

Horton Show

Horton & District Young Farmers Club, to give it its correct title, held its first show after the war in a field lent by Dick Davis. The next year in 1946 it moved to the field that it still uses today; in those days "kindly lent by Mr Perfect". The Young Farmers were an organisation open to any one up to the age of twenty-six. In those days, amongst other things, the Club helped to foster an interest in the rearing of livestock. The type of classes for cattle that could be entered echoed this interest. The first few classes were for heifer calves of varying ages to be shown by a young farmer, who should in theory had had some input into their upbringing. There was one calf class for bulls. A class "for calves marked in last year's Calf Club" and a final class for "Calves marked and shown in 1944 at the Y.F.C. Show". For this last class there was a special prize of £1 in addition to the £1 first prize. The second, third and fourth prizes were respectively, ten, six and four shillings [twenty pence]. Most other classes had a top prize of ten shillings. Only Young Farmers, not farmers themselves showed sheep or calves. Lambs predominated in these classes with half-bred gimmers and whethers, horned gimmer and tup lambs. There was a class each for horned shearlings and horned ewes and interestingly only one class for mature tups, that being for Wensleydales. The prize money for each class was ten shillings for a first.

The indoor section was held in the school and was basically open to any member of the Parish who could show exhibits produced within its boundaries. The first prize was four shillings and then two and sixpence and one and sixpence for second and third prize. The classes included Bread, Tea Cakes, Fruit Cake, Jam Cake, Ginger bread, Scones, Biscuits and Jars of Jam and Fruit. There were three classes for needlework and two classes for eggs. When it came to vegetables and flowers there were only two prizes giving three shillings and two shillings. Classes included Potatoes, Peas, Root vegetables, Cabbages and Cauliflowers, and Lettuce. The only class for flowers was for the "Best display of mixed flowers" except for wild flowers and wild fruits and berries; they were in a very limited children's class. The only other children's classes being a prepared dish of salad and one tray of salad vegetables, for which in 1946 there was only one entry between the two classes. At night there was a dance held at the Public Hall, which was, a single story building situated on the site that it is now the main car park near the New Inn bridge. It was not many years after this that the hall was demolished under the pretext that it was unsafe. Its destruction caused considerable controversy in the village because on the face of it, it was serving a useful purpose. I can remember some talk about part of the foundations having been laid on an old tree stump, which eventually had gone rotten and this fungus had transferred itself to the main body of the building. In 1946 the Young Farmers Club itself had a much more important status in the village than did the show, which was just one of the many activities of the club. There were two Club leaders, a secretary and a President who was supposed to be a figurehead but would always help when asked. In 1946 the President was Jimmy Morphet of High Birkwith and the two club leaders were Frank Campbell [Rowe End] and Earnest Sarginson [Quarry]. As the years went by the other activities of the Y.F.C. dwindled and the show became one of their main activities.

The show followed a similar pattern in the next few years. The ownership of the field changed to Robert Jackson and the evening dance was held in the school. In 1950 a new class for Ayrshire and Friesian calves was introduced, perhaps reflecting the gradual change that was starting in the valley where the traditional Dairy Short Horn was being replaced by other breeds. There was also a class for Cow in calf or milk, open to any farmer in the Parish, the first open class for cattle since the end of the war. The Presidential Cup for the best calf in classes one to five was presented by Alan Carr; The first of many cups to be given over the next few years. In 1951 there were two open classes for mature cattle. Sheep were still restricted to Young Farmers only. Bread was taken out of the schedules, there had only been three entries for the last two years. This suggesting that the purchase of bought bread was on the rise in the village. Otherwise the show was pretty much the same until the middle fifties.

By 1955 there was a new President and a new Secretary and small changes began to appear; there were more classes, no less than sixty-one in 1955 as against forty-four in 1949. There were three cups to be contested for, Mr P Bell [of the Knoll] giving a cup for the young farmer getting the most points in the Indoor Section and the President presented a Perpetual Challenge Cup for the Young Farmer with the most points in the cattle and sheep sections. In 1956 three new Perpetual cups were presented by the President. These four Perpetual cups were for young farmers getting the most points in the cattle section, most points in the sheep section and for the runners up in both these sections. There were then four open classes in the cattle section for any farmer in the parish. The sheep section was still closed to all but young farmers. Handicraft and Children's classes were expanding. In 1957 George Thompson, the cattle dealer presented a silver challenge cup for the best beast on the field.

