



# Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: [www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk](http://www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk)

## Newsletter 75 - August 2011

### Open Day at Stott Hall Farm

After Jeff, Helen and Karen Doweys' very successful Open Day at Pikenaze Farm last year, there was great enthusiasm to hold another event, so we are delighted that Paul Thorp and Gill Falkingham have agreed to host an Open Day at Stott Hall Farm on 22 October.

As last year, the aim is to give everyone the chance to compare and judge different groups of Woodlands – with experts on hand to advise, help and comment.

Stott Hall Farm is the famous “M62 farm”, to the west of Huddersfield, where you have probably seen Woodlands in the fields between the two carriageways of the motorway. Note the date in your diary, and we'll provide more details soon.

### 2011 AGM

As lots of Woodland breeders will be gathering at Stott Hall Farm on 22 October, we thought it would be an excellent opportunity to hold the AGM – without last years Laurel and Hardy distractions! The formal notice will be sent out later, but in the meantime, if there is any subject you want discussed, please let Rachel know, so it can be put on the agenda. We also need new officers – particularly a Chairman and Vice Chairman, as Rob and Paul have come to the end of their allotted three years – so if you care to volunteer (either yourself or someone else!), again, please contact Rachel.

### Subscriptions for 2011/12

Subscriptions become due on 1 September and remain at £10 for the year. Please send your cheque to the Membership Secretary, at the address on the back page – or catch Rachel at the Woodland Sale at Bretton Mill on 24 September.

### Show results

Honley Show - Judge: Tessa Wigham

Aged ram: Paul Thorp

Shearling ram: James Gill

Ram lamb: Paul Thorp

Aged ewe: James Gill

Shearling ewe: James Gill

Ewe lamb: Chereen Kaye

Group of 3: James Gill

The Champion was James's aged ewe, Reserve was Chereen's ewe lamb. 3 competitors

Harden Moss Sheep Show - Judge: Karen Doweys

Aged ram: Paul Thorp

Shearling ram: Paul Thorp

Aged ewe: Paul Thorp

Shearling ewe: James Gill

Paul's aged tup took Champion, and his aged ewe, Reserve Champion. 5 competitors

Royal Norfolk Show - Judge: Jeff Doweys

Aged or shearling ram: Jo Taylor

Ram lamb: Jo Taylor

Aged or shearling ewe: Jo Taylor

Ewe lamb: Caroline Lewsey

Group of three: Jo Taylor

Jo Taylor took the Championship with her aged tup, and her aged ewe was Reserve Champion. Jeff points out that the Royal Norfolk needs our support - there are at least 7 trophies to compete for, in the Woodland classes! Why not go and spend a couple of really good days there next year – dates for 2012 are 27 and 28 June.

Great Yorkshire Show - Judge: Martin Warburton

Aged ram: Paul Thorp

Shearling ram: Paul Thorp

Ram lamb: Paul Thorp

Aged ewe: Chereen Kaye

Shearling ewe: Paul Thorp

Ewe lamb: Paul Thorp

The Champion was Paul and Gill's shearling ewe, with their aged tup taking Reserve Champion. There were 5 competitors

Congratulations go also to Ric and Deirdre Halsall whose Woodland fleece carried off the Fleece Championship against strong opposition.

Although Chris and Helen Wray did not bring their Woodlands this year, their Northern Dairy Shorthorn, Queenie and her calf were on view to the public in the RBST tent – where they were also presented to Prince Charles.

Ryedale Show - Judge: Paul Dixon.

Aged or shearling ram: Paul Thorp

Ram lamb: Paul Thorp

Aged ewe: Paul Thorp

Shearling ewe: Paul Thorp

Ewe lamb: Paul Thorp

Group of 3: Paul Thorp

Paul and Gill swept the board – their shearling ewe took Champion, and their ram lamb, Reserve. Five competitors took part in this pleasant one day show where Woodlands had their own scheduled classes for the first time. Well worth entering next year!

## To AI – or not to AI

Really, I suppose, the principal factor which led me to AI was the separation (or otherwise) of ewes at tupping time. The previous year, I'd had tups in adjoining fields, one with a blue raddle, the other with yellow. When ewes started appearing with really quite beautiful green marks, I perceived that my six hours of assessing ewes, separating them and checking rigorously for inbreeding, might have been rather compromised. As for walkers leaving gates open – suffice to say, it was lucky I never caught them, otherwise I may well have been writing this on prison notepaper...

Moving on, I asked around, and found that Dan Fawcett in Penrith, was respected, and his rates for over 50 ewes reasonable – £9 per ewe, which also includes semen collection. I decided to select 60 ewes on phenotypic merit – 60 of my sheep with the best conformation, tightest jackets, best horns etc. etc.. I then made a list and worked out which tups I could and couldn't use on each.

