

363 Little, James  
The story of the  
Corriedale





This eBook is a reproduction produced by the National Library of New Zealand from source material that we believe has no known copyright. Additional physical and digital editions are available from the National Library of New Zealand.

EPUB ISBN: 978-0-908328-16-1

PDF ISBN: 978-0-908331-12-3

The original publication details are as follows:

Title: The story of the Corriedale : also, a few suggestions as to the possible cause of black sheep

Author: Little, James

Published: J. Little, Christchurch, N.Z., 1917

NEW ZEALAND  
NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE  
H.Q. COLLECTION





THE STORY  
OF  
THE CORRIEDALE  
ALSO

A FEW SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE POSSIBLE  
CAUSE OF BLACK SHEEP.

BY

JAMES LITTLE

CHRISTCHURCH

Printed by Willis and Aitken Limited  
125, Worcester Street,

1917

(This Copy from Booklet in possession of Otago Early Settlers'  
Association, Dunedin.)





## OBITUARY

Mr. W. S. Davidson

Noted Corriedale Breeder

A cable gram received from London last night announces the death at Edinburgh on Thursday of Mr William Soltan Davidson, who had been general manager of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company for the past 45 years, and a director of the National Mortgage and Agency Company for 40 years. He was about 80 years of age, and had been in indifferent health for about a year.

It has been stated that Mr Davidson, when at the Levels Estate, South Canterbury, in 1874, originated the Corriedale breed of sheep. This, however, is not strictly accurate. The name Corriedale was adopted by the breeders in New Zealand because successful experiments in crossing the merino and longwool breeds and maintaining an in-bred halfbred type, without reverting to either the merino or the long-wool of the original cross, were carried out on Dr. Webster's Corriedale estate by the late James Little about the year 1868. Mr Davison was, however, closely identified with the company which did so much for sheep breeding in the dominion.

Mr Davidson practically started the dairying industry as it is known to-day, for in conjunction with Mr T. Brydone he established the first dairy factory at Edendale.

The New Zealand and Australian Land Company, of which Mr.



Davidson was general manager, did good service to New Zealand in another way, as it and the National Mortgage and Agency Company, with Mr. T. Brydone, inaugurated the frozen meat industry. The first shipment of meat for that purpose was slaughtered on the Totara Estate, railed warm to Port Chalmers, and refrigerated on the ships Dunedin and Marlborough.

Mr. Davidson was one of the directors of the Colonial Consignment and Distributing Company which was subsequently merged into Vestey's. He was very well known in Timaru district in the early days, and was manager of the Levels Estate before he went Home in the early eighties.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### CORRIEDALE SHEEP

Whose was the brain that conceived the idea? Who was his own draftsman and who commenced breeding Corriedales in 1868 and selling rams bred on Corriedale Station 1870?

Thus, five years before I came to Allandale, and before anyone else had thought of such a thing, I was selling rams of the Romney Marsh Cross.

This was how the whole affair started. I imported from Home 22 Romney Marsh ewes and 9 rams (Romney) for Dr. Webster, but when his neighbouring squatters met him they ridiculed the idea, stating that the native tussock would not carry the pure bred Romney Marsh. At that time there was no English grass on either Balruddery or Corriedale.

Dr. Webster told me that his neighbouring squatters assured



Davidson was general manager, his good services to New Zealand in another way, as it and the National Mortgage and Agency Company, with Mr. J. H. Hughes, inaugurated the frozen meat industry. The first shipment of meat for that purpose was dispatched on the Totara Estate, which went to Port Chalmers, and returned on the ship Hamilton and Marlborough.

Mr. Davidson was one of the directors of the Colonial Consolidation and Marketing Company which was subsequently merged into Vestey's. He was well known in the district in the early days, and was manager of the Totara Estate before he went home in the early eighties.

REMEMBRANCE

There was the fact that connected the fact who was his own business and who commenced breeding horses in 1868 and selling them from the Corbridge Estate in 1870. Thus, five years before I came to Auckland, and before any one else had thought of such a thing, I was selling some of the Romney Marsh Cross.

This was how the whole affair started. I imported from home 25 Romney Marsh cross and 5 years (Romney) for Mr. Webster, but when his neighbouring gentlemen met him they ridiculed the idea, stating that the native horses would not carry the pure bred Romney Marsh. At that time there was no English cross on either side of the Corbridge.

Mr. Webster told me that his neighbouring gentlemen wanted

him that he had made a great mistake in bringing these sheep to this country.

My answer was that, with his consent I would start a half bred flock provided I could get a few other breeders to start in the same way so that we could exchange rams to prevent the sheep becoming in course of time too sib.

