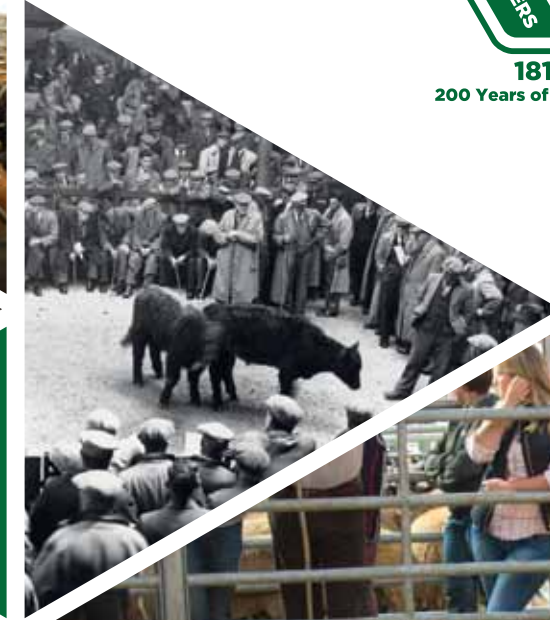




**1817-2017**  
200 Years of Livestock Auctions



Livestock  
Auction Marts  
**200 YEARS**  
of innovation and transparency



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### With thanks to:

- Mr John A Thomson
- Mr Mervyn Lister
- Greenslade Taylor Hunt
- Harrison & Hetherington
- Hope's Auction Co. Ltd
- Hawes Farmers' Auction Mart Co. Ltd
- Kivells
- McCartneys LLP
- North West Auctions
- Ruthin Farmers Auction Co. Ltd
- Selby Livestock Auction Mart Ltd

## INTRODUCTION FROM CHRIS DODDS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE LIVESTOCK AUCTIONEERS ASSOCIATION

Since our formation in 1939, initially as the Livestock Auctioneers' Pool Committee, the Livestock Auctioneers Association (LAA) has been instrumental in supporting, developing and promoting the crucial role the auctioneer plays in the livestock industry.

As you will see and read over the following pages, much has evolved since that first registered auction in 1817, and along the way there have been a number of crucial dates and developments that have influenced the way livestock auction markets operate today and how they will develop in the future.



and Governments can only be beneficial at a time when a framework for the future of the industry needs to be formed that is as robust as possible to pass on to the next generation.

So while new challenges and opportunities arise in this 'new world' post-referendum, you will continue to see the livestock auction industry leading and supporting the wider livestock industry through these uncertain times.

In this 200th anniversary year however, we also hope you can enjoy looking back and seeing how livestock auctions

It is still for us to learn quite how significant the date 23 June 2016, and the Brexit referendum result, will be for the future of our industry. One thing is for certain, it is essential that the industry works together to ensure a united voice of support during the Brexit discussions and negotiations.

have evolved from humble beginnings to the multi-million pound industry it has become today. We hope you enjoy the following pages charting 200 years of innovation and transparency.

**Chris Dodds,**  
Executive Secretary of the Livestock Auctioneers Association

That is why back in August of 2016 we brought together 18 of the UK's leading industry representative organisations to plan a route forward for farming after Brexit. I believe that a collaborative approach between the livestock sector

## INTRODUCTION FROM GEORGE EUSTICE MP

### MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

I am delighted to congratulate the livestock auction industry on this 200th anniversary year, and to recognise the important contribution auction markets make to the rural economy.

Over two centuries livestock auction markets have provided a consistent, stable and transparent method of selling livestock, yet through this time the industry has also adapted to modern demands to help both vendors and buyers alike.

In more recent times, there have been well publicised challenges to the livestock industry, not least the BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease outbreaks in the mid-90's and 2000's respectively. It is testament to the resilience of the livestock farmer and the auction market system that the industry has withstood such devastating crises, and today UK livestock auction markets boast a combined turnover of more than £2 billion.

Perhaps fundamental to this resilience is the crucial social role the livestock auction and auctioneer plays in the wider rural economy. Time and again, I hear from industry how important farmers find their regular visits to the auction market. It offers the unique opportunity to interact with fellow professionals, share concerns and feedback and generally speak to like-minded friends away from what is often a largely solitary profession.

