



# American Cotswold Record Association

## Raising and Exhibiting Cotswold Sheep: One Family's Experience

I was asked to write a few words about our family's experience with Cotswolds, so here goes! We were introduced to Cotswold sheep when our girls, Nancy and Eliza, were Cloverbuds in the Pioneer Valley Young Shepherds 4-H Club of western Massachusetts. They started a sheep project with one ewe lamb each. I had raised market lambs in 4-H as a kid, but compared to prepping slick-shorn market lambs for the show ring, Cotswolds took some getting used to. The girls couldn't just card or comb out the vegetable matter if they wanted to preserve the lock structure. We found that with our existing set up and need to practice intensive rotational grazing, their sheep required some special treatment to keep clean and limit VM. Winter was challenging because the sheep would spend more time indoors and hay inevitably got embedded into those beautiful locks. To keep the fleeces clean we experimented with blankets. Some longwool breeders we spoke with were



firmly anti-blanket, but we found that lightweight nylon coats work really well for us so long as they are loose enough not to press on the fleece and they are swapped out for larger blankets over the course of the year.

At small agricultural and 4-H fairs in our area, Cotswolds are still something of a rarity. The girls would clean, belly shear, and attempt to fit their sheep for the show ring without trimming too much wool, but judges, who were often more familiar with meat sheep, sometimes looked askance at the longer fleeces their sheep were sporting. The girls took to saying, "that's my product, so I don't want to clip it all off" when a judge would ask

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South and West Regional Directors needed, please consider volunteering on the Executive Committee

about a longish fleece. Over time and with practice, the girls got better at fitting and were able to show off body shape better without sacrificing too much wool. They also started doing larger shows, where they found judges familiar with wool breeds and more accepting of longer show fleeces. Still, showing is not entirely compatible with growing the best possible fleece for sale, so keep that in mind as the sheep you choose to show invariably wind up with shorter locks.

The girls have focused on fleece sales, expanding their flock over time with an eye more to fleece quality than animal size. This is not entirely compatible with show ring success - at sheep shows size is often the dominant ranking characteristic. Their Cotswolds eventually get very large, but unlike more modern breeds, they may not reach their full size until the beginning of their third year. This is a slight disadvantage on the show circuit, where classes are geared to yearlings and under. As members of the Northeast Sheep and Wool Growers Association (NESWGA) the girls have access to a variety of fiber sales, and they joined the Livestock Conservancy which allows them to market their fleeces with the Shave 'Em to Save 'Em passport sticker. There is a real market out there for blanketed longwool fleeces with long staple length, and the SE2SE program has got a lot of people interested in trying different breeds. Blanketed fleeces are desirable. They have also had good luck selling Cotswold curls to crafters.



Our girls have learned so much by raising sheep, and they consider themselves lucky to have had the privilege of exhibiting them at many great (little and big) fairs and shows. We are proud of our family's small role in helping to keep this historic breed alive and well in the U.S.

As an aside, I'll mention that we recently had the opportunity to take a trip to the U.K. that had been long delayed by the pandemic. We visited relatives and spent some time in the Cotswolds, touring stately homes and wool churches in medieval market towns that were literally designed around the need to handle sheep. We learned that the wool used for the cloth of the infamous "redcoats" of the British army came from Cotswolds. And since the 1300s the presiding officer in the House of Lords has sat upon a sack of wool as a symbol of its importance to their nation. And the tradition of always leaving the top knot on the shorn Cotswolds? That dates from medieval times. The fleeces were so valuable the sheep were always sold without them, and the top knot was left as a sample of the goods. The Corninimum Museum in Cirencester (a Cotswold town founded on an old Roman settlement) has an entire gallery dedicated to Cotswold sheep and the medieval wool trade- a must see if you are ever in the area.

*by Mary Hull of Shatterack View Farm, Russell, MA*



will help sell more breeding stock and connect with each other who have stock for sale. There are ways to bring CBA registered sheep back into the ACRA lines if there is good documentation as to the lineage. Any CBA sheep can always be registered under BCA. This past spring, the board also looked into what it takes to bring semen into the US from the UK. We are still looking into this feasibility. Until the website is finished, please join the Facebook page entitled "American Cotswold Record Association." When posting any

animals for sale be careful about your wording as Facebook does not allow animal sales. A cute ram picture with a statement of wanting new girl friends typically will do the trick! If you are not on Facebook but would like to post, please contact a board member and we will be happy to figure out a way to post on this site for you. There is also a Cotswold page on Facebook too. Last but not least, members of the Livestock Conservancy can also post stock for sale on their webpage.

## UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY

Hello Members,

Hope your breeding season has started. The weather has finally cooled off here in the East.

