

Kiwi team and supporters in charge in Ireland - May 27, 2014

New Zealanders played a large range of major roles in the World championships in Ireland.

In addition to the formal appointments, of Philip Morrison as Golden Shears World Council liaison officer with the host committee, Mike Barnett as one of four chief stewards, and Graham McNae and Libby Alkabaster as judges, New Zealanders also ran the points scoring system and had one on the commentating team, and also stepped forward to take roles in competitor registration and media assistance.

Pictures show the points scoring team headed by Lance Waddell, and the commentating team including Norm Harraway.



Smith triumphs as five nations share shear spoils - May 27, 2014

Hawke's Bay shearer Rowland Smith became New Zealand's seventh World individual machine shearing champion when he won a thrilling final on a dramatic final day the 16th Golden Shears World Championships in Gorey, Ireland.

Smith, 27, follows in the footsteps of original winner Roger Cox, 1980 winner Brian "Snow" Quinn, five-times champion David Fagan (1988, 1992, 1996, 1998 and 2003), Alan McDonald (1994), 2008 winner Paul Avery, and Cam Ferguson, who won in 2010.

It was otherwise slender pickings for the strong New Zealand team, as an unprecedented five countries shared the six titles.

The Scotland team of Gavin Mutch and Hamish Mitchell ended New Zealand's run of three consecutive victories in the teams event, with Smith and John Kirkpatrick being pushed back to third place by the Welsh pair of Gareth Daniel and Richard Jones.



Rowland Smith tends to the new responsibilities of being a World champion, signing an Australian short for Catherine Warnest, wife of Australian finalist and two-times former champion Shannon Warnest.

Joel Henare and Ronnie Goss became the first Kiwi woolhandling pair not to win a title in the nine championships since woolhandling was introduced in 1996. In the individual event, Hilary Bond

became England's first World shearing or woolhandling champion, and the teams event was won by the Welsh team of Meinir Evans and Aled Jones.

South Africa was the only country to win two events, Mayenseke Shweni beating teammate, defending champion and four-times winner Zweliwile (Elias) Hans in the blade shearing final, the pair having also won their teams event.

Ronnie Goss was second in the individual woolhandling final, while the blade shearing pair of Tony Dobbs and Brian Thomson was runner-up in their teams final, after being third and fourth respectively in the individual final.

Kirkpatrick was fifth in the final won by Smith, and Henare was the only Kiwi not to reach an individual final, missing out by one place on being among the six who qualified for the woolhandling semi-finals.

There was consolation for both, after wins in the respective Ireland Championships All Nations finals the previous day.

The 25 acres greenfields site developed for the championships beside the Redmond brothers Amber Springs Hotel was a quagmire before the four-day May 22-25 championships started, and there was drama as the Sunday afternoon finals session was about to start, when a loud cracking noise was heard coming from the upper reaches of the tent's centre tower.

The crowd was evacuated and a two-hour delay followed before a structural engineer declared it safe enough to return.

A crowd of about 1200 packed the "Dome", but hundreds more waited frustrated outside, with some relief when the flaps on the tent were raised to enable some to at least watch on the screen above the board.

Dobbs, who had won the blades title 26 years earlier, in Masterton in 1988 and who had been top qualifier in the first of the two rounds of heats, made the early pace in the bladeshearing final.

But Hans moved quickly in the middle stages of the race over 7-sheep, which he shorn in 16min 24sec, Shweni next off 57 seconds later and Dobbs finishing in 17min 36sec.

Dobbs had the best job on the shearing board, but Shweni had easily the best points from the judges out the back in the pens, and coasted home with a margin of more than four-and-a-half points over Hans, who had top-qualified for the semi-finals and the final.

The race was much closer in the 6-sheep teams final, with just 22 seconds separating South Africa, Australians John Dalla and Ken French, and New Zealand, but Mayenseke and Hans had also had the best quality and retained the title with 5.577pts winning margin.

Goss had just scraped into the woolhandling semi-finals, both she and Henare having battled back well after poor results in the first rounds. She appeared to be well in charge in the final in which she was first to finish, beating Bond by half-a-minute, and having easily the better board score, but she was hammered in table judging where Bond had 78 penalties, to the 129 assessed for the Kiwi hope.

It was a similar position in the teams final - fastest time, best board score, and big deficit on the table.

The machine shearing started with defending champion Gavin Mutch living up to the tag of favourite by being top qualifier from the heats and the semi-final, in which host-country favourite Ivan Scott was eliminated as next-man-in.

In a field of six, five of whom have won Open finals in New Zealand, it was fellow Scot Hamish Mitchell who made the pace over the 20 suffolk-mule crosses, putting a sheep around Australian champion and

2000 and 2005 World champion Shannon Warnest before the halfway mark, which Mitchell reached in 6min 43sec.

At the end, which he reached in 15min 15.497sec, 40 seconds covered the first four, with Welsh hope Gareth Daniel next, followed by Mutch and Smith.

Kirkpatrick, in his third World individual final and left still without the big prize, finished over a sheep behind Mutch, and Warnest two sheep.

Mutch had the best board points, but Smith easily the best in the pen judging, as Mitchell's quality faded, and claimed the title by a comfortable 3.135pts from runner-up Mutch.

The Scots had featured in the best contest of the day when just 0.561pts separated the first four in the teams event.

Finishing the 16 sheep in 13min 33sec, with the Kiwis next off in 13:50, the Scots did just enough to make up for a narrow defeat by New Zealand in the 2012 final in Masterton, and claim the teams title for a second time, having won previously in 1996 when New Zealand was disqualified in another final in Masterton.

RESULTS:

Machine shearing:

Individual final (20 sheep): Rowland Smith (New Zealand) 15min 55.517sec, 58.926pts, 1; Gavin Mutch (Scotland) 15min 47.331sec, 62.067pts, 2; Hamish Mitchell (Scotland) 15min 15.497sec, 62.525pts, 3; Gareth Daniel (Wales) 15min 42.966sec, 62.648pts, 4; John Kirkpatrick (New Zealand) 16min 16.483sec, 63.024pts, 5; Shannon Warnest (Australia) 17min 6.006sec, 64.2pts, 6.

