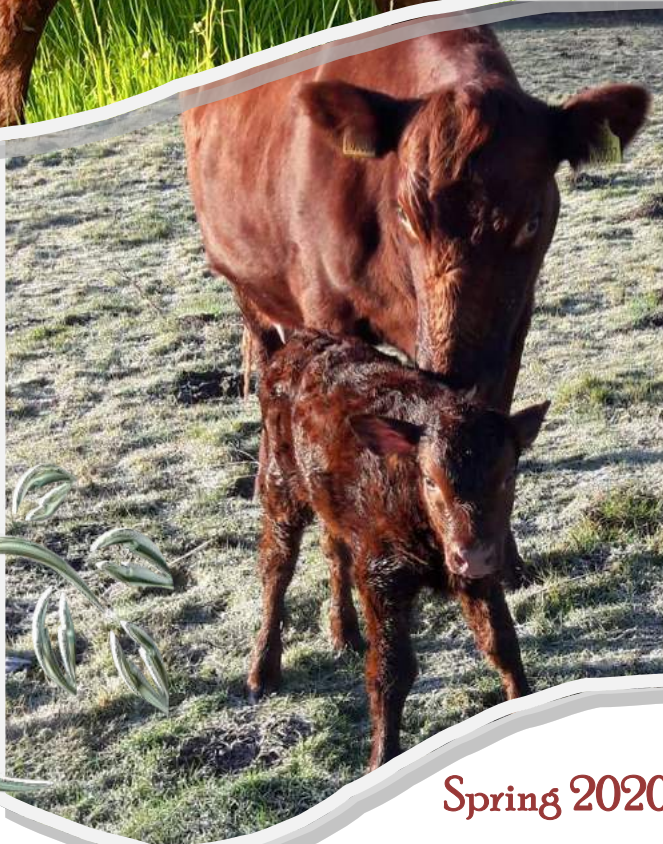




Newsletter No. 116



Spring 2020

WOLDSMAN RED POLLS

S.G. PRESCOTT & SONS

WOLD HOUSE LUND DRIFFIELD E YORKS YO25 9TW

Founded 1953

All females are home bred and registered with the Society

Health status: Tuberculosis, Brucellosis tested.

No animal we have bred has ever had BSE.

‘Would you like contented animals like these? Contact us!’



Herd size: 100 suckler cows, easy calving, all male calves left entire, sold as beef @ 15-18 months of age @ 550-600kgs or for breeding.

All young bulls weighed regularly & we are achieving gains of 1.7kg per day up to 365 days of age (own records).

Young cows, in calf and maiden heifers usually for sale.

Andrew & Office:

Tel: 01377 217232

Ben:

Tel: 07855 041632

Stephen:

Tel: 01964 550229

Fax: 01377 271813

Mob: 07985 745990

Email: prescott.andrew@btconnect.com

Email: ysgprescott@btinternet.com

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

The Red Poll Cattle Society

Established 1888



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Newsletter No. 116

Spring 2020

President: J. S. Butler
President Elect: Q. G. Edwards
Chairman: J. R. Williams
Secretary: R. J. Bowler
Treasurer: Mrs T. J. Booker



Dual purpose Red Polls

Charity Registration No. 213132
Company Registration No. 27159

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Year Letter

The year letter for 2020 registrations is K

Registration Fees

Heifer in the Herd Book of year of birth £13.50

Heifer outside the Herd Book of year of birth £25

Bull £80 Transfer of ownership £10 Birth Notification £10

Please note that the Herd Book closes at the end of January for entries from the preceding year. When you sell a Red Poll, please return the pedigree certificate to the office. The certificate will be sent to the new owner on payment, by the buyer or seller, of the transfer fee.

Advertising in Red Poll News

As a member, you can take a full page advertisement for £25. The rate for non members is £50. Half pages are priced pro rata.

Copy dates; February 19th, June 19th, October 16th

For livestock sales, please contact the Secretary, Ray Bowler, at the office. Steers are always wanted.

Membership Subscriptions as from 1st January 2020

Registering: £50

Associate: £25

Overseas: £30 in sterling

Life Registering Member: £750

Life Associate Member: £300

Life Overseas Member: £500

Secretary's Report – 22nd February 2020

There is only one new member for election at this meeting, 14 at this time last year, they are a registering member. There are 393 members – 377 at this meeting last year. There have been 37 new members, with 19 resignations during 2019, sadly there have been three deaths.

The makeup of the membership is therefore: 252 Registering/Life Registering, 80 Associate/Life Associate, seven Overseas and 54 Student/Junior. Since the last meeting I have sent out six information packs to persons enquiring about the Society.

16 straws of semen have been sold so far this year, compared to 52 last year. Last year's total was 390 straws.

Three bulls have been inspected since the last meeting, therefore 19 were inspected and registered last year. Ten of the bulls were M0's and nine M1's. Average inspection points were 171. All the animals have their Igenity Beef Profiles.

