

Southdown News

Newsletter of The Southdown Sheep Society

Issue 24

Autumn 2017

Season's Greetings



With best wishes for a peaceful Christmas
and a Happy New Year



Alison & Mark Robertson from Wymondham, Norfolk, took along their Southdowns to be part of the Christmas Nativity Service at Sprowston Parish Church in Norwich. A fitting start to the festive season.

Welcome New Council Member

At this year's AGM five places were up for election, and we welcomed back four members who returned to Council, Adam Brown, Duncan Crundwell, Paul Humphrey and Howard Wood, and welcomed especially Miriam Parker who joins Council for the first time.



Miriam Parker

Miriam Parker, and her partner Tim Green, started their Buckland flock in 1994 and moved to their 18 acre small holding in 2000. Starting small with only six ewes and a ram, they wanted to support a breed where they felt they could make a difference.

Miriam is an internationally renowned expert on animal behaviour, working full time, and therefore breeding sheep with easy care attributes was essential.

The Southdown as a breed suited their system, doing well on limited grazing of traditional sward. Through pre-planning, they have developed a very easy, stress free system.

Surplus lambs are sold successfully through her own box scheme lamb, using a local abattoir.

Miriam started performance recording the flock in 2011, she promotes a blend of growth and maternal traits, and uses the figures to influence her breeding strategy. She finds it a useful tool to identify good traits within certain lines of sheep.

The Buckland flock won the Most Improved Flock Award for the Southdown breed in 2015.

The flock is synchronised to lamb in January, during this time Miriam can provide maximum supervision with minimum interference. With her scientific background, Miriam is a keen recorder and analyses results thoroughly to modify management accordingly.

There is a strict culling policy and female replacements are selected from the top third of performance recorded animals. Miriam pays attention to the Southdown breed type, index (with attention to the maternal traits), and the breeding line history on both sire and dam. Generally the flock promotes longevity and this is clear within particular breeding lines.

ADVERTISE YOUR FLOCK

As a member of the Southdown Sheep Society there are a number of ways in which your flock, or individual animals, may be advertised:

2018 YEAR BOOK

The 2018 Year Book will be an A4 publication, in full colour.

Please note that all adverts included in the 2018 Year Book will also be included on the website.

Advertising rates for members are as follows:

Full page	£80
Half page	£40
Quarter page	£30
inside cover, front and back	£100

INTERACTIVE MAP ON THE WEBSITE

The usual £10 per box for the breeders' listing (to include name, address, flock and contact details) is still available at the current price: this includes a flag on the UK map on the Society's website, and a boxed entry in the annual Year Book.

The deadline for copy is January 31st 2018

WEBSITE ADVERTS

The cost of placing an advert on the website is £10 per advert. All adverts will include the flock name, breeder's contact details including telephone numbers and email, and a brief outline of what is available for sale. Please note that no pedigree information, no show results and no photographs will be included. Adverts remain on the website for 3 months. These may be added at any time. Please email the office with details.

A great day in West Wales

The 2017 Southdown Sheep Society Field Day and Annual General Meeting took place on October 7th at Neuaddlwyd Uchaf, Ciliau Aeron, Lampeter, Ceridigion, by kind invitation of Dylan and Delyth Williams and family.

Alison Harvey, Agriculture Manager for Lamb at Dunbia, led a team of speakers which included a butchery demonstration using a lamb carcass reared on the farm. This was followed by a powerpoint presentation from Dr Matthew Hegarty PhD, of Aberystwyth University: “an introduction to the use of genomics in sheep”

The annual auction of sheep paraphernalia raised welcome funds for the Society, with items as diverse as sheep bells, clothing and shears. The final item donated for sale was the most fiercely contested – a limited edition print by local artist, Southdown breeder and past President Gareth Lloyd Hughes.

An ongoing competition involved identifying the various breeds of ram that had been mated with Southdown ewes by looking carefully at the crossbred lambs.

Members and friends enjoyed a day of talks and activities before rounding off the day with the AGM and a truly Welsh afternoon tea.



SHOW CHAMPIONS ROUND UP

Well Done and Congratulations to those breeders whose flocks have featured in the Interbreed line-ups around the country during the 2017 show season:

Blaston Show

Interbreed Champion
Mr & Mrs Keith Stickels

Bucks County Show

Reserve Interbreed Champion
Basil Cooper

Cranleigh Show

Interbreed Champion
Hannah Turner

Edenbridge & Oxted Show

Interbreed Champion & Group
Mrs E Sargent

Essex Young Farmers Show

Interbreed Champion
Mrs Amy Readhead-Higgins

Frome Show

Interbreed Champion
Mrs G Helyer

Heathfield Show

Interbreed Champion
Mrs E Sargent

Henley and District Agricultural Show

Interbreed Champion
Graham Ryves-Webb

Moreton in Marsh Show

Interbreed Champion
Basil Cooper

Newbury Show

Interbreed Champion
Basil Cooper

Royal Norfolk Show

Interbreed Champion
Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

Royal Three Counties

Lowland Champion
Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

Royal Welsh Show

Supreme Pair
Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

Royal Welsh Spring Festival

Interbreed Champion
Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

South of England Show

Interbreed Champion & Group
Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

Suffolk Show Interbreed Group

Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

Surrey County Show

Interbreed Champion & Group
Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer

Please note: Whilst we try very hard in the Office to note all Interbreed champions in shows up and down the country, we rely on our members to let us know of their successes. Please keep in touch with the Office to tell us about significant results.

2018 NATIONAL SOUTHDOWN SHOW



ROYAL THREE COUNTIES SHOW

The 2018 Southdown Sheep Society National Show takes place at
Royal Three Counties Show on Friday June 15th 2018
The Judge is Mr Paul Humphrey.

Classes include:

Aged Ram, shorn bare on or after 1 February 2018

Shearling Ram, shorn bare on or after 1 February 2018

Signet Performance Recorded Shearling Ram (in top 25% of recorded breed in 2017) shorn bare on or after 1 February 2018

Pair of Shearling Rams, shorn bare on or after 1 February 2018

Ram Lamb, born 1 January – 28 February 2018

Ram Lamb, born after 1 March 2018

Aged Ewe, shorn bare on or after 1 February 2018

Shearling Ewe, shorn on or after 1 February 2018

Ewe Lamb, born 1 January – 28 February 2018

Ewe Lamb, born after 1 March 2018

A Pair, bred by exhibitor, comprising shearling ewe and shearling ram

Contact the show office for a schedule:

01684 584901 threecounties.co.uk

Findon Sheep Fair 2017



Record numbers of sheep were entered in this year's Fair with 45 farms and 24 different breeds. Included in the 45 farms were 10 new farms with a number of younger people bringing their sheep. The weather was very kind to us on the Saturday, having had heavy rain for most of Friday as we set up the show.

Judging the Southdown and Downland section was Susan Harmer. The supreme champion was Hannah Turner with her Southdown ram, a very appropriate winner as the show is held on the South Downs north of Worthing. Anne Lambert was there judging the Young Handlers where we had over 30 entered in all age groups, including some again from the local school at Findon which had been trained by Hilary Langford from the Nephcote flock.

We would like to welcome a lot more entries from Southdown members to the Findon Sheep Fair on Saturday 8th Sept 2018.

Graham Langford

Mrs Anne Lambert presenting the Interbreed Shield to Hannah Turner

2017 NSA events

The Southdown Sheep Society has been out and about promoting the breed at the regional NSA events throughout 2017.

In May Dylan Williams and his team represented the Society at NSA Welsh Sheep at Talybont on Usk, Brecon.

In June Adam Brown and the South West Regional Group flew the flag for the breed at NSA Sheep South West at Westleigh, Tiverton, Devon.

Also in June, Neil Stainthorpe headed up to County Durham with the display in order to promote the breed in the North of England.

All displays featured Southdown rams and examples of crossbred lambs. The message promoted to the commercial sheep farming sector was that Southdown rams are ideal for use on ewe lambs.

Members are encouraged to help and support these NSA events, and additional pairs of hands are always welcome.

Come along and support us at the national NSA event Sheep 2018 at Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 6PH, on Wednesday 18th July 2018.



The stand at North Sheep

THE SOUTHDOWN SHEEP SOCIETY

FLOCK COMPETITION 2017

Judge: Mr Stephen Humphrey

Class A Flock of 40 ewes or over
Winner is awarded the
Berkhampstead Rose Bowl and £25
1st **Goodwood Estate Co Ltd**
2nd **P E Goldsworthy MBE**

Class B Flock of 10 – 39 ewes
Winner is awarded the **Gaddesden Trophy and £25**
1st **Sophie Arlott**
2nd **Amy Readhead-Higgins**
3rd **Antony Glaves**
4th **Howard Wood**
5th **Lorraine Clements**

Class C NOVICE
Competition, not to have won a first prize
Winner is awarded the
Frank Grantham Trophy and £25
1st **Max Welton**
2nd **Louise Chiswell**

Tufton Beamish Trophy to the Champion Flock
Sophie Arlott
Reserve: Amy Readhead-Higgins

Hobgen Salver
for the best intake of shearing ewes
Mrs Amy Redhead-Higgins

Miller Hallett Trophy
for the best ewe lambs
Patrick Goldsworthy MBE

Paynter Wool Trophy for the flock with the best wool
Max Welton

Noakes Trophy for the best three lambs of each sex, sired by a named ram, present and shown
Antony Glaves

The Jim Cresswell Trophy
for the best ram or group of rams
Goodwood Estate Co Ltd

The Beryl Marsh Trophy
for the best newcomer
Max Welton

All trophies to be awarded at the Southdown Sheep Society Field Day 2018
Trophies to be held for one year

2017 Flock Competition

From the Judge

Dear All,

On behalf of the Southdown Sheep Society and myself I would like to thank you all for taking part in this year's Flock Competition.

