



# Heathfield News



“A not for profit organisation benefitting the local community”

## Where are we now? Facts and Figures

Seven Committees with a total of 67 volunteer committee members who attend over 30 committee meetings during the Show year usually help to organise the 140 Section Stewards on Show day, the 246 animal Showing Classes for Cattle, Sheep, Pig & Horse and their 654 exhibitors. Not to forget the 250 Ground Stewards organising car parking, entry gates, etc. This makes a total of 450 stewards, committee members and volunteers.

Over £15,000 are usually presented in prizes to our exhibitors and over £20,000 donated back to the local Societies, churches and other not for profit organisations that help with the running of the Show annually.

In 2019 we had 210 trade stands booked, 20 concession stands, 30 traditional display stands and, combined with the Main Ring displays, WI tent, Education marquee, New Enterprise Zone, Poultry tent and Dog Agility accounted for over 300 displays on the Showground on Show day. All this was confirmed and ready to roll out for our 2020 Show when the decision was made to cancel and it all had to be unwrapped. Such a disappointment for everybody involved but, when the

decision was made in March, the Covid-19 pandemic was very much an unknown quantity and our early cancellation saved the Show financially as we were able to limit our exposure to cancellation fees.

Now, as there are still ongoing uncertainties, despite the welcome news that progress is being made with anti viral vaccines, the Show Society Council has made the difficult decision to also cancel the 2021 Show. Council members of the Heathfield & District Agricultural Show Society unanimously decided, after much discussion, and with much regret, to cancel the Heathfield Show scheduled for 29th May 2021. Nicola Magill, the Show Society Secretary said, “In cancelling the 2021 Show at this very early stage we are able to conserve our reserves by reducing our expenses to a minimum.”

The wise words of our Health & Safety officer, Graham Baldwin, sum up the decision: *“Covid-19 continues to take up a vast amount of my time at present. I know that it must have been a difficult decision to cancel the 2021 Show, but I firmly believe that it was the right course of action to take. Even with the news of a vaccine being announced, I still predict a long period of restrictions being in place through 2021. I look forward to being able to help give the Heathfield community a show to be proud of in 2022.”*

Never fear, we are optimistic and planning our 2022 Show and very much hope that our members, sponsors, exhibitors, competitors, visitors and volunteers will continue to support us. You are essential to the ongoing work of the Society. Now more than ever.



## Where do we go from here?

We would very much like to continue to call on the wonderful support of our loyal Show visitors who we are hoping will help us in our hour of need.

A lot of the costs of running a regular annual event like the Heathfield Agricultural Show unfortunately don't disappear just because we are not having a Show. There are ongoing costs that have to be met in order to ensure continuity from year to year - and these very regretfully have been incurred for two years running. Modern technology and systems don't allow us to 'switch off', we need to continue paying service contracts for our web page name, our web hosters, email addresses, our bank accounts,

insurance policies and on and on it goes.

It is for this reason we are appealing to you all, as Friends of the Heathfield Agricultural Show, to consider making a donation, however small, to help with these expenses and to help us get through to 2022 without compromising the quality of our Show in the future.

In order to save on the IT expenses, which would be involved in setting up an electronic donation facility, we are asking people to send us an old fashioned cheque which can be banked without any costs to us.

Your kind donation will be

acknowledged at the 2022 Show, not only in the Show programme, but also on an honours board in the Members' Enclosure to formally thank you for your support in assisting the Show through such challenging times and helping to ensure its continuation as an annual community event - when many other Shows around the country may have had to close their gates forever.

If you would like to make a donation please send your cheque (made payable to Heathfield Agricultural Show) direct to our Membership Secretary Di Vickery, Pedlars, Swife Lane, Broad Oak, Heathfield TN21 8UU. Thank you very much.

## Heathfield Show Memories

### from Maggie Howie, Cattle Chairman and Exhibitor



As current Chairman of Heathfield show Cattle Committee I have been asked to record some memories of the Show.

I first went to Heathfield show with my Dad, many years ago. In those days we tied our cattle up to scaffolding poles outside in the rain (it always did rain, and still does, for the Heathfield Show). We were never put off by a little rain, there were lots of cows in those days and the competition was strong. My Dad would always moan all the way home, beaten by Stream Farm, Chiddingfold again. I was always upbeat, "Come on Dad we have just got to breed better cows." I loved the Show, even as a kid.