Registrations were once again a real struggle but by being persistent with emails and phone calls the final figures are 795 Registered Females, 45 Grading Females and 19 Bulls making a total of 859 animals, these are from 109 breeders, an increase of 32 animals when compared with registrations for 2018 which were 752 Registering females, 49 Grading animals, and 26 bulls, from 117 breeders. I also think it is a sign of the times that many more cows are being mated with beef bulls to make crossbred cattle for commercial sale as it is of no doubt that these cattle sell better in the open market.

I thought it would be interesting to analyse the numbers of cattle being registered by breeders:

The following table shows this analysis.

| 1 - 2 | 3 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 - 15 | 16 - 20 | 21 - 25 | 26 - 30 | 31 - 35 | 36 - 40 | 40 + |
|-------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|
| 36 | 30 | 17 | 11 | 2 | 9 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |

It shows that the majority of our breeders register less than five animals so it's imperative that we continue to service the smallholder. Large commercial breeders are just as important but it's interesting to see the breeders make up. Again, out of interest, the largest number of registrations were made by:

S.G. Prescott & Sons – Woldsman with 50 animals

Martin Holdings – Lawford with 44 animals

G.T. Goff Ltd. – Elmham with 39 animals

Daniel Powell – Rowton with 26 animals

Breeders with between 21 – 25 animals were:

Tony Barratt – Appleton, Roger Beecroft – Creting, Adrian Darby – Kemerton,

Essex County Council – Legacy, Quentin Edwards – Cools, A.N. Foster and

Partners – Canute, Lady Getty – Lavenham Brook, A.J.P. Pochin – Pochin,

Jonathan Stapleton – Carlton.

I have also carried out some analyses on the latest BCMS data. According to The British Cattle Movement Service data from 2nd January 2020, there are the following number of Red Polls registered with them, which means there are a lot more Red Polls out there than are registered with the Society, which in some respects is good news but in others not so good as it would be good to see as many registered as possible.

| Age of cattle | England | Scotland | Wales |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Prue bred Females | | | |
| 0 – 12mths | 978 | 28 | 15 |
| 12 – 24mths | 915 | 29 | 19 |
| 24 – 36mths | 712 | 10 | 18 |
| 36mths + | 3832 | 125 | 89 |
| Total | 6437 | 192 | 141 |
| | | | |
| Cross bred Females | | | |
| 0 – 12mths | 238 | 7 | 3 |
| 12 – 24mths | 220 | 4 | 3 |
| 24 – 36mths | 160 | 9 | 4 |
| 36mths + | 716 | 72 | 24 |
| Total | 1334 | 92 | 34 |
| | | | |
| Pure bred Males | | | |
| 0 – 12mths | 1234 | 37 | 18 |
| 12 – 24mths | 874 | 38 | 12 |
| 24 – 36mths | 136 | 10 | 3 |
| 36mths + | 179 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 2423 | 86 | 35 |
| | | | |
| Cross bred Males | | | |
| 0 – 12mths | 294 | 13 | 10 |
| 12 – 24mths | 247 | 14 | 14 |
| 24 – 36mths | 64 | 8 | 3 |
| 36mths + | 34 | - | - |
| Total | 639 | 35 | 27 |

As can be seen this makes a total of 9314 pure bred Red Polls and 2161 cross bred Red Polls in the UK herd. However this isn't the full picture with cross bred cattle as you are supposed to register the calf with the sire breed but as we know that there are numerous breeders using terminal sires on their Red Poll cows, with this in mind the number of cross bred cattle will triple in numbers if not more.

I have visited 16 members in Essex and South Suffolk together with two days in Norfolk visiting new members, members who have stock for sale and other members who I haven't been to for several years, Eight members in all. I have been to a Show & Sales Committee meeting at Joy Broughton's, Brogborough, which was combined with a Publicity meeting, and a Youth Committee meeting at Otley College. I have attended a Finance meeting and an Articles and Bye-Laws meeting at Mark Martin's in Rugby.

Lady Getty has a new Farm Manager, Chris Thomas having retired. The new manager wants to meet me and discuss the breed, as he doesn't know anything about it, and needs to decide in what direction he is going to take the farm.

One of the highlights of the autumn was my visit to Cornwall for a meeting with member Kenny Trembath and other interested parties about a conservation project they are undertaking. John Williams and Viv Caust accompanied me.

I have copied my report below.

Carnyorth Common – St Just, Cornwall.
Report from a meeting about the above – 21st November 2019

Present:

Kenny Trembath - Common Owner and Grazier

Richard Glasson – Natural England

Matt Watts – Cornwall Wildlife Trust & Penwith Landscape Partnership

Ray Bowler – Secretary, Red Poll Cattle Society

John Williams – Chairman, Red Poll Cattle Society

Vivian Caust – Local Red Poll Cattle Society member

The meeting was arranged to discuss the effects of the grazing of Carnyorth Common with Red Poll cattle.

Previously Kenny had grazed the common with Longhorn cattle but there were increasing issues with the cattle and the increased public access required to claim Stewardship payments for the land and in the damage the cattle were doing to the archeology of the site.

