Suffolk Smallholders Society Newsletter

November 2016
Deadline for the next edition: 16th November

Please send all entries for the next edition to
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Membership

Membership Application forms can be obtained from The Membership Secretary:
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Tel: 01449 711178.
Email: wendy.brame@crumblycottage.co.uk
Subscription by Cash/Cheque is £25.00 from 1st Sept to 31st August. Copies of back issues of the Newsletter (while they last) are sent to new members.

Advertising

Advertising income provides good revenue for the Society and businesses will get exposure to over 200 members in our monthly Newsletter. Prices are £80 per for a full page, £40 for half a page and £20 for a quarter page (fee for 12 issues) - great value for money and enables local businesses to also show their support for the Suffolk Smallholders Society.
If you can contact any potential businesses you know and they are interested, please contact Martin Hancock or Giles
Good Morning Smallholders!

In the past seven days Autumn has finally arrived. Suddenly the temperature dropped, we have rain and the evenings seem to be getting darker earlier. I don’t know about you, but it feels like we have prepared well for winter. Plenty of wood, animals in the right place doing the right thing, roofs are repaired and Jackie has been busy clearing large areas of the ‘garden’. Outstanding tasks; I have a fence to replace later in the winter, hopefully the ground will be a little less hard and clearing the beds we’ll do in good time. How are you set up for the seasonal shifts?

We had great use of the Society apple press this month, squeezing out several litres of glorious juice. We have done better than last year in terms of storing produce for the longer term either in terms of freezing or preserving. I think we could still do better next year. The freezer is full of meat - mainly this year’s lambs which generally have come in well.

This month we seem to have a dip in contributions so please give some thought to writing a short piece. I am really interested in featuring items from those members who do not have a smallholding. Why did you join? What’s the interest and what do you enjoy about being a member. I think it’s intriguing - I know we have a small number of you and it would be interesting to hear from you. Meanwhile, this month includes read the arrival of the new pup in my Sheep Dog Diaries, John Sones is back with an account of the important business of stock identification and Vicky Allen responds to last month’s piece on showing pigs. Peter Runacres talks pumpkins and Liz Marley has an update on life on the care farm. Ian Harris pops up with a report on progress and Jackie offers some thoughts on running a campsite on the holding.
Keeping Track

Legally sheep and goats have to be identified and their whereabouts recorded for the whole of their lives until they either die naturally or are slaughtered. The reasons for the requirement to be able to track animals are so that if there is a disease outbreak the whereabouts of all animals in the area are known and also food can be traced back to its source. In this article I am going to look at the rules for identifying sheep and goats, what has to be recorded in the holding register and who has to be informed as the rules apply to England. There are also some changes happening to lessen the recording requirements.

Firstly you will require a County/Parish/Holding (CPH) number for the holding where your animals are to be kept unless it already has one. This is issued by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and identifies the location of your holding. It has nine digits e.g. 12/345/6789 with the first two relating to the county where you are, the next three to your parish and the last four your holding. This is required whether or not you claim any grants or subsidies.

You will also require a herd or flock number which is obtained from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) who will give you a unique number which has six digits and is linked to your main CPH. However, where your use of the land whether rented or not is for less than a year and either is not already registered or the owner will not allow you to use their number, a temporary CPH number will be issued by this agency rather than the RPA. If you use new land for your sheep and goats with a different CPH, you must inform the APHA of the new number.
When must I identify my animals?

Sheep and goats must be identified within six months of birth if they are housed overnight or within nine months of birth if they are not or before you move them off the holding where they were born if this is sooner.

You are allowed to take an unidentified animal off your holding to visit a vet in an emergency but on its return it must be identified and the movement to the vet recorded in your holding register.

How do I identify them?

From 1 January 2015, lambs intended for slaughter before 12 months of age must have a single yellow Electronic Identification (EID) ear tag. Animals kept longer will have two identifiers – often two tags. Other forms of secondary identification are available but most smallholders will stick to tags as the simplest way.

Kids intended for slaughter under 12 months old can also have only one tag which does not have to be an EID.

Adult sheep and goats must have two identifier and in the case of sheep, one must be an EID if they have been tagged since 2010.

If your animals are not correctly identified when you take them to market or a slaughterhouse, they will be rejected.

What information has to be on an adult animal tag?

If the adult animal has an EID, then both the EID and the non-EID identifier are labelled with the same 14 characters, e.g. UK 0 123456 5432. All labels will start with UK 0. The next 6 numbers are a unique flock or herd mark that relate to the flock or herd where the animal was identified. The last 5 numbers identify that specific animal and will always have 5 numbers even if the animals is the first to be identified in the flock or herd e.g. 00001.
If the animal does not have an EID, both identifiers are labelled with the same details which in this case are between 9 and 14 characters long e.g. UK 654321 7 or UK 654321 100001. As in the case of animals with an EID, the first 6 numbers are the unique flock or herd mark. However, although the last numbers are again the animal’s individual identification, they can in this case vary in length.

What information has to be on a tag for lambs or kids intended for slaughter?

