

**Minutes of the Longhorn Cattle Society Annual General Meeting
Held via Zoom, commencing at 11.00am on Saturday 17 October 2020**

Present were: Mr T Mills (Chairman)
Ms D Dann (Secretary)
Mrs N Luckett (President)

Rev C Blackshaw, Mr D Blockley, Mr P Close, Mrs Y Ferguson, Mrs K Gibb, Mr P Guest, Ms R Heard, Mr C Hopley, Mr J Hutten, Mrs P Laing, Mr B Llewellyn, Mr D Phillips, Mrs C Phillips, Mrs R Poulson, Mr D Preece, Mr & Mrs M Preece, Mrs C Saxby, Mr & Mrs J&P Stanley, Mr C Sutcliffe, Mr G Towers, Mr M Wheeler, Mrs S Zentis.

Also attending – please identify yourselves. iPad, Jilly's iPad

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting and thanked members for attending. He stated that being able to hold the AGM at all was gratifying given the current circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Mr JS Brigg, Mr JW Brigg, Mrs A Close, Mr R Close, Mr & Mrs B&N Fuller, Mrs V Hopkinson, Mr S Horrocks, Ms Suzannah Long, Mr & Mrs B&T Stanley, Mr R Sullivan

1. Minutes of last AGM and matters arising

The Minutes of the 2019 AGM had been previously circulated.

Mrs Stanley stated that her statement regarding the separation of cattle at shows should have been for cattle in high health schemes, not TB as stated. The Secretary corrected the minutes.

It was proposed by Mr D Blockley and seconded by Mrs P Stanley that the minutes be signed as a true and correct record.

2. Chairman's Report

The Chairman spoke to his report.

Longhorn Cattle Society 2020 AGM – Chairman's Report

It feels a long time since the 2019 AGM. Certainly the freedoms of hosting a large scale social event and the mixing of members from all over the UK, Europe and Australia without a consideration of social distancing, 'rules of six' and where the nearest antibacterial wash is located seems a world away from where we find ourselves this year.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the government's restrictions severely impacted the Society's usual annual programme of events, with restrictions on livestock markets impacting Society sales and the show season being completely decimated following a summer of lockdown and restrictions. Although many will have supported the measures it is hard to have not been disappointed by the lack of opportunity to meet with fellow breeders and friends, showcase our wonderful breed to the industry through agricultural shows and enjoy the social events which we would in a normal Longhorn Cattle Society year.

The Council closely monitored the ever changing guidance and restrictions and looked to adapt to see how we could make the most of the situation and even use it as an opportunity to try new ideas such as the online show and online timed auction. Debbie and I also reviewed the resilience of the Society to operate through events such as a pandemic and what contingency measures we had in place should, for whatever reason, the society Secretary or the Council be unable to carry out their usual duties. We now have in place comprehensive, documented guidance on the various administrative processes involved in the running of the Society to ensure that the Society could continue to function under various circumstances.

As the restrictions due to the pandemic began to be imposed Council were also keen to look at how we could mitigate the impact on our members. We therefore agreed to remove the fees for members advertising cattle for sale through the Society website and introduce a temporary amendment to the bull registration process for members who were struggling to get vets to visit their farms to undertake bull inspections.

A couple of weeks after the 2019 AGM Newark Market hosted what was intended to be the new Premier Society Sale. Although entry numbers were lower than we might have hoped for there were some great quality cattle offered for sale and females sold very well. The bull trade wasn't so good but I think this reflected the time of year rather than the quality on offer. With Newark market now closed the Council will be considering other options for an Autumn Premier Society Sale venue for 2021.

Society sales continued to be a hot topic at Council meetings, in particular, a review of the health testing requirements which were implemented for the 2019 sales. The Council still sees it as a high priority to understand and improve the health status of the national Longhorn herd but it has also reflected on the speed at which the health testing requirements for Society sales were implemented and the impact this may have had on entry numbers to the sales in 2019. We will soon be launching a membership consultation using a herd health questionnaire to understand the membership's views on breed health. We will then use this information to shape our future breed health strategy. I would encourage members to take part in the survey and have their say.

