

Your Chairman's Thoughts

Well here we are in March 2010 and the Association has had some really very interesting meetings in the interim. Our visit by the Vet. in January was up to his usual high standard and really ought not to be missed each year. The February one about our lives in the 1940's brought back many happy memories to your Chairman. Made me want to be young again.

As I mentioned in the last "Gate" some of your Committee are having detailed talks with staff from Reaseheath and I think they hope to come up with some good ideas to spread the courses we try to do. It has also found us two new members. The College has recently had an "Inspection" and you will notice that there are a small number of adjustments when attending our Monday meetings. As they are really only to ensure our Security I hope all members will cooperate at each evening. To balance this we have been able to ensure that there will be fewer problems with both the doors to the building and the Car Park.

But now to the future, I am sure we are almost there. The new volunteers on your Committee are really getting active and taken on duties from other members. Not the least of these is that the preparation work for our Newsletter which is now spread around and our Editor only has to print etc, etc. Having watched him it still seems a lot of work to me on top of his other duties.

We have mentioned in the past that we would like to issue some leaflet information to help new Smallholders. I hope that the first of these is enclosed for you all to read. Its broad heading is "Registering a Holding". Having read it I wonder how I started at all but if you follow the headings slowly you will find it fairly straight forward. The next one should hopefully be about the records and rules we are required to follow to ensure you do not fall foul of the Law, particularly E U Laws.

I imagine that by now you are all having good trouble free lambings and that the extreme weather has not affected you too badly or you are not using the winter hay up too quickly. I have just realised I need to get some more hay. Ah well.

Have a good Spring and keep us up to date with your good and bad problems.

Arthur T. Green Chairman.

Lectures

29 March - Alternative Energy

Irrespective of your views on Global Warming come and hear how to save money by using alternative energy. Grahame from Raine or Shine tells us how. www.raine-or-shine.com for a sneak preview.

26 April - Pest Control

A very experienced pest controller gives us the benefit of his experience and anecdotes. NB No tips on getting rid of Husbands or Wives.

24 May - Reaseheath Farm

Traditionally our last lecture of the season has been more of a social affair, some of you may remember visits to Tatton Home Farm, Cholmondeley Estate, and a leisurely FWAG riverside walk near Nantwich, not to mention the year of the ducks in the main lecture theatre. This year we have been invited to see the new facilities and changes at The "Reaseheath Farm" followed by a Ploughman's Supper. Meeting at the usual time at the Leverhulme Centre please bring suitable footwear for farm walking, and an extra £2.50 if you want to enjoy the supper.

Doors open 7.30 for 8pm start. Entry £2. Notice board for ads, sales table, tea and coffee available. Room L3/L4 The Leverhulme Centre, Reaseheath College, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DF. Come early and have a chat.

Society Events

Summer Barbeque This will be on **Sat 3 July**. Attendance has been variable over the last few years but all who have attended have had a good time so put it in your diary now and come along. Starts at 5:00 PM at Gill's in Kingswood near Frodsham, ring for directions. Bring your own meat and drink we supply salad type stuff.

Acton Scott Visit

We have arranged a visit to Acton Scott Farm on **24th July**, just south of Shrewsbury on A49. Acton Scott is a working farm with many exhibits and demonstrations reflecting life in the good old days. The old school house provides lunches and snacks or there are plenty of places to enjoy a picnic, tickets £5.00 per person. If you would like to join us please put your name on the list at the back of the room on lecture evenings or contact me directly by email Jane.Hulse@i7services.co.uk or telephone 01829 781343

Training Courses

Ferreting Day

Kim's knee is a little better but she is very fully booked for the next few months so we are working on finding a suitable date but it may be in June/July.

Smallholder training courses

The CSA is currently in discussion with Reaseheath College regarding the provision of training courses. Whilst the two organisations have a long-standing relationship it has been identified that further opportunities exist for both parties by working more closely together to provide high-quality, affordable smallholder training - more of this to follow. Also other activities, again which would be mutually beneficial, are being discussed. Steve.

Sheep Tasks

This is planned for Saturday 15 May. If you have not put your name on the list please contact Tony on 01925 730530 ASAP. If you have put your name on the list and do not hear from Tony soon, please contact him.

Lecture Report

Ask The Vet - John Yarwood was, as usual, on form. The first question was about a cow with a sore eye, probably conjunctivitis but could be silage eye, caused by soil based bacteria in silage getting into the eye. We then moved onto Swamp fever and African Horse illness, exotic illnesses moving northwards through Europe, which are now threatening to spread into the UK.