And of course the livestock auctioneer is often a very welcome shoulder to lean on, and

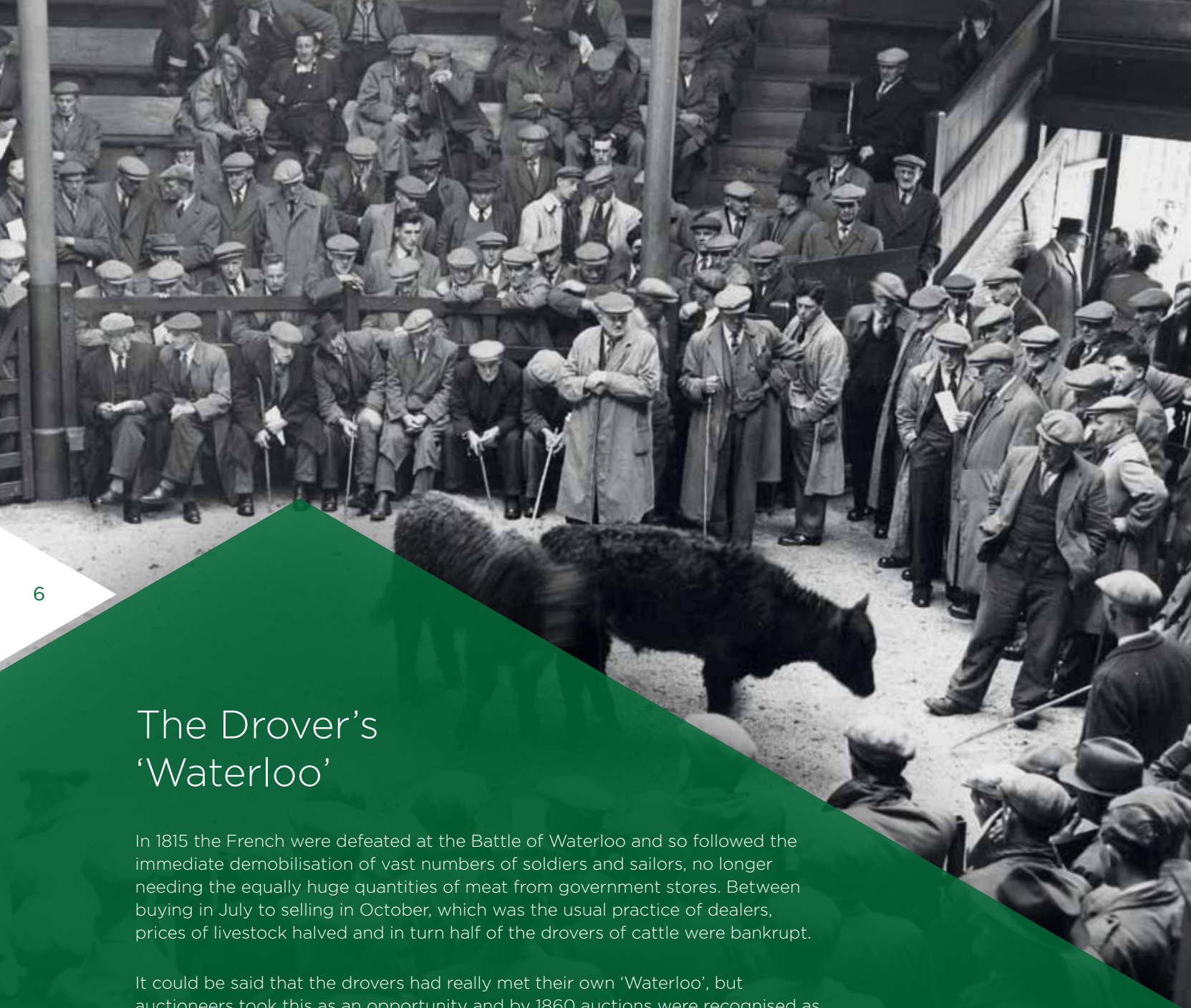


sounding-board. This social responsibility should not be under-stated, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the livestock auction industry for its dedicated approach to driving the livestock industry and rural economy forwards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Eustice".

