A Lleyn Sweep for Local Sheep?

Breed Societies and the Geographies of Welsh Livestock

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Abstract

This paper uses Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus to examine human-animal relationships within capitalist agricultural systems. The first part of the paper examines how Bourdieu's ideas have been used by academics to provide insights into the ways that livestock affect and are affected by farming practice. The second part builds on these conceptual, empirical and policy insights by examining some of the national and international social networks that contribute to human-animal relationships in capitalistic farming. It focuses on a case study of Welsh livestock and, in particular, the historic and contemporary roles that breed societies play in the imagination of farm animals and the creation of capitals in agriculture.

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'The mountain sheep are sweeter,
But the valley sheep are fatter;
And so we deemed it meeter
To take away the latter.'

'The War-Song of the Dinas Vawr'
Thomas Love Peacock (1829)

Introduction

The relationships between animals, locality and society have come under increased scrutiny by geographers (Philo, 1995; Wolch and Emel, 1995; Wolch, 1998; Philo and Wilbert, 2000). An emerging body of literature is critically reappraising the place of animals within capitalist agricultural systems, reflecting the three main trajectories of animal geography (Whatmore, 2000). First, research has focused on 'understanding the social practices and meanings that have shaped relationships between humans and other animals' (Whatmore 2000, p25). Livestock have cultural and symbolic, as well as economic, value in certain rural spaces and are important in the construction of rurality and local identity (Gray, 1996, 1998 and 2000; Yarwood and Evans, 2000; Holloway 2002a; Anderson, 2003). Second, a growing body of literature has examined the treatment of animals by people, with a particular emphasis on the ethics and morality of keeping livestock (Enticott, 2003; Holloway, 2001, 2002b and 2003; Buller and Morris 2003 and 2004). Third, post-humanist approaches have examined how animal, people and machines are enrolled and positioned in hybrid relational networks that blur distinctions between society and nature (Murdoch, 1997; Goodman, 1999; Enticott; 2001; Whatmore 1997 and 2002; Anderson, 2003; Castree *et al*., 2004).

This literature suggests that livestock are more than passive objects on farms but, instead, make their own contributions to farming practices. Animals are part of relational networks of human, non-human and technological entities that are held together as 'an ordering of land, animals, people etc which produces the 'farm' as an effect of a network' (Holloway, 2002a, p.2057). Livestock, as Buller and Morris (2003) note, have become the 'quintessential hybrids' in these networks, having their lives de-animalised by human intervention yet, at the same time, being valued for their 'commodified naturalness'. Consequently, these animals play 'an instrumental role in the commodification of rural spaces and resources' (Buller, 2004, p.133).

These ideas not only demonstrate a growing interest in animals, but can be viewed as an engagement by agricultural geographers with the cultural turn in human geography (Morris and Evans, 1999 and 2004). Although these 'excitements' have pushed the analysis of agriculture beyond political economy approaches, it is crucial to remember that farming remains an economic activity, albeit one that has undergone complex transformations. New agrarian policy strands place emphasis on developing the 'multifunctionality' of agriculture (Wilson, 2001) within a differentiated social economy of the countryside (Marsden and Murdoch, 2003), emphasising food quality, environmental stewardship, farm business diversification and rural development

(Ilbery and Bowler, 1998; Wilson, 2001; Evans *et al*., 2002 and 2003). These complex transformations both reflect and affect how animals are positioned by and in farming networks.

However, many geographical studies of animals and farming have either focused anthropocentrically on the productive characteristics of livestock in the agricultural economy or, when efforts have been made to study them in a more animal-centred manner, have over-simplified the farming regimes of which they are part (Yarwood and Evans, 1999). Most progress has been made where economically marginal farming activities have been the focus of research, such as hobby farming (Holloway, 2003) or keeping rare breeds (Yarwood and Evans, 2002).

If the geographies of farm animals are to be understood more fully, then it is necessary to formulate a conceptual framework that recognises the complexity of human-animal relations, as well as the complexity of farming change. This paper argues that Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus provides one such framework. The first part of the paper examines how Bourdieu's ideas have been used by academics to provide insights into the relational identities of livestock and people in networks of farming practice. The second part builds on these conceptual, empirical and policy insights by examining some of the national and international social networks that contribute to human-animal relationships in capitalistic farming. It focuses on a case study of Welsh livestock and, in particular, the historic and contemporary roles that breed societies play in the imagination of farm animals and the creation of different capitals in agricultural.

Livestock and Habitus

Bourdieu (1984, p.73) has argued that 'it is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction'. He rejects structuralist explanations of local actions and, instead, argues that actors have sets of resources and knowledge that can be applied in different situations. However, 'the rejection of mechanistic theories no way implies that .. we should reduce objective intentions and constituted signification of action and works to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.72). Instead, habitus equips actors with a 'pre-disposition' to act in a particular way, a 'knowing without knowing' that is likened to a 'feel for the game' (Painter, 2000).

The actions of individuals often help to reproduce the structures of which they are part (Smith, 2001). Bourdieu (1984) has demonstrated that habitus is instrumental in re-producing class and power relations. Habitus equips groups with the 'desires, motivation, knowledge, skill, routine and strategies that will reproduce their inferior [or superior] status' (Smith, 2001). These differences are referred to as 'taste', or 'an acquired disposition to differentiate and appreciate' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.466). Taste not only represents the economic wealth of the individual but also reflects a system of power relations: differences in class are represented though symbolic forms that constitute an objectified relationship between the individual agent and the field (Bourdieu, 1993). Thus, habitus offers 'a sense of one's place as well as 'a sense of the other's place'' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.131) and is the basis for 'symbolic struggles for

power to produce and reproduce the world' (p.134). To understand these relationships further, it is necessary to distinguish between different types of capital.

Capital exists in many forms and should not just be seen in economic terms. Although economic capital refers to material wealth, Bourdieu recognises the presence of social capital (that refers to the power and resources gained by social networks and contacts), cultural capital (knowledge and skills acquired by socialisation and education) and symbolic capital (the form assumed by legitimate forms of capital) (Painter, 2000). The effective use of these forms of capital to accumulate wealth arises from their deployment in particular fields. Fields are specific domains of social life, such as industry, politics, academia and so on. Actors can use their habitus and capital (in all its forms) to negotiate their position within specific fields and struggles over symbolic capital are key to legitimising actors' positions with specific fields (Smith, 2001).

Bourdieu's ideas have permeated agricultural geography because they have the potential to provide a holistic explanation of farmers' actions within changing economic circumstances. Habitus can help relate the individual's disposition to act to the internal material resources of the farm (such as farm size, available capital, labour skills) and the external context of markets, policies and cultural norms (Shucksmith, 1993; Shucksmith and Hermann, 2002). According to Shucksmith (1993), farmers' decision-making cannot be understood without reference to habitus, identified as the internal conditioning that farmers have received and which is reshaped by experience, social interaction and personality. These subconsciously give value to farming as an occupation and help to define the meaning of it, including features such as independence, respect within communities and satisfaction from good husbandry in addition to just profit generation (see also Price, 2004).

This has been superbly revealed by Gray's (1996, 1998 and 2000) examination of hill farming in the Scottish Borders. This demonstrates how family farms and the capital within them are capable of assembling and reproducing animal, nature and human relationships over time. Rather than discussing 'the power of capitalism and the state to transform the nature of hill sheep farms' (Gray, 1996, p.45), Gray instead foregrounds how local farming practice 'acts like a prism ... refracting exogenous forces manifest in the agricultural policies of the EC [sic] according to its endogenous social dynamics' (Gray, 1996, p.44-45).

