



# Leicester Lowdown

## September 2018

Issue 7

### From the Presidents Pen

Welcome to 2018 Leicester Lowdown.

In this edition we farewell Ethel Stephenson who was one of the leading breeders of English Leicesters in Australia, but perhaps more importantly she was without doubt the leading advocate and promoter that the breed has ever had. Ethel's enthusiasm for the breed, and heritage breeds in general will be greatly missed.

But looking to the future it is very encouraging to see two young breeders becoming very active with English Leicesters. Ten year old George Willows from Evandale in Tasmania and 12 year old Edward Southwell from Orange in NSW are our next generation of stud masters who will hopefully keep the breed going into the future.

Our next AGM and general meeting will be held on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> of September. I would encourage you all to attend as it is your organization and your input is important. One of the items to be discussed will be the possible printing of a gate sign that breeders can attach to their gate promoting the fact that they breed English Leicesters. These would be made of weather proof corflute and be 450mm x 600mm in size. Please give me your thoughts on this idea for promotion.

The English Leicester breed will soon be able to celebrate the fact that it has been in Australia for 200 years. At this time I have not been able to accurately determine when the first English Leicester sheep arrived here. My research so far indicates that this happened in 1825. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has any information regarding the history of the breed in Australia as I think that we should celebrate the importance of this breed's contribution to the sheep industry in Australia.



Introducing the new grandchild to our flock.  
Celia Margaret with her father Duncan.

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In conclusion I wish everyone a successful lambing season and I hope that those of you who have been in drought conditions receive good rains for the spring so that you get some grass growth.

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## Ethel Stephenson 1924 – 2018

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May the English Leicester sheep breed lost one of its greatest advocates with the death of Ethel Stephenson.

Since suffering a stroke some time ago Ethel had been residing at a nursing home in Benalla.

Ethel was not born into agriculture. She had a career as an architect. But from the time that she purchased her first English Leicester sheep she worked tirelessly in the promotion of the breed and the use of its wool.



As an example she helped set up a market for the wool overseas where it was used for dolls' wigs as well as always being on the lookout for the best market that the Association members could get from the local wool buying companies.

Ethel was a very astute breeder of English Leicesters, importing rams from New Zealand to widen the genetic pool as well as adopting modern breeding practices such as Artificial Insemination. The proof of her good judgment in breeding is the fact that her blood lines have been very widely used and are most likely present in every English Leicester flock in Australia.

Ethel was a great believer in putting the sheep in front of the public and exhibited her sheep at numerous shows. She always prepared and presented her sheep to perfection and was always willing to assist and mentor other exhibitors for the betterment of the breed. Ethel was also a very good show judge of not only English Leicesters but also other Heritage breeds of sheep.

Ethel always took a very keen interest in mentoring and assisting younger members. She was very generous with her time and sheep, often giving young

members sheep so they could exhibit and breed from them.

Ethel also put considerable energy into the administration of the English Leicester Association of Australia. She was an early member of the reconstituted ELLA, later becoming Secretary for many years. She was also a financial benefactor to the Association, quietly paying for goods and services without recompense or awareness by the other members. She had recently donated money to the Association for the purpose of providing a perpetual trophy to be competed for at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show.

Her interest was not confined to the ELAA as she was a founding member of the Black and Coloured Sheep Breeders Association as well as Heritage Sheep Australia. Ethel was also involved in the Handweavers & Spinners Guild of Victoria, Collingwood Children's Farm, Benalla Rose Garden and the Benalla Art Gallery.

Ethel will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing her.

Brenton Heazlewood  
President, English Leicester Association of Australia

## Fiona Hume – My English Leicesters

English Leicesters were first introduced to our farm," Arundel", in the late 1950's when my father Bill purchased a few to 'put over' Polwarth ewes to create a bigger framed and sturdier sheep.

It has been a labour of love since then, with dad eventually building up a flock of leicesters. We never really made any money from them, but we just loved them; their antics, their 'attitude' and their gorgeous locks.

