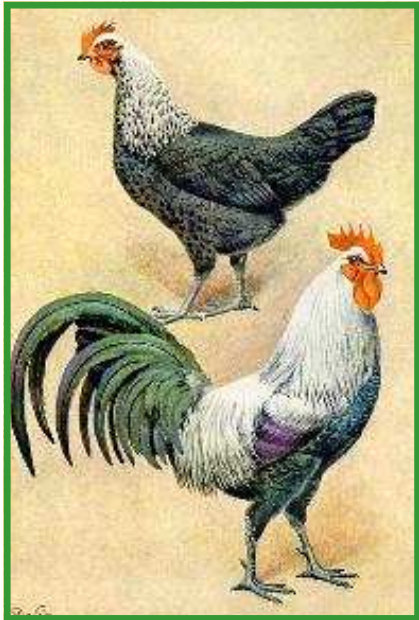


A Mottled Ardennaise hen
arrives at her new home,
Oldaway



Silver Hackled Black
Cockerel and Hen



A Rumpless version of the
Gold Hackled Black



RBST DEVON ARK
Spring 2011



Ardennaise Cockerel
newly arrived at Oldaway

RBST DEVON Contact details:

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The RBST was founded in 1973 and is a registered charity formed to prevent further extinction of British breeds of farm livestock. At least 20 different breeds had been lost between 1900 and 1973, but since the Trust was formed, no other breed has become extinct. RBST has recently widened its remit to include other native and traditional British breeds which are few in number.

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Copy (including advertisements) for the next issue to be sent to the Editor by 1st August 2011, Contributors are free to express their own views which are not necessarily those of the RBST.

RBST Devon exists to further the work of the Trust.

Membership: £6.00 per household per year, payable in January.

RBST DEVON web site: www.devon.rbst.org.uk

Hatching Eggs, Chicks and Growers

I keep several breeds of rare and traditional Poultry, Waterfowl and Turkeys
I usually have contacts for any breeds I do not have here at Bearscombe and am happy to give any help I can with traditional Poultry.
I also undertake custom hatching

Peter Hayford
Bearscombe Farm, Diptford, Totnes TQ9 7JY
01548 821212

Breeding stock for Sale

Richard and I started with 10 Manx ewes and now have 200 pedigree Manx Loaghtan and Hebridean sheep.

We supply pedigree starter flocks in the South West, or you can have non-pedigree ones if you want pets or to eat them at the end of a season.

We also sell rugs, sheepskins, fleeces and wool and can arrange for you to buy some of our lamb/hogget meat.

We also supply beef and pedigree Angus and Devon Ruby Reds.

Ring Barbara at Fowlescombe on 01548 821000

The Ancestry of our Modern Chicken: The Jungle Fowl



Jungle fowl are predominantly ground dwelling birds, living in areas with dense overhead vegetation. Social groups typically consist of one male with up to four females and their chicks, although larger groups of up to twenty birds can form in more open environments. Other males are either solitary or form small groups of two or three birds. Family groups have a well defined home territory and regular roosts.

Birds usually spend most of the day, and most of their time, foraging for food on the ground and only go to roost by night or at times when they feel threatened. A good deal of time is spent keeping the plumage in good order, by preening and by taking dust baths.

They lay their eggs on the ground in a hidden hollow lined with leaves and lay a clutch of about eight eggs, at which time they become broody and sit on the eggs until they are hatched, which normally takes twenty-one days. The chicks will stay with the mother hen until driven away by her at about eight weeks of age.

The breeding season varies with the length of daylight; the production of eggs increases with longer days and diminishes as days become shorter. In tropical climates egg production continues for much longer.

The earliest domestication of these birds is believed to have been about 10,000 years ago in India and Vietnam when they were kept for their eggs and meat. Modern chickens have descended from their wild Jungle Fowl ancestors (which still exist in parts of Asia), and, although they now tend to grow faster and larger and lay more eggs than their original forbears, a lot of their behaviour can be readily traced back to the wild.



CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

March 2011

As I write this on a dry, sunny and not too cold morning in March, the memory of the tough winter months seems a long time ago. I hope you and your animals all survived the snow and ice in reasonable shape. It certainly did make day to day routines very difficult and time consuming. Filling the poultry drinkers became like painting the Forth Bridge. The first one was frozen again by the time I got to the last! However, that is all behind us, at least for the next nine months, and I hope you are all looking forward to the summer months.

Devon RBST intends to be at our usual shows this summer, starting with Devon County Show in a couple of months. This year, the committee has decided to cut back on merchandise as Head Office is not providing the same range of items as they have in the past. This suits us quite well as we have not found a volunteer to take on the Merchandise role, so Liffy has agreed to continue with a reduced, but better quality, selection. We shall, of course, continue with members' goods for sale, which helps to make the layout of the displays so attractive.

So, I come to my usual plea for help at the stands, whether it be the loan of stock—and I am still looking for a big animal with a calf or foal at foot for the County Show. So, if you have any ideas please do get in touch, or help with staffing the stand. Here in Devon we are very lucky that we get such a good turnout of helpers, so I'm looking forward to this year's show.

The same plan applies to Mid Devon, Totnes, Honiton and Kingsbridge shows. Fortunately, Mid Devon and Totnes are a week apart this year, so we shall not have to go straight from one to the other as we did last year, which will make things easier.

I wish you all a successful breeding season. I have just hatched my first ducks and chicks of the year, so with a new crop of youngsters coming on I'm hoping for a good selection of ducks and pullets— so I expect I'll get a lot of drakes and cocks!

Peter



SUMMER EVENTS



SKITTLES and FOOD April 28th, Seven Stars Inn, Kennford, near Exeter, 6.30pm for food. Contact Hillary for a menu so meal can be ordered beforehand. Pub's details at <http://www.sevenstarspub.co.uk>

DEVON COUNTY SHOW: May 19th to 21st (ring Mark, 01548 560342 with offers of help)

MID DEVON SHOW: Sat. 23rd July (Nikki Morgan: 01647 253130 or John Mills: 01805 804494)

TOTNES SHOW: Sunday, 31st July (Mark again)

HONITON SHOW: Thursday, 4th August (Peter Hayford 01548 821212 or Nikki again)

KINGSBRIDGE SHOW: Sat. 3rd September (Mark—yet again!)

IMPORTANT: Devon County Show has a class for heifers and cows which would include rare breeds for our members. See page 60 of the schedule in the “any other dairy or dual purpose.....” section.

We are looking for volunteers to help on the stands at each of these events, so do give us a ring if you can spare a couple of hours or so. You do get a Free entrance ticket as a reward! We also need offers of animals that we can show on the stands. Something with young at foot is always the most attractive, so if you can help, please ring Peter for all shows except for Mid Devon, when John Mills will be in charge of sorting out the animal exhibits.

If you would like to sell your own merchandise at any of the stands, please contact Liffy (details inside front cover). Everything must be marked with the price and your name and address and goods should be brought to the stand on the day of the show and collected at the end of the day. In the case of Devon County the stand will be set up on the Wednesday, so please get things to us then so that they can be arranged nicely. We are not having as much RBST merchandise this year, so the more of our things the better. Don't forget to ring Liffy to let her know you are bringing things to sell.

There are new guidelines from HQ for selling non RBST items. These state that RBST cannot accept liability for anything that is not supplied by HQ and it will not indemnify members either, so appropriate insurance might need to be obtained. Also, members who have volunteered to represent RBST on a stand must have that as their first priority, so the selling of their own goods must not take precedence.

POULTRY ON THE WATCHLIST



You will have noticed from your Winter edition of the Ark that poultry has now been removed from the general Watchlist. (“At long last”, I can hear some of you say!)