**George Eustice MP,**  
Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.





## The Drover's 'Waterloo'

In 1815 the French were defeated at the Battle of Waterloo and so followed the immediate demobilisation of vast numbers of soldiers and sailors, no longer needing the equally huge quantities of meat from government stores. Between buying in July to selling in October, which was the usual practice of dealers, prices of livestock halved and in turn half of the drovers of cattle were bankrupt.

It could be said that the drovers had really met their own 'Waterloo', but auctioneers took this as an opportunity and by 1860 auctions were recognised as the best method of sale.

## THE ORIGINS

It is difficult to comprehend now when looking at the development of the large, multi-million pound agri-business centres hosting many of today's livestock auctions, that the origins of the modern livestock market can be traced back to the end of the Napoleonic wars. But in many respects this is where the story begins, although much happened before and since to shape the modern industry.

In fact livestock trading has existed at least as far back as the medieval period when fairs became established as the best means to bring buyers and sellers of cattle, sheep, horses and pigs together. Crucially, this sales formula meant transactions were made in public. A handshake in front of witnesses was verifiable, and guarded against later accusations of theft or receipt of stolen goods. At a time when few could read or write, to avoid the need for a written contract was an important benefit.

Today this overriding principle of transparency is still the backbone of the auction mart system. Esteemed auctioneer and author Mr J A Thomson perhaps defines this most succinctly in his excellent book 'Farmers Went to Market'.

**"...livestock auctions brought about much needed financial stability to breeders and feeders... by providing a means of ascertaining the value of their livestock and guaranteeing payment of the full price."**

Fairs and markets served the principle needs of the farming community up to and throughout much of

the 18th century. Markets generally looked after the local population, whereas fairs were often regional or even national affairs. It is clear though, that through the 18th century there was an ever increasing trend towards selling by auction. Indeed the government of the day felt by 1777 that sufficient livestock sales warranted a duty to be paid on auction sales of livestock which were not held on the farm of origin.

Despite this taxation, in 1778, the first year of the duty, sales of half a million pounds were recorded and it was clear that the popularity and frequency of auctions had increased considerably. But it was the end of the Napoleonic wars that lent impetus to the beginnings of the auction mart system of today.



## HAWICK AUCTION MART – ANDREW OLIVER & SON, LTD

The name Andrew Oliver & Son, Ltd is synonymous with the origins of the modern auction mart system. Born into a rich farming community in Eckford Parish in the Scottish borders, Andrew Oliver trained as a solicitor before settling in Hawick and deciding to return to his agricultural roots in some form. And it was with some foresight that Mr Oliver became the originator of what would be the blue-print for the auction mart system recognised today, with the first recorded auction mart in 1817.

A copy of the card that was issued when the firm began reads.

“Andrew Oliver, Writer, Messenger, Auctioneer, etc., begs leave to announce to his friends and public in general, that he has commenced business in Hawick, and from his prompt attention to business, and the great practice he has already had, hopes to merit a share of the public favour. He flatters himself that those who may honour him with their employment in any of these branches will meet with satisfaction.

Andrew Oliver executes respectable sales as an auctioneer and likewise as an appraiser.

N.B. – Andrew Oliver will attend at Newcastleton once a month.”

And in a very humble way, the modern auction mart system was born. It was also in the year 1817 that Andrew Oliver’s son James was born, destined later to assist in an enormous expansion of the business by 1860 following a move of premises.

Business in the early years was far from easy, not least hampered by the difficulty in promoting a sale. Advertising had barely been thought of, and the town-crier, bell-ringer or simple word of mouth became the principle forms of promoting an auction.

However, sales were conducted in the country for farmers, and several farmers held periodical sales conducted by Mr Oliver. Although not large in scale, these sales were attended by butchers from all of the neighbouring towns and villages, and were recognised as a most useful institution.

However two major issues still held back the further development of the auction marts, but by the 1840s dramatic developments would transform the industry and indeed, Mr Oliver’s auction business.





## RAILWAYS, INDUSTRY AND TAX ABOLISHMENT

It is for one to draw one's own conclusion whether the auction tax imposed in 1777 was actually to raise money, or was a means to appease the great landowners who controlled the fairs, and indeed public policy, and therefore wished to discourage auctions as they were to the detriment of their own business interests. Some also suggested auctions gave dubious persons an easy outlet to dispose of stolen stock.

