



# esmond & Friends

by Suzy Sharpe



Part 1



## In the beginning

I have kept sheep for many years since my daughters were very little. I have always been very aware of the purpose of most animals in the lives of humans as my Dad was a butcher and I helped making sausages in his shop as a child. I started my journey with Sheep by rearing a couple of lambs for a local farmer, it was a joy my daughters loved feeding them as did I our very first sheep was called Lamit...he was adopted by our lovely chow retriever cross Benson and would sit with him in his basket. We made him a coat as he was a little poorly and he lived in the kitchen for a little while. Time passed we became very attached to him but there was a point when he had to return to his flock with the farmer.

I went on to have a small flock of 15 sheep at its largest, for wool (which I never really did anything with) and to feed my family. Events took over, I moved house and was no longer able to keep sheep, but after a few more years, another move and I was able to keep sheep once more.

In 2010 I bought 4 sheep Two boys Kevin and George and two girls Spoonie and Olga. Keeping sheep for meat was never easy for me, but I rationalised it whilst my girls were young as I was feeding my family the highest welfare meat I possibly could. My girls left home, I eat very little meat so here we are now, keeping sheep as models for my drawing, to keep the grass down and hopefully one day I will use their fleece for somethink lovely!



evin



My lovely Kevin the best of sheep this painting is called King Kevin!

Gentle and friendly he came to me called Titch and had been bottle reared as he had been orphaned. A pure breed Texel with one foot squarely on each corner, he was almost impossible to turn over to tend to his feet as he was so solid. He loved a really good scratch. With his full fleece he seemed huge. He was definitely in command of the flock and brought them up religiously to be fed each evening. Very sadly a couple of years ago he died he will always be very fondly remembered and very much missed.



George



Little George is a pure breed Ouessant, a rare french primitive breed, bought locally with Kevin he was also quite freindly when he joined us and will eat from my hand but would rather not. He is the smallest of our sheep and is really no trouble at all. He keeps himself to himself and generally gets a bit picked on by the others. He always looks a bit depressed bless him and he kind of reminds me of Eeyore out of Winne the Pooh.

From time to time he will bound around up and down the field with his legs straight, but mostly he just gets on with life in a quiet way. He is going grey now but when he was younger he was dark chocolate colour because the sun would bleach his coat. Then when he was sheared he became a deep rich black again.



poonie



This beautiful Leicester Longwool cross girl has had a difficult time, she has the worst feet in the world and has had problems with them from day one. One of her feet is badly deformed and she suffered from repeated abscesses on the other front foot. She has had the vet more times than all the others put together and many times I have thought she would not survive. The vet calls her a tough old girl and a fighter and she is.

If I am out in the field she calls me to her... she comes up for food each evening if she can be bothered but she is increasingly stiff and creaky, sometimes she doesn't want to get up at all, so she always gets special treatment and extra food. She is one of those really stoic creatures who just gets on with it doesn't let anything get to her too much so long as there is a nice scoop of sheep nuts at the end of the day.



lga



Olga is a rare breed Manx Loaghtan ewe they are a primitive breed and at one time they were the rarest breed in the country. They are great sheep very easy to handle a good size for me and very hardy, rarely suffer with anything and have good feet most of the time. If their fleece is left on too long it starts to fall off by itself. They really don't need people at all and Olga doesn't let you forget that, she is always wary of me even after 10 years, she stays at the back of the group and is first to move if anything remotely startling happens. She is the boss in the group at the moment.

If I need to bring her in it can take hours even when she could hardly walk due to an injury she would not come in no matter what I tried (and my dog just doesn't help!) in the end I put all the others in gave up and went in for a cup of tea when I came out she had brought herself in! totally independent. Lambing was effortless just one there in the morning no problems and no warning.



una



Luna daughter of Olga born in on a Supermoon May 5 2012, She is the only one of our sheep to be born here. Olga was a fantastic mother very protective and attentive she gave Luna an excellent start in the world they are still inseparable today.

Luna is just like her mum in that she is hardy and very independent slightly larger than her mother they start off really dark brown in colour and fade to a beautiful warm toffee colour as the year goes by, their fleeces are short and very dense. She is also very wary of people in some ways I don't discourage this but after Kevin died I was becoming concerned that Olga and Luna were becoming more and more independent...or rather wild! I was finding I they would not come for food and if I went to them their personal space was getting larger, they were staying away and have always been at the top of the pecking order so the others were following suit. Luna is second in command after her Mum.