Teams final (16 sheep): Scotland (Gavin Mutch/Hamish Mitchell) 13min 33.227sec, 54.786pts, 1; Wales (Gareth Daniel/Richard Jones) 14min 26.214sec, 55.061pts, 2; New Zealand (John Kirkpatrick/Rowland Smith) 13min 50.613sec, 55.281pts, 3; Ireland (Ivan Scott/Tom Kennedy) 14min 29.437sec, 55.281pts, 4; Australia (Shannon Warnest/Jason Wingfield) 14min 52.6sec, 62.068pts, 5; Northern Ireland (Jack Robinson/Ian Montgomery) 15min 55.377sec, 62.068pts, 6.

Woolhandling:

Individual final (8 fleeces): Hilary Bond (England) 177.4pts, 1; Ronnie Goss (New Zealand) 203.2pts, 2; Jonathan Haakull (Norway) 217.6pts, 3; Leanne Bertram (Scotland) 4; Aled Jones (Wales) 5; Meinir Evans (Wales) 6.

Teams final (8 fleeces): Wales (Meinir Evans/Aled Jones) 167.4pts, 1; New Zealand (Joel Henare/Ronnie Goss) 246.2pts, 2; Scotland (Leanne Bertram/Kirsty Donald) 300.6pts, 3.

Blade shearing:

Individual final (7 sheep): Mayenzeke Shweni (South Africa) 17min 21.243sec, 61.205pts, 1; Zweliwile Hans (South Africa) 16min 24.204sec, 85.782pts, 2; Tony Dobbs (New Zealand) 17min 36.08sec, 89.09pts, 3; Brian Thomson (New Zealand) 18min 48.446sec, 94.137pts, 4; Elfed Jackson (Wales) 20min 19.788sec, 113.989pts, 5; George Mudge (England) 23min 14.723sec, 124.593pts, 6.

Teams final (6 sheep): South Africa (Zweliwile Hans/Mayenzeke Shweni) 16min 31.794sec, 82.09pts, 1; New Zealand (Tony Dobbs/Brian Thomson) 16min 43.33sec, 87.667pts, 2; Australia (John Dalla/Ken French) 16min 38.112sec, 99.906pts, 3; Wales (Elfed Jackson/Gareth Owen) 19min 2.714sec, 103.969pts, 4; Ireland (Peter Heraty/Seamus Joyce) 21min 1.223sec, 120.061pts, 5; England (George Mudge/Andrew Wear) 24min 29.685sec, 124.484pt, 6.

Kiwi team and supporters in charge in Ireland - May 23, 2014

Six New Zealand shearers, including World Championships representatives Rowland Smith and John Kirkpatrick, have made it to the semi-finals of the Irish All-Nations Open championships semi-final in Gorey, Ireland.

Smith headed the 18 qualifiers after 70 shearers took part in the open-entry heats on the first day of the 16th Golden Shears World Championships, while Kirkpatrick qualified in third place.

They were separated by Scottish World championships contender Hamish Mitchell, whose teammate and defending World champion Gavin Mutch was a surprise elimination. The All-Nations has no bearing on the World Championship, for which the first round will be held tonight (Friday NZT).

The other New Zealanders still in All-Nations contention are five-times World champion David Fagan and son Jack, and Smith's brothers, Matt and Doug.

Woolhandlers Joel Henare and Ronnie Goss made a more modest start, in their All-Nations event. Henare, winner of an All Nations title in his first Northern Hemisphere outing at the Balmoral Show in Northern Ireland last Friday, qualified in fifth place for Gorey's All Nations semi-finals on Saturday, but Goss failed to make the cut of nine.

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Kiwis to win four titles, TAB says - May 23, 2014

It may be the shortest priced quaddie in history - the odds on a New Zealand sweep of the machine shearing and woolhandling events at the 16th Golden Shears World Championships which started in Ireland yesterday.

The odds have been created by the TAB which today opened a book on how many wins New Zealand will have - from all six titles to none at all.

IThe favourite option in odds announced by TAB sports shearing spokesman Kieran McAnulty was \$1.75 for the Kiwis to win four titles. The rank outsider is no wins, paying \$250.

"It's all maths," said Mr McAnulty. "It's entirely dependent on the prices for NZ to win each event."

I"We've had a reasonably good response from punters so far. Every kiwi wants a chance to back a New Zealand win and they seem to have realised that the World Shearing Champs gives them just that."

I"The New Zealand Racing Board is once again pleased to provide betting on Shearing as a proportion of every dollar spent goes to the sport in this country," he said. "And being the only shearing bookmaker in the world is something quite special."

IThe TAB had already made New Zealand favourites to win all the individual and teams machine shearing and woolhandling titles, except the glamour machine shearing individual event where Kiwis Rowland Smith and John Kirkpatrick are vying for favouritism with defending champion Gavin Mutch, a New Zealand-based farmer and shearer from Scotland.

INew Zealand won three titles at each of the last two championships, in Wales in 2010 and Masterton in 2012, and all four machine shearing and woolhandling finals in Norway in 2008.

IThe TAB recognises South Africa as warm favourites to win the blade shearing events.. Odds on the number of New Zealand wins at the championships which end on Sunday are: 0 wins, \$250; 1 win, \$150; 3 wins, \$12; 4 wins, \$1.75; 5 wins, \$8; 6 wins, \$30.

IThe first day of the championships was confined to All-Ireland and Irish All-Nations events. The first rounds of World title events are tonight(NZ Time).

World shearing champs set for Christchurch in 2017 - May 23, 2014

The 2017 World shearing and woolhandling championships will be held in Christchurch, New Zealand, says Golden Shears World Council chairman Greg Herrick.