About ten years ago, I purchased the flock, and currently run 200 ewes. Once my responsibility, I started to question why we didn't seem to be making much money, but I was too busy pursuing my off-farm career as a zoologist/ecologist at the time, so I just didn't have enough time to focus on it.

A couple of years ago I finally decided I had to do better. I started communicating with restaurants and chefs but it wasn't until I came across food consultant Jo Cook, in early 2017 that things started to change.

Jo introduced me to chefs at MONA and the English Leicesters featured at the Dark MoFo Winterfeast in June 2017 (both hoggets and two tooths). It was great publicity and they were cooked Asado style, 9 hours over the 'wall of fire'. The fat content of the leicester is perfect for such cooking.

This year, I have been awarded a Sprout Producer Scholarship. Sprout is a small, non-profit organisation here in Tasmania which supports niche producers.

As part of the scholarship, we get mentoring as well as having study modules to complete e.g. farm relevant assignments on soils, weeds, animal health, branding and marketing, social media and quality control.

In January I started learning about social media, and after avoiding it all my life so far, I started using Instagram as a means of educating people about the English Leicesters on our farm as well as the other aspects of farm life at "Arundel".

In addition to my English Leicesters, we also run 700 cross bred ewes (English Leicester/Cormo) and 900 Cormo ewes.

The English Leicesters again featured at this year's Winterfeast, with hoggets cooked Asado style once more.

I am still exploring the prospect of a regular gig with restaurants but am generally selling my Leicester lambs and cull ewes to an abattoir who mostly export them to the Middle East.

However, in addition to playing around with the meat, I've also started tanning English Leicester skins and this is proving to be fun and interesting.

I didn't realise that sheepskins were 'in' until I started tanning a few and now it seems that everyone wants one! I may finally be able to cover costs and earn a bit extra. I have a good relationship with the abattoirs that I deal with and I retrieve all my sheepskins. I have only tanned about 20 myself so far and have about 80 salted and waiting for me to find some time!

Through my Sprout Producer Scholarship, a lot more people now know about the English Leicesters. A lot more people are also eating them and very slowly, homes here 'n there in Tassie are enjoying the lustrous locks of English Leicester sheepskins.

 Instagram: @fi\_hume

**Fiona showing George and Paul Willows her sheep**



## Bendigo Sheep Show 2018

It was very pleasing to see three exhibitors at this year's Bendigo Sheep Show. Edward and Jason Southwell, Nick and Vanessa Wootton and Colin Taylor presented sheep for the adjudication of the New Zealand judge Mrs Pam Tate.

With six ewes in one class Pam was kept busy doing her deliberation.

It was also pleasing to see the ribbons being shared between the exhibitors.

Colin Taylor was the most successful exhibitor winning the Duncan McGregor trophy for the best fleece of the show as well as the E & P Stephenson Perpetual Trophy for the Supreme English Leicester Exhibit.





At this year's Annual General Meeting Margaret Kingman will be retiring as secretary of our Association after 22 years of service to English Leicesters. I would like to thank you Margaret for your dedication and service to the Association. I have personally found your help and advice invaluable to me in my role as President. Your wisdom and knowledge will be missed by all associated with English Leicesters. – Brenton Heazlewood.

***This is the story of Margaret's involvement with English Leicesters***

The start of my love affair with English Leicesters was in 1992. At the time John and I had a flock of Angora Goats and I was looking for lustrous wool that would blend with the mohair for use by craft artists. A friend suggested that if I wanted English Leicesters I should visit Ethel Stephenson in Benalla and discuss this with her. So off we went.

From the sheep she had yarded, I finally chose two young ewes with beautiful wool, plus one more that I had to promise Ethel that I would show, which is what I intended anyway, as we were already showing the goats. The 3 ewes were in lamb. All the relevant fees and membership subs were paid and I was suddenly a stud sheep breeder and member of the English Leicester Association of Australia!

