

**CARAS
New Fellowship**

Eirwen Williams

Eirwen Williams was awarded Fellowship in November 2022. She had previously been awarded Associateship for her submission 'Knowledge Exchange and Personal Development.'

Agriculture has always been close to my heart and I consider it a privilege to be working in the industry as Rural Director for Menter a Busnes. One of the programmes I'm responsible for is the Farming Connect knowledge transfer programme and advisory service.

It is a pleasure to work with a team of enthusiastic individuals, supporting farmers in a period of substantial change. It is essential that Welsh agriculture is at the forefront as regards the most recent changes and developments in various fields, from technology to science and that this is communicated effectively with Welsh farmers.

From a personal perspective, my husband Gareth and I began farming on a tenant farm, before we succeeded in buying our own farm in 2010. We are very pleased that our son has now joined the partnership and that our daughter also works in the agricultural sector.

In my leisure time, I'm one of the Leaders of Llangwryfon YFC and it gives me pleasure being in the company of young people. It was an honour to be chosen this year as county Vice President of Ceredigion YFC.

CARAS New Fellowship

Elfyn Owen

Elfyn Owen was made a Fellow in November 2022. He had previously been awarded Associateship for his submission 'Improving Bluefaced Leicester Sheep.'

I started to learn how to improve my stockjudging skills in my local YFC Club at Betws yn Rhos many moons ago. Little did I think then that I would receive the ultimate accolade of judging the Sheep Interbreed Championships at the Royal Welsh Show in 2022!

Judging and exhibiting sheep over the years has given me, and still does, great satisfaction. There is nothing I like more than meeting fellow breeders, all across the country, to celebrate their achievements and talk about the never ending challenges of being a sheep farmer!

Currently, I am National Chairman of the Bluefaced Leicester Society, which is a fantastic opportunity for me to promote and ensure the Society moves forward. The Cernyw flock, has been a performance recorded flock since 1997.

I put a strong emphasis on ram genetic performance from forage. Feeding less concentrate and keeping a close eye on EBVs helps me continue to fulfil my aim of producing more efficient sheep.

Day to day running of the farm at Ffritharw, Llanddoged, keeps me out of mischief. I have a flock of 500 Welsh Improved type ewes, alongside the 60 pedigree Leicesters. In 2019, I joined the Welsh Hill Ram Scheme, to begin performance recording the Welsh Improved ewes.

The scheme has moved on to become the Welsh Sheep Genetics Programme. Involvement in this scheme has accelerated improvement of the stock we keep and sell at the annual PROHILL Sale in Aberystwyth in September.

I have also recently provided data for short term schemes, such as Breeding for Reduced Methane Emissions in Sheep and Responsible Anti microbial Use. I am a member of the executive committee of the Welsh Mule Association, a representative for Denbighshire on the British Wool Board, and a member of the NSA Ram Sale Committee.

My passion remains with the Bluefaced Leicester and I take pride in the fact that the Cernyw flock has accumulated quite a few prizes since it was established in 1978, competing in the ring and winning fleece competitions. Even more importantly, I still enjoy the skill of shearing, although my competition days are well and truly over!!

Breeding and improving an animal is always a challenge for any stockman, whatever the breed, but both these attributes remain my mantra and continue to be the driving force in my privileged farming life.

LLANWENOG SHEEP



Llanwenog sheep first appeared at the Royal Welsh Show in Golden Grove in 1961. There were thirteen exhibitors, with more than half of them Cardis.

It was two years before the show was permanently established at Llanellwedd and it is interesting to note that there were 12 breeds there in all. Six were Welsh breeds and the rest British. Today more than fifty breeds feature in the sheep ring – 15 from Wales and a dozen from abroad. How things have changed.

The beginning of the journey for the Llanwenog was quite a bit earlier than that. I know that my grandfather bought thirty of the black headed type, now known as the Llanwenog for £2 a head in 1904. He had come home from the Treorchy coal mines to farm here at Alltgoch.

This was a very high price since a farm labourer's wage at the time was five shillings (25p) a week. Earning the £60 to buy the thirty sheep equated to four and a half year's wages. Today, with a sheep being roughly £160 and wages about £500 a week, he could buy his flock in about nine weeks! The value of a sheep has multiplied eighty times, wages two thousand times.

