# SHROPTALK

The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association — Winter 2009

*"There was grass here yesterday? Better go and find some hay!" A group of out-wintering Shropshires from the Hornpipe Flock, owned by Alison and Paul Schofield, based at Sproston Green, near Holmes Chapel, Cheshire.*

## ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION FOR SHEEP

**NEW ear tagging regulations will apply for sheep born or identified after 31st December 2009.** DEFRA will send details of the new requirements to all registered sheep-keepers before Christmas. The website addresses below give some of the best information currently available:
www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/movements/sheep/documents/eid-ordertags.pdf

Ritchey Tag also has a useful flowchart available to download from:
www.ritchey.co.uk/filedepository//sheep%20eid%2009new%20.pdf - and thanks to SSBA member, John Bradshaw, for bringing this leaflet to our attention.

The new regulations will result in a change to the tag numbering system. Your UK123456 number will become UK0123456 and the individual sequential numbering will start from 00001 for all

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# PHASE TWO OF THE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

**THE Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme (SBIS) was launched by the breed society in 2006 with the goal of making Shropshires, especially our rams, more appealing to commercial sheep farmers. The scheme is also designed to enhance the maternal traits of Shropshires, which will be important for securing the long-term future of the breed.**

So far, eight Shropshire flocks have participated in the SBIS initiative by recording the performance of their stock with Signet Breeding Services. These flocks are: Alderton (P&P Geddes); Brereton (M&S Shimwell); Broomcroft (C&C Taylor); Brookmount (C Cleland); Greenrigg (K Mills); Hayne Oak (E Bowles & M Bray); Sidedowns (J & P Bowles) and Ushers (AL & M Webb).

Thanks to the data collected by these breeders, we have discovered that there is a very wide range of genetic merit both within the breed, and within every flock. The recorded flocks have used the Signet evaluations to make modest improvements in commercially important traits, such as the growth rate, muscle depth and fat depth of lambs; and the maternal ability of flock replacements. Faster genetic progress is likely to be made in future, provided Shropshire flocks continue to record with Signet. But our breed still has a long way to go before we can join the ranks of the most popular terminal sire breeds.

The cost of the Signet recording service for the first eight SBIS flocks was partially subsidised by the breed society for three years. The SSBA's Council has decided to extend financial aid for the scheme, primarily to encourage new flocks to start recording with Signet. We are now actively seeking applications from up to eight new flocks, based in the UK, that would like to join the Scheme in time for the coming lambing season (2009/2010).

### THREE YEAR COMMITMENT

Breeders who wish to join the SBIS must make a commitment to the scheme for three consecutive seasons. They must also undertake to:

- ►Provide timely and accurate pedigree and weight records to Signet;
- ►Use an approved Signet technician to scan at least a proportion of their lamb crop each year to determine eye muscle depth and back fat depth;
- ►Complete a general questionnaire about their flock management and feeding regime; and
- ►Agree to make their Signet evaluations available to the breed society, so that genetically superior animals can be identified.

Flocks of any size can apply, but in order to produce reliable results they should aim to breed at least 25 lambs from one stock sire over two seasons. Exceptions to this rule may be made if the rams concerned have strong genetic links with other recorded animals, either in the same flock or other flocks.

The level of subsidy provided by the SSBA will depend on the number of participating flocks, but will be between £125 and £200 per flock per year. Flocks that participated in the first phase of SBIS may continue to record flock performance with Signet, and some have already indicated that they intend to do so. Their results will be included in the annual Shropshire evaluation carried out by Signet. However, they are not eligible for the breed society's new subsidy

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## DON'T FORGET

**TO COMPLETE YOUR ANNUAL FLOCK RETURN AND POST IT BACK TO THE BREED SOCIETY'S REGISTRAR, ALISON SCHOFIELD, BY 31ST JANUARY 2010**

## PHASE TWO OF THE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

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unless fewer than five new flocks join the scheme.

The costs of joining Signet's Sheep-Breeder, including scanning, vary depending on the number of ewes recorded and the number of lambs scanned. They also vary depending on the location of your farm. More information about the costs has already been circulated to members, along with a detailed explanation of what is involved in Signet performance recording. If you have not received this, please contact the SSBA's Secretary, Jane Wilson.

The SSBA's Council hopes that there will be a good response from breed society members, and that there will be a full uptake of the available places for subsidised Signet performance recording.

## SIGNET RESULTS FOR 2009

**THE annual summary of the top five ram lambs and ewe lambs bred by Signet-recorded SBIS flocks in 2009 is included with this edition of *ShropTalk*.**

Over the past three years, the SBIS flocks and one privately recorded flock (the Hornpipe Flock of Alison and Paul Schofield), have together evaluated 60 different rams through the performance of their progeny.

