 Gate **Cheshire Smallholders January 2017**

**Chairman’s Chat**

Happy New Year to all our readers, I hope that 2017 is a kind year to us all.

2016 was a year of evolution for Cheshire Smallholders Association, with our longstanding President, Arthur Green, deciding to step back from the Committee into an advisory role. Arthur has been instrumental to CSA since inception and the committee want to put on record their sincerest thanks for his service to the association, that goes back well over a quarter of a century.

We have welcomed two new committee members, Neil Holding and Andrew Davies, who are both contributing fresh ideas and expertise and we will be blending the new ideas with a continuation of many of the successful initiatives that Arthur nurtured, such as our presence at the Royal Cheshire and Nantwich Shows, and our regular Reaseheath lecture and seminar series.

It has been a busy time for our new committee, setting up the lectures for Spring 2017. At the time of writing three of the five lectures before our summer recess are already confirmed, including the May site visit, which this year takes us to the South Cheshire Barn Owl Trust on the 24th May. All the dates you need are listed below and details of confirmed speakers will continue to be added to the front page of our website.

The main news we have all been following over the last few months has been the preventative measures required in response to the avian influenza outbreak. They affect all poultry keepers, both large and small, across the UK and the preventative requirements have recently been extended for a further month.

The steps DEFRA have instructed us to take are included in an article below and we hope that with suitable control measures the threat will subside, although as the disease is also transmitted by wild birds, it poses a particular challenge. Although the challenge is great and the efficacy of our response not guaranteed, doing nothing is not an option that CSA recommends in the circumstances.

Good luck with this and all of your other endeavours in 2017.

Best wishes,

David Golding, Chairman

**Committee**

Lawrence Beard (Treasurer & Membership Secretary) 01625 572324

Andrew Davies 07939 629474

Arthur Green (President) 01270 841288

David Golding (Chairman & Web Editor) 01270 528790

Rosie Golding 01270 528790

Neil Holding 01928 789800

Kevin Holmes 01928 722365

Gill Lawson (Secretary)

If you would like to get involved in the committee and can spare an hour or so each month please contact David.

No specialist skills are required, first and foremost we allocate tasks to people that they will enjoy doing.

**Dates for your diary**

**2017 Cheshire Smallholders Association meetings**

Monthly speakers / site visits listed at www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk

Date for this year are :-

Monday January 30th 2017

Monday February 27th 2017

Monday March 27th 2017

Monday April 24th 2017

Wednesday May 24th 2017 – site visit – note Wednesday, not Monday, with a 7.00pm start at the site.

Summer Break

Monday 25th September 2017

Monday 30th October 2017

Monday 27th November 2017

December – no meeting

If you would like to suggest a lecture topic and / or speaker please contact us at info@cheshiresmallholders.org.uk

Reaseheath meetings - doors open **7.30 for 8pm** start. Come early to have a cup of tea/coffee and a chat. Find us at: Room L3, The Leverhulme Centre, Reaseheath College, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 6DF. The Leverhulme Centre is on the right (from the B5074 entrance) just before the car park barrier.

The AGM will be held on Monday 30th October 2017, if you have a topic you would like to include in the AGM agenda, please contact a committee member.

**Events Diary 2017**

**April 2017**

Nantwich Jazz and Blues Festival

Thursday 13th April - Sunday 17th April 2017

www.nantwichjazz.com

Wonderwool

Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, LD2 3SY Saturday 22nd - Sunday 23rd April 2017.

www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk

**May 2017**

Smallholders' Spring Festival

Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, LD2 3SY, Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st May 2017

www.rwas.co.uk/spring-festival/

Staffordshire County Show

Staffordshire Show Ground, Stafford, Wednesday 31st May Thursday 1st June 2017

www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk

**June 2017**

Cheshire Show

Tabley Showground, Knutsford, Tuesday 20th - Wednesday 21st June 2017

www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk

Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival

Friday 16th - Sunday 18th June 2017

www.midfest.org.uk

Woolfest

Mitchell's Lakeland Livestock Centre, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0QQ. Friday 23rd - Saturday 24th June 2017

www.woolfest.co.uk

Kelsall Steam Rally

Saturday 24th - Sunday 25th June 2017

www.kelsallsteamrally.co.uk

**July 2017**

Royal Welsh Show

Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, LD2 3SY, Monday 24th July - Thursday 27th July 2017

www.rwas.co.uk/royal-welsh-show/

RHS Show Tatton Park

Tatton Park, Wednesday 19th - Sunday 23rd July 2017

www.rhs.org.uk

Nantwich Show

Dorfold Park, Nantwich, Wednesday 26th July 2017

www.nantwichshow.co.uk

**August 2017**

Bakewell Show

Bakewell Showground, Wednesday 2nd- Thursday 3rd August 2017

www.bakewellshow.org

Anglesey County Show

Anglesey Showground, Tuesday 15th and Wednesday 16th August 2017

www.angleseyshow.org.uk

Denbigh & Flint Show

The Green, Denbigh, LL16 4UB, Thursday 17 August 2017.

