

Building a wealth of knowledge



Teagasc equine specialist **Wendy Conlon** explores the value to breeders of the successful Knowledge Transfer Equine discussion groups

THE Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)-funded Knowledge Transfer Equine (KTE) Discussion Group Scheme saw approximately 300 breeders across the country engaged in discussion groups from 2016-2019. I started an Athenry-based Teagasc discussion group with 18 members, from across Galway, Clare and one dedicated Tipperary man, which endured for the duration of the scheme.

Discussion groups are basically groups of farmers, in this case equine breeders, that meet regularly. Discussions can revolve around technical issues, with an emphasis on sharing information. There is

also a social aspect where individuals find support, encouragement and new friendships. Opportunity exists to see and experience other farms, including those of group members, while validating the information provided with the facilitator and each other.

Following the cessation of the DAFM-funded scheme, group members could continue meetings as Teagasc clients, without receiving payment for attendance. The majority of the group opted to continue and though Covid restrictions have enforced alternative approaches over the last 12 months, the interactive spirit and interest to sustain the group has continued.

Three group members, their own enterprises, and experiences within the group are outlined below.

Deirdre Geoghegan, Canrower Connemara Ponies

DEIRDRE, based near Oughterard, Co Galway, grew up surrounded by Connemara ponies. Her grandfather, Mark Geoghegan, was one of the first stallion custodians for the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society in the 1920s. Her father, Paddy, established Canrower Connemara Ponies in the early 1950s.

During the summer season, the family also managed Oughterard Pony Trekking Centre, catering to tourists in the Oughterard and Connemara area. Deirdre continues the tourism connection providing self-catering cottage accommodation. She says that having ponies on the farm and grazing in adjacent fields has proved a massive attraction to guests.

The farm is approximately 16 hectares with a mixture of low and mountain land and sustains only Connemara ponies now. The farm participates in the agri-environmental scheme GLAS and the Pearl Mussel project.

Breeding experience

Deirdre's first experience as a breeder was alongside her father with Canrower Rebecca (Bridge Boy x Carna Dun), a finalist in the All Ireland Ridden Connemara Pony Championships class a number of times with Deirdre. Deirdre chose the stallion for her last mating, Village Boy, resulting in Canrower Andy who represented Sweden numerous times in World Mounted Games. The seed was sown.

Deirdre has three broodmares, by stallions Robe Earl, Ferdia,

and Earl of Newbridge, and a few youngsters from three to five years. She is looking forward to meeting the 2021 foal by Cashel-bay Prince (I Love You Melody x Callowfeenish Mairtin) out of Carn Lady Ash (Robe Earl x West-side Mirah) (2000). Carn Lady Ash is the dam of dressage pony Carn Verdon Boy (Ferdia x Robe Earl), so an athletic performance pony is hoped for.

Carn Verdon Boy competes with Alana Cazabon at Prix St George and Inter 1 level, the first Connemara Pony to do so in Ireland. Taking him to Grand Prix is the goal. Though Deirdre didn't breed him, she was insightful enough to spot his potential as a youngster and purchase his dam.

Deirdre describes Carn Lady Ash as "a traditional type mare, breeding height into progeny despite standing 138cms, with balanced movement, intelligence, and a kind nature." Her 2018 progeny by Dexter Leam Pondi is looking very promising.

Commenting on the KTE, Deirdre says she immediately wanted to be part of the discussion group after seeing it advertised, thinking, "it would be a great opportunity to broaden knowledge, a chance to meet like-minded horse enthusiasts and visit yards" that she otherwise wouldn't see.

Deirdre found the group to be "a valuable forum to share information, learn from the discussions at other breeding and production yards, vet clinics etc. Learning about tools such as linear profiling has helped (her) be more critical of the ponies and try to choose stallions that will compliment. Visiting other yards has given ideas and motivation to make improvements to facilities



Dressage rider Alana Cazabon competes Carn Verdon Boy at Prix St George and Inter 1 Level, the first Connemara Pony to do so in Ireland \ Sagittarian Photography

at home, to improve efficiency and make life easier during the winter months."

