



A Typical Agricultural Show

East Knoyle Agricultural Show 1852

The East Knoyle Agricultural Meeting for the Show of Cattle, Dairy Produce, &c., was held on Thursday last in a spacious field adjoining the pleasure grounds of the President, H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP.

The weather, upon the whole, was by no means unfavourable and many of the neighbouring clergy and gentry testified by their presence, their sympathy in the objects of the gathering. Besides the family at Knoyle, a party attended from Dinton, including Mrs. Wyndham, and F. and E. Wyndham, Esqrs., and from Ferne, J. Grove, Esq., and Mrs. Grove, J. Grove, Jnr., Esq., and Mrs. J. Grove, The Count de Rosmorduc, from Mingrelia, the Hon. Robert Daly, the Rev. C. Morgell and other gentlemen were also present.

Though the quantity of stock exhibited was not so large as might have been anticipated, considering that some premiums had been spiritedly thrown open to the country at large, the general results of the show were gratifying and the stock shown gave one a good idea of the excellent average condition, at which it arrives in the farm yards and pastures of the neighbouring agriculturists, without excessive feeding or artificial forcing.

Knoyle appears to be admirably placed for an annual show of this kind, as it marks the boundary between the pastoral downs of Wiltshire, and the fat valleys of Somerset, and therefore ought to combine the best specimens of our Southdown flocks, with good samples of the cattle and dairy produce of the Vale of Blackmoor. And perhaps with reference to the latter department of the Show, it would have been difficult to have produced finer animals than the three milk cows exhibited by Mr. Card of Mere; nor must we overlook a couple of seven months old Devons shown by Mr. Stodart, the indefatigable and active Treasurer of the Society. In the display of poultry, it was gratifying to observe that the Misses Seymour were successful competitors, and no doubt the example set by ladies who, it is easily apparent, enjoy the respect and affectionate attachment of all their neighbours, will not be lost upon those who need any stimulus to exertion. Among the extra stock shown, three Suffolk punches, the property of Mr. Seymour, attracted great admiration and one of them probably approaches as near perfection in regard to symmetry of form, as it is possible to do. A colt and filly, the product of an Arabian Dam by an English sire, and a gigantic Clydesdale mare, were also the "observed of all observers". The prizes were awarded as follows:

For the best pen of 10 Southdown 6 teeth ewes, Mr. Applin
For the best pen of 10 Southdown 4 teeth ditto, Mr. Applin
For the best pen of 10 Southdown 2 teeth ditto Mr. Pratt
For the best pens of the three former, collectively, the Challenge Jug, Mr. Applin

For the best dairy cow in milk, H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP.
For the second best ditto, Mr. Snook

For the best two years old heifer in milk, Rev. C. Morgell
For the best one year old heifer, bred by the exhibitor, Mr. Hinton

For the best bull, one year old or upwards, Mr. Snook
For the second best ditto, Mr. Jeremiah Corbin

For the best two years old colt or filly, for agricultural purposes, Mr. Snook
For the best one year old colt, or filly, for agricultural purposes, Mr. Pratt

For the best boar, not less than 4 months old, Mr. Staples
For the best breeding sow with young or in farrow, Mr. Whitmore

For the best turkey cock and three hens, Mr. Snook
For the best gander and three geese, Mr. Hinton
For the best Dorking or other fowls (cock and three hens), Mr. Snook
For the best drake and two ducks, Mr. Snook
For the best lot of young fowls, stating age, Miss Louisa Seymour

For the best two pounds of butter, in half pound pints, Mrs. Seymour
For the best full milk cheese, not less than 2cwt in quantity, Mr. Snook

The Judges were Mr. Phillips of Mere and Mr. Purvis of Blandford

Premiums Open to the Country at Large

For the best ram, a prize of 5/. given by Mr. H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP., Mr. Rawlings
For the second best ditto, a prize of 2/. given by the Rt. Hon. Sidney Herbert MP., Mr. Rawlings

For the best boar pig, a prize of 2/. given by R Graves, Esq., of Charlton, Mr. Rumsey
For the second best boar pig, a prize of 1/. given by J. Benett, Esq., of Pythouse, Mr. Staples

For the best bull of any age, a prize of 1/. given by P. P. Bouverie, Esq., H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP.

For the best pair of cows for dairy purposes, in milk, a prize of 2/. given by viscount Dungarvan and J. Grove, Esq., Mr. Card

For the best draught mare for agricultural purposes, a prize of 1/. given by Mr. Stodart of East Knoyle, H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP.

At four o'clock a party of about fifty sat down to an entertainment in the school room, hospitably provided by Mrs. Seymour; H. D. Seymour, Esq., MP. occupying the chair and Alfred Seymour, Esq., officiating as Vice. The usual loyal and patriotic toasts having been loyally and patriotically responded to, the chairman proposed "prosperity to their society". This was their second meeting. At their first Show some excellent stock had been shown and he hoped they had gone on improving and that in future years, their continued endeavours to improve the character of their stock would be crowned with success.