This year, for the first time, the Signet evaluations circulated to SSBA members include a list of all stock sires evaluated by the scheme that have achieved a performance index score above the breed average.

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## ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION

sheep keepers. EID numbers (within the ear tag or rumen bolus) will match the ear tag number and have both your UK holding number and the individual number for the animal as (012345600001)

EID tags (tags containing an electronic ID) can be only yellow in colour and should be placed in the sheep's left ear. An animal with an EID bolus will be issued with a black ear tag, which should be placed in the left ear. Replacement tags for animals not born on your holding will remain red. Your secondary (management) tags for the right ear can be colours other than yellow, black or red. Only in certain circumstances will you be required to use an EID reader on the farm, and the purchase costs for these might be shared between a group of breeders.

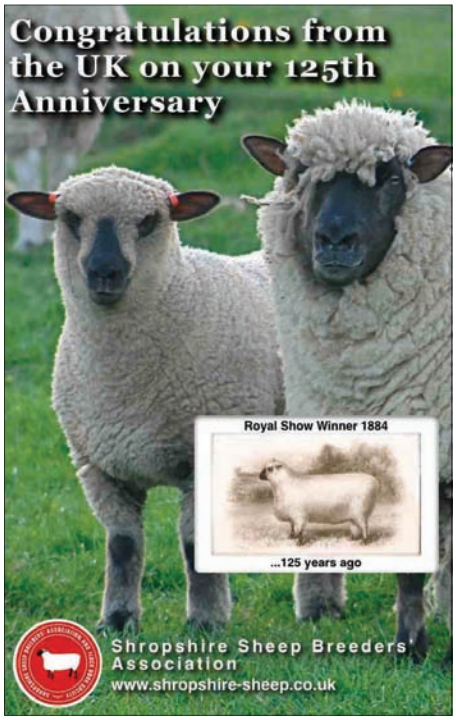
Speak to your usual tag supplier regarding your EID requirements. Prices range considerably in the market-place, but the National Sheep Association suggests that the extra cost of one EID will be in the range of 50p-60p, plus the tag price. You will still be required to use the current SSBA identification system for animals you wish to register. This must not interfere with the DEFRA identification, but can be included on the second, non-EID (or management) tag.

# TWO 125TH ANNIVERSARIES

### One in the USA...

**THE American Shropshire Registry celebrated its 125th Anniversary this year. To pass on our congratulations to American breeders, the SSBA placed the advert shown on the right in the Registry's magazine, "*The Shropshire Voice*".**

The advert features a ewe and lamb from the Broomcroft Flock of Caroline and Clive Taylor, with (inset) a 19th Century print of The Rector, the Shropshire ram that won the Royal Show in 1884. We hear that the Americans celebrated in style with a special banquet in Louisville, Kentucky, attended by around 125 people. Pictures and more news about the American Registry's anniversary can be found on the website: www.shropshires.org.




### ...And one in the UK

**IN 2010, SSBA Council member, Peter Tavernor, will celebrate the 125th anniversary of his family's connection with the Shropshire breed.**

Peter's great grandfather, William Stubbs Tavernor of Offley Arms, Madeley, Staffordshire, first appears in Flock Book 15 of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association (published in 1897). The entry states: *This flock was founded in 1885 by the purchase of 5 ewes from Mr W H Beach, Gunstone. Upon these ewes, the following rams have been used: Broadwood, Sutton Fancy, British Recorder and Sherlowe Recorder. In 1895, 5 ewes were purchased from Mr G Brown, Wolgarston. The present flock consists of 2 stock ewes of Mr Tavernor's own breeding and 4 not. Total:6 breeding ewes".*

Peter explains that his great grandfather was not a member of the breed society, because this was not necessary to register a flock. Membership was expensive, so it was cheaper for small flocks to pay the higher non-members' rates to register rams.

William Stubbs Tavernor maintained his flock until 1916 when he transferred it to Peter's grandfather, also called William Stubbs Tavernor. Peter's grandfather continued breeding Shropshires until 1928, when he sold his farm. The Shropshires were transferred to his brother, who did not register them.

Peter's grandfather later moved to Herefordshire and kept the breed he thought to be most like Shropshires: the Clun Forest.

The family dropped the use of the name "Stubbs" when Peter's father was born, as they felt three William Stubbs Tavernors in the area would be too confusing! Peter's father also kept Cluns, but both his father and grandfather always spoke nostalgically about the Shropshires, so when Peter decided to keep sheep, Shropshires were the obvious choice for him.

Peter established his Shebdon Flock in September 2001 with the purchase of ten ewes and a ram, Clinton Charlie, from D N Crow of Ryton, Shropshire. He then bought four more ewes from Carol Wadland (Rosemount Flock), but since then his flock has remained closed. Two rams have been purchased from Sue and Mark Shimwell: Brereton Max and Brereton Gilbert, followed by Pot House Adam from Dr Iain MacKirdy and Ushers Patrick from Aubrey and Marion Webb.

