

HERD FEATURE

THE TROTTENDEN HERD



Trotenden used to be a typical Wealden farm with some 30 acres of hops, 50 acres of topfruit, 30 acres of arable and the remainder grass, some of which is on steep banks against Goudhurst village. On the grass were grazed a flock of some 125 ewes and about 20 beef cows of varying backgrounds, with their followers which were always by a Sussex bull. As was typical on hop farms, the principal purpose of the cattle was to produce FYM for the hops.

During the 80s and early 90s, the hops and apples were phased out and by 1996 the entire acreage was grass. The buildings at Hammonds which used to contain 220 tons of fruit storage and an insulated pack house are now let for light industry/storage. In winter 2001/2 some 14 acres were planted with mixed woodland to take advantage of the Woodland Grant Schemes.



Trotenden Prebble 42nd (2009)

From the late sixties replacement cows were all pedigree stock, purchased privately or at the biannual sales. In 1972, when the Herd Book was opened the non-pedigree cows were inspected and nine female families were accepted for registration and one of those families, Terpsichore, still survives. It is in fact the most successful line in the herd. From that time unregistered stock were phased out.

Breeding policy has always been to improve the herd by the use of the best bull available at whatever the cost and only a few females have been bought in.



Trotenden Prebble 42nd (2010)

At the autumn Show & Sale in 1972 Boxted Despot 7th, as winner of the junior bull class, was purchased for 1050gns against an average for the class of 427 gns. At that sale, there were 44 bulls catalogued, but only about half were actually sold.

Routine weighing has taken place from the sixties as an aid to female selection and since 1978 the herd has been recorded with the MLC/Signet. In addition all the yearling stock are scanned at the spring weighing - the first Sussex to be scanned - in order to measure backfat levels and muscle depth.



Petworth Lion Premier 28th

In 1985, when it seemed difficult to find a bull good enough to continue to improve the herd, a decision was taken to purchase a Breed Development Scheme bull (Petworth Lion Premier 28th) which was one quarter Limousin. This has reduced fat cover and waste, improved muscling, and increased stature in the herd without any change in the temperament of the stock. From his first calf crop Trottenden Premier 1st was exported to South Africa.

The intention was to continue to keep the entire herd at 12½% Limousin blood, but this proved difficult initially as relatively few breeders had used Limousin blood. It is now more widely accepted that the introduction of 'foreign' blood is an acceptable way of achieving particular characteristics which the market demands, for instance polling.



Trottenden Despot 13th



Trottenden Keystone 2nd
Bull of the Year 1999/2000

Bulls have been registered and shown in breed sales since 1977. Since 1988 we have shown regularly at the summer shows and have won both Bull & Female of the Year several times.

We have also won the Intermediate section of the Herd Competition several times.

The herd is managed on a strictly low cost basis. With the exception of animals being prepared for show, the herd is entirely grass fed, grazing from late April to as late in the Autumn as the weather will allow, and on bag silage during the winter.



Wellington 3rd of Goldstone

Calves are creep fed towards the end of the summer. On yarding, bulls are fed a ration to maintain growth at approximately 1.25 kg per day so that they are ready for slaughter at 14-16 months and heifers at about half that rate of growth. The heifers then graze the following summer season and the best are selected for keeping in the herd. The others are sold at the official Show and Sales. They used to be sold in the autumn, but in the last 2 years have been sold in the following spring, on both occasions realising the highest average price for bulling heifer consignments. Bulls are selected for showing during their first winter on the basis of their conformation, stature, and growth performance and the scanning results.



Trottenden Terpsichore 12th (Don Masters) & Trottenden Premier 14th (Pete Masters)
being judged Breed & Reserve Champions
by Peter Szechenyi, South of England Show 1996