



# Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

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

## Newsletter 74 - Spring 2011

### Chairman's View

Not much to report in this edition as we emerge from what has seemed like a winter without end. Forage prices have been and remain horrifically high for those of us without much grazing since the snows arrived in November but with hogg prices also nicely high, the profit is not entirely disappearing into the feed rack. I suppose a 40% drop in ewe numbers in the national flock since 2004 has something to do with high values (horned hogs this week at Bakewell 180p per l/w kilo) together with a high export demand supported by the exchange rate.

Philip Onions has provided us in this edition with another of his flock profiles, this time moving on to the Doweys at Pikenaze at Woodhead – as close to Woodland heartland as you can get and a very strong heart it is as well. Thanks again Philip for yet another piece of your excellent journalism in this valuable series, which is gaining a lot of interest from other breed societies.

I'm experimenting with the small metal Ketchum turkey tags this year for my lambs. They are numbered and just 12mm long and so hopefully I can tag lambs at birth and thereby be able to match them to their dams when gathered again at shearing time when I can insert the required full sized tags...which are simply too big for a new born. The number spraying system never seems to be fool proof especially in wet weather. I'll let you know how I get on.

Do please take a look at Ann's show list. They are all worth supporting and you do of course get to meet other Woodland breeders. Most of the shows are very informal, with stock (and breeders) clearly straight off the hill without much preparation(!) We very much welcome the Ryedale Show to this year's list.

Happy lambing and let's hope everyone's a winner.

Rob Ford

### Shows and Sales in 2011

**The shows listed all offer specific Woodland classes – now including Ryedale Show in July.**

11 June – Honley Show, Honley, West Yorks.  
Contact: Paul Sykes 01484 680731.  
Judge: Tessa Wigham

19 June – Harden Moss Sheep Show and Sheepdog Trials, Holmfirth. Contact: Christine Smith 01484 680823. Judge: Karen Dowey

29-30 June - Royal Norfolk Show, Norwich.  
Judge: Jeff Dowey. Schedule from  
[mary@royalnorfolkshow.co.uk](mailto:mary@royalnorfolkshow.co.uk) or phone 01603 731965. [www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk](http://www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk)

12-14 July – Great Yorkshire Show, Harrogate.  
Contact: Amanda West on 01423 546231 or  
[amandaw@yas.co.uk](mailto:amandaw@yas.co.uk). Judge: Martin Warburton.  
[www.greatyorkshireshow.com](http://www.greatyorkshireshow.com)

26 July - Ryedale Show, Kirkbymoorside.  
Contact: Mrs A Welham 01652 697820 or  
download entry form at [www.ryedaleshow.org.uk](http://www.ryedaleshow.org.uk)  
Entries close 4 July. Judge: Paul Dixon.

13 Aug – Manifold Show, Ilam, Staffs. Schedule from [www.manifoldshow.co.uk](http://www.manifoldshow.co.uk) or contact: David Belfield: 01538 308362. Judge: Neville Belfield.

21 Aug – Mottram Show, Mottram, near Glossop.  
Contact: Angela Oldham 0161 351 1263. Judge: Rob Ford

Mon 29 Aug – Hope Show. Champion of Champions follows regular WFW classes.  
Judges: Paul Thorp; Rider Howard. Contact: [jane.dalton@lineone.net](mailto:jane.dalton@lineone.net) or Mrs H Morris: 01663 750318, [hope.morris1@btinternet.com](mailto:hope.morris1@btinternet.com)

3 Sept – Rare Breeds Show & Sale at Skipton.  
Craven Cattle Marts: 01756 792375.

*Shows and Sales list continues on the back page*



## Back to the Breed's Roots

Whenever I read about the Whitefaced Woodland I encounter the same place names mentioned: Penistone, Glossop, Hope and the Woodlands district of Derbyshire.