Deirdre admits to not realising how much money she was actually spending to produce ponies to sale time and by evaluating costs, it focused her to adapt a new system.

Another new step for her was

utilising social media marketing to sell a 2020 foal. "I only used Facebook to advertise and he was sold within a few days to a top performance yard; the talks on marketing and choice of visual images were a huge help," she commented.

Since the Covid outbreak, the discussion group meetings have

moved online but this hasn't dampened the enthusiasm of the monthly catch-ups. Deirdre enjoys "the variety of topics including nutrition, parasite control, marketing, accounting and more". She summed up the positive experience by saying, "you can never have enough knowledge or support".



Gina Heaps, Carrowgar Stud

GINA lives near Quin in Co Clare, farming just over 16 hectares. Her riding days began at four years old in the UK when her sister brought her to shows on a friend's pony where they would try to win the lead rein classes.

On moving to Ireland, Gina started hunting on her first pony at eight years old and never looked back.

Gina started breeding in the early 1990s in Co Waterford while running the Bride View Bar in the heart of what is point-to-point country.

The bar clientele were mainly horsey people and Gina was encouraged to buy the all-rounder thoroughbred mare Gritty Shoon (by Sheer Grit xx) who had won a point-to-point, hunted and show jumped successfully.

Among Gritty Shoon's offspring were the 1996 filly Equine Connect Belle, by Roberstown Boy VII; a 2001 filly Equine Connect Monchie, by Flagmount King; and

a 2002 filly Coolcorran Roseau, by Coolcorran Cool Diamond.

Gina competed both Equine Connect Belle and Equine Connect Monchie as an amateur rider in show jumping, cross-country and dressage.

Proudest moment

What began as a chance investment in a thoroughbred mare from the local doctor led to Gina's proudest moment as breeder and owner of Dublin Horse Show Supreme Young Horse Champion in 2019, shown by Rebecca Monahan. Carrowgar Herald, born 2016, is by Herald III (Heraldik xx x Lorenz) out of Equine Connect Monchie.

In Gina's words, "I knew I had a good looking horse but to see Carrowgar Herald crowned three-year-old champion, supreme champion and claim the Pembroke Cup was beyond



words. To witness him lead the Parade of Champions is a sight I will never forget."

He is now in the UK and will be aimed at ridden hunter classes.

Gina has two full siblings of Carrowgar Herald in Carrowgar Herald, 2017, beginning his eventing career and Carrowgar Henry, 2019, who hopefully will make his RDS debut in 2022.

Coolcorran Roseau bred jumpers Carrowgar Je T'Aime (2012, by Je T'Aime Flamenco); Carrowgar Je T'Aime Max (2013, by Je T'Aime Flamenco); Carrowgar Cool Heart (2014, by Sibon W); and Carrowgar Dakara (2016, by Dakar VDL).

These are all competing at their levels with Carrowgar Je T'Aime now at 1.40m and Carrowgar Apollo waiting in the wings (2018, by Johnnie Walker VDL).

Gina awaits two foals in 2021, both sired by Herald III out of

Jeanie Bell xx (Moscow Society x Duky) and Carrowgar Nerrada (Nerrado x Flagmount King), a daughter of Equine Connect Monchie.

Gina says: "I love my TIH mares and their qualities, and the subsequent cross with the warm-blood stallion. My foundation mares are old now and I must look to the future and make some decisions, but I will always have a TIH mare breeding on the farm."

Qualified practitioner

About 18 years ago, Gina began learning about the 'Tellington Touch' method and is now a qualified practitioner in several bodywork and training techniques like 'Equine Touch', a fascia release technique, and the 'Tucker Biokinetic' technique in managing fascia and skeletal issues. Gina never stops in her quest to learn more.

Regarding the discussion group, Gina says: "though it is a diverse group in terms of horse/

pony interests and breeding endeavours, there's a common desire to learn. I've really enjoyed attending the many interesting meetings hosted on farms around the West of Ireland."