This is important. The actual AI day goes so quickly; so you need to know which ewes you definitely can't put to each tup. Add to this the problem with fresh semen collection that you don't know how many ewes each tup can provide for, so you need to be able to think on your feet.

With frozen semen, this is obviously a lot easier. I used 10 doses of White House Liaison, courtesy of John Jones, and marked these ewes in advance of AI.

At this point, a word of warning. If you don't have the facilities to get your sheep in on a regular basis, **forget AI now!!** Here is my schedule.

29<sup>th</sup> October: sponges in.

Not hugely time critical, but it's essential that the strings are left outside the vulva, unless you're **really** good with forceps

10<sup>th</sup> November: sponges out and inject with PMSG

This is time critical, and varies by two hours between ewes destined for fresh or frozen semen. With most of the ewes the sponges pull out easily. However, the odd one will either be missing or unreachable. If it's fallen out, fine, but you want to check it's not stuck inside, cue quick trip to the vet.

11<sup>th</sup> November: Pen ewes

They need to be starved for 24 hours prior to insemination, with water out 12 hours before.

12<sup>th</sup> November: AI

I don't have any teaser tups, but it is recommended that one is introduced 2-3 weeks before starting the programme, removed when the sponges go in, and re-introduced when the sponges are pulled out. I put a tup back in with them after about 10 days, to deal with any repeats. It is expected that 70% will hold to the AI; in fact just over three quarters of them did so.

So, here are the costs versus the results.

AI 60 sheep	£545
Chronogest (sponges) and PMSG	£233
Vet fees (check for sponges)	£16
TOTAL	£794

From my figures, AI gave me a lambing percentage of 171, as opposed to 146% over all the other ewes. This means that I gained eleven extra lambs. I have to sell these for £72, (or £84 if you take into account frozen semen costs) and discount my labour to break even!

In conclusion, from a commercial point of view, it doesn't pay for itself, but it does mean that you can use a variety of different tups on specific ewes without putting them in several separate fields. It also gives a much tighter lambing, which is helpful if time is short. It means, too, that you can use frozen semen from long-dead tups. I have found it beneficial for two years, but I'm not intending to do so again this autumn. If I use AI again in the future, it is likely to be on a small group of specific ewes, using frozen semen, or tups that I can only get hold of for a short period of time.

Rachel Godschalk

# Meeting the Legend

It is five in the morning, and our house is quiet and peaceful, everyone else is fast asleep, but my head is spinning with thoughts and images from yesterday, so I am drawn to my computer, to write them down while it's all fresh in my mind. I know that everyone who keeps Whitefaced Woodland sheep does so for their own reasons, and that these reasons are different; there are those who want to rescue a rare breed, those that want to show, some who wish to keep alive their local breed and so on. But when most people start to become interested in a breed, they want to find out more about that breed and for me personally, that line of enquiry has become a dominant force in my life. I have never shown sheep at an agricultural show and don't particularly want to; but I enjoy seeing them and learning about them and their owners.

For anyone who has kept Whitefaced Woodlands in any kind of a serious way, there is one name with which you will be familiar, one man and his family who dominated the history of the breed in the twentieth century and will continue to do so well into the twenty-first. This gentleman has become something of a legend, appearing almost magically from the background, he sweeps the prizes in the showing ring then vanishes back to the hills. Everyone who keeps Woodland sheep has sheep that are related in some way to his flock, but you can't buy any of his stock these days. All the top breeders claim their best sheep come from his bloodlines, but these are no longer available. Everyone in the Woodland World that I talk to, knows about his sheep, but very few get to see them, except those he presents in the show ring. Everyone tells you that, yes they know where he farms, but no one is quite sure where it is, except those chosen few. This is because this is a gentleman who guards his privacy and his sheep, very closely and so, for me, it was the greatest of honours to be granted the privilege of visiting his farm, with my children and to be allowed to take as many pictures as we liked. Furthermore, I'll share some of them with you here today, but with this privilege comes a grave responsibility, because I've nothing but respect for the lifetime of work that has gone into building this irreplaceable flock and I realise that I can't do anything that might jeopardise what is truly a hidden gem, and hidden it must remain in this greedy, selfish world.

This then, ladies and gentlemen is the Flock Profile for Mr Rider Howard.

