



Members of the West of Ireland Registered Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeders' Club, which is celebrating 50 years this year with a special magazine recounting the Club's history being published to mark the anniversary.

# 50th anniversary of sheep breeders' club

By EMMA GALLAGHER

SUFFOLK sheep is a familiar and extremely popular breed in Connacht and this year marks the fiftieth anniversary since the foundation of the West of Ireland Registered Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeders' Club.

To mark the occasion, a magazine has been published as a special anniversary edition celebrating 50 years of the Club in the Province.

The Club has a long and proud tradition over the years, with Pedigree Suffolk Flocks in the West of Ireland accounting for just over 25% of all Flocks registered with the Suffolk Sheep Society. Of those breeders 20% are based in Sligo.

Remarkably, the Suffolk Sheep Society themselves have reached the incredible milestone of 135 since its establishment, making it one of the oldest breeds in the world.

It was Roscommon's Henry Strevins who was the first man to introduce Suffolk sheep to Ireland, in 1891, where they have since become one of the breeds of distinction.

The West of Ireland Club holds a proud association with the Suffolk Sheep Society and looks to progressing the Club far into the future, with the enhancement of blood lines in the West of Ireland.

The anniversary magazine gives a wonderful insight into the Ireland that was when the Club was formed back in 1971. Ireland had not yet joined the EEC (EU) and farm incomes prior to this were generally quite low.

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.

Back in 1971, there were no pedigree breeding sales in Connacht, instead, breeders had to travel to Ganly's sale in Dublin, where buyers from Ireland, Scotland and England would be there to purchase stock.

When the Club was being formed, it was a group of five breeders who played a significant role into making it a reality. They were; Mico Lavin, Boyle, Michael Jones, Tulsk, Paddy Gordon, Fuerty, Michael Cummins, Kiltoom, Co Roscommon & Paddy Broderick from Athenry in Galway. This led to the first ever Pedigree Suffolk Sale being held in Roscommon Mart (1971). The



Pedigree Suffolk Sheep are an extremely popular and successful breed in Ireland.

rest is history as they say.

The sale proved to be a huge success, 30 rams were presented with Paddy Broderick's lamb, Ballyglunin Flock, winning the Supreme Champion of the Show and selling for £75gns, approximately €1,150 in today's money.

The magazine points out that as demand for the Suffolk grew in the West, so too did the number of sales the Club held. Sales venues were increased to include Athenry, Tuam, Ballina, Headford with additional sales in Roscommon. Today, club sales cover Roscommon (2 sales) Athenry, Ballinasloe, Tuam as well as the Big Boy Ram Sale, a multi breed sale held in Carrick-on-Shannon.

Members from the West of Ireland Pedigree Breeders' Club 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.

They also competed with distinction at what was the popular Spring Show held in the RDS.

The magazine states: "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



A champion Pedigree Suffolk ram.



Ganly's Sale, Dublin, where breeders from all over the country were selling their Pedigree sheep.

bloodlines through careful selection of breeding stock to provide the best possible selection of rams to commercial farmers and breeders alike."

The Club also encourages young breeders to join and are willing to offer advice to new breeders.

"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."

If you would like to get a copy of the 50th anniversary magazine, you can email [woisuffolk@hotmail.com](mailto:woisuffolk@hotmail.com). The Club also has a website and Facebook page ([WestofIrelandRegisteredPedigreeSuffolkSheep](https://www.facebook.com/WestofIrelandRegisteredPedigreeSuffolkSheep)).