

## A Potted History of Llamas in the UK (1)

### Part Three – 1980 - A New Dawn

Apart from the reporting of recent llama births at the better known zoos, mention of llamas in the media also remained sparse for several years following the Second World War. It was not until the early 1960s when the UK government granted licences for the ownership of llamas outside of zoos and some zoos, most notably Whipsnade and Basildon, applied to sell surplus stock to private individuals. Although certainly not the first owner outside a zoo as claimed in the book (Mr Derek Wallis bought his first llama in 1964 - personal communication), Ruth Ruck obtained some llamas from Knaresborough Zoo in 1974. These she made famous via authorship of *Along Came a Llama* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978). A number of future keepers claimed to have been inspired by her book to purchase llamas (eg. Pam Roe of Caernarvon and Candia Midworth *The Times* 1/2/1997) but so far, I have not managed to find another stated reason for llamas growth in popularity at this time. As someone who moved between the US and UK at this time, I cannot but speculate that it might just have been another of those aspects of popular culture the British were keen to embrace. The rise in popularity of llamas in the US at this time was phenomenal. Animals were changing hands at staggering amounts. The *New York Times* (March 11, 1986) reports an auction sale of 247 llamas grossing \$1.5m with a top price of \$54K for one male llama (*Oscar*). Others followed most notably Fred Hartman's sale of Bolivian imports December 19, 1987. ([https://wyomingfirstperson.blogspot.com/2016/10/how-fred-hartman-invented-50000-llama.html?fbclid=IwAR3zzk8cLXRRpnzD3VCFsCKYr9i4vEV\\_xvsAVUz-i5ieNtTS-S6\\_w1u0nkQ](https://wyomingfirstperson.blogspot.com/2016/10/how-fred-hartman-invented-50000-llama.html?fbclid=IwAR3zzk8cLXRRpnzD3VCFsCKYr9i4vEV_xvsAVUz-i5ieNtTS-S6_w1u0nkQ)) The same was true of alpacas although these generally managed to secure higher prices on the basis of supplying a more regular source of fibre. (Alpacas generally needed shearing annually whereas some llamas never did and even the woollier varieties only biannually).

Ranches with upwards of 500 llamas were not unknown and the Pattersons, well known early breeders in Oregon, were producing around 200 cria a year (The History and Philosophy of Patterson Llamas, *Llama Life*, 31, Autumn 1995). Don Ricks (in the 'Hartman' article above) describes how he was able to retire young on the proceeds of a sale of his herd and Paul and Sally Taylor, on their website (<http://taylorllamas.com/index.html>) describe how they made their fortune out of a few llamas via importing and developing embryo transfer techniques. Some of their sought after males sired into hundreds of progeny and their females as many as two dozen and more embryos a year for transplant. Many newspapers correspondents at the time were stunned by this phenomenal interest and struggled to explain the reasons why they could fetch such high prices. However, it appears to come down to little more than a gold rush description of how the frenzy was generated by clever marketing see 'How Fred Hartman Invented the \$50,000 Llama', [https://wyomingfirstperson.blogspot.com/2016/10/how-fred-hartman-invented-50000-llama.html?fbclid=IwAR3zzk8cLXRRpnzD3VCFsCKYr9i4vEV\\_xvsAVUz-i5ieNtTS-S6\\_w1u0nkQ](https://wyomingfirstperson.blogspot.com/2016/10/how-fred-hartman-invented-50000-llama.html?fbclid=IwAR3zzk8cLXRRpnzD3VCFsCKYr9i4vEV_xvsAVUz-i5ieNtTS-S6_w1u0nkQ)) which as predicted by some was mere pyramid selling that would not stand the test of time.

Among the wealthier owners it was seen as some kind of tax evasion for as long as they had at least one male and 3 females they qualified for tax breaks in the US. As a llama owner, I also like to think in perhaps a romantic kind of way, that the llamas' personal charm had something to do with their emerging popularity.

Although prices plummeted towards the end of the Millennium, interest in owning llamas did not wane entirely. By now the show scene had established itself. Here was a popular activity that was social, educational and also had a serious purpose in developing the species. Classes were created for all types of llamas and in a variety of activities. Children were trained up in llama handling and travelled great distances to exhibit and test their skills against other handlers in competition of llama appearance and agility, whilst adults could exhibit the outcomes of their breeding programmes. These graded competitions took place at regional, state and national level.

Back in the UK, whilst some developments mirrored those in the US, these were certainly on a much smaller scale, numbers remained very few and those interested in breeding llamas had a very limited gene pool on which to draw, often resorting, I am informed via several personal communications, to inbreeding (father/daughter, etc.) and cross crossbreeding with their ancestral phenotype - guanacos and related species – alpacas, vicunas. Not surprisingly, various types emerged with ‘new’ and mixed traits and in some cases congenital defects. A breeder of the period explained to me that the wilder nature of the guanacos sometimes resulted in highly aggressive cross breed animals, males in particular, that were unsuited for the domestic market and in some instances ended up having to be destroyed (Derek Wallis – personal communication 2.2.2019).

