

Half a Century of Breeding Distinction in the West of Ireland

50 YEARS

of excellence

2021 witnesses our Club celebrating 50 years of promoting the Suffolk Breed in the West of Ireland. It is made all the more special due to the fact that we will be able to celebrate alongside the Suffolk Sheep Society who will have reached the incredible milestone of 135 years since its foundation, making it one of the oldest and most established breeds globally.



In 2019, the club lost a number of members who decided to relinquish membership of the Suffolk Sheep Society and our Club in order to set up a new Society. We would like to wish them the best of luck in their new venture. While we were sorry to see them leave us, our Club remains true to its origins and its affiliation to the Suffolk Sheep Society. This change allowed us to re-structure and re-organise the club and both the 2019 and 2020 sales seasons have proved to be our most successful years to date. We hold proud our association with the Suffolk Sheep Society and look forward to progressing our Club far into the future, through continued promotion and dedication to enhancement of bloodlines in the West of Ireland.

Ireland in 1971 was a very different country to what it is today. Eamonn de Valera was president, Jack Lynch was Taoiseach. Jim Gibbons was Minister for Agriculture and Alan Dukes was Chief Economist with the IFA. Ireland still had not joined the EEC. Many rural farms had no electricity or running water. In some rural settings, crooks were still in use to cook over the large open hearth and generally there weren't many phones or televisions at people disposal. Stacks of hay were the norm in fields in Summer and farm incomes were generally quite low. The 1970's heralded a new era of opportunity for farming in Ireland. Farm incomes began to rise in the early 1970s in anticipation of Ireland's upcoming membership of the EEC. Agricultural output began to increase as did productivity and confidence improved in the farming sector in general.

The foresight of a number of Pedigree Suffolk breeders in the West of Ireland at this time led to the establishment of this club and to a legacy which has stood the test of time, through good times and bad, to become the strong, buoyant club it is today. Members hold their own among Suffolk Breeders not just in Ireland but in the UK and Europe. As a Club we account for 25% of the Pedigree Suffolk Flocks in Ireland today.

The arrival of Suffolk Sheep in Ireland is credited to a Mr Henry Strevens of Roscommon who is first recorded in VOL V of the Suffolk Sheep Society Flock book in 1891.

In 1971, there were no pedigree breeding sales in the West of Ireland and breeders had to travel to Ganly's Sale, Dublin to sell pedigree sheep. Ganly's in its heyday was the top market for sheep cattle and pigs in the country, selling over 1 million head across all breeds in any one year. Buyers would travel not only from Ireland but also from Scotland and England to purchase stock.

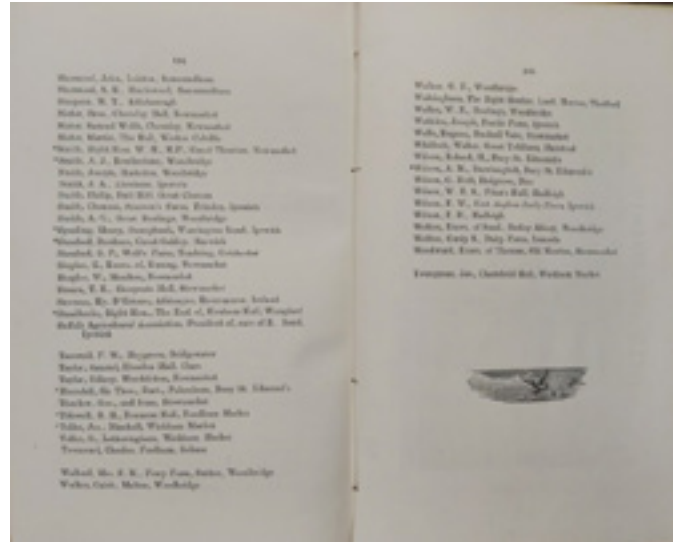
A group of breeders in the West of Ireland recognised the growing demand for Pedigree Suffolk Sheep in the area and decided to approach the South of Ireland Branch of the Suffolk Sheep Society to ask permission to form a dedicated Registered Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeders Club in the West of Ireland. This club would be affiliated directly to the Society, and the request was duly granted. As a result of these five breeders – Michael Jones, Tulsk, Co Roscommon, Paddy Gordon, Fuerty, Co Roscommon, Mico Lavin, Boyle, Co Roscommon, Michael Cummins, Kiltoom, CO Roscommon & Paddy Broderick, Athenry, Co Galway. the Club was formed and the first Pedigree Suffolk Sale was held in Roscommon Mart in 1971. The first Officers of the Club were Mico Lavin (Chairman), Michael Jones (Secretary) and Michael Cummins (Treasurer).