They were living in the heart of a beautiful country, which was partly adapted for dairy produce and partly for pasteurising flocks and so rare a combination of wild downs and rich valleys, it would be difficult to parallel. In the charming Vale of Blackmoor, the annual meeting of the Sturminster Agricultural Society would shortly be held and would prove second to none in the kingdom. That being so, he had thought a similar society might be advantageously established at Knoyle. It has been so established, and he believed the happiest results would flow from annual meetings like the present, at which they were enabled to assemble, communicate the knowledge they possessed, and compare notes as to the progress they had made, thereby improving the cultivation of the soil and cementing those bonds of union which strengthened and adorned society.

In the presence of so many practical men he would not venture to discuss the merits of the show, but he could not help observing that, if the quantity was small, the quality was excellent and that the stock was such as might be shown with advantage in any part of the kingdom. Thus encouraged, they might, without presumption look forward to many happy meetings, avoiding those faults which were apparent, and retaining the excellences now observable. It gave him sincere pleasure to propose "prosperity to the East Knoyle Agricultural Show".

The chairman next proposed the health of the judges, observing as he did so that they had discharged their

delicate and difficult duties to the satisfaction of all present.

Mr. Phillips expressed the pleasure he felt in discharging the duties which had been entrusted to him, a pleasure greatly enhanced by the compliment which had been paid to his colleague and himself. The show was small but good and the herds particularly so while the sheep, if inferior to those exhibited in larger shows, were as good as could be naturally expected. In awarding the prizes he had endeavoured to do so conscientiously and if he had erred it was in judgment and not in intention.

Mr. Purvis also returned thanks. He had been highly gratified by the proceedings of the day and desired to witness the continued prosperity of the Society. The stock was good and the extra stock especially so and he hoped next year it would be entered in competition for the regular prizes.

The Chairman said it gave him very great pleasure to propose the health of the successful candidates to which he was sure they would devote a bumper. With regard to the open premiums, he was rejoiced to find such worthy competitors as Mr. Card and Mr. Grove of Ferne; while in reference to those which were confined to Knoyle, it was very satisfactory to see such stock entered as that of Mr. Applin whose name he would beg in couple with the toast.

Mr. Applin, in returning thanks, suggested that as the ploughing match was coming on, that should be also thrown open to neighbouring parishes; and his suggestion appeared to meet with the general concurrence of the company.

The toast was also acknowledged by Messrs. Card, Rawlings and Snook and by the Revd. C. Morgell who expressed the extreme gratification to the kind family at Knoyle House. He owed everything he possessed to agriculture and it would be very ungrateful therefore, on his part, to manifest any indifference to its prosperity. In times of competition, like the present, it behoved them all to put their shoulders to the wheel and promote good farming and by good farming he meant farming which would pay and nothing was more effectual to this end than the improvement of stock and the introduction of agricultural machinery in order to overcome the disadvantages of soil and climate and to compete with cheap labour and low prices abroad. Warmly, however, as he advocated the use of agricultural machinery, he did not do so with any view to displace labour. Far from him be any such intention. In his belief, and it was demonstrable by facts, the use of machinery cheapened production and at the same time employed additional labour. He should be glad to see the resident gentry furnishing models of new inventions in agricultural machinery, as by many of these mechanical aids the farmer would find that he would diminish the cost of production, increase the products of the soil and counteract the unfavourable influences of climate. After adverting to the beneficial influences exercised by societies like their own in bringing the landlord, the tenant and the labourer into harmonious relations with each other, the Rev. gentleman concluded by returning thanks as a successful competitor, at the same time pointing out that his success was mainly owing to the good offices of Mr. Stodart.

The Chairman then proposed the health of the Committee, followed by that of the unsuccessful competitors whose stock, he observed, was deserving of admiration though it had failed to obtain a prize.

The toast having been responded to by Mr. Hart, The Chairman called upon the company to drink a bumper to the health of their neighbours whom they hoped to welcome at many future meetings, distinguished as many of them were by their knowledge of stock. In agriculture, as in other matters, they were necessarily dependent in many respects upon their neighbours and they had that day seen many superior specimens of stock sent from a distance. And, while he expressed a hope that the good feeling which now existed between their neighbours and themselves might long continue to exist, he could not refrain from touching upon the loss which they had all sustained by the death of a very ancient friend of agriculture – the late Mr. Benett of Pyt House. That gentleman was one of the earliest friends of British agriculture. He had taken part, with the late Mr. Coke of Holkham, in the introduction of improved systems and, by so doing, had probably contributed to the preservation of this country from those devastating political convulsions which had overwhelmed continental nations, for he must beg to remind them that it was of the last importance to the welfare of a country and the viability of its institutions that it should possess a body of gentlemen, living on their patrimonial estates, diffusing a spirit of loyalty, benefitting the fame of rural society by their example, proving their interest in its welfare by their presence, fostering feelings of neighbourly good will by their performance of kind offices to those around them and thus linking all classes by a chain of union. Such was the position of France two centuries ago but at a later period the landed gentry foresook the provinces for the fascination of a dissolute and luxurious capital, their estates were confided to the management of avaricious and unprincipled middlemen and the revolution of 1789 involved the whole nation in bloodshed.