When I have travelled through this area, while researching the breed, I have to say that I have been disappointed by the scarcity of Whitefaced Woodland sheep, but in a few places, dedicated enthusiasts tenaciously fight against the relentless tide of modern sheep farming fashions to keep alive this rare breed. Jeff Dowey, his wife Helen and their daughter Karen are one such family; Helen is the daughter of the legendary Rider Howard and Granddaughter of Arthur Howard whom I have come to view as the Father of the Modern Breed.

Helen and Jeff have now taken over the Pikenaze Farm that for years now I have been reading about (pronounced Pike-naze and not Pic-a-neese as I have always stupidly thought it to be). Karen, their daughter is now proudly carrying on her family's noble tradition. And here I was, driving up the steep track to the farm!

So much of what I have read about the Whitefaced Woodland, and so much of what I know about the breed is etched on this hillside. The breed itself has been forged by the conditions found in these hills, and in their turn the sheep and their Flock Masters have influenced the very appearance of this landscape.

The Woodland (Jeff firmly corrects my incorrect use of the word "Woody") is classed as a Hill Breed and this is a Hill Farm!

Pikenaze Farm clings to the edge of the steep hillside, with towering hills and moors all around it and, on the last day of July in 2010, the dried up Woodhead Reservoir below. It was a cold day for July and the wind being funnelled up the steep sided valleys was full of sharp, cutting rain showers. It felt more like the middle of winter than the middle of summer and I really sympathised with the newly shorn sheep.

Sheep and their shepherds have to be hard to survive here. The harsh realities of life up here make certain that only the very fittest can survive! If sheep can survive here then they will thrive anywhere! And here they were, perhaps not the biggest Whitefaced Woodlands that I had ever seen, but great, solid, strapping sheep, with broad faces and strong bones, Derbyshire's finest breed, in their home territory!

## The Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society - Flock Profile 9

**Date of Profile:** 31/7/10

### Contact Details

**Name of Flock:** Woodhead Flock

**Name of Breeders:** Karen and Jeff Dowey

**Address:** Pikenaze Farm,  
Woodhead, Glossop,  
Derbyshire

**Telephone:** 01457 861577

**Mobile:** 07931 143287 (Jeff)  
07787 241960 (Karen)

**Email:**

[KarenDowey@whitefacedwoodland.co.uk](mailto:KarenDowey@whitefacedwoodland.co.uk)



Karen and Jeff with a gimmer each

## Flock Details:

**Year Started Farming:** 1987

**Year Flock Established:** 1990

**Size of Woodland Flock:** Major

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

## Flock History

My research shows that Woodlands have been bred in this area for hundreds of years, certainly since long before the current roads, walls and fences were constructed; although it is probable that the Roman road that passes through Pikenaze Farm actually predates the breed.

Moreton Thomas writing in *Livestock Heritage*, an RBST publication of 1981, tells us that according to Arthur Howard when the reservoirs were first built in Derbyshire they flooded the precious in-by-land of local farms and just after they were built sheep were removed from the surrounding hills as it was thought that they would pollute this precious drinking water resource. But this proved to be a mistake and rank weed growth blocked the watercourses and water stagnated in the wet ground above, causing pollution and so sheep were reintroduced to the area.

The Woodlands returned to their home range, but this did not last for long, Thomas tells us, because during the hard times of the thirties and forties, the Woodland's larger carcass gave it a "special sanction for slaughter".

Arthur Howard, Karen's Great Grandfather came to Pikenaze Farm in 1942, having sold his chicken farm to finance the move. During the War lamb, mutton and chicken were highly valued products, for a country cut off from its empire by German U-boats and harsh rationing.

The severe blizzards of 1947 further reduced the breed to two or three flocks. One of which was at Pikenaze Farm, first under Arthur Howard and then under his son Rider Howard.

Jeff Dowey married Helen, Rider's daughter in 1987 and the couple have taken over the tenancy of the farm now. Jeff told me that his own interest in the breed was really reinvigorated when Karen their daughter started to take a keen interest in showing and breeding the Woodland and they took over the current flock in 1990, selected from the stock of Woodlands at Pikenaze.