After the show of 1957, the then Secretary handed over the reins of his job. The look in his face and eyes as he handed over his responsibilities should have warned the new Secretary about the load of work to come. Firstly there were the politics, Judges had to be found, and just like referees in today's football, they were never to everyone's taste. Both in the Indoor sections and the Outdoors each Judge had individual preferences as to how an exhibit should be; this did not suit everyone. Care was taken not to disclose who the Judges were until the day of the show and as is customary, in the indoors classes, no exhibit was labelled with the exhibitors name, just the class and entry number. Outside, the Judges probably knew most of the people handling the animals. Amongst all this, the complainants seemed totally unaware that it was very difficult to find Judges for some sections at all! The indoor section was mostly open to the whole village. The outside section had started off after the war just for young farmers. Slowly the cattle section was opened up to any farm in the parish. The sheep section still remained only open to Young Farmers up to 1958. The perceived underlying problem was that there were two very successful exhibitors of Dales bred sheep in Horton. These two farmers won sheep classes far and wide at county shows. It was thought that if they showed their sheep at Horton it would be a waste of time for any one else to turn up and exhibit. Because of this, the sheep section was kept for young farmers only, with a tacit agreement that the families of the two county exhibitors would not show their best. This worked well for some years; but a rising problem in Dales farms was that they did not carry as much labour as they used to and several farms no longer had young farmers working there as the families grew older. This precluded several farms from showing. As a compromise in 1958 the Sheep section, with sixteen classes, was in its entirety opened up to any farmer in the Horton District for 'Sheep not having been shown in Open Competition'. Another Perpetual cup was given for the best Sheep on the field. With prize money of ten shillings, six shillings and four shillings for first second and third respectively. The cattle section that year had first prizes of fifteen shillings or £1 and the indoor sections mainly six shillings, four shillings and two shillings. There had always been a 'guess the weight of the sheep' competition, which was very popular and quite often won by a nonfarmer! In addition in 1958 there was a contest for any breed of dog in best condition and most divisively a Baby Show. A hand writing competition for school children of various ages was also introduced. This caused much interest among the adults as they compared the best examples of handwriting with their own near illegible scrawls.

The actual logistics of the show also proved to be quite arduous. All the classes for the next show had to be agreed with the committee, which, as in any committee, contained some slower stubborn members. The positioning of special prizes had to be set against the correct classes. This was then written up and given to Lamberts the printers in Settle [who were very good], so that competitors were able in good time to prepare their exhibits; I was no good having a new class for Broad Beans if no one knew about it. In theory the entry forms were returned to the Secretary about two weeks before the show. In practice most people knew that the Show catalogue was not put to bed until the Friday evening, just over one week before the show. Big sheets of paper would be pinned to boards with all the class numbers on them, seventy two classes in 1958. After each entry had been examined had been to make sure the entry fee was more or less right, each entry was written up on the board under its

correct class. When this was finished, with perhaps four hundred and fifty entries, all the special prizes and cups and rules and patrons etc had to be inserted in the right place. Then the front page of the catalogue was set up to give details of the show day, including opening times, who was to present the prizes, the name of the Dance Band and the names of the judges. The catalogue was then ready to take to Lamberts on Saturday morning. During the week the prize money would be 'put up' in labelled brown paper wage packets. Careful calculation had to be made about the number of notes and 'silver', half crowns, florins (two shillings), bobs (shillings) and tanners (sixpences), required to make up the packets. On the show morning someone would go down to Settle and pick up the loudspeaker system [kindly lent by Mr Percy] with its twelve-volt battery running the system. At the same time, if the Show catalogues had not been collected from Lamberts on Friday, they were always ready very early on Saturday morning. The printers never let the Show down and typographical errors were just about unheard of. In fact they were very good at using their common sense in interpreting the schedule provided.

The Show field or Hippens was a meadow and usually it would be cropped in July. In exceptional years a second crop might be taken in early September [called Fog grass]. If a second crop was not to be taken before the show in order to get the grass short, the farmer usually grazed the grass off with sheep rather than cows. Cows would have left cowpats all over the place for people to walk in. There never seemed to be a lack of help to set up the field prior to the show. On Friday, tractors and trailers would arrive with sheep hurdles, which were used to make pens for all the sheep. Posts would be put in to make an outside perimeter to encircle the whole sheep area so preventing escapes. Posts would be put round the walls to which the cattle would be tethered and further posts would be put in a circle to make a roped ring. Inside the School, trestle tables were set up in long rows parallel to the road and covered with white paper. According to the number of entries in each class, room was provided for each exhibit with the class number and individual number put in place. Sometimes there was seemingly not enough room and either extra tables had to be employed or all exhibits were 'hitched' up, a tedious process. Four hundred and fifty show cards had to be produced in the week before the show to enable the exhibitors to get their produce or animals in the right place on the day of the show. Each sheep pen and each cattle post having a label. Farmers liked to keep their animals together on the day of the show, so considerable rearrangement did take place; but at least there was enough room. Prior to the show first, second and third prize show cards had to be sorted out with rosettes so that each judge could give them to the winners. For this there was always a steward attached to each judge to do his 'clerking' and write down what had happened in each class.

