

History of Advanced Performance Suffolks.

By Ian Turner

It was this advertisement that brought us together to form the APS Syndicate Consisting of Stan, Gerald and myself – from widely different locations, but with the similar objectives of introducing new genetics into the Australian meat sheep industry.

I immediately rang Tracy Haslem, a USA breeder, to start the search for the best animals he could find that fitted the criteria, while the authorities suggested we would be better off working together. A few phone calls and negotiations over the phone ended up with me joining Stan in this venture, with Stan flying over to the USA to link up with Tracy to undertake the purchases. Gerald joined us during that process. It was with great pride that Stan noted, that despite our urgent throwing together to form the APS syndicate, that over the whole 37 years, we did not have one argument. It was a totally positive and stimulating partnership.

These were exactly the type of sheep that would be needed to produce large lean lambs that the expanding USA market was requiring.

The Selection Decisions

The advertisement basically outlined where we could select from, and with Tracy's vital assistance, we sought out the best Suffolks we could find that had a strong commercial background, or at least, strong commercial traits. We were extremely happy with the selections we were able to make. (We must make mention and recognize that it was the extra strong push by Angora goat producers who wanted to improve their industry that, when added to our own import enquiries, helped enable this importation protocol to be drawn up).

We selected one ram and 4 ewes (one of which was pregnant) from the Holwegner stud and the one ram from Brigham Young University. The Holwegner stud was extremely dominant in Huff Ranch bloodlines. Costs and time basically restricted us to these sheep at this stage, with USA breeders also needing to be receptive to us purchasing – there are two main reactions – prestige from such a sale, general assistance to advance the breed worldwide, or rejection due to a protectionist mindset or fear of what the stringent health testing might find and possibly affecting future sales elsewhere.

It was about halfway through our 8 year quarantine program that a vet, Dr Kennedy who wrote a regular article in The Banner magazine, aired the issue of 'Spider Syndrome' and that US breeders should come clean on this issue.

This was a simple recessive disorder, but in quarantine, we had no way of knowing whether any of the sheep we had were carriers, or not. Ultimately, it was found that the Holwegner ram and at least one of the ewes were carriers. Without downplaying this issue, we are proud of the fact we were totally open and honest about it, and thoroughly co-operated with authorities, breed societies and researchers. We are also very pleased that the supply of our breeding records and access to our stock enabled researchers to firstly confirm it was a simple recessive (in the USA falsification of records and pedigrees led their researchers to believe they were not dealing with a simple recessive gene), and then find a gene marker. There is a simple genetic test for it in existence now and we have not marketed any genetics from carriers or possible carriers since that was available. From our records and to the best of our knowledge, all the sheep in our dispersals and the lots in the semen sale were spider clean.

This importation and our 8 years of quarantine to ascertain the imports were Scrapie clean, came at huge expense, plus enormous time, energy and committed determination to overcome the many challenges to see them through to release. The program was affected by quite a few hurdles, including a major shift in government policy to up the agistment from the \$75/head/year (as listed in the advert) to some \$365 with numbers that we were locked into breeding (for scrapie) and then keeping for the 5 years, all under the guise of 'cost recovery'. It shouldn't take you long to work out the costs for agistment alone – we left quarantine with 171 head.

There was also a toxic industrial gas leak that saw Torrens Island and nearby areas evacuated – a wind change saved the livestock. Major mismanagement saw two of our breeding programs fail (1986 & 1988) when major requirements in the AI & ET programs were not undertaken by the authorities; three of our top young pure 1985 rams were killed through feeding mismanagement – fortunately A852439 was saved, but he suffered a digestive inefficiency for the rest of his life.

A few years after release, when we were reflecting during our annual get together to class the previous drop of lambs and working out the next mating program, Stan asked, 'If the opportunity existed, would you do it again?'

After thought, our collective response was, 'Yes, but we'd make sure all the 'i's were dotted and the 't's were crossed – in writing! CONTINUED PAGE 5.....