I enjoyed meeting you all and seeing your Southdowns and thank you all for your hospitality.

I found the standard of sheep this year to be very high and it was most interesting travelling the UK to see them, from the South Downs to Suffolk, to the Brecon Beacons, the Midlands and Yorkshire.

It was my job to judge your flocks so hence there are winners and others of you that have not won, however you should all be very proud of your Southdowns.

I can truly say that there was not a single flock which did not have at least one sheep that I would like to have had in our own flock at home.

Thank you all once again, Stephen

Stephen Humphrey
2017 Flock Competition Judge

Honorary Life Membership

The Southdown Sheep Society would like to offer many Congratulations to Mr David Burden on his award of Honorary Life Membership of the Southdown Sheep Society.

The Award, presented at the South of England Show by President Mr Lindsay Dane, was made in recognition of many years of dedicated and loyal service to the Southdown Sheep Society.

In the picture, Southdown Judge Mr Steve Smith is congratulating David on his award following the judging of the Southdown sheep classes.



SOUTH DOWNS YARN

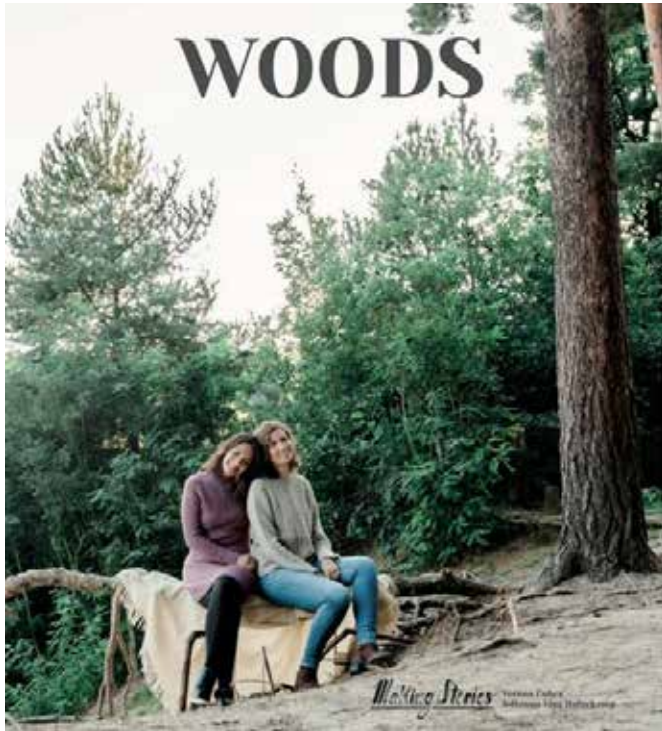
An update by Louise Spong

Southdown News has been following the progress of member Louise Spong and her company "South Downs Yarn".

Louise reports that they were "recently awarded a Highly Commended award from CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Sussex in their Rural Enterprise category, which we are absolutely thrilled about.

We've also been featured in a new knitting book called WOODS, and now have a stockist in the USA and London which is really exciting".

This is the article in WOODS about South Downs Yarn:



Can you tell us a bit about your company and yourself? How did you get to do what you do today?

The company I founded and continue to run is South Downs Yarn. I didn't set out to start a yarn company. Its creation came about as the result of my endeavours trying to source local wool for my own personal use. Difficult as it seems to believe now, it's a story that started a decade ago.

I learned to knit in 2007 when I was living in America. I was fortunate to have fantastic yarn stores all around me, and I travelled whenever I could to fibre festivals where I encountered all kind of fibre crafts being undertaken with a great variety of fibres. When I returned home to Sussex, I found the British wool market to be dominated by a few big yarn manufacturers with little or no mention of breed, let alone provenance. Thankfully, since then there has been much for change for the better.

Back home in 2010, nestled in the heart of the soon-to-be South Downs National Park, a landscape steeped in the history of shepherding Southdowns, during our annual visit to Findon Sheep Fair I still could not find anyone selling Southdown wool. I kept wondering why.

I carried on researching, and discovered I was not alone in wanting to use local wool. Whilst there seemed to be evidence of a gradual re-emergence of interest in British wool in general, I observed that Southdowns were never mentioned. It made me even more determined to find some Southdown wool to knit with. I wanted to know

that the wool had come from local flocks, the flocks that owe their name to the landscape that I grew up in. I wanted to feel that connection of place and time. I wanted to celebrate and share the heritage, the present, and the future of my local wool and landscape.

By 2012 I had a rough plan to source some fleece and get a small amount processed. I managed to pluck up the courage to write to David Burden. David is a smallholder and shepherd based in Duncton who has a flock of pedigree Southdowns. His response was overwhelmingly positive, and he has been a great supporter of our enterprise from the very beginning.

In September 2014 we made our maiden trip as stall holders to Findon Sheep Fair with our first batch of geo-traceable, single-flock Southdown yarn from the 2012 shearing of David's pedigree flock. It is named 'Duncton' after David's flock and association with the place.

Today, I can't quite believe that not only can I pick up a skein of Southdown wool from the South Downs and start making with it, I can also share my enthusiasm for my local fibre through SDY.

What do you love most about your job? What is your favourite stage of your work process?

There is so much about my work that brings me joy. Broadly speaking, I love being able to showcase wool from my native, local breed – the Southdown, and the landscape that is inextricably linked with the breed – the South Downs. If I had to choose a stage, I would have to choose two: the beginning and the end. Coming to know the shepherds and their flocks is such a privilege. I get to travel around the county I live in and love, discovering places I would never have visited otherwise, meeting and working with such hard working, interesting and inspiring folk. At the other end of the process I can't really explain what a thrill it is to see customers' finished objects in our wool. I always print photographs of them off to show to the shepherds – that is such a special moment, a shared moment of creativity and connection. It gives me goose bumps.

Let's dive into the yarns! What kind of fibres and yarns do you offer and what makes them special?

The yarn we offer is breed, flock, geography and year specific. What that means is that each yarn is named after the Southdown flock it hails from (Duncton, Nephote, Ridings). All the flocks I work with are bred, reared and shorn in and around the South Downs and the fleeces are taken from a specific year's clip, or crop as we say in Sussex.

Each flock's fleeces are woollen spun into 2 fold (2 ply) yarn.

Southdown fleece has a short staple and so historically it was woollen spun rather than worsted. It was important to me to carry on this tradition so all our yarn is woollen

spun. This means it isn't a tough, hard wearing yarn, rather it is more springy and has incredible warmth because of the air trapped between the fibres. I also value the additional bounce and versatility due to the crimp that allows me to work in various gauges without losing stitch definition. I specifically did not want to create a bulky yarn and that poses a little bit of a challenge with crimped fibre and woollen spinning. I worked with the mill to create a yarn that had the adaptability to work well for colourwork projects on smaller needles right through to looser garments with larger needle sizes.

In terms of the fibre, Southdown is one of the finest of the Down wools (in terms of microns between 24-29), whilst the lustre tends to be low which means it is less light reflective and more matt in appearance. I particularly like this quality and find it works well with the shades we achieve through natural dyeing, giving it a depth of colour.

A portion of wool from each flock is available in its natural undyed colour which I call 'Chalk Path' after the distinctive chalk tracks that cover the South Downs.

The remaining wool is all hand dyed in small batches by me using only plant based dyes. The diversity of colours and shades I achieve mean that our 'Shade Card' is not like most yarn companies. Instead of individual shade names or numbers that are mass-produced and reproduced, we have six broad 'Colour Collections'. Within each collection there is great variety as in nature, and each small batch cannot be exactly reproduced.

When you factor in the single flock, the year of the crop and the natural dyeing, each finished batch is genuinely unique.

Walk us through the process from 'growing' the fibre to the finished yarns. Who is involved and how does your production process look like?

When you become interested in the provenance of a natural product you come to value every aspect of its creation and the contribution made by all those involved in its production. From shepherds, shearers, and mill owners to customers who knit, crochet, embroider and weave, it is a collaborative process and one in which there is so much creativity.

When I first started researching the possibility of SDY there never seemed to be any mention of the shepherds. Of course, it all begins with the shepherds! I had not appreciated until I started SDY that shepherds and their flocks are such a diverse group. There are small shepherds (those with flocks of less than 50 sheep), estate shepherds, large farms with a small pedigree flock as well as a commercial flock, and lots more variations. Ultimately though, all fleece takes time to grow and is a finite resource. It is the shepherds that are responsible for the health and growth of the sheep and its fleece, 365 days a year. When I am snuggled up with knitting beside the fire on a dark, cold winter day I often think about the shepherds, out in all weathers checking up on the flock.

So, in terms of our production process, we are always planning a year in advance, working with the shepherds to determine how many fleeces may be available and when the shearing date will be. In between, we may be getting to know a new flock and shepherd for the year after that. Shearing day is always busy, and very hard work for those involved. Not many shepherds shear themselves, and here in Sussex shearers from larger local farms tend to be brought in for the day.

Once I have selected and purchased the fleeces, I store them until it is time to send them to the mill for washing, carding and spinning. It was important to me that I used a mill that could undertake all of these tasks in one place as I wanted to keep the mileage the fleece travels to a minimum. It's quite something to see the raw fleece gradually turning into spun and plied yarn. The technical skill required by those at the mill is something I am still in awe of.

I then take receipt of the hanked yarn and gradually work my way through dyeing small amounts ready for sale. Just like those that have preceded it, this process is labour intensive. There are various stages to natural dyeing involving wetting out the skeins, preparing the dye baths, dyeing the skeins, washing them, drying them, winding them and photographing them for the website, not to mention all the growing of the dye plants beforehand.