This applies to animals intended for slaughter before they are 12 months old who can be identified with a single ear tag. The animals are not individually identified and will be labelled with 8 characters with UK preceding your flock or herd mark e.g. UK 123456.

What do I do if I decide to keep a lamb or kid instead of slaughtering it?

If you change your mind and decide to keep a lamb or kid that has only one identifier to be retained so that it will be older than 12 months, you must replace the single tag with a pair of identifiers before its first birthday. If it wasn’t born on your holding, you can only do this if you can trace it back to where it was born.

Where can I get identifiers?

There are a number of recognised suppliers. When ordering, your supplier will ask for your CPH number and flock or herd mark. If the animals were born on a holding with a temporary CPH number, give the flock or herd mark for your main holding.
Can I add extra information to help me manage the animals?

Additional management information can be added for example your way of recording their age as long as it is clearly separate from the required information and the two cannot be confused with each other. Separate tags containing your management information are also allowed but they cannot be yellow, black or red or contain the letters UK.

What do I do if a tag is lost?

Unfortunately despite careful fitting of ear tags they are occasionally lost by the animal. If you find that this has happened, you must replace it within 28 days. If a tag has to be removed because of an infection, it must be replaced as soon as the infection has cleared up. New and old tag numbers if you know them must be recorded in your holding register. Replacement tags must be red if they are applied to an animal on any holding other than where it was born or last identified.

What information do I have to record in my holding register?

The keeper who is not necessarily the owner of sheep or goats has the duty to record the following information in their holding register:

- The fitting of new or replacement identifiers
- Movements of animals on and off your holding
- Any deaths
The number of each type of animal on your holding on 1 December each year
The register will also record your CPH and flock or herd numbers, your name and the address of the holding and details of any hauliers when the animals are moved.

Who do I have to inform when I move animals on or off my holding?

Any movement of stock from one holding to another must be recorded in the holding register, reported to the Animal Reporting and Movement Service (ARMS) and will be subject to the appropriate standstill period. There are specific forms which are available from the ARMS website which must be completed and a copy sent to them within three days of the movement. Other copies go to the destination, a haulier if not the keeper as well as the keeper retaining one.

I have heard that Defra is easing some of the recording restrictions?

Earlier this year Defra sent out letters to notify current livestock keepers of future changes to the way holdings can be registered in England for the purpose of recording and reporting livestock movements. The aim is to simplify movement recording if the movements are within a ten mile radius measured from the “place of business” point of the main holding which is usually the animal-gathering point or correspondence address.

The new rules will enable a keeper to register all land that they use within ten miles of their permanent CPH whether on a temporary or permanent basis under one CPH number. Additionally the requirement to record and report any movements between those pieces of land and the
associated standstill period will no longer apply. Identification and movement rules may seem complicated and I have in this article covered only the main requirements. There are various websites now available referred to at the end of this article which will provide full details of what a keeper must do and I advise anyone who is not sure to find out what they have to do before they keep animals. Also, we have people in the society with experienced who are available for advice. It is better to ask than risk problems when you later find out that you haven’t done something correctly.

**John Sones**

Legislation: Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (England) Order 2009 (as amended)
RPA helpline 0345 050 9876
Website: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-a-cph-number-from-the-rural-payments-agency
Defra Helpline 0345 933 5577 email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs
ARMS 0844 573 0137
Website: www.arams.co.uk
Registering your holding: www.gov.uk/guidance/sheep-and-goat-keepers-register-your-holding-and-flock-or-herd
Animal and Plant Health Agency:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency/about/access-and-opening
Showing Pigs at the Suffolk Show

Further to Chris Keeble’s article in the last newsletter, I did show my Saddleback sow Beauty, then a gilt, at the Suffolk Show in 2006. The day before the show, I washed her and was surprised she looked so smart! Then on Tuesday afternoon, off we set with her in the trailer. Now I was a bit apprehensive about how she would behave, because I had done very little work with stick-and-board, but the unloading was fine and a clever arrangement of passages and gates saw Beauty safely ensconced in her pen and anointed with oil – the proper show people have pig oil in large containers. I think I used Johnson’s baby oil...

Wednesday was show day. Beauty was in a mixed class of coloured pigs. We got into the ring all right, but then my lack of practice with stick-and-board showed as we walked in stops and starts and I failed to keep her head up to show off her straight back. At one point, Beauty stopped altogether and had a good rub against a fencepost – much to the amusement of the crowd. We were placed third, which was great. Even better, we later got an enormous rosette for best Saddleback in show. My fellow exhibitors were very generous, friendly and helpful. I had shown sheep before, but the pig people were much nicer! I was relieved when the showing was over - Beauty and I badly needed to have had more practice at walking around – but I was pleased to feel part of the show. When we got home, she celebrated her success, as all good pigs should, with an enormous, cleansing wallow.

Vicky Allen
Townland Farm

Combining farming with Conservation

I was thinking the other day about the pleasure and pain of being a small-holder, particularly at this time of the year when with good reason I find pain and pleasure in the morning chores. Currently one undoubted pleasure each morning begins by heading out from the house, a hot mug of tea in hand and casting a long look out over the Stour valley as I begin to let out and feed the animals. The shadows long as the lazy sun slowly rises to begin the task of burning away the rolling mist in the valley below. The village of Nayland buried beneath the cloud that I stand above. The first of the day’s pleasures indeed.