China Export-

As you may know, there was a shipment of Suffolk ewes and rams that were selected to be exported to China earlier in the year.

There was 10 studs that had sheep selected; 315 export certificates were created and process and these comprised of 282 ewes and 33 rams.

IMPORTATION OF SHEEP OR GOATS FROM USA AND CANADA

Applications are now being called from interested parties for the importation of sheep or goats from the USA and Canada. Any interested person should communicate their name, address, telephone number and their desired number and species of animals to:

Animal Quarantine Branch
Department of Health
PO Box 100
WODEN ACT 2606
Phone (062) 89 3388 (Contact - McLaren)

(062) 89 3188 (Contact - Scariett)
Selections of animals will need to take place in January 1984, with the animals ready to enter on-farm isolation, in North America, no later than 11 February 1984.

On-farm testing occupies 30 days when the animals would then be transported to pre-embarkation quarantine at Pickett Fence Farms, Chicago. While only 40 days are required for pre-embarkation, it is not anticipated that embarkation for Cocos Island will take place before 12 May, thus providing a three-week spare period in case of any failure and retesting being required. As most failures are designed to occur during the on-farm phase, intending importers are advised to select and have tested 2-3 animals for each one they wish to import.

Normally one would expect that for every 100 animals selected and tested, 125 will pass and of these 80-100 will proceed to pre-embarkation quarantine. Perhaps one or two animals may fail at this stage but it is unlikely. The animals proceed to Cocos where it is not anticipated there will be any further failures.

The appointed import co-ordinating agent is:

Mr. Jack Lidgard
Australian Livestock Imports Pty. Ltd.

C/O A.E.R.I.
University of New England
ARMIDALE N.S.W. 2350

Phone: (067) 72 5376

FAX: (067) 72 5416

Application forms may be obtained from the Department of Health, Animal Quarantine Branch, the appointed importing agent or the Chief Quarantine Officer (Animals) in each State Department of Agriculture or equivalent.

It should be noted that places in the proposed consignment can not be guaranteed.

Importers may import either a single male animal or a breeding unit. Animals must be under 15 months of age when entering testing in America. A condition of release of the genetic material is that for each animal imported, at least 5 progeny (produced and reared artificially) must survive to 5 years of age. Therefore, for each male animal imported, Australian females will have to be supplied to make up the breeding unit. For each female animal imported, as all breeding on Torrens Island is done by AI and ovum transplant, recipients will be required to be supplied.

Anticipated cost will be in the order of \$1000 per imported animal, for all agency fees, testing and freight costs, with the major variable being related to the number of animals. In addition any specific cost for artificial, ovum transplants, shearing etc. applicable to and requested by the importer will be charged at normal contract rates. Further details are available on request.

Stock Journal - 26th January, 1984.

A Bit of an Unsung Hero

On the 24th of December 2020, Professor Michael Byrne died quietly in his bed on the farm he loved so well. He was a few months shy of his 80th birthday.

Professor Byrne gained twin degrees in medicine and medical science in WA, where he was born and educated. He gained the BMed Sci with first class honours. He married in 1964 and had two sons. In 1968, the family travelled to Boston in the USA for him to pursue further medical qualifications. After five years spent working as a Resident at the Lemuel Shattuck hospital, teaching at Tufts University and at Brown University in Rhode Island, he gained acceptance by the American Board of Internal Medicine and travelled to Britain to obtain his fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians. He applied for a position in cardiology at a major teaching hospital in London but in the first of many ironies which dogged his life, the secretary sent the acceptance via sea mail so he took up the offer of the head of hospital to study the brand new specialty of oncology, in which the Lemuel Shattuck had a particular interest.

In 1973, Professor Byrne returned with his wife and three children to Western Australia to establish the first oncology clinic in the country. The specialty at that time was still in its infancy. Cancer patients in Australia were treated either with surgery, radiotherapy or both. He had applied in 1972 to one of the major hospitals in NSW for a position but was told that as a surgery/radiotherapy based cancer treatment centre they were not yet ready to engage an oncologist. It was due to the foresight and sustained efforts of geriatrician Dr Richard (Dick) Lefroy, in conjunction with the board of Sir Charles Gairdner hospital, that Prof Byrne was given free rein to set up the clinic there. As he said, “I just made it up as I went along”.

