

# *Southdown News*

Newsletter of The Southdown Sheep Society

Issue 33

Spring 2022

*Incorporating The 2022 Year Book*





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# LITTLEBROOK

## Southdowns



Sold at the Worcester Premier Sale  
for 1000gns to the Brompton flock



Sold at the Worcester Premier Sale  
for 800gns to the High Green flock

2022 SERVICE SIRE IS  
CHAILEYBROOK 18-00277

### "THE STAG"

JAM PACKED FULL OF  
PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH,  
THIS EXCITING SON OF MACRON  
IS OUT OF A POWERFUL  
SARKOZY DAUGHTER.



### SOPHIE LONG

Based in Herefordshire

Email: [littlebrook2011@gmail.com](mailto:littlebrook2011@gmail.com)

Tel: 07974 303306 (Jonathan)

MV ACC



## From the Chairman

Welcome to the Society's spring newsletter, in what promises to be a year when things get back on track following two years of disrupted events thanks to Covid-19.

A fuller summer show season, including the Society's National Show which will be staged at the Royal Welsh Show in July, will give members a chance to get out and about once again and promote their flocks and the breed more fully than they've been able to in recent years.

This is a cause for celebration and I hope many members will take the opportunity to exhibit again, both locally and further afield.

This time last year I wrote about what a strong year the sheep trade had enjoyed in 2020 and 2021 was no different, with prime lamb, cull ewe and breeding stock prices all surging on past 2020 levels to prices many previously thought unachievable.

Whether this year's trade can sustain these levels is yet to be seen, but increasing costs at a farm level and in other parts of the supply chain will, potentially, mean margins are likely to be squeezed for everyone in the sheep sector.

However, while this is a challenge, it is also an opportunity and breeds such as ours which can thrive in lower input systems and without the need for heavy feeding seen in other breeds have an opportunity to shine.

Anyone involved with our great breed is well aware of its ability to finish well off lower levels of feeding and from poorer pastures, something we must ensure we showcase as the farming world adjusts to these higher costs.

The ability of the breed to produce easily fleshed lambs from grass and milk is one which will become increasingly valued in future. It is important to ensure these traits are not overlooked, diluted or lost in the pursuit of other fleeting desires.

The Society this year will once again have a presence at the NSA Sheep Event, Malvern, aiming to demonstrate the breed's abilities to commercial sheep farmers with the aim of lifting demand for the breed to benefit all breeders.

From a sales perspective the Society's Premier Sale will take place at Worcester on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August, while the Society's second sale will be at Melton Mowbray on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September.

I look forward to seeing many of you at shows, sales and other events this summer and autumn and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of the Society both now and in future.

The Society is only as strong as the membership and I would urge members to get involved with their regional group and the social and learning activities they offer locally.

I wish you all well for the spring and summer and hope you all continue to take enjoyment from your involvement with our great breed.



Jonathan Long  
Chairman of Council



# Blackfriar Southdowns

The flock was established in 2015 with foundation female bloodlines from the Southern Cross and Brant flocks and other select purchases.



Sires currently being used:

**East Dean Dynamo 17/03178** (*Overall Champion at the Worcester 2018 Sale*)

**Chaileybrook 18/00302** (*Percheron Son*)

**Ridings Real Deal 20/07054**

**Blackfriar 18/00244** (*Exceptional Sarkozy son and Sire of top priced ewe lamb at Melton Mowbray sale Sept 2021*)



We will have a selection of rams, ram lambs and ewe lambs for sale at this years Society`s Sales and also privately off farm.

Visitors welcome by appointment

**Will Morton**

44 Bobbin Lane, Lincoln, LN2 4ZB

07793977092

[will\\_morton05@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:will_morton05@hotmail.co.uk)

## From the President



Spring is a wonderful time of the year with new life on the farm, birds are busy building nests. Trees, hedges & plants are starting to burst into colour.

I expect by the time you read this, lambing will be over, hopefully a successful season with plenty of vigorous healthy lambs.

We have several sets of triplets every year and it always amazes me how well our Southdown ewes milk, managing to rear all three through the first few crucial weeks. We do manage to foster a triplet onto a single bearing ewe if the timing is right.

The weather has been kind so far this year and I hope that has been the same for members up and down the country.

With the dramatic increase of input costs, I believe our indigenous breeds of cattle and sheep which have been greatly improved over the years have a positive future with their ability to grow on grass and forage crops to produce top quality meat.

Finally, a thought goes to how fortunate we are to live in a beautiful, diverse country with free speech, having seen the devastation, human suffering and loss of life caused by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. It feels quite hopeless for us in the West, looking on at such dramatic and awful events, let's hope for peace for the Ukrainian people before too long.

Wishing you all a good summer ahead and for those who show, a thank you for promoting the great Southdown breed of sheep.

Duncan Crundwell

*Southdown Sheep Society President*

# NOTES FROM THE SOUTHDOWN OFFICE

The Council of the Southdown Sheep Society meets at least twice a year and the Notes from the Office aim to keep members updated on some of the important issues raised and discussed within Council meetings.

## 2022 LAMB REGISTRATIONS

**More and more members are choosing to register their lambs using the Grassroots Online system. All paid up members should have received details of their password and information held on line. There is a User Guide available to download from the Southdown Sheep Society website, together with some FAQs. To access the online Flock Book simply follow the link from the Society website. Email the office if you need a reminder of your log-in details.**

### Lamb registrations

Members should make every effort to register lambs as soon as possible to avoid omission from the next edition of the Flock Book. Please note that all late registrations (ie after the year of birth) remain eligible for registration, but at the late fee charge of £30 per registration.

All lamb registrations should be with the office by November 30<sup>th</sup> 2022, and at the latest, by December 31<sup>st</sup>. Whilst we try to turn around all registrations promptly, there may be a delay in processing registrations at busy times in the Southdown office.

The Southdown Office is closed for all but emergency enquiries for two weeks over Christmas and New Year. **Please note that registrations cannot be processed until payment has been received and membership subscription is paid up to date.**

## REGISTRATION CHARGES

on line registration fee per ewe lamb	£5
on line registration fee per ram lamb	£12
paper registration fee per ewe lamb	£7
paper registration fee per ram lamb	£18
late registration fee online and/or on paper	£30 per animal

### Imports and Exports

Members are reminded that the Office must be notified of any intended exports and imports. The rules as published in the current Flock Book state that "All sheep sold for export must have a Zootechnical Certificate in accordance with current legislation. The Zootechnical Certificate must be obtained from the Office, at a cost set by the Council. A registration fee per head as notified to members will be charged for all sheep imported into the UK. A three-generation pedigree must be provided to the Society for all imported sheep. Please contact the Office for further information.

This zootechnical (export) certificate for pure-bred breeding sheep, their semen, ova and embryos certificate should accompany the animal (or germinal product) where they are traded or entered into the European Union to allow an entry or registration of those animals in other breeding books or breeding registers.

