

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Summer 2017

HANSNETT EWE WINS AT SHREWSBURY

THERE was a record entry of Shropshires in the National Show and Sale (West) at Shrewsbury Market on 30th July. The event celebrated 100 years of Shropshire sheep sales being held in the town. To mark this, all vendors received a special rosette and extra prizes were kindly supplied by local companies, Tanners' Wines and Maelor Feeds.

The show classes were judged by Robyn Hulme, a well-known breeder of NZ Suffolk, Texel and Sufftex sheep. Class sizes varied, but those for shearling rams, ram lambs, shearling ewes and ewe lambs were hotly contested. The results are shown on the right.

Mr Hulme selected a shearling ewe from Ellie Butcher's Hansnett Flock in Herefordshire as the overall champion. The ewe was sired by Irish ram Strangford Sam. The reserve champion was a shearling ram from the Kingfisher Flock of S Dewey, Stoke on Trent, sired by Roydon Ralph. In the sale, animals from the Brereton Flock of Sue and Mark Shimwell were particularly sought after, with the highest price of the sale (560gns) achieved by a Brereton shearling ewe, with a flock mate sold for 440gns. The highest priced male was the shearling ram, Stonegrove Dynamite, sold for 400gns.

A more detailed report will be published soon on the SSBA's website.

Show Class Results

Senior Ram: 1. & 2. S Wilkin; 3. M & L Cooper. Shearling Ram: 1. S Dewey; 2. C Coleman; 3. Stonegrove Livestock. Ram Lamb: 1. M&S Shimwell; 2. J Hares; 3. Stonegrove Livestock. Breeding Ewe: 1. & 2. R C Webb. Shearling Ewe: 1. E Butcher; 2. & 3. Stonegrove Livestock. Ewe Lamb: 1. M&S Shimwell; 2. A Clay; 3. P Richards.

Champion: E Butcher (Shearling Ewe). Reserve and Best Opposite Sex to the Champion: S Dewey (Shearling Ram). Judge: Robyn Hulme.

Winner of the Best Sheep Owned by a Junior Member: E Butcher (Sh Ewe). Winner of the Southworth Trophy for the best prepared pen of Shropshire sheep: Stonegrove Livestock (two ewe lambs). Winner of the Halls Trophy for the highest priced Shropshire from a small flock sold through the ring: M&S Shimwell.

Sale Results

Senior Rams: Top 160gns, 3 average £137. Shearling Rams: Top 400gns, 9 average £263. Ram Lambs: Top 360gns, 5 average £277. Adult Ewes: Top 170gns, 6 average £150. Shearling Ewes: Top 560gns, 27 average £245. Ewe Lambs: Top 280gns, 30 average £167. 17 males sold from 34 forward. 63 females sold from 73 forward.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Breed Society's AGM will be held at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich on Saturday November 25th starting at 10am, with coffee and tea available from 9.30am. There will also be a complimentary buffet lunch for all members attending, if booked in advance.

Council is currently looking at a number of options for a guest speaker and more information will follow as soon as possible. Please attend the AGM to support your breed society!

CHANGE OF PRESIDENT

Paul Stead stepped down as President of the SSBA in July because he no longer has sufficient time available to continue in the role. Vice President, Barry Hodson, has taken over as acting President until the Council Meeting after the AGM in November, when Council will vote in a new President.

SHOW AND SALE EAST

We have a very good entry of 73 Shropshires (65 females and 8 males) in our National Show and Sale East at Melton Mowbray Market on 8th and 9th September. Shropshire showing classes are held on the Friday starting at 2pm and the sale is the following day. Catalogues will be available online via Grassroots Systems' website (www.grassroots.co.uk).

YOUNG STARS TEAM

The SSBA is delighted to announce that the breed society is sending a team to the National Young Stars Competition at the Royal Three Counties Showground in August.

The team members are: George Clay (Swallows Flock), Owen Powell (Goblindale Flock) and Ellie Russell (Tushbrook Flock). The team manager is Council Member, Rosie Lee. This is the first time the SSBA has sent a team of young members to an event such as this and we wish them every success!



The Champion Shearling ewe, shown by Sue Farquhar, pictured with (left to right) Charles Morris from the organising committee, and sponsors James Tanner and Claire Jakeman.



GRASSROOTS REMINDER

Please remember to Birth Notify your lambs as soon as possible after lambing via Grassroots, our on-line flock book. There is no charge for this and it will make it easier for you later on when you come to register any stock.

Please also, every so often, go through your stock list on-line and remove any animals that have died, been culled or sold etc. It is important that we keep the database as accurate as possible, because this enables the SSBA to analyse our National Flock and monitor trends.



WOOL ON THE HOOF WINNER

A Shearling ewe bred by Anne Harvey (Roydon Flock) won the Wool On The Hoof section at the Stafford County Show - a contest that's open to all breeds and judged by an expert from the Wool Marketing Board. She also took first prize in the fleece competition at the same event. Congratulations Anne!



