

Kiwis crush Welsh in shears tour swansong - July 26, 2010

The New Zealand shearing and woolhandling team has ended its World Championships tour in the UK with a cleansweep of the six major events at the Corwen Shears in North East Wales during the weekend.

Going straight from their success in winning three titles at the 14th Golden Shears World Championships during the Royal Welsh Show midweek, New Zealand beat Wales in three separate tests in machine shearing, woolhandling and blades shearing while all three open class championships were also won by members of the team.

The wins were of some consolation to Taihape school teacher Sheree Alabaster who responded to defeat in her World Woolhandling title defence on Wednesday, by hammering new champion and Welsh heroine Bronwen Tango by almost 35 points. Alabaster won the Corwen Shears title with 66 penalties, Stacey Mundell was second amassing 95.1 penalties, and Tango had to settle for third, with 100.8.

Alabaster and teammate Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, also beat the new Welsh team of Menir Evans and Gwenan Paewai by almost 17pts in woolhandling test.

Veteran shearer David Fagan, of Te Kuiti, turned the tables on teammate and new World machine shearing champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, in a Kiwi quinella in the Corwen Shears open shearing final. While having missed the big goal when second to Ferguson in the World Championships final on Wednesday, it was the 48-year-old Fagan's third individual win in nine days, his fourth of the tour, and the 603rd in an 28-year open-class career. Fagan and Ferguson also Welshmen Gareth Daniels and Hwyl Jones by more than four points to complete a 4-0 machine shearing test series whitewash.

Canterbury blades shearers Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, and Brian Thomson, of West Melton, substantiated New Zealand's place as the best in their craft outside of Africa by also beating Wales in a test. Gemmell also gained some compensation for missing a place in the World championships blades

shearing final by winning the Corwen final, in Thomson repeated his championships placing of third, albeit in the absence of the Africans who dominated the world finals.

There was also some success for other New Zealanders, with John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, finishing fifth to Fagan and Ferguson in the open shearing final, while Fagan's son, Jack, extracted something from a week in which he failed to qualify for the intermediate finals at both the Royal Welsh Show and Corwen shows, by making his senior-class debut later at Corwen and finishing fourth.

Kiwi young guns miss-out on shears finale - July 23, 2010

The black singlet slipped quietly out of the limelight on the last day of the Royal Welsh Show as two of the supporting events to the World shearing and woolhandling championships were left to the locals. Numerous young Kiwi hopes were eliminated during the Royal Welsh Show championships junior and intermediate qualifying rounds, notably Masterton shearer Cushla Gordon who reached the junior semi-finals and Te Kuiti teenager Jack Fagan, the No 1 ranked junior in New Zealand last summer but who was eliminated in the intermediate heats yesterday.. There was still interest for New Zealand, with the two lower-class finals including several young UK shearers who had spent last summer working and competing in New Zealand.

Most successful was teenaged Irishman Brendon Graham who worked in Canterbury and won three competitions on the way to becoming the fifth ranked shearer in the New Zealand season, and who yesterday added to his successes with victory in the Royal Welsh junior final.

England-Wales border shearer Steve Rowberry and another teenaged Irishman, Jack Robinson, both of whom worked for Hastings contractors Brannigan Eastern and also made the top 20 junior rankings in New Zealand, were both in the Royal Welsh intermediate final. Robinson figured in the race for time honours with Welsh teenager John Thomas. While Robinson lost points on quality, Rowberry, the 2009 junior winner, claimed second placing with the event won by Welsh shearer Ifan Jones.

New Zealand had gone into the fourth and final day of the show with a possibility of a cleansweep of four Royal Welsh Show titles in addition to the three World Championship titles and four other top three placings won by the six-strong Shearing Sports New Zealand team more than 100 Kiwis were in Wales to support.

On Monday, David Fagan won the Royal Welsh Show All-Nations Open final for a 12th time, and Southland teenager Willie Hewitson, of Woodlands, won the senior title.

In the World Championships events in front of crowds constantly topping 4000 on Tuesday and Wednesday, New Zealand claimed three of the six titles, and four other top-three placings.

Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson won the glamour event, the individual machine shearing final, just beating David Fagan, with whom he won the World teams title. Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster and Te Awamutu mum Keryn Herbert won the teams woolhandling title, Alabaster was second to Welsh hero Bronwen Tango in the individual final, and Canterbury blades shearers Brian Thomson, of West Melton, and Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, were third in their teams final, with Thomson also claiming an unexpected third in the individual final as two of the four more favoured southern African hopes faded in the last stage.

Fagan, the winner of 602 open-class finals around the World since first competing in the grade in late 1982, has now won seven World teams titles, in addition to the five individual titles he won between 1988 and 2003, but is not prepared to publicly say how close he is to finishing his top level competition career, while set to turn 49 in October.