Bluetongue vaccination was covered, John thought that it was worth vaccinating especially as the price has now come down. He does not believe there is any link between abortions etc and vaccination. The testing of vaccines has to be very thorough and any issues are probably coincidental.

Next was Twin Lamb Disease, John said that they don't usually go off their feet straight away, often just go vacant and get worse. Can be confused with milk fever which can then cause Twin Lamb disease. Caused by body sacrificing itself to save lambs. Usually best to give energy drink and blue top calcium sometimes right up to lambing. Stress is often a cause, e.g. Handling

Chickens did not escape, this time with scaly leg, John is not a believer in Benzoyl Benzoate as a treatment due to difficulty in administering every day. Invomec as a pour on is preferred.

Discussion then moved onto the industry around pet bereavement and the practice of defensive medicine by some vets. Cats and dogs were covered in these discussions along with the foibles of some owners.

Having got away without any questions on worms we could not escape without a long discussion on TB, badgers, vaccination, testing reliability, culling etc.

An excellent meeting with a variety of interesting topics and answers.

How we Farmed and Fared in the Forties - Norman gave a very interesting account of growing up in rural Kent and the start of farm mechanism and the equipment used. From hop picking with his mother, hop drying in Oast houses, corn threshing, land girls and the changes in farming required by the war. A very wide ranging presentation which brought back memories to more than a couple of the audience.

Going Batty

Like all smallholders we keep the obligatory free-range hens and, as we haven't ventured as far as hatching our own recently, the costs for new hens can be substantial and in reality I am sure many of us do not cover all our various costs when selling on our eggs! I suspect we are like many smallholders - we don't want to look too closely at the economics of egg production!!

However, lets look on the bright side - hens are one of the few workers who don't ask for a salary increase and never complain about their accommodation - but they rarely advise us in advance when they go on their 'holidays' (broody or moulting).

This adventure started when we heard a comment on "Countryfile" on BBC1 about rehoming ex Battery hens. We looked up on the internet and found the "Battery Hen Welfare Trust" - www.bhwt.org.uk . We followed the instructions and set up our data on their site in late September, and inspection of their projected available hens, suggested we might get some around late November. ... Continued on page 10.

Smallholder and Garden Festival - 15 & 16 May 2010

The event is geared for the smallholder and the gardener and everything you want to know about how to make a start on a small country living can be found there, including experts to answer all your questions. There is even a property road show where you can find just the place to buy or rent to become a smallholder.

It is expected to attract over 25,000 visitors and preparations are already well under way. Several new features will appear this time among them an exciting scurry driving competition and a blacksmithing and farriery competition, part of a programme of demonstrations organised by the Welsh Farriers and Blacksmiths Association.

A new Spring Poultry Show is also being introduced at the Festival in partnership with the Poultry Club of Wales.

Venue for the festival is The Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SY, more details can be found on their website; www.rwas.co.uk

DEFRA Updates

If you are in the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme (ELS) you may need to renew it during 2010. If you are due for renewal in 2010 and have not heard from Natural England you can contact them on 0300 060 1482/ 1638.

If you are receiving SPS payments you should have received your application form for 2010. These have to be returned by 17 May 2010 Contact RPA on 0845 603 7777 if your forms have not arrived.

ADAS is running a series of workshops for meat chicken producers on the new regulations coming into effect on 30 June 2010. The North West event is on the 26 April at Garstang County Hotel Preston 6:30pm to 9pm. Contact Carol Gough 0135 469 2531 to book a place.

Sheep EID - If you are registered as a sheep or goat keeper you should have received a pack containing guides on the requirements of EID. If you have not had a pack or require a pack contact DEFRA Publications on 0845 955 6000 quoting reference PB13331 or have a look at www.defra.gov.uk/farminglink

Soil Protection - Some of the Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition standards of cross compliance, a condition of payment for SPS payments, have changed. The two main changes that would effect smallholders are:

- the need to record access to waterlogged soil on your soil protection review (SPR)
- use the new definition and rules for agricultural land not in agricultural production.

There is also increased responsibility for accessing and tackling risks to soil on your land. See www.wholefarm.defra.gov.uk

Food Labelling - extract from "The Guardian" 23rd February 2010

Some major supermarkets and restaurant chains have signed up to a voluntary labelling code to show the origin of pork used in products such as pies, pasties and sandwiches.

Asda, Tesco, Sainsburys, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, the Co-operative and Waitrose are among the retailers committing to the code which aims to end the confusion over the labelling of pork, bacon and ham.