It was where he remained for the rest of his career, treating and supporting patients, teaching students, mentoring young physicians and engaging in some eighty plus research projects both within Australia and overseas. He retired in 2007, stating that as the specialty was now in such good hands, it was time to go. The end result is that Western Australians and indeed Australians generally can expect to receive treatment for their cancers at a standard at least as good as they could hope to receive anywhere else in the world.

Professor Byrne, for much of his career, concentrated particularly on treating and supporting patients with breast cancer, as well as engaging with research projects in Australia and New Zealand and through the Ludwig Institute based in Switzerland. It was the ailment which had claimed the life of his wife’s grandmother and primary carer early in their marriage. Following the irony and agony of his wife’s 1993 diagnosis and treatment for that disease, he turned his attention to cancers of the lung and to the asbestos related disease of Mesothelioma. He held a seat on the board of the Australian National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases. The final irony was that Mesothelioma was the disease which ended his own life.

A career in oncology can be very stressful, so throughout his life Prof Byrne engaged in out of office activities with his family, especially his wife. These mainly involved their shared love of animals and the outdoors. It meant that the required residence close to the hospital was sold in 1975 and a small rural property acquired in Helena Valley. A family pet acquired from the Shenton Park Dogs home started a passion for German Shorthaired Pointers. In turn this led to a breeding programme which has supplied much loved canine companions for people around the country and the world. Prof Byrne was a foundation and Life Member of The German Shorthaired Pointer Club of WA. He competed in and was a judge of field trials, retrieving trials and shows. He and his wife became all breeds judges and judged all over Australia and overseas. Further interests encompassed importing, breeding and exhibiting llamas, which eventually outgrew the small property, so a move to a much larger block was required.

Australian Suffolk Association Newsletter- WINTER 2021

A Bit of an Unsung Hero

Another abiding non medical interest grew out of the newly available space. He established and nurtured what became a collection of oak tree varieties from all over the world. He joined the International Oak Society, became proficient at propagation and planted seedlings, some gathered from around the country, many rare and some of which are now approaching ten metres tall. His retirement project was a flock of stud Suffolk sheep. He and his wife joined and participated in the activities of the Australian Suffolk Association. Once again he became happily involved in breeding and showing the sheep with some success, greatly enjoying chewing the fat with fellow farmers at various sheep shows, particularly the local one where he won many broad ribbons with his beloved rams. He was very pleased by the fact that a group of buyers from Inner Mongolia bought some of the flock to help improve the sheep in their part of the world.

Whatever he did, he gave it his all and succeeded without fanfare or self promotion. He had a dry wit which sometimes alarmed his students but they soon discovered that he was a modest and unassuming man in an era when such is rare. He was always generous in sharing his expertise in every endeavour he undertook. He left behind him his wife, two sons and a daughter, five grandchildren and two great grandchildren, in addition to the legions of people whose lives he enhanced, many in their times of greatest need. His ashes will be placed in the shade of two of his beautiful mature oaks, overlooking peaceful paddocks containing contented livestock and a plethora of wildlife.



Professor Michael Byrne MBBS, BMSc(Hons) FRCP, FRACP, FASCO
13.5.1941 to 24.12.2020

Secret cooking tip for lamb-

Everyone thinks that the perfect things to pair lamb with whilst cooking is rosemary and mint. I beg to differ!! While this is very yummy, I want everyone to try adding mustard to their next lamb rack! Mix some Whole grain mustard and either some Dijon mustard together and slather it onto the outside of the lamb, then place into an already preheated hot oven.

