

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Autumn 2018

RAMS AND YOUNGER FEMALES IN DEMAND AT SHREWSBURY SHOW AND SALE

THE SSBA's National Show and Sale (West) was held at Halls' Auction Centre in Shrewsbury on 29th July. The number of Shropshires entered and forward was slightly down on the previous year but buyers appreciated the quality available.

The Show started at 9.00am. Clive Davies, the well-known Hereford and Shropshire breeder, had some interesting classes to judge.

The Senior Ram Class was won by Roger Howell with his three-shear ram Hayne Oak Ronald.

The Shearling Ram Class was won by Stonegrove Eclipse from the Stonegrove Livestock flock, sired by Stonegrove Carthorse. The runner-up was Tushbrook Darwyn from Eleanor Russell. This ram's sire was Piddington Jack.

The Ram Lamb Class was won by Brereton ram lamb (739DB18) sired by Brereton Stirling with another from Mark and Sue Shimwell (729DB18) in second place, also being sired by the same ram.

There were no adult ewes forward for showing.

The Shearling Ewe Class was dominated by Stonegrove Livestock with first and

second places for sheep from their flock. 272XP17 was first with 280XP17 being second, both of whom were again sired by Stonegrove Carthorse and the dams both sired by Ushers Bradley.

In the Ewe Lamb Class Stonegrove were again to the fore with 325XP18 sired by Stonegrove Chester winning the class and Brereton 741DB18 was runner-up, this sheep being sired by Alderton Forsyth.

After much thought Clive Davies picked out the Stonegrove shearling ewe as the Champion with Mark and Sue Shimwell's ram lamb being the reserve and the best opposite sex to the champion. Eleanor Russell's shearling ram was the best sheep owned by Junior member. The Stonegrove ewe went on to win the Osmonds' Interbreed trophy against the Dorset Down ram which was the overall winner of the Other Breeds section.

SALE OF SHEEP

Trade was much stronger for all males and the younger females with the overall price per head being up by £74 on the previous year. The top price for the sale was taken by the Shimwells'

Brereton ram lamb, the second in the show class, who went for 840 guineas to CP Goulding. The first prize ram lamb sold for 720 guineas to RT Davies & Co with E & T Powell paying the same price for the Stonegrove Livestock shearling ram placed first. Also over the 500 guinea mark were Ellie Russell's shearling ram making 580 guineas, D Freeman's shearling ram at 620 guineas and CA Weaver's ram lamb at 520 guineas.

48 of the 55 females forward were sold with much improved prices for the shearlings and ewe lambs. The top price paid for a female was 400 guineas for a ewe lamb from P&A Schofield. Hornpipe 241FN18 was sired by Morley Typhoon with the dam by Roydon Raiden Jack. The top price for a shearling ewe was 390 guineas for Stonegrove's Champion shearling ewe. Also over 300 guineas were two ewe lambs from the Clay family in the non-accredited section. It was good to see prices improving across the board in that section too.

All but one of the rams sold through the ring, there being fewer animals this year to choose from leading to competitive bidding.

Report by Les Newman

SHOW RESULTS

Adult Ram Class

1. R Howell

Shearling Ram Class

1. Stonegrove Livestock, 2. E Russell, 3. E Bowles & M Bray

Ram Lamb Class

1. & 2. M&S Shimwell, 3. A&M Webb

Adult Ewe Class - none forward

Shearling Ewe Class

1. & 2. Stonegrove Livestock, 3. M&S Shimwell

Ewe Lamb Class

1. Stonegrove Livestock, 2. M&S Shimwell, 3. The Clay Family

Champion
Stonegrove Livestock (Shearling Ewe)

Reserve Champion

M&S Shimwell (Ram Lamb)

Best Sheep Owned by a Junior Member

E Russell (Shearling Ram)

SALE RESULTS

Adult Rams: Top 390gns, (1 av £410);

Shearling Rams: Top 720gns (11 av £400);

Ram Lambs: Top 840gns (7 av £476);

Adult Ewes: Top 180gns (7 av £147);

Shearling Ewes: Top 390gns (13 av £263);

Ewe Lambs: Top 400gns (28 av £228)

67 head overall average: £283

19 males sold from 20 forward

48 females sold from 55 forward



Stonegrove Livestock's Breed and Interbreed Champion shearling ewe, pictured with (left to right) Richard, William and Archie Dorrell.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE Society's AGM will be held on 24th November at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich. A formal invitation will be sent to members in due course.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS NEEDED

THE breed society is looking for new Council members to join the Council from November this year. If you would like to stand as a Council Member, please contact our Secretary, Simon Mackay, by 16th November. In order to be considered you need to be proposed in writing by another member of the Society. Council meetings take place at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich (close to junction 1 of the M5) and there are usually three or four held every year.

COUNTRYFILE LIVE

ROSIE Lee owner of the Rosaline Flock, based near Winsford was asked to join the "Passion For Farming" area at the CountryFile Live event at Blenheim Palace in August.

