**Secretary Blog – Week One of Semi-Serious Opening Up!**

One fairly regular feature of my work is to deal with a variety of enquiries which filter into the office from folks interested in finding out more about the Breed. These interests take many forms - from students doing research work, to folks (often younger folks) trying to search back in their family histories to discover information about grandfathers or great grandfathers who owned or worked with Clydesdales – and a myriad of other requests.

With the instinct of trying to help, it is often with regret that I have to tell many of these enquirers that as we are not an archive Society, the chances of me being able to help them with their enquiry is remote.

However, under the mantra that we have a role to play in promoting the Breed and also in ensuring that the good name of the Society does not become tarnished, I have managed to build up a number of different reference points, which I can give to these interested enquirers. And it can be rewarding when, as often happens, an enquirer later advises that the direction which we encouraged them to follow, has allowed their enquiry to be satisfied. Another example of things which come along in regular course which make this job so interesting!

Ultimately, of course, we are a Breed Society but last week it was a bit of a thrill for me to be able to respond to one query from my namesake Bruce Roy in Canada. Bruce is writing an article for The Draft Horse Journal in Iowa about the stallion, Doura Masterstroke, and he was looking for information about the number of foals sired by that stallion and registered by the Society. And my thrill that night was that for once, I could offer a reply, almost immediately, since this information was readily available on our Breed Records system. And in case you are interested, the answer to Bruce’s question was that we registered 52 foals out of this James Douglas and Son bred, Doura prefixed stallion.

This got me thinking, as I often do, about the history of our breed which is steeped in tradition. I am acutely aware that following traditions and sticking resolutely to history (subscribing to the notion that ‘it’s aye been done this way and so we’re ‘no’ changing it) can and has been the downfall of many organisations.

So, we can be pleased that our Breed has, to a degree, succeeded in moving forward, whilst concurrently never losing sight of its roots and heritage.

The question is, have we come far enough? And that’s really not for me to say – but what I do know is that we can do so much more than we have achieved so far in our quest to make more efficient our administration and our procedures.

But also, under the notion that you can never please all the people all of the time and that with 662 members, at present therefore, I have 662 bosses (!!). So, there is a fine line to be drawn to get the balance right!

Oh, and by the way I am always delighted to add to ‘my list of bosses’ by seeing new folks come into membership of the Clydesdale Horse Society. All it really takes to join our Society is the completion of a form, a payment of £40 for your subscription plus £10 entry fee in year one – and provided that you are a person of good repute and intent, it is highly unlikely that our Council will refuse you entry! If you would like to find out more about membership and what you get for your subscription, why not email me on secretary@clydesdalehorsesociety.com

Returning though to traditions and history, I vividly recall being told very early in my time as Secretary by one worthy - words I’ll never forget - ‘Young man [and at aged 54, at least that opening to the oncoming salvo cheered me!!]. Young man, don’t you dare think that you can come in here and destroy our Society with all your high fluting, modern, business ways! Because ah’m telling you, if you do, you’ll be oot o here before your feet have time to settle under the desk!!’

And then when about a month into the job someone else emailed me with a list of complaints about our Society’s lack of forward thinking, the stark reality of not being able to please ‘awbody’ rang so true!

So, every day as I sit with my feet (precariously placed!) under the desk, but always with these differing, honestly held views in mind – I still feel that I have the best job working with the Society of a Breed which remains a vulnerable Breed as the attached Rare Breed Survival Trust watchlist of equines shows.

Thankfully, we are healthier than some breeds, but these statistics show that we are certainly not completely out of the woods when it comes to security of long-term survival. That is why, and I can say this honestly, that I am so happy to get in applications to register a new foal whether through the mail or by email - and that’s also why I feel your pain when the news is less good.

In recent times once again, we have seen and heard stories of the great sadness of new foals being born, seemingly doing well, then unexpectedly, and suddenly losing their lives with almost similar and inexplicable speed. Many of you have told me that the pain of this experience never leaves you and I totally believe your every word in these circumstances.

Now I can hear many of you saying as you read this, ‘Ian, you are preaching to the converted’.

Maybe so, but in the knowledge that this blog is capable of reaching nearly 4,800 people (and more) on Facebook - and that part of our job is to spread the news about the realities facing our Breed (both positive and negative), I hope you will excuse my ‘maudling’ just a ‘wee’ bit this week.

And yet I see every day that whatever happens, you folks love this wonderful Breed of ours – testament to why so many of you keep coming back for more year after year.

So maybe, just maybe, we need to hold on to that history and some of those traditions, always with an open mind of the needs of a more modern Society – both to remind us of the struggles of past days – and also to give us real hope in the days ahead – as we all work to preserve and sustain this great Breed!

So today I dedicate this blog and offer our grateful thanks to all the breeders who work away year on year investing in the Clydesdale Breed. And this dedication extends to the increasing numbers of owners who also invest in the fruits of the labours of all the breeders - and who continue the work of promoting our breed both by upholding the traditions of the past and also by creating what will become the traditions of the future through participation in some of the more modern ways of owning, showing and riding.

All of you are playing your important part in keeping the Clydesdale Horse well and truly alive! Thank you!

And now, before I finish, a recall back to more traditions – this time to the Two Ronnie’s Saturday night TV show on BBC1 of many moons ago when that programme ended always with the words ‘Now for some late news’!

My late news this week is this. In my blog last week, I forgot to mention that in the recent round of member voting, Capt Jim Anderson was unanimously reappointed as CHS Treasurer. Mea culpa! I did tell Jim during the week that he would feature as ‘Stop Press’ in this week’s blog and I wouldn’t want to let him down!!! Good to have you back, Jim, to hold the purse strings as only you can do!

Have a good week, all of you, until next week when heaven only knows what drivel will deluge down from the dining room then!

All the very best to you all.