



# 50 Years of Farming Memories in the Isle of Wight AONB



*“Farming Memories” is an archive designed to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Isle of Wight’s Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation in 1963. The archive, a collection of sound recordings and photographs, has been gathered by Natural Enterprise on behalf of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership. Contributors include farmers, farm workers and people with fond memories of the Island’s wonderful countryside.*

*The archive has enabled us to produce a number stories relating to farming on the Island in the last 50 years.*

## Royal Isle of Wight County Show



*Blackwater Showground – kindly contributed, Bill & Lynn Murdoch*

The County Show is run by the Royal Isle of Wight Agricultural Society, which started in the nineteenth century, dating back to 1874. Queen Victoria became patron in 1882 and was a regular visitor to the Society’s annual show where she exhibited livestock from the Osborne Estate.

Earlier in the twentieth century the County Show was held at Nine Acres, Newport, but by the time the AONB was designated in 1963 it was being held at Blackwater. Later it moved to the current Showground at Northwood. John Reynolds of Marvel Farm told us how historically it *“It was a day out for the farmers and farm workers really”*.

John Brett remembers belonging to the Young Farmers in the 1950s and ‘60s. They would compete at the County Show at Blackwater – how to dig a garden, twist a hay band, harness a horse etc. John won ten shillings first prize for harnessing a horse, attaching it to a cart, taking it around the field, taking it out of the cart and unharnessing it.

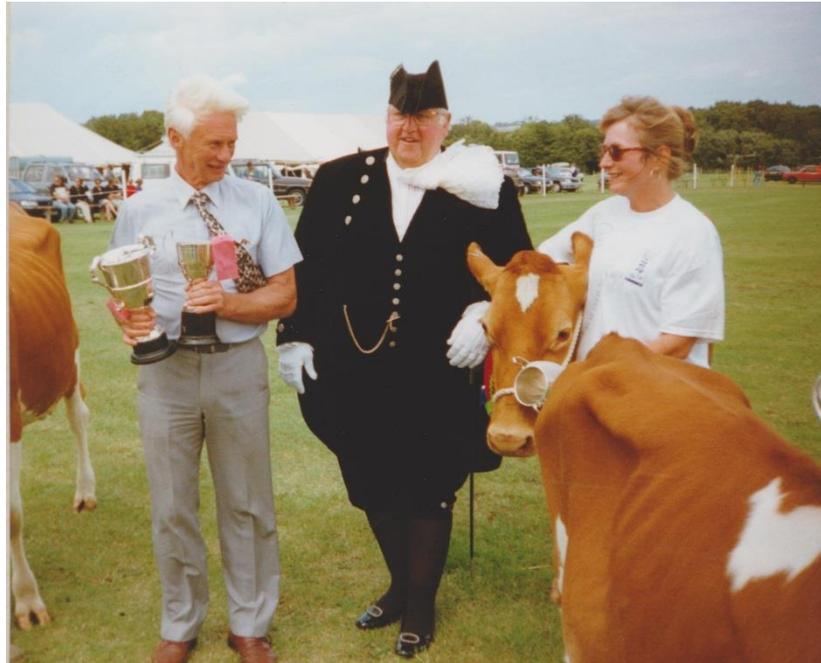
In the late 1960s Jill Cowley worked at West Wight Secondary Modern, which had a school farm. It was excellent for rural children, and they would take cattle to the County Show.



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Our farmers spoke fondly of the County Show in its heyday of the 1960s and 1970s. *“We always flew the flag at the County Show”* said Bill Mudoch of Roslin Farm. The County Council would give school children a day off to go to the show, and it would have between 12000 and 15000 people attending. It was always a good day out with lots of brand new machinery, and it developed into a two day event.



*1 Dairy Prize-giving, County Show, 1998, kindly contributed, Dickie Griffin*

Not only did attendances fall in the 1980s, '90s and 2000s, but also farmers' desires to show their animals. It was such hard work to prepare them, they would be up half the night.

Today farmers still like to support the show, it's a good place to meet with old friends, and in the last few years the number of people attending has increased quite considerably.

Further details of the Farming Memories Project can be found on the Natural Enterprise Website ([www.naturalenterprise.co.uk](http://www.naturalenterprise.co.uk)) and the AONB website ([www.wightaonb.org.uk](http://www.wightaonb.org.uk)).