

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Spring 2016

PRESIDENT'S SPRING UPDATE

ON 5th March 2016, this year's first Council Meeting took place at Sandwell Park Farm. Reports were received from the main officers of the Society.

Marion Webb, as Treasurer, reported a sound financial position with the usual significant inflow of funds over winter from new registrations and membership renewals through flock returns.

Alison Schofield, as Registrar, also confirmed that the upward trend of ewe numbers appear to be continuing given the volume of registrations received already within this year.

Claire Jakeman reported that one small order for export had already been received although it is quite early in the year for orders to be placed. The weakness of the pound against the euro may help to encourage foreign buyers.

Efforts continue to be made to ensure renewal of membership. Unfortunately delays in returning paperwork cause extra work for Council Members with ways of encouraging prompt renewals being discussed. There can also be problems in identifying who has paid if the payer's bank do not make us aware of the member's name.

Liz Bowles advised that Bulmers had agreed to support the application to be made for funding for the breed profiling project with the application being submitted in March.

On publicity and promotions, Barry Hodson

has taken on the task of finding new promotional stands with a view to making more people aware of the breed at shows, etc.

We are also looking at a complete re-vamp of the website, the present version having served us for a number of years and also opening a Twitter account enabling further member communication.

It is also hoped that a Field Day can be organised towards the end of August and members will be invited to attend. It is hoped to provide guidance on critical selection of stock and judging animals to test the members' skills.

The lambing season in Norfolk went well with just under 60 ewes producing in four weeks. Given our heavy clay soil and the extremely wet conditions, we have only recently turned the animals out, but they now seem to be enjoying the fresh air and a good crop of grass. We were also fortunate enough to have had three enquiries with regard to stock to date although our attention has been diverted slightly by the arrival of a first grandson on Leap Year's Day and the engagement of our oldest son. I hope his wedding date avoids showing commitments and the lambing season.

I look forward to meeting many of you during the summer season.

Les Newman



A lovely picture of lambs posted on our "Friends of Shropshire Sheep" Facebook page by Kay Caplice. The Shropshire sheep Facebook page now has over 500 followers.

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SHROPTALK

This is the 50th edition of *ShropTalk* that I have designed and written since becoming the newsletter's editor in December 2003.

To mark this milestone, this edition of the newsletter contains a wordsearch competition.

The prize for the winner is a pair of Burgon and Ball trimming shears (worth £20) kindly donated by Nigel Farr Farm Services of Westbury, Shropshire.



To enter the contest, look for ten words highlighted in green in the newsletter. Then find them in the wordsearch square that has been sent to you separately by the SSBA's Secretary. Mark the words on the square and complete the entry form, then post your entry to me at
Stable Views, Alderton,
Montford Bridge,
Shropshire SY4 1AW
Good luck!

Pippa Geddes



Shropshire ewes and lambs grazing in the fruit tree plantations of the Vanlerberghe family, France.

EXPORTS 2016

THE Breed Society has so far secured an order for 10 shearing ewes and a shearing ram. Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, and Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman, are talking to other potential buyers.

This year 17 flocks have expressed an interest in supplying export sheep. This includes four new flocks: Fairfields (UG), Millenheath (TW), Sprotbrough (EV) and Millview (ADR).

Anyone else interested in supplying export sheep in future years should contact Sue Farquhar on 01531 670439.

STOCK JUDGING SUCCESS FOR CHARLIE

SSBA member Charlie Morgan Jones (17), was part of the winning stock judging team from Shropshire Young Farmers at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair at Llanelwedd, Powys in December last year. This is a great achievement for the Shropshire club, which has not enjoyed such success in the YFC stock judging for more than ten years.

Charlie, who owns the Church Preen flock of Shropshires, has already proved that he knows a thing or two about good livestock: He won the breed championship at our National Show and Sale (West) in 2014, followed by winning the Halls Trophy for the highest priced Shropshire from a small flock sold through the auction ring at the same event last year. Charlie is pictured below receiving the trophy from Nick Hyne of Halls.



NEW PICTURES NEEDED FOR SHOW DISPLAYS

THE Breed Society plans to update its publicity materials displayed on our show stands.

If you have any good quality images of Shropshires - show-ring shots or simply good pictures of Shropshires on your farm - please send them to Barry Hodson via email: barryhodson@virgin.net. Pictures must be in high resolution and in focus, so that they can be successfully enlarged for display boards.