The bid by Shearing Sports New Zealand was one of two considered yesterday at a Golden Shears World Council meeting on the eve of this year's championships in Gorey, south of Dublin, in the Republic of Ireland.

Scheduled for late January 2017, it will be the fifth time the championships have been held in New Zealand, and the first in the South Island, and will mark the 40th anniversary of the first championships held in England in 1977.

Masterton, where the Golden Shears International Championships have been an annual event since the movement was founded in the Wairarapa town in 1961, was the only previous New Zealand venue for the World titles, in 1980, 1988, 1996 and 2012.

Mr Herrick, who is from Wairarapa, said there had been sympathy at the Council meeting for the only other bid, from Northern Ireland, but there was also a "mood" for alternating the championships between the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

He accepted the Northern Ireland contingent would be disappointed, but believed they could become bidders for the following World Championships to be held in 2020 or 2021.

The successful bid for 2017 was launched after it was learnt a bid from Australia was not being pursued.

SSNZ chairman Gavin Rowland said current hopes are to use midweek dates, to avoid direct clashes with established late-January weekend "shows" on the organisation's annual calendar of more than 60 events.

Christchurch currently stages the New Zealand Corriedale Shearing and Woolhandling Championship at the Canterbury Show each November, but the World Championships are expected to be a stand-alone event, hopefully in a significant stadium.

Irishman wins big pre World shears title - May 16, 2014

An Irish shearer who set a lambshearing record in New Zealand has soared into contention for this week's World Championships just a few hundred kilometres from his home town, despite never having shorn in a World final.

The 33-year-old Ivan Scott, who has based himself in New Zealand for several months each year since 2000, won Sunday's 20-sheep Connacht Spring Show open final, beating everyone else in a field of key World title hopefuls by at least a sheep.

They included New Zealand stars Rowland Smith and John Kirkpatrick, and New Zealand-based reigning World champion Gavin Mutch, of Scotland.



Ivan Scott at Connacht

In a spectacular display of speed, Scott was in charge almost from the start of the 20-sheep final which he finished in 16min 21sec - almost a minute before Mutch, the next to finish. While all but Robinson had better quality points, Scott had done enough to still win by a comfortable 1.65pts from runner-up Smith, the winner of both the Masterton Golden Shears and New Zealand championships open finals for the last two years.

It was Scott's third Connacht win in five years, although he was second last year when Robinson scored the biggest win of his short Open-class career. Mutch, who had been top qualifier from the heats and the semi-finals, had to settle for third.

The holder of a World record of 744 lambs in an eight-hour day, shorn in New Zealand where he works for about four months each year, Scott, from Kilmacrennan, Co Donegal, is yet to reach a World championships final but now becomes a serious threat to the hopes of Mutch, Smith and Kirkpatrick.

Scott, 33, also partnered Robinson in an All-Ireland team which was beaten only by the New Zealanders in a five-nations contest of 10 sheep for each shearer, identical to the conditions of a teams championship which will be one of six World individual and teams machine shearing, blades shearing and woolhandling titles to be decided next Sunday.

Meanwhile, Galway's Tom Kennedy, 47, will join Scott in the Ireland team in Gorey, Co Wexford after winning the second Irish position in a week-long selection series which ended yesterday. It will be Kennedy's fifth World championships.

A major festival has started in Gorey ahead of the World Championships opening on Thursday, when more than 350 shearers and woolhandlers will compete in all-nations events, including 102 competitors from 27 countries in the World Championships events over the following days.

Kiwi woolhandlers triumph at Royal Ulster Show - May 16, 2014

New Zealand's crack shearing sports team has chalked up another important triumph before next week's Golden Shears World Championships by dominating the Balmoral Show's Royal Ulster All-Nations woolhandling championship just outside Belfast.

Defending World champion Joel Henare, of Gisborne, and team Ronnie Goss, of Kimbolton, were first and second in the event earlier today, the first time either had competed in the Northern Hemisphere.

It came just a day after New Zealanders were first, second and third in the show's blade shearing champions, and the Kiwis will be hoping to make it a cleansweep early tomorrow morning when Hawke's Bay pair Rowland Smith and John Kirkpatrick tackle the machine-shearing championship.

Henare and Goss beat most of those they will meet in the Irish All-Nations Championships kicking-off the four-day 16th World Championships in Gorey, Co Wexford, next Thursday. Third place went to Scots entrant Leanne Bertram, who earlier in the week labelled the Kiwis as the toughest to beat.

The major absentees were English contender Hilary Bond and the Welsh pair of Meinir Evans and Aled Jones.

The blades shearing final on Wednesday, in which New Zealand World Championships team members Tony Dobbs and Brian Thomson were first and third, separated by fellow Kiwi shearer Phil Oldfield, was missing defending World blades champions Zweliwile Hans and Mayenseke Shweni, of South Africa.

The blades and machine shearers also compete at the Connacht Spring Show in Ballinrobe, Republic of Ireland, on Saturday and Sunday, but the woolhandlers have no further competition before the events in Gorey.

Results of All-Nations events on the first two days of the Royal Ulster Shearing and Woolhandling at the Balmoral Show in Northern Ireland:

Blades shearing final(5 sheep): Tony Dobbs (Fairlie, NZ) 12min 24sec, 82.6pts, 1; Phil Oldfield (Geraldine, NZ) 14min 30sec, 89.5pts, 2; Brian Thomson (West Melton, NZ) 14min 45sec, 97.65sec, 3; John Dalla (Warooka, South Australia) 15min 4sec, 104pts, 4; Ken French (Glenisla, Vic., Australia) 16min 31sec, 112.35pts, 5; Peter Heraty (Owenwee, Co Mayo) 15min 36sec, 115pts, 6.

