



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Newsletter 67 – August 2009

The main purpose of issuing this Newsletter **now** is to give formal notice of the Society's AGM

The Annual General Meeting

of the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society will take place at Melton Mowbray Market, Scalford Road, Melton Mowbray, on Friday 11 September 2009 at 5pm

Please see the Society's display board in the sheep lines for location of the meeting.

Please send your **nominations for officers** – Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer – to the Secretary by **28 August**. Also please send her any **resolutions or proposals** that you want considered at the meeting. Please include the name of a member who agrees to second your nominations or proposals. The resulting AGM papers will be sent out by 2 September, to give everyone a chance to make representation, even if unable to attend the meeting in person.

A census of Whitefaced Woodlands

John Jones is about to send a census form to all the Woodland breeders and keepers we know of, in an attempt to find out how many Woodlands there are and where they are located.

Please do make an effort to complete the form and return it to John by 31 August.

Autumn Stock for Sale

As in previous years, I will produce a list of stock for sale (and wanted), so please let me have details - or send them to the Secretary if you are contacting her. If you can respond fairly quickly, the list can go out with the AGM papers on 2 September. We shall also be able to put details on www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk, courtesy of Rod Corderey.

AG

Latest show results

Royal Norfolk Show Judge: Roger Green

Aged ram: David Perfitt

Shearling ram: Caroline Lewsey

Ram lamb: Jo Taylor

Aged ewe: Caroline Lewsey

Shearling ewe: Jo Taylor

Ewe lamb: Jo Taylor

Champion: Jo Taylor's shearling ewe

Reserve Champion: Caroline Lewsey's shearling ram.

Great Yorkshire Show Judge: Paul Thorp

Karen Dowey took first prize in all six age/sex classes, plus Champion Male and Female.

Champion: Karen Dowey's aged ram

Reserve Champion: Karen Dowey's ewe lamb

WFW fleece class: Ric Halsall

Wayland Show Judge: John Maxwell

Ram any age: Jo Taylor

Ram lamb: Anthony Lewsey

Ewe any age: Jo Taylor

Ewe lamb: Jo Taylor

Champion: Jo Taylor's shearling ewe

Reserve Champion: Anthony Lewsey's ram lamb.

Jo Taylor is also to be congratulated on winning the Rare Breed Group of Three class, with two woodland shearling ewes and a ewe lamb.

Manifold Show Judge: Richard Spencer

Ram any age: Rob Ford's 2-shear ram

Ewe to have reared a lamb: Rob Ford's aged ewe

Shearling ewe or ewe lamb: Karen Dowey's ewe lamb

Champion: Rob Ford's 2-shear ram

Qualifiers for the Champion of Champions at the Hope Show on 31 August are therefore:

From the Suffolk Show: Jo Taylor's shearling ewe and shearling ram.

From the Honley Show: James Gill's aged tup and shearling ewe.

From the East of England: Rachel Godschalk's ewe lamb and Ann Godschalk's ram lamb

From Harden Moss Sheep Show: James Gill's shearling ewe and Paul Thorp's aged ewe.

From the Royal Norfolk Show: Jo Taylor's shearling ewe and Caroline Lewsey's shearling ram.

From the Great Yorkshire Show: Karen Dowe's aged ram and ewe lamb

From the Wayland Show: Jo Taylor's shearling ewe and Anthony Lewsey's ram lamb.

From the Manifold Show: Rob Ford's aged ram

Also Champions and Reserve Champions from the Mottram and Hope Shows

Great Yorkshire Show

The Show certainly lived up to its name this year, with tremendous buzz and activity throughout all three days. It was good to meet old and new friends and members around the sheep lines and the judging ring. And apart from the inevitable wind, the weather was reasonably kind!

A total of six Woodland breeders and keepers were entered – we welcomed Chris and Helen Wray showing here for the first time, and Ric Halsall, who has taken on Ross and Avril Harrison's Beckermond flock. Paul Dixon's two shearling ewes were battened down in their pen, to avoid alleged escapist tendencies.

