



# The Portland Sheep Breeders Group



NEWSLETTER Spring 2015



▲ Two young lambs from the Valentine flock investigating and sleeping in a trough as their mothers watch.

**The Copy Date For The Summer 2015 Edition Is The 1<sup>st</sup> Of July.**

**If I could have any Articles, Pictures, Useful Information or Interesting Anecdotes by this date that would be very helpful.**

Hello,

As this is my first time editing the newsletter I thought that I'd better introduce myself, I am 19 Years old, I have owned and shown Portlands for 12 years now. Between me and my parents we have a moderately sized flock, mainly made up of Portlands. we tend to do most of the show circuit in the south west. Over the last few years I have noticed a drop in show entries for Portlands and would really love to see this reversed, we have the breeders, now we just need you to take up showing.

I am really looking forward to this opportunity to help promote the breed more and I look forward to seeing pictures of your flocks and reading any articles or anecdotes you have to offer for the newsletter.

Thank you.

Jack Rashley (Editor)

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### PSGB Premier Show: Sherborne Castle Fair

This year's Premier Show is the RBST Show at Sherborne Castle Fair on 25 May. It is a wonderful little show with excellent organisers who understand the need to present rare breeds to the general public in a way that gets them interested and raises awareness of the breed. A Veteran Ewe Class for ewes of age 5 years or older who are entered in the Ewe and Lamb(s) class, this is a normally under represented part of the show and I personally would really like to see the numbers of older Portland ewes better demonstrated as they are still very much a large part of the national flock, as shown in the article Sweet 17. Please also see the invitation from Cate Le Grice-Mack on page 3 to a meeting of Portland Judges and Card-Graders at the Sherborne Show.

### PSBG Annual Event

Please also support the Annual Event on 6 June, kindly hosted by Dawn and Andy Sprake. Details on page 4.

### A Letter From The Chairman

I am very honoured to be following in Fiona Mackenzie's footsteps as chair of the PSBG. I bought my first Portlands back in 1982 when there were few to choose from. I had been lured towards them originally by Frank Bailey who persuaded me – rightly - that they would suit my steep field with its thin soil overlying oolitic limestone.

Since then I have kept a total of 16 different sheep breeds at Norwood, in Somerset, where I ran a mixed farm and in that time my little band of Portlands grew to a flock of over 25. They were mainly of Marsden origin, but I bought in rams from a number of other sources as the choice grew. During this time I was a card grader at a number of Rare Breeds Shows and Sales, and became a sheep judge, as well as serving on the RBST Council for some years.

Since selling my farm I have remained in touch with Portlands although I no longer keep them. I have judged at a number of shows and look forward to meeting you all on the rounds this year.

Saving a very rare breed, with specific qualities and characteristics such as the Portland is never easy, and even harder when all the emphasis in the mainstream farming world is on size and conformation. Wool and the special quality of grass-fed Portland meat remain the unique selling points and I look forward to playing my part in promotion and continuation of this special breed.

Cate Le Grice-Mack

### **Changes to the Portland Breed Description and Breed Standard: Meeting of Judges and Card-Graders at Sherborne Show – 25 May.**

As most members will now be aware, the Breed Description for Portlands in the Combined Flock Book has been amended following discussions with RBST. There are also consequential amendments to the PSBG Breed Standard. These changes were approved at the PSBG AGM in September 2014. An article explaining the changes was published in the Ark in autumn 2014 and is repeated below on page 6.

Cate Le Grice-Mack would like to invite Portland Judges and Card Graders to an informal meeting at the Sherborne Show, to be held on the Bank Holiday Monday 25th May to discuss the changes and consider any implications for breeders and graders. Breeders are also welcome. Cate proposes that those who are able to come gather at the showground following the final judging and showing, probably about 3pm or so, for about an hour.

If you are able to come, please contact Cate on [Catemack.norwood@btinternet.com](mailto:Catemack.norwood@btinternet.com) or 07764654945.

**PSBG ANNUAL EVENT**  
**Saturday June 6<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Higher Farm  
Langton Herring  
Nr Weymouth  
Dorset  
DT3 4HX

By kind invitation of Andy & Dawn Sprake  
Provisional Programme

10.30am Arrival & Coffee

Butchery and sausage making demonstration

Lunch (try the sausages!)