You can thank me later!! ;)



WA Rainfall Update-

Perth has officially recorded the wettest July in 26 years. We recorded 271.4mm for the month. Astonishingly, Perth registered rainfall on a total of 28 days across the month. Including an 18 day stretch where it rained everyday! Hopefully there's a bit of sunshine around the corner!



PURE THROWBACK

This is a article direct from the 1987 Australian Suffolk year book...

Judging the Head of a Suffolk

We have been asked to print comments given by Ralph Speirs at the Melbourne Royal in relation to the 'Best Headed Suffolk' award at that Show. Hopefully it will help newer breeders understand the importance of a good head on their sheep.

For years I wondered why the most successful Stud Stock Breeders spend so much time studying the head on animals that interest them, so closely. Just what did they see? Also why did the founding fathers of our Suffolk breed of sheep allocate 25 out of 100 overall for the head? I would have loved to know just what those people had in mind.

The following are a few of the points that I have noted over the years, as I see the head as a sign post with indicators giving all sorts of hints as to what the body and covering of a particular sheep may be like.

Studying from in front of the sheep — Length of head, from the poll to the muzzle is directly related to the length of body which is approx. 3½ times the length of head.



Width between the eyes is related to the width of the pelvis at the hooks. If the **width** between the base of the ears is at least equal to the width between the eyes then the width at the hips and pins will also be good and the ears will hang with the classic Suffolk setting. If the width between the base of the ears is narrower than the width between the eyes then the sheep may well be prick eared and the pelvic structure will torpedo from the hooks back through the hips to the pins. Also the distance between the eyes and ears is related to the **length** of the pelvic area — more length gives more bone to attach muscle to, a larger area to carry lambs and generally better shaped udders.

Eyes should be well hooded with bone to protect the eye from injury when fighting.

Nostrils should be open and clear and the muzzle of good width.

Quality, density and evenness of the kemp fibres on the head and ears are directly related to wool quality on the body of the sheep, e.g. fine dense even quality kemping will indicate fine dense even quality wool, but if the kemps become coarser up over the poll of the sheep then there is every chance that the britch wool will be much coarser than the wool on the rest of the body. Also thickness of skin and kemping on the ear is indicative of a good dense wool covering which is particularly important on new born lambs as a good dense jacket will minimise the risk of death from cold and wind and give a higher value pelt or wool clip later in life.

Viewing from the side of the head — It is most important that the teeth bite firmly and fully onto the pad on the upper jaw.



The eye should be bright and alert and there should be good depth between the eye and the bottom of the lower jaw, which indicates a good strong bone structure and constitution.

The top outline of the head should be smooth and full with a slightly roman nose, allowing for the natural differences between sexes, with extra strength and masculinity in rams and femininity and maternal qualities in ewes.



CHAMPION RAM — PERTH ROYAL SHOW 1988
Shown by W.D. Veitch



Joanne, Guy and Luke Bowen with the Champion Group and Champion over all
British Breed Groups, Perth Royal Show.

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With the advanced knowledge on Scrapie, a lot coming from the success of this quarantine program and follow up research on blood typing, we were able to initially set up a program in the USA to identify and undergo breeding and testing over there and then be able to successfully import the genetics of a further 4 USA rams in 2003 to 2006. These were sourced with much more time and scrutiny than the initial rushed process. We avoided the show ring, which was going for taller and shallower sheep than from the 1980s, instead concentrating our selections on sheep that came from a strong commercial background &/or a feed conversion efficiency background.

Using this knowledge, Stan was also able to draw up an acceptable importation protocol in association with UK partners to also import from the UK. We imported semen from two Suffolk rams, plus embryos from 10 ewes, plus semen from one Texel ram and some embryos. These were the first new genetics to come into Australia for over 50 years. Unfortunately, the mismanagement demons struck again, with the second phase of this UK importation being scuttled because the authorities in the UK lost the biopsy samples on the donor animals, thus we only got half of what was planned to come!