www.denbighandflintshow.com

**September 2017**

Malpas Yesteryear Rally

Date to be confirmed

www.malpas-yesteryear-rally.co.uk

Annual Show & Sale of Pedigree Rare & Traditional Breeds

Chelford Agricultural Centre, Date to be confirmed.

 www.wrightmarshall.co.uk/autioneers/chelford

Yarndale

Skipton Auction, Skipton, BD23 1UD, Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th September 2017

www.yarndale.co.uk

Cheshire Ploughing and Hedge laying Match

Hatley Farm, Hatley Lane, Frodsham, WA6 6XX, Date to be confirmed.

www.cheshireploughing.co.uk

**December 2017**

Father Christmas at the Farm

Tatton Park, Knutsford

Please note, we understand Santa is arriving at Tatton Park farm in late November. Christmas does seem to start earlier each year....

www.tattonpark.org.uk

Always check with the organisers before making arrangements or travelling, shows are sometimes cancelled, often at the last minute!

**Subscriptions**

Subscriptions are overdue for 2016/17, if you have not yet done so & would like to pay by standing order, a form can be downloaded from the membership page on our website, [www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk](http://www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk).

For further details, email members@cheshiresmallholders.org.uk or telephone Lawrence, the Treasurer and Membership Secretary on 01625 572324.

**Cross Compliance 2017**

New Year, new DEFRA cross compliance document, perfect for those long winter evenings. The full DEFRA page is at :-

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cross-compliance-2017

...and the Cross Compliance document for England is download able from :-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579836/Cross_Compliance_2017_rules_FINAL.pdf>

Rather than try and transcribe the link above, you can get to the link by Googling “cross compliance 2017”

There is one confirmed change to GEAC1 that will affect those of use with watercourses on or adjacent to our land and a further change looks likely to SMR1 - Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ), of which Cheshire is one.

PLANET (Planning Land Applications of Nutrients for Efficiency and the Environment) is a software tool for use by farmers for assessing and demonstrating compliance with these rules and was recommended by a previous speaker from Hafren Water. It is available free of charge as a download from

[www.planet4farmers.co.uk](http://www.planet4farmers.co.uk)

**Defra Focus Group**

The report form the DEFRA focus group that CSA hosted in April 2016 has been uploaded to the CSA website. Drop by for a read.

**Wool Sheet Frame**

A neighbour of mine, long since gone, introduced me to Derbyshire Gritstone sheep and was also kind enough to start me shearing. Since he did not have electricity his shearer ran of his tractor PTO. However, one piece of modern equipment he did have was a frame on which he clamped his wool sheets (sacks) so he could easily pack his rolled fleeces by dropping them into the sheet which was held open by the frame.

I copied the dimensions of his frame and made my own. This worked well for several years, but one year I found the sheet was smaller than the frame. I managed by clamping the sheet so the frame stuck out at one end. Next year the sheet was a different size again. I have therefore modified my frame to accommodate various sizes although they all seem to be smaller recently.

The drawing shows my frame as it is now. It is made from mild steel 30 x 5 mm mild steel bar and is supported at the corners in a way that allows the sheet to be clamped all the way around the perimeter. I used to use small “G Clamps” but they are a bit clumsy so I now use the type of “Bulldog” clip that allows the levers to be folded down – three a side and two each end. They are the type usually used in the office for holding papers. The option of folding levers avoids catching the fleeces as they go into the sheet.

The construction requires welding, and the corners are made from 40 x 40 x 5 mm mild steel angle. The length adjustment allows a range of 175 mm at intervals of 25 mm. However having gone to the trouble of providing this adjustment I have found that all sheets are now the smaller size!

A “Pdf” file is attached with the design for you to follow.

Lawrence

**Headache Revisited**

Some of the committee members went to the Spitting Feathers brewery in Waverton in September 2016 for one of the brewery's Saturday afternoon “Brewbarn Sessions”. Now recovered, they plan a repeat visit on 22nd April 2017.

