

This Chairman's last letter.

Well my term of office is almost over and I need to report to the members just how the last two years have gone. First they seem to have flown by and whilst occasionally I have had worries, there have been more welcome changes than anything else. Those of you who were at the AGM in 2008 will remember that I was extremely concerned that we were all relying too much on a very small nucleus to carry forward the Association. I am happy to report that more people have come forward and they are making your Committee's life much pleasanter. Several day to day changes have been made and the work load spread out much more.

Perhaps the best example was the size of the last GATE and its diversity of contents. The only problem we have now is keeping up the quality of the newsletter. It is clear that our members would like to be kept up to date with what is happening and whilst we do make use of the Internet this does not guarantee every member is told. It does of course reduce our costs but until we are absolutely sure everybody is on it we need to continue normal publication.

As you will have seen considerable progress has been made in our work with Reaseheath College. One of our Committee has taken on the contact work and it is hoped that in the next few months we will see courses set up to assist our members. In the last few days we have agreed in principle to have another Smallholders event in summer 2011 and part of the setting up is already being sorted.

So I am happy that we will be able to move forward and I must thank your Committee for their support and all the work they have done over the last two years. I look forward to working with you and from what I have seen, our Association will have many happy years to come.

Arthur T. Green, Chairman.

September 2010

Subscriptions are due. Pay up NOW or face the wrath of Lawrence! Read no further until you have sent your cheque. Of course if you have paid by standing order or have joined in the last few months you are a member for this year. The small print .

Monthly Meetings

27 September 2010 - Sheep and Ewe Preparation

Come and learn all you need to know about sheep. Matt. A lecturer at Reaseheath gives us the benefit of his extensive experience.

25 October - AGM & Louise Young of NFU

Your annual opportunity to volunteer or let us know what you think of your committee's performance. Followed by Louise letting us know what the NFU is doing and what they can do for you.

29 November - Fire Prevention on Smallholdings

There are new rules about fire prevention and businesses. Learn what they are and how they affect smallholders and what you can do to stay safe.

Meetings are held in room L3, Leverhulme Centre, Reaseheath College, Nantwich on the last Monday of each month from September through to May except December. See Gate and the web site www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk for details of lectures.

Doors open 7:30 for 8:00 PM. Come early for a cup of tea, a chat and when we are feeling generous - a biscuit. Entry £2.00.

The Leverhulme centre is the first building on the right from the B5074 entrance. The car park barrier should be up so you can use the car park on the left if the small one in front of the centre is full.

Forthcoming Events

The CSA have no events planned in the next few months but have a look at:

Nantwich Food Festival - 24,25,26 September

www.nantwichfoodfestival.co.uk

Cheshire Ploughing Match - Wednesday 29 September Picton Gorse Farm, Picton, Chester. www.cheshireploughing.co.uk

Quiz in aid of RBST - Saturday 13 November, 7:30 at Toft Cricket Club. Tickets £8.50, includes hot pot and apple pie. Bar and raffle. Contact Ruth for tickets on 01925 26608. Smallholders have been in the winning team for the last two years so come on your own or as a team to try and keep our reputation intact.

Proposed Courses

Jane Watkins is organising some more butchery courses with Karol Bailey: bacon curing, sausage making and further lamb butchery. Places on the bacon curing and sausage making course will be very limited. Anyone Interested in going on a course please contact Jane on 01538 306510 or Email benloyal@clara.co.uk.

SOME THOUGHTS FOR NEW BEEKEEPERS: WHERE TO STORE KIT BUILT UP OVER A TYPICAL BEEKEEPING YEAR.

Early days: Well here you are with your brand new hive full of bees! Your queen excluder, flat pack super(s), frame parts, tacks and wax foundation are all ready to make up when needed. But where do you put all this stuff while you're waiting for your first colony to build up? Made up supers and brood boxes take up more room and wax foundation needs careful storage. And all this before we get down to the kit needed for extracting wax and honey and storing approved treatments for pest and disease control! Here are a few tips on storage solutions that, had I known what I know now, would have made 'my' beekeeping less of a 'takeover' of limited shared space in our house and garage!

