



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 88 – March 2014

Chairman's Rambling

Dear All,

Spring is coming on nicely. I hope the weather remains the same through lambing.

Philip seems to have put his Flock Book team together and is making progress. The RBST seems to want to combine the flock books. This I feel will help us all.

Nothing much else is happening at the minute so I will probably have just one more Chairman's Rambling before my term of office concludes.

Lastly, it has been brought to my attention that both Philip and Heather have an important birthday in the month of March. No doubt we can block their e-mail with comments and congratulations. I know you will be able to get back at me shortly!

Yours, R Paul Dixon

Flock Book Review Committee

The news from the Flock Book Review Committee is good; we have put a proposal before the Conservation Committee of the RBST and subject to approval from RBST members registering sheep in the CFB, they have accepted the proposal. The proposal was also approved by the Committee of the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society at its recent meeting. Now we are waiting for Ruth to draw up a document to circulate amongst RBST Woodland keepers for their consideration and hopefully we will have taken a small step forward in finally resolving the conflicts that have affected the Woodland world for so long.

Thank you to all involved for working so hard at trying to make this work; it is always easier to take a negative view of these things, but there are so many people working so hard on behalf of our breed, to make a simple solution that will work, that we cannot let them down and have it all fail now. Please support Ruth.

Philip Onions

For your Diary

The Society's AGM this year will be on Saturday 18 October.
Please keep the date free!

Chris and Helen Wray are kindly hosting it at Gam Rare Breeds Farm in Grassington, North Yorkshire. They are inviting members to a BBQ and to visit their farm, which specialises in native British breeds.

Editor's Bleat

Yes, we had our first bleat on 2 March – a bonny woodland ewe lamb – quite unexpected. Her dam is a ewe I should have culled, if I could have got her fit enough to go, and her sire is: well - one of our woodlands! I rather suspect it's a tup lamb who got a bit over excited on Open Day. We start lambing the pure bred's officially on 1 April!

The recent Committee Meeting agreed to renew our subscription to the National Sheep Association (NSA). I receive a weekly e-mail news bulletin which I would be happy to pass on. Would anyone requiring this please let me know. I am also investigating the cost of a breed advert, and details of Breed Society meetings and representatives.

Attached – or enclosed – are the Draft Minutes of the Society's AGM held on 6 October 2013.

Shows with Woodland Classes

Honley Show, Honley, West Yorks. Sat 14th June
Contact: Sally Hampshire 07775 898647
www.honleyshow.co.uk
Judge: Neville Belfield

North Yorkshire County Show, Northallerton.
Sun 15th June Contact: Len Cragg 01609 773577
www.northyorkshireshow.co.uk
Judge: Paul Dixon

Royal Three Counties Show - Rare Breeds Day
on Sun 15th June - *May offer Woodland classes if there is enough interest.* Contact Fiona Parker on
01684 584901 or fionap@threecounties.co.uk

Harden Moss Sheep Show and Sheepdog Trials,
Holmfirth. Sun 22nd June
Contact: Christine Smith 01484 680823.
Judge: Clive Mitchell

Great Yorkshire Show, Harrogate.
Tues 8th to Thurs 10th July Contact: Amanda West
on 01423 546231 or amandaw@yas.co.uk.
www.greatyorkshireshow.com
Judge: Karen Dowey

Ryedale Show, Kirkbymoorside, North Yorks
Tues 29th July Contact: Mrs A Welham
01652 697820 or download entry form at
www.ryedaleshow.org.uk
Judge proposed: Tessa Wigham

Mottram Show, Mottram, near Glossop.
Sun 17th August Contact: Angela Oldham
0161 351 1263. www.mottramshow.co.uk
Judge: John Jones

Hope Show, High Peak, Derbyshire.
Bank Holiday Mon 25th August. Woodland
classes followed by Champion of Champions.
Contact: jane.dalton@lineone.net or Mrs H
Morris: 01663 750318. www.hopeshow.org.uk
Judge proposed: Harold Smith
Championship: Tony Redfearn

Penistone Show.
Sat 13th September
Contact: Mrs Earnshaw 01484 766542.
Judge: Jeff Dowey

Hayfield Country Show, High Peak.
Sunday 21st September
Contact: Sarah Mellor 01663 746580 or e-mail:
sarah.mellor4@bopenworld.com.
Judge proposed: Paul Thorp

Sales in 2014

Sat 30 Aug - Rare Breeds Show & Sale at
Skipton. Craven Cattle Marts: 01756 792375.
www.ccmauctions.com

Sat 20 Sep - Show & Sale of Rare & Minority
Breeds at Carlisle. Harrison & Hetherington :
01228 640924 www.livestock-sales.co.uk

Sat 27 Sept - Annual Whitefaced Woodland
Show and Sale at Bretton Mill, near Barnsley.
Contact Paul Dixon at William Sykes 01484
683543.