As a teenager Heathfield Show was the start of a run of shows, followed by Surrey County then onto the Bath and West. The lorry would be mucked out once we arrived at a show and converted into living space. We were always pleased Heathfield was the start of our season because we would have a stop off at home on the way to Surrey and pick up all the things I had forgotten. I can't remember all the many friendships formed at Heathfield and other Shows. On arriving at a Show, unloading the lorry, strangers were always on hand to help and that was it, friends for the rest of the season were made. It did not matter whether you showed beef or dairy or Dexters, many life long friends were made.

In my twenties it was just me, my

dad having moved on. My first Show driving my own (overweight) lorry but I would not have missed it for the world, IT WAS SHOWING.

Breeding ways improved and we could now WIN!!! It always set the start of the season up. You

would arrive at Surrey lunchtime Sunday and everybody would know if you had a good Heathfield or not. They were always looking to see what came off the lorry, news from Heathfield seemed to travel far and wide.

In my thirties it was no longer me. Robert, born in the March, was at Heathfield Show in May. We bumped him up and down the lorry tailboard in his big pram and had to take one cow less to make room for the pram and baby stuff. Two years later he had to toddle around as his little sister Beth was now in the pram. There were always plenty of baby sitters to help look after the kids while David and I did the showing. It was a great big family. We have many pictures at the show of Robert and Beth aged 4/5 walking cows and calves up and down to the wash. It is amazing how roles change, now they are the ones who do the driving, washing etc and I am the one doing the walking up and down to the wash bay (haha). They are the ones who now know everybody with me going, "Who is that?" only to get a shake of the head and, "Oh Mother!!!!"

It all seems a long time ago that they were freezing cold, shivering on a rainy Heathfield Show in just a shirt, showing a little calf that had been clipped out for a wet judge who still seemed to be happy to be there. Beth moaning her calf would not behave as it was too wet and cold and that was why she was only 2<sup>nd</sup>. With

the little kid opposite absolutely delighted at their 6<sup>th</sup> place rosette. It makes me smile to think of all those kids that were competing in those classes. They are all now firm lifelong friends and have travelled the World together. Even as roles change and now we help them and they help us, friendships everlasting. Even when a young man, who wishes to remain unnamed, locked his sister and her friend in the ladies toilet at Heathfield, only to find he had also locked in the Cattle Chairman's wife - who took her false imprisonment very well when they eventually managed to get out. Said boy was not best pleased to be frog marched down to her car to apologise for this misdemeanour but it was a lesson well learnt.

Now I just have to put up with Beth bullying me at committee meetings telling me I can't munch on my crisps in the meeting!!!

Heathfield has always been a special Show and you always feel valued, none more so than the only year we did not enter. I had a problem with the judge, Sue Watson phoned to say "Come get your entries in", and I had to say "Sorry, not coming as the judge is not qualified". Only to be told "You have been coming here forever we will get you a different judge". With a different judge sorted, off we went.



## Heathfield Show memories

By David Unsworth-White, Council Member and former Show Chairman

My earliest memory of the Show must have been when I was 7. It was held at Little Tottingworth Farm then before moving up Swife Hill to Holbans Farm before moving back to Little Tottingworth in 1960. I recall there was a competition between 2 local fire brigades, they had to drive out into the middle of the ring in their old Austin engines, each towing a Coventry Climax pump, run out a hose, start the pump and direct a jet of water up the field. I think Heathfield won; anyway at 7 it was far more interesting than cattle, sheep or horses.



My father, having been assistant secretary to Sydney Hounsam, took over in time for the move back to Little Tottingworth and used to tell the story of how he

cycled from Cross-in-Hand to the Showground and marked out the trade stands, and presumably where the marquees went, with small stakes with labels tied to them and was horrified to find the next day that the sheep had eaten all the labels. Through him I became involved in the Show in the mid sixties. 1966 was the year of the gas main, a strip of field from the North East to the South West corners was fenced off and it rained. The good news was that we didn't have another wet Show for 13 years. 1979; we towed them on all morning and towed them off all afternoon, 1980; beautiful. 1981 there was a row of trade stands where, what is now the ring 3 collecting ring, the mud

flowed in the front of them and out the back. Afterwards I had to power harrow and reseed 5 acres.

Some will tell you that it always rains for Heathfield Show and yet, it doesn't. I can remember many balmy days, not too hot with a little bit of cloud. What is rather worse is when the North East wind blows and the people on the Broad Oak side are shivering in their Barbers and on the other side, shielded by the wood they are in shirt sleeves.

In the autumn of 2000 I was elected chairman of the Show Council and, at my first meeting, we had to cancel the 2001 Show because of Foot and Mouth, having lost the previous one because of the weather. It took 4 years for the Show to recover. My fondest memories though must be all the people, sadly, many of them no longer with us, who have made the Show what it is and, hopefully, will continue to be in the future.

