

More about - The Fawcett farm, the sheep, and the working dogs.

Since 1918, The Croft, Hardraw has been farmed by 5 generations of the Fawcett family.

Richard, being the 4th family member, has lived in the village all but 4 years of his life.

Until 1992, it was a sheep and dairy cow enterprise. More recently, it has become a predominantly sheep farm with an accompanying small herd of Limousin beef cattle.

The sheep are of the local Swaledale breed, the most popular hill breed in the UK. The vast majority are crossed with the Blue Faced Leicester ram to produce the very popular " Mule " lamb, which, when sold as future breeding stock, are the " bread and butter " of most farms in the Pennine region. The younger Swaledales, mated to rams of the same breed, are kept " pure " as flock replacements.

Without the dogs, it would be impossible to run a farm like this. They are referred to as Sheepdogs, but, in fact, their proper name is Border Collie. Their work instinct is second to none. At a very early age, they will begin "eyeing ", or stalking the sheep, and wanting to herd them. But not only sheep; they are keen to work cattle, horses, pigs, and all manner of poultry too.

Throughout much of the year, they are working most days. At lambing time, in the Spring, they are exceptionally busy. Gathering the flocks, during Summer, for dosing, for shearing, foot bathing, and general care, requires them to be really fit. The Autumn sales preparation keep man and dog occupied on a day to day basis. Only in winter are the demands on the dog not so onerous, but even then, the increasingly pregnant ewes must be checked for husbandry needs.

The indispensable companion is always there, at your side, to help; maybe in the Spring, to catch an individual ewe, having a difficult lambing, in the middle of a field; Or, to herd large numbers of very protective ewes, reluctant to be moved, with their young lambs, to new pasture in the early Summer; Or, maybe, to search for, and set (" dig in") saving the lives of ewes buried in snow drifts after a winter storm.

On this farm, much of the pasture land floods, covering up to 30 acres up to a depth of 1.5 metres. The River Ure rises very quickly, overflows the raised river bank, and creates death traps in many places. Man and dog need to be alert to such dangers in order to save many sheep from drowning.

A collie's life is very varied and requires many skills, a lot of enthusiasm, and a great deal of hard work. They excel in every way.