The type of sheep he bought had developed in this area during the two previous decades. It originated from the horned, black-headed sheep on Llanllwni Mountain. There is no definite period, nor a picture of the type of these black-headed sheep.

Then, in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, came the railways, increased use of lime to improve pasture land and the demand from industrial South Wales for meat. Shropshire rams were introduced to improve the quality and size of the native sheep.

It was the local landowners 'the gentry' who had the money and the vision to buy and breed the sheep from Shropshire. In the Parish of Llanwenog, G P V Pryse, Bwlchbychan, and Bertie Davies Evans, Highmead, had established flocks in the 1880s.

A class was established for the breed from England in 1877. It's likely that the Shropshires of the period in West Wales had cleaner heads and smaller ears than is common today.

A flock was also established on the Derry Ormond estate near Lampeter as early as 1872 and at Rhoscellan Fach in the north of the county. There was an auction of more than 200 within a few years.

The parish of Llanwenog was central to this early development and by 1935 there was a class for 'Two Black-Headed Sheep with two lambs each' at the Llanwenog Agricultural Society Show.



The result of this pioneering work was that the black headed sheep with a tuft of wool on its forehead became popular in central Cardiganshire. It was a period when the majority of farms kept a flock of sheep to run side by side with the dairy herd.

The easiness and hardiness of the mountain black headed sheep it originated from, worked well with the lowland characteristics of the Shropshire. It was therefore of medium size, easy to manage, prolific with meat and good quality wool.

A number of families from West Wales moved to farm in England in the 1920s and 30s, returning to Llanybydder mart each year to buy the Llanwenog black headed sheep. They took their place effectively on the fertile land of the counties of Hereford, Northampton and Leicester.

A society was established in the 1950s to manage, to stabilise the type and promote the breed. The influential R L Jones, Penwenallt, was an agricultural officer in the county and his son, D Iorwerth Jones, Ffynnonfair, was the first chairman.

Alderman Griffith Davies, from the Pantmoch family, was the first president. He also recalls his father buying black headed sheep in 1898 from Pencarreg Mountain. He had

crossed them with a Shropshire ram with a head that had comparatively little wool. It was another example of early efforts to improve the sheep in the Pontsiân area.

The breed had come to prominence in the National Lambing Competition by the 1960s. Flocks such as Cwmere, Brynsegur, Gwargraig and Maesmeillion were consistent winners, with percentages far beyond 200%.

Some argued that this was excessive, and that it was a counter attraction for some ewes to give birth to three or four lambs. The norm was to lamb outside in wet West Wales.

However, the breed appealed to a substantial number of shepherds over the border in England in 1960s and 70s, with some keeping flocks of a hundred or two hundred and even one flock of five hundred. A small number were also exported to Germany from the north of Pembrokeshire in 1976.

Evans Brothers from Llanbydder Mart have held the annual auction from the outset. The late Charles Evans took great pride in the sheep that emerged from his own native parish and he often referred to the pioneers who continued to toil for the breed as the 'old warriors'.

It is also interesting to note that the core area from which the Llanwenog originated and spread was the same, to a certain degree, as the stronghold of the Unitarians. There are a cluster of the denomination's chapels, more or less from Felinfach to Lampeter and down towards Talgarreg and Llandysul.

This is exactly where the original breeders were clustered. Freedom of thought, the development of ideas and being true to one other were the cornerstones of their religion. Who knows whether such virtues also stimulated their farming?

In the final decades of the last century, the numbers reduced as hardship struck from all directions. This created a considerable challenge for a number of the native breeds and, to some extent, heralded the end of the mixed farm. People got rid of their flocks and specialised in dairying.

There was an enormous growth in the popularity of the Halfbred and the Mule, at the expense of the old breeds. The continental breeds, predominantly the Texel and the Charollais, with their size and quality, swept everything aside lowland holdings. The Llanwenog found itself on the list of rare breeds.

The fortitude and virtues of the breed and its breeders prevailed. They supported the auction at Llanbydder on the last Saturday in August. The prolific, efficient, multi purpose and long lived ewe still appeals to smallholders and farmers.