 Probably the first pain of the day is handed out by the Norfolk Horn. They get some feed each morning to keep them bucket trained and to bring them close for inspection and handling. As many of you will know excited sheep like to get to where you are going before you do if they can but they don’t always know where that destination is. So they jostle for position in front of me, they take the lead, doubt creates more doubt and then one in front of me stops. I stop, then they all stop, all in front of me. Then because I have stopped they bounce around trying to guess where I am going again so an opening appears and I can move forward for a few steps until the whole process starts again. Then if it has showered in the night I have wet sheep all milling around, and the harder I try to keep them away from me the quicker they come back at me, as if they are all tied
to my shoe laces. I try to feed them close to the gate but at times there is a walk and even a walk of 20 yards in this manner can be tiring, it’s like running through the sea waist deep. Then the physical pain is endured as I get to the trough. Eagerness abounds as they push forward to get to the feed and rear facing horns are no hindrance to such a charge past my legs, but as they bicker and withdraw to find a new seat at the table their horns, rear facing and as a barbed arrow clatter against my shins.

The boisterous pigs have no such weapons of attack as I feed. They charge around my feet in figures of eight like bees to a hive, no weapons perhaps but they have speed and they have mud. They live in mud and this mud easily transfers from nose to trouser leg if slight of foot lacks the speed. Too much speed to avoid such a trouser stain or a well timed nudge with too little traction in the footwear department will lead to a need for trouser change as small-holder meets with terra firma.

Cows are more gentle but they don’t get out of the way with any urgency and they like to relieve me of the hay that I carry before the hay rack is reached. A gentle wrestling match between man with hay and bovine beast ensues and providing foot remains above hoof there is no pain.

Geese have no reason to nip so they do. The sheep have no knowing intent on harm but geese differ. The gift of food is greatly appreciated by them all but the provider of such a treat is no antidote to a beak induced blood blister on the back of the leg. It doesn’t matter how I reprimand them
they still consider their main purpose in life to bite a human from behind without any recourse to chivalry. Bad manners of the highest order I say.

Finally the hens, it’s not them that cause any pain but what I see in their runs at around this time of year. The tell-tale signs of burrowing under fences, the winding paths through grass, the realisation that sends shivers down my spine that the most awful of rodents have returned from their summer climes to their winter retreat, that being my cosy homestead. The return of THE RAT.

So whilst many an ordinary citizen will gain another half-hour in bed, or a second mug of tea watching morning weather report follow weather report follow weather report I am outside in all weathers enjoying the pleasure and enduring the pain......you know what, there is no real pain. I look back when all are fed and watered, seeing them all secure, healthy and content bathed in the morning light of the Stour valley I can only smile a contented smile because although it might be hard a times I, probably like you, enjoy every minute of it.

Ian Harris
Pumpkins are not just for Halloween!

Nowadays the shops and garden centres are full to the rafters with pumpkins, most are made into fantastic lanterns with carved out faces for Halloween, --- hardly any turn into dishes for the dinner table. This is a big shame as the golden flesh is versatile enough to be roasted with paprika and salt for an addition to the vegetables on offer or used as a filling in “Pumpkin Pie”. This American favourite is great hot or cold, with cream or maple syrup --- look up ‘Housewives of America’ website for their recipe for a dessert to bring a smile to your face.

In Styria, Austria and eastern Slovenia fields of pumpkins are a common sight but not grown for their flesh --- only a few find space on menus in restaurants—it’s the large seeds that are required !! The seeds are crushed to give a wonderful almost black oil which is a fantastic dressing for salads; luckily you can find this oil in selected outlets in the UK now.

In the 60s, marrows were widely grown and pumpkins were a bit of a novelty; stories of “orange monsters” grown in the USA of enormous size started to grab the attention of growers in this country and soon most villages held “biggest pumpkin contests”.

So after very little persuasion, Father purchased his packet of ‘Atlantic mammoth pumpkin’ seeds. Only 3 seeds; planted into pots indoors so they could get away to a good start --- only two came up ! Nurtured inside until all chance of frosts had passed these were planted out on the old muck heap where father could water them when pumping up the water for the house. In time each plant flowered and
father selected what he thought could be the ahead of all the rivals, -- then disaster struck ??!!
After a heavy rain shower there had been a surge in growth resulting in an ever widening split in the “champion”. By the time the weighing day came round we knew it would be impossible to move the larger one without it splitting apart, so Pumpkin B took its place. It would still take us some gentle persuasion before we got the beast into the wheelbarrow and then into the van to take to the weigh-in. An old barn scales had been installed for said purpose with an extended platform so the pumpkins would sit on nicely. The line of pumpkins that had been weighed all looked puny to my boyish eyes, and as soon as Father opened the van doors the judge said” think we’ve got our winner !” On the scales ‘ B ‘ took nearly all the weights to balance, easily the heaviest, a testament to the goodness of all that pig manure. When Father regaled everyone with the fact that his bigger pumpkin was still at home, several loads of pig manure were ordered by a hand-shake that day !!
Slight twist in the tail though, on moving our “winner” back home Father managed to put his back out so he struggled to get about for a week or so afterwards; Yes it’s a pretty dangerous pastime Pumpkin growing.