Peter now has 35 ewes and his daughter, Donna, owns the Madeley Flock of 10 ewes. All the sheep are run together. Their aim is to keep a medium sized flock of quality Shropshires and to sell good, meaty lambs direct to the public for the freezer.

*Pictured Below: Peter Tavernor.*

# SHOW POINTS TROPHY WINNERS

*THE Clay family from Yarkhill, Ledbury, Herefordshire took away two trophies from the AGM (above). George Clay (Swallows Flock) won the Novice Trophy, and his older sister, Alice, (Showle Flock) won the Hornpipe Quaiche, for junior members. The President's trophy for showing in Any Other Breed Classes was won by Sally Evans (Heath End Flock), and the Farquhar Trophy for Shropshire breed classes was won by Anne Harvey (see below).*

## ANNE'S SHOW-RING SUCCESSES

**OWNER of the Roydon Flock, Anne Harvey, enjoyed tremendous success at this year's shows.** She exhibited at nine different events, and her sheep won the Shropshire championships at six of them. This is a truly outstanding achievement, especially as different animals from her show team were chosen by the judges for these accolades. Her results were as follows:

Stafford County: Champion with Roydon Ransom (shearling ram);

Shropshire and West Midlands: Champion (with a ewe lamb);

Cheshire County: Champion with Roydon Ryan (two-shear ram) and Reserve Champion (with a ewe lamb);

Oswestry: Champion (with a shearling ewe);

Denbigh and Flint: Champion (with a ewe lamb);

Poynton Show: Champion with Roydon Ryan, who was also the show's sheep Interbreed Champion.

Anne also won the Group or Pairs classes at eight of the nine shows she competed at. She says she particularly enjoys selecting the sheep for these classes, and the key to success is to find well matching animals.

Congratulations Anne!

*Anne Harvey with her winning group of three at the Cheshire County Show 2009.*

## SOCIETY'S FORMS AVAILABLE ON-LINE

THE following forms are available to download from the "Contact Us" page of the SSBA's website:

- ► Full Membership Form;
- ► Associate Membership Form;
- ► Regulations and Conditions of Entry into the Flock Book;
- ► Application to Register a New Flock;
- ► Service Certificate;
- ► Transfer of Ownership Certificate;
- ► Birth Notification; and
- ► Registration Form.

Most of the SSBA's publications, including Flock Books 100 to 106; our breed leaflet; the Guide to *Critical Selection of Shropshire Sheep* and back issues of *ShropTalk* can also be downloaded from the Publications Page.

The SSBA's website address is: www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk

## DIARY DATES FOR 2010

THE New Year will soon be here, and the SSBA has some important dates for your diaries! Why not make a note of the following, and get involved with the activities we have planned?

Weekend of 29th and 30th May: See Shropshires from the Snowbird Flock grazing in Christmas tree plantations on Council Member Adrian Morgan's farm in Castle Bytham, Lincolnshire (more details to follow in the Spring issue of ShropTalk).

Our breed stand will also be going to the following events, and volunteers are needed to help to promote Shropshires at each one:

12th to 14th May: Balmoral Show, Belfast (awaiting final confirmation of our booking from show organisers);

2nd June: NSA ScotSheep, Blairdrummond, Stirling;

16th June: NSA South Sheep: Stockbridge, Hampshire;

22nd and 23rd June, Cheshire County Show, Tabley, Cheshire;

3rd August: NSA Sheep 2010, Malvern, Worcestershire;

7th and 8th September: The Dairy Event and Livestock Show, NEC, Birmingham, West Midlands;

10th and 11th September: The Traditional and Native Breeds Event, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

If you would like to help at any of the above events, please contact the SSBA's new Breed Stand Officer, Barry Hodson, on 01925 765304 or 01744 811124.

## ANOTHER EXPORT

AN export consignment of 26 Shropshires was sent by SSBA members to Northern Ireland recently. The sheep were purchased by Dolway McCorry (Ballinderry Flock). Ewe lambs were supplied from the Hayne Oak Flock (E Bowles & M Bray); the Hilltop Flock (D & A Tordoff) and the Clipston Flock (R Webb), with a ram lamb from the Piddington Flock (S Farquhar).

## SHEEP SALES

MEMBERS who have sold Shropshires privately during the past 12 months are requested to send the contact details of the purchasers to the SSBA's Secretary, Jane Wilson. The Society would like to keep in touch with these new flock owners and , if possible, persuade them to join the SSBA.