Currently, because of an EU labelling loophole, pork (and other meat) can be labelled and marketed as British if it was processed in the UK, regardless of where the pig is reared or slaughtered. This means retailers can label foreign meat products "Produced in the UK" and endorse them with, for instance, a union flag if they have undergone a significant change in the country. In the case of a pie, encasing foreign meat in pastry would justify the description. Companies which have signed up to the code will have to display country of origin clearly on the pack, and if they describe meat as "produced in the UK", they will also have to put the country it originally came from.

The use of imagery which suggests the food is from the UK - for example, English village scenes, the union or Welsh flags on packaging - will only be used if the meat originates from within the UK, or the country of origin information is given on the same part of the label. And descriptions such as "free range", "outdoor bred" and "outdoor reared" are defined in the code, which also says that imagery featuring outdoor pig farming products can only be used where the pigs have been bred or reared outside or on free range farms.

As well as major supermarkets, brewer and restaurant chain owner Whitbread, and catering company Baxter Storey have signed up to the code. Participating restaurants will make the country of origin information available to customers on menus, in leaflets or on company websites.

Members Adverts

Petrol Generator Clarke's 1kw single phase 250 volt. Briggs & Stratton 4 HP engine. Bought for sheep shearing in fields, used about 10 times. Contact Mike Taylor on 01925 263184

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

The End of The Line.....

It was a sunny Monday morning early November, and I had just settled in to the daily work routine; PC switched on and finally warmed up, coffee prepared, week-end emails scanned to check for the really important ones, (i.e. from those more senior than myself or gossip from friends), electronic diary checked for the first meeting, when the phone rang. I groaned inwardly as this was external ring tone, as it usually means it is a rep trying desperately to sell something or else it is someone who has spent the weekend in bed with flu and is ringing in sick.

No, this was different. This was from home. And it was serious. I hurriedly explained to my boss that even though it was still only 09.00 on a Monday, I needed to get home. (He usually understands these things as he's used to my crises such as the kids are sick at home or there is a problem with lambing or a water pipe has burst or Bertie the Longhorn bull has gone to visit the neighbours Friesians. In this instance, the message was brief, sheep had escaped and had been hit by a car, and some were dead.

I got in the car to drive home, imagining the sight which would await me..... Definitely police cars, fire engines, ambulances and hysterical car occupants. Probably TV crews. What about helicopters? Was anybody injured, or worse? Super sexy Thunderbird 1 and Scott Tracy will already be on the scene, giving directions to boring Virgil Tracy in slow boring Thunderbird 2, (probably carrying The Mole), which will lumber in on the act like an Austin Allegro. Then oh no, heaven forbid, RSPCA!! I didn't worry about the first ones on the list; it was the last one which made me worried.

I drove home as quickly as was safe, and rapidly got changed. Off came the nice smart cloths and on came the mucky jeans, sweatshirt, dirty coat and muddy wellies, as quickly as Clark Kent turns into Superman. I found out roughly where I'd likely find the police cars, fire engines, ambulances etc and set off on my quad, (road licensed no less!), but was somewhat surprised that I couldn't see any blue flashing lights, couldn't hear any sirens nor was there any sign of TB1 hovering overhead.

I eventually arrived at the scene of carnage. There was a nice gentleman whose car had hit the sheep. I quickly established that, he wasn't injured, he was absolutely fine. He reassured me he was fine, several times, as I kept asking, several times. A neighbour, Jane, who had thought they may be my sheep, had hung around till I'd arrived. (Jane would normally have contacted her sister who just happens to a vet but her sister was in Liverpool that day). At that point, I established that 3 sheep had been out, enjoying themselves eating the new grass which was appearing in Jane's father's field, and had just run out across the road. The trio were my last North Ronaldsay ewe and her two lambs. One lamb was already dead, the ewe had injured a leg and was lying down, and the other lamb had run off, I assumed, home. Jane left at this point, leaving the driver and myself. I phoned the local vet and explained the situation. I decided it was best to get the animals home for treatment, rather than stay in a narrow country lane.

If I'm honest, if you are going to hit a sheep in a car, a North Ronaldsay is probably a better sort, as they are relatively lightweight, and therefore less likely to cause vehicle damage, but much, much more importantly, injury to people in the

vehicle. I therefore lifted the two sheep onto the quad, (again a practical advantage of lightweight sheep), and secured them properly with the obligatory bailing twine. Mr Smith, the driver, agreed to come back to my house to sort out details.