At this time, money was tight and the mart advertised the sale for the Club with the Champion Cup being purchased from entry fees. The Sale in 1971 proved to be a huge success with 30 Rams being presented on the day. The Judge on the day was the late Denis Lynch from Longford and he chose a lamb presented by Paddy Broderick, Athenry, Ballyglunin Flock, as Supreme Champion of the Show, which went on to sell for £75gns. This would equate to about €1150 today. The average price on the day was £44 or €670 in today's money.

As demand for the Suffolk grew in the West, so too did the number of sales the club held, and gradually sales venues were increased to include Athenry, Tuam, Ballina, Headford with additional sales in Roscommon. Today, our club sales cover Roscommon (2 sales) Athenry, Ballinasloe, Tuam and we are looking to expand our sales for 2021. We also participate in the Big Boy Ram Sale, a multi breed sale held in Carrick-on-Shannon.



Mr Henry Strevins in the grounds of Castlecoote House



First listing of Suffolk Sheep in Ireland VOL V SSS Yearbook

Sales are held throughout August September and October. The sales season kicks off with some members attending the South of Ireland Branch Premier Show and Sale in Blessington. This has moved about over the years from Maynooth, to Roscrea and most recently Blessington. Next up is our Club Premier Sale, traditionally held on the last Saturday in August at Roscommon Mart, and this always draws large crowds of commercial farmers, keen to purchase the top Pedigree Suffolk Stock available in the West of Ireland. There is always an air of anticipation as to whose sheep will be crowned Supreme Champion of the show and prices in the ring are always reflective of the quality of stock offered for sale. Our Club sales then continue throughout the region, usually until the end of October. Our Club has always led the way and in 1990, the first ever sale of recorded and scanned rams took place in Roscommon Mart. By 1991 all breeders were taking part in the then Dept of Agriculture Breed Improvement Programme, which focused on leanness and conformation

Over the years, members and flocks have come and gone as the tide of Suffolk Breeding ebbs and flows. One thing however, always remains consistent – the quality of sheep presented by the club is always first class. This is as a result of two main reasons, firstly, we have a policy of culling hard, stock which we feel is not up to the correct standard of pedigree breeding thus ensuring only the cream of the pedigree crop is offered for sale. Secondly, our members are constantly investing in new bloodlines to further enhance the quality

of stock which is available from our Club flocks. We endeavour to achieve the traits that both the commercial farmer and the breeder is looking for in a quality Suffolk Ram.

Club flocks now account for 25% of Flocks registered in the South of Ireland and they hold their own when it comes to competitions both nationally and locally. Members have enjoyed successes over the years at the Suffolk National Championships, Premier Shows and Agricultural Shows up and down the country during the Summer Show Season. Members have recorded both Supreme & Reserve Champions in Male and Female classes, Champion in the group classes and Champion in the Open & Novices at the SOI Branch Premier Show. Our own Club Championship was first held in 2005 in Roundfort, Co Galway, where Supreme Champion of the show went to Gerry Killilea who continues to be a member of the club



Champion Ram Lamb 1974 at the Club Premier Show & Sale, Roscommon, BRED BY Mr F Harrington, Purchased by Mr J F McCulloch for £275gns

to this day. Our Club Championship has continued annually ever since and is one of the highlights of the Club year. Many members have also competed with great success at what was the 'Spring Show', held annually at the RDS in Dublin, one of the largest events in the agricultural calendar during the late 1970s and 1980s. The last Spring Show was held in 1992.

