The Irish Draught Horse
A Horse for All Seasons
Background

The first authentic reference to the Irish Draught dates from the close of the eighteenth century. At that time a great increase in the area of land under tillage took place and this created a demand for bigger, stronger and more docile horses than was required when land was devoted to grass land and the rearing of cattle and sheep.

The Irish farmer bred for himself a lighter, more adaptable animal than the heavy breeds available in England. He needed a horse he could work, drive and ride.

According to the old rhyme the Irish Draught Horse could "plough, sow, reap and mow, go to church and hunt". Draught Horses were bred to be strong and gentle, have a good trot, and be able to gallop and jump.

Consequently today’s Irish Draught is not simply a working horse, it is a riding and sporting horse as well.

HISTORY

Breed History

From the earliest times horses have always been part of Irish life. Over the years the small active native horse was crossed with Norman warhorses, Great Horses from England and also Spanish Andalusian stallions brought in by way of trade. There were many schemes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries to increase the size and quality of the Irish Draught Horse in which the thoroughbred horse played a significant role. From these beginnings the Irish Draught Horse of today evolved.

In 1617 an Irish Riding Horse in 1617

Farmers worked their horses alone or coupled with a neighbour’s horse for heavier work

Pride of Shaunlara, by Milestone RID, out of Boston Burglar by Prefairy. This stallion had a pre-eminent influence on today’s Irish Draught

Clover Hill, RID stallion, by Golden Beaker. One of Ireland’s greatest sires of showjumpers

King of Diamonds, RID, by Errigal, RID, consistently ranked among sires of showjumpers in world rankings since 1990

Versatility

One of the real strengths of the Irish Draught Horse is its Versatility. Because of its wonderful temperament it learns quickly and is very easy to work with. Its strength, intelligence and lightness of step means that it can perform in many varied disciplines including show jumping, eventing, dressage, driving, le trek and endurance riding. Above all its reliability makes it an extremely safe and sound horse for the amateur and leisure rider. Today the Irish Draught Horse is to be found competing in every aspect of equestrian sport. It is also being used as a Police Horse in many countries.

A team of four Irish Draught geldings coping easily with a water hazard

Sir Rivie, RID Stallion, successful show jumper. Sire: Sea Crest. Dam: Ginger Anne

Chrystal Breeze RID mare, prizewinning Le Trec competitor, by Heather Breeze out of April Jewel

Kingman, ID gelding, consistently successful three-day-event competitor. Sire: Creggan Diamond Dam: Serene Sunset

Huntingfield Rebel, RID stallion, National Performance Champion. Sire: Glenagyle Rebel Dam: Whippy

O’Leary’s Irish Diamond, RID Stallion winner of numerous dressage championships in the United States. Sire: Glidawn Diamond Dam: Grey Currangong
Part Bred Irish Draughts on the World Stage

Ever since show jumping had its birth here in Ireland and went on to become an international sport at the end of the 19th century, the Irish Draught Horse has played a major role. The temperament, durability and athleticism of the Irish Draught, so important in crosses with the Thoroughbred, has created a potent mix which is suitable for the demands of modern day show jumping.

Numerous horses with Irish Draught Breeding are competing successfully on the International Circuit. The Irish Draught/Thoroughbred cross is famous throughout the world as the Irish Sport Horse, a much wanted competition horse.

Carling King (ISH) 1991 gelding, by Clover Hill (RID), out of Gortnagger Star (ISH) by Chairlift (TB), bred by Dr Pat Geraghty, Kilkerrin Road, Glenamaddy, Co Galway.
Rider: Mr K Babington (Irl). Won the East Coast League, Ariat WEF Challenge Cup Series Final (USA) CSI-W March 2001

Boherdeal Clover (ISH) 1989 approved stallion by Clover Hill (RID), out of Virginia Wolf (ISH), by Regular Guy (TB), bred by Ms Pamela Miller, Mount Cashel Stud, Mount Cashel, Co Roscommon.
Rider: Lt David O’Brien. Won the 1m50 SEB Cup Table A in Falsterbo (Swe) 2002

Coolcorron Cool Diamond (ISH) 1989 approved stallion, by Glidawn Diamond (RID), out of Bonmahon Belle (ISH), by Bronti (ISH), bred by Mr Francis Fitzgerald, Ballinasisla Stud, Bonmahon, Co Waterford.
Rider: Mr R Splaine (Irl). Member of the Winning Samsung Nations Cup Teams at Washington (USA) and Toronto (CAN) in 2001