It was at this stage, that the police car turned up with blue lights flashing. The officer got out of the car, note book eagerly at the ready and radio to hand in case the armed response team or the entire air squadron of Tracy Island were to be needed. "Has the car left the scene?" he asked excitedly, as there was no apparent smashed up car "Er, no. This is the car, and I'm the driver" said Mr Smith. "Does the sheep owner know?" came the next eager question "Er, yes, that's me" said I, in my muddy clothes strapping the sheep on to the back of the quad, as if I would have just happened to have been a passing Good Samaritan on a quad, and at the same time, inwardly thanking the Good Lord that the said quad was road licensed. "And I've just phoned the vet," I quickly added before he contemplated contacting the RSPCA. "So no-one injured?" came the slightly more deflated question.... "Er, no" we both replied. "And which one of you contacted the police?" came the triumphant final question. Mr Smith looked at me and shook his head, and I looked at him and shook my head. "So, neither of you contacted the police?" he asked dejectedly. "No" we both said. "Ok, then we don't need to be involved then", and with that, he was off, no doubt wishing it had been a bit more exciting with either the driver beating up the sheep owner for damaging his precious car, or the sheep owner beating up the driver for damaging her precious sheep.

Mr Smith, the sheep and I got back to the house and did the necessary exchanging of details whilst we awaited the vet. Mr Smith was truly a gentleman. I had been concerned that I would have been faced with someone aggressive, mouthing off about his car, dangerous wild animals on the loose etc, but he wasn't anything like that, even though it was an almost new, very shiny red sporty Alfa Romeo. And he did reassure me he was fine, several times, as I kept asking, several times. He then went off and I checked that the other missing lamb had returned. Yes, she was back in the field with the others, thankfully unscathed and running round.

The vet arrived. The ewe had quite a nasty deep cut on the knee joint, which would heal with some difficulty, and she was in shock. Coupled with her age, we sadly agreed the right decision was to put her down. Once the vet had gone, I contacted my insurance company, NFU, to explain what had just happened. I tidied everything up, and then got washed, changed and was back to work by about 11, to catch up on the emails and the meetings for the rest of the day.

The insurance wheels then swung into motion. I had to make a statement of what had happened, (difficult when I wasn't there). Mr Smith had to get estimate for car repair work. Whilst the visible damage was slight, (cracked low level spoiler and radiator), due to the newness and type of car, it cost about £1500 to repair. Thankfully the repair was done before Christmas, so it didn't impact on his plans. I also had an inspection by the insurers to assess the condition of my fencing to ensure I am a responsible owner. The sheep were in Barn Field which is some distance from the road, ie Tom's Field and the Ford's field separate Barn Field from the road. I still have no idea as to where or how they had escaped. I also had to outline how I would prevent animals straying again in the future, which is difficult if you don't know the original escape route. But unlike many others in such situations, Mr Smith did not subsequently claim to have delayed whiplash and want significant compensation for severe pain and being unable to work for several weeks.

In total, with the £100 insurance excess, vet fees, sheep value and disposal cost, the incident cost me about £250. But what would have been the cost if I hadn't been insured, or if there had been serious human injury??

So, the questions to ask yourself:

Are your fences and gates secure for all your different livestock?

How do you know? When did you last check them?

If the worst does happen, are you properly insured?

And lastly, why do we women think Thunderbird 1 is so much better than Thunderbird 2?

Anon (Editor - The names/breeds/sexes have been changed to protect the guilty)

Barbed Wire Grip

There is nothing quite so smart as a straight fence tensioned up with the netting and barbed wire in a perfect straight line. But how do you pull the barbed wire tight? A hand winch is almost essential is but not much use if you cannot grip the barbed wire easily. This device requires welding but the welds are so simple it could be the first welding you ever do!

