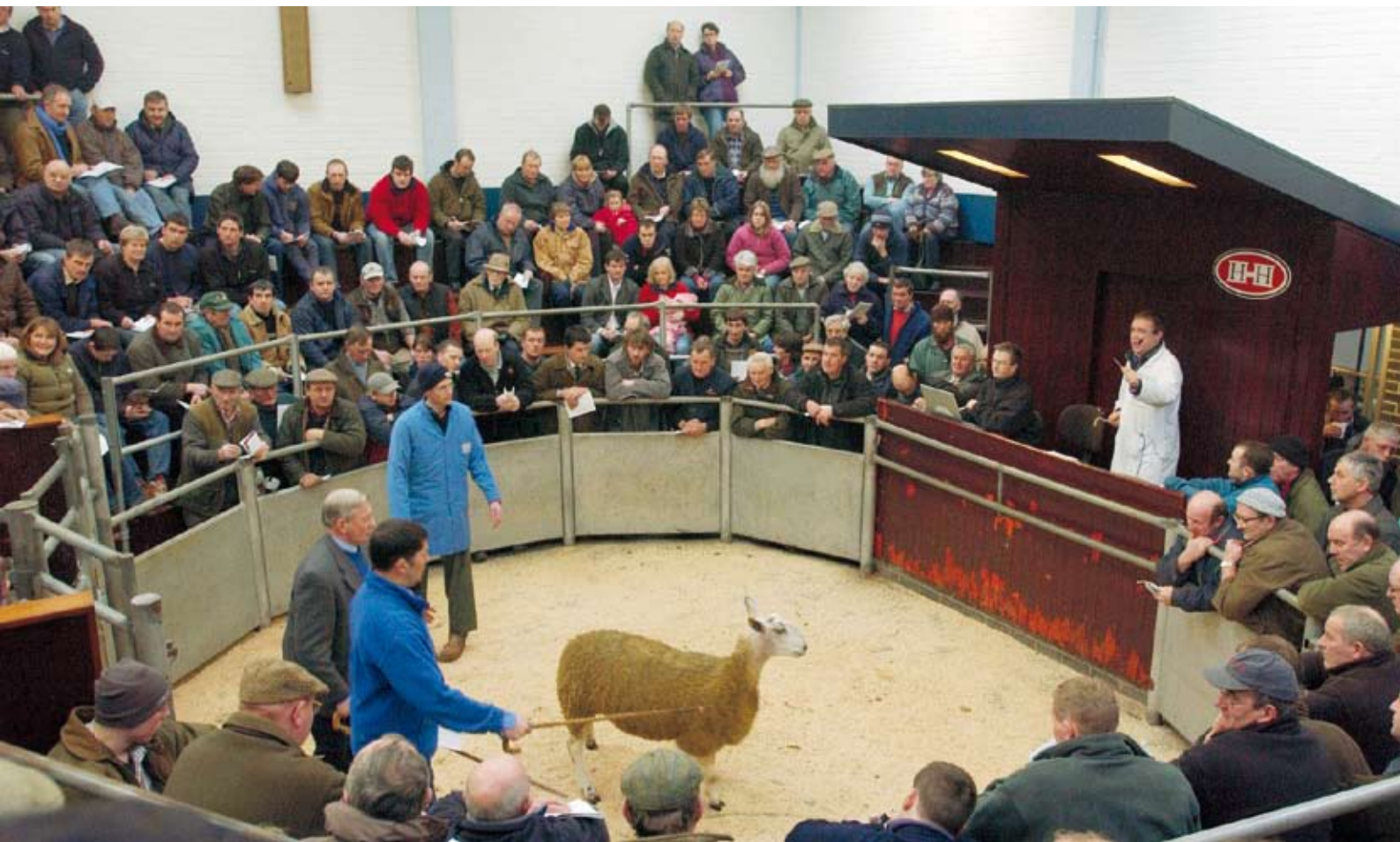


BLUEFACED LEICESTER

LOOKING AHEAD

EDITION No. 17, 2006

A PROMISING START TO THE YEAR



Packed ringside at the In-Lamb Ewe Sale at Borderway Mart Carlisle, January 2006

Photo - John Fraser

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Scotsheep, Aberdeenshire
Royal Highland Show
Royal Show
Yorkshire Show
Penrith Progeny Show
Royal Welsh
NSA Sheep Event, Malvern
Progeny Show, Oswestry**