Master Ballinteskin (ISH) 1994 gelding, by Master Imp (TB), out of Highland Beauty (AID), by Highland King (ISH), bred by Ms Francis Hatton, Slyguff, Bagnelstown, Co Carlow.
Rider: Mr M Hauri (Sui). 2nd in the 7 year old final of the FEI World Breeding Jumping Championships for young horses, Lanaken 2001

Ado Annie (ISH) 1993 filly, by Errigal Flight (ISH), out of Coolrain Princess (ISH) by Blue Henry (RID), bred by Ms Frances Sheeran, Glebe, Coolrain, Portlaoise, Co Laois.
Rider: Mr Will Simpson (USA). Won $60,000 Tiffany & Company Grand Prix at the Oaks Blenheim Fall Classic in 2001
Irish Sport Horses have continued gaining great successes on the International show jumping circuit in recent times. In 2001, they won over 50 international classes in 12 countries worldwide. ‘Carling King’ by Clover Hill (RID) represented Ireland on the Gold winning team at the European Championships in Arnhem (NL) and won the Grand Prix in Hickstead (CSIO). In 2000, Ireland won a record 10 Nations cups. Of the 13 Irish Sport horses that competed on those Irish teams 5 were by Irish Draught stallions, ‘Ballaseyr Twilight’, ‘Dream Point Clover’ and ‘Carling King’, (by Clover Hill, RID), ‘Coolcorron Cool Diamond’ (by Gildawn Diamond, RID) and ‘The Prophets Thumb’ (by Knockboy, RID). ‘Ballaseyr Twilight’ also won the Kings Cup at Hickstead and the Kerrygold Grand Prix in Dublin.

Mister Springfield (ISH) 1993 gelding, by Western Promise (ISH), out of Glebe Bess (RID) by Ballinahow Boy (RID), bred by Mr Robert L Gallagher, 22 Springfield Road, Co Derry. Rider: Mr R Smith (GB). Won in the 1m50 - Table A with Jump off at Alencon (FRA) in 2001.

Killossery (ISH) 1992 gelding, by Clover Hill (RID), out of Jeannie (ISH), by Radical (TB). He was bred by Killossery Lodge Stud, Kilsallaghan, Co. Dublin and owned by the Minister of Defence. Rider: Mr S. Carey (Irl). Won the 1m60 H&M Derby - Table A in Falsterbo (Swe) CSIO**** in 2002.

Clover Leaf (ISH) 1986 gelding, by Clover Hill (RID) dam by Middle Temple (TB). Rider: Ms L Howard (USA). Won the $30,000 Grand Prix FEI World Cup in Tampa (USA) in 2001.

The Irish Draught Horse Society was founded in 1975. Its aims are to encourage and assist breeders and those interested in the preservation, promotion and improvement of the breed. There are currently 17 branches of the Society all over Ireland and affiliated groups in Great Britain, Germany, New Zealand, the United States of America, Canada and Australia. The studbook is maintained on behalf of the Society by The Irish Horse Board and the Northern Ireland Horse Board. All animals are inspected for entry into the studbook.

**Stallion Inspections**

Registered Irish Draught stallions are inspected for type, conformation, movement, soundness and temperament. Colts for inspection must be at least three years of age and must pass a veterinary examination and performance test as part of the approval procedure.

**Mare Inspections**

All potential Registered Irish Draught mares are inspected for type, conformation and movement. Mares for inspection must be at least two years of age and must pass a veterinary examination. Inspections are held at locations round the country during the autumn of each year.

**Judging Courses**

Courses are held for future judges to instruct them on the finer points of conformation and movement.
Qualifiers and Championships

In co-operation with the Irish Shows Association the Irish Draught Horse Society holds All Ireland Irish Draught Mare and Young Horse Championships for which contenders must qualify at venues round the country for finals at the National Show.

The National Show

The national breed show is run by the Society annually. It is hosted by Branches of the Society and the show location changes every two years. There are classes for mares, foals, stallions, young stock and also a performance section. Every year 300-500 of the best of the breed attract visitors from all over the world. It is the place to see the world’s greatest gathering of Irish Draught Horses.
The Irish Draught National Sale

This is one of the most important shop windows for Irish Draught Breeders. Buyers come from England, Germany, France, The United States, Canada and as far away as New Zealand, to buy directly from the breeders. The National Sale takes place early in October each year at Cavan Equestrian Horse Marketing Centre.

The Irish Horse Board Inward Buyer Programme operates at this sale whereby travel refunds are provided for successful buyers of horses for export at this auction. Contact the Irish Horse Board or the Sales Company for more details.

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