

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Autumn 2017

YOUNG STARS BREAK NEW GROUND FOR SSBA

IN August, the Breed Society entered a team in the National Young Show Stars Event, held at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern. This is a relatively new contest for the livestock sector, designed to showcase the industry's future talent. The SSBA has never before entered a team, but with the help of team manager Rosie Lee, three of our younger sheep breeders set out to represent Shropshires in the Sheep Challenge. Rosie takes up the story:

Very proud to report back on the Shropshire Young Shepherds team competition adventure. Overall Fourth place, first time in the competition!

The team of 2017 included George Clay (16), Ellie Russell (16) and Owen Powell (12).

At the beginning a call went out for any young breeders in the Spring *ShropTalk* edition, to put themselves forward to form a team for entry. A plan was formulated and the team decided "Sheep Camp" was the answer.

In early August the team and parents rendezvoused in Herefordshire at the kind invitation of the Clays. With valuable input of all the young shepherds and coaching from Sue Farquhar the team practiced stock

judging, shared ideas and worked on trimming skills, but most importantly, became a team. It was wonderful to observe their passion and enthusiasm

The competition involves a wide spectrum of skills and knowledge. The team are observed from point of arrival on the show ground until the end of the competition by the "Scrutineers". The elements being marked include: Set-up of pens and working areas; handling the two chosen livestock; health and safety of themselves and the work area. There's a "skillathon" test, which involves answering questions across the industry, legislation, livestock welfare knowledge and other breed information. There is a stock judging session. Then the breed stand and its demonstration of industry contribution is marked. There is absolutely no contact with any team by related adults throughout.

In addition to arriving with washed sheep and then under watchful eyes of the scrutineer they prepare the sheep to show ring standard. After which one of the team is interviewed whilst the other members of the team demonstrate ring etiquette and show sheep in the ring. The atmosphere from arrival is electric. Entries

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The Shropshire Young Shepherds team (left to right) George Clay, Ellie Russell and Owen Powell, pictured with two of the judges.

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.

The Society's show points trophies will be presented at the meeting, as will the annual Sansaw Sidedowns Most Prolific Ewe Award. There will also be a number of long service awards for longstanding breeders. At the time *ShropTalk* went to press, the Council was in the process of confirming a guest speaker. Please see the formal invitation letter for details of this. We hope as many members as possible will attend the AGM to support the breed society!

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS NEEDED

AT least two breed society members are needed to join our Council from November 2017, when two of the current committee are due to step down. If you are interested in this, but require more information about what's involved, please contact our secretary Simon Mackay or any of the current Council members (listed in the most recent Flock Book and the website). If you would like to put your name forward, you need to confirm that in writing to the Secretary (an email will be sufficient), no later than 17th November. You will also need another member of the breed society to nominate you in writing by that date.

THE SSBA'S WEBSITE

AS breed society members will know, the website has been undergoing a major re-design for some time now.

The work involved has been considerably greater than first realised due to the amount of information that has built up on the site. Most of the historical data is still very useful to members, and this takes time to transfer over.

The SSBA's Secretary has recently been on a training course to allow him to update and maintain the new web pages when they are completed. We hope to seamlessly transfer over to the new site in the near future.

FLOCK RETURNS 2017

PLEASE remember to complete and return your Annual Membership Renewal and your Annual Flock Return on time. Both need to be received by the Registrations Clerk, Ruth Mawer, by 30th November 2017. Payment must be made by the same date.

Penalties for late payments and renewals will be applied at the following rates: £10 fine for those received after 30th November, rising to a £20 fine for those received after the 31st December 2017. Returns and Renewals received after 31st January 2018 will not be accepted.

EXPORT PRICES 2018

COUNCIL has decided to hold export prices for 2018 at the same level as this year. Prices are as follows: Shearling Rams £520 (£650 for ARR/ARR Scrapie Genotype); Ram Lambs £420 (£500 for ARR/ARR Scrapie Genotype); Shearling Ewes £300; Ewe Lambs £220. For more information about sheep exports and how to participate, please contact the Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, on 01531 670439.

NATIONAL SHOW AND SALE DATES 2018

THE date of our main national Show and Sale at Shrewsbury Market next year is Sunday 29th July.

The dates for our Eastern Show and Sale at Melton Mowbray are 7th and 8th September.

Council is also currently considering adding a third official show and sale at a venue further south and west than Shrewsbury, but held later in the year - late August or September. This would most likely be an established Rare or Traditional Breeds sale event. If you have any suggestions for this, please send them to our Secretary, Simon Mackay, by email.