**June 7th
June 22 - 25th
July 2nd - 5th
July 11th- 13th
July 22nd
July 24th - 27th
August 2nd
August 5th**

Chairman's Report

Once again I find myself struggling to put thoughts on paper, and, after nearly a year "in the chair", there's a lot to think about. As Jill and I have travelled around the country, the welcome and the "crack" has been tremendous. Much of it was about Leicesters, where they came from, and indeed, are going. Generally, the more successful a breeder is, the more convinced they are that they're on the right track. Quite often I'd then find myself talking to another successful breeder, who was about to leave the "station" in a completely different direction. Now, let me explain my position. I am, and have always been, an enthusiast of the "crossing" side of the Breed. Adding our flock on to the history of the Whitehall Flock we started from, and you have at least half a century of an unbroken line of the crossing type. However, I'm well aware that what we continually strive for in the colouring of a Mule lamb, although financially rewarding for me, should be, for the lowland farmer a complete irrelevance. So why do I breed them, and more importantly why does he buy them? The answer is pride, pride in what we do. A field of well-coloured Mule lambs are just so beautiful, dammit!

At this moment, if you're from the other side of the Breed, you'll probably be clapping your hands and thinking at last a crossing man admitting it's all nonsense! But I've a question for you - what's that blue skin all about? Just the same surely! Pride, or significantly, pride in the ability to exhibit breed points for your own enjoyment, and to bask in the appreciative glow from your peers. The danger for us all was plain to see at Crufts, which was won by an Australian Sheepdog with perfect breed points, but he hadn't the vigour to jump on to a low table for the inevitable photo shoot and had to be lifted up. Vigour is the first thing to go, as breed points come to the fore. But then what are breed points? As far as I can make out they all start with a type, usually specific to a particular area from which it takes its name, and as it out performs its' competitors the expansion begins. Forward thinking individuals see an opportunity and a type evolves into a breed. The breed points no doubt coincide nicely with the likes of the committee that is inevitably formed. It's at this state that our breed differed somewhat to others. Any attempt to fix a particular "stamp" was missed because the committee was formed about thirty years too late. Out of the Tyne Valley and away, the cat was well and truly "out of the bag".

It's interesting that one of the main topics at the first meeting was to decide on a name: it was nearly the Hexham Leicester. The reasons for this are obvious when looking at some of the early Flock Book photos - not much sign of blue there. But blue, like brown and pure white were around, and it's also interesting that even to this day there are many crossing men who will tell you that the best breeders they ever had were of the paler persuasion.

Then came the seventies and eighties, with a massive influx of newcomers to the Breed. "Was it all in the name?" Many have said as much, but, for whatever reason, blue was king,

demand was created, and fortunes were made - mostly at Hexham and Lazonby.

Blue for blues sake was in my opinion extremely damaging, and I hope we're not about to repeat it, in a mad scramble for brown. We would do well to remember that the original Leicester, and it's daughter the North of England Mule, built their reputation on performance not any particular facial colouring. Indeed some of my first memories of sheep are of the Mule lambs which came down from Tow Law each Autumn to Northallerton where we then lived. Immensely thrifty, they ousted the flashy Masham and aristocratic Half-breds who paid the ultimate price for their over attention to irrelevant detail.

So what of our future? As a Society I would be so bold as to suggest that to secure it, the "traditional" side of the Breed needs to get off it's high horse and stop accusing those with brown of mongrelisation; no doubt there's something in there but whatever it is will have been present for over seventy years. As for my colleagues on the "crossing" side, some of us need to knock that chip off our shoulders and recognize the Bluefaced Leicester Association for what it is, a voice for the upland sheep farmers of Britain. If you didn't know that, it's possibly because you haven't been to any meetings.

There I go, towards the end of my year, I find myself continuing to upset both sides in equal measure, which isn't really in my nature, but I hope you understand why.