Some breeders were concerned by this and sought ways of overcoming the problem. This was at the same time that dealers and entrepreneurs, possibly influenced by what was happening across the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, saw the chance to make a fast buck. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had opened up access to the Eastern bloc and a number of UK businessmen bought up a significant number of llamas from zoos and brought them back to the UK. Gerald Walker of Maplehurst Llamas organised an auction of these llamas, together with alpacas and guanacos at the National Agricultural Centre in Stoneleigh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1989 (*The Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1989). A report on the sale in *Llama Life* (Winter, 1989/90) mentions that 400 people attended and offered for sale were 12 male and 8 female llamas from Sweden and Poland along with a number of alpacas and guanacos. Several of the buyers were said to be first time llama owners. The most successful buyer, the report continued, was Dick Chandler of Bristol who purchased ‘probably the best male llama in the sale (I understand to have been named *Goliath* – Norma Chandler telephone conversation 7.3.19) and several of the better females’. Also amongst the successful purchasers was Geoffrey Shringley who ran a rare breeds farm near Glasgow. In a personal communication (6.2.2019) Peter Bourne also recalls buying a female and cria that came from a zoo in Prague.

One of the pioneers in buying, breeding and selling llamas in the UK in this era was Paul Rose who resided in the Cotswolds and later Cornwall. Like so many llama enthusiasts of the era, curiosity about these unusual animals had led to acquisition of one or two as interesting pets. Smitten by an unexpected cria he soon entered into serious breeding llamas learning as he went but not from a traditional stock breeding background. A desire to breed responsibly meant widening the gene pool looking for traits that reflected good form. He imported a few from Holland and a report in *The Times* newspaper (26 June, 1990) mentions he also acquired a number of llamas from Zoos in Eastern Europe. Private correspondence confirmed these to be from Poland (Warsaw Zoo), Hungary and Russia. Some of these were offspring of llamas imported from Peru and so from a broad gene pool. Inspired by the birth of *Crackerjack*, an exceptionally woolly llama, he started to selectively breed for this particular feature, amongst many others.



Figure 1 - Roseland Crackerjack

Crackerjack went on to sire a significant number of llamas in the UK, but Paul Rose also dabbled in a limited amount of cross breeding and was known to have experimented with using a male vicuna to improve fleece quality. He found himself courted by the media (there are several articles and letters in the national press), which no doubt enhanced his profile and helped secure some return on his investments and some of his good llamas started to command good prices in the very late 20th and early 21st centuries. His selective breeding programme marked a major step in enhancing the quality of the UK herd and many owners were proud to have a *Roseland* llama in their herd.

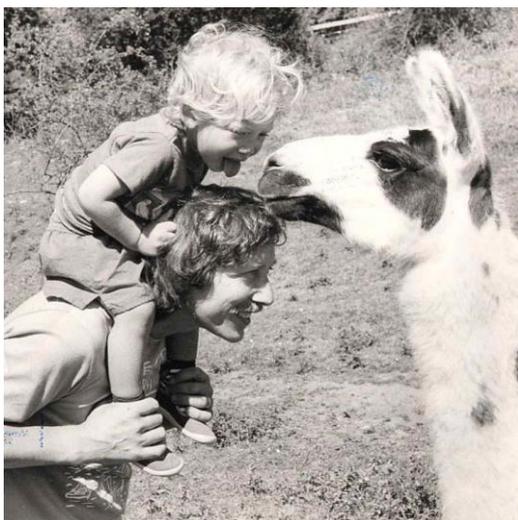


Fig. 14 - Paul Rose and Llama Lucky

As wealthier and business-oriented llama owners started to import a significant number of camelids, the UK government, imposed a restriction because of the threat of bringing disease into the country with them. They set up a lottery system and very strict regulations relating to importation. I have not, as yet, identified who did import animals through this mechanism although Peter Bourne mentions that he was on the list and that Sir Robert McAlpine, the building and engineering magnate, was said to set up a llama and alpaca farm for his daughter with 400+ animals (Peter Bourne, personal communication). For there to be that number it might be that some must have been imported from South America (An obituary in the *Tatler* magazine. 14/09/2017 also mentions his llamas)

