

# Highland Cattle Club of Wales Newsletter

## Issue 44 - Spring 2010



## www.hccw.org.uk

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of HCCW

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## REMINDER

2010 Membership Subscriptions are due now

£20 (cheque payment) £15 (Standing Order)

Please send cheques payable to HCCW (or requests for a standing form) to: The Secretary Mo Morgan (see back page)

## EDITORIAL

I shall make no excuses for using the front cover to display my own photo, as I'm still reeling from the thrill of the birth of our very first homebred calf.... and I hope you will agree that he is rather beautiful!

How about a "cutest calf" photo competition this year? Please send me your photos!

I'm eternally grateful to our little heifer for bringing her son into the world without the need for my assistance, and during the few days of relatively mild weather in between spells of snow. In Oscar ceremony fashion, I'd like to express my thanks to Paul and Marie Carson for the loan of their lovely bull, to Howard Dare for producing such a sweetnatured heifer, and to Annie and Geoff for being on the end of the phone in my hour of birthing panic (see next page). With more than a hint of Spring in the air now, I'd like to wish you all a successful calving season.

I'd also like to congratulate Liz McCombe on being appointed to the council of the Highland Cattle Society. She already works considerably hard on behalf of our club, and I know she'll work tirelessly within the society to represent Highland breeders in Wales and to promote the breed in general.

Mo Morgan

Cover photo: Gwyn of Mynydd Du

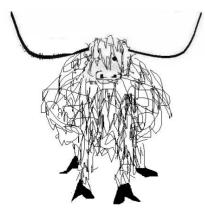
## EDITORIAL—continued

Those old hands amongst you can fast forward to the next page, but I'd like to share my experiences of 20<sup>th</sup> January with some of the other new hands....

For a fortnight or so we've been nervously anticipating the arrival of our very first calf (and mentally noting that *next time*, we'll make a note of when she's bulling, rather than having to guess her due date nine months later), and measuring the depth of the snow. The 20<sup>th</sup> is relatively mild and free of snow, and Charles sets off at the crack of dawn to London for two days.

This of course, is the day the heifer chooses to calve. So after phoning Charles to curse him for leaving me on my own, I spend an anxious morning watching her pacing up and down the field, whilst murmuring words of encouragement to her (which I'm sure help). At my lunchtime visit, I'm amazed to see a pair of feet – "my god, it's really happening". But an hour or so later, there's still just a pair of feet. I read "Starting with Cattle" (or whatever the book's called) for the umpteenth time, curse myself for not going on a calving course, and then do the only thing I can think of – phone Annie and Geoff!

Geoff advises me, very calmly and quietly, that the heifer is a little small and she may need a bit of help with some ropes. "But I'm not sure I can do it" I tell him anxiously. Geoff assures me very quietly and firmly that I *can* do it, but by now it's time to collect Tom from school. So off I go in the car, and with Geoff's words ringing in my ears, by the time we're heading home, I've managed to convince myself that I *can* indeed do it. As Tom and



I hurtle up the lane, we see the heifer lying apparently comatose in the middle of the field, with a steaming pile of slime lying behind her. By the time I've got out of the car and climbed the gate, the steaming pile and his mother are both on their feet; the steaming pile trying to suckle whilst being vigorously washed. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Isn't nature amazing?

Mo Morgan

Either I'm in show condition or I'm pregnant! ACM

#### **FROM THE CHAIR**

In this first newsletter of 2010, may I wish all members a late but sincere Happy New Year. Amid all the snow and ice we can only hope that spring is just around the corner, promising good things for the summer. The season will start with the Smallholders and Garden Festival in May at Builth, followed only a fortnight later by the Gilden Vale Open Day. (For details see elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Various members have kindly offered to hold fold visits and the club tries to have a couple every year. We are widespread and it is very useful to have visits in different areas of Wales so that the maximum numbers of members can attend. A fold visit can be extremely simple; just a tour round your animals, with people bringing their own picnics to eat al fresco is more than adequate. Members' folds are extremely diverse and methods of feeding and animal husbandry vary widely, so if you are prepared to talk about your operation, it will certainly be useful and informative. Any opportunity to chat about beasts and farming matters, exchanging experiences and advice is always popular amongst members. The basic visit may be further enhanced with a talk from an expert, and vets and animal chiropractors amongst others have been used by other clubs with great success. I admit to having had a brain fade and forgotten who I have spoken to about a possible fold visit. I do apologise, and ask you to contact either myself or Mo so that we can put future visits in place. (A written list, rather than relying on my inadequate memory, would be a start!) Please consider holding a fold visit, no fold is too small or too large, we're all doing our bit for the breed and farming!