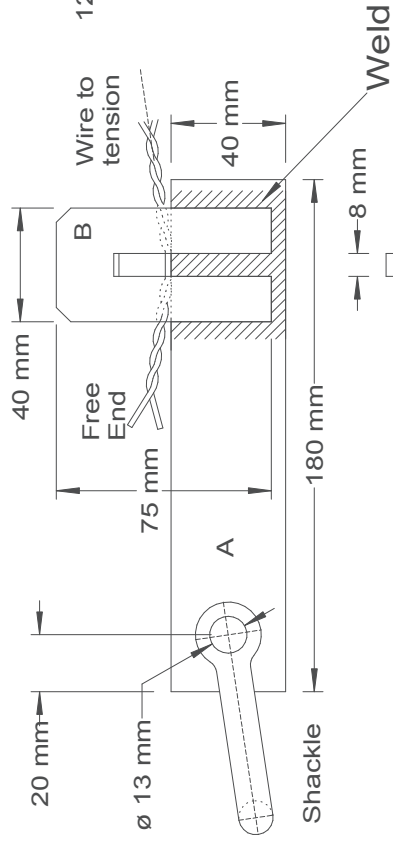
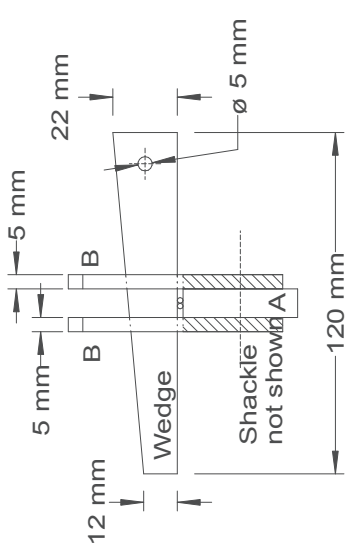
See the diagram with this description. Start by cutting a 180 mm long piece of mild steel strip "A", 40 x 10 mm in section. Then prepare two pieces of 40 x 5 mm strip "B" each about 75 mm long. These pieces require an 8 mm slot cut down the centre. Before welding, drill the hole to take the pin of a large shackle. The shackle appears over size but it is chosen to accommodate the hook on the winch not for strength. The wedge is about 120 mm long and 8 mm thick and tapers from say 12 mm to 22 mm as shown in the diagram.

When setting up the pieces to start welding, clamp the strips "B" so that the centre part of the wedge is used when there is a piece of wire trapped in the grip. After welding, the slots can be filed so the wedge slides on them at the right angle. A hole in the wedge allows you to attach some string with a coloured label so when the wedge falls in the grass it can be found again. I have tried fastening the other end of the string to the grip but the string tends to get in the way when you are fighting with the barbed wire to get it under control! Once you have got the wire between the two items "B", tap the wedge in place with a hammer.

This grip also works with single strand wire. When applying tension to a wire when there are other wires, or netting already on the fence, it is important to achieve the correct tension so that the other wires, or netting, do not sag.

A little maintenance is required on the wedge from time to time, as the working edges of the wedge tend to burr up, so dress the burr off with a file.

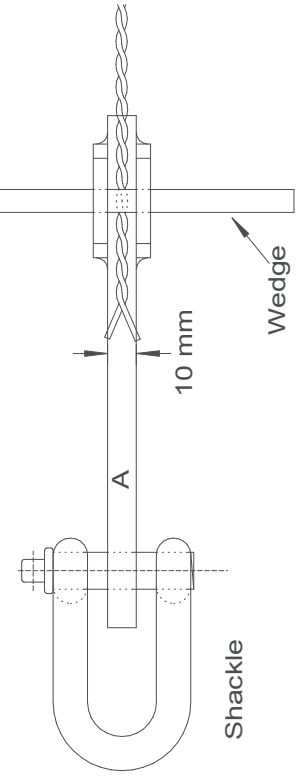
L E B Heyshead Farm 2010



Material = Mild Steel

Barbed Wire Grip

24/1/10



So we filed the date away until we were sitting enjoying our Sunday morning breakfast on 10th October. We took a call from BHWF saying they had 15 hens over from a rehoming event and would we like them. Fortunately we had already prepared the house - a large one we had overhauled and treated - so everything was set up to go - so naturally we agreed to go and collect them.

We quickly grabbed a couple of old cardboard boxes plus our large dog cage, and headed off to the far north of the world - or as the locals call it Bury..... the land that time forgot. Why is it that directions always sound so easy to follow, but in reality they seem to miss some small but vital piece of the information! We arrived at the right road - not only did my 'TomTom' confirm it, but the road signs did as well! Needless to say after arriving in a likely looking farmyard, the local farmer advised us.....ee by gum lad, av niver erd of t'farm yer lookin fer n ave bin ere thurty year. So we returned to the road and after some more phone calls eventually arrived where the 'Bats' were held about 150 yards from the original farmer's house! Who said Northerners know their neighbours!!

Our 'rehome' greeted us welcomingly - she said those fateful words..... were we easy to find?

