

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

February 2023



A lamb from the Alderton Flock (Peter and Pippa Geddes), near Nesscliffe, Shropshire.

OFFICIAL BREED SOCIETY SALES IN 2023

National Show and Sale at
Shrewsbury Market
Saturday 15th July

Sale of Shropshires at
Worcester Market
Saturday 30th September

VERY IMPORTANT REMINDER

When making on-line banking (BACS) payments to the breed society, **please always tag each payment with your flock letters** - so that we know which flock to allocate the payment to.

PRESIDENT'S WINTER UPDATE

It seems an age – just over three months – since my last President's notes. The sun is now shining (even if it is a little brisk early in the morning) and the Snowdrops and Catkins are out. We are definitely 'on the other side' of winter now.

Here in South Wales, after the drought in the autumn and early winter came a deluge, which continued until mid-January. Since then we have had an unusual spell of calm weather. Shepherding at Cefn-carnau is calm too as the Shropshires and New Zealand Romneys approach lambing. Roll on St David's Day when the action kicks off in the lambing shed!

Our work on Council has been anything but calm. We have a new Vice-President in Steve Dewey, and I am already indebted to him for his support, and for his leadership of the Membership Group. He is also going to be working with Adrian Norton as one of the two directors of the European Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association, helping to take that new organisation forward.

We have appointed the new Membership Secretary and I wish Jan Morris every success. I can honestly say that we are

already seeing the benefit of her input and I know that you, our members, and especially our new members, will benefit too. There are more developments for new members in the pipeline, so watch this space.....

Our Secretary, Simon Mackay, is currently on extended leave of absence and I am indebted to everyone who has stepped in to share his workload. In particular, Alison Schofield dealt with the new members backlog, Pippa Geddes has organised our Council meetings, Jeannette Hares and Rosie Lee are organising the National Show & Sale, having previously been on the steering committee. Claire Jakeman has acted as secretary to the Judges Panel, making sure shows with Shropshire classes all have a judge for the coming season.

The SSBA will be 'out and about' at National Sheep Association events this Summer: We've booked stand space at NSA WelshSheep, NSA Sheep South West and NSA NorthSheep. These are invariably good events, and worth supporting, all the more so if you can come along to the Shropshire Sheep stand

to meet other members and speak up for Shropshires.

I was delighted to be able to visit Charlotte Attwell to present her with the showing trophies she was awarded at the AGM, which she was unable to attend. I am even more delighted to hear that Charlotte and her family have assisted the Breed Society in securing classes for Shropshires for the first time at Frome Agricultural and Cheese Show on Saturday 9th September. If you can get along to support the classes, please do so.

Elsewhere in this *ShropTalk*, you can read about how to improve your grassland despite the huge rise in the cost of bagged fertiliser, and the potential benefits of using Artificial Insemination and Embro Transfer in your flock. Over on Anglesey, new member Dafydd Jones is helping to promote the breed for grazing within his "bee friendly" woodland.

Meanwhile, you will all be finished/in the middle of/ or just about to start lambing. It is invariably challenging but rewarding, and as we know from experience success is not accidental.

Rob Kerby

AWARD WINNERS AT THE AGM

The Farquhar Trophy

for points won in Shropshire Show
Classes: Anne Harvey (Roydon Flock)

The President's Trophy

for points won in Any Other Breed
Show Classes: Charlotte Attwell
(Bramble Flock)

The Novice Showing Trophy:

Charlotte Attwell

The Hornpipe Quaiche (Junior Members' Trophy):

Charlotte Attwell

The Hardwicke Trophy

for the Sansaw Sidedowns Most
Prolific Ewe: David Kelly and Anita
Kilpatrick. (Ardunshin Flock)
This includes a cash prize of £25



Long Service Awards

Bronze Awards for breeding Shropshires for 20 Years:

Anne Harvey (Roydon Flock)



Peter Tavernor (Shebdon Flock)



NEWS FROM THE AGM AND COUNCIL MEETING

THE Society's Annual General Meeting was held at Stafford County Show-ground on 19th November - coinciding with the English Winter Fair at the same venue.