Two years ago to try and solve this problem, Kenny purchased a few Red Poll cows and established the Sunset herd. Today the herd stands at 10 cows plus associated youngstock together with recently purchased bull Fedw Melchior.

Richard Glasson has been advising Kenny for many years on HLS issues and now the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The Common is part of the Penwith Landscape Partnership which is a Partnership between several Conservation and Environmental bodies, which is overseen by Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Since the Red Polls have arrived there have been no complaints from the public or Archaeologists.

The cows graze the common from May to October, the rest of the year they are grazed on grass paddocks which are used as lie-back paddocks for the Forage Stubble Turnips and Kale which the cattle strip graze through the winter. Silage or hay is made and fed to the cattle if required and to the youngstock which are kept on another part of the farm. Cows are out-wintered, they calve in October/November and are then weaned in May before the cows go onto the common. The bull runs with the cows during the winter, again he doesn't go onto the common. Therefore only cows graze the common which it is felt is a major reason why there haven't been any issues with them.

Kenny, Richard and Matt were all very positive about the improvements the cattle are making to the Common, not only in the fauna and flora of the area but in the aesthetic look of the environment. Another real plus factor has seen the return of nesting Dartford Warblers, something not seen in the area for many years. Public access has increased, the hope being this will continue in the future.

Whilst in the South West I took the opportunity to visit six members in the area.

Paul Granger has requested that he starts the Probationary Judge process.

Cattle sales have been fairly quiet through the winter. Quentin Edwards has sold 12 maiden heifers to a potential new member in Somerset, but apart from that I haven't heard of any sales apart from a couple of bulls changing hands. There are several batches of cattle for sale on the website, be it cows, heifers and bulls.

I haven't had any information about cattle sales through the markets.

Ray Bowler

The RPCS Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner will be on 31st October 2020 at Mercure White Hart Hotel, 1 St John Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2SD. The three course dinner will be £35 per head and accommodation on 31st October will be £100 (double room, b&b); on 30th October and 1st November £95 (double room, b&b). Full details and a booking form will be sent out with the Summer Red Poll News.





Rare and Native Breed Sale 4th April 2020

The Red Poll Cattle Society will be in attendance at the Native Breed Show. This is an inspection only show and if you would like to put cattle forward please contact the Secretary – 01245 600032, or Joy Broughton – 01525 288189.

Please come and support this show as it has a lot going on. It is a good day out and we always look forward to meeting members.

Shows with Red Poll Classes - 2020

South Suffolk – 10th May, Judge: Su Mahon
Shropshire – 23rd/24th May, Judge: Mark Cheetham
Hertfordshire – 23rd/24th May, Judge: Jeff Daw
Suffolk (National Show) – 27th/28th May, Judge: Ross Draper, Australia
Royal Three Counties – 12th/13th/14th May, Judge: John Butler
Royal Three Counties, Rare/Native Breeds - 14th May, Judge: David Hunt
Royal Cheshire – 16th/17th June, Judge: Denis Jenkins
Royal Norfolk - 1st/2nd July, Judge: Andrew Kirk
Nantwich – 29th July, Judge: David Blunt
Westmorland – 10th September, Judge: Anthea Daw

Herd Competitions - 2020

Midlands – Judge, Terry Mancey
South – Judge, Tony Barratt
North – Judge, David Hunt
East – Judge, John Williams
National – Judge, Quentin Edwards

Mick Trundle 1939 – 2019



The son of Harry and Edna Trundle, Michael William was born on April the 5th 1939 in Lever near Bolton, Lancashire, his father's home county. Shortly after his birth Harry and Edna moved back to Edna's home town of Luton where they had met and married the previous year. Harry found employment with Vauxhall Motors who trained him as a welder. He first worked on the production of Bedford trucks and on Churchill Tanks and remained at Vauxhall for 28 years.

In 1957 during regular social evenings of Chapel folk and Church folk where both dad and a certain Miss Penelope Dudley were regulars, a relationship developed and would last for about a year but ended prematurely. At the same time the apprenticeship was coming to an end and dad made a decision that joining the Navy as a regular would be better than National

Service in the Army so May '59 found him at the Royal Naval Cookery School in Chatham and looking forward to nine years in the Navy. His first posting was on Britains last battleship, HMS Vanguard, followed by a stint on the aircraft carrier HMS Centaur in the Baltic Sea. Dad asked to keep in touch with Penny and the romance was rekindled.

During time spent at HMS Excellent on Whale Island, dad managed to slip on a wet floor and break his left hip. After some weeks of recovery, a two year draft to Singapore was received and one evening in May '61 dad found himself on a bench in Green Park (not on one knee) popping the question to Penny which was duly accepted.

