



THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF WOOLMEN

# WOOLMEN'S SUMMER NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021



[www.woolmen.com](http://www.woolmen.com)

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

*I hope you will find this edition of interest despite the effects of having so many events and meetings on Zoom and some cancelled.*

*One particular disappointment is that because it was a virtual event, we have no photographs of the installation of the Master and Wardens for the current year, which took place on 21st April 2021.*

*We see the newsletter as a vehicle to exchange items from each regional coordinator's hub and hope they will feed these in for inclusion in future editions.*

*Hopefully we shall all very soon be able to get together in person.*

*Margaret Miller*

FRONT COVER IMAGE:

**Liveryman Stephen Higgs with Supreme Overall Wool on the Hoof Champion .  
See article following "Great Yorkshire Show"**



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# Message from the Master

In our last Newsletter towards the end of last year I wrote about the effects of the pandemic on the business world and of the effects, good and bad, of working from home (WFH): office-based businesses have done well, and London's financial markets have remained open throughout, a great tribute to the adaptability of the City and a huge investment in its future. Meanwhile, those businesses which rely on the physical presence of office-workers nearby have continued to suffer.

I wrote that in anticipation – or was it hope? – that restrictions would be lifted earlier than they have been and I write this days after they actually have been. There are undoubtedly more people about the City, and other city streets than before and many more eateries and drinkeries reopening, but it will be some time before numbers return to pre-Covid levels. Most, if not all, businesses are consulting staff, and customers about the “return to the workplace”. The sharpest, most competitive end of the City is insisting on full-time attendance, but the most common view across all businesses appears to favour some kind of hybrid routine: continuing to take advantage of technology and allow some WFH but valuing the human contact of physical presence and requiring, say, three days a week in the office. Of course, everyone wants to be in on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday but things will settle down over time, not least when people can't get a table in their favourite restaurant or get into their favourite wine bar on a Thursday, but they could on a Friday....

People's biggest worry continues to be public transport, despite the huge investment in London

on cleanliness and revolving airflows on the Underground. I travelled in and out of London by train the day before writing this and the great majority of my fellow passengers were wearing face masks, as I will continue to do for some time.

Meanwhile, we Woolmen are re-opening and moving back to physical events. The first was in mid-June, our north-south golf competition, organised by David Hopkins, in the relative safety of the Lincolnshire countryside.

Continuity of restrictions required us to cancel our planned Day on the Farm at the Seemarks' in Bedfordshire (it is Barbara and David's sheep which are driven over the Bridge at our September Sheep Drive) but 16 of us joined eight members of The Merchants of the Staple of England for a wonderful lunch, organised by Andrew and Gill Dawson, on a gloriously sunny day at the Great Yorkshire Show; Raymond Cousins brought Past Masters together for their annual, very convivial, lunch; the London hubs, led by Tory Manuel and Roland Hayes, have held a most successful get-together in the beautiful courtyard at St Vedast, our chaplain Paul Kennedy's church in the City; and later on the day I am writing this I will lead a special meeting of the Court to clothe – bring into the Livery – nine of our Freemen who have been waiting patiently, preferring a physical ceremony to a virtual one, and on the following day Mark Johnson is hosting a day on the Lloyd's yacht Lutine on the Solent.

We have announced our programme of formal dinners over the next year, which we will maintain as white tie for men, the first being our Civic Dinner at Clothworkers Hall on Wednesday, 27 October. We will continue our virtual “drop-ins” on “woolly” subjects and we will be arranging physical visits to sites active in the world of wool around the country. But my strong sense is that members are relishing opportunities to enjoy each other's company, and to introduce new members to the Company, and that we will see many smaller, informal events organised by the regional hubs, an excellent initiative covering the whole membership, led by Giles Schofield. I strongly encourage everyone to think of, organise and support these get togethers in your area: they really do work and are very well received.

And finally ... we look forward to the second largest street event (after the Lord Mayor's Show) in the City of London – our



“I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO THINK OF, ORGANISE AND SUPPORT THESE GET TOGETHERS IN YOUR AREA: THEY REALLY DO WORK AND ARE VERY WELL RECEIVED”

Sheep Drive and Livery Fair on Sunday, 26 September over Southwark Bridge, magnificently organised by Peter and Ann Hullah and team. It will be a great day and really will mark a return to life-in-person.

