

Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Newsletter 68 - October 2009

Chairman's Message

With this year's annual Woody sale at Bretton Mill still fresh in mind's eye I can report that the future of our breed can only be deemed secure. There was a great turnout of stock and attendant buyers, some of whom were new to the breed. The breed record for tups (previously £1000) was broken three times in succession, with the sale champion (and Champion at Hope) selling to Neville Belfield for £1440. Some 200 of Neville's good strong younger ewes were present and I think nearly everyone took the opportunity of taking a pen of these home. The killing man, who's sometimes an unwelcome presence of late when selling breeding stock, continues nevertheless to underpin prices. However, he went home without any woodies on board. Many thanks are due of course to Paul Dixon for continuing this traditional field sale year on year and long may it continue.

Of the 200 of Neville's females, the Society inspected and received some 40 to 50 into the Hill Register and the top three tups along with four or five others present. So these, in addition to the 100 already in the Register have got us off to a good start. The Society's Hill Register will have two main functions. Firstly to maintain quality within registered stock and thereby supply a quality mark to registered stock, which is of particular importance to new entrants to the breed, and secondly to record the pedigree of stock. This latter point is important. It is fairly clear that Bretton Mill's top tups may represent just a few blood lines with the same potential for a bottleneck to form in the breed's genetic diversity as is reportedly the case with the RBST registered flock.

The various specialist rare breed sales around the country were not well supported by woody breeders. In fact the season in this respect was very poor indeed, with only two tups present at Melton and only one sold, two at Chelford and none sold, six ewes and one tup at York and one sold etc. Clearly though, people trade breeding

stock amongst themselves and indeed through our stock list. It has been suggested by Tessa Wigham that we try to concentrate an effort on getting people to one show and sale next year where RBST registered stock can be shown, bought and sold and I guess this needs to be Melton. Melton is centrally located and is supposed to be and is a premier event. So more on this early next year when we need to pull together to renew confidence in the RBST registered flock and in consequence, get more breeders into the arena.

Do check out Philip's illuminating flock profile of the Dickson's flock in Northern Ireland. What a great piece of journalism and just so interesting to see how others are fareing and spreading woodies onto the hills overseas. *Coming soon!* – the Beckermond flock and that of Neville Belfield.

If anyone is still not fixed up with a tup or ewes to tup, please get in touch because we can usually sort something out for you.

Off now to raddle my tups and good luck everyone in the forthcoming lamb forming season which should be a goodun bearing in mind the amount of flushing grass still around.

Rob Ford

Subscriptions for 2009/10 Annual subscriptions were due on 1 September, still £7.50 for this year

If we have not received yours yet, you will find a renewal form enclosed. Please complete it and send with your cheque to the Secretary.

Please note Rachel's new address – on page 8 If phoning her, please use her mobile number.

This edition of the Newsletter is posted to you for a change, - but we will revert to electronic means (where appropriate) next time.

Show results

Mottram Show Judge: Tessa Wigham

Aged ram: James Gill

Shearling ram: Karen Dowey Ram lamb: James Gill Aged ewe: Karen Dowey Shearling ewe: Karen Dowey Ewe lamb: Karen Dowey Group of Three: James Gill

Champion: Karen Dowey's shearling ewe Reserve Champion: James Gill's aged ram

Two competitors

Hope Show Judge: Jim Thornley

Aged ram: James Gill
Shearling ram: Chereen Kaye
Ram lamb: Karen Dowey
Aged ewe: Karen Dowey
Shearling ewe: James Gill
Ewe lamb: Karen Dowey

Champion: James Gill's aged ram

Reserve Champ.: Chereen Kaye's shearling ram

7 competitors

Champion of Champions Judge: Harold Smith

Champion: James Gill's aged ram

Reserve Champion: Paul Thorp's shearling ram

RBST Show & Sale Judge: Carole Muddiman

Champion: Rob Ford's 2-shear tup

Reserve: Rachel Godschalk's shearling tup

2 entries

Penistone Show Judge: David Robinson

Aged ram: James Gill Shearling ram: Chereen Kaye Ram lamb: Karen Dowey Aged ewe: Paul Thorp Shearling ewe: James Gill Ewe lamb: Paul Thorp

