

Thomas Preece

Thomas Preece began helping his father shepherd sheep on the Forest from when he was a small child. At the age of fourteen he had his own flock of sheep. He combined commoning with working at the Princess Royal Colliery after he was conscripted as a Bevin boy during the Second World War. He continued as a collier for twelve years until he became a full time commoner and farmer on land acquisitions in the Bream area. At one point he had extensive numbers of sheep grazing on Forest waste and maintained one of the largest flocks on the Forest. He commoned through the 1967 Foot and Mouth disease outbreak, but gave up after the 2001 epidemic. He is a widow and has two sons. He continues to keep about 100 ewes at his farm in Saunders Green, near Bream (2016).

- 1.00 Family and Intro to Sheep Commoning
- 1.52 Father's Sheep
- 2.10 Railway Inn, Parkend
- 3.00 Shearing
- 3.30 Sister working with sheep
- 4.20 Early employment
- 4.40 Starting his own flock
- 5.36 Flock size
- 5.50 Buying a farm
- 5.53 Becoming Bevin Boy
- 6.44 Buying a farm at Saunders Green
- 8.10 Speech House
- 8.53 Shaking hands at Three Brothers
- 10.10 Brockholland Farm and expanding into diary milking
- 11.10 Help from sons.
- 11.34 Sheep owned today
- 11.59 Conscripted to work at Princess Royal Colliery
- 12.43 **Bevin Boy Badge (see photograph)**
- 13.11 Career underground ending in 1958
- 13.58 Foot and Mouth
- 14.30 **Letter to his Grancher dated 1904 regarding sheep straying (see photograph)**
- 14.57 **Son arrives to help with lambing**
- 15.40 Sons could draw lambs when they were 6 or 7 years of age
- 16.30 Sheep straying at Beaver hut, Parkend
- 17.04 Parkend Forestry School
- 17.21 (Yanks) US soldiers in the Forest
- 18.07 Starting as lorry drivers mate
- 18.30 Delivering to PoW camp at Broadwell WW2
- 19.59 Delivering PoW labour to Gloucester Gas Works
- 20.37 Italian PoWs and mashed potato
- 22.07 Working in the pit and farming
- 22.40 28 miles before breakfast shepherding
- 23.10 Colliers giving up runs because sons hated sheep
- 24.05 Silicosis and Farmers Lung
- 24.56 Full time commitment to communing

25.15 Welsh Sheep and Suffolk rams
25.41 Mireystock
26.42 Welsh is best
27.19 Turning ram out October 20th and lambing on his birthday, March 16th
28.10 Lambing on the Forest
28.20 Losses, road casualties
28.40 Dog nuisance
30.00 Cannop bottom and sheep
30.30 Change in Forestry practice after WW2
30.52 Wet Wood, Nags Head.
31.10 Shearing
31.27 Impact of coniferous Forest on Commoning
32.10 Sheep dipping (August)
32.49 Tups
33.18 Using the abbatoir at Lyes, Gloucester Road, Westbury
33.50 First Foot and Mouth outbreak (1967)
34.20 Criticism of Foot and Mouth management
34.50 1960s outbreak
36.00 Sheep in Parkend
36.34 Selling lambs to Ivor Davies
37.00 2001 outbreak
37.22 Ewes that knew places lost in the cull
38.07 Impact of F&M a 'bad blow'
39.04 Loss of all haunted sheep

Glossary

Draw a lamb: Help a lamb be delivered by pulling it out in a measured way.

Eaning - the act of giving birth in sheep, alternative to *lambing*.

Farmers lung: a type of pneumonitis caused by an allergic reaction to spores in mouldy hay.

Fly Strike: Fly strike or myiasis – infestation of the wool, skin and eventually flesh with blowfly or botfly maggots.

Haunting: Old term meaning to settle sheep in a particular location where they would generally stay. There is an instinct in some breeds to stay with a certain *heft* (a small local area) throughout their lives. This allows commoners to graze their sheep without the need for fences. Lambs learn their heft from their mothers. Continuity of generations of sheep is therefore extremely important.

Hefting: Modern equivalent of above.

Heafing: As above.

Grancher: Grandfather.

Lonk tup: a breed of mountain sheep, see: <http://www.lonk-sheep.org>.

Mark: A mark, usually an initial or large letter that indicates the owner of the sheep. This was preceded years before by the practice of cutting marks in the ear. *Earmark* – a distinctive mark clipped in the lobe of the ear.

Pit: A Colliery.

Scrag tup: A ram lamb that is not castrated and left on the Forest. Unless ringed and castrated they will serve their own mother.

Scrudded: Gently beaten or roughed over.

Sheep Scab: An acute or chronic form of allergic dermatitis caused by the faeces of the scab mite, *psoroptes ovis*. See: <http://www.scops.org.uk/ectoparasites-sheep-scab.html>

Silicosis: Lung fibrosis caused by the inhalation of dust containing silica

Tag or Ear tag – plastic or metal tag clipped to ear, with identification number, name or electronic chip.

Tats: Welsh sheep.

Tup: A ram.

Tupping: Ram mating with a ewe.

Wool on the wire: Wool left by sheep accidentally or when scratching that can be contaminated with sheep scab. Scab sometimes causes the itching and it is therefore considered good practice to burn or remove the wool in case it is a contaminant.

Worming drench: Drench – a veterinary medicine administered orally and usually an anthelmintic or *wormer*.

OP dip: Organo-phosphate sheep dip (chemical) used to prevent fly-strike and scab.

Abbreviations

NFU: National Farmers Union

MAFF: Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food

DEFRA: Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs

FC: Forestry Commission