

# SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Spring 2014



*A group of ewes and lambs from Marion and Aubrey Webb's Ushers Flock, based near Lutterworth in Leicestershire. Over 40 ewes dropped their lambs in the first two weeks of January and 56 lambed in total this year, achieving a lambing percentage of 1.5 live lambs/ewe.*

## CHANGES TO REGISTRATIONS, AND TO "STOCK FOR SALE" ON OUR WEBSITE

**PEDIGREE certificates for Shropshires are changing to a larger A4 format printed on one side only, in order to comply with DEFRA's new requirements for farm animal registration documents.**

At the same time, the breed society's Council has decided that the SSBA's pedigree certificates will now be issued by email in digital format for breeders to download and print off themselves. The registration fees payable by breeders who receive these "electronic" certificates will remain at the current level.

**However, fees will rise by £2/head to £7/female or £12/male registered with photos (£17/male registered without photos) for breeders who cannot, or do not wish to, receive electronic certificates.** This is because more work is required and additional costs are incurred if certificates have to be printed by the Registrar and then sent by post.

If breeders do not have an email address themselves, but wish to register an email address of a family member or friend in order to receive digital certificates, please contact the Registrar with the relevant information as soon as possible.

Distribution of pedigree certificates by email is one of a number of measures that the breed society will introduce this year to help streamline the sheep registration process. The workload of our Registrar, Alison Schofield, has grown enormously over the past few years as breed society membership and the number of sheep registered per year has increased so

significantly. The SSBA is looking at several ways of providing additional assistance for Alison so that registrations can be dealt with much more quickly in future. In the meantime, the breed society requests members to please ensure that when birth notifying lambs or registering sheep they provide *all* the information requested on the society's forms.

Please use the on-line registration system if you can, via the new website: [www.ssbaregistrations.co.uk](http://www.ssbaregistrations.co.uk) (see details in the Winter *ShropTalk*). Additionally, if you are paying your registration fees by BACS transfer, please send the Registrar an email at the same time, to notify her of the amount you have paid and what it is for. At the moment, our Registrar and Treasurer are spending a lot of time trying to identify "anonymous" payments into the society's bank account, and matching these with sheep registrations.

### STOCK FOR SALE ON THE WEBSITE

The "Stock for Sale" page on the SSBA's website will soon be changed to a "Breeders Page", which will list by geographical region the contact details of all current members of the society who are breeding sheep. The Sales Register Form will no longer be used to advertise stock for sale. However, breeders who have advertised in the society's flock book this year will be given a click through link on the website to their advert or their own farm website, if they have one. Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman, is still available to advise and assist breeders with selling their stock.

## SIGNET PERFORMANCE CLASSES MOVE TO BURWARTON

**TWO awards for Signet recorded Shropshires will be on offer at this season's Burwarton Show in Shropshire (7th Aug). These awards will run within the show's existing classes for rams and ram lambs.**

Thanks to generous sponsorship from EBLEX and RAS Rosettes, Ribbons and Show Supplies, there will be a £25 voucher and a sash for the highest placed performance recorded ram, and the same for the highest placed recorded ram lamb.

The ram and ram lamb classes will, of course, also be open to other non-recorded Shropshires. The classes will be judged as usual, based on conformation and show style, by the judge appointed for the Shropshire section. Once the final line-up has been decided, the Signet awards will be distributed to the highest placed recorded animal.

Exhibitors may enter animals they have bred themselves that have been performance recorded by Signet, or animals that they have purchased from a Signet-recorded flock. All entries must have a Terminal Sire Index greater than the breed average score for the current year to be eligible.

Similar classes were previously run at the Cheshire County Show, but these have now been replaced by the new performance awards at Burwarton to give breeders in a different geographical area a chance to enter. There are currently 19 flocks of Shropshires recording the performance of their sheep with Signet.

For more information about Signet recording and the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme, please see the society's website.