They are popular from Pembroke to Bala and from Yorkshire to Devon. The classes for the Llanwenog in England's county shows are increasing. Meanwhile at the RWAS shows in Llanellwedd, the standard and the presentation is as high as any breed in the sheep ranks.

Last year, more than 60 years since that first 1961 show, there were 15 exhibitors at the Royal Welsh Show, five of them from the parish which gave the breed its name. Only one of the 1961 flocks remains, but there are new flockmasters tinkling shears and continuing to bring dignity to the appealing black face that started its journey almost a century and a half ago.

The Llanwenog has stood its ground. It has spread to the four corners of the world. May it have honour in its own land.

Huw Evans

Feature County Article

Tregaron Type Sheep

One of the most delightful wonders to be seen when visiting the uplands of Ceredigion is a flock of Welsh Mountain Sheep, grazing leisurely in their natural habitat. Heavenly!

But look again at the type of sheep, especially if you are wandering the uplands of the vast area between the Preseli Hills, the Black Mountain, the county borders of Powys and the southern tract of Eryri. Here, more than likely, you'll see one special type of sheep. It is the Tregaron type!

Tregaron is famous for quite a few reasons: Henry Richard, Twm Siôn Cati, Rhiannon Welsh Gold Centre, the Talbot, pony trekking, Cors Caron and double parking on the famous square! It is also the spiritual home of the Tregaron type Welsh native sheep.

You see the Tregaron type sheep doesn't fit in with the usual description of the Welsh Sheep of North and South Wales. The Tregaron type is a white, clean, sheep and, in my opinion, is the ideal commercial sheep. It's a much hardier and smarter sheep than the Welsh.

It is larger in size and form, but boasts the essential qualities of hardiness and flexibility. It thrives in a difficult and boggy landscape, is almost self-sufficient and has a low carbon footprint.

It is productive, maternal, milky and long-lived. The Tregaron and District Welsh Mountain Sheep Society, established in December 1999, adopted the catchy tag, 'On mountain or meadow, she'll pay by making her mark'.

Our intention in establishing the society was to maintain, promote and improve our kind of sheep, together with maintaining and supporting our local market at Tregaron. I refer to the farmers in some of the most difficult agricultural areas of Wales.

The altitude, the fluctuating weather and the quality of the land means our geographical location does not suit every breed of sheep. There had been talk for a few years about the need to ensure the future of our type of sheep and so there was an open meeting at the Talbot Hotel in December 1999.

The dozens of farmers present gave unanimous support for establishing a society, Dai Harris, Esgairsaeson, was elected chairman, John Thomas, Frongoch, secretary, Gary Jones of D A G Jones Auctioneers was treasurer I was vice chairman. Our first President was none other than Dai Jones, MBE, Llanilar. Ieu Jones, Blaenau, was Vice President and Dai Jones, Pantlleiniau, vice secretary.

The society has gone on to receive advice and guidance from a number of bodies and key people in the sheep breeding world. A constitution was drawn up with the intention of holding three auctions each autumn specifically for rams, sheep and lambs of the Tregaron Welsh Mountain Sheep type.

It was a source of great pride when the society succeeded in becoming a member of the National Sheep Association (NSA), with the sheep recognised as a native breed. The society began to market itself and to promote the Tregaron type in the 2003 Sheep Event at the Rhug Estate, Corwen. A stand exhibited various examples of pure and crossbred rams, sheep and ewe lambs.

The Tregaron type sheep is perfect for crossing to create the Welsh Mule. The result of crossing it with a Blue Faced Leicester ram is to create an ideal sheep for lowland pastures. Crossing with Texel or Suffolk rams produces ideal fat lambs: the perfect machine for converting pasture into meat!

The conclusion was very quickly reached that there is a tremendous 'value added' element to the Tregaron type sheep in Wales and beyond. It became obvious that society members were increasingly confident that there was real value to our type of sheep.

D A G Jones have held annual auctions each September and October at Tregaron Mart since 2000. These successful auctions are now an important feature in the calendar of farmers from Wales, England and Scotland, especially the annual ram sale.

It is an important and unique market and we farmers are very proud of it. We are grateful to Sian Jones and her team at D A G Jones for their support, then D.A.G. Jones Facebook page has all the latest auction information.