Within Gray's work, it is recognised that sheep are more than just trope for economic assets. Knowledge about sheep breeds, behaviour and genetic qualities are essential to both the daily operation of hill farms and reproduction over time. The acquisition of this knowledge is a labour intensive process that requires 'spending a lot of time herding and handling sheep' (Gray, 1996, p.31). Shepherds and farmers are therefore required to organise their daily and annual lives around the natural requirements of sheep and their knowledge of these requirements. Over time, this knowledge of (local) sheep becomes essential in the breeding of specific flocks for specific places. Breeds of sheep are chosen according to perceived 'natural' characteristics that are seen to suit them to harsh upland environmental conditions. Farmers then attempt to modify or maintain the genetic characteristics of their flocks though the selective breeding of specific tups and ewes. The monitoring of breeding in this way means that the flock becomes a closed population (Gray,1998) and, over time, particular flocks:

'build an association between a particular family with a specific line in sheep whose characteristics embody the natural qualities of the ground on which they graze, the genetic make up of tups with whom they mate and, consequently, the skills that define the personhood of the farmer' (Gray, 1998, p.351).

Bourdieu's writings on the body (Bourdieu, 1990 and 1999; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) allow animals to be understood as active agents within these farming networks. He argues that the body exists in both culture and nature, enacting, producing and reproducing the ideas and memory of a particular field. The body is not 'a purely subjective phenomenon that houses memories of its participation in the conventional games of the social field' (Butler 1999, p.116) but, rather, it enacts or performs habitus.

Sheep embody and perform these knowledges by 'hefting' (Gray 1996). Hefting refers to their tendency to confine their grazing and movements to particular territories or 'hefts'. In turn, farm space and labour are organised into in-bye and out-bye land that reflect these hefting places. As Thrift (2004) emphasises, the organisation of space follows on from ways in which bodies, in this case those of sheep, perform habitus. As Gray ably demonstrates, the establishment of hefting knowledge over time, by both person and animal, assemble farmers, livestock and places (both local and European) into complex, but locally unique, farming networks.

Flocks of sheep have economic worth and manifest good decision-making and husbandry (cultural capital), representing products of knowledge and decisions made through local and national networks (social capital). They are not only a form of symbolic capital, but also actively embody and perform the operation and succession of the farm (Gray, 1996, 1998 and 2000).

The use of detailed ethnographic methodologies allowed Gray to make important connections between the development and implementation of EU policy and the practice of farming. His work makes the important point that specific flocks and breeds of sheep are maintained over generations *because* of EU policy pressures, rather than despite them (Whatmore *et al.*, 1987; Marsden *et al.*, 1989), raising interesting questions about government and symbolic capital. Bourdieu notes that the state plays a key role in legitimising symbolic capital within conflicts of taste 'because of its social position as that set of institutions, discourses, acts and codes and practices which regulate and conduct the activities of virtually all other field and institutions' (Webb *et al.*, 2002, p.87). State policy, therefore, can assist in the legitimisation of particular kinds of capital and, in the case of Gray's livestock, give credence to the enrolment of specific livestock breeds into local farming networks.

Crucially, however, the state offers very little guidance, or indeed holds very little cultural capital, on specific livestock breeds. So, while policy frameworks may encourage or discourage the keeping of particular species of animal suited to particular tasks, the decision to work with particular breeds of animals is left, as Gray demonstrates, to the individual farmer. This is even the case within tightly regulated agricultural spaces, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest – see Evans *et al.*, 2003). The question arises as to how farmers develop the social and cultural capital to make these decisions and what kinds of practices or institutions legitimise the specific

social capital that is embodied in particular livestock animals or breeds. Bourdieu (1988) places emphasis on the importance of educational institutions, and universities in particular, in developing cultural and social capital. Undoubtedly, institutions such as agricultural training colleges play a role in the early development of these capitals in the field of farming, yet a whole series of other state, private and voluntary institutions also compliment and compete with education establishments in the development of this capital, including farmer's unions and associations, rural social groups, agricultural associations, as well as state agencies aimed at researching or 'improving' agricultural knowledge. Geographical research has remained fairly limited on these organisations, focusing either on individual farmers or state policy-making at national or international level, yet a greater focus on them will start to reveal struggles over, and legitimisation of, capitals within the field of farming.

To begin addressing these issues, we will foreground the role of breed societies in the enrolment of livestock breeds into farming networks. It is not our intention to over-state the importance of these societies, nor to relegate the influence of other farming organisations and state agencies in the development of habitus in the agricultural field. Indeed, we would argue that further research is needed on these farming institutions. However, the emphasis on breed societies may be justified because they have been strongly influential in the legitimisation of particular breed capitals. This focus will extend Gray's excellent work by taking it 'beyond the farm gate' in order to improve knowledge of human-livestock relations and the concept of habitus and geography.

We draw on a case study of Wales and Welsh livestock and use the concept of habitus to explore how national breed societies and national identity contribute to different geographies of local farming practices. The following section of this paper introduces the identities, histories and geographies of Welsh breeds. It then moves on to foreground the role of breed societies and evaluates their contribution to the development of different capitals in agriculture and livestock-human relations in Wales.

Wales and Livestock

Wales has a strong tradition of livestock farming that remains an important component of the rural economy (Cloke *et al.*, 1997; Countryside Council for Wales, 2004). Farming is essentially an upland, extensive activity which has experienced similar pressures, problems and policies as the Scottish Borders studied by Gray.

Agricultural and rural policy in Wales has been regulated by a number of Welsh agencies such as the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW) and, more recently, the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and The Welsh Assembly. In addition to governmental agencies, there are in existence a number of specifically Welsh organisations, such as the National Farmers' Union Cymru (NFUC), Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) and Royal Welsh Agricultural Society (RWAS) that have an interest in promoting particular ideas about Welshness, rurality and farming. All of these agencies have the potential to develop

farming capital in a specifically Welsh context. However, their roles have to be set in context with broader economic and political changes in agriculture.

During the post-war period, farming in Wales became characterised by greater intensification, concentration and specialisation under the influence of production-oriented policies (Healey and Ilbery, 1985; Marsden *et al*., 1993). Under these conditions, breeds with the most economic capital were those that could produce most food. Many of these animals, such as Holstein-Friesian cattle, Poland China pigs and Texel sheep, originated from outside Wales (and indeed, the UK). These animals embodied innovation in farming practice, progressive thinking and efficient husbandry.

Concerted state effort aimed to make farming more scientific to improve the social capital associated with the keeping of livestock. This was delivered by encouraging farmers to use more technological inputs in their farming. Arguably, this view of animals neglected their welfare, as increased emphasis was placed on scientific, rather than humane, discourses of animal production. Some have suggested that these inputs have been used to such an extent that animals might be labelled as 'hybrids' (Whatmore, 2002; Buller, 2004). Here the term refers to a blurring of artificial and natural properties, rather than its more traditional use to signify an animal that has been bred from different breeds of livestock.

The emphasis on productivity and the scientific rearing of animals led to a decline in the number and status of many Welsh breeds (Alderson 1990), including the extinction of Glamorgan cattle and Rhiw sheep. The decline of these animals has been explained by 'the whims of fashion' (Alderson 1990, pp1-2) as many breeds would have been capable of making a valuable contribution to today's redefined, multifunctional agriculture. Bourdieu's concept of 'taste' has a strong bearing on which animals are seen as fashionable to keep, with the choice of breed reflecting a desire by farmers to appear progressive in farming.

Since 1973, no further breeds of Welsh, or indeed British, livestock have become extinct and many have actually increased in number. Traditional breeds of livestock have become re-valued by farmers as they themselves come to accept the multifunctionality of agriculture (Yarwood and Evans, 2000). For example, nine breeds of Welsh sheep, seven of cattle and the Welsh Mountain pony have been used in grazing schemes aimed at ecological conservation (Small *et al.*, 1999). Other animals, such as White Park cattle (Yarwood and Evans, 2000), make good attractions in farm parks due to their unusual colour, size or horns. These animals have, therefore, important economic capital in such enterprises. Given the recent emphasis on linking producers and consumers more closely through local, environmentally benign or beneficially produced food (Tovey, 1997; Morris and Young, 2000; Murdoch *et al*., 2000; Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002; Buller and Morris, 2003), such use of local, identifiable breeds may yet become profitable for farmers. As yet, the marketing of particular breeds of animals has not impacted significantly on the activities of regional food marketing agencies (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000).