We're focusing on local, sustainable, if possible breed specific yarns for WOODS. What is the story of the base we're using in the book and how does it relate to that?

I saw a sign sometime ago from a US producer that I admire that read "local wool, local dyes, local labour" it really struck a chord with me. It sums up what I set out to do, and what I would like to continue to stay true to.

I only work with shepherds who have registered, pedigree Southdown flocks that are reared and grazed in their natural habitat, the South Downs and its environs. Ideally, I would have liked to have had all the processing done here in Sussex as well but that was not possible, so we send our fleeces to Cornwall, England. I am really pleased that we produce yarn that has no air miles, and as few road miles as we can manage.

When I first started SDY it was obvious that some shepherds had given up thinking their fleeces were worth anything. This of course has had an impact on the breed, with attention being focused by some solely on meat production. For those who are still interested in fleece quality I pay above the market value for the fleeces that I select, and all our yarn can be traced back to the flock it comes from, with details of the flock and date of shearing appearing on the yarn label. Every flock has its own pedigree and history and I can tell customers about this. The provenance of our wool is not just part of the story, it is the story.

All our coloured yarn is hand dyed in small batches using only plant based dyes. I have a small dye garden where I grow and harvest the majority of dye material I use. I am also fortunate in being gifted dye plants from fellow dyers, neighbours and friends as well as sourcing some in extract form. Dyeing requires a lot of water, so I do my best to minimise use and waste of this precious resource. I have a lot of water butts to collect rain water in and I also exhaust every dye bath extracting as much colour as I can from each before discarding. I am very careful about my choices of mordants and modifiers in order to mitigate any possible environmental impacts, and I also produce smaller quantities of solar dyed wool.

Where can people find you and your yarns, both online and offline?

The website is: www.southdownsyarn.com

We exhibit at the biennial show and exhibition of the East Sussex Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers which is held in Lewes, East Sussex and of course the annual Findon Sheep Fair (details on the website).

Double honours for local Suffolk based breeder at the 2017 National Southdown Show

The 2017 Southdown Sheep Society National Show took place at the Suffolk Show and attracted an impressive number of entries which totalled almost one hundred. Breeders travelled from East Anglia and further afield to compete in the twelve classes, with a large number of quality animals across all classes competing for the prizes.

Judge Mrs Alexandra Long from Ashford, Kent, said that it was an honour to judge the national show, stating that the “quality and presentation was as expected superb; such was the quality that placing the top sheep in some classes was demanding; however my champion stood out for me”.

Taking the overall championship title and winning the Moulton Perpetual Rose Bowl presented by Hugh & Mary Clark, the Northumberland Perpetual Challenge Trophy, and the Sheila Colman Trophy, was the shearling ewe, Wakes Hall 16/00425, from Suffolk based breeder Miss Jessica Middle-itch of Belchamp St. Paul, Sudbury.



This ewe is out of a Wealden dam and sired by a Chaileybrook ram.

National Show Champion and Reserve Champion with Judge Mrs Alexandra Long and Mr & Mrs Middleditch

The reserve championship title, and the Hazelton Perpetual Challenge Cup for best opposite sex to the breed champion, went to Jessica Middleditch's shearling ram, Wakes Hall Jimmy Choo 16/00428. This ram is out of a Goodwood ewe, and sired by the same Chaileybrook ram as the champion, Chaileybrook French Connection 12/01476. Commenting on her double win, Jessica admitted that she was “proud and completely overwhelmed” with the results of the National Show.

The aged ram class was won by Messrs Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer, who also took the first prizes for the Signet performance recorded ram and the ram lamb born between January 1st and February 28th.

The pair of shearling rams class was won by Goodwood Estate Co. Ltd, with D, S & P Humphrey claiming second place with their pair of East Dean shearling rams.



Judge Mrs Alexandra Long and President Mr Lindsay Dane awarding Championship trophies to Miss Jessica Middleditch

In the two classes for lambs born after March 1st, it was breeders Messrs G & M Sparke from Stewkley, Buckinghamshire, who carried off the first prizes for both ram lamb and ewe lamb. Keen young handler Matthew Sparke achieved a ‘hat trick’ by taking the red rosette too with his aged ewe.

The older ewe lamb class was won by Messrs Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer, who were also awarded first prize for their pair of sheep, and the group of four sheep.

Judge Mrs Alexandra Long thanked all those members who had entered, and concluded by wishing everyone a successful season.

NOTES FROM THE SOUTHDOWN OFFICE

The Council of the Southdown Sheep Society meets at least twice a year and the Notes from the Office aim to keep members updated on some of the important issues raised and discussed within Council meetings.

2017 LAMB REGISTRATIONS

More and more members are choosing to register their lambs online using the Pedeweb system. All paid up members should have received details of their password and information held on line. There is a User Guide available to download from the Southdown Sheep Society website, together with some FAQs. To access the on line Flock Book simply follow the link from the Society website.

REGISTRATION CHARGES

on line registration fee per ewe lamb	£4
on line registration fee per ram lamb	£10
paper registration fee per ewe lamb	£5
paper registration fee per ram lamb	£15
late registration fee on line and/or on paper	£20 per animal

Lamb registrations

Members should make every effort to register lambs as soon as possible to avoid omission from the next edition of the Flock Book. Please note that all late registrations (ie after the year of birth) remain eligible for registration but at the late fee of £20 per registration.

The Southdown Office is closed for two weeks over Christmas and New Year. Please note that registrations cannot be processed until payment has been received.

Imports and Exports

Members are reminded that the Office must be notified of any intended exports and imports. The rules as published in the current Flock Book state that "an export certificate must be obtained from the Secretary at a cost of £10 per Southdown and the sum of 5p in every pound of the sale price shall be paid within six months of the sale".

This zootechnical (export) certificate for pure-bred breeding sheep, their semen, ova and embryos should accompany the animal (or germinal product) where they are traded or entered into the European Union to allow an entry or registration of those animals in other breeding books or breeding registers.

The Southdown Sheep Society therefore fulfils its obligations as a Defra recognised breed society by issuing the export pedigree certificate to allow the entry of pure-bred breeding sheep in flock books.

Getting it right

Do we have your correct information? Please try and update the Office with any changes of address or contact details. If you spot any errors or inaccuracies in the information included for you in this year's publications do let the Office know by the end of the year as the Flock Book goes to print in January.

Email

If your email address changes, please remember to inform the office, this can be done via Pedeweb.

All members for whom we have an email address receive the Southdown Enewsletter throughout the

year. The Enewsletter gives the Office a chance to share information with members on a more regular basis in between the paper newsletters in Spring and Autumn.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Many thanks to all those members whose subscriptions are already paid up to date. Just a reminder that the 2017 subscription (£35) was due from January 1st 2017.

PLEASE NOTE: the membership subscription for 2018 is £40.

Please update your standing order instruction with your bank.

Standing Order instruction forms are available to download from the website or from the Office. **Please ensure that when making a BACS payment, or setting up a Standing Order for subscription payment, that you include your name as a reference with the payment. Just occasionally it is impossible to trace the source of a payment!**

BACS payment details

Account name: Southdown Sheep Society
Address: NatWest, 81, High Street, Bedford
Sort Code: 60-02-13
Account Number: 51501376

Southdown Lambing Open Day

Earlier this year the Richer family, Paul, Emma, Elisabeth and Abigail, held a lambing Open Day at their Great Sir Hughes Farm in Great Baddow, near Chelmsford, Essex. The Spring Flock (Flock Number 609) saw over 200 people attend on the day, although, as Emma Richer explains "everybody enjoyed the event although none of the ewes wanted to lamb, preferring to do so that evening after everybody left. We also had a short wool spinning and carding demo and had a few of the lambing essentials on display."

The Open Day raised over £380 for RBST. All the family helped out, and daughter Elizabeth was kept busy rattling the collecting bucket.



Elizabeth rattles the bucket

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to the Society's new members:

Matthew Barber	Thatcham, Berkshire
Phil Tucker	Lymington, Hants
Mr Tom Davis	Isle of Dogs, London
Mrs Sophie Polden	Fittleworth, West Sussex
Mr & Mrs J Gowing	Diss, Norfolk
Karen & David McIntyre	Abergele, Conwy
Mrs C Sparling	Thetford, Norfolk
Bedales School	Petersfield, Hampshire
Mrs Nicola Tozer	Holsworthy, Devon
Timothy Clist	Brecon, Powys
Sarah Milsom	Little Badminton Gloucs
Mr J O Hedger	Maidstone, Kent
Mr John Dickin	Solihull, West Midlands
Paul Freshwater	Marsh Gibbon, Oxon
Aled Johnson & Elizabeth Wheeler	Llanfynydd, Carmarthen
Duncan Ascoli	Liphook, Hampshire
Joshua Jack	Milton Keynes
Mrs Sarah Spence	Stonehouse, Gloucestershire
David Martin & Julie Alderson	Steventon, Oxon
Marie & Antony Davey	Bridgewater, Somerset
Harry T A Wood	Littlemill, Pontypool
Gareth Jones	Dorking, Surrey
Julia Chapman	Orsett, Essex
Joshua McFarlane	Whitehill, Hampshire

2018 Southdown Sheep Society Annual General Meeting and Field Day

**Saturday August 18th
2018**

to be held at
Mudchute Park & Farm
Pier Street
Isle of Dogs
London E14 3HP

by kind invitation of
Tom Davis and
Mudchute City Farm

full details, including maps,
to be available nearer the
date.

*Tom Davis with some of the Mudchute
City Farm flock in front of Buckingham
Palace*

Photograph: P Dixie



UPCOMING EVENTS

SOUTH WEST GROUP

The annual Christmas lunch is scheduled for early February, as is the tradition. Look out for local information nearer the time from your co-ordinators.

