



# Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

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

## Newsletter 72 – October 2010

### Chairman's Message

Winter is on its way it seems with strong north wind and a threat of snow. Snow! It only seems like a few weeks since I was cutting snow, Inuit igloo style, out my little old Zetor cab so as get started getting feed out. Anyway, the long range forecast is for a mild winter which is just as well because there isn't much decent hay around at a reasonable price.

But a good autumn ensued, with a decent turnout of both stock and members at Hope. James Gill won top slot as Champion of Champions with a lovely big perfect shearling ewe. Tessa Wigham did the judging of the classes and demonstrated great skill and consideration in the task.

The AGM followed at Hope and was well attended. It came slightly unstuck however because the cattle tent had blown down the night before and we were relegated to the horse secretary's tent, next to the main arena. After a bit of a battle to wrest something to sit on from the horsey people, the meeting opened in synchrony with the start of a Laurel and Hardy impersonation act just outside in the arena and for half an hour, unless we were shouting, all you could here were such immortal phrases as *that's another fine mess you're got me into*. Which is not really what you want to hear at an AGM. Anyway, some business was dealt with and the minutes are attached.

Melton followed and turned out to be greatly successful with Mandy Windsor showing and selling seven or so nice big shearlings ewes, well judged by Carole Muddiman and with Carole herself taking the best two home at £147 apiece. There were at least 4 bidding.



Mandy's tup sold to a new breeder for around £170.

*Continued on page 2*

Photo:  
R Ford

### Subscriptions for 2010/11

Annual subscriptions were due on 1 September. If we think you have not sent your renewal, you should find a reminder sheet enclosed. Please complete it and send to Rachel with your cheque.

**Grassroots** has asked us to remind those breeders who have not returned their Combined Flock Book surveys that the deadline for the 2010 CFB is fast approaching.

**RBST** is working with Professor Mike Taylor of York to investigate variations in resistance to certain parasitic diseases between a number of native breeds of sheep. Initially, they have sent us the enclosed questionnaire. If you feel you can help, please complete and return it direct to the RBST, by 31 October.

### Woodland Calendar

If you haven't bought a copy of our calendar yet, act now, before they're all gone! If you are likely to be seeing Jeff or Helen Dowey at Woodhead, ask them to bring you some, or call in at William Sykes in Holmfirth (both contact details are on the back page). Calendars cost £6.50 each (with envelope) or we can post them to you at £7.50.



### ***Chairman's Message continued...***

On to Bretton with an astonishing turnout of some sixteen shearling tups on show, with James Gill having a difficult job sorting out the best.



Photo: P Onions

The Ken Wild Memorial Trophy went to Neville Belfield and this tup sold for £800. Top price went to James at £1320 (James wasn't showing because he was judging, having won last year – as is the tradition at Bretton). A good day all round with the weather smiling on us, which makes all the difference with a field sale, and with most of the tups sold being Society registered. Shearling ewes sold to £122 with not enough forward to meet demand.

On then to Pikenase where Jeff and Helen Dowey held an extremely well organized and welcoming Open Day with the object of getting as many of us as possible introduced or fine tuned into the art of judging woodlands and inspecting them for registration.

Hot food and drink was laid on and then we (about 25 in attendance) did our own inspections of all the usual classes of stock arranged in pens, judging each sheep in each pen as being best to worst. James Gill and Paul Thorpe then did a run through pen by pen, arranging in order of best to worst with an expert commentary. These two lads certainly know their sheep and it was a pleasure to hear what they had to say and indeed to see how they handled the sheep. Jeff had obviously had a bit of job to find stock which was less than perfect but Paul and James were mostly able to find something not quite right and there was much discussion on horn direction, sharpness of horn on the top edge (best rounded) tightness of fleece (a big issue this), correctness in mouth, down at heel (something of a problem in the breed), obvious issues like lack of shoulder height leading to a humped back, shoulder width, and more controversially the presence of black spotting on the head and body (James and Paul don't want to see any at all, not even on ewes) and lastly, if I've not forgotten something really crucial - the blue eye! - should have a yellow iris not a 'rat eye'. So back home for me and another round of culling I think!.

Many thanks then to Helen and Jeff and Paul and James for a great day out in the presence of great looking stock, in the heart of woody country. I think

the general feeling was that we should have another similar event on another holding about the same time next year. I'm looking forward to it.