Rider Howard keeps on the Pikenaze Flock name himself, which has now moved with him and while it can't be argued that his influence is still here, he has gracefully stepped back to allow his Granddaughter to make her own mark on her flock, although he has given her some excellent sheep. The family are quite competitive, but I am sure that Rider would have been proud to be beaten by his Granddaughter at this year's Great Yorkshire Show, with her Gimmer lamb.

## Breeding Policy

Karen and Jeff are very critical of all their own sheep as they go about the daily task of running a large hill farm. They consider the head, bone, jacket, feet, faces, eyes and pasterns of all the animals in their care, constantly striving to perfect and refine the breeding of their best Woodlands.



**Jeff assessing a group of sheep**

They operate a ruthless cull policy inherited from Rider. If an animal is not up to the task it must be culled, in an insatiable quest for perfection.



**Karen shows us Kneel, so called because of his habit of kneeling when they try to get hold of him**

Above all Karen and Jeff want power and size in their sheep, it is only then that they start down the list of other features listed above.



**Karen with one of her Tups**

The flock lambs in April and May outside on the lower slopes of the hill. In the main lambing fields they have erected some shelters from the biting wind that screams up the Woodhead pass, using some curved corrugated sheets as windbreaks, held by fencing stakes on their sides for lambs to shelter behind.



**Behind this ewe you can see three of the windbreak shelters for lambing sheep**

Jeff told me an interesting fact that might be of great relevance to all of us; “some of our best stock getting tups, are sawn horned tups,” he said.



**Rider Howard bred this Tup, note the big, broad head, strong body and closeness of the horns**

Jeff pointed out that you could always see the horns if they threaten to cut into a tup's face. It's a shame to waste a good powerful tup like the one above, just because his horns are tight. What is more to the point is that some of these big powerful tups need their horns to be sawn off.

As we travelled around the farm looking at all the other sheep, those not destined for showing necessarily still had the same broad faces. A typical Woodhead Woodland would have a broad forehead, a modest Roman Nose and horns that were well set back out the back of the head.



**The Show Team lines up**

All pure, male Woodland lambs are kept entire from birth. Jeff and Karen then start to weed out any lambs displaying any noticeable faults at weaning. Like all the best breeders they are very critical of their own flock, constantly looking to refine and perfect their breeding stock, and sending the rest as fat lambs. Lambs that are too small for the fat trade or which might be worth keeping for breeding are wintered on dairy farms lower down the valley.

“Some years we’ve kept no tups back at all!” Jeff proudly tells us. This policy is one that many newcomers to sheep breeding would do well to learn from!

## Marketing Policy

All sheep not wanted for breeding purposes are sold through Welsh Country Foods who send a representative to their farm to grade lambs for slaughter on a regular basis.

“He’ll take everything and we have difficulty stopping him from taking the lambs that we want to keep sometimes!” Jeff said. “All he is interested in is whether it is fat enough and will meet their requirements!”

## Showing Achievements

“This year I beat my Granddad!” Karen jumps in with straight away, obviously a big achievement in her eyes and I can’t say I blame her, I’d love to produce a sheep of any description that would be anything near as good as one of Rider Howard’s!

Karen has had huge success at the Great Yorkshire, winning a first for a shearling ewe in 2007, and the trophy for “Wool on the Hoof” in 2008 and sweeping the board with six firsts and six seconds in 2009 and this year with her gimmer lamb, beating her grandfather! (Rider has asked me to point out that he didn’t show any sheep in 2009!) Now Karen has her eye fixed on Hayfield and Hope shows; “Because Granddad’s won those and I want my name on the cup too!” she says with a beam! Poor Rider!