I have noticed as I have re-met members in recent times how much younger everyone looks than last I saw them. Long may that continue!

All best wishes

*David*

*Alderman Sir David Wootton*

*Master Woolman*



## *Past Master William Clark's Meeting With Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal*

**O**n the morning of Wednesday 7th July, I got dressed in my darkest suit, my whitest shirt, my woolliest tie (the Woolmen's tie made of real wool, not the new synthetic one) polished my medals, buffed my shoes and set out for Carpenters' Hall for a very special lunch. The City Livery Club, who sponsor the City Root and Branch awards, were presenting a Lifetime Achievement award to HRH The Princess Royal at their annual Civic Lunch to recognise the contribution she has made to the Livery movement over the years. She has been Prime Warden or Master of a number of Companies, including, of course, the Woolmen (1994/95). I was privileged to attend her Installation Dinner in Painters'

Hall and I have a photograph of the occasion on my study wall.

I was highly commended for the Root and Branch award in 2018 for planning and delivering the annual sheep drive across London Bridge for six years and so I was privileged to be invited to the reception and lunch. As things turned out I was the last in the (socially distanced) reception line and so I had time to explain to The Princess Royal how the original scheme was conceived, planned and arranged and then became an annual event. As one of only nine living Honorary Freemen of the City of London, I suggested she might like to attend the sheep drive one year as our celebrity freeman if she wished to open festivities.

We had an excellent lunch and between courses the Princess Royal was presented

with her award, which she graciously received. In her acceptance speech she referenced the Woolmen, so perhaps she had remembered my comments and I hope this is a useful lead for the Sheep Drive committee to pursue. The lunch was a wonderful event to attend, and it was my first event – my first visit to London – for about 16 months. It was a delight to be out and about in the City. We were socially distanced at the table, the individual tables were also socially distanced and we all had to wear masks except when eating, but they managed to get about 65 diners in Carpenters Hall and it was all very jolly.

I look forward to the next event in London.

*Bill Clark*

# Military Associations

## The Company's Links with the Queen's Own Yeomanry ("QOY")

The Company's relationship with QOY was initiated through Colonel John Nickell-Lean, TD when he was Master of the Company in 2003/4. He had commanded the Regiment between 1994 and 1997 and was keen to put in place a formal link between the Company and the QOY. During his time as Master he instigated the Regimental Trophy. This is a silver Quaich with a Ram and ewe on the lid. This trophy is awarded each year by the CO of the QOY to the Squadron whose Yeomen has contributed the most to mobilisation or operations. The Trophy is kept by the Regiment for 6 months and by the Company for 6 months. It is usually presented to the Regiment at the Company annual Installation Dinner in April, when the new Master of the Company is installed, an event the CO and OC of the winning Squadron are invited to attend.

The affiliation between the Company and the QOY goes beyond this trophy as the Master and the liaison officer from the Company are invited to visit the Regiment on exercise or at other appropriate events in the UK.

The Company is extremely proud of the affiliation it has with the QOY and is always keen to attend events with and promote the activities of the QOY. The relationship is now formalised under a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2019. That document sets out the key aspects of the relationship and how the Company and the QOY will work together to promote each other and the affiliation. Long may it remain as such a close and meaningful affiliation.

"Lana Spes Nostra" – Wool is our Hope.

Peter Lynch  
Company Liaison Officer

## Affiliated Military Unit Livery Visit



### 131 independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers

On the evening of Tuesday 17 August 2021, the Master led eight of us, including our esteemed Clerk, on a visit to the HQ of our affiliated military unit 131 Independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers, Lonergan Lines, Kingsbury.

131 Commando Squadron are reserve sappers who work with their regular counterparts to enable 3 Commando Brigade to live, move and fight. They are true commandos; many of the unit's reservists earn their coveted Green Beret over a two-year intensive training course. This culminates with the sappers having to pass the All-Arms Commando course. No mean feat!

The Woolmen are affiliated to a number of military units of which 131 Commando Squadron is one. The relationship is important to the unit, providing a link into the City, to our members and in terms of building relationships. The evening started with a most interesting introduction to the life of a reserve commando sapper and the various roles the squadron undertakes. Civilians, male or female, from a wide variety of jobs and professions, turn themselves into elite commando soldiers, providing all necessary engineering support to their regular colleagues. It was a fascinating presentation and clear the unit prides itself on a 'commando ethos and approach to life'. The reserve sappers have, in previous years, deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, southern Somalia and elsewhere across the globe where 3 Commando Brigade has deployed.