This year ACRA co-sponsored the Cotswold show at the 2022 All American Junior Sheep Show. This was followed by the North East Youth Sheep Show. Both were held in West Springfield, MA in July. A great time was had by all our youth.

Mari Santalucia with her yearling Ewe, Gabby, won Reserve Champion Cotswold Ewe (Picture on right)

*Just a few notes:*

Dues are Due - Annual dues runs from January 1 to December 31.

Get your registrations in for your 2022 lambs

Nomination papers are due October 15<sup>th</sup> - It's been a fast two years and time to nominate officers and Directors for 2023-2024. Please make sure when nominating someone that they are interested in the position. You can nominate yourself if you're interested! Voting ballots will go out end of October with a due date of November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Happy Fall, Linda Schauwecker



**The new website is in need of the Iconic Cotswold picture!**

**A large Cotswold ram in full wool with a head full of locks and a great background ....You can picture him. You know the shot, right? So pull out your camera and help us with this picture! Send to [sbivankovic@charter.net](mailto:sbivankovic@charter.net)**

## A few Cotswold Thoughts and a bit of History

Rather than to write about Cotswold sheep for this newsletter I decided to make a note about history and the Cotswold sheep. Two well known historical figures in the history of England were closely associated with the breed. The first most definitely unwillingly, and the latter as a desirable undertaking for career advancement.

The first individual was King Richard the first, the Lionhearted, who on his way back from the third crusade was captured in December 1192 and imprisoned by Prince Leopold of Vienna and then turned over to Henry VI the Holy Roman Emperor. He demanded a huge ransom of silver, 150,000 marks, and the ransom was paid by a tax placed upon all of England. Several smaller Cistercian monasteries unable to provide silver or gold contributed a total of fifty thousand sacks of Cotswold wool as their share of the "king's ransom". At that point in time the wool industry accounted for 50-60% of the GDP of the kingdom. Richard actually remained a prisoner of Henry from December 1192 until February 1194 when the ransom was paid and Richard had to humble himself before Henry.

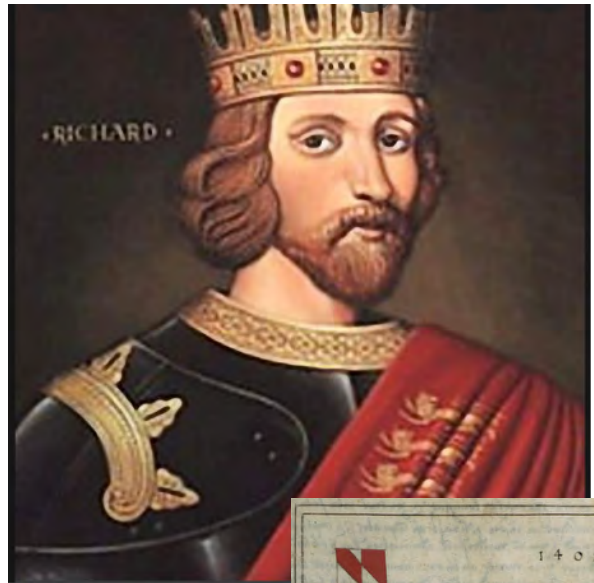
The second person was Geoffrey Chaucer who in part due to his father having a minor bureaucratic role in the English government received a royal appointment as the royal wool customs officer for the port of London in the last quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. He was familiar with the wool trade in Europe as he had served several ambassadorial functions for the crown. In fact he had been to Flanders many times and Italy, both being major purchasers of English wool. Bruges and then Antwerp were the major markets in Flanders, now Belgium. There is still a very large tower in Bruges called the wool tower which was atop the wool guild building. Bruges was widely known for its beautiful tapestries and several are on exhibit there in their tapestry museum. Florence was a major purchaser in Italy, a city Chaucer was familiar with in his role as ambassador.

The excellence of Cotswold wool is the quality of its whiteness which allows for a remarkable

uptake of dyes with great brightness and true reflection of the desired hue. The other quality is its luster which gives a shine to the finished product. This made it a superior choice for the dying of tapestries. As an example, Chris and I visited the Cotswolds in 1999 and went to the wool mill at Filkins. We spoke with the manager and told them we raised Cotswold sheep in the states. They told us that they had spun several yards of Cotswold wool for a lady who wanted her wedding gown to be made of Cotswold wool and that there was a small amount of it left in their store. Without any further guidance we were able to find it from several feet away because of its luster.

I am aware that I digressed from the usual sheep information but as a lover of history I hope that the readers find this at least mildly interesting.

