



The British Pig:
A millennium of service to our
society

Professor Julian Wiseman

Anglo-Saxon Medieval Pig

What did they look like ?

What was their value ?

- We do not have much evidence

British Museum

Queen Mary's Psalter c1310/1320



What does the Ms tell us ?

Even modern pigs are fed acorns



**Mediterranean oak forests:
Southern Spain / Eastern Portugal**

‘Dehesa’

**Jamon serrano;
‘pata negra’
‘bellota’
- the world’s finest ham !**



More acorns !

Officials are desperately seeking hundreds of pigs to eat the millions of acorns that have fallen in New Forest before the fruits poison the area's ponies.

The Times, September 14, 2006

Not just acorns



Beech nuts or 'mast'

'To fatten' is 'mästen' in German

**Ancient rights still exist in the New Forest: "common of mast"
- Governed by 'Court of Verderers'**

Luttrell Psalter c 1330; Irnham, Lincs



*quoniam tacui inueterauerunt ossa mea;
dum clamarem tota die*
because I was silent my bones wasted
away; whilst I cried out all day

- One (31) of the seven penitential psalms;
- expressive of sorrow for sin

Just how **HARD** was life ?

This pig system in a wider context

Mid 14th Century:

- Food shortages and rapidly inflating prices
- Wheat, oats, hay and consequently livestock; all in short supply.
 - Malnutrition, starvation

1314/15, unusually heavy rain and cool in much of Europe

- Widespread crop failure
 - Seed:grain as low as 2:1 (30:1 currently)
- Straw and hay could not be cured, no fodder for livestock
 - Draft animals butchered, seed grain consumed
- Food prices in England doubled in a few months
- Salt became scarce
- Bad weather continued in subsequent years
- A weakened population more susceptible to the 'Black Death'
 - Came to Europe in 1348
 - Killed 30-60% of the population

This pig system in a wider context

What saved Europe.....?



Pig's contribution to human nutrition and development of European Medieval society has rarely been acknowledged

Swineherds' dues

End of 12th C, Glastonbury

1. 1 sucking pig/year
2. Entrails of the best pig killed
3. Tails of all pigs killed

End of 14th C, Basingstoke

1. 1/2d per quarter/pig
2. 1/2d per quarter/2 small pigs
3. An annual dinner from each tenant

What about the true wild boar?



**Villa Romana,
Armerina, Sicily**

**Hunting had been common since classical times
- Odysseus had been scared by a wild boar**

British Library: Cotton MSS Tiberius Bv Folio 7 11th C

- Written in Old English and Latin
- One of the most lavishly illustrated secular books of the early middle ages.
- Origins: Christ Church, Canterbury?
- Number of lunar / solar days in September noted



Scene of boar hunting represents September / October

Medieval Europe

Gaston Phébus (France, 1331-1391) Brittany? 'Le livre de la Chasse'
JP Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Hunting boar on foot was considered the bravest and noblest of 'sports'

Sir Thomas Ingilby 1310 - 1369

Hunting (~1350) with Edward III, saved king's life following attack by wild boar, thrown from horse.

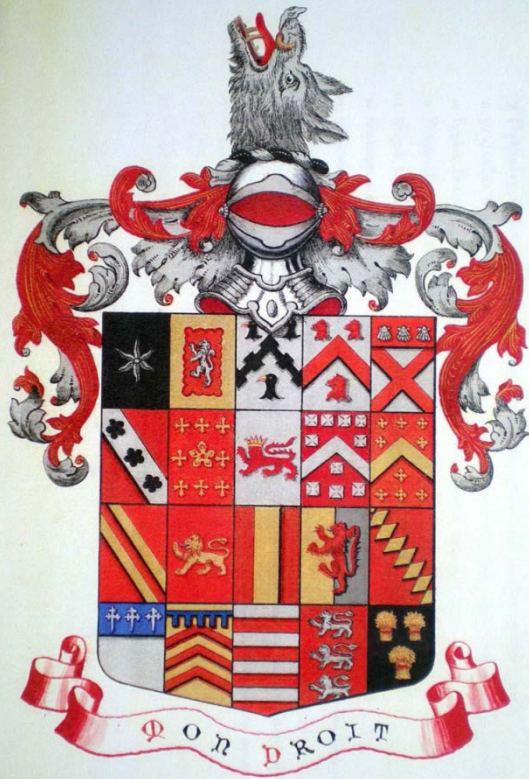
Edward granted the Ingi(e)lby family the title Kt, granted boar's head as crest, allowed market and feast in Ripley, granted family right of free warren (right to hunt) anywhere in royal forest of Knaresborough.

