

Southern Lleyn breeders open day 17 June 2017

Blazing sunshine, stunning views over the South Downs, excellent stock and first class farm management made the Southern Lleyn open day a memorable experience for the 23 visitors who left their haymaking to look at one of England's first Lleyn breeders flock no 213.

Chris Passmore purchased his first Lleyn sheep in 1983 whilst they were a rare breed, on their reputation for hardyness and milkyness. 34 years later they still provide the basis of their top rated commercial lamb production system. Homebred pure Lleyn ewes from a nucleus flock of 60 are crossed with Texels to give 250 -300 commercial ewes which are then put to either Charollais or Texel rams for prime lamb production

Chris and Hugh Passmore's 850 acre family farm on the top of the South Downs above Shoreham is only grade 3 and 4 chalk down but they have learned over many years how to turn it into one of the most respected mixed farming enterprises in Southern England. Hugh Passmore, Chris's nephew now runs the farm and conducted the day's farm tour.

It is an integrated lamb, beef and arable enterprise which although not certified organic uses minimal cake, chemicals or fertilisers, maximising production from the crop rotation methods.

Winter wheat is immediately followed by mustard, roots or forage rape for in lamb ewes Spring barley is under sown with a special legume mix of clover, trefoil and medic, which the following spring provides a 1st year clover ley for lambs to graze. Cattle graze the second and follows the third, then arable crops follow.



Lambing outdoors from 1st April gives lambs ready by early June, killing out at 60% for 21-23kg dead weight. Some ewes gathered, Hugh then passed lambs through the weigh crate as a demonstration





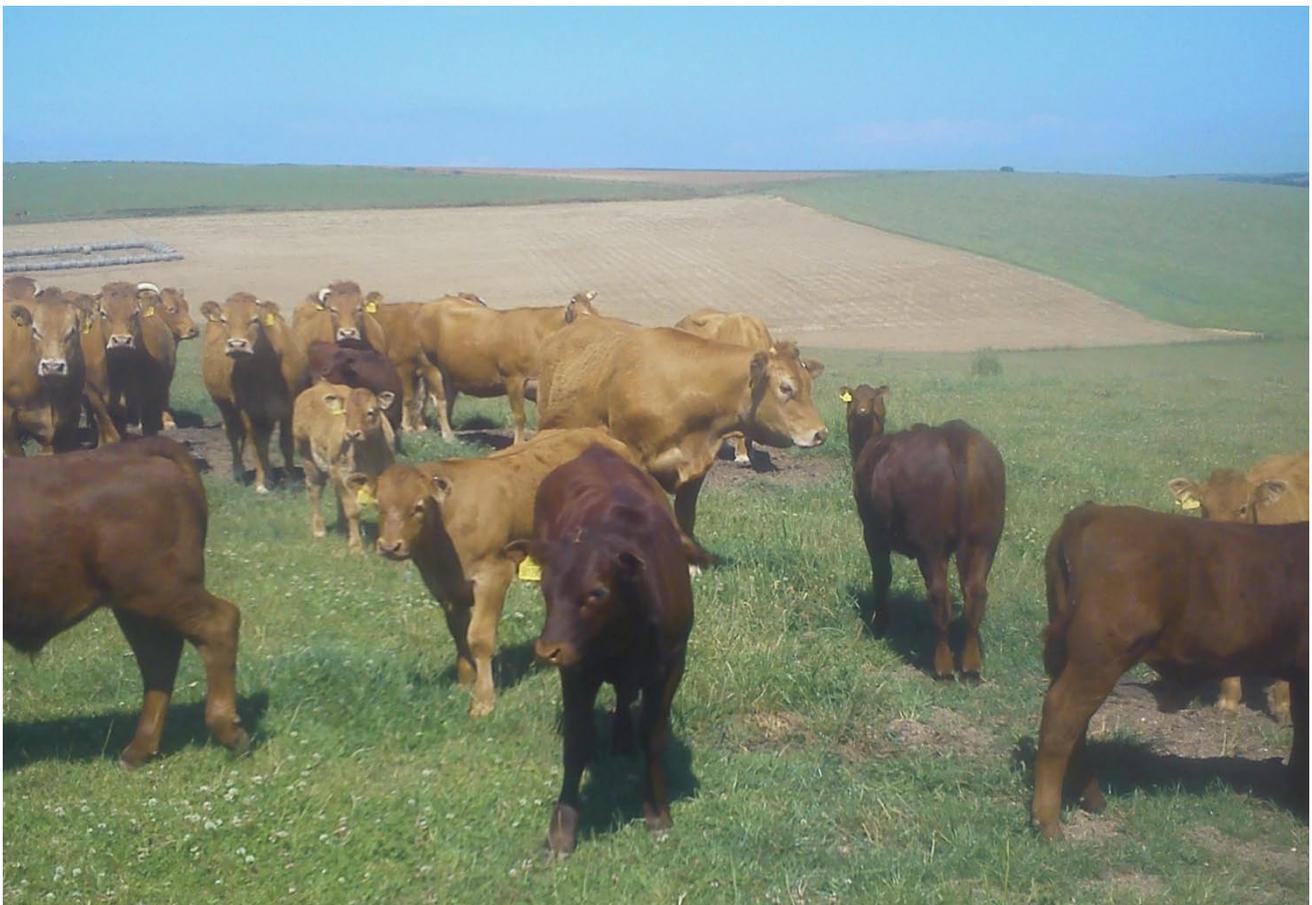
It was very interesting to compare the Charollais and Texel lambs, where the Charollais looked lighter but weighed the same. The lambs averaged 9 weeks old on our visit and most singles weighed from 34 to 38kg live weight, the heavier having already gone deadweight.

The pure and 1st cross ewe lambs are run on and over wintered on the hill permanent pasture which is rotationally grazed one year by sheep, then cattle and then fallow for the wild flowers.

The picture below show the yearling ewes grazing the southern section of the down



The limosin cows with their Sussex cross calves were on the northern slopes where the lambing pen and turnout field can be seen in the distance from which a cut of silage had recently been taken. Beside is a close up of the rare pyramid, bell and spotted orchids with cowslips scattering the fallow down top, which was almost a mile long. A profusion of wild chalk meadow flowers are to be seen throughout June and July.



After the farm tour the visitors moved to the farmhouse garden where a barbeque lunch was enjoyed by all, with Chris Passmore , (who is now 87 years old) and Hugh leading the discussions on how they manage, by using traditional methods , to achieve such good results on ground which is known to be some of the poorest in the region.

Derek Bond