Those of you who knew Ethel would realise that nobody was allowed to sit back and do nothing, and she quickly had me doing odd jobs for the ELAA at shows and field days, and by 1996 recording the Minutes for meetings as Minute Secretary, then in 1997 being elected Assistant Secretary, and eventually in February, 2003 we swapped positions where I was Secretary and Ethel supported me by being Assistant Secretary. So there I have been until September 2018. In the early years we held several General Meetings and one Annual General Meeting each year but as membership and attendance slowly diminished we reached the stage of one General Meeting and one AGM per year. Thankfully, membership now seems to be slowly increasing again.

Through my involvement with English Leicesters I have met many interesting and talented people. Farmers who are committed to their properties and the welfare of their animals; craft artists who use the magnificent fleece from this old breed with modern day skill and ideas. Shows are a wonderful social occasion and a fertile learning ground as well as a "shop window" to promote the breed and we

showed our sheep all over the State. Sales of the sheep have taken us to many and varied areas of Victoria, and the delicious meat has been sold at Farmers Markets. I hope that there is still 'Yarn Time' English Leicester blood in some of the stud flocks today.



As I approach the end of this long and enjoyable term as Secretary, I look forward to another member stepping up to assist Brenton, our very conscientious and capable President. I have been on a delightful journey with the members and the sheep and await a new and fruitful time ahead for the ELAA.

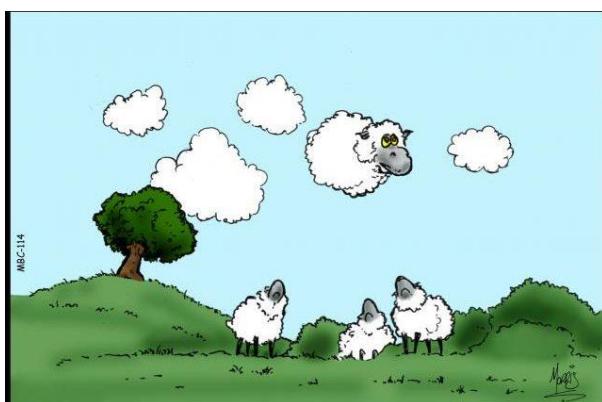
Thank you all, Margaret

## Annual General Meeting 2018

Place: Collingwood Childrens Farm  
Time: Sunday 16th September at 10.30am

On the agenda:

- Retiring secretary
- Election of new secretary
- Farm gate signage
- Printing a new run of our brochures
- Trophy presentation
- Strong Wool Breeders Assoc. Lustre Feature



### Wanted

As part of the celebrations of the English Leicester's being in Australia for 200 years in 2025 (?) I am researching the history of the breed in this country and would like to obtain copies of some early FLOCK BOOKS to assist me in this research.

In particular I am looking for copies of Flock Books Published by the Australian Longwool Sheepbreeders Association. Also Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16 of the Flock Book for British Breeds of Sheep in Australia.

Many Thanks,  
Brenton Heazlewood

### Office Bearers

#### President:

**Brenton Heazlewood**  
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#### Vice President:

**Colin Taylor**

#### Secretary:

**Margaret Kingman**  
[jkingman@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jkingman@bigpond.net.au)

#### Treasurer:

**Lisa Docherty**

### Corny Corner....

*I'm reading a book about glue. I just can't put it down.*

*How do you turn a duck into a soul singer?*

*Put it in a microwave until it's Bill Withers.*

*What do you get if you cross an angry sheep and a moody cow?*

*An animal that's in a baaaaaaaaad mooooooood.*

*How do sheep greet each other at Christmas?*

*Merry Christmas to Ewe!*

*How do sheep in Mexico say Merry Christmas?*

*"Fleece Navidad!"*

*How many sheep does it take to knit a sweater?*

*Don't be silly - sheep can't knit!*

*What is Beethoven's favourite Fruit?*

*Ba-na-na-na*