I also hope you'll find time to allow Jill and I the chance to repay the hospitality we've found throughout the country, by visiting us on the 20th August as we host the first half of this year's Open Day before going on to Rosehill.

Finally many thanks to James Porter and Neale McQuistin for their advice, the Trustees for their support - in particular Arthur (font of all knowledge) Yeats who knows all the stories, Pauline who "held the fort" so magnificently after Fiona left, and finally Jean who's professionalism and good nature has made my year as Chairman so memorable. So good luck to you all, and I look forward to seeing many of you on Sunday 20th August.

Denis



Denis, our Chairman, takes the floor.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2006 has again been a successful year in the Bluefaced Leicester calendar. The Shows were well represented with stock and the Progeny Show at Penrith was an excellent example, with several members competing.

I very much enjoyed stewarding at The Royal Show when Glenn Shapiro walked off with first prizes from every class she entered - well done Glenn!

The annual Sales again represented the hard work undertaken to get the animals groomed and this was reflected in the prices.

It has indeed been a pleasure to have been given the honour of being your President. I have enjoyed my year in office and thank you for your support.

Robin Raine



Royal Show 2005: Judge Martyn Archer, President Robin Raine and Glenn Shapiro.

PUBLICITY REPORT

Someone, whose name escapes me, once said that half of the money he spent on publicity was wasted; the only problem was he didn't know which half it was. Bearing this in mind it's quite a responsibility to spend association funds in a way that hopefully brings the best returns for members.

The focus of our efforts, in the last year, has been to improve our sales and show reports in the national farming press and to integrate this with our website. We now employ the services of Wayne Hutchinson to make reports and take pictures at, hopefully, all the association sales and main shows throughout the season. He in turn works closely with the Drummonds at Cassington who have done such a great job at managing our website over the last 12 months. The result has been very satisfying indeed. Press coverage was excellent last year and 12 thousand plus visits to the website speaks for itself.

The Autumn Review and Looking Ahead Magazines, which we produce in the course of the year, are continuing to develop with one or two new features finding their way in. Jean and the band of volunteers who make up the publicity committee are to be congratulated. I hope that everyone enjoys reading it and appreciates the time and effort that goes into collecting up all the information.

The stock judging competition at Lanark Mart recorded an increase in attendance this year. The added interest of the judge giving his reasons during the proceedings gives the event an edge and increases the kudos of the breed as a whole. I am certain that if more of an exhibition could be made of our shows especially at the point where the championship line up is assembled it would stimulate interest and generate publicity completely free of charge.

All the usual events that we attend are scheduled again this year:- Scotsheep, the Royal Shows and two progeny shows. So even if you can't come and show at any of these events please do come and lend your support by packing the ringside.

New banners have been produced to be used, as and when needed, at any event where Bluefaced Leicesters are present. They have incorporated the winning entry from the slogan competition that we ran in the Autumn Review. The number of people who responded to the competition was not large but half of the respondents included the same slogan. So take heart in these uncertain times that we live in because:

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT THE FUTURE'S BLUE.

Neale McQuistin

PROFILE

William and Trevor Bell live just outside Comber in Co Down, Northern Ireland with their father Jim. Comber is known to the local people as the 'Garden of Eden' for producing the early Comber potatoes.

William is 26 and Trevor 21 - both boys are sheep mad! William has a full time job and Trevor farms at home with his father. They run a suckler cow herd of approximately 80 cows and a pedigree Charollais sheep flock as well as the Blues.

The Charollais sheep lamb from December to March. When they are finished, the Blues then start around the eighth of March, with the cows calving from February onwards.

Why Bluefaced Leicesters? Well if we are really honest it was because the Blues chose us instead of us choosing them. About ten years ago my father was looking for a foster lamb for a crossbred ewe, and we rang a phone number in the paper which happened to be Fred Loughridge. Off we went to collect two pet lambs - which just happened to be Bluefaced Leicester lambs. Trevor thought that these strange looking bundles were just great and got hooked on them. After a lot of thought and research on the breed a few years ago, the boys decided to start a pedigree flock of their own and go into opposition with their father Jim and his Charollais flock.