Our calendar's on sale by mail order now, if there are any left - so get one now and enjoy some really nice woody photos supplied by members.

Rob Ford

## **Show Results**

Hope Show - Judge: Tessa Wigham

Aged ram: Karen Dowey

Shearling ram: Karen Dowey

Ram lamb: Peter Harkness

Aged ewe: James Gill

Shearling ewe: James Gill

Ewe lamb: Karen Dowey

Champion: James' aged ewe; Reserve Karen's shearling tup. There were six competitors.

Championship - Judge: Rob Ford

Champion: James Gill's Shearling ewe

Reserve: Karen Dowey's Shearling tup.

Mottram - Judge: Paul Dixon (in the absence of Richard Cottrill) Karen Dowey's shearling ewe was Champion and her shearling tup, Reserve.

Bretton Mill - Judge James Gill

Aged tup: 1<sup>st</sup> Simon Burford

2<sup>nd</sup> Karen Dowey

3<sup>rd</sup> J C Nutter

Shearling tup: 1<sup>st</sup> Neville Belfield

2<sup>nd</sup> Karen Dowey

3<sup>rd</sup> Paul Thorp

Champion: Neville's shearling tup, Reserve:

Simon's aged tup

Hayfield - Judge: Martin Warburton

Aged ram: Paul Thorp

Shearling ram: James Gill

Ram lamb: Karen Dowey

Aged ewe: James Gill

Shearling ewe: James Gill

Ewe lamb: Paul Thorp

Champion: James' shearling tup, Reserve: aged ewe

Penistone - Judge: Jim Thornley

Aged ram: Paul Thorp

Shearling ram: James Gill

Ram lamb: Paul Thorp

Aged ewe: Paul Thorp

Shearling ewe: Paul Thorp

Ewe lamb: Karen Dowey

Champion: James' shearling ram, which went on to take Reserve Champion in the Interbreed Class.

Melton – Judge: Carole Muddiman  
Champion: Sally Windsor's shearling ewe  
Reserve: Sally Windsor's shearling tup

Congratulations to Francine Burns, whose Southlea ram and ewe lambs came 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the large Any Other Hill Breed classes at the Three Counties Show.

### Autumn Sales

At Skipton, one of Middlesbrough's shearling tups took the Interbreed Championship and sold for £378, with their second tup making £220. Three shearling ewes reached £78 and the only two ewe lambs forward made £80 and £85 respectively.

At Melton Mowbray, five of the nine shearling ewes were sold, at prices ranging from 100gns to 140gns, the latter for the first and second prize animals. The shearling tup made 160gns.

At Bretton Mill, six shearling tups made over £400 each, with a top price of £1280 for James Gill's Champion. Sixteen other shearling tups made an average of £150. Nine correct ewes realised £68 and the only four shearling ewes present reached £122 each. The 7 ewe lambs forward sold for £78 apiece.

A considerable scarcity of shearling ewes and ewe lambs has kept prices very high this season. This is reflected in the price of £95 for the only ewe lamb forward at York in early October

### Woodies in the Eastern Counties

There was a light dusting of snow in the crystal clear air of dawn, as Katie and I made our way south through the flat lands of Lincolnshire on our way to visit a couple Woody keepers in Norfolk and Suffolk.

As the miles tumbled past I was reminded of the trip James and I had taken to Northern Ireland; the potato harvest had been in full flow then and when we got to some corners, or cross roads, we would see a few potatoes left at the road-side that had fallen from passing trailers. James and I had decided that this was clear evidence of the great annual potato migration!

In this part of the world in late January, it's not potatoes, but sugar beet that was being harvested; but try as I could, I could not convince Katie that there was a sugar beet migration happening!

So we stopped for coffee on a lay-by full of beet wagon drivers. Across the flat landscape we could see the billowing chimney of the sugar factory in the distance. The coffee was really bitter. Katie took a sip and with a shudder gazed longingly at the distant white

cloud, "Do you think they'd let us buy just one spoonful of sugar?" she asked with a giggle.

These fen lands are not the natural habitat of sheep. A Woody could walk for miles down here and only have to slow down for the wide, straight dykes and to munch on the fields of vegetables. We passed one field however, surrounded by huge fields of leeks and the remnants of Brussels sprout plants, with a feeble looking electric fence and several hundred Suffolk fat lambs, finishing on what looked like turnips from a distance.