FOR A QUALITY RAM – GO WEST YOUNG MAN!

Members have also garnered successes at the annual Suffolk Sheep Society Flock Competitions, one of the highlights of the annual Suffolk Calendar. Down through the years many of the prizes in the Flock competition have come to the West with members achieving Overall Champion Flock, (Carragh) Best Flock of Ewes (Carragh), Best Ewe Lambs (Heathleigh), Best new Entrant (Deburca), Best Small Flock (Deburca), Best medium Flock (Carragh), Best Stock Ram (Heathleigh). A number of members have also achieved 2nd and 3rds as well as Certificates of Merit over the year. Our most recent Club achievements in the flock competition have been by Carragh and Kirriemuir Flocks.

In recent years, In-lamb Female sales have started to play a larger part in the annual Suffolk Calendar and a number of Club Flocks participate annually in these sales in November. Originally Carragh & Deburca offered in-lamb females for sale alongside the famous Baileys Glenho Flock. Since the Baileys Flock dispersal, Carragh, Deburca and most recently Kirriemuir, now participate in the All-Star Sale in Blessington each November. Many females are sold directly off farm and enquiries are always welcomed by members.

Our members have very capably and conscientiously represented the Club at both Club and SOI Branch level also. Many members have served on the SOI Branch committee with a few acting as Chairman of the Branch. In 2021, we are continuing that tradition and we currently have three Club members on the SOI Branch committee, representing Connacht. It is a committee we are proud to be part of and as we adjust to a new phase in sheep production in a post Brexit world, we look forward to the coming years of representing the Suffolk Breed at national level.

Ganly's Livestock Sales, Dublin





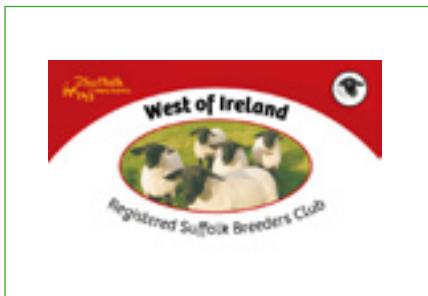
Presentation by Club Members to founding member Paddy Broderick on his retirement from the Club in 2008. Paddy started breeding Suffolks in 1965 under the flock name 'Ballylunin'.

For the past 50 years, our Club has built up a proud history through the dedication and hard work of its breeders. We owe a debt of gratitude to our 5 founding members for having the vision to promote the Suffolk breed through a club committed to the promotion of Suffolks as the NO.1

Terminal Sire in Ireland. We have weathered many storms, including oil crises, bank strikes, recessions, the Foot & Mouth outbreak in 2001 and finally Covid 19 in 2020.. We constantly strive to improve bloodlines through careful selection of breeding stock to provide the best possible selection of rams to commercial farmers and breeders alike. We aim to produce a ram with a great topline, gigot and carcass, who can in turn replicate these assets in its progeny, producing easy fleshing and fast finishing lambs.

We encourage young breeders to join and are always willing to offer advice to new breeders. Our established breeders strive to aid the Suffolk in achieving its full potential. We are actively promoting this magnificent breed through shows and sales all over Ireland. With such dedication and determination to succeed, we at the West of Ireland Registered Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeders Club are looking forward to a bright and successful future.

EVOLUTION OF THE CLUB LOGOS



FUN FACT

Canon Joe Delaney of Roscree Flock once owned a ewe L60 157A, who went on to breed 40 lambs!

An incredibly prolific breeder, she was first scanned for twins but delivered triplets as a Shearling. She then went on to have 5 sets of quads, another 4 sets of triplets and her last delivery was a set of quins. All lambs survived, as did the ewe with her final set of quins.

The ewe lived to be 15 years of age. Some of her lambs were sired by Cairness Carlsberg. She became quite the celebrity featuring on TV and in the national press.