

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Winter 2010

NEW PRESIDENT FOR THE SSBA - BASED IN SHROPSHIRE

PIPPA Geddes from Alderton in Shropshire is the new President of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association. She is the first President of the Society for nearly 40 years to actually reside in the breed's home county.

Pippa and her husband, Peter, have a 50-acre farm situated near Montford Bridge, eight miles north west of Shrewsbury. Their farm is home to the Alderton Flock of 50 Shropshire ewes and a pedigree beef suckler herd of 18 Red Ruby Devon cows plus followers, the latter being managed in partnership with a neighbouring farmer.

As the "local" sheep breed, Shropshires seemed the obvious choice to the Geddes's when they decided to establish a pedigree flock. But that was back in 1999, when there were surprisingly few flocks of Shropshires in the county. Pippa remembered that the parents of one of her university friends, Liz Bowles, kept Shropshires. And so the Alderton flock was eventually established with 25 ewes and a ram purchased from the Side-downs Flock in Devon. Another four ewes were added when the Trefos Flock owned by Wendy Davies was dispersed in 2002. All flock replacements have been home-bred for the past eight years.

The Red Ruby Devons were added to the Geddes's farm in 2003, with the purchase of four females who very obligingly bred a

succession of heifer calves for the first few years. Red Rubies were chosen because Pippa and Peter were keen to keep another native breed and Pippa had worked with the cattle before in Devon during 1977/78. Despite the very harsh winter that year (much worse than the weather we've recently experienced) the Devons were extremely resilient. Their beef also tastes fantastic, according to Pippa.

Although Peter's grandparents ran a large mixed farm in Yorkshire, Pippa has no family connections with the industry. She has, however, worked in agriculture all her adult life: Having gained a degree in agriculture from Wye College (London University), she worked for the Milk Marketing Board and then moved into agricultural journalism. She was a features writer for two national farming magazines, *Milk Producer* and *Stock*, and a sub-editor on *Crops* and *Farmers Weekly*. In 1990, she won the Guild of Agricultural Journalists' annual prize for the best livestock article.

Moving to Shropshire to work for a large agricultural PR agency in 1991, she has been a marketing consultant for many well-known national companies in the farming sector. However, in 2003, Pippa scaled back her full-time PR work to devote more time to

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Pippa with some of the Alderton Flock, due to lamb December/January.

NEWS FROM THE AGM

THERE was an excellent turnout at the SSBA's AGM at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich on 13th November, with 47 members and four guests present.

The retiring President of the breed society, Les Newman, thanked everyone for attending and introduced the society's officers and the SSBA's new Secretary, Simon Mackay, who took over this important post in September. All officers presented reports, which were full of good news as the popularity of Shropshire sheep continues to grow.

SALES

Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman, reported that society members have enjoyed an excellent year, with a large export order to France of 100 ewe lambs; a very successful inaugural show and sale at Shrewsbury; and buoyant private sales. Most breeders had sold out by the end of the summer. She urged members to make full use of the SSBA's website to advertise their stock in future, as many buyers are now searching on-line.

REGISTRATIONS

Registrar, Alison Schofield, revealed that a record number of 40 new flocks of Shropshires have been formed in 2010.

Ewe registrations have also continued to rise and the total number of registered females now stands at 3274. Although this figure will decrease slightly after the annual flock returns are processed, it is the highest ever recorded in modern times.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Two new Council members were elected: Monique Hustinx from Dorset and Patrick Delaney from County Wexford, Eire. Pippa Geddes was elected as the new President and Sue Shimwell as Vice President. All other Society officers agreed to continue in their current posts. See the back page for their contact details.

DON'T FORGET YOUR FLOCK RETURN!

Please complete and send back to our Registrar by 31st Jan 2011

Your annual Flock Return should be included with this newsletter. If it is missing, please contact Alison immediately on 01477 533256 alisonschofield@hotmail.com

NEW PRESIDENT

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the farm and also to use her marketing skills to help promote Shropshire sheep. Peter continues with his job as a finance director, often travelling abroad on business.