Justice of the King's Bench, only judge to hold position apart from Chief Justice

Boar is an unusual heraldic crest in England (more common in Scotland)

Only one English monarch has used the boar.

Boars Head, Ingleby, N Yorkshire



Pannage Seasons

Anglo-Saxon England

29 Aug - 31 Dec

Medieval France

29 Sep - 30 Nov

England 11th/14th C.

1 Oct - 1st. leaves of Spring or 23 Apr

Tudor England

6 - 8 weeks Oct - Nov

England 16th C. (Lancs)

29 Sep - 11 Nov

end Aug – sowing

- ‘Pannage’ (‘Denberra’ in Anglo-Saxon) gradually declined
 - Destructive activities of pigs
 - Rise in importance of sheep, so more pasture
 - A result of serious population decline: arable to pasture
 - Wool trade economic powerhouse of late medieval England
 - Pig’s omnivorous character still valuable:

The husbandman’s best scavenger and the housewife’s most wholesome sink for his food and living are by that which would else rot in the yard and make it beastly

Gervaise Markham 1683

The popular Pig..... Omnivorous habit not appreciated!

Of all the quadrupeds that we know the Hog appears to be the most brutish and the most apt to commit waste wherever it goes.

The defects of its figure seem to influence its dispositions: all its ways are gross, all its inclinations filthy and all its sensations concentrate in a furious lust and so eager a gluttony that it devours indiscriminately whatever comes in its way.

Mills 1776

Old English Pig

The native British Pig had been erect-eared and coarsely bristled. Its dark brown colour was modified to dun and then to white by relatively early importations from a now completely unknown source;

These importations were probably responsible for the introduction of the lop ear and the marked maternal qualities usually associated with it.
Trow-Smith 1957



Old English

William Youatt 1847

'Imported' Pigs

Associated with the great European maritime voyages

Chinese: Black, White, Tawny

Neapolitan

Siamese/Indo-Chinese

Wild Turkish

Black African

Maltese

Half African

Wild Jamaican

(Originally from Europe!)

Barbadoean

(Originally from Europe!)

Indian Jungle Pig

Europeans also left pigs on their travels

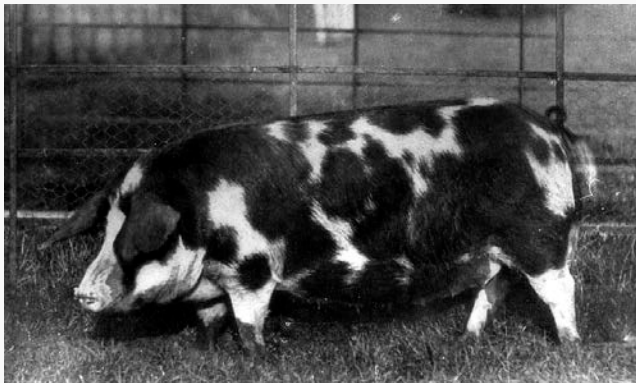
**Uniformity of appearance seemed to
dominate breeding policy**

The breeding debate

'Pre-Mendelian' Breeding	'Mendelian' Interpretation
To breed from stock most resembling those desired - like begets like	Homozygosity
To breed 'in and in'	Outbreeding increases risk of heterozygosity
To breed from pedigree	Guarantees homozygosity?
To use tested sires	Identification / time?

Traits / Characteristics

Objective	Subjective
<p data-bbox="86 344 432 468">Reproductive performance</p> <p data-bbox="86 494 484 546">Product Quality</p> <p data-bbox="86 572 687 625">- meat, milk, eggs, wool</p> <p data-bbox="86 651 697 704">Efficiency of production</p>	<p data-bbox="755 344 1064 396">Appearance</p> <p data-bbox="755 422 1103 475">Temperament</p> <p data-bbox="755 501 1180 554">Mothering ability</p> <p data-bbox="755 579 1277 632">Breed specifications</p> <p data-bbox="755 658 1818 711">- Number of spots: Gloucester Old Spot...</p> <p data-bbox="755 736 1335 789">- Is the ear attractive....</p>



1919



2011

Fat Pigs

At Dishley a fine-boned sort of small dimensions had been carried to great perfection

Length, height and thickness being nearly equal; belly touching the ground, the legs being enveloped in fat and the eyes scarcely to be seen for fat; the whole appearing a solid mass of flesh.

