

## History of the Longhorn Breed

From the very earliest records of British agriculture there has been a race of cattle set apart from most other breeds by the great length of their horns.

The Longhorn, as they became known, were predominant in medieval times over a large area of the Midland counties and Northern England. Their origin is shrouded in mystery, but the Craven district of Yorkshire, northern Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland, Staffordshire, Derbyshire & Leicestershire hold the honour of being greatly (especially) linked to this grand old breed. The Midlands must, however, be given full credit for the great improvement that was effected in the Longhorn, and certainly held the reputation as the stronghold of the breed. Here it was to be transformed from a multi-tasking role of milk, meat & draught to one whose primary function was beef.

It was improved and designated as our first British beef breed by that great high priest of livestock breeding Robert Bakewell (1725-1795). It was Bakewell's aim to feed the masses who had left the rural areas and moved into the towns and cities in pursuit of work during the Industrial revolution. Bakewell gave us the blueprint for all livestock improvement. The blueprint that is still followed to this day. Bakewell brought his herd to great perfection and worldwide repute, so much so that for many years after his death they were still referred to as the Dishley, or New Leicester breed. His stock were used to improve many other regional types/breeds.

In the very early days of the breed, cheese and butter making was the main occupation of farmers, and in this capacity the Longhorn at that point had no equal. It is said that Stilton Cheese was first produced at Wymondham, in the Melton Mowbray district of Leicestershire using the superior, rich, quality milk of the Longhorn.

The Longhorn is a particularly hardy breed, with a very robust constitution, and will thrive well in most situations. Of a medium frame, they have great length, well sprung ribs and wide level backs. The hide which should be mellow to the touch, is well and thickly covered with silky hair. Through the winter their hair becomes thick and rough, to enable them with little or no shelter to withstand the season and emerge in the Spring still looking fit. In past times they earned the nickname of the 'Leicestershire Curly Coat'. These are just some of the many reasons the Longhorn is wonderfully adapted to produce product in a most sustainable & environmentally friendly way & in a variety of systems.

The Longhorns have a quiet temperament which makes them an ideal beef animal not prone to stress, ensuring that meat quality is of the highest specification. Used for crossing purposes the Longhorn is extremely successful, passing on its many attributes including wealth of flesh of the very best sort, hardiness, ability to convert forage, and good mothering ability. They make an excellent cross for dairy cattle due to ease of calving and vigorous offspring. Cross bred Longhorn calves are currently commanding a premium from the dairy sector in an exciting new era for the breed. It is gratifying that artisan butchers are now using Longhorn as their premium product, bringing the breed full circle & placing them back on the pedestal on which Robert Bakewell first placed them. Its many excellent attributes will serve it well, to compete in new & emerging markets across the globe providing meat of exemplary texture & flavour to a more discerning market- place.

The Longhorn is in an excellent position for a successful future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century & beyond!

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