Pippa became the SSBA's Publicity Officer in 2000 – a post which she holds to this day. As part of this role, she edits and designs *ShropTalk* and produces other publicity material for the society, including the 2nd edition of *Two Crops From One Acre*, general breed leaflets and the latest breed stand posters.

Having held the post of Secretary of the SSBA for four years from 2003 to 2007, Pippa has a very good understanding of all the breed society's activities. She is also currently the Coordinator of the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme, which encourages flocks to record the performance of their sheep with Signet Breeding Services. She sees this as an essential key to making our breed more appealing to commercial sheep farmers.

The Geddes's started showing their Shropshires in 2004 and have won three breed championships to date. Pippa would like to do more showing but, unfortunately, the sheep events often overlap with dressage competitions. She is a keen amateur rider and has two horses competing successfully in British Dressage shows up to Medium level. Her ambition is to ride at Advanced level before she gets too old and has to retire!

Another area of Pippa's life connected with Shropshires is her small wool business, "Flock of Ages", which she started in 2007 with her sister, Lyn. Wool from the Alderton flock is spun into knitting yarn which is then used to produce a range of hand-knitted gifts. Pippa admits that she hasn't inherited any "knitting genes" herself, but luckily her sister is very talented in this area, designing the patterns and managing a small team of hand-knitters.

The gifts are marketed mainly via a website, www.flockofages.co.uk, and through local shops and gift fairs.

EXCELLENT TEAM

Looking ahead to her two-year term as President, Pippa says: "This is a very exciting time for the Shropshire society. We had a record number of new flocks formed this year and most breeders had sold out of stock well before the end of the summer.

"New markets, such as orchard grazing, are just beginning to open up for our sheep. Coupled with the general resurgence of interest in native breeds, these developments should enable Shropshires to thrive in the years ahead.

"The SSBA has an excellent team of officers and council members who all work extremely hard for the benefit of the society as a whole. I look forward to assisting them to ensure that the Shropshire breed has a very secure future."

PRESENTATIONS AT THE AGM



Above Left: Les Newman presents Sue Farquhar (Piddington Flock) with the Farquhar Trophy for show points accrued from Shropshire breed classes. Above Right: Sally Evans (Heath End Flock) won the President's Trophy for show points obtained in "Any Other Breed" classes.



Above Left: Alice Clay (Showle Flock) won the Hornpipe Quaich for Junior Members. Above Right: Sue Farquhar collected the Novice Trophy on behalf of her granddaughter, Ellie Butcher (Piddington Flock).



TROPHIES GALORE!

MOST of the showing trophies belonging to the breed society were brought to this year's AGM and displayed for members (see picture below)

Out-going President, Les Newman, had arranged for a professional silversmith to attend the event to value all the cups, shields and salvers for insurance purposes.

Many of the trophies date back to the heyday of the Shropshire breed and they carry a fascinating record of some of the most notable flocks from past decades.



Pippa Geddes thanks Les Newman for his two-year term as the SSBA's President. She presented Les, a rugby enthusiast, with an England rugby shirt on behalf of the Society's Members.



SHROPSHIRE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME IN ACTION

FIFTEEN Shropshire flocks are now recording the performance of their sheep as part of the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme (SBIS). A summary of results, listing the top stock sires used last season, ranked by Signet Index, and the top five ram lambs bred by each SBIS flock in 2010, is included with this edition of *Shrop-Talk*. Pictured here are some of the top stock sires and some of the top ram lambs. All these animals have Signet Indices in the top 25% of the breed. The Signet Index identifies animals with superior growth, carcass and maternal traits. The breed average score is 100.



Brereton Nimrod (above) with a Signet Index of 136 was Supreme Rare Breed Sheep Champion at Cheshire County Show 2010.



Ushers Udell (above right) with an Index of 218, was shown once at Burwarton in 2010 and won the ram lamb class. The lamb on the left, KX10060, has an Index of 169.