Get a shed! We bought an 8ft x 6ft double door shed on the Internet for about £200. It's ideal for storing stacked brood boxes and supers, nukes and travelling boxes. The boxes are also ideal for storing drawn comb or new frames over winter, protected from wax moth. A wide shelf was put in for storing floors, inserts, queen excluders, ekes, dummy boards and crown boards. Roofs are a pain to store but you need a couple of spares for acetic acid treatments. Hive inspection kit is kept in the shed including smoker fuel, spare marigolds, porter bee escapes and plastic ends, and mesh for icing sugar treatments. I don't store stuff that can be damaged by heat or damp and I never leave my blowtorch or smoker in the shed (just in case!).

A broom to keep the place tidy and mouse bait to sort out the vermin are also in there. My shed is not totally bee- or wasp-proof but I put wasp-traps in the shed in late summer. A few years down the line and I probably wish we'd bought a bigger shed, but perhaps it's time to reduce the number of colonies I have!

Handy recycling I have some good-sized plastic lawn-treatment containers (well-cleaned) with snap-on lids; one for storing my hive tools and drone comb fork in washing soda, another for collecting wax at each inspection and a third with tools and a solution for cleaning hive parts. These are cleaned and refilled regularly and kept in the shed.

Storing approved treatments Test kits and treatments for brood and adult bee pests and diseases need to be kept under the right conditions. I have an old kitchen wall cabinet where I store my Apiguard, oxalic and acetic acids, and foulbrood test kits. I also have containers and syringes stored there with latex gloves and protective glasses handy.

Wax & Honey Extraction Over the years I've tried to buy catering-grade equipment that reduces the number of operations (and sticky mess) between comb and bottle and that can be well cleaned with a water-jet. Apart from a solar wax extractor, this is the bulkiest equipment I have and it's stored in our garage roof, only coming out in September when we process the honey.

After years of using Curver boxes for **uncapping** frames with a carving knife, we've now invested in a cold uncapping tray and frame holder from Thornes. This double tray system catches the cappings, the honey filters through the

perforations in the first tray and into the second from which the honey drains through a nylon valve into your filters/ripeners.

I have a 4 frame tangential **extractor with filter** and 50 kg tank. This piece of kit takes 4 shallow or 2 deep frames at a time. Apart from needing a new gear wheel this manual extractor has proved a really good investment. Once cleaned it goes back into its box and gets stored in the roof along with a 25 kg **honey ripener** with its two filters. At times I wish we had bought a larger ripener, but when it actually comes to lifting a tank with 25 kg of honey in it, we're glad we didn't!

Our garage roof is not only home to frame parts and extraction equipment, it's home to boxes of **new honey bottles, lids and returned jars**. I try to keep all my old bottle boxes for storing sterilised returned jars, but sometimes they get 'chucked in the roof' out of sight and out of mind until the day the great clean-up begins. It's also home to some of my **kit for honey shows**: display cases for comb, doilies and paper plates for honey cakes and biscuits and tins, boxes and cleaning equipment. I also have **wax processing** 'stuff' stored up there, but it's not something I've really got in to yet.

Once **bottled**, the jars get moved into the garage and stored on shelves or in a cupboard cleared out for the purpose. I use another cupboard in a room off the garage to store wax foundation where the stable temperature conditions are ideal.

Storage Solutions Summary

Having a **shed** for your hive parts and inspection equipment is really helpful if you have the space and can afford it. **Old kitchen cupboards and wall units** located in an unheated utility room or garage provide good storage for wax foundation, test kits and treatments, bottled honey and labels - but not necessarily together! Once you get into wax and honey extraction then you not only need the space in which to do it properly, but somewhere to store the equipment for most of the year.

You obviously don't need all this in your first year, but perhaps this article might help you identify what could work for you in the happy beekeeping years ahead!

Maggie Taylor

Howard County Police officers still write their reports by hand, and the data is entered later by a computer tech into their database. One theft report stated that a farmer had lost 2,025 pigs. Thinking that to be an error, the tech called the farmer directly. "Is it true Mr. (Smith) that you lost 2,025 pigs?" she asked. "Yeth." lisped the farmer. Being a Howard County girl herself, the tech entered: "Subject lost 2 sows and 25 pigs."