RECORD-BREAKING NEW FLOCK BOOK

THE Society's next flock book (Volume 115 - reflecting the year 2015) is expected to be the Society's largest, thanks to increases in membership, as well as in ewe and ram registrations.

The book is compiled by our Registrar Alison Schofield and Registrations Clerk, Ruth Mawer. It is due to go to the printers in early April and will be posted out to members around one month later.

BLUETONGUE UPDATE

BE ESPECIALLY VIGILANT THIS YEAR

THE National Sheep Association (NSA) is calling for the whole livestock industry to be vigilant to Bluetongue over the coming months and, given the current unavailability of vaccine, to have an open dialogue about potential uptake.

The Bluetongue virus, a potentially fatal disease of sheep and cattle, is very likely to arrive in England in 2016 according to the government's Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Reports in the media state that there is an 80% chance that the biting midges that transmit the disease will be blown across the channel this summer. Farms in southern England suffered the first ever outbreak in the UK in 2007, but the virus was quickly eradicated after a vaccination campaign. However, the farming industry is concerned that the vaccine will not be available this season unless farmers indicate that they are prepared to use it.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, explains: "Low vaccine uptake in the past has made manufacturers understandably nervous about potentially producing a drug that no one will buy. The vaccine takes some time to produce so we must be responsible as an industry, think well ahead about the risk to our flocks and herds, and ensure clear communication between us and animal health companies."

NSA understands that all existing stocks of vaccine are owned by the French Government, which will hopefully help them contain the Bluetongue BTV-8 Virus. With the movement of live animals tightly controlled, the likely source of introduction to the UK will be infected midges coming across the channel from France, with the level of risk dependent on weather conditions, temperatures and the extent of virus circulation in France.

Mr Stocker continues: "As there are currently no stocks of vaccine available here in the UK we would expect vaccine manufacturers to be watching the situation very closely.

"The NSA is in contact with the relevant companies and, while it is difficult to make predictions we need a clear steer from our members and other sheep farmers on how we proceed.

"In the meantime, we have discussed the situation with colleagues in the Sheep Veterinary Society and collectively, while there is absolutely no need to panic, we would encourage all sheep and cattle farmers to be aware of the risk we face, contacting their vet immediately if there is any suspicion regarding their stock. Farmers should be extra vigilant given that most stock are immunologically naive to the virus, and that experience in France suggests a low level of clinical signs."

DEFRA has said vaccination levels of 80%, 50% or even 25% in bovine and ovine species by 1st May 2016 would have a significant impact on the rate of spread of disease, but there is little cost incentive for individual farmers to vaccinate at present, and no vaccine available to do so.

Mr Stocker concludes: "While the reluctance of DEFRA to roll out a nationally-funded vaccination programme is understandable, NSA feels strongly that trade must be protected at all costs. We are told the risk to both export and internal trade is considered to be low at the current time, but this must be closely monitored. This dilemma once again raises questions over the costs of industry protection being borne by a few, even though the decision to vaccinate may be based on the individual business."

Professor John Blackwell from the British Veterinary Association commented: "We strongly encourage all farmers to closely monitor their stock for Bluetongue symptoms - particularly sheep which are most susceptible to the disease - including eye and nasal discharge, drooling, swelling around the head or mouth, lethargy and lameness."

The NFU says it is taking the threat of Bluetongue very seriously and recommends farmers to have a conversation with their vets to inform their decision (about whether to vaccinate) based on risk to their business.



WANTED: PRIMESTOCK SHOW EXHIBITORS

THE SSBA is urgently seeking breeders who are willing to exhibit their stock at high profile Primestock shows, such as the English and Welsh Winter Fairs. These events are great showcases for high quality meat producing breeds - and we need to encourage producers of purebred Shropshires and Shropshire-cross lambs with good conformation to represent our breed.

If you think you might have suitable stock available, or if you know someone who is producing good quality Shropshire-cross lambs, please contact the breed society's Secretary. Suitable lambs are likely to be spring born. The SSBA can provide assistance with stock selection and preparation (if required), and may also be able to help with show expenses.

NATIONAL SHOWS AND SALES OF SHROPSHIRE SHEEP



**NATIONAL SHOW AND SALE (WEST)
AT SHREWSBURY LIVESTOCK MARKET
SUNDAY 24TH JULY**

**&
NATIONAL SHOW AND SALE (EAST) AT
MELTON MOWBRAY MARKET ON
FRIDAY 9TH AND SATURDAY 10TH
SEPTEMBER**

THESE are the Breed Society's two official shows and sales in 2016, attracting entries from Shropshire breeders throughout the UK.