Increasingly, the trend to import the woollier or so called *tampuli* type can, I think, be put down to the taste and market foresight of Paul Rose. Hitherto, most llamas in Britain had been of the *classic* or *ccara* type. Some breeders considered this woolly type required too much maintenance to keep in

good order and others that they were not best suited to their trekking business, but this does not appear to have put new owners off being attracted by their ‘cuddly appearance’. It is difficult to determine whether it was the chicken or egg which came first but around this time, there were several renewed attempts to sell the idea of there being profit to be made in llama fleece. In a lengthy article in *The Observer* (19 November 1989). Peter Knowles Brown, President of *British Camelids*, tried to make a convincing case of how the economics could stack up and a few years later an article in *The Times* (19 August, 1992) described initiatives at the Universities of Aberystwyth and Aberdeen to resurrect the ailing British woollen industry via Guanacos. The BLS were invited to visit and produced a Report in *Camelids Chronicle*, 18, Summer 1992). According to the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, llama wool was the new ‘super fibre of the future’ (August 22, 1988, Issue 41417, p.9). It was at this time the first ‘llama related’ company was registered with Companies House (eg. *Elite Llamas Ltd.* By Paul Rose in 1978 – *Companies House*). The Rowett Institute, later affiliated to the University of Aberdeen in 1987, recruited a herd of llamas and guanacos and pioneered IVF and ET breeding techniques (*Theriogenology Volume 44, Issue 2*, 15 July 1995, Pages 255-268; Bourke, D. A., Adam, C. L., & Kyle, C. E. (1991). Successful Pregnancy Following Nonsurgical Embryo Transfer in Llamas. *Veterinary Record*, 128(3), 68-68) and when the project came to a close sold them at an auction in Carlisle on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 2008 to private purchasers ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/north\\_east/7348645.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/north_east/7348645.stm)). When the first suri llama appeared in the UK I have been unable to establish. There was first talk of suri llamas for sale in 2001 but Dick Chandler refuted their existence here but it was rather Llama/suri alpaca crosses that were beginning to appear (*Camelids Chronicle*, 54, 3 (2001), p.6. Certainly, *Watertown Llamas* had imported true suri llamas and llama crosses in 2018.



**Figs. 15/16 - Chip, an Argentine type llama imported by Hillview Llamas from the US**

Presently, there are a very small number of breeders who have recently imported llamas into the UK from North America and continental Europe, including a few from Chile (the only South American country still permitting live export of llamas) via Europe. Their motivations have been to ensure quality stock both in terms of widening the UK gene pool but also in some cases breed back to the traditional types bred over centuries in South America. This has been a trend in North America in recent years as well as producing hybrid stereotypes suited for purpose such as wilderness trekking (capable of carrying large loads over long distances) or ‘silky llamas’ providing fibre for the fleece cooperatives .

Annie Austen of *Watertown Llamas* was the next breeder to invest in importing foreign stock, first from Europe and then North America and more recently *Llama Land* (miniatures), *West Wight*,

*Quinta Da Llama* (from Italy) and *Hillview Llamas* (North America) have imported foreign stock to add to the gene pool.

A significant issue for llamas and indeed all types of camelid in the UK in this modern era has been their susceptibility to and association with Bovine Tuberculosis (TB). Attempting to eradicate TB from the British dairy herd has been a major issue for the British Government and farming industry, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a disease potentially harmful to humans and an industry critical to the British economy, testing for and attempts to eradicate it have been extensive. Few would agree that the commonly used testing regimes are satisfactory or fool proof. Animals showing signs and even potential signs of the disease are isolated, culled and the farm shut down to animal movements. The farm or holding is then subject to 6 monthly retesting and the results show the herd to be completely free of the disease on two successive occasions before sanctions are lifted. Neighbouring (contiguous) farms are then also tested as a check on whether the disease has spread locally. The consequences can be catastrophic, large numbers of animals culled that were later discovered on post mortem not to have contracted the disease, emotional and financial hardships for the farmers whose stock was affected. Several llama breeders fell victim to this and one can but wonder just how badly the British llama herd may have been affected in this respect. On the basis of knowing the quality of some of the llamas that did fall victim, my suspicion is that it was set back several years, not just because of the good llamas lost but because investors in stock, especially from abroad, saw the risk too great. At first the Government could not insist that llamas showing positive or inconclusive were culled but when they could financial compensation was introduced to owners. However, since most llama owners were not typically commercial, this was not the main issue. Nobody wanted to lose their valued animals and no money could compensate for loss of the emotional attachments they had to their pets. On the other hand, for those who had invested heavily in stock, the Government compensation scheme did not recognise the relative importance or cost of the culled animal. It did not matter whether you had picked up a sub standard stud llama for free via the internet or spent a fortune buying and bringing one with super genetics half way round the world from one of the top breeders in the world, you still received the same level of financial compensation.

Diary farmers dependent upon their animals for their livelihood were sometimes understandably eager to blame someone or something for their loss and gain revenge. I do not wish to enter the badger culling debate here since this is a major issue in itself but what I do know is that in some areas, camelid owners were suspected and in some cases accused of being responsible for bringing TB into the area and affecting their herds. I know of no clear evidence of this and to my knowledge know of few infected herds but understand why, as potential carriers of the disease, some dairy farmers insisted camelids residing in contiguous areas are also subject to testing. Where the camelid community strongly disagreed is in respect of the testing protocol itself.