and ruin. And at this period he must also state agriculture and public morale were at a very low ebb in England and that with the revival of the former, the latter also underwent improvement. To this end Mr. Coke had most materially co-operated and amongst the earliest attendants at the annual sheep shearing at Holkham was their lamented friend and member, Mr. Bennet of whom it was impossible to speak in any other terms than those of reverence and respect, whose name naturally occurred to mind in connection with the sentiment he had proposed, whose valued example he trusted would find many imitators, and the influence of whose love for agriculture he sincerely hoped would long survive and prove of lasting service to the neighbourhood. He (Mr. Seymour) had somewhat wandered from the subject and would now conclude by calling them to drink the health of their neighbours and he would associate with the toast the name of the Hon. R. Daly, a gentleman closely connected with an ancient Wiltshire family.

The Hon. R. Daly, in replying to the toast expressed the gratification it had given him to be present at their first meeting and the satisfaction with which he witnessed the improvement which had since taken place. He hoped at the same time to have many future opportunities of observing these improvements and participating in their enjoyments.

The Rev. C. Morgell then proposed the health of Mrs. Seymour which he did with the warmest personal feelings as rector of the parish which benefitted so largely by her benefices.

Mr. Alfred Seymour returned thanks on behalf of his mother, the dearest wish of whose heart was to live amongst those with whom she was so intimately connected and in whose prosperity she took so warm an interest. With respect to the particular business of the day, he might be permitted to observe that Mrs. Seymour was no judge of stock but she knew when it produced good butter, good cheese and yielded tender meat. For his own part he was much gratified with the merits of the show and though many "dark Horses" had been held back, he felt assured that they would come out in double force next year when they might expect some very fierce competition. He had been recently on a visit to Spain and he could not help contrasting the condition of agriculture in that country, from which we formerly derived some of our best levels of stock, with the condition of agriculture in England. He had been present at a cattle show in Seville and the sheep were lean and poor and they could hardly walk round the bull ring in which the exhibition took place. In traversing the city his attention was attracted by some curious articles not unlike dilapidated hair brushes and, on inquiring what they were, he learned they were agricultural implements. In short, everything was stationary there, while all was progressive here and the achievement which England had made in the science of agriculture proved how much could be accomplished in time and by the exercise of hearty good will.

The Chairman said he had one more toast to propose and it was one which was always drunk with fervour and applause in every company of Englishmen – that of "The Ladies". There were many present connected with his own family and he knew that by those around him they were regarded with feelings of affectionate respect. He was delighted to see ladies mingling in their enjoyments and doubling them by their presence and in drinking this toast, let every man present think of his own home and of her who made that home happy, and drink it in a bumper.

Mr. Philips responded on behalf of the ladies.

Mr. Alfred Seymour in a humorous speech proposed the health of the bachelors but none of the unfortunate had the courage to respond and

Mr. Purvis proposed the health of their excellent Chairman, coupled with the hope that he would honour them with his company at their meetings for many years to come.

The Chairman thanked them most cordially for the undeserved compliment they had paid him. What he most earnestly desired was to promote good fellowship among all classes around him and this he believed to be a sound and wise policy. He was happy to see so cheerful a gathering on this occasion and wished for the prevalence of the same union of feeling in every parish and in every county throughout the Kingdom at large, satisfied as he was

"That naught shall make me rue
If England to herself do prove but true"

Such a spirit of union was far from implying hostility towards foreign countries: indeed it would tend to bring about the diffusion of those principles of Peace and Good Will taught by Holy Writ, sanctioned by philosophy

and productive of happiness here and of hope hereafter. He would once more beg to thank them for an unmerited honour which it should be his study to deserve and before parting from them he would express a hope to be present at many more such social gatherings.

Mr. Seymour then vacated the chair and thus terminated the proceedings of a meeting which afforded the most gratifying proofs of the subsistence of feelings of mutual confidence and respect between all classes and the good effects of which are far more permanent than they might at first sight appear inasmuch as social contact leads to a juster appreciation of character and as the habitual reserve of the English tends frequently to conceal what is good and to suppress emotions which are laudable, such contact is *pro facto* a positive benefit.

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