The Southdown Sheep Society, therefore, fulfils its obligations as a DEFRA recognised breed society by issuing the export pedigree certificate to allow entering of pure-breed breeding sheep in flock-books.

### Getting it right

Do we have your correct information? Please try and update the Office with any changes of address or contact details. If you spot any errors or inaccuracies in the information included or you in this year's publications please let the Office know.

### Email

If your email address changes, please remember to inform the office, this can be done via Grassroots Online.

All members for whom the Society has an email address receive the Society Enewsletters throughout the year. eNewsletters give a chance to share information with members on a more regular basis in between the paper newsletters in Spring and Autumn. If you would prefer not to receive our eNewsletters then please let the Office know.

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Many thanks to all those members whose subscriptions are already paid up to date.

**Just a reminder that the 2022 membership subscription (£40) is now overdue.**

Standing Order instruction forms are available to download from the website or from the Office. Please ensure that when making a BACS payment, or setting up a Standing Order for subscription payment, that you include your name as a reference with the payment. Just occasionally it is impossible to trace the source of a payment.

**And finally, if you have not yet updated your Standing Order Instruction, please inform your bank that the annual subscription is £40.**

### BACS payment details

**Southdown Sheep Society bank account details can be found on page 4 of the current Flock Book**

## REGISTRATION FEES

**There has been a small increase in the registrations fees from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.**

**The new rates as are follows:**

**Online registrations: ram lambs £12, ewe lambs £5**

**Paper/office registrations: ram lambs £18, ewe lambs £7**

**Late registrations: £30**

## SELL YOUR STOCK ON THE SOCIETY WEBSITE

### WEBSITE ADVERTS

All adverts will include the flock name, breeder's contact details including telephone number/s and email, and a brief outline, totalling no more than 475 characters, including spaces, of what is available for sale.

Descriptions may include pedigree information or other relevant details, including show results and one photograph is included within the £10 charge. Additional lines of text (no more than 125 characters including spaces) may be purchased for £3/line and additional photographs can be added for £3/photograph.

Where breeders wish, they may also submit a private catalogue of their animals for sale in pdf format to be included with their advert at a cost of £25. All catalogues must include wording which indemnifies the Society.

#### PLEASE NOTE

**AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS ALL DATES PRINTED IN THIS PUBLICATION WERE VALID. HOWEVER, SOME DATES AND EVENTS MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE CHECK THE SOCIETY WEBSITE & FACEBOOK PAGE FOR REGULAR UPDATES, OR CALL THE SOUTHDOWN OFFICE.**

## Southdown Sheep Society approved sales in 2022

Southdown Sheep Society official sales provide the best opportunity to purchase veterinary inspected, high quality sheep from leading Southdown flocks.

Both performance recorded and MV accredited stock are available at Society sales, giving potential buyers and unrivalled selection of quality stock.

**Saturday August 6<sup>th</sup>**

**The Premier Breeders Show & Sale at Worcester  
Market**

**Closing date for entries: July 11<sup>th</sup>**

[www.mccartneys.co.uk](http://www.mccartneys.co.uk)

[worcester@mccartneys.co.uk](mailto:worcester@mccartneys.co.uk)

Telephone 01905 769770

**Friday September 9<sup>th</sup> and Saturday September 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Traditional and Native Breeds National Show and  
Sale at Melton Mowbray**

[www.meltonmowbraymarket.co.uk](http://www.meltonmowbraymarket.co.uk)

[sales@meltonmowbraymarket.co.uk](mailto:sales@meltonmowbraymarket.co.uk)

Telephone 01664 562971

For more details or to request a paper catalogue please contact the auctioneers or the Southdown Office. Catalogues will be available on line.

## The Southdown Sheep Society Flock Competition

The annual Flock Competition is an ideal opportunity to gain an appraisal of your flock, on a one-to-one basis with the Flock Competition judge.

The judge for this year's competition is Antony Glaves. A knowledgeable and experienced judge, Antony's Brompton flock was founded in 1999.

Whilst the judge has to compare all flocks and select the winners in the respective classes, at the same time the judge is able to offer an informed opinion and answer any questions you may have. The Flock Competition judge is always an experienced sheep keeper and the experience of taking part in a Flock Competition should be an enjoyable and educational experience.

It should be pointed out that the competition judges the whole flock, and therefore breeders with individual, different groups of sheep within their one flock will necessarily be disadvantaged. The judge is looking to see a flock, rather than a collection of different animals.

The judge follows a marking scheme approved by Council where points are awarded across a number of sections:

<b>A</b>	quality of flock ewes	£35
<b>B</b>	intake of shearing ewes	£35
<b>C</b>	uniformity	£35
<b>D</b>	ewe lambs	£20
<b>F</b>	ams	£60
<b>E</b>	wool	£15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£200</b>

**Noakes Trophy:** Three ewe lambs & three ram lambs sire by a named ram and shown £100

Flock Competition entry forms and rules can be downloaded from the Society website, or email or call the Office if you would like a paper copy sent to you. The entry fee is £25 per flock, and the closing date for entries is September 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.

### The Chelsea Flock (No. 222)

**C.G.F. & M. J. Ing**

**Yew Tree Farm**

**Weston Lullingfields**

**Shrewsbury**

**SY4 2AW**

**01939 260100**

[cgf.ing121@outlook.com](mailto:cgf.ing121@outlook.com)

## Around the regions

### East Midlands

With Covid restrictions over the past two years there have been no shows or social events in our region, so it's fantastic to see that the shows in our region have set dates and are busy taking entries. I hope that all members will be as keen to support these shows as previous years.

Please see details below and entry cut off dates:

- Nottinghamshire Show 14<sup>th</sup> May (entries close 8<sup>th</sup> April)
- Woodhall Spa Show 22<sup>nd</sup> May (entries close 22<sup>nd</sup> April)
- Rutland Show 4<sup>th</sup> June (entries close 16<sup>th</sup> May)
- Lincolnshire Show 22<sup>nd</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> June (entries close 28<sup>th</sup> April)
- Heckington Show 31<sup>st</sup> July (entries TBA)

We will be holding our annual BBQ at The Lincolnshire Show on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June and all members who attend the show are welcome to join us. The BBQ has always been a popular event for the region's younger members and I am sure they will be just as excited as the adults for its return. We have a lot of new members in our region and it would be great to see new faces supporting the shows. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

**Will Morton**

[will\\_morton05@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:will_morton05@hotmail.co.uk)

### East Anglia

Just to introduce myself for those who do not know me, I'm Mark Robertson, based in South Norfolk and we have a small flock of Southdowns which I run with my mother Alison. My day job is a senior assessor for RSPCA Assured (farm animal welfare scheme), looking after the Eastern region, I'm married to Katy who is a small animal vet and we have a rescue dog Dougie (who is most certainly not a sheep dog).