The universal skin test used for all animals was to inject into the front armpits bovine tuberculin to prime the antibody response and the resultant reaction measured with callipers 3 days later. This was very stressful for the animal, difficult and dangerous to perform on animals that in some cases have not been handled as much as say cows, were more sensitive in this body region and the owners less likely to own suitable restraints such as a crush or chute (although the British Llama Society did purchase one for members to borrow).

The British Camelid Association argued for replacing the full skin test with a simple injection of bovine tuberculin anywhere on the body, blood samples taken 10-30 days later and tested with the Enferplex test or the combination of IDDEX and DPP (the owners' choice). A

compelling argument to use the blood tests was also that sensitivity to the tuberculin would be increased by 10 or more percent over the simple skin test.

DEFRA and APHA in 2018 agreed to implement the change to contiguous contacts with immediate effect, but retained the full skin test for herds that had already had positive reactors. This, of course, is a very simple account of what was for some a very distressing experience with significant and unnecessary losses. It took some very determined and tenacious lobbying to achieve these relatively minor changes and as I write we have the ongoing case of an alpaca owner attempting a stay of execution for her prized stud male Geromino who she is contesting in the courts, supported by crowd funding from the camelid community. (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-45361856>) The challenging question here is whether priming with tuberculin as a normal part of the skin test has the effect of “priming” the anti-body response of an animal such that a subsequent blood test is a bit more sensitive and thus TB is more likely to be detected. However work remains to be done to look at the effects of multiple priming over a relatively short time and whether it can cause false positives.

Only time will tell how effective Government regimes are in eradicating the disease. But, there again, even if it can be eliminated, there is nothing to suggest camelids and llamas in particular, cannot become subject to some other awful diseases currently prevalent in some camelid herds in other countries (e.g. Blue Tongue).

In terms of organisational infra-structure, a *British Camelids Association* was incorporated 20<sup>th</sup> May 1988 (Companies House). Representing the llama fraternity as directors were Pamela Walker, Derek Williams and Ann and Peter Knowles-Brown (Scotland) alongside Adele Bentley (Scotland) and Jenny Cobb from the alpaca community. One of its first achievements was establishing a herd book for camelids in the UK. It also published its own magazine entitled *The Camelids Chronicle* edited by Cindy Midworth. However, alpacas started to win greater popularity than llamas because they were perceived as having greater commercial potential with the result they were imported from the continent and elsewhere in much larger numbers. This change of emphasis appears to have catalysed the formation of a separate *British Alpaca Association* founded in 1996 (incorporated 29 September) and in 2003 the *British Alpaca Herd Book and Register* (incorporated 12 September) was established which in 2006 changed its name to *The British Llama Society*. (incorporated 1 June). Founding directors were Donald Butler, Linda Johnson, Yvonne Parfitt, David Pryce and Paul Rose. All 3 organisations still exist today but have separate structures and what appear to be different order of objectives beyond general welfare of the species. They are a much larger organisation (1500 vs 45 Members 26/1/2019) and as a consequence a better resourced organisation. Reading their annual reports and talking to some founding members, they appear to have a stronger focus on stockmanship, showing, education/training, marketing and commercial opportunities. The *British Llama Society*, by contrast, appears driven more by enthusiastic hobbyist for whom the organisation seems to fulfil a social as much as any other role. It organised its own *Llamarama* and *Lamakhama* events, notably at Ascot with various competitions and hosted by its Chair – Ordell Safran (personal communication 2.2019). The Society was behind the annual llama show at Newbury and exhibits at several others shows mentioned above. Numerous treks were organised, often with the added goal of raising money for charity (eg. Michael Bassett’s Woolacombe Sands trek in aid of Lukemia, Joe Connolly’s Lytham St. Anne’s trek in aid of the *RNLI*). Ordell Safran organised annual treks at Windsor Great Park, Vivienne Ives in Nottinghamshire (by Vivienne Ives) and one to the top of Cairngorm was organised by Malcolm Curtis in 2002 (*Camelids Chronicle*, 56, 1 (2002), p.7). In recent years, these

appear to have fallen by the wayside. Some regions have been more active than others although this has varied over time. In the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the South East, Midlands and West regions were holding monthly meetings (see *Camelids Chronicle*) but again this appears to have lapsed in recent years.

It has been suggested that BLS indeed emerged out of a growing rift between those who were motivated to focus the Register on only llamas attaining an agreed standard and those who wanted a more inclusive organisation. However, for Mary Pryce to write

*"I have banged on for years about... and the importance of conformation and phenotype when selecting animals for breeding. It has always fallen on deaf ears. 'They are just pets' is the constant reason. I think there is an embarrassing ignorance among our members and maybe even some breeders regarding what is desirable and what is not".*

suggests there remained concerns by some in the Society about the direction llama breeding was still been taken by some. Such a concern to llama breeding was not new or confined to the UK. As far back as 1858, Mr Benjamin Gee critically wrote 'llamas hitherto have been too much regarded as curiosities or ornaments for gentleman's parks' rather than animals of considerable commercial potential and writing in 2005, American, Daniel Powell expressed concerns about what he described a 'chaotic breeding free for all' and 'the desperate need for a sophisticated and ethical approach to llama breeding'. As a stockman with a passion for breed development and breed presentation he was disheartened by 'the rampant out-crossing and mix & match approach' that the typical llama breeder had hitherto employed.