Peter Runacres
Setting up a campsite – Part 1

We’ve been running our little campsite for five seasons. Several smallholders have asked us what setting up and running a campsite involves, so I thought I’d describe how we went about it.

The Site

We had a small half-acre meadow which was too small to graze livestock for anything other than a couple of weeks, and it really didn’t seem worth the expense of fencing for such limited use. On the other hand, it’s too big for growing vegetables for our own use. This is certainly not the kind of problem we encountered living in London! We wanted to make the most of the plot and decided that growing anything there was not viable, but a campsite could bring in some income. We can get about 5 family-sized tents on the site.

I went to see a couple of sites and talked to the owners, as well as lots of internet research. We had originally thought about glamping, providing yurts, teepees and bell tents. But these cost a lot – yurts started at about £8,000. It would also have meant providing all sorts of furnishings and most off-puttingly, washing a whole load of bedding. So we decided to go basic.

Planning Permission

The first hurdle is planning permission. Now, you can use land for up to 28 days a year for camping without needing planning consent, but that only really works if you already have toilets, or hire some portable ones. That might be a good option if you just want to try it out. We decided to use a planning consultant who had been recommended, but it should be easy enough to do it yourself. Make sure you check out the local plan, particularly the sections on promoting tourism. You will probably need an
architect or architectural technician to draw up site plans, even if you are not planning to put up any buildings. Your local planning officer can advise too, although I think they now charge for pre-application advice.

We thought about going with the Caravan Club as you can bypass the planning consent if you use their scheme for sites of up to 5 pitches. We found there were lots of disadvantages to this. Firstly, we weren’t planning to install electricity as the site is some way from the nearest supply and it would have been really expensive. But the Caravan Club’s advice was that we wouldn’t get much business without electric hook-ups. We also wondered whether caravanners, as opposed to tent campers, would be the kind of customers we would get on with! A third issue was access – the entrance is off a busy-ish road, only just inside a 30mph limit and traffic goes quite fast past the site. Highways were a little concerned that there would be accidents with caravans pulling in and out, but cars on their own would be ok.

We didn’t have any objections from local residents – the site is right at the end of the village and there are no houses nearby. The local pub sees a good increase in trade during the summer.

**Utilities**

Even on a basic campsite, you need to think about utilities. We had wanted to use composting toilets, but we were advised that these needed to be sited at least 10m from any ditch. As there are ditches on 3 sides of the site, it would have meant putting the loos practically in the middle. Since we therefore needed a septic tank (no mains drainage here), we decided to provide showers too. In any case, we were told any waste water (including from washing up) must be properly dealt with – you can't just fill a soakaway hole with gravel.

Water supply wasn't a problem as we have a borehole and it was
simple enough to run a pipe to the site. Supplying hot water was more of a challenge without electricity. Solar water heating will need a back-up for when it’s not sunny, not do-able without electricity. We found some lovely little gas powered shower units, for just under £200. All you need is a propane cylinder and a hozelock connection. Our campers love them but as they are designed for outdoor use, the shower cubicles have big gaps at the bottom and no roof, although I’ve added some bamboo screening (the kind you get at garden centres) to keep off the worst of the leaf fall. They aren’t great when it’s chilly, but the big plus is there’s little cleaning needed and no chance of mould or condensation. Most people only stay 2 or 3 nights and we could probably get away without providing showers.

**Legalities**

Aside from planning consent, campsites need a licence from the local housing authority. The regulations are really old and so are easy to comply with.
You’ll need adequate fire fighting equipment. It goes without saying that it’s best to get 2 or 3 quotes. One company suggested we have 3 fire extinguisher points, when actually one is sufficient for the size of our site.
Because our water comes from a borehole, we need to have a sample tested annually as we supply it to the public.

Public liability insurance is essential! We got an ‘open farm’ extension to our smallholder policy with NFU. The risk assessor who visited was really helpful.

More next month

**Jackie Barrow**
Last month I wrote about the preparation for a new sheepdog pup. Well, she’s arrived. Flossie is her name, shortened to Floss. Naming a sheepdog is an important decision - obviously you want a name you like, but there is also a practical consideration. When the training shifts from general puppy training to working stock, it really helps if the name is short and has a distinctive sound. ‘Stan’ is good because it has a strong short sound and is close to ‘stop!’ which can be an especially useful command. Floss is a common working dog name, short and strong, but it also happens to have been the nickname my grandfather (Stanley) had for his wife, my grandmother. So without any forward planning I have re-created an ancestral pairing - Stan and Floss.