Some of their foundation flock came from Jock McCullough in Scotland. The boys met the late Jock at their first Bluefaced Leicester Show at Ballymena, where he told them, "Come and see my sheep and you will get good skins". They took his word for this as they were 'green' and did not have much experience, but true to his word the boys were put on the right track.

Now, with a little more experience, William and Trevor enjoy the Show Circuit. They feel it is the Breeds' shop window and that it is very important for the Blues to be out there with times changing and new breeds coming forward wanting to take over.

William and Trevor have had a great show season last year. A homebred gimmer took Champion for them at Balmoral. She was never beaten in her class all season and also took three Interbreed titles at Ballymena, Ballymena and Coleraine. This was great publicity for the Bluefaced Leicesters as it has been a long time since they have featured in the Interbreed stage of the shows in Ireland.

The boys have taken stock to Carlisle for the past three years and have gained a lot of experience from this. They have made a lot of new friends both here and across the water and a many people have given them good advice that hopefully has steered them in the right direction.





You are always striving to find that near perfect sheep, and we think that is what keeps the motivation going. It is also very satisfying to see good quality Mules being produced from your homebred rams, as this is our market. Times are changing so fast for the farmer with a sea of paperwork, and there seems to be more time spent doing this. Every week new regulations are enforced, but we hope by only keeping the best stock we can, that we can go with the flow of things to come.

Diane Christie



KEMPT VIEW

PROGENY SHOWS AND RAM CLASSIFICATION 2006

Penrith Progeny Show will again be held at Penrith Agricultural Show on Saturday 22nd July. This will take the form of the usual Show Classes with the addition of the Association Progeny Show Classes. The Ram Classification will also take place between 9.30 and 12noon. Entries taken for Classification on day.

Oswestry Progeny Show is new to the Bluefaced Leicester calendar - this will replace the event held in recent years at Welshpool. The date for your diary is Saturday 5th August. The Progeny classes will be integrated into the Show classes and the generous sponsored prizes for all the Bluefaced Leicester and Progeny classes should encourage a good entry - this promises to be a really competitive day for all. Ram classification will take place at this Show also from 12.30pm, entries on day

At both Shows there will be the ever popular Junior Handling Classes.

THE WEBSITE:

Visit www.blueleicester.co.uk along with nearly 12,000 Other visitors and see what's happening in 2006!

Sale dates for this year now on line,
And soon to come a new Archive section
(and by archive we don't mean 2005)

You will be able to download 2006 Sales Entry Forms if needed, and catalogues as available.

Wayne Hutchinson will again be attending the Sales and Shows and submitting reports, but you can still send in your Show photos and show reports from your local shows.



NEW COMPETITION!

It is proposed to publish a Bluefaced Leicester Calendar for 2007 to sell for Association funds and a chosen Charity.

We need photographs... so get your cameras out now and lets see if we can get a good selection of photos to look at in the months of 2007.

Rules are simple: Pictures must be original, include Bluefaced Leicesters (naturally) and no photographs of people (unless a crucial part of the background).

The Judge will be professional photographer Wayne Hutchinson, and the bumper prizes are.....£25 for each photograph used.

Please submit to the office by email, disc or hard copy, remembering to attach your name and address, by the **Closing Date of 31st August 2006.**



Smile Please!

OPEN DAY
20th August 2006
NOOKTON AND
ROSEHILL
CO DURHAM

*Further details
to follow*

NEW IN STOCK!
BLUEFACED
LEICESTER TIES

NAVY BLUE ONLY
With BFL Logo

Please contact the Office
Price (incl. P&P)

£10.50p



PROFILE



Angus cross cows Blackfaced ewes and Bluefaced Leicesters would seem like a very probable mixture to find on a livestock farm anywhere in the South West of Scotland, but the mixture of animals at High and Low Airyolland in the Luce Valley looks a bit more exotic than most. The Highland Cattle and Beltex sheep that also graze the patchwork of green fields, rush pasture, moor land and native woodland give the 365 hectare farm a different look altogether. You half expect to meet Tom and Barbra Good as you drive up to the farm but Janet and I are not cut out for the good life. Our children, Lauren 13, Gavin 11 and Caroline 10 have banned us from talking about the S word at the dining table such is our total absorption in genetics and all things sheep.

