

Spectacular weekend for NI Blonde clubs Anniversary Weekend

Last weekend the NI Blonde Cattle Club hosted the National Blonde Stockjudging weekend in conjunction with their 30th Anniversary this saw an excellent turn out of members and friends from throughout the United Kingdom and Southern Ireland

The weekend started with a trip to the Classic herd, Ballyward of Mr D McCusker, and family. The herd has been in existence for around 25 years. As a result of a mainly closed herd policy the breeding females within the herd today relate back to one of the original purchases, Clarkhill Clare that had been bred by Cyril Morgan. A new stock bull has been introduced to the herd called Droit Crystal, a Steakhouse son which was purchased privately from Richard Mowbray of the Droit Herd.



The Classic Herd

The herd consists of approximately twenty top quality cows with calves sired by Droit Crystal had sired which impressed the visitors to the herd. Dermot then took the Party around the farm where they were shown some of the other quality blood lines that he has been breeding from. This was followed by a light lunch and Refreshments.

The visitors then travelled a few miles down the road to the Ivaniskey herd of Ivan, Ruth and William McElroy, Dromara. This herd was established in 1996 and has gone from strength to strength having many successes along the way. These include Lurgan Show Interbred Champion 2011, numerous other breed and Interbreed Championships and Best Small Herd in Northern Ireland 2004/05, 2008/09 and the Reserve Overall in the UK in 2004/05, 2010/11 to name a few. The first stop on the farm was the cows and calves at the herd.

Visitors and breeders got the opportunity to see some of the potential champions of the future that have been bred out of their stock bull Doncombe Aga Khan and various other sires. Aga khan was not on show due to him returning to AI Services for a further collection of semen as all the semen previously taken from him had been sold out and they required more. Following this visitors where shown the young bulls and heifers on the farm before they were served up lunch and refreshments.



Visitors at the Ivaniskey Herd

It was then off to Co. Antrim for a visit to the Islandhill herd of Mr P Gribbin and family. The Islandhill Blonde herd was established in 2004 where the foundation stock was purchased from Eugene Gillian and Robert Gibson. Paul showed the guests through his herd of twenty five pedigree blonde cows with calf at foot which are running with his home bred bull Islandhill Duke. This was followed by a visit to his thirty head of commercial cows that are running with Budore Bud. Both herd's pedigree and commercial are breeding good stock to suit today's market. Over one hundred and fifty members and friends of the NI Blonde Cattle Club gathered at the Farm of the Gribbin family for a BBQ and dance.



This was a great opportunity to not only see what a blonde can produce but taste some of the succulent cuts of beef that a blonde carcass produces. Entertainment on the evening was provided by our very own Yodelling Kenny Archer and Trevor Dickson. A great evening was had by all.

The next morning the party were taken to the Pedigree Sales Arena, Moira where the National Stockjudging championships took place. Master Judge, Mr R Gibson of the Ballygowan Herd, had the hard task of selecting the positioning of the two classes of bulls and females. This gave members and friends a chance to test their judging skills and have a go at placing the classes. A number of trade stands was on display during the day ranging from agricultural products to Engineering and not to forget a little something for the ladies with a selection of jewellery and handbags etc on display. Jason Irvine Foot Trimming also came along on the day and demonstrated his American tip over crush for pairing cattle's feet.



The Premier female sale then got underway with some great breeding and genetics from breeders in Northern Ireland. Topping the sale on the day was the Budore Herd of Paul McGarry with his home bred heifer Budore Ellie, sired by Budore Clive. Ellie was the Ulster bank calf Champion in 2009 and was sold at the sale for 2000gs.



The evening took the form of a dinner dance at the White River hotel Toomebridge where once again a great crowd turned out to support the club. Club Chairman Alistair Martin thanked everyone who had helped to make the weekend such a success and presented flowers and gifts to the herd owners who had held herd visits over the weekend. This was followed by the long anticipated results of the National stock judging competition; Results were as follows.

Juniors, under 18s winners-

- 1st Emma Mc Garry N.I,
- 2nd John Green R.O.I,
- 3rd Connor Savage N.I.



Seniors 18 to 30 winners –

- 1st William McElroy, N.I
- 2nd Eamon McGarry N.I
- 3rd Angela Griffin NI,



Over 30's - Joint 1st Robbie Kennedy, Scotland and John Stott, N. England,
Joint 2nd , Ruth McElroy NI, Jimmy and Margaret Frame Scotland, Muriel Gibb, N England,
Paddy Hayes, ROI and Jonny Mawhinney NI.
3rd Ronald McGuigan NI.



The entertainment for the evening was provided by committee member Wesley Tomb who played a great selection of music which included a Kaylee which was enjoyed by all who attended the evening. A number of Items donate by companies who attended the open day were auctioned off by Kenny Archer with the money raised going to club funds

After a late night the trip headed to the Drumraymond herd of the Griffin family which was established in 1996 with the purchased of heifers from the Deerfin and Ashtonlodge herds, a number of these still remain in the herd today. During the farm walk the guests were shown a lot of top quality blondes that have been very successful for the Griffin Family winning a number of championships in the show rings over the years. Drinks and snacks were served back at the farm. Then everyone was back on to the bus and off to Belfast for a sightseeing tour of the city. This gave our visits a great opportunity to learn about the history of Belfast and see many of the sights, before heading back to the airport for their flights home.



Mr & Mrs Stott from England having a chat with Ronald McGuigan and Sheena Kennedy



Some of the visitors who attended the National Blonde Stock Judging Weekend

The club would like to take this opportunity to thank all its sponsors and anyone else who made this event so successful.



Thanks must also go to the visitors and guests who took part in the weekend, without them these sorts of events would be impossible. Keep up to date with all the latest news and pictures on our club website, www.niblondecattleclub.com