You may have seen our picture on the back of the

autumn newsletter where we took our sheep to our wedding! After speaking with Gail, I have agreed to have a go at rejuvenating the East Anglian Southdown Breeders' Group.

I hope this group will be informative and welcoming for all breeders, whether you have five or 50 Southdowns, if breeding Southdowns is a hobby or a part of your business, if you have been breeding for years or have only just started. This group will be for everyone where we can share tips, ideas and get to know each other and share our knowledge and enthusiasm.

For those who like to show their sheep, or for those looking to meeting other breeders We have Southdown classes at the following shows in our region for 2022:

- Hadleigh Show 21st May
- Suffolk Show 31st May & 1st June
- Tendring Show 9th July
- Norfolk Show 29th & 30th June
- Wayland Show 4th September
- Aylsham Show 29th August (TBC if this show will have its own Southdown class or merged)

For those on Facebook, we have a group exclusively for East Anglian breeders, you can find it by searching 'East Anglian Southdown Sheep Owners'. There's been some good discussion points on there, so please feel free to join in.

Finally, I hope to meet as many of you as possible at the shows. If anyone has any thoughts on the Eastern region group or things you'd like to see or do please do not hesitate to get in touch.

I will be in touch soon with more things to be aware of such as other shows across the borders and events coming up.

**Mark Robertson**

**07739091520**

[briggsflock1256@gmail.com](mailto:briggsflock1256@gmail.com)

### Welcome to New Members

Molly Best  
Drew Coulter  
George Dunbar & Shelagh Scott  
Miss Scarlet Hale  
Paul Holden & Frances Dennis  
Olivia Skye Holtom  
Emilie Kelso  
Duncan Mark Smith  
The Bullock Family  
L J Thompson & H J Morgan

Chatham, Kent  
Peebles, Scotland  
Moffat, Dumfriesshire  
Hertford Hertfordshire  
Tattershall Bridge, Lincolnshire  
Meriden, Coventry  
Dungannon, Northern Ireland  
Haselbech, Northamptonshire  
Maidstone, Kent  
Abergavenny, Monmouthshire



## Northumbria Flock wins The Cresswell Crook for 2021 lamb crop

The Cresswell Crook, which is awarded for the most improved Recorded Flock\*, has been won for the first time by Messrs G and M Sparke's Buckinghamshire based Northumbria flock. The flock achieved its improvement through the use of the exceptionally high performance (top 5%) Ridings Acrobat (M57263) bred by Messrs Wakeham-Dawson and Harmer and a homebred son of Acrobat: Northumbria Taranis (M58143) also in the top 5%. Rob Beaumont's Andersey flock was placed second again showing its continued steady improvement into one of the top performance recorded flocks.

In analysing the 2021 lamb crop Signet Breeding specialist Samuel Boon also reviewed the performance of rams (with at least 10 progeny) that have been used over the last 12 months. Sam highlighted Andersey Steve IV (M58373) as the top performing ram lamb, Andersey Norman VII (M57986) as the top shearing ram and Ridings Acrobat (M57263) as the top mature ram.

\*Only flocks that are performance recorded, have had least 10 lambs ultra-sound scanned for muscle depth and have been recording for three or more years are eligible to enter.

## DATES FOR THE DIARY IN 2022

**NSA Scotsheep  
June 1<sup>st</sup> at Tealing, by Dundee**

**National Sheep Association  
National event  
July 27<sup>th</sup> at Malvern, Worcs**

- **Southdown Sheep Society National Show at Royal Welsh Show  
18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> July  
Southdown classes take place Tuesday  
July 19<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm**
- **The Early Premier Breeders Show and Sale at Worcester Market  
August 6<sup>th</sup>**
- **Traditional Native Breeds National Show and Sale at Melton Mowbray  
September 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>**

## Larger Leaner Leggier and Well Muscled

Breeding for the commercial market

**Eblex Most Improved Flock:** Inaugural Southdown Winner

**Rams selected for AHDB RamCompare Project**

**Melton Show and Sale 2019:** Shearling Ewe: Second Place and Reserve Champion; Ewe lamb: First in Class

**Flock Competition 2017:** Runner Up Class A and Miller Hallett Trophy (Ewe Lambs)

**Flock Competition 2015:** Winner Class C Frank Grantham Trophy



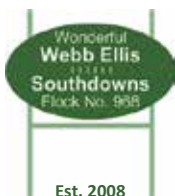
**Lawton Bobby M57558**  
Terminal Sire EBV in Top 25%  
Maternal Index EBV Top 25%



**Webb Ellis 17/368**  
Terminal Sire EBV in Top 25%  
Maternal Ability EBV Top 5%



**Webb Ellis 18/468**  
Terminal Sire EBV in Top 25%  
Maternal Ability EBV Top 10%



**High EBV Signet recorded rams, semen and breeding stock available**

**Visitors and Enquiries Welcome**

**Patrick Goldsworthy MBE**

**Ambleside, Church Road, Grafham, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 0BB**

**07711 416312**

**patrick@goldsworthy-uk.com**

# Northumbria Southdowns



**NORTHUMBRIA TARANIS 20/00176**  
No. 1 Ranked Signet Recorded Stock Sire  
\*\*Reserve Champion Staffordshire Show



**NORTHUMBRIA 20/00189**  
\*Breed Champion – Staffordshire Show

## Performance and Style

### SELECTED 2021 SHOW RESULTS

- **Breed Champion** –  
Staffordshire Show\*
- **Reserve Champion**  
**Interbreed Pairs** –  
Edenbridge Show
- **Reserve Champion** –  
Staffordshire Show\*\*

**HIGH SIGNET  
RECORDED SCORES WITH  
SHOW-WINNING QUALITY  
Pedigree and Commercial  
Rams available**

**The NORTHUMBRIA Flock  
of Pedigree Southdowns**

**Messrs. G&M SPARKE  
WARREN FARM, STEWKLEY  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**SIGNET RECORDED**

**t: 07968 182020**

**e: [g.sparke@btinternet.com](mailto:g.sparke@btinternet.com)**

# What Commercial Ram Buyers Really Want

The Southdown, in spite of its good looks, easy temperament and tasty meat, is primarily classified as a Terminal Sire Breed to be used by commercial farmers on their crossbred ewes to produce meaty lambs. And, when I set out breeding Southdowns my aspiration was, and still is, to sell their easy lambing and early finishing to commercial farmers.

Every farmer/customer is different, so it is not always easy to identify what it is - in general - that a commercial farmer wants. However last year I came across a report prepared by renowned sheep experts Lesley Stubbings and Kate Phillips with the help of the NSA, which gave some valuable insights into commercial farmers' thinking and their choice of ram. The report, published in 2017, titled "Improving the Welfare and Longevity of Rams in Commercial Flocks" makes a number of valuable recommendations on ram welfare aimed at commercial farmers, but there is also some valuable market research on ram buyer's behaviour and thinking. And, although the study was conducted five years ago, I suspect little has changed (apart from lamb price) in the intervening years.