As you are doubtless aware, the Highland Cattle Society is hosting the International Gathering between September 29<sup>th</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup>. In the few days until the annual Oban autumn sale on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October, there is an opportunity for delegates to the gathering to travel round to visit other folds. It is not feasible for HCCW to organise anything as ambitious as the Gathering, but Wales is a friendly place, and it would be great if some visitors could come and see some of us. If you are prepared to welcome visitors to your fold at the start of October, please let Mo or me know so that we can put a list together for HCS to publicise.

Also, if you are free at the end of September and would enjoy a few days in Scotland looking round folds and meeting people, there are still places left for the gathering. I understand that a fairly large number of people from the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Canada are expected to attend, so there will be plenty to discuss.

It has been a very great honour for me to be asked to stand for the Highland Cattle Society Council. I will serve for three years and during that time I hope I can help make a difference to the way the breed is perceived by people who are unfamiliar with Highlanders so that these thrifty and productive animals become more widely appreciated as a positive asset to farming.

Thank you all for your support during the past twelve months and I look forward to seeing you at various events this year.



2009 Fold Visits

A picnic at Celyn Fold in August

Photos: Mike McCombe

# Gilden Vale Open Day

## Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2010 9am until 4.30pm

By Kind Invitation of Angie and Duncan Handley Gilden Vale Fold, Quarry Farm, Dorstone, Herefordshire, HR3 6BL

Demonstrations throughout the day:

- Stock Fencing
- Butchery
- Foot Trimming
- Presentation and Handling
- Show Etiquette

Farm Walks to see the Cattle

Experienced breeders share their knowledge of Highlanders

Come and handle cattle, practise show techniques and have fun!

Lunch will be provided

## **Booking Essential:**

Phone: 01981 550096 Email: chair@hccw.org.uk Post: Quarry Farm, Dorstone, Herefordshire, HR3 6BL

## Smallholder and Garden Festival 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May

The Club will have a stand at the Smallholder and Garden Festival and the committee are looking forward to seeing members as it's very popular. Please drop by and say hello if you're passing! The stand will again be in the competition for the best presented/designed display and we are hoping to do even better than last year's third place.

The cattle are always a huge crowd puller and usually more people visit us than any other exhibit: they love the photos and live beasts are even more fascinating.

We would like some help to man the stand, so if you would like to contribute and have an hour to spare on your visit to talk about your fold and Highland experiences to an interested audience, please let either Liz or Mo know (see below).

## Do you have yours yet?

The *stylish* and *exclusive* HCCW jute bags will be available to buy at club events this summer. To reserve yours, contact Liz or Mo (see below).



## **Selling Your Meat**

We are in the process of producing a bilingual brochure advertising the benefits of Highland meat. We propose to include a list of meat producers so that potential customers can look at the list to find their nearest producer, ring or email them, and if it's available, buy some meat.

If you would like to be included, please send your contact details (name, email address and/or phone number, and address) to Liz or Mo (see below).

Phone Liz (01291 652957) or Mo (01550 740206); write to us (see back page for addresses); email: chair@hccw.org.uk; or contact us via: www.hccw.org.uk.

## The Royal Welsh Show 2010

As you are aware, last year the Highland Cattle Society had a marquee at the Royal Welsh Show in July. It faced the cattle show ring and was ideally positioned to capture the passerby on their way to or from the cattle lines. It was very well attended, with much interest shown by commercial farmers, old and young, in the viability and economic value of keeping Highlanders, both as purebreds and as crosses with almost any other breed. Sponsors' folders containing information and photographs of their cattle were extremely popular with members of the public as well.