However, the range of livestock kept in Wales testifies that, despite strong EU and governmental regulation of agriculture, farming practice is far from consensual. Three

distinctive geographies of Welsh Livestock have been identified (Yarwood and Evans 2003):

1. Breeds found almost **exclusively in their area of origin**. These include Hill Radnor sheep, Welsh Black cattle (Figure 3), Welsh Mountain sheep (Figure 1), and Welsh Half-Bred sheep.

2. Breeds with a **strong association with area of origin but also found widely elsewhere in Britain.** These include Balwen Welsh Mountain sheep, Welsh Black Mountain sheep, Clun Forest sheep (Figure 2), Kerry Hill sheep, Llanwenog sheep, Lleyn sheep (Figure 4), Shropshire sheep[1], Badger Face, Welsh Mountain ponies.

3. Breeds found elsewhere in Britain but **not in their area of origin**. These include Welsh pigs (Figure 5) and White Park cattle.

These contemporary geographies raise two important 'cause and effect' issues. First, it may be that some livestock were quickly assimilated into local constructions of 'good farming' founded in the dominant farming ethos, meanings of being a 'farmer' and the esteem held by a particular farming family within their agricultural community. Second, it may be that the geography of livestock breeds is an effect of the strength of the dominant disposition to act in particular localities. The introduction of new breeds into an area from outside will have met with varying degrees of resistance. Gaining cultural acceptance necessitated adopters projecting an image of progressiveness and innovation over one of seeking alternatives as a response to failure with accepted, 'traditional' husbandry.

In both cases, livestock embody what is understood by 'good farming' and, consequently, the acceptance or rejection of particular breeds may be understood as a form of symbolic struggle over the nature of capitalistic farming. The favouring of traditional breeds in a policy and economic environment which favours non-traditional livestock is clearly an expression of habitus. It encompasses cultural capital within farming, as well as the social capital established by the operation of (often informal) farming networks at the local (Gray, 1996) and national level.

This raises questions about how social and cultural capital is developed for different breeds and how this is diffused within and across different localities. It is apparent that agricultural policies and governmental institutions have covertly rather than specifically affected livestock breeding or geographies. Indeed, there has been little effort by the state to even record, yet alone monitor or promote, particular breeds of livestock animals in Britain (Yarwood and Evans, 2000).

Instead, the identity, promotion and maintenance of particular breeds have almost exclusively been shouldered by breed societies and other voluntary organisations with an interest in these animals. Consequently, breed societies play an important, but often unrecognised role, in the development of human-livestock relations in capitalist agriculture and the diffusion of local farming practice to other localities.

[1] A sheep with an English county name, but which has received substantial 'cultural' input from Welsh farmers in its development over time – see the later discussion about identity and livestock.

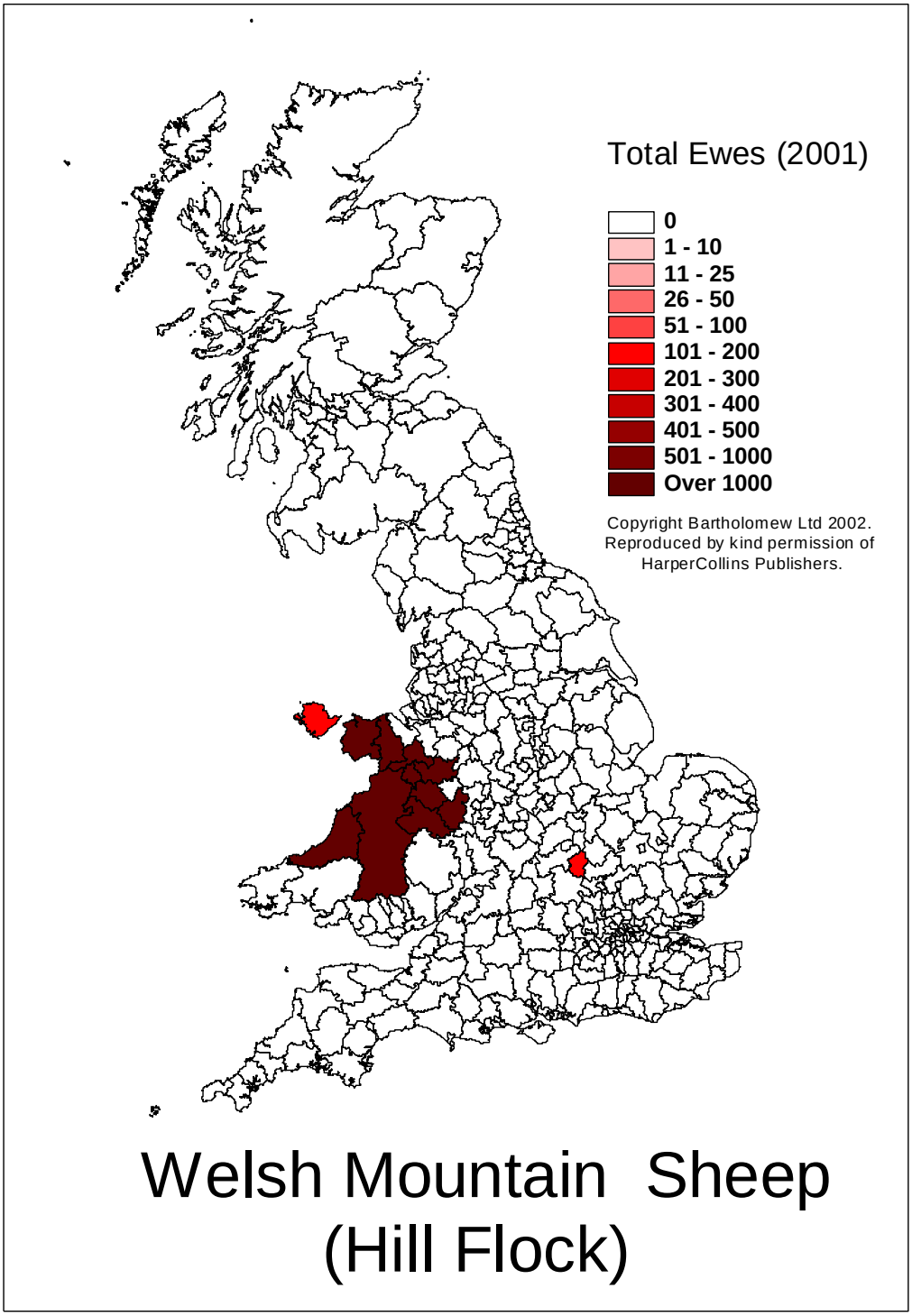

Figure 1: Welsh Mountain Sheep (Hill Flock) Ewes (Welsh Mountain Sheep Society, Hill Flock, 2002)

