



# BWMSBA Spring 2020



*Photo: Gwawr Llewellyn Hughes. BWM x Texel (left) and pedigree BWM (right)*

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## News & Centenary Update:

As you'll no doubt be aware by now, Covid-19 has turned pretty much everything upside down and has totally laid waste to the 2020 Agricultural Show season.

In addition, 2020 was supposed to have been a year of celebration for BWMSBA and plans for that have also gone down the drain at high speed. BWMSBA Chairman, John Griffiths, would like everyone to know that it has been decided that all planned centenary events will now be deferred until 2021.

The planned early Open Day and the Centenary Show had already been postponed but it's now become clearer that running the Open Day planned for September and the Centenary Dinner (planned for 3rd October) is not viable in the circumstances.

Given the huge amount of work that has been put in by BWMSBA members to plan and make these events happen, this is a big blow, but on a more positive note, BWMSBA is still hopeful that the Annual Show & Sale at Monmouthshire Livestock Centre will be able to go ahead on the 28th August as planned. Our auctioneers have said that they are happy to accommodate us at a later date if necessary, subject to any further restrictions. Obviously the situations around livestock sales are very much being discussed and reviewed daily and we will keep everyone updated as soon as we know anymore.

We're liaising with the venue for the Centenary Dinner to agree a replacement date for 2021. With regard to the Centenary show, a provisional date has been agreed with the Royal Welsh and once it is confirmed, we'll let members know so that the date can be put in the diary for next year.

In the meantime, your sheep will continue to do what they do, and hopefully they will prosper and give hope for a good year to come. It's very, very dry here and once the silage has been baled this afternoon, I'll be praying for rain along with everyone else!

Keep safe and please do get in touch if you have any queries or questions. (phone: 07511 653715 or email: [enquiries@blackwelshmountain.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@blackwelshmountain.org.uk) )

*Dot Tyne,*  
Secretary.

In the absence of any shows to report on, I've asked a couple of Black Welsh Breeders to write a piece for this newsletter, telling us about their farms and flocks.

I hope you find these items interesting.

## **Newarks Black Welsh Mountain Sheep**

### **Founding a new flock**

If someone had told me a few years ago that I'd be farming sheep on a hill farm in Wales, I'd have laughed in their face! So now I'm looking out of my window at the beautiful Black Mountains, my sheep grazing contentedly and attempting to write an article for the BWMSBA newsletter - quite a turnaround for an Essex born midwife!

So, to briefly introduce myself..... I'm Samantha Matthews and I'm from an arable farming background, growing up on a 1500 acre family farm near Chelmsford. I was the typical horse mad girl, doing Pony Club and later working as a veterinary nurse and helping to run the family livery yard. When the farm was sold, I trained and qualified as a midwife, working at Harlow Hospital for over ten years as well as being a single parent to my son.

In 2015 I met my boyfriend, Neil, who was working as livestock manager on an estate in Suffolk, farming Fallow Deer and sheep. I really enjoyed helping with lambing and began to see sheep as more than just stupid woolly creatures (which admittedly they sometimes are!) When Neil was to be made redundant we hatched a plan to buy our own farm, which I was in the position to do due to the sale of my family farm.



We chose Wales as Neil had lived in Usk for nearly twenty years previously. We were lucky enough to find a 60 acre farm within the Brecon Beacons National Park, in Pengefnffordd near Talgarth and moved here in February 2017 with a motley collection of animals, including deer and two Hampshire rams, which Neil had taken as part of his redundancy pay. We soon bought our first commercial ewes - Welsh ladies with lambs at foot and my love affair with all things ovine had begun!

