



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 81 - September 2012

Chairman's Ramblings

Summer has come at last (September). Hope weather lasts till Bretton.

Hope to see you all at Bretton but as usual I will be well stressed by lunchtime then relieved at the end of the sale. Good entries to date, both ewes and rams but plenty more due before sale. All enquiries either selling or purchasing ring me.

Unfortunately, we have had to defer the Open Day, but the AGM will take place on 13 October at the Dog and Partridge, where we can also have lunch.

As I write, the weather is set fair for Penistone show tomorrow, a large entry I am told. Hope the judge is up to the job, will probably be told!

Thanks Philip for your work with RBST even if it lifted stress levels at the time.

Well done Chareen, Champion of Champions at Hope. Uncle Paul says watch out next year! Following all the washouts, it was nice to see such a good turnout.

See you all soon, Paul

Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions became due on 1st September and remain at £10.

If you have not already paid, please see Ann or Rachel at Bretton Mill, or post to Rachel at the address on the back page.

The Annual General Meeting

will be held at the Dog and Partridge on Saturday 13 October at 11.30 am.

Lunch will be available at around 1 o'clock

Any nominations for Society Officers should be sent to the Secretary by 29 September, as should any Resolutions to be put to the meeting, or matters you want discussed.

The Dog and Partridge is on the A628 Manchester to Penistone road, one mile west of the Flouch roundabout (the A616 junction).

Post code for your satnav is S36 4HH

Annual Sale of Whitefaced Woodland Sheep

**Saturday 29 September
at Bretton Mill Farm, Haigh, nr Barnsley
(next to Junction 38 of the M1)**

Aged and shearling rams will compete for the Ken Wild Trophy

Note that judging begins at 11 o'clock

There will also be classes this year for:

- Pen of 6 or more ewes born in 2011
- Pen of 6 or more ewes that have reared a lamb in 2012

**Sale starts at 12 noon
and includes at least one
substantial Woodland flock dispersal**

To enter, or for further details, please contact Paul Dixon at William Sykes
tel.: 01484 683543, mobile: 07720 765094

Show results

Great Yorkshire Show

In addition to results published previously Dave and Debbie Wardell's ram lamb Ryedale Dominator won the RBST Keystone Trophy.

Ryedale Show - Judge: Avril Harrison

Ram lamb: Pam Crosby

Ram: Dave & Debbie Wardell

Ewe lamb: Judith Hawkhead

Shearling ewe: Chareen Kaye

Ewe with lambs: Chareen Kaye

Group of 3: Dave & Debbie Wardell.

The Champion was Dave and Debbie's aged ram, with Chareen's ewe taking Reserve. The RBST sash for the best CFB home bred Woodland was won by Pam Crosby with her ram lamb.

Manifold Show

Judged by Richard Spencer, Kath Goldstraw won the Championship with her shearling tup.

Reserve was Lizzie Kiddle with a tup lamb.

Hope Show - Judge: Neville Belfield

Aged Ram: John Jones

Shearling ram: Paul Thorp

Ram lamb: John Jones

Aged ewe: Chareen Kaye

Shearling ewe: Paul Thorp

Ewe lamb: James Gill

Champion: Paul Thorp (shearling ewe)

Reserve Champion: Chareen Kaye (aged ewe)

Rosie Ford won the Woodland fleece class

The Champion of Champions was won by Chareen Kaye with her aged ewe. Paul Thorp's shearling ewe took Reserve Champion.



Champion and Reserve at Hope Show – Photo: R.Ford

Malham Show

Robert and Angela Crampton report:

We finally went to a show last Saturday that was not cancelled. Malham is one of the few Dales shows with a Rare Breed Section, and we, Chris Wray and Ric Halsall entered Woodlands.

Chris won the Primitive Rare Breeds. We won first and second in the Non Primitive any age ram (two other entries) and also won the Rare Breed non primitive female of any age. Ric was second and there were nine entries in total.

Our ewe went on to win the Championship and Pennine Cup and our tup won best Reserve.

Chris won the primitive section. A good day, apart from two hours' downpour around midday.



Woodland tups at Malham – Photo: R & A Crampton

Three Counties at Malvern

Congratulations to Robert and Jean Price, whose shearling ram took the Championship in the Any Other Hill Breeds Section.

Thornton-le-Dale

Dave and Debbie Wardell won the RBST rosette with their gimmer shearling Ryedale Crest.

Skipton Show and Sale

Robert and Jean Price's ram lamb took first place in the Hill and Heath class.