Woolhandling: Joel Henare, Gisborne, NZ 114.8pts, 1; Ronnie Goss (Kimbolton, NZ) 153.8pts, 2; Leanne Bertram (Lockerbie, Scotland) 3; Jonathan Haakull (Etne, Norway) 4; Kirsty Donald (Argyll, Scotland) 5; Audrey Lamb (Carlisle, Scotland, 6).



Ronnie Goss, Kimbolton, NZ



Joel Henare, Gisborne, NZ

New Zealand trifecta at Royal Ulster Show - May 15, 2014

Canterbury shearer Tony Dobbs has made a successful start to his bid to regain the World title he won 22 years ago by triumphing in the Royal Ulster blades shearing final at the Balmoral Show in Northern Ireland.

Dobbs, set for the 16th Golden Shears World Championships next week in the coastal Republic of Ireland town of Gorey, led a Kiwi trifecta in his first competition since arriving in the UK to start practice-shearing in Wales.

Second was non team member Phil Oldfield, of Geraldine, and third was Dobbs' World Championships teammate, Brian Thomson, of West Melton.

Based in Fairlie, Dobbs took-up competing seriously again at the start of the New Zealand summer, when he won the New Zealand Corriedale bladeshearing title at the Canterbury Show, 18 years after he had last shorn in the event.

No New Zealander has won the World blades shearing title since Dobbs won at the Royal Bath and West Show in England in 1992.

Woolhandling team members Joel Henare and Ronnie Goss are in action in the Royal Ulster championships tonight New Zealand time, and machine shearers Rowland Smith and John Kirkpatrick will be in action tomorrow.

The shearers compete again at the weekend at the Connacht Spring Show, before heading south for the World Championships which open with the Irish All-Nations championship heats next Thursday.

Northern Ireland shearers count down to World champs - May 14, 2014

Northern Ireland shearers Jack Robinson and Ian Montgomery showed they're ready for a big crack at two World titles next week when they won the opening Ireland and UK competition season by reaching the final of the Donard Shears' Leinster Championships on Sunday.

The two headed for the for the 16th Golden Shears World Championships next week in Gorey, Co Wexford, and finished third and fourth respectively in the five-man, 16-sheep final and will top-off their preparation this week at the Royal Ulster Show at Balmoral Park and the Connacht Spring Show on Saturday and Sunday.

They were beaten only by World record Irish shearer and host country title contender Ivan Scott, of Letterkenny, Co Donegal, and Tom Kennedy, of Athenry, Galway and who hopes this week to win selection as Ireland's second machine shearer for the World Championships.

It was an especially important result for Robinson, 23, of Claudy, Co Derry, and who will be the youngest among the 50 seeking the World machine shearing title, among 102 entries drawn from 27 countries across the range of machine shearing, blades shearing and woolhandling events, limited to a maximum two per nation.

Gorey's big event start in the especially erected ICM Dome on May 22 Irish All Nations events, which have attracted 354 entries, and will finish on May 25 with six World individual and teams titles.

Robinson rose rapidly through the grades, being the first to win Northern Island circuits from Junior to Open class in successive seasons, and has already beaten all of the top Ireland and UK World championship contenders at least once, with three Open-class wins to his name since stepping up to the top class in 2012.

"And then there are the two New Zealanders," he said, of the two Southern Hemisphere shearers most likely to challenge defending champion and New Zealand-based Scotland representative Gavin Mutch.

"The goal is to make the final," said Robinson at a cold and wet Donard Shears, on a remote farm near Enniscorthy "If I make the final I'd be happy, but anything can happen from there."

Robinson had four seasons working in New Zealand in



Donard, open Jack Robinson



Donard, open, Ian Montgomery



Northern Ireland, Jack Robinson and Ian Montgomery, machine shearers

the same gangs as new Kiwi star Rowland Smith, who hopes to add the World title to almost 60 finals victories in a seven-year Open-class career, including 10 wins in the UK and Ireland.

PHOTO/Doug Laing, Shearing Sports New Zealand

In 2012, Robinson won six finals in the busy New Zealand season, and was second in the Golden Shears International Championships Senior final at the home of the Golden Shears in Masterton, NZ.

Montgomery had his biggest moment in shearing when he won the Masterton Golden Shears Junior final in 2003, and has since won three All-Ireland titles.

Robinson and Montgomery form a strong combination in the World Championship teams event dominated by New Zealand over the year. Northern Ireland will also be represented in the woolhandling events by Caryn Webster and Jayne Harkness Bones.

Aussie Dalla sharpens blades for World shearing title bid - May 14, 2014

A second placing in the first competition of the UK shearing season has made a young Yorke Peninsula farmer a top prospect to win Australia's first World title in the traditional craft of blades shearing etched in folklore by the legendary Jack Howe.

Preparing for the 16th Golden Shears World Championships to be held in Gorey, Ireland, on May 22-25, John Dalla, 25, of Warooka, was runner-up in the Donard Shears' Leinster Championship on a remote farm in Co Wicklow on Sunday, having arrived in Ireland just two days earlier.

Keeping himself busy on a bitterly cold and wet afternoon, Dalla also uniquely shone also in the machine shearing competition, finishing sixth in the semi-finals, just missing a place in the five-man final by just 0.05pts.

The four-sheep blades final was won by 52-year-old New Zealand shearer Phil Oldfield, is not competing at the World Championships, but even before contesting the showdown, he was surprised to have done so well so soon after arriving.

Left in his wake were reigning World Champions and 2014 title favourites South African shearers Mayenzeke Shwen, who was third, and four-times individual champion i and Zweliwile Hans.

"I'm pretty happy," said Dalla. "I wasn't expecting it."

But he did have an idea of what to expect with the sheep and the conditions having had two previous seasons shearing in Ireland, and is ready for the challenge next week.

"I'm happy with my preparation, I've had a good build-up, and I'm ready to give it a good shot," he said.

The youngest person to represent Australia internationally in shearing sports, Dalla was a blade shearing teams finalist as a teenager at the 2008 championships in Norway, but injury kept him out of the last World Championships two years ago at the home of the Golden Shears in Masterton, New Zealand.