While away in Singapore another slip, this time down a ships ladder, resulted in the same leg being broken and the visit was cut short. Back in England a house was purchased and a wedding date set for 6th October 1962 with a honeymoon in Jersey. For some time dad had been suffering from occasional headaches which had been getting more intense. This led to visiting a specialist in Harley Street and hospitalisation at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington. Tests confirmed a condition known as acromegaly which results in excessive growth. He was told that the Navy would make a decision about his future. Drafts arrived for two aircraft carriers; HMS Victorious and HMS Ark Royal, out to the Far East on one and back on the other, but the chances of complications with the condition meant that dad was to be discharged from the Navy on medical grounds.

Since school days a hankering for being involved in agriculture had been growing and so it was that five acres were purchased in Meppershall, know unofficially as Trundle Towers! An ambition to farm this land commercially was never realised due to its small size so this became a hobby which lasted fifty years, with pretty much every farm animal you can think of finding home there at some point. Mum and dad kept pigs and cows for meat and milk and over the years an interest in the Rare Breeds Preservation Society led to exclusively breeding Red Poll cattle, still a familiar sight and sound at The Towers! Following a visit to a Meppershall Players production in 1974, dad decided he could have a go at that and started a long association with The Players. In 1992 dad was made redundant from SKF and now, free of their offspring, they decided to do something together and with dad's stage experience and mum's love of singing, Margaret Blenkin recruited them both into the Putteridgebury Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Dad's magnificent role as the Chief of Police in The Pirates Of Penzance must go down in the annals of the society's achievements.

Dad has often been described as a big man with a big heart (and a big voice). A great story teller and fine purveyor of the shaggy dog story, he was always talking to somebody and sharing a joke. In Meppershall and beyond he has become a great figure of the community, loved (especially by the ladies of Caritas) and respected by all who have come into contact with him during his life, while all the time remaining a very modest and gentle man.

Howard Trundle



Photo at Trundle Towers

Richard Dawes 1942 – 2020

Richard was born in Bedford in 1942 at the height of the War. His earliest memories included standing in the garden watching the planes from airfields around Bedford and East Anglia stack up over Bedford until the sky was thick with RAF and USAF bombers.

Richard had a strong association with Bedford School, where he was a pupil from 1949 to 1961 and later a Governor. It was here that he developed a love of rowing, sailing and fencing, as well as a love for the outdoors.

He had a lifelong interest in agriculture and even in his teens was reading *Farmers Weekly*, which, for a boy living in the centre of Bedford was slightly odd and a dream everyone thought would go unfilled at the time. His parents had close friends who farmed just outside Bedford and their eldest son was a good friend. Richard spent many happy days there.

In those days the school was much more closely tied to agriculture since the county had a large farming community. It had a flourishing Young Farmers Club and just before he left school the master-in-charge apparently gave them some advice “what you boys should do is to marry a farmer’s daughter....”

Anyway, most weekends Richard returned to Bedford to hunt with the North Bucks Beagles. In the mid sixties he joined the meet just as a most attractive girl turned up. Always keen on the main chance he asked a friend who she was. He told Richard her name was Virginia Drummond and she was from a farming family from Hinwick out Wellingborough way. Fortified by a large piece of chocolate cake at the post hunt tea, he approached her and suggested they adjourn to the local pub for a sharpener. “Certainly not, I’m busy and anyway I don’t know you” was the response! Clearly Richard’s charm worked in the end, as Virginia and Richard married.

A close friend and colleague from the Mercury Asset



Management days said “He was a great stock-picker but definitely didn't go by the book and he most certainly did things his way.”

“He was loveable and had the best sense of humour - we laughed A LOT!”

He certainly extolled the virtues of perseverance and determination as well as being able to develop strong relationships with family, friends and colleagues. Even as his career in the City came to a close, he had many other interests, which normally had a strong social aspect. One example being racing. He had some notable winners such as Junk Bond, and even claimed he “broke even”.

He had a real love of food and a legendary sweet tooth – in particular his classic ice cream – sugar – double cream combination, despite the efforts of “the food police” as he sometimes called Virginia!

When it came to a drink, he liked the glass full to the brim – known as “doing a Richard” by certain members of the family. Very good for morale Richard used to say.

When Richard retired he took the opportunity to further develop his interests alongside Virginia as well as enjoying village life to the full. He also continued with his non executive roles and was a Justice of the Peace, sitting for many years on City of London bench and subsequently returning to sit on the Milton Keynes bench.

It was also during this time that Richard became the Chairman of the Red Poll Cattle Society and the following is from Terina, who was the Society's Secretary at that time:

Richard was my second Red Poll Chairman and it quickly became clear that he was going to make great changes in the way in which the Society operated and he set about his plan with great energy and foresight, producing a strategy document to take the Society forward. This set the Society on a business footing and with Giles Crisp as Treasurer and the appointment of Diana Flack as our Field Officer, the four of us formed a very close working relationship which saw the Society expand from 180 members to 400.

In 2011 the UK hosted the Red Poll World Congress, with delegates attending from all over the Red Poll world. Again, Richard formed a small group, this time of five, to organise the Congress. He had it all planned out in his mind – start in London and travel around the UK – but he did allow us to add just a few tweaks to the master plan. The Congress was a roaring success and deemed by those attending to be the best ever and to have set a benchmark that would be hard to follow.