This is the second time the YFC Pavilion at the show-ground has been used for our AGM, and attendance was up 26% compared with last year. It was great to see some new faces including Lyn Arrowsmith and Debbie Wardell who travelled from Yorkshire, as well as Gail Beattie, our Registrations Clerk, who trekked all the way from Angus in Scotland.

The President, Rob Kerby, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. His report reflected on a year when normal breed society activities were finally able to resume, after the pandemic. He explained a number of new initiatives that the SSBA is introducing in order to meet our key objective of *"the encouragement of the breeding of Shropshire Sheep at home and abroad, and the maintenance of their purity"*. In recent years, only around half of people purchasing pedigree Shropshires for the first time have gone on to become SSBA members. Council is therefore working on a new recruitment process where every non member who purchases female Shropshires could automatically become a member of the Society.

MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

Another important aspect is the retention of members, once they have joined the Society. For this reason, there will be a new paid officer role - the Membership Secretary - who will "hold the hand" of all new members through their first year and encourage them to become committed Shropshire breeders.

Thirdly, the SSBA's council has developed a new and simplified membership renewal process which was introduced last November. Once you have paid your

membership invoice, you have renewed! Members are then asked to review their flock data on-line and draw up service certificates to complete the "ewes to ram" list for the flock book. This is a completely paperless process, unless Members specifically wish to continue to complete their returns on paper.

The President thanked all SSBA Members who had shown their Shropshires during 2022, the Society's 140th anniversary year. Shropshires had been exhibited at shows up and down the country with great success.

He also thanked all Council Members and Officers for their input during the past 12 months, and in particular the SSBA's Treasurer, Marion Webb. After nearly 20 years in the role, Marion has indicated that she wishes to stand down during 2023.

Before closing his address, Rob thanked his predecessor, Alison Schofield (President in 2020 and 2021). As a token of the SSBA's gratitude for her efforts, he presented Alison with an original drawing inspired by a showing class at the Three Counties Show when Alison demonstrated her sheep handling capabilities with a particularly feisty ewe at the other end of the halter!

DIGITAL AND ARCHIVE STORAGE

The SSBA's Secretary, Simon Mackay, reported that he'd had a very busy year, welcoming 34 new members into the Society as well as dealing with breeders' enquiries. The SSBA now has 317 members.

Simon has also been involved with two major projects: The first is the establishment of a central "cloud" file-sharing system, whereby digital copies of all the Society's most important documents and digital images can be stored, while allowing access for Council Members and officers. He has also been working with Alison Schofield, Peter Tavernor and Barry Hodson to review hard copies of documents and other materials such

Continued on the next page/..



Rob presenting Alison with the original drawing of "the leaping sheep".

as flock books. Old records that are no longer needed are being shredded, and those that we need to keep will be stored in a central location. A number of possible storage options are being considered. Together, these projects will ensure the security of the Society's records for the future.

Simon thanked the steering committee and the volunteers who had helped to organise the Society's National Show and Sale at Shrewsbury. Record prices were achieved. He also thanked those who had helped to organise the breed society sale of Shropshires at Worcester market.

A YEAR OF CHANGE

Registrar Alison Schofield, highlighted what a year of change it had been for those involved with the Society's pedigree registrations. Ruth Mawer had retired at the beginning of 2022, and Alison thanked her for her years of service. Alison took on the registrations work for a few months, before Gail Beattie took over as Registrations Clerk in the middle of March.

Grassroots on-line registry had a revamp and there were a few teething problems, which have mostly been sorted out now. At the same time, Grassroots no longer provided an accounting package, so the SSBA has had to switch to QuickBooks.

The ESSBA (European Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association) launched on 1st February, which required extra work in both Grassroots and QuickBooks to get the Society up and running.

Turning to the SSBA's registrations, Alison reported that Birth Notifications were down this year and more flocks were late in loading their lambing data onto the system. She urged breeders to provide this information on time - by the 30th June. The Society is looking at ways to ensure BNs are made on time in future.