EAST MIDLANDS

SOUTHDOWN SHEEP SOCIETY EAST MIDLANDS GROUP CHRISTMAS LUNCH!

Group Co-ordinator Sophie Arlott says: "I thought it would be fun to get together for a Christmas lunch to meet up with society member, swap sheep stories and have a pint!"

You are warmly invited to lunch on
Saturday 2nd December @ 12.30 pm
at The Butcher & Beast, High Street, Heighington,
Lincolnshire, LN4 1JS
Meals must be pre-ordered, please contact Sophie on
07899 833157 for more details.

PS: PRIZE FOR THE BEST CHRISTMAS JUMPER!!

Southdown Show Trimming Day

'Come along and watch how the expert does it!'

- Lots of useful hints and tips
- Chance to have a go yourself
- Bring your hand shears

**Saturday 7th April 2018 @ 10.00 am at
Old Manor Farm , Lenton, Grantham,
Lincolnshire NG33 4HG
Tel: 01476 585960
Coffee & cakes**

Lunch: Southdown lamb burgers

To book your place please contact Sophie on

07899 833157 or sophie@arlott.net

**DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR SHOW SHEEP
SHEARED AT THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY
FOR THE EARLY SHOWS!**

Pedigree analysis of UK registered Southdowns

Libby Henson (Grassroots), Ruth Dalton (RBST), and Gail Sprake

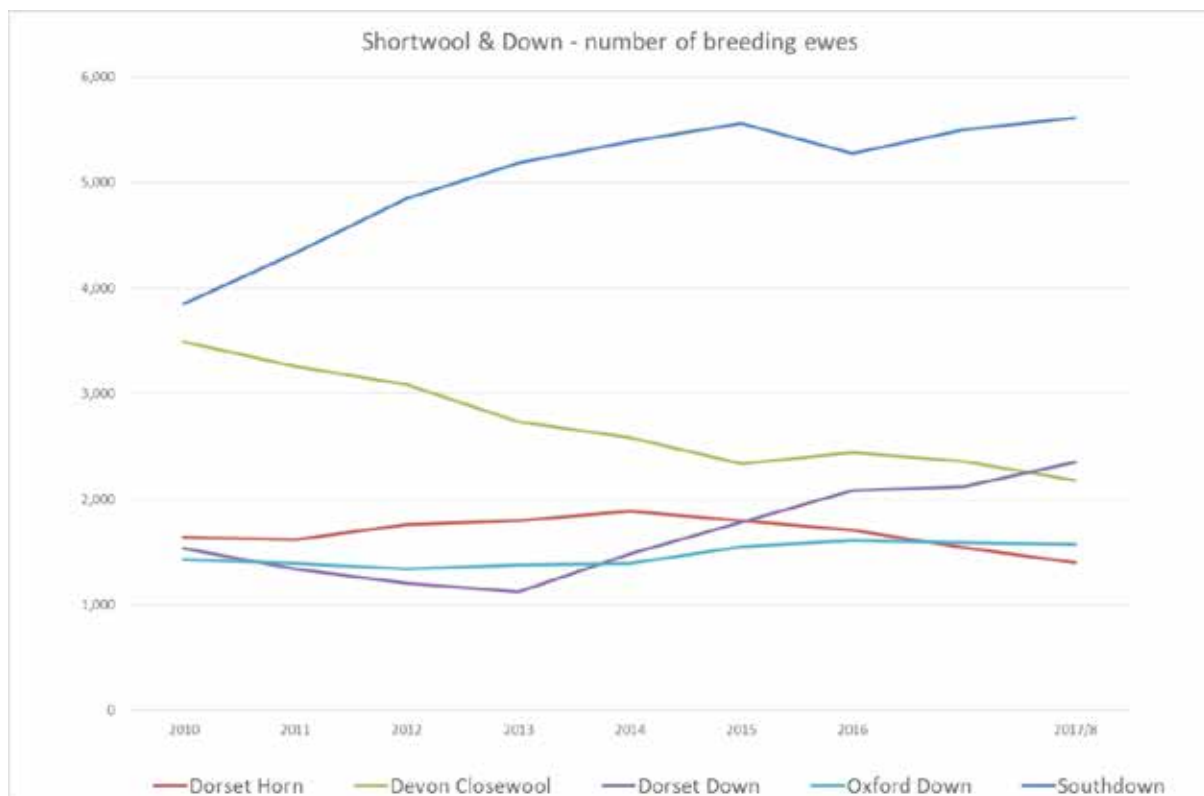
Background

Following discussion and questions from members about the impact of recent French imports, Council decided to commission Grassroots Systems Ltd to conduct a detailed genetic analysis of historic pedigree registrations. This analysis would then give members and Council a better understanding of the recent origins of the breed, the risk of inbreeding, our genetic diversity and our overall conservation status. The report below is based on a presentation given by Ruth Dalton to Council in October.

Animal Data

For the purposes of the analysis, 8,917 animals were considered to be the total live population, belonging to 377 members. (Please note the data set for 2017 was extracted on 20th September so comparatively few 2017 registrations are included in the analysis. In addition, any animals that were recorded as dead or had no registered progeny for three years were also excluded.)

The Southdown is numerically a successful breed, as shown by the graph below, representing estimated breeding females for the Southdown compared with rare “shortwool and down” breeds (estimates made using RBST’s multiplier on a 3-year average of female registrations). The threshold for RBST to consider a sheep breed “rare” is 3000 breeding females.



To assist the current analysis, new registration types were introduced, which have been transferred into the Society’s live database:

FM (Modern French Imports) born from 2000 onwards

FH (Historical French Imports) born pre-2000

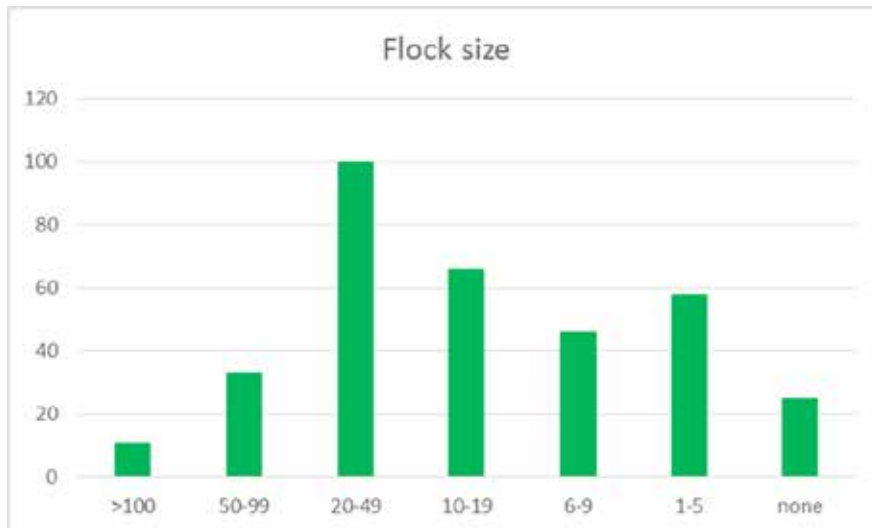
NZ (New Zealand Imports)

RF (UK Registered Females)

RM (UK Registered Males)

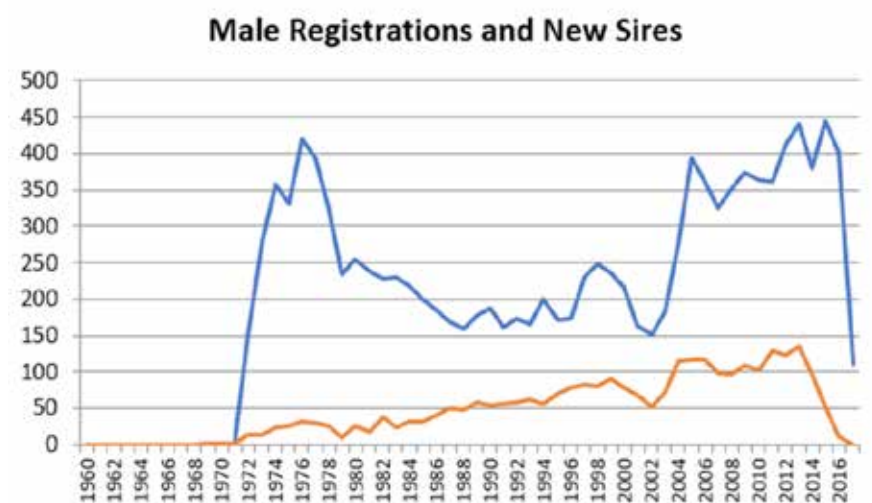
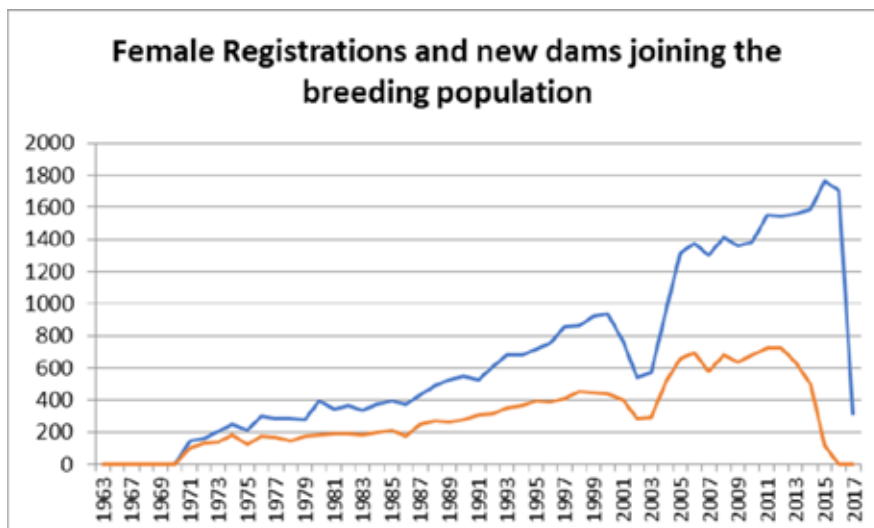
Flock Size

An analysis of flock size shows that there are relatively few flocks over 100 animals, with the average flock size being 25 (21 females). There is a good geographical spread of Southdowns around the UK. Both of these factors make the breed resilient to the challenges such as disease outbreaks and genetic erosion.



