

Chapter Four. Years of Hardship 1940 to 1945.

The coming of the war brought a change in the fortunes of the BGS. As World War II progressed the BGS found itself in a Catch 22 situation brought about by the increase in interest in goat-keeping, and the restrictions imposed by rationing.

The Stud Goat Scheme had to be abandoned - no petrol being available for inspecting males - although a Stud Goat Circular was still produced. Petrol rationing also meant no shows, although one, Wetherby, was held in the spring of 1940, and no meetings. Paper rationing meant that although the 1942 Year Book was a fat one (100 pages with both 'Rules and Regulations' and Membership List included), subsequent issues were reduced to 60 pages with circulation limited to 2000 with a possible 500 to America. The Monthly Journal was little more than three sheets of Official Notices and advertisements.

However milk rationing meant that more people with a small corner of land began to keep goats to supplement their milk supply especially if they had young children. The goats' meat, butter and cheese were not rationed either. Feed rations for goats were allocated twice a year, from May to September and from 1st October to 30th April. The winter ration could be supplemented for milkers (supplying milk for sale); males at stud (with extra for Stud Goat Scheme males when the scheme was running); and female kids being reared as milking replacements. To qualify for the supplement goats had to be registered with the BGS. Owners had therefore to be members, so BGS membership was swelling rapidly just when the Society was being forced to restrict its various publications. The Editor was in the unusual position of having to keep 'copy' back.

In 1942 there were changes in the membership rules. Cottager members - who had received full privileges at half the subscription - were discontinued after December 1942. Associates became 'Associates or Cottagers' at full subscription rate and a lower-paying grade 'Subscriber' was to be implemented after the war when the number of publications was no longer limited by rationing.

The rapid increase in membership (by July 1945 it was over 3000) and the number of goats had repercussions too. The demand for goats for milk was such that goats of all types and quality were kept and this had its effect on the quality of goats shown immediately after the war. Years of careful breeding were watered down and the milking bucket became more important than conformation. However at the lower levels stock had been improved by the generations produced by the Stud Goat Scheme.

Without shows there had been no need for the Show Register, a list similar to today's Identification Register, which

gave an 'identity' to goats of unknown origin so that they could be shown. In 1943 it was therefore replaced by the Supplementary Register for kids from an unknown dam and a HB sire born as a result of the Stud Goat Scheme.

Originally just the goat and its number were listed but, in January 1945, the sire's number also appeared and in July 1945 the Identification Register was opened for animals of entirely unknown parentage. In 1943 over a thousand goats were registered in the Supplementary Register. Why? Because goats needed to be registered to qualify for the rations!

All these registrations caused a boom in prefixes- from 46 in 1940 to a peak of 291 in 1943. It was now getting harder to make up fresh names of up to ten letters so prefixes had to be acquired after a maximum of six kids had been registered by any one breeder without a prefix. Affixes issued prior to June 1941 could still be used, but after that date only prefixes were issued, and in January 1943, all current affixes were 'converted' to prefixes.

In 1943 the 'Registers' for BA, BS, and BT were discontinued. The breeds were now considered to be sufficiently established to allow kids of suitable pedigree to be registered straight into the breed sections. Occasionally, however, goats in the 'section' failed to conform to type (the wrong colour for example). Goats registered in the British Section after July 1943 and eligible under amended regulations for registration in the AN, BA, BS and BT sections were transferred (by order of the Committee 22nd November 1945) to the relevant Section in the July/Dec 1945 Herd Book.

The lack of shows had other repercussions - the Prize Record and show reports disappeared from the Herd Books - still being issued twice a year - although, because of the increased numbers of prefixes, registrations, and transfers of ownership - these were no slimmer. No stars or Q stars could be awarded hence any daggers for males. Thus Milk Recording became an important measure of an animal's performance. The snag was that the MMB had a staff shortage and, for a period, had to limit the number of herds to 100. This was eased in 1946 to include herds in proximity to other herds and milked at convenient times.

