

# SHROP TALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Winter 2015

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

THE Society's AGM was one of the main events of the autumn - held at Sandwell on 14th November, followed by a Council Meeting. As President, I reported on the increase in membership during the year with Alison Schofield's report as registrar indicating that ewe numbers were now registering at the rate of 1,600 per annum on a three year rolling average basis. Ram numbers are also increasing.

The accounts of the SSBA showed income of approximately £26,000 for the year with expenditure of £21,000. The increase in membership and sheep numbers had boosted income with the main increase in expenditure being the investment in the Grassroots' pedigree registration system and its management, which is already showing benefits in controlling our records.

Barry Hodson and Trevor Lightfoot stood down as Council Members, having completed their terms of office, and we thank them for their assistance over the past three years. Barry will continue to attend council meetings in his capacity as the Breed Stand Officer, although this post does not carry a vote.

Jeanette Hares, Anne Harvey and Sue Farquhar were returned to Council with Iain MacKirdy joining Council for the first time. We welcome them all.

Show trophies were presented to those winners who were present, with the details of the results appearing on page 2.

Those attending the AGM were then educated and informed with a splendid talk by Libby Henson of Grassroots. We are grateful for the insight into the information that is available from the system that we have now adopted.



*Les Newman*

The Council meeting following confirmed my re-election as President and Paul Stead as Vice President. All other Council Officers remain as before (see page 4 for a complete list).

During the meeting, Liz Bowles indicated that she had been working on the possibility of a further source of funding for work on the breed DNA profiling carried out a couple of years ago. This is intended to help reinforce the benefits of grazing Shropshire sheep in fruit orchards, which is at present a major interest to our foreign buyers as well as those with fruit orchards in this country.

Sadly I have to report the death in late November of John Bowles, a former President

of the society, who as a breeder had established his flock of Shropshires in the 1970s when the breed was at its all-time low. On behalf of members I sent condolences to Pauline and their family. The funeral was held at St Mary's Church, Willand, Devon on 9th December. An obituary providing more details of John's substantial contribution to our breed society is included in this edition of *ShropTalk* on page 3.

News from our farm is a scanning percentage of 167. I was also pleased to note in the local press this week that one of those hiring Shropshire rams from us last year achieved top price for lambs in Norwich Livestock Market with her Shropshire cross lambs. Best wishes to all of you for Christmas and lambing, if you have started before I write again.

*Les Newman, President of the SSBA*



### IMPORTANT DIARY DATES FOR 2016

**National Show and Sale (West) at Shrewsbury Market**  
Sunday 24th July, with a social evening and pub quiz the night before at the market

**National Show and Sale (East) at Melton Mowbray Market**  
Friday 9th and Saturday 10th September

#### Council Meetings:

5th March

7th May

12th November

at Sandwell Park Farm,  
West Bromwich

Society members can attend Council meetings if they wish, with the prior permission of the President

The SSBA's Council is also considering moving the Annual General Meeting to a date in September and combining this with a farm walk and flock visit.

This would also necessitate a change to the Society's financial year-end to enable the accounts to be produced in good time.

Details will be available in due course.



*Ewes and lambs from Sue Farquhar's Piddington Flock on a wintry pasture, February 2013. The flock is based near Ledbury, in Herefordshire.*

## EXPORT PRICES FOR 2016

COUNCIL has decided there will be no change to export prices for 2016. They remain as follows:

**Shearling Rams:** £630/head for ARR/ARR Scrapie genotype, £500/head for unspecified genotype;

**Ram Lambs:** £480/head for ARR/ARR genotype, £400/head for unspecified genotype;

**Shearling Ewes:** £280/head.

**Two-Shear Breeding Ewes:** £240/head and **Ewe Lambs:** £200/head.

Breeders wishing to participate in Society-led exports must have ticked the appropriate box on their Annual Flock Return and ensure that this was completed and sent back to the Registrar by 30th November 2015.

Export sheep must be Scrapie Monitored or of the ARR/ARR Scrapie Genotype, confirmed by a blood test taken by a vet and tested at a DEFRA approved laboratory.

