

# SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Spring 2010

## NEW SHOW AND SALE VENUE FOR SHROPSHIRE

THE SSBA's Council has decided to introduce a new show and sale for Shropshire sheep at Shrewsbury Market, Shropshire on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2010. This will be known as the SSBA's National Show and Sale (West). The breed society will also continue to support the show and sale at Melton Mowbray Market, Leicestershire on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September, which will now be known as the SSBA's National Show and Sale (East).

In both cases, the show and sale of Shropshires will be part of a larger traditional and native breeds' sale, incorporating entries from other breeds of sheep, as well as other farm livestock species. The sale at Shrewsbury is a new event which the organisers, Halls Auctioneers, have introduced to satisfy demand from livestock producers in the region.

"The annual Show and Sale at Melton Mowbray has proved a good venue for selling Shropshire females, but it comes rather too late in the season for breeders who want to purchase rams for early lambing flocks," explains the SSBA's Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman.

"By introducing a show and sale earlier in the year at a different, more westerly, venue we hope to be able to assist more members to buy and sell their sheep at the most convenient time.

"Up until 1950, Shrewsbury market was the main sale venue for our breed. We are really thrilled that the growing popularity of our sheep has enabled us to introduce another show and sale date, and bring a sale of Shropshires back to the breed's county of origin."

The facilities at Shrewsbury Market, which relocated to a new site just four years ago, were inspected by Claire Jakeman and Pippa Geddes, on behalf of the breed society. Not only does the site at Battlefield, just north of Shrewsbury, offer very modern livestock lairage, it's also easily accessible from the road network without the need to drive through the town itself. The new Battlefield development also includes a Travel Lodge, offering reasonably priced accommodation for people wishing to stay overnight. Livestock can be delivered to the market the day before the show and sale.

### Sansaw Hog Roast

There will be an evening BBQ or hog roast for SSBA members on Friday 2nd July, at Sansaw Estate (3 miles away from the market) at the kind invitation of James Thompson. More details will follow in due course.



Shrewsbury livestock market: the new venue for our National Show and Sale (West).

The new traditional and native breeds' sale at Shrewsbury has the full backing of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. Local RBST Support Group organiser, Sue Lawrence, and Ruth Dalton, the Trust's new field officer for the North, have visited the market and been involved in drawing up the plans for the new event.

### Shropshire Showing Classes

The showing classes at both the Western and the Eastern National Shows and Sales will be as follows:

- Ram, Shearling or over
- Ram Lamb
- Breeding Ewe (any age, to have reared lambs in the current season)
- Shearling Ewe
- Ewe Lamb

Rosettes to sixth place will awarded in each class. A champion and reserve champion will be selected from the winners of the above classes, and these will receive special rosettes and a trophy. In the case of the new event at Shrewsbury, Claire Jakeman has generously offered to donate a new trophy for the champion animal.

The showing classes at Shrewsbury will be held on Saturday morning (3<sup>rd</sup> July), commencing at 10.30am. At Melton Mowbray, show classes will be held at 2pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September.

### Minimum Weights

At the most recent Council Meeting, the following minimum weights were set for ram and ewe lambs entered in the Western

## NEW SECRETARY NEEDED FOR THE BREED SOCIETY

The breed society's Secretary, Jane Wilson, has accepted a new position as the Secretary of the British Goat Association. This is a full-time job, so she will be relinquishing her position with the SSBA later this year.

The SSBA is, therefore, seeking a new person to take over the important and demanding role of Administrative Secretary for the Shropshire breed. Candidates should be good communicators, competent in word processing and the use of email.

For more information about the role, the salary and a full job description, please contact the SSBA's President, Les Newman on (daytime) 01379 640640; (evening) 01953 860373, or by email:

diss@newmans-online.co.uk

## DIARY DATES

**3rd July: National Show and Sale (West) at Shrewsbury**

**10th and 11th September: National Show and Sale (East) at Melton Mowbray**

**13th November: Annual General Meeting of the SSBA at Sandwell Park Farm West Bromwich**

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## NEW SHOW AND SALE VENUE FOR SHROPSHIRE

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and Eastern Sales:

### Shrewsbury

Ewe lambs: 35kg

Ram lambs: 45kg

### Melton Mowbray

Ewe lambs 40kg

Ram lambs: 50kg

Lambs will be weighed on arrival at the market and must meet these minimum weights.

