

## **From Steak to Squirrel**

**Talk by Bridget Borlase – Sacombe Herd Hertfordshire**

**On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March thirty members of the Cornwall Simmental Club travelled from all over the county to welcome Bridget Borlase to the County Arms in Truro for a talk about her family's livestock and arable enterprises.**

**Bridget took us through the history of their farming set up, now totalling 357 ha (882 acres), from the 1930's to the present day and explained the reasoning behind opting for establishing a pedigree Simmental herd forty years ago and a herd of Galloways more recently.**

**Being situated 30 miles from London Bridge has proved to be a major factor in establishing a successful farm shop. Direct selling began in 2005 with attendance at a Farmer's market and six months later they were covering 26 a month!**

**The farm now supplies pubs, restaurants and hotels and after a dubious start now provides six lines to local ASDA stores. Bridget spoke highly of their relationship with a big name supermarket and described the training provided to them that had enhanced their standards of production.**

**It was obvious during Bridget's talk that the family's incredible work ethic, a solution focussed 'can-do' attitude, the ability to network, grasp opportunities and learn from their mistakes have been major factors in building a butchery and farming business with a turnover of million pounds.**

**Bridget reflected on whether the British Simmental presently being produced for the show ring really is a butcher's animal. Only heifer carcasses are processed in their butchery and they have started DNA testing for assessing meat quality and breeding traits. Sacombe have also been involved in research into sheer tests, marbling percentages and taste testing panels with the focus very much on quality.**

The emphasis on breeding values underpinned the decision to use Skerrington Rajah on the herd. Although an unimpressive individual when he arrived to serve 20 of the highest scoring females the resulting progeny have far exceeded expectations.

## SKERRINGTON RAJAH

\_\_\_\_\_CAMUS BRANDY M029502  
 \_\_\_\_\_DOVEFIELDS GALLANT M045537  
 \_\_\_\_\_HEVINGHAM PIAF F016358  
 \_\_\_\_\_Sire: **SKERRINGTON LEGACY M056019**  
 \_\_\_\_\_SKERRINGTON COLOSSUS M033257  
 \_\_\_\_\_SKERRINGTON REBECCA 5TH F044308  
 \_\_\_\_\_SKERRINGTON REBECCA 2ND F030166

**Animal:** **SKERRINGTON RAJAH M063628**

\_\_\_\_\_CAMUS BRANDY M029502  
 \_\_\_\_\_DOVEFIELDS GALLANT M045537  
 \_\_\_\_\_HEVINGHAM PIAF F016358  
 \_\_\_\_\_Dam: **SKERRINGTON CARINA 10TH F061818**  
 \_\_\_\_\_DELLFIELD CORINTHIAN M032741  
 \_\_\_\_\_SKERRINGTON CARINA 8TH F051943  
 \_\_\_\_\_SKERRINGTON CARINA 2ND F023839

2008 Autumn British Simmental BREEDPLAN EBVs												
	Calv. Ease Direct (%)	Calv. Ease Dtrs (%)	Birth Wt. (kg)	200 Day Wt. (kg)	400 Day Wt. (kg)	600 Day Wt. (kg)	Milk (kg)	Scrotal Size (cm)	Carcase Wt. (kg)	Eye Muscle Area (sq.cm)	Rib Fat (mm)	Retail Beef Yield (%)
EBV	-0.8	-2.4	+4.0	+45	+87	+96	+10	+0.4	+63	+3.2	-1.6	+1.5
Acc	51%	49%	75%	73%	73%	68%	52%	71%	62%	51%	58%	56%
Breed Avg. EBVs for 2006 Born Calves <a href="#">Click for Percentiles</a>												
EBV	-1.2	-0.5	+1.9	+27	+46	+52	+3	+0.3	+32	+2.6	+0.2	+0.2
<b>Traits Observed: 200WT(x2), 400WT(x2), SS, FAT, EMA</b>												
<b>SELECTION INDEX VALUES</b>												
Market Target		Index Value	Breed Average									
Terminal Production Index (GBP)		+38	+19									
Self Replacing Index (GBP)		+43	+22									

**Bridget also provided a few marketing tips:**

- **Vaccum packing had been replaced with wrapped black trays**
- **Older and younger customers (including a high percentage of young men) prefer cuts they can request from the butcher**
- **Customers in the middle aged bracket tend to choose pre-packed meat**
- **Boxes of mixed cuts were less popular than individual buys - due to lack of freezer space in today's family homes**
- **Customers like to have a wide choice of meats and be prepared to source anything including squirrel !!**
- **Featuring regular special offers or recipes – stimulates sales and shifts any slow lines**
- **Be alert to the trends being set by celebrity chefs**

**At the end of the talk questions were invited from the floor and presentations were made to Bridget and her mother.**