Champion: Chereen Kaye's shearling ram Reserve Champion: James Gill's aged ram

Hayfield Country Show Judge: Paul Dixon

Aged ram: James Gill Shearling ram: Chereen Kaye Ram lamb: Karen Dowey Aged ewe: Paul Thorp Shearling ewe: James Gill Ewe lamb: Karen Dowey

Champion: James Gill's aged ram

Reserve Champion: Paul Thorp's aged ewe

7 competitors

Annual Sale at Bretton Mill Judge: Neville

Belfield

Champion: James Gill's aged tup

Reserve Champion: James Gill's shearling tup



James Gill's Champion aged ram and son at the Hope Show.

Photo: Martha Ford

Sale reports

At the early autumn sale at **Skipton**, there were some 10 Woodlands forward. Two Beckermond ewes from Ric Halsall sold for 60 guineas each. I understand that the Champion ram, Whitehouse Notable made 80 guineas and two further tups, 42 guineas each.

There were no Woodlands at **Carlisle**, and neither the ram nor ram lamb finally forward at **Chelford** found a buyer.

At **York**, one of the 2 rams reached 51guineas, but 4 gimmer shearlings and a ram lamb failed to sell.

Bretton Mill, on the other hand, witnessed more than 300 Woodlands forward and some record breaking prices. James Gill's tups, pictured above, made £1420 and £1220 respectively, and a much sought after shearling tup from Edward Lees reached £1350. Chereen Kaye's three shearling tups sold for £900, £600 and £400 and one from Paul Thorp for £450.

The market in ewes was dominated by Neville Belfield's flock reduction, his shearling ewes fetching between £68 and £80 apiece, and prices holding up well, even to 5-shears.

Average prices for the whole sale were:

Ewe lambs: £55.50 Shearling ewes: £70.75 2-shear ewes £57 Older ewes £50 Tup lambs: £39

Shearling tups: 6 at £400 or over, 9 others

averaged £140

Aged tups: 1 at £1420, 8 others averaged £111

Woodies in Northern Ireland

Despite the wild, windy squalls that were hurling themselves against the high sides of our ancient van as we sat on the dockside at Cairnryan awaiting the ferry across the Irish Sea, it was with a real sense of excitement that we anticipated seeing Alan Dixon's Killybawn flock of Whitefaced Woodlands. This is potentially one of the most important flocks in the UK. Why? Because if for no other reason. Alan stands as the lone guardian over a flock which provides a priceless insurance to us all if the mainland were to be ravished once more by a disease like Foot and Mouth. Take it from me, as someone who farmed on the edge of Cumbria and saw the result of the disease on a neighbouring farm, if ever it did to the High Peaks what it did to Cumbria. then we will all need these isolated, satellite flocks if we are to stand any chance to conserve this important breed.

Your 'Roving Reporter' is pleased to report that he was far from disappointed by his trip. Alan and his family are doing a superb job of maintaining three important bloodlines of high quality pedigree sheep. For more details see the flock profile.

Although my son and I only had time to spend the weekend in Northern Ireland, Alan, his father Bill and all of their family made us very welcome. In fact it is true to say that everyone we met in this fabulous part of the UK made us feel extremely welcome.

For those of you who have never visited Northern Ireland, or who have not been there for many years, Belfast is a really modern city now, with outstanding, good roads and cutting edge architecture. For those interested in shopping, James and I wandered awestruck through a very sophisticated shopping centre filled with the most chic designer boutiques, where our rustic charms stuck out like sore thumbs, and I'm sure that we ended up with half of the security guards following us. But then I didn't want a Rolex and Tommy Hilfiger designer underpants wouldn't match our wellies and woolly hats anyway!

The countryside of the north east side of the country is much more to our taste however. I had the very real sense that everyone there was in touch with their rural heritage. Bill later explained the very enlightened planning rules which actively encourage scattered development, which allows families to stay together near to their family farms and heritage. Bill had been

turned down on a planning application to build an extra family cottage next to his own, at the end of the drive to Alan's because there were already too many houses in the area! Around here you might, and I stress might, get planning permission there as 'infill'. There were a huge number of original and unique new buildings going up everywhere, in all kinds of styles. Many of the farms were smaller than you would see around us, with small fields and high natural hedges and clusters of farm buildings attached to most. The relaxed attitude to planning extended to gardens that ranged from grand stately formal gardens to the ones that I particularly related to, where the weeds were suppressed by paving over the entire garden with round bales! How very practical!