The Tregaron type sheep has, in my opinion, a very bright future. Some members of the society are taking part in the ProHill group performance testing and genetic improvement, with the support of Farming Connect's Sheep Genetics Programme. It is also a matter of pride that so many young breeders are taking an interest in and rearing our breed, trading at Tregaron and exhibiting at shows and on marketing stands.

Many very experienced farmers have decided to turn back to the Tregaron type sheep after having experimented quite a bit with other breeds. It has no equal: this is a sheep with deep roots in her habitat and she is the queen of the hills.

Sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed towards the success and splendour of our Tregaron type sheep. And remember, 'On mountain or meadow, she'll pay by making her mark'.

Aled Hopkins

John Gittins Memorial Award 2023

Winner: Moss Jones

It was a considerable honour to receive the John Gittins Memorial Award. I'm very grateful. John had a significant influence on my career.

I worked with him for many years at the Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association. He was a founder member and chairman, a man of few words, shrewd, well-respected, kind and generous with his time.

I was born and brought up on the Llŷn Peninsula, in the village of Y Ffôr, 400 yards from the cooperative, South Caernarfon Creameries (SCC). My mother's family farmed, supplying milk to the creamery and I spent all my school holidays on the farm.

Around the age of 14, I began working for SCC as a very junior roundsman's assistant, delivering milk around Llŷn and Eifionydd. There were no supermarkets then. It was an early introduction to co-operatives and their role in food production beyond the farm gate and the start of a long road.

Having graduated, I returned to Aberystwyth, to work for the WAOS and continued there until my recent retirement. Although I may have worked for the same organisation for many years, I was lucky to have had many different roles.

These stretched from bulk buying agricultural requisites, to helping small organisations. They included the Welsh Sheepdog Society or Devil's Bridge Auction Marts, managing the FAWL scheme for WLBP or running QWFC, FAWL's accredited assessment body.

I also sat on several official bodies such as the OCVO's Animal Health & Welfare Framework Group. Things came full circle when I was appointed President of South Caernarfon Creameries in 2003.

I was also Secretary of the Welsh Mules and the Welsh Mountain Sheep Society, each supporting hard working family farms, but very different organisations. The Welsh Mules focused primarily on marketing members' stock, while the Welsh Mountain represented members' interest with government or the food supply chain.

I'm very grateful to the many people who've helped me over the years, people who've become friends. My biggest debt, though, is to my wife, Jean, for her patience, love, and support.

Thank you one and all.

**Gwobr Myfyriwr Amaeth y Flwyddyn CAFC / Prifysgol Aberystwyth
RWAS / Aberystwyth University Agriculture Student of the Year Award**

Winner: Siwan Roberts

I was brought up on the family farm at Llanwddyn in Mid Wales and developed an interest in and passion for agriculture. Since childhood I've wanted to learn more about the agricultural industry and to broaden my knowledge.

I was determined that I wanted to go to Aberystwyth University to study agriculture. Three years at the university, meant I acquired a wealth of knowledge about the world of farming. Researching more deeply into the subject, opened my eyes as to how I could adapt and improve our own agricultural systems for the future.

I graduated in July 2023 with a First Class degree in Agriculture. My very special three years at university were topped by my being so fortunate to have achieved the RWAS/Aberystwyth University Agriculture Student of the Year Award.

The presentation at the Royal Welsh Show was an unforgettable experience, which I shared with my family and friends. I have now returned home to farm, where I love being involved with the sheep and cattle. I also keep busy with the family's glamping business.

I'm really looking forward to the future, with the aim of continuing to produce quality lamb and beef, to continue to improve the grassland and to try and incorporate different grass varieties in the leys. The aim is to try and respond to the challenges of the farming world and create a more efficient and environmentally friendly farm.

Gwobr Myfyriwr Amaethyddol Frenhinol Dr Richard Phillips 2023
Dr Richard Phillips Agricultural Student Award 2023

Winner: Aled Jones

The combination of university and involvement in the Young People's Academy has changed my vision of farming and the way we farm at home. I'm particularly grateful to Gelli Aur for the grounding they gave me.

It was a busy month in July 2023 as I graduated from the University of Wales Trinity St David with a First Class degree in Agriculture after three years of study and hard work. The month ended with great excitement as I was chosen as the winner of the much revered Dr Richard Phillips Agricultural Student Award 2023 – achievements I shall treasure for the rest of my life.

