

# HERITAGE SHEEP AUSTRALIA

*"Saving the breeds that were the foundation of our sheep and wool industry"*



**NEWSLETTER NO 20**  
**September 2010**

## **Heritage Sheep in a Heritage Setting**

*By Ivan Heazlewood*

As we approached the gate I was struck with a tinge of envy, but also with a tinge of admiration, for the plaque said in very readable letters:

### **Heritage Sheep Australia**

Envy because I had not thought of it, and admiration because it was such a positive promotional device. Actually it could have also emphatically said, "Heritage Home" for I was visiting "Wanstead Park", Campbell Town, Tasmania the home of Malcolm and Phillipa Baird, the owners of English Leicester flock number 395.

The "Wanstead" mansion was built by an enterprising pioneer migrant, Richard Willis, in the 1820's and is said to be the oldest remaining substantial building made of pise (rammed earth) and brick in Australia.

Before leaving London in 1823, Willis was a prosperous well-connected businessman. His younger brother, Arthur, was head of a company trading with the colonies, which in the 1830's had branches in Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne.



*"Wanstead Park" Homestead, Campbell Town, Tasmania*

When applying for land grants Willis declared that he could take to the colony assets worth more than \$5000 plus an independent income of \$300 per year, and a promise by friends of a further \$10000 if needed. An unusually cordial letter from the Colonial Office to Governor Arthur ensued in addition to the then normal 2,000 acres maximum, a further 1,000 acres was granted soon after his arrival.

The Courier, a ship in which he may have had a financial interest, brought Willis, his wife and ten children, 50 Merino ewes and three rams bred from the flock of George III, stud horses and cattle, plus several indentured servants (of whom more later) to Hobart in December 1823.

Willis selected his grant on the highway connecting Hobart and Launceston just north of Campbell Town and named it after a village in Essex. To say that he prospered is an understatement. A description in 1831 says "the delightful estate comprises 8,000 acres plus a garden of 15 acres, and two orchards. Beside the main house a smaller one in which he previously resided, two capacious stables, granaries, threshing and corn mills and other out houses".

Some of the accumulated 8,000 acres was reward for his role in the capture of a bushranger, when his horse was shot under him and his neck wounded by gunshot. In 1832 he had the services of 32 convicts.

When applying for more land in 1828, Willis claimed that he was "without competitor in these districts having enclosed 1,000 acres, put 150 acres in cultivation, just finished one of the best houses in the colony, at an expense of upwards of \$1,000. He also had 3,000 sheep, 150 cattle and one of the most beautiful stallions (Peter Fin a famous foundation sire of Tasmania turf) ever imported".

Unlike many landed gentry of the period, Willis found favour with Governor Arthur who appointed him to the Legislative Council, but his arrogance was said to have led to quarrels with most of his neighbours.



*"Wanstead Park" Homstead, Campbell Town, Tasmania*

When the cellar and the extensive attic are counted, there are four storeys in the "Wanstead" mansion. The interior is exceptionally generously paneled with cedar. A contemporary description says "the French doors are geometrically capped by first floor windows, in turn capped by third floor tiny windows. The verandah with narrow columns contributes to the simple Regency style".

"Wanstead" interests me not only because of its Heritage Sheep and Heritage House; it is significant in the heritage of hundreds of Heazlewoods now residing in Australia.

The shipping report in the early Hobart newspaper of Sunday December 21<sup>st</sup> 1823, announcing the arrival of the Courier after a voyage which began in London on July 16<sup>th</sup> lists: in the cabin Mr and Mrs Willis and 11 children and in steerage, among others, two young Heazlewood men. They had left a humble Leicestershire village where, for generations their ancestors had been carpenters, six days



*"Wanstead Park" Shearing Shed, Campbell Town, Tasmania*

prior to the Courier's sailing. Their only assets were the skills of their hands. Richard Willis would know that he needed tradesmen for his new venture and it would be surprising if shepherds, grooms and blacksmiths were not among the several other males in the steerage.

We do not know how long their contract required these servants to work at "Wanstead", but we do know that the move to the colony favoured James and Joseph Heazlewood – probably in much the same proportion (but from an infinitely lower base) as it did Richard Willis.

In 1828 James unsuccessfully applied for a land grant declaring that he had assets of \$560 consisting, 400 fine wool sheep at \$400, four cattle \$20, and various tools. His address was then "Wanstead Park" and Richard Willis endorsed the application. In the next year his address was Launceston, he had married Sophia Diprose, his assets now totalled \$1,002 and included two houses.

His younger brother, Joseph, married Sophia's sister and established a blacksmith in Launceston and later in Longford. In the 1830s he owned a 300 acre bush run southeast of Launceston, on which from 1833 he agisted



*"Wanstead Park" Shearing Shed, width of floor boards.*



*Wanstead English Leicesters, Campbell Town Tasmania*

some sheep owned by John Batman. It is understandable that John Bateman's preoccupation with the grazing potential of Port Phillip and naming the place for a village on the banks of the Yarra diverted his attention from a minor Van Diemens and matter and dispute arose which led, in 1837 to arbitration, the outcome of which is unknown.

