

Midland Longhorn Breeders' Summer visit 2013

June 30th had been highlighted in member's diaries for some time, the 2013 summer herd visit! Definitely not to be missed. We are very fortunate to have the Blackbrook Herd within our area and John and Pat Stanley had kindly agreed to host this year's visit.

The day arrived, the sun was shining and club members descended on Spring Barrow Lodge. Before lunch we were given an introduction to the Blackbrook Gallery, a rather interesting and unique form of diversification. On display was a wonderful selection of animal portraits by various artists, mainly from the 19th century. The knowledge and enthusiasm shared by John and Pat in these magnificent paintings is second to none. It was interesting to note that the gallery really developed as a consequence of keeping longhorn cattle and now has clients world-wide.

Our tour of the Gallery was followed by lunch consisting of delicious home produced beef, equally tasty pork and Great British strawberries.

Next on the agenda; a tour of the prize winning Blackbrook Herd. The current herd policies were explained, these being to maintain a young productive breeding herd, selling off older animals to allow the genetics of the next generation to develop. On looking around the herd it was easy to see the success of this policy, with a tremendous group of maiden heifers on display, so uniform in type despite being by different bulls.

The cows currently in the herd were also showing great consistency in conformation, large deep bodied animals with plenty of capacity, capable of utilising the top quality grassland available to them, producing milk for their calves and maintaining body condition.

Although no showing has taken place yet this year it was interesting to spot the stars of the show circuit, with members able to see the likes of Natalie, Plenty, Question, Sunshine, U-wood and Upsadaisy. Southfield Lyric has settled in well and will bring some new genetics to the herd in the future.

Continuing the quest for next generation genetics the well-known stock bulls, Philosopher, Rochester and Sabre have all moved to other herds and it was good to see Trapper and Uruk-Hai ably stepping into the place of these great bulls.

Over the past few years John and Pat have put a lot of effort into developing an embryo transfer programme and have now exported embryos to Canada and Australia, certainly evidence that the breed is moving forward, with buyers interested in the breed's commercial attributes rather than just looking nice in the park, again John and Pat's enthusiasm and dedication shining through.

The emphasis at Spring Barrow Lodge is production from forage. We saw well managed grassland and we saw a tremendous herd of cattle bred to utilise the grass, a trait which will help the breed to move forward and continue to grow.

The Club would like to say a huge thank-you to John and Pat for their hospitality, the sight of their superb cattle in the fields and the beautiful paintings on display in the gallery will be remembered for a long time.

Tom Mills, Chairman Midland Breeders' Group.