3-4 Oct - Show & Sale of Rare & Minority
Breeds York Livestock Centre 01904 489731
www.ylc.co.uk

Junction 36



The new auction mart at Junction 36 off the M6

It's an exciting time for those of us that keep rare breeds in the North West, with North West Auctions Ltd working with the RBST to promote its two rare breed sales at Junction 36. For those of you who don't know it yet, Junction 36 (so named because it is just to the east of junction 36 of the M6) is a brand new, purpose built rural auction centre and agricultural business park in South Lakeland. All very posh!

The first rare breed sale this year is planned for the 3rd of May. It is an ideal opportunity for the owners of rare breeds of cattle to buy and sell cattle ready for the new season's grass, but it is also a good opportunity for sheep breeders to sell ewes with lambs at foot or even rams that are no longer needed, after all it's a long time before the autumn sales and this might be a good opportunity to build up numbers or cash in early on this year's crop.

NWA have a new Livestock Manager for all their livestock sales, Bill Nelson. Bill comes to the

group from Carlisle where he has worked as an auctioneer since coming out of farming himself following Foot and Mouth.



Katie Onions, Ryeland keeper and one of the youngest drovers at NWA and Bill Nelson, Livestock Manager

“While at Carlisle I was always impressed by the care and attention that some small breeders put into their sheep,” Bill told me. “Here at Junction 36 we want to offer small holders and farmers alike a complete service, you can get everything here for all your farming needs from a hair cut to professional advice from marketing livestock to property. Our fieldsmen are always happy to advise customers on how or when to market their sheep and I’d like to help develop markets for rare breeds too, if I can.”

“While we want our rare breed sales to be full of high quality livestock, we recognise that not everything is a good breeding animal, so we can help with marketing livestock for other markets too. Take the Shropshire sheep, a good commercial animal in many ways but they also have a role in grazing tree plantations, because they do not damage the trees. So all breeds have qualities that we want to market and we can find markets for all fat lambs.”



The small sale ring is less intimidating than some larger ones

“We’d like our rare breed sales to be so much more than just a sale. We would like them to become an event for all those keeping rare breeds to come and get to know the auction mart here at Junction 36, even if they are not buying or selling livestock.”

Bill told me that the best thing for him about NWA were the people here. “Everyone here is so friendly and opened minded especially about rare breeds so I really want to make something better of our rare breed sales here at Junction 36.”

Bill was at Carlisle Auction Mart for 13 years, starting as a fieldsmen, he then went on to spend two years in the pedigree office, but he was called upon to go to the car auction suddenly for a day and ended up staying for eight years! Bill went with the NSA down to Bulth Wells as a guest auctioneer selling Rouge, Bleu de Maine, Berrichon, Beltex and Roussins all of which did very well.

Bill told me that not all auctioneers are quite as hard and ruthless as they would like you to believe. He told me a story about a well known auctioneer, a man who had spent many years cultivating his image as a hard and grizzled man, who had one day been walking around the pens after the rare breeds sale talking to his customers when he came across a grand old Tamworth sow. Reaching into the pen he started to scratch the pig behind her ears and soon became quite taken with her. As the lady who had been selling her approached, the auctioneer asked how the sale had gone. Badly he was told and the sow had failed to reach her minimum bid...so she was off home to be made into sausages! The auctioneer was horrified!

Much to the shock of the young auctioneering staff around him, the ‘hard’ auctioneer seemed much taken aback and made an offer on the spot! He ended up taking the sow home where she spent many a happy year foraging in his orchard until she was claimed by the dreaded Foot and Mouth. But in all that time, she was never put in pig; she was kept purely as a favourite pet. Some ruthless auctioneer he was and he’d blown his carefully cultured image with some of the junior staff!

The first rare breed sale this year at Junction 36 will be on Saturday May 3rd 2014. I will advise you of a date for the autumn one nearer the time.

Philip Onions

Basic Hedge Laying

When a hedge becomes overgrown and straggly, gaps can develop in the bottom that are big enough for sheep to squeeze through. Now it is perfectly possible to patch such holes as they develop with bits of wire, old pallets or even old bed springs (or you could just fence it!), but the preferred and more permanent solution is to lay the hedge.



Here I have cleared side growth

There are all sorts of styles for hedge laying depending on local custom and need and although some of these can seem quite daunting for someone setting about the job for the first time, it need not be so. Basically all one needs to do is thin out the misshapen branches or side shoots and remove the rubbish first. Then a clean cut is made (by bow saw, chain saw or with a cut from an axe or billhook) partly through the stem until the stem can be folded over and the main upright stem laid as close to the ground as possible. It is important that some of the bark remains but it's surprising how little the tree needs to grow into a hedge. It then needs to be held in position somehow (a stake is preferable but I have seen baler twine used) and the next stem is laid on top. I then work



down the hedge (always starting at the highest point and working down) clearing out awkward bushes, trimming the sides off those I intend to keep, folding them down and anchoring the uprights in the hedge until I get to the other end. I like a wide dense hedge, so I leave a lot of side shoots (some say too many) and I aim to fold the uprights down as tightly to the ground as possible to stop sheep getting under.



In this picture you can see the stakes holding the stems in place on this side of the hedge, don't forget that the same need to be offset between these, on the other side.

