

## LITTLE BUDWORTH W.I. JANUARY NEWS

President Beryl Worrall welcomed members and visitors to our January meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

The business part of the meeting was quickly dealt with and various ideas for outings for this year were discussed.

Beryl then introduced our speaker Rosie Lee from Weaver Dairy House Farm, Winsford. Rosie started her illustrated presentation by telling us how she became an Accidental Shepherd. In 1964 her parents bought the farm in Winsford and ran it very well until many years later when her Father died and her Mother then let the farm out to tenant farmers. It soon became obvious that the farm was becoming neglected and after a career in banking Rosie decided to quit her job and take over the reins and run Weaver Dairy House herself, embarking on a 4 year degree course at Reaseheath College to learn about new farming techniques.

In 2012 Rosie bought twenty rare breed Shropshire sheep, prized for their high quality wool and lean meat. These sheep are used in the German and Norwegian Christmas tree forests where they keep the weeds down without damaging the trees. The first year of lambing in 2013 was one of hope and luck conquering inexperience. Now she has the lambs scanned for pregnancies and has monitors in the lambing pens so they she can keep an eye on them via her i Pad even when she is not on the farm.

Rosie works closely with Natural England and the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and with their help of funding for ten years she has been able to establish educational facilities on the farm, with visits from both primary and secondary school pupils. Students from Reaseheath and Care in the Community students from Petty Pool have replanted the orchard, previously eaten by a goat, and put up nine kilometres of fencing. Today she has forty sheep with twenty followers and two good breeding rams.

Her talk finished with a film taken by a drone flying over the farm showing us the diversity in the fields, with Hereford beef cattle grazing traditional pasture, open soil areas so birds can find worms, two ponds with no fish in them, a large ancient woodland, currently being managed by students from Reaseheath College, historic hedgerows and views of the river Weaver and Winsford Flashes running side by side. All in all a splendid habitat for birds, butterflies and wildlife in general.

Rosie is a passionate and articulate speaker and even if you have no prior knowledge of farming or sheep you could not help but be carried along with her wave of enthusiasm. She was thanked by Glenys Jones and the evening was rounded off by refreshments served by Christine McKenzie and Ruby Speed.

What a great way to start our 2017 calendar of speakers and if you missed it you missed a treat so be sure not to miss next month's (February) meeting when Chris Prior is coming to talk on the Shropshire and Staffs Blood Bikes, a voluntary professional service supporting the NHS with urgent and emergency movements of blood samples contributing to enhance patient care and transporting donated breast milk for premature babies in neo-natal units.

Date for you diary is Wednesday February 8<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Visitors most welcome.