We had bought the farm with planning permission to convert a stone barn into two holiday lets and I'd always planned to have some pretty looking sheep to entice customers, initially deciding on Jacob sheep as they're so striking and I duly purchased ten ewe lambs. We went to our local show at Cwmdru in 2017 and I totally fell in love with the smart black sheep being shown by old friends of Neil's, Matt and Donna Evans. I resolved to buy some and got ten ewes from a local farmer. We bought a Pentwyn ram from Builth and my first flock of Black Welsh was complete! I run all my ewes together - Black Welsh, Mules, Jacob, Beltex and two Shetlands that belong to my son,



so it's quite a mixture. Despite their size, the Blacks are feisty sheep and hold their own with the other breeds - especially at feed time! They quickly became very friendly and are forgiving of my frequent mistakes as I learn about sheep farming.

Our land is hilly and mainly above 1000 feet, so it suits the Black Welsh down to the ground as they're so hardy. In our first full winter we were hit by the "Beast from the East" but our heavily pregnant BWM ewes simply made themselves an igloo in one of the deep gorges in their field and emerged at the shake of a bucket, looking much less frosty than their icicle covered friends!

Our first lambs were born in April 2018 (we now lamb in March) in one of our large barns, having been brought in a fortnight before their due date. We're lucky to have three decent barns and some good sheep hurdles left by the previous owner.

I manage a lot of the sheep work myself, but always get lots of help from Neil when my inexperience shows - or something needs rugby-tackling!

The Blacks have always lambed easily and are fabulous mothers and will easily adopt spare lambs from other breeds. Our lambing regime is fairly simple and I apply the hygiene basics I learnt in the NHS to avoid infection and unnecessary use of antibiotics. All ewes lamb in the main pen and then move to single pens for 24 hours, cords are sprayed with iodine and lambing areas limed between uses. Triplet or higher risk lambs are also given a dose of Spectam as a precaution.



All our sheep have a ration of sheep nuts and our own haylage in the winter. In our first year we took pot luck and left a pair of twins as ram lambs with the rest being banded and sold as lamb boxes to friends, with a few finding their way into our freezer. We're very spoilt with our selection of Black Welsh and Jacob roasts! Now we leave more boys entire to choose the best at weaning.

Apart from drenching and vaccinations the Blacks don't tend to need medications and are rarely poorly.

Our first crop of lambs were too young to show in 2018 but I resolved to have some sheep to show at Cwmdru in 2019. In order to register my flock I contacted the society and arranged an inspection. Judge and breeder, Steve Forsyth, kindly visited the farm and thoroughly checked the flock to ensure they were true to type. This was nerve wracking but worth it as I wanted to be sure I was breeding correct sheep. I later established that my foundation



ewes were related to a local pedigree flock, so I was reassured that I'd inadvertently picked some good ewes!

I chose Newarks as my flock name as this was the prefix used by my Mum for her Welsh Section A ponies. She used to be a breeder and judge and I learned as a child the importance of good conformation and that certain presence a show animal must have - the "look at me" gene. I think this applies to sheep just as much as ponies!

The show sheep are out at night in the summer and in the barn during the day to prevent any bleaching of their fleece in the sun and to have them handy for halter training and trimming during the day. When the gate is opened they take themselves in and out with no fuss as they're so used to their routine! They have two feeds

of coarse mix and haylage, with Radio 2 on in the barn (they're not keen on Radio 1).

With our first ever show sheep, yearling rams, Arapaho and Apache, we sheared, halter trained and (with some help from a friend) trimmed before arriving rather nervously at Cwmdu Show. I was blown away by how friendly and welcoming everyone was. We knew absolutely no one but felt accepted straight away. I watched how others lined up and handled their sheep and was soon standing in line with Arapaho and Neil with Apache. It's no lie to say that it was one of the happiest moments of my life when my boy won first place. He then won best of breed and my showing obsession had started! I went to several shows over the rest of the summer, including Brecon, Lower Chapel, Erwood and Sennybridge, with some of my Black Welsh and Jacob lambs also, winning a few more rosettes and also managed to sell both breeds at their show and sales. All went to good pedigree flocks, with my lovely Arapaho going to the Eryri Flock.