Sixteen Woodlands were forward, including nine shearling ewes. Top price for these was 160gns, with an average of 136gns (£143), up around £23 on last year. Robert and Jean Price's three ewe lambs fetched an average of £83 (up £10). Their ram lamb sold well at 190gns (£200), though Pam Crosby's two did not sell at 140 and 135gns respectively. A large 2-shear ram entered by Mr C Waddington made £100.

We set up the Society's display stand between the café, pens and sale ring, where a lot of people saw it, and many commented favourably. We wait to see if it has brought us any new members!

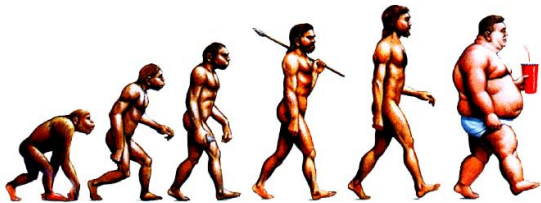
And now for something completely different...from Philip Onions

THE ALMOST COMPLETE AND UTTER HISTORY OF SHEEP AND MAN

PART 1: THE EVOLUTION OF MAN AND THE INVENTION OF AGRICULTURE

Long, long, long ago across the dry, dusty plains of Africa, our ancient ancestors set off on their path to conquering planet Earth. For thousands upon thousands of years these early humans wandered from place to place hunting and gathering to survive. When they exhausted the resources, they must have either moved on or perished. Life was simple but hard and the small advantages gained with language and using tools will have helped some to survive better than others.

The evolution of man¹?



Joking apart let us start this story at the beginning of the human race 4.4 million years ago; there was a species then called *Ardipithecus ramidus* living in forested parts of Africa. It was much like the modern bonobo chimpanzee and probably lived alongside the ancestors of modern chimpanzees. There is some evidence that *A. ramidus* walked for at least part of the time on two legs. But the first of our ancestors that nearly always walked on two legs was probably *Australopithecus afarensis* about 3.6 million years ago.

The first species that we know for sure that used stone tools was *Homo habilis* about 2.3 million years ago and they are believed to have evolved into the species *H. ergaster*, the first known species to use fire. *H. erectus* evolved at the end of the same period and for a while there were several species of early humans living side by side. *H. erectus* had a brain that was 74% the size of our own, but in many other ways they were similar in appearance and this species successfully spread out over the world and formed several other subspecies.

Then about 200,000 years ago the first *Homo sapiens* are thought to have evolved in Ethiopia. Living at first alongside other species of humans, they all used stone tools and had fire, but bit-by-bit, advantages in the brain size of *H. sapiens* gave them better technology with their tools and hunting and gathering skills and slowly they took over. But for almost 200,000 years there is little evidence that *H. sapiens* developed a great deal more from this hunter gathering nomadic lifestyle.

Then about 10,000 years ago something changed; something relatively small and often overlooked by modern man. No, we weren't visited by Aliens, or hit by a giant meteorite or flooded by a huge tidal wave that engulfed the world for forty days and forty nights. No it was much more simple than that: our ancestors discovered agriculture.

Suddenly, instead of being a nomadic species that lived off the land and what they could hunt or gather, people were able to grow the crops that they needed to feed themselves and their families and from surpluses of these crops they were able to raise animals to eat, ensuring a supply of fresh meat whenever it was needed.

This small change had huge consequences because instead of each person having to spend all day searching for food, now it was possible for a surplus to be grown and stored. People had time to do other things and could trade the surplus for other things that they really needed (or thought that they needed). The population was no longer governed by how much food they could find in their environment, but now they had the chance to expand. Some members of these early farming groups even had time to do others things apart from gathering the next meal. They had time to develop better tools, better languages and could start passing information on to others with cave paintings and even to develop writing.

Art, crafts, houses, better technology, writing, maths, science, religion, culture, towns, cities, architecture, armies, warfare, different races, creeds and cultures, countries...everything we now take for granted has come in the past 10,000 years because of agriculture.

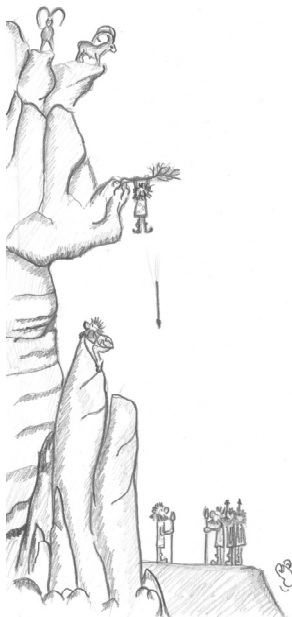
¹

http://s675.photobucket.com/albums/vv116/jayfree_1/?action=view¤t=evolution_of_man.jpg&&newest=1

So how did agriculture start? Who was the first man to think of milking a cow? And what was he thinking?