Whatever the reason the duty was applied, it is clear the emergence of and great desire of the railways to encourage collection of livestock near to their stations was the main catalyst to the repeal of the tax by Sir Robert Peel's government in 1846.

The railways were instrumental in the germination of livestock auctions and were the prime factor in their development. Not only did they make the transport of livestock much easier and quicker over greater distances, but also farmers would travel much more widely to sales to acquire breeding stock. Rail companies encouraged the establishment of markets with close access to their stations, and these marts soon reaped the rewards, often to the detriment of established market centres that were bypassed by the rail network. The agricultural industry was as vital to the viability of the railways as it was in converse, so this opportunity played happily into the hands of livestock auction businesses.

An example of the rapid rise of auction marts was again demonstrated by Andrew Oliver & Sons, Ltd of Hawick. In 1857 Andrew Oliver passed away and his son James took over the business. By 1860 the business had moved to new premises at Bourtree Place and had founded the first sale of store lambs. In the first year 2000 lambs were sold, by year two this increased to 8,000 and some 20,000 were sold in the sales' third year.

Similar stories were witnessed throughout the UK as the blossoming success of those early pioneers started to cause a stampede to open marts in every town served by the rail network. This was matched by the growth in population in industrial areas demanding meat on a regular basis. Increasingly the demand for weekly markets overtook the demand for seasonal fairs.

While fairs and auctions had co-existed, by the 1880s fairs had really ceased to be important as a trading platform and became more of a day-out. Auction marts had by now become established as the best method of sale of livestock.

It was around this period that some enterprising groups decided better premises should be provided, with under-cover facilities.

## REPRESENTATION THROUGH LAA AND IAAS

As auction marts became the recognised sales method for livestock, so it became even more important to ensure livestock auctioneer businesses were represented and their interests promoted. In 1926 The Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland (IAAS) was founded to represent Scottish livestock auctioneering companies. Today IAAS is regularly consulted by Scottish Government and other stakeholders on issues relevant to the handling and marketing of livestock.

The Livestock Auctioneers Association (LAA) is the national organisation representing auctioneering firms that occupy and run the livestock auctions of England and Wales. The association has a long pedigree. It has operated under its present style and title since September 1992, at which date it was born out of the Livestock Auctioneers Market Committee for England and Wales and its forerunner the Livestock Auctioneers' Pool Committee.

That body was promulgated by government in 1939 at the outset of the Second World War for the

purpose of regulating and apportioning to livestock markets, the central fund which was made available to the markets as compensation for the closure of all fat stock auction sales, when rationing and the central purchasing of slaughter stock was introduced on 11 March 1940; a task which continued for 14 years until food rationing ended and free marketing recommenced in 1954.

As it has, for the past 65 years, this representative body continues to actively promote the interests of the livestock auctioneering business with other trade organisations and with all departments of government, as occasion demands.

Representing the industry at governmental and parliamentary levels in London, Cardiff and Brussels, the LAA's role has evolved considerably over the years. Today the LAA is instrumental in shaping government strategies and the future of the industry through thought-leadership.



## Evolving to meet the needs of the modern farmer

The livestock auctioneering industry has always evolved to meet the needs of the farmer, and often this has quite literally been 'driven' by advancements in transport and slaughter house networks.

By the 1950s road transport was becoming increasingly prevalent as local livestock transport companies with specialist lorries moved more and more livestock to and from the markets. This was supplemented by farmers gradually acquiring their own transport.

While road transport and networks developed, the total numbers of livestock carried by rail was falling, and was dealt a severe blow by the Beeching report in 1963, resulting in the closure of many railway lines.

The movement of livestock by road transport therefore was already in the ascendancy by the time the motorway networks began to be well established in the 1970s. Larger articulated livestock transporters made use of these improved connections and road transport began to offer large scale movement economies previously provided by the railways.

This in turn made access to many traditional auction marts in central market town locations difficult, and led to the emergence of purpose-built, out of town, agri-business centres. This in many respects seems a natural evolution to allow the industry to develop and offer far more than just livestock sales; indeed it has always been far more than that.