It is still very early days in terms of the path ahead, but the task of training starts on day one. I am sure many members are familiar with these early weeks of raising a pup and might be reminded of those days. Floss weighs in at around 3 kilos and on her first
day, at 8 weeks old, has her first visit to the vet for her vaccinations. This is a tricky time for a puppy. They are just beginning to gain confidence in roving from the nest, weaning from mother, and yet are susceptible to disease, and especially if they are on a smallholding. Right on the doorstep there is a plethora of dung, dirt and dodgy nooks and crannies. So she and I are under a degree of house arrest, or at least confined to a vicinity away from other dogs and areas where other dogs exercise. Because Stan and Bob are fully vaccinated Floss is okay to meet and play with her new mates. I had been a little anxious about this dynamic, but currently my concerns are unwarranted. They have made her feel at home but are not particularly interested in the new kid on block. She’s far too small to present a threat and hasn’t the speed to keep up with them. For now she’s left behind and is a bit of an observer, but this will change within a few weeks.

Our first challenge with Floss is getting her diet right. Given the move to a new home I had expected some difficulties, but for the first ten days we juggled in balancing rice, dried feed, raw egg and small quantities of meat. Combined with the haphazard nibbling at whatever she could find outside, keeping her from getting the squits proved near on impossible. Two weeks in, and improvements were shortlived. At the 10 week check up we got a short treatment of meds to help help firm up. Crucially Floss’s energy and high spirits reassured us that there was nothing too much to worry about, but nevertheless it needed keeping an eye on.

Basic training with a sheepdog is pretty much the same as any other pup. Socialisation is the priority and establishing good habits the necessary focus of consistency, for all involved. Border Collies are astonishingly intelligent and quick to learn (and by
implication easy to train). But, the learn very quickly whether or not they are being trained! I think this is the downside of having an intelligent breed. Collies have to be busy making sense of what’s going on; they are compelled to figure stuff out. It’s like having an insatiable child asking quick fire questions and if there’s no swift answer they’ll start to get busy on something else instead. This is a really tricky aspect because on the one hand the pup understands commands within a few minutes, but they then continue to learn from you when you are not training, which means inevitably they learn stuff you don’t want them to learn! I guess most dogs do this, but because the breed is so damn quick, it starts to develop bad habits early on. The other consideration is that without sufficient stimulation the Collie is prone to going crazy. We have never seen this in either of our two dogs, but I can imagine how despairing it must be for both owner and dog if there is little opportunity to be outside and busy. We have not needed to generate any special activity or routine for them because life on the holding is stimulating enough. The task with Floss is calibrating her introduction so that she can take it in and not be overwhelmed.

First things first - she needs to know her name and she needs to know that I am her master. For the first few days I use her name frequently, I let her get plenty of my smell and hear the sound of my voice. She is in many respects a blank page in the sense that she is starting to make sense of whatever stimulates. So the more she hears and sees me, and the more she associates food in particular, but attention generally, with myself, the better. I am who she sees first thing in the morning, I am the one who sets out her meals, tops up her water, accompanies her outside, sits with her, puts her back in bed and scolds her when needed.
I also give her lots and lots of praise. I realised early on that the sheepdog is most motivated to please its master. Last summer Stan was working the sheep and we had a bit of an audience. As I said ‘That'll do’, to signal the end of the task, someone said - ‘Don't you give him a reward?’ I replied that doing the work is the reward itself; the working dog loves to work. It’s the point at which all of his intelligence is most activated - he’s at his most alive when he’s allowed to work. But the desire to please needs to be brought on and it begins way before she ever goes into the field to work the flock. At first virtually everything she does which I want to see her do gets praised. If she trots alongside me, she gets praise, if she goes into her bed, or waits until I open the back door, she gets praised. I learned with Stan that the absence of praise can sometimes be all it takes for her to know she’s made a mistake. Naming the good behaviour becomes another useful training technique. As she moves to her bed I say ‘Bed, Floss, bed’. If she starts running to me, I say ‘Come, Floss, come’. This will be the template for later when we’re in the field - associating language with her own movements begins to help the training develop naturally rather than be imposed. However, sometimes it does need more explicit instruction. In her second week I introduced the ‘Stay’ command. Of course this is entirely at odds with what a young pup wants to do! So, emphasising the ‘St’ in stay, and gently placing my hand in front of her face, I try a backward step or two before enthusiastically calling ‘Come Floss, come!’ Naturally it doesn’t initially work, but the open hand on the face and a change in my tone of voice soon gives her the message that praise only comes when she waits at that point until I ask her. Over a couple of days she will stay whilst I walk most of the lawn - thirty feet - and can do so without a treat but plenty of praise and strokes.
Floss had a collar on the first day she arrived. The lead presents a challenge for a youngster which has had the free run of the nursery cage. It also caught me unawares too. I had completely forgotten what a bizarre experience it must be for a puppy to be on a lead. It’s unusual for Stan to be on a lead, but when he is, it is hardly ever a problem, and I have erased from my memory the struggles we must have had. With Floss I make some stupid errors, believing that tugging will sort her out. I soon realise that I am literally leading us both up the wrong path - she will quickly learn that the lead is about tug of war, and eventually she’ll be able to give as good as she gets. Patience is the key, and my early successes with calling and staying commands has given me an unrealistic expectation. I slow down and decide to simply let her wander around with the lead without my holding it. I use it for short periods, I run alongside and give her plenty of treats and encouragement. It turns from tug of war into easy and free walking and wandering, with barely any tension on the lead. We are a long way off from walking to heel, or where I want to go, but I am happy to let that take it’s time. To be honest, there are few occasions in the future where she will be on a lead. The irony is that it is most critical for enabling her to be socialised in town during her early development, rather than for what she will spend most of her life doing! Nevertheless, it’s a necessary skill for a dog and there’s nothing worse than seeing a dog take its owner for a walk.

