

Andrew Sheppy - An Obituary 01.04.1949 – 09.05.2017



Born on the 1st April 1949, in the little village of Congresbury in Somerset, Andrew Sheppy took little time to become involved with poultry. Indeed, obtaining a small group of Wyandotte bantams when he was barely walking, he began showing his own stock in his teens, taking advantage of the excellent services the rail network provided to fanciers.

"Shep" to his friends, he became a steadfast breeder, often recounting the stories of the numerous breeds he had bred and developed at the farm. Out of those popular breeds standardised in the UK, only three had not been bred at Cobthorn. Involved with the family mill business and following that, the movement to a greater emphasis on the farms, Shep had a love for the vast majority of livestock and the natural world. One of his most outstanding achievements being the founding and formation of the Rare Poultry Society, since then, no British breed has become extinct. Unfortunately, it was with a heavy heart that Shep had tried to save the last surviving example of the Yorkshire Hornet; a male which he had obtained at Cobthorn, however due to infertility and age of the bird, the situation was inevitable.

Shep went on to become the proponent of rare poultry breed conservation, with numerous now popular breeds having been part of the RPS. Indeed, Brahmas, Frizzles, and many others owe their survival to a dedicated band of fanciers collated through the RPS. He was very successful showing, winning BIS at many venues, most notably with his Sultans, which were truly inspiring.

A Panel A Judge, past PCGB Council Member, and involved in more clubs one can count, Shep was a true poultry man, interested in every facet of the fancy. He had adored judging the Championship at the PCGB National Show a couple of years ago, and fondly recalled the birds he had had the pleasure of awarding the highest accolades.

Not only a poultry fancier, Shep also had immense success with his original population Dexter cattle herd. A past President of the Dexter Cattle Society, Shep was also their genetic advisor and assisted with the breeding issues raised by the wonderful team in the Dexter office. His cattle were his pride and joy, all being classified as "original population" meant the world to him, and maintaining this was his guiding aim.

Apart from being the archetype of the bumpkin farmer, Shep was far, far more. A Fellow of the Society of Biology and Fellow of the Linnaean Society, his scientific accomplishments were extraordinary. Having written the national poultry breed inventory whilst working for DEFRA on the Farm Animal Genetic Resources Committee, Shep was at the forefront of conservation work with parliament on a daily basis. Moreover, even after his official retirement from DEFRA more than three years ago, he continued to be asked to contribute as a specialist consultant; testament to his exceptional expertise.

Shep taught at the University of Bristol as an Honorary Lecturer in Farm Animal Science, and was greatly appreciated by the Vet a Students. Often joining them on their nights out, and group events, Shep was fantastic company at any social event.

Not only will he be missed by his Vet Students, but by the livestock and natural world as a whole. As President of the Conservation Breeding Group of the World Pheasant Association, and more recently Honorary Life member of the Oxford and Sandy Black Pig Society, a breed which he helped to save from extinction; Shep's name will live on in his work and legacy.

A brilliant scientific mind, but also accomplished musician, Shep would play the organ for the local parishes, a task he often relished.

Shep leaves behind a vast group of friends, all of whom will miss him dearly. He was a keen educator, encouraging youngsters throughout his adult life and always leading them to success. Shep will have now his absence noted at each of our local shows, our National events, the Vet Student parties, Dexter Cattle meetings, and his choir practice which he regularly attended, every week.

We will miss him, more so than we likely care to admit, but he and Dave can now share another cup of coffee together.

Rest in Peace, Old Man. We miss you.
Phillipe

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