## The Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society Flock Profile 10

**Date of Profile:** 20/11/10

### Contact Details

**Name of Flock:** The Pikenaze Flock

**Name of Breeder:** Rider Howard

**Address:** Somewhere in the Peak District

**Telephone:** We will pass on your details if you wish to contact him.

### Flock Details:

**Year Started Farming:**

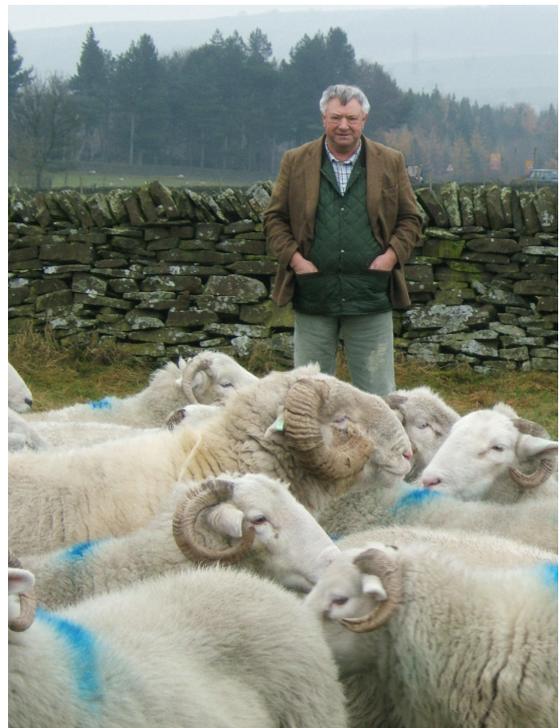
**Year Flock Established:** 1942

**Size of Woodland Flock:** Major

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

### Flock History

Arthur Howard, Rider's father started the flock at Pikenaze Farm, Woodhead in 1942, and Rider passed Pikenaze Farm on to his daughter Helen and her husband Jeff in 1986, when he bought his current farm, but he kept the Pikenaze Flock name. These sheep are descended then from the few flocks of sheep kept by Mr Arthur Howard (Rider's father) and his neighbours. It is a closed flock, with very few sheep being brought into it in the past decades. The simple truth is, that there are no other flocks that could fully replace these bloodlines if they were to be lost. The history of this flock is the history of the Whitefaced Woodland breed.



*Rider Howard watches one of his giant tups*



*Note the strength of bone in this ewe*

### **Breeding Policy**

Rider Howard's breeding policy is summed up beautifully in one simple sentence, "You can't breed rats from mice!" But do not let this fool you; there is nothing simple about the breeding of these huge sheep! There is not a single detail of his sheep that he does not consider very carefully indeed. But even a novice like me can see that in the Pikenaze flock, size matters above all else. Rider breeds big boned, powerful sheep, with broad shoulders, great length and legs planted like telegraph poles, firmly at the four corners of their bodies. Their horns come tightly from the backs of their heads, down close to their faces and if they get too close in his tups, they're sawn off; it's that simple. Indeed, many of his best tups have had their horns sawn off. These sheep have broad faces and strong Roman noses.

Rider, as with all the most knowledgeable breeders that I have spoken to, has noticed that pure white Woodlands with pink noses and pink feet are slightly more susceptible to foot rot, so he doesn't care too much for this passion that some have for breeding pure white, pink nosed Woodlands, he doesn't seem overly concerned by what he describes as blue-nosed sheep. Actually he proudly points out one tup to me with a few dark speckles on his muzzle that is otherwise an outstanding tup. Okay this tup might not be rated top in the show ring, but personally I would say that it beats most that I've seen! A few blackish specks don't detract from what is otherwise an outstanding tup. Nevertheless, this tup is relegated to the second division in Rider's flock, because there are better tups!



The same is also true of the tuft of wool on the forehead of one of the ewes in the flock of his best sheep. Some breeders that I've spoken to are almost obsessed with weeding out this "fault", but although I could only see one or two ewes in his flock displaying this tuft, it doesn't seem to worry Rider. He is looking at the shape, size, conformation and power of his sheep first. Perhaps there is a lesson here for all of us, with so many variables to worry about, perhaps we would be better off concentrating on getting one thing right –

good, big, healthy sheep! So what if they have a black spot on their nose or a tuft on their head...they must have size, bone, and broad, straight backs first. "You can't breed rats from mice!"



