

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Winter 2014

GOOD NEWS FROM THE AGM AS OUR BREED SOCIETY CONTINUES TO GROW

THE SSBA's Annual General Meeting was held on 10th November at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich. After welcoming breed society members to the event, President Liz Bowles reported that the breed society had enjoyed a successful year, with some notable achievements.

"Registrations and membership are up on the previous year. Membership now stands at 230? and continues to climb, along with both male and female registrations. The SSBA is now registering nearly 50% more females per year than in 2010. This is fantastic news, as it helps to develop the critical mass of the breed in the UK," she commented. "Both our breed society sales (at Shrewsbury and Melton Mowbray) continue to be well supported with record prices set yet again at Shrewsbury this year."

Other highlights for the year singled out for particular praise by Liz included:

- The new on-line sheep registration service initiated by Registrar, Alison Schofield;
- The good support for the main annual sale of Shropshires at Shrewsbury, including the pre-sale social evening;
- The success of the Breed Improvement Scheme, which has led to Shropshires becoming one of the leading breeds in the UK in terms of Signet membership, with the performance of over 1,000 lambs recorded this year. Many members participating in the scheme are finding clear and visible results of progress in terms of lamb growth rate, carcase conformation and maternal traits;
- A new research project in conjunction with the Soil Association and Cranfield University to better understand the role of Shropshire sheep grazing safely amongst fruit trees;
- A record year for exports of pedigree stock, with sheep going to many countries in Europe including close to 200 females exported to France and smaller consignments to Germany.
- The finances of the SSBA remain in good heart. Profits were up fourfold from last year's levels, due in no small part to the continuing increase in registrations, transfers and export levies.

Liz concluded her two-year term as President by thanking all the Council Members and



Onwards and upwards - just like the Shropshire breed as a whole: Ewes from the Mapleton Mynd Flock, belonging to Cody Hiemke, Wisconsin, USA, overseas member of the SSBA?

Officers of the society who had supported her throughout the year. She particularly thanked Vice President, Les Newman, who was on hand whenever she needed a second opinion, and also the SSBA's Secretary, Simon Mackay, for the sterling service he provides for the Association.

Sheep Registrations

The Society's Registrar, Alison Schofield, was unfortunately unable to attend the AGM, owing to illness in her immediate family. She had, however, submitted a written report and this was read out to the meeting.

The three year trend for the SSBA's ram registrations had been steadily rising for the past five years. The ewe registrations had broken the 1,500 barrier for the first time, since Alison took over as Registrar in the early 1990s. Indeed the three year trend for female registrations was now in excess of 1,000 per year, which equated to some 30 registrations every week. Some of the increase was due to 208 Grading-Up ewes that were registered with the SSBA before the scheme closed at the end of March.

The new on-line registration system had helped Alison deal with the workload, but all registrations still had to be checked manually to ensure that every animal had been correctly Birth Notified and that the stated ownership was accurate and any transfer fees had been paid.

Alison had introduced a new system for the Society's two National Shows and Sales, whereby pedigree certificates are provided via the auctioneers for all animals sold. This

ensures that everyone purchasing a sheep got a copy of the animal's pedigree, but the onus was then on the new owner to transfer the animal or contact the breeder to register a ram lamb. It was too early for Alison to tell whether this new approach had been successful.

With the steady increase in registrations, Alison had come to the conclusion that she could no longer cope with the workload on her own. She had, therefore, asked the SSBA's Council to consider pedigree registration services offered by other companies and organisations. Many other breed societies contract out their registrations in this way.

Liz Bowles thanked Alison on behalf of the SSBA for all her work as its Registrar. She assured SSBA Members that finding an alternative registration service was now the top priority for the breed society.

LES NEWMAN IS ELECTED PRESIDENT

AT the Council meeting following the AGM, Les Newman was elected as the Society's new President, succeeding Liz Bowles, who had completed her term of office.

This is the second time Les has been President of the SSBA, having held the position previously from 2008 to 2010.

Les and his wife, Tricia, own the Rode Flock of Shropshires, founded in 1991. They also run a flock of Southdowns. A full profile of Les and his sheep enterprises will be published in the next edition of *ShropTalk*.