New Zealand has won the individual machines title 10 times, Ferguson being the sixth Kiwi victor. New Zealand has also won the teams final 11 times, one of the eighth individual blades finals, four of the seven individual woolhandling title, and all four woolhandling team finals.

The next World Championships will be held from February 29 to March 3, 2012, in Masterton, where the Golden Shears movement was founded in 1961 and where three previous World Championships have been held, in 1980, 1988 and 1996.

The founding Golden Shears International Shearing Society's first female and non-Wairarapa president, Mavis Mullins, of Dannevirke, was in Wales to promote the event among the countries which took part, and hopes towns and shearing communities will "adopt" teams, particularly those with lesser resources, to help them spend a month or more in New Zealand preparing for the event.

Young Kiwi shearers tackle Welsh show cleansweep - July 23, 2010

A number of young New Zealand shearers have succeeded in their successful bid to complete a Kiwi cleansweep of New Zealand shearing titles at the Royal Welsh Show where the Kiwi idols won three of the six titles in the World shear woolhandling championships yesterday.

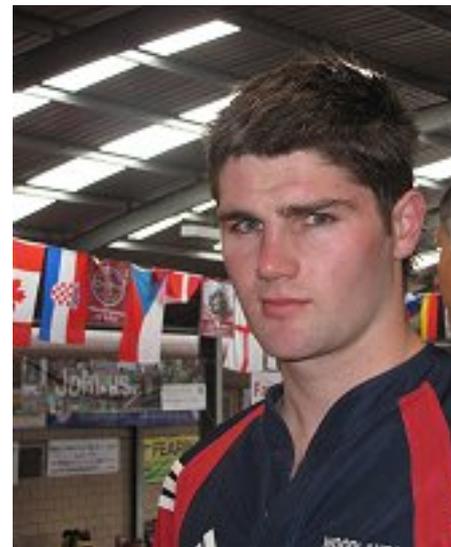
They include Cushla Gordon, the sister of Masterton school student David Gordon who became the youngest person to win a Golden Shears title with victory in the final last March. She qualified for the semi-final of the Welsh Show junior championship, joined by at least 10 others who have already made their name shearing New Zealand, headed by young Welsh shearer Robbie Healey who shone in the Manawatu area. Others in the Kiwi team included Irish teenager Brendan Graham and Brett Laidlaw of Temuka, both of whom won junior finals in New Zealand last summer.

Jack Fagan, the teenaged son of World Championships runner-up and former five-times champion David Fagan is among those in the Royal Welsh Show intermediate heats.

The Kiwi successes at the four-day show started on the opening day on Monday when 19-year-old Willie Hewitson, of Woodlands, in Southland, won the Royal Welsh Show senior final.

Later that day Te Kuiti legend David Fagan won the show's All Nations open title, a prelude to the two days of World Championships which culminated yesterday with New Zealand claiming three of the six titles - Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson winning the machine shearing individual final and with David Fagan the teams title, and Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster and Te Awamutu mum Keryn Herbert triumphing in the woolhandling teams final.

The 19-year-old Hewitson has played representative rugby as a loose for Southland through the age



groups, and was in the Southland BHS first fifteen at the age of 15, but says rugby is starting to take "second place" to his shearing career.

He had won just once previously, in an intermediate final at Winton in Southland in January last year, and was fourth in the Royal Welsh Show intermediate final a year ago.

In his second season working in the South of Scotland, he was runner-up in his senior grade debut at the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh last month, and with a best woolshed tally of 500 lambs in seven-and-a-half hours is already headed to the open class and matches with the likes of Ferguson, Fagan and the other big names of New Zealand shearing..

Despite the lack of an extensive winning history, he was confident of success during Monday's final, in which Omaru shearer Ants Frew was second and UK-based Southlander Paul Smith was fourth - up against the traditional Welsh opposition comprised of one Evans, one Lewis and one Jones.

"I was feeling like I was in my zone," he said today. "I had put quite a bit of preparation into it, and the whole way the sheep were relaxed ...none of them were kicking."

He shored his 14 lambs in the final in 10 minutes 59 seconds, 17 seconds ahead of next-man-off Smith, and also with the best quality points eventually beat second-placed Frew by a comfortable 3.29pts. He said he'd shorn his first sheep when he was about eight years old, and left school at 15 to do a shearing course, with his heart already set on a career in the industry and sport.

He flies home about August 10, headed for the family dairy farm of which he is a part owner, and more shearing before the opening competitions of the New Zealand season at Omarama, Alexandra and Waimate.

Kiwi wins shears test - July 23, 2010

The World champion new Zealand shearing team has this morning sewn-up another test series against Wales, going up 3-0 with one test to go.