*A Group of Massive Ewes*

*Note the strong bone, broad shoulders, and faces. The tuft on the forehead of one and the blue nose of the other are only considered to be minor faults*

## Marketing Policy

It is no coincidence that the more successful flocks share one very important tool in their formation – a strong cull policy. In my humble opinion, Rider Howard’s flock is so exceptional, because he operates such a precise cull policy. Everything that fails to meet his high standards for breeding from is sent “off down the road”. Rider started the farm with a green field site and has reorganised the fields to all lead into a set of superb sheep pens, now enclosed from the weather in their own dedicated building. Here sheep can be sent effortlessly through a shedding race where a rep from a large national meat marketing company can cut off all the best fat lambs that he wants into a large pen for loading onto a wagon for the trip to the slaughterhouse. It is all very organised and extremely efficient. Judging by the well-used set up, I expect that lambs will all be used to passing through the yard and by the time that they are ready to go, they must just think it to be another ordinary day – a stress free day for all concerned.



*The tup lamb on the left is marked to keep, the other isn't. Rider said that the tuft on the first would be lost as he matures.*

The only really shocking part for me was that Rider had marked so few tup lambs to keep, when there were so many good ones to choose from! (They had used some cheap pig branding and it had run in the rain, so there was no doubting which were to be kept.) “Oh well,” he said almost reluctantly as we looked at one fantastic tup lamb that wasn’t marked to keep, “I suppose I ought to keep that one. But the thing is that he has only come on since I put him in here on corn, to fatten; you can’t always tell when you first bring them in, that they are going to make descent tups. And some you think will make good tups, don’t make the grade after all.” So he’s flexible as well; another lesson that we could all learn from!

## Showing Achievements

Perhaps it would be easier to say what Rider hasn’t won, as he has been setting the bar in this area for years, winning at the Great Yorkshire every time that he enters for example. Well I’m not sure if he will ever win the Ken Wild Trophy at Bretton Mill in the future, because you have to be prepared to sell your best tups to do that and he doesn’t seem to want to do so. Perhaps if he did, we would see the record for the highest price paid for a Woodland pass the two thousand pound mark!

## Farm Details:

**Year Started Here: 1987**

**Size of Farm: Group D**

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

**Land Classification: SDA, LFA**

**Farm Type: Sheep; no other crops/livestock.**

## Farm Description

Rider Howard farms at over 900 feet high, on land reclaimed from heather moor land, but despite this it is surprisingly flat land with a rich, black, peaty soil. When he took over the land it was mainly thick, coarse Molinia grass (the purple moor grass is only found on very acid, wet soils), but careful management using tight grazing cattle and sheep, some reseeding and selective feeding with hay has improved the land considerably on what is just up the road. Careful planting with shelterbelts and the restoration of high dry-stone walls has improved the shelter from the prevailing winds dramatically.

I have already described the efficient layout of sheep handling pens, but these are just a small detail in the well thought out layout of all the new buildings that he has erected since taking over the land. Rainwater is harvested from the sheds to supplement the mains supply and help reduce costs. In a dry summer like the one that has just passed, there is a shortage of water on the farm and this has to be managed very carefully.



*This photo does not do justice to the size of these ewes, because the tup is so huge*

When he took over the farm, there weren't enough internal boundaries, but Rider has turned this into an advantage by setting out a field network that effortlessly feeds gathered livestock into the central yard in front of the new buildings.

The layout of the farm includes a couple of very well protected paddocks next to the building to accommodate any sick animals or those which require an extra bit of care and attention. The now redundant cattle shed has also been converted into the same use, when not being used to house sheep with adopted lambs, or any of the many other uses that a good shepherd has to put such accommodation to. It also houses a cosy brew house for the workers and passing roving reporters and their offspring.



*Another giant tup standing head and shoulders above a group of shearlings. To give you some idea of his size, the wall is over five feet tall! These shearling ewes are bigger than most sheep that I've seen, of any breed!*

## **Flock Management**

Despite his excellent new buildings, there simply isn't enough room to lamb all his sheep inside, and is that necessary when you keep breeds like the Whitefaced Woodland anyway? So the sheep lamb outside in late April and May. Because the sheep lamb outside, it is important that the breeding stock all have backwards facing horns that come out tight to the head at lambing, otherwise both ewe and lamb would probably die if the horn buds got stuck in the ewe's pelvis.

The lambs are weaned in September and ewes are flushed pre-tupping after being wormed and fluked. The ewes were wormed with Ivomectin wormers, which would also take care of any scab mites if these were present (there absolutely didn't appear to be any such problem there when I visited, I hasten to add). Many of the Woodlands are kept for most of the year on the heather moor and were only down on the meadows for tupping time, this makes their fleeces characteristically grey. Some of these hefted ewes were included in the flocks run with Rider's best tups as he works to improve the quality of all his sheep. Fat Lambs are fed ad-lib creep, which he calls corn (we call it provin up here) from hoppers scattered about the fattening fields. I have never seen so many of these in one place!