Grass Roofs

We are becoming more environmentally aware and green roofs are becoming a feature of environmentally friendly buildings. In Norway they have been doing green roofs for a very long time. The problem they have is how to cut the grass. The answer is obvious - Goats. In the photo of this modern building the goat is quite happy grazing right up to the edge and has a little hut (on the left) to keep it dry in bad weather.



Unfortunately the green roofs currently being built in the UK often don't use grass but instead use sedum which gives a lighter weight roof. The Norwegians used to use the bark of a tree laid under the grass to waterproof the roof. This would be laid in overlapped strips down the slope with the curve alternating so the water coming through the earth would run off. The wood from the trees providing the bark would be used to build the walls or as roof supports.

Kevin

Smallholders Barbeque

About 20 people gathered at Gill's on a beautiful summer evening to put the world to rights. The charcoal was a bit slow to light but soon everything was hot and lots of meat from rare breed to supermarket best was cooking/burning depending on the taste/capabilities of the cook. Despite the normal prejudices there was a mix of sexes doing the cooking, with much banter about the abilities of each. Plenty of food ensured that most people commented on eating too much. As the barbeque and the evening cooled down we all generated much hot air to compensate. A very enjoyable evening where we had the opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

Kevin

“Coney Greave Sheep”

I’m about to buy a tup, probably a Texel, to put to my dozen Suffolk ewes.

I used to breed pedigree Suffolks with some success, but don’t have the time to travel all over and preparing sheep for shows and sales any more (and nor can my back stand up to bending over trimming sheep any more! Literally) So I’ve kept the ewes (just because I *do* like their beautiful black faces!) and now cross them with something else to give the lambs some hybrid vigour.

Pure Suffolks really are pretty useless at survival! particularly the whole “lambing thing” and also the older lambs seem very prone to getting crappy bottoms once out on grass. This isn’t just my experience, it’s well documented and the breed society has even funded research into why. The answer they came up with was not worm burden.....but just that they eat too much grass!! Hmm, well I’m not sure about that, but am fed up with dagging green backends.

So the plan is to make life easier by breeding and keeping the cross bred ewes and hopefully they will thrive without so much input from me. I can’t say that I find the Texel exactly *pleasing* to look at - understatement of the year, I know, I know beauty *is* in the eye of the beholder so you may disagree - but I can’t help visualising a maggot on legs when I look at a Texel tup - sorry! Never-the-less the last two years I have used a Texel.

The first time I put one in with my ewes was hilarious, the ewes had only ever seen ‘handsome’ black faced Suffolk tups and this white thing didn’t count as a sheep, they really didn’t seem to recognise him as the same species and were petrified of him..... Talk about racism! It took him about a week before he managed to get anywhere near them! Anyway, he clearly did and the resulting cross is really superb.

I had hoped that the black face of the Suffolk would come through, but in fact these ewes have speckled brown faces, and are slightly shorter and smaller than the Suffolk ewes. My first x-bred shearlings will be tupped this autumn, to date they have avoided any daggy bottoms, and we’ll see how they perform lambing next spring, I’m keeping my fingers crossed they’ll manage without assistance as I have got used to NO SLEEP Februaries and it’s not funny any more!

The cross bred ram lambs have all been butchered and were, according to my butcher “bob on” which I think means pretty good, his only criticism has been that entire ram lambs put a lot more front end on, and you can instantly see that when comparing carcasses on the hookMine had big shoulders in comparison to the others in the butchers.

So this year (first time in 15 years) I castrated my ram lambs. I hated doing it - it must be so painful, but in fact it didn’t seem so bad, and now another benefit is becoming very apparent: I don’t have to worry about keeping ram lambs away from females so it’s making management a whole lot easier just now.....Think I’ll probably castrate again next spring. I’m just about to send this year’s rams to the butchers, but the “space age” ear-tags still haven’t arrived.....should’ve ordered them sooner.....Oh yawn, know the feeling?