Cam Ferguson and David Fagan beat Welsh shearers Gareth Daniels and new member Hwyl Jones by a single point in a 20-sheep match culminating the royal Welsh Show and 14th Golden

shears World Championships at Llanelwedd, Builth Wells.

The teams meet in the final test over the next two days at the Corwen Shears, where there will also be a woolhandling test between New Zealand Wales, Kiwis Sheree Alabaster and Keryn Herbert the favourites after winning the World teams final on Wednesday.

Herbert, a Te Awamutu mum now soon heading to the South Island on a merino wool classing scholarship, was disappointed with finishing seventh in the world championship heats, missing out on the semi-finals by one place, said the World teams title was compensation.

"It was always going to be very difficult against Wales," she said. "It was more about doing it for our country than doing it for ourselves."

Fagan beaten by teammate as Kiwis skim the gold at World Shears - July 22, 2010

Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson culminated one of the most dramatic rises to stardom in sheep shearing when he beat hot-favourite and New Zealand teammate David Fagan to win the World individual machines title in Wales early today.

Fagan, 26, had less than a year ago won just three open-class titles, which compared with the legendary record of Fagan who, aged almost 49, claimed a 602nd title when winning the Royal Welsh Show All-Nations title in a championships warm-up on Monday.

Ferguson only got the chance to get to the World Championships when he won the 50th Golden Shears open final in Masterton in March, and revealed soon after today's win in front of 3000 spectators and amid an electric atmosphere at the Royal Welsh Show he would have otherwise been at home preparing for a World tally record bid.

He shored 856 in a nine-hour blow-out at Ohineumeri, between Waipukurau and Porangahau last December and today was still not discounting a challenge for the woolshed record.

"We can talk about that," he said in the din of the pavilion where he and New Zealand-based Scottish hope Gavin Mutch each shored 20 lambs in 11

minutes 45 seconds to win the race seven seconds ahead of Te Kuiti gun Fagan. Among the crowd were partner Teresa Hall and their infant daughter Kalyah. Ferguson sewed-up the title with the better points from the judges in the outside pens, and five-times former winner Fagan claimed second place, as Mutch sacrificed quality for speed on the board.

He was quick to recognise Fagan who had been his mentor throughout the tour, which he started in June after a short work stint in Italy, and quickly recorded his first Northern Hemisphere win in the Royal Cornwall open.

That was his only other win since his victory at the Golden Shears, where he had first become prominent winning the senior title in 2004.

He had however had more than one in Speedshears, the one-sheep speed test now a popular spectator pub sport, in which has won over 50 totals with combined earnings topping \$25,000. Today he won 1200 pounds.

It was a big day for New Zealand, with Te Kuiti College old boy Ferguson and Fagan also winning the teams final, while Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster had to be content with second in her World woolhandling title defence, won by Bronwen Tango, Wales first winner in the history of the championships.

New Zealand completed a set of podium finishes in all six finals, when Brian Thomson, of West Melton, was third in the individual blades final won by three-times former winner Zingisele Elliot Ntsombo, of Lesotho, and teamed with Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, for third in the blades teams final won by South African pair Bangani Joel and Mayenzeke Shweni.

Today there were big celebrations in Central Hawkes Bay where Fergusons family heard of the win from Hawkes bay Today reporter Doug Laing, in Wales as media officer with Shearing Sports New Zealand.

Also celebrating was contractor Neil Waihape, for whom Ferguson has worked most of the last year.

The championships attracted competitors from 28 countries, and werent the end of the line on the Kiwi tour. Tomorrow Ferguson and Fagan shear a test against Welsh shearers Gareth Daniel and Gareth Evans, and go to Corwen the next day hoping to wrap-up a test series 4-0 before heading home.

RESULTS from the 14th Golden Shears World Shearing - July 21, 2010

Llanelwedd, Buith Wells, July 21 - RESULTS from the 14th Golden Shears World Shearing and Woolhandling Championships which ended today at the Royal Welsh Show at Llanelwedd, Buith Wells, in Mid-Wales:

Machine shearing:

Individual final (20 lambs): Cam Ferguson (New Zealand) 11min 45sec, 45.55pts, 1; David Fagan (New Zealand) 11min 52sec, 46.1pts, 2; Gareth Daniel (Wales) 12min 26sec, 48.45pts, 3; Gareth Daniel (Wales) 12min 26sec, 48.45pts, 3; Gareth Evans (Wales) 12min 20sec, 48.85pts, 4; Gavin Mutch (Scotland) 11min 45sec, 50.4pts, 5; Kieran McCullough (Northern Ireland) 12min 48sec, 51.25pts, 6.