South of Kings Lynn, trees began to fill the landscape, and the country started to roll again. With this change in the landscape, we started to see livestock appear again, along with tiny Muntjac deer. We passed one at the roadside between the woodland and a road sign and at first I thought it was a little escaped goat. Then I realised what it was and told Katie.

"Oh Dad!" she said knowingly. "You don't expect me to believe that *that* was a deer do you?" she asked, in disbelief after all the talk of a sugar beet migration. "It looks more like a big rabbit or something!" [Actually she used to have some giant rabbits that in a straight fight would probably whip a Muntjac!]

Soon we arrived at R. and P. Baker's Christmas Hill Farm managed by Jo and Michael Taylor. Jo and Michael are really living the dream; well my dream anyway! In 2006 they sold their Fuglemere flock of sheep to Mr and Mrs Baker, the owners of Christmas Hill. The Bakers then employed the Taylors to manage their 700-acre farm for them, investing heavily in miles of new fences and lovely big new buildings!

[If there are any rich landowners out there who would like to buy me out and then pay me to run their farm for them, I can be contacted on [philip@keerfalls.co.uk](mailto:philip@keerfalls.co.uk)]

But seriously, Jo and Michael have obviously worked very hard to set up a very productive and well organised commercial rare breeds unit and Mr and Mrs Baker have obviously chosen wisely in selecting the Taylors to manage the farm.

Christmas Hill is not an open farm; it is a genuine lamb and beef unit that sells much of its produce through the farm shop, where a full time butcher is employed. So Jo is managing all the sheep and Michael the cattle, with clear commercial carcass quality at the front of their minds; this is reflected in the quality of livestock on show.



## The Christmas Hill Flock

**Flock Profile 6 - 30/1/10**

**Flock Prefix:** Christmas Hill

**Name of Breeder:** Jo Taylor

**Contact Details:**

Christmas Hill Farm. Lakenheath, Brandon, Suffolk

**Telephone:** 07733 258494

Jo and Mike Taylor have dedicated their lives to proving that there is a place in modern agriculture for rare breeds. Talking to Jo, it soon felt to me that if she were a stick of Blackpool Rock the words "Rare breeds" would be etched through her very core!

### Flock Details

**Year Flock Started:** 1991

**Year Started Here:** 2006

**Size of Flock:** Large

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



Jo Taylor and One of her Ewes

### Breeding Policy



Christmas Hill Erica, one of the ewe lambs

The flock originated as the Fuglemere Flock in Buckinghamshire in 1991 with two ewes from the Aldenham Flock owned by Hertfordshire County Council. They soon built up a flock of "Show Quality" sheep using a "founder ram" from Kent Langholm Airlie. I asked Jo what she thinks makes a good show quality Woodland. She tells me that she is looking for a square sheep that has plenty of length, good bone quality and size. She says that they must not be up or down on their pasterns. She also wants sheep with a flat back.

In the ewe, Jo wants a sheep of basically the "same type", it must have a broad face, not too narrow, but the ewe must look feminine. We have all seen Whitefaced Woodlands with colour around the eyes or even the

occasional spots on the face and it is a characteristic of the breed that we are all trying to breed out; Jo thinks that it is most prevalent in sheep that are too closely related. She has tried to avoid this problem and has almost succeeded in eliminating it from her own flock, although it has to be said that she does not see it as a huge issue except for showing.

Jo has found that sheep with the greatest length tend to be leggier and have wider horns, whilst the heavier rams tend to have tighter horns and they can sometimes be down on their pasterns. So Jo uses heavier rams for a few years followed by leggier ones to bring back size, this she feels has led to a more uniform flock.

Now they are working on bringing the average age of the ewe flock down, clearing out some of the older ewes that they had that had reached the ages of twelve or thirteen. They haven't bought in any ewes for some years, but if they did, they would not buy ewes with speckles, flyaway horns or horns that are too tight to the face. "We have run a closed flock for many years now and are breeding super ewes so would really only consider buying in Rams to introduce new blood. In doing so we would avoid tight or flyaway horns and speckled eyelids but the greatest influence we would look for would be good solid body conformation and good pasterns and teeth."



Christmas Hill Diver



Jo has a theory that: "If a sheep on the hill, had horns that were too tight to the face, he'd be dead, therefore Woodlands with tight horns, are not suitable for the job," she said. So they wouldn't consider a tup that needs his horns slabbing before 2/3 years old, this she believes would be too much trouble for most hill farmers, although they do slab older rams.