Jane Watkins

Sheep Skin

“Have you ever thought of having your lamb skins made into sheepskin rugs?... then the following may be of interest to you: There is only one organically certified tannery in the UK, in Herefordshire.

I've had beautiful sheep skin rugs done by them in previous years and will be taking some skins down again this year. I'd be happy to take other people's at the same time - just give me (Jane Watkins) a ring. As long as you've made a proper job of salting you can store salted skins for several weeks without them coming to any harm.

The skin needs to be salted as soon as possible after slaughter, I have always gone back late afternoon on slaughter day to collect my skins - your butcher may be prepared to sprinkle some salt on the skin for you - especially useful if the weather is warm.

As soon as you get your skin home lay it out skin side up - I have used a sheep hurdle covered with chicken wire to support the skin, and balance this across other hurdles so you can work at 'table' height ...it's not the only way, but works for me and just makes the job easier. Spread a layer of salt all over the skin, working it well into the edges, and any places where the skin folds, you can buy 3 kg bags of salt at the supermarket for under £1 so there's no point in scrimping here - be liberal so there is a layer of salt all over your skin, and in all the nooks and crannies!

There shouldn't be much but may be a little blood staining on the neck area - again the salt will deter the flies so be generous with it here. I do the skin in an airy shed, protected from the weather, but with plenty of air to allow the skin to dry out. If the salt turns into a mush (as it will in humid weather) scrape it off and reapply fresh. After about a week or two the skin will have become stable, there won't be much more liquid coming out of it, and at that stage I hold the skin up vertically to allow the excess salt to fall away, then put it back into horizontal position and re-apply a light scattering of fresh dry salt, and then fold the skin by folding the sides in to the middle then rolling the fleece up from head to tail, so you have a roll of fleece, with the wool on the outside and the skin in the middle.

Paper feed sacks are useful to store the skins in, or a cardboard box. For more advice contact Nicky Port at the tannery. The following information has been taken from the Organic tannery's web site:

SALTING: Remember the skin is part of an animal and like meat it must be **PRESERVED IMMEDIATELY WITH SALT** or it will **ROT** just like any other part of the carcass! It is imperative that the skin is treated with the same care as the carcass; it could be worth more than the meat and just as vulnerable. Skins must be salted properly the same day as slaughter. Stand and wait for them if necessary. For salting instructions, information and quotes and other advice Email nicki.port@btconnect.com OR Phone Nicki ON 01989 730615

It is too late to tan skins from animals slaughtered after



October/November. Sheep moult and that process starts in Autumn/Winter of the year they were born or shorn. It does not show on the animal, but your skin will come back looking like this! Global warming is having a detrimental effect on the season for sheepskins. In 1978 sheepskins could be tanned from animals slaughtered right up to Christmas because the animals had not

started to moult. In recent years by the middle of SEPTEMBER Zwartbles already have a fleece break and by the middle of OCTOBER, the Down breeds are losing theirs, Hill breeds a couple of weeks later.

Check with your abattoir when you book your animals in as some will not let you have your skins back regardless, maybe they are paranoid about breaking Defra rules or either they, or the hide market have taken on contracts and are shipping *everything* abroad by the container load, including your skins. Why should you lose the value of your skins to fulfil some anonymous contract? You may be asked for paperwork by your abattoir - because Defra do like to have their paperwork!

It is "Commercial Document for transport of Category 3 hides/skins under the Animal By-Products Regulations 2005" and can be downloaded from the Defra web site or obtained from your local Animal Health office. One for the abattoir - one for your file (when you collect your skins) and then one for your file - one for the tannery (when you send the skins to the tannery) If you live in Wales check with your Animal Health Office as Welsh law is slightly different."

Jane Watkins

Smallholder Event - 4th July 2010

This year, for the 1st time we held a Smallholders event at Reaseheath College. Having only decided to put together the event in May, we made the decision to keep the event small and manageable with the view that if well received we would plan a more elaborate affair next time.