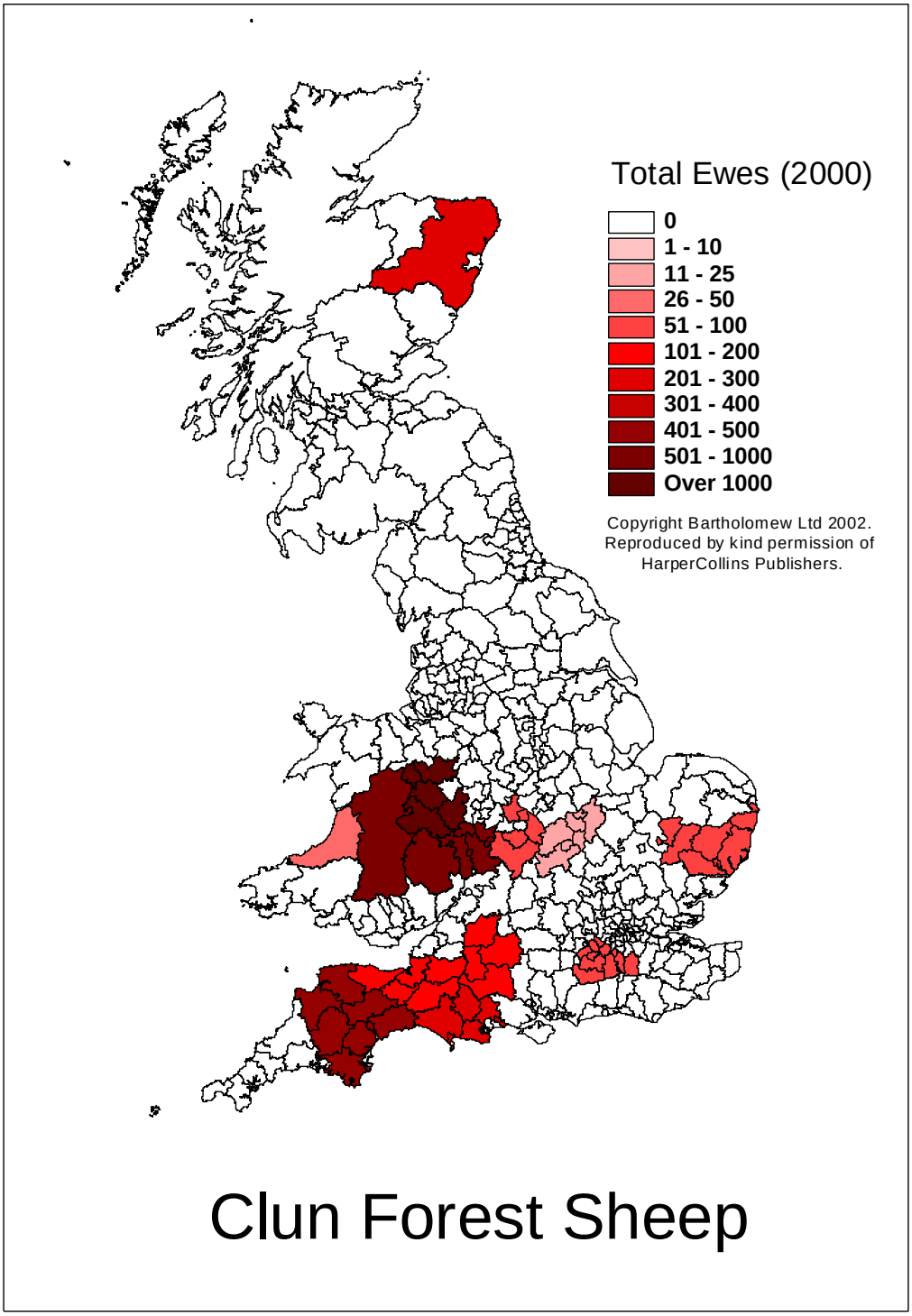

Figure 2: Total Clun Forest Ewes, 2000 (Source: Clun Forest Sheep Breeders Flock Book 76, 2000)

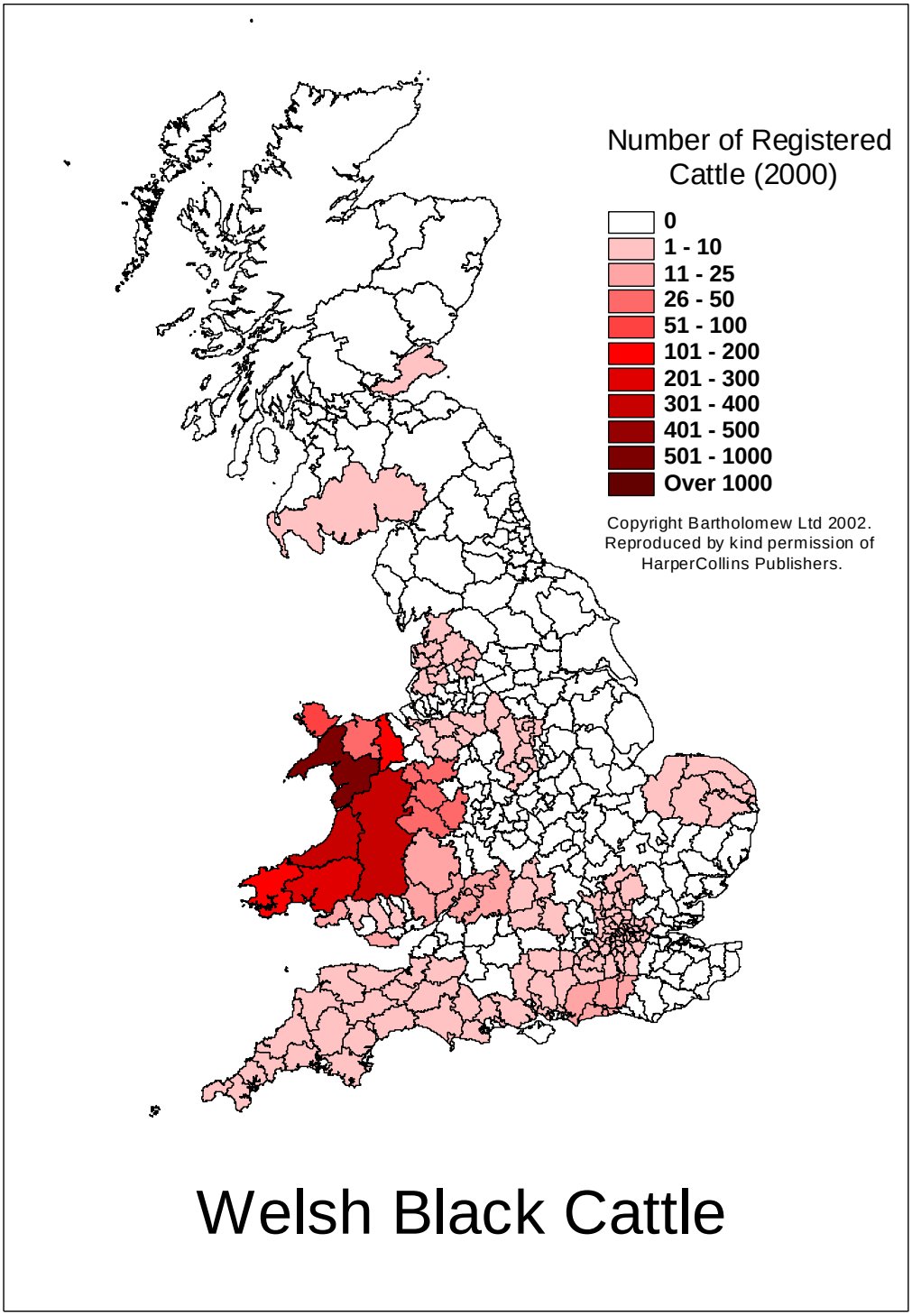

Figure 3: Welsh Black Cow Registrations 2000 (Source: Welsh Black Cattle Herd Book Volume 89, 2000)

