



Ellemford Show 1886 - 2011

Ellemford Show Memories

In recognition of the 125th show I asked two long standing members to recollect some of their show memories. I am grateful to Robert Mack, ex Godscroft and Andrew Pate, ex Horseupcleuch for their time in recalling times past.

Robert Mack

Robert remembers attending the show when it was resurrected after the Second World War in 1948. He walked his show team from the family farm at Godscroft – leaving home on the Friday afternoon to take the sheep to Barnside where he then teamed up with Jim Coltheard and together they took their sheep to the show on the Saturday morning by way of Greenhope. The sheep were walked to the show for a further five years before the use of lorries became the norm. Robert also recalled his father telling him that in the 1920s he had walked sheep to Ellemford Show from Harelawside at Grantshouse. The trek took him via Quixwood, Blakerston and over the Abbey Hill down into Ellemford – quite a journey.

Robert recalls that the show used to be held in the little paddock on the other side of the road from the current site and that the bar was in the lambing shed where many an argument would be held over the merits of the sheep and not least the performance of the judges. The sheep classes then were blackface, cheviots and half bred and Robert recalls that the half bred judge in that first year was Mr Elliot from Edington Hill whose son Adam was show secretary when I first entered sheep from Longformacus Estate in 1980.

Andrew Pate

Andrew recalls attending the show as a wee boy before the war when it was held in the Redpath haugh at the junction of the Dye and the Whiteadder. He remembers there being a temporary bridge over the deep ditch that runs along the roadside. Classes for pens of 20 sheep were common at the show pre war and all the stock came from within a five mile radius which has gradually extended over the years. The show date was also not so fixed in the calendar back then.

He also remembers the show being held in a field on the road to Greenhope one year on what turned out to be a very wet day - the company retired to the Ellemford steading where they were “highly entertained” said Andrew!!

Pre the First World War Andrew said that the show had included a ploughing match and also horses and whilst unable to absolutely confirm is fairly certain the origins of the show stemming from the annual gathering and exchange of stray sheep is correct. A similar exchange gathering took place at Dyehead on Byrecluch where tales of long days and 'entertainment' with many a late journey home for sheep and shepherds are the stuff of legend. What a wonderful place these hill communities must have been then.

Andrew's Uncle Andrew from Redpath was largely responsible for the resurrection of the show post the Second World War and served as "Convenor" right through until around 1960. The show secretary post war was Tom Heatlie who lived in Castle Street in Duns. Tom worked for the Berwickshire News and had at one time been goalkeeper for Heart of Midlothian. Another great supporter of the show in the early days after the war was Hilda Sherriff of Priestlaw.

Andrew remembers the industrial section being a very important part of the show post war and the auction of produce being one of the mainstays in providing the finance to keep the show going. Sandy Veitch of Reston mart was the auctioneer in the early years followed by his brother Archie and now of course Archie's son Hugh – a great tradition.

Lorries bringing sheep to the show gradually became more and more commonplace but that did not stop the drivers taking full advantage of the traditional hill show hospitality. One haulier (who shall remain nameless) is reputed to have driven from the show all the way to Duns with the ramp trailing along the road!!

Finally Andrew recalls the time that committee decided on an innovative new addition to the show in the early 1950s. They decided to hold a class for cats and so to ensure the job was done properly hired cages from the Duns Bird Society to hold the cats. Unfortunately things did not go according to plan. The cages proved not to be strong enough to hold these feline characters and they all escaped and scattered to the four winds. Legend has it that one was found at Quixwood some days later but the majority were never seen again!!.

Ian Davidson
Caldra
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