### Upset Prices

The minimum upset sale prices for both sale venues are as follows:

Ram Lambs: 140 guineas

Ewe Lambs: 100 guineas

Older ewes: at vendors' discretion

Shearling Ewes: 150 guineas

Shearling Rams: 200 guineas

Older Rams: at vendors' discretion

Vendors may, of course, set higher reserve prices, if they wish.

All Shropshire females must be registered with the breed society before being entered in the show and sale. Males must be Birth Notified and eligible for registration.

The vendor selling a ram or ram lamb to a Society member will be required to register the animal, if sold. The transfer fee of £3/animal will be charged to buyers and collected automatically by the auctioneers, before animals can be removed from the market.

All animals will be inspected by an inspector from the breed society before commencement of the showing classes and the sale. All rams and ram lambs entered in the sale MUST be shown beforehand. Females can be entered in the sale without being shown.

### Closing Dates for Entries

The closing date for entries for the National Show and Sale (West) at Shrewsbury is Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May. Schedules will be available from Halls by mid to late April (phone number: 01743 462620). Directions to the livestock market are available from the Halls website: [www.hallsgb.com](http://www.hallsgb.com).

The closing date for Melton Mowbray, our National Show and Sale (East), is likely to be in mid July. Details will be circulated to members in due course and will also be posted on the breed society's website.

## SHROPTALK

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Contributions are welcome!

## OBITUARY

# JOHN BIRD (1925 - 2009)

**JOHN Bird will be known to many SSBA members as the founder of the Trenton Flock, established in the early 1970s. But this was just one element of his long and distinguished career in agriculture.**

John started on the farming ladder at an early age. His father had moved to Manor Farm, Weston-on-Trent, Derbyshire in 1921, just a few years before John was born. Even before he left school at the age of 14, John remembered having to milk "his" cows before he left home in the morning to join his classmates. He had fond memories of working with shire horses and never forgot horse-ploughing a field three times a year, whereas nowadays a high horse power tractor manages the same task only once a year.

John took over the farm in 1953 and ran a prize-winning herd of Ayrshires. Despite being a life member of the breed society, he was always ready for a change. Red Polls replaced the Ayrshires, and the Red Polls were, in turn, eventually replaced with British Friesians. To establish the Friesian herd, John bought a truck load of heifer calves from the Lintonhill Herd. This was the dispersal sale at Grangewood Farm near Burton-on-Trent, prior to Joss and Alan Woods (owners of the Grangewood Shropshire Flock) moving there.

Despite the changes in breed, the herd prefix at Manor Farm always remained "Trenton", which was chosen because the farm is bounded by the River Trent to the south.

John was not simply a dairy farmer. He also dabbled in Herefords and kept Angus cattle, whilst still milking the Friesians. He finally stopped producing milk in the mid 1970s. As well as the cattle, the farm also had a flock of commercial sheep for many years. However, in the early 1970s, John got talking to Joss Wood at an event at Stoneleigh, where Joss had a fine display of Shropshires. John decided to purchase several ewes and three rams from the Grangewood Flock. Grangewood Chief was one outstanding sire that was used for many



years on the pedigree Shropshires as well as the commercial sheep owned by the Bird family.

John was President of the SSBA from 1981 to 1983, and he always enjoyed both showing and judging Shropshire sheep. A highlight in his showing career was a 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the very first lamb carcass competition held at the Royal Show, followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> the next year – both achieved with Shropshire-cross lambs.

Just as with the cattle, John tried several breeds of sheep on the farm, including Texels, Suffolks and Charollais. Commercial sheep numbers got up to 450 for many years, but have now dropped back to 60. The Shropshires are, however, a permanent fixture, with John's son, Peter, carrying on the Trenton Flock, alongside a 60-cow suckler herd.

A farmer to the last, on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November, John asked if the cows' TB test was clear. The second visit to confirm this was on the following day. The result was clear, but by this time he had slipped into a coma and died that evening.

Aside from his farming commitments, John was a parish councillor in the village for over 40 years. He attended the Methodist Chapel for most of his life, being the Chapel Steward and the Treasurer, as his father was before him.



John Bird (left) showing a Shearling ewe, alongside John Bowles with a Sidedowns ram.

# THE SSBA'S NEW IRISH COORDINATORS

THE SSBA is increasing the support it offers to Shropshire breeders in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Two new Breed Society Coordinators have been appointed.

