



# POLWARTH

## SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

### President's Piece

#### Unprecedented Times

Unprecedented times! I know we have all heard these words repeated many times in recent weeks and yet they are very true. What extraordinary times we are currently experiencing in Australia and around the world due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I hope you and your family are safe and well and adjusting to social distancing rules and current travel restrictions. At the same time, if you have been financially impacted due to the coronavirus, I hope you can successfully navigate your way through this difficult period.

#### Shows Cancelled

For those breeders who follow the show circuit, particularly in southern Australia, this year will be quite different as many of the major shows have been cancelled.

These include:

- The South Australia Sheep Expo (15-17 April)
- Campbell Town Show, TAS (29-30 May) postponed
- Victorian Sheep Show, Ballarat (21 June)
- Australian Sheep and Wool Show, VIC (17-19 July)
- Sheepvention, VIC (3-5 August)
- Royal Adelaide Show (4-13 September)

#### Association Annual General Meeting

Under normal circumstances, the Annual General Meeting and General Meeting was due to be held on Saturday 18th July during the Australian Sheep and Wool Show. We propose to still hold the meeting on this date, instead using one of the online platforms available to us. We will do some research to select a platform which works for the most number of members. The secretary will distribute more information in the coming weeks.

#### Welcome to New Members

- Chris Newson, Newley Vale Polwarths, Kelso TAS
- Warwick Fisher, Mingara Polwarths, Carlsruhe VIC
- James Derham, Scott Worland and Hugh Graham from Toomwilloo Pastoral, Winchelsea VIC

### Sale of historic 'Streanshalh' property

At the end of January historic Tasmanian property 'Streanshalh', located on the Macquarie River near Campbell Town, changed ownership for the first time in 100 years.

'Streanshalh' was home to the Nicolson family since 1899 and home to Rendlesham Polwarths, flock number 523. Andrew Nicolson started the flock in December 1968 and at the height of operations ran some 5000 Polwarths. Andrew was also known for his love of Corriedale sheep.

Following Andrew's death in 2014, Judith Nicolson took over the reins with the help of long time employee Peter Baker. Together, Judith and Peter instigated many improvements which made the property an attractive proposition for the new owners.

Of the remaining 3000 Polwarths, some 2250 were purchased by Toomwilloo Pastoral located at Winchelsea in Victoria. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus we have been unable to bring you pictures of this important purchase. A further 300 ewes lambs were purchased by flock 709, Rendlesham at Fairview. Between these two flocks, much of the Rendlesham genetics have been retained.

Judith has now moved to Rosevears, 20km from Launceston where her home overlooks the beautiful and everchanging Tamar River. We thank Judith for her contribution to the association and wish her well in this new stage of her life.

#### Update Polwarth History, 1980-2020

Many members will be aware of the green covered book written by Noel C. R. Dennis in 1982 titled, Polwarth Sheep, 1880-1980, A resume of the first one hundred years.

As it's been 50 years since this book was written, secretary Kaye Potter has volunteered to write a new book updating the history of the Polwarth breed from 1980 to 2020. The book will be published by the original publisher Waller and Chester in Ballarat. We are aiming to launch the book at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show in July 2021. During the next 12 months, Kaye will contact many past and current members so that their story, experiences and knowledge of the Polwarth breed can be included.

## Black Summer

Unfortunately, the seriousness of the Covid-19 pandemic has overshadowed one of worst bushfire seasons on record.

Overnight on 9th January, the Taljar stud and McArdle family were severely impacted by a fire which burnt through some 450,000 acres on Kangaroo Island.

Miraculously, most of the Taljar sheep survived due to a wind change at the right time. However, David and Lynne lost their family home, a second cottage, shedding, some machinery and a lot of fencing.

Just prior to Christmas, fires in the Adelaide Hills caused much anxiety especially for Narang Polwarths. The efforts of firefighters and a lucky wind change resulted in Caroline and Peter's property being saved. Fortunately, their show ewes and lambs also survived a fire which burnt through another property on which they were agisted. The fires also came close to the boundaries of Mt Crawford Polwarths and Bel-Antha Polwarths.

Some 3½ months later, the process of recovery on Kangaroo Island is gradually progressing. Initially, David and family did some temporary fencing repairs to contain the sheep. A group of Australian Defence Force Reserves came through and dismantled and rolled up much of the burnt fencing.

Insurance assessments were completed and fortunately David and Lynne were well insured. A donated mobile home and Atco hut have become their temporary home powered by a generator. Early progress was slow due to the shortage of fencing materials. There was also a wait on machinery needed to clear some of the fence lines.

Blaze Aid were very keen to assist and eventually helped David erect some 3-4km of fencing. Recently, debris from the house and shed sites has been cleared and carted away.

