

NOTE

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TO:

*Ph. Hill and Vera*

FROM:

*Pony Jeremy / Jay!*

DATE: 30th November, 1991

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*Many thanks for an excellent evening last night.  
The meal and wine were splendid!*

A couple of items which you may find of interest concerning our conversation last night about the preservation of small populations of animal species, as well as the extinction of the Alderney cow.

- 1) I enclose a copy of a paper by one of the best small population biologists, Dr. Tom Foose, entitled 'Interactive Management of Small Wild and Captive Populations', which highlights the importance of genetic and demographic management in order to maintain the required diversity for survival.

However, I imagine one of the problems that domestic cattle breeders face is that it is necessary to line-breed individuals in order to maximise the milk quantity and quality etc., so perhaps the management criteria required for endangered wild species would not be applicable to domestic stock?

In connection with metapopulation management, I take this opportunity to enclose details about the Sixth World Conference on Breeding Endangered Species: The Role of Zoos in Global Conservation, which JWPT is hosting here in Jersey on 4th - 6th May, next year. Session 3, scheduled to take place on 5th May, is on metapopulation management with papers by some of the world's leading authorities covering such matters as 'Population and Habitat Viability Analysis Modelling', 'Global Captive Action Plans', and 'Species Differences and Population Structure in P.V.A.'s'. Perhaps some of your council members would be interested in listening to such aspects of interactive management programmes for endangered species?

- 2) The enclosed photocopy with the pictures of the Alderney cattle is from a book entitled 'The Chance to Survive' by Lawrence Alderson, which covers the plight of the endangered domestic breeds of sheep, pigs, and cattle. Should you want to see the book itself, please let me know. The cartoon depicting the 'Large Pig' is a good example of short term gain and mismanagement of a domestic breed!

*Yours ever,  
Jeremy*



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*Extinct: Rhiw sheep. The last flock, photographed in 1954.*

In the British Isles alone, 23 breeds of domestic livestock have become extinct during this century; each breed that becomes absent from the roll call represents the irretrievable loss of unique genetic material. Among cattle we have lost the Alderney, Suffolk Dun, Sheeted Somerset, Castle-martin and Caithness as well as the Irish Dun; among sheep, the Limestone, St Rona's Hill, Norfolk Horn, Roscommon, and Rhiw; among pigs, the Ulster White, Small White, Yorkshire Blue and White, Dorset Gold Tip, Lincolnshire Curly Coat, and Cumberland; among horses the Manx, Cushendale, Tیره, Long Mynd, Galloway and Goonhilly.

The loss of some breeds seems particularly tragic. If the Suffolk Dun had survived, it might have had a great impact on today's dairy industry — even 150 years ago, the cows of Suffolk though subjected to careless treatment, and supported on the most common kinds of food, are scarcely surpassed by any other in their power of yielding abundant milk. The Limestone sheep, otherwise known as the Silverdale or the Farleton Crag, was a unique hill breed. It combined hardiness with high wool quality and an ability to give birth at different times of the year in a way that no modern hill breed can do. The Lincolnshire Curly Coat was a robust, outdoor pig with a coat of long white hair quite unlike that of any other British breed and equalled only by the Maglanitza pig of eastern Europe. It fell foul of the whims of fashion, in no way deserving the cruel succession of events that led to its extinction.

*Right: Shire horse; Golden Guernsey goat and kid.*

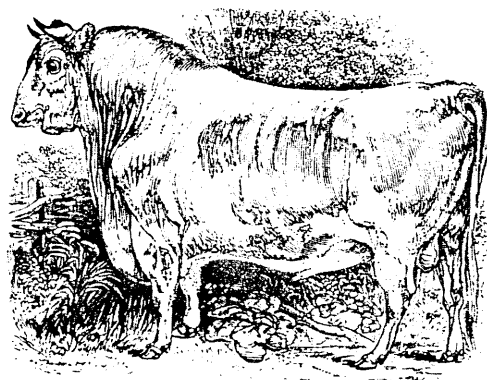
walk out of the pens was often so great that the attempt was abandoned. However, while understandably lamenting the loss of the Suffolk Dun, the Limestone, and the Lincolnshire Curly Coat, we should not assume that the Alderney, the St Rona's Hill, and the Dorset Gold Tip were not equally the possessors of qualities which, though undetected or irrelevant in the past, might have served some vital purpose in the future.