Karen Dowe swept the board, with some excellent stock. Until she arrived at the show, Karen was not convinced that her grandfather, Rider Howard, would not be competing against her! The majority of classes had seven or eight entries, which Paul Thorp, in his debut at the Great Yorks, judged with considerable care and attention to detail.

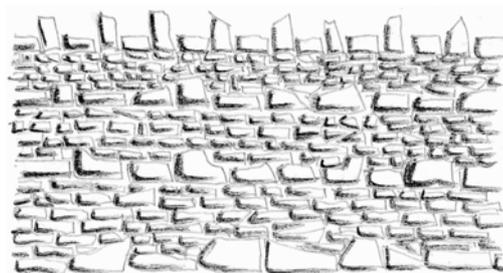
A most enjoyable show – see you next year?

Ann Godschalk

The “Inclosure” Acts

If you're anything like me, you probably never really had time to wonder who put that dry-stone wall or hedge there first, or when. It's my job to mend the wall gaps that those Woodies have made and get on. The way I used to look at it, that wall's been here forever, well perhaps not forever, but certainly for hundreds and hundreds of years, right?

Wrong. My research into the history of Woodlands keeps hitting the same watershed in the history of all hill breeds: the “Enclosure Acts”. There is a record of our local Act in Hutton Roof village hall that states that the “Inclosure Act” for us was in 1814 – so it wasn't that long ago when you consider that sheep may have been kept for the past four thousand years in this country!



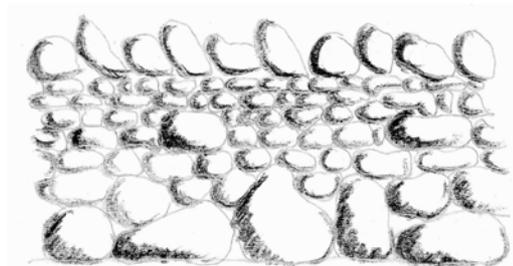
An Allotment wall circa the 1814 “Inclosure Act”

It did cross my mind however, that the Allotment – most hill farmers will have an allotment – seems to have a better wall than the smaller fields around farms or villages. The walls are much straighter up here too, why is that? The further up the hill that you go, the bigger the fields and the straighter the roads and the higher roads are often much wider than the lanes around the villages. There's one road just up from us that is a winding narrow lane as it leaves Burton, then as it comes out on the tops it straightens out and becomes a really wide one and then narrows into a winding track as it approaches Whittington.

Then there are those little abandoned quarries scattered about here and there in remote places, just off the road. I had always assumed that they were used to build local houses.

All of these are apparently features of the “Inclosure Acts” as William Garnet called them in 1914, or the Enclosure Acts as we now know them. These were used to divide up what was the common on which we now farm. Apparently our common was enclosed in the 1814 Act, up until then this whole area was open moor or common land.

The straight-sided fields were built following surveyors' instruction after the Enclosure Committee divided the land. The reason that the stone walls are so different from those surrounding smaller fields closer to inhabitation, is that the people assigned Allotments were often given strict instructions on how the walls had to be built and gangs of labourers would come in and erect these walls using stone specially quarried from all those little quarries everywhere.



A good early Enclosure wall, using rounded rock gathered from fields and streams.

Whereas the little fields around inhabited farms and cottages, were often originally enclosed before these big Enclosure Acts using stone cleared from the fields themselves. These dry-stone walls are often then lower and made with rounded boulders, rounded by river activity or glacial drift from the last Ice Age and deposited in the surface layers of the ground.

As for the roads, around the villages, they follow the path created by earlier, haphazard enclosure of land by cottages, but the ones on the land mapped by the Enclosure Acts followed straight lines drawn on a map and were designed to allow horse drawn wagons to carry stone from the quarries to where the walling gangs needed it, or lime to improve the acid soil or just to 'drove' stock.



Some Enclosure Acts demanded hedges on lower ground, grown on raised beds, supported by rocks, to keep tree roots from the waterlogged ground and fenced by wooden rails – all paid for by the new tenants of course!

These wide lanes may seem on the face of it to be a waste of land, but actually, at the time they were designed to save money. By making the

roads wide, it gave more room to manoeuvre narrow wheeled horse-drawn wagons through all the deep ruts and mud created by all this traffic on the moor, thus saving on expensive quarried stone being needed to make better roads.