## SHOWS WITH CLASSES FOR SHROPSHIRE

**The following agricultural shows hold classes for our breed:**

**Burwarton  
Cheshire County  
Denbigh and Flint  
Minsterley  
Oswestry  
Poynton  
Royal Welsh  
Shropshire County  
Staffordshire County  
Tenbury  
Three Counties**

Please note, the East of England Show will not be held this year. At other shows, Shropshires may be exhibited in lowland or "any other native breed" classes. Contact details for the above shows, can be found on the SSBA's website (Shows page): [www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk](http://www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk)



Building on last year's very successful Show and Sale (West) at Shrewsbury, Halls have announced plans to expand the event with the addition of a section for goats, a Farmers' Market and a bigger auction of vintage farm machinery. The Show and Sale of Shropshires will remain a highlight - and the largest exhibition of our breed anywhere in the UK this year.



*The 2013 Shropshire and Interbreed Champion, Stonegrove Archie, with breeder Richard Dorrell.*

#### NEW ELECTRONIC MOVEMENT REPORTING SYSTEM FOR SHEEP

On 1st April 2014, a new electronic movement reporting system will be launched by DEFRA. The new Animal Reporting & Movement Service (ARAMS) will be provided by SouthWestern from their Milton Keynes Office. The ARAMS system will take over the processing of sheep movements from each Local Authority in England.

ARAMS involves two parts. The first is the SouthWestern Bureau operation in Milton Keynes where staff will process all paper movements onto the ARAMS database. The second part is an electronic interface with some premises' (eg abattoirs and livestock markets) to automatically transfer movement information into the system. Once all the movement information has been validated by the ARAMS database, the information is then transferred to the Government's database Animal Movement Licensing System.

#### Will farmers have to report movements electronically?

Farmers will have a choice of reporting sheep movements electronically if they wish. However, they can continue to report movements on paper if they prefer this option. The ARAMS system is being developed to be user friendly and is currently undergoing pilot testing. If you want to report movements on paper after 1st April, you will need to use new movement documents supplied by SouthWestern. An ARAMS-1 document will replace the current AML1 form for sheep movements. These new forms should be posted to ARAMS, SouthWestern, PO Box 6299, Milton Keynes, MK10 1ZQ, instead of your Local Authority. It remains the obligation of the receiving keeper to report the movement onto their premises. ARAMS-1 forms can be downloaded from [www.arams.co.uk](http://www.arams.co.uk).

## NATIONAL SHOW AND SALE NEWS

The Schedule and entry forms for our show and sale (West) are now available and will be emailed to all SSBA members. Paper copies will be sent to those without email. The Schedule and entry forms can also be downloaded from the SSBA's website.

#### Important Changes For 2014

Council would like to draw members' attention to a number of changes to arrangements for this year's National Show and Sale (West).

**1. There will be no section for MV Qualifying Sheep this year** due to the difficulties of penning these animals separately and moving them to the show and sale rings without compromising the health status of MV accredited sheep.

Animals that have passed one MV qualifying test may be entered as "Non-MV" although the owners should be aware that they will revert to "Non-MV" status sheep once they are at the show and sale venue and have been off-loaded.

#### 2. Change to arrival times for Shropshires:

Shropshires must arrive at Shrewsbury Market between 4pm and 7.30pm on Friday 25th July or before 8am on Saturday 26th July. These time restrictions have been introduced to enable us to provide stewards to collect paperwork and check that sheep follow the correct pathways through the market.

**3. Shropshire ram and ewe lambs entered in the show classes must be trimmed.** This is to bring the Western show and sale classes into line with all the other showing classes held for Shropshires and classes at our National Show and Sale (East).

**4. New Junior Members' Award:** The breed society will award a special rosette to the Junior Member with the highest placed animal in the show classes. To qualify, the Junior Member must be the breeder of the animal and he or she must also show the sheep.

**5. Later sale time for Shropshires:** The sale of Shropshires will start at 12 noon, an hour later than in previous years. This is to allow more "breathing space" between the showing

classes and the sheep sale. Other breeds of sheep will be sold before the Shropshires from their pens. Shropshires will be sold through the ring (MV accredited stock first, then non-MV).

**6. Inspections:** Shropshires will be inspected by independent inspector, Rob Gregory, who carried out the same role at Shrewsbury last year. He will be looking at functional type traits only. Vendors should only enter sheep that meet the breed standards, and buyers should also be aware of these, especially undesirable traits such as horn stubs, white specks on the face and/or legs, and coloured wool in the fleece. For more information, please see the booklet *Critical Selection of Shropshire Sheep*, which can be downloaded from the SSBA's website.