## MORE THAN JUST LIVESTOCK – A PROFESSIONAL RURAL PRACTICE WITH A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

An important role of the livestock auctioneering business, and something that should not be underplayed, is the social responsibility and role it plays in the wider rural community.

As farms become more mechanised and the labour force reduces, the auction mart allows the farmer to combine productivity, and hopefully profitability, with the almost unique opportunity to network amongst friends and colleagues and to share knowledge, experience and advice.

It has always been thus. Mr J A Thomson again encapsulates this view perfectly when referencing the growing popularity of the livestock auctions in the 1850s.

“And so the farmers went to market - first in their hundreds and then in their thousands they went every week to their local mart. Not only to the sale, but to meet their corn merchant, their seedsman, their implement merchant and their friends. Getting on their better boots they made it the focus of their week. Their wives looked forward to it as they got a lift with the shopping and if their husband came home a little cheery, perhaps it added to the pleasure.”

Today non-livestock sales are also key features of most auction firms. Sales conducted can include agricultural, farm, contractor's plant and machinery,

vehicles, horticultural goods, furniture and fine arts, land and property.

Many are also recognised for the wide range of rural professional practice work that they conduct, which often includes valuations, rent reviews, planning, compensation and environmental work, as well as helping to complete vitally important government forms for farmers. Many livestock market sites host associated business premises, which may, for example, include animal feed merchants, pharmaceutical merchants, machinery dealerships and veterinary practices. Several feature hairdresser shops and one even a doctor's pop-in clinic and health centre, and there are always good, hearty and wholesome meals.





# LIVESTOCK AUCTIONS TODAY

In the last 25 years, the livestock industry has faced many challenges, including unpredictable factors and disease outbreaks such as BSE and FMD, and of course these have impacted on auction businesses. But the auction mart system has, by its very nature, helped the industry negotiate these difficult times and provides the only marketing service which works to get the best prices for farmers and deliver best value to consumers.

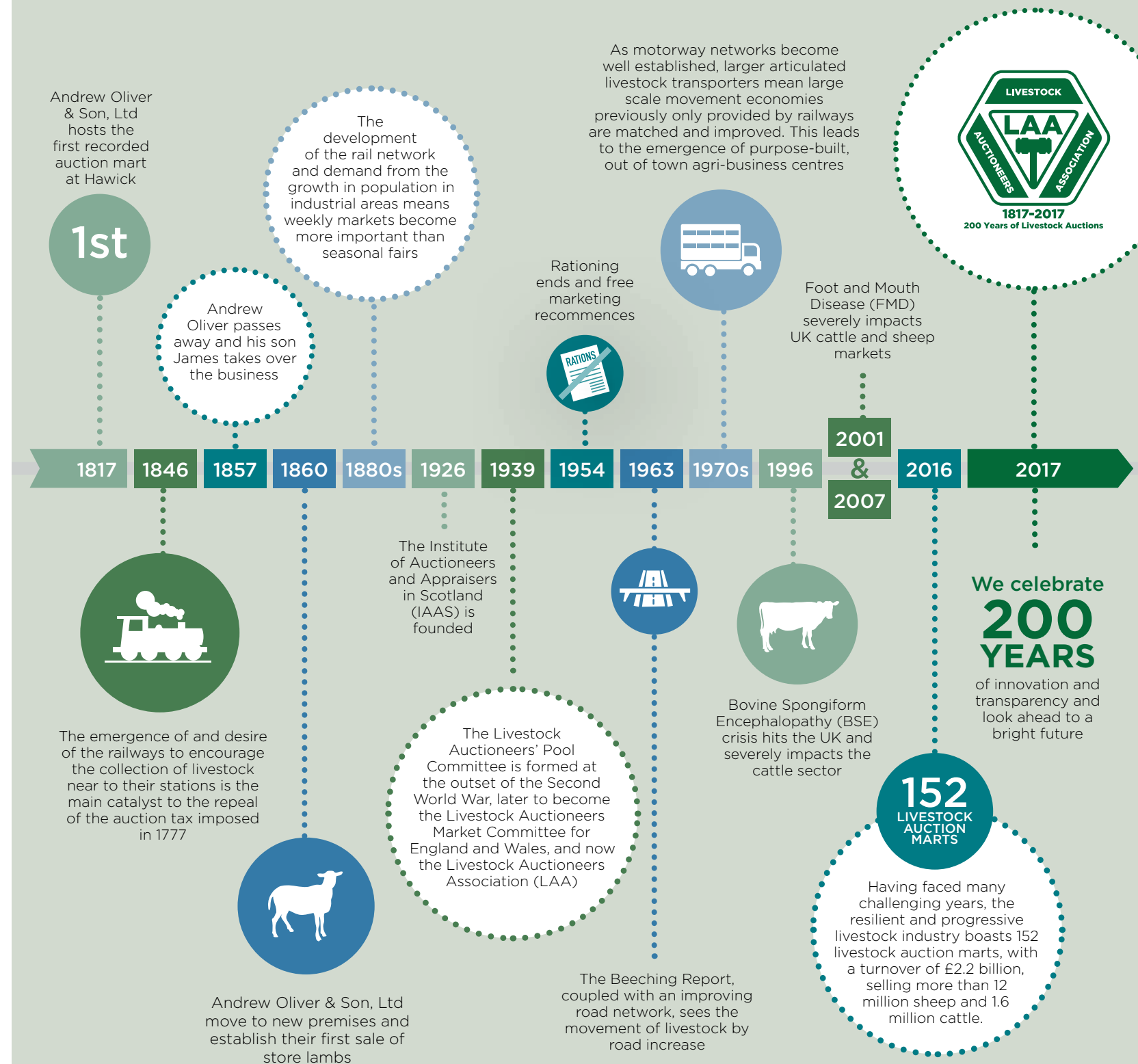
There are today 152 livestock auction marts in the UK, with a turnover of £2.2 billion, selling more than 12 million sheep and 1.6 million cattle, as well as a small volume of pigs. This is further supplemented by the sale of vehicles, machinery and fine art, as well as the provision of land agency, finance and valuation services.



