

National Crossbred Herd Competition  
Report by Pip Rogers, Presteign, Powys

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July saw us heading across the border into England and the county of Herefordshire to visit Mervyn Thomas at Heywood Farm, Callow.

We commenced our tour of his 100 Blue Cross cow herd, which was split into several groups and ages, with calves at foot. Mervyn was using two Kinaston Blonde bulls and told us that he was achieving very good weights and grades with their progeny. He is on a good farm, growing lots of cereals and straw, thus allowing him to take these calves through to finish. The grassland available to him was in several parcels, some rented in as well as owned.

We saw some smart calves with good potential; some of which will possibly see this inside of a show ring in the future.

Mervyn also showed us some views of Herefordshire I had not seen before; they were quite spectacular from the higher ground.

Mervyn had recently purchased a considerable number of Pedigree Blonde females and a new bull from the Doncombe herd. Not a bad start Mervyn, and we wish you well with these in the future.

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August

Leaving Burwarton Show, we drove north up to Shap in Cumbria to Sleddale Hall to view Mike Harrison's herd. Mike is sunning his herd on challenging grassland ground at Shap and some easier grazing at Penrith. He was using three bulls over a mixture of cross-bred cows. Shapfell Bongo, Shapfell Universe, Applecroft Earl and Hadley Esquire for AI, producing some fantastic calves.

The first bunch of calves was the youngest and had plenty of shape for this early stage. We then went to see an older bunch of calves that again looked tremendous, some very stylish calves in this bunch, show potentials without a doubt. The final group we looked at were some entire calves with exceptional growth and muscle. Mike's stock were looking a picture. An outstanding herd with an abundance of quality calves to view. Well done Mike!

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August

After a very early start, we caught a flight from Newcastle to Belfast, where we joined other members for the Northern Ireland stock judging weekend. Whilst we were there we judged Paul Gribbins Islandhill herd at Toomebridge, Co Antrim.

Paul showed us some nice, shapely calves with plenty of style, sired by Budore Bud. These calves were doing really well.

Paul had a mixture of cows but said that he was working towards a Blonde X Blue X cow to make a  $\frac{3}{4}$  calf. His calving was over a 6 month period, so we were able to see them at all stages. He also used Islandhill Duke, again calves showing good conformation. Paul is a young person with a vision in mind for the future of his herd and correctly providing for the needs of his market.

I think I can speak on behalf of all our fellow members attending this stockjudging weekend by saying, we had a wonderful time, saw some excellent cattle and the hospitality shown to us by all of our hosts, was second to none. Thanks to you all.

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August

Crossing the water back to Newcastle, and being met with pouring rain, we made our way up the A1 to Berwickshire to Ramrig farm and our next finalist, George Hamilton.

George informed us that they received 3 inches of rain over the last 30 hours. This was confirmed by the quantity of water standing in the fields.

Despite the rain, the cows were looking tremendously fit and had some equally fit calves at foot.

George was using Blonde bulls, Ardmore Upgrade, Hallfield Destiny and Strathisla Braveheart on his cows. The calves were born to a tight calving pattern and they had good grazing conditions available to them, no shortage of grass here.

George also took them all the way through to finishing, achieving a very good return in the live markets. The older stock was looking well with plenty of growth.

Once again, a pleasing show of livestock.

Thank you George for the loan of the wellies.

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August

Following a comfortable night's sleep and a super breakfast to rival the Irish, we left Lawrence and Philys Hagarth's at Kelleth who kindly put us up for the night, and headed south in search of David Morris at Chilton Park, Aylesbury. Here we saw a great bunch of Blue X Frieshan and Blonde X Frieshan cows, with a few pedigree Blondes also running with several Blonde Bulls. David had been using Rayneside, Cromkill, Islanhill, Penyghent and Marstonmill, all of which have been doing an excellent job, producing some great calves.

Mr Morris said that they had had very little rain, but this did not detract from the condition of the calves, once again, there were several calves which should be gracing future shows and winter fairs, showing plenty of style, conformation and class.

David was running a crossbred herd of 140 cows with followers, he was proud of the weights and prices that these crossbreds were yielding. He also runs a dairy herd of 125 Frieshans.

Having just completed construction on a Round House for ease of management, I shall be interested to find out how he gets on with it, and how it fits in to his system.

David makes a four hour journey to Bentham Market to sell his calves. I was very impressed with his herd health and management plan.

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August

On the road again, this time heading down the M5 for Exeter and on to Mike Scott at Brisdrew, Drewsteignton. Mike had some impressive cows and calves to show us, the cows were South Devon and South Devon X Blondes and even crossed again with Blonde, making some of the calves on show 7/8. Mike was using 2 bulls, Rodleigh Blaze and Druk Darwin.

Once again, like all our finalists, Mike had a clear vision on what he wants to achieve. He is also on the right track with calves on show that had scope and will grow on well, achieving good returns.

His management on this hilly farm was obviously paying off for him; it was once again, a pleasure to be shown around such a well- maintained herd.

After a quick stop for a bite to eat, we made our way back to our homeland of Wales and our last but by no means least finalists, the Hardy family, where three generations of the family were producing some very nice, stylish calves. Mike was using 3 Blonde Bulls, Fronfedw Amore, Doncombe Caligula and Yieldingtree Csnac on their Charolais cross cows, crossed back to the Blonde, again producing  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{7}{8}$  calves. The Hardy family grow their own cereals and beans and are able to take the calves through to finish, examples of these were on show and should achieve good grades at a later date.

Ryees was about to enter the show ring for the first time with a young Blonde bull that he had bred and was looking forward to presenting him at their local show the following day.

We wished him well and feel sure that we will be seeing him in the showring in the future if he continues his pedigree breeding program.

Sadly this was our final herd as we were due to return home.

We had seen some well deserved finalists and all of them were winners and a credit to the Beef industry and the Blonde Bull breeders, showing how versatile the Blonde bull is when used on a variety of breeds, it shone through consistently, catching our eye with its length, style and conformation.

Well done to everyone who has competed in this fiercely competitive competition and for giving me some super animals to judge.

The 1,191 miles, excluding air miles were well worth the trip I have had a high standard of stock and stockmen presented to me and they did not make my job an easy one.

Lastly, I would like to thank the British Blonde Society for inviting me to judge this prestigious competition and feel encouraged that if we continue to breed bulls to the high standards that produced these finalist's herds, then we are doing a dam good job.

Regards  
Pip Rogers