#### Upset Prices for 2014

THE SSBA's Council has agreed that Upset (minimum) reserve prices will remain the same as last year for Shropshires sold through both the society's National Shows and Sales. These are as follows: **Shearling Rams:** 200gns; **Older Rams:** At the vendor's discretion; **Ram Lambs:** 140gns; **Shearling Ewes:** 150gns; **Older Breeding Ewes:** At the vendor's discretion; **Ewe Lambs:** 100gns. Vendors may set higher reserve prices for their animals if they wish. Halls reserve the right to charge the full commission on the reserve price for any animals not sold. This is to ensure that realistic reserve prices are set.

#### Social Evening and "Pub Quiz"

There will be a social evening at the market, open to all vendors and buyers on Friday 25th July. Food will include hot roast pork rolls, salads and a sweet for only £7/head. Tickets must be purchased in advance either via the livestock entry forms or from our Secretary, Simon Mackay. As last year, Peter Geddes and Aubrey Webb have kindly agreed (had their arms twisted!) to run another pub quiz. You can camp overnight at the market for no charge or there is a Travelodge just a quick stroll away, with other accommodation available in Shrewsbury itself.



*Some of the Shropshire pens at last year's National Show and Sale (West) at Shrewsbury.*



## SHEEP WILL ALWAYS SURPRISE US!

**Alan Oliver (Sprotbrough Flock, based near Doncaster) shares a story from the lambing shed:**

Even after 29 years of keeping sheep they still manage to come up with something new and unexpected!

The ewe in the photo (born in 2010) came down with a bad case of twin lamb disease, went very lame and stopped eating. By the time she lambed on 7th Feb, she was very poorly and I didn't expect her to survive. She had twins: one female, which was born dead, and one male which survived with a lot of 'TLC'

In the next lambing pen was a ewe which had a super female lamb, but the ewe never got up and died two days later. Her lamb had to be bottle fed from birth and was doing very well. However, she took a fancy to the ewe next door and, much to our amazement, the ewe not only recovered from her illness but volunteered to adopt the orphan.

But this is not the end of the story...out in the

barn with all the other ewes and lambs was a ewe with triplets, born on 17th January (only the third set of Shropshire triplets we have ever had).

One of these, a tup lamb, was obviously not doing very well - and he was going round all the other ewes trying to steal milk and getting a severe beating in the process.

When I released the twin lamb disease ewe into the barn with her family, the triplet lamb tried his luck - bingo!

I don't know who was more surprised, the lamb or us, when he was accepted without hesitation.

Now we have a very contented family of four. The orphan still takes four bottles a day, the ewe's own lamb takes a little bottle and the triplet relies totally on his adopted mother.

In the picture below, the lamb on the left is the ewe's own, the lamb in the middle is the orphan and the lamb on the right is the triplet who got lucky.



## NEW LEAFLETS PROMOTING SHROPSHIRE LAMB ARE FREE TO DOWNLOAD

THE SSBA now has available a leaflet and a flier for members to use to promote their prime Shropshire lamb to butchers and consumers. These new publications are available in digital format and can be downloaded from the SSBA's Website (Publications Page). Members can then print copies for their own use.

The main leaflet prints out on A4 paper and folds into six pages “DL” size. It is aimed primarily at butchers and it extols the qualities of Shropshire lamb, particularly the traditional taste and eating quality of meat from our breed. There is a blank space on one page for members to insert their own contact details. Additionally, there is a single-page “flier” that can be used either to promote Shropshire lamb when sold by SSBA members direct to the public, or to help butchers to promote Shropshire lamb to their customers at point of sale. The leaflets have been professionally produced with the help of Richard Lutwyche of the Traditional Breeds Meat Marketing Company. The SSBA would like to thank Richard for producing these to help our members boost sales of their lamb.

How can we help you?

Get in touch if you would like details of our diverse Shropshire breeders in your area. We welcome any direct trade between quality breeders and our members and will be happy to try and help you source local stock.

Once you have stock available, we can supply you members with letters for you to put on your counter to encourage purchases and to provide more information for your customers.

We've been using the best practice to help you find the best producers and to keep your customers coming back for more.



Shropshire Lamb

Your local Shropshire breeder:

There's lamb...



Then there's Prime Shropshire Lamb...