Gina, encouraged by group discussions, has "increased (her) presence on social media, really enjoyed learning more about linear profiling, and changed both fertiliser products and application rates, focusing firstly on realigning the pH of soils."

Gina extends her gratitude to "all the breeders, producers, veterinary surgeons and others who opened their gates to the group over the recent years as it has been a super experience to see how others manage their yards and their stock."

Continued on page 18

IRELAND: A TOP PRODUCER OF EVENTERS WORLDWIDE

It makes commercial sense to aim to breed an eventer!



ROAD TO HAPPINESS (TB).

Rainbow Quest ex Hedonic (Gone West). 2004 Bay Stallion. 16' 1"

The thoroughbred stallion that has gotten everyone in the industry talking.

Proven producer of jumpers and top-class event horses.

Progeny are highly sought after for their temperament and athleticism.

Sire of Big Berry (ISH)(Eventing CCI4*)

Sire of Seefin Surprise (ISH)(TIH) (Showjumping 1.40)

€600 incl. VAT. Chilled and frozen semen. Frozen semen available in UK through Stallion AI UK.



KUSHKAME (TB) NEW, EXCITING TB SIRE FOR 2021!

Sidestep ex Pearls of Wisdom (Kyllachy). 2017 Bay Stallion. 16' 3"

Kushkame combines some of the best thoroughbred sprinting bloodlines through his paternal grandsire Exceed and Excel and his maternal grandsire Pivotal. He is an impressive and imposing TB with a kind even temperament.

He retired from racing to pursue a career as a sport horse sire and he will be a name to follow into the future as a traditional eventing sire. Passed all of his veterinary examinations for the HSI Stallion Inspection Approval in 2020 and will be assessed under saddle at the 2021 Stallion Inspections.

€500 incl. VAT. Chilled semen only.



RINGFORT CRUISE (ISH)

Cruising ex Renkum Woudina (Nimmerdor). 1997 Grey Stallion. 16' 2"

The only 5th stallion son of Cruising remaining in Ireland. Successful at FEI CSIO5* 1.60m (Capt. David O'Brien). Team win Lummen CSIO5* Nations Cup 2006.

"If I wanted to breed a top class eventer I would bring my best thoroughbred mares to Ringfort Cruise." Lt. Col Gerry O'Gorman

Sire of Mike Of Mourne (ex. Roselier (TB)). Represented Ireland Le Lion d'Anger CCI2* in 2020. Individual winner of Ballindenisk CCI2* in 2020. Ringfort Cruise consistently achieves high prices for his offspring at every level. He is exceptionally commercial for those looking to sell as foals

€500 incl. VAT. Chilled semen.



LAST SAMURAI W & W (ANGLO EUROPEAN STUDBOOK)

Lincoln L ex Lady Z (Langata Son). 2016 Brown Stallion. 16' 2"

Last Samurai represents an opportunity to introduce new but well proven continental bloodlines on traditional Irish mares. He has three correct and elastic paces which will come out in any offspring and his temperament is said to be excellent.

His first foals were born in 2020 and were well received.

A limited amount of frozen semen is available on a first come, first served basis.

€600 incl. VAT. Frozen semen only.

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Nigel Kenny, Derrycastle Stud

NIGEL farms 17 hectares on the scenic shores of Lough Derg near Ballina, Co Tipperary. Nigel's dad gifted him his first horse in 1998, the mare Coppa Leaf (Cavalier Royale x Unknown), and foundation mare of Nigel's breeding programme today. She topped the sale in Goresbridge on the day after Nigel's request to his father of, "she's the one, buy her please". Due to injury, she had been retired from sport.

This began a breeding programme which has produced many winners. Coppa Leaf's 2003 son Corrib House, by Harlequin du Carel, won the 2012 Arezzo Derby and National Grand Prix Galway 2014. Her 2006 progeny Cavalier Rusticana, by Try Time, won the 2017 Land Rover Puissance under Daniel Coyle following being third in the same class (2016) under Peter Smyth. He also won a 1.45m class at Liverpool International Show with Peter in 2016.