Teams final (20 lambs): New Zealand (David Fagan/Cam Ferguson) 12min 15sec, 48.7pts, 1; Wales (Gareth Daniel/Gareth Evans) 12min 17sec, 50.8pts, 2; Scotland (Hamish Mitchell/Gavin Mutch) 12min 39sec, 51.15pts, 3; Northern Ireland (John Buchanan/Kieran McCullough) 13min 49sec, 55pts, 4; England (Mark Fox/Steven Lloyd) 13min 53sec, 55.15pts, 5; Falkland Islands (Jan Clarke/Lee Molkenbuhr) 15min 5sec, 58.05pts, 6.

Blades shearing:

Individual final (7 sheep): Zingisele Elliot Ntsombo (Lesotho) 16min 25sec, 62.25pts, 1; Sokesele Doba (Lesotho) 16min 17sec, 64.412pts, 2; Brian Thomson (New Zealand) 20min 9sec, 75.593pts, 3; David Ferguson (Scotland) 20min 35sec, 77.607pts, 4; Mayenzeke Shweni (South Africa) 17min 23sec, 70.864pts, 5; John Dalla (Australia) 21min 29sec, 93.879pts, 6.

Teams final (8 sheep): South Africa (Banhani Joel/Mayenzeke Shweni) 15min 16sec, 62.05pts, 1; Lesotho (Sokesele Doba./Zingisele Elliot Ntsombo) 15min 6sec, 63.05pts, 2; New Zealand (Allen Gemmell/Brian Thomson) 20min 55sec, 79.5pts, 3; England (Andrew Mudge/George Mudge) 24min 38sec, 92.9pts, 4; Scotland (David Ferguson/Willie Shaw) 27min 9sec, 98.2pts, 5; Republic of Ireland (Peter Hearty.Sean OSullivan) 27min 57sec, 105.1pts, 6.

Woolhandling:

Individual final: Bronwen Tango (Wales) 56.8pts, 1; Sheree Alabaster (New Zealand) 60pts, 2; Menir Evans (Wales) 79.8pts, 3.

Teams final: New Zealand (Sheree Alabaster/Kieran Herbert) 57pts, 1; Wales (Menir Evans/Bronwen Tango) 69.8pts, 2; Scotland (Leanne Bertram/Stacey Mundell) 92pts, 3.

Scots challenge to Kiwi shears hopes - July 21, 2010

New Zealand based Scots shearer Gavin Mutch has taken a big challenge to the New Zealand favourites in the shearing at the 14th Golden Shears World shearing woolhandling championships by topping the second round at the Royal Welsh Show today.

Combined points from the two rounds were not immediately available, but Mutch was expected to head the 12 qualifiers to the semi-final to be shorn tomorrow, followed by a six-day event. Fagan was a clear leader in the first round, on both quality points, with Mutch in second place, but the Kiwi shearer was comprehensive in the afternoon round in which he finished sixth.

Teammate Cam Ferguson, who won the 50th annual Golden Shears international championships final in London in March, was third in both rounds.

Mutch is from Huntly, Aberdeenshire, but farms and shears sheep in New Zealand in the Southern Hemisphere summer, at a property at remote Whangamomona, in Taranaki.



Kiwis take charge of glamour event at World shears - July 21, 2010

New Zealand shearers David Fagan and Cam Ferguson have taken charge of the glamour open competition at the Golden Shears World Shearing Championships in Wales at the end of the first round in Wales this morning.

With the second round about to start, Fagan had a lead of 1.8 points over New Zealand-based Scotsman Gavin Mutch, with Ferguson close-up in third place.

Fagan was clearly in charge with fastest time of 4 minutes 40 seconds for the six sheep in the round of

heats, as well best pen judging points and equal-best quality marks on the shearing board.

Fagan, the 48-year-old winner of three pre-championships events in the last week, including two in record event time, was last night still paying \$1.40 to win as New Zealand TAB favourite to win the final tomorrow.

Kiwi blades shearer promoted in World Championships preliminary - July 21, 2010

Canterbury blades shearer Brian Thomson has been promoted from 14th to 8th in the first round of the World championships after a recount of points at the Royal Welsh Show today.

Thomson, second on Monday in the Royal Welsh Show All Nations championship and consequently the better-favoured of two Canterbury shearers chasing the blades title, is now better placed to tackle the might of the southern Africa contingent in the ancient craft in the second round and finals tomorrow.

Teammate Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, was fifth in the first round, which was headed as expected by All Nations winner and South African Bangani Joel, followed by Lesotho shearers Sokesele Doba and three-times champion Zingisele Elliot Ntsombo, with second South African Mayenzeke Shweni in fourth place.

Kiwi machine shearing stars David Fagan, of Te Kuiti, and Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, are going through the first round of their competition this morning, with Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster due to start her World woolhandling title defence soon afterwards, joined by Te Awamutu hope Keryn Herbert.