*'It was as if llama breeders existed in a vacuum, isolated from all other livestock industries as well as from the breadth of that knowledge those industries had to share'*

There were certainly some who were driven by the commercial imperative creating new business opportunities (*The Daily Telegraph*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2002).

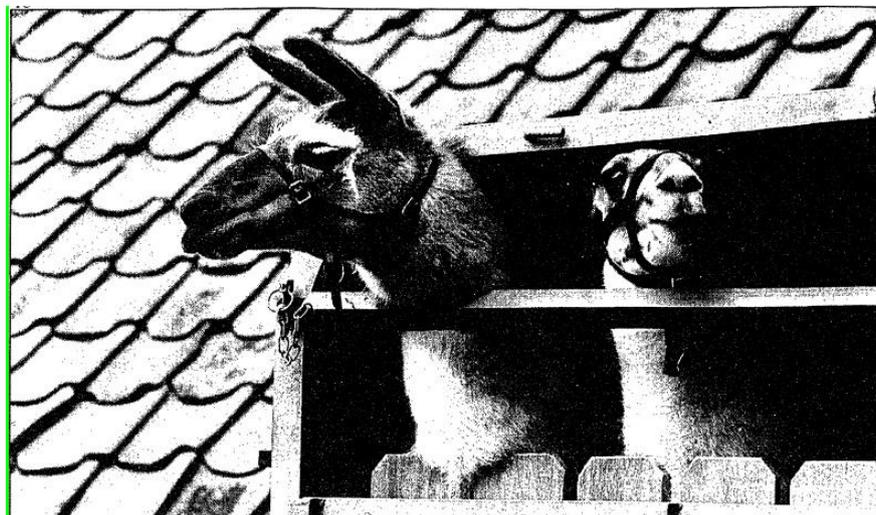
Today, both *BAS* and *BLS* support the *British Camelid Association* who continue to provide a representative lobby for camelid owners as a whole supporting research and welfare. Finally, a *Camelid Vets Association* was formed in 1994 to help support professionals working with camelid owners in the UK.

The popular image of the llama as rather odd and unpredictable throughout this history in the modern world, appears to remain both its strength and Achilles heel. Earlier, I mentioned the first description of llamas in the UK being a negative one. This was to continue and apart from positive comments about them being relatively easy to halter and lead, have generally been described in a derogatory way. Goldman (ibid) wrote

*'It is supplied by Nature with saliva in such large quantities, that it spits it out on every occasion; this saliva seems to be the only offensive weapon that the harmless creature has to testify its resentment... this fluid, which, though probably no way hurtful, the Indians are much afraid of it. They say, that wherever it falls, it is of such acrimonious nature, that it will either burn the skin or cause dangerous eruptions'*

In 1899, the *Illustrated London News* (8<sup>th</sup> April) described them as ‘very unpleasant animals’. 13 years later in 1912, the *Manchester Guardian* (12<sup>th</sup> March) described them as ‘having all the bad traits of camels – bad tempers, stupidity, obstinate refusal to work’ and ‘having an objectionable habit of spitting’.

An attempt was made to enhance the image and awareness of llamas’ qualities via a *Llama Khama* organised in June, 1989 at Bildeston in Suffolk. This was no doubt linked to the importation of llamas from Eastern Europe and their pending auction sale at Stonleigh mentioned earlier. Sadly, it all went rather wrong according to reports in *The Times* (12 June), *The Observer* (14 November) and *Manchester Guardian* (12/6/1989), due to the lack of cooperation of the animals with their owners. The report further reported that a llama could ‘hit you with spit at 4 foot with a foul smelling spray’. This perception no doubt inspired a solicitor who bought one of the 7 surplus to requirement being auctioned by Mary Chipperfields Circus in Over Wallop, near Andover in 1980 to train to spit at disliked neighbours over the garden fence. (*The Guardian* 20 Nov 1980: 6). Another Lamakhama event was held at Manor Farm, Notts in 2001 (*Camelids Chronicle* 2001)



Two contenders anxiously await their turn along with the cream of Britain's llama population at yesterday's competition at Bildeston, Suffolk

PHOTOGRAPH ALAN REVELL

## Spitting image of love and hate at llama show

**Eyewitness**

**Shyama Perera**

Rupert, if you bite me, I will bite you back! shouted the woman in jeans as the incensed llama bared its back teeth at her before chasing round in a circle and head butting its rival in love. The amorous beast was quickly led away to the show ring and the llama in hand competition. At this point, Rupert spat on the bald head of his owner, Mr Peter Isaac.