Like most people's departures into pedigree livestock breeding; the flocks of Bluefaced Leicesters founded in 1979, the Beltex Flock in 1998 and more recently the small fold of Highlanders in 2005 all started away as being a bit of a hobby. But as my wife Janet, who rears all the spare lambs, keeps all the records and generally does 51% of all of the work about the place, while holding down her job as a primary school teacher, can tell you, "flocks of 80 Beltex and 30 Bluefaced Leicesters are more than just a hobby." The recent addition of the Highlanders has added yet another layer of paperwork but we both just love having the hairy girls about the place.

If all that sounds as if we're a pair of anoraks I haven't mentioned our real obsession yet. Without a doubt breeding mule ewe lambs takes precedence over all other aspects of what we do. There are two times in the year when excitement peaks when you're breeding mules. The first is when the lambs are being born and finally you get to see if that new ram that was purchased with cast iron guarantees from silver tongued Dalesmen can walk the walk or not. This can sometimes produce a negative peak, as the spin doctors would say, but nevertheless the day I stop looking forward to seeing those newborn lambs struggling to get to their feet is the day I'll apply for a council house. The second peak of excitement, and it's quite closely linked to the first, is when the ewe lambs

HIGH AIR



are prepared and taken to market. Is there a bonnier sight than a well presented pen of mule ewe lambs? I don't think so.

There are 25 score of Blackfaced ewes crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester and the 60 Angus cross suckler cows are crossed with the Limousin bull to calf in the Spring. The emphasis is now on low input low output as far as the suckler cows are concerned and as much of the farm as we can has been entered into stewardship of one kind or another. An application is being made this year to the Rural Stewardship Scheme to grow our silage in a bird friendly manner especially for Corn Crakes. I can just remember as a boy in short trousers hearing a Corn Crane in a field of oats. If they do come back to breed here it will be nice to have something on the farm that we don't need to worry about keeping their mouths right.

When I'm off duty I continue my 40 year quest to catch that illusive 20 pound Salmon that hopefully waits for me in the River Luce, which flows along one side of the Farm. I would quite like to down that pheasant that is so high it looks like a Starling, the one I'm aiming at that is. I would also quite like to Ski down a blue run without falling on my backside. Maybe this year.

Being involved with the Bluefaced Leicesters for the last 27 years has been a source of great pleasure in terms of the people you meet and the great friendships that are formed. It's always great to meet up again after lambing time and hear the tales of Bluefaced Leicesters with nine inch lugs that sadly never took a cough and that mule with perfect markings a beautiful skin and very disappointing testicles. I'm up for it again this year See you at Scotsheep.



"Normal production for a Scottish Blackface Ewe"

YOLLAND

NORTH EAST AREA REPORT

The sun is finally shining as I sit and write my report, our lambing is now well through and we are desperate for a little bit better weather for the lambs - the poor things know nothing else but rain.

Unfortunately I must start my report with some sad news, our region has lost some dear friends, Kath Walton, Potter Wood and Alec Peart.

Kath Walton, a well known popular figure was secretary of the Northumberland County Show. Previously she had also helped out in the BFL office, and first became interested in the breed through her father Jack White who had the Broomley flock. In 1984 she registered her own flock in the flock book under the Broomley Fell prefix through which she had a good deal of success with lambs selling for up to £4000. Unfortunately she lost her sheep in the 2001 foot & mouth outbreak but had since restocked. Kath was also very keen on showing Mules with which she had great success, the highlight being at the 2005 Great Yorkshire Show when she won the Championship and took the cup which had been presented in memory of her Father.

Potter Wood was a legend of the sheep world, and his first interest in the breed came when he was the shepherd at Whitshields. Through hard work he took the sheep to new heights winning many championships along the way, then 21 years ago he retired with a few sheep and started breeding his own very successfully. Potter was an artist when it came to dressing them and his sheep were always turned out to perfection, however, he wasn't afraid to pass on his knowledge and expertise to the younger generation. Many society members and young shepherds will have benefited from his help - I know that I have. Although Potter sold his sheep in 1997, he still had close connections with the breed, inspecting at many sales and also judging the breed

at shows far and wide. In 2004 he won the NSA 'TI Allinson Award' in recognition of a lifetime dedicated to the sheep industry.