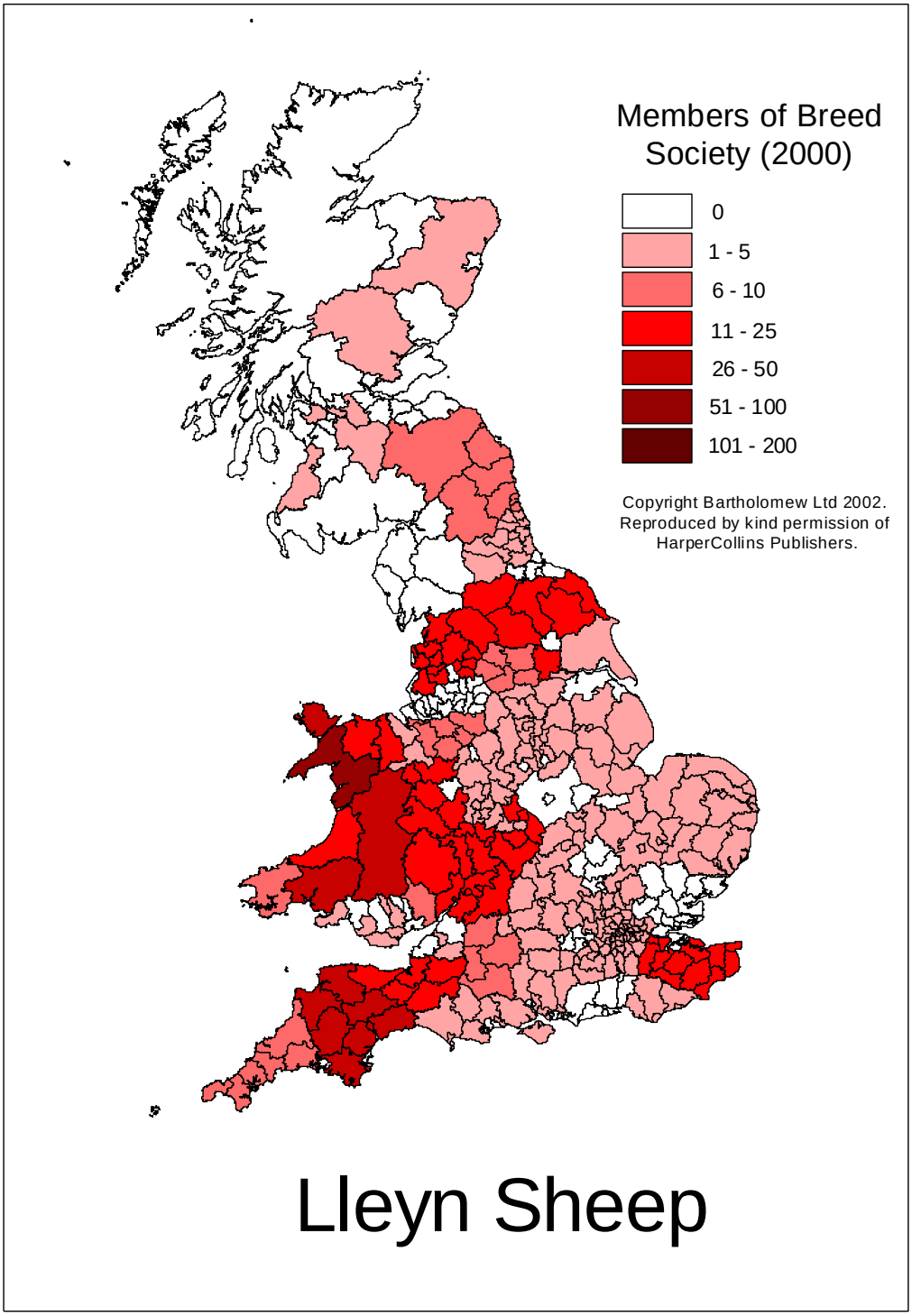

Figure 4: Members of Lleyn Sheep Society (Source: Lleyn Sheep Society, 2002)

Breed Societies and Breeds

Breed societies have been crucial in the enrolment of livestock and people into farming networks and the development of farming habitus. Their main role has been to formalise the ideas and social networks associated with the breeding of farm animals.

Agricultural societies in general have a long history and can be traced back to the 'agricultural revolutions' of the 18th and 19th centuries. These fora not only allowed for the exchange of knowledge, but also led to the birth of local agricultural shows. Their initial establishment may have reflected the interests of elite groups who bred animals to reflect and embody the size and wealth of their agricultural estates (Ritvo, 1987). Thus, in 1883 Mr. William Dew, Secretary of the North Wales Black Cattle Society, reported that 'a herd book was very little understood, or even heard of, by many tenant farmers in North Wales, which accounts for the lethargy exhibited by them in entering their stock in our Herd Book' (quoted in Williams-Edwards, 1962, page 4). These societies sought to develop the social and cultural capital needed to maintain their breeds and were responsible for the diffusion of 'improved' breeds across the British Isles (Walton, 1984).

Over time, and as breeds became more influential, their societies' human membership became wider and less elitist (Yarwood and Evans, 2002). According to National Sheep Association records, a Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association was formed in 1979 from a core of 16 enthusiasts, but had in excess of 1,200 registered producers by the end of the 1990s. The Welsh Black Cattle Society has over 1,200 members, the majority (88%) of whom live in Wales and account for nearly 15% of beef farmers in the country. The contemporary importance of breed societies is highlighted by Table 1, which reveals that many societies were formed during the late twentieth century, reflecting their continuing importance during the post-war restructuring of Welsh agriculture.

Societies are managed by a committee of members elected at an Annual General Meeting. The size, scale and operation of societies depend upon its membership and size: some have central offices and full time paid staff (usually located in agricultural show-grounds) while others are organised by amateurs and enthusiasts working in a part-time voluntary capacity. Membership of these societies is not, of course, confined to humans and, as Evans and Yarwood (2000) have demonstrated using Actor Network Theory, breed societies are an optimal passage point in the enrolment of livestock and animals into agricultural networks.

Three main activities are undertaken by breed societies that, when taken together, assist in the development of habitus in agricultural practice. These activities are identifying, promoting and recording breeds of livestock. Animals, as well as people, play an active role in these activities which are examined in the following sections.

SHEEP
Balwen Welsh Mountain (1985) **Beulah Speckled Face** (1958) **Black Welsh Mountain** (1920) **Brecknock Hill Cheviot** (1970) **Clun Forest** (1925) **Hill Radnor** (1951) **Kerry Hill** (1899) **Llanwenog** (1957) **Lleyn** (1970) **Shropshire** (1882) **South Wales Mountain** (1948) **Welsh Bleu** (1990) **Welsh Halfbred** (1893) **Welsh Hill Speckled Face** (1969) **Welsh Mountain Badger Face** (1976) *(Inc. Torddu and Torwen sub-types)* **Welsh Mountain** (1905) *(Inc. Pedigree and Hill Flocks (1958))* **Welsh Mule** (1979)
CATTLE
Welsh Black (1904) **White Park** (1918)
PIGS
Welsh Pig (1918)
HORSES
Welsh Mountain Pony and Cob (1901)

Table 1: Breeds of Welsh livestock and date of society foundation (Yarwood and Evans, 2003). Those underlined are considered rare by the RBST.

Identity

In physical terms, animals' bodies have been altered through selective breeding to produce specific food and fibre products for people (Clutton-Brock, 1994; Alderson, 1990). Over time, these altered physical characteristics have come to embody different ideas about animal husbandry. Animals are, therefore, socially constructed by farmers and wider society as representations of good and bad agricultural practice. These discourses have been most strongly articulated through the classification of livestock into different categories or 'breeds'. This process has been fluid and contested, revealing much about the way in which the habitus of agriculture has been constructed.

However, it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that breeds became more closely defined, regulated and maintained. These practices not only reflected agricultural advancement according to scientific principles, but also a fashion-driven desire to breed new, unusual and often large animals that reflect the wealth and prestige of landowners (Ritvo, 1987). Therefore, breeding was culturally as well as economically driven. Animals became important forms of symbolic capital, reflecting knowledge (or cultural capital) of scientific breeding and the economic capital of elite landowners.

