

light-soil uplands of chalk and limestone. Of this group only the six Down breeds have something in common except shortness of staple.

### Dorset Horn

The old Dorset Horn breed represents the nearest approach so far to the production of a crop of lambs twice a year. The Dorset Horn will breed earlier in the year than any other type in Britain, for the ewes take the ram in May (late spring), lambing in October (late autumn). Thus, Dorset Horn flocks are lambing when most English flocks are being mated, and so provide fat lambs from December onward. The ewe also will produce lambs at shorter intervals than a year.

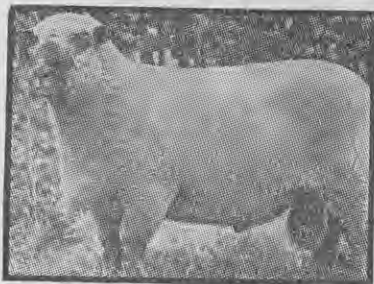
The Dorset Horn is a breed of great antiquity, but as far as is known it has not been subjected to infusions of other blood, Leicester, Southdown, or Merino. It is distinct from other British breeds in that its lips and nostrils are flesh coloured, not black. The wool is very white. It is not a breed for a cold, wet climate, but is found mainly in south and south-west Dorset, Somerset, and the Isle of Wight. In carcass quality and conformation the breed is not up to the standard of the Down breeds.

### Ryeland

Perhaps the rather chequered story of the Ryeland might have been more noteworthy if there had been an Ellman or a Jonas Webb to try his skill at breed improvement in Hereford. The Ryeland, too, is a very old breed, descended from the small sheep kept in the Ryelands district of southern Herefordshire and noted for their fineness of wool. Professor Scott Watson says the breed was the favourite of "Farmer George" (King George III) and quotes him as saying he "wanted no better sort of foreign sheep than the true Hereford Ryeland."

However this may be, George III's very real interest in the Spanish Merino certainly led to a good deal of crossing with the Ryeland, but it appears that, apart from some slight cross with the Leicester, the Ryeland is very similar to the ancient breed.

The rage for Shropshires and other Down breeds threatened the Ryeland even in its home county until in 1903 only 30 flocks were left. However, determined efforts by some breeders increased the demand and the Ryeland flocks, and the breed joined in the competition for early fat lamb production. The Ryeland is now of no pronounced importance in any particular district in Britain.



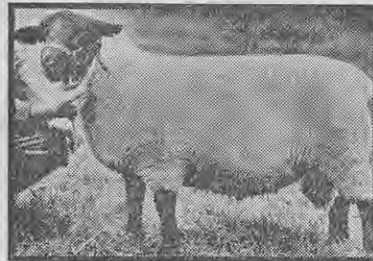
The Shropshire, which is now more important and better known in other countries than in England.

The Ryeland is fairly small, very docile, and unless kept on second-class land tends to put on too much fat for present tastes. The fleece is white and fairly uniform in quality. The rams are in some demand for cross-breeding.

### Southdown

In this article the name of John Ellman, of Glynde in Sussex, is associated with that of Bakewell. Starting with different raw material and working under different conditions, Ellman produced a very different new breed of sheep. The Southdown bears the same relationship to other Down breeds as the English Leicester bears to the long-wooled breeds. Therefore pride of place must be given to the Southdown in dealing with the Down breeds.

The local breeds which roamed the downs are described as small and ill shaped, with a very short and light fleece of indifferent quality. This was the type on which Ellman began his life's work toward the end of the 18th century. Ellman's object was different from Bakewell's: He wanted a sheep that would thrive on the poor, dry downlands and that would yield, not a heavy carcass with a superabundance



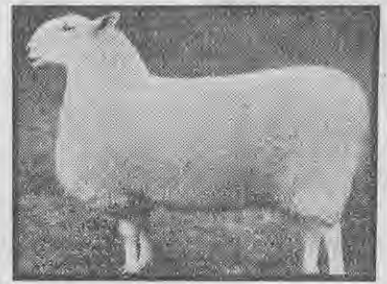
The Suffolk, which is more widespread in Britain than any other Down breed because of its popularity for cross-breeding.

of fat, but a choice quality of fine-grained meat. It appears, too, that his methods were different in that he avoided close in-and-in breeding. Glynde Estate and its master soon became famous for the mutton qualities of the Southdowns.

In the early years of the 19th century there was no royal show and the main farmers' gatherings were the annual sheep shearings. There were many such gatherings, but two of the most notable were those held at Holkham and at Woburn. These estates were also noted for their Southdowns, for in 1790 Ellman had persuaded Coke of Holkham, a great agriculturist, to replace his old Norfolk Horned breed with the Southdown. At about the same time Francis, Duke of Bedford, gave the breed a trial at Woburn; a purebred flock was established there later.

However, it was Jonas Webb of Babraham who carried on the Ellman tradition. He started life as manager for Mr. Adeane of Babraham, and there he first met Ellman, who was at the height of his fame at Glynde. Webb struck success rapidly after leasing a farm at Babraham and buying from the chief Sussex breeders. After Ellman retired in 1829 Webb

## ... BRITISH BREEDS OF SHEEP



The Border Leicester, which, mated with the Cheviot, produces the half-bred, Britain's most famous type of cross.

took the lead, and he is said to have retained constitution and wool, though he could not stand a "muffy-faced sheep." The Babraham flock was auctioned in 1861, the year before Webb's death, and the 1404 sheep realised a total of £16,646. A statue was erected in Cambridge to his memory; the inscription is simple—"From farmers and friends in many lands." Jonas Webb was one of the very few great farmers to whose memory a statue was erected.

The influence of the Southdown has been very wide, both in the development of the other Down breeds and in lamb- and mutton-raising flocks overseas.

### Shropshire

The original parent stock of the Shropshire largely roamed the hills and commons of Shropshire and Staffordshire. They were Morfe Common sheep, those of the Longmynd, and those of Cannock Chase. From the blending of these sheep with a cross of Southdown brought in by Samuel Meire of Harley in 1810, the Shropshire was evolved.

The modern Shropshire is a very different animal from those exhibited by Meire and Adney at royal shows from 1853 to 1856. The skill of Shropshire breeders of the past 70 years has changed the speckled face to one of soft black, improved the carcass out of recognition, and turned the wool that was once open into a dense, fine staple. The excessive woolliness of the head has told against it for cross-breeding. It is now more important and better known overseas, for its popularity in England has declined in recent years.

### Suffolk

The transformation of the Old Norfolk Horned breed into the Suffolk is another instance of the influence of Ellman's Southdown. Arthur Young and a tenant farmer of his were largely responsible for early experiments with the cross. The Suffolk had inherited something of the activity of the Old Norfolk, but it was combined with a better carcass and the earlier-maturing qualities of the Southdown. By the middle of the 19th century flocks of pure Norfolks were rare, for most of the sheep were crosses of varying degree. However, the new Suffolk type was being fixed by the continued careful selection of such men as George Dobito of Croypley Grove.