The Highland Cattle Society proposes to have a stand at this year's show, and HCCW have been asked to sponsor it again. Upon sponsorship of £100, a wall mounted advertisement (up to A3 size) for your fold, together with a folder with photos and information about your cattle and business cards will be displayed on the stand. Two free entry tickets will be available, and your name will be included in the list of sponsors.

Sponsorship of £50 enables you to design a wall mounted advert (up to A3 size) for your fold **or** submit a folder for display on the stand. Your name will appear on the list of sponsors.

A donation of £30 will enable you to design your A4 size fold advert for display on the stand, with your name on the list of sponsors. Sponsorship of £20 will include you on the list of sponsors on display in the marquee.

Last year's sponsorship was very successful, and people were Extremely interested to see where and how Highland cattle are kept in Wales. You can tell them as much and as often as you like: nothing cements it in people's minds as quickly as a photograph of the beasts out on the hill in all weathers! You have all been very generous with your sponsorship and support, and I know that this will continue, thank you.

We need a rota of members to help Hazel (wo)man the stand, ideally with at least two people for each half day of the four days, so that there is a chance for volunteers to look round the Show during their free morning or afternoon. Volunteers will receive free entrance and an opportunity to talk about their folds. So, if you are intending to go to Builth in July, please consider giving some time to the Highland Cattle stand in return for free entrance and no doubt a sit down and a drink!

#### SUMMER SHOW DIARY

For your diary, here is a list of shows in and around Wales during the Summer of 2010. Most of the shows have their own websites, and links to these can be found on the HCCW website. Shows which have classes specifically for Highland Cattle are shown in **bold** type.

North Somerset Show	ТВА
Smallholders' Show	15th-16th May
Aberystwyth & Ceredigion County Show	12th June
Three Counties Show	18th - 20th June
Carmarthen County Show	ТВА
Royal Highland Show	24th-27th June
West Mid Show	26th - 27th June
Royal Welsh Show	19th - 22nd July
Cardigan County Show	28th July
Oswestry Show	7th August
Chepstow Show	14th August
Llanilar Show	14th August
Anglesey Show	ТВА
Lampeter Show	ТВА
Mid-Somerset Show	15th August
Pembrokeshire Show	17th - 19th August
Denbigh & Flint Show	ТВА
Monmouth Show	26th August
Cerrig Show	ТВА
Usk Show	11th September
Newbury Show	18th - 19th September

If you're aware of any other shows, please let us know!

## Annual Bull Sale Oban, February 14 & 15<sup>th</sup> 2010

Our dear ones do seem to manage very well when thrown helter-skelter into the genial chaos that is the Oban mart. For the rest of us it was business as usual: meeting old friends and acquaintances; looking at the stock that would be shown on Sunday and for sale on Monday; talking over breed points, blood lines and catching up on news.

The show on Sunday was judged by Donald McGillivray. At the sale on Monday bidding was brisk, although over a dozen beasts were not put forward and more than double that not sold in the ring. The quality of the bulls on show this year was good. Buyers were a well informed lot and did not slavishly follow the judge's opinion. The Champion Senior bull, Angus Dubh of Upper Cornabus did not fetch the top price. There was something for everyone and prices reflected this. Good beasts could be had for 800 gns. The senior bulls averaged out at around 2,633 gns. The highest prices were over 5,000 gns. In the senior bull class Am Drobhair of Coirefuar was sold by Angus Mackey for 5500gns, Callum 2<sup>nd</sup> of Goldenberry topped the list at 5800 gns. The lowest price in this class was 400gns. Females were not of such high quality, but one had to remember that February is a bull sale and the best females are on show in October. The highest fetched was 2100gns and at the bottom of the scale poor quality animals fetched under 300 gns. There were about 40 beasts in the heifer class and this naturally affected the prices, some animals were under 200gns.



