

Chapter Ten - Adapting to further changing circumstances 1991 to 1999.

The Society started the nineties on track. The then Chairman, Michael Flinton, had been publicly thanked for his efforts – drastic and sometimes unpopular – which had brought the registrations up-to-date and the balance sheet back in the black. Michael did not stand again for the Committee and a new Chairman was elected.

Financially the various costs beyond the Society's control still made tight budgeting necessary and any special projects needed special funding. Further modernisation would enable a better service to be provided for the members. Investment income was particularly important at this time as membership was dropping again.

Legacies were a further valuable, although variable, source of funds and one very generous legacy enabled various BGS publications to be revised and reprinted.

The new Chairman, Peter Cox, brought in several changes to the Committee structure with the intention of making it 'value for money'. At this time up to thirty members could attend meetings – the President and past presidents from the previous ten years as well as 18 elected members and 8 Area Delegates. Initially elected members were reduced from 18 to 12. In 1998, to maintain the previous balance, Area Delegates were reduced from 8 to 6 and the number required for a quorum was adjusted in view of the smaller committee.

In 1998 the rule relating to the election of the President was changed. Written nominations are now sent in advance to the Secretary, published with the AGM papers and then voted on at the meeting. Previously nominations had merely been received from the floor at the meeting. Changes were also made to the number of years a previous President could serve as a Vice-President /ex-officio committee member.

The rule change which would have required a committee member to stand down after three terms in office was repealed before it came into effect when it became obvious that almost all the committee would go at the same time thus losing valuable continuity. In 1997 a saving of approximately £1000 a year was made by cutting Committee meetings from five to four a year. All Committee members were now expected to have a specific role, and job descriptions were prepared to serve as a guide for their successors. 'Working groups' replaced sub-committees. Meetings, which had for many years been held at the Friends' House near Euston, moved to more Spartan accommodation at the University of Westminster.

It was necessary to find funds to modernise the office equipment so that a smaller staff could maintain the level of services. The 200 Club set up in 1990 to raise money for a second laser printer failed to reach its target on time.

The printer was purchased nonetheless as the previous printing firm had been unable to type-set the show results.

In 1992 a Grand Raffle raised a profit of £911 for funds. By 1995 the Society was receiving less income from subscriptions, registrations, and transfers due to lower membership and the office staff were not being used to capacity. The work of the Milk Recording Secretary and of the Show Secretary were therefore brought back into the office, having been out-sourced when there had been a back-log of registrations. Computerisation of the Society's work had started with the registrations and the compilation of the Herd Book. Later the work of the Show and Milk Recording Secretaries was made compatible with the office before being reabsorbed. By gradually producing all publications to camera-ready stage in the office, printing costs were greatly reduced. Services to members were now widened and speedier. By 1993 registrations were sufficiently up-to-date that RAF was no longer acceptable on show entry forms. All kids had to be fully registered before being shown.

In 1996, under the rules of the Charity Commission, the Society was obliged to consult an Independent Financial Adviser and the following year the Society's portfolio was restructured as it did not comply with

the Charity Commission's guidelines. In 1998 some investments were sold and the proceeds used to replace the 'old' and possibly non-millennium compliant computer system. The scope of the Society's services would thus be widened to include internet and e-mail, and, ultimately, the Society's accounts. To satisfy the Charity Commissioners, the accounts had to be laid out differently, but members still needed the information in the old format. This caused extra work for the Auditor, Secretary and Chairman.

At this period directives from Brussels were coming thick and fast. Dairy requirements for the numerous small-goat-keepers who relied on farm-gate sales for a degree of financial return became ever more stringent.

In 1990 premises selling milk or milk products for human consumption had to be registered if more than five milking goats were kept. Before registration the premises had to be inspected and reach a certain standard. The products had to be correctly labelled. Produce from smaller herds could still be sold at the farm-gate, but not from shops, and labelled as from unregistered premises. For many the expense was too great and the producers went out of goat-keeping...and the BGS! By 1993 all goat-keepers had to register with MAFF (for health reasons) and to receive a holding number.

Goat health considerations were also causing problems. In the past British herds had an enviable health record. In 1990 Caseus Lymphadenitis was diagnosed in imported animals. Six herds were subject to movement restrictions in March and six months later received a request from the ministry to destroy the animals. After widespread BSE in cattle in 1992 a Scrapie Monitored Scheme was brought in. Stock for export could only come from a herd whose holding had been registered with MAFF as Scrapie-free premises for a minimum of three years. There were repercussions on the show scene too. Milkers could not be shown until thirty days after kidding, no pregnant goats could be shown and show-grounds had to be 'clean', i.e. ungrazed by sheep for the three months leading up to the show.