By June any hope of a show season was a distant memory and Council were keen to look at ways to replace the excitement, competition and fun of attending the summer shows and also provide a platform to showcase the breed and the fantastic cattle which our members have. We decided that we would organise a 'virtual show' for 2020.

I thought that the virtual show was a huge success with 14 different exhibitors and over 60 cattle entered. There was a good mix of entries from breeders who regularly show and from those who don't, many of whom were up in the prizes. For me, one of the most pleasing aspects of the show was the junior handler classes. It was great to see the enthusiasm within the junior members – the breed is clearly in safe hands for the future! Well done to all those who participated and congratulation to all the prize winners. Hopefully it has given a few new members the showing bug and the confidence to take their cattle out on the show circuit when it resumes. I am aware that a small number of members struggled to submit their entries through the 'cloud-lines-shows' system which is a real shame and something we will try and learn from if we run similar events in the future.

With significant uncertainty surrounding livestock sales at markets the Council had to take a decision on what format the autumn sale should take. With the guidance and advice on the sale of pedigree livestock regularly changing throughout the Pandemic a number of successful online auctions had been run by various parts of the industry over the summer. We therefore decided that it would be a good opportunity to trial the Society's first online timed auction. The auction took place between 10th and 13th September. This was a completely new experience for the Society and ended with mixed results. Entries were a low with only 20 lots forward, although this was perhaps to be expected with a new format of sale and in the current situation. A number of the lots were successfully purchased and those which sold achieved good prices, however a number of lots remained unsold which was disappointing. Council would really appreciate feedback from the membership on online sales. I personally feel that there is a place for them in our sale portfolio but we need to understand why more members did not enter cattle for sale, particularly when there were a number of cattle being advertised through the Society website, and what we can do to get more buyers interested. If you have any views on this please get in touch with a Council member or Debbie.

The Longhorn breed continues to improve in quality and popularity and is attracting significant interest from the dairy industry as a beef sire. The newly launched Buitelaar Longhorn scheme has added momentum to this interest. Dairy farmers using Longhorn genetics have given positive feedback on calving ease & calf vigour and finishers are reporting competitive growth and yields when compared against other native sired carcasses.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of Council for their input and support over the year, Debbie for her continued hard work as Breed Secretary and all the Society members for the great work they do in promoting the fantastic Longhorn breed and taking it forward. Let's hope through 2021 we are able to regain some sense of normality but if not I'm confident that as a Society, like the Longhorn breed, we will continue to adapt and go from strength to strength.

3. Financial Report

The Secretary presented the accounts and the financial report:

2020 was an unprecedented year for The Longhorn Cattle Society, with all normal activities outside of maintaining the Herdbook cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Activity on the Herdbook was stable. Herdbook activity for the financial year was 1,286 females registered (1,278 in 2019), 1,063 (995) animals birth notified, 73 (50) males registered and 1,214 (1,624) transfers. Excluding deaths, a total of 3,568 (3,947) individual transactions took place in order to maintain an accurate registry.

As a membership based organisation the Society's main income streams remained subscriptions, registrations and transfers.

Secretarial salary, social security and occupational pension expenditure were the Society's largest single outgoing.

Printing, stationery and postage expenditure was increased in this financial year as the Journal was produced.

Shows and demonstration expenditure was decreased in this financial year as the Society did not attend any events in 2020

The Longhorn Cattle Society is a Charity and the Trustees of the Society are entrusted with the role of ensuring the monies held are well managed and that there is a prudent reserve, and then ensure that funds are used to carry out the principal objectives of the Society. It is Council policy to ensure that the routine running costs of the Society are self-funding and that the Society has reserves roughly equivalent to a year's annual expenditure. A budget of £85415 has been approved by Council.

Mr Llewellyn expressed concern that registrations were down by 10%, but the Secretary's salary had increased. Registrations were one of the Society's main income streams and staff costs were the main outgoing, and the Society, along with other Breed Societies, needed to keep this under review.