Sheep for Society-led exports must also be MV Accredited. For more information please contact the Export Officer, Sue Farquhar, on 01531 670439.

## CHANGE TO RAM REGISTRATION FEES

THERE will now be just one fee of £15 for registering rams or ram lambs. Council has decided to withdraw the option of a cheaper £10 registration fee that was available if breeders supplied three pictures of the ram at the time of registration. This change takes place with immediate effect.

## AUTUMN 100 CLUB WINNERS

TWO sets of flock owners have won cash prizes in our twice-yearly 100 Club Draw. The winners of the first prize (£49) are Mr AJ and Mrs MR Heath (Holloway Flock), Baldwins Gate, Staffs. Mrs S Handley (Moreton Wood Flock) Market Drayton, Shrops wins the 2nd prize of £33.

The 100 Club is used to raise money for our marketing and display materials. Tickets cost £10 each and there are two draws a year. Tickets can be purchased via the breed society's annual flock return, or from the Secretary, Simon Mackay, at any time: 146 Chandlers Way, Sutton Manor, St Helens WA9 4TG (01744 811124).

## FLOCK BOOK PICTURES NEEDED

IF you have any good shots of Shropshires that would be suitable for the 2015 Flock Book - please send them to Alison Schofield or Jeanette Hares by the end of December.

## REGISTER WITH AHDB FOR FREE TECHNICAL SUPPORT

DID you know that if you are a sheep producer based in England, you can obtain a range of excellent technical guides from AHDB Beef and Lamb (formerly known as EBLEX) - and all this information is free of charge?

Published as part of the AHDB's Better Returns Programme, these guides cover just about every topic of interest to flock owners. For example: Breeding, Selection for Slaughter, Health and Fertility, Nutrition and Forage, and Systems and Costings.

If you would like to receive this information, you can register via the organisation's website: [www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk](http://www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk). Simply click on the "Better Returns Programme" and then the "BRP Signup" button to add your details.

# TROPHY WINNERS FOR 2015

**THE winners of the show points trophies were announced at the Annual General Meeting. The results were as follows:**

**The Novice Trophy**, awarded for the highest number of points gained by novice exhibitors showing in Shropshire breed classes in their first five years of showing, was won by Janet and Charles Morris, Apiary Flock, Stoney Stretton, Shrops with 29 points.

The runner-up was Eleanor Russell, Tushbrook Flock, Moreton in Marsh, Glos with 7 points.

**The Farquhar Trophy** awarded for the most points in Shropshire breed classes was won by Anne Harvey, Roydon Flock, Wirral, Cheshire with 104 points for the third year running.

The runner-up was Jeanette Hares, Millenheath Flock, Whitchurch, Shrops with 93 points.

**The President's Trophy** awarded for the most points in Any Other Breed or Rare Breed Classes (in shows where Shropshire classes are not available) was won by Sally Evans, Heath End Flock, Leighton Buzzard, Beds for the third year running with 122 points.

The joint runners-up (both with 28 points) were Anne Harvey and Les & Tricia Newman, Rode Flock, Carleton Rode, Norfolk.

**The Hornpipe Quaich** for young members showing in Shropshire and/or Any Other Breed Classes was won by George Clay, Swallows Flock, Monkhide, Herefordshire with 257 points. The runner-up was Eleanor Russell with 210 points.



*Above: Janet Morris accepting the Novice Trophy from President Les Newman. Below: Anne Harvey winning the Farquhar Trophy for the most points gained in Shropshire breed classes. Other trophy winners were not in attendance at the AGM.*



## JOINT WINNERS OF THE SANSAW SIDEDOWNS MOST PROLIFIC EWE COMPETITION

**TWO ewes from different flocks in the north west have been named as the joint winners of the breed Society's annual competition that recognises animals with particularly high prolificacy and longevity.**

The competition is judged on the number of fully pedigree registered progeny that a ewe has produced over her lifetime.

This season's contest was open to all members of the SSBA who submitted their flock returns by 30th November 2014.