To quote Spitting Feathers, “Brewbarn Sessions are Saturday afternoons of beer, food, music & laughs at Spitting Feathers HQ.” They have “brewery tours, food from the farm, live music &, of course, lots of beer.” Tickets are £25 via their website and this covers everything - Spitting feathers add, "You don’t need *any* money on the day."

http://spittingfeathers.org/brewbarn-sessions/

This event is the day before we commemorate the 400th year of William Shakespeare’s passing. “As you like it”, why not treat yourself to a pint or two?

Please let David know if you are interested on 01270 528790 as we may be able to share transport if enough people from one locality want to visit.

**Fencing & the attraction of the opposite sex**

A couple of years ago, when I bought a new ram, I put him in what I call my “small field” where I presumed he would stay for a few days before having raddle applied and he was put to work. I thought the fencing was good but he was in with my flock before I wanted him to be and I didn’t know which ewes he had served!

Last October I was planning to get another ram so I went round the fences in my small field and doubled up the posts. Sagging of the netting between posts was the previous fault. So far so good – he was contained. I caught him in one corner on the appropriate day and applied yellow raddle. He was then put in with the flock.

I thought the boundary fence containing the flock was good. I observe and count all my sheep each day, and then one morning a couple of days before planning to change the raddle to red, I was short of one sheep, not just a ewe, but the ram. A second count confirmed he was out - I went to look in my neighbours flock and there he was. There was no way I could recover him without help.

Another neighbour and his mum came to help, but he was uncatchable. I phoned the flock owner, and spoke to a young lad who turned out to be the owner’s grandson. He was about six years old but was surprisingly efficient. He went to look for his dad or his granddad but they were both out, so he took a comprehensive message. Later the owner said he couldn’t come till later in the day, he was repairing his vehicle. As it turned out, repairing the vehicle took longer than expected and the owner was not able to come until the next day. When he arrived, he had his son with him, who had a quad bike.

The granddad and I waited for the quad bike to come and I could hear it but it was still out of sight. When it did appear surprise, surprise, there was my ram across the handle bars of the quad, the ram had been tempted by some corn, whereupon he had been rugby tackled and man-handled onto the quad. It took both the granddad and I to get him into my waiting stock box; what it is to be young and athletic!

The ram was housed in the barn for a few days, and I moved all the sheep to different fields before he was put back to work with red raddle and I could start repairing the boundary fence.

The final conclusion of this tale will be seen at lambing time this spring - not everyone wants Gritstone cross lambs!

Lawrence

**Fencing Course**

We are aiming to run a fencing course in the summer, if you are interested, please contact David at info@cheshiresmallholders.org.uk or call on 01270 528790 and leave a message. We have a possible venue and we are now looking for a reasonably priced trainer to deliver the session.

**Bowled over**

In October 2017 we will host a food and skittles evening at the Bickerton Poacher. We need a minimum of about 16 people to participate, if you are interested, please contact any of the committee members in advance so we can get an idea of numbers.

http://www.bickertonpoacher.com/php/skittles.php

**Avian Influenza**

Avian Influenza, or “bird flu”, is a disease that affects all types of poultry including chickens, ducks and geese. A severe strain of the disease, H5N8, was recently found in wild and captive birds in the UK. The information below has been put together by Defra, with the British Veterinary Association (BVA), Royal Veterinary College (RVC) and British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA) and is correct as at 6th January 2017.

The purpose is of the information is to help keepers of small flocks of poultry look after their birds while there is a prevention zone in place.

How bird flu spreads

Bird flu can be passed from wild birds to poultry, causing birds to fall ill and die. It can be transmitted directly from bird to bird or via the environment, for example in wild bird droppings.

To reduce the risk of bird flu spreading from bird to bird there is currently a **legal requirement** for all birds to be housed or otherwise kept separate from wild birds.

This means if you keep poultry, including chickens, ducks or geese, even as pets, you must take action to prevent contact with wild birds and protect your animals from this potentially fatal disease.

Risks to human health are very low and bird flu does not pose a food safety risk.

Protecting your poultry

Where possible, move birds into a suitable building, like a shed or outbuilding adapted to house them, or a new temporary structure like a lean-to or a polytunnel. Put netting over openings to stop wild birds getting in and remove any hazardous substances.

It is **our responsibility** to ensure the birds’ welfare while indoors and keep them calm and comfortable. If you keep several types of birds, house chickens or turkeys in separate enclosures from ducks and geese.

