

East Anglian Herd Competition report – August 2011

Judge - Ray Bowler

Thank you for all members who participated in the competition, although small in number, more than made up for in quality. 10 members took part, 4 in the large herd section, and 6 in the small.

I'll come back to the overall winners later but first the classes.

Registered stock bull: I saw a very good selection of bulls. Nick Thompson's Lavenham Sir Gawain, a young bull with tremendous stature and size with excellent legs & feet, slightly let down by being a little slack in the loin and I thought lacking a little in hind quarter development; Daryl King's Hepworth Harrier, a young bull lacking a bit of condition on the day but with potential to grow on; Jonathan Clark's Kemerton Sligo, 10 years old and still going strong with a tremendous top line and hind quarters; Sarah Barnes's Brundish Colonel, 5 years old showing masculinity, excellent all round conformation, well defined rump, and walking on excellent legs & feet. He was rather skittish on the day but then the day previous he had been taken away from his girls!; Tony Barratt's Appleton Spartacus, 6 years of age and in his prime, an excellent advert for the breed. Depth of body, well defined rear end, walking on first class legs & feet are just some of his many plus points, a very masculine bull with superb presence & temperament; Will Hancock's Castlefields Spud looked well despite him being in with over 80 cows. Young bulls seen were of an equally good standard; Richard Brookes' Pochin Ferny James, Nick Thomson's Lavenham Sir Caradoc, Sarah Barnes' Hopeham Absolute and perhaps the best of them all Denis & Kaitlin Jenkins' Bridgham Lancelot. These latter 3 young bulls have a fantastic future within the breed. In the end I gave the award to the older bulls with Appleton Spartacus first and Brundish Colonel as reserve.

Female youngstock born 2010: Many young heifers were seen, far too many for individual mention, but the ones from the Lavenham herd stood out, I couldn't separate the ones from the Appleton & Hopeham herd so awarded them joint reserve.

Homebred Cow: Several of the newer members didn't have an animal that fell into this class as the cow has had to have calved 3 times. However, there were many animals of excellent quality to choose from. In the end I came down in favour of Beasthorpe Wildrose 2nd from Tony Barratt's Appleton Herd - for those confused Tony changed from the Beasthorpe prefix to the Appleton prefix 5 years ago – This 11 year old cow is deep bodied with a tremendous udder for her age, walks well on good legs & feet and was suckling her 8th calf, a bull calf that at present looks very promising. In reserve I placed Lavenham Super Star. This 6 year old cow sucking her 3rd calf stood out for me in that she is an upstanding cow with a body and topline to die for, let down slightly by a slightly weak udder attachment. Both Nick & Tony have numerous cows that are of an excellent type. Other cows to note were Tim Hazlem's cow Parkgate Lulu, a 3rd calver with a fantastic body and udder but for me carrying a little too much condition on the day, and Hepworth Hairbell, a 4th calver, with good all round type but again for me carrying a little too much condition.

Homebred Heifer – born 2009: Once again, several first class heifers were forward but the pick for me was Hopeham Zwena, closely followed by Appleton Wildrose 7th. Zwena is the sort of heifer that everybody should be hoping to breed: well grown, excellent conformation, nicely developing udder and generally of good Red Poll type. Other heifers of note were Lavenham Painted Lady, Canfieldbury Kiwi & Hepworth Aconite, the latter was a fantastic heifer but for me should have been in calf.

Progeny group: This I found to be perhaps the most difficult class to judge. There were great animals from several bulls that would be worthy of winning. However, I finally made my decision on the fact that the 3 animals from Denis & Katlin's herd, were just like peas in a pod. By Woldsman Leonard, they were cattle, purchased 3 years ago as maiden heifers, from Nicola Seaton in Devon. They are point of calving 2nd calvers, East Beere Yolande, Xuxa & Xina. These 3 cows are all excellent examples of Red Poll cattle. In reserve I placed 3 younger animals by Onenfawr Prince from Sarah Barnes, Hopeham Arina, Atalia and young bull Hopeham Absolute. Other bulls' progeny to note were Lavenham Sir Lancelot & Onenfawr Prince from Nick Thomson, Beasthorpe Zeus from Tony Barratt and Lordship Ulysses from Tim Hazlem.