Morley Malik, (above) 3rd in the breed class and 3rd in the Performance Recorded class at Cheshire County Show 2010 (his only show this season). His Signet Index is 166.



Ushers Shaun (above) has a Signet Index of 155. He was 1st at Oswestry Show 2010.



Hayne Oak ram lambs (above and below) with Signet Indices between 148 and 212.



Ushers Tiger (above), Index 218, was the winner of the Performance Recorded Ram class and the Shearling Ram Class at Cheshire County Show 2010.



Alderton Bradman (above two pictures) was breed champion at Burwarton Show in 2008 and has an Index of 174.



Alderton Special Agent (pictured above right) was 1st at Minsterley Show 2010. His Signet Index is 144.

Roydon Rufus (right) Reserve Breed Champion at the Three Counties Show in 2007 (World Congress) has an Index of 127.



NEWS IN BRIEF

FRENCH BREEDERS TO JOIN THE SSBA

THE SSBA's Council has recently agreed that the breed society will register pedigree Shropshire sheep bred by farmers in France.

In the past three years over 350 Shropshire ewes and around 15 rams have been exported to France from the UK. However, there is currently no French flock book society able to register the purebred progeny of these sheep. French breeders are, understandably, keen to ensure that they retain the value of their animals by keeping them registered. More details of this agreement will follow in the Spring *ShopTalk*.

NATIONAL SHOW AND SALE DATES FOR 2011

THE very successful National Show & Sale (West) held at Shrewsbury Livestock Market this year will now become a regular event. Next year's date has been set as **Saturday 2nd July**.

The date for the National Show and Sale (East) at Melton Mowbray Livestock Market is **Saturday 10th September**, with the Shropshire showing classes being held on Friday September 9th.

CHANGE TO IRISH EXPORT REGULATIONS

IN order to encourage the formation of registered flocks of Shropshires in Ireland, the SSBA's Council has agreed to relax the Society's export regulations for sheep sold and moved between Northern Ireland and Eire, and vice versa, with immediate effect.

This means that there will be no export levy payable to the breed society for sheep moved over the border. Furthermore, sheep can be sold at prices set by the vendors, rather than at the SSBA's agreed export prices.

The usual £3/head transfer fee must still be paid by the breeder/owner to the SSBA when Shropshire sheep are sold. Breeders should also remember that ewes and lambs over four months old must be registered by the breeder before any change of ownership, even if they are sold to an unregistered or

non-Shropshire flock. Ewe lambs under four months old need only be Birth Notified. These are general regulations that apply to all members of the SSBA.

The changes to the SSBA's Irish export regulations do not affect the governments' normal health requirements and official licences that may be needed for trans-border movements of sheep. Farmers must continue to comply with these when moving sheep between NI and Eire, and vice versa.

Sales of Shropshires from Great Britain to either NI or Eire will still be considered an Export Sale by the breed society and the SSBA's normal regulations will apply (see the 2009 Flock Book).

If you require further clarification of this rule change, or assistance with buying and selling sheep in Eire/NI, please contact our Irish Breed Coordinators, Jean Jones (NI) and Pat Delaney (Eire). They are here to help! Their contact details are shown on the right.

PICTURES PLEASE!

WE are looking for good quality pictures of Shropshires for use in the next flock book and other breed society publications. If you have any that might be suitable, please send them to Alison Schofield or Pippa Geddes. If you have prints, rather than digital images, we can scan them and return the photos. Digital images can be sent by email. All kinds of Shropshire sheep pictures are welcome. *The seasonal scene below was taken recently by Bruce Jobson (Hazon Mill Flock) based in Northumberland.*



Shropshire shearling ewes in Germany. Photo kindly supplied by Gert Bank.

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**THE SSBA WISHES ALL ITS
MEMBERS A
HAPPY CHRISTMAS, A
SUCCESSFUL LAMBING
AND A PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR!**