



PEDIGREE PORK PIONEERS

Sue Fildes visits Pedigree Pork producers who have been expanding their businesses to find out the secrets of their success. In the latest of the series she reports on a farm with a view in Wales



Over twenty years ago, Barbara Warren and her family moved from a riding school on flat Bedfordshire clay to a Welsh hill farm in the Brecon Beacons 'for the peace and quiet'. Court Bleddyn Farm is 1000 - 1200 feet above sea level, giving views from Somerset to the Malverns, and bags of wind and rain in season; peace and quiet is a little rare. Taking after her father, Barbara started farming the 40 acres of the farm, which is supplemented by another 50 acres of common grazing, very useful for the cattle.



Early on in her farming career, Barbara added Tamworth pigs to her beef and hill sheep enterprise, and over the years has become well known in Welsh agricultural circles as a source of Tamworth pigs. The

pork, beef and lamb produced is sold directly to loyal customers and at Usk Farmers Market, 9 miles from home. Her husband, Vic, has a day job, but mucks in with farm work. Occasionally he will stand in for her at the Farmers Market where he wears a badge declaring him to be the 'Farmers Husband' to explain his lack of knowledge on



cuts of meat and how to cook them! This breaks the ice, gives a laugh and frequently helps sales! The Market is attended twice a month, except for the summer showing season: Barbara takes her Tamworths to the Welsh Smallholders, Three Counties and Royal Welsh shows.

Barbara is usually there in the shop on Fridays before the Saturday Market, weighing, labelling and vac packing her meat, often to order from customers. The pork is therefore mainly sold fresh (chilled), but any not sold is then frozen, and sold later.

That is a full-time job, but Barbara still manages to add several extra-curricular activities. She is Chairman of the Wales and Borders Pig Breeders Association, a super pig networking club covering all breeds based on Wales but with members well over the border. For £15 per year, members gain quarterly newsletters, information on members' breeds and bloodlines, availability of weaners and boars, technical training session, and of course help and advice on tap. Recent well-attended day courses have included pig task days (tattooing, de-tusking, injecting), pigs in woodland, show preparation, and expert tutorials by Bob Stevenson, chief veterinary adviser to the BPA. These were all free to members, because they were subsidised by CALU (Centre for Alternative Land Use).

She is the driving force behind the Association's activities at major events like the Royal Welsh Smallholder & Garden Festival and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, coming up with ideas including parades of all the various breeds, 'history of the pig' displays, and even pig agility contests.



Barbara is also the Tamworth Breeders Club Welsh Co-ordinator. Barbara passionately believes that shows provide a shop window for people to see pigs, both for those who are knowledgeable or looking for stock, and for the general public. She says it really is the taking part, not the winning that matters. Not only that, but she also takes on respite care for young adults with learning difficulties, and cares for her own son with MS.



Barbara's Tamworths are all descended from two original Jacquelines purchased in 1989. She currently has seven sows and three boars at stud, changing at least one boar each year, so that gilts can be served. The boars visit other herds regularly, Barbara has found that travelling the boars to sows is the best way, because they are easy to load, never stressed, and look forward to the next job. They come home at least once every 6 months for routine worming etc. Boar hire has produced very few problems over 20 years; one boar was starved in the snow whilst on hire, and one boar was returned too fat to walk.

Current boar bloodlines are Glen and Golden Ball, with a Golden Ranger in the pipeline.

Boars, dry sows and growers live out most of the year either in dedicated pig enclosures, with permanent stock fencing and electric fencing, or in grassed paddocks, in either case with floored arks. Other pigs, including sows & litters, are let out to graze regularly, but care has to be taken not to mix litters, as they are not tattooed until 8 weeks old. The sows with litters come in overnight, walked from their individual fenced paddocks. There are only four looseboxes; the plan is never to have more than four suckling litters at any time. Bad weather brings all outdoor pigs in to strawed yards or loose boxes.

All pigs get 16% protein sow rolls except young stock selected for showing, which are fed on grower ration. Tattooing is at 8 weeks – this is because the size of the letters in her trusty old tattooer need ears of this size. Barbaras tattoo kit only has 3 digits for the HDL and 3 digits for a number and she is approaching her 1,000 pig so she must start again at 1 (with a letter suffix on the Birth note eg 001a) to avoid spending £200+ on a new tattoo kit with a fourth digit.

Of the other farm enterprises, the cattle are Welsh Black sucklers and followers, which live out all year round, in winter they are fed inbye on silage, and turned out onto the hill common in the day. Some heifers are retained for breeding, the remainder are sold as meat through the Farmers Market. The herd has its own bull, which like the boars goes out on hire. Sheep are Badger-faced Welsh Mountain, Torddus bred pure, Torwens crossed with Beltex. Lambing is indoors due to the fox, the lambs need to be 2-3 weeks old before they can safely go out. How does one woman do all this? Easy – very little sleep!



www.tamworthbreedersclub.co.uk
www.pigsonline.org.uk (Wales and Borders Pig Breeders Association)
ba.warren@hotmail.co.uk
01495 755 557



PEDIGREE PORK COMMITTEE



In the past the BPA has run its own sausage competitions but we feel it is an important to be able to compete with more commercial pigs and so we will have a different approach to sausage competitions this year.