It seems to me that two llamas in a bush is better than a llama in the hand," a bemused spectator said. Angry llamas can hit you with a spit at about four feet. It comes out in a fine, foul-smelling spray, projected upwards by their startling lower dentures which curve and protrude like the side of a salad bowl. But it wasn't for llamas' teeth that the people of Bildeston, Suffolk, turned out this weekend. We were witnessing the first ever British Llama Khama in which Rupert and his peers would attempt a llama slalom, showjumping and cross-country running. All three are extremely difficult for animals with large hairy bottoms, spindly legs and maverick temperaments. It's a bit like putting a muz-

zle on Dame Edna Everage and asking her to compete at a meeting of the Amateur Athletics Association. Llamas rarely look ahead of them, let alone downwards, and have extremely argumentative natures. As the electronic clock was turned on and the competitors entered the ring, confusion reigned. "I'd be delighted to produce a commentary if only I knew what was going on," despaired Mr Proctor Naylor, sitting alone in the public announcement area. "I haven't a clue what's happening." Rupert meanwhile was falling out with a brown llama which had the temerity to stick his nose in Rupert's hand quarters. The animal was dealt a deft blow with his tail and kicked

soundly in the chest. "See rears its ugly head again," explained Mr Isaac. "He wants to get his end away." "Perhaps you could find out what's happening and let me know?" Mr Naylor asked bleakly as the Stowmarket Junior Brass Band struck up. The llamas were put on starting orders; at last a little organisation. A procession was taken round the course. Most eyecatching was Percival, a 22,000 curly-haired black alpaca with a stomach only inches off the ground. With him was a nameless gypsy goat earning its keep as companion until a matching female could be found. "A female will cost up to £10,000," explained Percival's owner, Mr David Rose, a farmer from Thame, Oxfordshire. "Llama rus-

thers? Well, it's not something we've seriously considered but there is a pedigree on his gate." Llama owners take such events very seriously. Dr Dick Cleary, who arrived the previous day with his eight llama rosette-winning stable, was not amused when it was lightly suggested his beasts had been helped with steroids. "I didn't know how well they performed until I arrived here. This is the first event of its kind," he pointed out. Rupert was at it again. He spat for a second time on Mr Isaac's gleaming head. "Can we have some aprons out here?" asked a young steward in a yellow spotted cravat. A lady competitor, leading her animal into a slalom, fell over and got a cheer. Llamas are, of course, fla-

vour of the month in the US where Michael Jackson's passion for these jolly South American animals has started a real llama drama. However, Mr Isaac, who organised Saturday's event, was quick to point out that most of the competitors had shown an interest in them "when Michael Jackson was still a teenager". Mrs Brenda Wickendon, who works on a llama farm in Maplehurst, Sussex, said: "We are near Gatwick and were given a few llamas to quarantine. When their time was up, one was left behind, and it grew from there. "What's their attraction? Well, they are very individual creatures, and while you would not get a lot of come-back from cuddles, they are very interesting and independent," she said.

Fig. 17 - Perera, Shyama. *The Guardian* (1959-2003); London [UK] [London [UK]]12 June 1989; 20

My research suggests that this was not the popular image of the llama in North America which may, at least in part account for its greater respect and popularity. Writing as early as 1838 a commentator in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (reproduced in the *New York Herald* October 4, 1838, Vol. IV, Issue 123) wrote:

for the llama is the only creature employed by man that he dares not strike.

If it happens (which is very seldom) that an Indian wishes to obtain, either by force or threats what the llama will not willingly perform, the instant the animal finds itself affronted by word or gesture, he raises his head with dignity, and without attempting to escape ill treatment by flight, (the llama is never tied or fettered) he lies down turning his looks towards heaven. Large tears flow freely from his beautiful eyes, sighs issue from his breast, and in half or three quarters of an hour at most he expires. Happy creatures, who so easily avoid suffering by death! Happy creatures, who appear to have accepted life on condition of its being happy! The respect shown these animals by the Peruvian Indians amounts absolutely to superstitious reverence. When the Indians load them, two approach and caress the animal, hiding his head that he may not see the burthen on his back. If he did he would fall down and die. It is the same in unloading. If the burthen exceeds a certain weight, the animal throws itself down and dies. The Indians of the Cordilleras alone possess enough patience and gentleness to manage the llama. It is doubtless from this extraordinary companion that he has learned to die when overtaken.—*Foreign Quarterly Review*.

Fortunately, the often zany, eccentric, humorous image of llamas in popular social media that I addressed in an earlier issue of *Llama Link* now appears to be giving way to a more positive one of a gentle, intelligent, sensitive creature. However, as alluded to earlier, their unusual traits can also be their endearing and interesting features. No one can reasonably deny that their running style at times can appear down right daft and certainly has me bursting into laughter when they 'prong' around the paddock on a summer's evening. Likewise with some of their expressions. I mention it here only to help identify a changing popular image. I address it as a potentially successful marketing issue in a forthcoming article I have already penned for *Llama Link*.



