

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2011

The sheep industry continues to be buoyant with good returns for sheep farmers but this has also been a challenging year for many with prolonged freezing conditions in the winter for most and the worst drought since 1976 for those of us in the east of the country, resulting in a serious lack of grass.

We were saddened to hear of the death of Neil Morris in January at the age of 85. Neil's Hoggston flock, which has since passed to his son George, is one of the three surviving original flocks registered with the Society in 1923, the other two being Iolo Owen's Gedwydd flock and Stuart Brodie's Brockhall flock. Our sympathies go to his family and friends.

The first Society event this year was the Kenilworth show in June which held Wiltshire Horn breed classes for the first time. The classes were judged by Iolo Owen and were well supported by members with an impressive entry. The Championship was awarded to Jonathan Jeyes with his shearling ewe with T Lever winning best opposite sex and the pairs. Classes will again be held at the show in 2012.

Regretfully breed classes were cancelled at the North Devon Show due to lack of support and it is unlikely that classes will be held there in the future.

Two members have kindly donated cups this year. Joshua Brigg presented the Gorse Challenge Tankard and sash for the champion at Kenilworth Show and Jenny Grant-Parkes gave the Newland Champion cup and the Newland Best Opposite Sex cup which were both presented at Moreton-in-Marsh show this year; she also gave a sash for the group of three at the same show. Three of the cups previously presented at the Royal show were reassigned. The J Jeyes cup for Best Opposite Sex and the ER Morris cup for the group were presented at the Kenilworth show and the Philip Smith Points trophy were presented at the Stoneleigh show and sale.

The Society again awarded £25 to members who won championships at shows which do not hold Wiltshire Horn breed classes. This year's recipients were MA & JA Winn and N & T Hodgkinson.

The Society held three show and sales with the Welsh sale being held at Ruthin for the first time. There was high demand for females this year with good prices achieved at all sales but there were fewer buyers for the males and many good rams went home.

Iolo Owen took the championship at the Ruthin sale with Ruhi Hamilton taking the female championship and later going on to take both championships at Exeter.

Headlining the Stoneleigh show and sale, judged this year by J Jeyes, was the supreme champion from Mrs J Evans, a fine shearling ewe which achieved a breed record price for a female of 780gns selling, to Clive Morse. Stuart Brodie again won the champion male with a shearling ram, selling to 750gns, and Lyn Davies picked up the rest of the prizes winning both reserve championships, both groups and the Philip Smith Points trophy.

The Society took stands at two NSA events this year, Welsh Sheep and Sheep South West and as always our thanks go to those members who gave up their time to man the stands and provide stock. Plans are already under way to improve our stands for the events coming up in 2012, most importantly the NSA Sheep event in July.

The Signet Recording group continues to progress with 15 members now recording across the country. Several flocks are now scanning lambs for muscle and fat depth across the loin at 21 weeks of age, so improving accuracy and reliability of data. All participants continue to score the shedding of yearling ewes according to an agreed protocol. Work on the genetics of shedding and the development of a stand alone EBV for the trait is ongoing. This was the focus of a very successful event in June arranged by the Wiltshire Horn recording group which was hosted by Tim White and fully funded and supported by Eblex. Another event is planned for 2012.

The 2011 AGM was held on Saturday 22nd October and was hosted by Iolo Owen in celebration of the centenary of his flock. The AGM was followed by an interesting talk given by Iolo and a dinner in the evening. The following day members toured the Anglesey visiting the flocks of B & H Thomas and Son, RJ Thomas, W Roberts and R Owen. The weekend was very enjoyable and a great success thanks to the generosity and hospitality of the Anglesey members.

Six council members retired this year with four standing for re-election. Jean Burke and William Roberts wished to stand down. William has been a council member for 31 years and has been a valuable and popular member of council. Jean has been a member since 2006 and her legacy has been the formation of the Wiltshire Horn Signet Recording group which she will continue to co-ordinate. Our thanks go to both of them.

I have greatly enjoyed my time as Chairman of Council but due to other pressures I find it is time for me to stand down as Chairman. However, my commitment to the Society and my belief in the breed are undiminished and I hope to continue to serve on your council.

I should like to thank Christina and my fellow council members for their hard work and support throughout the year and wish Roger every success as our new Chairman.

Teresa A Hodgkinson