It has long been felt by knowledgeable poultry keepers that the Watchlist as it stood had no value as a record of endangered breeds. The old way of establishing categories of rarity was hopeless as there is no method of registration, and therefore no way of establishing the numbers of breeding females. Peter and other members of Council who are particularly interested in the poultry side of things have been meeting on a regular basis and have come up with the list of breeds that was published recently.

This covers some forty three breeds of chickens that are now established in Britain - even though some of them were certainly not British in the first place - but the required number of forty generations has been passed.

Not all the breeds by any manner of means are in danger of extinction, but all of them are justified in being kept, and having an eye kept on them. Some of these are known to be numerically small in this country, although they might not be rare in their own countries.

Some, like the Old English Pheasant Fowl and some colours in the Dorkings, are quite rare whilst others are numerically very healthy.

Turkeys are next to be examined by the working group, followed by waterfowl at some time after that.

It is because poultry is such an important part of farming and small - holding that this work by the Poultry Working Group is of so much significance. It is relatively easy to keep a few chickens or ducks in a garden, and not at all easy to keep a few sheep or cattle in the same area! The important thing is that owners should keep the breeds they like and enjoy having, and we (Devon Group) are particularly lucky in having Peter's expertise which can be called upon for advice and help.

Chicks—are they male or female?

It can be very difficult to determine the sex of chicks until they are quite old. Some can be determined at about eight weeks of age on, but some make it so difficult that it is not possible to be sure until a few of them start crowing!



But here are some tips that might help:

Combs and Wattles: at about five weeks of age chicks will begin to develop red wattles and combs. Those of the cockerels will be larger and darker in colour.

Back and Tail Feathers: by eight weeks the chicks will develop more pronounced feathers. The cockerels will have more pointed looking ones on their back and sides as well as longer tail feathers. Those of the hens will be rounder looking and their tails will be shorter and rounder.

Crowing: some say that by eight weeks of age the cockerels will begin to crow, but this is open to debate. What is certain, however, is that at first the sound will be pathetic, thin and weedy, but, as they practise, they will get better at it and the sound will become more recognisable as the familiar cock-a-doodle-do! Each cockerel has a distinctive voice.

Aggression and sexual behaviour: the cockerels gradually become more aggressive in their attitude than the hens. They will establish themselves at the top of the pecking order, will strut around with their bodies more upright than the hens and will begin to try to mate with the hen birds.

This is by no means an exhaustive guide, so don't be too astonished if Charley lays an egg and Lucy starts to crow!

NEWS FROM RBST

Claire Bowry

Claire has been appointed as the new Fundraising supremo at headquarters and she is full of good ideas and enthusiasm. At the recent Support Group meeting at the beginning of March she was telling us about how people can now give donations to the RBST on line, and was also urging us to suggest to people that legacies can be left to the Trust in their wills. She had a sample display of this year's merchandise on show with the new posters and leaflets.

Richard Broad

Those of you who were able to come to the AGM in January and listen to Richard's talk will have heard how on the ball he is. He is keen and committed and very ready to help members in any way that he can. His contact details are: mobile: 07772 007399 or email: r.broad@rbst.org.uk. Let him know if there is anything you need help with.

Office

There have been all sorts of new rules and regulations drawn up, with a new constitution for Support Groups, rules for the sale of members' own merchandise (see page 3), Risk Assessment forms etc., all with a view to trying to make us rather more professional in our approach. All I can say is "Watch this space.....!"

There are some excellent new display posters for the Marler Hayly boards, a new Joining the RBST form, which contains the 2011 Watchlist and a new Poultry Breeds at Risk leaflet, which you will see when you help on the stands. The main priority for HQ is for us to raise funds and to recruit new members, so please do all you can in those areas. Our Guess the Weight competition at each show does raise a lot of money, but if any of you have any ideas of other things we can do, please get in touch.