We are encouraging pedigree breeders to take part in commercial competitions. Whilst this may at first seem quite daunting, we will provide help though BPEX co produced workshops, which pedigree producers can join in. It is important to build confidence and we hope to do this through these sessions. We will also have a pedigree section at the Welsh Winter Fair and we hoping to organise competitions with Quality Meat Scotland and the Ulster Pork and Bacon Forum. BPA Pork Committee members will be present at these events so please come along and meet your representatives

SAUSAGE COMPETITIONS IN ENGLAND

NORTH EAST & YORKSHIRE - BPEX ROADSHOW & PRODUCT COMPETITION

Date: Wednesday, 17th November 2010

Venue: Pavilions of Harrogate, Great Yorkshire Showground (Wharfe Suite) Harrogate, HG2 8PW

Tel: 01423 544544

Website: www.pavilionsofharrogate.com

ENGLISH WINTER FAIR - BPEX PRODUCT COMPETITION ONLY

Date: Sunday 21st November 2010

Venue: Bingley Hall, County Showground, Stafford, ST18 0BD

Tel: 01283 820012

Website: <http://www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk>

NORTH WEST- BPEX ROADSHOW & PRODUCT COMPETITION

Date: Wednesday, 19th January 2011

Venue: Reebok Stadium, De Vere at Whites Hotel, (Lion of Vienna), De Havilland Way, Horwich, Bolton, BL6 6SF

Tel: 01204 667788

Website: www.bwfc.co.uk/page/StadiumInformationIndex

EAST MIDLANDS - BPEX ROADSHOW & PRODUCT COMPETITION

Date: Tuesday, 8th February 2011

Venue: The Newark Showground, (Cedric Ford Pavillion), Newark, NG24 2NY

Tel: 01636 705796

Website: www.newarkshowground.com

WEST MIDLANDS - BPEX ROADSHOW & PRODUCT COMPETITION

Date: Wednesday, 23rd February 2011

Venue: The Three Counties Showground (Severn Hall), Malvern, Worcs, WR13 6NW

Tel: 01684 584900

Website: www.threecounties.co.uk

SOUTH OF ENGLAND - BPEX ROADSHOW & PRODUCT COMPETITION

Date: Wednesday, 30th March 2011

Venue: South of England Showground (Queens Jubilee Hall), Ardingly, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6TL

Tel: 01444 892410

Website: www.seas.org.uk

SAUSAGE COMPETITION IN WALES

WELSH WINTER FAIR - PEDIGREE SAUSAGE COMPETITION

Date: 30th November 2010

Venue: Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SY

Telephone: 01982 553683

Website: www.rwas.org.uk

Contact Keith Brown - 01982 552100 - chisholmkv@tiscali.co.uk

Details of competitions in Northern Ireland and Scotland will be announced on the Website



BRITISH SAUSAGE WEEK 1st – 7th November 2010

British Sausage Week is now in its 13th fabulous year and we are proud to reveal that our celebrity judge for British Sausage Week 2010 is none other than (drum roll please): the fantastic Craig Revel Horwood!

From 1st November, everyone's favourite Dancing judge will be fox trotting his way around the country in search of Britain's Star Sausage.

visit www.britishsausageweek.com for more information



Traditionally Farmed Gloucestershire Old Spots Pork Available in Oxfordshire



In June, Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State at Defra, announced at the Three Counties Show at Malvern that the Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club (GOSPBC) had been awarded Traditionally Guaranteed Status (TSG) for the pork from pedigree pigs.

The first herd and shop to be approved under this scheme has just been announced. Based in Stadhampton, to the south of the city of Oxford, **Crazy Bear Farm** (Featured in our Autumn 2009 newsletter) has been shown to operate to the highest standards and its produce is now TSG-approved. To achieve this, the pigs must all be pure-bred and pedigree and the farming methods must be to the highest welfare standards with non-intensive systems in place.

Crazy Bear Farm demonstrated this conclusively at a recent inspection and their produce is now certified for the reassurance of all their customers. All the pork and bacon produced from their herd of Gloucestershire Old Spots is sold through their own Farm Shop on site where customers can source a wide selection of high quality goods including lamb and beef also from their own farm. The stock is all kept in large enclosures outside except for sows when they are brought in to airy, comfortable barns to farrow and rear their young piglets.

The TSG is part of the Protected Food Names Scheme operated in the UK by Defra. It is similar in the way it works to other schemes such as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) which are more widespread and better known – this is only the second TSG awarded in the UK and this first TSG awarded to a breed of livestock *anywhere*. The TSG differs from the other two schemes in that production is not limited to a small geographic area but can take place anywhere in the UK (or indeed, the EU). PDOs and PGIs are used to protect foodstuffs such as Parma ham, champagne and Melton Mowbray pork pies very effectively but these were unsuitable for the Gloucestershire Old Spots as production is spread throughout the UK.

Now discerning shoppers can buy Traditionally Farmed Gloucestershire Old Spots Pork with the TSG logo confident that the produce is derived only from pedigree GOS pigs which have been kept in the best possible conditions throughout their lives – a combination that provides an exceptional and distinctive product as recognised by the EU Commission. Details of the shop can be found at <http://crazybeargroup.co.uk/farmshop/index.html>

Congratulations to the Gloucestershire Old Spots Club on their perseverance in the face of 10 years of Brussels bureaucratic stalling. Guidance from Trading Standards already ensures that pork cannot be sold by breed unless it is 100% pedigree. Now shoppers can also be sure that the pork that they buy has not been intensively reared.