Find a local contact of Shropshire lamb

[illegible]

## CHANGES ANNOUNCED TO FAT DEPTH EBV PRESENTATION

SIGNET is changing the way the Fat Depth Estimated Breeding Value (EBV) is represented on its breeding charts, with the aim of helping producers select livestock with the right genetic potential for fatness or leanness to suit their breed and their farm. Leaner animals are currently reported as above average or superior on charts. However, producers recognise that in practice they require stock with an optimum level of fatness to suit their farming system.

The change will see genetically fatter animals with their Fat Depth EBVs presented in the same direction as those that are genetically heavier and better muscled. Feedback from sheep producers is that they see this change as logical, with “more fat” being presented on the same side of the bar chart as “more growth”, “more muscle” and “more milk”. Signet’s Breeding Services Manager, Sam Boon, said: “Breeding charts are an important reference point for producers looking to purchase high genetic dams and sires, so it’s essential that the information is communicated as clearly as possible.

### Optimum Fat Depth

“However, it’s important to state that the change in presentation of the Fat Depth EBV doesn’t mean that genetically fatter animals are necessarily more desirable. Producers should select breeding stock with optimum Fat Depth EBV to ensure maximum returns for their enterprise - this will vary from farm to farm and from breed to breed”

The change to the presentation of the Sheep Fat Depth EBV has already been made. Shropshire breeders will see the updated charts at our two National Shows and Sales, where all breeding stock from recorded flocks are marketed with up-to-date Signet bar charts on the pen fronts. Bar charts for all recorded Shropshires can also be viewed via Signet's website ([www.signetfbc.co.uk](http://www.signetfbc.co.uk)).

## GRADING-UP SCHEME CLOSING

THE SSBA's Grading-Up Scheme will officially close on 31st March 2014. Flocks that have joined the scheme before that date will be allowed to complete the grading-up process. However, no new flocks will be permitted onto the scheme after the March deadline. For more details, please contact the Secretary or the Registrar.

## PAYMENT OF TRANSFER FEES

THE rules about payment of transfer of ownership fees have changed. The fee of £3/head, payable to the SSBA within 10 days of a sale whenever a registered Shropshire is sold, *can now be paid by either the vendor or the purchaser*. The future progeny of sheep that have been sold cannot be registered with the SSBA until the transfer fee has been paid.

## EXPORT NEWS

THE SSBA has received a large export order from France for 200 ewe lambs and five ram lambs. Stock is now being sourced from eligible flocks. Well done Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, and Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman, for securing this order for the society! Sue Handley (Moreton Wood Flock) has also kindly agreed to join the Society's export team to help with breeder communications.

# INTRODUCING TWO OF OUR NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

THE SSBA is delighted to welcome five new Shropshire breeders onto the society's governing Council. Here we profile two of them and will introduce Jackie Lewis, Paul Redgate and Paul Stead in the Summer edition of the *ShropTalk*.

## GILLIAN DIXON (SOUTH YEO FLOCK)



Gillian and her husband, Ian, farm 93 acres in west Devon. Their land is mostly down to pasture with some blocks of woodland. The soils is clay and fairly wet underfoot - particularly this season!

The couple keep various rare and native breeds including a suckler herd of Beef Shorthorns and riggit Galloway cattle. Aside from Shropshires, they keep Balwen Welsh Mountain, Norfolk Horn, Zwartbles and Coloured Ryeland sheep. They have 30 breeds of poultry in separate runs so that they can produce purebreds for sale and offer eggs for hatching. Gillian and Ian also fatten weaners and somehow find time to run introductory courses for smallholders and new livestock keepers. Gillian now works full-time on the farm but used to work for Westcountry Rivers Trust, working with landowners to help protect their water resources.

A flock of Shropshires was established at South Yeo Farm in 2008. The couple had started with black Balwens, but were looking for a second breed and were attracted to Shropshires because of their "tree friendly" nature. The farm has a couple of small plantations of Christmas trees and a small orchard and the Shropshires are used in these areas to control the weeds and herbage.

Foundation stock came from the Furze-fields and Threemoor Flocks, which have both now been dispersed. Their first ram was Sidedowns Kane, and more recently Hornpipe and Ushers rams have been used. The flock now stands at 25 Shropshires, run alongside 50 Balwen and 30 "other breeds".