Afternoon activities

Live demonstrations using Dawn's Herbury flock of Portlands

Talk & hands on from Steve Gould about his Steepton Bill Flock  
and Farm Shop.

A day in the life of showing Portland Sheep  
by Darren Rashley

Demonstration of felt making(tba)

Farm Walk  
Including an old stone sheep wash

**Dinner in Langton Herring Village Hall**  
**6.30 for 7pm**

Sorry no dogs at the open day.  
Estimated price including lunch & dinner £15 per adult  
Children free

RSVP by May 8<sup>th</sup> to Dawn Sprake at  
dawn@zephendorsetfarm.plus.com  
Or send form on page 12 to postal address above.



## Sweet 17

In January 2012 we bought our first Portland ewes. As anyone who has got a flock of these pretty sheep will know they can be hard to come by.

Our first purchases were a group of four ewes with a mixed lineage and a variety of ages. The oldest was a Monkton ewe bred by Cate le Grice-Mack. This ewe was born in May 1997. The reason we were happy to purchase such a mature lady was that she was in good condition and had teeth. She gave us a lovely ewe lamb in 2013 and now lives the good life babysitting all the youngsters. Her bloodlines go back to Rooknest, Bushcot, Bill Colony and Trevors.

This just shows how long lived the breed is. (She is still in good condition and still has her own teeth!)

Graham and Helen Butler  
Hawthorn Tree Flock



### Committee and Regional Representative News

At the AGM in September 2014 Fiona MacKenzie and Jim Gardner retired from the Committee. Both Fiona and Jim have given an enormous amount of time and enthusiasm to the breed in countless ways over many years. We thank them for everything that they have done and wish them well. Fiona continues as the regional representative for the South Central Region and has kindly agreed to continue looking after the Ram Database and Kinship Analysis.

Cate Le Grice-Mack was elected as Chair in place of Fiona. Stephen Tricks was re-elected as secretary and Karen Wilson was re-elected as Treasurer. (Karen also acts as membership secretary.) Other committee members are Steve Peberdy, Steve Gould, Paula Bull (Paula acts as Show Secretary), Mike Johnston, Dan Stover and Kate Kershaw.

We are very pleased to say that Darren Rashley and Dawn Sprake have recently agreed to join the Committee as co-opted members.

Biddy Roche has retired as regional representative for the South East and Europe Region. Biddy has been a tower of strength throughout the life of PSBG. We thank her for all she has done and wish her well. Kate Kershaw and Paula Bull have kindly agreed to stand-in as Biddy's replacement on a joint basis, but we are looking for a volunteer to take on the role. The other regional representatives remain unchanged, except that Michelle Jones is now being assisted by Steve Gould.

Please do not hesitate to contact a committee member or your regional representative if you need help or advice, or if you have news to pass on. We are here to support you as members of PSBG. Contact details are printed at the back of this newsletter.

Stephen Tricks

Article from ARK Autumn 2014.

## Revision of CFB Breed Description for Portland Sheep

The conservation of rare breeds often involves finding a balance between the conflicting aims of preserving the purity of the breed with maintaining genetic diversity within the breed. This is a particular challenge for breeds which are numerically small. RBST and the Portland Sheep Breeders Group (PSBG) are pleased to announce that they have agreed amendments to the Breed Description for Portland Sheep in the Combined Flock Book with the aim of achieving that balance.

For several years the CFB Breed Description has differed from the Breed Standard for Portlands, which was adopted by RBST and PSBG in the 1990's. Following lengthy discussions with RBST, the PSBG membership recently approved the revisions to the CFB Breed Description and consequential amendments to the Breed Standard.

The primary concern in this debate was the registration of rams with black marks or patches. The former Breed Standard had required the disqualification of rams with black marks or patches. That was not reflected in the CFB Breed Description, which listed black marks or patches as an undesirable characteristic but did not provide for disqualification of rams. The new wording lists black marks or patches as an undesirable characteristic and provides for the reclassification in the C Category of the CFB of any sheep which exhibits a significant departure from the Breed Description or any major functional defect. This provision reflects the current CFB registration regulations, which in turn are designed to be consistent with the EU zootechnical regulations. A non-conforming animal born to two parents that are registered in the A Register will be registered in the C category if the breeder insists on registration. The progeny of an animal registered in the C category are not eligible for registration.