In June 1942 the index of the Herd Book changed to being a list of breeders rather than owners, although the Foundation Book continued to list owners. In 1943 Fransham Fraulein became the first goat to qualify for the AR prefix. The Stud Goat Scheme was re-introduced for the 1942/3 season and for several years thereafter.

In 1943 a gift of goats was sent to Malta. After the 1942 siege of Malta its goat population had halved. The terrain of the island is unsuitable for cattle and the island thus lost most of its milk supply. An appeal was launched for money or stock and eventually eight Saanen and BS males were sent out to Malta, a gift from the goat-keepers of Britain to the goat-keepers of Malta. The expenses were paid by the British Goat Society.

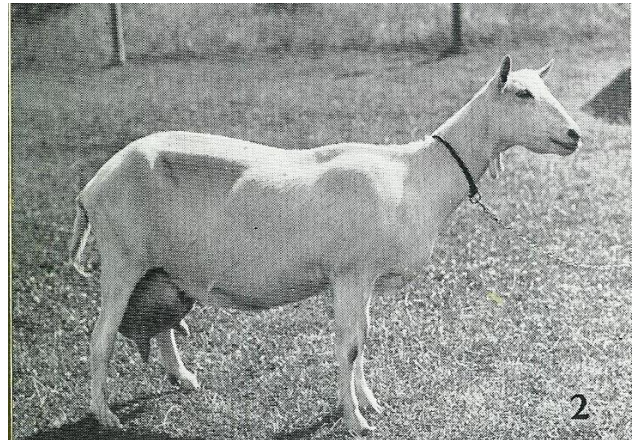
Because of petrol rationing meetings were difficult although the AGMs were held in London in the years 1943-45. The Society was largely run by the Chairman and Secretary. At this time both the Secretary and Herd Book Editor were elected annually and had not only a salary but clerical assistance. A Treasurer was also elected annually. H.E. Jeffery was the elected Secretary at this period - but seems to have been an elected committee member as well. The Committee consisted of eighteen members elected annually. Affiliated Societies were entitled to provide a delegate. At the start of the war there were a few Affiliated Societies and only five or six delegates listed but later on the clubs really mushroomed.

In the early years of the war no committee meetings were held in London. However at an EGM in 1944 it was agreed that committee members could be paid the 3rd class return rail fare (if claimed). The AGM was followed by

a Brains Trust in which one of the panel was an American, Major Linnquist. He raised the idea of an exchange of Toggenburgs to provide fresh blood for both UK and US herds. Nothing came of this idea through lack of interest by UK breeders – a pity perhaps but hardly surprising under war conditions.

Prior to 1943 judges had been elected annually in a similar way to those members standing for election to the committee - i.e. by the general membership. Voting papers were sent out to members and the twenty-five candidates with the highest votes were elected. Any nominees living in Scotland, Ireland or Wales, not included in the twenty-five, could also be put on the Judges' List if they had received not less than 20% of the valid votes cast.

Despite the problems attendant on the war and post-war conditions, the October 1944/45 lactation period showed a return of the 5000lb milkers, with Malpas Melba giving 5346lbs 2oz and Thundersley Petronella 5173lb 10oz. A supplementary list of yields between 1500 and 2000lbs was also published.



RM5 Malpas Melba - whose yield of 5346lbs 2oz. was the second highest yield ever recorded by a goat.

Amongst the many new members who joined at this time were a number of well-known names whose prefixes are still familiar. These included Miss Duthie (Tanatside), Mr Barber (Upware), Miss Dupree (Parford), Mrs Elliot (Culduthel), Miss Goldsmith (Silverhoof), Mrs. Harrison (Foxley), Mrs. Macnamara (Chessetts), Miss Rigg (Hill), Miss Rochford (Berkham), Miss Sadler (Uffdown), Mrs. Sawyer (Vertwood) and Miss Weldon (Tracey).