Alan's farm is immaculately set amongst the rolling drumlins of the area. He inherited it from his Grandmother and it was apparently run down and almost derelict when he took it on, but you wouldn't know that now, because Alan and his wife have turned it into a modern spacious family home to be proud of! Alan works as an accountant in Belfast and Bill is a retired teacher, although I suspect he is possibly busier now with various projects around the farm than he was before! He's built a large barn and several outbuildings and has ambitious plans to reseed all the fields, which are small and steep. Bill keeps a flock of pedigree Rouge De L'Ouest sheep and they have found that the Rouge tup put onto a cast WW ewe or a shearling that they don't want to breed from, produces an outstanding butchers' lamb. Alan now has a keen following of commercial farmers looking to procure his older WW ewes to put to terminal sires, and I can see why!

Alan is not alone in admiring the Woodland though in these parts, he tells me that he has sold ewes to a number of local breeders who, sadly have not chosen to join our society or to maintain the pedigrees, but who none the less breed the sheep true. Is this a new Hill Register in the making in Northern Ireland I wonder? I actually passed a field with a flock containing a few Woodlands on the dash back to the ferry with our newly acquired tup, and I have to say that if you ignore the mountain of paperwork, importing a tup from Alan back into England was easy! So come on everyone, let's all help Alan in his modest, but noble attempt to conserve the breed in Northern Ireland!

From your Roving Reporter,
Philip Onions

Flock Profile

Name of Flock: The Killybawn Flock

Flock Prefix: Killybawn

Name of Breeder: Mr. Alan Dickson

Contact Details:

Address: 35 Killybawn Road, Saintfield, Co. Down,

Northern Ireland. BT24 7JP

Telephone: 02844 830469 **Mobile**: 07710 348129

email: alanw.dickson@tiscali.co.uk

Flock Details: Year pedigree flock formed: 1991

Size of pedigree flock: Medium

[Small: 1-20; Medium: 21-50; Large: 50-100; Major Flock: 101+]

Breeding Policy

Alan maintains three specific bloodlines in his flock, the Beckermond Ross, the White House Acclaim and the Riffham blood lines. Each year Alan and Bill select the best tup lamb from each line to keep pure, then castrate the others. Alan



Alan Dickson and his father Bill with a Woodland Shearling Ewe

selects breeding stock by size and conformation, then he is looking for horns that are growing flat from the top of the head [not away as a goat's might]. He does not want horns that point too far forward or that are growing too close to the head. Although Alan wants big sheep, it is important to him that they are not too long in the leg. Finally Alan wants all his sheep to have long, fine wool with a good crimp in it.



A Killybawn Tup

Marketing Policy: Presently, Alan is struggling to market his tups in Northern Ireland and Bluetongue restrictions make it very difficult to return sheep from England to Northern Ireland if they fail to reach a fair price at auction. This makes maintaining the flock unnecessarily difficult! However he regularly sells some tups and all of his spare ewes in the province itself.

Showing Achievements: Numerous showing achievements, up against rare and commercial breeds. Of special note, at the Balmoral or Royal Ulster Agricultural Show (their biggest one) First Place Female Hogget and Second Ram Lamb. At Ballymena Show second place for a ewe of any age.

Farm Details:

Year started to farm here: 1840

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:

None LFA

Farm Type: Sheep

Other crops: None

Other Livestock kept: Rouge De L'Ouest sheep The Killybawn ewes and shearlings



Description of farm:

35 Killybawn Road is a small family farm that has been in the family since about 1840 or thereabouts. Once it was a show farm for their dairy of 14 cows that were then milked by hand - this was in Alan's grandmother's day. Now the farm is run more as a hobby for Bill's pedigree Rouge Flock and Alan's pedigree Whitefaced Woodlands. Both gentlemen enjoy showing their sheep, but don't take the job too seriously. I get the impression that Bill's Rouges take priority over Alan's Woodlands if they can't show both at the same show for some reason. The farm is made up of small fertile fields of steep, rolling drumlins. They have high hedges and freely draining soil.