With the authors' agreement I have extracted relevant market research information and made some personal comments in italics. Please also note that I have redrawn the graphs so the percentages are approximate as I did not have the raw data.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Market research

As a basis for the report the researchers conducted a survey of commercial (non-pedigree) farmers with >200 ewes: 586 farmers participated and most had flocks of 251-1000 ewes. The survey was then followed up with 10 focus group meetings (across the UK) reaching 98 farmers who had completed the survey.

The report highlighted some valuable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for rams (see box) that ram buyers ought to be considering - whether they do is another matter.

### Ram Performance Indicators

- Ram life in the flock  
e.g. 4 years
- Ram lifetime output of lambs e.g.  
272 lambs
- Cost of the ram per lamb reared  
e.g. £1.84 for a £500 ram
- Cost of the ram per kg carcase  
e.g. 9.2p/kg for a 20kg carcase

## Ram Longevity

In general, the expectation was that a shearling ram should last 4-5 years and would cover 40-50 ewes/year. Most farmers bought shearling rams (70%), with 21% buying ram lambs and 9% (*probably*) buying older rams. It appeared that most (70%) buyers were satisfied with how long rams lasted, with just over 12% being dissatisfied. (NB A higher proportion of dissatisfied farmers paid more than £500 for their ram). However, data on ram history showed that on average rams were only lasting 3.8 years with those in larger flocks having a shorter flock life (3-4years) than those in medium or small flocks.

## Where to buy and what to pay

The most common way to buy rams was direct from the breeder (57%), approximately 48% at a specialist (*breed*) sale while c.34% bred their own and of course many farmers will use more than one source. These results are summarised in Chart 1.

There is, of course, a huge variation in price buyers were prepared to pay. Chart 2 shows prices ranging from under £200 to more than £1000 with most saying they paid £300-600. Apparently several commented that "a ram is worth 10 fat lambs" that would be well over £1000 at today's prices ... if only!

## What were the factors influencing buying decisions?

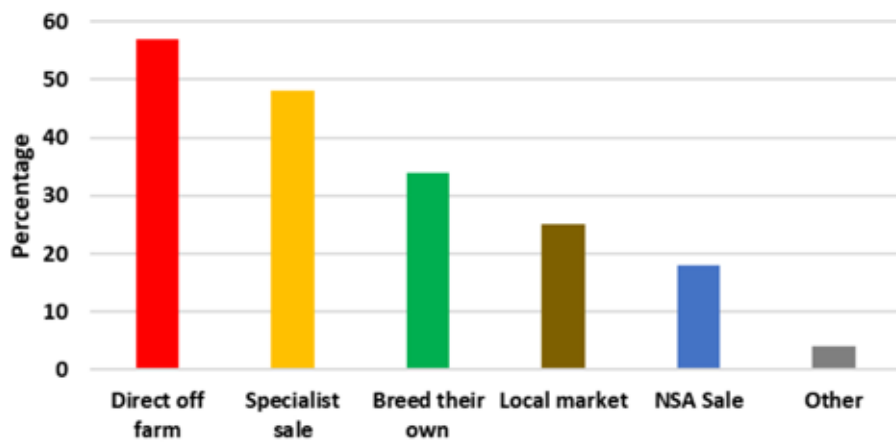
The survey asked ram buyers how important specific factors were when choosing which ram to buy: 71% said health status was the most important, compared to less than 30% attaching the same priority to price, while conformity to breed type was second most important *reflecting perhaps that the buyer was wanting the "characteristics" of that breed*. Recording with EBVs and Index (*sadly for me*) were the least important factors.

## Health: what did they really know/want?

When quizzed about health information two thirds said they knew everything/most things about vaccinations. However, 50% or less had the same amount of knowledge of feeding levels or worming/ectoparasite regimes. This was discussed at length in the focus groups, as there was a significant mis-match between the emphasis on health status as a selection criterion and actual knowledge. Delving into this further, health knowledge varied depending on the source of rams: 80% of those buying direct from the breeder knew everything/most things about vaccinations (*or knew they could find that out from the breeder?*). 60% said the same for feeding, worming and ectoparasite control. Only 45% of those buying in the market knew everything/most things about vaccinations. Although it was noted in the focus groups that there was also an element of distrust in the information ram buyers are given by vendors. One other observation from the focus groups was that Maedi Visna (MV) was not considered important: MV accredited

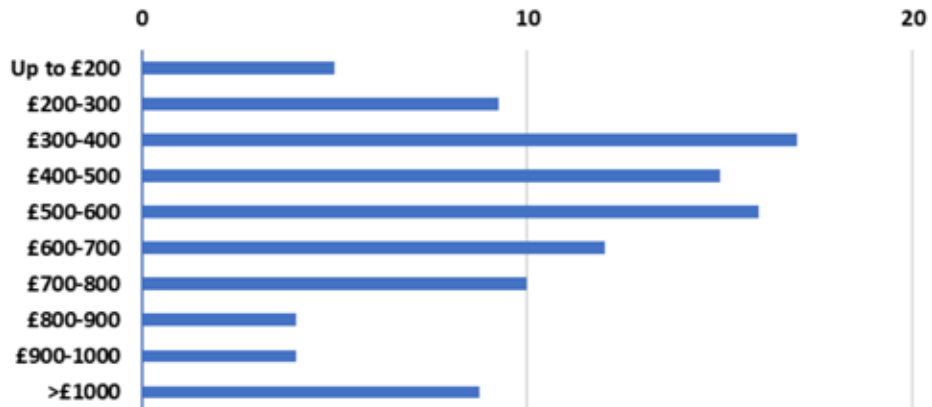
**Chart 1: Where commercial ram buyers buy**

NB They buy from more than one source!

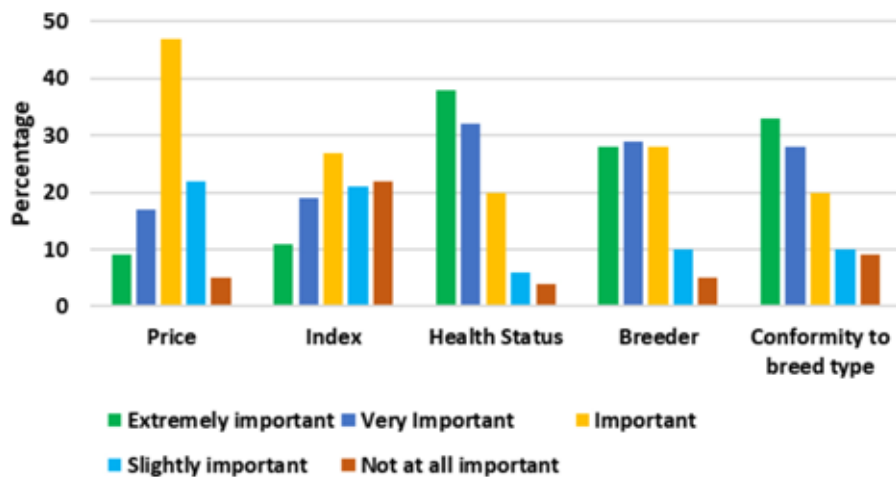


**Chart 2 Ram Price**

Percentage of buyers



**Chart 3: Ram Selection Criteria**



rams were bought incidentally rather than deliberately. (Though it might be argued that the extra effort involved with MV accreditation and quarantine etc could provide a useful surrogate for good health status).