We headed about 20 yards from the car and found a small shed with obvious sounds of hen clucking going on. We were soon grabbing the Bats - and what a forlorn bunch of skin with just the hint of the odd feather they were. Without exception they were a motley crew, with very pale combs and wattles. We also ended up with 2 extra Bats as they seemed to appear from the shed darkness. BHWT does ask for a contribution for the hens, and we settled on around £3 per hen which all parties were happy with!

So we set off back for home with 17 clucking strangers in the back of the car, none of them wearing their seat belts! It did cross our minds that if we did by some strange chance have a collision, we wondered what the emergency services would make of all the blood and gore in the back of the car !! its strange the things you think about while driving on the motorway.....in Bury.

We got them home by early afternoon and they didn't look any better in the full light of day. We carefully put them into their new luxury home, together with water and layers mash and chick crumbs - we had been told to start them off on this as it would be closer to what they had eaten while intensively housed.

That evening none of them were roosting - all preferring to sit on the floor. So we started to place as many as we could easily reach onto perches - something we continue to do today - as many of them still don't seem to get the message!

Over the next few days the braver ones started venturing out to experience the 'great out-doors' eventually followed by all the others. They still looked a forlorn bunch with only the odd feather and very pale combs and wattles. However, we did see them laying immediately. This went on for around 2-3 weeks, and then almost overnight they stopped laying. To be fair, it was by now November, so days were cold with reduced daylight. We did start to notice the odd feather growing through and within another 4 weeks or so, the hens had feathered up well. By early 2010 they did start to look well, and the egg production kicked in again, and at this time we seem to be getting almost an egg per day from each of them.

We stopped the chick crumbs after 10 days or so, and they were very happy with ordinary layers mash as well as the layers pellets from then on.

We have had 2 of them 'fall of the perch' so to speak. Nothing obviously wrong with them. The first one we found in early December, with no clear reason. The second was in early March and had showed the 'usual' lethargic hunched up sign, and was gone within 2 days. Neither of them was particularly light. All the other hens continue to look well and thriving.

So if you want to take some Ex Bats, then go to the web site and sign up. It is rewarding to see them once they are all feathered up again!

Derek

Thank you

Carol, who had to dispose of a herd of sheep in a very short timescale, wishes to express her thanks to all the Cheshire Smallholders who gave her advice and support during a very traumatic period. The sheep have now been re homed.

Attention all Textile fans...WOOLFEST 2010

Woolfest is an annual festival, held in June at the Livestock Market at Cockermouth, Cumbria, celebrating all aspects of natural fibres - their sources, uses and products. Woolfest 2005 was the first ever festival of it's kind to be held in the UK

Woolfest is organised by members of The Wool Clip, which is a Cumbria-based cooperative of sheep farmers, spinners, dyers, knitters, felt makers, weavers and other wool workers. It was set up in 2001 to add value to local wool and to market members' skills and products.

Woolfest covers all aspects of fibre production, with stands of Alpacas, Angora Rabbits and Goats, and of course many of the Rare Breed sheep which are known for their fine wool. There are stands of processing equipment (spinning wheels, weaving looms and associated tools), processed fibre (wool, silk, and alpaca), accessories for garment production (buttons, buckles) as well as finished products from many different materials and designers. As well as the many stands, there are also workshops and demonstrations held over the 2 day event.

Tony & Gill Moore will be helping to man the Ryeland Sheep Breed stand at Woolfest, which aims to promote the breed to wool users, and to try to get a better outlet for our coloured and white fleeces than sending them to the Wool Marketing Board, which does not want coloured fleeces at all, as it has no market for them. It is proposed to have a pen of Coloured Ryeland sheep, as at previous Woolfests, but to also have a pen of Ryeland sheep, an information stand, and to have processed wool, with woven and knitted woollen goods (from Ryelands and Coloured Ryelands of course) on display, and for sale as well. So if you have been persuaded to attend, please come along to say 'hello'.

Woolfest 2010 will take place on Friday 25 and Saturday 26 June.

Details will be available soon at www.woolfest.co.uk.

Tony

Other Stuff

Gate

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

Web Site

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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Membership Update

Following on from the distribution of the member list last year we have again asked people about what they want from CSA.

These conversations confirmed the request from last year for members to have the names and contact details of each other. In order for this to happen I asked via The Gate to contact me if you did not want your details shared. No one has asked for their details to be withheld.

I am pleased to be able to include with this edition Names, general area, and telephone number of our membership that will enable members to contact each other. You may find you live closer to a Cheshire Smallholder than you thought. I will try to keep this list updated and send out a new list to everyone annually.

Our members confidentiality is important to us. We never supply members details to anyone else .
Jane

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