On the day of the show, everyone woke up hoping it would be fine, about a fifty fifty chance in Horton. Soon Trailers would be arriving at the field gate to unload their animals. Sheep exhibitors received willing help in herding their animals into the sheep pens, which were to be sorted out according to class. The cattle were supposed to be trained to be leadable by a halter, but many an animal took its owner a merry dance round the field before it was tethered to its post. On very dry years vehicles were allowed onto the field to unload, this reduced the entertainment somewhat. As early as eight o'clock, stewards were arriving in the school to herd the owners and their precious produce to the right spot. If an exhibitor had twenty entries to go inside the schoolroom then it took several return journeys from their home to get everything to the school safely. The gate into the field and the door into the school were each guarded by a steward. At first admission was by paying one and sixpence on receipt of which an indelible stamp was put on the back of a hand. Later, admission was by catalogue, which was two shillings, the same price as the admission to the dance to be held in the school later the same evening. Although it was unofficial most people could go in the school before the judging to weigh up form, before the judges started their duties at twelve o'clock. Each class was carefully considered, some times with the help of the steward, especially on technical grounds where the exhibits might not quite meet the specification of the class. People in the dales could be vehemently picky to the minutest detail on such matters. The winners name would be revealed and their names were written on

the prize ticket, which was placed by the exhibit. When there was limited entry in a class, the judge may have only offered a second and third prize, withholding the first. Again this gave rise to debate when the public were allowed in which was in theory at two o'clock. In practice this was often a little later. If the Judge had thirteen fruitcakes to taste by taking a slice from each, then this took time, especially if the next class was twelve lemon cheeses followed by twelve plates of short bread and then another dozen plates of biscuits!

Outside the public address system would be blaring out, cajoling the next class of cattle to come out into the ring at the behest of the stewards. If it was thought that the judging of cattle was slow and therefore falling behind schedule, the sheep judging was slower still. All the sheep men would be leaning on the hurdles looking at the sheep and weighing up their pros and cons. That was before the true judging started. On one occasion when the 'Best Ram' of any age was the first to be judged and there were only two entries, both shown by the same farmer, considerable time passed by before a result was arrived at. Usually by half past three only half the classes had been surveyed and that was after three and a half hours judging. The poor public address man was urged to chivvy the sheep men on. The prize giving was at five o'clock and there had to be a bit of leeway beforehand to sort out things such as points for cups to determine the winners. On one particular year Peter Woods, then of Old Ing, approached the poor public address speaker and told him in the nicest possible way [truly] that any amount of hurrying up would do no good "We are all having a great time and are happy to go at our own pace and enjoy ourselves, if it takes until six o'clock so be it. What matters is the happiness we are enjoying". This was relayed to the organisers, where one was heard to mutter "a show within a show", which was about right because they were still judging sheep when the field had been cleared of cattle [there was milking time to consider] and the school was all but emptied.

The prize giving was always a bit fraught because the secretary did not want to have too many prize money packets left on his hands. Then there were at least five cups, which were to be won using a calculation of the most points in certain classes. The press always wanted to interview the show officials and to get all the results. It was soon learnt, after reading in the next week's paper that it was much safer to give the press the results written down in a catalogue, since any verbal communication was hardly recognisable after being edited. By 1960 the prize giving had been brought back to four o'clock from five and this caused even more tension in the sheep judging pens. In 1961 it was decided to only hand out the indoor prizes at four o'clock and to do the outside prize giving on the field whatever the weather, when judging had come to a close. The reason for the urgency in the prize distribution was because there would be a dance that evening in the same room that had been used for the show and every thing had to be cleared out to make the space spik and span. After all the cups had been given out they were quickly taken back again so that they could be taken to be engraved with the winners name. Most cups were returned on the day of the show and there was never any worry that they may not turn up. If a particular winner was not to be on the field that day, someone else would return the cup for them. In return for the cup it became the practice to give a small, silver cup in exchange, which could be kept. Very little was done to the field on the evening of the dance; but on the Sunday morning a whole gang of helpers would turn up and rapidly disassemble everything and take it away to store until it was required the next year.