### Ram feeding and after care

There was a clear message that commercial farmers wanted healthy rams, "typical of the chosen breed" that were not dependent on concentrates. Commercial farmers did not want to feed rams – but will do so if in poor condition. Interestingly a clear message from the report was that commercial farmers tend to be somewhat negligent of ram health and nutrition – often forgetting to worm, vaccinate and feed them until too late.

However it was noted that the more progressive commercial farmers were wanting to buy rams earlier rather than wait for ram sales – by visiting breeders and buying earlier they could have the pick of the stock and have sufficient time to quarantine and ensure the rams were in the right condition for work.

So what are the take home messages from this market research:

1. Successful commercial ram sales depend on building a long-term relationship with customers who will buy direct from you.
2. Breed sales may be a useful shop window. but unless commercial ram buyers are looking for Southdowns they are unlikely to come to a Society sale.
3. Build your reputation with your clients by providing the information and most importantly good quality, healthy stock that has not been forced or overfed.
4. Many commercial ram buyers are willing to pay a reasonable/fair price for rams.

*Patrick Goldsworthy*

*Acknowledgements: Kate Phillips and Lesley Stubbings for letting me plagiarise their report.*

1 The full report can be found here:

<https://www.animalwelfarefoundation.org.uk/grant/improving-welfare-longevity-rams-commercial-sheep-flocks/> or there is a pdf of a PowerPoint on the study: <https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/workspace/pdfs/16-kate-phillips.pdf>

2 The report was funded by the Norman Hayward Fund of the BVA Animal Welfare Foundation

## LADYWELL SOUTHDOWNS

FLOCK NO. 816



**Duncan & Monica Crundwell**  
**Cobblers Yard Farm**  
**Leggs Lane**  
**Langton Green**  
**Tunbridge Wells**  
**Kent TN3 0RQ**

01892 863448 07921471018  
dgcrundwell@btinternet.com

**Award winning Southdowns from the heart of Kent.**

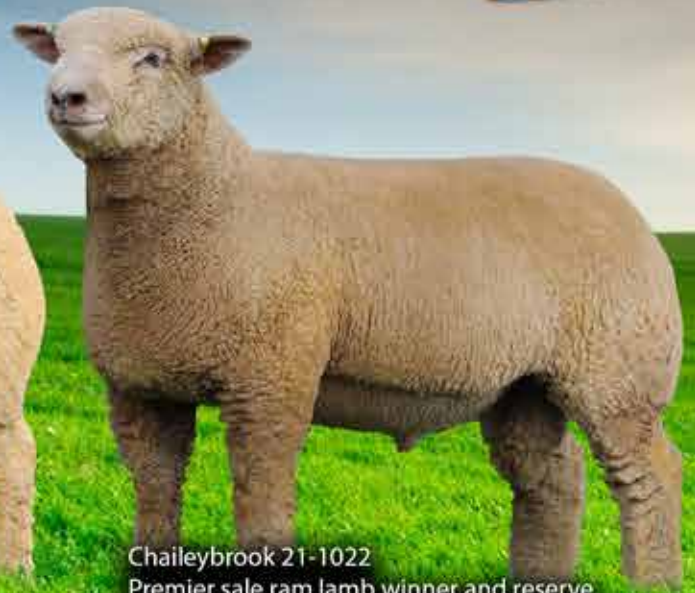
Enquiries welcome.

# CHAILEYBROOK

WINNERS of every class at the WORCESTER PREMIER SALE 2021



Chaileybrook 20-00669  
Premier Sale champion and centre record male  
price of 1250gns sold to the Chapel House flock



Chaileybrook 21-1022  
Premier sale ram lamb winner and reserve  
champion, sold for 850gns to Ray Edwards



Chaileybrook 20-00685  
Sold for 750gns at the Premier  
Sale 2021 to the Fulfen flock



Chaileybrook 21-01027  
Premier sale class winner and  
top price ewe lamb sold for  
480gns to the Uneedah flock

**JONATHAN LONG**  
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Lower Walton Farm, Bishops Frome, Herefordshire

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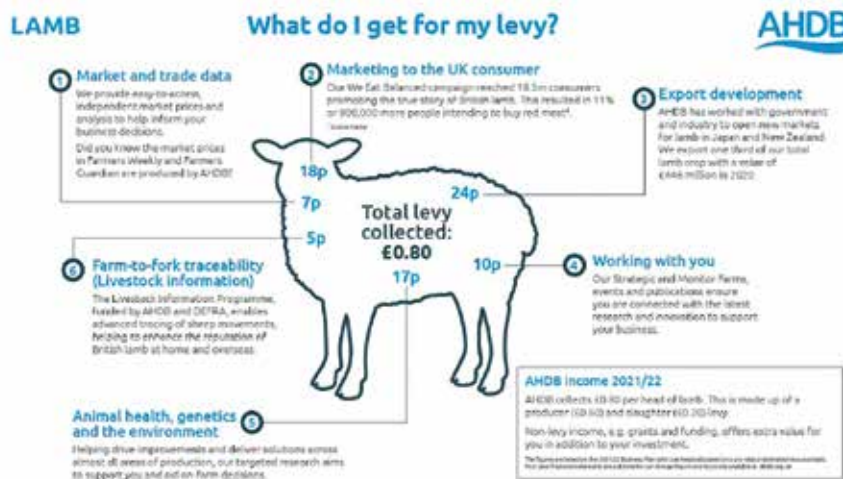


# Genetic improvement in the Southdown breed and the support provided by AHDB

By Samuel Boon, AHDB Breeding Specialist with Signet Breeding Services

## Decision time for levy payers

This year beef and lamb levy payers in England<sup>1</sup> will be asked to vote on how they want to see the 80p levy they pay to AHDB invested. (AHDB currently collects 80p per head from every sheep slaughtered in English abattoirs).



This levy is invested in a range of services including marketing, export, the market data and traceability; with 17p spent on services to enhance animal health, reduce environmental impact and increase genetic gain.