Western Show and Sale

Our Western Show and Sale at Shrewsbury is part of the Traditional, Native and Rare Breed Livestock Sale organised by Halls auctioneers. It takes place at a very convenient time for those looking for a new ram or ram lamb for the 2016 breeding season. There is also usually a good entry of Shropshire females of all ages. Entries have grown steadily over the past six years and the breed society expects that this will, once again, be the largest exhibition and sale of Shropshires anywhere in the country in 2016.

Halls hold a **Vintage Machinery** and Small Holders' equipment sale on the same day, and this year a new poultry sale will also be added to the attractions at the event.

Social Evening and Hog Roast

There will be an evening get-together at the market the night before the Show and Sale, with food, a bar and a "pub quiz" to entertain breeders and buyers. This is open to all - not just Shropshire breeders - and is a great opportunity to meet other SSBA members as well as viewing the stock in the sheep lines the day before the sale. Tickets can be purchased via the Livestock Entry Forms, from Halls or from the SSBA's Secretary, Simon Mackay. There is a Travelodge adjacent to the market plus numerous hotels and B&Bs in Shrewsbury a short drive away for anyone wishing to stay overnight. Campers can stay in their vehicles parked at the market itself.

Rules and Regulations

Schedules and entry forms will be available in April. Please be aware that if you are selling sheep at the event, there are a number of rules and regulations that you *must* adhere to. Details of these are given in the schedule - please read it carefully. The closing date for entries is 24th June.

Please also note that Shropshires may be delivered to the market between 4pm and 7.30pm on Saturday 23rd July and between 7am and 7.30am on Sunday 24th July. Showing classes will start at 8.30am, half an hour earlier than usual.

Eastern Show and Sale

Our Eastern Show and Sale takes place as part of the Rare and Traditional Breeds Show and Sale held at Melton Mowbray Market in September. This is a large event that is well supported by many breed societies. The show of Shropshire Sheep takes place on Friday afternoon (9th September) with the sale on the following day. More details of this event and the closing date for entries will be publicised in the Summer edition of *ShropTalk*, and can be found on the Grassroots Systems' website:

www.grassroots.co.uk



SHEBDON FLOCK SCOOPS MOST IMPROVED FLOCK AWARD

THE 2016 winner of the AHDB Beef and Lamb Better Returns Programme's Improved Flock Award for Shropshire sheep is the Shebdon Flock from Staffordshire, owned by Peter Tavernor. This award is presented to the English Signet performance recorded flock that makes the greatest improvement in breeding potential during the year.

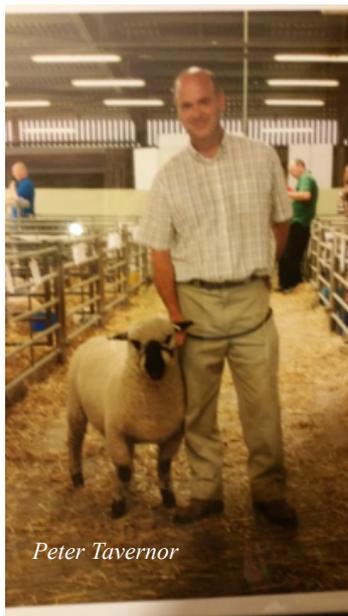
The AHDB Better Returns Programme aims to highlight the positive financial impact that improved breeding and better lamb selection strategies can have on commercial flock profitability. The award seeks to reward those breeders that are using Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) to enhance the performance of their flocks and assist them to promote their achievement.

The impact of performance recorded stock is significant in the sheep industry and increasing every year because of the activities of progressive farmers.

The Tavernor family has a long history with the Shropshire breed: Peter's great grandfather established a flock of Shropshire sheep in 1885, shortly after the formation of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association. Peter's Shebdon Flock was established in 2001 with ewes and a ram bought from D N Crow and Carol Wadland.

More recent ram purchases include Ushers Urbert (ear tag KX:10047) who joined the Shebdon flock in 2010. He was the flock's first Signet recorded sire. His genetics are still influencing the flock because he left a legacy of good maternal traits in the replacement females. Hayne Oak Lucas (LX:10040) the breed champion at the SSBA's National Show and Sale (West) in 2011 was the next sire to join the flock, chosen for his high Terminal Sire index. Today, Shebdon lambs are bred for all-round performance, and the flock's current stock sire, Ushers Vulcan, has both maternal and terminal sire indices of 248, which put him in the top 10% of the breed for growth, carcase and maternal traits.