Coppa Leaf's 2004 daughter Corrib Sensation, by Lux Z, produced



Cavalier Rusticana (Daniel Coyle), joint winner of the Land Rover Puissance at Dublin 2017 \ Laurence Dunne Jumpinaction.net

Kiltealy Stud

Dilshaan TB



Bay 16.1hh Fully approved with Irish Horse Board. By **Darshaan**, Grandsire **Shirley Heights**. Dam Avila by Ajdal. Group 1 winner at 2. Group 2 winner at 3. Sire of several smart hurdlers. Quality horse with super movement. Good temperament. Available to cover TB and Half bred mares. First half bred foals 2013.

Kiltealy Silver ID



2009 Grey 16.3hh Bone 23.5cm Approved 2012 Class 1 Irish Draught. By **Coolcronan Wood**, Dam Silver Fox by **Fast Silver** Grandam by **Diamond Lad**. Kiltealy Silver is a big quality light moving horse with plenty of presence, and has good technique over a fence.

JJ Bowe, Kiltealy Stud, Kiltealy, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.
Ph: 053/9255406 Mob: 087/6705504 - 087/1330711

the mare Derrycastle Sensation by Cevin Z, third in the Dublin Horse Show Mo Chroi four-year-old national championship final in 2016 with Peter. Corriboucarel, the 2007 daughter of Coppa Leaf by Harlequin du Carel, placed third in the Irish Breeders' Classic in 2012 with Jordan Coyle.

Nigel commented: "The partnership with Peter and other riders has been invaluable in promoting the breeding enterprise."

2016 progeny of Corrib Sensation, Derrycastle Houdini (by Ulysses M2S), was one of the top-priced lots at the 2020 Goresbridge Go For Gold sale, consigned by DJ O'Sullivan of O'Sullivan Sport Horses. Nigel also considers himself "very fortunate to have a father who has been so supportive of his equestrian endeavours over the years."

Nigel has two mares due to foal in 2021, and a selection of young stock ranging in age from yearlings to three year olds. Derrycastle Heartbeat, (Diamant De Semilly x Heartbreaker x Cavalier Royale) the 2016 progeny of Corrib Heart also descends from Coppa Leaf, his grandam, is presently being produced by Peter Smyth.

Nigel intends to campaign the 2017 daughter of Corrib Heart (by Touchdown) himself all going well. Nigel also follows the sport closely

and feels that this has added tremendously to his knowledge as a breeder. Corrib Heart is very special to Nigel as she is the last foal produced by Coppa Leaf and he says she produces quality foals no matter what sire is chosen.

Nigel is "very excited to meet 2021 progeny of Derrycastle Sensation, whose first foal is due in May, as she proved very difficult to get in foal". She is the "first mare in the programme with a strong performance record herself and having covered her with Billy Congo (Vechta x Animo), hopes are high".

RDS joy

Standing ringside in Dublin when Derrycastle Sensation was placed in the Mo Chroi final was Nigel's proudest moment as a breeder to date. "It confirmed that decisions taken were positive ones and provided confidence in decision-making."

Despite having to drive a fair distance to most meetings, Nigel joined the

KT Group as he is "a firm believer that knowledge is a powerful tool, and when it comes to horses, you can never know enough." Participating in the group "helped in all areas of the enterprise – improving grass and grazing management with adaptations to fertiliser planning, husbandry skills with small changes to parasite control and in particular, monitoring with faecal egg counts."

A highlight for Nigel was visiting Lisbeg Farms a few years ago with the late Deirdre Bourns, her husband Richard, and Jenny Rankin who was their rider at the time. "As a breeder to be able to observe and discuss the type of horse they looked for and the training methods implemented was very informative," he said.

Nigel chose to continue with the group beyond the funded scheme saying, "it's great to meet up with like-minded people who are motivated to succeed in whatever discipline they are involved in."

Nigel Kenny of Derrycastle Stud with the 2020 progeny of Corrib Heart, by Verdi