## fter Kevin



As mentioned Kevin was our most friendly sheep, he always came running up for food and loved a good scratch, so he kept the rest of the flock tame. A year ago our lovely old Spoonie went through a patch of very ill health where she had to be kept in, over the weeks that followed the others came close less and less, primitive breeds are great but they really dont need humans, they are so hardy and tough, they will be just fine thank you very much! I could see a time when getting near them would be a challenge if anything happened to our old girl. So we decided to increase the flock a little. We managed to find our newest additions in Devon from a commerical flock, born to aging ewes who could not cope with the feeding. So they had a few lambs who needed to be hand reared...



## he Arrival

It was very hard to choose between the Lambs who needed homes but as they were not going to go for meat the owner wanted us to take a couple of males. There is nothing quite like holding a lamb, its long dangly legs, complete trust in you and little soft feet just like hard blisters. They had huge ears and massive ear tags in each ear denoting their origin holding and flock number They travelled home in a cardboard box in the back of the car because they were too small to go in a trailer. Most of the way home they just slept.



It was the 11th April when they arrived home, we popped them under a lamp to keep them warm. They slept a lot and over the next few days we had to wake them to feed them, they seemed quite subdued.



These first few days are critical, they would be missing their mother even though she was unable to feed them. We cuddled them often and fed them small amounts of replacement milk made from powder. In pop bottles with a special teat. At first they couldn't finish 100 ml in a sitting and were being fed 6 times a day.. Including 2 night feeds at 1am and 5am.

After 3 days Walter became a little unwell, I had a few sleepless nights and had to go out to check him in my dressing gown a few extra times overnight just to be sure. I was very concerned about him for a few days, he had an upset stomach, which can be serious in a lamb so young. It's quite a strange thing you become quite obsessed with what is going in one end and what is coming out the other... Many conversations about the colour and consistency of all his little movements! However a few more days and he pulled through.

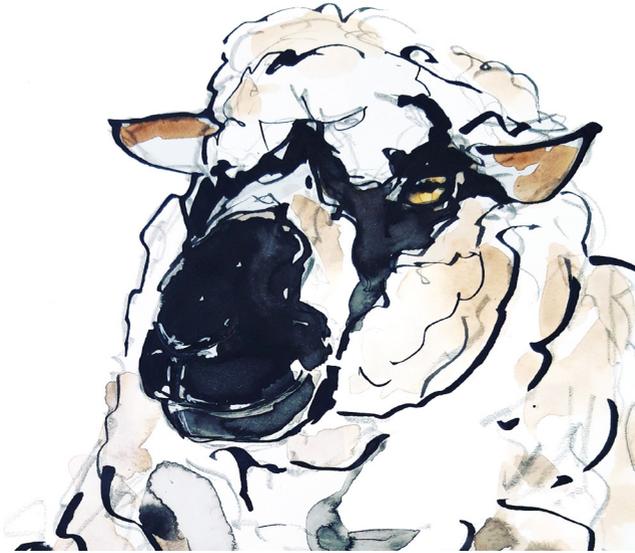
Before long they were going outside when the sun was shining and nibbling at the dry grass, exploring everything with their mouths just like all babies, even the electric fence (mesh) designed to keep them safe, which didnt seem to concern them too much.

Their true perosnallities started to develop Walter was the quiet gentle one who didnt like to be handled too much and Desmond was the boistrous boy always loving a cuddle and a scratch. first up to us and first to finish his bottle.





alter



Walter is a lovely gentle soul. He is a Shetland cross and a medium sized sheep which is good for me to handle, I find that I am not tall enough to reach the feet of a large sheep when they are turned up with their heads against my legs. He is always hungry and always first to come running to greet me. He is happy to be around us and will feed still from my hand, in fact try stopping him, but he doesn't like to be touched very much, although recently with his large thick fleece I have been able to give him a bit of a scratch around his neck which he seems to appreciate. He has a huge dense very soft fleece. It will be interesting to see him without it for the first time.

He and Desmond are always together but their personalities are very different. Walter except for food is a very calm sheep, he is quite vocal and when he was young it was always him shouting when it was feed time.



esmond



Last but most certainly never least Desmond! Well what can I say, if you dont know Desmond he is the reason for starting this, he is always up to no good. He gets stuck in brambles, he chews my fingers, jumps up at me, barges and charges around. He has a huges character and is very full on... larger than life I think is a good way to describe him.

I will talk more about Desmond as the time goes on and his exploits but I will say that like with people some animals have the ability to make a big difference to your life and Desmond is one of those creatures... I think the world of him but he certainly keeps me on my toes. Bless him...many of my social media posts start....OH DESMOND!!!

You can follow Desmond and friends day by day on instagram <https://www.instagram.com/suzysharpeart/> or Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SuzySharpeArt>



See you in next time



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