Wanting to offer as wide a range of interest as possible, Lucy and Alan from Reaseheath Agricultural Department arranged an array of short lectures throughout the day, delivered by specialist speakers from the college, ranging from sheep care to vegetable growing and beekeeping, as well as arranging for some useful trade stands. Among the trade stands, there were many admiring glances at the smallholder range of tractors and associated implements. Lucy, Alan and colleagues were also on hand to represent Reaseheath's continuing commitment to Smallholders. Both Marshalls auctioneers and the NFU were also represented sharing their expertise and advice.

Sarah from Cheshire Beekeepers

Cheshire Beekeepers were able to offer help and advice to budding apiarists. Our own Tony and Gill Moore and dog, manned the Ryeland Sheep display and together with both the ladies of the Cheshire Spinners group, and Christine from The Redstone Centre displaying basket making and willow work there was a varied range of displays to suit most interests. This was, of course, augmented by Arthur and Kevin doing a grand job on our own Cheshire Smallholders Stand.



West Cheshire Spinners & Dyers

We had a steady stream of visitors and everyone seemed to be very positive about our first efforts. Obviously, we would have liked the event to be oversubscribed but there was sufficient interest for us to make the commitment, along with our friends from Reaseheath, to do it all again. As such, 10th July 2011, is booked for our 2nd Smallholders Event which will be both bigger and better - so make a date for your diary.

Jane Hulse

Scaffold pole sockets & plugs for barn floor.

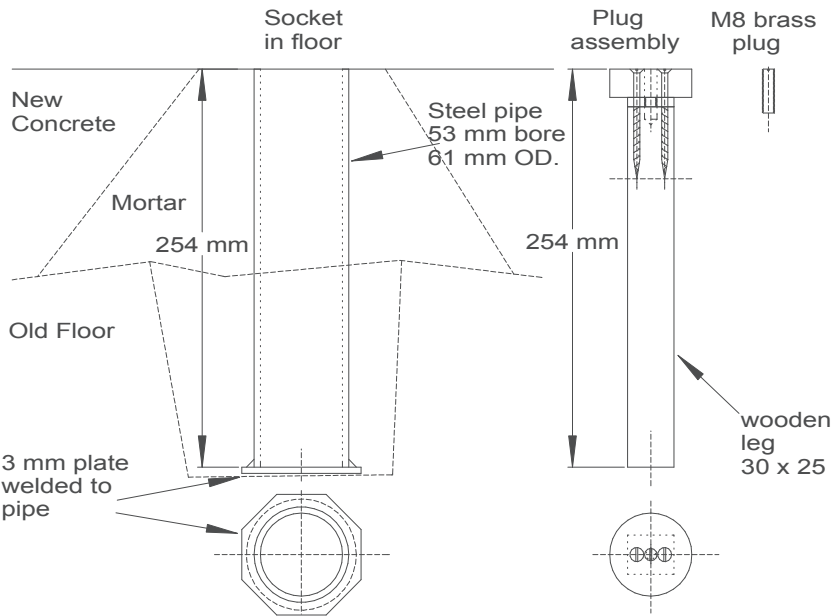
When I took over our barn it was derelict, and after putting a roof on it I constructed a mezzanine floor in half of it, with pens below for ewes and lambs, and storage space above for hay and straw (and junk!). I have used the second half, which is open to the roof, for gathering in the whole flock. In the winter this is also where they come in for hay. The original floor was a rough mixture of uneven concrete and old slabs of stone. Consequently I let deep litter build up on the floor. The average depth of the deep litter became about two feet and some hurdles that stood on the floor became no barrier to the sheep since only the top three rungs were sticking out!

All the litter has now been dug out and I decided that I wanted a floor that drained properly and that could be swept out easily. I also wanted to be able to put in pens if required and other hurdles to control the sheep when they were gathered in. I have always used wooden hurdles because they are more easily made as and when required. My standard hurdle is six foot long and three feet high and I am used to using baling twine to fasten them together (and to other things!)

I had decided that the required flexibility could be achieved by having pieces of pipe 10 inches long let into the floor to take 4-foot sections of scaffold tubes to which I can attach the hurdles. Consequently I have come up with the design shown in the drawing. (Sorry it involves some welding again!) I found I already had some suitable pipe that would accept scaffold tubes so I cut this into 10" sections and welded a piece of 3 mm plate to the base. I had to cut varying depths into the existing floor but arranged that the tops of the pipes conformed to the final floor level which has a slight slope on it for washing down. Before the concrete was laid to the tops of these pipes I made plugs so that the pipes could be kept empty.