Following this, we were given a demonstration of two of the core physical training activities a reservist recruit must pass. Firstly, a most arduous 30-foot rope climb. Witnessing the young recruits haul themselves up to the dizzy heights of the drill hall roof in combat clothing and webbing was most impressive. This was followed by an equally challenging rope crawl, just as hard and tough as the climb. The PT instructor then turned to our Master and Clerk suggesting they should try their hand at the rope climb. With a slight hesitation, both declined on the basis that wearing City suits does not readily assist with completing the challenge. The Livery honour was maintained!

We were then shown some heavy plant in operation, the extent of a reserve commando soldier's 80kg kit, and an interesting introduction to the unit's communications role.

A fascinating evening finished with a marvellous curry in the unit's mess, prepared by a commando chef. Delicious!

The evening showed how important our affiliations to various military units are, and how much they appreciate the relationship with our livery company.

John Foddy

# Events

## Chocolate Tasting

There's chocolate and then there's CHOCOLATE!

**A** brief reflection by Court Assistant Jo Huxley of our online virtual chocolate tasting evening hosted on 13th May 2021

Against the huge frustrations of being locked down and missing so much of our livery fellowship, the upside has been an opportunity to try many things online that in honesty, we would probably not have experienced in person.

None more so than dialling in with fellow Woolies and guests to be entranced by the guru-like chocolate knowledge of Spencer Hyman and the business Cocoa Runners <https://cocoarunners.com/> he founded.

Given that we all probably thought that fine chocolate ended with the Green & Blacks range it was truly eye opening to learn about the true art of artisan chocolate manufacturing and how the "bean to bar" work they do is proven to be infinitely fairer to grower and the environment alike. With a full spectrum from the utterly bitter 100% cocoa content Pralus from Madagascar to the infinitely creamier, Swiss made Yuna – Original Beans, our taste buds were taken on a truly global journey.

Along the way we came to appreciate the so-called Bliss Point where the perfect balance of fat, sugar and salt combine to create the perfect flavour. Not the same for everyone and by the end we had all found our own personal Bliss Points. Which, in a slight postscript, sometime after the evening we had a weekend away in Orford, Suffolk when we found ourselves walking along the main town thoroughfare, Pump Street and found ourselves outside the eponymously named Pump Street chocolatier who had been featured at the tasting. We stocked up accordingly and fully explored our Bliss Points courtesy of a good part of their range!

### GIN TASTING

Members and guests of the Woolmen's Company have enjoyed a variety of fun and stimulating 'virtual' activities during the past year whilst under lockdown restrictions. A phenomenally successful and well attended evening on March 17th was 'Meet the Makers Gin and Mixer Evening' by the Folkington Team.

This was introduced by immediate Past Master Mark Johnson and with the Master in attendance. Paul and Frances Bendit, owners of Folkingtons, based in East Sussex led us through the evening sharing their passion and love for sourcing specific fruit varieties and botanicals backed up by their uncompromising respect for quality with provenance and sustainability at their core.

Prior to the evening we had taken delivery of a variety of their fruit juices and mixers along with a good size bottle of Tanqueray Gin and a stack of small tasting cups. All we had to provide was a large quantity of ice, sufficient glasses, nibbles to cleanse

the palate between tastings and a variety of sliced citrus fruits. As well as the Gin we received a 70 cl bottle of Punt e Mes vermouth which makes a refreshing and slightly less alcoholic summer drink. Whilst listening to their story we sampled several of their premium fruit juices and juice-based drinks from traditional favourites to wonderful alternatives such as pink lemonade and elderflower. They were all delicious!

For us Gin fans we soon assembled the four varieties of chilled tonic waters and opened the Gin! Paul and Frances demonstrated the art of pouring the perfect 'G&T'. Firstly, lots of ice, then a measure of Gin (large or small) followed by pouring the tonic slowly down the handle of a long cocktail spoon inserted into the ice which negates the need for a 'swizzle'. Lastly a slice of your preferred fruit.

Duncan arranged breakout rooms for us to enjoy each other's company and Paul and Frances joined the groups to answer any queries. Many of us went on to order some of their flavoursome juices and tonic waters, a talking point as we start to socialise in our gardens again enjoying a G&T or a fruit juice in the hopefully warm evenings to come!