## Farm Details

**Year Started Here:** 2006

**Size of Farm:** Group D

*[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:** Low Land

**Farm Type:** Beef and Sheep

**Other crops:** All Grass Land

**Other Livestock:** Long Horn, South Devon and Belted Galloway Cattle

**Other Sheep:** Portland and Hampshire Down Sheep.

## Farm Description

Christmas Hill Farm is a flat lowland farm, sheltered from the worst of the prevailing winds by plantations of trees. The soil is Breckland Sand and Fenland Peat. It is all down to grass and part of the farm floods in winter because it is made up of Water Meadows. Nearby is a RSPB bird sanctuary and the farm is teeming with wildlife.

## Flock Management

The wet soil is deficient in Cobalt, this leads to pneumonia like symptoms apparently, and a general lack of vigour, especially in the finishing lambs, although it was less noticeable in the Woodies than in the other sheep. They drench the lambs with white wormers containing a cobalt supplement and leave out mineral nutrient supplement licks all winter and salt licks with extra minerals all year round. Ewe pencils are fed four weeks prior to lambing, with haylage fed to supplement the grass when the ewes are confined in smaller fields by very wet ground, as they have been this year.

They lamb inside in a brand new, purpose built building. I had asked if they have a fox problem and sure enough as we return through the buildings, we see a big dog fox leave the open sided sheds and calmly make his way through the midden back to the fields. This cocky devil was clearly a town fox, because he showed no respect or fear to us!



**If only we'd had a gun!**

## Marketing

Woodland Lamb is sold through the farm shop, which is a relatively new enterprise, they only opened in April and sales have been slow, but are steadily building up. Jo Taylor also sells her Prize winning pedigree stock through the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society newsletter and on their web site and regularly supplies to established customers such as County Council and City Farms in the South East.



## The Byway Flock

Flock Profile 7 30/1/10



**Flock Prefix:** Byway

**Name of Breeder:** Mr Chris Steel

**Contact Details:** Church Farm, Long Lane, Banham, Norfolk NR122DF

**Mobile Telephone:** 07748 523855

We left Christmas Hill Farm and headed into Norfolk to see Chris Steel's flock. Church Farm is set back off a quiet country lane, in a landscape that is almost flat and is dominated by arable farming. At the end of the drive up to the farm we were met by the familiar white faces that we were looking for in an area that had few sheep. My overwhelming memory of the visit, was of Chris, calmly and resolutely standing holding a Woody ewe as chaos broke all around – Marilyn, Chris's partner was trying to get hold of a sheep using a bucket of cake, while two of his children were also trying to get hold of a sheep apiece to get their pictures taken and a horde of sheep were all fighting to get to the same bucket! Katie and I must have taken a dozen pictures each, as we tried to get everything and everyone in and looking our way, but it seemed impossible, but in every picture, Chris is standing there, resolute, like a lighthouse in a turbulent storm tossed ocean!

As we had entered the wind blasted field, the bitter gale straight off the North Sea had cut through us like a knife and Chris enquired innocently if I could answer a question for him; I said I'd give it a go, but was no expert. "When I try to sell my sheep up North," he said, "they all turn their noses up at these 'soft southern sheep'; so tell me Philip, if a sheep can survive in these winds, doesn't that make it hardy?"

Through my chattering teeth, I had to admit that he had a point; it was only later when I got home that it dawned on me, my sheep don't seem to mind the cold, crisp mornings, with a biting wind, it's cold wet weather that kills them! Perhaps Neville Belfield had a point when he said that 'you wouldn't like it if someone put a cut up the back of your jacket on a cold wet day, so I don't like sheep whose jackets have a cut up their backs either!' So in answer to your question Chris, perhaps it takes different types of sheep to do well in different climates, because although I agree that Norfolk can be very cold when the wind blows in off the North Sea, it is perhaps a dryer wind than those they get in the Pennines or Lake District.

### Breeding Policy



The Stock.Tup Put to a Few Old Girls

Chris keeps all his ram lambs entire, so that he can pick the best to breed from. This comes at a price however, as tup lambs do not finish well in autumn or winter and he still had a large group of shearling rams that he was still trying to finish, in their second winter. Chris is looking for sheep with horns that grow away from the face, adopting a very similar view to Jo Taylor in that the flock master should not have to keep trimming or slabbing horns. Then in the ram, Marilyn told me, they are looking for a long straight back, broad shoulders, good teeth and good, big, testicles. In the ewes they also want a long straight back, broad hips for lambing, no black marks at all, no topknot and no kemp in the wool.