New sires and dams joining the population

The ratio of male and female registrations relative to the number of new sires and dams joining the population each year is an indicator of the genetic diversity being maintained within the breed. The top line is the number of registered females born each year, and the bottom line is when they join the breeding population. There is of course a lag, but animals in the gap between the two lines are registered but never join the breeding programme.



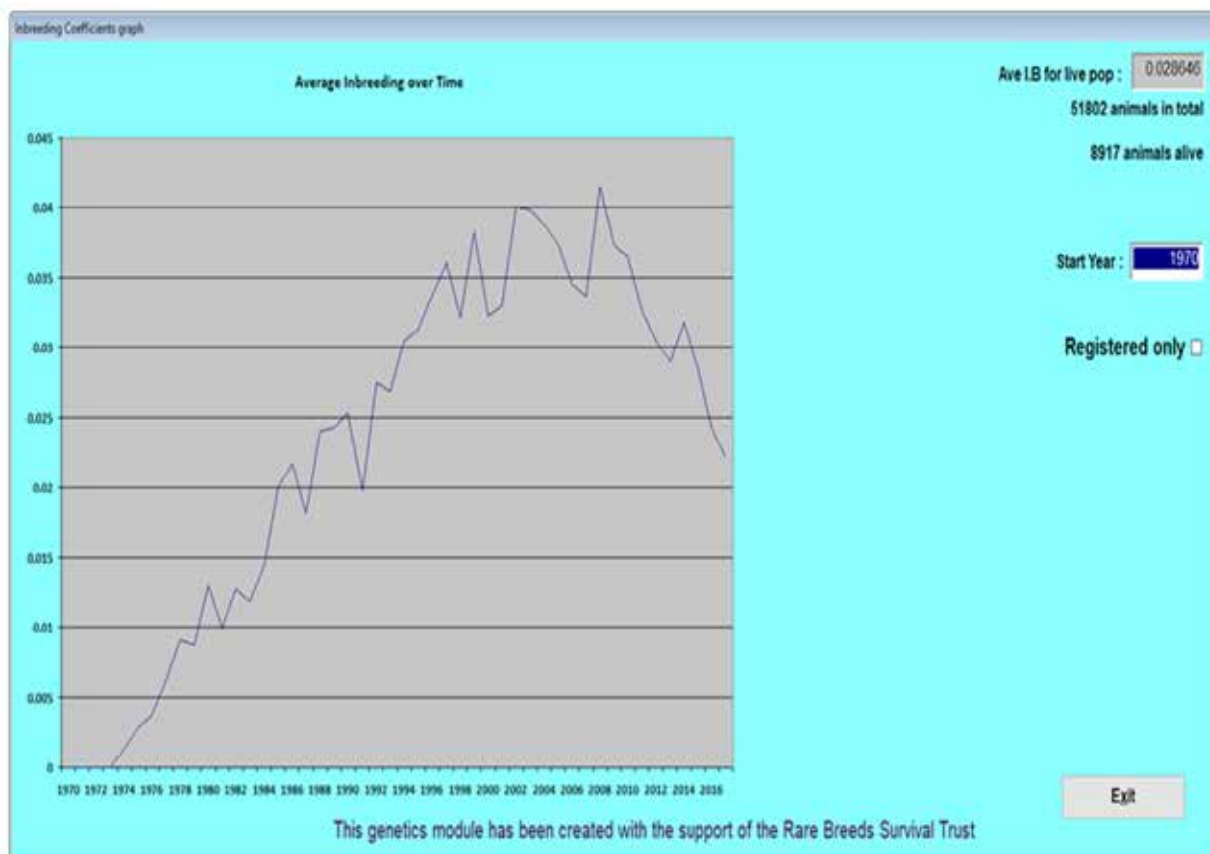
We find that 40-50% of registered females and 30-40% of registered males become dams and sires to registered offspring.

Inbreeding

The inbreeding coefficient for any one animal is the measure of how many common ancestors appear in its extended pedigree back to the start of our records. The mean inbreeding for the whole population is an indication of the fraction of genetic variation

lost from the population that was present among the founders. Over time the level of inbreeding will increase – this is inevitable within a breed and no upper limit can be sustained over time – however, it is the rate of increase in this level that determines the risks. If the inbreeding rate is too high it is more likely that deleterious effects will be observed.

Strangely, given the above, the rate of inbreeding in this population appears to be falling - but this is a function of the data, not a function of the real inbreeding within the population. It is due to the imported animals which have no pedigree recorded in the data and which therefore have a nominal inbreeding coefficient of zero. At the time of the analysis, the average inbreeding coefficient of the living population was 2.86% - this has been lowered by the animals with “short pedigrees” in the living population.



Impact of imported sheep on the current live population.

We began by identifying the imported sheep into four different groups:

French ancestors of imported French animals (FA). We excluded these from our analysis

French imports from the late 1900s (FH) – French Historical

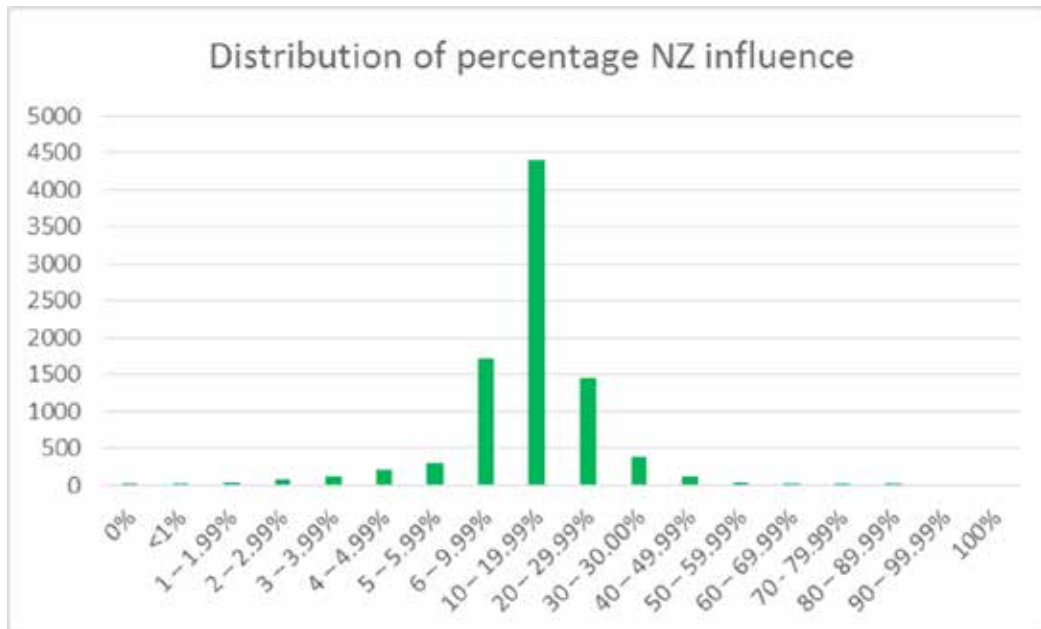
French imports this century (FM) – French Modern

New Zealand Imports (NZ) – New Zealand – this group also includes a few Australian imports and more recent (post 2000) use of NZ AI sires.

We then looked in detail at the current live population and the makeup of their pedigrees with respect to these imported animals.

New Zealand Imports

We found that out of 29 animals originally imported, 27 of them had living descendants. We found these sheep in the pedigrees of every live animal with the exception of 20 animals which are 100% French blood.

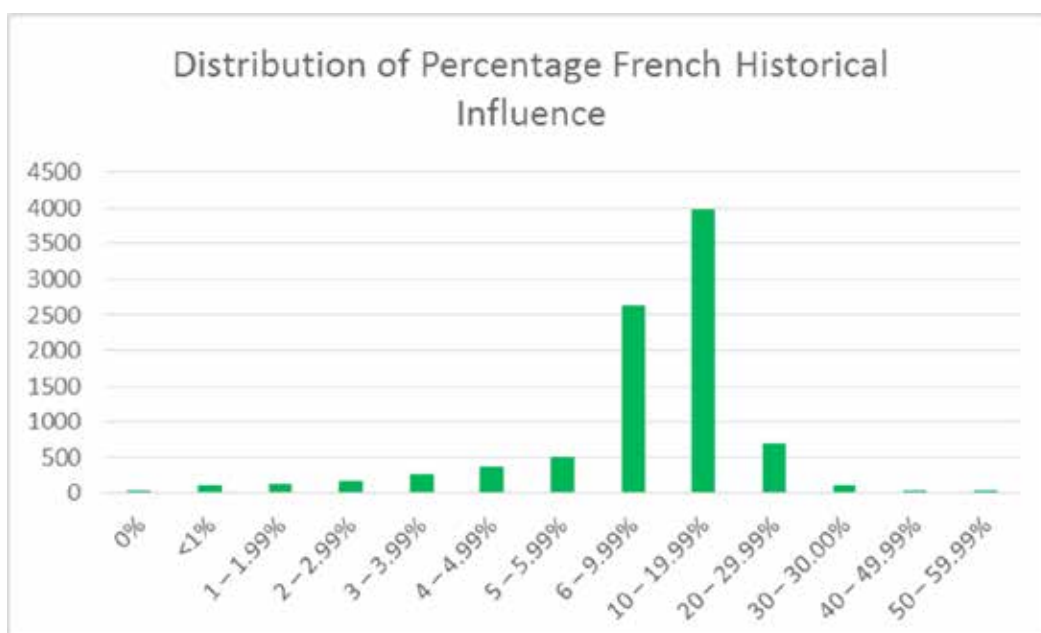


French influence from pre 2000 (FH animals)

We were asked to look specifically at the French influence on the breed in two sections.