While high genetic merit and good EBV scores play an important role in the Tavernors' breeding programme, they also select for good



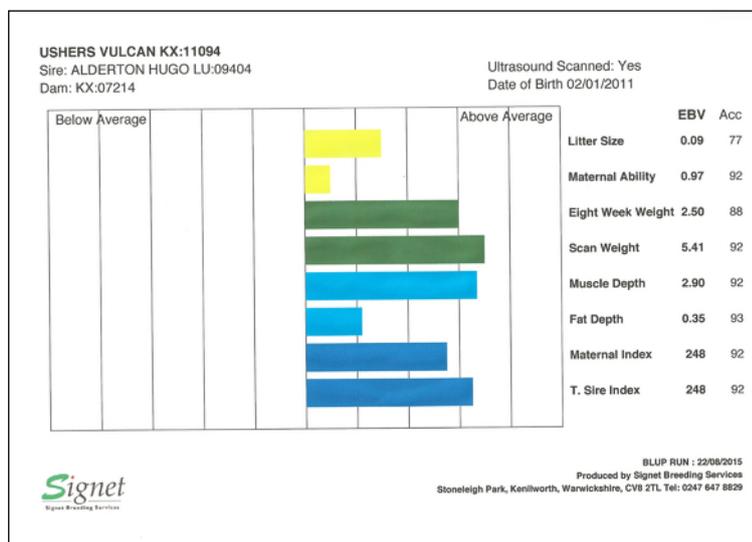
Peter Tavernor

breed type and easy-care traits, such as animals that require low rates of dagging and have the ability to finish off grass.

The Shebdon Flock is kept on the Tavernors' small grassland holding, while Easy-care ewes are managed on land bordering Mrs Tavernor's plant nursery. All sheep are managed commercially with lambing in April and lambs finished on grass whenever possible.

The Tavernor's daughter, Donna, has her own Madeley Flock of Shropshires, which also participates in the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme. Future plans for both flocks include continued improvement in flock performance for commercially important traits.

The Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme, which is based on Signet Performance Recording, was introduced in 2006. The aim of the scheme is to enhance the growth rate and carcase conformation of Shropshire lambs and to increase the prolificacy and maternal ability of Shropshire ewes. Peter Tavernor enrolled his Shebdon Flock in 2010. As of March 2016, there are around 18 Shropshire breeders recording with Signet.



SHOWING 2016

SHOW SUBSIDY

THE breed society offers a show subsidy to breeders exhibiting sheep at shows that last two days or longer. The subsidy rate is £5/head for two-day shows and £10/head for longer shows. Subsidy claim forms can be downloaded from the SSBA's website. Forms must be completed and returned to the SSBA's Treasurer, Marion Webb, by 31st August 2016.

SHOW POINTS TROPHIES

AT the end of each show season, the Society runs a show points competition and awards trophies to the most successful exhibitors:

The Farquhar Trophy is awarded to the breeder who has gained most points in Shropshire Breed Classes;

The President's Trophy is awarded to the breeder who has gained most points showing in Any Other Breed or Rare Breed Classes, in shows where no Shropshire classes are available;

The Novice Trophy is awarded for the highest number of points gained by novice exhibitors showing in Shropshire Breed Classes. Exhibitors are considered novices in their first five years of showing or until they win the Novice Trophy;

The Hornpipe Quaich is for young members of the breed society showing in Shropshire classes and/or any other breed classes and young handlers' classes. See the application form for how points are awarded for this trophy.

Details of the allocation of points are given on the Show Point Entry Forms. The closing date for all competitions is 30th September and forms must be sent to the Awards Officer, Anne Harvey.

SIGNET PERFORMANCE AWARDS FOR RAMS AND RAM LAMBS

These are held within the breed showing classes at Burwarton Show in Shropshire (4th August 2016). The whole classes are judged first and then the Signet Performance Awards are made to the highest placed Signet recorded animals in the ram and ram lamb classes.

To be eligible for the award, Signet performance recorded males must be above the average score for Terminal Sire Index for 2016. The winners receive a £25 voucher from AHDB's Better Returns Programme for the purchase of a performance recorded ram and a show sash from RAS Rosettes, Ribbons and Show Supplies.

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