A particularly good evening and thanks to Folkingtons and to all the organisers.

*Tessa Trollope*



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# Cheese Tasting

The Woolmen invited a member of the Company of Entrepreneurs to join them at the event, which would have been physical but it had to be engaged on Zoom.

With a large number gathered this was perhaps more unique than others in the Huxley household with Jo, a liverywomen and Deputy Chair of the Woolmen's Livery Committee being the host to her husband Mark, Junior Warden at the Entrepreneurs.

Together they joined Rennet & Rind's certified MonS Affineur, Perry Wakeman. Perry currently holds the highest certification possible with the Academy of Cheese and is a regular contributor to the Academy Curriculum. He judged at the



World Cheese Awards in Bergen, Norway in 2018 and again the following year in Bergamo as a Captain Judge. A man who knows his cheeses, therefore armed with our boxes of some of the finest examples of UK produced cheeses, Perry took us through a journey giving the back story of each producer: how Rennet & Rind mature their cheeses to be ready for them to sell and how to understand each of

them and more importantly how best to enjoy them. With a curious audience there was a lot of questions asked along the way, by the end of the session everyone had learned much.

Those attending then spent an enjoyable hour being randomly placed in breakout rooms where Entrepreneurs and Woolmen spent time together.

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## The Great Yorkshire Show

The Great Yorkshire Show is one of the leading shows in the agricultural calendar and one which, albeit in a smaller way went ahead this year. With no shearers from abroad we were unable to present our usual prizes but we have our Liveryman Stephen Hipps who flew the flag.

Those of you who know him within the Livery are probably aware of his passion for the Ryeland breed of sheep. Stephen relates that this breed is one of the oldest wool sheep in the UK and dates back to the 14th century; their wool having been used throughout the centuries and renowned for its fineness and quality. Ryelands were kept by the monks of Leominster in the 14th century, grazing on the fields of rye after the harvest from whence they got their name. Their fleeces were processed and eventually made into their clothes. The wool was known as 'Lemster Ore' which referred to its high value. It is believed that

the woolsack in the House of Lords was originally stuffed with Ryeland fleeces and that Queen Elizabeth 1 would only wear stockings made from Ryeland wool.

This year the 'Wool on the Hoof' competition at the Great Yorkshire Show was judged by the Wool Board, where Stephen's Ryeland shearling ram was reserve Supreme Overall Wool on the Hoof Champion. To bring an animal to that level takes a whole year and depends on its care, nutritional intake and of course, genetics. This award helps to underline the provenance of the older, pedigree native breeds of British sheep.

Stephen says It is all about the importance of wool and that the Livery starts at 'the farm gate. Stephen's sheep also won this coveted prize in 2008 and 2014.

CONGRATULATIONS STEPHEN !

# Obituaries

## J BRIAN WHITAKER 1939 – 2021

*The Worshipful Company of Woolmen's Charitable Trust has pleasure in supporting students in Wool, Textiles and Design. Some were present to receive their medals.*

**B**rian Whitaker was steeped in the Bradford wool business and had the perfect credentials to assume the role of Master of the Woolmen's Company in 2002/03.

He was the fourth generation of Whitakers who had worked in the city in wool trading, wool scouring and wool combing, working mostly at

G. Whitaker, established in 1890, and latterly at Haworth Scouring.

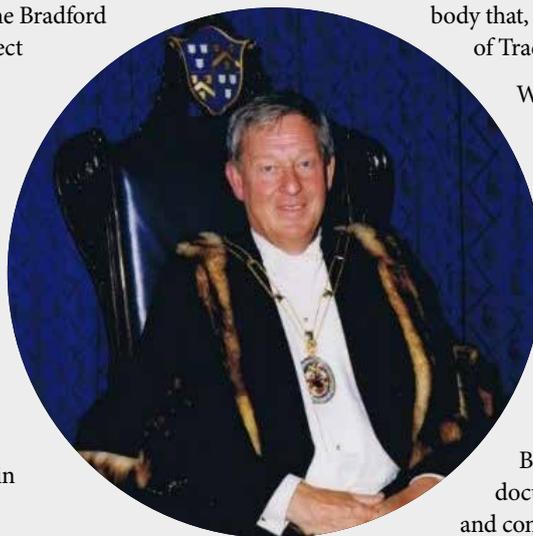
Educated at Oundle, where he distinguished himself as an oarsman, he joined the family firm straight from school in 1958.

