

Chapter Eleven - In to the 21st Century 2000 to 2006

A mere twenty years after entering its second century the Society was facing the challenge of a new millennium.

As well as celebrating this great historical moment, the Society had to make sure that, as an institution, it was able to deal with all the technical and administrative hurdles that working in an electronic era might produce.

The millennium was celebrated in several ways. A special lunch was held at the Millennium AGM at York racecourse and, in the Autumn, a very successful conference, hosted jointly by the Highland Goat Club and the Scottish Goat-keepers' Federation, was held at Blair Atholl. A porcelain model of Theban Conchita was produced, a limited edition of 100, which was sold for funds.

Special rosettes were awarded at the shows. Various medals won by the late Miss Mostyn-Owen over the years had been donated to the BGS by her estate and Bronze Medals were awarded to both male and female goats achieving their Championships and Breed Championships during the 2000 season; any milker qualifying for an AR with a lactation completed during 2000; and the winners of the eight BGS trophies which are not allocated at shows. At the end of August, Stoneleigh hosted a three-day National Goat Show - on condition that the animals were there for all three days. Therefore, as well as the usual classes, various additional stands and displays were organised. One of the main attractions was a pageant 'A Hundred Years of Goats'. The fancy dress competition included Mr Peter Cox giving an excellent impersonation of Mr Holmes-Pegler!



JUDGING IN PROGRESS AT PETERBOROUGH SHOW
The author in the foreground

Not Peter Cox! Holmes- Pegler from the eighth edition of his Book of the Goat

The BGS was modernised with new equipment - the computers were networked and updated. The Society went onto the internet with two web-sites and an e-mail address. Forms could now be downloaded and 'in-house' printing became possible with the addition of a scanner. Later, when no member volunteered to edit the *Monthly Journal*, this was produced in the office by the Secretary.

Another millennium project was to widen the Society's commitment to A.I. The first A.I. Conference was held in 2000 and a push was made to train more inseminators at two-day courses nationwide. Efforts were made to increase the semen bank, a policy which was to prove beneficial in the autumn of 2001.

In February of 2001 goat-keepers learned with dismay that Foot and Mouth Disease, virtually unknown in Britain for decades, had returned in a particularly virulent form. The majority of vets and Government officials had no experience of dealing with an outbreak so the disease spread rapidly, devastating certain areas especially in the North. For BGS members this meant no meetings (the AGM was postponed for six months and the President, Mrs. Goodwin, remained in office for an unusual third term), no registrations (ear-marking was impossible unless the breeder was able to do their own), no transfers, and - as the months crept by - no matings. Without shows there was no comparison of the season's stock, and breeders were invited to submit photographs of milkers to be assessed. This was an interesting exercise as stock from all over the country could be compared. The BGS relies on income from fees and the Society's finances were starting to look unhealthy, although when life-members and Affiliated Societies realised the situation, they contributed generously.

Goat-keeping ceased to be the fairly relaxed occupation it had once been. Legislation restricting the free movement of livestock provided great obstacles to showing. Although some shows were held in 2002 the numbers were much reduced, as were the numbers of exhibitors. Each succeeding year more shows were prepared to accept livestock entries but even in 2010 some shows have not re-instated goats and, for various reasons, numbers of goat exhibitors have not returned to the pre-Foot and Mouth level.

Other health restrictions came into force. Stock can now only be exported from Scrapie Monitored herds and, after years of discussion about CAE testing and shows, in 2005 a rule required that all exhibits at BGS recognised shows must come from 'whole-herd tested' herds. In other words herds in which all goats had been tested for CAE and had a negative result.

The previous system of A, B, C, and R shows was scrapped with all recognised shows (other than Breed Shows) now having all BGS awards available, to be awarded, regardless of numbers present, at the Judge's discretion. This meant that exceptional animals were not penalised, as it were, if there was a lack of competition.

As a result of the constantly changing legislation from DEFRA, together with the on-going regulations concerning Scrapie and other diseases, two regular columns have appeared in the *Monthly Journal*. These have been 'Goats in the News' by Ruth Goodwin, a worldwide look at things caprine, and 'Goat Health and Welfare' written until 2010 by BGS Health and Welfare Officer, Charlie Peck, which kept members abreast of any DEFRA rulings. In 2010 the Health and Welfare role was taken over by Nick Clayton of the Goat Veterinary Society.

One such ruling, although not strictly 'Health and Welfare', required all goats to be 'tagged' for identification from

July 2005 with the ear-tag providing both the holding number and the goat's unique number. Previously identification of BGS registered goats had been by earmark showing the breeder's or club's BGS allocated letters and an individual number which could be repeated from year to year because there was a third element - a year letter. Once the identification number ceased to come from the BGS an earmark certificate was no longer required with a registration application.

The Society's finances continued to cause concern. In 2000 Area Representatives were reduced from eight to six, and for the 2004 election, there was a more drastic re-organisation with the Area Representatives being phased out totally. The overall committee was reduced to ten, elected under a more complex system with some candidates elected specifically to represent regions of the United Kingdom. With only ten members everyone has to be responsible for a specific section of the Society's activities.

Membership dropped as a result of the Foot and Mouth outbreak and the subsequent restrictions. On a more positive note, the Society was gaining more overseas members, especially from Europe and the USA. Innovation was demonstrated with the import of Dutch goats by David Will and Nick Parr, who advertised the services of Germ K in the September 2005 Journal. Previously the most recent import had been of semen undertaken in 1994 by Virginia Crane.

With fewer shows the Society had to make its presence more noticeable. Eye-catching banners and new membership leaflets were bought. After ten years as Chairman, a decade in which, due to his efforts, the office had been modernised, Peter Cox did not accept the nomination for the position, although he did remain on the Committee. He was succeeded briefly by his Vice-Chairman, Barry Clark, then, in April 2002, Richard Wood was elected.

By the autumn of 2004 the Society had been in existence for 125 years and celebrated with an Autumn Conference at Chatsworth. A porcelain model produced by the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Company was kindly donated by Brian Perry and raised £580 in the auction. Autumn Conferences hosted by Affiliated Societies have long been a feature of the BGS year, and in October 2005, for the first time, the Society's members were invited to Northern Ireland for the 40th anniversary of the Northern Ireland Goat Club. Another invitation received at this time came from the Society's Patron, Princess Alexandra, for four members to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in the Queen's 80th birthday year.