Kiwi hopes in Welsh senior shears final - July 20, 2010

Two South Island shearers have qualified for today's final in the major lower-grade supporting event to the 14th Golden Shears World Shearing Championships at the royal Welsh Show.

Ants Frew, of Oamaru, qualified in second place for the six-man Royal Welsh Show senior final, with Paul

Smith, of Southland, qualifying in fifth place. Young Gisborne female shearer Te Atakura Crawford was eliminated in the semi-finals. The three are among more than 20 New Zealander shearers and woolhandlers travelling independently in the UK and supporting the six-strong Kiwi team at the contesting the World titles.

Shearing World Champs - July 20, 2010

Canterbury blades shearer Allen Gemmell is best placed to challenge the African might in the ancient wool craft at the Golden Shears World Championships in Wales overnight by finishing fifth in the first round qualifying today.

But it was not so good for more favoured teammate Brian Thomson, also from Canterbury, who, after finishing second in the Welsh All Nations Championship a day earlier, faces an uphill battle in the World event from 14th place going into the second round and final tomorrow. Gemmell is from Loburn and Thomson is based at West Melton.

The first round was headed as expected by All Nations winner and South African Bangani Joel, followed by Lesotha shearers Sokesele Doba and three-time champion Zingisele Elliot Ntsombo, with second South African Mayenzeke Shweni in fourth place.

Kiwi machine shearing stars David Fagan, of Te Kuiti and Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, are going through the first round of their competition this morning, with Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster due to start her World woolhandling title defence soon afterwards joined by Te Awamutu hope Keryn Herbert.



Fagan wins - July 20, 2010

Champion King Country shearer David Fagan may have cramped his already tight World Championships odds with the New Zealand TAB even tighter when he won the Royal Welsh Show's All Nations final earlier today (NZT).

Fagan was paying \$1.40 to win a sixth World title on Thursday morning, but today scored his third win in four shows in a week in the UK, and the 602nd of his astonishing open-class shearing career which started almost 28 years ago.

It was the class of today's win which was even more

astonishing for in a frantic race with Kiwi teammate Cam Ferguson, in a six-man final which also featured two other New Zealanders, the Te Kuiti icon who was idolised by a crowd of over 2000 watching the final stripped the wool from 20 lambs in just 10 minutes 27 seconds, beating Ferguson off the board by just three seconds.

Ultimately, it was a Kiwi trifecta with Ferguson winning by 1.35 points from surprise finalist and World eight-hours lambshearing record holder Matt Smith, of Ruawai in the Far North, with 2008 World teams champions John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, third. New Zealand-based Scotsman Gavin Mutch was fourth, and Welsh champion Gareth Daniel fifth.

Ferguson had to settle for sixth, incurring a maximum penalty on one sheep, without which New Zealand would have taken the first four places.

Fagan had won the All Nations 11 times from 1988-2005, and late tonight (NZT), he and Ferguson shear in the first round of the 14th Golden shears World Championships, with Fagan after a sixth World title.. Also today, Canterbury blade shearer Brian Thomson, of West Melton, finished second to South African Bangani Joel in the final of the Royal Welsh Show Commercial Blades championship, while teammate Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, was fourth, in two confidence-boosting performances previewing their chances of a challenge to the African straglehold on World blades titles over thye next two days.

New Zealand woolhandlers Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, and Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, missed out on the three berths in today's Royal Welsh Show woolhandling championship final, but Herbert was placed fourth on the strength of her performance in the semi-finals.

Alabaster, however, remains the TAB favourite to retain the World title she won in Norway in 2008. It is the first time TAB betting has been available on woolhandling events, and TAB spokesman Kieran McAnulty is confident it will become an important part of interest in the unique grassroots agri-sport.

Betting on the six options had been light since they were opened last week, but stronger interestt was expected today, and leading to the six individual and teams finals on Thursday morning (NZT).

In a special moment for Ferguson, the machines final today was watched by Central Hawke's Bay farmer Sam Morrah, who earlier in the day was presented with an international lamb supply award at the show, from retailing giant Marks and Spencer. Last December, Ferguson shored 856 lambs in a nine-hour day at Mr Morrah's Ohineumeri Farm, between Waipukurau and Porangahau.

Kiwi guns blazing as world shears show opens - July 20, 2010

Five New Zealand shearing guns have blazed their way through the opening stages of the Royal Welsh Show's All Nations events as Golden Shears World Championships week started at Llanellwedd near Builth Wells in Mid Wales today.

Kiwi team members David Fagan and Cam Ferguson have qualified in the top 12 for the semi-final of the Open shearing, the big shakedown before the World championships which start on the second day of the show tomorrow.

They are joined by fellow Kiwi and 2008 World teams champion John Kirkpatrick, who on Saturday won his first open title in Wales after nine seasons of competing in the United Kingdom, and who headed the 109 shearers in the heats earlier today.