The prices in Oban to a certain extent underpin what we can expect at home. Granted there are some high prices that tend to skew the averages; especially if two buyers with money decide that they want the same beast - usually a show winner. This February buyers were sensible and no-one paid over the odds and the averages are realistic. Nevertheless, there were a number of Danish buyers and a large proportion of the females made 2000gns.

It all seems to have got a bit much for this chap!

Going up to Oban to either buy or to look at the cattle used to be a must for the serious breeder from south of the border. Today, there are experienced and serious breeders south of the border and it is possible to find really excellent beasts anywhere in the country without the long trek north. Going to the Oban sales can cost over £1,000 with the fuel, hotels or B&B, eating out and the inevitable socialising. Nevertheless, it is probably the best learning experience for any breeder and the fish restaurants are absolutely fabulous.

Annie May

#### Gallery

We would be delighted to receive your photos for future newsletters, so if you manage to capture a delightful, unusual or amusing moment, please share it with us.

Angie and Duncan Handley captured at last year's Monmouth Show by Mike McCombe





Conspiracy?

Photo: Annie May

We feel this is one for a **caption competition**. Suggestions so far:

"I think I'm on to a winner here, pity she won't speak to me!"

"We're streets ahead of the competition!"

"Comb your hair and whip your coat off, Godiva, and jump on"

"How do I un-superglue my leg from this cow?"

What do you think?

## VIRTUAL VISIT TO .... CELYN FOLD

One of the best things about being a member of HCCW, is meeting other breeders and sharing experiences. As has been previously mentioned in this newsletter, one way to do this is by taking part in organised fold visits, but not everyone is able to make it to all these events, and not all breeders feel up to hosting a fold visit. So I'd like to introduce "virtual fold visits" as a regular feature in the newsletter – a chance to tell other members about your fold. You can use it as opportunity to promote your fold if you like, share your wisdom or ask for help! I'd like to hear about all sizes of folds, long established and new ones. I'd like to know what got you into Highland cattle and what your aims are. Tell us what you find works for you and what doesn't. Or simply tell us how beautiful your beasts are! All contributions will be gratefully received, so please get in touch.

Mo Morgan

To start the ball rolling, and for the benefit of those who missed a great day out last year, I asked our new committee member Becky Russell to tell us about her fold....



Our Highlands first joined us in February 2007, after a lot of research and reading. We were replacing cows that used to graze some rough in the winter and also to be my next show cows. I fell in love with the breed after seeing them at shows - so cute and quiet to handle. All ours are halter broken which makes life a lot easier.

We run a commercial beef (Lim x, Char x, Welsh Black x, Hereford x) and sheep (Welsh, Blue Leicester, mules) farm on 500 acres in mid Wales. So far, the Highlands have cost rather than made money, but that's what building up is all about. We're up to 8 now.

Over the years I've shown various different breeds, but these are the first with horns and long coats, so a new technique's needed - ducking and diving those horns is easy once you master it, ha ha.

Our first three animals came from Annie and Geoff Spawton at The May Fold. We had a fantastic start with a champion at the Royal Welsh in 2008, although Geoff hadn't been keen on selling this one. I did have to bend his arm a little and she did us all proud. Thanks both.

We ventured up to Oban sales in October 2008 and purchased our next girl from the Cladich Fold. She's my two year old for this year's showing. She's come on well and I'm looking forward to showing her. Our next girl came from Angie and Duncan Handley at Gilden Vale Fold - my first dun. She's also looking good and has grown well, so we'll see what the year brings for her.

It's been a bad start to the year for us, as we should have been expecting three new arrivals, but one cow didn't take to the AI. We've not had problems before, so will try again next month. The other also repeated a few times, and is now in calf to our Charolais bull and is due in 4 months – it'll be an interesting cross. And my pretty girl unfortunately calved three weeks early with a dead bull calf.

I'd like to wish all us show mad ones good luck for the coming year. Thanks for all the helpful information received from all. I'll be out and about looking for a nice yearling in the autumn, just in case anyone has any for me to look at, ha ha.

See you all soon.

#### Becky and Huw

Photos taken by Mike McCombe at the Celyn Fold visit last year: Wind turbines above the farm, and two of Becky's girls with a friend.