My interest in farming began early in life on the sheep farm at home in the small village of Bethania in Ceredigion. With everyone working full time off the farm, the decision was made some years ago to keep only pure Tregaron Welsh sheep, with the hardiness of the breed and its mothering ability ensuring that they thrived here on our upland farm.

When I was involved in the Agri Academy Junior Programme in 2018, my vision of farming started to change. I noticed that business skills, and making the best of what one had were key to the future of farms.

This and what I learnt at university led to a change in the way we farm at home. Today, caring for the health of the soil is a big focal point. Modern techniques are used to try and maximise the flock's performance; and more emphasis is placed on effectively marketing our produce.

I would not have received either of the above accolades without the high quality teaching, and the hard work of the lecturers at Gelli Aur college. The fact that a student from Gelli Aur won the award for the second year in succession is witness to this.

Young Handler Awards

Dairy Cattle

Winner: Elan Thomas

I'm 20 years old and I live on the family dairy farm at Penygraig, Meidrim, near Carmarthen. My interest in showing cattle began when I was six years old. I've enjoyed my family's support from the very beginning and my showing journey has gone from strength to strength!

I've been successful throughout the years but unfortunately TB losses mean I've not been able to show my own stock for quite a while. I've been fortunate in being able to help friends from our community to exhibit stock of the highest quality.

I owe the biggest thanks to James Evans for having the confidence to allow me to show one of his calves. I travelled from show to show with Mydrim Tequila Spring Tracy and we were very successful. This calf also won its class in the Royal Welsh Show in 2023.

A lot of time and patience goes into preparing these animals and it's no small task to turn a calf of this quality out for competition. It's only fair to exhibit the animal at its best, walking correctly and gracefully. It is all worth it when the adrenaline begins to flow in the ring!!

I've had so much enjoyment learning from other people and picking up the odd tip here and there, but one of the most important things is to ensure that you get to know the animal well. It's important to become good friends and to trust each other. I felt an affinity with Tracy straight away and by now we both know each other very well!

It was an honour to win the Young Handler in the Dairy Cattle section in 2023 – it was an unforgettable experience and a personal pinnacle. I love spending time with the dairy cattle, caring for them and exhibiting them at shows, and enjoying all the fun and sparring there is within our 'showing family'!

I've spent six months until April in New Zealand, gaining unbelievable working experiences and travelling the North and South islands. I've had experience of exhibiting here too with the Fullerton family, Waipiri Holsteins in shows at Waikato, Stratford and the Dairy Show.

I had the opportunity to call by Tandara and Brookboara in Australia to attend the International Dairy Week and exhibit there! Best wishes to all the competitors for the coming season and I'll see you at the Cardis Show 2024!

Young Handler Awards

Pigs - Intermediate

Winner: Anest Roberts

I'm 11 years old. I live at Ffridd, Llithfaen with Dad, Mam and my brother, Emyr.

We arrived at the Royal Welsh Show on Saturday afternoon with seven pigs and five heifers. I've been helping with and had an interest in preparing and showing our Welsh pigs for a number of years.

On the Thursday morning, it was time to prepare my pig for the Intermediate Young Handler class, between nine and 12 years old. I was showing Gwynys Marigold, but before going into the ring I needed to prepare.

Firstly I washed the pig, then dried her with a towel before sprinkling her with fine sawdust. Wearing a blouse and tie, with putting on a white coat and clean shoes, and carrying my stick and show board, I felt both confident and nervous going into the ring.

First, the pig needs to be brushed to get all the straw and sawdust off. Then, it was wait for the announcement to enter the ring, before opening the gate to the ring and away we go, with the last words of encouragement from Mam and Dad, 'Remember to concentrate and look at the judge'.

When we were in the ring, the judge asked a number of questions, such as my name, my pig's name, my age and when was the pig born. He then asked me to walk the pig in a straight line away from him, before turning around and walking back towards him.

This is to see how much control we have over the pig. I felt that I had done my best and had kept my pig under control throughout.

I felt nervous when the judge was ready to choose the winner, but when he started to walk towards me with the first prize I felt happy and very pleased.

Thank you