The three are favoured to produce the eventual winner later in the morning, continuing extending New Zealand domination of the event to five consecutive wins.

Their achievements have been emulated this morning by teammates and blade shearers Brian Thomson and Allen Gemmell who have qualified in second and fifth place for the All Nations bladeshearing final, also later this morning.

The heats were the first showing of the Southern African might in international blade shearing, with World record holder Bangani Joel, of South Africa, comfortably the top qualifier in a field of six which includes three-times former World champion Zingesele Elliot Ntombi.

The New Zealanders and Africans were the only Southern Hemisphere shearers to make it past the All Nations heats.

Fagan misses out - July 18, 2010

World Championships favourite David Fagan has missed out on qualifying for a final in the last event before his bid for a sixth world title in Wales.

The surprise elimination came at the Lampeter Shears on Saturday but it was not a day without plenty of success for both the New Zealand's Team and its contingent of followers.

In the 20-sheep final, a day after Fagan had won a similar event at Cothi, was won by Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick, a non-team member.

Fagan's world championships team mate, Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson reached both finals, with a confidence-boosting third at Lampeter.

Soon afterwards, Fagan and Ferguson scored their second win over Wales in two days to take a 2-0 lead in a four-test series which ends at Corwen at the end of this week, following the world championships at the Royal Welsh show.

Overnight (Sunday night), woolhandlers Sheree Alabaster and Keryn Herbert, were starting their week's campaign in the heats of the Royal Show All Nations Championship.

Fagan hammers the Welsh - July 17, 2010

Kiwi shearing legend David Fagan unleashed one of his best performances in more than 20 seasons of shearing in Wales when he hammered the locals to win again today on the road to next week's World Championships at the Royal Welsh Show.

Fagan won the Cothi Open final, in which he and New Zealand teammate Cam Ferguson were pitted against four Welshmen, including World title hopefuls Gareth Daniels and Gareth Evans.

Just three months short of his 49th birthday and making it win number 601 in an open-class career stretching back to October 1982, Fagan still posted a record time for the event - 20 Welsh mule lambs in 11 minutes 56 seconds.

The first to congratulate him afterwards was Welsh judge Lewis Jones who said: "You were faster than last time I judged you and that was eight years ago. Unbelievable."

"To stand there and judge David Fagan," he said, "was an honour."

It echoed the sentiments of the crowd, which

included not only the Welsh who have idolised Fagan as they may once have idolised the shearer's fellow Te Kuiti hero, Colin Meads, but also a smattering of other World Championships entrants.

Evans was second and Daniels third, both with superior quality to Ferguson who, while second off the board in 12m 2s, had to settle for fourth in the final count.

The Kiwis then hit the Welsh again to score a narrow win in the first of four tests to be shorn within nine days, including one at the end of the Royal Welsh Show, during which the 14th Golden Shears World Championships will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Fagan's win made it two-in-a-row, having won at the Great Yorkshire Show on Wednesday. Coincidentally, a horse named after him and in which he now has a 10 percent interest had its first North Island win at about the same time, at the Cambridge Trots.

Fagan has cemented favouritism to win the World title for a sixth time. But he hasn't won the title in Wales, where he was beaten in the 1994 final by Alan McDonald, with whom he grew-up in the King Country farming locality of Pio Pio.

McDonald, 10 days older than Fagan and managing a Landcorp farm north of Taumarunui as well as owning a block near Pio Pio, is also in Wales to support his mate, and shore in a Welsh competition today for the first time in 11 years.

He reckoned he'd enjoy keeping some of the locals out of the money if he could, and had a chance when he was fifth qualifier in the heats. But he was eliminated in the semi-final.

Fagan scores magical 600th win - July 14, 2010

Kiwi shearing icon David Fagan cemented favouritism for next week's World Championships when he won the Great Yorkshire open final today - his 600th open-class win. Fagan, 48, of Te Kuiti, first competed in the open class in the 1982-83 season and has scored almost 150 of his wins in Britain, including eight now in the Great Yorkshire which he first won in 1986.

In today's final, he beat Scottish shearer Hamish

Mitchell by 1.65pts, and fellow New Zealander John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, was third.

The win came just six days before the start of the 14th Golden Shears World Championships at the Royal Welsh Show where Fagan will be aiming to win a sixth individual World title, and a seventh in the teams event..

Kirkpatrick is not in the team for the championships, where reigning New Zealand champion fagan is joined by Golden Shears champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa. Ferguson did not reach today's final, in which Welsh hope Gareth Daniel was fourth.

Kiwi bladeshearers Brian Thomson and Allen Gemmell, both from Canterbury, who opened their preparations with first and second at the Lakeland shears on Saturday, had to settle for second and third today behind Elfyd Jackson, of Wales.