When Dr. Webster mentioned my proposals to his neighbours and station managers, they and their shepherds went dead against them, ridiculing them in no unmeasured terms, and as far as I was concerned, nothing but derision was heaped on my head.

But, as luck would have it, I became most successful with the Romney Flock, winning a great many prizes and selling rams at big prices, especially in Canterbury.

This gave Dr. Webster more confidence and in course of time he gained courage. He told me he would give me 600 ewes to experiment with.

When we docked the lambs I kept what I thought the best of the ram lambs to put to the 600 ewes. These had a distinguishing mark and were put to graze all the winter with the other half bred out of Merino ewes. Before lambing, however, they were to be drafted off so as to lamb by themselves, and at docking time they were earmarked and branded and were grazed with the half bred out of the Merino ewes until shearing time. They were then drafted by themselves and compared with the half bred.

They were shorn separately, the wool was weighed and compared by the wool classers, with the wool from the half bred





and in the inbred hoggets. It was found that their wool had a slight advantage in both weight and quality, and the sheep had a most decided advantage in conformation. It was found also that they had fewer of the bad points of the Merino as a mutton sheep.

Let us give honour to whom honour is due. It is evident that had the experiment proved a failure Dr. Webster stood alone to bear the loss, consequently, his name should be handed down to posterity as having financed what in those days was thought by one and all without exception to be an absurd and disastrous innovation.

As time went on, Dr. Webster, being completely satisfied allowed me to put inbred rams to the whole of the "Corriedale" half bred ewe flock.

On the demise of Dr. Webster, however, all his stud flock was dispersed.

This caused a break in my career as a Corriedale breeder. I bought Dr. Webster's Lincoln Flock, together with the pick of Geo. Sutton's flock of ewes, rams and hoggets, also the best of his old sheep for all of which I had to pay a high price.

By this time I had leased the Allandale Estate in North Canterbury of 9000 acres. I bought 2000 merino ewes from Horsley Downs, also a consignment from Mr. Robinson of Cheviot Hills. I also got the late Mr. Tabart to procure for me twenty 2-tooth ewes from the Allan McLean's stud (Ashburton).

It was about this time that I started the Lincoln Cross to



which I gave the name of "Corriedale" simply because it was on the "Corriedale" Estate that the inbred half bred ewes were first thought of or saw the light of day.

After I had got two or three crosses of inbreeding for two years running I entered them at the Christchurch Show as Inbred half breds or Corriedales. As there was no one to compete with me I could not get a prize. I obtained leave from the Association to put on my pens a large card with "Inbred, half breds", printed thereon.

I should like to know if there is anybody alive who can remember this. It is so many years ago that there are really and truly very few to tell the tale, and that is my reason for trying to put these matters ship-shape before I go to my long home.

The late Mr. Stringfellow of Chertsey, Ashburton, was the first to step into the arena, and his enterprise proved very successful. Mr. Stringfellow was one man in a thousand. No one ever heard him complain, prize or no prize. He was always the same, never a word of resentment or an unpleasant look. As the world goes he was a grand old man. I cannot help thinking that he (Mr. Stringfellow) was very much in luck's way in having Mr. Lyttelton, of Rokeby, Rakaia, as a neighbour. Mr. Lyttelton had then only just arrived from Australia with the pick of his Merino flock to breed Merino Rams for New Zealand. I never saw his flock, but have often admired his few bales of wool as displayed for sale in the sale rooms in Christchurch.





I cannot say what name his sheep carried in the Merino world, but there is one thing certain, they seemed to blend very well with the Lincolns.

I got one ram from him and for two years' running gave it the pick of my 2-tooth ewes. This provided an excellent change of blood, which by line of breeding lasted for many years.

From a financial point of view, if "Allandale" wool did not top the market it was close up, and the "Allandale" brand was familiar to all buyers from every country.

I held diplomas and gold medals as under :- from two Christchurch Exhibitions also from France and from Panama. At the time of going to print the Panama medal has not yet arrived because of adverse circumstances happening to the Canal.

As regards the sale of rams I have for two or three years consecutively sold as many as 600 rams which were scattered from the Bluff to Auckland and all over the Globe. This refers to flock rams. In studs and high-priced rams I received orders from Australia and South America, also Terra del Fuego, and Punta Arenas.

Mr. James Stringfellow divided the spail with me; our sheep, for the most part, going in the same boat. This continued until the great "Romney Upheaval" which took the running for a few years which breeders of all other classes of sheep had to give way for the time being to popular feeling. I don't think there is any industry more uncertain than ram breeding.