Alec Peart, a very well respected breeder with his Woodcroft flock, was a founder member and, in 1965, was appointed to the Council of Management. In 1975 he became Association Chairman and in 1981 President. Alec continued as a North East committee member until 1987. The Woodcroft pen was noted at the Hexham sale winning the 'W H Davison Champion Tup Lamb Trophy' on at least 4 occasions. In 1988 the champion Woodcroft C1 sold for £3,800, a record price at the time. In 1987 the 'Thomas Ridley Female Trophy' was presented at the Hexham Sale by Mrs Ridley, and Alec, who had been great friends with Thomas, was very pleased to win it with a shearling gimmer.

All three were dedicated to the breed and great ambassadors for the sheep industry, they will be sadly missed far and wide, our sympathies go to all those concerned.

On 21st January we had the Hawes Female Sale which went well with quality sheep selling and almost 100% clearance. A gimmer hogg from Hewgill took the championship selling for £3000 and the 2nd placed gimmer hogg from the same consignment topping at £3200. The reserve was a 3 shear ewe from Oddacres which sold for £550. 33 sheep were forward with an overall average of £569.16 which is £50.70 up on last year. Hawes Auction Mart also tells us they have a new sale ring planned for the back end sales.

On the 24th January we attended the Trident Sheep Fair at Skipton. The event was not as well attended as on previous years but we did sign up 2 new members on the day. Thanks must go to Mawson Bros for providing two good ewes for the stand and to John & Claire Mason and Jean for all their hard work.

On the 4th February we had the North East Region Dinner Dance at Hexham Mart, it was well supported both by local members and members travelling from further afield. The

evening was a great success with many members requesting a repeat next year (3rd February 2007!). A collection on the night raised £211 for the Air Ambulance. Thanks must go to Denis Lumley and Claire Bisset for helping me to organise it.

At our AGM on the 16th February James Porter, James Herdman, David Brown and Granville Fairburn were elected onto the committee.

We have persuaded Denis and Jill Lumley of the Nookton flock and Willie and George Wearmouth of the Rosehill flock to have this year's joint flock visit. Further details will follow shortly.

Nicholas Robinson

NORTH WEST REPORT

It's mid-March with lambing underway and long days and sleepless nights. Crops of three or four - that's the reward you get from Bluefaced Leicesters: they certainly keep you with plenty of work to do.

January saw our Association In-lamb Sale at Carlisle, held by Harrison & Hetherington. It was a good trade for all classes of sheep with top honours going to John Wight & Son, Midlock with a gimmer shearling by the £17000 Bull and Cave ram. She was carrying triplets and sold for £1800. 31 gimmer shearlings from Midlock went on to average £764.81. Well done! The Sale averages were 29 Aged Ewes - £321.88, Shearlings - £429.75 and 23 Ewe Lambs - £528.65.

On February 9th a special meeting was held at Edenhall Hotel to discuss moving the Penrith Association Sale from 5th October to Tuesday 3rd October. This change was subsequently given the go-ahead by Council and would start 2.00 - 2.30pm after the multibreed sale. Judging times and further details will be available later after further consultations with the Auction Mart. Let us all give our commitment, as we do need a Registered Sale at Penrith Mart.

The Progeny Show once again is at Penrith Show on Saturday 22nd July. This has proven to be a great success over the past 2 years. We could still take more sheep in our classes so please give us your entries.

Our AGM for the North West Region will be held during the first week in May, so do come along and give us your support and new views about your Region.

I will now sign off and hope your lambing has gone well.