Now we've bred two crops of lambs, and kept detailed records of lambs produced from each ewe, I can be more selective about which ewes are



kept for pedigree breeding and the type of ram to put to them. After an escaping ram last year we've got a few BWM/Mule lambs and they're very nice sheep, so I'm considered putting a few of my older Black ewes to our commercial tup this year - my original ten will be here for life as they're the foundation of my flock (and I'm soft).

We're hoping to finish the holiday lets soon, which will be a major source of income for us, coupled with Neil's fencing work and lamb box sales. We also sell venison and Neil has sold Fallow Deer to Badminton Park and to Brett Graham, a Michelin Star chef. I cannot imagine living anywhere else and although, along with everyone else, I'm beyond sad that we've lost this seasons showing, I'm hugely optimistic about the future for this wonderful breed and glad to be a small part of the BWMSBA. Thanks for reading my rambling and I hope to meet more of you soon!

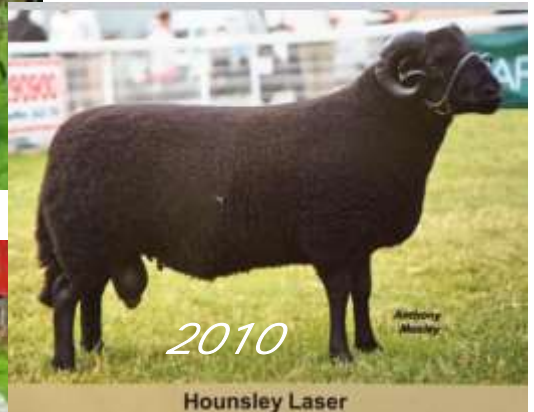


*Samantha Matthews*

Normally the Spring newsletter would carry photos and reports from the RWAS Spring Festival, but with no show this year, here's a look back at the last 10 years of this event.

The champions of the show for the past 10 years as follows:

- 2010-P Laws, Hounsley Flock
- 2011-D & R Rowlands, Gaer Flock
- 2012-W & S Workman, Fedw Flock
- 2013-G Hughes, Ffridd Flock
- 2014-Kimberly & Dawson, Pengwern Flock
- 2015-W & S Workman, Fedw Flock
- 2016-G Hughes, Ffridd Flock
- 2017-M & D Evans, Cefn Flock
- 2018-EO Williams, Wenallt Flock
- 2019- Gwawr Hughes, Eryri Flock



Photos are mix of highlights from the Spring Festival over the last 10 years, starting with the 2010 winner from Patricia Laws, Hounsley Laser (pictured later as the champion at the Royal Welsh Show).



# Garnview Flock

## Darren & Sian Hayward

The Garnview Flock was established in 2010 after I met Will Workman through my job. We got around to chatting about sheep and he suggested I get a few 'blacks' and that is how it all began!



We made the trip to the Llandovery Coloured breeds sale in the September and purchased 2 yearling ewes from the Wenallt flock, 2 yearling ewes from the Kieran flock & 5 aged ewes from Mair James. A ram lamb was also purchased from the Fedw flock - we were all ready to go!

We farm at Ysguborgoch, which is situated in the Vale of Glamorgan. We're 15 minutes from Cardiff city centre and 15 minutes from Barry Island of Gavin & Stacey fame. Sian grew up on the farm with her Dad and after he passed away in 2008 we took over the running of the farm as well as juggling full time jobs.

The farm is 70 acres with a further 25 acres rented, with ground that ranges from clay to rock. The Black Welsh Mountain suit the ground here as being a



light bodied sheep they cause less damage to the ground during the wetter months.

We run approximately 110 BWM ewes with the best 50-60 running with the pedigree rams. Around 20 are put to a Bluefaced Leicester ram to produce a mule and the rest are crossed with a terminal sire (we're currently using a

Southdown) to produce meat lambs. Each year 15-20 yearling ewes are kept as replacements and a few to sell. We will usually retain 3-5 of the very best ram lambs as potential breeding tups. We only use the very best of our BWM ewes to breed pure. Anything we feel is not good enough will be used for cross breeding.