It was clear that despite the tremendous positive advantages the original sheep introduced, we were limited to just the two rams, which restricted what we could do breeding wise. Thus, we made a deliberate decision that we would not market any genetics from our actual imports into the Australasian industry. This was a threefold decision. Firstly, we needed to retain our premium genetics to be positioned to be able to continue producing these unique genetic lines. This was necessary to be able to recoup the costs of these importations and ongoing breeding programs. Secondly, we did not wish to promote and sell further genetics to our industry participants without having first-hand data on their performance in our environment and management systems. Finally, through Stan's hard marketing work in China in particular, we had a potential income source that would enable us to stimulate and meet this demand if we were able to retain our unique product.

The Australian lamb market has constantly changed over these last 28 years since the initial release and the APS syndicate has moved with it. Being successful in our quest to import UK genetics in 2004 enabled us to work on producing "blends" of these two widely differing bloodlines and types. We felt this would offer outstanding new breeding options to better suit the lamb industry needs and Australian free range grazing management systems from that time.

The USA Suffolk is a large, easy care sheep with huge growth rates and outstanding feed conversion ratios, having a later maturity pattern, being primarily developed in America around a feedlot system. This enables their progeny to be targeted to multiple weight range market options, while retaining leanness. Contrary to some perceptions, they do have great muscling, eating qualities and plenty of bone; their muscling is just a different shape. You can't get their growth rates and bodyweights without muscle, and plenty of it. They were absolutely ideal for the Australian industry at the time of the initial release, and it is our belief they are still as important as an infusion option now as when they were first released.

The UK genetics also grow rapidly, but as they were developed to suit the short UK spring/summer growing period, they have a much earlier maturity pattern and are lower set and stockier in type.

It is the blends that these two exciting, yet contrasting types offered that stimulated us the most, either in a direct cross, or with our established Australian lines. At APS, we were determined to produce genetic blends that could produce top results in our environment and under our normal paddock grazing conditions, which has been severely tested through to a string of poorer seasons over time.

We are pleased to say that the cull rate of unsuitable sheep within our flocks is now virtually non-existent. Over the last 3 decades, we produced a flock that we were extremely pleased with. We also aimed for high reproductive rates through culling of non-lambers. The lambing percentage to weaning regularly averaged

150% or better. Reports back since the dispersal sales say what great mothers they are.

The Impacts

Without doubt the USA and UK imports has a huge impact on the industry, both here and in New Zealand. There would be very few Suffolk flocks in this country that do not have some of this blood from our imported rams in them. Upon release from quarantine in 1992, we held a field day just prior and made some necessary sales to go some way to recouping our costs. The top 6 Suffolk rams from that release sold to \$30,000 (still a high for Suffolks in this country) and averaged over \$22,000. On top of that we made many semen sales. Four of those top 6 rams went to New Zealand breeders where they made a huge impact as well. Bob Seaton purchased A872939Tw for \$25,000 and dominated sales over there in the next year. A852439ET also had a big impact. The UK blood is still very much in demand, as demonstrated in the semen sale with a sale high of \$230/dose for The Westend 'Panache' semen. The greatest motivation of this whole 37 year project for the syndicate was to accommodate a need to expand the genetic base of Australia's meat sheep industry, especially at a time when the Australian prime lamb industry was rapidly expanding through exports to many countries.

It is extremely sad that Stan's sudden illness and passing did not let him experience the enjoyment of retirement and to be able to observe how the APS stock (from the dispersals) and semen would continue to influence Australian flocks for years to come; plus the other AI advances and successful pioneering importations of other sheep and goat genetics on his own behalf have greatly influenced the Australian industry. May these genetics be his lasting legacy – he deserves nothing less.

PICTURED– Iam, Stan and Gerald (2021).



Where are they now

– Pam and Sue

1. Where are you residing now?

Albany WA

2. What does a typical day look like for Pam & Suellen?

At the moment we have square eyes as we are watching the Olympics and thoroughly enjoying it.

3. A typical day could consist of :

Fishing, Camping & travelling, Tinkering in the shed, garden, vegie patch etc, Walking with our old dog Elle, Going to the beach for Elle to have a swim, Helping Bouch's Mum if required, Chatting to my Mum & friends, Normal household chores, Exploring our new surroundings and obviously being slack and watching movies!