Pitt 1809

Fat Pigs

If a hog be more than a year old he is the better for it. Make him fat by all means.

If he can walk two or three hundred yards at a time he is not well fatted.

Lean bacon is the most wasteful thing that a family can use.

In short it is uneatable except by drunkards who want something to stimulate their sickly appetites.

Cobbett 1828

The value of a pig

A couple of fitches of bacon are worth fifty thousand Methodist sermons and religious tracts.

The sight of them on the rack tends more to keep a man from poaching and stealing than whole volumes of penal statutes, though assisted by the hulks and gibbet.

Cobbett 1828

Show Pigs

- FAT IN SHOW PIGS

"it is painfull to see the prostrate masses of fat grunting and sweating under a weary life in the sun"

"the time has come to put a check on the unlimited exhibition of animals which plainly cannot be in a fit state for breeding"

1881

"all blubber, with little of the lean flesh which is wholesome food for men"

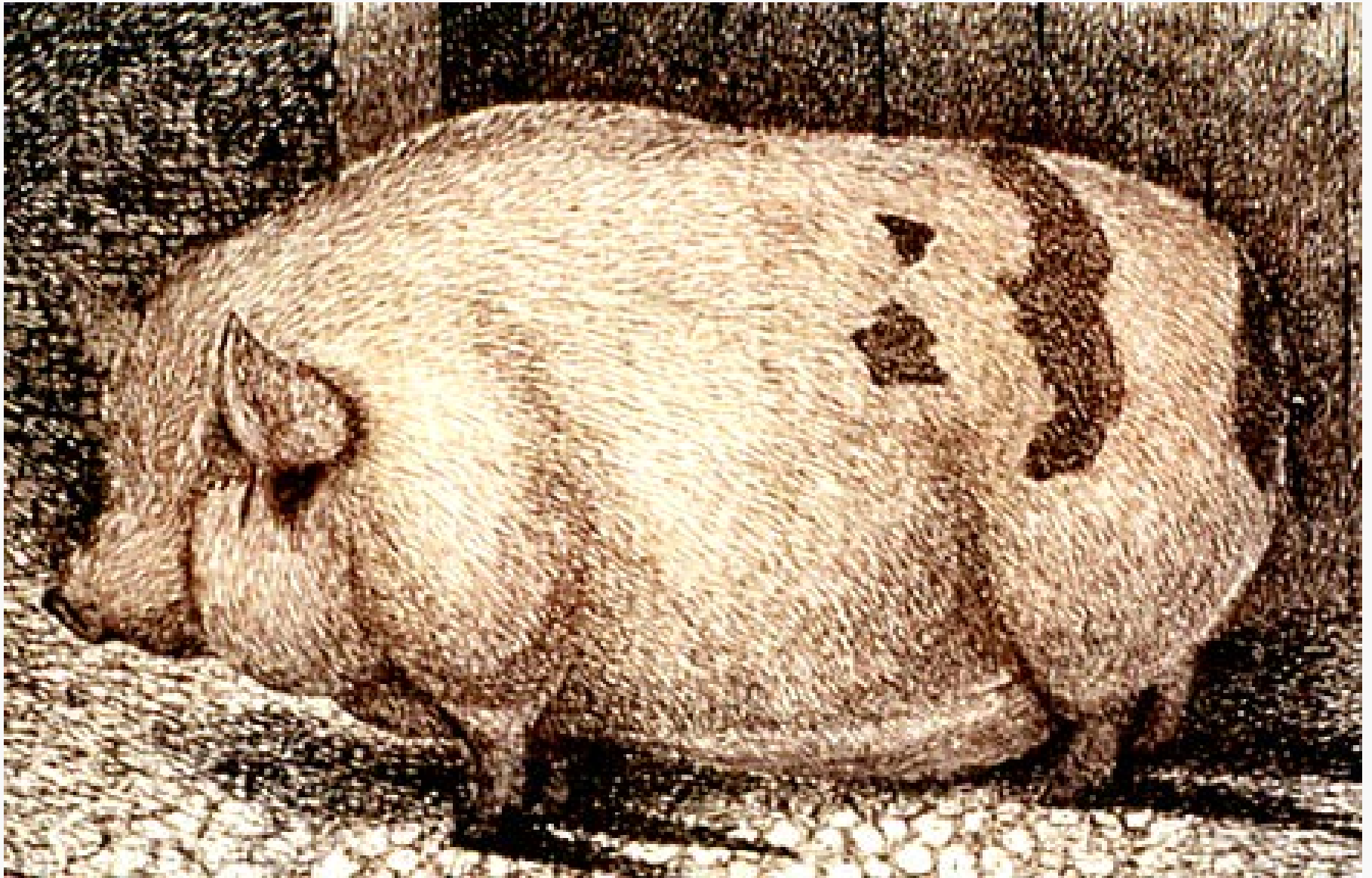
1882

"in the shortest possible time and at the least cost produce the maximum amount of lean meat and the minimum amount of valueless offal"