#### Talking to the Animals - Dr Doolittle and me By Annie May

I guess we all talk to our animals; we understand them, and of course they understand us, don't they?

In the Highland cattle world it seems that the cows are the bosses. This doesn't mean that they can push the bull around but they can nearly always fool him into letting them steal his bucket, or babysitting for hours on end. It's the cows who know what's going on. The bull is all balls and just a tiny bit of brain. It can take him fifteen minutes to decide to go and drink from the trough and up to half an hour to decide to walk into the next field where the cows are grazing. In fact we once had an old bull who would sit in a field alone for half the day occasionally looking about him with a puzzled air as if wondering where his wives had gone.

When we move the cattle two or three miles on the road, as few people do these days, the bull is always in the middle of the bunch of cows. This is partly because he is really the dominant animal and only those lower down the pecking order go in front and behind to be attacked first. Although dominant is not quite the right word to describe the way his cows treat him. I am convinced that he's in the middle because he can't remember the way home and doesn't know what's going on unless a cow tells him or he finds himself doing it.

We have a small quarry on the mountain, in the winter we graze a few cattle up there. One day Geoff and Wynfford, the contractor from Pant y Gwyn across the valley, were digging shale and transporting it to the farm track to fill in all the pot holes made by the winter rains. I arrived up there with some tea and sandwiches at midday and noticed that the gate to the road was open and the cattle gone; no doubt heading for town and some retail therapy. Treating Geoff and Wynfford to a few choice oaths I dashed back to the farm to get the car; we didn't have a quad in those days.

I caught up with the cattle about a mile down the road. It's a very narrow road and I didn't have the dog with me so it was impossible to pass them and turn them. I wondered if we were just going to carry on along the road until we ended up as part of the afternoon traffic of Lampeter four miles away. In a fit of panic I did the only thing I could think of. I stopped the car, got out and said severely and loudly:

"And where do you think you're going?"

They all stopped. The bull tried to hide behind the girls, the girls appeared to ask each other where, indeed, were they going?

"Come along, this is the way home, look sharp" I called briskly, taking the initiative. I got back in the car and began to reverse back to the farm. To my amazement they followed me.

We came to a T junction and I thought I'd lost them as they looked speculatively down the open road; they hesitated, they were very tempted. But I jumped out of the car again and yelled urgently, "Oh do come <u>on</u>!" And they did, all the way back to and through the gateway of the mountain.

And yet after all these years, learning to talk to cows is still absorbing and rather delightful work in progress.



Annie and friend

#### LETTERS

The letter reproduced on the next page has been doing the rounds, so apologies if you have seen it before, but we thought it amusing – thanks to Annie for sending it in.

Letter to Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), dated 16 July 2009:

Dear Secretary of State,

My friend, who is in farming at the moment, recently received a cheque for £3,000 from the Rural Payments Agency for not rearing pigs. I would now like to join the "not rearing pigs" business.

In your opinion, what is the best kind of farm not to rear pigs on, and which is the best breed of pigs not to rear? I want to be sure I approach this endeavour in keeping with all government policies, as dictated by the EU under the Common Agricultural Policy.

I would prefer not to rear bacon pigs, but if this is not the type you want not rearing, I will just as gladly not rear porkers. Are there any advantages in not rearing rare breeds such as Saddlebacks or Gloucester Old Spots, or are there too many people already not rearing these?

As I see it, the hardest part of this programme will be keeping an accurate record of how many pigs I haven't reared. Are there any Government or Local Authority courses on this?

My friend is very satisfied with this business. He has been rearing pigs for forty years or so, and the best he ever made on them was  $\pounds 1,422$  in 1968. That is - until this year, when he received a cheque for not rearing any.

If I get £3,000 for not rearing 50 pigs, will I get £6,000 for not rearing 100? I plan to operate on a small scale at first, holding myself down to about 4,000 pigs not raised, which will mean about £240,000 for the first year. As I become more expert in not rearing pigs, I plan to be more ambitious, perhaps increasing to, say, 40,000 pigs not reared in my second year, for which I should expect about £2..4 million from your department. Incidentally, I wonder if I would be eligible to receive tradable carbon credits for all these pigs not producing harmful and polluting methane gases?