## STOCK PRICES

BREED society officers are often asked for guide prices by members who have pedigree stock for sale. Council has discussed this and suggests that breeders should use the upset prices set for our national show and sale as a guide, while emphasising that these are *minimum* prices. In 2009, the upset prices were: Ewe lambs: £90; shearling ewes: £140; older ewes: £65; ram lambs: £140; shearling rams: £180. Guide prices for 2010 will be issued next spring.

## EXPORT PRICES 2010

THE SSBA's Council has set next year's export prices as follows:
Shearling Ewes: £240/head;
Two-Shear Breeding Ewes: £200/head;
Ewe lambs: £160/head;
Shearling ram of unspecified Scrapie genotype: £480;
Shearling ram (specified R1 genotype): £610;
Ram lamb of unspecified Scrapie genotype: £380;
Ram lamb (specified R1 genotype): £460.

No prices were fixed for older rams or for ewes older than two-shear. The Society's Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, will use her own judgement on the price for these animals, if they are required by export buyers.

Members wishing to be considered for exports in 2010 *must* submit their completed annual flock returns to the Registrar by 31st January 2010 and tick the relevant "export" box on the form. Their flocks must also meet the specified health status requirements: MV Accreditation, as well as being Scrapie Monitored. Flocks do not need to be Scrapie Monitored if the stock they are offering for export is of the ARR/ARR Scrapie genotype. However, genotype testing must have been carried out by a laboratory that is approved by DEFRA for export testing. Please contact Sue Farquhar for a list of these facilities (01531 670439). A full version of the SSBA's updated export regulations will be published in the 2009 flock book, but copies can also be obtained on request from the Registrar, Alison Schofield, on 01477 533256.


**SHROPTALK**
is edited by **Pippa Geddes**
psellwood@aol.com
01743 741689
and produced by **Jane Wilson**
jane.winkwell@btinternet.com
01434 240435
**Contributions are welcome!**


# NEWS FROM THE SSBA'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**THE SSBA's Annual General Meeting was held at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich on Saturday 14th November. Twenty two Shropshire breeders attended the event**.

Les Newman gave his first report as President and thanked the Officers of the society for their hard work through the year. He also mentioned the sad demise of three shows in 2009: the Royal Lancashire, the Shropshire and West Midlands and the Royal Show, where Shropshire sheep were exhibited for the first time in 1853.

Registrar, Alison Schofield, reported that while ram registrations for the year have remained steady, a total of 850 females have been registered. This figure represents an increase of nearly 140 registrations, year-on-year. The number of live ewes in the UK has reached 3000 for the first time in over 40 years. Although this figure is likely to be adjusted downwards after the annual flock returns are received, it is still a big milestone for our breed. The membership of the SSBA has also increased to 146, with a total of 23 new flocks established in 2009, compared with a figure of 14 for the previous year.

A raffle was held, with gifts kindly donated by society members, which raised a total of £120 for the SSBA's funds. The second draw for this year was made for the "100 Club". Ticket winners were No 12 Barry Hodson and No 32 Pippa Geddes, winning £50 and £25, respectively.

### NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

Three new council members were elected: Liz Bowles (Hayne Oak flock) Jean Jones (Sperrin View Flock) our first Council member from Northern Ireland; and Richard Spencer (Benfield Flock).

### COUNCIL OFFICERS

At the Council Meeting following the AGM, Les Newman was reappointed President and Pippa Geddes was reappointed Vice President for the next year. All other Council Officers agreed to remain in their posts: Jane Wilson (Secretary); Marion Webb (Treasurer); Alison Schofield (Registrar); Claire Jakeman (Sales Officer); Sue Farquhar (Export Officer); Anne Harvey (Merchandise and Awards Officer), Pippa Geddes (Publicity Officer) and Barry Hodson (Breed Stand Officer).

### MEMORANDUM & ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Copies of the SSBA's amended Memorandum and Articles of Association, which have now been ratified by the Charities Commission, are available on request from the SSBA's Secretary, Jane Wilson.

### PHOTOS NEEDED

Good quality photos of Shropshires are needed for the next Flock Book and the 2009 Year Book. Pictures of show winners and general shots of sheep in their "working clothes" should be sent to Alison Schofield by mid-February (earlier if possible).

## SHROPSHIRES AS CROSSING SIRES AND MEAT PRODUCERS

PUBLICITY officer, Pippa Geddes, would like to hear from breeders who've sold Shropshire tups to commercial lamb producers, especially if they can provide facts and figures about the performance of Shropshire progeny — such as lamb survival rates, good growth rates, and the ability of lambs to finish from grass alone.

Additionally, can anyone provide *recent* carcass grading sheets for Shropshire lambs (either pure-bred or cross-bred), which could be used by the breed society to promote the use of Shropshires as terminal sires?

**THE SHROPSHIRE SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION wishes all its members a Happy Christmas, a successful lambing and a prosperous New Year !**