## Farm Details

**Year Farm Started:** 1942

**Size of Farm:** Group F

[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, SDA

**Farm Type:** Sheep and Beef

**Other Crops:** None

**Other Livestock Kept:**

Cattle: Limousin X and Blue Greys

Sheep: Rough Fell, Swaledale, Dalesbred, Scottish Blackface, Lonk, Gritstone, Herdwick, Texel, Bluefaced Leicester, Torwen (white bellied) and Torddu (black bellied) – versions of the Badger Face Welsh Mountain – Lleyln, and some Soay crosses (from the St Kilda archipelago) and a number of crosses.

## Flock Management

There are 45 tups in all on the farm for the thousand or so sheep, only fifteen of which are Whitefaced Woodlands. The ewes lamb in April and May outside. Ewes are wormed at lambing, shearing time and Burling time (that is when the tails are clipped before flushing and prior to tugging). All the sheep are in the Heptavac programme. Dipping is carried out as necessary. For the sheep kept in the lower ground – mainly the best show Woodlands – this means dipping in the spring (May) to avoid fly-strike. Those sheep on the higher ground are usually dipped later in the year (July) for fly, ticks and lice. Jeff points out that flies are more of a nuisance around the wooded valley than up on the open hilltop.

All the sheep have access to good quality haylage all winter and get sugar beet nuts for 6 to 8 weeks before lambing.

Fluke is an occasional problem, but not too bad, and only when it is a particularly wet year.

Foxes and other predators are a constant problem, especially at lambing time.

Like the rest of us, there are constant problems with red tape, hikers getting lost, or leaving gates open, officials and landlords with unrealistic expectations, but they seem to be “mekin a go of it” as we say up here in Cumbria! I wish I was doin’ as well!

**Philip Onions**  
2/8/10

## Shows and Sales continued from page 1

9-10 Sept – National (RBST) Show & Sale for CFB registered stock at Melton Mowbray 01664 562971. [www.meltonmowbraymarkets.co.uk](http://www.meltonmowbraymarkets.co.uk)

11 Sept – Penistone Show. Contact: Mrs Earnshaw 01484 605805. Judge: Harold Smith.

17 Sept – Show & Sale of Rare & Minority Breeds at Carlisle. Harrison & Hetherington : 01228 640924 [www.livestock-sales.co.uk](http://www.livestock-sales.co.uk)  
Entries close 8 Aug.

Sun 18 Sept - Hayfield Country Show, High Peak. Contact: Sarah Mellor 01663 746580 or [sarah.mellor4@btopenworld.com](mailto:sarah.mellor4@btopenworld.com).

24 Sept - Annual Whitefaced Woodland Show and Sale at Bretton Mill, near Barnsley. Contact Paul Dixon at William Sykes 01484 683543.

24 Sept – Show & Sale of Rare & Traditional Breeds, Chelford, Cheshire. Frank Marshall Ltd. 01625 861122. [www.frankmarshall.co.uk](http://www.frankmarshall.co.uk)

7-8 Oct – Show & Sale of Rare & Minority Breeds York Livestock Centre 01904 489731 [www.ylc.co.uk](http://www.ylc.co.uk) Entries close 1 Sept.

## Stock for Sale

Genuine Flock reduction of high quality Woodland ewes: approx 25 pedigree CFB registered ewes, with lambs at foot - £180 per ewe. Lambs are sired by Christmas Hill Eddie W11244 (2nd Norfolk 2010) out of Riffhams Erica W9925, by Haselbech Bernard W9607 and Christmas Hill Diver W11034 (Norfolk Show champion 2010, 1st shearling ram Suffolk 2009, reserve Champion 2009 Norfolk and Wayland) out of Fuglemere Aster W9938 by Haselbech Bernard W9607.

Also for sale: twelve ewe lambs by Christmas Hill Cornelius W10721 (1st Ram lamb Suffolk 2007, Best shearling Suffolk and Norfolk 2008) out of Fuglemere Rowan W8234, by Fuglemere Arnie W10032 - £120 each.

One mature ram Christmas Hill Cornelius (2007).

Contact: Jo Taylor: 01842 862702  
or mobile: 07733 258494  
email: [christmashill@btconnect.com](mailto:christmashill@btconnect.com).

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