Flock management – general details:

At present, the flock does not receive extra feed during the winter, because the mild climate maintains grass growth for longer than some of on higher ground can expect. Since the addition of Bill's big new shed, they can lamb inside. Their biggest problem at present seems to be that the ewes are a little too fat at tupping and this has pulled down lambing percentages, but they are working on the problem. All sheep coming from Northern Ireland enjoy MVA accreditation because the country is free of the disease. They are also outside of the Bluetongue area. Their sheep are all vaccinated and they are happy to fluke and worm sheep at the buyers' request before dispatch. Gimmer lambs are not put to the tup in their first year. Three tup lambs, one from each bloodline, are kept entire each year but not worked until they reach a good size. Alan is considering AI in the future given the geographic isolation point and is keen to find out if other breeders are currently using it, and with what success.

Profile compiled 3 October 2009

Annual General Meeting

Here follow the draft minutes of the meeting [draft because they don't get approved (or amended) till next year's meeting]. I know they're long, but please do take a few minutes to read them. If your time is limited, you might like to concentrate particularly on the deliberations on the Hill Register (item 10). If you have views on this, please can you make your representations or comments to Rob Ford fairly quickly, as the working group is due to meet again shortly.

Members' views would also be very welcome on other topics discussed, especially: location of the AGM (item 8) and the suggestion of promoting Woodlands at just one of the RBST autumn sales (item 11).

Draft Minutes of the AGM of The Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society held at 5pm on 11 September 2009 at Melton Mowbray Market

<u>Present</u>: Paul Dixon, Jeff Dowey, Karen Dowey, Rob Ford (in the Chair), Rosie Ford, Ann Godschalk, Rachel Godschalk, Philip Hodges, Sally Hodges, Dawn Teverson (RBST)

1. <u>Apologies</u> were received from James Gill, Roger Green, Clive Hill, John Jones, Liz Jones, Philip Onions, Tessa Wigham.

- Minutes of the 2008 AGM were accepted proposed: Paul Dixon, seconded: Rachel Godschalk
- 3. Matters arising, not on the Agenda about half of the census forms had been returned to John Jones so far and he is collating the data. Returns are about equally from Hill and from CFB registered flocks, and include some 950 ewes on the hill, so the final numbers may be less than had been estimated.
- 4. <u>The Chairman's report of the year</u> had been circulated and was taken as read.
- 5. The Accounts and Treasurer's report had been circulated its adoption was proposed by Paul Dixon, seconded by Ann Godschalk.

Discussion on the benefits of the *Farmers Guardian* advert concluded an entry be made

once a year, in the autumn – cost probably around £43. **Action: RF, KD**

Paul Dixon proposed a calendar – costs expected to be £225 for a batch of 50 (i.e. £4.50 each and sold at a small profit). Paul would investigate, with a view to a 2011 calendar. Members to be asked for seasonally appropriate photographs to be

submitted for 12 to be selected at the Great Yorks Show next year.

Action: PD + AG publicity in Newsletter

Rachel Godschalk suggested a banner for the pens at shows, also Woodland mugs and was asked to investigate possible supply and costs.

Action: RG

- 6. Election of Officers Rob Ford (Chairman), Paul Dixon (Vice Chairman) and Rachel Godschalk (Secretary) were re-elected unopposed. Proposed: Philip Hodges, seconded: Ann Godschalk. Karen Dowey was elected as Treasurer. Proposed: Rachel Godschalk, seconded: Rob Ford.
- 7. Subscriptions for 2010/11 it was proposed by Rob Ford and seconded by Philip Hodges that this be increased to £10 from September 2010, and life subscription to £100. Ann and Rachel Godschalk agreed to instigate a membership drive. Action: AG, RG
- 8. 2010 AGM it was agreed to hold this at the Hope Show on August Bank Holiday Monday (30 August). Members thought it would be beneficial to move the AGM to different parts of the country, either combined with a show or sale or with a social event. Suitable location(s) would be proposed for decision at the next AGM.