"The foot fall over the four days is estimated at 120,000. The #365sheep team were amongst all the other livestock represented with our own dedicated arena. We had shearing demonstrations, a pretend auction, descriptions of the fleeces and the products made from the them. The public had the opportunity to come up to the sheep in the pens which were mainly rare breeds from Cotswold Park and the Scottish mules of Blenheim Palace," says Rosie. "It was fantastic to be able to answer so many questions from the public and discuss current aspects of the industry and Brexit. Everyone was very appreciative of the farming industry and the challenges it faces. My personal challenge is to get some Shropshires on stand next year!"



Rosie pictured 2nd from right.

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"Friends of Shropshire Sheep"

BUYERS VERY THIN ON THE GROUND AT MELTON MOWBRAY

THE SSBA's National Show and Sale (East) took place at Melton Mowbray Market on the 7th and 8th September. This was part of the larger Native and Rare Breeds event organised by Grassroots Systems.

Not all the Shropshires entered in the catalogue were forward on the day, leading to rather sparse show classes. Judge Carol Watson placed shearling ram Haugmond Buster, by Haughmond Amazing Tom, in first place in the ram class and then as Breed Champion. A ewe lamb from Madders and Johnson's Blackheath Flock was Reserve Champion.

The sale on the following day failed to attract many buyers and only ten Shropshires were sold through the ring. Top price of these was achieved by the show Champion, who was sold to Maggie Wilson of Swadlincote, Derbyshire. Demand for stock of all kinds appeared to be low throughout the market, and possibly this was the result of the very hot, dry summer affecting the available grazing on many farms.

Having said that, the SSBA's National Show and Sale East has struggled for a few years now, and its future will be discussed by Council. Please contact the SSBA's Secretary or any Council Member if you have strong views on this event or ideas about how it could be improved for Society Members.

Show and Sale Results

Show classes

Ram: 1. AL and ME Webb, 2. R Webb

Ram Lamb: 1. R Webb

Ewe: No entries

Ewe Lamb: 1. Madders & Johnson, 2. L

Arrowsmith, 3. L Arrowsmith

Champion: AL and ME Webb with

Shearling ram Haughmond Buster

Reserve Champion: Madders &

Johnson with ewe lamb Blackheath

4609RL18

Judge: Carol Watson

Sale Results

Breeding Ewes: Top price 50gns,

Average £51.45 (5 sold)

Ewe Lambs: Top price 100gns, Average

price £98 (3 sold)

Rams: Top price 200gns, Av £210 (1

sold)

Ram Lambs: Top price 160gns, Av

£168 (1 sold)

Total sold:10.

Top price £200gns, Av Price £92.93



Melton Show Champion, Haughmond Buster (left) owned by Marion and Aubrey Webb, and Reserve Champion a Blackheath ewe lamb bred by Madders and Johnson. Pictured with judge Carol Watson.

HEREFORDSHIRE OPEN-DAY

SSBA MEMBERS enjoyed a sunny day and a warm welcome at Hansnett Farm, near Ledbury, the first of two venues hosting an open-day on 1st July. The breed society's new exhibition pull-ups were on display and so, too, were some pens of Shropshire sheep - ready for inspection. Host, Sue Farquhar, had selected a few animals to be "judged" by the open-day visitors. The idea was to take a close look at the sheep and decide which ones should be kept as flock replacements. This was a bit of fun whilst at the same time a learning experience. This was followed by a farm walk and a chance to see the rest of the Hansnett and Piddington flocks. After lunch, visitors moved on to Showle Court, Monkhide, home to the Clay family who run a large flock of Shropshires alongside their other farming enterprises. This visit gave breeders a chance to learn more about grazing sheep in cider orchards. The breed society would like to thank both host farms for a very interesting day.



GAINING A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON SHROPSHIRE

EARLY in the morning on 6th July, several breeders headed to Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire, each with five of their best ram lambs. These animals were the first Shropshires to go through the mobile CT Scanner Unit that comes to England once a year to evaluate lambs from terminal sire breeds.

The scanning equipment is exactly the same as that employed for human medical imaging. It is all housed neatly in the body of an articulated lorry and operated by experienced technicians Kirsty Mclean and John Gordon.



The whole operation runs like clockwork and with minimal stress to the animals. Watching them at work, it is easy to believe that these two people alone have scanned over 25,000 lambs in the past decade!

Computed Tomography (CT) scanning is a high tech way of evaluating the carcass and bone structure of live animals. Lambs are passed through a circular gantry, where low dosage X-Rays are used to take a full body scan, storing cross sectional images every 8mm down the length of the body. The scanning process, which measures the muscle, fat and bone across the whole carcass takes less than three minutes.

CT Scanning predicts to an accuracy of 96 to 98% the muscle shape, including gigot shape and eye muscle area. It also measures the muscle to bone ratio, the muscle to fat ratio, total spine length, pelvic width and killing out percentage. All these attributes are important for breeders aiming to produce good meat lambs, and so the CT results enable the very best sheep to be identified.