To be eligible, ewes must have produced registered progeny in the previous season, and have been entered as "put to the ram" for the 2015 lambing season. All progeny registered up to 31st January 2015 were counted.

### 016KD05 - owned by the Troutdale Flock

This ten year old ewe was bred by Claire Jakeman (Morley Flock) but was sold to the Turnock family when they formed their Troutdale Flock, based near Leek in Staffordshire.

Known as "Barb", 016KD05 was sired by Frenchlands Great Expectations. She had produced a total of nine registered lambs by the competition's closing deadline.



### 024LU07 - owned by the Holtridge Flock

The joint winner, which had also bred nine registered progeny by 31st January, belongs to Mr and Mrs Openshaw, who are based in Norbury, Cheshire. The ewe was bred by Pippa and Peter Geddes (Alderton Flock) in 2007. She was sired by Alderton Bruce Willis.

The winners will share the Hardwicke Perpetual Trophy (pictured above) - by kind permission of James Thompson (Sansaw Flock) and the cash prize of £25, from a prize fund of £500 kindly donated by John and Pauline Bowles (Sidedowns Flock).



# JOHN BOWLES' OBITUARY

22nd May 1934 - 23rd November 2015

**IT is with great sadness that the Society has to report the death of John Bowles, a former President of the SSBA and one of the most influential breeders in the recent history of Shropshire sheep.**

It will be both as a stockman and a judge of livestock that he will be best remembered. These skills led to him being instrumental in saving Shropshires from the brink of extinction in the 1970s.

John was born and lived the majority of his life at Frogmore Farm, Broadclyst in Devon. As a young man, John is well remembered by his fellow young farmers for his stock judging skills. He represented England on many occasions and travelled to competitions across the UK in the 1950s, often bringing success to his team. He learnt the science of stock judging in the Young Farmers movement, but the art of judging animals was an innate skill he was born with, which is difficult to explain to people who are not lucky enough to possess it. Now we have computers to keep track of animals' pedigrees - but John's amazing memory meant he could recall livestock family lines going back over many generations, sometimes with more accuracy than electronic means.

When John married Pauline Edwards in 1958 he had found his soul mate and someone who shared his passion for livestock breeding. Throughout their farming career they were often pioneers in adopting new innovations. In the early 1970s, Frogmore Farm became the first dairy farm in the county to install a rotary milking parlour, moving to the cutting edge of dairy technology from the previous abreast parlour. Through the 1960s and 70s, showing dairy cows and sheep at all the Devon Shows was part of the yearly calendar, as well as judging assignments across the country.

In 1976, John discovered Shropshire sheep when looking for a new breed to replace the flock he had inherited from his father. He was looking through a book of sheep breeds when the Shropshire caught his eye. John and Pauline then set out on a mission to find Shropshire sheep in their homeland of the West Midlands, as well as Herefordshire. This was difficult as the breed was in great decline

with less than 250 registered females in the UK flock book at that time.

A total of 26 ewes were purchased from three flocks: Grangewood (Messrs Wood), Stretton Court (TB Dew) and Lea (SB Whittles), with a ram bred by Messrs Wood that was loaned from M Rosenberg. From this foundation, John went on to develop one of the largest and most successful flocks of Shropshire sheep in the world - the Sidedowns Flock.

Early stock rams used in the breeding programme included Grangewood Senator, Spice Kojak, Stretton Court Gordon, Stretton Court Archie and Stackhouse Scott. Later, many home-bred rams were used. Flock returns between 1987 and 1993 confirm that John and Pauline's flock numbered around 300 registered ewes. Breeding animals with the Sidedowns lineage are now found in Shropshire flocks around the globe.

## SHOW SUCCESSES

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the Sidedowns Flock was supreme at all the major livestock shows in England and Wales, in no small part due to John's eye for livestock and Pauline's attention to show preparation.

Their successes in the show-ring are really too numerous to mention, but there can be few Shropshire sheep trophies that do not have "JH and PA Bowles" engraved upon them.