By the time you are reading this Floss will be about 4 months old. By then she’ll be familiar with all the different types of stock we have, be clear with the routines, know the lie of the land and we in the thick of developing the crucial social skills for becoming a great companion and getting ready for apprenticeship. I suppose this might come across as just hardwork. I do have a sense that
this tends to be the case for farm dogs. Floss is currently living in her large cage in the conservatory, so she's near enough the family home. Of an evening she'll come in and sit with me watching some telly or chatting. But once she has grown she'll move to her proper quarters outside and won't be back in the house again. I know for some dog owners who have pet/companions this is thought of as harsh. Our experience is that the dogs are fit as fiddles, don't smell, or suffer from house-based illnesses or disorders. There's no chance of them putting weight on and they grow and shed their fur as needed through the seasons. For me it seems peculiar that anyone would keep such a creature indoors on a long term basis!

The mid-term plan is that throughout the winter Floss gets used to us, the holding and our way of life. We lamb in early March by which time she'll be nearer seven months. Whilst that's a good age to introduce a new dog to sheep, it won't be a good time in terms of the flock. Ewes are protective at lambing and even a seasoned dog can be faced off and stamped on, and a new pup risks being overwhelmed at the outset. This can do irreparable damage to their confidence. So, instead, I have six shearling ewes and this past few months Stan has been getting them into shape so that they flock together easily. Floss will start out on these before meeting the main flock after weaning in May/June. By then the flock will be more easy to settle, and the shearling will already have some respect for her.

For now, it's back to basic training. Now, where's that lead.....

Giles Barrow
Purdis Poppy Farm Diary

Hundredweight Pumpkins

Why did we do it? Nobody knows. Flowers thinks it was a foolish random decision by me. I would prefer to blame her, but I secretly think she is right.

In the squash and pumpkin section of the Market Garden we grew butternut squash (very sensible decision – who doesn’t like butternut squash?) and . . . “Hundredweight Pumpkins”. Average weight 15 kg. There was a clue in the name.

What does one do with these monsters? I thought they were too big to eat (unless you happen to be making pumpkin soup for 500 people) or carve for Halloween. Shows what I know. They all sold very quickly as a fundraiser for this year’s Children in Need appeal. One went for £15!

I’m still not sure what people are going to do with them but who cares? As long as I’ve got rid of them and the customers are happy, that’s all that matters!
2017 Seed Catalogues

Do you get excited about seed catalogues? Flowers and I have just spent a sunny Saturday morning hunched over the dining table, placing our seed order for next year. Guess what? No Hundredweight Pumpkins! Lots of butternut squash though! We have set ourselves some strict rules for next year:

- 1 row - 1 crop. No naughty crop-mingling trying to cram in spare seedlings
- Reduced number of varieties of each vegetable
- Irrigate everything
- Plant through black membrane wherever possible – save weeding and water
- Plant seeds sparingly instead of liberally – save thinning and / or congestion

Productive

I am sure you will remember my three key words for next year: productive, manageable, aesthetic.

So on the productive front, I think that the seed selection and the rules of engagement set out above should go a long way to being productive.

We have also agreed that we need to invest more time in the early part of the year improving the soil. In particular, the carrot and parsnip beds should be really thoroughly dug over and as many stones, weeds and other impediments removed as possible. We are also going to try to monitor plant feeding. We have fed a lot of the plants with growmore and tomatoes with tomorite. But we are going to try to be more “scientific” next year!! Not sure how yet – any ideas – let me know!
Manageable

We are going to extend the Market Garden, stealing a little more of the goats’ field. We will move the small polytunnels there from the orchard, re-cover them and establish an asparagus bed. This should then be more manageable as everything will be in one place – the Market Garden. Also the rules regarding membrane and irrigation means less time watering and weeding which will also make it more manageable.

Aesthetic

Do I need to say anything?!

14 sleeps until a week’s holiday on the Norfolk Broads!
Can’t wait!

Liz Marley
Purdis Poppy Farm
www.facebook.com/poppiescarefarm
The Annual General Meeting of Suffolk Smallholders Society

Saturday 17th September 2016 at Earl Stonham Village Hall, Earl Stonham, Suffolk

1. Welcome
Paula Blackmore called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to Earl Stonham Village Hall.

2. Apologies for Absence
Martin Hancock, Bobbie Ceravalo and Fleur Waters

3. Minutes of last AGM
Held on 19th September 2015 – approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Rick Waters. Seconded by Ian Harris.