At the time he was disappointed, having been rapt with his buildup before having to withdraw, but the stalling of his career may now be seen as a positive.

"In one sense I'm happy, because I'm shearing better now than I would have been then," he said on Sunday, although he still considers himself "just a part-time shearer."



John Dalla, of Warooka, South Australia, with his blades and machine handpiece on Sunday in Ireland where he was runner-up in a major prelude to his bid for a World blades shearing title bid next week.

PHOTO/Doug Laing, Shearing Sports New Zealand

His mother, Heather, will be in Ireland next week to see him competing as one of six Australians at the World Championships, the maximum two in each of the sports of blades shearing, machine shearing and woolhandling, but father Dennis has been left at home to run the farm.

There is another South Australian hope in multiple champion and 39-year-old Willalooka publican Shannon Warnest, the World's most successful shearer on the finewooled merinos common in Australia but needing a few breaks to triumph on the crossbreds being used in Gorey.

Dalla's blade shearing teammate, Ken French, of Glenisla, Vic, was fourth in Sunday's final, but Warnest, machine shearing teammate Jason Wingfield, of Cobram, Vic, and the Victoria-Tasmania woolhandling pairing of Sandra Moran and Mel Morris were yet to arrive in Ireland.

An occasional shearing instructor for TAFE and Australia Wool Innovation, Dalla also harbours an ambition to become the first person to succeed the likes of Warnest and Wingfield and become the first person to be selected to represent Australia in both blades and machine shearing.

The Australians round-off their World Championships preparation at the Royal Ulster All-Nations Championships on Friday and the Connacht Spring Show on Saturday and Sunday.

Record entries for shearing World Champs warm-up - May 14, 2014

A stunning entry for the Golden Shears World championships supporting' Ireland All-Nations competitions in the coastal town of Gorey next week has forced organisers to make some programme cuts to make sure all the scheduled events are held.

The All-Nations events, which open the four-day shearing sports extravaganza being held on May 22-25, attracted 354 entries, thought to be easily a record for any shearing event in Ireland or the UK.

"We (in Ireland) haven't had anything like that in the past, we've never had half of that," said host committee chairman George Graham.

"It wasn't anticipated at all, it became quite unmanageable, we would have required at least another day," he said. "We couldn't do that."

Changes include merging All-Nations and All-Ireland competition heats, and cutting sheep numbers by one per shearer per heat. No changes have been made to sheep numbers in the six World Championships events.



Ireland All-Nations championships late-entry Catherine Mullooly, from Matawai, near Gisborne, New Zealand. Now rising to Senior class, she was beaten only once in her first seven Intermediate finals in the New Zealand season, and became the first woman to top any grade of shearing in New Zealand since a national rankings system was established more than 20 years ago. Her arrival has boosted All-Nations entries to 354 across all grades.

PHOTO/Doug Laing, Shearing Sports New Zealand

There was also a personal sacrifice with Mr Graham deciding, in the interests of cutting one heat to further tighten the programme, to pull-out of the All-Nations woolhandling, which would have been his preparation for representing Ireland in the World championships woolhandling over the following days leading up to the 16th Golden Shears World Championships finals on the afternoon of May 25.

Open-entry All-Nations heats in four shearing classes and one woolhandling class will open the shearing extravaganza on May 22, with the fields including most of the 102 selected by their countries for the World Championships events starting the following day.

Juniors will shear just one sheep in each of their heats, intermediates will shear two, seniors three and Open-class entrants four. The numbers increase for semi-finals and finals. The climax of the first day

will be the six-man All-Ireland Open shearing final over 15 sheep, and on the second day the All-Nations Open final of 20 sheep each.

A star attraction in the All-Nations Open is New Zealand shearing icon David Fagan, who at 52 only just missed selection for a 10th World championships, but who will represent New Zealand in a series of test matches in the UK in July.

He has won almost 630 finals in an Open-class career of over 32 years, with a record five individual and seven teams titles in the World Championships.

Some of the World's best emerging talent will be seen in the lower classes, including Alun Jones and Hefin Rowlands, who figured in Wales' greatest hour in Southern Hemisphere competition when they won the Intermediate and Junior finals respectively at the Golden Shears International Championships at the home of the Golden Shears movement in Masterton, New Zealand, on March 1.

Each stepping-up a class, Jones will have among his opposition New Zealand shearer and fellow Masterton finalist Catherine Mullooly, who recently became the first woman to top Shearing Sports New Zealand's rankings in any grade since the annual classifications were first compiled in 1992.

Kiwi shares shearing with Mayor of London Boris Johnaon - May 14, 2014

Kiwi shearing icon David Fagan has shorn with a lot of people, but few as well known as popular Mayor of London Boris Johnaon.

The big event came on Tuesday at the new Lister plant at the Stroudwater business park in the Gloucestershire town of Stonehouse.

Fagan, in the UK on the way to see the 16th Golden Shears World Championships in Ireland on May 22-25, and compete in the associated All-Nations event and this week at the Royal Ulster Show in Northern Ireland and the Connacht Spring Show in Ballinrobe, Ireland, was almost overawed by the meeting, which took place in front of select media.

"He's been voted the fourth most popular politician," said Fagan.

It was the Mayor's first time with a handpiece, but he commented it felt like a "knife through butter."

Lister Shearing is relocating from Dursley to Stonehouse next month.



(Pictures from The Gazette, and from Jack Fagan)



Kiwi blades shearer wins in Ireland - May 12, 2014

A New Zealand shearer in Ireland to help the home team in next week's Golden Shears World Championships team put his money where his mouth is when he won the opening blades shearing event of the UK season during the weekend.

Phil Oldfield, 52, of Geraldine, won the Leinster Championships event at the Donard Shears, in a remote farm shed in a wet and bleak County Wicklow.

Although it was his second win in a row in the event, it was a minor surprise after the first-round elimination of four-times World champion Zweliwile Hans.