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DIARY DATES FOR 2015

**National Show and Sale (West)
at Shrewsbury Livestock Market:**

Saturday 25th July

**National Show and Sale (East)
at Melton Mowbray Livestock**

**Market: Friday 11th and Saturday
12th September**

NEW PRESIDENT AND OTHER CHANGES TO COUNCIL

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The SSBA's Council also elected Paul Stead (Timberline Flock) as the SSBA's Vice President.

Three members of Council completed their terms of office at the AGM: Jeanette Hares, Pippa Geddes and Yvonne Clinton-Palmer. The President thanked them for their efforts.

Pippa, who had just completed two years on the Council as the immediate Past President, was permitted under the society's rules to stand again for Council. She decided to do this and was re-elected.

Jeanette remains on the Council as a non-voting member because she is also the society's Publicity Officer. Sue Farquhar was elected back onto council as a voting member after one year's break. Richard Dorrell has resigned from the Council, owing to work commitments. All other Council Officers agreed to remain in their posts.

Council meetings for 2015 were set for the following dates: 7th March, 9th May, 19th September and 14th November (also the Annual General Meeting). If members of the SSBA have any particular issues they wish the Council to discuss, they are requested to please put them in writing to the breed society's Secretary, Simon Mackay.



Pictured above, Liz Bowles with the Hardwicke Trophy, which is now awarded annually in the Sansaw Sidedowns Competition to the owner of the most prolific ewe. In 2014, the winner was one of Liz's ewes that is now 12 years old and has produced 11 registered progeny (see Autumn ShropTalk for more details).

Pictured above right (left to right), Sylvia Evans, Yvonne Clinton-Palmer and Sally Evans with the Reserve Interbreed Group of three at the Bucks County Show. Sally Evans is this year's winner of the President's Trophy.

Pictured below right, Liz was also presented with a copy of the Everall Painting, depicting some of the earliest Shropshire sheep breeders as a "thank you" gift from the SSBA on completing her two-year term as President. Les Newman made the presentation.

BREED SOCIETY TROPHIES AWARDED AT THE AGM

The Farquhar Trophy for points gained in Shropshire breed showing classes

Winner: Anne Harvey (Roydon Flock)

The President's Trophy for points gained in Any Other Breed showing classes

Winner: Sally Evans (Heath End Flock)

The Novice Trophy for show-ring novices

Winner: Charlie Morgan-Jones (Church Preen Flock)

The Hornpipe Quaich for Junior Members

Winner: George Clay (Swallows Flock)

The Hardwicke Trophy for the Sansaw Sidedowns most prolific ewe competition

Winner: Liz Bowles (Hayne Oak Flock)



The results of this year's show points competitions were announced at the AGM and trophies were presented to the winners, if present. Pictured above are Liz Bowles (left) presenting the Farquhar Trophy to Anne Harvey. Anne won the most points from Shropshire breed classes in 2014.





FIELD LABS ARE GATHERING DATA

FOLLOWING the launch of the Soil Association's orchard Field Labs in June, we can report that ten "stakeholders" involved in orchard management are continuing to assess the role of Shropshire sheep for grazing in apple orchards in the UK.

A further meeting has been hosted by SSBA members, the Clay family, who farm near Ledbury in Herefordshire. The participants visited an orchard purchased by the Clays in 2009. The trees had been planted in 1998 and the lower branches had been recently pruned to raise the canopy slightly, as Shropshires are known to eat

leaves and non-wooly branches of deciduous trees if within reach. The sheep do not, however, generally cause significant damage to the bark and are living up to their "tree friendly" reputation. Areas of particular interest to the stakeholders include:

- What is the best grass species to grow if sheep are to graze orchards? Palatable species may need to replace "hard wearing" grass;
- Does removal of the lower branches reduce overall fruit production, or does it in fact improve air flow through the orchard and reduce the incidence of fungal disease?
- How long do sheep need to be excluded when trees are being sprayed or harvested? And how soon after planting can sheep be safely allowed into the orchard?
- Can the cost benefits be quantified of minimising mowing by using sheep to graze the grass instead?

The study continues with the aim of eventually producing firm guidelines for managing Shropshires in orchards.

