



WHITE PARK CATTLE SOCIETY LTD SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Message from the Secretary

Hello everyone

Summer rain has made hay making and harvest difficult this year, but at least the cooler temperatures have suited our livestock. We have used some more of the photos that we received for our photographic competition in this newsletter, and they are also appearing on our new Instagram page. We are still also posting on Facebook. Please follow us if you are a social media fan.

Best wishes, Jane



Above: Broadecton cow and calf taken by Henry Rusch

A history of the White Park breed

White Park cattle have a remarkable history punctuated by dramatic events which give it an enviable and unequalled provenance. DNA in the remains of a cow from 10,000 years in the Middle East can be traced to her female descendants to cows living today in the Dynevor herd of White Park cattle.

The heritage value of the breed was recognised by Winston Churchill who exported a few animals to Canada as an insurance against invasion of Britain during WW2.

Despite recognition of its special status as the most ancient British breed the White Park declined during WW2. Registrations had ceased in 1946 and the breed drifted for a quarter of a century as a couple of ornamental parkland herds. By 1970 only 65 breeding cows remained. The breed's recovery was kick-started in 1974.

Twenty seven years later there were more than sixty cattle in one herd when a special Open Day was staged for the Dynevor prefix on Salisbury Plain. It celebrated 800 years of history of the herd since the death of Rhys ap Gruffydd (a previous owner of the herd). It was a major event attended by more than fifty guests, including a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, and was followed by a banquet in London at Butchers' Hall.

The breed has continued to expand and attract new owners with a

desire to breed distinctively special cattle. There are now almost 100 members of the society with about 1,000 cows of breeding age. The special qualities of the White Park have been recognised in many different areas of interest, and it has demonstrated its commercial potential. The breed has truly come of age.

Taken from an article by Lawrence Alderson CBE.



Above: Pass Plus bull Smoile Elgar taken by Debbie Dann

A call for breeding better quality bulls

Our recently retired President, Lawrence Alderson, has many years' experience in the fields of genetics and animal breeding and has been a member of Defra's UK National Steering Committee on Farm Animal Genetic Resources. For many years now Lawrence has advocated the breeding of better quality White Park bulls and he has now written a paper which compares the performance testing of thoroughbred horses in the racing industry with the performance testing of White Park bulls.

Recently WPCS has started progeny testing herd sires on the basis of the performance of their sons. Lawrence has discovered that some bulls with a

below average linear assessment still have achieved a good progeny test. This shows the importance of delving deeper into pedigree records. We have now gathered data to show performance under a range of management and environmental conditions, and in comparison with other cattle breeds. Linear assessment identifies the strength or weakness of each animal for size, length, rump and testicular development, enabling breeders to select the most suitable herd sire.

Another factor which Lawrence feels is undervalued is the importance of the dam and dam line of a bull. If a highly-rated bull sires good daughters but only average sons it is quite likely that significant contributory genes are held on the X-chromosome. That enables a cow to transmit her quality to all her progeny, but a bull only to his daughters.

Potential breeding bulls are inspected at a minimum of 2 years of age and this costs £125. A Society inspector will visit the bull to conduct a linear assessment in a crush and DNA analysis is also conducted on hair samples taken from the bull and his dam. If the bull passes both sections of the inspection, he will then be graded either a Pass or Pass Plus bull. 46.3% of inspected White Park bulls are rated Pass Plus, 47.8% Pass and 5.9% Fail.

If you have a query about keeping a bull calf entire or have a potential bull for inspection please [contact Jane at the office.](#)



Photo by Tim Rutter

Grants to be available for cattle housing

Defra grants of between £15,000 and £500,000 are soon to be available for large infrastructure projects that help to continually improve the health and welfare of your cattle.

For example, you could get funding for an A-frame building to house dairy calves from birth to weaning, or a mono-pitch building on a beef unit to house calves between 3-6 months. You can also apply for funding for permanent open-sided structures with igloos/hutches and other types of calf housing.

This is also an opportunity to adapt your calf housing and ensure it's ready to meet the demands of extreme weather conditions and changing climate.

Through this grant you will be able to access funding for rooftop solar panels, a great source of thermal insulation and low-cost energy for your calf housing. We are still waiting to hear the opening date for applications.



Above: Calves from the Harley herd by Dorit Albertsen

Native Breeds Coronation Fund

King Charles has long been a champion of our native breeds so to celebrate his coronation former Defra Secretary George Eustice MP proposed a £10 million Native Breeds Coronation Fund. Along with many other native breed societies we contacted Defra to support the proposed

fund and Defra has indicated that they are sympathetic to finding cash in their farming budget to establish the fund.

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust is working with Defra on the proposal and how the fund might support native breeds. In particular it is hoped that the fund would invest in breeding programmes and the marketing of native breed produce, but nothing has been decided yet. Once we receive further news, we will update you. In the meantime you can read an article about the proposed fund [on this link](#).