I remember a good many years ago I found that orders were not coming in as usual, and at the time of the Annual Christchurch Show, I found half of my rams were still on my hands, whereas as a rule I usually had them all bespoke or booked. As the Ram Fair approached I found the Springs on the place had completely dried up, and any few offers I had were so absolutely low that I could not think of doing business. Under the circumstances I thought it best to try and make arrangements with the Belfast Co. and have something up my sleeve preparatory to the Ram Fair. When the Fair came I gave each of the Christchurch salesman an equal lot of sheep to offer for sale; only a few were sold, and the offers for the balance were in some places only a few shillings. I withdrew from sale what remained and put them on the train for Belfast Works. There they were tinned for mutton, and I got the price for skins and fat. But mark me, the Corriedale did not stand alone. Things were equally bad with Lincolns, Shropshires, Southdowns, and others of the English breeds. If I mistake not Mr. Threkeld's English Leicesters were turned out without eliciting a single bid at Auction. This is merely to show that "all is not gold that glitters" in ram breeding.

But to come back to the story of the Corriedale's; it came to pass that by this time nine or ten had come into the arena to try their luck. Mr. Murphy, the Secretary of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association put a paragraph in the



newspapers stating that he considered the time had arrived when the inbred half-bred should get a recognised name. At the same time he asked all interested to suggest a name.

The N.Z. & A. Land Coy. proposed "Southern Cross" and of course I sent in "Corriedale" as it was on that Estate that inbred half-bred first saw the light of day. I never heard that any of the others proposed a name, consequently it became a controversy between the Land Company and myself, which lasted for fifteen years, before they threw up the sponge. Mr. Orbell, of the Levels Estate, was then Manager, and was the same gentleman who, when managing Makataramea, told Dr. Webster that my proposition of inbreeding would end in disastrous failure. By this time, however, he was posing as the inventor of the breed.

As time went on nothing further was done, but the name "Corriedale" was fast spreading abroad. It was now all over New Zealand, and everybody was satisfied but the few connected with the N.Z. & A. Land Co. and their "Southern Cross", but at that time they had immense influence.

I was under the impression they endeavoured to pack every Show Yard Committee from the Bluff to Timaru and did their best to get their tentacles into the Christchurch A. & P. Association, and especially on to the various Stock and Station Agency firms.

During all this time nothing was done definitely until all the N.Z. & A. & P. Associations agreed to hold an Annual Conference to discuss matters in general.





If I am not mistaken the first of those conferences was held in Christchurch. I believe the late Mr. Stavely was put up by the Land Company to bring before Conference for discussion the question as to whether "Corriedale" was a proper name, or if it was a name that should not be recognised. Sir Geo. Clifford considered that the sheep had earned the name, and he could not see what good purpose could be achieved in changing it. Mr. J.B. Reid endorsed the above remarks and considered it was a most appropriate name, and went on to say that it was Mr. James Little, now of Allandale, Waikari, who, when managing the Corriedale Estate for Dr. Webster, first conceived the idea. That being so he was of opinion, there could not be a more appropriate name than "Corriedale", and in this respect he was of the same opinion as Sir Geo. Clifford. When it was put to the vote it was ultimately carried that all inbred sheep should be distinguished by the name "Corriedale".

After this I considered that the Land Company had got a nail in their coffin which would settle the matter. But that was not so. If I am not mistaken the next conference was held in Wellington, where the matter was brought up a second time by some friend of the Land Co. It was again carried in favour of "Corriedale" and for the third and last time it was brought up at Dunedin. Sir John Roberts was in the chair. He had been a personal friend of Dr. Webster, and knew all the circumstances connected with the inception of the breed of the sheep, having had some thousands of them himself.



For the fourth and last time the name "Corriedale" was carried against "Southern Cross". This nearly ended the controversy as everybody knows.

As time passes the above true story will be told from one to another, and what with additions and subtractions it will in course of time become a legendary tale founded on fact.

Although my age is now considerably over the allotted span I have taxed my brain and memory to the utmost (although late in the day) to leave the history of the start and progress of the "Corriedale" in black and white to be handed down to posterity and now placed on record.

In addition to the foregoing, I may state that I have experimented in a small way in other breeds of sheep such as a Shropshire ram over the Corriedale ewe, which in my humble opinion produces a more profitable progeny than the pure Shrop. in both wool and mutton. I also found that a dash of the English Leicester in the Corriedale Strain from Lincoln Merino, improved the conformation and I found they fattened sooner. All things considered I found life too short to get to the bottom of everything. I thought I had learned a good deal in my time, but I also found to my chagrin that the more I learned the more plainly I found out how little I did know

\*\*\*\*\*





INTERESTING OBSERVATIONSON THEVAGARIES ATTENDANT ON SHEEP BREEDING

That the question of Black Sheep, which has not yet been solved to any one's satisfaction, and it looks as if it would continue so to the end of time.