"feeders and breeders are suffering through their pigs being so devoid of lean meat"

1887

I do mean fat.....600lbs, c1800



Show pigs really were fat; Birmingham 1870



Show pigs

In many cases even the judges are unable to form any estimate of value as to the probable carcass weight of the pig;

and as to the proportion of lean to fat, it seldom enters their calculations.

Spencer 1919

Breeding policy

The notion of Pedigree

VS

Practical Value

Plus interactions with environment

• Phenotype =

Genotype + Environment

And what do you CALL them?

Show pigs; at last some commonsense

Far too frequently the prizes are awarded to the handsomest and fattest pigs of compact form.

There can be little doubt that two of the much needed improvements in the exhibition of pigs are the weighing of the animals, and the publication of the weights, and the block test.

Spencer 1919

Value of Pedigree

The conditions of entry into the Herd Book may not be such as to ensure that even the grand-dam of a boar shall be of the breed of which the boar is supposed to be.

The mere fact of a pig being entered in a Herd Book is of very little real value to the breeder.

Spencer 1919

Value of Pedigrees...

You should study the peerage, Gerald.

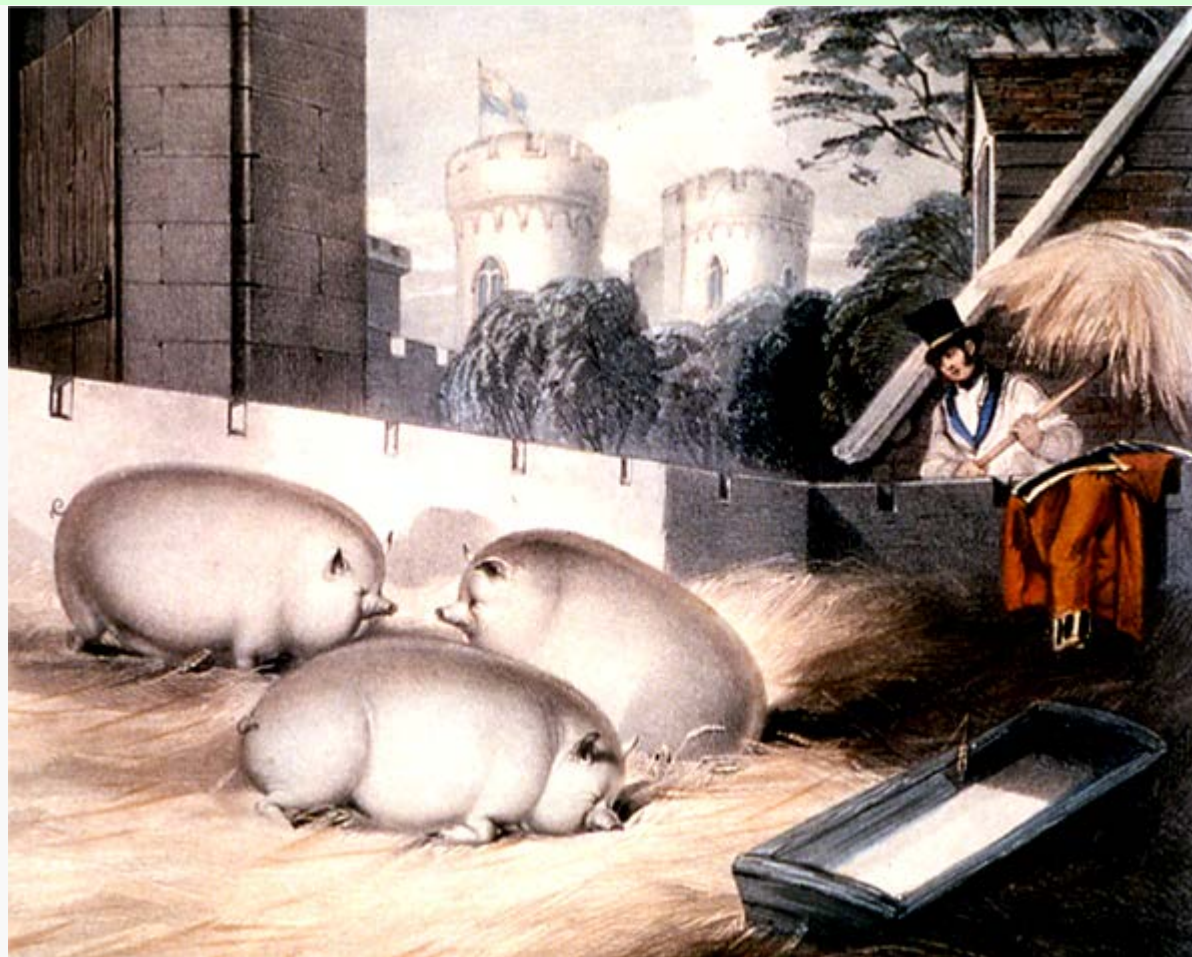
It is the best thing in fiction the English have ever done.