Another point: These pigs that I plan not to rear will not eat 2,000 tonnes of cereals. I understand that you also pay farmers for not growing crops. Will I qualify for payments for not growing cereals to not feed the pigs I don't rear?

I am also considering the "not milking cows" business, so please send any information you have on that too. Please could you also include the current Defra advice on set aside fields? Can this be done on an e-commerce basis with virtual fields (of which I seem to have several thousand hectares)?

In view of the above you will realise that I will be totally unemployed, and will therefore qualify for unemployment benefits. I shall of course be voting for your party at the next general election.

Yours faithfully,

Nigel Johnson-Hill

## FOR SALE AND WANTED

Advertisements are free to members, so if you have any livestock, equipment, other items or services for sale or wanted, please use this space. Sales and Wants are also listed on the website: **www.hccw.org.uk** Please send items for the next issue to Mo Morgan by 15th June 2010.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE OF SIMILAR AGE.

White heifer calf, born August 2009.

All enquiries to PAUL or Marie Carson on 01685 881209. Location – Glamorgan.



#### **Yearling Heifers**

Two very pretty yearling heifers, fully halter-trained and easy to handle. Contact Mike & Liz on 01291 652957 or email lizmccombe@btinternet.com





Shrops/Welsh border. 4 x yearling heifers for sale (born March 09). Red and yellow. Good breeding and temperament. Contact Mike Whyte on 01948 710302 or 07940 836874.

#### Black bull calf for sale

1 year old black bull calf (entire) Contact: Paul and Marie Carson Tel. no. 01685 881209



For Sale - CATTLE CRUSH suitable for highland cattle. This is an adapted crush to give better clearance for the horns. We have used it for 4 years and would suit a small fold.  $\pm 300.00$ 

Young Stock Bull For Sale - ANGUS RIABHACH 1ST OF ABERSKY



Born 20/04/2006 Herdbook Number PWC060003 UK Ministry Tag UK311179 200003

This gentle young registered bull has produced excellent calves; the young stock can be viewed. He is halter trained and easily handled.

Colour - Brindle with good pedigree please view database. Reasonably priced as replacement has been arranged.

Also, two heifers, 21 and 23 months old, plus steers for sale

Call Peter on 07966 417585 or 01886 884870 or email chalk@gwi.net

#### WATERWYNCH - Home of the Rowston Fold

Organic, pure bred stock always available. Bloodlines include Torloisk, Killochries and The May. Naturally reared on 250 acres at Marros Mountain, Red Roses, Carmarthenshire. Soil Association certified. IBR, BVD, Lepto and Johnes accredited. Enguiries: Dai Ormond: 07831 111896

Juines: Dai Ormond: 07831 1118

www.waterwynch.co.uk

Organic approved mineral licks, with or without garlic (to repel flies). Suitable for cattle and sheep. Soil Association approved. Available in 20kg or 100kg tubs. For further information contact Charles or Mo Morgan on 01550 740206, email mo@phonecoop.coop or visit www.wenallt.com

#### FOR SALE

**BULL CALVES** 

2 Bull calves for sale: One brindle born 06/04/09 and show hardy. The other yellow born 03/01/09 and very quiet. Excellent conformation and some valuable blood lines: Leachy, Brucefield, Millerston.

#### **3 YEAR OLD BLACK HEIFER**

Subhlair Coireaman 2nd of The May. Running with black bull - Gille dubh 5th of Killochries. Interesting and rare blood lines, haltered and used to being handled.



#### PURE BRED ORGANIC HIGHLAND STEERS

Used to wet bogland sites in summer and rough mountain foraging in winter. No hay, silage or concentrates or supplements. Prices from £350.00

Telephone 01570 423080



#### **COMMITTEE ADDRESS BOOK**

Liz McCombe (Chair) Great House Farm Earlswood Chepstow, NP16 6AT 01291 652957 lizmccombe@btinternet.com

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