The features that I am describing here, are features of a landscape built by our Enclosure Acts and while these are local to North Lancashire and Westmorland, they are also ones that I have observed in other areas, including the moors of Derbyshire and Yorkshire – when I say “observed” I mean that I have seen them in passing, but had never really paid them much attention before I learnt all this.

We have all heard of the Enclosure Acts I'm sure; I always thought that they were just another way in which the rich landed gentry stole our land from us and to some extent that is true, however it is not quite that simple.

According to Ian Whyte from the University of Lancaster in his book *Transforming Fell and Valley* (2003), until the 1760s, most of Westmorland was a barren and wild place and the countryside had not changed much from its earliest form. The same could also be said of parts of Derbyshire, in fact I have read that wolves inhabited the Peak District up until relatively recently! [More can be read on www.peaklandheritage.org.uk/index.asp?peakkey=00900321]

Whyte tells of how my own local area was transformed by a succession of enclosures. Cottagers would enclose a small area of ground around their own cottage, to grow food for themselves and their livestock and probably this has been going on to some extent for hundreds of years. These were the first enclosures and were often apparently illegal.

The rich landowners owned this land, but commoners had certain rights over it; to graze livestock, gather turf [peat], black-sticks [the semi burnt remains of gorse burning] and quarry stone and so on. The Enclosure Acts were an attempt to formalize these rights as a result *not* necessarily of the greed of the landowners [according to Whyte] but to curb the greed of some commoners who were apparently enclosing land for themselves at the exclusion of others in the area. Apparently this caused great local friction between neighbours of each village and neighbouring villages.

Whyte describes 'dogging' as a common process by which dogs were trained to drive off neighbours' sheep, to free up the fell for one's own stock.

The Enclosure Acts must have changed the landscape and upland farming dramatically. These Acts of Parliament were largely a result of the Board of Agriculture trying to 'improve' the nutrition of the people of Britain at this time – I choose that word carefully, because one result of Sir John Sinclair's [the chairman of the Board in the late eighteenth century] policy was the Highland Clearances, in which the Scottish inhabitants of the Highlands were forced out to make way for sheep, which resulted in thousands starving to death.

Most of these Acts took place between 1760 and the end of the 1800s. So as late as 1800, 79.7 % of Westmorland, 50.5 % of Cumberland and 9 % of Lancashire [it was much larger in the north of the county] was described as "waste" or open common, heath, moor or moss-land [bog].

In the Peaks, it must have been something similar because Stephen Glover in 1881 in *The History and Gazetteer of the County of Derby* describes how farmers in the Peaks would dog their own sheep with specially trained dogs, from the gate leading from their in-bye land around their farm out to the ends of the farm (commons), as far as they could. The sheep would then be allowed to drift home to the same gate – grazing along the way – where they would be fed at night with turnips. If the sheep returned too early, perhaps because of bad weather, they would be 'dogged' back again. In this way, Glover writes, "the poor creatures were often on the move all day in winter!"

The Enclosure Acts were then a way to settle local disputes, with Common land being divided up between local farms, while cleverly remaining the property of the rich landowners. But what interests me more than the politics or the structure of the walls is how this transformation of the hills affected the breeding of sheep. It is clear from the books of the period that Enclosure has changed many aspects of the way we farm today.

Philip Onions

Stock for Sale

Choice of two well grown tup lambs - will work this year. By our own tup with good temperament. Lambs shown this year. Any viewing welcome (Nr Thirsk North Yorkshire). Contact Pam Crosby on 01845-537451 or Pam Walker pamelawalker@ntlworld.com

For sale at Melton Mowbray on 12 September:

Rob Ford's Toot Hill Loyaltor W9784 born 2004

Rachel Godschalk's shearling tup, Mortham Sierra W10977

And a reminder that the

Annual Whitefaced Woodland Sale

will take place on Saturday 26 September
at Bretton Mill, near Barnsley
next to Junction 38 of the M1

Contact Paul Dixon at William Sykes on 01484 683543 or mobile 07720 765094.

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