One significant aspect of the new CFB Breed Description for Portlands is the requirement that rams should be assessed more strictly than ewes. This reflects the fact that a ram is likely to have a much greater influence on the characteristics of the breeder's flock, and ultimately the national flock, than a single ewe. Portland breeders are therefore encouraged to refrain from registering and/or using rams with black marks or patches. By contrast, breeders may continue to register and use a ewe with a black mark or patch, if that ewe is otherwise sound. Any Portland which is predominantly black should not be registered or, at most, should be registered in the C category. Further information, including PSBG's guidance note on black spots, may be obtained from Stephen Tricks, the PSBG secretary, email: [sjtricks@gmail.com](mailto:sjtricks@gmail.com)

Cate Le Grice Mack, the incoming chairman of PSBG, said, "The revised wording of the CFB Breed Description will help to preserve and promote the Portland breed. We are very pleased to have reached an agreement with RBST and we welcome the Trust's recent cooperation in resolving a complex issue."

Tom Beeston, CEO of RBST said, "It is important that RBST recognises the work done by the breeders and in preserving our rare breeds. This agreement on the CFB Breed Description demonstrates the benefit of a combined approach by RBST with the breed societies."

Stephen Tricks, secretary PSBG. Contact [sjtricks@gmail.com](mailto:sjtricks@gmail.com) or 07802769049.  
28.09.14

## SCHEDULE OF AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND EVENTS FOR 2015

“P” Indicates separate Portland classes

“M” Indicates Mixed classes

	April 25 – 26	Wonderwool Wales, Builth Wells, Powys A festival of wool and natural fibres	01938 820 495
M	May 4	North Somerset Show, Wraxall, Nr Bristol	08456 342464
M	May 16 – 17	Royal Welsh Smallholder & Garden Festival	01982 554404
M	May 21 – 23	Devon County Show, Exeter	01392 446000
<b>P</b>	<b>May 25</b>	<b>RBST Dorset Support Group Show, Sherborne – PSBG PREMIER SHOW</b>	<b>01749 814041</b>
M	May 25	Surrey County Show	01483 890810
M	May 27 – 28	Stafford County Show	01785 258060
M	May 27 – 30	Royal Bath and West Show	01749 822200
M	June 4 – 6	Royal Cornwall Show	01208 812183
	<b>June 6</b>	<b>PSBG ANNUAL EVENT Higher Farm Langton Herring, Nr Weymouth, Dorset By Kind Invitation By Dawn Sprake Booking Form Enclosed With Newsletter</b>	
M	June 6	Cumberland Show, Carlisle Racecourse	01228 812601
<b>P</b>	<b>June 12 – 14</b>	<b>Royal Three Counties Show, Malvern</b>	<b>01684 584924</b>
M	June 21	Cranleigh Show, Surrey	01483 267771
M	June 23 – 24	Cheshire County Show	01565 650200
	June 26 – 27	Woolfest, Cumbria A Celebration Of Natures Finest Fibres	016974 78707
M	July 5	Malton Show, North Yorkshire	01653 693 382
M	July 10 – 12	Kent Show, Maidstone, Kent	01622 630975
<b>P</b>	<b>July 19</b>	<b>Singleton Show for Rare &amp; Traditional Breeds</b>	<b>01243 811363</b>
M	July 25	Mid Devon Show, Tiverton Devon	01884 820859
<b>P</b>	<b>July 28 – 30</b>	<b>New Forest and Hampshire Show</b>	<b>01590 622400</b>
M	Aug 19	Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show	01747 823955
<b>P</b>	<b>Aug 27</b>	<b>Melpash Agricultural Show, Bridport</b>	<b>01308 423337</b>
M	Aug 30 – 31	Edenbridge & Oxted Show, Lingfield, Surrey	01737 645843
M	Sept 5	Alresford, Hampshire	01962 738748
<b>P</b>	<b>Sept 5 – 6</b>	<b>Dorchester Show, Dorset</b>	<b>01305 264249</b>
M	Sept 12	Frome Agricultural & Cheese Show, Somerset	01373 463600
M	Sept 12	Findon Sheep Fair, Findon, West Sussex	01903264161
<b>P</b>	<b>Sept 11 – 12</b>	<b>Traditional Native Breeds National Show and Sale, Melton Mowbray</b>	