The controversy regarding CAE and shows continued to rumble on and was aggravated by the new anti-Scrapie regulations. Because of restrictions imposed due to these two diseases fewer goats were being shown and the old classifications of shows needed amending to one which took the health status of the show into consideration. BCCs and CCs were to be awarded to those of champion standard regardless of numbers present, but could be withheld if the animals were not of high enough quality. English Golden Guernseys became eligible for BCCs. There were other changes to the show season as well. A formula by which proteins could be incorporated into the Milking Competition points had finally been devised and the Milking Competition awards had been adjusted

accordingly. The first six goats placed in the 'Championship Parade' were now published in the show results (loose sheets sent out with the Journal) but the Judge's Comments were discontinued. Sunday shows were becoming more usual and regulations had to be brought in to enable exhibitors to compete in a milking competition at a second show twenty four hours after the first.

Judges' Training Seminars continued to be held regularly throughout the nineties. They provided valuable training for stewards as well as those hoping to become judges but there was a major drawback. As restrictions gradually tightened with regard to CAE and Scrapie it became difficult to get goats for the necessary practical sessions.

Instead a system whereby a 'Probationary judge' accompanied a licensed judge at a recognised show was devised as an essential prerequisite to gaining a licence. The various leaflets relating to the running of shows, stewarding, milking competitions and judging were all revised. Judges' Conferences - until now a hurried hour-long meeting over lunch between the AGM and Affiliated Societies' Conference - became a Sunday meeting moving around the country.

Also revised at this time were the criteria relating to the various BGS trophies. Many of these had been donated in the early years of the Society to shows which no longer existed, or under criteria which metrication, for example, had rendered out of date. The conditions of the award had therefore to be tailored to fit modern shows whilst bearing in mind the wishes of the original donors. The committee also decided that because of storage and insurance costs the Society would accept no further trophies. An exception was made a few years later when a picture (not a silver trophy) was donated to commemorate the achievements of Ashdene Metaphor. It was to be awarded for the Highest Milk Recorded Champion.

At her death Metaphor held the record for the highest recorded yield in the Northern Hemisphere and a lifetime yield of 21408 kg in 3210 days. In 1990 her half-sister Theban Merle had broken the 55 year old record for a 24 hour yield. (Others had given more on occasion but without the required level of butter-fats). In the 1997/98 lactation period Chesswood Amelia gave a record AR yield of 3212 kgs in 365 days.

In 1993 a Dam of Excellence award was introduced. Similar to the Sire of Merit award, a milking goat needed the following to qualify: four daughters each gaining a * or Q* or the prefix AR, RM, or R; four sons each gaining SM; any combination of six sons and daughters gaining the above awards. In 1996 a Certificate of Merit for the best female or male on inspection entered in the British section of the Herd Book was introduced. Unlike the BCCs it is a one-off award not accumulating towards any further qualification.

In 1995 - nearly sixty years after twin sisters Didgemere Dream and Deebee both gained their championship – another pair (Atherton Geneva and Genoa) repeated this achievement – and in the same year! In the intervening years only one pair of full sisters and a brother/sister twin pair had attained a similar distinction.



*CH AR197 Atherton Genoa Q*2 BrCh*



*CH AR210 Atherton Geneva Q*2 BrCh*

In 1998 milk recording regulations were changed so that it was no longer mandatory to record the whole herd. Certain categories could be exempt i.e. veterans of eight years and over and those whose lactations exceeded 730 days. This move benefited commercial herds which could now record selected high yielders without the previous prohibitive expense of recording the whole herd.

The nineties saw several more significant events. Two further Hyde Park Festivals were held (in 1992 and 1995). Mrs Abbey (Didgemere) celebrated her centenary but died a year later. Toggenburg and Saanen semen was imported from Switzerland in 1994. For many years Her Majesty the Queen had been Patron of the Society, but in November the BGS was one of those selected when she reduced the number of societies she honoured in this way. Another patron had thus to be sought and Princess Alexandra has been the Society's Patron since spring of 1998.

Early in the decade an EGM debated another suggestion that the BGS become a society for 'Dairy' goats only. This was before the influx of Angora, Boer and Pygmy goats. However the resolution was rejected as it was felt that a bigger society representing all goats would have a stronger voice when dealing with the ever increasing officialdom