Action: Committee

9. <u>Judges and Inspectors</u> – two separate lists (with some duplication) were needed. Drawing up of lists to be delegated to the Committee. Two inspectors would be nominated by the Chairman for each inspection, and would work to the breed standard already defined. Once a Judges' list had been formulated, the Secretary would be responsible for contacting them and for liaison with Show Secretaries.

Action: Committee + RG

- 10. <u>Hill Register</u> the following draft registration rules circulated by Rob Ford were discussed. *Decisions and/or comments made by the Meeting are in italics*
 - 1. Rams and ewes of previously unregistered stock will be eligible for registration after reaching one year of age. Such rams and ewes will be referred to as foundation stock. Agreed, but Philip Hodges would like ewe lambs considered too.

- 2. Foundation stock will be subject to inspection by two persons prior to registration nominated by the Chairman of the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society. Agreed, with the addition of "from a list of names recommended by the Committee".
- 3. Progeny of foundation stock are eligible for registration in the hill register when both sire and dam are registered. Rams will be eligible for registration only upon achieving one year of age and subject to inspection by the Society. Agreed
- 4. Foundations rams and progeny rams to be marked by the Society with a horn brand. *Agreed*
- 5. The horn brand will be the capital letters WH followed by the numerical sequence in which rams appear in the flock book eg: the tenth ram to be registered will be WH10. Agreed that there should be a horn brand 'logo' as a quality mark, with a running number.

 Jeff and Rachel to investigate possible symbols and practicality
- 6. Foundation stock will be registered to the owner at the time of registration, progeny stock to the breeder. Agreed, provided that the pedigree links back to the animal's breeder.
- 7. Applications for registration are to be made to the Society Secretary who will instigate the inspection process. Breeding and tag information gathered at the inspection is to be passed to Grassroots Systems with the prescribed fees payable for entry into the Hill Flock Register. Agreed, with the addition that the Secretary will provide all information to Grassroots, in a form yet to be established.
- 8. Applications for flock book entry are to be deposited with Grassroots before the end of October if they are to be entered into that year's published flock book. Agreed that this should be just feasible for the Secretary, following Bretton Mill inspections.
- 9. Rams will be recorded with as much pedigree information as possible with both sire and dam details being entered for three generations. Ewes are to be recorded under their sire with the dams recorded under their sire et seq. Change to "a maximum of three generations". Discussion on recording of

ewe pedigrees did not reach a firm conclusion.

10. The Register will be held and maintained by Grassroots Systems Ltd. on behalf of The Rare Breeds Survival Trust and the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society. Dawn Teverson said that the relevant Sub Committee of the Conservation Committee (consisting of herself, Tim Brigstocke, Richard Small and Libby Henson of Grassroots) had not yet met, and there were cost implications, including a licence fee of £1000 per year which RBST might not wish to meet. She also suggested that there were considerable difficulties for Grassroots inherent in the Society's suggestions. Rob Ford reiterated that working in association on this project was vital for the breed's promotion, and that the principle of association was agreed at the recent meeting between WFWSS (R. Ford, R. Godschalk, J.Jones) and RBST (T. Brigstocke, D. Teverson) in July 2009.

The Meeting then considered a series of operational questions from Libby Henson of Grassroots. Many had already been covered in the meeting; additional answers were:

- a) Those registering need not be members of RBST, but must be members of WFWSS opposed by Dawn Teverson, but approved after discussion by the meeting.
- b) All applications to be made through WFWSS Secretary
- c) WFWSS to organise inspections and costs, if any
- d) No time limit to be imposed on registering Foundation Stock
- e) Horn branded numbers will be linked to ear tag/ EID information
- f) Progeny pedigrees will have registered sire information as minimum. It is not clear how much pedigree information can be provided for ewes, and this needs further discussion in conjunction with Grassroots.
- g) Applications and transfers will be handled by the Secretary. *Possibly also certificates*. 'Read only' Internet access to the Flock Book would be very useful.
- h) The WFWSS currently has no plans to charge for flock inspection. Registration fees of £1.20 (on line) and £1.50 (paper) were suggested by RBST at the July meeting.

Rob Ford agreed to talk with Libby Henson to consider any outstanding problems, and to make urgent contact with Tim Brigstocke at RBST to move the whole matter forward.