Brian retained a deep affection for the city and had served as President of the Bradford Textile Society and President of the Bradford Club, two august city institutions he enthusiastically supported throughout his long career in Yorkshire.

His energetic leadership of the wool industry as President of the Bradford based Confederation of British Wool Textiles (CBWT), was a natural segue to him playing a leading role in international wool industry organisations, robustly representing UK interests in several global wool fora. He served as Vice President of the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) in 2001 and 2002 and hosted the highly acclaimed 76th IWTO Congress in Edinburgh in 2007.

Brian, always accompanied by his wife Liz, whom he married in 1962, continued to travel widely on IWTO business, visiting wool growing countries in the Southern Hemisphere and textile processing cities throughout Europe and Greater China as Head of the UK Delegation at the organisation's annual congresses. Particularly convivial were the IWTO wool round table events, held in a fine hotel just off the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, between the Maritime Alps and the Mediterranean, each November...an acceptable alternative to the grey late autumnal skies of Airedale and Wharfedale.

Whilst Brian thoroughly enjoyed being in Europe, he was not particularly enthused by Brussels and matters EU, nor did he warm to the crazy (sic) idea of the UK adopting the Euro, as the gold £ sign pin in his lapel made abundantly clear to all, when monetary union was mooted by the John Major Government in the early 1990s and later by Tony Blair. His classic Eurosceptic views, not uncommon amongst patrician denizens of Bradford living in leafy exile in Wharfedale, did not prevent him becoming a highly effective Chairman of the British Apparel and Textile Export Advisory Group (BATEAG), a government



body that, as the name suggests, advised the Department of Trade on how to spend export promotion funding.

Whilst something of a laissez-faire libertarian believing good government was less government, Brian took the view that if Department of Trade largesse were available, he was not too proud to grab it for the good of the British Wool Textile Industry. This he did on several critical occasions, and woollen and worsted mills benefited accordingly.

Sensing a wind of irreversible change was blowing through the global wool industry, Brian embarked on the mammoth task of documenting the history of the Bradford industry and commissioned the former editor of the Wool

Record, Mark Keighley, to write *Wool City* (published in 2007 by G Whitaker), a somewhat harrowing tale of how wool textile manufacturing in West Yorkshire was making the painful post war transition from bulk to niche.

In his post wool days Brian was fully occupied with a number of diverse business projects, often acting as a 'Business Angel' offering pro bono guidance to fledgling companies and start-ups across the UK. Perhaps the more telling task that showed the kind and compassionate side of the man was his work with Abbeyfield assisted living in Ilkley. "When I needed to find a home for my ageing father, I went to see Brian and I will always treasure the kind, caring advice he offered in those difficult days", said one of many who sought his counsel over the years.

But it was the quintessential family man whose life was celebrated at the picturesque Church of St Just-in-Roseland near St Mawes on the South Cornwall Coast on the afternoon of May 31st, with a photograph of Brian clothed as the Master of the Worshipful Company of Woolmen, of which he was immensely proud, displayed prominently in the transept of the church.

He is survived by his wife Liz, sons Tim, Robert and Andrew, daughter Helen and thirteen grandchildren.

### *Other Members who have sadly departed*

- Liveryman Emeritus Thomas Ramsden
- Liveryman Emeritus John Langley
- Liveryman Graham Bennett

# Hub News

## Hubs 7&8 London - Drinks At St. Vedast London

In one of the earliest gatherings since the easing of lockdown regulations, the Master, the Clerk, fellow Woolmen and guests, mainly from Hubs 7 and 8, met together in the courtyard of St Vedast Church, courtesy of the Chaplain. The intermittent rain did not spoil a most enjoyable evening catered by Mark Grove and his team from The Cook and Butler. Over 30 Woolmen and guests attended the drinks evening and took advantage of the chance to meet face to face, rather than on Zoom; in many cases having not met since the Alms Court Dinner in 2020.

The venue was the courtyard of St Vedast Church, very close to St Paul's Cathedral, where our Chaplain, Paul Kennedy, is Rector. The courtyard is one of those secret gems in the City, hiding behind a small blue door up a small, narrow street, with a lovely old Japanese maple tree in the centre and a number of interesting plaques and artworks dotted around. St Vedast Church is an English baroque Wren/Hawksmoor church, with John Betjeman among its past noteworthy parishioners.