That last sentence could also sum up Richard's vast contribution to the Red Poll Cattle Society.

I loved working with, and learning from him and I and many of us will miss him very much.

Terina Booker

Maggie and I had been on notice from my elder cousin Jem to visit Australia for at least the last 15 years. We decided in 2019 to spend a month away from the farm, visiting family and friends “down under”. The holiday became a mind cramming mix of town and country: Four states, four cities, four farms, a huge privilege to be able to see Australia through the eyes of those who live there. We have driven just under 3000 km, been driven 1500 km, flown 4000 km, to get this glimpse of this huge country, the same landmass as the USA.

My cousin landed from a ship in Fremantle when he was just 19 in 1965 with a suitcase and a letter of recommendation. Being a farmer's son, he had worked briefly in abattoirs in the UK before setting off for a new life. He worked on sheep stations in Western Australia and I had asked him to take us to stay on one of these quintessential parts of Australia's settler history. We travelled from Perth north to Geraldton by car and then on to Gabyon Station, two-and-a-half hours east of Geraldton and two hours south of the station Jem had worked on. We became used to straight roads disappearing over the horizon, heat, dust and flies; strips of tarmac succeeded by graded dirt track as we entered the outback.

Gabyon stretches over 650,000 acres. It has paddocks that are 25,000 acres. In its heyday it was shearing and selling 40,000 sheep a year and was owned by a family who had three other stations in the same region but never visited any of them. The landscape is a desiccated vista of endless scrub. It is desperately dry and harsh and the intensity of the old farming model has been achieved at the expense of the environment. Grazing stock destroy the vegetation that managed to survive in these conditions, eating every leaf that fell onto the ground as a protective mulch that retains moisture and protects from the sun. Bark has been stripped from the major plant stems so the scrub dies, destroying the last vestiges of a protective



Red Poll Bull, Eurir



Importance of sh

s in Australia

shade. What is left is a concrete hard red brick floor where few plants can gain any purchase. The current owners are attempting to regenerate growth by studied neglect but it will take years for the scrub to thrive again and rewilding projects will need to be undertaken by generations.

Apparently, the Aboriginal community have been protesting about the problem for years, seeing the destruction of what they believe is part of themselves, the land. There are some moves to return swathes of this very marginal land to its original occupiers but this will be fiercely contested. Where the land is better quality and the climate is kinder, the Aboriginal population is almost invisible. In the North and the Outback it is much more present in the community but, even in South Australia, one of the farms we visited had been commended by local Elders of the indigenous tribe for planting and protecting trees. The farmer was really surprised by encouragement from this source.

Gabyon retains all its woolshed and shearers' accommodation, its small school, its shop, the car carcasses that the aboriginals who worked on the farm used to inhabit, the heaps of glass bottles round the cars, the wind pumps standing like memorials to absent water, the dry tanks a further testimonial.

It is very hard to see how the courageous, tough and delightful couple who have recently bought the place will be able to make a sustainable living out of farming it. Their B&B in the old manager's house has clearly proved popular and the home grown pork was delicious but the area is so huge and unforgiving; musters of stock can only take place directed from the air and the gyrocopter had broken down. On top of which, the government has been under sustained pressure from the animal rights lobby to cease live export of animals to the Middle East and Indonesia, which are the principal markets for Stations like Gabyon, until animal welfare standards can be improved. This export route may be closed off all together in the future and Australia's home market is not large enough, only 25 million, to absorb any extra meat.



Eurimbla Handling Yard (above)

Ian and Jill Coghlan, Eurimbla (below)



The Eurimbla Herd

After staying in Perth with my cousin, we flew to Sydney on the east coast and then hired a car to drive through the Blue Mountains and south to near Albany where we were hosted by fellow Red Poll breeders.

Jill and Ian Coghlan's family have been farming at Eurimbla now since 1976 on 500 acres of light gritty loam which produces good grass when there is rain but the seven-year drought which has afflicted this part of Australia showed signs of browned off grassland even though we were visiting in spring, late October. Eleven years ago they bought a further 200 acres in higher country, an hour's drive away and this remained lush and plentiful when we visited, having an average annual rainfall of 35 inches as opposed to 24 inches in the drier grounds of Eurimbla. The higher ground affords opportunity for cattle to be moved with the seasons and the grass at the time of our visit was plentiful and growing ahead of the cattle.

On these 700 Acres, the Coghlan's have developed a magnificent herd of Red Poll and some Shorthorns numbering around 550 with 200 cows and four bulls active at the time of our visit. Boomer, Zeus, Casanova and Porter were all magnificent beasts by any standards and the whole herd showed fine stock in excellent condition with tidy udders and big consistent conformation. Ian's cows were anything up to 15 years old and still producing fantastic calves. There don't appear to be any problems with udders and I think this has to do with breeding and with the quality of the grass or the lack of grass.