It is probable that the earliest forms of agriculture were more random than our current ideas of agriculture. For example, Ray Mears did a series of programmes looking at bush craft in modern hunter-gathering cultures. In one Ray showed Aboriginal women in Australia harvesting wild yams. When they had taken the ripe plants they returned some parts of the roots to the ground to keep the plant going and ensure that when they returned at some point in the future, there would be more of the same available to harvest in the same spot. This is just common sense really and one could imagine many hunter-gatherers doing something similar, taking seed from a plant to eat, but returning a few seeds to the ground to ensure the plant lived on. This then would have led to areas being selected to grow crops and small crops being grown in them, in “gardens” designed to be reliable food sources.

However, mankind had left the forests 4 million years before to follow the vast herds of migrating herbivores and they still needed meat. Growing vegetables in a rudimentary garden was all very well, but where was the meat going to come from?



**He thinks
there must
be a better
way of
getting
fresh meat.
Grrr!**

One of the first species of animal that was ever domesticated, according to Ryder² was the dog; it is often assumed that wild wolves would have scavenged around the encampments of humans

² ML Ryder “Sheep & Man” 1983 Duckworth printing

and would have followed people on hunting trips and that this would have led to their eventual domestication. This is indeed highly likely, but the next species to become domesticated was in fact reindeer. How then did that happen? Reindeer or wild sheep (or cattle for that matter) would not scavenge around humans, not if those human beings would then go out and hunt them, so how did these species become domesticated?

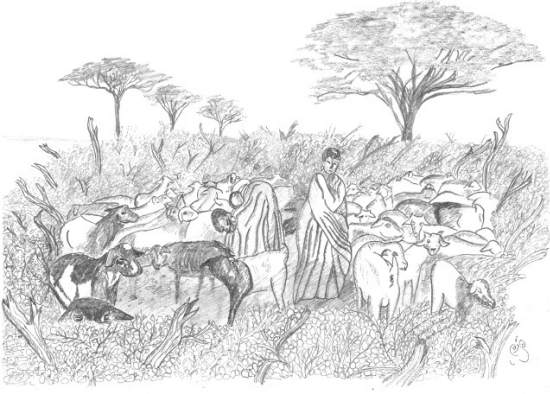
One of the ways that Ryder suggests humans might first have domesticated wild animals is by the capture and then breast feeding of very young mammals, by lactating women...



Well I suppose it might have been possible that sheep farming started this way, but I think that it is more likely that large traps were set and animals captured live in them. We know for example that the earliest men, even Neanderthals used large traps to capture whole herds of mammoths. These traps may have utilised natural features in the landscape like box canyons or cliffs and piles of driftwood, or they could have cut bushes to form sturdy corals in which the animals could be driven and secured. Then instead of killing all the occupants at once, some could have been kept alive for killing later. Such captured prey might even live for a time off the browsing from the cut up bushes used to trap them. A wise group of people would continually cut fresh thorns bushes to keep them in and this might feed them longer.

Clearly a mammoth would require a great deal of fodder, which would have been very hard work to cut with stone axes and would quickly deplete all the bushes in the area, but smaller species like sheep and goats would live longer in such pens.

In parts of East Africa nomadic stock keepers still keep flocks of goats and sheep in corals made of thick thorn bushes cut down and piled together at night. The animals inside are safe from predators and don't need their keepers to be on duty herding them all night. They call these pens bomas.



A Masai boma

It is more feasible to me that a group of people first captured a flock of wild sheep or goats in a corral or boma and found that they could keep them alive by feeding them forage gathered in the area. Perhaps at first they only wanted to keep these animals alive for a short period of time, so that they could have fresh meat later on in the season, or perhaps they deliberately wanted to farm them, either way, as all modern farmers would know, eventually this food supply would run out, then what did they do?

There were four choices; they could kill all the animals in their pen and eat or dry their meat; they could grow crops to feed them; they could let them go completely; or they could release them and try and capture them back later, perhaps with the lure of fresh food gathered elsewhere.

The Masai release their sheep and goats everyday from their bomas and young boys stay with their flocks and herds all day, driving them from food source to food source or protecting them from predation until at night they are driven back to the bomas to sleep. But the bomas do not have to be the same ones that the flocks spent the previous night in. This then allows the Masai to adopt a nomadic lifestyle or perhaps they have just stayed with the lifestyle of their ancestors.

And so it was that mankind domesticated sheep, goats, cattle and horses and even reindeer and set off again on their wanderings around their planet, taking with them the herds that they needed to sustain their newly acquired civilisation.

In the next article in this series, I shall consider the evolution of the modern sheep, Ovis aries from its wild ancestors with the aid of man.

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