On this occasion, a total of 20 Shropshire lambs from four different flocks were scanned. The animals chosen had already been identified as having potentially very good carcass characteristics through the ultrasound scanning that is carried out by the breed improvement scheme. The CT scans will add a lot of information to what we know already about these particular animals, and the scans will also give us a good indication of how Shropshires compare with other terminal sire breeds. For example, spine length - positive feedback from butchers has indicated that Shropshires have longer backs than some breeds. It will be interesting to know if this is actually the case. We will be given access to some comparative data from other terminal sire breeds that participate in CT scanning which will help us to see how our breed compares. We will then be in a better position to promote the Shropshire breed and to develop it to meet current and future market demands.



Lambs are mildly sedated, then strapped into a purpose built cradle with plenty of padding to ensure they are comfortable.



The cradle is then taken by an external lift into the scanning unit.



A tea towel is placed over the lamb's head to further reduce stress, and the animal is then passed through a circular gantry, while low dose X-rays are beamed around it and a scan of the whole body recorded.



Examples of scans of the gigot area in Shropshire lambs.

The cost of the CT Scanning was partially funded by the breed society as these data will be of benefit to all breeders. The SSBA would like to thank all the flocks that took part: Alderton (Peter and Pippa Geddes), Cefn-Carnau (Robert and Alison Kerby), Hayne Oak (Mike Bray and Liz Bowles) and Ushers (Aubrey and Marion Webb).

SHROPSHIRE SHEPHERDS SHINE IN THE YOUNGSTARS CONTEST

Three of the SSBA's Junior Members took part in this year's National Youngstars Competition - a relatively new event designed to showcase the livestock industry's future talent. Ellie Russell tells us more about the experience.

Firstly, I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank the society for sponsoring our team which allows us to enter the competition and gives us the chance to represent the younger generation of Shropshire breeders. We can put all our practical skills to the test as well as learning new ones. Another big thank you goes to our team leader, Rosie Lee, and our mentor, Sue Farquhar. Rosie's enthusiasm and commitment to the team is a real confidence boost and Sue's experience and knowledge that she has passed onto us is so greatly appreciated by me, George and Owen.

Our journey this year started with our annual sheep camp which my family and I hosted at the Tushbrook. It was the first time we have opened the farm up to other Shropshire breeders. We started by challenging our stock judging skills on our Shropshire cross commercial lambs followed by trimming. Both workshops led by Sue. The following day we focused on our presentation stand and a review of stock judging. We had great fun and I enjoyed showing everyone around my flock for the first time!

A few weeks later, the competition took place at Three Counties Show-ground, Malvern. After a few hours of hard work, our stand was complete. This really tested our teamwork skills, but we were all pleased with the result. Our other task on the first day was stock judging. We were faced with a great pen of Beltex ewe lambs supplied by Andrew Bishop to be judged as prime lamb. Beltex being a very different breed of sheep than we were all used to, we learnt a lot from the judge's placings and reasoning of these lambs.

The second day was the real test. The show allocated 4 hours for trimming. Our team had a



Team members (left to right) Ellie Russell, George Clay and Owen Powell pictured with their trimmed lambs and standing in front of their well presented breed stand.

difficult pair to trim out. One open fleeced ewe lamb and one tight fleeced ewe lamb. We managed to make them a good pair despite this, which really pleased us and gained us some extra points as the judges could see the difference in the lambs before and what the final finish was.

Everyone's final challenge was ring craft and the interview. George and Owen did a great job showing the lambs and really impressed the judges. I volunteered to be interviewed. I wasn't sure how this went until Rosie said she had tears of joy! For one of my first public speaking experiences, it really made me happy and confident to know how proud everyone behind our team was.

In the final presentation, the Shropshire Young Shepherds were placed 4th and Owen won best

under 16 shepherd in the trimmed section. This was a proud moment as a member of our team walked away with this award!

It would be great for more young shepherds to join us and create another team, whether in the trimmed or untrimmed section. It's a real chance to demonstrate the potential and enthusiasm the next generation has. It has really helped me, George and Owen to become closer and work as a team which is so important to bring the breed forward for the future.

Junior Members who would like to train with a view to participating in the Youngstars Event next year, please contact Rosie Lee on 01606 592186.

ANOTHER EXCELLENT YEAR FOR EXPORTS



Stock pictured at Sue Farquhar's export assembly centre in early September: Sheep were sent to buyers in France, Germany, Belgium, Ireland and the Netherlands. In total, the following were supplied: 67 shearling ewes, 41 ewe lambs and 20 males. Thanks to Sue Farquhar and Claire Jakeman for organising the sales and all the flock-owners that supplied sheep this year - Liz Bowles and Mike Bray, Anne Tordoff, Trevor Lighfoot, Michael Von Bruggenburg-Rothschild, Marion and Aubrey Webb, Robbert Webb, Jeanette and Robert Hares, Claire Jakeman, Janet and Charles Morris, Ellie Butcher, Alison Schofield and Sue Farquhar.