Hay is mainly bought in, but Jeff, Rider's son in law makes round bales and some haylage for him too, from a few better meadows. Judging from the quantities of forage that he has, and the length of grass that he still had in November, I would say that his stocking rates must be quite extensive over the winter, with forage being used to supplement the diets mainly in the most severe of weather. The acid nature of the soil means that Rider has to supplement the ewes' diet with copper boluses to avoid swayback problems. We have to do the same; it is not uncommon on acid soils.

**Philip Onions 22/11/10**

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## **Chairman's Message**

"There's one thing you don't find, other than a dead donkey and that's a satisfied farmer" [Anon]. But I don't see that we sheep farmers have much to complain of: plenty of good hay gathered over the last few weeks, high cull ewe prices and a really good lamb crop growing in the warm sunshine with few early casualties reported. Though some of us are still carting water and the wretched fly strike has reared its ugly head earlier than usual...and I don't recall seeing so many thistles! But it's all capable of being dealt with, whereas we can't do much about the weather.

Thanks to all who exhibited at the Yorkshire, Norfolk and Ryedale shows. Norfolk was a little low on numbers and as this is the only show with Woodland classes in the eastern counties and because the prize money is so generous, well worth entering in your diaries for next year but keep an eye out for the early entry date.

Manifold, Mottram and Hope Shows this month and entries still possible for Manifold this coming week, (via me if pushed for time). Aisle judging is assured this year. Entries are possible for Melton online to Grassroots until midnight on 7 Aug. Julie Beardwell has 9 shearling ewes entered and Amanda Windsor has a tup in so far.

In this edition you will find another of Philip's truly super flock profiles, this time that of Rider Howard, a flock at the very core of the breed.

There will be the usual Annual Woodland Sale at Bretton Mill on 24 September. This year we may attempt a catalogued entry of registered stock. We have a few tups to visit in August or September, so if you need a visit for registration inspection for tups or foundation ewes, give me a call and I'll arrange the required inspection. Registration fees are £5 for tups and £1 for ewes. Registered tups certainly sold well at Bretton last year and were sold first in line.

Another important date is another farm visit arranged for Saturday 22 October at Paul Thorp's holding at Stott Hall Farm. This follows the very successful visit to Pikenase last year. It has been suggested that we hold our AGM at Stott Hall and I am in favour. More later on this.

I see there is growing interest in producing strains of wool shedding sheep. This can be achieved by introducing a tup carrying the wool shedding gene (just one gene apparently) into a flock – usually the Wiltshire horn. I don't imagine we want to go down that particular road but I do have the odd one or two woodland ewes that shed their wool completely in the spring and I wonder if this is just a random event or because they carry the gene. Does anyone else experience the same? Please let me know.

See you at the Manifold or Mottram or Hope!

Rob Ford

## Stock for Sale or Wanted

**Rising Sun Farm** at Wallsend, Tyne & Wear is looking for organic Woodlands. Contact Mark on 0191 234 0114 or e-mail [info@risingsunfarm.co.uk](mailto:info@risingsunfarm.co.uk)

Six shearling ewes for sale in **North Yorkshire**. Contact Pam Crosby on 01845 537451, mobile: 07963625411 or 07870116159.

**Alan Dickson** writes from Northern Ireland "I have a selection of quality females for sale due to having to reduce my flock size. I have ewe lambs, gimmers, 2- and 3- shear ewes available. In total there are 15 females for sale". Phone: 07710 348129, email: [alanw.dickson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:alanw.dickson@tiscali.co.uk) Alan may be able to bring sheep with him to Carlisle on 12 August.

**Tessa Wigham** has two shearling rams for sale and a few shearling ewes, all registered. (Irthington, Cumbria) Phone: 01228 675304, or e-mail: [wighamtessa@aol.com](mailto:wighamtessa@aol.com)

**Heather Graves** from west Cumbria has 30 ewes for sale. Phone: 01946 861769.

You are reminded that the **Annual Whitefaced Woodland Sale** will be held at Bretton Mill on 24 September. All enquiries to Paul Dixon, c/o Wm Sykes on 01484 683543.

**Ruth Dalton**, Northern Field Officer for RBST, would like to extend her heartfelt appreciation to all those Whitefaced Woodland keepers who allowed her to come and DNA sample their sheep - often in less-than-clement weather conditions! Thank you for all your help and hospitality. We look forward to seeing an analysis of the results of this DNA profiling in due course.

Please can anyone give **advice on a weigh crate** for lambs? I presume sheeted sides would be best, to avoid catching horns. It's not going to get a huge amount of use, so we can't justify any of the auto ones - but is digital display worth the cost, rather than a needle that swings about? Your thoughts would be most welcome.

Rachel & Ann Godschalk

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