**PSBG AGM will be held at Melton Mowbray on Friday 11 September**

## **PSBG Communications: A Note from the Committee**

One of the main benefits of membership of PSBG is the ability to share news, information and advice. This is a two-way process. For effective communication, some members have to contribute material and other members have to volunteer their time to help publish that information. But time is a precious commodity for most members who have busy lives. The PSBG committee is therefore pleased to say that after a difficult year in 2014, we now have volunteers for both the editorship of the newsletter and the updating of the website. We are particularly grateful to Jack Rashley for undertaking the editorship of the newsletter. This edition is the first Jack has produced. Please support him by contributing material for future editions. News, events, stories or notices; everything is welcome. Email: [jackrashley@googlemail.com](mailto:jackrashley@googlemail.com)

We are also grateful to the Butler family for agreeing to update and revamp the website. This is not only an important resource for members, but also the principal shop window for Portlands. Without an effective website, it is much more difficult to attract new breeders and supporters. Please send material, comments and good quality photos to Graham Butler on [gm-hf.butler@hotmail.com](mailto:gm-hf.butler@hotmail.com)

Meanwhile the Facebook page run by Paula Bull continues to provide an informal way for members and the public to keep up-to-date. Facebook users are welcome to visit this page (Portland Sheep Breeders Group) and contribute their news. In the future, the plan is to have an informal communications team covering all three media. The team would support Jack Rashley, Graham Butler and Paula Bull and so spread the workload. If you wish to join the communications team, please contact Stephen Tricks on [sitricks@gmail.com](mailto:sitricks@gmail.com) All members are encouraged to contribute, whether or not on the communications team. There can be no output without your input!

Circulation of the newsletter will continue to be restricted to PSBG members only. Therefore, some items in the newsletter will not be available to the public on the website and Facebook. We may also look at creating a members-only section on the website. Finally, on the subject of communication, the time and cost of posting the newsletter and the AGM papers is itself a major drain on resources. We need to use email for such tasks whenever possible for collecting or distributing information relevant to PSBG and, more generally, the care and promotion of Portland sheep. Communication may come from the Committee, Regional Representatives or others involved with PSBG. It will take some time to bring together in one database all the addresses we already hold, but if you receive a request from PSBG for your email address, please consider it sympathetically. We shall honour legal requirements on data protection. In particular, we shall not sell or release address lists to third parties.

PSBG Committee – March 2015





## **Black spots – The Final Word?**

*If wool growing is your business, beware of barbed vegetation,  
goose grass and star-thistle; avoid too rich grazing;  
Choose from the start a flock both white and soft of fleece.  
Reject any ram, however pure and white his wool,  
if the tongue beneath his moist palate is black, for he'll breed  
lambs with black-spotted fleeces – Reject, and look around for  
another ram on the crowded sheep run.*

Vergil: *Georgics*, Book 3. (Translation reprinted from *Counting Sheep* by Philp Walling, published by Profile Books Ltd 2014.)

Vergil was a Roman poet who published a long treatise on agriculture around 29 BC. Book 3 covers animal husbandry. It appears that Roman shepherds had much in common with modern Portland breeders.

## PORTLAND SHEEP BREEDERS GROUP

### COMMITTEE 2014 – 2015

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<b>Honorary Breed Historian</b>	Norman Jones	Tel. 01297 561072

### Regional Representatives

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South Central Gloucs/Wilts/Hants/Berks/ Oxon/Bucks	Fiona MacKenzie Millcroft, Bozley Hill, Cann, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 0BN	<a href="mailto:fiona@verifie.plus.com">fiona@verifie.plus.com</a> Tel. 01747 851292 Mob. 07947 020130
South East & Europe London/Surrey/Kent/Sussex	Kate Kershaw and Paula Bull (Temporary arrangement following retirement of Bidy Roche)	<a href="mailto:kershaw@waitrose.com">kershaw@waitrose.com</a>  <a href="mailto:cousleyflock@hotmail.com">cousleyflock@hotmail.com</a>

## **PSBG Annual Event**

Please can I have ..... spaces at this event  
Number of adults \_\_\_\_\_ @ £5 lunch  
Number of adults \_\_\_\_\_ @ £10 for dinner  
Number of children \_\_\_\_\_  
Total

Please specify any dietary requirements.

Email to [dawn@zephendorsetfarm.plus.com](mailto:dawn@zephendorsetfarm.plus.com)

[Phone 01305 871348](tel:01305871348)

Post to

Dawn Sprake  
New Cottage, Higher Farm  
Langton Herring  
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