Breed societies are responsible for defining the physical characteristics or phenotype of a breed. For example, a Balwen Welsh Mountain ewe is described thus:

'The base colour is to be black, dark brown or dark grey (preferably black). A white stripe on the face running down from the tail to be white (upper tail the same as the base colour). A small quantity of white is acceptable on the lower jaw but it must not extend below the top edge of the breastbone. Females should ideally have four (4) white socks (in order to be registered females must have at least two (2) white socks – these must be clearly definable but are not required to be perfect). Females must have black noses but a small amount of pink is acceptable. Definition of a sock: a band of white hair that goes all around the foot and touches the hoof at one or more points. No horns are allowed on females'. Source: Balwen Sheep Flock Book, Volume 15, 2000, p.3.

This process reveals much about the co-relations between people and livestock. Initially, selective breeding was a means to achieve particular characteristics that made a breed suitable for farming. When a breed is established and recognised by a society, it is an end in itself to breed animals to match the criteria expected by a society. Over time, the genetic characteristics and visual appearance of breeds have become increasingly 'fixed'. Livestock are therefore far more than 'blank sheets' on to which breed societies and farmers project ideas, but are themselves agents in which farming practices are passed on to new farming generations and localities. As Butler (1999) emphases, the bodies of animals *are* habitus, rather than merely its representation or memory. Animals' bodies are more than inscriptions of culture, but actively engage with the landscape in a way that helps to develop taste, social action and engagement in farming practice.

This is no more seen than in the activity of 'showing'. Shows are organised by societies to encourage owners to 'show' their animals in order to demonstrate and reward good examples of the breed. Showing animals seeks to develop cultural capital within farming by providing advice and education on the qualities, properties and husbandry of particular breeds. Individual animals are judged on how well they meet breed criteria and are penalised if they do not match them (Figure 6). Such stringency seeks to maintain breed characteristics and winners embody good husbandry (social capital) and breeding knowledge (cultural capital)[2] (Holloway, 2004 and forthcoming).

[2] It might be noted, though, that language employed about selection, especially on the basis of gender, colour and perceived 'nativity', might be deemed as exclusionary towards minority groups visiting or living in the countryside (Yarwood and Evans, 2000).

Incorrect type:	Disqualification
'Panda' face:	20 penalties
White in ears:	5 penalties
Broken blaze:	20 penalties
Star:	25 penalties
All white tail:	10 penalties
Insufficient socks:	5 penalties per black leg
Pink nose:	Disqualification
Excessive bib:	5 penalties
No white on tail:	Disqualification
Part pink nose:	10 Penalties

Figure 6: Breed Criteria for Balwen Sheep (Source: Balwen Sheep Flock Book Volume 15, 2000)

Anderson's (2003) examination of the Sydney Royal Show, and the animals within it, has not only revealed a hybridity of nature and culture, but also of coloniser and colonised. Likewise, livestock in Wales embody different identities of nationhood and Welshness. Rurality, agriculture and tradition have been key elements in some discourses of nationhood and identity (Gruffudd, 1994), particularly in the inter-war and immediately post-war period. It is widely recognised, however, that Welsh 'identity and culture' carry multiple meanings that can conflict with each other in the competition for 'symbolic space and public recognition' (Bowie 1993, p.169, quoted in Cloke *et al*., 1997). Although it has been suggested that Welshness, and conflicts over Welshness, can have a significant impact on social and community life (Cloke *et al*. 1997), curiously less attention has been given to the role national identity plays in economic change, including agriculture and livestock.

An interesting example of this is seen in the identification of 'Welsh' breeds. Alderson (1976, p.66) has warned that 'a great deal of confusion has arisen in the past by attempting to define the origin of various Welsh breeds in an area of the same name'. Some breeds developed primarily by farmers at locations distant from Wales have become popular amongst Welsh farmers who, in turn, have selectively bred them for characteristics that they particularly favour. The Brecknock Hill Cheviot sheep is a case in point. Original stock from the Scottish-English border country has been adopted by farmers in Wales and through their actions has subsequently developed features distinctive from the parent stock. Indeed, a case could be made that virtually no livestock identified in this paper as 'Welsh' contain genetic material that can be proven to have originated in Wales. As each species of domestic farm livestock is derived from a small set of wild ancestors, the extent to which breeds can be linked to place is clearly a function of time and cultural practice. 'Welsh' livestock are thus difficult to define and can be highly contested. The only practical conclusion that can be reached is that the autonomy of a breed is socially constructed and reflected primarily in the existence of a breed society to laud its virtues.

Despite this, some breeds are identified as 'Welsh' and may be kept by farmers as an expression of identity. For example the Welsh Mountain Sheep, which is found almost exclusively in Wales (Figure 1), has been described as 'the native breed of the

uplands of Wales' and a 'truly national breed' (Welsh Mountain Sheep Pedigree Section, 2001, p1). Similarly, the Clun Sheep Breeders Society notes that 'it has been suggested that the original Clun sheep were bred by the pastoral or semi-nomadic shepherds who lived in the [Clun] Forest about a thousand years ago' (Flock Book 76, 2000, p.9). In contrast, Alderson (1976, p.32) suggests that it was derived from 'a variable assortment of types in the West Midlands'! Although this breed is found mainly in Wales, it is also found widely in the UK (Figure 2).

This has been noted as a potent factor in the history of livestock development (or rather, the lack of it) in Wales by Colyer (1974). He quotes a 1794 commentary by Charles Hassell which condemns the cross-breeding of Pembrokeshire stock with English animals as producing stock ill-suited to the locality, and 'By this fatal error our farmers became more than ever attached to their own breed and prejudiced against anything that bore the name English' (Colyer, 1974, pp.2-3). However, the widespread adoption of breeds outside Wales, together with the cross-border breeding of animals, such as the Clun sheep, confirms that Welsh farmers are not as parochial as Colyer suggests.

Nevertheless, some significant attachments to locality remain. In 2000, nearly 80% of the total Welsh Black registrations in 2000 were in North and West Wales (Figure 1) and 88% of Breed Society members live in Wales. Gwynedd remains the breed's strongest location, with 545 animals registered there in 2000. Limitations on profitability within the marketplace explain why it has not spread widely beyond the locality. However, the breed retains sufficient economic value under modern agricultural market conditions to ensure that it is kept in its traditional area. Through its strong place association, reinforced in its breed name, the Welsh Black has become an expression of Welsh identity. Breed societies play a key role in the development of these human-animal relations by promoting these animals, often enrolling ideas about national identity to do so.

Promoting

Farming may be viewed as a site of social struggle in which 'contention is the ubiquitous feature of collective life' (Wacqaunt, 1998, p.218). Different breed societies engage in 'tournaments of taste' (Cloke *et al*., 1995) with each other to establish and promote the commercial use of different breeds in farming practice. This can lead to internal political conflict within breed societies to determine how best to do this (see Evans and Yarwood, 2000), but, as this section demonstrates, the results of these tournaments are manifest more clearly in the promotion and changing geographies of different livestock breeds.

Breed societies' second function is the promotion of individual breeds. 'Brand marketing' is commonly based on the economic value of the livestock, with emphasis placed on the ease of raising particular animals, their fecundity and the quality of their products. Thus, despite the stringency applied to the appearance of Balwen sheep noted above, potential buyers have been encouraged to focus on the 'sweetness and flavour' of its carcass and to remember:

'They're a whole lot more than just a pretty face.'

(Information Leaflet published by Balwen Welsh Mountain Sheep Society, 2002)

The Lleyn sheep provides an excellent example of this. The Lleyn developed from a highly localised Gwynedd breed to one found across the UK and the world. The breed was developed in North Wales and became associated with the Lleyn Peninsula in 18th century (however, it is estimated by Alderson (1976) that five-eighths of its genetic material came from Leicester sheep and the rest from local Welsh Mountain sheep). The remoteness of the Lleyn from major markets meant that the sheep attracted little 'status' amongst farmers outside this remote locality and social and cultural capital associated with the animal declined, threatening the survival of the sheep. There were only ten flocks of about 500 breeding Lleyn ewes remaining, split between the Lleyn peninsula itself, and the Isle of Anglesey where the breed had gained a loyal following. The situation deteriorated to the extent that the breed was classed as rare by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) in the 1970s.