See you at the Agricultural Shows

Sid Ivinson,
North West Chairman

SCOTTISH REPORT

Well, as I sit here typing my first Regional Report I cannot believe that it is now my turn to be Regional Chairman. My two years as vice have flown by and thanks to Neale's hard work and enthusiasm I have taken over the reigns of a Scottish region that seems to go from strength to strength. I am looking forward to my term as Chairman and getting about meeting members whenever I can. I am also pleased to be serving alongside our President Elect, Robert Currie. Robert is solely responsible for my interest in the breed. His enthusiasm for the breed he demonstrated all those years ago, when I was a student lambing at Tayburn, is still evident and I look forward to attending events and being kept in line by him.

Lambing in Scotland has been hampered by the weather. A good dry winter with sheep being kept out as long as possible before lambing has been compensated for by the coldest March on record with record snowfalls covering fields for up to a week and making life difficult for sheep and shepherd alike. It is funny how nature reminds us who is really in charge !!

We had a good AGM and stockjudging in February where numbers swelled on last year and Martyn Archer ably

placed the quality stock on show. A big thanks to all who attended.

We look forward to Scotsheep in May up in Huntly where we hope to show the versatility of our breed as the true crossing sire. It is important to focus on our breed's strengths and not on other's potential failings when challenged by incomers and I am sure the Bluefaced Leicester will stand up to these challenges and emerge on top. This point has been taken up by the Publicity Committee who are looking into ways of answering the challenges posed by other breeds.

Then we have the Highland in June. Will the Robinsons from Cocklaw make it a hat-trick of raids over the border? Who knows but I'm looking forward to finding out.

Neil Laing, Scottish Region
Chairman

NORTHERN IRELAND REPORT

As normal I am running behind schedule and leaving this very short report to the last minute, probably putting Jean under an awful lot of pressure to hit the printers. I apologise for that.

As I am writing this I am thinking of a few things: will those Blues need in again? Is the snow going to come? How many will die? Will the living ones be worth much money this year? The Blackie ewes are in full flight, needing grass, but doing well considering the terrible week of rain and cold we had last week. But through all the hardships of lambing it is a wonderful time to be a farmer. Seeing how new rams breed, watching years of selection all coming together and making it all worthwhile. Remember all the rain and cold will be forgotten along with the casualties you may or may not have. The heat will come, the grass will grow and things will look different.

Wishing you all luck for the remainder of the spring, and looking forward to a good summer and more importantly another good year for the Blue Leicester.

Seamus O'Kane,
Chairman

WALES AND SOUTH REPORT

We had our Autumn Meeting at the Raven Hotel in Welshpool and afterwards enjoyed a Christmas Dinner. After the meal we were entertained by Denis Lumley who gave us a very amusing speech. We very much appreciate him and his wife travelling so far to attend our meeting and meal.

The main items discussed at the meeting were our Progeny Show, the date of the Welshpool Sale and the possibility of the Hereford Sale becoming an official Society Sale. Oswestry Show had offered us the opportunity to hold the Progeny Show there and it was decided we should try this to get a wider audience for our Show. The date for this event is Saturday 5th August. We discussed the date of the Welshpool Sale but it was decided we should keep the existing date, as it was part of a multibreed sale which encouraged buyers to attend.

Hereford Market auctioneers had shown an interest in their annual sale of Bluefaced Leicesters becoming a Society Sale. The date of the sale this year is 18th October. This sale is always well attended and being slightly later than the other Society Sales always seems to attract plenty of buyers from the south of England. The auctioneers have been in contact with our National Chairman and this subject was discussed at the recent Council Meeting. It was decided that the sale could not become an official sale, as unregistered sheep could be sold in the same ring, but the Society would put forward some prize money for a show at the sale to encourage entries.

Jo Binns



THE SCOTTISH INVASION AT THE ANNUAL DINNER DANCE AT HEXHAM IN FEBRUARY

*left to right -
Vice-Chairman, Neale McQuistin
Alex Brown
Neil Sinclair
Wallace Parker*



Results of Slogan Competition:

The Winning Slogan was

“The Future’s Bright, the Future’s Blue”

We had three members suggesting this slogan:

D. Banks, Craigbank • D. Smith, Lowes • D Lumley, Nookton

Thanks to all who entered - prizes will follow shortly

The Secretary would like to acknowledge the work done by Martyn Archer in the compilation of the £1,000 Register.

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