Fig. 19 – Hillview Llama Jack proves how gentle llamas can be even with strangers and indoor setting

Llamas, in this new positive guise as animals of interest and intelligence, started to appear usually as guest exhibits at agricultural shows making their first appearance at the Royal Show (Stoneleigh) in 1990 (*The Times*, 23 June 1990) and Henley and District in 1991 (*The Daily Telegraph*, 15 September

1991). A few more shows supported competitions or exhibition of the animals such as the Great Yorkshire (Harrogate), Royal Welsh (Builth Wells), Midland Counties (Shrewsbury), Salisbury, Kenilworth and District, Moreton in the Marsh, Edenbridge & Oxted, North Somerset, Staffordshire (Stone), Cumberland (Penrith) and Rutland shows but apart from this one and the annual British Llamas Show at the Royal Berkshire Show in Newbury have not sustained that interest with very few entries in remaining competitions. I have recently explored the reasons for this and made some comparisons with the North American scene where shows are very popular and well attended and staged throughout the year. It appears largely due to absence of commercial imperative, concerns over bio security, problems associated with transportation and a whole raft of lesser reasons explained more fully in my Report (see: <https://llamas.yolasite.com/resources/BLS%26showing7.pdf>).

Around this same time (1990s on), llama trekking, popular in North America, took off in a number of locations around the UK. Unfortunately on this small isle there has never been the scope to develop these to those in some of the U.S. National Parks that organise treks lasting up to and occasionally beyond a month. The earliest trekking businesses I found reference to were at Thetford Forest, Norfolk (*The Times*, 25 October, 1995) and one near Scarborough operating in the same decade. I suspect there were several more that were started and short lived or only operated in a low key way/scale, etc. Amongst those achieving wider prominence and recognition were: *Ashdown Forest Llama Park*, *Bluecaps Llamas* (Sussex), *Catanger Llamas* (Northants 1997 to date), *Golden Valley Llamas* (Gloucestershire), *Lakeland Llamas* (Cumbria), *Nidderdale Llamas* (Yorkshire 2009 to date) *Severn Wye* (Gloucestershire 2007 to date), *Surrey Hill Llamas* (Surrey) and *UK Llamas* (Dorset).

Recent years have seen the upshot of many more small scale enterprises (sometimes offering familiarisation programmes, animal assisted therapy, etc. as well as or as alternative to treks) such as: *Balmy Llama Farm* (Lancashire), *Black Rock Llamas* (North Wales), *Briery Hill* (Gloucestershire), *Dartmoor Llamas* (Devon), *Exmoor Llamas* (Devon), *Faster Lente Llamas* (Cambs.), *Hillview Llamas* (Cheshire), *Lakeland Llamas* (Cumbria), *Llama Adventures* (Staffs), *National Forest Llama Treks* (Derbyshire), *Nightingale Llamas* (Warwickshire), *Norfolk Llamas* (Norfolk), *Peak Hill Llamas* (Derbyshire), *Pembrokeshire Llamas* (West Wales), *Two Hoots Llamas* (Mid Wales) and *Watertown Llamas* (Devon). (*BLS Business Directory* 2019).

It has been hard to pin down the cost of a llama at these different periods of history. We know that in October, 1851, Lord Derby's llamas fetched between £33 and £65 and that in 1858 Mr Gee sold some of his imports for a mere £25 each although one entrepreneur was able to more than double the price to £60 on resale. As the novelty value of the llama started to wane so did its value. Mention was made earlier of a llama sold at auction in 1872 for £15. Unfortunately, I have no information of what gender, age or condition this llama was in but clearly their monetary value went in cycles. Some purchasers clearly fell for the idea of llamas making money for them but when the optimism faded so did their monetary value and so it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More recently, *The Times* (October 13, 1988, p.7) mentions the auction of Pam Walker's *Maplehurst Llamas* at Stoneleigh fetching £87,885 for 27 lots and according to the *Daily Telegraph*, a Cumbrian farmer was paid £5K compensation when one of his llamas was killed by a low flying RAF jet! (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1989, p.1). Anecdotal evidence I have from a breeder around the same time suggests that at its zenith, £10K was not unknown for a llama and others have claimed that certainly for a period they were around £5-6K each although this fervour was short lived with prices falling with demand towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century before recovering again for quality stock in very recent years.

Perhaps a few early astute entrepreneurs made a good few bob out of llamas through advocating pyramid selling, as in the US, but they were probably very few with the majority getting their fingers burnt. Today, a good stud male can fetch around £2-3K and a young female £1-2K (ex VAT), considerably less than in Europe and parts of North America. Sales in the US reached their zenith around 15 years ago with \$220K paid for *Newevo* in 2003. These dropped again before also picking up again with a record \$80K for *CTF Renegade's Vigilante* in 2017.