4. Society Chairman’s Report
For those who attended the Society AGM last year you will already be aware of our current situation. It was not possible to properly appoint the necessary officers to the committee in order for the Society to continue to normally function. After further discussion the following was proposed as a way forward:
The current committee were appointed for one year only.
The committee agreed to meet just four times in the year and this was to coincide with member gatherings.
We would re-vamp our presence on Social Media in an effort to attract new members and to encourage existing members to participate in Society events.
A decision on the future of the Society would be taken at this AGM.
So, what has been achieved?
The committee met in October and the minutes of that meeting were published in the Newsletter. After a call for interest to members interested in administering the social media we awarded the task to Jacob Barrow. The new Website went Live on 5th December and features a Members-only area where back copies of the Newsletter can be downloaded. There was also a Members Discussion Forum but that has since been closed down due to lack of interest.

The Society Facebook Page has been given a make-over and that and the Facebook Discussion Group Page has been taken under the same control as the website. The Facebook page is accessed regularly by around 300 people and sometimes up to 600 have viewed individual posts. The large majority are not Society members. The FB Discussion Group which is a closed group has 38 members.

In practice it seems most member discussion takes place in the public domain on the main FB page and buying and selling on the Discussion Group.

Regarding events - these have for this year have been coordinated by Peter and Katy Runacres.

The first was a Member Gathering of around 20 of us at Depden Farm Shop back in January.

This was followed by a visit to Baylham Rare Breeds Farm in February for an evening seeing live lambing. 40 members attended this.

Also in February was a promotional activity for the Society when Pater and Katy ran a stall at Potato Day at Stonham Barns.

The next Member Gathering was in April with a visit to Palfrey & Hall Cutting Rooms. This was followed by a buffet supper and a chance for 20 or so members to interact.

We have tried to space these out across the four corners of the
County.
Another promotional day was WW2 Day at The Long Shop Museum, Leiston. Katy and Peter entered into the spirit of the day by dressing in costume and visitors to their stall were able to sample some WW2 recipes.
As well as the Member Gatherings and Promotional events an important aspect of the Society is the training provision for Smallholders. This year we have funded courses on machinery maintenance and use of chemicals for pesticide spraying. The committee would particularly like to thank Chris Keeble for all his hard work in putting on these courses which he does completely free of charge.
The monthly newsletter continues to be edited by Giles Barrow and everyone seems to agree that he does an excellent job. However not one to be content with the status quo Giles is keen for anyone who can inject fresh ideas to get in touch. He has already been trialing the use of colour in the newsletter and there could be more changes afoot.
Wendy Brame has filled the position of Secretary which is a Constitutional post. At one of the Committee meetings it was discussed that the Membership Secretary function be incorporated into the Secretary function going forward as both roles have been filled by Wendy due to lack of nominations for the post of Secretary.
As you will see from the accounts expenses for the year exceeded income by just under £2k. This was intentional as we sought ways to use our surplus funds while benefitting members and the future of the Society.
This brings us in a full circle to end of the transitional year and this AGM. The way we have run the Society this year has been a lot easier on the committee than in the past but without any
further initiatives to increase our income or input from more people than then the current committee will close the Society. Discussion regarding future of the Society to be discussed under Point 7.

5. Treasurers Report
(Appended to these minutes.)
There is still a healthy balance in the bank accounts; expenditure exceeded income by nearly £2000 last year.
The main outgoings for last year were sprayer training which a number of members attended and also the website/social media update.
Accounts approved by Tim Brame and Paula Blackmore.

6. Election of Officers/Committee
Nomination for President (Chairman of Society) – Paula Blackmore & Peter Runacres
Proposed by Lee Smith, Seconded by Julie Plumb
Nomination of Treasurer – Martin Hancock
Proposed by Paula Blackmore, Seconded by Dee Williams
Nomination of Secretary – Wendy Brame
Proposed by Zac Blackmore, Seconded by Julie Plumb
Committee:
Giles Barrow (Newsletter Editor)
Gill Bedson (Quartermaster)
Simon Pullum (Website Manager)
Katy Runacres
Bobbie Ceravalo
Pete Jones
Ton Damen
Proposed by Paul Goring, Seconded by Val Soper

7. Any Other Business
Future of Society:
General discussion held – various comments made which include:
A good chance to socialise
People pick up where they want but may not want to attend all events/training
The newsletter is excellent.
Would like some Nosey Sundays (Liz Marley volunteered to host)
It was agreed that the Society would continue in its present form (2 Chair people/4 Committee meetings per year/various events and training).
Newsletter:
Giles is happy to continue as Newsletter Editor but is worried the format is becoming stale and would welcome comments about any changes which could be made. Jacob (website/media) will look at re-designing the newsletter.
Someone mentioned the possibility of guest editors so if anyone would like to volunteer you are more than welcome.
Everyone loves the newsletter especially the colour photos.

Various:
Discussion around the transportation of animals over 60km – apparently the rules had changed so that you have to have a spare trailer available or 1 person per animal in the vehicle in case of an accident.
A request was made for small power tools maintenance training, trailer training and safe use of medicines.
All enjoyed Baylham Rare Breeds and would like the event held again.
Paula Blackmore thanked everyone for coming and declared the meeting closed.
The Produce Show results were then announced. Thanks go to Adam Paul for judging and to everyone who entered.
For Sale/Wanted

Members ads will be printed (no charge) for two months unless cancelled or renewed. Month of expiry is given in (). Please send adverts to Giles Barrow, Mill House, Mill Hill, Earl Soham, IP13 7RP or email giles.barrow@virgin.net Larger adverts (1/4 to whole page) are available at £80 per A5 page per annum pro rata.