Shropshire registrations are not increasing, and the breed society needs to look at ways to address this. One way we are trying is the auto membership of anyone buying a Shropshire female from a member.

GREATER EXPENDITURE, BUT ACCOUNTS REMAIN HEALTHY

The Society's Treasurer, Marion Webb, presented the SSBA's accounts, which had been approved by Council. The balance at the end of the year of £62,168 is slightly higher than the previous year.

The income figure is similar to last year. Membership income is similar but registrations are down by £746, which the Society is looking into. Expenditure is up by over £6,000, mainly due to the Society being able to promote the breed at shows, whereas in recent years we have had Covid restrictions.

The newly formed ESSBA is a totally separate entity, which will produce its own annual accounts. As yet we do not have a cost for that. The figures for ESSBA under

Expenditure relates to the set up cost of the new company in Dublin - a one off fee. When the adjustments are taken into account we have an excess of income over expenditure of £592 overall.

On the other side of the Balance sheet it is very similar to 2021: the Creditors is higher due to a payment for the secretary of £1000, Accountants' fees for 2 years of £400, deferred income for the life memberships of £840, money collected by ESSBA and owed to SSBA of £971, so the ESSBA may be able to break even at the end of its first Financial year. Marion concluded by reflecting on the changes she had seen over the two decades that she had been the SSBA's Treasurer: At the time she took over the SSBA had around £10,000 in the bank and no proper accounts or balance sheet at the AGM. Now we have more than £62,000.

Marion thanked the Registrar, Registrations Clerk, and Credit Controller (Trevor Lightfoot) for their assistance, and Les Newman for providing a subsidised version of QuickBooks via his company. She also thanked the auditor, Philip Frost, and assured Society Members that she would assist the new Treasurer, to ensure a fluent changeover.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Secretary had received a total of seven nominations for Council, which may comprise up to 20 SSBA Members. As there was space for all nominees, Tom Sellers proposed that they all be elected. This was seconded by Trevor Lightfoot and passed unanimously. The new Council members are: Deborah Blackmore (Yarralong Flock, Gloucestershire), Helen Carroll (Adelaide Flock, Derbyshire), Sue Farquhar (Piddington Flock, Herefordshire), Peter Geddes (Alderton Flock, Shropshire), Peter Greenow (Hackford Flock, Herefordshire), Les Newman (Rode Flock, Norfolk) and Joanne Powell (Goblindale Flock, Shropshire).

Harvey Clay, Adrian Norton and Barry Hodson stepped down from Council, having completed their terms of office. Adrian and Barry may attend Council Meetings as non-voting officers: EU Coordinator and Breed Stands Officer, respectively. At the Council meeting following the AGM, Rob Kerby was re-elected as President and Steve Dewey was elected Vice President. All Officers agreed to remain in their roles, except for Alison who wished to resign as a director of the ESSBA. Steve Dewey agreed to take on this responsibility, alongside Adrian Norton.



Charlotte Atwell (Bramble Flock, Langport, Somerset) was unable to attend the AGM, because she was lambing in Devon. Following a very successful year in the show-ring, Charlotte was the winner of the President's Trophy, the Novice Trophy and the Hornpipe Quaiche, as well as a special 140th Anniversary rosette. Rob Kerby travelled to the west country to ensure Charlotte received her silverware, and they are pictured above, with one of Charlotte's show team.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Janet Morris has recently been appointed as the breed society's Membership Secretary. This is a new paid role created to boost the recruitment of new members and help them quickly get to grips with all the requirements of pedigree recording. The Membership Secretary will also work with existing members, answering their queries about annual subscription renewals and helping the SSBA to retain breeders with a long-term commitment to Shropshires.

Janet and her husband, Charles, are based in Stoney Stretton, Shropshire and formed their Apiary Flock (XA) 12 years ago. Here Jan gives us more of an insight to her farming background and connection with our breed:

Born on a Welsh hill farm with grandparents both sides in farming beef and sheep, I have always been hands-on with any jobs on the farm from calving, lambing, haymaking and shearing.

Even when working for Laura Ashley in Cambridge I would take two weeks annual leave to help my father lamb about 400 ewes and the cows were scheduled to calve at the same time.

Single ewes were lambed outside which was a real experience of coping with wet conditions, catching sheep in the dark and assisting with difficult births in the field. I moved back to mid Wales to assist my father in 1995 and continued with farming until he retired in 2002.

My husband Charles & I started with the Shropshires in 2011 with 10 ewe lambs purchased from The Alderton flock with MV and Scrapie Monitoring status already in place which we have continued. This has enabled us to export some of our sheep to several European countries, including one ram to Estonia and another to Menorca.

I opened my kitchen showroom in January 2002 and this has kept me busy, but when my work allowed me to, I volunteered to assist on the Shropshire Sheep Council and helped organise the National Show and Sale at Halls in Shrewsbury, in conjunction with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and other members of the SSBA.

When I took an interest in showing, Sue Farquhar gave me invaluable experience by allowing me to assist her with showing her sheep at The Shropshire County Show.

This gave me enough confidence to start trimming and showing, which Charles & I have enjoyed doing at our nearest shows of Shrewsbury, Stafford, Newport, Burwarton, Oswestry and Minsterley.

Now that I am finishing with my kitchen business, I would like to give more time to the Breed Society and I'm delighted to have been appointed Membership Secretary.

This is a new role that entails looking after new and recent joiners to the Society and I look forward to meeting new and prospective members, as well as those who may have queries about their membership renewals.



Janet at Minsterley Show in 2022 and (below) with a ewe and lamb born in January.



Contact details for Janet Morris
SSBA Membership Secretary
Home 01743 821685
Mobile 07816 813986 (WhatsApp)
Email membershipsec@shropshire-sheep.co.uk

PROMOTING THE BREED AT NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION EVENTS THIS YEAR

The SSBA's breed stand will be exhibited at the following:

Sheep South West
Peterhayes Farm,
Yarcombe,
Honiton
EX14 9LW
10th May

WelshSheep
Red House,
Aberhafesp,
Newtown,
Powys
16th May

NorthSheep
Bradford House Farm.
Belsay,
Ponteland
NE20 0HA
7th June

If you would like to help on the breed stand at any of these events, please contact President Rob Kerby: president@shropshire-sheep.co.uk. We are particularly looking for extra help at Sheep South West.

SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT FOR THE SASCOTT FLOCK...

Along with running a commercial sheep enterprise and his Sascott Shropshires, Tom Sellers works for Embryonics – a company that organises training courses for vets and farmers. Last year he held a training course at Pen Y Bryn, near Newtown for vets to learn how to artificially inseminate ewes. This course came with an optional second day of learning how to flush embryos and transfer them into recipient ewes.

Hosting the course gave me the opportunity to AI some of my own Shropshires and, with the help of Claire Jakeman and Richard Spencer, I was able to locate some straws of Morley Malik semen to inseminate the ewes.

Malik was bred by Claire in 2010. His semen was collected under the AHDB's Ram Linkage Programme because of the ram's high Signet figures, which placed him in the top 10% of the breed. Malik also had good conformation and breed type. He was sold to Richard (Benfield Flock) at the National Show and Sale in 2011

for 800gns which was a record price at the time. Through the RLP, the ram's semen has been made available to Shropshire breeders in England, free of charge.

The ewes from my flock were selected for flushing for the ET work, because they had particularly valuable bloodlines: One is a show ewe who was out of a ewe that had some very good breeding; one is a purchased ewe who has some very different breeding to most of my flock; and

the final one was selected as she is the only ewe I had by a tup that I particularly liked. I firmly believe that when selecting ewes for AI / ET it should be based on what is going to improve and diversify your flock.

In preparation for the AI, the ewes were put on a strict hormone programme. For AI this

is very similar to sponging/using CIDRs. The ET donor ewes and recipients are different, requiring a more intensive course of hormones. The AI day came around and we used 10 straws of semen on 10 ewes, three of which were destined to be flushed to provide embryos for the ET course. Six days later, I drew a breath as we prepared to flush the 'donor' ewes, as there is never any guarantee they will provide us with embryos. Thankfully they did and we flushed nine embryos out and implanted them into recipient ewes. The fingers were firmly crossed as I let the ewes go back out until scanning day!

Later in the autumn, I held another course training farmers and vets how to scan sheep. This time the scanning results were even more important to me. There were 120 ewes to scan but the ones I was really interested in were the AI & ET ewes. Results were in

AI Ewes confirmed in lamb: 4.

Recipient ewes carrying embryos : 2

The insemination of sheep has to be carried out by a vet due to the surgical aspect of the procedure, which uses a laparoscopy (keyhole) technique. Using frozen semen will drop the conception rate to 50-60% typically, however using fresh semen can see results of 90% easily. Shropshires AI'd here with frozen Malik semen saw 6 out of 8 holding at scanning. My commercial ewes were AI'd with fresh semen for the course and that resulted in 15 out of 16 ewes holding.

Laparoscopic AI and ET procedures are both surgical and quite invasive. The results can be pleasing, however. If anyone is interested in using AI to breed their sheep, or some of them, then please do get in touch, and if I can help in any way I will. You can contact me by email on: tomssellers@gmail.com

Tom Sellers



Sascott ewe and lamb

NEW! SHROPSHIRE SECTION AT FROME SHOW

Classes for Shropshires will be introduced for the first time at the Frome Agricultural and Cheese Show, taking place on 9th September this year.

The Shropshire classes will be: Ram, Ewe, Shearling Ewe, Ram Lamb, and Ewe lamb Group of Three (from above classes, one to be the opposite sex) Shropshire Championship - Champion and Reserve. There will be a trophy for the Champion, kindly donated by the Hassed family (Charlotte Attwell's grandparents).

Schedules will be available later in the spring from:

www.fromecheeseshow.co.uk.

Thanks to Charlotte Attwell and her family, and Claire Jakeman for getting this new section accepted at the Frome show, and for sorting out the class sponsorship.

NEW ON-LINE ENTRIES FOR ROYAL THREE COUNTIES

The Three Counties Show Society has moved to an on-line entry system for livestock exhibitors, called Showing Scene. This should cut down on paper, admin and having to rely on the postal service quite so heavily, says the Society.

Show schedules will no longer be posted out, but can be downloaded and viewed from the Society's website: www.threecounties.co.uk.

Entries open on 14th February and close on 18th April.

RBST 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

SSBA Member, Lyn Arrowsmith, announced at our AGM that there will be a celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust at the Great Yorkshire Show (11th to 14th July 2023). The local RBST group is hoping that 50 rare and traditional breeds will be exhibited at the event – and Lyn encouraged Shropshire breeders to attend.



SHEEP, TREES, GARDEN AND BEES

New SSBA member, Dafydd Jones, Trefnant Flock, will be opening his smallholding on Anglesey to the public through the National Garden Scheme on 7th May.

As well as the garden at Trefnant Bach, Gaerwen, Dafydd runs beekeeping training courses throughout each spring and summer. Visitors will be able to see the apiary pastures and honey bee friendly woodland, grazed by his Shropshire sheep.

The deciduous woodland was planted three years ago, with species specifically chosen to benefit the honey bees and enhance the foraging available to them. These include alder, downy birch, wild cherry, crab apple, oak, walnut, sweet chestnut, elder, dogwood and hawthorn.

GRASSLAND: How to boost forage yields without bagged Nitrogen fertiliser

The challenge for sheep farmers today is to improve grassland production without the use of bagged fertiliser (priced at the time of writing at £680/tonne for 34.5% Nitrogen). We asked SSBA Member and agronomist, Laurence Power (HL Farms, Adelaide flock) for some timely advice.

As a starting point, my advice as an independent agronomist to all my customers is start with soil sampling to gain control of your fields. If this fundamental is missed out you are essentially wasting any money spent on fertiliser, lime, grass seed, and/or weed control. Consequently grazing and forage yields will be impacted.

Early spring is the best time to get out and soil sample your fields. This also gives you the opportunity to assess how the grassland has come through the winter, identify any wet areas, weed burdens, and general condition of the grass. Soil sampling is not difficult - you require a good trowel or a soil sampling spear. Sample the field in a W pattern taking small subsamples as you walk across the field.

You need approximately 1kg of soil per field. To take the sample, pull back the turf and dig a small amount of soil only, avoiding any stones or grass getting into the samples. AHDB website has a list of laboratories you can send samples to. The approximate cost is £40 for a basic P, K, pH and micronutrient analysis.

The most important priority is pH - you need a pH of 6 for grazing and a pH of 6.5 for silage, haylage or hay production. If you are below these figures, you can have losses up to 40% of your grass yield. Apply lime as per the recommendation from the soil samples - spring and late summer are the optimum times to apply lime.

Harrowing and rolling are important springtime field tasks to carry out. I like to get these done by mid-March as soon as the grassland will carry the weight of the tractor. Over-seeding to improve your grassland can be done at the same time. The use of herbage mixes gives you good scope to improve your grass sward and use plants to help fix nitrogen within the soil. There are lots of good grass seed mixtures on the market. I would advise a low clover (white or red) content in the sward as too much clover can affect ewe fertility as shown by AHDB and Teagasc studies.

The use of slurry and farmyard manure will really help your grassland. It is important that you get it analysed so you know the NPK and micro-nutrient content before applying to grassland. You will have to work out a grazing rotation before you apply it as you need four weeks after applying slurry, and six weeks after applying FYM solids, before grazing sheep.

In my experience sheep don't graze well after manure applications for the first six weeks. For forage production, ideally you need a minimum of eight weeks between application of slurry or FYM solids and mowing for silage/haylage.

On HL Farms we have used seaweed-extract fertiliser with some success. My advice would be to apply it in late March. It certainly helps with the grazing and helps the grass utilise residual soil fertility.

Weed control is also very important as weeds can account for up to 30% loss of grazing and forage yield. This year, the withdrawal of grass herbicides containing Clopyralid comes into effect. For grassland where silage, haylage or hay is going to be made, these products cannot be used.

If you would like any advice, or a consultation, my contact details are: 07931 955126, hlffarms2020@gmail.com.

Laurence Power



These days a "crock of gold" is what you need to buy bagged fertiliser! Picture of Helen Carroll and Laurence Power's Adelaide Flock, Snelston, Ashbourne, Derbyshire.

EXPORT OUTLOOK FOR 2023 AND PRICES

COUNCIL recently agreed an uplift for some Shropshire Sheep export prices, as follows: Ewe lambs: £250 (+ £20); Shearling ewes: £320 (stay the same); Ram lambs: £550 (+ £50); Shearling rams: £650 (+£50). The export prices for ARR/ARR animals will stay the same as in 2022, except for the ram lamb price, which will increase to £600 (+ £50). The increases have been made to reflect the increase in veterinary charges for those taking part in exports.

Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman, and Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, reported that the Society has received a number of export enquiries, but unfortunately most of these are unlikely to be fulfilled until an animal reception centre is built at Calais. It is possible for sheep to be exported via the Republic of Ireland, although this involves a lengthy journey.

Despite the post Brexit difficulties, one Society export comprising a shearling ram and five shearling ewes from the Ballycanal Flock of Andrew Wilson in Northern Ireland was made to a buyer in Switzerland. The sheep travelled at the end of January. Pictured below: the exported ram, Ballycanal Mayne Man (below) sired by Morley Mogul.



DON'T FORGET.... TO TAG ALL BACS PAYMENTS MADE TO THE SSBA WITH YOUR FLOCK LETTERS

SHROPTALK

is edited by Pippa Geddes
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Contributions welcome!

www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk.
Check out our Facebook pages:



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