The Chairman stated that the registration fees were down by 10%, but the income for registrations in the previous financial year had been greater due to more late registrations than usual. He stated that the Society was in the fortunate position of being able to sustain a full time secretary.

The Secretary stated that no salary increase had been awarded by Council in the last three years, and that the only increases were due to occupational pension increases and Government basic rate tax code changes.

Mr Stanley stated that he felt the Trustees were managing the accounts well and that they were running a 'tight ship'. They needed to invest for the future whilst remaining careful.

Mr Close stated that as breed numbers had gone up, the percentage of registrations had decreased.

There being no further questions on the accounts, the accounts were proposed by Mrs Gibb and seconded by Mr Blockley.

4. Election of Trustees

The Secretary stated that three spaces were available for Council and four valid nominations were received from Peter Close, Bernard Llewellyn, David Phillips and Brian Wragg. A vote was held, with members being able to vote both online and on paper and Messrs Close, Llewellyn and Wragg were duly elected.

The Chairman thanked all the nominees for standing, welcomed the new Trustees and thanked Mr Bertie Facon and Mr Blockley for their time on Council.

5. Any other business

A question had been submitted in advance by Mr M Graham, manager of the Willock Park herd in Tasmania. His question centred around the recording of statistics such as birth weights, scrotal circumference and structural assessment. Mr Graham also stated that a benchmarking group in Tasmania had shown Longhorn steers gaining 1.8kg per day off grass.

The Chairman thanked Mr Graham for his question and stated that birth weights and scrotal circumference could be recorded on the database and that data supplied was available should members request it.

The Chairman stated that the measuring of scrotal circumference would now be required when registering bulls, rather than just a recommendation.

The Chairman stated that herds that type classify could have the inspection of bulls made mandatory and that this would be discussed at a future Trustees meeting.

The Chairman stated that the Buitelaar group now had around 70 holdings using Longhorn bulls or semen and that data from this initiative would be coming through in due course once cattle started going for finishing.

Mr Stanley stated that Longhorns were 'growing up' as a breed and that more facts and figures would be required otherwise the breed would always be on the back foot.

The Chairman stated that it was good to have data but it needed to be statistically accurate and robust and therefore a large number of cattle would be required. Previous Longhorn breed performance recording initiatives had not been viable as there weren't enough members or cattle participating.

Mr Guest asked if calving ease data was available. The Secretary stated that a report could be produced from the database if required. Mr Guest asked if making the supply of calving ease data compulsory should be discussed. Mr Close stated that breeders were looking for light weight calves that grew fast.

Mr Llewellyn stated that he had been to a number of livestock markets and farmers' adoption of suitable social distancing measures were variable. He asked that a note be put in the next newsletter reminding and encouraging members to abide by current regulations, for the good of the whole industry.

Mr Sutcliffe asked about membership numbers. The Secretary reported they were stable (around 500 members).

Mr C Hopley introduced himself as the new herd manager of the Cholmondeley herd. As a lifelong owner and breeder of British Blondes he had found the Longhorn cattle to be very docile and easy calving and felt there was an untapped market for bulls in commercial herds.

Awards

The Chairman stated that the first recipient of Carreg Ambassador's Award was being announced at the AGM. He thanked Bernard Llewellyn for providing a trophy for the award, which was introduced to recognise members who promote the breed in ways other than in the show ring. Four nominations had been received and these were for Graham Gilder (Harrow herd), Ben & Tori Stanley (Melbourne Park herd), Tom Williams (Maydencroft herd) and Stephen Wright (Brookfield herd). The winners, nominated by Ben Sutton (Parc Grace Dieu herd) were Ben & Tori Stanley. They have their Longhorns and the Longhorn beef at the centre of their marketing, do farm to fork and butchery events, supplied the beef for a MasterChef winner and run a successful farm shop. They were congratulated on their win. Mr Llewellyn stated he felt they were very worthy winners and would arrange to have the trophy delivered.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the AGM with a slide show of winners of the photo competition. The meeting closed at 12.05pm.