But among others who failed to qualify were Ireland representatives Peter Heraty and Seamus Joyce, who Oldfield is mentoring through next week's World Championships in Gorey, Co Wexford.

Missing from the event were New Zealand World Championships blades shearers Tony Dodds and Brian Thomson, who had still not arrived in Ireland.

Oldfield was never a contender for New Zealand selection this year, but in yesterday's final in Ireland he beat World title prospects John Dalla, from South Australia, and Hans' World teams champion partner, Mayenzeke Shweni.

Oldfield's role in helping another country in the World Championships is hardly an act of treason, for he's one of several New Zealand blades shearers who have taken their skills abroad to teach others in the interests of helping blades shearing survive.

"I only came over to help the Irish...I teamed up with them when I did a course here last year," he said.

While the results of the tutoring might not have been that obvious in the results at the weekend, he said: "They will improve."

With New Zealand machine shearing World Championships hope Rowland Smith deciding not to travel from a base in Cornwall, there were no other New Zealanders at the Donard Shears. But there was still some New Zealand interest, with the Open machine shearing final won by Letterkenny shearer Ivan Scott, who has shorn in New Zealand each summer for 14 years, including two World lambshearing records.

Open third placegetter Jack Robinson and Senior champion Colm McLaughlin both made their marks in shearing working for Hastings contractor Kerry Brannigan in Hawke's Bay, while intermediate winner Jonathan McKelvey worked two seasons for Onga Onga contractors Barry and Erin Baker.

The New Zealand team, including second machine shearer John Kirkpatrick and woolhandlers Joel Henare and Ronnie Goss, will this week compete in the Royal Ulster Championships, and then go to the Connach before heading to Gorey for the Irish All-Nations Championship and the 16th Golden Shears World Championship, being held on May 22-25.



Geraldine blades shearer Phil Oldfield winning the Leinster Championship on Sunday, just two days after arriving in Ireland to help the home team prepare for next week's World championships.

PHOTO/Doug Laing, Shearing Sports NZ

The bets are on: How Mutch to win...? - May 08, 2014

New Zealand's sole betting racing and sports betting agency, the TAB, has staked its colours to the mast by naming just three shearers as strong possibilities to win the 16th Golden Shears world title in Ireland in three weeks' time.

Thought to be the only agency taking bets on the championships, to be held in the Co Wexford town of Gorey on May 22-25, the NZ TAB has plumped for defending champion and New Zealand-based Scottish shearer Gavin Mutch as the favourite at \$2.50, closely followed by New Zealand shearers Rowland Smith (\$2..70) and John Kirkpatrick (\$3.00).

Also considering past World championships form, the TAB has been guided by form during the Shearing Sports New Zealand season, which had more than 60 competitions from October last year to Easter last month.

While 48 shearers are entered in the championships' glamour event, one of six individual and teams titles to be decided in machine shearing, blades shearing and woolhandling, the TAB has carded just 13, at least nine of whom competed in New Zealand at some stage of the season.

The next most favoured are Richard Jones and Gareth Daniel, the Welsh team members who were beaten in four tests but won three regional matches on a New Zealand tour in January and February, each quoted at \$25.

Ivan Scott, the host country's hope of becoming the first Republic of Ireland shearer to reach an individual World championships final and who has shorn the New Zealand season annually for the last 13 years, in the fifth line of betting at \$30.

Many of the shearers real prospects will emerge over the next week and a half, with the UK and Ireland season opening with the Leinster and All-Ireland Shearing Championships on Sunday at Donard, Co Wicklow, followed by the Royal Ulster shearing and woolhandling championships at Balmoral Park, Lisburn, near Belfast, next Wednesday-Friday (May 14-16), followed immediately, on May 17-18, by the Connacht Spring Show at Ballinrobe, Co Mayo.

New Zealand TAB spokesman Kieran McAnuly said in opening the book that other odds will be offered, along with other options, including head-to-head choices.

The machine shearing field will be culled to six for the final over 20 sheep each, the last event at the championships which have attracted 102 competitors from 27 countries, and which are part of a festival organisers hope will bring tens of thousands of visitors to the area where a venue is being developed from a 25-acres greenfields site at Knockmullen, on the fringes of the town.

The New Zealand TAB opening odds to win the 16th Golden Shears World Championships machine shearing title are:

Gavin Mutch (Scotland) \$2.50
Rowland Smith (New Zealand) \$2.70
John Kirkpatrick (New Zealand) \$3.00
Richard Jones (Wales) \$25
Gareth Daniel (Wales) \$25
Adam Berry (England) \$30
Hamish Mitchell (Scotland) \$30
Ivan Scott (Ireland) \$30
Ian Montgomery (Northern Ireland) \$40
Jason Wingfield (Australia) \$40
Shannon Warnest (Australia) 40
Daniel Boillot (France) \$40

Kiwi shearer confirms new bid for World record - May 06, 2014

New Zealand shearer Stacey Te Huia is back in training for another crack at one of the toughest of shearing records after an Australian run which has produced the best results of his occasional competition career.

Based in Bathurst, NSW, Te Huia won the local show Open final and a Speedshear at the weekend, making it "six in a row."

He had previously won at Canowindra, Carcoar, Inverell, Conargo and Grenfell. The Inverell show decided the NSW representatives for the Australian championship later in the year, but Te Huia is ineligible for selection.

The bid on Southern Hawke's Bay shearer Rodney Sutton's World Record tally of 721 ewes shorn in a King Country woolshed in nine hours in January 2007 is expected to be in mid-January next year at Waitara Station, off State Highway 5 between Taupo and Napier.



FLASHBACK: Australia-based New Zealand shearer Stacey Te Huia during a two-stand record near Benneydale in January 2012, with sister Kerri-Jo as woolhandler and father Dean calling the shots.

Te Huia will make a second bid for the solo nine-hour ewes shearing record next January.