The Shropshires are lambed in Jan/Feb, while the other breeds lamb in April. "We wouldn't be able to fit them all in the shed at the same time, so we lamb the Shropshires earlier to make space. It also means we can spread our lamb box sales over more months by having a longer supply period," says Gillian. "We find the Shropshires need more help at lambing than the other breeds so like to clear the decks and be able to concentrate on

them. All lambs are sold privately: Most Shropshire ewe lambs are retained for breeding and ram lambs are marketed in meat boxes to local customers and nationwide by overnight courier.

The aspects of Shropshires that Gillian values the most are the ability of lambs to finish off grass and the fact that the breed really doesn't eat trees. "We can trust them not to escape from lesser fenced fields along the river for example, and they will happily follow a bucket up the road to a new field without running off. I wouldn't dare let some of our others out of the gate," adds Gillian.

She was interested in joining the SSBA's Council so she could meet other Shropshire breeders and she is looking forward to assisting the breed society where she can.

There's no doubt that many aspects of the SSBA's activities will benefit from Gillian's wide-ranging experience!

## JANET MORRIS (APIARY FLOCK)



Janet is based in Stoney Stretton, Shropshire where she and her husband, Charles, have three acres of their own land and rent another 12 acres from a neighbour.

Jan runs her own kitchen design and supply business from home. Her interest in sheep comes from being born into a farming family, which ran a commercial flock for many years: "My father had a hill farm in Llangurig, mid-Wales and later we moved to a farm in Llanidloes when I was seven. We kept beef and sheep, using mainly Texel tups on Welsh half-bred ewes. Over the years we experimented with Charollais, Rouge and Suffolk tups, but always went back to Texels. I left home at 18 and was working for Laura Ashley's in Cambridge, but took my holidays in the first two weeks of March to help my father with the lambing and calving, which he planned for those dates."

Jan's husband has recently retired from his business in mechanical and electrical engineering. Charles still loves to build things and has made all the hay cratches and sheep feeders for their smallholding. He's currently working on a link box for the tractor.

Shropshires were the only breed Charles would consider keeping. Being a true "Shropshire Lad", he announced that he would like a few of them after seeing the sheep on BBC2's Victorian Farm series. Ten ewe lambs were duly purchased from the Alderton Flock

in May 2011. Now that Jan and Charles have secured some extra grazing they plan is to build the flock to around 25 breeding ewes. They will lamb outside in the first week of March. Lambs not retained for breeding are generally sold for meat direct to consumers. Jan and Charles also exported some ewe lambs to France via a breed society-led export.

Jan likes Shropshires because they are easy lambing and good mothers with a calm nature: "We don't have a sheep dog, but easily move the sheep around by getting them to follow a feed bucket. They have a very easy-going, docile nature - well, most of them have!" she says.

"Initially, I was happy to have any sheep. But now that I've had Shropshires for a few years, I find them very easy to manage. I am also enjoying learning about the breed lines, which is not something you really look at in a commercial flock."

Jan was persuaded to join the breed society's Council by Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman. As well as serving on Council, she has kindly agreed to take over the management and maintenance of the SSBA's archive of press cuttings and other Shropshire Sheep memorabilia.

## SHEEP HEALTH MATTERS

A SURVEY undertaken in conjunction with the national Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency has shown that the incidence of Maedi Visna in the national flock has increased in the 15 years since the last large scale survey. This poses a threat to high health status accredited flocks. If your sheep are MV Accredited, please ensure that biosecurity is maintained at all times and that you follow all other rules of the health scheme.

A number of MV flocks are inspected each year by independent inspectors and where non-compliance with MV rules is found the valued Accredited status of the flock is suspended. Shows and sales are also inspected and SAC, the organisation that runs the MV scheme, urges all accredited flocks to bring any shortcomings to the attention of the organisers and SAC itself.

SAC also carries out Scrapie Genotyping and is approved by DEFRA to undertake genotyping for export purposes. So, if you are due a vet visit for MV testing, it might be opportune to combine the tests.

SAC also administers the Scrapie Monitoring Scheme, which is a useful means of complying with rules for export of breeding stock. SMS members are reminded that they can only buy ARR/ARR stock or stock from holdings of the same status. For more information check out SAC's website: [www.sruc.co.uk/sghs](http://www.sruc.co.uk/sghs).

## SHROPTALK

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