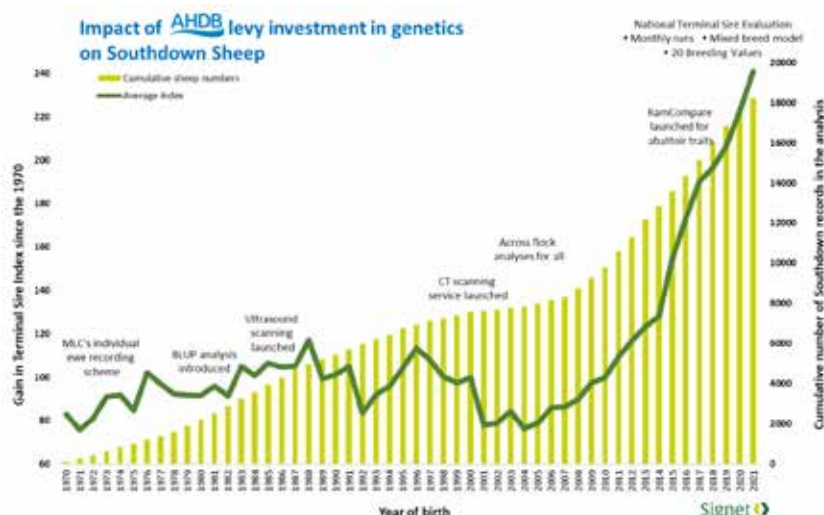
## What do sheep farmers want and what do they need?

When asked how they would like to see their levy spent, commercial sheep producers often answer: “more on marketing”. However, spend on marketing overlooks the long-term strategic gains from genetic improvement. The cumulative and lasting impact of genetic selection means investment in this area is highly cost effective and has delivered major productivity gains in the UK and every other major sheep producing country across the world.

## We have come a long way

One of the initial remits behind the collection of a beef and lamb levy in 1967 was to promote the performance recording of livestock, to provide ram and bull buyers with accurate information to assess an animal’s genetic merit – rather than relying on visual assessment. Since then, many milestones have been reached, each having an impact on rates of genetic gain.

Most Southdown sheep bred today are very different to those of the past. Southdown sired lambs now grow faster, have better conformation and are less likely to become overfat at light carcase weights. This improvement isn’t limited to rams purchased from Signet recorded flocks, as the movement of genetics within the pedigree world benefits the whole breed.



This genetic change has clearly influenced the productivity of the national flock, and another key benefit is that by reducing days to slaughter, enhancing meat yield in the carcass and increasing maternal output, genetic improvement provides one of the best ways to reduce the carbon footprint of lamb; something that has quietly happened over the last four decades.

### A look to the future

The next steps for levy investment in genetics are less clear, as much will depend on the resources available after producers have had their say in the vote. However, there is still much to be done if we are to compete with the other major sheep breeding nations of the world and reduce the carbon footprint of sheep farming still further. These include:

- Incorporating genomic information into our evaluations
- Identifying new and existing phenotypes that can reduce environmental impact require consideration.
- More progeny testing on commercial farms linked to analysis of abattoir data

As part of the contribution to genetic improvement, the levy has had for many years supported the recording and scanning costs incurred by ram breeders. Keeping Signet's recording costs low is really important if we wish to enhance the impact of our work on the national flock; genetic improvement which is currently worth over £20 million per annum to the UK sheep and beef industry (AbacusBio 2015), making it a fantastic return on levy investment.

### The future is in the sheep industry's hands?

In April 2022, all eligible levy payers in England<sup>2</sup> – who have registered to vote – will have their say about the shape AHDB's work and areas of priority. It will be important for AHDB (and DEFRA) to listen and understand the views of English farmers so as to guide what is delivered over the next five years. As a geneticist, I hope, given the challenging and greener times ahead for farming, that English farmers will continue to see the importance of continuous genetic improvement.

(Endnotes)

1 AHDB collects and invests levy payers' money in England. Although a similar process is followed Different arrangements apply to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

2 Currently no "vote" is taking place in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland however their equivalent organisations HCC, QMS and Agrisearch will doubtless be interested in the views of the farmers.

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**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

## Synchronising ewes for lambing

Many members will already be aware of the various means of synchronising ewes for tugging and they can all prove beneficial, particularly for those breeders with other work or farming commitments which create time pressures at lambing.

Having successfully used three different methods of synchronisation I can safely say all will work when undertaken correctly.

While all of the methods outlined here come at some level of cost, the benefits in both labour saving and easing lamb and flock management can be vast.

However, it is important to plan and allow the necessary days/weeks required for all methods to be effective before rams are introduced to ewes.

### Teaser rams

The first and simplest method of synchronisation is to use a vasectomised teaser ram. This method will not achieve the level of synchronisation possible with other chemical methods, but will tighten the lambing period significantly and works well where larger numbers of ewes are to be lambled.

The first step to successfully using teaser rams is to keep ewes away from all rams for at least six weeks before the teaser ram is introduced. Ewes should not be able to see or smell rams at any point in this six-week period.

At the end of the six-week period a teaser ram should be introduced to ewes at a maximum ratio of one teaser to 100 ewes.

The teaser ram should be left with the ewes for 14 days before being replaced with fertile rams. Most ewes will be served between five and 10 days after the fertile ram is introduced.



### Chronogest sponges

The next method of synchronisation is the first of two chemical options, the use of chronogest sponges.

With this method a hormone impregnated sponge is inserted into the ewe's vagina and left in place for 12 days prior to removal.

At sponge removal the ewe is injected with Pregnant Mare Gonadotrophin Serum (PMSG) at a prescribed rate.

Fertile rams are then introduced to ewes at a ratio of 1:10 or thereabouts, 36-48 hours after sponge removal.

### CIDR Ovis

The third and final method of synchronisation is a relatively new product, CIDR Ovis. This is similar to sponging in that a hormone device is inserted into the ewe's vagina.

However, in this instance it is a plastic device rather than a fabric sponge. This has a number of advantages, the first of which is that CIDRs are far easier to implant than sponges.

In addition, as the CIDR is plastic it does not absorb urine as a sponge does, meaning it is far cleaner to remove and there is less chance of urinary tract infections which can, in rare circumstances, occur with sponges.

On top of that, due to the CIDR's T-shape design retention rate is higher and thus effectiveness is improved.

As with sponges CIDRs are removed 12 days after insertion, at which time ewes also receive a PMSG injection at CIDR removal. Fertile rams are then introduced 24-48 hours after CIDR removal at a ratio of 1:10 or thereabouts.

**NB** Both sponges and CIDRs work best when ewes are already cycling, so the use of a teaser ram for 14 days prior to device insertion can help maximise their effectiveness.

*Jonathan Long*

# The RIDINGS and OFFHAM FLOCKS

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Wakeham-Dawson & Harmer, Elizabeth Sargent, Edward Harmer  
Offham Farm, Lewes BN7 3QE. Tel: 07980 624 196 / 07976 068 094

## Learn about Livestock – ‘Loan-a-Lamb’ Educational livestock project offers schools across Norfolk and Suffolk a unique hands-on experience

The Food and Farming Discovery Trust teamed up with Rare Breeds Survival Trust, Chapelfield Veterinary Partnership and Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association to help young people once again learn about livestock. This hands-on opportunity offered schools the chance to look after ewes and their lambs at their school, for five days.