Particularly welcome were three Freeman of the Company who were to be clothed the very next day, Marshall Allender, Jane Lowe and Brian Plunkett, who were able to meet the Master and the Clerk and fellow Wolman. It was good also to see the Mayor elect and Woolman, Alderman Vincent Keaveny, along with past Masters, Court Assistants and Stewards.

And when Sir David Wooton gave a brief speech of welcome, Duncan Crole added to his usual Clerkly duties as a most adept, most 'umbrella man' by the end of the evening all were suitably cheered by good food, good wine and most importantly, good company.



Raindrops Keep Falling on my head



RIGHT Organiser of this Event Tory Manuel with Guests Vicki Miller and Ian Galbraith

LEFT Thanks to Chaplain Paul Kennedy and Vincent Keaveny



## Northern Hub

A highlight of the Summer is the Great Yorkshire Show at which we were privileged to enjoy lunch together with members of The Merchants of the Staple of England in a private room. We were hosted by the Master and thanks go to Andrew Dawson for his tremendous efforts to bring this to happen.



## South West Hub

### Intrepid Southwest Hubbers brave the elements for pea soup and humus

On Friday 21st May, Past Master Richard Excell, ably supported by Carolyn, arranged an informal Southwest hub lunch at the White Post Café (and garden centre) at Langford Budville near Wellington, Somerset. Due to other commitments the numbers were down to a small core of hardened Woolmen and their consorts who would risk anything for a drink and a chat under the recently reduced pandemic restrictions. Apart from Richard and Carolyn, the company consisted of John and Ros Stace, Peter and Pauline Reynolds and their two dogs, and Bill and Janet Clark with their dog.

Richard and Carolyn laid on a splendid venue for the SW hubbers inaugural event. There was good food, great company and a generous supply of wine – the only thing lacking was decent weather, because the meteorological gods had taken a day off, and the al fresco diners experienced, drizzle, showers, rain and deluge – and the occasional pause in the general wetness. But it did not matter because Bacchus and a few other sociable gods were on hand and a good time was had by all. Even the dogs – the reason for dining al fresco – enjoyed the experience, but the weather was not such a problem for them. However, they missed out on the humus, pea soup, kedgeriee, and other delights that were available for the human element.

It was great to catch up with everyone and sharing tales and woes, highs and lows of lockdown restrictions and irritations. Let's hope the worst of the pandemic really is all behind us now, and the next time we meet in person at a Woolmen's event and raise a glass, the restrictions will have been raised.

The event raised £80 for the Woolmen's Charity.

## People

### NEW MEMBERS & SPECIAL COURT MEETING

A meeting was held on 29th July at Information Technologist Hall to clothe new members some of whom have been waiting

months for this occasion. Whilst different to the usual clothing a small number of Court members were present to witness the Master carry out the ceremony. Because of the higher than usual numbers the Master read the declaration to all and each of them confirmed his/her wish to become a Liveryman. At the same event Peter Lynch was admitted as a Court Assistant and Margaret Miller and Peter Ackroyd were given their badges as Honorary Court Members. After the formalities everyone took the opportunity to get to know each other over an informal celebratory glass.

**Robert Hodgkins**, a sheep farmer and is one of our winners of the Wool Innovation Prize. A former Nuffield scholar Rob with his wife is very much hands on, breeding, shearing and looking to the future using DNA testing to improve wool yield and quality.

**Marshall Allender**, American by birth but moved to London and now a manager of the Campaign for Wool. Interests include – Shooting, Showing Working Dogs Theatre & Opera

**Jane Lowe**, Actress and Teacher of performing arts from London

**Wing Commander Simon Meade OBE**, based in Stamford and working in the defence sector after a long career in the RAF

**Brian Plunkett**, consultant trichologist from Woburn

**Margaret Eaton**, based in Bingley, a Conservative Life Peer since 2010 following a distinguished career in Local Government

**Sarah Lopez Ferreiro**, from Nottingham, now working for a Fine Art House in Salisbury after completing a degree in Chinese Studies

**Tony Pringle**, Born in South Africa, now living in St. Albans and currently working for Moody's in the City. Charles has already sponsored our prizes.