### Membership of the Heathfield Agricultural Show

Many of our members are kind enough to renew their membership early every year (Membership actually runs from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December each year). The Show Council has decided that any member who pledged their support to the Show in 2020 by paying their subscription will have their support recognised and will be awarded free membership of the Society in 2021. This will come with the normal benefits but, of course, excluding the Show as it has been cancelled.

### A note from our President, Sara Stonor, DL

It has been a great privilege to serve as the President of the Heathfield Show for the last year and to attend all the Council Meetings, most recently by Zoom. It has been a curious experience with no Heathfield Show as the highlight of the year.

We are so lucky that the Show Council looks after the Show Society investments and all expenditure, with such care and responsibility ensuring that future Shows are secure.

The Show Council are extending the 2020 Membership to cover both 2020 and 2021 so existing members stay part of the Society without paying for a second year. However, the

Society has still had expenses in 2020 and 2021 - notably insurance - which cannot simply be cancelled when there is no show. If you felt able to make a donation to the Society it would be greatly appreciated. Please see the front page of this newsletter for details.

It was with great regret that the Council decided to cancel the 2021 Show but they will continue to keep in touch via Social Media and email with all the Show supporters giving regular updates on the exciting plans being put in place for the 2022 Show.

Thank you for your continuing interest and support.

## LETTER FROM OUR SHOW CHAIRMAN, Rita Dingwall



*Rita's grandson Wills with his best friend Tilda – he is of course devastated that we are not having a show next year – he lives for the show, but understands that everyone needs to stay safe*

Since Heathfield Show was successful in winning the South East Farmer Farming Awards Best Agricultural Show/Event in 2019, the world has experienced changes we could never have envisaged, and these challenges continue to this day. Every one of us has been affected one way or another by this pandemic from business to pleasure and everything else in between. However, our stoic rural community has risen to these challenges and Farmers have emerged as one of the unsung heroes of the pandemic.

As with everyone, we, the Show, have had to quickly adapt, change and be resourceful. There have been many firsts for us this year – holding Council and committee meetings online and we will also be holding an online AGM on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 8 pm. A virtual show was held in May to recognise what would have been Show day – thank you to everyone who contributed to this – great fun was had by all who judged the event and there were some delighted prize winners.

Sadly, we had to cancel the 2020 Heathfield Show. By cancelling the Show promptly, we were able

to reduce our losses, however a loss was recorded for the year. Much work had already been carried out by volunteers working towards Show day and it was a huge disappointment for us all.

The day itself was a mixture of weathers, no change there! The day was spent thinking about what had happened at the 2019 show at particular times – the cattle parade, the displays, trade stand judging, horse and livestock championships, inter-hunt competition, enterprise zone, education and so much more. At 5.15, when sunset would have been played, my partner John and I went into the garden dressed in our Show day attire and toasted the Show that never was, with a glass of wine and posted the photo on the Show's Facebook page. Judging by the amounts of likes and comments, many others were sharing similar thoughts that day.

As the year has continued, we have been keeping abreast of the changes in the current situation and, after many online meetings, we have sadly had to make the unanimous decision to cancel the 2021 Show. By cancelling the Show at this early stage, we are able to conserve our reserves by reducing our expenses to a minimum. I never imagined that we would find ourselves cancelling two shows within my tenure – something that has not happened since the bad weather of 2000 followed by Foot & Mouth in 2001. We have had to consider many factors including the health and safety of everyone in the locality, our team of volunteers and the long-term economic viability of the Show. We look forward to putting on our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary

show in 2022 and hope it will be one of the best ever and, with the support of everyone, I am sure it will be. I was humbled by my grandson, who lives for Heathfield Show, counting the number of sleeps – (fortunately he can count beyond 730 days – 2 years) and plans his day at the Show meticulously – when told the news, he replied, “I am very sad, Nanny, but we must keep everyone safe.” That sentiment is uppermost in the minds of the Show Council.



We will continue to ensure that 21<sup>st</sup> century agriculture is well supported, relevant and remains in people's hearts and minds – wherever they are. Should you wish to make a contribution to our Friends of Heathfield Show, it would be so very much appreciated by everyone involved with the Show and will help ensure the long term viability of the Society – details can be found within this newsletter. We are not just a Show day, we are a Society that makes donations to local groups and charities who are also facing huge challenges. I would like to thank everyone for the support given to the Show in the past few months and to me personally in my role as Chairman.