The project, sponsored by Clan Trust, is aimed at giving children, ranging from Reception to High School age, the chance to learn about animal husbandry and to engage schools in food and farming education.

Fourteen schools across Norfolk and Suffolk took part in this project from Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March to Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March and breeds included Southdowns, Norfolk Horns, Greyface Dartmoors and Ryelands.

This year Gail Sprake, from the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and the Food & Farming Discovery Trust Advisory Board has been the driving force behind the project, liaising with schools and farmers to ensure the success of the project. Gail has been overwhelmed with the level of response and as expected, the project was once again oversubscribed.

Participating schools were provided with everything they needed to care for and look after the animals and staff were given a comprehensive briefing, to ensure that they adhered to the very best health and safety and husbandry practice. A variety of ideas on how to incorporate the project into the curriculum were provided, to help schools make the most of their livestock visit.

This year the sheep were kindly provided by members of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust East Anglia Support Group, which included Southdown sheep from Tricia & Les Newman’s Snowden flock, and Gail & Michael Sprake’s All Saints flock. Farmers have been instrumental in ensuring that animal movement licences have been acquired and they supported the delivery of the animals to the schools, thereby strengthening relationships between schools and their local farms.



*Getting up close to a lamb at the Clare school*



*The Clare School with their ewe and lambs*

Matt Frost, from Harford Manor School who is a new participant in the project, says:

“Here at Harford Manor, we are currently engaged in a whole school topic all about ‘farming’ so participating in the Learn about Livestock project creates a perfect opportunity to quite literally, bring our learning to life! We hope that by taking part in the project, many of our students, who may not have been able to access farm visits off site, will be able to engage in first hand experiences whilst caring for livestock. Many of our classes will also be exploring every aspect of sheep farming, from woolly fleeces to Shepherd’s Pies and beyond.”

One recipient was the Clare School in Norwich - a specialist school for pupils with complex physical and sensory needs. Class teacher Julie Hatfield actually helped sheep owner Gail Sprake deliver the twin lambs when they were born at Meens Farm in January. She said the animals' arrival with their mother at the school gave the children access to a valuable sensory experience, particularly as many use wheelchairs which could otherwise prevent them getting close to farm animals.

"We are talking about the sheep and increasing the children's vocabulary and language, so to be able to do all that through an actual real-life learning experience is amazing."



Tricia Newman at Carleton Rode Primary School

This project forms part of the Food and Farming Discovery Trust's wider programme of events and initiatives run throughout the year, which help promote focused educational learning about food, farming and the countryside, to young people across Norfolk.

This year the South of England Agricultural Society under the guidance of Mary Masters have also taken part in the 'Learn about Livestock' project, building on the foundations established by the RNAA and FFDT team. A number of other agricultural associations around the country are interested in getting involved, so perhaps even more schools may welcome ewes and lambs in to their schools in Spring 2023. For more information on the activities and educational opportunities available through the Food and Farming Discovery Trust, please go to [www.rnaa.org.uk](http://www.rnaa.org.uk) to learn more, or contact Shannon Woodhouse: [shannon.woodhouse@rnaa.org.uk](mailto:shannon.woodhouse@rnaa.org.uk) / 01603 731974, or Gail Sprake: [gail.sprake@outlook.com](mailto:gail.sprake@outlook.com)

**Sutherland Southdowns**

Est 2005 Flock 896

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07850830030 [amy.readhead@gmail.com](mailto:amy.readhead@gmail.com)

Sallylogue

# Southdown sheep

by John Ellman



**A good, solid sheep: Southdowns are much admired for their fine wool, docility and ease of lambing, not to mention their undeniably appealing appearance**

**O**NE of the most charming passages in Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne* is his letter to Daines Barrington of December 1773, reflecting on how, despite having travelled the Sussex Downs for more than 30 years, he still investigated 'that chain of majestic mountains with fresh admiration year by year'. White was writing from Ringmer, where he often stayed with his aunt and her ancient tortoise, Timothy, the long-suffering recipient of various experiments by the inquisitive Hampshire vicar.

The visits also facilitated his observations on the distinctive hornless (or polled) sheep, black-faced and with a white tuft of wool on their foreheads, that grazed the eastern ranges of the Downs across East and West Sussex. Different from the coarser, horned

**'They were the linear descendants of sheep that had been grazing the Downs since Neolithic times'**

animals further west, these were Southdown sheep, later famous around the world.

As his walks took him up Mount Caburn, the striking, wedge-shaped hill that rises above the Lewes brooks, White almost certainly saw the Southdown flocks of the Ellman family, shortly to be inherited by the breed's great improver, John Ellman (1753–

1832), on succeeding his father to his Glynde farm tenancy in East Sussex in 1780.

The Southdowns were the linear descendants of sheep that had been grazing the Downs since Neolithic times. Even in the 13th century, the flocks on the hills running from Lewes eastwards to Eastbourne were noted for the quality of their wool. Ellman, however, whose farm complex was in a fold of the hills directly west of Glynde Place, also wanted to improve it as a sweet mutton animal. His selective breeding programme focused on using rams and ewes noted for the quality of their wool and carcass shape.

The resulting offspring grew stockier and more boxy in stature and the black facial colouring was eventually lost. He was not the only Southdown improver, but attending the local Lewes market brought him into



## The downland shepherds

Southdown sheep farmers were practising sustainable farming long before it was an environmental buzzword. The sheep were bred to thrive on the nutrient-low chalk turf. They were outrun on the open sward during the daytime and brought onto the lower down or fields at night and enclosed in hurdle folds, thus concentrating their manure for subsequent crop fertilisation. The shepherds who managed them were persons of high status. Even so, by the early 20th century, the vast flocks of yesteryear were fading and the shepherds were seen as an endangered species. A romanticised semi-cult grew around them.

The great chronicler of the last of these figures was Barclay Wills (1877–1962), who wandered the hills befriending the shepherds, recording their stories and accumulating a collection of shepherd-related artefacts and memorabilia. His



books included *Bypaths in Downland* (1927) and *Shepherds Of Sussex* (1938). In 1989, Richard Pailthorpe and Shaun Payne collaborated on a collection of Wills's writings, *The Downland Shepherds*. With artwork by the late Gordon Beningfield (above), also a champion of the shepherd's life, it serves as a fine testament to the enduring fascination of the wise men of the hills.

contact with Arthur Young, the leading agricultural writer of the day. Young invited him to write for his *Annals of Agriculture*, which provided Ellman with a platform to publicise both the breed and his more general thoughts on sheep husbandry.

As his reputation spread, Ellman sold Southdowns to local estate owners, such as Lord Gage at Firl Place and the Earl of Egremont at Petworth. After George III, having visited Ellman, bred Southdowns at Windsor, the Emperor of Russia asked him to procure two Glynde rams on his behalf.

Southdown rams crossed with Norfolk Horn ewes led to the creation of the celebrated Suffolks. There were fierce arguments at the

turn of the 19th century about whether the Southdown or Robert Bakewell's Leicesters were the superior, more profitable sheep.