**Jean Jones** joined the SSBA's Council in November 2009, and she is also the breed society's new Coordinator for Northern Ireland. Based in Ballyclare, County Antrim, Jean and her husband Alistair live on a smallholding, adjacent to Alistair's father's farm. As well as their Sperrin View flock of Shropshires, they keep chickens, pigs and a milking goat. Jean also helps milk and look after a commercial herd of milking goats on a nearby farm. She has been involved in farming all her life, growing up on a mixed livestock and arable farm, and then attending Greenmount College.

Over the years, Jean has kept lots of different breeds of sheep, but says Shropshires have very strong commercial attributes. She purchased her first Shropshires in 2006. She also helped her brother, Mervyn Tweed, select his Shropshire sheep a few years earlier, for use in Christmas trees.

**Pat Delaney** is the SSBA's new breed coordinator in Eire. Married with nine children, he is based near Murrinctown, County Wexford, where he runs a Christmas tree farm. Pat purchased his first Shropshires in 1996. He currently has 23 acres under trees, ranging from newly planted to mature trees.

Pat is from a farming background and has had a lifelong interest in sheep and nature in general. He currently has 16 purebred non-registered Shropshires, descended from the stock he originally purchased.

In 2009 he bought 5 purebred registered Shropshire ewes, five registered lambs and a registered ram from Mervyn Tweed (Strangford Flock, in NI). Pat would also like to grade-up his non-registered ewes at some point, and he is fully committed to helping to promote registered Shropshires to farmers in Eire.



Above: New Council Member and Coordinator for Northern Ireland, Jean Jones, pictured with sons Sam (9) and James (4).

Below: Pat Delaney, our new Coordinator in the Irish Republic.



## THE SALES REGISTER AND THE RAMPAGES

FORMS for these are included with this *ShropTalk*. The 2010 RamPages will now be displayed on the SSBA's website, rather than being a separate publication.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT SHEEP IN TREES

ADRIAN and Cheryl Morgan have kindly offered to hold an open-day on their Christmas tree farm near Castle Bytham, Lincolnshire on Saturday 29th May. This event is open to all SSBA Members and tree growers who have expressed an interest in the "sheep-in trees" system.

Adrian and Cheryl have been running Shropshires in their trees for 12 years, and have regularly provided advice on the system to new entrants. If you would like to attend please call Adrian on 01780 410101 or by email on: [snowbird@btconnect.com](mailto:snowbird@btconnect.com).



## CAN YOU HELP ON OUR BREED STANDS?

VOLUNTEERS are needed to help to promote Shropshires at the following events:

12th to 14th May: **Balmoral Show**, Belfast (still awaiting final confirmation of our booking from show organisers);

2nd June: **NSA ScotSheep**, Blairdrummond, Stirling;

16th June: **NSA South Sheep**: Stockbridge, Hampshire;

22nd and 23rd June, **Cheshire County Show**, Tabley, Cheshire;

3rd July: **National Show and Sale of Shropshires (West)** at Shrewsbury Market, Shropshire;

3rd August: **NSA Sheep 2010**, Malvern, Worcestershire;

7th and 8th September: **The Dairy Event and Livestock Show**, NEC, Birmingham, West Midlands;

10th and 11th September: **National Show and Sale of Shropshires (East)**, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

If you can help at any of the above events, please contact the SSBA's Breed Stand Officer, Barry Hodson, on 01925 765304 or 01744 811124. You will be provided with free entry tickets in return for your assistance.

## SBIS COORDINATOR

PIPPA Geddes has agreed to continue as the Coordinator of the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme until this year's Annual General Meeting (13th November).

She would, however, like to pass on the role to another SSBA member at that time. Anyone interested should contact Pippa as soon as possible. A full job description is available on request. This is an important job involving liaison with Signet and SBIS members.

## SPONSORSHIP FROM TOYOTA



CLAIRE Jakeman, the SSBA's Sales Officer, (pictured above) has obtained £300 in sponsorship from motor manufacturer Toyota's Charitable Trust on behalf of the SSBA. The funds will be used to purchase a new set of exhibition boards for our breed society. At the March Council Meeting, President Les Newman thanked Claire on behalf of all SSBA members for obtaining this very welcome sponsorship.

## STOCK PRICES

BREED society officers are often asked for guide prices by members who have pedigree stock for sale privately. Council has discussed this and suggests that breeders should use the upset prices agreed for our national show and sale as a guide (see page 2), while emphasising that these are *minimum* prices.