Since this time, numbers have recovered dramatically. In 1985, 231 flocks were registered comprising 4000 breeding ewes (Hall and Clutton-Brock, 1989). One indication of how quickly fashion in livestock keeping can change is illustrated by a brief period in the early 1990s which saw the Lleyn become the most fashionable sheep for UK farmers to adopt, following in the footsteps of the Dutch Island Texel. It was discovered that crossing a Lleyn ewe with any popular continental breed produced a lamb of exceptional carcass conformation and quality. Groups now equipped with motivation to adopt and acquire skill in its husbandry were able to transform the habitus in the sheep into a powerful economic knowledge. Socially and economically, such practice rapidly became regarded as 'progressive' and 'good farming' amongst sheep breeders, creating a highly favourable disposition to act to adopt it. The case is significant as it emphasises that discourses of 'tradition' and 'progress' are not mutually exclusive: the local qualities of a traditional breed of sheep can effectively be diffused in national and international farming practices.

By 2000, 483 breeders were registered across Wales and Britain as a whole (Figure 4), with many (10% of breeders) in Gwynedd. The Lleyn breed Society promotes the sheep as 'difficult to pronounce, hard to beat' and uses the slogan 'have a Lleyn sweep through your flock'! The former statement offers direct help with pronunciation to the many keepers living outside the locality and emphasises that marketing is aimed at British rather than just Welsh farmers. The latter associates Lleyn sheep with a victorious or overwhelmingly successful practice. There are now regional support groups for the breed in every region of Britain.

Conversely, other societies have emphasised local uniqueness to promote their breed. Here, as Buller (2004) has argued, livestock are a hybrid of natural goodness and good farming practice. Local breeds are seen by their respective societies to symbolise traditional, local systems and often environmentally friendly methods of production. Welsh Black cattle, for example, have been promoted as 'the breed where quality comes naturally.' This ethos has been marketed through a meat marketing scheme run by the breed society. The Welsh Black Quality Beef Marketing Scheme aims to regulate the production of meat from these animals. It claims that:

'under the scheme beef is sold only from pure bred Welsh Black cattle registered with the Welsh Black Cattle Society. These cattle are reared on traditional grass based feeding systems designed to produce the best quality beef under high welfare conditions. Slaughter is made as stress free as possible, which is good for the animals as well as ensuring the best beef. The beef is then carefully handled and hung to ensure the highest possible eating quality before being sold.' (Welsh Black Cattle Society, 2004)

Nevertheless, the marketing of produce by breed societies to the public marks a significant step. Societies are attempting to increase knowledge of their animals to a wider, public network of people. In this way, cultural and social capital develops amongst retailers and members of the public, thus increasing the economic worth and capital of particular breeds (Clarke, 2003).

The importance of breed societies in maintaining capital associated with particular breeds cannot be underestimated, as the example of the Welsh Pig demonstrates. The Welsh pig or Welsh Landrace was, until recently, the third most popular British pig breed, behind the Large White and the British Landrace (Oklahoma State University, 2004). The breed gained popularity in the 1950s when its mothering instincts, good-sized litters and carcass characteristics were thought to be of benefit to modern farming systems (Oklahoma State University, 2004). It appears that animals were infused with blood from other types of Landraces to produce the modern breed of Welsh pig (Wallis, 1986). The breed society amalgamated with the British Pig Association around the same time and this organisation has been responsible for registering and monitoring pedigree animals. The knowledge base and identity of breed weakened, together with their collective position through a lack of new subscribers to the breed. Is it also a function of distribution in that there is less loyalty or concern for the breed because it is isolated from it place of name origin

The breed now appears to be in severe decline. In 1981, there were 1,341 registrations of Welsh Pigs, 674 in 1991 and only 211 in 2000 (Welsh Pig Herd Book 1981, 1991 and 2000, c/o The British Pig Association). The draft herd book for 2001 reveals a mere 124 registrations. In the 2000 herd book, registrations show that, despite its name, the Welsh pig does not have a particularly strong association with Wales (Figure 5). Only 12 animals were registered in Carmarthen and one in Powys. Instead, the breed is more strongly associated with more traditional areas of pig farming in the east of Britain, including 69 animals (48% of all registrations) registered in Cambridgeshire, England. Other than this, the animal appears to exist in pockets around England. Keepers of the Welsh pig were initially reluctant to accept the assistance of RBST in the preservation of the breed. This is because they regard the breed as a 'mainstream' one. To accept the help of the RBST would amount to an admission that the Welsh pig is marginal to the activities of modern pig husbandry, despite the hard evidence of declining animal numbers. In 2004, however, the RBST recognised the pig as being an endangered breed.

It is clear that the fate of different breeds rests largely on their enrolement and successful promotion by individual breed societies. The rise and decline of certain breeds is evidence of differences in 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984) and competition between farming groups to establish dominant ideas about best farming practice. Clearly, there