The Southdown was seminal in the development of other polled downland breeds, such as the Hampshire Down and the Oxford Down, and they were exported around the world. In New Zealand, they were used to develop Canterbury lamb. At the same time, their 'teddy-bear' faces made them popular as the sheep for paddock hobbyists.

They subsequently fell from favour, partly due to cheaper lamb imports from Australia and New Zealand and partly to the ploughing up of the downland sward to make way for arable production. The breed has enjoyed



Pictured in the 1920s, a shepherd of the South Downs continues John Ellman's work

## What they said

‘Mr Ellman, by his knowledge of the subject, and his means for improvement has paved the way for the propagation of South Down sheep, and has added no little store to the general mass of knowledge, now afloat, upon this subject’  
*Arthur Young, 'Annals of Agriculture', 1794*

‘I was at Lewes at the beginning of the last harvest, and saw the fine farms of the Ellmans, very justly renowned for their improvement of the breed of South-Down sheep’  
*William Cobbett, 'Rural Rides'*

‘A pedigree older than the peerage’  
*Old Sussex saying*

‘Perfectly adapted to live year-round on the Downs’  
*The Prince of Wales, RBST patron*



something of a comeback in recent years as a prime lamb animal and for use in grazing schemes aimed at restoring traditional downland pasture. The sheep is no longer categorised as priority or at risk on the Rare Breeds Survival Trust's watchlist.

Ellman, like his sheep, remains a venerated name in the story of British agriculture. A founder member of the Smithfield Society in 1798, on retirement in 1829 he was presented with an ornamented silver tureen surmounted by a figure of Southdown sheep, bearing the names of 186 noblemen and landowners from all over Britain. His tomb is in the churchyard of St Mary's, Glynde, next to the old farmhouse in which he lived, and Glynde Place. 🐑

*Jack Watkins*

February 23, 2022 | Country Life | 49

*The Society was not involved in the preparation of this article and is grateful to Kate Green and Country Life Magazine for permission to reproduce this article in full*

## 2021 WINTER FAIRS ROUND UP



*The Long family's triple native championship winning lambs which took award at Agri-Fest South West, the English Winter Fair and the Royal Welsh Winter Fair.*

Southdown lambs enjoyed unparalleled success in the 2021 winter primestock fairs, taking the live lamb native championships at four events and leading the carcass classes at several too.

Southdown lambs took the top tickets in the both the live and carcass sections for native breed lambs at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair, achieving a remarkable treble for the breed.



*Hywel Williams first prize Southdown carcass at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair.*

In the live classes it was a memorable day for the breed when a pair of pure Southdown lambs from the Long family's Chaileybrook flock, Herefordshire, took the Pure Lowland championship before going on to lift the overall Native Championship of the event, having previously won the breed class on the first day of the event.

Praised by championship judge Paul Slater, Macclesfield, for their superb loins and evenness of fleshing, this pair tipped the scales at a combined weight of 87.5kg and were both sired by the homebred Chaileybrook Beaujolais.

This win completed an unstoppable winter season for the Long family, with the same pair of lambs having previously taken the native championships at both Agri-Fest South West and the English Winter Fair prior to their arrival at Bulth Wells on the family's Royal Welsh Winter Fair debut.

Across in the carcass hall it was a pair of pure Southdowns from Dylan Williams, Lampeter, which won the pairs class, with both of these grading U3L, while in the singles class it was a lamb from Hywel Williams, Llangadog, with this one also grading U3L.

At the English Winter Fair the Long family, Herefordshire, won the show's class for pure Southdown lambs before going on to tapped out as Native Champions under judge Matt Prince.

In the event's carcass class Robert Cox, Leicestershire, won the native sired lamb class, with a lamb from the Long family in second spot here. The South East Primestock Show saw Messrs Wakeham-Dawson and Harmer win the live lamb Native Championship, with this pair of lambs later being the reserve overall champions of the show.

The carcass classes saw a lamb from the same home take the native championship too.

# 'TIME TO FOCUS ON THE SHEEP FARMERS AND SHEPHERDS' SAYS NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION



## PHIL STOCKER, NSA CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

The 'National Sheep Association' (NSA), all about sheep then yes? Well of course, NSA's core interest is sheep, but in a sheep-farming context sheep are nothing without people. NSA is an organisation for people – our sheep farmers, shepherds, vets, advisers and a host of others who work within and on the fringes of our great industry. For the past couple of years NSA has worked hard to make the case for the public good of grazed grasslands. We have drilled home the sustainability credentials of sheep farming as being almost the ultimate in renewable technology, producing highly nutritious meat and wool mainly from grass grown using not much more than sunshine, rainfall, and soil nutrients. In its wake, sheep farming creates a landscape that most people appreciate, a reservoir of soil carbon and, at various levels, habitats for nature.

But NSA has never ignored the social side of sheep farming. It is the bedrock of many remote rural communities and services and contributes sustainably to local economies. It supports tourism and many other rural businesses, and sheep farming still offers attractive jobs and achievable business opportunities for young people making that first step on the farming ladder. NSA publicly announced at the beginning of 2022 that it was to step up the focus on our people. The whole country has been through a tough couple of years, and sheep farmers are no different, even though we have had more space than many and our work and social lives are often indistinguishable.

This year, whatever continues to happen with covid-19, many of the tougher restrictions will be relaxed and we will get back to some form of normality. Popular NSA events including NSA Scot Sheep and NSA Sheep 2022 will welcome back crowds of sheep farming visitors this summer. I hope as many members as possible will join us for a real celebration, putting our community and friendships firmly back on track, alongside all the technical and business activities on offer.

So as NSA strives to do what it can to represent the sheep farmers of today and the future we encourage all involved with the sector to consider subscribing to NSA Membership. As you may know, NSA is a membership organisation that relies on its membership subscriptions to carry out its vital work acting as a voice for the industry whether that be promoting the positive contribution sheep farming makes to the economy, environment, culture and society; Informing policy decisions through consultation and by working with Defra, other Government departments, non-governmental organisations and industry bodies; By active involvement in cross-industry groups covering, or producing and promoting industry advice for best practice, high animal welfare and sustainability.

Our voice is only as strong as our members, and we would like to thank every member for their continued support. We are pleased to continue our relationship working with the Southdown society and would like to offer any member of the Southdown Society joining as a new NSA member a 15% discount on their first year's subscription. This has never been easier to do, simply visit [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/membership](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/membership) and add SOUTHDOWN15 in the discount box to claim your discount and start what we trust will be a happy and beneficial relationship with NSA.



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# NSA NEEDS EWES!



With many key political changes taking place over the next few months, NSA is working hard to ensure the UK sheep sector and its farmers are supported. NSA values every member from all corners of the UK and recognises there has never been a more important time for us to be united in our work to protect and strengthen our industry.

**Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive**



*Phil Stocker*