Amongst my stock of material (i.e. in with the junk!) I had some 18 mm marine ply. I started by using a hole cutter to produce circular pieces of ply with which to make the tops of the plugs. I chose a size that initially had a diameter that was too big and had to use my lathe to turn the plug top down. I have since decided that the next smaller size would have worked if I then built up the diameter of the ply with PVC tape thus eliminating the need of a lathe. I then made a number of steel rectangles out of 25 x 6 mm mild steel strip. I drilled three holes in these, the centre hole was tapped M8 and the other two holes were of the correct diameter to take the wood screws shown. The leg, which stops the top of the plug from descending down the hole, is of the same section as the steel rectangle. To fill the centre hole when the plug is in the barn floor, I cut suitable lengths of brass M8 screwed rod and put a screwdriver slot in the top.

It only remained to make the plug removal tool from a piece of the 25 x 6 strip and two lengths of 8 mm diameter MS rod. The shorter rod has an M8 thread to fit the cross bar and the longer rod is threaded M8 at both ends. The bottom end is finished with a screwdriver tip. So first one uses the screwdriver to remove the brass centre plug and then the removal tool is put down the centre hole and screwed into the steel plate. It is then an easy matter to pull out the plug. Immediately the scaffold tube is in position the complete plug can be put in the top of the tube for safekeeping. Note that if you can afford the luxury of alloy scaffold tubes the leg will still fit even though the wall thickness of the alloy tubes is greater than the steel tubes.



Plug removal tool.
8 mm dia.

Enlarged detail of top of Plug

MS strip 25 x 6 mm
100 mm long

Handle tapped
and welded at
"W"

MS strip
6 mm thick
centre hole
tapped
M8

Brass screws
75 mm long

30 mm

25 mm

Working tip
threaded M8
+ screwdriver
end.

53 mm dia
from 18 mm
marine ply

Scaffold pole sockets
& plugs for barn floor.

The only cow in Cricklade stopped giving milk. The people did some research and found they could buy a cow down in Swindon for £200. They bought the cow from Swindon and the cow was wonderful. It produced lots of milk all of the time and the people were pleased and very happy.

They decided to acquire a bull to mate with the cow and produce more cows like it. They would never have to worry about their milk supply again. They bought a bull and put it in the pasture with their beloved cow. However whenever the bull came close to the cow, the cow would move away. No matter what approach the bull tried, the cow would move away from the bull and he could not succeed in his quest. The people were very upset and decided to ask the Vet, who was very wise, what to do.

They told the Vet what was happening. "Whenever the bull approaches our cow, she moves away. If he approaches from the back, she moves forward. When he approaches her from the front, she backs off. An approach from the side and she walks away to the other side." The Vet thinks about this for a minute and asked, "Did you buy this cow in Swindon?"

The people were dumbfounded, since they had never mentioned where they bought the cow. "You are truly a wise Vet," they said.

"How did you know we got the cow in Swindon?"

The Vet replied with a distant look in his eye,

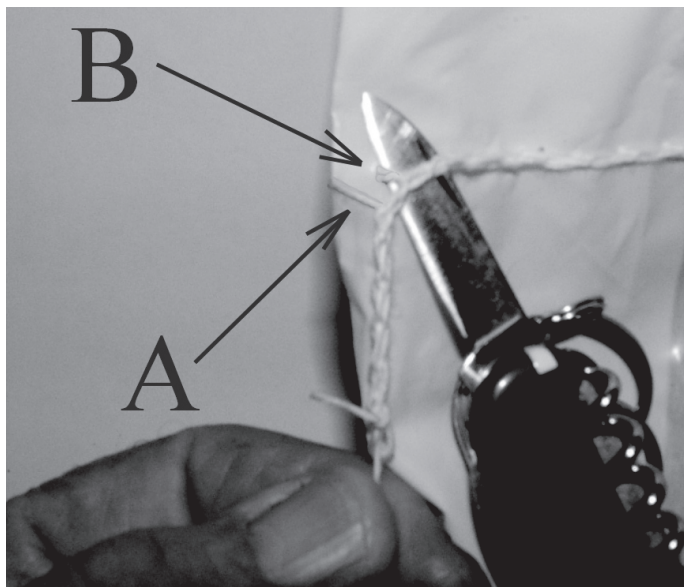
"My wife is from Swindon."