To look back into ancient sheep lore, I fancy they must have been all black. The first evidence that I have been able to find is from "Jacob's" flock, which must have been all black. As a slight proof of this, we are told when he ring-barked the willow trees the rings must have appeared white, as the Bible tells us when "Jacob's" flock and herds came to drink they looked at the ring-barked willows, and in course of time their progeny came all ringed and spotted.

Herein lies the two-edged sword. This much we all know - there is no known breed that is exempt from having black lambs more or less. Here comes the crucial point.

Let us ask ourselves - is it inherited from their black ancestors, or is it caused by looking at an unwelcome black object which they may have perceived in a fright shortly after their conception - say a black dog or black pig, etc?

To come nearer to my own day, I have often heard my father tell a story of what occurred when he was a boy twelve years of age, which would make it nearly one hundred years ago since it occurred. It happened in what was then a wild-outlandish part in the South of Scotland. Everything was in a very primitive state; there



were no boundary fences or hardly such a thing as sheep yards. They did all their drafting in the open by what they called "shodding", by means of well-trained men and dogs. There is little, or none, of it done at the present day.

In the large surrounding district there was one well-known farmer and breeder who had outclassed all his competitors. He sold a Tup or Ram to a neighbour at a very high figure. There was a near neighbour who bargained for, say, twenty of his best ewes to be put to this great ram by paying a high price per head before sending his ewes. The ewes had to be run out in the open, and my father had to look after them from daylight in the morning until dark at night. They were then put in a small yard overnight. My father had a splendid black dog, as black as a stove. The neighbours' sheep from daylight to dark were continuously on the alert to get back across the boundary on to their own country, but the aforesaid dog was continually in front with a steadfast eye on them all the time. When lambing time came almost every ewe had a black lamb. Here was a fine kettle of fish. What made the evidence so conclusive was the fact that the ewes belonging to the owner of the ram produced white lambs. This was no doubt due to the fact that his ewes being content on their own country, saw, comparatively speaking, but little of the dog.

The first case that actually came under my personal observation





was of a very similar nature. It happened when my brother John and I were small boys, our father's house was so situated that in the forenoons the sheep came down from the high ground or hills, and came all around the house, and my father had a pig that was running loose amongst them when they were lambing. One day, we picked up an object, stillborn. It had the skin of a pig, and only one eye, and it was perfectly straight in the middle of the forehead.

The next instance happened under my personal observation. It took place after coming to New Zealand. Dr. Webster imported through the late Robert Wilkin of Christchurch, two pens of 1st and 2nd prize two-tooth Lincoln Ewes from the Royal Show of England, costing a small fortune to do so. I knew the game at home, and I knew that those ewes had been nurtured from their infancy more than many thousands of the human race, consequently I thought they would have to continue the high life, or they would go to the dogs. I put up a shed to shelter them in the cold nights and stormy weather. When lambing came along and my favourite ewe came due to lamb, I had her shut up of a night, and late one evening she was alright when I visited her. In the early morning she had started to lamb and before very long she gave birth to a pair of lambs, but, to my great chagrin, they were both as black as "Nicky-Ben" is said to be. I thought I would fall down through the earth. I whipped them out of her sight, and cut their throats, and got a twin lamb on her, which she nursed rightly or wrongly. I attributed the mishap to my dogs. I imported a black slut, and she had a black son. These dogs were always at my heel wherever I went.

was of a very similar nature. It happened when my brother John and I were small boys; my father's house was so situated that in the forenoon the sheep came from the high ground on which we came all around the house, and my father had a dog that was running loose amongst them when they were feeding. One day, we picked up an object, stillborn. It had the skin of a pig, and only one eye, and it was perfectly straight in the middle of the forehead. The next instance happened under my personal observation. It took place after coming to New Zealand. Dr. Webster reported through the late Robert Wilson of Christchurch, two pairs of fat and thin two-tooth lambs seen from the Royal Show of England, costing a small fortune to do so. I knew the game at home, and I knew that those ones had been purchased from their infancy more than any thousands of the same race, consequently I thought they would have to continue the high life, or they would go to the dogs. I put up a shed to shelter them in the cold nights and stormy weather. When feeding came along and my favourite one came out to feed, I had her shut up at a night, and late one evening she was startled when I visited her. In the early morning she had started to feed and before very long she gave birth to a pair of lambs, but, to my great chagrin, they were both as black as "black-ben" is said to be. I thought I would fall down through the earth. I whipped them out of her sight, and cut their throats, and put a thin lamb on her, which she nursed slightly or wrongly. I attributed the mishap to my dogs. I imported a black one, and she had a black one. These dogs were always at my heels wherever I went.