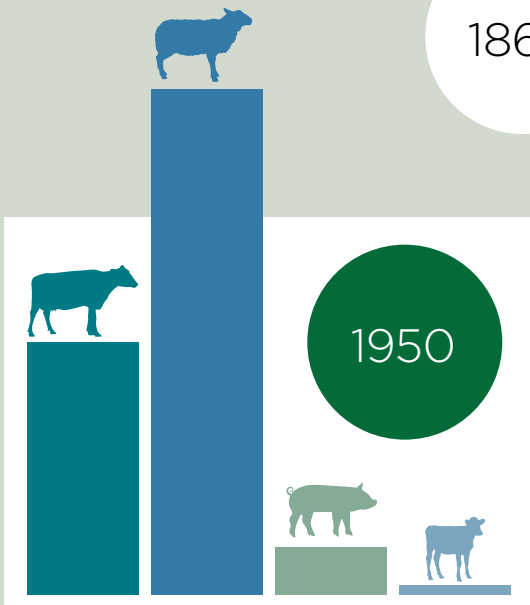
Auction markets continue to evolve to become multi-million pound agri-food and rural business centres, working for the benefit of farmers and the rural community, as well as the consumer. There is no other sales method that can accumulate buyers all gathered in one place to facilitate the best price and market outlet for all categories of livestock.

Equally, the livestock auction provides the unique opportunity for buyers to assess stock before purchase and buy what they want, not what is out of spec for their requirements.

The livestock auction industry is at the forefront of the development of animal health status traceability systems and provides an unrivalled knowledge of the industry and the livestock available for sale. With complete animal traceability, and movement reporting for both buyers and sellers, this marketing system ensures the livestock sector remains open, transparent and competitive.