PHOTO/Doug Laing, Shearing Sports NZ

Te Huia's highest nine-hour tally is 703 in February 2013, when making an unsuccessful bid for the record in a woolshed east of Benneydale, near his home town of Te Kuiti.

Renowned for the intensive fitness regime he endured in addition to the grind of shearing hundreds of sheep each day, Te Huia expects to step even further up to the mark and said after his latest wins on Saturday: "I start training tomorrow. Eight months is the respect this record deserves."

He expects to remain in Australia working until November, before returning home for what will be only the fifth attempt at the record since legendary King Country shearer David Fagan broke the 700 barrier with a tally of 702 in February 1994.

Central Otago shearer Dion Morrell raised the bar to 716 in 1995, and Southland gun Darrin Forde shore 720 in 1997, unchallenged until Sutton broke the mark by just one.

Te Huia is currently in the World Sheep Shearing Records Society's books with two other ewes records, with a two-stand nine hour-record of 1341 shorn with Waikaretu contractor Sam Welch in January 2012, and the solo record for eight hours of 603 shorn in December 2010.

Sister Kerri-Jo Te Huia has the women's eight-hour lambshearing record of 507, while Stacey Te Huia and brother Hayden had set a two-stand, eight-hour ewes record in 1999.

Next season's record bid is expected to take place in the same shed in which brothers Rowland and Doug Smith set the current eight-hour record of 1066 in January 2011.

Mutch ado about the Whangamomona phenomena - May 05, 2014

World champion Scottish shearer Gavin Mutch will have some of his biggest support from a remote New Zealand locality where the name is longer than its main street as he defends his title in the Irish town of Gorey later this month.

It was in the tiny eastern Taranaki community that more than 200 people celebrated the triumph of the local hero two years ago in the World Championships final at the Golden Shears in Masterton - the man from equally remote Forgue in Aberdeenshire, now the Whangamomona Phenomena in a kilt, grit for a Celtic haka if ever.

Marrying local girl Pip McLellan, it's over the last 15 years that Mutch, now 34, has become entrenched around Whangamomona making a home as a family man, farmer, shearer and shearing contractor providing work for the likely lads and lasses of the community on the Forgotten World Highway between Taranaki and King Country in the North Island.



DEFENDING CHAMPION: New Zealand-based Scottish shearer and World title defender Gavin Mutch, pictured during the 2013 Golden Shears in Masterton.

PHOTO/Pete Nokolaison, Golden Shears.

"The reason I started the shearing run here was to give local people work without travelling silly hours each day," he said this week.

It brought a special reward last month when three of his shearers - Dean Herlihy, Darren Alexander and Craig Herlihy - carried the Whangamomona name into each of the top three Intermediate placings at the Easter Show, in Auckland.

Alexander, a university student who shears to pay for his studies, had three weeks earlier won the New Zealand Championships Intermediate final.

"Not bad for a little town like Whanga," Mutch reckoned.

His own big win two years ago was a particularly meritorious achievement, for while Mutch had become the most successful overseas shearer based in New Zealand, he had been injured on the farm, struggled to win a tiny competition in the Forgotten World Highway settlement of Ohura, and shone the World Championships with a torn shoulder muscle.

This year, commitment to farm, family and community meant he competed only sparingly in the early stages of his buildup for the big defence in the Northern Hemisphere, although in late-March he beat leading World championships opponent John Kirkpatrick and legendary fellow Kiwi and five-times World champion David Fagan in the Taranaki Open final.

It also means he will return to the UK only just in time for a two-show preparation in the week before the 16th Golden Shears World Championship on May 22-25, the focus of a nine-day sheep and wool festival in the Co Wexford town of Gorey, 87km south of Dublin.

He expects to compete alongside most of the other World title hopes at the Balmoral Show on May 14-16 and the Connacht Spring Show on May 17-18.

Returning to Scotland almost annually, Mutch has had numerous wins on UK shearing boards, including last year's Royal Highland Show, where he again won the Open shearing final from Lochearnhead shearer and World championships teammate Hamish Mitchell.

But he's also established a proud record in New Zealand, as one of only a handful of shearers who have shorn in three or more of the four championships in the Golden Shears International Championships held annually in Masterton since 1961, regarded as the Holy Grail of all shearing sports pageants, and the event on which the World Championships are founded.

At an event where wins by non-New Zealand shearers are rare, he was third in the Junior final in 2000, runner-up in the Senior championship two years later, and has shorn five times in its revered six-man Open final from 2006 to 2013. And he has won a New Zealand Lambshearing Championship.

But some of his biggest experiences came with his World tally record attempts of December 2008 and December 2009, both called-off early because the targets of over 730 lambs in eight hours were out of reach.

The failures had a silver lining, and he said: "Basically Whangamomona is home. It's got a great strong community, where we all work together to keep things happening within the area."

"I have been made part of the fittings and have great friends in 'Whanga,' which was best demonstrated when I tried the World record," he said. "The whole area got behind it 100 percent to help."

"And then after I won the World champs over 200 people turned up to help celebrate."

NZ hopes arrive for World Champs in Gorey - May 05, 2014

The buildup to the World shearing and woolhandling championships in Ireland later this month steps-up a gear with this week's arrival of New Zealand team members defending their country's reputation as the most successful nation in the history of the event.

Leading the charge will be 27-year-old, two-metres-tall Rowland Smith, a strong contender for the machine shearing individual title to be decided in a six-man final of 20 sheep each on the last day of the 16th Golden Shears World Championships, to be held at Gorey, Co Wexford, on May 22-25.

New Zealand's 34 titles in the history of the championships, first held at the Royal Bath and West Show in England in 1977 and building on the success of the Golden Shears International Shearing Championships founded in Masterton, New Zealand, in 1961, include 10 of the 15 in the glamour event, the individual machine shearing championship.

Having earlier this year successfully defended the Masterton Golden Shears Open title and the New Zealand Championships Open title in Te Kuiti, Smith kicks-off his World title preparation next Sunday at the Donard Shears, on a farm near Donard, Co Wicklow.