Docks

In a previous article I described my attempts to control docks in my field. This year I again tried spot spraying with Grazeon 90 which had a degree of success but more continue to appear so unless I keep on spraying I cannot get rid of them. However I have found a solution: Alpacas. The paddock I have fenced for them contained my worst area of docks. After a few weeks of the three Alpacas being in there; the docks are no more. Unfortunately they do not eat nettles or thistles, but winning one out of three is not bad. Yes I know goats would eat them as well but the goats would eat everything, escape and would not produce such lovely fleece. I would have included a picture but I am sure you can all imagine grass without docks.

Kevin

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Some notes on Feed Bags

Assuming your feed bags have just arrived, the best first action is to store them in some container that protects them from vermin. Next you are going to have to open one and start using it. Depending on the number of stock to be fed it is most probable that being a

smallholder you will not use a whole bag at one feed time. Therefore you will have to transfer the contents of one bag into a metal container, say a dustbin. In my experience there are several methods of opening a feed bag.

- 1) Slit the plastic all the way across below the stitching and throw away the piece you have cut off.
- 2) Pull the stitching so the bag tears across the stitch holes and throw away the top of the bag and the stitching.
- 3) Cut the stitching at one side so that the thread comes away and leaves two neat rows of small holes across the top of the bag.

This last method is by far the best and it leaves you with a better bag that can be used again. However problems can be encountered in removing the thread. Firstly it should be pointed out that there are two types of stitching used across the top of the feed bag. There is the simple single thread style similar to the stitch made by the cheaper sewing machine. This stitch presents no problem. The more complicated stitch made with two threads, one at the front and one at the back, can be considerably more frustrating to unravel. Firstly establish what I call the front and the back of the stitching. The front has all the “knots” and the back appears as a row of dashes. Refer to the photo. Having set the bag up so one is looking at the left hand side front then the trick is to cut not only the

thread at “A” but also the first loop coming out of the hole at “B”. After this double cut, grip the stitching hanging at the left and pull across to the right and the bag is open!

Next pull out the back thread and save both threads. Why? Because it has the right strength to be used to sew up a prolapsed ewe! (So I have been told but I have not done it myself!) Also catch the note attached to the bag by the stitching. I recommend writing the date on the back of the note and storing this date, together with a sample note from a batch of feed, as a detailed record of the feed and approximately when it was first used. (Remember BSE?)

Before tipping the feed into the bin, look at the top layer of feed. The thread holes are the only way moisture can get into the bag after it is sewn up in the works. If the bags got very wet in transit the top of the feed could be caked up. If this is the case then the better feed merchants will replace the bag and you would not have known until later if the caked feed gets tipped first into the bin.

Make sure not to spill any feed since this would encourage vermin. Also check that all the pellets are out of the bottom corners of the bag for the same reason.

Having carefully removed the threads to keep the bag intact the next tip is how to store the empty bags. Long ago my father had a long wooden ladder and it had a break about five feet from the top. I still have this top section and I turn the bags upside down and pull them down over this short ladder. Anything about a foot wide would be as good. I find I can have about twenty bags on top of one another before I have to lift them all off as one packet and start again.

L E Beard. Heyshead Farm 2010

Membership

Just a reminder that membership fees (£10 for family membership) is now due. Contact Lawrence if you want to pay via standing order. Payment by standing order will mean that you will not miss any editions of Gate!

If you are a new member and have paid in the last three months then you have already paid for this year.

Visit to Acton Scott Historic Working Farm

Ten members gathered in the car park on a sunny Saturday morning quivering in anticipation of the excitement to follow.