Many of the breeds which still survive are in serious danger. Farming is as susceptible to fashion as the motor trade—old models are cast aside with a reckless disregard for their true value. If a few breeds can generate sufficient impetus, with their entrance acclaimed by the fashion writers of livestock breeding, they can expand numerically and geographically far beyond the limits which their inherent qualities can justify. The Longhorn enjoyed universal admiration in the eighteenth century, before it was almost completely superseded by the Shorthorn. The phenomenon of the twentieth century is the Friesian-Holstein. In the early stages of its invasion of Great Britain, it enjoyed the benefit of astute and influential patrons, so that it spread not only to the fertile lowlands which were its true habitat, but also to many less favourable locations, purely because it was in vogue.

Times and situations change, and there may have been no reason to dispute the right of the Friesian to usurp the long-established dominance of the Shorthorn in Great Britain or of the Normande in France, but there is every reason to question the wisdom of the breeders who introduced the Friesian into the Shetland Islands in 1923 or, more recently, into the oil-boom countries of the Middle East. The same arguments apply to other species, particularly to pigs whose high reproductive rate and short breeding life make them subject to rapid fluctuations in population size, so that a breed can very quickly become extinct if fashion, misfortune or ill-conceived objectives conspire against it.

In 1974, a survey carried out in Great Britain of domestic breeds of livestock identified 54 breeds of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses, about

*Extinct: Alderney cattle.*



half the total number remaining, that needed help to ensure their survival. They are not breeds that can be dismissed as irrelevant, although they have been brutally described as 'the waste products of the process of domestication', a view that ignores all but short-term standards of evaluation. A more responsible attitude would take account of new concepts and allow for changing requirements in the future. There are other considerations that should not be sacrificed in the interest of the maximum immediate profit: those of sentiment, aesthetic pleasure, or concern for the symbols

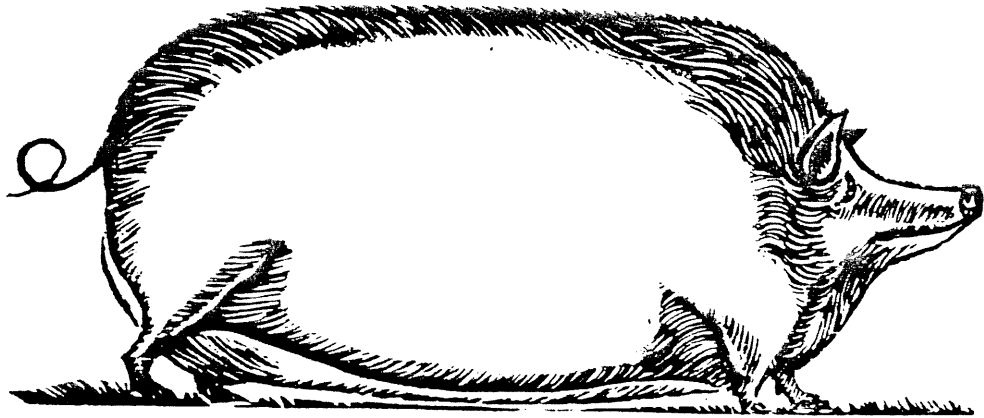
*Endangered Breeds of Domestic Livestock in Great Britain, 1974-77.*

CATTLE	SHEEP	GOATS	PIGS	HORSES/PONIES
		<i>Category 1 (highest priority)</i>		
White Park	Portland	Bagot	Tamworth	Exmoor Pony
Kerry	Manx Loghtan		Middle White	Caspian
Shetland	Wensleydale		Berkshire	
Northern Dairy	Leicester		Gloucester	
Shorthorn	Longwool		Old Spot	
Irish Moyled			British Lop	
British White				
Gloucester				
		<i>Category 2</i>		
Longhorn	Cotswold	Golden	Large Black	Suffolk
		Guernsey		
Dexter	Whitefaced			
	Woodland			
Red Poll	Lincoln Longwool			
White Galloway	Oxford Down			
	Ryeland			
	Teeswater			
	Shropshire			
		<i>Category 3</i>		
Belted Galloway	Lleyn		British	Dales Pony
			Saddleback	
	North Ronaldsay			Fell Pony
	Soay			Shire
	Hebridean			Clydesdale
	Wiltshire Horn			
	Shetland			
	Southdown			
		<i>Category 4</i>		
	Black Welsh			
	Mountain			
	Jacob			
		<i>Pending</i>		
Bolian Gwynion	New Norfolk	Old English		
	Horn			
Blue Albion	Castlemilk		Oxford Sandy	
	Shetland		and Black	

The Chance to Survive

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# The Chance to Survive

Rare Breeds in a Changing World

LAWRENCE ALDERSON



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in association with

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