We were impressed by the quietness of the cattle and how Ian could quickly identify those animals who had won distinction in the Agricultural Shows and the breeding history of his stock. Ian is a passionate advocate of EBV's, arguing that his market is primarily aimed at commercial herds where the Red Poll is seen as a contributor to the hybrid mix. He reasons



Heading off at Eurimbla



Relaxing at Eurimbla

that his buyers won't look at cattle if they don't have the figures, want measured evidence of their breeding potential and, in some cases, won't even visit the herd but will buy on figures alone. Given the distances that some buyers would have to travel, one can understand this, but figures alone won't tell you the whole story and there has in the past been an EBV scandal in Australia where some breeders were massaging figures to secure sales.

On our second day at the farm, we helped Ian load 10 cows with accompanying calves and two bulls for their visit to the national fertility centre at nearby Holbrook. Ian had sold semen and eggs to a major breeder in Jamaica where the Red Poll is the largest single breed. I would recommend we try to reinstate purchase of Australian semen which, I understand, is currently not permitted. I followed Ian up the trackway between paddocks as we walked the

two enormous bulls to the handling area. They were completely relaxed even when presented with the ramp up onto the lorry. The handling system was a circular maze of galvanised steel with cattle races curving round interconnected pentagonal sorting bays. Each race had an accompanying raised walkway on the outside for those handling the cattle. It made me realise that my handling system leaves my helpers too exposed to moving cattle although we later watched young men leaping in and out of the races while injecting their youngstock! Maybe it is a matter of age but I am currently planning a redesign.

Red Pepper Herd

Our next visit was to the Red Poll President Gay Ward's pedigree Red Pepper stud. This was a short visit as we had many kilometres to cover and the first welcome rain, the first in seven years for many was pouring

down, so walking out to see cattle was not an option but the visit was useful to understand the President's role in Australia.

Gay is an Executive President so chairs the society steering committee and is much more hands-on than the English equivalent. She was dealing with a furious complaint from a member who did not like the photos of cattle in the previous year's newsletter, all shared on Twitter with the rest of the membership. The photos record cattle coping, in many cases, with the seventh consecutive year of drought. The newsletter is a record of members' experience and progress, not a sales brochure.

The drought has been unforgiving, with terrible fires and we watched the very moving series of clips on the television of farmers running out into the rain in their underpants and dancing for joy, young children screaming with astonishment as they encountered rain for the first time. Another clip showed big men weeping with relief; suicide rates in the farming community have soared and supermarkets are running campaigns to raise funds for families ruined by drought. Some are walking off unsalable farms and we met one couple who had recently sold a dry farm to move south to moister climes.

Driving South along the east coast we left smoke swathed coastline and mountains behind and found increasingly verdant spring pastures on either side of the highway: mile upon mile upon mile of cattle country with large herds of British breeds, predominantly black but a fair number of Herefords and Shorthorns.

Interestingly, the continental breeds have been tried but in this part of Australia and the West at least have not stuck, so one only sees the occasional Charolais or Simmental cross, throwbacks to an earlier fashion. The British breeds have stood the test of time and climate. We saw literally thousands of prime cattle glowing with condition, sometimes on pastures that at first glance had nothing on them.

East Victoria beef gave way to West Victoria dairy and truly lush pastures. An increasing number of farms are engaging in what they call regenerative farming so paddock grazing is being replaced by a system more akin to a cow's natural behaviour, drift and graze, but still within a paddock framework. We visited one farm where cattle are moved every one and a half to 2-days, an easy process with a quad bike because the animals are always moving onto new pastures.

I was surprised to discover that, in terms of membership, the Red Poll breed is struggling. The society has about 64 members and although we saw some superb cattle, the Australian breeders share many of the same dilemmas that exercise our own Society: is the Red Poll now just to be seen as a beautiful and easy cow for



Calves in Dry Handling Yard at Eurimbla

hobby farmers or should its undoubted potential as a commercial breed be pursued more energetically? As we free ourselves from the domination of “EUROP” in our meat industry should we be promoting the virtues of this wonderful English breed more energetically? The ability to forage efficiently, the quality of the meat with the superb intramuscular fat, the easy management, low handling risks and costs are all qualities the Australian breeders recognise too. But if we go for the commercial market and sell to it how do we ensure the future of the breed?

Even Ian Coghlan’s herd of superb cattle is not really contributing to the expansion of a quality national herd because the commercial farmers just want the genes for their own carefully calibrated mix.

Bainger Beef near Adelaide

The next herd we visited was a five-day stay with old friends Hugh and Clare Bainger who have been seeing us regularly in the UK since they first came to stay in our B&B on the farm. Hugh and Clare have built up a very successful beef business, literally in the sense that they continue to buy more farms as and when the right ones become available at the right price. Hugh prepares cattle predominantly for the European market because he sees this market as setting the highest standards in pricing and animal welfare. His product is a 500kg 24-month mix of Shorthorn, Hereford and Angus cross. All the bulls are black and bought in batches of 20. He uses the same bull breeders who understand what he wants, cows that would produce a calf which must be 500 kg at 24 months. They are then sold to feed lots where they will be finished for slaughter in 3-months. The bulls are the engine of that process and are chosen individually by Hugh from a shortlist given him by the breeder. That way the breeder is committing himself to his own stock, an important element in the psychology of an ongoing sales relationship. Hugh is third generation Bainger to be farming in South Australia and we were shown the homesteads where his grandfather lived and his father founded his family. Clare is the daughter of another farming dynasty.