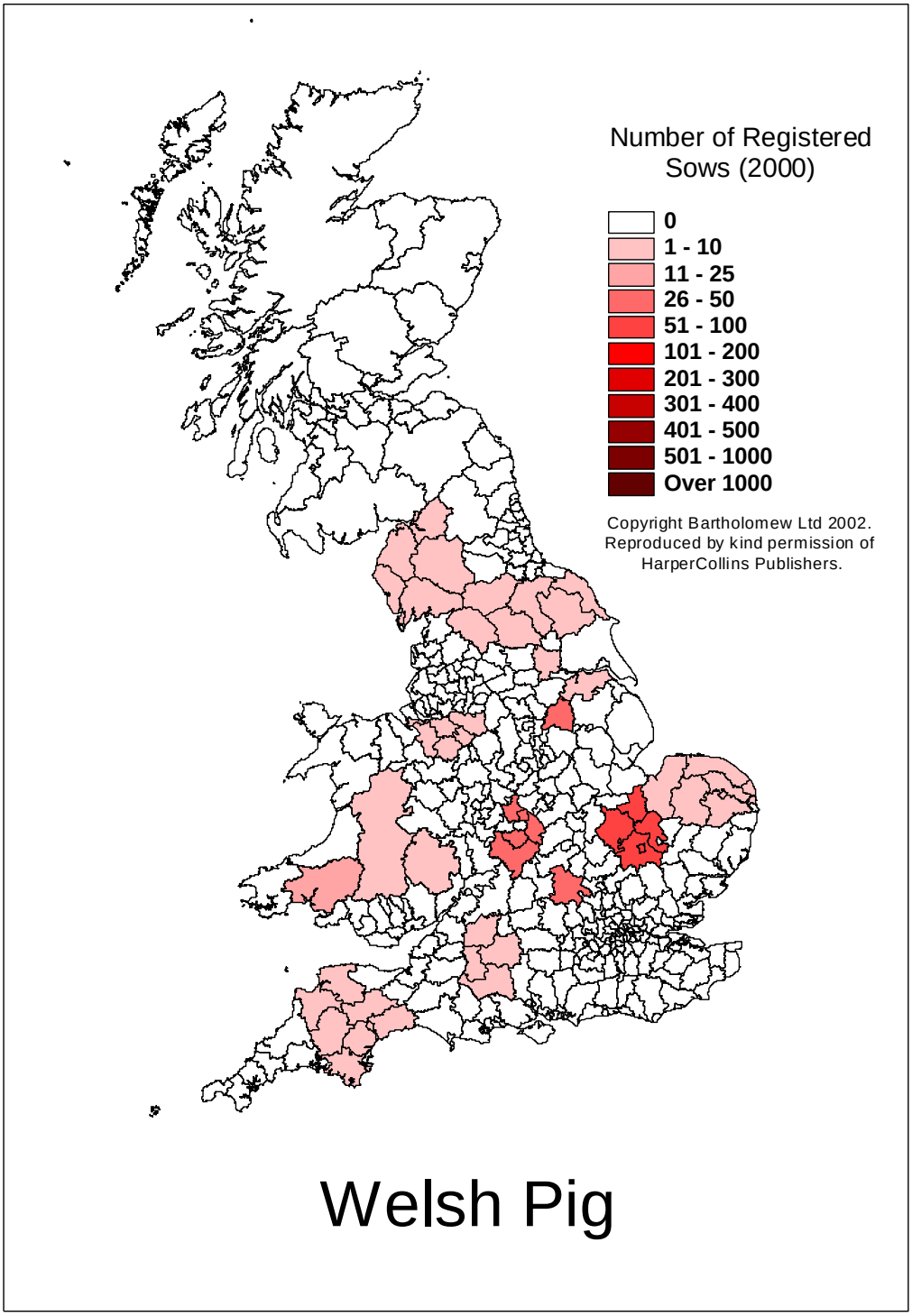

Figure 5: Welsh Pig Registrations, 2000. (Source: Welsh pig Herd Book 2000, c/o British Pig Association)

is scope for original research which combines recent work on actor networks with insights from the conceptualisation of habitus. The Welsh Pig crisis reveals that the third function of breed societies, recording, is vital to sustaining particular animals in farming networks.

Recording

The third important role of breed societies is to maintain the genes of particular breeds. To do this, breed societies confer and register 'pedigree' status on individual animals that have been born to parent animals that already have this status. In turn, these beasts can be used to breed similarly 'pure' animals. In this way, it is possible to maintain 'bloodlines' to propagate the unique genetic material held by each breed. Indeed, it is possible to trace the lineage of animals and breeds over several generations (see Alderson, 1990). The ownership of these animals also satisfies the power dimension of 'taste' as the animals with the highest fecundity and equipping offspring with the best food-producing characteristics become economically valuable assets. The names of specific pedigree lines and herds/flocks are renowned and synonymous with modern farming success.

As well as recording details of animals, breed societies register the owners and thus develop the social networks and capital needed to maintain a coherent breeding programme amongst farmers that may be spatially distant from one another. Societies become the most important source of cultural capital as their members have specific knowledges about the history and husbandry of their breeds. This is often recorded in publications about the breed.

Without the recording activities of breed societies, the legitimisation of livestock as distinct 'breeds' would be highly problematic. This is principally because it is possible to produce two animals of similar appearance; one which is genetically distinct from other breeds, and another that is an amalgam of genetic material from other breeds. For example, in 1979 *Farmers Weekly* reported that Glamorgan Cattle (which had thought to have been made extinct) had been found in Sussex. They were offered for sale by their elderly owner, together with a herd of Gloucesters and a herd of Longhorns. The Glamorgan cattle, numbering ten to twelve, had reputedly been established at this locality in 1820 from a purchase of cattle made from Highgrove, Tetbury in Gloucestershire. According to Alderson and Porter (1994), the reality was that these cattle were a mixture of Gloucesters and Longhorns, occasional calves from which produced visual characteristics close to the colour pattern recorded for Glamorgans. The claim therefore passed unsubstantiated, largely due to a lack of rigorous recording procedures caused by the absence of a Glamorgan Cattle Society.

Controversy can also surround the status of some breeds. For example, Belted Welsh Black Cattle are felt by Defra[3] to be a unique breed but a 'lack of unique genetic material' has led to a rejection of this claim by the RBST. Despite these conflicts, the RBST categories are an important form of cultural capital associated with breeds. The categorisation and monitoring of animals in this way has proved an invaluable source

[3] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which has overall responsibility for farming matters in the UK; agricultural policy in Wales is delivered through the Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside of the devolved Welsh Assembly Government.

of information about British and Welsh livestock. Their widespread use has encouraged more people to keep traditional breeds, thus improving the social capital associated with keeping local livestock breeds.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to examine some aspects of human-livestock relationships within Welsh agriculture. Bourdieu's notion of habitus has been used to provide a theoretical middle ground that recognises that livestock are kept by farmers for economic reasons yet, at the same time, are far more than simply economic assets. From the discussion in this paper, it is apparent that any livestock animal must be associated with economic, social or cultural capital to justify its keeping. Livestock are themselves a form of symbolic capital, embodying good taste in farming practices, animal husbandry and selective breeding. These capitals vary over both space and time, ensuring that the geographies of livestock breeds are fluid.

The development of social and cultural capital in farming practices at a country-wide level can largely be attributed to national and international, governmental and non-governmental organisations. This paper has chosen to emphasise the role of breed societies in the regulation of these capitals. It has not been the intention to over-emphasise the role of these breed societies and it is recognised that these organisations are only some of the many agencies that regulate agriculture and livestock in Wales and the UK. However, it is clear that breed societies have played, and continue to play, a vital role in the development social and cultural capital within the 'field' of livestock farming.

In turn, these capitals have had a bearing on the development of agricultural policy and practice in Wales. Currently, for example, the prospect of rural development funding linked to local breeds has prompted CCW to begin investigating the numbers and location of their native livestock (Yarwood and Evans, 2002). Indeed, the recent consultation on establishing an entry-level agri-environmental scheme for Wales (Tir Cynnal) also generated responses that there should be 'more encouragement for locally suited breeds and varieties' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003, p.4). This conservation and revival of livestock breeds is unlikely to be achieved unless efforts are made to increase interest and make it fashionable to a wide range of farmers and farming groups and thus integral to their capital (a fact recognised directly in the concept of an *entry-level* agri-environmental scheme). The gradual acceptance of environmental conservation as a valid outcome of agricultural activity amongst farmers is assisting the re-acceptance of some livestock, previously marginalized by intensive production systems, into constructions of 'mainstream' farming.

Use of the notion of habitus emphasizes that the survival of livestock breeds in Wales is as much, if not more, dependent upon cultural factors as on political and economic ones. Thus, the paper has revealed that connections of livestock to Welshness and locality have directly influenced their survival, as demonstrated by Welsh Black Cattle. Indeed, this form of breed loyalty appears to be one of the most enduring aspects of habitus. It may be speculated that breed society membership, conferment of pedigree status on animals and the generation of awareness about keeping (through status, sales and marketing) of often 'uneconomic' breeds, all serve to enhance the

image of the farmer as committed to locality and nation. However, where local association is weak, as the case of the Welsh pig demonstrates, threats to the continued existence of particular breeds can become acute.

More broadly, this paper concurs with Gray's (1996) assertion that the field of farming acts like a prism, refracting the influence of outside forces onto a well-established set of endogenous social practices. Gray's detailed analysis of individual farmers has played an important role in revealing these tensions, yet, as this paper has demonstrated, it is also important to take a broader, more extensive view of farming to understand the development of social capital in the agricultural 'field'. This is especially relevant in the case of livestock farming where many ideas and knowledges about specific livestock breeds have been developed and propagated by non-governmental, as well as governmental organisations. However, further research is necessary to examine these relationships. In particular it would be relevant to examine how farmers and animals are enrolled into breed societies. Although some important work has started to deconstruct these relationships at shows or events (Anderson 2003), the extent to which these organisations influence farming at an 'everyday' level has yet to be fully examined. Thus, future work might usefully explore the significance of breed societies on the decisions made by individual farmers in the practice of agriculture.

Bourdieu's concepts of capital are a useful way of linking the practice of agriculture with some of the broader structures that it operates within. Such a perspective is useful in the 'new' animal geography in order to understand the place of farm animals in the countryside. As this paper has shown, farming is more than an economic activity and a more deliberate focus on the non-economic relations to which livestock contribute will help further engage geographers, as Morris and Evans (2004) argue, with an agri-cultural turn.

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