New Zealand shearers on top in World shears warm-up - July 11, 2010

New Zealand shearers have cleaned-up in a major World Championships buildup in England with one blemish - the two Kiwi team members in the main event were beaten by another Kiwi.

The open final at the Lakeland Shears in Cockermouth, Cumbria, was won on Saturday by Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick, on a competition holiday in the UK with his wife after missing out on selection in the Shearing Sports New Zealand team earlier this year.

But the machine shearing team members, Te Kuiti icon David Fagan and Waipawa gun Cam Ferguson, completed a Kiwi trifecta, finishing second and third respectively just 10 days out from the 14th Golden Shears World Championships at the Royal Welsh Show.

There was even better news for New Zealand with Canterbury bladeshearers Brian Thomson, of West Melton, and Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, finishing first and second in their first UK outing, just a day after arriving from New Zealand.

Kirkpatrick, who was second to Taranaki shearer Paul Avery in the 2008 World Championships final in Norway, was recording his second win in the UK this season, by just four-tenths of a point from World Championships favourite Fagan, who is still a win

away from winning his 600th open-class title.

Fagan, 48 and winner of five World individual titles from 1988 to 2003, was top qualifier for Saturday's final in which leading Welshman Gareth Daniels was fourth and English shearer Steve Capstick fifth.

While the form of Thomson and Gemmell was a big confidence-booster, their event was missing the leading South Africa and Lesotho shearers who have dominated recent World Championships blades finals.

Fagan and Ferguson head for the Glenarm Shears in Northern Ireland before rejoining the rest of the team for the Great Yorkshire Show on Wednesday and two other one-day competitions in Wales before the World Championships on July 20-21.

Morale boosting win for World champ Kiwi woolhandler - July 5, 2010

Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster has scored a morale-boosting win a fortnight ahead of her World woolhandling title defence by winning the open title at the Lochearnhead Shears in Scotland.

The win at the weekend followed her third place in the Royal Highland Show final in her season's UK debut a week earlier. Teammate Keryn Herbert, of Te Kuiti, failed to reach the final.

Alabaster won the World title in Norway in October 2008 and is on track for a repeat at the 14th Golden Shears World Championships at the Royal Welsh Show. She is the only member of the six-strong Kiwi shearing and woolhandling team from the team in Norway contesting this year's championships on July 20-21, the second and third days of the show.

Lochearnhead provided mixed pickings for shearers David Fagan, of Te Kuiti, and Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, who failed to make their open class final, again bowing to the Scottish pair of Gavin Mutch and Hamish Mitchell, and fellow Kiwi and 2008 World Championships runner-up John Kirkpatrick, of Napier.

Fagan and Ferguson did, however, turn the tables in a teams event, being joined by Southland shearer Darin Forde to win the Lochearnhead International Relay.

Kirkpatrick and Forde are both on working holidays in the UK, culminating with supporting the New

Zealand team at the World Championships which have attracted entries from 28 countries.

Kiwis pipped by Scots hopes in shearing test- June 28, 2010

A mere eight-hundredths of a point has separated New Zealand from Scotland in the first test of the Kiwi shearing team's World Championships tour of the UK.

But it was a home team win in the feature match on Sunday at the Royal Highland Show at Islington, Edinburgh, where New Zealand-based Gavin Mutch and fellow Scotsman Hamish Mitchell triumphed over World Championships favourite and King Country veteran David Fagan and comparative rookie Cam Ferguson, from Central Hawke's Bay.

Ferguson claimed some of the spoils for New Zealand, taking individual honours to complement a rare off performance by the 48-year-old Fagan who trailed both Scots in the final judging.

Fagan also has to wait at least another week for a 600th open-class career win, a milestone which had beckoned after he won at the Romney Shears in Kent last week. He was fourth in the Royal Highland Open final, in which Mutch and Mitchell were first and second, followed by Napier shearer and 2008 World champion team member John Kirkpatrick.

World champion woolhandler Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, made a promising start to her World Championships preparations by finishing third in the Royal Highland Open woolhandling final, although beaten by another New Zealander competing in open ranks for the first time.

Ngaio Braddick, who was sixth in Shearing Sports New Zealand's national senior rankings, was runner-up to Scotland's top World championships hope, Leanne Bertram. Alabaster's World Championships teammate, Keryn Herbert, of Te Kuiti, did not qualify for the final.

The New Zealanders now head for Lochearnhead for the second test against Scotland, as they continue the preparations for the 14th World Championships at the Royal Welsh Show on July 19-22.

Six-tonne milestone looms for shearing

giant - June 23, 2010

Kiwi sheep-shearing giant David Fagan is on target to break a milestone of 600 wins in open class competition ahead of next month's World Championships when he competes at the the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh on Sunday.