Talking to Hugh, you realise he has not just got a very sharp business brain but a deep and personal engagement with the cattle industry. Although the community is spread over hundreds of kilometres we discovered that the Baingers know a very wide range of people through years of dealing in cattle. Each of their farms is run by a single employee, all of whom live on site because the distances are so huge. Each employee keeps his own records of the performance of his herd so there is friendly competition between them: number of cows in calf, number of empty, weight gains of calves who are all graded from weaning in separate batches, each batch going to the feed lots when they are ready. There are about 4000 cattle spread over about 17000 acres but this ground has to generate enough feed for the hay in winter and to carry feeding cows through the extreme heat of December’s summer when the pastures dry up and temperatures can rise to 42 degrees.



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Hugh and Clare's son Charlie is gradually taking over the reins of the venture and the challenges of succession are the same as they are everywhere. How do you hand over a thriving business and allow the next generation to take over the whole responsibility for it and do their own thing? They have thought carefully about this and their solution has been to step away by traveling for months at a time. Hugh is a biking enthusiast having farmed from a horse when a young man and travels all over the world with a bunch of friends. Clare loves Europe and goes culture tripping. Charlie, in his turn, is still running his lucrative surfing school in the summer months. The next stage will be the forming of a strategic vision for the future: Charlie's vision. These are exciting times.

What have I learnt?

The Australian Meat Market is huge and international in its reach and aspiration. As in the UK, Red Polls are a minority breed but, even with this breed, serious commercial producers are developing them to meet the requirements of overseas markets. With a population of only 25 million, the home market remains a relatively small part of this.

At the same time, cattle farmers, along with everyone else, are having to relearn that production methods must acknowledge the condition and needs of the land. A more sensitive approach is necessary if they are not going to destroy the goose that lays the golden egg. The recent terrible fires are partly due to a lack of a systematic approach to controlled burning, something the aborigines have been doing for millennia. Just preserving bush, without breaks and clearances, has created a tinder dry network of combustible materials, often very close to housing, so fires can spread, join together and devastate whole regions. The conservation lobby also needs to learn how better to manage the environment.

The increasing use of regenerative grazing, where cattle are regularly moved, sometimes daily, is another example of more sensitive management. Cattle are encouraged to graze and move on, returning 10 weeks later to the same patch, thus avoiding overtaxing the grasses or destroying them altogether by pulling the whole plant from the parched soil. Rediscovery of a symbiotic relationship with the natural world is happening and applies to UK farmers just as much, even though our challenges, eg loss of soil quality through water erosion, are different.

The chain of supply must assist with the farmers' attempts to farm more responsibly. There should not be a financial penalty for caring for the environment; the product should be more valued as a consequence of careful farming. Australian farmers don't have grants from government like we do and don't see why they are necessary. Even with grants, we are not really addressing the conflicts between high production and conservation. Rewilding dodges the issue unless it embraces the need for productivity and with a growing human population we are all going to need more food, not less.

Another advantage of more sustainable farming is that food quality can be maintained. There is ample evidence of a decline in essential nutrition and trace elements in vegetables sold in the UK because of too much take and not enough give back to the soil. For example, the drop in iron to be found in spinach - so much for Popeye's muscles! Originally, Popeye was a cartoon figure for an American campaign to encourage more healthy eating. All of these challenges can be addressed by human ingenuity and imagination if the will is there. The greatest challenge for Australian agricultural production is the lack of water and the huge amounts of energy required to desalinate what water is available; yet, Australia's vast surface is relentlessly burnt by the sun, the greatest energy source we have. Solar energy could use one excess to relieve the other shortage.

The whole trip was so stimulating, I could go on, but my final point is the recognition of shared history, culture and concerns. We have a huge amount in common: shared families, constant interchanges and we need to go on communicating in our shared language and cooperate with each other in the Anglophone world.

Quentin Edwards



The High Country, Eurimbla



The Felix Cobbold Trust provides grants to improve and advance agriculture in six categories:

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Since 2007, the Trust has funded individuals and projects benefitting Suffolk and the adjoining counties to over £1.2 million, and is pleased to support the Red Poll Cattle Society breed development programme.

