

New chapter has its focus on family's farming history

PEEL Park Holsteins was established when Allan and Mary Heaton's eldest son Andrew joined the family business after leaving Askham Bryan College.

Allan was a first-generation farmer, who began farming in partnership on a tenanted farm above Garrowby Hill before marrying Mary and taking on Canvas Farm at Knayton, Thirsk, from there the family moved to Peel Park, Brandsby in 1966, with a commercial dairy herd and sheep.

However with a larger farm and an eldest son who was leaving school and attending agricultural college, expansion was inevitable. Andrew then takes over the story. "Everything I have done seems



PROGRESSION IN LIFE

Andrew Heaton has gone from being an award-winning dairy farmer to taking up writing. Sarah Liddle reports.

to have been a natural progression; one thing has then led to the next in my life.

"This spring I have been fortunate enough to publish two books that are made up of scrapbook records compiled by my mother, Mary, over 50 years of her involvement in sheepdog trialling.

"This would never have occurred in isolation, but as my life has evolved and things have happened it has led me

to make this achievable, and maybe it all started with the joking we had over still keeping sheep at Peel Park despite dairying becoming the core enterprise - those three sheep in every field just for my parents' sheepdog trialling interest had its part to play."

From a commercial upbringing, Andrew spent a year on sandwich placement as part of his Askham Bryan course and during that time worked at Snape Castle, for a Jersey herd near Scarborough and for John Pick at Marton cum Grafton. "While at John's I was exposed to heifers with pedigrees, and it was the first time I saw ten-gallon heifers - it was enough for me to want to breed them at home, so my father let me grade up the herd, and left the dairy side to me.

"I appreciated the innovation and foresight he had as a dairy farmer, partly developed by his background and experience in post-war agricultural advisory - whilst Dad was an early adopter of silage making, I was an early adopter of feeding Total Mixed Ration (TMR).

"When I married Ann in 1978 my parents and younger brother Mark moved to Catterick and Ann and I farmed then on our own account.

"This allowed me to pursue the pedigrees of the cows more, and I made selective purchases into Pure Imported (PI) families as well, over this time I was heavily involved with both Club and Nation-

al Holstein Society, winning every eligible trophy in the Northern Holstein Club, as well as securing the Yorkshire Agricultural Society (YAS) Dairy Farm of the Year and the following year YAS Farm of the Year.

"Another accolade I was honoured to achieve was the first member of the British Holstein Society to be awarded a second Master Breeder Award, which recognised whole herd performance for both type and production, which from a predominantly graded-up herd was something special to me."

Having spent into the teens of years during the late 1970s and 1980s involved with the British Holstein Society Council as chairman and in other offices, Andrew was logically placed to embrace opportunity when regulations on AI were opened up.

With his entrepreneurial spirit he seized the opportunity to establish Taurus Cattle Breeding Services - which offered independent AI technicians, DIY AI flask top-ups and semen sales, initially selling semen for any company before over time becoming aligned to Alta.

The technician service was sold to Philip Green of Eshton while the DIY arm of the business continued until 2004. Following some health issues, the family decided to sell the herd and farm in 2007, with daughters Alison and Karen both pursuing careers outside farming and Andrew's day-to-day work (which expanded on something he was already doing) shifted to trading cull cows.

"Again this venture came about because I had been calling on farms selling semen and was continually asked what a



AUTHOR:
Left, Andrew Heaton and, below left, the cover of one of his books based on his mother's scrapbook of her sheepdog trialling days

farmer would do with his cull cows, once they were to be re-introduced into the food chain.

"With my connections in the meat trade, and inherent desire to solve my own and other farmers' problems, and using the trust I'd established with farmers in Yorkshire over the years, I set about growing this business, again working with anyone and everyone initially before becoming aligned to Pickstocks, who offered quick and guaranteed payment and took a wide range of classes of beef and dairy cattle - and this took up around another decade of my life."

By his own admission, Andrew tends to get an idea in his head, and having made a decision throws himself wholeheartedly into it. As work slowed down and life was taken a little easier, and coinciding with the death of his parents, Allan in 2012 and Mary in 2017, Andrew started to look into his family history.

He found information in bottom drawers which gave him a thirst for more knowledge, with the interest in his own lineage and family history replacing what had once been

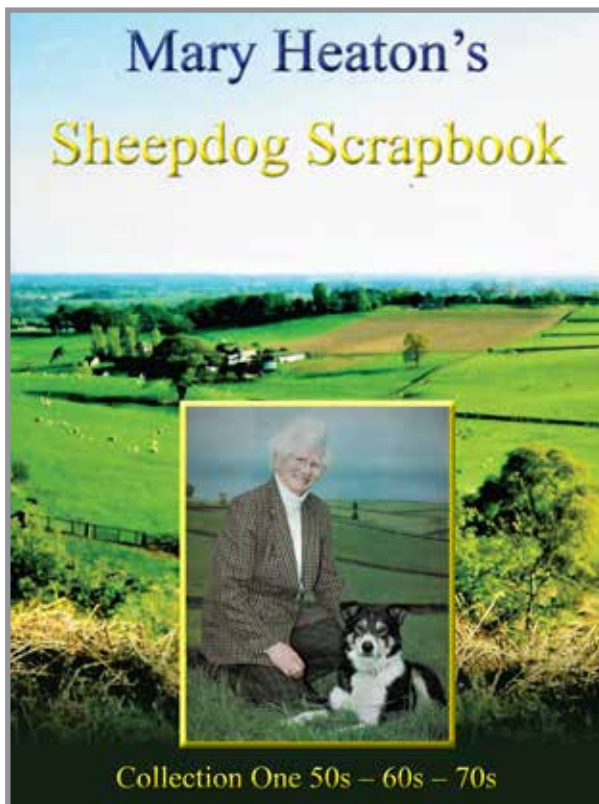
curiosity about cows' and bulls' pedigrees.

"I guess writing a book was another challenge, kind of like one of the things to do on 'the 101 things to do before I die' list. It was easy to write but publishing it was going to be harder.

"However, publishing and self-publishing is now so much easier with the internet and technology. Recording family history for posterity was important to me. You'll never make your fortune, particularly if time is accounted for, but it led me to making more contacts, find relatives around the world and one book has led to another."

Now with a couple of books under his belt, 2018 has seen the launch of not only the two volumes of his mother's Sheepdog Collections but also a website dedicated to the books at www.heatonfamilyonline.com. With the English National Sheepdog Trials coming to North Yorkshire this month, at Jervaulx near Masham, the next chapter of Andrew's varied and diverse life is only just beginning.

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