1959 saw further changes in the sheep section where five classes for Dales-bred Sheep were introduced, open to any farmer in the 'United Kingdom'. The thrust behind the implementation of these classes was that it gave an opportunity for local farmers to show against any incomers, their very best sheep. These had been excluded from sheep classes in previous years. The idea was not a huge success, there being only twenty-two entries for the five open classes. The next year, 1960, a further three classes for Swaledale sheep were added to the open sheep class, with a rather better number of exhibits. After two years of the divisive baby show it was dropped in 1960, maybe because no judge could be found who was ready to be lynched on declaring the winner! In 1961 the President gave two more Perpetual Challenge cups, which were aimed at the indoor sections. One for the person, not being

a young farmer, who got most points in the indoor section and the other for the best piece of confectionery. At the same time the allocation of cups to the outside sections was changed to take into account the improvement in the quantity and quality of the Swaledale section, which had increased to seven classes with fifty-five entries. The two runners up cups being diverted to the Best Swaledale Exhibit and to the best, non-young farmer, cattle exhibit. These changes echoed the gradual change of the show from being predominantly for young farmers to being for anyone in the parish and even beyond. The number of classes was rising most years and in 1961 it had reached ninety-two. The prize money per class had not risen much over the years; nevertheless the extra classes took toll on the show's finances. A system of 'Patrons', a mixture of individuals and local businesses was evolved, this had about twenty five participants in 1960 and in 1961 these patrons and members had increased to a staggering eighty or so. As well as the cups there were more than ten special prizes to be won, mainly outside.

In 1962 the number of classes had increased to a hundred and eight the biggest increase being in children's classes; but most sections showed a small increase, even eggs which went up from two to three- white and brown hen eggs and bantam eggs [only three entries.] There were five entries in the new rabbit class. The School Master, Robert Booth organised various races up the field for the school children and good fun was had by all. There were other side shows like tossing the sheaf and throwing the welly. Prizes for indoors were presented at four o'clock and the Swaledale prizes, when they were ready, some little time later. In 1963 Young farmers judging was added as an extra attraction. This was a competition between local Y.F. Clubs such as Coniston Cold, Gisburn, Skipton and Burton-in-Lonsdale, the winner receiving a shield. By 1964 there were only four cattle classes for the Young Farmers and twelve cattle classes for Horton and district, most first prizes being between a £1 and thirty shillings. First prize for open sheep went up to a £1, not that the money really mattered, most exhibitors did it for the pride of showing their stock. In 1964 Michael Dawson of Langcliffe Hall presented the prizes and presented a challenge cup to the show. 1965 saw the loss of the secretary, who although not a farmer, was a long-standing loyal servant to the club. The show schedule was very similar to the previous year. One of the disappointments in 1965 was the dearth of exhibits in the first four young farmer's classes with only eleven entries. The Swaledale section and the 'indoors' were well supported. Again in 1966 the first two Young Farmer's section for Shorthorn calves showed very little support, there being only one entry in each section, the other two classes for Friesian Calves did much better. This probably reflected the change in stock type in the valley, however the committee was slow to pick up on this change because in 1967 the two non-Friesian calf classes only had one exhibitor showing three calves. In 1968 the Y.F.C. calf classes were down to two, both for Friesians. To commemorate the death of the Secretary, the Sarginson challenge cup was given to the show. In its first year it went to the winner of the class which had the most entries in the indoor section, this turned out to be for fruitcake. The next year it was for four fruit scones. The School Master took great interest in the show during the late sixties and besides organising the children's races he supervised most of the twelve children's classes. These included handwork, handwriting and coloured pictures, there were also classes for wild flowers and dried leaves.

In 1968 there were twelve cups to be won and twelve smaller replica cups presented to the previous years winners and a challenge shield for the 'Young Farmers judging' competition. There were only two Y.F. calf classes, both for Friesians, with one special prize. There were twelve open cattle classes with five special prizes. All the sheep classes were open, seventeen to Local Farmers and fifteen were open to any farmer. There were seven special prizes. The indoor confectionery classes were very well supported, the twenty-seven classes having about two hundred and thirty entrants, the prize money was about twenty pounds and the entry money was eleven pounds fifty pence. In the cattle and sheep section the prize money was about sixty pounds and the entry fees were seventeen pounds. Horticulture had nineteen classes and the prize money was nearly thirty pounds with entry fees of about five pounds. The twelve children's classes were entry free and gave about seven pounds in prize

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money. There was also a deficit in the seven well supported Handicraft section. The gate money, the evening dance and a whist drive funded these deficits. In the early sixties there had been around eighty Patrons; but by 1968 the number of Patrons had gone down to about thirty-five. An overall deficit was looming for the show.

It was about this time that a younger part of the village decided that it was time to change the running of the Show, as eventually happens to all clubs whether it be Fishing, Tennis, Bowls or even Opera Societies. A new broom sweeps clean and the show is still going today.