To promote careers in agriculture, the Trust has commissioned a collection of films, ***"Amazing Careers in Agriculture"*** which can be found on You Tube at <https://youtu.be/azZuW5dnQGk>

For more information and eligibility for grants, visit:

www.felixcobboldtrust.org.uk

or contact colinsmith3438@gmail.com

Fedw Stig 26877



Sire: Fedw Thomos

Dam: Fedw Crag

Born: 26:2:2002

Weight: June 2003 606kg January 2009 1150kg

Semen Available for UK & Export

Bulls for Hire

J.R. Williams

Pinguis Herd of Red Poll Cattle

2 Sleapford, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF6 6HQ

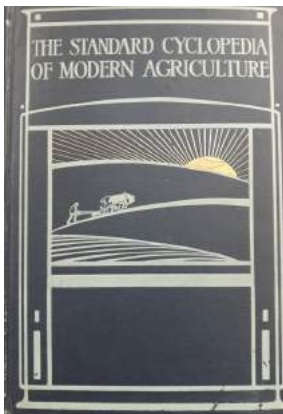
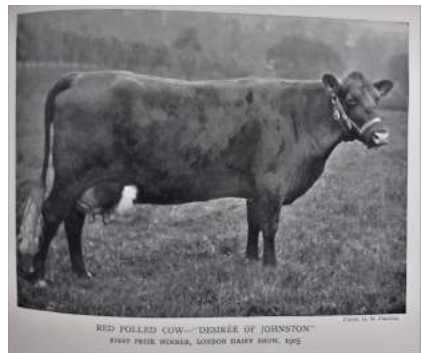
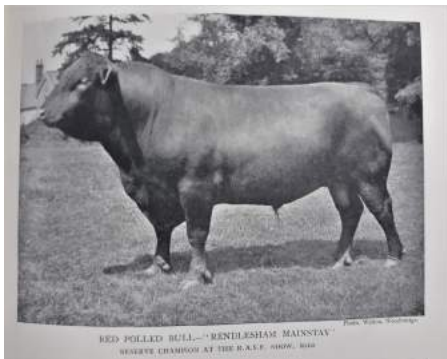
Tel: 01952 254203

Email: jrw2@btinternet.com

www.pinguisherd.com

Archive Corner

Four photographs from the beginning of the twentieth century found a fascinating volume of all things agricultural and rural. The Red Polls have one of the biggest sections for cattle breeds detailing the history and leading members of the breeding of these cattle to fit the requirements of farms at that time.



The Archive

The Society has an extensive archive of herd books, papers, silverware and paintings which are being curated by Joy Broughton. If you have anything that might be of interest to the society please contact Joy on 07961428431.



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Regional Field Officer Arrangements

The Society operates a system of Honorary Regional Field Officers, as it has become clear that it is very difficult for one individual to cover the whole country. The system is co-ordinated by our Secretary, Ray Bowler. A list of Regional Field Officers is given below with contact details:

Ray Bowler—01245600032/07906761206 secretary@redpoll.co.uk

Area: South Suffolk, Essex, Greater London, Kent, Berkshire, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Devon & Cornwall

Richard Brookes—07940547180 richardsjbrookes@gmail.com

Area: Norfolk, North Suffolk

Joy Broughton—07961428431 zulu623@gmail.com

Area: Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire

John Williams—07860269044 jrw2@btinternet.com

Area: Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland and Cumberland, North Wales

Anthea Daw—07508136409 antheadaw@live.com

Area: Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, South Wales

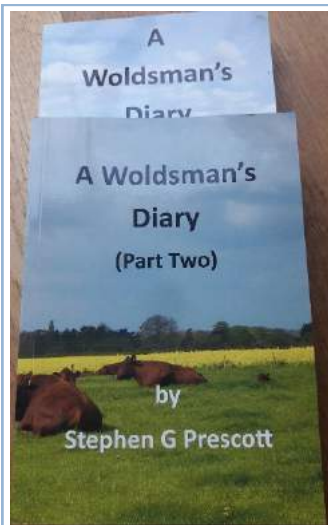
John Anderson—07833664121 borenichjohn@gmail.com

Area: Scotland

If you wish to buy or sell cattle you should contact Ray Bowler on 01245600032 or 07906761206 or secretary@redpoll.co.uk. Ray will pass the details to the relevant Regional Field Officer and arrange for inclusion on the website if you so desire.

If you have any problems or queries please feel free to contact: John Williams (Chairman) 07860269044 jrw2@btinternet.com

We hope that you will have the opportunity to meet your Regional Field Officer before too long.



A Woldsmen's Diary

The next instalment of the fascinating life and farm goings on of the Prescott family is now available in book form. This edition runs on from the first early years book and runs up to 1990. A real life history of a traditional Yorkshire family progressing with the times as farmers must!

Available on our website www.redpoll.org

The Red Poll Cattle Society National Show



This years' National Show will be held at The Suffolk Show on 27th and 28th May. Our judge is Mr Ross Draper from Australia and we are expecting a good number of Red Polls in the show ring, to give him plenty of the British breed for him to judge. The colleges that we sponsor will have their show teams there and as usual there should be plenty of friendly rivalry. We also have our own marquee with displays and merchandise, so please call by for a chat and a 'cuppa'. If anyone would like to help man (or woman) the stand for awhile please contact the secretary. All help would be appreciated.

2020 Field Day

The 2020 Field Day will be held at R H Forrest & Co. Mowness Hall, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 5JJ on Sunday 28th June 2020



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