HENRY'S RAM LAMB RAISES MONEY FOR A GOOD CAUSE



"PATRICK", a Shropshire ram lamb bred by Junior Member Henry Davy (Poundown Flock), had an important role at the Butterleigh Harvest Home Festival in Devon this autumn. Henry had trained Patrick to lead on a halter and used him at the event in a "Guess The Weight of the Ram Lamb" Competition. Overall, Henry and Patrick raised an impressive £100, which will be used to help repair the roof of the local church. Patrick's weight was 55kg at five and a half months old. His dam was a ewe lamb born in 2013. Well done Henry for coming up with such a clever idea!

SHROPSHIRE SHEEP FEATURED IN NFU'S COUNTRYSIDE MAGAZINE



THE use of Shropshires for grazing in tree plantations was put in the spotlight in the January issue (published Dec) of the National Farmers Union's magazine, *Countryside*. The three-page article featured SSBA members Jeff Rees from Ceredigion and Roger Howell from Devon, both of whom use their sheep to control herbage between Christmas trees. The article was a very positive endorsement of this alternative use for our breed and also emphasised that Shropshires produce excellent quality butchers' lambs. Together, these attributes have helped our breed increase numerically and move off the Rare Breeds' endangered list.



A stunning picture of hardy Shropshires taken near Lyngdal in Norway by overseas member of the SSBA, Uwe Rutzen. His sheep are used for grazing extensive conifer plantations.

SHROPTALK

is edited by Pippa Geddes (pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk) and printed by Simon Mackay (shropshire_sheep@hotmail.com). Contributions are always welcome!

Visit our Facebook page: **Friends of Shropshire Sheep**, and our website: www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk for all the latest news.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR PICTURES!

THE SSBA is looking for good quality images of Shropshire sheep for its 2014 Flock Book, which will be published in spring next year. Images are also needed for other breed society publications.

Pictures for consideration should be well lit and in focus. They can cover a range of subjects such as show winners, pastoral scenes with Shropshires and other images to illustrate the versatility of our breed. We are particularly in need of shots of sheep grazing in tree plantations, because this is an expanding market area for our breed that we would like to promote as widely as possible. Please send your pictures to the Publicity Officer, Jeanette Hares by email: jeanettehares@hotmail.co.uk, or to the society's Registrar, Ali Schofield, email: alisonschofield@hotmail.com, by the end of 2014.

EXPORT PRICES FOR 2015

COUNCIL has decided there will be no change to export prices for 2015. 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 2014. 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.

THE SSBA WISHES ALL ITS MEMBERS A HAPPY CHRISTMAS, A SUCCESSFUL LAMBING AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!



Seasonal picture kindly supplied by Kathryn Turnock, Troutsdale Flock, Staffordshire.

SHEEP TRIMMING WORKSHOP AND BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME OPEN-DAY APRIL 25TH 2015



A GROWING number of SSBA members have expressed an interest in learning to trim their sheep for the show-ring. With so many new flocks of Shropshires having been formed in the past few years, there is also a need to provide members with information about our Breed Improvement Scheme, as well as to decide collectively the priorities for performance recording in the future. The breed society has, therefore, organised a special open-day on Saturday 25th April next year. There will be a number of activities and discussions happening on the day, all geared to providing SSBA members with new practical skills and essential information for improving their own flocks.

The venue selected is Sandwell Park Farm (pictured above), near West Bromwich in the West Midlands. Despite its urban-sounding address, the farm is a beautifully restored, working Victorian Farm situated just a mile or so from Junction 1 of the M5 Motorway. Sandwell even has its own flock of Shropshire sheep, as well as many other breeds of traditional and rare livestock.

The SSBA's Council is currently refining the itinerary for the event, but the broad plan is to start with a session about the breed improvement scheme that will explain the background, goals and practicalities of recording with Signet, including ultrasound scanning (pictured on the right)

We will then move on to discuss selecting sheep for the show-ring, and how to wash and

halter train them, before providing a practical demonstration of how to trim. We hope to give everyone a chance to "have a go" at carding and then using the trimming shears.

A buffet lunch will be laid on in one of Sandwell's beautifully converted barns. The breed society will be making a nominal charge for this of around **£2.50 per head???**

So, if you are interested in this event, please reserve the date in your diary. More details of the day and how to book your place will be available in due course. If you have any questions, please contact Simon Mackay.



Barry Hodson shows how it's done!