The slow letters to Leicestershire carried good news and in 1834 my great grandfather, married with children, a younger brother and two sisters migrated. Henry, also a carpenter worked that trade, and then became a tenant farmer and in 1854 he purchased 420 acres, which he named "Melton Vale" after a provincial Leicester town near his birth village.

The Heritage English Leicesters of "Wanstead Park" have made a significant contribution to Australia's flocks. Mrs Baird is a neice of the late Eric Gray and it was after his death that the Marengo flock came to "Wanstead".

Mr Gray had established his stud from one of Tasmania's leading flocks in 1981 and the introduction of New Zealand blood quickly made it influential in both Tasmania and Victoria. Several ewes were included in a consignment to Virginia, USA., in the late 1980's where the breed is now thriving and expanding.

Responding to the requirements of handcrafters, the Bairs arrange the shearing of their lustrous Leicester wool when length, crimp and vitality are at their best. Their product, carefully prepared examples of which Mrs Baird showed us in a room heavily lined with cedar paneling, the work of a wood craftsman of nearly 200 years, is eagerly sought by waiting customers.

I left "Wanstead Park" with the sense of warmth, which invariably comes with meeting people with an interest in stud sheep plus the extra pleasure of spending time with

folk who have come under the spell of that most historic and influential breed – the English Leicester.



*"Wanstead Park" Homstead, Campbell Town, Tasmania*

## 2011 Sheep and Wool Show

The woolcraft committee of the Sheep and Wool Show, Bendigo would like to work for and put on displays for Heritage Sheep Australia at the 2011 show. The woolcraft theme for the show is "Generations" thus a connection with our heritage sheep. These displays create a lot of interest with the woolcraft ladies and men as well as the public.

All that is required is a fleece from each of our breeds. The committee would like to get these fleeces as soon as possible to allow them time to spin, dye, knit, felt, weave etc. for the display. Members at the AGM agreed that each breed would supply a fleece so could those members please confirm who is providing the fleece and a pick-up/delivery point.

Dot Vallence is organizing the display and can be contacted on [mikev@optushome.com.au](mailto:mikev@optushome.com.au) or our Heritage Sheep Australia member Ethel Stephenson has an enormous knowledge in this area and would be happy to help with any questions regarding fleece requirements, Ethel can be contacted on 03 57641298.



## 2010 Heritage Sheep Feature Show Clunes, Agricultural Show

Heritage Sheep will feature at the 150th Clunes Show on Saturday, November 20th 2010

To mark the 150th Show the Agricultural Society is featuring a Heritage Sheep Feature along-side other historical attractions such as blade shearing, farm machinery and memorabilia.

Members will recall we had a very successful feature show some years ago with sheep exhibits so large some breeds were housed in a marquee. Since then the Clunes Agricultural Society have built a new larger shed to cater for the growing number of sheep entries.

Special Heritage Championship Awards for our long and short wool breeds, as well as Supreme Heritage Sheep of the Show and Heritage Lamb of the Show have been added to the schedule.

An addition to the Fleece section is a Champion Heritage Fleece and this can be brought to the Show on Saturday 20th for judging.

Heritage Sheep Australia invite members to support this feature show either exhibiting sheep or coming along to be part of what will be a fun day for Heritage Sheep Australia.

Entries close on Tuesday 17th September 2010

For information and schedules contact

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Secretary

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## Guild Insurance

Guild Insurance sponsor Heritage Sheep Australia. We are grateful for their continued support and encourage members to think of them when renewing your insurance. They are very pleased to quote on any of your Insurance requirements.

**Call Rod Crook on 03 9373 2500**

## Royal Melbourne Show Display 2010

Preparation is well under way for our Heritage Sheep Australia Display for the 2010 Melbourne Show. The Show starts on Saturday 18th September and is open until Tuesday the 28th September 2010.

Once again I would like to thank breeders who support this display with sheep, it is the main focus of our display and certainly extremely well admired by the public and the RASV. Some breeders bring sheep exhibits to the show however they have to make a return trip to collect them at the end of the show, others make two trips specially to deliver and collect sheep, this requires a lot of time and effort which Heritage Sheep Australia is extremely grateful.

This year the display will be manned by Des Stevens, Colin and Margaret Chapman, Ian and Ray Christie and myself. I would like to thank these members who are leaving their farms and giving enormous amounts of time and energy to look after the sheep and promote our Heritage breeds.

The Weekly Times will be taking photographs of children with lambs and has requested our help in supplying some lambs. Last year the Cheviot ewe had triplets which would have been the most popular photograph in the show (along-side Des!) Hopefully we will have some suitable lambs this year.

If any member would like to help on our display during the show please phone me on 98204172 or email.

### Annual Membership Fees

Annual membership fees are now due for 2010-2011 Please complete the attached membership form then mail or email along with your membership fees. If using direct debit please notify me of your payment.

## December 2010 Newsletter No 21

Thankyou to all those members who have contributed to this issue. The next deadline is **1st December 2010**. I would be delighted for any contributions from members, either email or post. Email: **Jacque @ mcarchitect.com.au** Mail: 11 Mona Place, South Yarra 3141