For Sale: Christmas Trees
From 3ft upwards at Hulvertree Farm, Badingham Road, Laxfield Open 9.30 am – 4pm from Saturday, 26th November. Reservations can be made for collection any day up to and including Thursday, 22nd December. The Cousins 01728 638721.

For Sale: Oxford down ram
From 1st Nov (working at present)
Tel 07887628702 (Jan)

For Sale: Large Selection of Hedging Plants
Laurel, Yew, Box Horthorne, Field Maple, Spindil, Beach Oak, Privit Dog Rose - Eteridge Nursery, Stradbroke, IP21 5NL
Tel 01379384204 for Price List (Jan)

ORGANIC MEADOW HAY New Season small bales @ £3.50 each available for collection from Hulvertree Farm, Badingham Road, Laxfield also ORGANIC FEED WHEAT £9.25 per cwt (suitable for poultry) BARLEY £9.10 per cwt
The Cousins – 01728 638721(Nov)
For Sale: High quality new meadow hay
Small bales £3.00 a bale and local delivery possible from Charsfield.
Christopher 01473 737553 (Nov)

For Sale: Meadow Hay
Good Quality. £2.50/bale. Ashfield
Phone 01728 685 402 (Dec)

For Sale: Soay sheep, from closed flock near Newmarket.
Support our Rare Breeds Heritage.
Happy, healthy and hardy. All ages, dark and pale breed colours available now.
Spring 2016 born lambs, including some uncastrated ram lambs. Lovely yearling females ready for tupping this autumn. Chunky castrates – yearling, 2 and 3 year olds for grazing duties or the abattoir.
A relatively small, horned breed. Once caught they are easy to handle, have short tails so no docking needed, and shed their wool naturally (some plucking, but no shearing usually necessary.)

and Barnevelder chickens.
Hatched spring 2016. Both sexes available.
Beautiful feathering, friendly, and hens lay brown goodsized eggs.
Visitors welcome to come and view – no commitment.
Enquiries to Katherine W. 07860 575 655 (Nov)

For Sale: Log Splitter
Vertical 'slide hammer' type log splitter. Place log on base (supply your own such as a large section of tree) and the cutter bar in position where you want to split the log. Slide
the metal sleeve (hammer) up the vertical pole and down hard onto the cutter bar. Repeat until log splits. £15. John 01472 658804 Near Hadleigh (Nov)

**Free: Straw**
Free for collection about 30 bales of straw, Halesworth area. Susan Harrison 01502 575838

**For Sale: Freezer Chest**
Four foot freezer chest needs a home. It has been working very well for about ten years and still is. No cash. I am buying a new small freezer more suited for one person Phone 01728 723296 (Saxtead) (Nov)

**For Sale: High Quality, Outdoor Free Range, Rescue Hens**
Available regularly throughout the year to homes in E Suffolk/ NE Essex. As they currently have free access to acres of meadow, they would need you to have an adequate sized run.
Non-profit making. £3.00 per hen, usually minimum 4 delivered to you direct in local area. Delivery fee £5.00 may apply.
Claire hen.rescue@yahoo.co.uk
Calling all Members

Can you help fill this space with an Advertisement from a local business you know?

Advertising income provides good revenue for the Society and businesses will get exposure to over 200 members in our monthly Newsletter. Prices are £80 per for a full page, £40 for half a page and £20 for a quarter page (fee for 12 issues) - great value for money and enables local businesses to also show their support for the Suffolk Smallholders Society.

If you can contact any potential businesses you know and they are interested, please contact Martin Hancock or Giles

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to discuss your requirements.
Society Equipment

We have recently acquired more equipment which members may borrow from the society FREE OF CHARGE. Equipment is held at two separate locations: Badingham, in the East of the county, and Depden in the West.

The list of equipment currently available is:
- Egg Incubators
- Chick Brooders with Infra Red lights
- Post Rammers/Thumpers
- Hand Post Augers
- Fencing tensioner tool
- Apple Press
- Slap Marker Handle
- Smallholding DVD series inc:
  - Establishing Your Flock
  - Managing Your Flock for Peak Health
  - The Breeding Flock
  - Sheep for Business, Enterprise and Profit

The DVDs can be borrowed from Paula Blackmore (01359 240223 or paula.blackmore@gmail.com)

If you would like to borrow equipment, please contact our quartermaster, Gill Bedson. She will arrange for you to collect at either Badingham or Depden. Gill can be contacted by phone on 01728 638747 or by email at gillbedson@yahoo.co.uk
The Society cannot be held responsible for any problems arising from help given

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<th>SHEEP RARE BREEDS</th>
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<th>01473 830 264</th>
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<td>Chris Keeble</td>
<td>01449 711 587</td>
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<td>DEFRA LAND ISSUES</td>
<td>John Sones</td>
<td>01473 658 804</td>
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Committee Members

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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