There were 10 animals imported prior to the turn of the century. Of those, only the 7 listed below have any living descendants but they are found in all but 32 living animals.

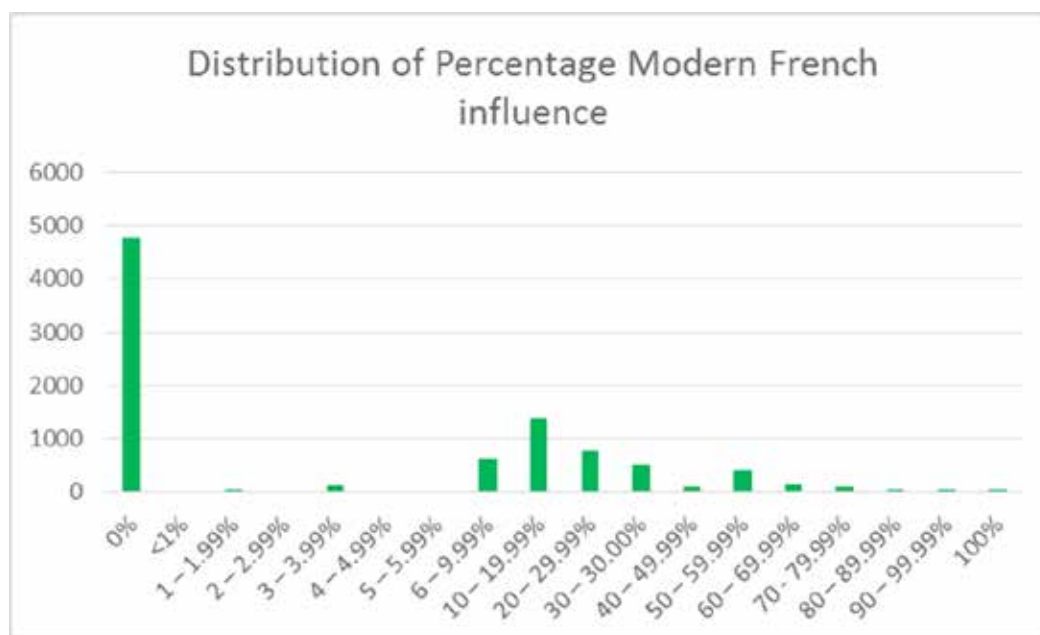
- 031(FR) Bordier, France of 1970
- 058(FR) Thomas, France of 1970
- FR1098 French Ewe 4140T of 1994
- FR647 Joseph Thomas of France 9001T of 1989
- FR861 Paris of France 4005T of 1994
- FR933 Maria of France 0003T of 1990
- FR943 Collett of France 0026T of 1990



An analysis of animals with less than 5% imported blood (NZ and FH) showed that although there are 478 living animals with less than 5% NZ influence, and 1011 animals with less than 5% FH influence, there are 15 animals with less than 5% combined NZ and FH influence.

Modern French Influence (FM Animals)

There are 28 of the 30 'Modern' French imports, (born this century) which have alive descendants. A total of 4762 (53%) have no modern French animals in their pedigrees. Another 128 have less than 5% modern French influences in their pedigree.



Conservation Breeding?

While the breed is no longer "at risk" it is still prudent for breeders to remember the "golden rules" of conservation breeding.

In order to ensure that all the genetic variation present in the current population is maintained in the future, it is important to maximise the contribution of all the males currently available. This will minimize the rate of loss of genetic diversity.

The golden rules for the population as a whole are:

- Use as many males as possible
- Not keep too many offspring from any one male. For rarer breeds no one male should produce more 5% of the offspring born in any one generation. In this breed that represents a maximum of 80 daughters and 20 sons per male
- Minimize inbreeding (ie where possible use males unrelated to your females)

Next Steps

The analysis and its implications are being considered further by Council, and there has been a limited discussion so far over the practicality and desirability of indeifying individual groups of animals. Some suggestions as to how this could be done have been made by Grassroots Ltd. However before considering this further, Council would be interested in hearing the views of the wider membership. It is important also to bear in mind that any new approach must balance the need for the breed to fit the modern market with the importance of maintaining the breed's distinct and original qualities.

For those who would like to see more of the analysis and the genetic origins of their own flock an Excel spreadsheet containing details of 8917 animals included the analysis will be placed on the Society website. Please note the file is 6.9 MB and if printed legibly would come to over 1000 pages so please do not ask for the Southdown Office to send you a copy.

LATE NEWS

It has just been confirmed the the Hanbury Show near Droitwich, Worcestershire, will be offering dedicated Southdown classes in 2018. The Show takes place on July 7th

Our Quadrophenic, Diverse and Happy Breed

Those of you of a certain age and musical taste may recall The Who's album Quadrophenia and the lyric that says "Schizophrenic? I'm Bleeding Quadrophenic."

As I was pondering the diversity of our breed and the variety of phenotypes ("looks"), I felt this four-way split captured the wonderful diversity in our breed. The article in this newsletter by Ruth Dalton et al explains some new work, by Grassroots, into the breed's recent breeding heritage and the different imported breeding lines. And, even though I am a comparative newcomer of 10 years, I thought it might be helpful to remind ourselves of the breed's recent history and share some of my thoughts and observations on the different phenotypes.

So first off, a reminder of our breed's history. During the late 19th century and 20th until probably the fifties, Southdowns were the pre-eminent Terminal Sire breed widely used for crossing onto lowland meat producing half-breeds. In the early days and until the 60s the pedigree breeder's principal selection criteria was what looked good in the show ring. This meant that short, fat (when fat used to be a good thing), compact and blocky sheep were selected (Aberdeen Angus breeders also followed the same approach and suffered the same consequences). Then fashion changed, and larger and, then leaner sheep became the name of the game so initially the Southdown lost out to the Suffolk (which also gave the useful option of a breeding cross) and latterly Texel and Beltex. This led to a rapid decline in the breed and listing by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) soon after its inception in 1973. Southdowns remained under the auspices of RBST for over 30 years only coming off their Watchlist in 2007.

In the sixties breeders tried to meet the demand from commercial flocks for larger Southdowns by introducing external genes to "improve the breed" using Dorset Downs and Suffolks and some New Zealand rams. Two French sires (Bordier 031 and Thomas 058) were brought in by the Southdown Sheep Society in 1971. Then in the late seventies, working with renowned Australian breeder the late Geoff Baker (Southern Pastures) and recognising that the Aussies and Kiwis knew a thing or two about commercial lamb production (as well as starting off with some original Southdowns in the 19th century) the late Philip Whitcombe brought over Southern Hemisphere* genetics to his Greencross and then Southern Cross flocks. However, numbers continued to decline, and with the growing risk of inbreeding, more French stock – known as Historic French - were bought in during the late eighties, notably but not exclusively by the Steepdown flock – the ram Joseph Thomas (FR647) had many offspring. In the 21st century there has been a plethora of French imports known as Modern French. For some breeders there has been concern about the recent French imports. I certainly remember reading, on the old website, a report from a member describing the apparent mixing – accidental or deliberate - of different breeds of tups (Vendeen?, Charollais?) amongst some French Southdown flocks... so there is a suspicion, for some, over the "purity" of some French imports; matters are not helped by the French only requiring a three-generation pedigree. For some reason no similar suspicion has been attached to any Southern Hemisphere genetics. Why that is I do not know, though it makes me wonder if we are still fighting the 100 Years or

Napoleonic wars – perhaps given Brexit we are. By the way, it is EU health rules that make it virtually impossible to import semen from the latest New Zealand breeding lines although a few straws of some older (e.g. 1997) NZ rams are still around and being used by some breeders. Of course, us sensible, honest and pragmatic Brits would never invent complicated rules or allow another breed to "mix" with our Southdowns!

The Grassroots analysis has shown that almost all Southdowns – whatever they look like - have some Historic French genetics and some of the earlier Southern Hemisphere genetics, even so the breed has ended up with some different phenotypes: our Quadrophenic split. In my 10 years, and with the benefit of Signet Recording, I have had the opportunity to see how these different strains play out thus:

The Traditional type – have charming teddy bear heads, short woolly ears, shorter woolly legs, a very placid temperament – possibly lazy – and finish well on grass but are small and can get too fat. Lambs tend to have a very good conformation (a great gigot) and at 21 weeks weigh about 36-38kg. Sadly, this is too small for the modern day commercial farmer who is looking for lambs to be 40-44kg and they potentially can get over fat for modern tastes if not watched closely.

