



# 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 of stories relating to farming on the Island in the last 50 years.*

## Livestock Farming



*Galloway cattle in yard at Cridmore and North Appleford.  
Kindly contributed, Bill & Lynn Murdoch*

In 1963 most farms would have had a few pigs. However, currently the archive does not have any pictures, and we would like anyone to contact us who can help. Jane Phillips at Compton who relayed the story of Prudence, a piglet not expected to survive, but who went on to have 17 litters.

John Brett told us a very colourful story about Park Place Farm in the 1963, involving the cowman at Park Place Farm, the Blacksmith Arms and a murder. This was reported in the County Press on the 20<sup>th</sup> April.



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Some of our farmers switched to beef, or increased their beef herd size, when they left dairying. One of our farmers now supplies a local meat wholesaler with beef all year round. This meat is sold on to hotels, restaurants, pubs and some Island schools.

We also spoke to an Island shepherd. He told us how the number of sheep on the Island has decreased from about 20,000 in the 1980s to about 16,000 now. John Brett told us how Les Flux had kept sheep on the Downs in the 1960s. A lot of farmers have gone out of sheep, those remaining have increased their herd size, or kept it about the same. Again, this farmer had struck a deal with the same meat wholesaler, and coupled with direct-sales, was pleased to tell us that virtually all the lamb he produces ends up on Island tables.

Wool has had mixed fortunes. We were told that the old boys said the wool cheque would pay the rent; however in recent years it had been nothing to get excited about. The Wool Board do their best to help the industry. Last year prices took a turn for the better due to increased demand from the Far East.

Our livestock farmers were concerned about the few choices in mainland abattoirs. In the 1960s there were several small ones on the Island. Heytesbury was the last to close in the 1980s.

If anyone can help by adding to the livestock archive, particularly with pictures of pigs, or breeds of cattle not seen so often today, please call Carol Flux on (01983) 201563.



*Steve Fruin with a half sheared ewe lamb, Chillerton Farm - Les Morris's sheep  
Kindly contributed, Steve Fruin*

For more information on the Farming Memories Project contact Carol Flux on 01983 201563,  
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