Merchandise

The merchandise has been culled severely this year—with fewer items available. This is just as well for Devon because, as you know, I do not want to carry on being Merchandise Officer any longer, so we will have books, a few posters, some small fluffy animals and the new RBST tea towels. This tea towel looked very good, but it is only now being printed so I haven't as yet seen the finished article. So, with the really nice Otter House items and with your own merchandise, I think we can make the stands look attractive and interesting.

☺ **Devon Life Food & Drink awards 2010: Roger and Dodie Huxter at Welland Down Farm were runners up in the Best Butcher/Meat Producer of the year category.** Many Congratulations to them. All their hard work has certainly paid off.

ARDENNAISE or ARDENNER HOEN by Liffy

A few weeks ago I was contacted by a man who wanted to find a new home urgently for some “Ardenners” and could I help? Of course I could help.....I rang Peter!

Being more horsey than chickeny, I immediately thought of Ardennes horses, but how wrong I was! Apparently there is a breed of little chickens which come from Belgium, and these were what the enquirer was talking about. It turned out, inevitably, that Peter knew the man in question, and, indeed, knew the person in Cornwall who was keeping the chickens and who needed the new home in a hurry.

To cut a longish story short, they are now residing at Bearscombe with Peter and all his other poultry, except for a trio who have come to live with us at Oldaway. Peter has given us three which are “mottled” in colouration, but, as you will see from the photograph on the front cover, the cockerel has gold hackles. They have been with us for about two weeks as I write this and have just started producing some rather charming little white eggs. We hope that they will settle and we can produce some offspring to help to increase their numbers in this country.

There were a total of seventeen in the flock that came to Peter from Cornwall, with a preponderance of cockerels, inevitably, and they have been running together for some time, so the colours are a bit mixed. Peter has three “blue” hens, some “Gold Hackled Black”, some “partridge” (like Old English Game) and a few more “mottled” like the ones we have. We are interested to see what transpires in the way of colours from the eggs. The “mottled” colour does not form part of the breed standard, so we wait and see what happens.

They are smallish and quite flighty so we have put them in an enclosure with a six foot high wire fence and we have clipped their wings to make sure they don't escape. They found a gap under the gate one day and the hens had a scout round and then put themselves back with their chap again so no harm was done.

I found this wonderful quotation on Google *“this rustic Belgian breed has a great vivacity and can be easily elevated in all freedom”* but so far we have had no problems.

From “Rare Poultry Breeds” by David Scrivener:

“ARDENNAISE or ARDENNER HOEN

They are a standardized form of ancient cottagers' chickens kept for centuries in the Ardennes region of south-east Belgium. It is a hardy breed but needs to be kept under natural conditions. It is an excellent forager and likes the freedom to scratch around in search of nourishment. They are nervous of strangers. The hens are fair layers of medium-sized eggs, and the cockerels are meaty for their size. Their home region includes a lot of scrub land and it is suggested that the keepers of these birds probably left them to wander at will. They would happily roost in a tree or on barn roof beams. Very few are bred outside their home region, with the possible exception of neighbouring parts of northern France.

They are very much a normal light breed chicken in general shape and size. They have compact bodies, fairly large fanned tails and longish legs. Combs are single, straight and fairly small.

There is also a Bantam version which was developed originally in the early 1900s by crossing large Ardennes with Old English Game Bantams and Bassette Liègoise Bantams.

Colours include: Gold and Silver Hackled Blacks, which have dark eyes, dark red or purple combs, wattles, faces and lobes, and Gold and Silver Partridge, which have brown or red eyes, red combs, lobes etc., and slate blue shanks and feet.”

Although they are patently not a British rare breed, Peter and both RBST Field Officers feel that, because there are so few of them, it is just what RBST is about in trying to breed them to increase their numbers. If you would like to join in and take a trio to breed from do let Peter (01548 821212) know—if several of us have a go we are more likely to succeed.