As well as BWM, we have a small flock of pedigree Bluefaced Leicesters and are in the early stages of establishing a small flock of Badger Face Texel. We run 40 commercial ewes which are a mixture of Torddu Badger Face and homebred mules.

We also run a small livery yard which was established here in 1979. Sian and I have also bred Welsh Mountain ponies under the Garnview prefix with a few going on to compete successfully under saddle. We also have 4 Longhorn cows to add into the mix!

Our BWM ewes run with the tups from mid-September for around 6 weeks. We find this works best for us as our ewes will not cycle before no matter how early we put the rams in. We have used AI in the past with a few BWM ewes with good results of 80% conception.

The ewes are scanned in late December/early January, Multiples will be



turned on to stubble turnips and the singles returned to pasture. Singles will be given supplementary haylage as necessary. All our sheep are in the Heptavac P + system with ewes being vaccinated 6 weeks prior to lambing and also dosed for fluke and worms.

All the ewes lamb indoors, multiples in one shed, singles in another. They usually come in around 3 weeks prior to lambing and are fed a ration of soya bean meal and oats along with haylage produced on the farm. Once the

ewes have lambed, provided the weather is suitable, they will be turned out after 24/48 hours. All lambs are vaccinated to prevent orf and the young lambs will receive a white drench around 6-8 weeks for Nematodirus. The ewes and stock tups will be shorn around mid-May, we also shear any lambs we intend to keep in September.

Ram lambs that are not suitable for breeding will be fattened and are sold in meat boxes. We have a good customer base who return each autumn to buy from us. The lambs are slaughtered and butchered locally, which is a big selling point - it is locally produced and people like to know the provenance of what's on their plate. We only ever eat our own lamb and the BWM has a fantastic flavour.

We normally attend 6-7 shows per year which include the Smallholder Festival, Three Counties, Royal Welsh and finishing with Sennybridge in early September. All



the show sheep are shorn in early January and will remain housed until the weather is warm enough for them to spend time outside. They will be washed once usually in mid – late April in preparation for carding and trimming,

In 2012 we decided to take a couple of sheep to our local Vale of Glamorgan show, it was very much unknown territory for us as all we had ever shown were horses and ponies! Will Workman came down and gave me a very basic trimming lesson and off we went! Much to our surprise and delight our ram lamb, Garnview Picasso, won his class under Mair James. She gave us some encouraging words and told us to keep going! Picasso was subsequently sold to the Ganol flock of Steve Forsyth and went on to have some

great successes including BWM ram of the year in 2013.

In 2014 we decided to have a go at showing again - no half measures so off we went to the Royal Welsh. We had a fantastic show under Lynn Williams Banc, Our ram lamb, Garnview Sirius, won his class and went on to be reserve male champion. He was also in the last 6 in the interbreed ram lamb championship. We had a 4<sup>th</sup> with our ewe lamb, Garnview Suzy, and a 6<sup>th</sup> place with a homebred ewe. We were so proud and at the time really didn't appreciate what we had achieved.

Since then we have had consistently good results at all the major shows with homebred sheep, Suzy in particular has done so well for us. She won ewe and progeny class in 2016/17 at the Three counties and was BWM & Coloured breed champion at Sennybridge 2016. She has also given us some lovely lambs who have also done well themselves. Her sire is Popeswood Hugo. who along with Upper House Spritz, have had a huge influence on the type of sheep we are breeding. Both Hugo and Spritz were purchased from Chris Garn, Upper House and we will always be so grateful for them both. Garnview rams sired by Spritz have gone on to produce top priced sons sold at the 2019 society sale.

Our son Iestyn has always been involved with the BWM and in 2018 started his own Y Fro flock. His lovely ram ,Y Fro Arglwydd Amser, was 4<sup>th</sup> at RWAS last year so hopefully our BWM are in safe hands for the future.

Little did we know after my conversation with Will 10 years ago and 'trying a few blacks' that we would be where we are now. We have had tremendous fun and most importantly made some wonderful lifelong friends along the way.

Here's to the next 100 years!

*Darren & Sian Hayward*