We have also the experience of the great and noted breeder, McCombie of Tillifour, who brought Black Agnes Aberdeen Cattle to such perfection. It was said that his employees had all to wear black clothes of some sort or other.

During my sojourn in Allandale and Dalmeny, I could not help taking notice of a neighbour's flock, which every year seemed to increase in the numbers of black lambs. The owner eventually sold the run with the stock. No doubt during those years the small settlers bought drafts from this flock, and it became no unusual thing to see two or three small pens of black sheep in Hawarden Saleyards. No one seemed to pass a thought on the matter, while I silently looked on with suspicion.

I am perfectly convinced that it is one of the principal things that should be guarded against in breeding sheep.

\*\*\*\*\*

We have also the experience of the great and noted breeder,  
Nathaniel of Wiltshire, who brought black sheep between 1660 and 1670  
such perfection. It was said that his employees had all to wear  
black clothes of some sort or other.

During my sojourn in Alameda and Delaney, I could not help  
taking notice of a neighbor's flock, which every year seemed to  
increase in the number of black lambs. The owner eventually  
sold the run with the stock. He found during those years the small  
settlers bought right from this flock, and it became no unusual  
thing to see two or three small pens of black sheep in Harbison  
Valley. No one seemed to have a thought on the matter, while  
I silently looked on with astonishment.

I am perfectly convinced that it is one of the principal things  
that should be guarded against in breeding sheep.





NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND



3 1111 00005817 0





3 1111 00005817 0

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND

DATE DUE

2 Aug 65 HO

EX 11/90

for 6/1/92

15 SEP 1995

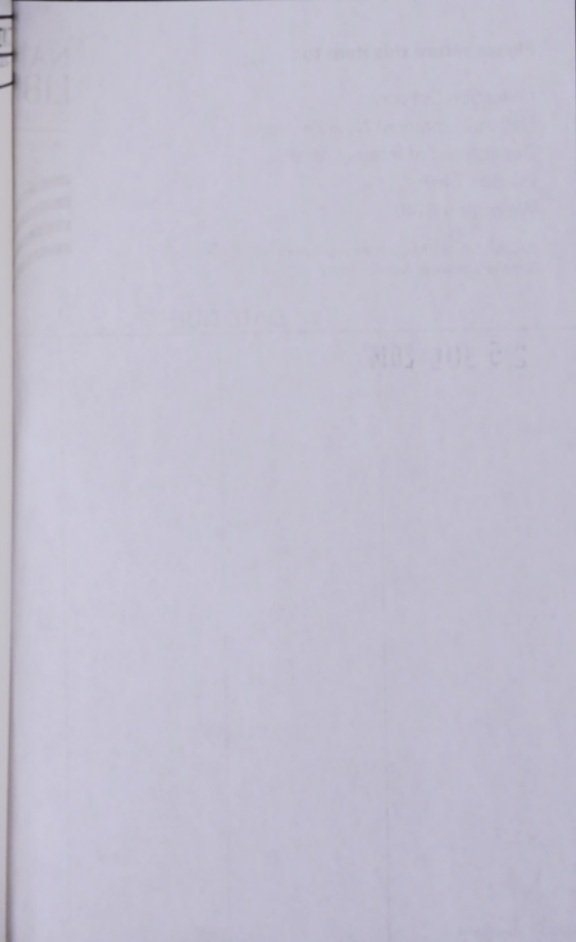
13 MAY 1997

R398

-8 MAY 1997

02 NOV 2007





**Please return this item to:**

Collection Delivery  
National Library of New Zealand  
Department of Internal Affairs  
PO Box 1467  
Wellington 6140

*Supplied at no charge from the collections of the  
National Library of New Zealand*

**NATIONAL  
LIBRARY**  
OF NEW ZEALAND

Te Puna Mātauranga  
o Aotearoa



DATE DUE

25 JUL 2014

P-14

L Little, James  
636.368 The story of the  
LIT Corriedale

1917

636.368  
LIT

4 1 7 0 1 0



HQ

N.Z. GOVERNMENT  
NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE





STORY OF THE  
CROSSING OF THE  
RED SEA

636  
LIT

1917