Through the trees we could see the hall but most of the farm was hidden from sight as we entered through the new visitors centre entrance where we met up with the informative yokel who was to be our excellent guide to the history and workings of the farm.

Starting with the kiln where the bricks for the hall and buildings were made using clay which was available on the site, we then walked past the small field of various old fashioned varieties of crops. Due to the amount of manual work required to harvest these crops in the traditional way the area propagated is limited. Walking toward the hall we passed the old school house which is now a cafe, more of which later.

Our guide (on the right) gave a very interesting history of the hall and it's current operation.

The farm is run by the council while the family still reside in the hall.

Eavesdropping on a guide taking a tour based on the BBC Victorian farm series it became clear that the series was not as real as it appeared on screen with the participants actually sleeping in a modern comfy flat instead of the old farm house. As I am sure you can appreciate we were all devastated.



Carrying on through the farm it was fascinating to see the old ways of farming which are actively followed on the farm with the old types of breeds, and methods of care and equipment, some of which I can remember from my childhood.

The farmyard included the muckheap, complete with chickens and the modern power source of a horse turning a shaft which powered the equipment in the barn. A few notes here cannot do justice to the variety of activities going on and the old equipment available to see. At the end of the tour we went for lunch in the cafe which we all agreed was excellent.



We then continued exploring the farm after lunch and a few of us bought some butter which we saw being made. Unfortunately when we came to leave, the butter which was waiting for us in the fridge was still soft so we had to go to the cafe again for afternoon tea while waiting for the butter to harden. An excellent day out which was enjoyed by all.

Kevin

Other Stuff

Gate The next Gate will be produced in December Please send me any articles, pictures, adverts etc for the next issue by the end of November 2010. (phone 07773780722 for email address).

WebSite www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk
If you have any articles or adverts for the web site let me know, pictures of your activities always welcome. I update the web site every few weeks so keep on looking at it for latest news.

Selected Charity

Our selected charity is Send A Cow which provides training, animals, trees and seeds for families in Africa in order to enable them to become self sufficient. Have a look at their web site www.sendacow.org.uk to see where they spend our contributions. Send some chickens or a beehive as an unusual present or if you are feeling generous send a cow.

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Tel: 077 737 807 22

Gill Lawson (Secretary)
Tel: 01928 788289

Lesley Gallagher (Membership)
Tel: 01928 740212

Lawrence Beard (Treasurer)
Tel: 01625 572324

Margaret Holmes Tel: 01928 722365

Jane Hulse Tel: 01829 781343

Tony Moore Tel: 01925 730530

Linda Buckle Tel: 01782 502030

Gillian & Gordon Murty
Tel: 01928 788380

Jane Watkins Tel: 01538 306510

Steve Williams Tel: 01270 584547

Members Adverts

Pedigree Ryeland Sheep - Ryeland and coloured Ryeland ram shearlings for sale from Gill & Tony Moore, Nr Warrington, Cheshire. 01925 730530

Land Wanted - Nr Macclesfield for growing fruit and veg. Contact Dresina - 07790604580

Shepherd - Doug Edge is a member and freelance shepherd who can help with all aspects of sheep care including shearing, foot trimming and all aspects of sheep work. He comes with a recommendation from other members. If you need help contact him on 07967961112

Sheepskins - Jane Watkins is taking some sheepskins to Nicky Port's Organic tannery in Herefordshire to make sheepskin rugs, and can take others (for a small contribution to fuel!) contact Jane on 01538 306510 (See article on page 7)

Pedigree Hampshire Down Ram Lambs

Born January 2010. MV accredited and Heptavaced. Would suit commercial, pedigree or hobby flock. Contact Diane Davenport Tel:- 01829 260134

Tripod suspended lamb or poultry feeding hopper
£15.00 Contact Diane Davenport Tel:- 01829 240134

Goats Wanted - To purchase/borrow to graze down overgrown (2-3 ft high) scrub/pasture land. Fencing will be standard sheep netting, so any that can defeat this need not apply! Contact Tony on 01925 730530. (Nr South Warrington)

Cider Press Wanted - for purchase or loan - Kevin 077 737 807 22