As well as a great many breed championships in Shropshire classes, John achieved many notable successes in Butchers' Lambs and Carcase Competitions. These included a win at the Royal Show in 1982 with a crossbred lamb by a Shropshire ram out of a Mule ewe. He also competed successfully at the Welsh Winter Fair and Smithfield with purebred Shropshires.

Alongside show success, John and Pauline were trailblazers in the 1970s adopting performance testing for their Shropshire flock when this kind of scientific assessment of genetic merit was in its infancy. Working with the Meat and Livestock Commission, they were able to identify and breed from the best in their flock and accelerate breed progress.

In 1990, Sidedowns Hallmark went into a breed testing programme at ADAS Liscombe



and outperformed all other breeds on trial for weight gain and eye muscle, with a 21-week eye muscle reading of 39mm. The Sidedowns Flock joined the current Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme in 2006.

John was President of our breed society on two occasions: from 1983-86, and again from 1998-99. He was a Council Member for a total of 22 years. The SSBA recognised the outstanding contribution John and Pauline have made to Shropshire sheep by presenting them with a long service award in 2005 - a specially commissioned painting based on the photograph below.

John is survived by Pauline and a growing family of children and grandchildren, all successful in a range of fields and many still associated with agriculture in its broadest sense. His legacy within the Shropshire Society is unlikely to ever be forgotten, and he must have taken great pleasure when the Shropshire breed was formally removed from the RBST's Watchlist for rare breeds in 2013. There can be no doubt that John played a major role in the survival of Shropshire sheep, which once more flourish in the UK and in many countries around the world.



*John and Pauline pictured with a group of Sidedowns ewe lambs*



## NEW FLOCKS TO JOIN THE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

SEVEN new flocks have been successful in their applications to join the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme (SBIS) in 2016. They are:

**The South Yeo Flock**, owned by Mr and Mrs Dixon, Northlew, Okehampton Devon (Flock letters TH);

**The Apiary Flock**, owned by Janet and Charles Morris, Stoney Stretton, Yockleton, Shropshire (Flock letters XA);

**The Hodghurst Flock**, owned by Nick Forsyth, Longville, Much Wenlock, Shropshire (Flock letters XN);

**The Holloway Flock**, owned by Mrs and Mrs Heath, Baldwins Gate, Newcastle UnderLyme, Staffordshire (Flock letters TR);

**The Cefn-Carnau Flock**, owned by Mr and Mrs Kerby, Upper Cefn-carnau, Llangibby, Usk (Flock letters ABB);

**The Lukesland Flock**, owned by Roger Howell, Harford, Ivybridge, Devon (Flock letters VP); and

**The Ashley Flock**, owned by AP and WA Crocker, Ramsey, Isle of Man (Flock letters YU)

These flocks will receive a breed society subsidy of £125/year for three years to help with the costs of Signet recording. Their data will be analysed with all the other self-funded Shropshire flocks that continue to belong to SBIS - the largest group of performance-recorded Shropshire flocks in the world. For more details contact Pippa Geddes (see right).



*The well-supported ram lamb class at this year's Burwarton Show (8 flocks exhibiting), which incorporates the Signet Performance Awards. Ram lambs were judged on conformation first, and then a special award was made to the highest placed recorded animal with above average genetic merit. The winner of both the showing class and the Performance award was Ushers Captain (standing 5th from left in the picture) and the runner-up in the showing class was another lamb with above average genetic merit (6th from left) - Alderton Winston Whopper. The Performance Awards will be held at Burwarton Show again in 2016.*



**THE SSBA WISHES ALL ITS MEMBERS A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND A SUCCESSFUL LAMBING**

*Shearling ewes from the Hornpipe Flock of Alison and Paul Schofield, based in Sproston Green, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire.*

## OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE SSBA

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**Breed Improvement Scheme Coordinator:**  
**Pippa Geddes**  
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**Northern Ireland Coordinator:**  
**Barry Hodson** (as above)

**French Breeders' Coordinators:**  
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& **Les Newman** (as above)

**Newsletter Editor: Pippa Geddes**  
(as above)

**Shrewsbury Show and Sale Co-ordinator:**  
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**Other Council Members**  
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