Oscar Wilde

Breed Nomenclature

- **Based on geographical location / name of owner !**
- **1842 Royal agricultural Show**
 - **William Ellison from Sizergh Castel near Kendal**
 - **A 10 ½ months-old Sizergh Boar**
 - **Thomas Goodlake of Wadley House near Faringdon Berkshire**
 - **Wadley Boar**
 - **Rt Hon Charles Shaw Lefevre MP from Heckfield Hertfordshire**
 - **Heckfield Boar**
 - **Rev John Vane**
 - **Vane Boar**

Breed Nomenclature



Three 25 week Suffolk and Bedfordshire Pigs bred by His Royal Highness Prince Albert which gained the second prize of £5 at the Smithfield Cattle Show 1844.

Fed on milk, pea meal and barley meal

The Royal herd changed names regularly...

1846	Bedford	1847	Bedford and Yorkshire
1848/9	Suffolk	1850	Yorkshire

Breed Nomenclature

It has often been said that the show of pigs has been superior to any other part of the Kingdom.

And we are at a loss by what term to describe the peculiarity of breed.

In default of a better distinguishing title, it will be no misnomer to call it the Improved Nottingham Pig.

[Yes, talking about a pig from Nottinghamshire.....]

JRASE 1845

Industrial wastes; more on omnivores

- **Johnson, Vauxhall** 3000/annum; wash, grains, meal dust
- **Benwell, Battersea** 3-4000/annum; “
- **Bush, Wandsworth** 2000/annum; “
- **Stonard** 3400/annum; starch waste

James and Malcolm 1794

Sir Richard Meave fattens his hogs on boiled potatoes mixed with biscuit-makers' sweepings very successfully.

Young, 1794

Pigs possess digestive organs of great strength

White 1828

Which artist...? Gainsborough



'Dig for Victory'



Put IN Bin

Potato and Apple Peelings
Pea Shells
Scraps of meat
Waste Bread
Cabbage, Lettuce leaves

Do NOT put IN Bin

Rhubarb or Potato Tops
Tea Leaves
Coffee Grounds
Skins of Oranges, Lemons, Grape Fruit, Bananas
Salt, Soap or Soda



**KEEP IT FREE FROM
GLASS, BONES, METAL,
PAPER, etc.
YOUR COUNCIL WILL
COLLECT**

To sum up

- **Pigmeat has had a vital role in human development**
 - **Did not compete with humans for feed resources**
 - **A vital source of meat / essential fatty acids in time of famine**
- **Subject of some appallingly scurrilous allegories**

**The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms, this foul swine
Lies now even in the centre of this isle**

The boar?

Richard III

The author?

Wm Shakespeare

Media Consultant / PR Agent for the Tudor 'dynasty'

To sum up

- **A large number of different types have arisen**
 - **Pigs readily inbreed**
 - **Wild, domesticated, feral all co-exist**
 - **Accordingly very difficult to trace ancestry**
 - **Appearance can be changed very easily**
 - **Colour, shape, form**
- **Human involvement can be to the detriment of the pig**
 - **Excessively fat**
 - **Absurd obsession with breed conformity / name**
- **How clever is the pig ?**
 - **One of the more stupid questions.....**
 - **It is very clever indeed at being a pig**
- **Is the pig a good mother**
 - **NO.....**
- **How successful is the pig?**
 - **Very, if measured in terms of numbers around**
 - **A typical means of assessing species success.....**

Lunchtime...





Thank you for your attention