KIWI BID: New Zealand shearing champion Rowland Smith, who arrives in Ireland this week to start the buildup to the 16th Golden Shears World Championships at Knockmullen, Gorey, on May 22-25.

PHOTO/Pete Nikolaison, Golden Shears

Machine shearing teammate John Kirkpatrick, a 44-year-old who has two World teams titles to his name in a 20-year Open-class career which has produced four Masterton Golden Shears victories and more than 200 other wins, will arrive just too late for the Donard Shears, but the pair and blades shearing and woolhandling teammates will be at the Royal Ulster Show at Balmoral over the following week.

They will also compete at the Connacht Show next weekend, and the All Ireland Championships which will open the Golden Shears World Championships, the focus of a major sheep and wool festival starting on May 17, with organisers hoping up to 40,000 people will pass through the gates.

The New Zealand team also includes 22-year-old Joel Henare, who will defend the woolhandling title he won at the last World championships in Masterton in 2012, and 58-year-old Tony 'Dinny' Dobbs, making a comeback 22 years after winning the first World blades shearing title at the 1992 championships in England.

The other members are woolhandler Veronica (Ronnie) Goss, 44, and blades shearer Brian Thomson, a two-times World championships individual blades shearing finalist who was a late selection this year after the withdrawal of fellow Canterbury competitor Mike McConnell.

Organisers say 27 countries have entered the championships, bringing over 100 competitors to Gorey chasing the six titles to be decided, the individual and teams championships in each of the three shearing sports disciplines of machine shearing, blades shearing and woolhandling.

New Zealand have also won 12 of the 15 World teams machine shearing titles, five of the eight individual woolhandling titles since woolhandling was incorporated in 1996, and all five woolhandling teams titles.

Australia's six titles include three individual and two teams crowns in the machine shearing, while South Africa has also won six titles, all in blades shearing.

The only other countries to have won Golden Shears World Championships are Lesotho, with five all in blades shearing but unable to attend this year's championships, Scotland with three, including two machines shearing titles, and Wales, with two in the individual woolhandling.

Ireland and Northern Ireland will both be among those striving for a breakthrough in Gorey.

2014 Golden Shears World Championships - May 05, 2014

Shearing Sports New Zealand has chosen a full team of six for the 16th Golden Shears World Championships at Gorey, Co Wexford, Ireland, on May 22-25.

The team is machine shearers Rowland Smith, of Hastings, and John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, woolhandlers Joel Henare, of Gisborne, and Veronica (Ronnie) Goss, of Kimbolton, and blades shearers Tony Dobbs, of Fairlie, and Brian Thomson, of West Melton.

The manager is John Hough, of Rakaia, and New Zealand officials appointed for the championships are shearing judge Graeme McNae, of Masterton, and woolhandling judge Libby Alabaster, of Taihape, and refereeing official Mike Barnett, of Aria.

New Zealand will contest all six titles, comprising Individual and Teams titles in machine shearing, woolhandling and blades shearing.

Team members will be competing at other competitions in Ireland in the week before the championships.

Competitor Profiles

Machine shearers:

Rowland Smith, 27, of Hastings.

Former Golden Shears Junior and Senior champion while based in Northland, has since moving to Hawke's Bay won the New Zealand Open final in Te Kuiti in 2011 and has won the Golden Shears/NZ opens double the last two years. Has won almost 60 Open titles, including 11 in his just-completed seventh New Zealand Open-class season, 10 finals in the UK, and an Australian crossbreds title. With brother Doug holds the World eight-hours two-stand eweshearing record of 1066, of which he shares 562.



John Kirkpatrick, 44, of Napier

New Zealand's most successful shearer of the last two decades apart from the legendary David Fagan, having won more than 200 Open finals, including four Golden Shears Opens and three New Zealand Opens. Runner-up to teammate Paul Avery in 2008 World final in Norway, and beaten only by Gavin Mutch (Scotland) and NZ teammate Cam Ferguson in Masterton 2012, but won World teams title in both years.



Woolhandlers:

Joel Henare, 22, Gisborne

Despite his tender age, Joel has been one of New Zealand's top woolhandlers for the last seven years, winning the five New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year titles in Balclutha and one New Zealand Open title in Te Kuiti before winning the World title in Masterton at the age of 20 in 2012. Has won the Golden Shears Open title in Masterton the last two years, and won the right to defend World title by winning New Zealand team selection trial in March.



Veronica (Ronnie) Goss, 44, of Kimbolton

It's six years since Ronnie Goss had her biggest win, in the Golden Shears Open final, but she has remained at the forefront of New Zealand competition, and won her place in the team by finishing second in the selection series final. Husband Alan was a Golden Shears senior shearing champion, and daughter Sarah and son Simon have won several lower grade shearing titles. Sarah is now vice-captain of the New Zealand women's Sevens rugby team hoping to compete at the 2016 Olympic Games.



Blades shearers:

Tony Dobbs, 55, of Fairlie

Won the first World bladeshearing title in 1992, but hadn't competed regularly for 18 years until this season when he hit early form and won the New Zealand Corriedale title at the Canterbury Show in November. Subsequently won the selection series and headed to Wales to start preparing to tackle the might of the defending champion South Africans.



Brian Thomson, 58, of West Melton

Third in 2010 World final in Norway and fourth in Masterton in 2012, and was late selection after the withdrawal of fellow Canterbury shearer and 2012 teammate Mike McConnell. Started blades shearing at 15, but did not compete regularly. First won a title at the McKenzie show in 1996, beating Tony Dobbs (who had won the only previous World blades title four years earlier). His biggest wins include the national Corriedale title at Christchurch in 2001 and 2012, was reserve for the World Championships in Toowoomba (2005) and Norway (2008). Has a best blades tally of 328 on Corriedales, and shorn 22,000 in a season at peak.