## Marketing Policy

Chris and Marilyn sell meat from their sheep privately and their meat is in high demand, they also sell pedigree stock privately to people looking for pedigree Woodies and have sold sheep through the newsletter.

## Showing Achievements

Chris Steel is a very competitive man; one of the attractions for him of keeping pedigree sheep was clearly showing them and he told me that they had done twelve shows a year for the past few years, so he has many successes under his belt. So to narrow it down, I asked what he was most proud of.

“Best in Breed at the Great Yorkshire Show,” he replied immediately. “I really felt like I had made it, when I beat them all on their home ground! Then it was the Reserve Champion Ewe in the Hill Breed Class – I felt that it was quite an achievement, beating all those popular hill breeds like Swaledales with a rare breed ewe!”

But he quickly went on to tell me how proud he is of his daughter Victoria who won the Junior Handler’s cup at the Royal Norfolk and was presented to the Queen as a result!



Victoria - Champion Young Handler at the Royal Norfolk

## Farm Details

**Year Started Here:** 1997

**Size of Farm:** Group B [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:** Low Land

**Farm Type:** Grassland

**Other Livestock:** Some poultry

**Other Sheep:** Texels and Lleyn

## Farm Description

Church Farm is a family smallholding, on flattish clay soil. The ground is wet but fertile and there was grass growing in even the coldest part of winter. The smallholding has a variety of small sheds and a couple of big buildings, one for hay and straw and the other for sheep housing. Chris drives a taxi for a living and works some very antisocial hours, so Marilyn is left to deal with their children, dogs and sheep, ducks and chickens in their extended menagerie.



One of the Bwvay ewes

## Flock Management

The ewes are mainly being lambed to Lleyn and Texel tups this year inside in the big shed.

## Woody Word

*The last in this series for the time being - unless someone can supply a few more of the local vernacular for dissection.*

*Woodland* - 24% of land use in Derbyshire in the Norman period was given over to *wood pasture*, that is grazing land with some trees. This in turn evolved into either open heath or heather moorland or enclosed grassland or hunting *forests*. More particularly in the middle ages, *woodland* was land where commoners had the right to gather wood (for fires) from hedgerows or other types of scrub. Woodland as we now use it was a term for a protected area for timber production, i.e. timber for building.

The district of Hope in Derbyshire has an area called Hope Woodlands, hence the breed of sheep found there being the Whitefaced Woodland (or Woodland Whiteface). For further reading see: Oliver Rackham’s *History of the Countryside*.

We see from *Holly as a winter feed* by Jeffrey Radley, that John Farey recorded at Rowlee in Hope Woodlands in 1811, the feeding of sheep in winter with holly taken from pollarded hollies scattered over the hillsides, which when in stands were called haggs. We see separately written by the present Duchess of Devonshire that on the Devonshire’s estate land at Rowlee in the 1820s our breed of sheep was present.



## Stock for Sale or Wanted

**RBST registered ram for sale.** High Plains Rambo, easy to handle, halter trained. A large strong boned ram with strong legs, upright pasterns and a good short fleece. Born 2003, he is still very fit, agile and keen to



work. Good blood lines and has bred prizewinning stock.

**Dave & Debbie Wardell**, North Yorkshire. Phone 01751 472089, or email - [d-wardell@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:d-wardell@hotmail.co.uk)

**Julie Beardwell** is still looking for about four ewe lambs – preferably CFB registered. Whaley Bridge, High Peak. Tel.: 01663 733570

Due to loss of grazing, **Hazel Hindmarch** has nine 2-, 3- and 4-shear ewes for sale, including three bought as shearlings from Neville Belfield at Bretton Mill last year. Wolsingham, Co. Durham. Phone: 01388 527119, mob. 07710 463412.

**Genuine Flock reduction** of high quality tupped WFW ewes. Approx 25 pedigree CBF registered ewes will be available in November. These ewes will be lambing to 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, res Champ 2009 Norfolk and Wayland) out of Fuglemere Aster W9938 by Haselbech Bernard W9607].



A small number of ewe lambs also for sale 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].

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

Christmas Hill Eddie

[See page 4 for a photo of Christmas Hill Diver]



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