Rachel Godschalk to be responsible for detailed discussion with Grassroots regarding data transmission. Facility for inspection would be offered at the Bretton Mill sale on 26 September. A working meeting of the Hill Register group would be held as soon as feasible.

Action: RF + RG and Hill Register Group

10. Any other business

Tessa Wigham suggested that because the many RBST approved sales round the country dilute the potential of a significant numbers of animals of any one breed being forward, the WFWSS should support and positively promote one specific RBST approved sale each year. The specified sale would change annually (ie Skipton one year, York another, Bristol etc.) This should produce a larger entry of the breed in one location, so more choice of bloodline and animals to encourage vendors to turn up. The change of location would also encourage the distribution of the various bloodlines around the country. The AGM could be held at this location and breeders could plan well in advance. The Bretton sale should remain as usual. Paul Dixon, Karen Dowey and Rob Ford agreed to look at the feasibility of this, and report back. Action PD, KD and RF

Ann Godschalk, as Newsletter Editor, was co-opted to the Committee.

Tessa Wigham suggested that, with the demise of the Royal Lancashire, the Westmorland County Show be asked to put on Woodland classes. The Meeting felt that, as an interim measure, Woodland breeders should be actively encouraged to enter the rare breeds classes, to see if enough interest could be generated to ask for specific breed classes. The next Show will be on 9 September 2010.

Action: Committee + AG (Newsletter)

The Chairman was thanked for his handling of the meeting, which then closed at 7pm.

Woodland Calendar

The calendar for 2011 which was mooted at the AGM would depend on suitable 'through the seasons' photos *from you all!* It was suggested that photos submitted should be displayed at the Great Yorks Show for selection. That seems a long way off – but why not get going with your autumn and winter shots soon...

Stock for Sale or Wanted

There is not a huge amount of stock either for sale or wanted at the moment, so I haven't circulated another list. However, as Rob Ford has mentioned, if you are not fixed up with a tup or ewes to tup, please get in touch because we can usually sort something out for you. Also, do have a look at the appropriate pages of our website: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Roger Green at Hassocks in Sussex has about 12 shearling ewes for sale from his Earthingly flock, also ram and ewe lambs. Phone: 01273 832023 or e-mail rgmrcvs@bigfoot.com

John Jones in Llandovery has for sale: Barleymount Ensign – proven shearling ram sired by WH Liaison (W10082) from Barleymount ewe (W10618). Also ewe lambs from the same sire. Phone: 01550 720514 or e-mail johnjonesbenjamin@yahoo.co.uk

An older Barleymount ram is available from **Gabrielle Hanson-Smith** at Brockhampton, near Hereford – B. Brutus (W9792, b.2005). He is good tempered, easy to handle and halter broken. He throws extremely nice offspring with good length and width. g.hansonsmith@zen.co.uk Phone: 01989 740658

Liz Jones in Lowesby, Leics usually has a few registered and unregistered ewes for sale. Phone: 0116 259 5664, e-mail: precihorses@yahoo.co.uk

Shirley Rowan has three good ewe lambs for sale. Phone: 01142 366050 (Dore, Sheffield).

Alisdaire Lockhart is looking for a breeder who can supply him with 3 or 4 experienced in-lamb ewes - preferably in their second or third pregnancy. Ideally from anywhere north of Lancaster. E-mail: alex3098@btinternet.com, or phone: 01750 22155 (Selkirk)

Doncaster College is looking to buy ten to a dozen to 12 ewes as part of a field to fork project. South Yorkshire area preferred. Contact: Darren Whitaker - darren.whitaker@don.ac.uk

Neil Beattie at Newton in Bowland, Lancashire needs ewes suitable for moorland zone. Phone: 01200 446630

Woody Word

a Penistone (or pensitones) – coarse* woollen cloth used for garments and made in Penistone in Yorkshire – source: Household and Farming terms from probate inventories for Derbyshire (Chesterfield) Wills 1521 to 1700. Derbyshire Record Society ISBN 0 9505940 1 6

- a bit obscure! and presumably not now in use (especially since the Merino* introduction (!))

Next edition - Woody Word: fleak

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