By Max Crossman of Ewetopia Farm



A

King Richard the Lionhearted (above) and Geoffrey Chaucer (right)



## MESSAGE FROM OUR ACRA PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Shepherds:

Fall is finally here and hopefully a reprieve is on the horizon from sweltering heat and a notable parasite season. As shepherds we all bear similar struggles and uphill battles with our animals. As the fall comes upon us, we welcome cooler nights to make our flocks more comfortable and our work more bearable. Many of us have either already put our rams in or are preparing to do so. Many of the big Cotswold shows are eminent and preparations have left us busy. As a handweaver/spinner I have been prepping many fleeces and getting them ready for the fall fiber shows.

This past June, our VP (Beth) and I went to Knoxville attending the Handweavers Guild Association's (HGA) National conference called Convergence. We spent three days taking spinning, weaving, and dye classes and learning so much. When we mentioned being Cotswold shepherds we were met with big smiles and complements on the breed and our wool standards. That level of affirmation was encouraging as we work to better market Cotswold's with all their breed benefits in mind.

The board has worked very hard to create a website that will work to promote the breed and especially ACRA heritage standards. Our expectation is to help shepherds market their animals and create a central place to research, find and purchase animals as well as learn about farms around the nation that house them. We are almost done with continued "work in progress" and I hope that you'll check it out and use the available resources. If many of us use the bulletin board/marketplace/store tabs this will help show diversity and representation around the country, then the draw will only grow. Many of us have focused on adding genetics to our flocks and a central availability list can help in getting those details deeper than resources have provided before.

Please help to share the news that ACRA is growing and help inspire others to check out the new website. Hoping to see you at a show, connect on the website or see your pics on the Facebook page. We can all find connection through our beloved Cotswold! Kathy

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR MIDWEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Summer is winding down here at Kline Creek Farm. We threshed oats in August and will be harvesting corn in October. As an 1890s living history farm, we showcase historical methods and livestock breeds to educate the public. Today, oats and corn are harvested with a combine. A combine is called such because it literally "combines" the harvesting functions of multiple machines from the past. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, oats had to be cut and bundled into sheaves with a reaper-binder and then threshed to remove the grain from the stalk. Corn had to be picked by hand and then shelled at a later time.

Both our oats and corn were planted using our draft horses and both crops go into our livestock rations throughout the year. For our sheep, we only feed grain to lambs and lactating ewes, but we love being able to grow our own grain for our sheep, just as farmers would have done in the 1890s!

Lisa Carpenter  
Historical Farming Program Coordinator  
Kline Creek Farm

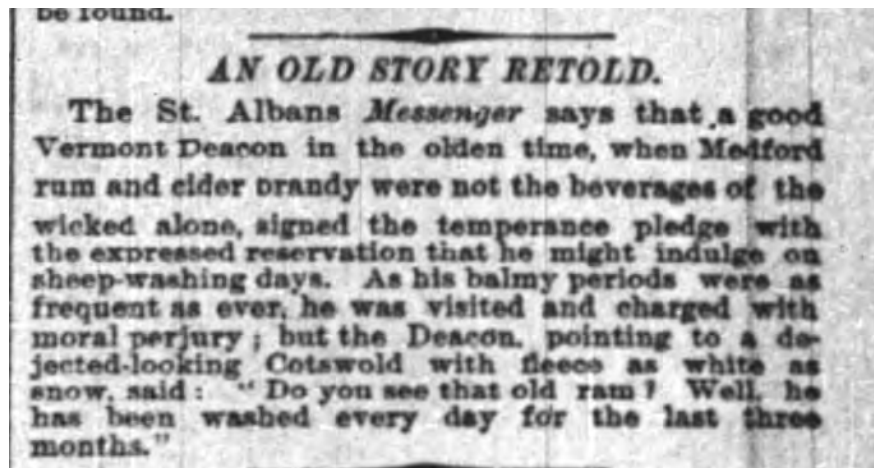




Lisa Carpenter at Kline Creek Farm

## A little fun

We've had a lot of history this Newsletter. How about a good old Cotswold joke? The following was found while searching the term "Cotswold" in [newspapers.com](http://newspapers.com). Published in The New York Times on Feb. 25, 1878



## What else is coming up?

The Livestock Conservancy has a new program in which our ACRA board will be attending over the next year. It is their new "Cultivating Leadership in Breed Organizations, Training, and Accreditation Program." Although ACRA has been around for 144 years, we could still learn a few new things! We hope at the end that ACRA will earn their bronze level of accreditation and maybe even a higher level. Watch for more information about this training in the next newsletter.

Lots of fall sheep shows and wool shows. Take lots of pictures and let us know how your farm and sheep are doing!

A BIG thank you to Mary Hull and Max Crossman for their contributions to the newsletter. If you are interested in writing for the next newsletter, please send to Beth Ivankovic at [sbivankovic@charter.net](mailto:sbivankovic@charter.net)