ELLIE QUALIFIES FOR RBST YOUNG SHEPHERD CONTEST

Congratulations Ellie Russell, who qualified for the RBST Young Shepherd Contest by winning the class at the Berkshire County Show.



100 CLUB WINNERS

THE first draw of the 100 Club in 2017 was made in the spring and the winners were Yvonne Clinton Palmer, who won £45, and Jeanette Hares, who won £30.



Thanks to the SSBA's team that organised the National Show and Sale West: (left to right) Alison Schofield, Simon Mackay, Janet Morris, Charles Morris, & Jeanette Hares, plus everyone else who helped on the day!

NEW EDITION OF TWO CROPS FROM ONE ACRE

A new edition of *Two Crops From One Acre*, the comprehensive guide to managing Shropshire sheep in orchards, conifers and other types of plantation, was officially launched at the NSA Sheep South West event, near Tiverton on 20th June.

The updated publication has been produced by the SSBA with the help of a number of innovative growers. It replaces the previous edition, published in 2008, and contains much new advice about how to use Shropshires in a range of different deciduous trees. It also explains how Shropshires can be used safely in vineyards and commercial lavender fields.

"Over the past thirty years, Shropshire sheep have become well known as the 'tree friendly' breed, but to begin with they were used just in conifer plantations," explains Council Member Pippa Geddes, who published the new booklet for the SSBA.

"Since then, the breed has been used by many different commercial fruit growers and the breed society has gathered information from them about how best to manage the sheep in a range of scenarios. Quite a lot of the new advice about managing Shropshires in



fruit tree plantations comes from overseas, although our breed has also been used successfully in cider orchards and lavender fields in the UK."

Copies of the 48-page colour booklet will be available at events attended by the breed stand for £1 each. They can also be purchased from the SSBA's Secretary for £1.50, which includes postage and packing. Digital copies are free to download from the SSBA's website. All breed society members have already received a free copy.

WINNERS AT THE EARLY COUNTY SHOWS



Pictured below: Stafford County Show Winners - Breed Champion - Jeanette Hares with a ewe lamb (Millenheath Flock) and Reserve Champion - Owen Powell with a shearling ewe (Goblindale Flock). Pictured with judge Richard Dorrell.

Pictured above: two-shear ram, Stonegrove Carthorse, Breed Champion at the Royal Three Counties Show, with William and Archie Dorrell.



STRONG EXPORT DEMAND FOR SHROPSHIRE CONTINUES

A large consignment of 165 Shropshires left the Hansnett Farm export assembly centre in Herefordshire in July, destined for buyers in Belgium and The Netherlands. The export, supplied by breeders throughout the UK, was coordinated by Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, and Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman. Another export is scheduled for Spain (a new export country for the the SSBA!) leaving the UK in September.



Shearling ewes pictured at the export assembly centre.

A VERY SPECIAL FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH



Shropshire ewes are long-lived and prolific, as perfectly illustrated here in a photo taken by the Turnock family, owners of the Troutdale Flock, based near Leek in Staffordshire.

Pictured above (lying down) is "Evie" one of the flock's original foundation ewes, now aged 14. On the right is one of her daughters, number 7, and one of *her* daughters (number 86). At the back of the group, some of Evie's great granddaughters can also just be seen in the pen.

Last year, another one of the Turnock's foundation ewes (Barb) was a joint winner of the Sansaw Sidedowns most prolific ewe competition, having produced nine registered progeny at the time. Thank you Kathryn Turnock for sending us this success story!

COULD NEW WOODLANDS SCHEME BOOST INTEREST IN SHROPSHIRE?

FARMERS are to be incentivised to plant more trees with a new £13 million government fund. Up to £6,800 per hectare could be offered, according to a news item published recently in *Farmers Guardian*.

The journal reported that: DEFRA Minister Theresa Coffey confirmed the scheme to encourage the industry to boost the timber sector and reduce flood risk in a move to plant more than three million trees.

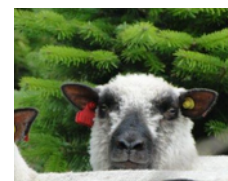
Ms Coffey said: "Our forests and woodlands are vital for providing timber, improving the environment and protecting our wildlife.

"The announcement demonstrates the government's on-going commitment to the forestry sector and to biodiversity, which afforestation delivers.

"I hope to see as many applications as possible so that this important industry can continue to thrive."

The fund falls under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme as part of discussions surrounding potential opportunities for Brexit. Application forms will be available in September in advance of the fund opening in January 2018.

The SSBA will be keeping a close eye on developments, bearing in mind that our sheep have a proven track record as the tree friendly breed.



REMINDER

NO MORE TRANSFER FEES

THE SSBA's Council took the decision to abolish Transfer of Ownership Fees from 1st June 2017. These fees, which were payable at £3 a head whenever an animal was sold for breeding, have proved very difficult to collect from members. In order to cover this lost income, the SSBA has introduced a modest increase of £1/head for all registration fees (whether paper or digital pedigree certificates) for both females and males. This also took effect from 1st June.