## EXPORT 2010

THE SSBA has already received one firm export order to France for 120 ewe lambs. This export consignment is likely to leave the UK in the 3rd or 4th week of June. Breeders who have been accepted as exporters are advised to have all potential export stock vaccinated against Blue Tongue by a vet. This must be done a minimum of 60 days before the export consignment leaves the UK. For more information contact Export Officer, Sue Farquhar 01531 670439, or Sales Officer, Claire Jakeman 01244 301546.

## 100 CLUB WINNERS

FIRST prize in the first draw of the SSBA's 100 Club in 2010 (£40) goes to Mr and Mrs Cross of Whitchurch, Shropshire. Second prize (£20) was won by Mr Kirk of Castlebellingham, Co Louth, Northern Ireland.

Tickets are still available for the second draw of 2010, which will be made at the AGM in November. If you would like to buy one, please contact Secretary Jane Wilson by phone 01434 240435, or send her an email: [Shropshire\\_sheep@hotmail.com](mailto:Shropshire_sheep@hotmail.com).

## SHOW TROPHIES

THE SSBA's Council requests that members who win show trophies this season should bring them to the AGM at Sandwell Park Farm on 13th November. President Les Newman has arranged for a professional silversmith to attend this event, so that the value of the trophies can be assessed for insurance purposes.

## SHROPSHIRES AS CROSSING SIRES AND MEAT PRODUCERS

PUBLICITY officer, Pippa Geddes, would like to hear from breeders who've sold Shropshire tups to commercial lamb producers, especially if they can provide facts and figures about the performance of Shropshire progeny — such as lamb survival rates, good growth rates; and the ability of lambs to finish from grass alone.

Additionally, can anyone provide *recent* carcass grading sheets for Shropshire lambs (either pure-bred or cross-bred), which could be used by the breed society to promote the use of Shropshires as terminal sires?

Many of us sell our lamb direct to the public and we receive excellent feedback on the taste and quality. If you have any comments of this nature, please send them to Pippa (see page 2 for contact details).

# PHASE TWO OF THE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME IS OFF TO A FLYING START

**FOLLOWING applications received from breed society members in December last year, the SSBA's Council has agreed that eight new flocks can join the second phase of the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme (SBIS).**

These flocks will each receive a breed society subsidy of £125/year for three years to offset the cost of joining Signet's Sheep-Breeder recording scheme.

The new flocks that have signed up for the second phase of SBIS are: Hilltop (Anne and David Tordoff); Hornpipe (Alison and Paul Schofield); Morley (Claire and Graham Jakeman); Piddington (Sue Farquhar); Sansaw (James Thompson);, Shebdon & Madeley (Peter and Donna Tavernor - recording as one flock); Showle & Swallows (George and Alice Clay, recording as one flock); Southworth (Barry Hodson); and Westwood (RT Davies & Co). John and Pauline Bowles' Sidedowns flock is also eligible for one more year of the breed society's subsidy. The Millenheath flock of Jeanette Hares is the first reserve, should any of the above flocks drop out of the scheme.

They join the Alderton, Brereton, Brookmount, Hayne Oak, Greenrigg and Ushers flocks, which all participated in the first phase of SBIS. All these flocks are continuing to record with Signet, but without the breed society's subsidy. That means that we now have 16 recorded Shropshire flocks and around 700 ewes on the scheme this season. This exciting development has been welcomed by the SSBA's Council, because it should enable the breed to make faster

genetic improvement in the future and will enable more breeders to benefit from using genetic evaluations.

Having taken into account the lambing dates of all the participating flocks, Signet has decided that we should have three evaluations for the Shropshire breed this year, rather than two as we have previously had for SBIS flocks.

The first Shropshire analysis of 2010 will be based on the analysis of 8-week weights for early lambing flocks and will provide breeders with some indication of their best lambs, allowing them to make marketing decisions early in the season. These results will be available in late April. The second and third Signet evaluations for the Shropshire breed, which will include results for ultrasonic back-fat and muscle scanning in live lambs, will take place in June and September, respectively.

As before, the SSBA will publish figures towards the end of the year for the top five ram and ewe lambs bred by each flock, and the stock sires that are above the breed average. These results will be made available to all SSBA members.

### Recorded Ram Showing Classes

The Cheshire County Show will again be running two special showing classes for performance recorded Shropshires — one class for rams, and one for ram lambs. These will take place on the first day of the show (Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June). Details are available from the show organisers on 01565 650200.



*Alderton Brad (pictured as a ram lamb in 2005) is currently the highest ranked SBIS sire with an index of 211, compared with the breed average score of 99.*