If I find a good straight, upright tree, such as an oak or ash, I try to leave it to grow into a full tree (it's a good idea to leave telegraph poles as well, BT are a bit touchy about them and don't start me on the electricity companies and their health and safety!), but leave too many and it becomes hard work for the hedge cutter and dense trees such as beech will shade out the hedge and it will die beneath as the tree grows.

Larger stems of bushes can produce some useful firewood as the work progresses and straight branches can be recycled to use as hedging stakes. Otherwise it is traditional here to burn most of the off-cuts in the field (where sheep and lambs end up rolling in it and getting black!) so you could try hiring a chipper for the day and get some useful mulch to suppress weeds in the garden!

Here are the tools I use in the foreground and you can see the stems of the new hedge laid one on another up hill behind

A year on and the hedge is thick and growing well and can be trimmed by a tractor mounted hedge cutter again and although the stakes are no longer needed, I leave them in anyway



Finally I do not advise anyone to use a chainsaw without the proper instruction. Chain saw courses are less expensive than cutting your leg off and always, always wear a helmet, ear protectors, eye protection, gloves and Kevlar leggings! Hedging with a chain saw is dangerous. So if you've never done it before, start with a hand bow saw (billhooks require a bit more skill to avoid cutting right through the stem) and keep your hands behind the cutting blade, I have the scars that testify that blades slip and can cut deep, so be careful please!

Philip Onions

The Holly and the Ivy

Are you short of fodder? No grass yet? Sheep looking tired and in poor condition after this long wet winter? Perhaps you have a ewe that just won't eat? Well don't despair, the answer might be staring you in the face! Like so many of our ancient customs, the act of bringing holly and ivy in at Christmas to 'decorate' our homes, might have its roots in a very real custom practiced by our forefathers. Before we had round or square bales, before we even had horse drawn mowers, it



The author learning how to mow grass in Sweden, with real horse power

was often the practice to feed both holly and ivy to cattle and sheep during the winter.

Perhaps it was the practice of gathering both Holly and Ivy and storing them in the round or long houses which ancient Britons used to share with their livestock, that led us to the modern custom of dressing our homes at Christmas time.



Be careful gathering Ivy in the spring as it often provides nesting sites for birds

Ivy is a great tonic for sheep. In spring, we often see our neighbour gathering ivy from local hedgerows for her family's ailing sheep. When hedge laying I often leave cleared undergrowth and cut branches in the field where I'm working, where they are hungrily sought by sheep sick and tired of the slim pickings of short pasture and often taken in preference to even good hay!

But how can one feed holly when it is full of very sharp prickles? Indeed the lower branches are not very palatable, which makes holly an excellent hedge plant, but regardless of age, holly leaves on higher branches are smooth edged where they grow high enough to be above the browse line.



The holly twigs below are both from the same bush, those on the left are from much lower and have many spines, while those on the right are from a higher branch and have very few.

Throughout our ancient past it is highly likely that both holly and ivy were cut as winter fodder. The custom of pollarding holly trees was apparently¹ quite widespread throughout the UK with many local names given to the areas of

¹ <http://www.bahs.org.uk/AGHR/ARTICLES/09n2a3.pdf>
Radley, J

woodland or deep valleys that favoured the plant. With names like the hollins (from the old English “holyn” which meant holly tree with hollins being the plural) which leads to Hollinsend, Sheffield and Hollingworth, Cheshire, Holling Dale on Bradfield Moors, Hollingworth Clough, Hayfield and Hollins Clough, Dovedale.

Such winter pastures were often sought by shepherds for winter forage and so commanded higher rents. Those who abused these rights were soon prosecuted. Radley found a reference to the destruction of the Hollingwood at Hope in 1216-22 and deeds in Yorkshire at Heeley recording the grant of permission to graze five acres of holly known as “Heele holis” Hollinclough, Derwent in 1381 and at Hollywood in 1433 at Ludworth, Cheshire.

Prosecutions against ten people for illegally lopping of holly were made at Tideswell Court in the Royal Forest of the High Peak in 1524, and 21 people were then prosecuted in 1567.

In Sheffield in 1624 the renting of “Hollens” was quite widespread and a total of 23 separate “hagges” of holly realized a total rent of £19 3/10d, a considerable sum in those days!

In 1811 John Farey noted that “At Rowlee in Hope Woodlands, Derbyshire the sides of the hills were formerly scattered with Holly Pollards which they used to lop in severe winters for the sheep (Woodlands), with good effect.”²

Holly has a coarse, waxy leaf and is probably quite low in nutrients and by no means should we expect it to be a complete feed or use it to replace hay or silage. Instead look upon it as a complementary feed, lopping branches off trees high up and don’t be afraid to let sheep have access to the whole branches too, because they love the bark, which is surprisingly green underneath.

As for the bushes themselves, regular pruning of holly does it no harm, in fact it will have a similar effect to pruning apple trees in the winter, invigorating them and making them send out lots of new shoots. But I would not cut all the stems off a bush; that might be too much, so just lop off a few as a treat for sheep that are off their food.

Philip Onions

2. Farey, John “A General View of the Agriculture and Geology of the County of Derbyshire” 1811, vol III pp 89, 90

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