3. Is retirement different to what you expected?

No, it's nice not to have so many responsibilities and now having the time to start working on our bucket list.

4. COVID would have put a dent in your plans to travel internationally, have you managed any Australian/Western Australian get aways instead?

We sold our place in April 2020 right at the start of COVID which was a challenge as we needed to obtain approvals just to move between regions. We were eventually granted approval to travel down South, our home at this stage was our Motorhome. So we stayed in Albany for a month looking at property and then went and stayed at Gardner River on one of my nephews farms. During that time borders were open and we were able to head north, went to Exmouth, Cape Range National Park and slowly headed back down the coast – spent about 14 weeks up there and thoroughly enjoyed it. Earlier this year we spent about 3 weeks in Esperance at Cape Le Grand National Park, in the camper

trailer.

5. Have you taken up any new skills/hobbies, joined any clubs etc?

We haven't been long in our new place so most of our time has been spent settling in. I have bought a new mig and plasma cutter with the intention of doing some metal art. Bouch is trying her hand at mosaics and restoring old cream cans. We do hope to get involved in something, some sort of club or volunteering so we can meet like-minded people.

6. What do you miss about farming?

I miss having space that you can call your own and I really miss the lambing season

7. What don't you miss about farming?

I certainly don't miss the foxes and fixing split water pipes as they normally always happen on a 40 degree day.

8. What are you proudest of throughout your farming/Suffolk history?

Proud of us buying our own farm which we setup for our Suffolk sheep and very proud of us achieving Supreme Champion Sheep All Breeds at the Perth Royal Show 1989. This was the first time a meat breed was triumphant against the merino. (Obviously this class no longer happens as the Merino and Meat breeds don't exhibit together anymore.)

9. Do you have any favourite stories from your time breeding Suffolk?

The meeting of the late Dawn Bingham and her wonderful family of the Kinmel Suffolk Stud Tasmania - changed my direction of the past 10 years of breeding. I was fortunate to spend time with Dawn at her property in my early 20's, where

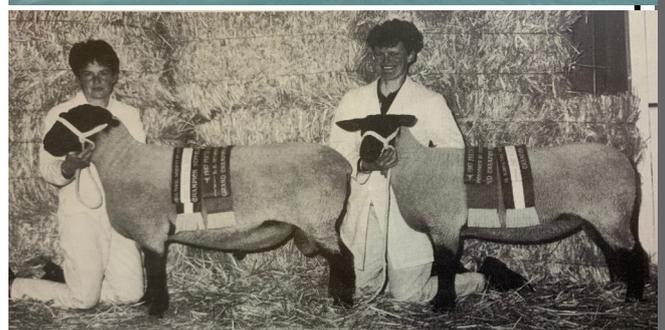
I learnt so much. One day Dawn yarded all her young rams and told me to select any ram I want to for an upcoming local show. After a bit of halter training and an attempt at fleece trimming (which I think Dawn fixed up for me) off we went to the Show. The ram I selected and held that day won Champion Ram, it may say more about Dawns quality stock than my ability to pick the young ram, but it was a fantastic thrill for me. As I left Dawns place, her words to me were "go home and show your sheep" – something I did and have never forgotten her words.

Also; The great camaraderie at the Northam Suffolk feature show in its heyday with the Association being the envy of others.

10. Are you watching the Olympics and what sport captures your attention?

Yes we certainly are enjoying all the sports, the skill, determination and commitment that must go in to an athlete to compete at this level is inspiring.

GO AUSSIES!!



1987 Grand Champion British Breed Ram & Ewe — Perth Royal Show
These two outstanding sheep (ram - Pamellen S76 and ewe - Pamellen M166) were both shown by Pam Hinkley (holding the ram), who has had outstanding success in the last couple of years, including the winner of the same ram award in 1986 which set a State record when sold for \$3050.