“SELL MY LIVESTOCK” IS RECOMMENDED

A number of our members have tried using the on-line market place SellMyLivestock.co.uk and found this to be a good way to sell Shropshire sheep.

It does not cost anything to place a sales advert, although if you want to make your listing “Premium” - which guarantees that it will appear in the Website’s bi-weekly newsletter and social media streams, then there is a charge of £10 plus VAT.

The website offers useful advice about what to include in your advert. Good pictures are very important to generate interest from potential buyers.

WELCOME TO NEW FLOCKS FORMED IN 2017!

THE SSBA’s Council is delighted to announce that we currently have 250 members including 29 new flocks that’ve been formed this year. Details of these will be included in the next flock book.

YOUNG STARS *Continued*

across the whole farming industry compete; Cattle - both beef and dairy, pigs, sheep, butchers and auctioneers. There were even entries from Canada!

I can best sum up the “Shropshire Young Shepherds” by way of answers they gave me to four questions, which prove their pride in the breed and determination to return next year.

1. What was the best thing for you out of the whole experience?

“Being told by the judge how to do stock judging.” *George*

“The best thing was what we learnt at sheep camp (trimming etc) and being able to use those skills in the competition.” *Ellie*

“Working with other people who share the same passion as me.” *Owen*

2. What challenged you the most?

“Being spokes-person and answering questions in front of a crowd.” *George*

“Stock judging was the most challenging as the sheep were very similar and a very different breed to Shropshires (Beltex).” *Ellie*

“Generally it was all the trimming and not knowing what to expect.”

Owen

3. What would you do differently?

“More input into design of the stand at sheep camp. Perhaps have 2 weekends for sheep camp.” *George*

“I would have volunteered to do the interview or talking to the judge about our stock judging decisions.” *Ellie*

“Have more time to do everything like washing beforehand and making the decision to change animals if needed.” *Owen*

4. Would you do it again?

“Yes I would do it again.” *George*

“I would definitely do it again, It was a great experience!” *Ellie*

“Yes, love to.” *Owen*



FIRST SHROPSHIRE EXPORTED TO SPAIN



Pictured in their new home in Asturias, northern Spain - a small consignment of UK Shropshires, the first to be exported to this country. They are grazing in a Kiwi Fruit plantation owned by Diego Eguia Vega. The Society-led export was organised by Sue Farquhar and Claire Jakeman. The sheep left the UK in September.

BUYERS IN SHORT SUPPLY AT MELTON MOWBRAY

DESPITE a strong catalogue entry of Shropshires at our National Show and Sale (East), this year's event was disappointing in terms of demand for stock.

The show classes were judged on Friday 8th September by Marion Webb, who kindly agreed to stand in at short notice when the original judge was unavailable. She placed a Stonegrove ewe owned and shown by Alan Oliver as Champion, and a shearling ram, Clipston Kent, bred by Robert Webb, as Reserve Champion.

The sale took place the following day, with very few buyers present. Luckily, on this occasion, not all stock in the catalogue were forward. Only a very few in the sale found new homes, with the top price of £221 achieved by a ewe from the Snowbird Flock of Adrian Morgan in Lincolnshire. The Champion and Reserve Champion did not reach their reserves.



On the right: Champion at Melton, a Stonegrove ewe owned by Alan Oliver (Sprotbrough Flock) and on the left, Res Champ shearling ram with his breeder Robert Webb (Clipston Flock), pictured with Marion Webb.

MELTON SHOW & SALE RESULTS

Judge: Mrs Marion Webb

Ram Class

1. Robert Webb;
2. Alan Oliver;
3. C & J Morris

Ram Lamb

1. Robert Webb

Ewe

1. Alan Oliver;
2. Robert Webb

Ewe Lamb

1. Alan Oliver;
- 2 & 3 Robert Webb

Champion: Alan Oliver, Breeding Ewe;

Reserve: Robert Webb, Shearling Ram

Sale: £ average & (number sold):

Older Rams £68 (1); Ram Lambs £179 (1); Breeding ewes £221 (1); Ewe Lambs £105 (4). 7 sold from 32 forward. (Average £127).

BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME EVALUATIONS 2017

THE genetic merit of recorded Shropshires made a big leap forward this season. The average Index of lambs born in 2017 was 177, compared with a score of 154 last year. This was the result of greater use of rams with performance figures well above average. It's the greatest year-on-year increase we've seen since the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme started.