The Southern Hemisphere strains - I have used two tups in recent years – are not as attractive and as shearlings can look like llamas! Their heads seem narrower, ears lower set and more inclined to point forward and the wool a little longer, thinner and lankier but, they have length, height and size, all things that commercial farmers want. I have also found (though I have no hard data on this) that their progeny are easier to lamb as their legs are thinner and longer, while lambs find it easier to suckle the taller NZ cross ewe. I also feel that there is a little bit more vim in the lambs and the ewes... these are the ones that are a bit more scatty to round up and as rams, a bit more aggressive (but then there are rams and rams). Following a suggestion from Peter Rycraft, I found they cross very well onto a Traditional ewe, and I suspect the combination produces the shape of lamb commercial farmers want. However, close inspection of recording data shows that they tend be fatter and have less muscle than would be expected. In practice they do take longer to finish, and don't hold condition as well but are heavier (and leaner than the Traditional) reaching 42-44kg.

Modern French vary quite a lot in looks but to my eye often look closer to the Traditional type though their ears may be longer, heads and legs have less wool and some heads are more "domed" and backsides are more rounded. In temperament they seem a bit more sparky than the Traditional but not as feisty as the Southern Hemisphere. They have good width are very well muscled, grow quickly and are a little taller than the Traditional. Their wool seems more creamy in colour. Looking at performance recording data, most of the French rams are very average and no better than their British counterparts, however one import – Benoit FR215680 (born 2009) - whose sons have been used quite widely of late has been a quite exceptional tup producing extremely well-muscled very lean lambs. The flock book also shows the influence of another French tup, The Frog TC 4028 (born 2003) has spread even further with many flocks having purchased his progeny. My

one concern with some of the French lines is that they can be quite lean and so may need some hard grub to finish. Size wise these also produce lambs around the 42-44kg mark and currently a high proportion of rosette winners have these Modern French genetics.

Both Southern Hemisphere and Modern French don't hold condition as well, but seem to milk better in the summer-possibly milking off their back. Conversely, Traditionals cope better with short grass supply and always seem to be fat but may not milk as well though they can be got away early off grass albeit at a lighter weight.

So, finally what about the fourth type in my Quadrophenic definition... well these most probably are the sheep in your flock, they are the sheep you enjoy and have the looks you like, they will certainly have some Historic French in them and some older Southern Hemisphere lines too. If you are satisfied with them and they give you pleasure: staying alive, upright and rear lambs for as many years as possible then all is as it should be. After all, the main priority should be to enjoy and possibly make some money from your sheep. And, if you want to change your flock – get bigger lambs, milkier




ewes, reduce the risk of inbreeding, win rosettes (of late the bigger ones seem to win), have woollier ears or sell rams to commercial farmers then we are lucky that within our diverse and happy breed there are different strains that may improve your flock... and we should be grateful too, to the breeders past and present who have conserved the traditional type or have invested in bringing in new lines from France, New Zealand and Australia.

PS Post Brexit I wonder if anyone will be bringing in some Southdowns from South America... now they will really to look like llamas!

*The vast majority of Southern Hemisphere imports came from New Zealand however a few came from Australia.

Although these words and views are my own I would like to thank the following whose wisdom and observations I have incorporated into this article: David Craig, Gail Sprake, David Burden, Lesley Mead, Lindsay Dane, Peter Rycraft, Paul Humphrey, and information from The Southdown Sheep (1991) by Valerie Porter.

Patrick Goldsworthy MBE

Trait	Traditional	Southern Hemisphere	Modern French
			
Looks	*****	**	****
Overall Conformation	*****	***	*****
Lambing Ease	**	***	**
Lamb Vigour	***	*****	***
Milkiness	**	*****	***
Maternal ability	***	*****	***
Adult Weight	**	*****	****
Gigot/Backend	****	**	*****
Length	***	*****	****
Width	****	***	****
Ease of finishing	*****	***	***

Traditional: Spratton Wren SB; Southern Hemisphere: Waidale 872-14 photo courtesy of Ike Williams; Modern French: Ridings Daniel



REGIONAL GROUPS NEWS

REPORTS ON RECENT EVENTS

WEST MIDLANDS

Spring Meeting

It was a bright dry day in late May and the West Midlands Group saw 35 enthusiasts gather on the Welsh border for its Spring meeting. The location was ideal to extend invitations to neighbouring regions and many Welsh members and those from further afield were also in attendance.

The meeting was treated to a superb interactive discussion about feeding the ewe by renowned independent ruminant specialist Dr. Kate Phillips. Kate came equipped with many samples of common compound feed constituents and as these were circulated, she explained their feed values and their place in modern manufactured feeds. Many Southdown breeders brought labels from their usual feeds to the meeting and Kate pointed out the highs and lows of the formulations and gave pointers as to what additional nutrients and energy might be needed as the needs of the ewe changed during the year.



SOUTH WEST

November Meeting

On Sunday 26th November the South West Southdown Sheep Group enjoyed a most interesting visit to Dunsbeare Farm, Torrington, North Devon, the home of Sue and Rod Moore. After an introduction to the farm and tea and biscuits, Sue and Rod showed us their Southdown flock, followed by their herd of Limousin cattle and their range of historic farm buildings, which includes a three hundred year old water wheel which used to grind wheat to provide flour for



the bakers in Torrington and the surrounding villages up until the mid 19th century when steam power took over. The visit ended with a brief description of Rod's other business, lagging and insulating industrial pipe work, on among other things multi million pound super yachts in the Mediterranean. The group thoroughly enjoyed a most interesting visit which was rounded off by a carvery lunch at local pub. Our thanks go to both Sue and Rod for their time and hospitality.

AROUND THE REGIONS

There is a regional Southdown Group within easy reach of most members of the Southdown Sheep Society. All members are welcome to attend any of the regional meetings. For more information about what is going on in your region, feel free to make contact with the breeders listed below.

South West Group

Co-ordinator: Nicole Peart
01209 861356
ellieandbaileypeart@aol.co.uk
Adam & Caroline Brown
01398 361245
adamandcaroline@googlemail.com

West Midlands Group

Co-ordinator: Miriam Parker
01743 884483
miriam@livestockwise.co.uk

Wales Group

Co-ordinators: Gareth Lloyd Hughes
01970 880804
garethlloydhughes@btinternet.com
Dylan Williams
07771 542578
Del2880@yahoo.co.uk

East Midlands Group

Co-ordinator: Sophie Arlott
07899 833157
sophie.arlott@btinternet.com

East Anglia Group

Co-ordinator: Lindsay Dane
01353 721216
lindsay.dane@icloud.com

Beds, Bucks, Herts Group

Co-ordinator: Lesley Mead
01525 270135
lesleyhollybar@btinternet.com

South of England Group

Co-ordinator: Paul Humphrey
01243 811518
nhfcamping@gmail.com



We welcome Southdown Breeders

The Small Shepherds Club was founded in 1977 to help shepherds in Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire with all aspects of keeping sheep from good husbandry to legal issues. Today with almost 300 members we provide free training as well as a great forum for small scale sheep keepers to exchange ideas and for help and advice.

If you want to know more?
Visit www.smallshepherdsclub.org.uk



NEW!

Southdown classes at the 2018 Royal Bath and West Show

May 30 – June 2

Southdown breeders have their own Southdown classes at The 2018 Royal Bath & West Show

The Judge is Mr Nick Page,
Goodwood Estate Co. Ltd.

Classes include:

Group of Three

Ram 2 shear and upwards

Shearling ram

Ram lamb

Aged ewe

Shearling ewe

Ewe lamb

Pair

Breed Champion & Reserve Champion

For more information see the website:
www.bathandwest.co.uk

or contact the Show Office to order a
schedule

sarah.chick@bathandwest.co.uk

Do please consider supporting these new Southdown classes at the 2018 Royal Bath & West Show

Worcester Premier Show and Sale

The Southdown Sheep Society held their Premier Sale at Worcester Market on Saturday 12th August with females proving to be the order of the day with breed enthusiasts witnessing a new female record set with a shearing ewe from the Goodwood Estate Co Ltd flock selling for 1500gns.

Goodwood Duke's Delight is by a Ridings sire and out of a home bred Southern Cross daughter. She's already had a coveted show career to date for Chichester, Sussex-based Goodwood shepherd Nick Page as she's notched up the reserve female championship as a lamb at the breed's National Show last year, as well as ewe lamb champion last year at the East of England Smithfield Festival. Buyers here were Steve and Helen Smith of Welshpool, Powys.

Goodwood carried on a hot demand for their shearing females with the next selling for 800gns in the form of Goodwood Angel Delight, another by a Ridings tup, this time out of a Wyndham ewe. This one was knocked down to Edward Morgan, Carmarthen, while at 720gns Megan Chilcott, Highbridge, Somerset, bought Goodwood Daffodil. This one is by the 2014 Paris Show champion Rene and is out of a home bred ewe carrying East Dean bloodlines. Joining this one to Somerset with Megan was her sister, Goodwood Delphinium, bought for 620gns.

First time vendor to Worcester, Ben Collings made the journey up from Launceston, Cornwall and sold the best of his shearing ewes from his Wenfork flock for 660gns with this going to previous buyers Steve and Helen Smith. Her pen mate then traded at 520gns selling to D Geary, Olney, Bucks.

Trade for shearing rams was selective and leading trade was a pair of rams from Jonathan Long's Chaileybrook flock, Bishops Frome, Herefordshire. His sale leader at 780gns was a son of

the French bred FR 200221 10187 'Sarkozy' and is out of one of the flock's successful flush ewes from the Golden Valley flock. This one has previously stood second at the National Show last year as a lamb and was sold on the day to Richard Windsor, Malpas, Shropshire.

Next best from the Chaileybrook flock was a ram bred by Celeste and Florence McKeague. This one is by a Brant ram and out of a Chaileybrook dam, selling for 750gns to Ken Smith, Pollington, Goole.

Third best price in the shearing rams was yet another from the Chaileybrook flock, this time home bred on both sides going back to original French lines. This one found a new home at 500gns with H and S Lakin, Wrexham.

The Goodwood team were back in the action in the ram lamb section selling to a top of 480gns for Goodwood Ebor, which found a new home with D and S Humphrey for their East Dean flock at Chichester, Sussex. Nick Page of Goodwood then bid 320gns for the best ram lamb from the Chaileybrook flock. This one is again French-bred and stood first at Royal Bath and West.

In the ewe lamb offering, Goodwood Ellie, a Ladywell Sam daughter, topped the trade selling for 400gns to Katherine Wheeler, Hereford. Two ewe lambs then followed from the same flock selling for 380gns, the first of which was Goodwood Eclipse, which joined the ewe lamb leader selling to Katherine Wheeler and Goodwood Elegant Girl, selling to J Miller, Marley, Glos.

Averages	3 flock ewes	£117.25
	44 shearing ewes	£319.53
	24 ewe lambs	£244.12
	13 shearing rams	£361.03
	6 ram lambs	£308



Setting a new female Southdown record at 1500gns was a shearing ewe, Goodwood Duke's Delight from Goodwood Estate, selling to Steve and Helen Smith, Welshpool.

Melton Mowbray Show Sale 2017



The final official Southdown Sheep Society Show & Sale of the year took place at Melton Mowbray Market as part of the Traditional Native Breeds Show & Sale on September 8th -9th.

Support for the sale from the vendors' point of view was encouraging, with in excess of 100 sheep entered for the show and sale. Buyers were selective in their choice of animals, with those animals that had achieved success in the pre-sale show finding ready homes at good prices.

Show champion was a ram lamb from the Sutherland flock of Mrs Amy Readhead-Higgins, of Leiston, Suffolk, Sutherland 17/00299, sired by Ridings 14/02126, out of a home bred ewe. This lamb was purchased by Ruth Judson of Bingley, Yorkshire, for 460 guineas. Judge Mr Adam Brown commented on the correctness and style of the ram lamb and considered it a worthy winner.

Reserve Champion in the show line-up was a shearling ewe from the East Dean flock of D, S & P Humphrey. East Dean 16/02778 was sired by East Dean 09/2131, and is out of an East Dean ewe 14/01655. She sold for 265 guineas to M J Dickens, of Bicester, near Oxon.

Taking the top price of the day was the first placed shearling ram from Miss Jessica Middleditch of Sudbury, Suffolk. Wakes Hall Jimmy Choo 16/00428 was sired by Chaileybrook 14/00005, out of a Goodwood ewe. This shearling ram was shown at the National Southdown Show at the Suffolk Show earlier this year where he was placed Reserve Champion by judge Mrs Alexandra Long. He sold for the top price of 650 guineas to D A Geary, of Olney, Buckinghamshire.

There was keen interest in the ewe lambs. Placed first in her class, Sutherland Misty 17/00308, from Mrs Amy Readhead-Higgins, sold for 170 guineas to D A Geary. This was the top ewe lamb price.

Regular vendor Peter Oven from Ashbourne, Derbyshire, saw a total clearance of his large consignment of Harehill shearling ewes, the majority of which were purchased to start a new flock in Leicestershire.

Averages: 1 aged ewe	80 guineas
24 shearling ewes	141 guineas
11 ewe lambs	108 guineas
2 aged rams	130 guineas
6 shearling rams	295 guineas
3 ram lambs	236 guineas

YOUNG HANDLERS' PEN

In the Spring 2017 edition of Southdown News we featured keen young shepherd Reg Gamble.

Reg has had a great show season and the culmination of this was winning the Young Handlers' Championship at the Staffordshire Show this summer. Well Done Reg!



YOUNG HANDLERS' PEN

TOBY BATEY

The true story of my best friend Jeff



My mum and I have been looking for a Southdown Ram. I think we have found one. I'd better be quiet because she is on the phone to a breeder called Neil Stainthorpe. YES! We can buy a ram off him, he has four to choose from.

I am on my way there with my mum and my dad. But if you know my dad we will have to go and have a look at a digger on the way (which we bought). We have arrived at Neil's house. We went and had a good look at his rams. Personally I think the shearling is the best ram there. Neil told me all about him. I picked this one and named him Jeff.

When we get home my mum and I will put Jeff in with the ladies. These ladies we bought from Anna Robson last year. I hope he will settle well and make friends.

Last month I decided to take Jeff to my first ever sheep show. It was Greenholme Show. But Jeff doesn't get ready by himself. I needed to wash him and trim his fleece. Santa brought me a dressing stand, shampoo and a white coat.

The Show day

This morning I got up at 7 o'clock to get the trailer ready for Jeff. I went to get Jeff from the shed and did some practice handling him.

It was absolutely pouring down so my mum was waiting in the house. I went with Jeff to say we were ready to go. My grandad came too.

We are here.

We unloaded Jeff and took him to his pen.

Our class is on now. Any Other Breed - Aged Ram. Jeff has WON! Not only did he win but he went on to get CHAMPION of this section.

Everyone was impressed with Jeff and most had not seen a Southdown before. The Judge later complimented us on having a very good sheep. He is a Beltex breeder and the class had five Beltex in so Jeff did well to be placed above them.

Thank you Jeff you are the best and I love you lots.

by Toby Batey

Fellside Flock, Melmerby, Penrith, Cumbria



George Owen

Mr & Mrs Owen are the Southdown breeders of the Wern Bach flock in Flintshire, north Wales. Mrs Helen Owen reports that their son, George, age 5, is a keen young shepherd.

"We attended our local show, Caerwys Agricultural Show, along with some of our flock. George brought along his pet lamb, Maddie, who is one of this year's ewe lambs born in March. The pair won second prize in the under 10 years Young Handlers class and provided everyone with entertainment in the ring as George demonstrated how Maddie likes to wear his flat cap!

We are incredibly proud of George. He has been around our flock since he was born, his first lambing he spent the majority of the time wrapped up in a box watching while we tended to our ewes in very snowy conditions, he was 10 months old. Around the age of three, George developed a fear of the sheep, we still don't know why but he was terrified when they made a noise. However, he has now overcome this fear and has gained so much confidence, especially since partnering up with his good friend, Maddie the lamb! He thoroughly enjoyed preparing her for the show and then showing her off on show day.

We are pleased to report we also were successful on the day gaining first prize with our homebred shearling ewe and reserve champion with our ewe who lambed in March this year".

SOUTHDOWN PEOPLE

PRESIDENT ELECT – LESLEY MEAD



Lesley is truly a country girl, born to farming families, where animals – particularly horses and ponies – were her companions in her younger life, when for Christmas and birthdays she would get a calf, lamb, kitten or pony. Her father still milked his Shorthorn cows by hand in her younger days, and still used a Suffolk Punch for farm work. But on shearing days, dipping days, or at harvest time, she was lucky enough to miss school if her father was too busy to take her. Though sometimes one of his chaps would put her on the crossbar of his cycle to take her! Her favourite lessons were maths and sports, being in school teams for athletics and hockey, but her love of the farm life meant she didn't choose university. She is still enjoying maths by doing several businesses' bookkeeping in her local area. She joined Young Farmers at sixteen, and held the Secretary's position for several years, also those of Treasurer and Chairman whilst a member. She had many happy years in Pony Club teams, and as years rolled by returned to teach at camps and rallies with wonderfully naughty kids, many the offspring of her own friends. Her greatest passion was hunting, riding many, many horses for other people, as well as her own. A nasty accident put her in hospital for three months, and after that she rode less and did give up being on the Hunter Judges Panel. But doing these things is why she has good old fashioned standards, which she continues and wishes the modern world would do the same.

She met her first husband through Young Farmers, and they farmed just over 100 acres in Bucks, having sheep, horses and arable. After a divorce, she left the farm, and when she met up with Terry again – he had been in the same

YFC in earlier years – they married and moved to Holly Bar Farm over 20 years ago, initially having Suffolk sheep and developing a good ram lamb trade.

By chance they went to the last rare breed sale held at Stoneleigh, and decided to have some Southdowns as they were then on the rare breed list, and by luck, help and good fortune they purchased some good stock and are very proud of the traditional stock that now is Holly Bar Southdowns. They travelled to shows throughout the country, promoting the sheep by being successful and have only used new bloodlines on occasions. Having always been brought up to compete, Lesley says that some of her most wonderful moments have been winning with a home bred animal when, in addition, its pedigree is Holly Bar for generations. During her Southdown life the Holly Bar flock has been placed several times in the flock competition, and the year before Terry died, they won the flock championship. A great honour. The Burch Dare Trophy is presented each year by a points system for successful show teams, and Holly Bar sheep have been in the first three of this several times, and won the beautiful cup in 2010, which was first presented in 1934. This makes wonderful reading, with the names of old established flocks, as do the Flock Competition cups also going back to the early 1900s.

Lesley's farm is only ten acres of grass, so all forage and bedding does have to be bought in, but great friends from YFC days supply this; and having direct drilled the grass seed when the farm was first bought - previous crop had been linseed apparently - the land has not been sprayed or fertilised almost since then. The stock sold is mostly as breeding stock, and a certain amount of the lambs not considered showable are sold to local people as freezer lamb. Rams are hired out or, more often, visiting ewes come to Holly Bar at tupping time. Lesley is very pleased to note how many members have started by buying Holly Bar stock.

Lesley does have some interests apart from animals! She loves cooking (although how she had the time to do so much -- making pickles, jams, etc. -- in years gone by, she does not know!), gardening, flower arranging and stamp collecting!!

Lesley is very proud to have been asked to stand as President-Elect of the Society, and obviously as President next year, and she would be happy to chat about the breed with long-standing, new, and prospective members.

Southdown Sheep Society

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