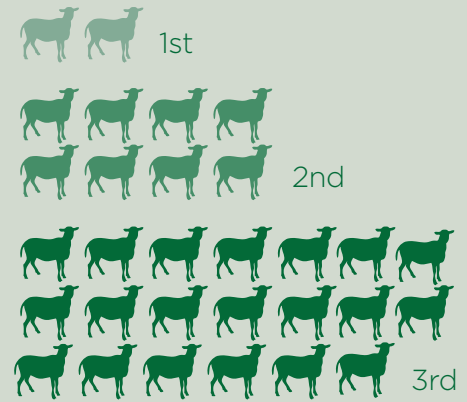


# KEY STATS



1860

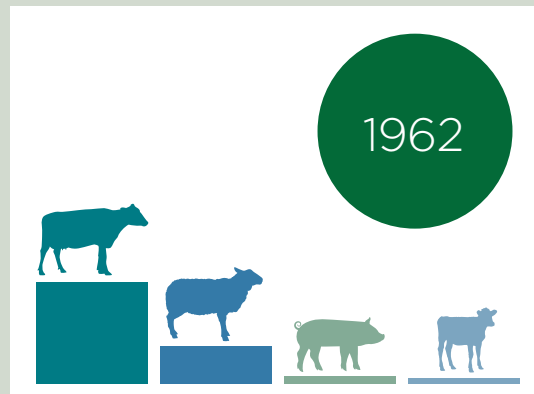
Andrew Oliver & Son Ltd founded their first sales of store lambs. In the first year 2,000 lambs were sold, 8,000 in the second year and 20,000 by the third



1950 - total numbers of livestock carried by rail in a year were 1,750,000 cattle, 3,500,000 sheep, 330,000 pigs and 64,000 calves

1962 - number of livestock transported by rail had fallen to 703,000 cattle, 262,000 sheep, 49,000 pigs and 40,000 calves

(source British Railways Board)

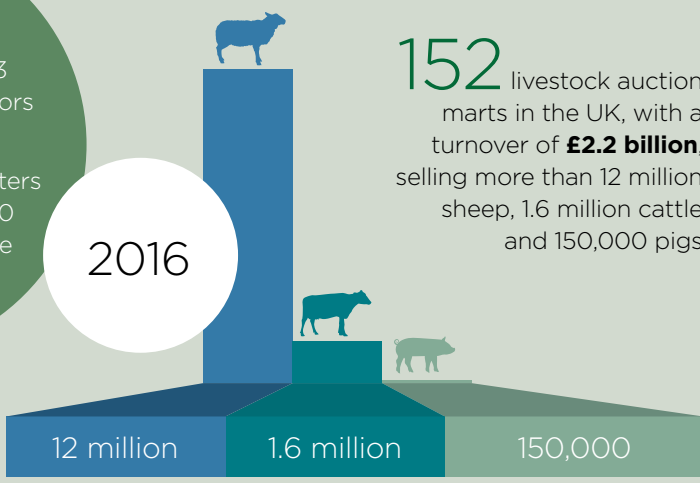


1963

After the Beeching Report, the Road Haulage Association state that their members operated some 3,250 livestock vehicles

2016

The Road Haulage Association now has 83 livestock and milk operators working 897 vehicles. Today's livestock transporters can move upwards of 50 store cattle or 500 store lambs in a single shipment.



## FUTURE

No-one yet knows what Brexit might bring, but key stakeholders from the UK livestock industry have already agreed to work together to help shape future policy post-Brexit, and to help Governments as much as possible by working in a collaborative way to help deliver a profitable and dynamic industry.

Instigated by the Livestock Auctioneers Association, this collaborative approach demonstrates the industry's commitment to the next generation, and engaging with the future livestock professionals and younger members of the community is crucial to the success of the industry.

Indeed, the LAA considers training and knowledge transfer to be vitally important parts of market management and development. To this end the association has developed two high-profile, industry-recognised training programmes in partnership with Harper Adams University and other training institutes, aimed at bringing the next generation auctioneers, market managers and drovers to the industry.



By ensuring the auction mart base is retained and nurtured, farmers will remain confident that they will get a fair price for stock sold through the market.

Technology will of course play its part and livestock auction marts will need to creatively embrace new initiatives, but this will not take over the essence of a market, which is to bring buyers and sellers together to enable the better exchange of a unique product, a live animal.



Let us not forget, this industry is the backbone of the UK economy, it feeds the country in more ways than one. And it is the livestock auctioneering business that has been able to support the interests of both farmer and consumer, deliver transparency and provide the support networks to the wider rural community. And this will be essential to the future success of the livestock industry.



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