It has proved difficult to get to grips with the extent of llama ownership in the UK over the years. A University of Bristol undergraduate project, based on returns to a questionnaire came up with a figure of 727 llamas and 2778 alpacas (*Camelids Chronicle* 2002). This compared to a figure of around 2000 being banded around in *The Independent*, a few years earlier in 1995). I suspect it has not fluctuated that much in the years since apart from an upturn in very recent times. The *BLS* has since 1992 aimed to keep an up-to-date record via its Registration scheme but as it openly acknowledges, many owners are not members and many keepers fail to report any changes, despite various incentives and initiatives to encourage them to do so. Trying to identify breeders may help give a clue. Llama breeders in the UK of recent years I have been informed of include:

1960s - Hazel Ames (Norfolk), Mr Derek Wallis (Cheshire, from 1964-2006), Mr and Mrs Jagger (Shropshire) and Mary Warner *Maplehurst Llamas* (Sussex -1995). Maggie and Mike Warner (*Carlton Llama Farm*, Bury St Edmunds)

1970s- Paul Rose *Roseland Llamas* (Gloucestershire -1978-2008), Ruth Ruck (North Wales 1974-198?), Tim Walker and Derek Williams (Bradford-on-Avon).

1980s –Peter Bourne *Bremia Llamas* (Mid Wales from 1988 – to date), Gwyneth Hogger (Fynn Valley Llamas, Suffolk), Peter Isaacs (Scotland), Paul and Rachel Jay *Llamas Limited* ( London), Jane Methuen (Derbyshire from 1989 to date), Robin Pratt (West Wales), Ordell Safron *Ordell Llamas* (Berkshire from 1984 to date), Mike and Maggie Warner (Suffolk).

1990s, new breeders included Pat Bentley (Scotland), Brenda Birmingham (*Llamaraty*), *Border Llamas* (Scotland to date), Jane and Allen Brown (*Brown Boy Llamas*, Shipston-on-Stour), Guy Davies-Bateman (Dorset), Elaine Hillson *Bryngwyn Llamas*, Richard (Dick) Chandler and Norma Chandler Paterson (*Winterbourne Llamas*), Tina O'Donnel *Bluecaps Llamas* (Sussex to date), Amanda Huntley and Robert Dewar *Golden Valley Llamas* (Gloucestershire, 2000-), Richard Cox *Hillview Llamas* (Cheshire 2009 to date), Anthea Hughes (*Llamarama* , Cheshire), Vivienne Ives (*Rushcliffe Llamas*, Notts., 1998-), Paul and Rachael Jay (*Llamas Limited* London), Linda Johnson (Ashdown Forest Llama Park, Sussex), Peter and Ann Knowles-Brown (Scotland), Mary Walker *Lakeland Llamas* (Cumbria), Tom Tripp *Llama Land* (Cornwall, 2006?-2015), *Lowther Llamas* (Scotland 1990 to date), Sue Marrow (Cheshire), Candia Midworth (Surrey), Suzanne Benson *Nidderdale Llamas* (Yorkshire 2009 to date), Yvonne Parfitt *Yvonne Llamas* (Shropshire), Matthew Parris (Derbyshire 2000-), Caroline Pembro ( also called *Llamarama*), David and Mary Pryce *Catanger Llamas* (Northants, 1994 to date), Pam Roe (North Wales), Jean Ruck, 2000-2009 - *Ashwood Forest Llamas* (Devon), *Berwyn Mountain Llamas* (North Wales), Alistair Fraser *SevernWye Llamas* (Gloucestershire), Annie Austen *Watertown Llamas* (Devon 2003 to date).

2010 onwards – Tina Gambell, *Faster Lente Llamas* (Cambs.), Neil Payne *West Wight Llamas* (Isle of Wight 2017 to date), Simon Hill, *Quinta Da Llama* (Isle of Wight 2017 to date).

Contributions to llama life were made in other ways of course such as Terry Crowfoot who pioneered operant conditioning techniques with training llamas to teach simple tasks like retrieving to more complex ones such as carting. Similarly, Julie Taylor-Browne (*Carthvean Alpacas*) practicing *Camelid Dynamic* techniques to build confidence, improve communication and establish cooperative behaviours amongst llamas and humans. Phil and Fiona Davis for rehoming unwanted and berserk male llamas, Jane Brown, Linda Johnson, Rodney Newth, David James and Vivienne Ives administration (secretary, Chair, Treasurers, Registrations respectively).

Spinning llama wool has only ever been carried out on a very small scale in the UK with several of the above named companies producing hand crafted products Fiona Davis, Amanda Huntley and Caroline Pembro.

It is perhaps worth mentioning some of the studs of note of this recent era. Mention has already been made of *Crackerjack*, *Black Jack*, *Esprit*, *Primo* and *Maximus* were other prolific and popular *Roseland* bred studs, as were *Preacher*, *Winston*, *Eldorado* and *DJ* (*Ordell* Llamas bred studs) and in more recent times (*Watertown's* owned *Talisman*, *Benito*, *Rossi*),

Apologies to any I have accidentally left out in all of these listings.