Leading the top stock sires list for the 4th year in a row is Ushers Alexander, from Marion and Aubrey Webb's flock in Leicestershire. Alexander is still placed within the top 1% of the breed for genetic merit, based on his own performance and that of 102 progeny and close relatives. He is an outstanding ram and even the best of this year's ram lambs have still not overtaken his performance figures.

There are three new rams entering the top ten. The highest ranked of these in 5th place is Timberline Dawson, bred by Paul Stead and Val Tew in Oxfordshire. This ram, by Hayne Oak Preston,

has the highest score for Terminal Sire Index currently recorded in the breed. The Terminal Sire index is based on growth rates and carcass traits alone.

In 6th place in the rankings is another new entrant, Hayne Oak Randall, by Hayne Oak Nelson. Randall was the winner of this year's Signet Performance Award for rams at the Burwarton Show in August, where he was the highest placed Signet recorded ram with above average genetic merit (2nd in the ram class). His genetic merit puts him in the top 5% of the breed. The 3rd new entrant is Ushers Captain, winner of the ram performance award in 2016 and now a stock sire in the Cefn Carnau Flock. The 4th newcomer is Alderton Morgan, by Alderton Maxwell. He is the sire of one of the top rated ram lambs this season, KX17678, bred in the Ushers Flock. This lamb shares the top spot with two others that also achieved an Index of 266 (top 5% of the breed for genetic merit). The others were bred by the Alderton Flock (Pippa and Peter Geddes, Shropshire) and the Sansaw

Flock owned by James Thompson, also in Shropshire.

The winner of the Signet Performance Award for ram lambs was Alderton Monty, placed third in a very strong ram lamb class at Burwarton. He is by Alderton Maxwell (4th in the top stock sires list). Monty (ear tag LU17645) is also ranked equal 4th in the list of this year's top ram lambs.

TOP TEN STOCK SIRES

Ranked on Carcass Plus Maternal Traits Index (shown first) followed by the Terminal Sire Index

1. (1) Ushers Alexander 294 / 227
2. = (4) Ushers Apollo 274 / 238
2. = (3) Hayne Oak Nelson 274 / 276
4. (5) Alderton Maxwell 262 / 233
5. (-) Timberline Dawson 259 / 284
6. (-) Hayne Oak Randall 257 / 219
7. = (2) Ushers Barnaby 251 / 255
7. = (-) Ushers Captain 251 / 254
9. (-) Alderton Morgan 246 / 200
10. (6) Ushers Vulcan 244 / 246

Ranking in 2016 shown in brackets

TOP TEN RAM LAMBS

- 1= KX17678 (Alderton Morgan) 266 / 240
- 1= LU17638 (Hayne Oak Randall) 266 / 232
- 1= TA17741 (Alderton Chubster) 266 / 272
- 4= LU17645 (Alderton Maxwell) 262 / 221
- 4= KX17690 (Ushers Alexander) 262 / 229
6. LX171351 (Hayne Oak Nelson) 258 / 239
7. VZ17677 (Hayne Oak Preston) 248 / 261
8. TA17737 (Alderton Chubster) 247 / 215
- 9= VZ17698 (Hayne Oak Preston) 246 / 237
- 9= TA17748 (Alderton Chubster) 246 / 22

Sires shown in brackets

Signet Performance Award Winners 2017: (Left) Hayne Oak Randall and (right) Alderton Monty, pictured with owner Peter Geddes.



UTTERLY BUTTERLY - GETTING TO GRIPS WITH SHROPSHIRE FLOCK MANAGEMENT

CHARLIE Lambert is a farmer's son and one of the founding partners of the Lambert, Leonard & May farm veterinary practice in Cheshire. Three years ago he and his wife, Yolanda, bought a house with 30 acres and decided to establish their own flock of Shropshires. Charlie writes regular updates about the progress of the Butterly Flock for his vet practice's newsletter. We thought SSBA Members would be interested to read the latest instalment - the highs and lows of the past 12 months.



Last October, we hired a local Shropshire ram, Millenheath Gust, for the second year running and introduced him to our flock of 21 ewes. Although we applied raddle to him religiously every week, yet again "Gus" managed to get several ewes in-lamb without marking them in any way - silent but deadly!

I scanned the ewes at 75 days using our bovine ultrasound scanner, applying it externally just underneath the right hind leg of the sheep. This is a very effective way of seeing if the ewes are pregnant, but does not tell us how many lambs they are carrying, like the scanners designed specifically for use in sheep would do.

Twenty of the 21 ewes were in lamb and, starting at the end of March, all 20-ewes lambed to the first 17 day cycle - with 19 of these lambing within the first fortnight.

