



Helen and her family



Harry as a baby

It all started in the spring 2011 while sitting in my friends Lockerbie kitchen. A flippant remark “It’s a shame there aren’t any miniature beef cattle. Dexter’s are the right size, very milky, good mums and taste great but I’d love something a bit beefier, like...” and my friend’s husband finished my sentence with “a miniature Hereford”. “Perfect!” I replied, and after a short phone call we were on our way to visit Sam and his two miniature Herefords Dan and Daisy.

Unfortunately, despite Sam putting a number of embryos in, these were the only two that had taken and they were genetically brother and sister. Unable to breed from them and with Sam’s freezer looking a bit empty, Dan was looking a very good option to fill that space.

Okay no surprises here, a week later I was on the road back up to Lockerbie with trailer in tow. And after a very slow eight hour return journey, Dan was back in Shropshire. Securing the purchase had taken a lot of begging and a bit of bartering with my dad, resulting in Dan spending the summer half of the year with my uncle and his two Dexter cattle and returned to me in the autumn ready to get to work with my newly acquired very small herd of three Dexters.

Only problem was when it came time for the vet to PD (pregnancy diagnose) none were in calf and when tested Dan was firing blanks. So Dan’s fate, although postponed for a year, was sealed. Not before the arrival at my uncle’s of his one and only daughter, Ruby. And despite Sam’s attempts to help by sending semen, AI was unsuccessful and I admitted defeat and sold my three Dexters too.

The dream wasn’t on hold for long though, as I met Nick and he fell in love with Miniature Herefords too. If you’ve looked, you’ll find like we did that there



Harry and his surrogate mum



Nick and Charlie

are very few miniature Hereford females in this country and none for sale.

So we researched the embryo option and headed off in spring 2013 to see Malcolm and Leslie Gough at Chater Valley and came back with a five rather expensive embryos and a new Mini Hereford bull Charlie.

Our new herd of seven red non-short Dexter heifers arrived, we put them on

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a strict feeding regime, blood tested for a number of diseases that might affect fertility, inserted CIDRs, injected with estrumate, removed CIDRs, observed them come into heat and finally the day came to implant the embryos. But lo and behold only three were ready to be implanted, so the other two embryos stayed in the flask, and as we found out the following spring only one held!

Calving soon approached and the first to appear was our embryo Harry, the smallest fluffiest bundle of cuteness, making up for the huge dent in our bank balance. And not far behind him was Danni, Amanda, Cheryl and Ruby’s calf Kylie that were all as equally gorgeous. I’m guessing it will come as no surprise that Nick was on naming duty that year.

Five years later, now on our own farm, we have 36 in calf and Kylie’s daughter Delilah is about to have our first 15/16ths offspring. Like everyone, our path has had it’s twists and turns but when I stand in our cowshed giving Harry his obligatory back scratch I’m really pleased we kept going with our dream.

However right now I need to pop out to the lambing shed to suckle a few blue faced Leicester lambs that seem convinced milk comes from heaven, not their mum’s udder before I can turn into bed and carry on dreaming.

In the next issue we will find out how this year’s lambing season has gone on the Forsyth’s farm as they wait for the imminent arrival of their first calf