While David and Lynne still have a long way to go we hope that as the months pass the rebuilding of their new home and shedding starts to take shape.

This week, the Polwarth Association posted a new set of flock books to David and Lynne. Special thanks to Dani Hogan from Catherine McAuley College for assistance with this process. Thanks also to Lynne Dohle who donated her copy of the Polwarth book written by Noel C. R. Dennis.

In the last few days Kangaroo Island received a welcome 20mL of rain. Hopefully there is still enough warmth in the ground for the grass to grow.





## Life for the Aisthorpe family at 'Carinya Haven' in Roma, Qld written by Sophie Aisthorpe

Hi this is the Aisthorpe family (Alan, Lesley, Sophie, Emiley and Courtney) from Carinya Haven Roma Queensland.

The Aisthorpe family has been purchasing Polwarth sheep since early 1940's. Thomas Alfred Aisthorpe registered a stud on the seventh of seventh 1955 which was the flock number 318, prefects: Carinya. Over many years he attended shows and field days, promoting the Polwarth breed. As years passed the family was unable to continue attending show and field days.

With passing away of Thomas the family took a different direction regarding stud sheep. But we have always stayed true to Polwarth's. With the decline of sheep in Queensland it has been harder to find avenues to sell stud stock. In 1991 Alan Aisthorpe re-registered as flock number 675 and prefects: Roma. Since then Alan married Lesley and she joined the partnership. The prefects were then changed to Carinya Haven.

We have had our ups and downs with weather, money and health as we all do. We have been in drought since 2012 which has caused major difficulties on the property. During the drought we had to lock sheep up to feed and water them. This had to be done because there was no water in the dams and no feed in the paddocks. During this period, we had financial burden from having to buy feed for the sheep each week to keep them healthy to make money from them.

Other challenges we had to face was like when Alan had his motor-bike accident in July 2018 breaking several bones in his body. Due to him having this accident he had to have surgery on his collar bone. This accident caused Alan to be unfit for working for nine months which also caused financial burden. We had also planned to go Victoria to buy some rams but due to the accident we were unable to go, we still plan to go in the near future. Our daughter Sophie was also diagnosed with Miserable malalignment, in 2019. This caused her knees to turn in. Sophie had to have surgery. For this surgery her tibia and femur were broken and rotated 20 degrees outwards on both legs.

Not everything was bad though during this time. Our family won a trip to Disneyland in California due to receiving one of 10 Disney titles from Woolworths. We had planned to take this trip in April this year but due to COVID-19 we had to postpone this trip. We were able to change it so we can go next year if possible. We were still able to make some money by selling wool when the prices were good.

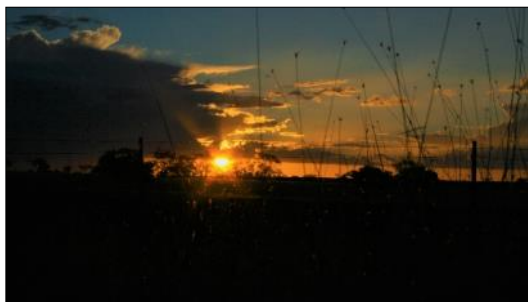
Early this year in February we started to receive rainfall and so far, we have got 343mm. This rain has made grass grow back in our paddocks and our dams full. We have been able to let our sheep out into the paddocks. From this rain we were able to plant sorghum for the sheep to graze on. We are now expecting lambing to begin in the next few months. Our sheep have started to put on weight and become healthier. The last four months we have been able to supply one of our local butchers with sheep each week. *Continued next page.....*





Sophie our oldest daughter who is fifteen and half has started to study at TAFE to achieve a cert 2 in rural operations. This course allows her to gain skills and experience from others and different environments. From this course she is also able to bring her skills to our own property so she can become more independent on tasks. She has also started her own YouTube channel about the experiences that we are going through on the property like the drought and the rainfall.

Even though it has rained we need it to rain regularly for the next few years to keep the dams up and keep the feed in the paddocks. It is probably going to take some years to get our numbers of sheep up again. With self-isolation the family as a whole is achieving more goals such as fencing, animal health, finish shearing shed and sheep yard upgrades and when border and other restrictions are lifted from COVID-19 we plan to get some new rams. We hope the rain keeps coming more regularly and everyone stay safe to catch up soon.



### Other pics from around the country



### Thank-you!

*Kaye Potter thanks members for their contribution to the newsletter. It's great to see Polwarth's in their natural environment around Australia.*

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Above:

Mt Crawford, SA  
(Kate and David Thornsteinsen)  
2019 ewe lambs looking healthy and even

Right:  
Moorabee ewes in lamb near Bendigo, VIC (Peter and Hilda English)