The 48-year-old who vies with All Black great Sir Colin Meads for acclaim as Te Kuiti's favourite son moved the penultimate step towards the six-tonne goal when he won a near all-New Zealand final at the Romney Shears in Kent last Sunday. The previous day, at the start of his 26th season in the UK, Fagan was third to Welsh shearer Gareth Daniel in the Three Counties open final at Malvern, Worcestershire.

It was a good day at the Romney shears for New Zealand's championship preparations with teammate Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, finishing second. Welsh veteran Nicky Beynon[crrct] was third, Jason Win, from Ikamatua on the South Island's West Coast, was fourth, and Masterton-based Dannevirke shearer Paerata Abraham fifth.

Hawke's Bay-based, globe trotting Far North shearer Matt ASmith was sixth in the three counties final.

Fagan was the third Kiwi to win an open competition in the UK in a week, with Ferguson having won the Royal Cornwall title and 2008 World championships runner-up John Kirkpatrick winning the South of Scotland title for a second year in a row.

Win, Abraham, Kirkpatrick and Smith are among a significant number of New Zealanders in the UK hoping to see Fagan and Ferguson retain the individual and teams machine shearing titles at the Royal Welsh Show on July 19-22.

New Zealand will also be after a repeat double in the woolhandling events, represented by individual titleholder Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, and World championships newcomer and Te Kuiti-based Te Awamutu mother Keryn Herbert, and aiming to break an African stranglehold in the bladeshearing, in which New Zealand will be represented in Wales by Canterbury veterans Brian Thomson and Allen Gemmell.

Fagan and Ferguson will also be shearing a series of tests against Scotland and Wales.

Golden Shears champion claims first UK win in World Champs build-up - June 14, 2010

Golden Shears shearing champion Cam Ferguson has launched his preparations for next month's World Championships in Wales by winning a major title in England.

Ferguson won the Royal Cornwall Open, his first victory since winning the 50th Golden Shears in Masterton in March, as a 26-year-old, in-form, first-time finalist conquering a host of veteran champions to claim the first of two machine-shearing places in the New Zealand team.

Finishing the home season with fourth in the New Zealand Championships in Te Kuiti as 48-year-old veteran and five-times World individual champion David Fagan secured the second berth, Ferguson shore in Italy for about six weeks before heading for the UK at the end of May.

In his first Northern Hemisphere competition he was fourth in a six-man Royal Bath and West Show final on June 4, being beaten by Northern Ireland World Championships hope Kieran McCullough, South Island-based Irishman Ivan Scott, and fellow New Zealand shearer Jason Win, from Ikamatua on the West Coast.

Two other New Zealanders featured in the five-man Cornwall final on Friday, with Far North shearer Matthew Smith third, and fifth place going to Paerata Abraham, from Dannevirke but based last summer in Masterton.

Ferguson was first off the board in the 14 sheep final, finishing in 10min 7sec, with Smith next nine seconds away.

Meanwhile, Fagan left his Te Kuiti home today (Sunday) headed for the UK to team-up with Ferguson and later the four others making up Shearing Sports New Zealand's team for the 14th World Championships at the Royal Welsh Show on July 19-22.

The others are the woolhandlers, reigning champion and Taihape school teacher Sheree Alabaster and Te Kuiti-based team selection series winner Keryn Herbert, from Te Awamutu, and North Canterbury blade shearers Brian Thomson and Allen Gemmell. Fagan won the World title in Masterton in 1988 and

1996, England in 1992, Ireland in 1998 and Scotland in 2003, and is keen to win the title in Wales, where he was beaten in the 1994 final by lifelong friend and fellow King Country veteran Alan McDonald.

He has also won six World teams titles, and is determined that New Zealand will successfully defend the titles won by Taranaki shearer Paul Avery and Hawke's Bay's John Kirkpatrick in Norway in 2008. Alabaster, already in England, is determined to retain the World double she won with former individual champion Joanne Kumeroa.

Fagan is also hoping to win his 600th open competition title in a 28-season open-class career dating back to 1982, and along with Ferguson expects to contest up to eight competitions before the Championships, starting with the Three Counties Open this week.

The pair will also shear in five test matches, two against Scotland and three against Wales.

Fagan said he had done some shearing since his New Zealand championships win on April 10, but the real work is ahead in the UK, where he has been a regular since first competing in the Northern Hemisphere in 1983, returning every year except 1985 and 1987.

Apart the competitions, the day-to-day practice is expected to be shearing on trailers, but the conditions don't worry Fagan, who said: "Once you're over there it's on. You just get on with the job." The Cornwall show on Friday also brought triumph for another New Zealander in Oamaru shearer Ant Frew, who won the senior final, having also finish fourth in his class at the Royal Bath and West Show.