



**WHITE PARK CATTLE SOCIETY LTD  
SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER**

**2023 AGM and Open Day**

**\*\* Save the Date \*\***

**SATURDAY 17 JUNE**

**to be kindly hosted by  
Virginia and David Johnson at**

**CHARTLEY HALL  
STOWE BY CHARTLEY  
STAFFORD  
ST18 OLN**



Chartley Castle on the Chartley Estate

## **2023 AGM and Open Day**

We are pleased to announce that our 2023 AGM and Open Day will be held in the midlands of England region this year; at Chartley Hall which is situated mid-way between Stafford and Uttoxeter. We would like to thank members Virginia and David Johnson for agreeing to host us.

Chartley Estate has a long and interesting history which can be traced back to the bronze age. When visiting Chartley you will find yourself standing on the same ground where ancient Britons hunted aurochs, Vikings came to plunder, feudal barons fought, royal visitors hatched treason and Cromwell's men rampaged! The estate has the remains of a Norman castle, which we will be visiting during the open day, and is also home to the Castle herd of White Park Cattle.

Many of you will be familiar with the prefix of Chartley - the herd of White Park cattle who lives at Ditchingham Estate in Norfolk. But there is a connection between the herd and Chartley Estate, as the Ferres family who live in Ditchingham owned Chartley Estate for many centuries. The estate finally passed out of their hands in 1907 and was bought by the Johnson family in the 1930's.

Our Open Day evening meal will be held at The White Hart hotel in Uttoxeter. The hotel has reserved 16 bedrooms for us as a discounted room rate of £80 per night plus breakfast. To take advantage of this offer you need to book your room by 1 June. Just mention you are attending the White Park Cattle Society Open Day when you book your room:

A booking form and full itinerary will be circulated in due course. But, in the meantime, please save the date!



## **Start taking photos of your White Park cattle!**

We all love taking photos of our cattle and other animals, but trying to catch that perfect pose is incredibly difficult with subjects who don't understand how much patience is required by a professional model! We are always on the look-out for great photos of White Park cattle to use on our website, in our newsletter and on our social media pages. So, at our 2023 Open Day we aim to secure a visit from a professional animal photographer who will be able to give us some advice on how to place yourself around your cattle to take that stunning shot. With this in mind, we will be running a photographic competition of the photos you have taken of your cattle over the years, to be judged by the photographer. Council member Frank Sutton has generously donated a cash prize for the winner. Details on how to enter the competition will be announced shortly. In the meantime, please start taking photos of your cattle or look out that special shot which turned out well.

## **Review of fees**

### **Message from the treasurer, James Gill**

Each year the WPCS expenditure is scrutinised alongside the income and every effort is made to balance the accounts.

The White Park Cattle Society has, over the past 10 years, kept the cost of our membership, registrations and bull inspections at the same level, notwithstanding that these fees together, create our only source of regular income.

Regrettably our Council has found it necessary to increase the membership of £40 to £50 from January 2024.

The bull inspections are a very important part of our herd improvement program and for this reason they are subsidised by the WPCS; however the Council regrettably must increase the cost of £100 for a bull inspection to £125 from 1st January 2024.

All other fees will remain the same as before.

It is always a difficult decision to increase fees but we hope that you understand our reasoning behind this latest review.

Jane will be sending out updated standing order forms for 2024 membership payments later in the year.



## **Why I joined the Pasture for Life Scheme and became a High Health herd**

**by David Yiend, owner of the Watercombe herd**

By way of introduction to this article I am very conscious that we are absolute novices as far as farming is concerned.

Within the White Park Cattle farming community there will be many of you who have established successful systems; this after all is what has enabled the breed to survive. This article is written regarding the experiences of a new entrant who still has masses and masses to learn!

Although connected with agriculture for most of our working career my wife Carol and I had not farmed previously, so it was a big step to invest in our small farm here on Exmoor some six years ago. We passionately believe in the role that rare breeds have to play in the future of farming and were keen therefore that this was the focus of our 35-acre holding.

We were anxious not to lose sight of the market demands in our choice of cattle breed, and so we chose the noble White Park cattle for their hardiness, meat quality and suitability to our farming system, which was to be producing beef from a totally grass-fed system.

Our passion was to do things right, our stock to be healthy and managed well and our farming activity to be thoughtful and respectful to the environment. We were very mindful of the fact that we were novices and had a lot to learn from others. In this regard we were very fortunate to find a locally retired beef farmer who became our mentor and also so fortunate to find a local veterinary practice with whom we have established a great relationship.

When it came to marketing our product, it was likely that we would struggle to be taken seriously - how could we get people to believe that our products might be worth investing in? We were never going to be the cheapest! So, considering these three objectives - credibility with our prospective customers, managing our herd to the healthiest of standards and a need to learn - we decided to participate in two accreditation schemes.

Firstly, after careful research we set about joining the Pasture for Life Association and becoming accredited as a Pasture for Life producer of Beef and Lamb.

Secondly, after lengthy discussion with our vet, we started to understand what High Health status would represent for our herd; ie to be free of any of the nasties BVD, Johnes, IBR, Neospora and Leptospirosis. We knew this could be a challenge, but we nevertheless decided to set about accreditation. It made complete sense to us to do this.

It was likely that some of our cattle would be sold as breeding stock - how could we in all honesty be selling cattle to others without a definitive health status of our own? I have to say it does surprise us that people are prepared to invest in stock themselves without this proof of health status. Personally, I do wonder whether in years to come this will become the norm? Why should it not?

The journey to this status for us has not been without its challenges; we did find Johnes in our herd and we also found Neospora, but through culling and a breeding policy these have been eradicated. Of course, this had an economic impact on us in terms of how infected cattle had to be managed, but we believed that if we were farming then it was irresponsible not to ensure health cleanliness of our herd.

Our journey to accreditation for Pasture for Life has been relatively straightforward. We chose White Park because of the breed's record at being able to rely entirely on grass/forage for successful breeding or meat production. Our animals do not grow as fast as if we were to add cereals to the diet, but PFLA accreditation has enabled us to market our animals at an enhanced price to outlets that would not have been otherwise possible.



Personally, I believe that this standard of totally grass fed cattle will increasingly become reflected in the price paid and become more of an essential to doing business in the future. Surely the role that cereals play in beef production will not continue to be ignored? Education of the consumer will continue in this regard.

Of course, at the end of the day, it is economics that has to drive us and personal choice of one's farming system is one of the joys of being a farmer. But likewise, thinking about the changing market and perhaps trying to take a position to influence that in the right direction is something I am sure, we all consider.

One final point. Earlier in this article I referred to our need for support on our journey into successful farming. So how has PFLA helped us with this? Brilliantly! They have a fantastic network of like-minded farmers and people who are always available for advice, there are numerous farm walks and other visits regularly organised in our area and there is the forum that we see on a daily basis which is a treasure trove of diverse, interesting and useful information.

Yes, our journey has been into farming has been fun, albeit with plenty of challenges.



## **Enjoy your coffee in a branded portable mug**

We still have branded mugs available for sale. They are designed to cut down on the wastage of using a cardboard mug every time you pop into a coffee shop to buy a take-away drink

Council member Frank Sutton and his daughter Anna arranged the production of these mugs and kindly donated them to the Society to enable to us raise some much-needed funds.

The mugs are for sale at £10 each or £9 each if you buy 5 or more at the same time. Postage and packing are included.

Contact Jane if you would like to order some mugs.