SHROPTALK

is edited by Pippa Geddes
(pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk) and printed
by Simon Mackay
shropshire_sheep@hotmail.com



Visit our Facebook page:
Friends of Shropshire Sheep,
and our
website: www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk
for all the latest news.

SANSAW TRIUMPHS AGAIN IN AHDB'S MOST IMPROVED FLOCK AWARDS

THE 2017 winner of the AHDB Beef and Lamb Better Returns Programme Improved Flock Award for Shropshire sheep is the flock owned by James Thompson at Sansaw Farms near Hadnall, Shropshire. The award is presented to the English Signet performance recorded flock that made the greatest improvement in the breeding potential of the lamb crop during the previous year.



James Thompson

The AHDB Better Returns Programme aims to highlight the financial impact that improved breeding and better lamb selection strategies can have on commercial flock profitability. This award seeks to reward breeders that are using Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) to enhance the performance of their flocks. The impact of performance recorded stock is significant and is increasing every year because of the activities of progressive farmers.

James Thompson's family has been based at Sansaw for around 150 years. The Shropshire flock was reintroduced to the Sansaw Estate in 2007 after the original flock had been dispersed in 1998. Shropshires have been part of James's family since the 1800s and, as a native breed, he thought it was important to bring them back as they were really part of the local landscape.

The Sansaw flock comprises 25 to 30 ewes kept within a tightly managed nucleus flock. The farm breeds its own replacements, retaining around 30% of the top ewe lambs while stock rams are bought in.

James began recording the performance of the flock with Signet in 2008, joining the SSBA's Breed Improvement Scheme.

He uses performance figures to aid his purchase of rams, concentrating on the Maternal Index (which includes Carcase plus Maternal Traits) in order to produce a functional sheep that is able to produce good flock replacements as well as aiding the breed's potential to produce lambs with a good butcher's carcase.

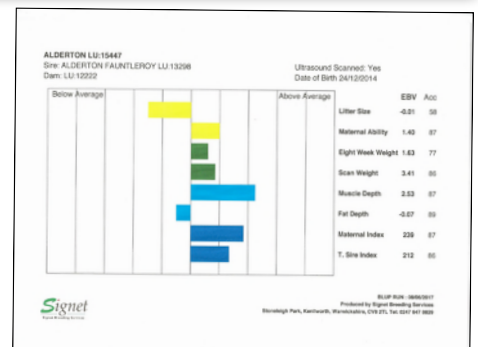
In autumn 2015, James selected an Alderton ram lamb which had EBV scores putting him in the top 5% for Maternal Index and an EBV for muscle depth in the top 5% of the breed. LU:15447 (Alderton Chubster) was also correct for conformation and breed standards, and was the Champion Male Shropshire at Oswestry Show as a ram lamb. James has used Chubster for two breeding seasons now. The first season resulted in his winning the AHDB award, based on the performance of the 2016 lamb crop. James will use the same ram for two breeding seasons and will then sell on. This allows the genetics within the flock to be continually changing and improve.

James sells his Shropshires to both pedigree and commercial breeders - sometimes attending the annual Society Show and Sale at Shrewsbury in July. James does not show any sheep at the other summer shows, however this is something that he thinks he could invest more time in, for marketing purposes.

The Sansaw Shropshires are kept as a sideline enterprise, as the Estate also runs a 1500-cow NZ Friesian X Jersey dairy unit and operates a property business. The management of the flock is kept tight: The ewes are given only one turn with the ram and those which do not hold are culled. Therefore fertility is a non-recorded trait that James concentrates highly on. The flock lambs in April, after the spring calving of the dairy herd, therefore the tight management regime is in place to assist the farm's workers.

Regarding the future, James plans to continue breeding high quality, high genetic merit sheep. In 2016, the Sansaw Flock was in the top 10% of the breed for both Maternal Index and Terminal Sire Index.

James is delighted about winning the AHDB Award this year and was surprised by the news, especially as the flock has won the award before on two occasions. James would like to thank Ioan Hughes and all that work at Sansaw Farms for their continued hard work and dedication.



Above: The latest (June 2017) Estimated Breeding Values for Alderton Chubster. These figures are now based on the performance of his 55 Sansaw progeny, as well as his own performance data as a lamb and the performance of his close relatives.

His Maternal Index score of 239 is still within the top 10% of the breed, although no longer top 5% because the breed average has moved up each year. His muscle depth EBV of 2.53 is also currently in the top 10% of the breed.



High genetic merit Sansaw ewes with lambs from the 2017 crop, sired by Alderton Chubster.

SHROPSHIRE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME 2017

The following flocks are members:

KX - Ushers; LU - Alderton;
LX - Hayne Oak; MR - Shebdon;
PQ - Madeley; TA - Sansaw;
TH - South Yeo; TR - Holloway;
TW - Millenheath; VP - Lukesland;
VZ - Timberline; XA - Apiary;
YU Ashley: ABB Cefn-Carnau
and AET - Redlands.

All SSBA members are welcome to join the Scheme. For more information please contact Pippa Geddes
pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk