

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

January 2024



DIARY DATE

THE SSBA'S NATIONAL
SHOW AND SALE 2024

Saturday 27th July
at Shrewsbury
Market

Pictured on the left, a ewe from the Stone Circle Flock owned by Sophie Royle, based near Bolton, Lancashire.

This image was chosen by the British Wool Marketing Board to promote the qualities of Shropshire wool on the social media platform Facebook.

THE PRESIDENT'S WINTER UPDATE

Well, here goes, my first *ShropTalk* as President! It's certainly been a challenging autumn and early winter, with the weather throwing everything at us, but Shropshire sheep continue to live up to their reputation of being easy to manage and resilient.

As I write this, we've just celebrated the arrival of the first lamb. It never ceases to amaze me how that is always an exciting event on the farm, but after long days and nights in the lambing shed, we soon start to look forward to the arrival of the last!

2023 has been another successful year for the SSBA, seeing some important changes to the Officer team with the creation of the Membership Secretary role, in which Jan Morris is doing a fantastic job. And in November we appointed a new Secretary, Yvette Openshaw. We must acknowledge how much our Officers do to enable us to continue our work on behalf of Shropshire breeders, and I would like to thank all of them for their dedication.

At the AGM in November, Rob Kerby

completed his term as President. The passion and leadership he provided was unwavering and has left us in a very positive place. A big thank you must be given to Rob for the time and effort he put into the role. I have big boots to fill.

Some new faces have joined Council for the first time and I'd like to welcome Phil Sutton-Green, Lyn Arrowsmith, Mark Openshaw and Andrew Wilson. I'm delighted that Marion Webb and Les Newman have also returned to Council, and I'm sure we will benefit greatly from their experience. I'd also like to thank the Council Members who retired after serving their 3-year term: Anne Harvey and Rosie Lee. Council has some exciting work to get stuck into, so watch this space for developments to come.

Our Young Members Co-ordinators, Rosie Lee and Jo Powell, have done some fantastic work over the past 12 months in encouraging young members to get involved with showing. So if you fancy getting involved, please do get in touch with them. It's been a real pleasure to see so many Shropshires out and about at local shows. I congratulate every one of you who took sheep into the

show-ring. Local agricultural shows are such an important part of the community and a great shop window for our breed, so I encourage you to take any opportunity you can to get your sheep to them. Support and guidance is available from the Society at all times for anyone who wants to have a go.

Wherever you are in the country, lambing will be no doubt happening, have happened or be imminent. I always find there is something calm and enjoyable about a 2am night check where the sheep are all laid down chewing their cud.

Don't forget to birth notify your lambs as soon as you can, using Grassroots. If you are unsure what the correct process is for birth notifications, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Jan Morris, Gail Beattie (our Registrations Clerk), or Alison Schofield, (our Registrar) – there is no such thing as a stupid question! I wish you a successful lambing and all the very best for 2024!

Tom Sellers

AWARDS AT THE AGM

Show Points Trophies

The Farquhar Trophy
for points won in Shropshire
breed classes:
Janet and Charles Morris,
Apiary Flock

The President's Trophy
for points won in Any Other
Breed Classes:
Charlotte Attwell.
Bramble Flock

The Hornpipe Quaich
for Junior Members:
Charlotte Attwell

The Novice Showing Trophy
for breeders in the first five years
of showing:
Charlotte Attwell

Other Trophies

The Halls Trophy 2023
for the highest priced Shropshire
from a small flock of less than 15
ewes, sold through the ring at the
SSBA's National Show and Sale:
Janet and Charles Morris,
Apiary Flock

**The Sansaw and Sidedowns
Most Prolific Ewe Award,**
including the Hardwicke Trophy
and a cheque for £25
awarded to ewe 03XA12
bred and owned by Janet and
Charles Morris (Apiary Flock)

Long Service Awards

Bronze Award
(breeding Shropshires
for 20 years)
Mrs A Tordoff,
Hilltop Flock
Mr M K Tweed,
Strangford Flock

Gold Award
(breeding Shropshires
for 30 years)
Mr Peter Richards,
Canalside Flock
SR and RP Spencer,
Benfield Flock

NEWS FROM THE AGM AND NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING



Outgoing President, Rob Kerby, receives a gift (a weathervane) from Tom Sellers, as thanks for his two-year term at the helm of the breed society.

TWENTY FIVE Shropshire breeders attended the Society's AGM at Stafford County Show-ground on 18th November, with a further eight observing the meeting via a Zoom link. Rob Kerby welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, Rob reported that the Society was in good order even though he, as President, had faced some significant administrative difficulties: The roles of Secretary and Vice President had been vacant for more than half the year, necessitating Rob and others on Council to step in to cover these extra duties.

Simon Mackay had retired as the SSBA's Secretary in April, after 12 years in the post. Rob thanked him for his contribution, as membership of the breed society had expanded significantly during this time. Looking to the future, Rob was pleased to announce the appointment of Yvette Openshaw as the Society's new Secretary with effect from 1st November. Yvette has a wealth of experience in business administration and has been breeding Shropshires for many years. Rob was confident that Yvette's appointment would make the Society more efficient and professional.

At the beginning of the year, Janet Morris had been appointed to a new role of Membership Secretary. Rob thanked her for significantly increasing the dialogue the SSBA has with its members, enabling Council to be more in touch with breeders' views, and for her success in signing up new members.

Rob also thanked Marion Webb, who had stepped down as the Society's Treasurer in the spring after nearly 20 years in the role. Marion was presented with an engraved glass

vase as a small token of gratitude. Peter Geddes took over as the SSBA's Treasurer in May.

Rob reported that in August the Council had agreed to adopt a new Code of Conduct for Council Members. This would ensure that decisions taken by Council going forward must always be made in accordance with the SSBA's Articles of Association and, once taken, cannot not be disregarded. This is an important step forward for the Society and a reminder of lines that cannot be crossed.

Society Sheep Sales and Events

In terms of activities, Rob highlighted the National Show and Sale at Shrewsbury in July. This had significantly gathered momentum since the previous year, with the strongest entry since the pandemic and some very large showing classes. Rob thanked the team behind the organisation of the event and also the social evening beforehand. The Society's second sale at Worcester was well supported by vendors but lacked buyers. An earlier date would help and Rob reported that Council was looking at the options for 2024.

The SSBA had sent breed stands to three major NSA events during the year: NorthSheep, Sheep South West and Welsh Sheep. Rob thanked all those that had helped with setting up and manning the stands.

Export Success

Another notable success related to exports. Despite the increase in "red tape", associated costs and Brexit-related transport challenges, the SSBA managed to export sheep to the value of £21,000 to France, Belgium and Germany. Rob thanked the export team and the small number of breeders who supplied sheep for their efforts and perseverance.

Continued on next page/...

Before concluding his report, Rob thanked Council Members Rosie Lee and Anne Harvey, who had completed their three-year terms of office.

"It has been an honour and a privilege - as well as very hard work - to serve as your President for the past two years and I wish my successor well," he said.

Registrar's Report

Alison Schofield explained that 2023 had been a very busy year for the Registrations Team because they had to prepare for and implement a lot of changes introduced by Grassroots (the on-line flock book).

Another big change was brought in during November when the people side of Grassroots back office was moved to the Cloud. This means data and programs will be accessed via the Internet, instead of from a computer's hard drive.

Turning to Shropshire pedigree records, Alison reported that birth notifications were down slightly on previous years, but the number of people notifying late had reduced, after a concerted effort to remind people.

Shropshire ewe registrations were down again for the third year in a row, so the trend was now definitely downwards. Ram registrations were holding steady.

She urged all members to keep their records on Grassroots up-to-date and remove animals that have been culled or sold for meat.

Treasurer's Report

Peter Geddes presented his first report as Treasurer and started by thanking Marion Webb for her work as Treasurer which had left the society in a strong financial position - and also for the assistance she had given him in taking over the Treasurer's role.

The Accounts had been circulated to all Members before the AGM. The overall position showed a surplus for the financial year ending 31st August 2023 of £899, which compares with a £592 surplus the previous year.

Within the surplus, income and expenditure were both reduced from the previous year. Income (excluding Gift Aid and bank interest) was down 13% on the previous year and the main reason was the fall in ewe registrations. There was also a decline in income from membership subscriptions due to breeders resigning or giving up. This should be offset in the next year by new breeders who were automatically enrolled when they bought sheep, but will not have to pay a subscription until the end of November.

On the up side, the Society-led export has contributed £1,162 of export levy, whereas the levy in 2022 contributed £255.

Expenditure was down by £3,112 in the financial year. The main reasons were less expenditure on travel and mileage, as well as a £1,594 reduction in printing, postage and stationery.

The Society had benefitted from the increase in interest rates during the year. The SSBA received Gift Aid of £790 and interest of £908 - which combined amounted to £488 more than in 2022.

The Council is reviewing all costs very

carefully, and we plan to "go digital" wherever we can to minimise expenditure.

Debtors remain very low. Peter thanked members of the SSBA for settling their invoices quickly and Trevor Lightfoot, our Credit Controller, for his diligence in chasing up late payers.

New Council Members

Six people had been nominated by the agreed closing date for nominations. As there were six vacancies, all of them were elected to Council. They are:

Lyn Arrowsmith (Sunbeck Flock)

Les Newman (Rode Flock)

Mark Openshaw (Holtridge Flock)

Philip Sutton-Green (Windy Ridge Flock)

Marion Webb (Ushers Flock) and

Andrew Wilson (Ballycanal Flock).

NEW PRESIDENT

At the Council Meeting following the AGM, a new President had to be appointed. Tom Sellers was the sole nominee and was duly elected.

No one present at the meeting wanted to stand as Vice President, so this role will be filled at a future date.

Claire Jakeman wished to hand over the role of Northern Ireland Co-ordinator to Andrew Wilson, who is based in the Province. Andrew was willing to accept the position. All other Council Officers were willing to continue in their present roles.

As had been previously agreed by Council, Rob Kerby will replace Alison Schofield as one of the two Directors of the European Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association. Adrian Norton remains as the other Director.



Pictured top left: Charlotte Attwell, winner for the second year running of the President's Trophy, the Hornpipe Quaich and the Novice Trophy. Charlotte was unable to attend the AGM as she was lambing in the West Country. Top right: Marion Webb, receiving her engraved glass vase from Rob Kerby - a thank you gift for being the SSBA's Treasurer for 20 years.

Pictured below: Rob presenting the Piddington Trophy for the most points won in Shropshire breed showing classes to Jan and Charles Morris, Apiary Flock. Jan and Charles also won the Hardwicke Trophy and the Halls Small Flock Trophy.

INTRODUCING THE SSBA'S NEW PRESIDENT: **TOM SELLERS**

Tom formed his Sascott Flock (YN) in 2012, with four ewes purchased from three flocks: Liz Bowles and Mike Bray's Hayne Oak Flock, Sue Farquhar's Piddington Flock and Heard & Manford's Ifton Beech Flock. Sascott Shropshires currently numbers around 40 ewes.

This is not the only farming enterprise Tom runs, as he also lambs 200 commercial ewes in two lots - the first in December/January and the second in March. The sheep are run alongside a small suckler herd of 25 Hereford Cross cows. He also rears dairy replacements for a milk producer based near Oswestry.

Tom's farm is a tenanted Council holding near Newtown in mid-Wales of around 60 acres, with another 100 acres rented elsewhere. He took over the lease in 2020.

CATTLE BREEDING EXPERTISE

In common with many new farming entrants, Tom has another string to his bow, and also works for Cogent, a UK-based bovine genetics company as its National Fertility Specialist. This involves working with Cogent's customers and staff to ensure that on-farm cattle fertility is being managed correctly. The job often involves trouble-shooting problems as they occur, as well as covering the UK to implement protocols and provide specialist guidance on bovine fertility.

Tom is also the Chairman of Minsterley Show Society, and is training to be a livestock commentator at shows around the West Midlands. He was recruited to this role by Clive Davies, owner of the Westwood Flock of Shropshires, who has many years' experience of commenting.

Tom believes the Shropshire has a lot to offer, as the breed is easy to manage with plenty of maternal instinct, coupled with bags of milk. Shropshire lambs are easy to



Above: Tom showing a ewe from the Goblindale Flock at the National Show and Sale - an animal that he went on to purchase for his Sascott Shropshires.

finish off grass and produce good meaty lambs as an end product.

As the new President, he hopes to ensure that all members feel part of the Society, whilst helping the SSBA to function in the most efficient and effective way. Tom is determined to see the Shropshire Sheep's popularity continue to grow, and looks forward to meeting as many SSBA members as possible over the coming 12 months.

HARDWICKE TROPHY WINNER

This year's winner of the Sansaw Sidedowns Most Prolific Ewe Award, including the Hardwicke Trophy and a cheque for £25, was "Dilly" from the Apiary Flock of Jan and Charles Morris, Stoney Stretton, Shropshire.

The award is made to the live ewe with the highest number of registered progeny. Dilly (ear tag 03XA12) was born in 2012 and has produced 11 registered females and one registered male - so far!

She was actually the third lamb ever born in the Apiary Flock, sired by Sansaw Typhoon and out of one of the foundation ewes purchased by the Morrisons from the Alderton Flock. Congratulations to the breeders - and Dilly of course!



EXPORT REPORT

All export sheep were away on Wednesday evening (30th August), after an incredibly eventful amount of paperwork and changes to the rules. I could write a book on just this one export.

I would like to thank the following who provided sheep that were a credit to the Shropshires: Marion Webb, Jeanette Hares, Rosie Lee, Alison Schofield, Ellie Butcher, Robert Webb and Andrew Wilson, also a few from myself.

Without unstinting help from Claire Jakeman and Alison Schofield, I could not have managed.

In total the export consignment was 64 head: 18 rams and 46 females (plus 56 Boer Goats and 2 Clun rams). Shropshire sheep were sent to France, Belgium and Germany. There will have to be some changes to the Ministry paperwork if another multi-drop export is ever to take place again, due to rule changes the day before they went.

Sue Farquhar
Export Officer

WILL "THOMAS" STAR ON THE REPAIR SHOP?



Senior stock ram of the Millenheath Flock, Alderton Thomas, was borrowed for filming, whilst he was at the Royal Three Counties Show in June last year.

Thomas is pictured above with Jay Blades, one of the stars of the BBC's popular series *The Repair Shop*, and actor David Jason - well known for so many roles it is impossible to list them!

Unfortunately we haven't been able to find out when the ram may appear and why they wanted to include him - but keep your eyes peeled on the TV.

HALLS TROPHY WINNER 2022

The Halls Trophy is awarded every year to the vendor of the highest priced Shropshire from a small flock (fewer than 15 ewes) sold through the ring at the National Show and Sale.

In 2022, the trophy was won by Peter Harris (Ellerdine Flock) who sold shearling ram, Stonegrove Oreo at the event. Unfortunately the trophy was not available on the day and so a special presentation was made this summer. Pictured above with Pete and one of his current rams are (left to right) Tom Sellers, Membership Secretary Jan Morris, and Council Member Helen Carroll.



PICTURES FOR THE NEXT FLOCK BOOK

If you have any good quality photos of Shropshires taken during 2023 that would be suitable for the Flock Book. Please send them to Alison Schofield registrar@shropshire-sheep.co.uk by the end of January.

SHROPSHIRE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME REPORT 2023

Shropshire flocks that record performance with Signet had another successful year in which there was a significant jump forward in the Terminal Sire Index for the top ranking ram in the breed.

The Cefn-carnau-bred ram, 598ABB21, has a phenomenal TI score of 328, the highest ever recorded for Shropshires and 128 points above the breed average. The ram has a large number of cross-bred progeny on one of the farms taking part in the national RamCompare trial. He has been retained for use for a second season by the farm concerned.

There are some new entrants in the top ten of the Top Stock Sires' list. Two are from the Hackford Flock - Athelstan and Ostorius - both sired by Cefn-carnau Endeavour. Also making his debut is Hayne Oak Denzel, placed at number 7. Last year's leader, Sansaw Duke, is still in the top ten but has been overtaken by the next generation. A total of 43 Shropshire rams were evaluated by Signet in the 2023 season.

INTRODUCING YVETTE OPENSHAW OUR NEW BREED SOCIETY SECRETARY

At the beginning of November, Yvette Openshaw was appointed as the SSBA's new Secretary, one of the most important roles within the breed society. Yvette and her husband Mark (who is one of six new Council members) have been breeding Shropshires for nearly 16 years.

The Openshaws formed their Holtridge Flock (flock letters TF) back in 2008. The flock was named after the area where they lived in Cheshire and the foundation stock - two ewes and five lambs - was purchased from Mr and Mrs Goodyear in Wrenbury. The Goodyears kept Shropshires for only a short time and most of their sheep originated from the Alderton Flock.

"The majority of our flock are related to 07LU024, also known as 'Dolly'. She was one of the two original foundation ewes that came to us as shearlings. She was a real character and lived until she was about 15 years old. She won the Hardwicke Trophy for being the most prolific ewe on three occasions," recalls Yvette.

"Our first ram was Croxton Captain bred by Mr R E Ball and purchased from the Chelford rare breeds sale. Captain happened to be of the ARR/ARR scrapie genotype. At that time, it meant very little to us, but over the years we have bred for scrapie resistance and all our sheep are now R1s."

Yvette and Mark moved to their current smallholding, Little Sutton, four miles south east of Oswestry in 2017. Having previously moved house too many times to count, they have no intention of moving ever again. The sheep flock moved with them and now enjoys a purpose built sheep building with all "mod cons" and around 10 acres of pasture. They currently have 10 breeding ewes and eight females born in 2023 to join the flock later this year.



Yvette was previously on the SSBA's Council from 2016 to 2019 and she is looking forward to supporting the Society as its Secretary. She has extensive experience of operational and office management, with formal qualifications in Business Management and Administration.

"I have a strong background in customer facing roles in both the public and private

sectors. I started my working life as a hairdresser and my last full time role was the operations manager for a Management Consultancy. I think my favourite role has been working as the Personal Assistant to the Royal Navy Commanding Officer of the Command Training School where the work was very varied and thoroughly enjoyable."

Yvette is a trustee of various charities and heavily involved at local and regional level with the Women's Institute. She does occasionally relax - and enjoys walking, travel, and meeting up with fiends.

Turning to her new role with the SSBA, Yvette says: "I enjoy being busy and I think my career background and love of Shropshire sheep make me ideal to fill the Secretary's position. I'm ready to encompass all aspects of this demanding role."

"Mark and I enjoy showing our sheep alongside fellow breeders, and I hope SSBA members will pop along and say hello, especially if we have yet to meet in person."

Top Stock Sires 2023

Ranked on Terminal Sire Index
(Terminal Sire Index/Maternal Index)

1. Cefn-carnau 0598ABB21 (328/209)
- = 2. Ushers Izar (290/275)
- = 2. Alderton Major (290/269)
4. Hackford Athelstan (270/233)
5. Ushers Igor (267/215)
6. Hackford Ostorius (265/195)
7. Hayne Oak Denzel (263/231)
8. Sansaw Duke (262/194)
9. Ushers Hector (261/237)
10. Holloway George (252/191)

Top Ram Lambs 2023 Retained for Breeding

Ranked on Terminal Sire Index
(Terminal Sire Index/Maternal Index)

1. Holloway 865TR23 (314/251)
2. Alderton Sumo (311/256)
3. Ushers King (299/260)
4. Holloway 890TR23 (284/210)
5. Hackford 096ALM23 (275/243)
- = 6. Cefn-carnau 1057ABB23 (272/218)
- = 6. Holloway 893TR23 (272/215)
8. Holloway 868TR23 (270/236)
9. Ushers 1279KX23 (269/217)
10. Hackford 0081ALM23 (267/215)

MY TIME AS THE JUNIOR MEMBERS' REP

Hi, I am George Clay, and for the past three years I have been the Junior Members' Representative for the SSBA on Council. Here is my story with Shropshire sheep.

Many years ago, my involvement with Shropshires, started by helping with shepherding the family's flock including lambing, shearing and routine tasks. In 2008 I went to my first show at the Royal Three Counties, showing sheep in the main breed classes and as a young handler, where I learnt a lot about handling sheep and talking to the judge and answering questions on the spot - something which is still important even now!

Over the following years I have attended many different shows each time learning more, from preparation to show etiquette, to meeting other breeders, including other juniors. With help from the SSBA, this led to the opportunity to compete at the National Young Stars Competition: A two-day event where teams from each breed are judged on every aspect of sheep keeping; including the tidiness of our pen, the quality of our breed stand (designed by the whole team), stock judging, show trimming, and finally an interview in the ring. In the evening there was a tug of war social and hog roast.

Each year before the competition the Shropshire team would meet up and have a "sheep camp"

where we would design and make the breed stand, practice sheep trimming and stock judging, answer health questionnaires and receive instruction from a butcher about lamb carcass classification and the different cuts. In the evening we would have time to socialise and play team games. This helped build friendships and team spirit. I then used what I had learnt at National Young Stars to help host two open afternoons for members, where we all looked at lambs for both breeding and finishing. I have also been assisted through Council to qualify as a Shropshire Sheep Inspector.

I have enjoyed my time as Junior Rep and gained insight into how Council works and been able to raise questions from the young members' perspective. Since having more commitments with work and the YFC, I feel now is the right time for someone else to take on this role and work alongside the Junior Coordinators, Rosie Lee and Joanne Powell, to encourage new young handlers and increase their knowledge and experience with sheep with help from the Society.

If anyone is interested in the role of Junior Members' Representative and aged between 18 and 21, please contact Rosie (01606301503@talktalk.net) or Joanne on (jocanne@gmail.com).



George in action in the show ring.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!
You can still pay
your Annual
Subscription to the
SSBA - although late
payment fees
will apply.

If you need help, please
contact Membership
Secretary Janet Morris on
membershipsec@shropshire-
sheep.co.uk
01743 821685
07816 813986
(call or WhatsApp)

DON'T FORGET
IF YOU MAKE A PAYMENT
TO THE SSBA BY BANK
TRANSFER

PLEASE TAG THE BACS
PAYMENT
WITH YOUR FLOCK
LETTERS

MARLPIT SHROPSHIRE SPONSOR STOPPAGE TIME!

Stephen Perrins, owner of the Marlpit Flock in Staffordshire, is a long-term supporter of Burton Albion football club and he sponsors the "stoppage time" at every home match. When the Marlpit Shropshires' logo flashes up on the stadium screen, there is an outbreak of "baa-ing" and "bleating" amongst the crowd. But they certainly all now know about Shropshire sheep. Just goes to show there are many ways of promoting our breed!



SHROPTALK

is edited by Pippa Geddes
pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk
Contributions welcome!
www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk.



Check out our Facebook pages:
Friends of Shropshire Sheep
&
Shropshire Sheep Tree Club