Check the birds regularly to ensure they are healthy and have enough food, water and dry bedding. Keep the environment interesting to reduce the risk of feather pecking and add fresh bedding, straw bales, perches and objects such as cabbages, scatter feed or grain on the floor and add grit to litter to encourage birds to scratch. Make sure birds have natural light where possible and are not permanently in the dark. Light should ideally follow typical day and night patterns.

You may want to consider nutritional supplements in drinking water that can help keep birds calm. Skin parasites like red mite can be a problem in birds kept indoors and can make birds more irritable. Advice on controlling parasites can be obtained from your vet.

Reducing the risk of infection

If you don’t have a suitable building to move your birds into, or the welfare of the birds would suffer if moved indoors, you must take sensible precautions to keep them away from wild birds.

You should follow these steps to reduce the risk of infection via the environment, for example in wild bird droppings, even if your birds are inside. Keep food and water supplies inside where they can not be contaminated, feed birds inside and keep them away from standing water.

Where birds remain outside, set up a temporary enclosure covered with netting that wild birds can not access. Minimise movement in and out of your birds’ enclosure and clean footwear before and after visits. Keep the area where your birds live clean and tidy, removing spilled feed.

Signs of Avian Flu

Signs include loss of appetite, swollen heads and respiratory problems. If you suspect bird flu call the Defra helpline on 03000 200 301.

Further details can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu

Neil & David

**A lot of bottle**

Fresh, raw milk is available from a vending machine at Street Farm, Tarvin, on the A54 between the Kelsall and Ashton turnings. This is unpasteurised milk from their herd and there is a large sign outside the gate. Having tasted it I can confirm it is lovely stuff.

(<https://tastecheshire.com/blog/2016/11/21/fresh-raw-milk-now-available-in-a-milkbot-7-days-a-week-from-street-farm-dairy/>).

Raw milk is also available from Hoolgrave Manor, Minshull Vernon, Crewe. [www.realrawmilk.co.uk](http://www.realrawmilk.co.uk/)

Kevin

**Adverts**

**Pedigree Lincoln Longwool Senior Ram for sale** - Shortwood Len is a proven, reasonably amiable character. He can't be used again on my remaining girls, he is used to horses & is well handled. £50. Phone Angela on 07786 620076 for more details or to view.

**Pure bred Shropshire ram looking for a good home** - Emlyn, a pure bred Shropshire ram born in 2013 is looking for a good home. Contact Colin Crawford on 07786 230345.

**Pedigree registered Texel shearling tups for sale** - Pedigree Registered Texel Shearling Tups for sale – Indexes of 328. Sires: Milnbank Ulsterman / Corriecravie Union Pacific. Heptavac / Orf vaccinated, Crovect treated and wormed. Prime condition, keen to work this breeding season. Also Senior Pedigree Texel Ram, Born 2014 for sale. Produced some good lambs last year.

Price on application, contact Diane or John Mifflin on 01782720572 or 07966979469. Any inspection welcome.

**Pedigree Saddleback pigs for sale** - Well handled by both adults and children, boars and gilts available, ideal for breeding, conservation or meat. Please ring Elaine on 01928 740415 to view.

**Beulah x Teeswater Ewes** - 2 x 1 Shear - 2 x 2 Shear, not previously tupped. Heptivaced annually. Good strong ewes, good for butchers' lambs. Contact Rob. 07958 647045.

**Small bales of hay (2016)** - Lovely; weed free, home grown & barn stored. £3.50 a bale, Kingsley area, may be able to deliver. Contact Gill. 07933 767994.

**Logs for sale** - Barn dried and stored, small net bags, builders’ bags or trailer loads. Free local delivery also:

**Hay & straw** - In small bales or large round bales. Good quality and dry. Call Mike on 0771 476 8164 or Chris on 0787 102 4275. Helsby area.

**Rotovator wanted** - Ideally a Howard gem or similar. Please call Rosie on 07770 783980.

Members may advertise on the website and also in "The Gate", please email your advert to editor@cheshiresmallholders.org.uk

Please mention Cheshire Smallholders Association when replying to advertisements.

**Charity Appeal**

David Golding climbed Kilimanjaro this time last year and is planning to trek to Kala Pattar and Everest Base Camp in April 2018. If any CSA members would like to support David, he has suggested members might like to donate to our nominated Charity, which, for many years, has been Send a Cow.

Send a Cow provide direct support to African farmers and you can either donate via our Treasurer, Lawrence, or the Send a Cow website, [www.sendacow.org](http://www.sendacow.org)