

THE GOLDSTONE HERD

Chandler and Dunn was formed in 1922 when G.S. Dunn became a partner after his marriage to Miss W. Chandler. However, the farm was originally started by Peter Chandler in 1809 when he purchased 28 acres of land at Lower Goldstone. Since then the succeeding generations have expanded the business and now farm approximately 604 hectares.



“Apples for lunch”

Today the farm consists of a fruit enterprise of about 200 hectares, an arable section of approximately 206 hectares and the remainder designated to a livestock section comprising sheep and Sussex cattle. These cattle are grazed on the marshland and fields that are unsuitable for cropping, allowing for premium use of the farm’s land. The more hostile winter months, from around November until April, see the cattle housed in yards closer to the centre of the farm. Protecting the cattle from the elements is obviously the primary concern, but the location of the yards is ideal for maximising the products of the farm. By-products of the other enterprises, such as potatoes, apples, pears and straw are fed out to the animals over this winter period and as well as being supremely economic, the situation of the yards mean there is minimal hassle in obtaining and distributing the feed. A certain amount of grass is conserved also and a small amount of concentrate is fed to the young stock and fattening cattle.

The herd itself comprises approximately 80 cows, which are subsequently split into two groups, one calving in March/April and the other in September/October. This allows us to calve heifers at 2 and a half years old. Most of the bull calves are castrated with rubber rings, only the best left entire for later selection. All young stock are Signet recorded, which gives another selection criteria as well as visible and breeding. The cattle that are not deemed up to breeding standard are fattened and sold through the butcher’s shop and other outlets.

The herd was started by my father John Dunn in 1943 when he purchased a small number of cows from Waldershare Park near Dover which was owned by the Earl of Guildford. He then acquired a bull, Capenor Colonel from Mr. Henry Brandt at Nutfield in Surrey. Several of the female lines can be traced back but the most prominent is Snowdrop.

8 years later, in 1951, a group of breeders collaborated to start breeding “polled” cattle. At the time this technique was not highly thought of by many breeders. However, this group including my father was probably 50 years ahead of its time.



*John Dunn (left) and stockman Ted Barnes,
Sandwich Fat Stock Show December 1960*

The process was started by using a Red Angus bull, "Red Jake" and graded up the same way as the "development" cattle of today. Possibly more than one sire should have been used at the beginning, which would have given more options on bloodlines, but it was not to be and due to a certain resistance within the breed, polled cattle virtually disappeared.

We have always maintained a small nucleus of polled females so when the society widened the breed options for development we made a conscious decision to expand the polled lines. We have used Black Angus bulls from Genus A.I. Nightingale Regent and Galantray Preditor who has red genes and has produced several red females. The other breed we chose was the Salers, (not at all influenced by my brother who had them in Zimbabwe); they make lovely half-bred cows for commercial crossing a maternal breed. The 2 sire lines we used Lowca Grandee and Cumbria Bruno. These have produced some excellent females and a polled Bruno bull, which has also been used in the herd.

In 2000 we purchased a polled bull, Stonepit Katawampus from Bernard Pearson, which we used on the half-bred cows. The three-quarter heifers have now calved and a young three quarter bull is having his first crop of calves this spring. The polled bulls now being used include three quarter bred Wellington 1st of Goldstone by Elbridge, Wellington 4th out of Pepsi 1st of Goldstone half bred Angus cow, both of these bulls are producing a high percentage of polled calves and Katawampus 1st of Goldstone out of Ester 2nd of Goldstone who is a half bred Saler cross.

In the early 1980's we bred Goldstone General 7th by Deedstone General 4th out of Goldstone Violet 27th, this bull went on to be the herd sire producing many good females and young bulls and had the biggest impact on the herd as any bull. One of his sons won the Maidstone show and sale and sold to Mr. N. Ventham for £2,700 where he went on to leave his mark on that very good herd winners of the herd competition many times.

Also in the 1980's, 1987 to be precise was our high point in the show ring, winning the South of England, Norfolk and Royal shows to take the coveted prize of "Female of the Year". The highlight of that success was at the South of England where she won Reserve and Supreme Champion of the show coming second only to a very large Charolais bull. The female in question was in the yearling class, Snowdrop 41st of Goldstone by Boxted Lion Fanfaron a bull hired from Les Stevens. She went on to produce several replacement females, the oldest one being a Z (16 years) and still producing quality calves.



As I mentioned earlier, we market all of the beef we produce ourselves. Started just after the B.S.E outbreak, with pedigree prices both depressed and depressing, we decided to sell beef packs, (as many now do). In 2000 we purchased a portacabin which was already decked out for a butchers cutting room and we started selling cuts of meat to the public as the demand grew we decided to move premises. In August of 2004 we opened our new shop, a converted barn "Goldstone Butchers" selling home produced Sussex beef, lamb and pork.

We now supply the "Goods Shed" a farmers market open six days of the week, with sides and bodies of beef, lamb and pork and also supply some local butchers.

All the stock is slaughtered in our local abattoir, "J.R. Farm Meats" a small, family concern, situated about 5 miles from the farm. The stock is slaughtered on a Tuesday or Wednesday and carcasses are collected on a Thursday and then taken back to the shop where the beef is hung for 3 weeks before being cut.

In 2003 we took the option of managing our neighbours herd which allowed us to employ a stockman Robbie Clark. The herd has reverted back to the local breed (Sussex) which hopefully solve the problem of sourcing enough cattle for the shop and other outlets.

Wishing everybody a successful year and thanks to the Society for asking me to write about our herd.

Roger Dunn April 2005