshire and of their homebred shearling ewe High Moss Zoe who also won Overall Breed Champion at the same show.

Farm Details:

Year Started Here: 2004

Size of Farm: Group F

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

Land Classification: SDA, LFA

Farm Type: Sheep

Livestock. Mainly Woodlands and Woodland crosses, also Swaledales, Gritstones, Lonks, Herdwicks, and Cheviots . Jill also has some Welsh Mountain Ponies

Farm Description

Stott Hall Farm is classed as a severely disadvantaged hill farm, high in the moors between Manchester and Huddersfield. Thick with rushes and coarse grasses, the land is poor and wet, with many areas of boggy moorland. There is precious little shelter and few trees, except the steep terrain itself and drystone walls.

The valley itself would be a quiet almost tranquil place, were it not for the huge motorway thundering through it. Their in-bye land is mainly just around the motorway itself or down by the huge man-made reservoir below. But even this land is far from flat, and the soil is thin and acidic and full of rock and stone.

Paul and Jill have built a lovely new shed that we had the AGM in and have another for hay and the buildings attached to the farm itself. To get to the farm one has to go under the motorway itself and Katie and I thought that the bridge would make a great sheep shed too! Apparently they have used this area to store fertiliser and other essentials, but some passing idiot decided it might be a good idea to set fire to the nitrates! Thank goodness he failed or the whole motorway would have been blown up – although on second thoughts....no don’t be silly someone could have been hurt!



Tups line up

Flock Management

The ewes all lamb in May outside. This year they put the tups out on 26th of November. Normally it is the 28th but they moved it forward slightly to help with their wedding arrangements next year.

They bring the ewes down to the lower fields by the reservoir to lamb. I asked if they have a fox problem but Paul’s brother works very hard on dealing with that problem and is probably helped somewhat by the presence of the motorway through the farm.

They send about 500 sheep away to be wintered on lower ground and they keep the show flock at the family farm at Hade Edge so these sheep never go on the moor and as they send many away for the winter they are able to take sheep off a large part of the moor all winter in compliance with the HLS requirements. The purpose of this is to allow the heather to

regenerate and it's early days yet, but Paul says that you can see a bit of a difference already. During the summer they can only put those 500 sheep on the moor, so even then they are very thinly spread.

When selecting sheep to keep, they have to be hard, life on the moors isn't easy so they select them very carefully. A sheep's jacket is a high priority for them here as in breeding.

Sometimes they finish some of their own lambs, but to do so on such thin soils at this altitude can be expensive, so most lambs are sold as stores. This year they had about 120 lambs left when I visited just after Christmas, but it had been a mild autumn and there was plenty of grass about still. These were mainly polled lambs, out of Whitefaced Woodlands, by Texel tups, but they were all away on lower grass keep to fatten. When they bring them back, they may keep some in the shed to fatten, but most will be sent on to finish as stores.

In the last few weeks before lambing, they get the ewes scanned and then they will pull out the geld ewes, but Paul doesn't have enough fields to separate into twins and singles and triplets. This seems ironic with so much land, but the moorland in particular tends to be great huge open spaces and dividing a flock of this size up on land like that would be difficult. On top of which is the added problem of the moors now all being open access. Apparently walkers who left gates open were a minority, but with open access the public just don't get that the sheep are being kept in separate lots and will just leave the gate open for others following in their party and the last through assume the gate was supposed to be open. Apparently mountain bikers are the worst for this. I suppose that stopping and getting off their bikes to shut a gate is too much trouble – so they don't bother!

They also have a problem with dogs being let off their leads. As people come through the gates, they release Fido to run and play, forgetting that genetically Fido is almost identical to his big brother the wolf. Then we get Fido setting off in hunt mode and causing all sorts of problems and damage! I'm sure we are all familiar with the inconsiderate behaviour of the general public with our sheep, but what can we do? All the sheep are in the Heptavac-P system and they drench for fluke and worms at clipping and before tugging. Because it is a Water Authority owned farm, they are not allowed to dip any more and the dip was removed and in exchange they bought them a Sheep Shower. This is very good for fly control and all the sheep are put through it in the spring, but Paul has concerns that it would not kill scab mites, especially ones hiding in the sheep's ears,

so he also injects with Dectomax to insure there is no scab outbreak.

We really enjoyed our visit to your farm Paul and Jill, despite the bleak weather, and we and I'm sure all Whitefaced Woodland breeders in the Society will join us, would like to wish you both all the best for your coming wedding and let the rest of your lives together be happy and content.

Best Wishes for the forthcoming Wedding

Philip Onions 28/12/11

First Scottish Smallholder and Grower Festival, at Forfar on Sunday 30 September

Rosemary Champion of The Accidental Smallholder (www.accidentalsmallholder.net), which offers help, support and advice to smallholders and aspiring smallholders, asks us to mention the Festival to our members: "Maybe some will fancy an autumn break in beautiful Angus and fit in a visit to the Festival at the same time." Aimed at smallholders, crofters, those growing fruit and vegetables on a small scale and those simply interested in a more sustainable lifestyle, the Festival will also host a sheep show, including classes for British Hill and Upland breeds. Schedule and entry forms from www.scottishsmallholdershow.co.uk

Registering Authority for Woodlands

As requested by the AGM, Rachel has investigated and reports: "Having tracked down the EU Directive and searched for legislation, it appears that the Directive has never been implemented in this country. This means that, unless any evidence can be found to the contrary, we do not need to worry about having to be an authorised *Registering Body*".

Rob Ford adds: "The Directive was that a *Competent Authority* (ie Defra in the UK) would keep a list of *Registering Authorities*. This list is available on the Defra website. However, this procedure is advisory only where a breed exists in more than one EU state and is intended to facilitate trade in a breed between States. A lot of sheep breeds accordingly do not have a *Registering Authority* listed, because it simply isn't necessary. Being a *Registering Authority* does not confer *Breed Society* status on the corporate body putting itself forward as a *Registering Authority* and indeed it is clear that more than one corporate body can be a *Registering Authority* for a particular breed. I know all this because I have checked out the whole issue with the Head of Zootechnics at Defra."

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