Family group: Once again, I found this class hard to come to a decision on but I finally came down in favour of a group from Nick Thomson's Lavenham Herd. The animals were Beasthorpe Rosebud 8th, one of Nick's foundation cows purchased from Tony Barratt, her daughter Lavenham Dark Lady and her daughter Lavenham Rhiannon. This group was excellent in every aspect, in fact in Rhiannon I felt that she was the best animal I saw in the whole competition, but there isn't a class for her to be entered individually. Reserve I placed a group of animals from the Wildrose family of Tony Barratt, Beasthorpe Wildrose 2nd – winner of the cow class, Appleton Wildrose & Wildrose 7th. Of note here I ought to point out that a family group consisting of cattle bought by Daryl King as foundation cattle for his Swallows herd were first class only being let down by the fact that the older cow wanted her feet trimming. Underhills Pussycat, Leaventhorpe Kitty and home bred heifer Swallows Annabel.

Purebred steer: An easy winner here was a 27month old steer from Jonathan Clarke. This beast was ready to go, in fact by the time I am doing this he will have been! He had the correct amount of finish, weighed I estimate 575kg, has been grass fed only and just looked the complete finished article. Reserve was a steer from Nick Thomson.

Crossbred steer or heifer: Again another easy winner this time coming for the Thornage herd, owned by Camphill Communities, managed by Philip Culley. This animal was a Shorthorn X Red Poll down calving heifer. She looked in great condition for the task ahead and she had a tremendously deep body with an udder to die for. Reserve I placed Daryl King's Red Poll X Belgium Blue youngstock - these will make excellent beef in the future I'm sure.

So to the overall result. I judged this not only on the animals presented to me but on the overall management of the herd as well.

For the **Small herds:** this went to Denis & Kaitlin Jenkins and their Heathgate Herd. This herd, established in 2008, is an excellent enterprise, managed to the highest standards with superb quality animals. They bought foundation stock of highest quality which are now showing their abilities in the production of excellent type youngstock. Recently purchased in-calf heifers from the Hinwick Herd, together from some younger animals from Brook Hall Farms can only enhance the herd. The use of Bridgham Lancelot this year will, I hope, prove to be a first class move. Reserve in this class went to Richard Brookes and his Hepworth Herd. Once again, a herd managed to very high standards.

The **Large herds:** This proved to be more difficult for me as there were three very strong competitors. However in the end I had to make a decision and it went to Sarah Barnes and her Hopeham Herd. This relatively new herd has been established with cattle purchased from a variety of breeders. The resulting progeny are of the highest quality and type. Two recently purchased young bulls from Peter Brown will compliment senior sire, Brundish Colonel. Hopeham Absolute

will also play his part in the future as well I'm sure. The herd is managed on commercial lines but with attention to detail second to none. I was particularly impressed by the way the cattle were presented and detailed with pedigrees of each group printed for me. It was very easy to find specific animals we were looking for.

Reserve was more difficult as both Denise at Lavenham and Tony at Appleton are true breed enthusiasts. The quality of stock at both farms is excellent. The main reason that I plumped for Lavenham was that I thought the herd was managed a little bit more thoroughly and tight, not as commercial as Appleton. That's not to say anything against Tony as I know how busy he is running the whole enterprise by himself with help from Ann when possible.

So, in summary, congratulations to all who entered; pass the word around so that hopefully more members will participate next year. It really is an ideal and easy to get your stock and farm known to other members of the Society.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of judging this year's competition and I wish all of you the very best in the future.

Regards

Ray Bowler