These 20 ewes carried 37 lambs through to lambing and we lost only three. The first loss was a lamb born with a membrane over her nose that we probably only missed by about five minutes.

The second loss I'm blaming firmly on the Lambert, Leonard and May Flock Health Group! The evening after our spring flock group meeting I went home to a new born set of twins. As it was a frosty evening and the group members had all tried to convince me to lamb indoors, I brought them in for the night. Within two hours the ewe had laid on one of the lambs and killed it! I knew I shouldn't have listened to the group!

Our third and last loss of the year was a large dead lamb that we had to deliver by C-Section. Despite watching the shearling closely for a couple of days, it was only a distinctive smelly discharge that gave us any clue she was ready to lamb.

We have reared the 19 ewe lambs produced by our ewes, which we hope will come into the flock next year, and the 15 male lambs have all been butchered and sold locally.

Last year we butchered our lambs in September and, although extremely tasty and popular, they were over-fat. This year we purchased a weigh crate and have weighed the lambs regularly.

All went for slaughter at between 43 and 46kg, which I feel is about right for this breed. Reared on milk and grass only, the daily live-weight gain up until slaughter for castrated males averaged 434g/day with the best lamb growing at 500g per day and the lamb with the lowest growth rate still managing 330g/day. Having an abundance of grass is only half the story.

Sheep don't like long grass and will restrict themselves to a smaller and smaller area if the grass is growing unchecked all around them. Regular topping of the pasture not only improves the look of it but also stimulates fresh grass growth, allows better intakes and encourages the sheep to graze over the whole field.

I applied Click to the ewes post lambing in April and then again at shearing at the end of May. I firmly believe the early application makes a big difference in reducing blow fly strike and for the second year running we haven't seen a single case despite it being a bad season for fly strike generally.

The thirty three ewes and hogs were sheared in the searing heat at the end of May. Nathan from Hill Farm, Charlton kindly volunteered to clip the sheep for us and he soon realised why I hadn't attempted to do them myself.

There is a good reason why the British sheep shearing record has never been achieved clipping Shropshire sheep!

Another purchase made this year was a second hand race, shedding gate and foot bath. We have run the ewes and lambs through 5% Formalin whenever we have



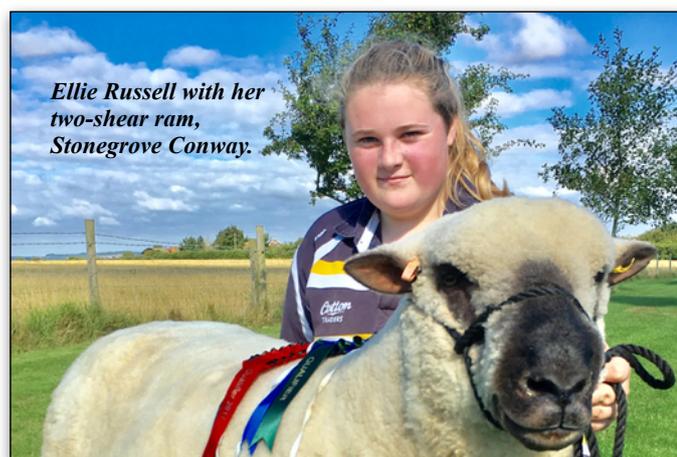
had to handle them and although it might be too early to assess the benefits, we haven't seen a single case of scald this year to date. We do see a few lame sheep over the winter but I don't believe this is true foot rot.

The animals will get white line horn separation, which I think is down to the constant wet conditions under foot. This is something I haven't quite got my head around yet but I'm happy for any suggestions.

So, all in all, it has been a good summer for the sheep and lambs. The lambs are now weaned and it will soon be tupping time again. We are going to cull out half a dozen ewes we don't particularly like for various reasons, which should give us just over 30 to go to the ram this time.

We have purchased a local ram lamb, Checkley Emperor, whose sire is Ushers Duke, a very well bred Signet recorded ram with high genetic merit.

We also purchased Kingfisher Bruce, winner of the ram class at the Centenary Shropshire Sheep Sale at Shrewsbury in July. With Gus on hire again this autumn, we hope to continue to improve the quality and consistency of the flock.



Ellie Russell (Tushbrook Flock, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire) has had a very successful year in the show ring. She rounded off the 2017 season by taking the Reserve Senior Champion Rosette at the Young Shepherd of the Year Competition, held at the Royal Berkshire Show. In the contest she had to show the sheep off to best advantage whilst answering the judges' questions about breeding and show preparation. Many congratulations Ellie!

SHROPTALK

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